


#52 Ancestors 2020 - Week 41 - Newest

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Week 41 - Newest

I thought for this prompt I would share my newest discoveries relating to the Whitten family, which have come about because of a recent visit to Quirindi, the family's home town in the central west of NSW.

After several months when most of us in Australia were unable to travel anywhere because of COVID 19, the idea of a trip was very attractive. We planned to visit the local Museum, which holds my grandmother's wedding dress, and the cemetery, and to stay at a guesthouse which is attached to the tiny church which was the Quirindi Methodist Church before the creation of the Uniting Church.

This little church had been the centre of my Quirindi ancestors' lives and in acknowledgement of my great grandmother Charlotte it is now named "The Whitten Room". There is a plaque on the wall inside:



As we checked in, I mentioned to the receptionist that I had attended a service at the church when I was a child. The occasion had been the dedication of a memorial to my late grandfather, Frederick Whitten and involved some work on the church organ.

"Would you like to see it?" she asked.

She led me down a corridor to the organ which now sits, unplayed, but visible to all who stay at this place.*



The highlight of our visit to Quirindi was the Wedding Dress. I wrote in a previous blog (#25 Ancestors 2020 Week 23 – Wedding) about my grandparent's wedding and used this beautiful photo of my grandmother.

The dress lies in a tissue-lined box. It's very fragile now, and the silk lining is beginning to disintegrate. The silver thread on the bodice has tarnished to a rather dramatic dark grey. It's nevertheless still a spectacular dress and I'm grateful that it's still here after 109 years and is lovingly cared for.



Small country town museums do a wonderful job on a shoestring. All of their workers are volunteers who love their history and try hard to preserve it. This little town has been shrinking for years with faster cars and highways making the large nearby regional city of Tamworth easily accessible for shopping and services. I don't think there is anyone left in Quirindi to whom I am related or who would even remember much about my pioneering family, so I am especially grateful for their care of this precious family heirloom.

* sadly I have since learned that this is not the original organ restored by my Grandmother, but a more recent acquisition. The original was taken by a family member who convinced the Church that it should have been hers. I have no idea where it is now



