

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY(New Zealand)
A Society within the Methodist Church of New Zealand

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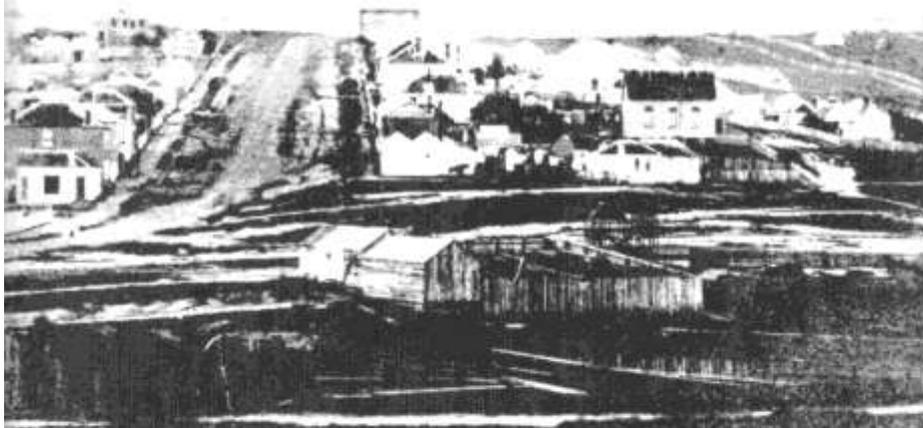
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FOREWORD

In the Journal we relate the present to the past and the future. Journal 2001 continues that function. We are constantly dependent on the Archives for reliable information, both historical and up-to-the-minute, and we note with extreme regret that Verna Mossong has been obliged by ill health to retire from the position of Head Archivist in Auckland; we also celebrate the lives of two outstanding personalities who have died.

Little-known facts about the first Methodist pioneers in this country, the Primitive Methodists, have been diligently researched by Ivan Whyte to produce our leading article.

Preliminary publicity for the Solomon Islands Mission Centenary next year is included in order to stir awareness of the occasion, and understanding of the present situation in the now self governing indigenous church in Melanesia.

There is more about the present use of old churches as private residences, from Marcia Baker, supported by photographs taken by Dave Roberts and Doug Burt.

Allan Davidson has supplied a guide for the production and presentation of a local church history.

We acknowledge that some of what we publish in good faith "ain't necessarily so" and are grateful to all who alert us to the true facts. Finally, to all who have contributed articles, researched information or assisted in various ways, many thanks.

Bernie Le Heron

METHODIST MISSION NORTHERN THE SESQUICENTENNIAL

by Ivan Whyte

It may be possible to trace the history right back to 1851 but it is drawing a long bow. Certainly it was very important to mark the opening of the first church on the site. It was very right and proper to mark the exact day even though the original was on a Sunday and 150 years later it was a Friday and a working day. The story of the church that preceded today's Mission needs to be retold within the Church.

The story begins with the Primitive Methodist Mission to New Zealand, and the first missionary Rev. Robert Ward in New Plymouth in 1844.¹ Ward received a letter in July 1846 from Mr Harris, a cabinetmaker in Auckland who was formerly a member of a Primitive Church in London. Ward wrote to the Mission Committee in England 26 July 1846:

"He informs me that there are many people in and around Auckland, but there is little religion. He begs that a Primitive Methodist missionary be sent there, promising that he will befriend him as far as he is able. I think Auckland would be a suitable missionary station; for as it is the seat of Government, it is more likely that peace will be maintained there than in other settlements. Also some persons who were members have gone thither, and many persons who have been bearers amongst us, are likely soon to go."

There was a prolonged delay before Ward was able to follow up the invitation from Auckland. The Committee in England thought Rev. H Green recently sent from England should go to Auckland but meanwhile he had been committed to Wellington. Ward asked for a third missionary, for Auckland. Stationing would be decided in England. He investigated the conditions by going to Auckland himself, but not until January 1849. Presumably he kept Auckland informed.

He began his venture with a prayer meeting on 11 Jan, 1849: "We laid the matter before the Lord." Four days later he sailed in the schooner *Ellen*. Six days later they were entering the Manukau Heads. They grounded on a sandbank or the bar "and were in imminent danger. The women were praying, the children were crying. The sea was washing over the deck. Such a scene I never before witnessed." They got free ten minutes later and made deep water safely.

