

#52 Ancestors Week 40 - Harvest

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I have been on the road for two weeks, so in the absence of any literal interpretations of this week's prompt "Harvest", I am detailing the harvest of information I gleaned from a visit to Whittingham cemetery, near Singleton during my trip away.

I knew that Joseph Whitten was buried there in a grave shared with his 6 year old son, Percival and his 16 year old daughter, Matilda, known in the family as Barney.



Joseph was one of the four Whitten brothers who came to Australia in the 1860s (see #52 Ancestors Week 31 – Brother). Unlike the others, he did not take up farming land, but

worked first on the team surveying the Great North Road (from Sydney to the north) before he became the proprietor of the Chain of Ponds Inn, in the Hunter Valley.

Two years after his arrival in the colony, in July 1865, he married Johanna Mary Devitt. She was also born in Ireland, in Tipperary, and was 18 years old at the time of the marriage. (We have always known in the family that Joseph became estranged from his brothers because he sold alcohol - they were very strict Methodist teetotallers).

When Joseph died in 1895, he was only 56 and he left Mary with 10 children, the youngest of them only 9 years old. His six year old son, Percival had died in 1890 and his daughter Barney was already suffering from the disease (consumption or TB) which was to kill her the following year.

***Maitland Daily Mercury (NSW : 1894 - 1939), Saturday 22 February 1896,
page 4***

CAMBERWELL.

OBITUARY. — It becomes my painful duty to have to announce the death of Miss Matilda Whitten, which took place at her mother's residence, Liddell, at four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon last. The deceased, had been suffering from consumption for some short time past, of which complaint she succumbed. Everything was done in the form of medical attendance and kind nursing to arrest the terrible insidious malady, but all in vain. The deceased young lady was scarcely seventeen years of age, hence we have "another rose nipped in the bud." The deepest sympathy is felt for the afflicted mother and relatives in their sad bereave-ment. The remains will be conveyed by train to-morrow to Singleton, and buried in the Church of England cemetery at that place

I arrived at the cemetery expecting to see this grave, but I found a collection of Whitten graves enclosed within a fence.



The grave to the left of Joseph's is that of his eldest son, William Liddell Whitten, born in 1866. William was married and had two small children when he died of pneumonia at the age of 30. His headstone reads "In Loving Memory of William Whitten who died 16 June 1896 aged 30 Years. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

William and his wife Annie, had had three sons but the eldest (another Percy) died at the age of 2 in 1894. Their other two sons were Halwyn Richard (known as Dick) and Liddell (known as Dell). Both served in the military in WW1.

On the right of the main grave is that of Edward Whitten, who also died at 30. Edward was Joseph and Mary's third son, and he too was married at the time of his death, although there were no children.

His headstone reads (on the left side) "In Loving Memory of my Beloved Husband Edward Whitten died 15th June 1904 aged 30 years. And on the right side, "Resting till the Resurrection Morn".

In front of the graves is a small headstone for Mary, Joseph's wife and the mother of his children.

It reads, "In Loving Memory of my Dear Mother, Mary, wife of the above died 16 June 1906. Erected by her loving daughter Minnie"

Minnie was Joseph and Mary's youngest child (1886-1967). She, John (1869-1914) and Henry (1878-1938) were the only three of the ten children to live past the age of 30, which gives credence to the family story that one of the reasons the brothers left Ireland was to escape from the scourge of TB. Sadly it seemed that Joseph brought it to Australia with him.

Mary Whitten actually married again after Joseph's death, to George Cruikshank in 1902, but she lived only another 4 years before her death at 59. I don't know if she is buried in this family plot, or if the stone is simply Minnie's recognition of her in relation to the rest of the family.

After so many tragedies, the family rests in a peaceful corner of the Hunter Valley under gum trees and blue skies.

