

**Penrith Cemetery,  
Penrith, Cumbria  
War Grave**



*Lest We Forget*

**World War 1**



**2467 PRIVATE**

**H. WHITMAN**

**2ND AUSTRALIAN PIONEERS**

**23RD SEPTEMBER, 1918 Age 28**

*Blessed Are The Dead*

*Who Die In The Lord*

## Harry WHITMAN

Harry Whitman was born in Kensington, London, England, in 1889, a twin with Thomas, to parents Henry and Lavinia Whitman. Harry & Thomas Whitman's births were registered in the March quarter, 1890 in Kensington, London, England. Thomas & Harry Whitman were baptised on 15th December, 1889 at St. Clement's Church, Notting Hill, Middlesex.

The 1901 England Census recorded Henry Whitman as an 11 year old, living with his family at 15 Mary Place, Kensington Town, London. His parents were listed as Henry Whitman (\_\_\_dealer, aged 49, born St. Pancras) & Leavener Whitman (aged 48, born Fulham). Henry was one of four children listed on this Census – Lucy (Laundress, aged 16, born Kensington), Thomas – twin of Harry & William (aged 9, born Kensington).

The 1911 England Census recorded Harry Whitman as a 21 year old Carriage Cleaner, living with his family at 15 Mary Place, Kensington Central, London, England. His parents were listed as Henry Whitman (General Dealer, aged 50) & Nanie Whitman (aged 44). Harry's parents had been married for 33 years & had a total of 7 children, 2 having since died. Harry was one of six children listed on this Census – George (aged 30), Alice (aged 28), Lucy (aged 25 & married for 7 years with no children), Thomas Whitman – Harry's twin (aged 21, "Australia") then Harry & William (Labourer, aged 20).

According to information supplied by his sister-in-law, Margaret E. Hind, Harry Whitman came to Australia when he was 22. A "Harry Whitman" was a passenger on *Orvieto* which departed from London, England & arrived in Sydney, New South Wales on 27th February, 1912. (Note: CWGC & Service Record file both have Margaret E. Hind as Harry Whitman's remarried widow)

The 1915 & 1917 Australian Electoral Rolls for the division of Wide Bay, subdivision of Maryborough, Queensland record Harry Whitman, Labourer, living at Banana St., Granville. His wife – Margaret Elizabeth Whitman, Home Duties, was listed as living at Banana St., Granville only in the 1915 Electoral Roll.

Harry Whitman was a 25 year old, married, Labourer from 5 Herbert Street, Spring Hill, Brisbane, Queensland when he enlisted at Maryborough, Queensland on 20th March, 1916 with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). His service number was 2467 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his wife – Mrs Margaret Elizabeth Whitman, of 5 Herbert Street, Spring Hill, Brisbane, Queensland.

Private Harry Whitman was posted to No. 11 Depot Battalion for recruit training on 25th March, 1916. He was transferred to 4/12th Machine Gun Company on 26th April, 1916 then transferred to No. 3 Company, Machine Gun Depot at Seymour on 15th May, 1916. Private Whitman was transferred to 4th Reinforcements of 2nd Pioneer Battalion at Seymour on 22nd June, 1916.

Private Harry Whitman embarked from Melbourne, Victoria on HMAT *Themistocles* (A32) 28th July, 1916 & disembarked at Plymouth, England on 11th September, 1916.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

### 2nd Pioneer Battalion

The 2nd Pioneers were established on 10 March 1916, at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and were subsequently assigned to the 2nd Division. Trained as infantrymen, they were also tasked with some engineer functions, with a large number of personnel possessing trade qualifications from civilian life. As such, they were designated as pioneer units. In early 1916, the Australian Army was reorganised ahead of its transfer to the Western Front in Europe. A total of five pioneer battalions were raised by the A.I.F. at this time, with one being assigned to each of the five infantry divisions that the Australians deployed to the battlefield in France and Belgium. Tasked with digging trenches, labouring, constructing strong points and light railways, and undertaking battlefield clearance, the troops assigned to the pioneers required construction and engineering experience in addition to basic soldiering skills.