¹ Refer to *Fifty Years of Primitive Methodism in New Zealand*; J Guy and N S Potter 1893. The quotations are mainly from that source. They help to establish a sense of period. Other sources are *-In the Midst of the City*: Wesley Parker 1971 which is a retelling from the above. Newspapers from Auckland Public Library microfilm and Auckland Museum Library.

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Ward went ashore at Muddy Creek (now Laingholm-Parau area) and the following day preached twice to the sawyers there. The next day they made Onehunga at 7 p.m. and he walked to Auckland from there with a friend, at whose house he slept.

The next day he made his contact: "I called to see Mr Harris, and was received in true Primitive Methodist style." In the evening he met several people who had been Primitive members in England, and wanted their own Primitive Society in Auckland, and they agreed to form one the following Sunday. Ward planned to hold an open-air service then too. That Sunday's Journal entry January 28, 1849, was: "I opened my Mission in Auckland". They held a prayer meeting early, then he preached at the same house, and formed a Society, with a class of nine. In the afternoon he preached in the open-air, "to about two hundred attentive hearers, besides many stragglers, many at the windows, etc". He asked for, and got an immediate offer of, a house to hold a prayer meeting, and to preach in. There were subsequent prayer meetings and services in cottages, class meetings and a Society meeting. They talked about a church but could not see a "way clear to build".



Rev. Robert Ward 1816 - 1876
Mission in a Secular City, Donald Phillipps,
Methodist Mission Northern, 2001.

Two important references are to Sunday evening service in a cottage "at the outskirts of the town", and at "Mechanics Hill, a little distance from the town, and where most of the people are without the desire of godliness".

Mr Whitmore was chosen by the members as leader and secretary of the Society and Mr Harris as assistant leader and treasurer.

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The pattern was very Primitive in style: prayer meetings, cottage church, visiting, evangelising, open-air preaching. Organisation was akin to the Wesleyan: class meeting, Society meeting, leader, secretary, treasurer and all "decently and in order". In Ward's terminology this was a Mission! The word came to have a second meaning over the years.

A first attempt to return home failed for contrary winds so he returned from Onehunga, hired a room for services, "got seats free of cost and timber given. Arranged for a church fund. Made a Plan and appointed prayer leaders, class leaders, etc... Arranged for a Sunday School".

Exactly a month after arrival in Auckland he was on his way out, crossing the Manukau bar.

The journey home, including the walk from Kawhia to New Plymouth is one of the missionary epics.

A summary of the first visit listed names of seven members including James Harris's wife, and gave the location of the Sunday School as Mrs Williams's house in Wellesley Street.

He applied again for a third missionary and three months after his homecoming he was off on the Ellen again to Auckland. This time the journey was smoother-a four-day sail followed by the long walk from Onehunga to Auckland.

This second visit was longer-7 June to 28 August, nearly three months. Ward visited members and others, and had a busy round of prayer meetings, services, a "love feast" with testimonies, Sunday School, class meetings, issuing of quarterly tickets, and a visit to pensioners and families (fencibles) newly arrived from England and "stowed together in a large building" in Epsom.

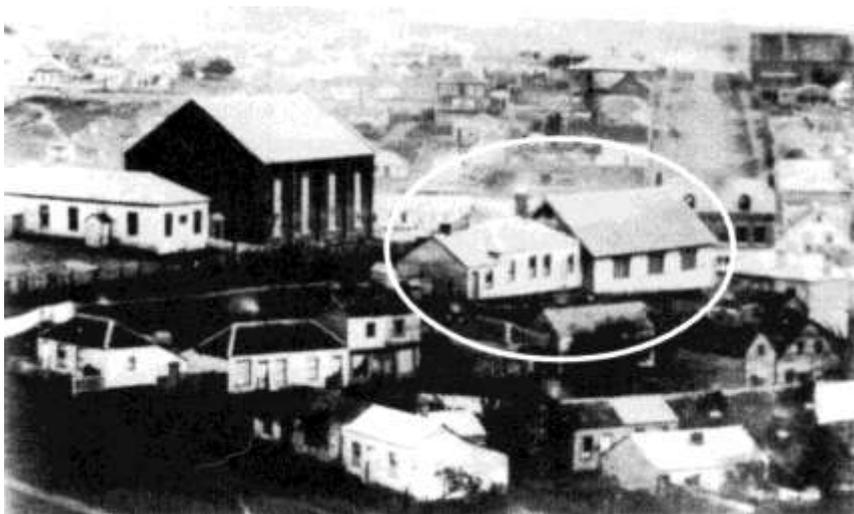
The use of the house for services and Sunday School was abruptly cancelled but he was offered, free of cost, a building which had been used as a schoolroom. The owner was a Scotsman, Mr Comrie, who attended Ward's Sunday services there twice the first Sunday. It was "amid a populous neighbourhood". Ward also had the use of the Mechanics Institute, adjoining the Wesleyan High Street Chapel, for services. Relations with the Wesleyans were good; the two groups were complementary. This second visit consolidated his church.

