## **WHITTELL, Henry Rawes**

Henry Whittell was born on 9th June 1857, at Bourke-street, Surry Hills, the son of Henry Rawes and Esther Whittell.

His father, Dr. Whittell, M.D., M.R.C.S., London, was a noted surgeon practising in Sydney. In 1847 the estate of Henry Rawes Whittell, of College and also of Bathurst-streets, coal merchant, was declared bankrupt.

He died, aged 60 years, of a heart attack, on 21st February 1865, at his late residence, Bourke-street, Surry Hills. He was buried in the Congregational Burial Ground, Devonshire-street. He was Post Patriarch of the Sons of Temperance, an order established some nine months previously; nearly 100 members of the order attended his funeral.

Esther Whittell (born 1817, died 1899), was the daughter of James Wilshire and wife Hester (nee Pitt).**1**

As a young man he served his apprenticeship at sea under sail, took out his master’s certificate, and did a lot of trading in the eastern seas and the Pacific.**2**

On October 1884, at St. John’s Church, Parramatta, Henry Rawes, youngest son of the late Henry Rawes Whittell, M.D., M.R.C.S., London, of Chester, England, was married to Amy [Amelia Annie], youngest daughter of the late James Menzies, of Bristol, England.**3**

In 1886, a son, Harry R. M. Whittell, was born in the district of Ashfield, and in 1887 a daughter, Dorothy V. Whittell, was born in the district of Burwood.**4**

In 1889 the family moved to Beecroft as Esther had acquired land there from her father.

An advertisement In January 1891 states that at a meeting held at Mrs. Hull’s residence, Beecroft, it was resolved that a PROGRESS ASSOCIATION be established, to be known as the Beecroft Progress Association, and that a public meeting would be called to take place at Mrs. Hill’s residence. H. Rawes Whittell was designated as Hon. Secretary.**5**

In July 1891 Mr. Whittell, civil servant, employed in the Mines Department, was declared a bankrupt. This was, no doubt, the result of a court case whereby Rock and Co., sued H. R. Whittell, of Pennant Hills, for £46, for tiles supplied to the defendant, and for fixing them on a house at Beecroft. The defence was that the goods were supplied to John Fox, the contractor for the work. Various court cases ensued.**6**

In August 1891 Henry Whittell was one of three vice-presidents for the Pennant Hills Cricket Club, and in October is mentioned as a leading member of the Horticultural Society.**7**

In January 1892 Henry is re-elected as hon. secretary of the Beecroft Progress Association, although the position was taken over by Mr. Nicholle for 1893 and 1894. He still maintained an interest in local affairs although not an office-bearer or committee member of the association.**8**

In 1893 and 1894 Henry was secretary of the National Horticultural and Pomological [fruit-growing] Society.**9**

In 1896 he was secretary of the Bee-keepers’ Association. Also in June that year, as Government Assessor, he started his work of valuing the town of Richmond. And he was also on the Citizens’ Committee for the Reception of the Co-operative English and Scottish Delegates. The Co-operative Wholesale societies of England and Scotland having deputed three of their leading officials to visit Australia with a view to reporting on the various products of the different colonies, in the hope of being enabled to open business relations on an extensive scale with Australian producers generally.

At the Conference of Beekeepers in 1897 a special vote of thanks for his services to the association was accorded to the hon. Secretary, Mr. H. R. Whittell.**10**

In 1906, the electors of “C” Riding, Hornsby Shire, included T. E. Whittell, M. H. Whittell, H. R. Whittell and Amy Whittell, all of Beecroft.**11**

In 1907 the tender for assessing the rateable properties within the Shire of Hornsby, for “B” Riding, was awarded to the valuer Mr. H. R. Whittell, of Beecroft (of Whittell and Tipping). Those appealing these rates were dealt with the following year.**12**

Also, in 1907, the Northumberland Timbers’ Union had bought the sole right to cut and remove Timber on the 5,000 acres controlled by H. R. Whittle, Esq., at Lisarow and Erina.**13**

On 27th April 1910, at St. John’s Church, Beecroft, Arthur Everett, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. A. Stanton-Cook, of Turramurra, was married to Dorothy Vernon, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. Rawes Whittell, of Beecroft [At home June 8, 9, 16, “Overleigh,” Malton-road, Beecroft.]**14**

In July 1912 Mr. Whittell spoke at the Farmers and Settlers’ Conference, urging the necessity of organisation, in regard to Minority Government.**15**

By 1929 he was taking an interest in golf at the Pennant Hills Golf Club.**16**

In 1930 Mr. H. Rawes Whittell, of Pennant Hills, had succeeded in growing the tung oil tree.

