

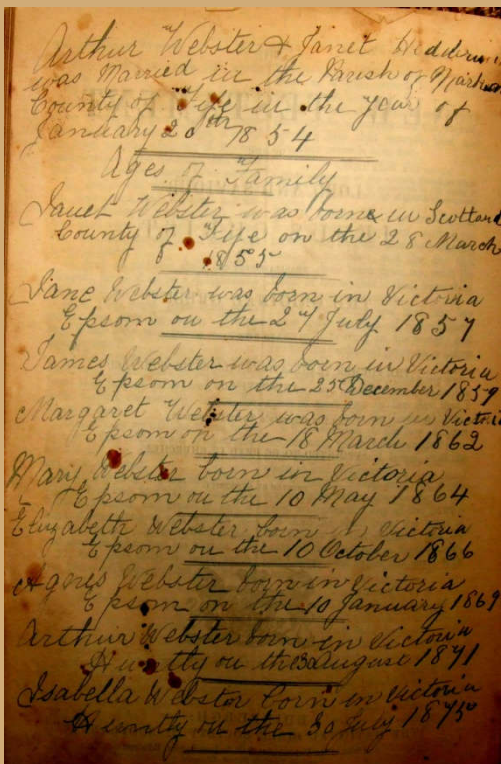
The Webster Family

The earliest of our Websters that I have found is James Webster who married Jane Thomson in Dysart, Fife, Scotland on 2nd March 1823. The couple had six children, the eldest Arthur being our ancestor. James is a bit of a mystery as apart from being the father of the six Websters and his marriage that is all I have found of him. By 1841 when the first census records we have are found he appears to have died. His wife Jane or Jean is now the wife of David Berry, ten years her junior, and living in the village of Thornton with three Berry children and four Webster children including Arthur who is 15 (actually 17) and a journeyman shoemaker. Journeyman simply means he worked for other people. The oldest Berry child is five so we can presume James Webster died around 1835.

In the next census of 1851 Jane is still living in Thornton and is recorded as the head of family, a widow and under the name of Jane Webster. So possibly she did not marry David Berry. Living with her are sons Arthur, now a coalminer, Alexander, a stone breaker, John, a coal miner and George Berry, a stone breaker. He was aged thirteen.

Dysart, Markinch and Thornton are all close together and in those times the residents would mostly have worked at the local coal mines or as agricultural labourers. It was a poor area.

Arthur Webster married Janet Hedderwick in the Parish of Markinch, county of Fife on 7th January 1854. Living at Thornton, Markinch was the nearest parish church. All the Webster children's births were registered at Markinch which is only four miles away. Janet was from a local Thornton family, her father William was a carter and farmer in 1851 and 1861.



A page from the Webster family bible.

Arthur and Janet had one child, also Janet, born in Fife on 28 March 1855 before migrating to Australia on the ship Negotiator in 1857. Janet was heavily pregnant for the voyage as they arrived on June 3rd and their next child, Jane, was born on July 27th 1857. Then followed James, born 25 December 1859, Margaret born 18 March 1862, Mary born 10 May 1864, Elizabeth born 10 October 1866, Agnes born 10 January 1869, Arthur born 30 August 1871 and Isabella born 30 July 1875.

These dates are all recorded in the family bible which our Nana had.

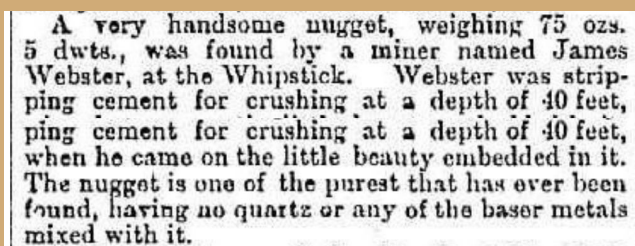
The first six children were born at Epsom and the last two at Huntly, both places are just out of Bendigo on the Northern Highway.

Arthur Webster worked with three brothers, James, Alexander and John, the first of whom arrived in Australia in 1852. The different birth places of Arthur's children are explained by the knowledge that they owned and ran the Caledonian Crushing Battery at

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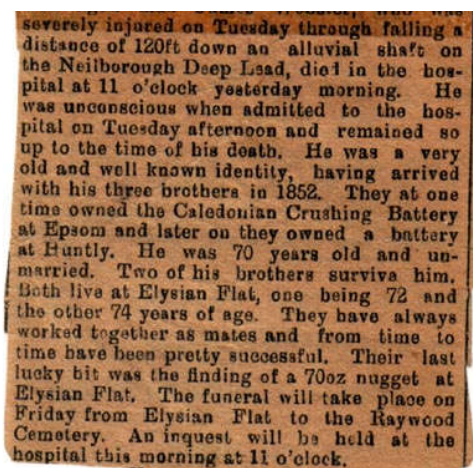
Epsom and later ran another battery at Huntly. The brothers also mined for gold at Elysian Flat which was the original name for Neilborough and set up a crushing mill there too. They had some success there finding a gold nugget that weighed 70 ounces was discovered at a depth of 40 feet on the 28th December 1877 and reported in the Bendigo Advertiser of 1st January 1878. The nugget would have been just over 2 Kgs in metric and worth \$92,400.00 on today's values.

They had moved to Neilborough from Huntly and continued to mine and operate their crushing mill there. My impression from Mum was that the Websters lived close to the Shamrock Hotel at Neilborough.



From The Bendigo Advertiser 1st Jan 1879

The Websters also bought land and became farmers at Neilborough while they continued their mining and gold crushing business. In 1896 James died after falling down a 120 ft shaft while extracting rock that was to be crushed. His brother Alexander died five days later but his death seems unrelated to the accident. Alexander died of an asthma attack. The fourth brother, John, had married Margaret McGilvray in 1858 and had a family of ten children. They also lived at Epsom, and Huntly. John passed away in 1871 aged 42 when his youngest child would have been only a year old. His probate records had him listed as a miner.