This time the return home was quicker - a strong fair breeze turning soon to a gale. But after a fast run to New Plymouth, it was too rough to land, so they ran into the Waitara. The walk home this time much shorter than after the previous Auckland visit.

He had been away "about thirteen weeks". He wrote: "The sea affects me much" and was off work as a result, unable to preach for six days.

Instructions from England directed Rev. Long from Australia to New Plymouth and Rev. Ward to Auckland. Meanwhile the Auckland Society "held regular Sabbath

services, which were conducted by Messrs Monk, White, and J Whitmore". No detail survives, but they were the foundation of that church.



Auckland Mechanics' Institute {ringed} and Wesleyan Chapel (centre left).
From Wynne Colgan. *The Governor's Gift - The Auckland Public Library 1880-1980.*
Auckland Public Library.

Ward left New Plymouth on 11 May 1850, to take up his appointment to Auckland. His Journal entry was: "My dear family and myself left New Plymouth, where we have spent nearly five years and nine months". He chartered the William and James cutter for 20 pounds. It was "a comparatively long and rough passage" of five and a half days, landing at Onehunga, 18 May. It had taken six months reasons unspecified, to give effect to the transfer. He noted that winter was not the best time to commence a Mission.

Ward was nurturing the church for ten months before the building was up and opened. The church was based on cottages and a schoolroom on loan, and a Sunday School was functioning at some stage in Wellesley Street. On arrival in Auckland his little Society received him gladly, he reported. He preached twice in the schoolroom on his first Sunday and also addressed the Sunday School children. A fortnight later he records two services in the schoolroom, and "I formed a Sunday School and held a preaching service in our house at Windsor Terrace". There is no clear record now of that Windsor Terrace, but it is likely to have been at Mechanics Bay Hill, or what now is lower Parnell. The oldest map² had a Windsor Lane It was part of the present York

² Maps at Special Collections Auckland Public Library and at Auckland Museum Library - none as early as 1851. Details of name change are missing.

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Street at lower Pamell Rise, and parallel to Augustus Terrace. The schoolroom location is not known but could well have been in that area, "a populous neighbourhood".

Three weeks later he "gave out cards to the school children with which to collect for our church". That is not a reference to the building as that had not yet been decided on. In fact collection by Sunday School teachers in England had been the foundation of the Mission to Australasia. He was simply building on a successful method.

That same day, Mr Comrie who was lending the school room and had "helped in the singing department", told Ward that if the Primitives were about to build a church he would give "something handsome either in money or timber". Ward understood Mr Comrie to have been formerly a Presbyterian minister. He certainly was giving practical support to another denomination.

The first meeting about a building was convened 13 July 1850 "at MrProbert's", where it was decided to hold a public meeting. Ward had anticipated by gaining consent from the Wesleyans to use their schoolroom, and from Mr James Rout to act as chairman. The public meeting gave the required support and appointed four trustees.³ On 9 September the first trustees meeting made arrangements for a plan and specifications of a church building. From a later journal entry, the architect and builder is named as Mr Robertson, who died less than two months after the building was opened.⁴

The Journal entry for New Year's day included a prayer that " 1851 would witness the building of the temple of the Lord with living stones, hewn out of nature's rough quarry".

