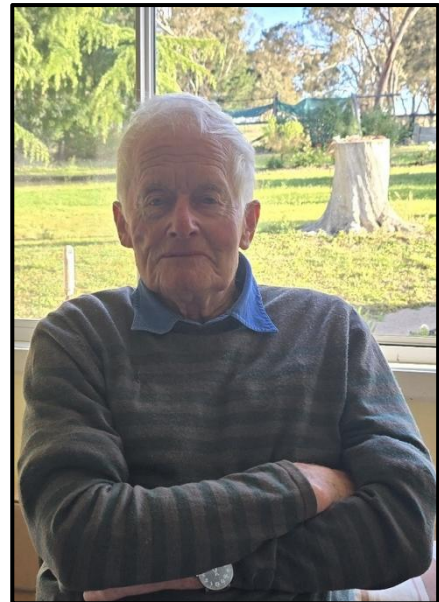


RICHARD WEBB

The Webb families in the Tarana Valley are all directly related to William and Anne Webb who came to Tarana to work on Dr Ramsey's property in 1842.

I was born on 4th August 1938 in Turrumurra to Keith Webb and Ena Smith. My mother and her parents and siblings arrived in Australia from England after World War 1.

My father met my mother when she was a guest at the Kamaringi Guest House run by my grandparents. She had visited with several other young women. They arrived by train and were met at Carlwood Railway Station.



When my parents were married, they moved to a family property Wellbank, at Dripstone, near Wellington. This was a very difficult time as there were a series of severe drought years. My father spoke of being short of water for the stock and the house. An Aboriginal who worked for my father knew they would find water if they dug the two main wells deeper. This was found to be true.

My sister, Suellen, was born in August 1940. Not long after her arrival both my parents caught Scarlet Fever. They were sent to Prince Henry Hospital, which was the infectious disease hospital. My aunt came to look after us until my parents recovered.

In 1941 the seasons were so bad my grandfather decided to sell Wellbank and we came home to Tarana. Dad's brother, Merrick Webb, had built a second house on the family property Kamaringi. This house was called Wonga. Not long after this Merrick decided to become a Methodist minister. He hadn't actually left when we came back to Tarana, so we lived in Crown Lea (the two-storey building on the outskirts of Tarana) for a period of time. Crown Lea had been built for my Great aunt Em but she didn't get to leave the family home at Keirstone. My main memory of Crown Lea was walking over to the police station and peering through the fence at the policeman's horse. He had a big white blaze. The police were mounted police in those days. The police station was the old brick house on the corner of the Mutton Falls T intersection in Tarana.

The war was still very much an issue and the local farmers, including my father, would meet as the VDC (Volunteer Defence Corps) and sometimes camp on the Reservoir Hill, so they could train in the event that Australia was invaded. The rails where they tied their horses remained there for many years.

The Webb family were sent three Italian prisoners of war to work on Kamaringi during the war. They lived in the shearers' quarters. I can remember Salvador, Nicador but not the third name. They did quite a lot of fencing and engraved their names in the box fence posts. They had wonderful singing voices and I quite often heard them singing in the evening. They made a big fuss of Sue and I. When the war finished and they went home, we all cried. They promised to come back and see us.

At that time most of the farm work was done by draught horses. The paddocks would be ploughed and the crops sown to make chaff to feed the horses. Much of the horse work was done by my Uncle Greg. He died quite suddenly in his late 30s. He had suffered from polio when a child. We bought our first tractor, a Red Farmall H, in the early 1950s.

My Uncle Tom, on my mother's side, developed tuberculosis so he came to live in a cabin in the garden at Wonga, as it was the medical belief that the country air would benefit him. He died, and my grandfather on my mother's side died suddenly a few days later. Alison and Bill Webb looked after Suellen and me while the funerals were held in Sydney. I believe my parents were away for quite a while.

My youngest sister Angela was born in October 1946. At this time rabbits were in plague proportions and much time and effort were exerted in trying to control the plague. We would have greyhounds sent up from Sydney to try and combat the problem. However, they were very accident prone and did not look where they were going and, as a result, did not survive long.

When I was old enough for school my mother taught me by correspondence for 12 months. Then, Sue and I attended school at Tarana. It was a bit of an effort to get there from our home at Wonga as my mother did not drive until later in life. Sometimes my mother took us in the sulky, and we would catch the Oberon train home in the afternoon, as we could walk home from Carlwood Station. The train trip was always interesting.

For the whole time I attended school at Tarana we had a teacher, Mr Gill, who was an Englishman. He was a marvellous teacher. Looked after 32 pupils in two rooms. He had very practical solutions for any problems. He would call me out and say, "Webby, I am making you a JP. Please sign this document here."

