



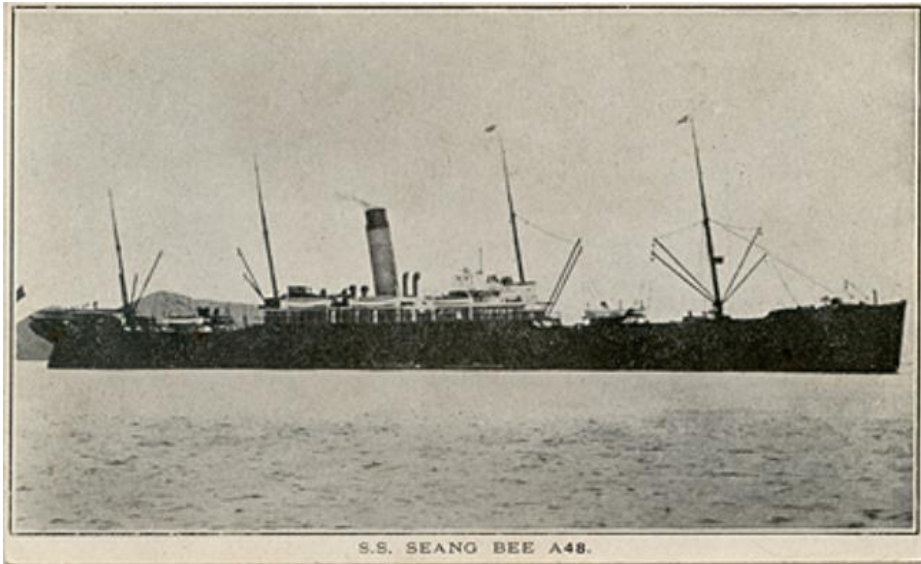
Arthur William Whatling

1437 Private, 2nd Battalion Australian Imperial Force

He died of his wounds on 9th May 1918 in France, aged 28

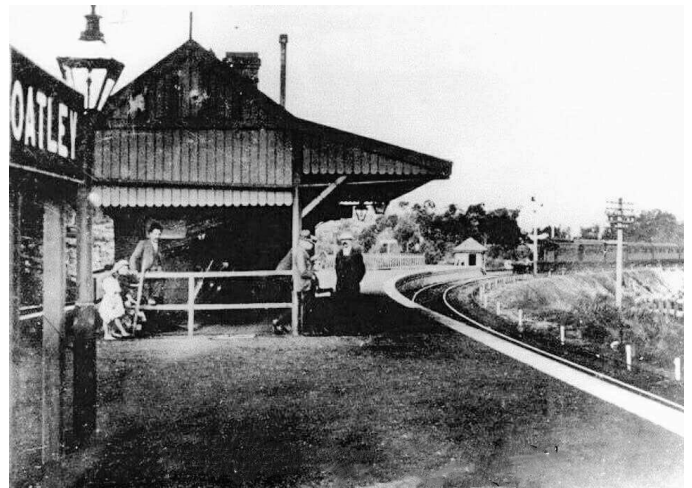
Arthur is buried in Ebbingham Military Cemetery, France

Arthur Whatling was ready for adventure and a better life for himself; one of many young men who left England in the early 20th Century to set himself up as a farmer in Australia. Only 22 when he landed in Australia, probably in 1911/12, when he enlisted at Liverpool NSW in November of 1914, he gave his hometown as Oatley, Hurstville, New South Wales. We know he left Sydney, not far from his home town, on the Seang Bee on the 11th of February 1915 after 3 months of basic training just in time for the Gallipoli offensive.



Oatley is an attractive suburb of Sidney, blessed with parks and a number of older buildings. Founded by a former Convict in 1821, it was only when the Post Office arrived in 1903 that this town had an official Postal Address unique to itself. Oatley also had a railway station – and this linked it to the big city of Sidney and from there to the bigger world.

Oatley Station in 1905. Not too unlike many small Norfolk Halts!



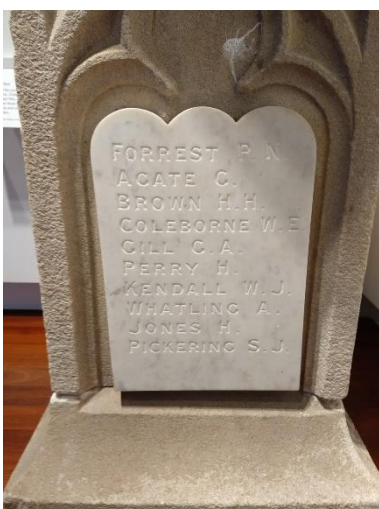


Oatley's original war memorial was erected in 1924, a project promoted by the local Soldiers Association. Originally the memorial was to be erected near the rail lines that took so many of the town's young men away to war, but a more peaceful spot was deemed appropriate, and it was erected on school land. The Memorial bore Arthur's name, alongside those of another 41 men from the town.