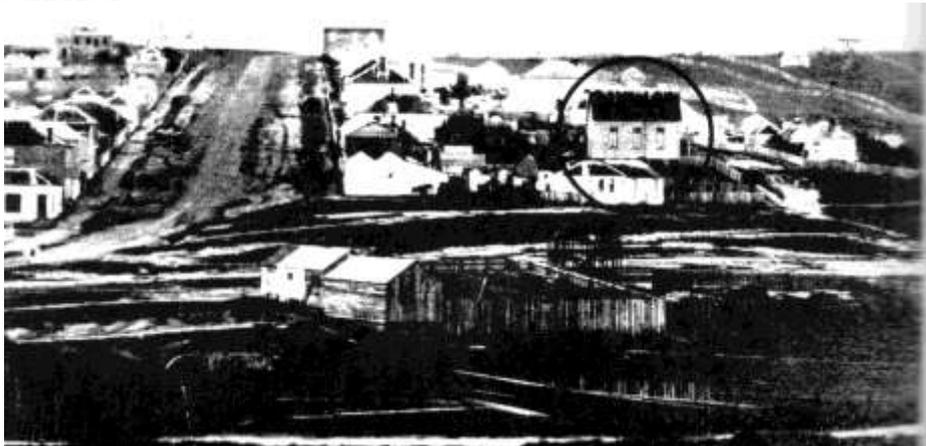
The building was opened on 16 March 1851. "This will be remembered as the day on which the first Primitive Methodist Church in Auckland was opened".

There was a short prayer meeting at 7 a.m. and at 11 the Rev. T Buddle (Wesleyan) preached the first sermon within its walls". At 2.30 p.m. Rev. A. Macdonald (Independent) preached, then Ward himself at 6.30. "The congregation in the morning was good, afternoon and evening overwhelming, aisles filled. Some could not get in. The collections were liberal...." The Presbyterian minister. Rev. Inglis, preached on the Tuesday.

Ward saw the church itself as a Mission, as shown in two journal entries before and after the church opening.

³ The meeting was reported in *The New Zealander* 31 August 1850 [p.3(2)]. The later opening of 16 March, 1851 was not reported. The only record is in Guy and Potter.

⁴ Arrived from Sydney 1846 with family. Important early architect: 1847 Catholic Chapel, 1847 New Wesleyan Chapel, 1848 Wesleyan Native Institution (Three Kings), 1848 Presbyterian Church.



First Primitive Methodist Church in Auckland, 1851 (circled) taken 1857.
Queen Street is in centre running parallel to bottom. Auckland Public Library.

On 11 July, 1850 he and a friend distributed tracts among the soldiers, eight later attending the evening service.

A year later, 15 July 1851, he "met with about a dozen sailors belonging to HMS Fly, invited them to church gave them some tracts and advice. Was pleased to see nearly all the sailors at church". The first marriage recorded in his register was that of a soldier from the barracks.

The opening day in 1851 took place in a town that was itself very primitive in the secular sense of the word. The church was, by modern standards, a wooden hall in a side street, with a scatter of wooden shops and timber nearby. The Town Hall was 60 years in the future, the church front on Queen Street 113 years away. By the standards of today with the spectacle of the sesquicentennial service within the Aotea Chapel, robed presbyters and choir, and the stained glass window overlooking the gallery and ground floor church, those beginners were the deserving poor.

Lay People

It is not easy to trace the founders in detail. Some who made a mark in their day and were mentioned by name left almost no other record. We have to make some calculated guesses.

Of the original four trustees, Probert and one other were Wesleyans.⁵ The other was probably Canty. There was a generous subscription by Canty and Co. to the Wesleyan

⁵ *The Saga of the Probert Trust*, E W Hames Wesley Historical Society No.40 1982 p.2.
Probert obituary NZ Herald 11 August 1890 p.9(7). *Ostentation Versus Justice, Observer and Freelance* 11 June, 1892, p.4 an attack on the Church. *An Exemplary Wesleyan*, Wesley Historical Society Publication #74 – 2001

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Chapel at High Street in 1844, in a published list. That points to the likely man. Harris was Primitive and Keven must have been the other. There was more than one Keven but it looks like Thomas Keven who had a house in Karangahape Road, the name remembered in a different form in St Kevin's Arcade. Two of the original preachers Whitmore and Monk left no trace, and it is not apparent which of several Whites was preaching for the Primitives. Oddly the Wesleyan Probert has an important indirect link with the present site, though he was never a Primitive. He bequeathed a substantial sum and properties to the Wesleyan Church in 1890. The Probert Trust has been the benefactor for theological education. The properties took some time to become valuable but location in Queen Street and Great North Road/Newton Road corner could not fail, given time. Probert died 25 July 1890 but it took until 1925 for the Probert Trust to erect a four-storey Probert Building on the Queen Street/Airedale Street corner. It housed the Church Offices on the top floor. In the complete rebuilding the prime site became the Aotea Chapel. Of course the denominations had merged in 1913. Remember Probert too for hosting the preliminary meeting at his house.