*(Pioneer Battalion information from Wikipedia)*

Private Harry Whitman was written up for an Offence while posted with Pioneer Training Battalion at Perham Downs, Wiltshire – Absent without leave from 5 pm on 14th November, 1916 to 12 noon on 17th November, 1916. He was awarded 168 hours detention & forfeited a total of 11 days' pay.

Private Harry Whitman proceeded overseas from Pioneer Training Battalion on "*Princess Henrietta*" via Folkestone on 28th November, 1916. He was marched in to 2nd A.D.B.D. (Australian Divisional Base Depot) at Etaples, France on 30th November, 1916. Private Whitman was marched out to Segregation Camp on 6th December, 1916. He was marched in to 2nd A.D.B.D. on 11th January, 1917.

Private Harry Whitman was marched out to join his Unit on 17th January, 1917 & was taken on strength of his Unit on 19th January, 1917 from 4th Reinforcements of 2nd Pioneers.

Private Harry Whitman was wounded in action in the field on 29th September, 1917. He was admitted to 3rd Australian Field Ambulance on 29th September, 1917 with a bomb wound then transferred to 10th Casualty Clearing Station where his left leg was amputated. Private Whitman was transferred to Ambulance Train on 1st October, 1917 & admitted to 54th General Hospital on 2nd October, 1917 with multiple bomb wounds. Private Whitman was invalided to England from France on 15th October, 1917 on Hospital Ship *St. Denis*.

#### War Diary – 2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion

*Ypres – 29th September, 1917*

*Very heavy shelling of BELLEWAARDE CIRCUIT ROAD. Road broken in several places. Reinforced A Comy by 2 platoons of D Comy to repair & patrol \_\_\_\_\_. Cleared in 3 hour. Platoon of B Comy halted for drink at "Comforts" shelter on MENIN ROAD hit by aerial bomb. Lt. TAYLOR & 6 O.R killed. & 19 wounded. Day casualties 1 Offr Killed & 6 O.R.; 1 O.R died of wounds; 19 O.R. Wounded; 1 O.R. Gassed; 1 O.R. missing.*

(War Diary information from the Australian War Memorial)

Private Harry Whitman was admitted to Lakenham Military Hospital, Norwich, England with multiple gunshot wounds on 6th October, 1917 – as per Casualty Form – Active Service. (Date as per Hospital Admissions Form should be 16th October, 1917). He was transferred to 1st Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield on 21st November, 1917 with Amputation of left thigh. Private Whitman was transferred to 2nd Auxiliary Hospital at Southall on 5th December, 1917.

Communications regarding the injury of Private Harry Whitman sent to Mrs M. E. Whitman of 5 Herbert St, Spring Hill, Brisbane, Queensland were returned to Base Records unclaimed in 1917. Base Records were informed by 1st Military District Headquarters, Australian Military Forces that Mrs Margaret E. Whitman's address was c/o Penrith Post Office, Cumberland, England.

A Medical Report was completed on 24th December, 1917 at No. 2 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, England on the disability of Pte Harry Whitman. His disability was described as Amputation of left leg through knee joint, gunshot wounds to left thigh & right thigh & right hallus. The origin of the disability was recorded as Ypres, France on 29th September, 1917. Private Whitman "*was being relieved from trenches & was hit by aeroplane bomb. Left leg was shattered & amputated the same day. Also struck on both thighs & right hallus.*" The Medical Board recommended that Private Harry Whitman was permanently unfit for General & Home Service.

Private Harry Whitman was granted leave from 9th March, 1918 to 23rd March, 1918 & was then to report to 2nd Auxiliary Hospital.

Private Harry Whitman was written up for an Offence while at 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall – Absent without leave from 10 pm on 18th April, 1918 to 8.30 am on 19th April, 1918. This was admonished by Lt. Col. A. L. Buchanan & he forfeited 1 days' pay.