Official trials had been a failure and all hope of producing tung oil in Australia had been abandoned. China was practically the sole supplier of the tung-oil requirements of the world. It was largely used in the manufacture of high-class varnishes and lacquers. Its use during the war in the manufacture of certain water-resistant varnishes needed for aeroplane work.

Of the five species of the tung oil tree that being grown at Pennant Hills was known as *Aleurites Fordii*, believed to be the best oil producer. His plantation includes over 400 trees at various stages of growth, ranging to maturity. He proposes to raise thousands of seedlings from this season’s crop of seed, with the object of providing for an extensive commercial plantation.**17**

In 1933 Mr. Whittell was advising director of the Tung Oil Ltd. Exhibits were displayed at the Goulburn and district show. Its importance as a commercial crop was publicised by H. Rawes Whittell, F.R.E.S., Ex-member of the Council of the Linnean Society of New South Wales; ex-secretary of the Horticultural Society of New South Wales; ex-president of the Metropolitan Division of the Farmers and Settlers’ Association of New South Wales. In that year he produced at his Pennant Hills Grove fruit yielding of 4 tons per acre, worth £144 per acre. Seeds were available – 25 seeds for 10s 6d.**18**

In 1933 his son, Harry Rawes Whittell, Customs officer, was charged with fraud.**19**

In July 1935 his four-room cottage, in Lilla-road, Pennant Hills, caught fire early morning and was burnt to the ground. Mr. Whittell and his wife escaped from the burning building.**20**

On 16th June 1936, Henry Rawes Whittell, died at his residence, Lilla-road, Pennant Hills, in his 81st year. He had resided at Pennant Hills for more than 20 years.

‘Mr. Whittell was a native of Sydney. His father, Dr. Whittell, was one of the noted surgeons practising in Sydney 100 years ago. As a young man he served his apprenticeship at sea under sail, took out his master’s certificate, and did a lot of trading in the eastern seas and the Pacific. It was while he was trading on the China coast that he saw how the Chinese handled the tung oil tree, and the oil in which the paint and varnish manufacturers have since become so interested. For many years Mr. Whittell was a draughtsman in the Mines department. Since 1926 he had lived in retirement. Mrs. Whittell, Mr. H. Whittell, a son, and Mrs. Stanton Cook, survive him.’ Privately interred.**21**

In 1937 the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Main) counselled the utmost precaution on the part of those contemplating planting tung oil trees, as prospects of success were most uncertain.**22**

The story of Mr. Whittell’s dream of a tung industry in Australia, and its establishment, was documented in 1938.**23**

On 31st July 1942, at a private hospital, Neutral Bay, Amelia Annie, wife of Henry Rawes Whittell, died in her 93rd year.**24**

**Bibliography**

1 NSW Government Gazette, 29 Sep 1847; The Sydney Morning Herald, Wed 10 Jun 1857; Empire, Wed 22 Feb 1865; The Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 23 Feb 1865; Empire, Fri 24 Feb 1865; Sunday Times, Sun 11 Nov 1900

2 The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 20 Jun 1936

3 The Sydney Morning Herald, Wed 22 Oct 1884

4 NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages

5 The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 31 Jan 1891

6 The Sydney Morning Herald, Wed 10 Jun 1891; The Cumberland Mercury, Sat 11 Jul 1891

7 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 29 Aug 1891; The Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 23 Oct 1891

8 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 30Jan 1892

9 The Australian Star, Sat 26 May 1894

10 The Australian Star, Fri 29 May 1896; Windsor and Richmond Gazette, Sat 13 Jun 1896; The Worker (Wagga), Sat 18 Jul 1896; The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser, Sat 3 Jul 1897

11 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 27 Oct 1906

12 The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 16 Mar 1907; The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 29 Feb 1908

13 The Gosford Times and Wyong District Advocate, Fri 2 Aug 1907

14 The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 4 Jun 1910

15 The Sydney Morning Herald, Tue 16 Jul 1912

16 The Sydney Morning Herald, Tue 8 Oct 1929

17 The Farmer and Settler (Sydney), Sat 21 Dec 1929; The Farmer and Settler, Sat 7 Jun 1930

18 Goulburn Evening Penny Post, Tue 28 Mar 1933; The Farmer and Settler, Thu 1 Jun 1933; The Farmer and Settler, Thu 6 Jul 1933

19 National Advocate (Bathurst), Thu 18 May 1933

20 The Sydney Morning Herald, Tue 30 Jul 1935

21 The Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 19 Jun 1936; The Sydney Morning Herald, Sat 20 Jun 1936;

22 The Farmer and Settler, Thu 21 Jan 1937; The Farmer and Settler, Thu 4 Mar 1937

23 The Farmer and Settler, Thu 6 Oct 1938

24 The Sydney Morning Herald, Fri 14 Aug 1942

**NOTE**: Additional information contained within Beecroft Cheltenham History Group website and book ‘Beecroft and Cheltenham, the Shaping of a Sydney Community to 1914’.