In 1962, the Memorial was moved, to the Oatley Gardens where a substantial brick wing was added. Following deterioration of the memorial and the discovery that some names from later conflicts had been omitted, the whole area was redesigned with scope for additional names to be added, including those who died in the Vietnam war.

By 2009 the rather utilitarian part of the structure was looking somewhat worse for wear and the corporate bricks were replaced with elegant black marble and tiles contrasting with a rendered finish on the plinths. Through all these variations, the central focus remained on the original rough hewn monument raised to these young men of WW1, many of whom were not long left from Europe but who returned to die on the other side of the world to where they had been building their lives and building the young nation of Australia.

Slightly surprisingly, as early as July 1917, a memorial font to the fallen soldiers of Oatley was erected in the St Pauls Church, Oatley. This appears to have names of those already fallen inscribed on the sandstone body with marble plaques added later, and it is on one of these plaques we find Arthur's name. 100 years after it's dedication, the font was removed to the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, NSW.



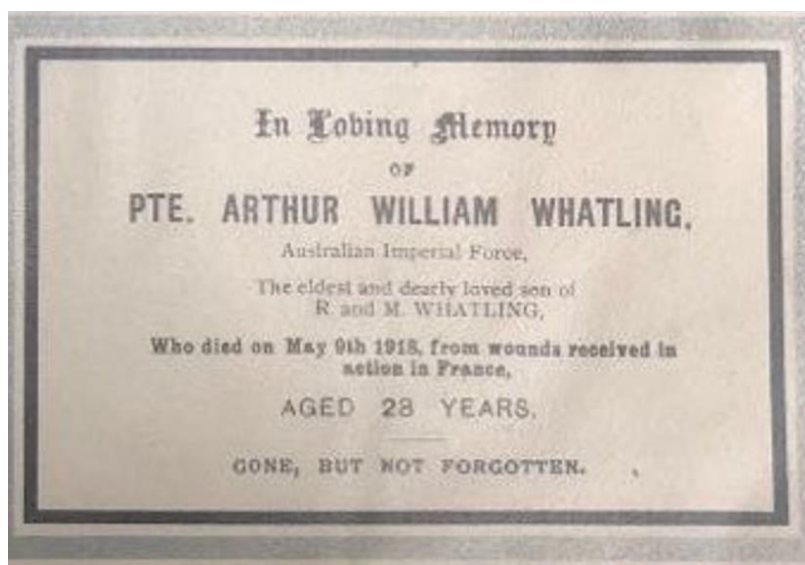


Please see:

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/content/anzac-memorial-hyde-park>

So who was this young man who died in France but whose name is on two memorials in Australia and what are his links to this area?

The Harleston Royal British Legion became aware of Arthur William Whatling when a memorial card appeared in a collection of similar cards that had been rescued from Wortwell Hall. Whatlings had appeared in around Harleston for hundreds of years but, following a mass mid 19th C migration to London the W(h)atlings had died out in the town.



Research revealed Arthur William Whatling was actually a descendent of Whatlings who had been living in around the town of Eye in Suffolk.

His grandfather, James Whatling had been born in Horham and in 1851 was journeyman shoemaker, basically a guy on day rate doing fairly basic stuff. In 1845 he married Mary Stocks from the neighbouring parish of Denham and settled down there to raise his family. By 1851, there were three children, by 1861 4 more had been added including young Robert Whatling, father of our local Hero. Luckily, whilst James' family increased in size, James had been increasing his skill level and was now described as a cordwainer – making good quality shoes for the topend of the local market.

At Denham.

On Friday, the 6th October.

2 Capital Chesnut CART HORSES, Handsome Yearling CART FILLY, and ditto FOAL.
2 Choice Milch Cows
Steer, forward in condition, Handsome Heifer and 2 Weanels
Sow and Pigs;
Carriages, Implements, Part of the HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, Dairy Utensils, &c. of Mrs. RACHEL MOORE, who retires from farming.