It is not certain where Probert's house was originally but as the Church site was secured it may well have been adjacent. Probert was an early settler. He arrived at the Bay of Islands with Hobson's party in 1840 and would have met Harris there. He was a skilled metal worker and gunsmith. He married Miss Froude, an attendant to Mrs Hobson, on 31 May 1842 and the Governor gave a section as a wedding gift.⁶ Hames thought the gifted section more likely to be a High Street one but the Queen Street one would have been surveyed and developed by 1851 and unavailable to the Primitives.

Of the site itself that Governor Grey gifted the Primitives there was a reminiscence by Grey himself in 1888 at an anniversary gathering. He told of his experience in South Australia as Governor when "a few stragglers" presented themselves to him in Adelaide. He was impressed by their demeanour and set out to help them. In South Australia there was tension over attempts to set up an established Church as in England, and endowments were regarded with suspicion. New Zealand Primitives were part of that Australasian Mission and Ward would have had similar feelings. But Grey had powers to help the various denominations serving the community. The Wesleyans had benefited earlier. The Primitives' site was away from the centre but expansion was obviously going to change that. Grey's gift was in the long run a very valuable one in every sense.

Mr Comrie has been overlooked. When Ward first needed a place for prayer meetings and services he got a prompt offer from Comrie. Comrie was a Presbyterian who had been a minister of the established Church of Scotland in New South Wales. He conducted the first Presbyterian service in Auckland using the old Supreme Court-House in Queen Street. As he was not an official minister here. Ward recorded him as

***Observer and Freelance* 2 July, 1892 p.4. a reply by the Probert Trustees, T Buddle, Frank Phillipps, Robert Froude.**

⁶ Material drawn from Hames.

Mr Comrie but knew his background. The Primitives could not have been better served.⁷

The outstanding founder was James Harris who was completely overlooked in the sesquicentennial services. Rev. Potter of the Guy and Potter history was surely the one to record the Auckland section.⁸ He included more detail of this one man than any other and that is the main record existing now. The newspaper obituary, important though it is, contained errors, which Potter must have corrected. James Harris arrived at the Bay of Islands in 1838, well before the Treaty of Waitangi.⁹ He was born in 1791, so he was 47 years of age, comparatively old, when he joined the Anglican Mission, employed as a mission carpenter and residing "at the Bay of Islands". He would surely have become familiar with the stations at Paihia, Kerikeri, and Waimate North in his work as carpenter. The Wesleyans' style of service was based on the Anglican, particularly in Wesley's lifetime, but this mission carpenter was a Primitive Methodist from London. He had a missionary call no doubt, serving where he could.



James Harris – From Methodist Mission Northern Archives

REMOVED,

J. HARRIS, Cabinet-maker, Upholsterer, and Builder,—to No. 3., Queen-street, near the Market,—begs to inform the Public that his Material and Workmanship will be first-rate, and prices moderate for cash.

⁷ Comrie, 5-9-1846, moved a resolution to form the NZ Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was elected co-secretary with T Buddle. [Obituary, *NZ Weekly News* 4 October 1884, p. 15 (4)], also in the history of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. There was a family of Comries. The Comrie relative at Pukekohe was involved in the defence of the Pukekohe East Church in 1863, and is referred to in Cowan.

⁸ William Smith Potter was a Sunday School scholar at Edwardes Street (later Alexandra Street, then Airedale Street) from 1859, "converted" in Mr Hanson's Bible Class, was teacher, secretary and local preacher, then called to ministry, which was outstanding. He was minister at Alexandra Street Church where he grew up.

⁹ Guy and Potter p. 162. A genealogical summary stated a period of 40 years in New Zealand. If correct that would mean 1836 instead of 1838. The newspaper obituary implied 1856, obviously incorrect. The insert in the Auckland Methodist Archives copy of the book gives the information - born at London, and age married.