Private Harry Whitman was written up for an Offence while at 2nd Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall – Absent without leave from 10.30 pm on 14th June, 1918 to 9.30 am on 15th June, 1918. This was admonished & he forfeited 1 days' pay.

Private Harry Whitman was granted leave with pay from 31st August, 1918 to 30th October, 1918 & leave without pay until 3rd March, 1919. (This was later revised & deleted to read leave with pay to 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1918.)

Private Harry Whitman died on 23rd September, 1918 at Eamont Bridge, Penrith, Cumberland, England from Acute Lobar Pneumonia & Acute Peritonitis.

A death for Henry Whitman, aged 28, was registered in the September quarter, 1918 in the district of Penrith, Cumberland, England. The informant was Margaret E. Whitman, widow of deceased who was present at the death.

Private Harry Whitman was buried on 25th September, 1918 in as Penrith Cemetery (also known Beacon Edge Cemetery), Penrith, Cumbria, England – Plot number “C”. U. Green. 76 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. From the burial report of Private Harry Whitman - Private Funeral. *The deceased soldier was buried in a Private Family grave at Penrith by his relations. In this instance the Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F. London were not represented. The Widow & friends attended the funeral.*

Private Harry Whitman requested in his Will dated 31st May, 1917 that all his personal estate be bequeathed to his wife – Mrs Margaret Elizabeth Whitman, Penrith Post Office, Cumberland, England.

Base Records contacted the Department of Repatriation in March, 1923 to ascertain if a war pension was being paid to the widow of the late Private Harry Whitman & if so requested an address as communications sent by Base Records to the widow at c/o G.P.O., Brisbane, Queensland had been returned unclaimed. The Department of Repatriation advised Base Records in March, 1923 that Mrs M. E. Hind, remarried widow of the late Private Harry Whitman, had her War Pension cancelled from 3rd November, 1921 & that the address of her child, who was in receipt of a pension, was c/o Post Office, Pialba, Queensland.

Private Harry Whitman was entitled to British War Medal & the Victory Medal. They were signed for by Margaret E. Hind, remarried widow of late Pte Whitman, on 24th May, 1923. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Private Whitman's widow – Mrs M. E. Whitman remarried as Mrs M. E. Hind, as the closest next-of-kin. (Scroll sent November, 1922 & Plaque sent November, 1922 but redespached April, 1923).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Harry Whitman– service number 2467, aged 28, of 2nd Australian Pioneers. He was the son of Harry Whitman and the late Lavinia Whitman; husband of Margaret E. M. Hind (formerly Whitman) of 62 Dodds St., Darlington, England. Born in London.

Private H. Whitman is commemorated on the Roll of Honour, located in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 173.



Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia

(73 pages of Private Harry Whitman's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll) & National Archives*



## **Newspaper Notices**

### **THE ROLL OF HONOUR**

#### **AUSTRALIAN CASUALTIES**

##### **348th LIST**

##### **WOUNDED**

Harry Whitman, Spring Hill

*(The Queenslander, Brisbane, Queensland – 10 November, 1917)*

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### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

#### **DIED, OTHER CAUSES**

Harry Whitman, England, 23/9/18, illness, p.r.w.

*(The Telegraph, Brisbane, Queensland – 19 November, 1918)*

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### **Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones**

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Private H. Whitman does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*Blessed Are The Dead Who Die In The Lord*

## Penrith Cemetery, Penrith, Cumbria

Penrith Cemetery, Penrith, Cumbria contains 47 War Graves – 30 Commonwealth War Graves relating to World War 1, 15 relating to World War 2 & 2 Polish Army War Graves.



Penrith Cemetery, Penrith, Cumbria (Photo from CWGC)



(Photo by Rod Allday)

Photo of Private H. Whitman's Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone in Penrith Cemetery (also known as Beacon Edge Cemetery), Penrith, Cumbria, England.



*(Photo courtesy of Kay Youngberry)*