In 1952 I had to start high school but there was no vacancy at Newington so I stayed with my maternal grandmother in Gordon and attended the Hornsby Technical High School for 12 months. I did not enjoy that school at all. However, I started the following year at Newington. I learnt to play rugby and cricket and enjoyed them both, but did not star. I also learned to play the organ and quite often played at Stanmore Methodist Church. One of my regrets is I did not continue with music when I left school.

In 1957 I completed the Leaving Certificate and then came home to a drama. Part of Wonga was burnt out by a train fire, as were quite a few of our neighbours. I think the fire burnt all the way to the Jenolan Caves. Then my grandfather died in 1958 and we were up for probate. He had left half of Kamaringi to Merrick and half to my father. Merrick was a Methodist minister, and, as the family was in no position to purchase his share, he sold it to Frank Wolstenholme. The family was devastated when the new owner bulldozed the two storey Kamaringi house they had grown up in.



During the 1960s my father was having trouble with unauthorised shooters on the property. Before gun laws, everyone believed they could shoot on anyone's land. As our property had a lot of road frontage it was especially vulnerable. In an effort to curb these indiscriminate shooters he had Wonga declared and registered as a Wildlife Refuge. Thus the name 'The Wonga Wildlife Refuge' on the local Parish map.

At home, I finished the wool classing I had started at school. I met the Seaman brothers at wool classing and we are still friends. Brian Seaman, Col Ferguson, myself and several others started the Bathurst Merino Association 30 years ago and it is still going.

After leaving school I started a carrying business to bolster our farm income, mainly taking lambs to Homebush Sale Yards. That happened on Sunday and Wednesday nights. I often did two loads in a night in a Bedford truck that could carry about 100 lambs each trip.

The first summer at home I played cricket with an Oberon team and they seemed to be all named Evans! I also played rugby with Bathurst, but not for very long. My first love was horse sports. In the early days I rode my horses to Bathurst for the show. On the way home I would let them go at the bottom of Carlwood Road to come home themselves.

Because I had good horses and dogs, I received many requests from neighbours to help them to muster their difficult paddocks, particularly Mac Heane who needed his sheep mustered off the 'dog trap' (up on the eastern side of the Diamond Hill).



Suellen and I started playing polocrosse with Oberon and during the late 70s and early 80s I played polo with the Bathurst Polo Club. That was a wonderful time as I had two very good horses and was playing all around the Central West.

Polocrosse was where I met Marjorie Eames, who played for Rylstone. We married at St Martins, Killara on 11th May 1967. We lived in a Perry house on the river until the house that we still live in was built.

The Tarana Agriculture Bureau, an extension arm of the Department of Agriculture, was still very strong in the 50s and 60s. I became President of the local branch for some years and we had lots of interesting speakers. The Department of Agriculture offered farmers leadership schools at Hawkesbury Agriculture College for two or three weeks at a time. I was fortunate enough to attend on more than one occasion. That was an invaluable experience as we were taught meeting procedure and guidelines on how to run a business.



Our farming business has been a mixture of fat lambs and wool growing. We breed our own first cross ewes. We also run shorthorn cattle to supply the feedlot market. Of recent years we have concentrated more on wool, and join our second rate ewes to Border Lester rams and sell the offspring. We breed our own merinos, and at the recent sheep expo in Bathurst one of our ewes was judged champion.

Both Marjorie and I were recently awarded our 50-years plus service to the Rural Fire Service, and I have, for a few years, been the Tarana Volunteer Fire Brigade Captain.

I spent a year as Master of Lodge City of the Plains (a Masonic Lodge in Bathurst). And spent over 20 years going to Bathurst to their meetings.

I was President of the Oberon Equestrian Club for some years when we constructed the cross-country jumping course at Melrose Park. The Oberon Equestrian Club ran the state One Day Event Championships for a quite a number of years, often attracting international riders.

I have also been equestrian ring master at the Oberon Show for some years.

While I was President of the Oberon Branch of the NSW Farmers, a location was being chosen for the high voltage transmission line from Mt Piper to Marulan. It was very divisive. The meetings were just as heated as they are with the Oberon Against Wind Towers meetings.

My son Hugh was born in 1969, Robert in 1971, and Bruce in 1973. They have all married and settled in the district and we now try to keep up with nine grandkids. The love of polocrosse continues with the next two generations playing. In fact, Hugh and Sue's youngest, Victoria, has been picked in a NSW team to play in the Nationals at Darwin in 2026.

The Tarana Valley has been farmed by Webb families for over five generations and I am happy to have our sons continue this connection with the land. I hope to continue to contribute to local life and be part of our local community while good health allows.

(February, 2026)