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He married Mary Wilson when he was 40, and was converted by the Primitives at 43. Presumably his wife was like-minded, and presumably the church he joined was the one that converted him, Coopers Gardens in London. Unfortunately Mary does not figure in the record except for the one reference to Mr and Mrs Harris - proof that she accompanied him and was part of the Auckland Primitive church. There is no information about his time with the Anglican Mission, but when he did get to Auckland, whenever that was, he looked for Primitive Methodists and wrote to Ward in 1846.

It might be thought he left the Bay of Islands either when there was a big influx after the sacking of Kororareka, or when the Anglicans moved their focus to St John's at Meadowbank, and had a mission at Mission Bay. But there is a strong probability that Harris, a cabinetmaker, is the J Harris, cabinet-maker etc. who advertised 17 August 1844 that he was removing to No. 3 Queen Street. That means he was already in business in Auckland, and moving to a better location. In fact 3 Queen Street was a prime site. Auckland was founded 18 September 1840, so he arrived sometime between 1841 and 1844. He was indeed one of the early settlers.

He made Ward very welcome at their first meeting in 1849, and became assistant leader, one of the original trustees, and on other committees detailed in the history of Auckland Primitive Methodism. His original letter to Ward was not from just an excess of "enthusiasm". At 55 he could make a realistic assessment. He must have had a clear idea of how many Primitives and like-minded people were about, and he knew the population was increasing rapidly. As a Primitive he was, too, closer to the working people and knew that the hardship of the times offered plenty of scope for his denomination.

There is a record of Harris and a partner owning land in the Waitemata, presumably the upper harbour. Land speculation was a common way then to improve one's fortunes. That and his trade developed into a business enabling him to achieve "a competency", that is a sufficient income in his retirement.

He was a supporter of the Sunday School: the scholars attended his funeral.¹⁰ He made two substantial bequests of 100 pounds, one to the Edwardes Street Church and the other to the Sunday School.¹¹ He had become Father Harris to the church. When he died at 86 the church building was 25 years old, and his original request 30 years in the past.

¹⁰ Newspaper obituary.

¹¹ **The legacies were received when Potter was the minister. The library legacy was "permanently invested as a library fund to perpetuate the memory of the worthy donor". David Goldie was long-term superintendent of the Sunday School which was strong on library long before any public schools could meet the need. Hundreds of the books were given to Waterview Methodist Church. The writer had his first access to books there - Avondale Primary School was bookless.**

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There *is* a clear statement of who the lay leaders were at the beginning even though detail is lacking except for the outline of the life of the father of the church.

As the Mission commemorates its past, some highlights of the early years may help to put some flesh on the bones. Shortly after the opening, Ward recorded some statistics:

9 June 1851: Membership 20

Sabbath Schools 64

Teachers (i.e. Sunday School) 7

Total income for quarter 3 pounds 8 shillings 8 pence (= \$6.87)

The money of course has to be related to the 1851 value.

A week before the 9 June quarterly meeting Ward "rode fifteen miles to Howick ... preached to a good number and formed a Society of eight members".

A day school of thirty was established with Ward as the teacher it is believed, but because of pressure of work it was discontinued and also country preaching by him given up. In March 1853 a parsonage adjoining the Church was bought for 150 pounds¹² and that move alone must have freed up travel time from Parnell.

The Australian gold rush drew many to emigrate there, and there was a severe slump in Auckland at the same time. In 1854 the September quarterly meeting sought an increase in salary for the minister: "at one time the flour bill was more than the whole of the quarter's salary". Times were hard. Ward had had to sell his horse and "frequent and lengthy journeys on foot" to preaching appointments took a toll of his health. A new horse was purchased: horse and saddle cost 35 pounds. When Ward and his wife looked back that period was the most trying of their life.

The sesquicentennial acknowledged Ward, as was proper. A Maori woman presbyter. Rev. Diana Tana, officiated and the Maori Queen graciously attended. What was forgotten over the years was that Ward began a mission to the Maoris near New Plymouth early on. He learned the language and preached. He established the first day school for native children in New Plymouth. He developed "a plan of services for eleven pah, all within ten miles of his home". His journeys were on foot. "He frequently slept on the bare ground, wrapped in his blanket or cloak, which he carried with him and was not infrequently without food. After four months of patient and self-denying effort, Mr Ward came to the conclusion that it was impracticable to carry on the work of a double mission, and the Maori work was relinquished."¹³ The Maori people at Methodist Mission Northern should warm to such a man.