Newspaper cutting found in the Webster family bible

There are many family photographs that were passed on to Mum from her grandmother via our Nana. There is an entire album of photographs but few have any names recorded on them.

There are however studio portraits of all of the girls of the Webster family. Maybe the boys are amongst the unnamed ones. Mum was able to name some of the people in the photos and some have been worked out. The album and the photographs can be seen via another link ("The Webster Album") on the previous page.

There are three studio photos of the Webster girls that appear to be coming of age photos, which are taken about the time one of the girls turned twenty one. Only one photograph has'nt any identification of the subject on it. Originally I thought they were all represented but studying the clothes and the times that the photographers operated suggest they are of the youngest girls. The two eldest, Janet and Jane may have missed out.

The Webster girls fall into three groups by age, Janet (1855) and Jane (1857), Margaret (1862), Mary (1864) and Elizabeth (1866), Agnes (1869) and Isabella (1875). This grouping is reflected in the photos that may be coming of age photos.

Mary and Elizabeth Webster?

On the back of this photo "Sitting Aunty Pollie". It is the only piece of identification on these photos. Pollie is the pet name for Mary. So is the other person her older sister Margaret or her younger sister Elizabeth, Nana's mother?

The clothing suggests the photo could have been taken in the mid 1880s. The person seated seems to have a bustle and these did disappear from dress but came back again around 1884.

Photographer West End Portrait Studios 112 & 114 Victoria Street West Melbourne.

The book "The Mechanical Eye" lists photographers and when they worked but unfortunately this one is not listed.



Mary (Pollie) seated with either Elizabeth or Margaret Standing

Agnes and Isabella Webster

These photographs appear to be taken on the same day although the detail of the photographer on each card varies. The portraits were done By R Yeoman of 169 Bourke Street Melbourne (or 139 Bourke St.).

R Yeoman operated between 1885 and 1899, the style of dress is very up to date and also suggests the early 1890s and is the reason I think this is a photo of the youngest of the Webster girls. In January 1891 Agnes would have been 21 and Isabella 15. It is most likely a special occasion



Agnes Webster standing, Isabella Webster seated

photo, the garlands of flowers on their shoulders and Agnes holding a book and Isabella holding a posy of flowers (I think they are flowers) are signs of this. The separate photo of Agnes suggests it may have been her special occasion



Agnes Webster

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although there could have been a separate photo of Isabella too that has been lost.

The Mystery Photo

There is no photographer's name or mark on the photo so the only method of ageing the photo is the girls dress.

The three subjects do not seem to include Agnes, Isabella, or Pollie.

This photo could have been taken in the 1900s and we assume they are seated according to age. The missing sisters seem to be Elizabeth and Mary (died 1899). This would give the identification as: back row Isabella and Agnes, front row Margaret Janet and Jane.



The Webster Women in later years

This could be a mourning photo, all dressed in Black, very formal. Was it taken at the time of Mary's



Webster sisters from back, Isabella, Agnes, front left Margaret, Janet, Jane

death in 1899? Their respective ages would have been Isabella (25), and Agnes (30) front row Margaret (35) Janet (44) and Jane (42). They look a bit older, their mother died in 1907, their father in 1910, and it could have been at one of these occasions. At each of these possible dates Elizabeth was still in Deniliquin which may explain her absence.

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The photo is by Yeoman & Co 116 Bourke Street Melbourne. Yeomans were a very long running photography business so it is not much help with the dating of the photo.

Images of the two boys, James and Arthur, from the family have not been identified although I have no doubt they are amongst the album and loose photographs in the collection. Images of the parents and other two sisters are also probably in the collection. I hope we can eventually identify these people.

There is only one photograph where Elizabeth Webster was definitely identified by Carrie, our Mum (or Grandmum). She is in the middle, on the left is Liz Downie and the right is one of her sisters. The boy in the corner is either Liz's son, Darcy or Elizabeth's son Bill. Other photos of Darcy suggest it might be him. They were both born in 1909 which would mean the photo was taken about 1912/13.

When I compare this photo of Elizabeth with the first photo of the Webster girls I think it could have been Elizabeth standing behind Pollie (Mary).



Elizabeth Webster married Michael

Thomas Downey in Deniliquin in 1883, she was 16^{1/2} and he was 24. Elizabeth's sister Jane Rudd was a resident of Deniliquin at the time of the marriage, Elizabeth may have been living with her. Jane had four children in four years and was pregnant with another. Elizabeth may have been helping Jane with the family at this time.

Elizabeth Webster had eight children, Elizabeth (Liz) born 1883, Arthur b. 1889, Henry Francis b.1893, Dorothy (Dolly) b. 1896, Jane E.B. b. 1898 died 1899, Ruby M., b. 1900 and Leslie Martyn, b. 1906 and William Sheppard Downie b. 1909. All of the children were born in Deniliquin except Arthur (Collingwood) and Nana who was born in Hay, N.S.W.

The marriage broke down. Some of the family did move back to Victoria. The older children do not seem to have moved to Neilborough, Elizabeth was probably in Melbourne, Arthur had a child in Queensland in 1909 leaving Henry who stayed in Deniliquin, and it appears, stayed with the Hoskins family. He would have been about 17 and eventually took on the Hoskins surname.

Elizabeth lived in Neilborough until her death in 1931. She lived with William Sheppard who came from Deniliquin and was, I think, the father of her last child Bill. He may have fathered more of the

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children; Elizabeth stopped recording the children's father when she registered them after Dorothy (Nana) was born in 1896.