**HENRY RAWES WHITTELL PAPERS 1801 to 1924 – State Library of NSW**

**Call Nos. A2782 & A2783**

Scope and contents of each on State Library website.

**Extracts**:

* British Mercantile Marine Board of Trade Certificate of Competency for foreign-going ships as 2nd Mate.

Then government land surveying and exploration in Central Australia, changing to mineral prospecting and mining (as owner) [for 3 ½ years]

* Founder of and belonged to Naval Artillery Volunteers of N.S.W.
* 40 years as draftsman (1916).
* Australian – 4th generation. Australasian Pioneer Club (1910) – ancestry back to 1792 with James Wilshire, Commissioner-General of N.S.W. Connection to Lord Nelson.
* Hobby: Mechanical Inventions.
* Board of Agriculture – invention 1907 – Cultivation and Sterilization Machine for crops and soil. Worked by heating of ground to eliminate harmful bacteria.

Worked for years on this and spent about £6000.

* At 59 weighed 12 stone 8lbs. Could lift over 300 pounds weight and 100 pounds weight in each hand.

Went to UK in late 1915, with references, to Ministry of Munitions.

Initial Address: Museum House, 69 Torrington Square, London, WC

Later Address (1917) – Castlewood, Shooters Hill, London

Inventions for Warfare:

* Subterranean Military Torpedo for Trench Warfare. Used for surface work and trench work. Blueprint of Whittell Military Trench Torpedo (Patented). Blueprint of steering gear to contain high explosives or gas. Diagram showing application.
* Wire Cutter. Blueprint for cutting barbed wire entanglements.
* Shell transporting device (1916). A trial was conducted late 1916. Rejected with list of stated shortcomings - countered by Whittell.

Inventions not taken up. Letter May 1916 from Vickers Ltd., Aviation Dept., re rejection. Various other correspondence.

Spent most of 1916 arguing with bureaucracy.

Whittell asked for all his plans & specifications to be returned to him but did not receive them. Mislaid by Ministry of Munitions who reported them stolen, later pirated (copied without permission) by a person named as ‘Le Mocele’ (or similar) who received a knighthood and a profitable outcome for others but nothing for Whittell.

[Letter 24th May 1916 regarding Chorley blocks???]

**Further inventions**:

* 1915 -Rotary Excavator Plant for railway cuttings, canals, road works etc. (specs., etc)
* 1922 – Whittell’s Australian Fire Proof Fence Ltd., 2 O’Connell Street, Sydney (specs., etc.)
* 1923 – Whittell’s Patent Mouse and White Ant Proof Farm Silo & Building Piers (specs., etc.)

**Photos**:

* Loading Machine for coal, taken on trial
* Loading Machine for wheat, taken in backyard of Whittell’s property, Pennant Hills (3 photos + newspaper article photo)
* 1st Ministry under Responsible Government in N.S.W. 1856 – T. Holt, W. M. Manning, S. A. Donaldson, J. B. Darvall, G. O. Nicholls
* Dorothy Vernon Stanton-Cook, nee Whittell (5th gen.)
* 1st Government Battery starting for Mount Ida from Victoria Desert, W.A. 1898
* Rotary Excavator – private trial (2 photos) 1915
* Gravestone of H. R. Whittell M.D. (senior), died 1865, and wife Esther, at Waverley Cemetery, with H. R. Whittell junior seated nearby (Wilshire grave alongside)

**Newspaper and Magazine clippings**:

* Daily Telegraph, 8 Nov 1900 “An Old Australian Family”
* The British-Australasian, 22 June & 21 July 1916
* Sydney Mail, 28 Nov 1917 “Descendants of an Australian Pioneer” [James Wilshire]
* The Lone Hand, 1 Dec 1917
* Sydney Mail, “History of Fencing”
* The Land, 12 May 1922 “A New Australia”

**Brochures & Clippings**:

* Prospectus for Steel Preservatives & Plantations Ltd., 1 York Street, Sydney
* Tung Oil
* Family History – Wilshire, Matcham, Whittell
* Various others