There is a year of celebration by and for Mission Northern. There is still plenty of time to add to prayers of thanksgiving the church that thrived until the union of 1913. It

¹² **Guy and Potter p. 144. In 1871 a further parsonage in Wakefield Street was purchased, p. 159.**

¹³ **The Maori story is told in Guy and Potter, pp.62-66.
Wesley Historical Society Publication #74 – 2001**

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evangelised, provided the prime site and the buildings and influenced the lives of many important people who went on to become ministers of the church, and lay people who made their mark in church and community. The ministers rightly have been named, even the Wesleyan one who preached at the opening. Well, the lay people too deserve acclaim. They were the church.

Children often have the last word. The newspaper The New Zealander carried an advertisement for the Sunday School Anniversary to be held 29 February 1852. The church's first anniversary would have followed a fortnight later. But the children were holding their third anniversary. When the wind had stopped him from sailing from Onehunga in February 1849 he had returned to Auckland and among other things "arranged for a Sunday School also".

The February dates make a perfect match. The children beat the church hands down.

**PRIMITIVE METHODIST SABBATH
SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY,**

THE Services in connexion with the above Anniversary will be held D.V., on Tomorrow, Sabbath, 29th Feb., 1852.

In the morning at 11 o'clock, the Children will recite suitable pieces, and in the evening at 6 o'clock, a Sermon will be preached by the

REV. WALTER LAWRY.

A Collection will be made at the close of those services on behalf of the funds of the School.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS MISSION

Verna Mossong

The veteran missionary, Rev. George Brown DD (1835-1917) entered the ministry from New Zealand in 1860. He went immediately to Samoa, transferring to New Britain in 1875, pioneering the Methodist Mission in that area, later responsible for opening the Mission in Papua. Brown was addressed in 1898 as "The Great Elder". It was Dr Brown, as General Secretary of Methodist Mission, based in Sydney, Australia, who in 1901 moved the resolution, "That Mission work be immediately begun in the New Georgia group of the Solomon Islands...".



Rev. George Brown DD
From his autobiography.

Rev. George Brown Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer

"... The vessel *Titus*, on which Dr Brown travelled, reached Marovo Lagoon at the south end of New Georgia in July 1901. The chief, Bera, a fine old man of good physique and genial expression, was told of the intention to begin mission work ... Bera was not sympathetic, ... decidedly against any missionaries living with, or near, him. However, there was no active opposition, so the General Secretary reported prospects and recommended that a start be made in April 1902.

Quote summarised from: *Isles of Solomon*, CTJ Luxton, Methodist Foreign Missionary Society of New Zealand 1956.

The late George Carter in *A Family Affair*, reports George Brown in 1855 ... "off to New Zealand as a passenger and thus able to enjoy the company of fellow passengers,

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Bishop Selwyn and Bishop-to-be John Coleridge Patterson ... these contacts also gave him his first taste of a Pacific language, for he learnt (some) Maori from the Bishop. He had a natural gift of language and during the years became fluent in Samoan, Fijian, Duke of York and Kunua (New Britain) as well as a smattering of Maori and Tongan".

George Brown was nephew of Sarah Dixon (Mrs Thomas Buddle), who took the place of her sister, the mother George had never known. In a service conducted by John Whiteley he made a conscious decision of commitment... RB Lyth turned his thoughts to Fiji. Isaac Harding challenged him with ministry. When appointed to Samoa he married Sarah Lydia Wallis, second daughter of James and Mary Ann (Reddich). Lydia was New Zealand born and bred (1838-1923). Years later it was said of her, "she had watchfulness without fear or over confidence, a cheerful spirit and an indomitable will under severe strain"; (p.54 **George G Carter - A Family Affair, Vol. 28 Nos.3 & 4 1973**).

NATHAN SIPISONG

Wartime Adventures in Bougainville and the Solomons

edited and re-presented by Audrey Bruce

The Solomon Islands and the island of Bougainville have strong connections to people who live and have lived in Waiuku. The Rev. Vincent LeC Binet worked as a missionary on the island of Choisuel from 1917 to 1932, and was minister here at Wesley Church 1937-1939, Rev. Don Alley (father of Rev. David Alley) was on Bougainville from 1936-1942 when he was captured by the Japanese. Rev. Max and Mrs Audrey Bruce were there from 1968-1976. (Audrey was previously in the Solomons from 1957 to 1963.) Max was also a previous minister at Wesley Church, and Audrey still lives here. Mr & Mrs Arthur Pinnok Buckland have had business connections with the Solomons and Bougainville, and up until a few weeks ago, AMA Nynke Haitisma served on Bougainville as a part of the Peace Monitoring Group (PMG), as a teamsite medic based at Buin, a town in the southern part of the island. We also have recent memories of Rev. David Alley's adventurous trip when he took a yacht loaded with medicines from New Zealand to the hospital at Sohano in the Buka Passage. He was given an opportunity to meet people at Teop who remembered his parents, and he and his brother as very small boys.