Framlingham Weekly News
30 Sep 1871

1871 saw a surprising change of career; James was no longer making shoes but was a live in baliff, still in Denham, for a widowed lady farmer and her brother – both octagenarians! One more son had been added to his family, his wife and four of his sons were also lodging with the elderly

farmers! Not too surprisingly, later on that year Mrs Rachel Moore retired from farming, putting all her stock up for auction. By 1881, James, presumably applying all he had learnt as a baliff, had moved up to Weybread and was there farming 36 acres whilst being assisted by two of his sons; his youngest son, 15 years old Frank, was subsidising his education by being a 'Pupil Teacher'. Essentially a juvenile teaching assistant in the days when one teacher had a whole village worth of children to educate in a single room!

DIED.

HAZARD.—On the 7th inst., at Caltofts, Harleston, William Martin Hazard, aged 55 years.
WHATLING.—Sept. 6th, John Whatling, Weybread, late of Denham, grocer and shoemaker, aged 87 years. Much respected by all who knew him.

It appears that James moved his elderly father up to Weybread to care for him in his final years as evidenced by John Watling's death notice in 1883.

James carried on farming in Weybread, appearing in the 1901 census with his wife, an unmarried son and a 20 year old grand-daughter in his house hold. Since both he and his wife were galloping up to their 80's by then I suspect that grand daughter 20 years old Maude Beales was a deal of help! James died the following year at the grand old age of 79 whilst his wife, Mary, carried on to the even more impressive age of 88, dying in 1914.

In the mean time; what had James' son Robert, father of Arthur, been up to? We had last seen him as a 14 years old lad living in the house of the elderly Moore's where his father was the Baliff; 10 years on, in 1881, and our unmarried 24 years old lad, Robert, was recorded under the name of Whatley, and was working as a footman in Elstree. I am not quite sure for whom as he was lodging with a butler, presumably both working at the same establishment.

Unlike working on the land, being a servant could be quite mobile and in 1887 Robert married Mary Gravell, 6 years his junior, up in Southwell Notts. She too was a domestic servant, from a fairly humble background; this prove to be a good marriage for her.

I say they married in Southwell, this was Mary's home town, but we have no evidence they ever lived there together. Indeed, by the time of the 1891 census, Mary and Robert were living down in Kent, the High St, Erith to be precise. They already had two children, Arthur and his older sister, both born in Erith. Robert was described as a Coffee House Keeper, possibly attached to a pub as both his neice, a Denham born Whatling, and his sister in law, a Southwell born Gravell, who were also in the household were waitresses in an Inn.

The Whatlings got their heads down and worked hard, unlike the Coffee House in Harleston at about the same time, the buisness did well. By 1901, Rober Whatling was describing himself as the Coffee House Proprietor, at the same adres but indicating under his ownership, and they had a live-in general servant to help with running the household including 7 children.

I think we can confidently assume that the family moved up to Weybread at the time of old James' death in 1902, Robert's youngest son, Herbert, was born in Weybread in 1904 and, too young to serve in WW1, went on to become a special constable during the second world war.

By 1911, Robert had taken on his father's farm, Hill Farm, up in Weybread as well as taking on his, by then, very elderly, widowed mother. His oldest son, Arthur, then 21, was already describing himself as a farmer and probably planning the new life in Australia where he arrived either in 1911 or 1912, only to return at his country's time of need, two years later.

It is difficult to imagine what Arthur endured in the 3 ½ years of service he survived before he finally perished from wounds received in action. He had already been injured twice, once in 1915 and once in 1916. Perhaps one of these wounds got him some time back in blightly or at the very least a break from the war in the relative safety and comfort of one of the hospitals attached to a base camp. As part of the 2nd Australians he almost certainly served in the disasterous Gallipoli Campaign before fighting in the Somme and Ypres. Did he get leave from France that enabled him to visit his family back in the Waveney Valley? It is highly likely that he received the wounds that killed him during the successful resistance against the German's Spring offensive in the year of 1918. The Brass Memorial plaque in St Andrews Church that bears his name and of the others that fell or served in WW1 reveals four of his brothers, (Robert) John, Percy, Leslie and (Gerald) Frank also served in the same conflict; this must have been a time of constant worry for their parents.

Robert Whatling lived on until his mid 70's and, although when he died the country was deep in an economic and agricultural depression, at least he was unaware that another war was looming over the horizon in which one of his younger sons, (Gerald) Frank was to serve in the Navy as revealed when Robert's widow died 12 years later

Diss Express Norfolk, England
13 Mar 1931

WEYBREAD.

