

Annie Hughes - October 2017



I was born in Adelaide and attended The Wilderness School. I lived in Adelaide with my parents and they had a small property in the Adelaide Hills where I was able to keep a couple of riding horses.

My mother was a great gardener and had an extensive garden with both native and exotic plants. After leaving school I nursed at the Royal Adelaide hospital for three years.

I married and had two children before moving to Kars Station, Broken Hill with my husband in 1972 and became involved in the running of Merino sheep and beef cattle on the property.

I was a keen horse rider and started breeding Australian Stock horses.

The children and I all attended pony club with our horses in Broken Hill.

Needing some repairs around the house and not having the necessary skills, after the children left home for boarding school, I started a three year Carpentry and Joinery course at the Broken Hill TAFE College which I completed in 1992.

I became involved with the Silver City Pastoral and Agricultural Association Inc. and started an animal nursery at their annual three day agricultural show in 1989.

I ran this display over the next 13 years and the Nursery developed into one of the largest in the country and one of the most popular displays at the show, involving displays of up to forty different animal mothers with their young. I held the position of President of this Association for four years from 1996 to 1999 and was the first woman to hold this position.

It was around this time that a maiden great aunt in England died and left me, along with a number of my Australian cousins, a small inheritance and with this I decided to purchase a couple of ostriches as I planned to display some of their chicks in the animal nursery.

This purchase led to my involvement with the ostrich industry and the breeding and selling of young ostrich-

es which was a pretty amazing business to be in.

As we didn't have continuous power on the property at that stage I found some partners near Mildura who had the power on and were happy to run my ostriches on their farm, collect and incubate the eggs and share the chicks that were hatched.

A power line was introduced onto our station in 1994 and as soon as possible we brought our ostriches home, set up paddocks for them close to the house and ran two breeding pairs.

I sold chicks at three months of age when they were about shoulder height and did a number of deliveries of them on our horse float across the state.

I was elected as a director of the Broken Hill Rural Lands Protection Board in 1997 and served two years on the Board.

With the abolishment of the Wool Floor Reserve Price Scheme in 1989 and the subsequent drop in wool prices it became apparent that another way must be found to make a living in pastoral country.

In 1993 with the proceeds from my ostrich business I purchased a number of Wiltshire Horn sheep (woolshedding meat sheep) and trialed them on our station for some years where they thrived even during dry times.

We found that the horns on these sheep were a great disadvantage, getting caught on fences, being locked together after fighting and so began the development of a polled (hornless) version of the Wiltshire Horn which has led to the creation of a new breed of sheep which I called Wiltipoll.

I was instrumental in establishing the Australian Wiltipoll Association Inc. in 1996 and held the position of President for 12 years.

I am still very involved with the Association and hold the position of Vice President and Publicity Officer.

Our station gradually changed over, as the Wiltipoll numbers increased, from a wool growing enterprise (Merino) to a meat producing one (Wiltipoll) and we run a flock of about 8000 Wiltipoll ewes and sell prime lamb to the market every year as well as commercial numbers of breeding ewes and rams to other prime lamb producers looking to run sheep that need little maintenance.

Our son took over the running of the station and my husband and I moved to Martindale our small property just outside Strathalbyn in 2001.

We brought some of our Wiltipoll sheep here with us and we run them here and supply breeding animals to other lifestyle farmers around the Hills.

The climate in Strathalbyn is so much milder and wetter than Broken Hill and gardening here is so much easier than gardening on a station with an 8 inch annual rainfall.

I am a keen gardener and have more time for the garden now as well as looking after the sheep. I have been able to grow quite a variety of natives here at Martindale as well as some exotics, roses and salvias.

Plants seem to grow much more quickly and they don't have to deal with the times of extreme heat that we had on the station and they don't need so much watering - the only downside is that the weeds seem to do really well here as well!