THE LATE MR. R. WHATLING.

The funeral of the late Mr. R. Whatling, of Hill Farm, Weybread, who died on Tuesday week, took place at Weybread Churchyard on Saturday. There was a large attendance at the service, which was conducted by the Rev. F. S. Sansom and as the congregation was assembling, the organist, Mr. Rush, played "Blessed are the Departed" (Spohr), "Lift Thine Eyes" (Mendelssohn), "He, Watching over Israel" (Mendelssohn) and the "Funeral March" (Beethoven).

WEYBREAD

FUNERAL

The funeral took place at St. Andrews Church, Weybread, on Monday, of Mrs. Mary Whatling (aged 81 years), of Hill Farm, Weybread, widow of Mr. Robert Whatling, a former well-known local farmer.

The Vicar (Rev. F. Richardson) officiated and Mr. W. C. Eglinton (Harleston) at the organ rendered "Blessed are the departed" (Spohr) as the mourners assembled. The hymns sung were "Saviour again to Thy dear Name" and "Abide with me." As the cortege left the church, "The Dead March" in "Saul" was played.

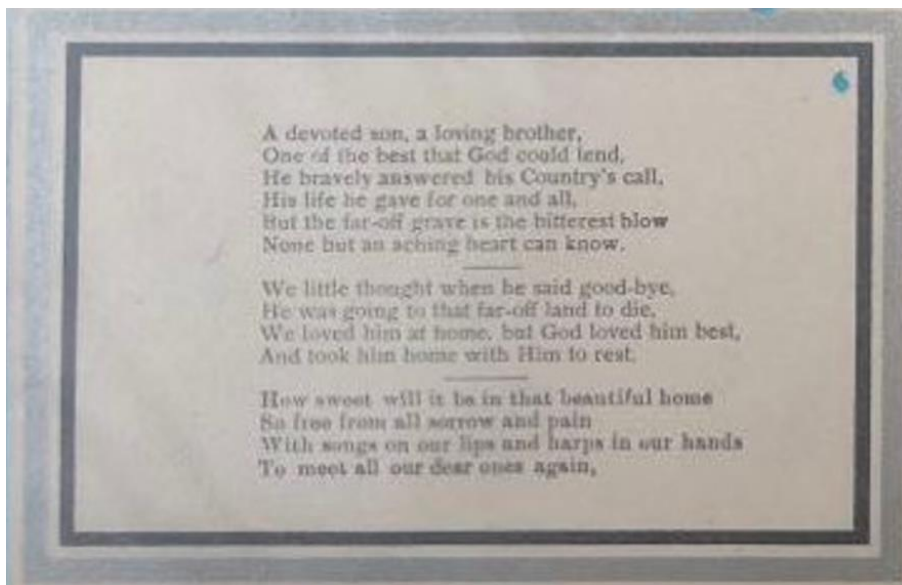
The chief mourners were: Messrs John Whatling, Percy Whatling, Leslie Whatling and Herbert Whatling (sons), Mrs. Bayles and Mrs. Tebbutt (daughters), Mr. H. Tebbutt (son-in-law) and Mrs. L. Whatling (daughter-in-law).

Mr. Frank Whatling, R.N. (son), Chief Petty Officer Cecil Bayles, R.N. (son-in-law) and Mrs. W. Emery (niece) were unable to

Diss Express Norfolk, England
29 Oct 1943

Arthur William Whatling appears on not only the Memorial Plaque in Weybread, the Memorial on the other side of the World in Oatley Australia, and in the main NSW ANZAC Memorial Site but also at St John's Church, Erith (his place of baptism?) and certainly in his town of birth, in addition to the Memorial in Ebbingham Cemetary, one of at least 4 Australian troops who died on that day. Although he appears on these five memorials, it was only the re-appearance of a memorial card, slightly battered but not as worse for wear as others in the same group, that prompted this investigation into a lad with roots near Eye, born and partly raised in Kent, who spent a large part of his teens in Weybread before heading to Australia.

Had it not been for the preservation of this particular set of cards, similar ones of which must have been such a common feature of village churches and local churches that they became largely discarded, forgotten and lost to our nation, Arthur William Whatling may well have just remained a surname and set of initials rather than emerging as an adventurous lad from a steady going, hardworking family who were also prepared to strike out for pastures new whilst also being ready to care for their elderly relatives when needed.



Not really a Harleston Hero but I am glad the memorial card for Arthur appeared in the collection at Wortwell.