The island of Bougainville was invaded by the Japanese forces during World War II as part of their advance towards the Solomons and Guadalcanal and from there to the rest of the Pacific which would include Australia and New Zealand. Many heroic stories are told of the Coast Watchers who remained in these islands living in the bush and radioing to the allied forces shipping and troop movements of the Japanese as they advanced from their headquarters at Rabaul in New Britain.

Admiral Halsey acknowledged the great debt owed to the Solomons Coastwatchers, "the intelligence signalled from Bougainville ... saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific".

The Rev. A WE Silvester was stationed at Vella Lavella, and after the Japanese invasion was closely associated with the coastwatching party which was established in October 1942 and aided in the rescue of many airmen who had been shot down.

In June 1943 161 survivors from the cruiser USS Helena, which was sunk in battle, reached the island and Silvester joined with the coastwatchers in collecting the men before they could be caught by the Japanese patrols. He was involved in the organising of the scanty local food supply to help cope with the large influx to the local population. The rescued men were taken off the island by a destroyer a week later. Silvester was later awarded the US Medal of Merit for his services.

Coastwatchers by DOW Hall.

War History Branch, Dept Internal Affairs, Wellington 1951.

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These Coastwatchers were ably assisted in their work by loyal Bougainvillian and Solomon Islanders who stayed with them and helped them in their task. One such person was Nathan Sipisong, a man from the Siwai area in Bougainville who was training to be a teacher and pastor at the Methodist Mission at Munda in the Solomon Islands. This is his story, with Nathan's own words in italics.

I was at Munda in the Solomon Islands when war came to our homeland, yet my home village is Hanong in Siwai. How had I come to be there, you ask? When I was a small boy I went to Lotu (worship service) in the Methodist Church with my family. After a short time at the village school I went away down the coast in Bum. On the Mission Station at Kihili there was a very good school and I wanted to learn more than the village school could teach me. The year was 1936. In 1939 I was promoted to the top class and my teacher was Sister Ada Lee from New Zealand ... I worked hard and sat my examinations and had a good report on my behaviour, and when the time came it was announced that there would be places for 7 students at the pastor/teacher training college at Munda. Two would be from Buka, two from Teop, and three from Siwai. I was one chosen and I was very pleased and excited as we travelled down to Munda just before Christmas.

The year was 1940 when the school year started. War news was listened to each week on the radio by the staff and students, but the battles were being fought on the other side of the world, and the war was between Germany and Britain.

At the end of 1941 the students learned of Japan's entry into the war, then in January 1942 bombs were being dropped on Rabaul in New Britain, which was part of New Guinea just north of Bougainville. Most of the European and Pacific Island people in Bougainville and the Solomons were ordered to go to Australia by whatever means possible, and most of the Solomon Island students went back to their home islands by canoe. The fourteen students from Bougainville were unlucky. They had nowhere to go, for the Japanese were already on their island.

We stayed on the Mission station then three European missionaries came from Choiseul and Vella Lavella. They were Rev. J R Metcalfe, Rev. A W E Silvester and Sister Merle Farland, a nurse. Mr Metcalfe said, "Let us continue our school and college until the Japanese land here". So we continued our school work under the care of Mr Metcalfe for about four months. One evening after work we were washing when we saw four Japanese barges enter Munda Bay Passage. They landed at the Mission headquarters. We saw hundreds of enemy soldiers marching up and down and spoiling all of the buildings. That same night we ran away into the hush.

The three expatriate missionaries and the young men travelled by canoe down the coast and to some of the other islands nearby. There they joined up with the teams of Coastwatchers.

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After a while Simon Donguhoring and I joined the Coastwatchers. We stayed with two white men, one was American and one was from Australia. We hid with a big wireless. Every day that we saw enemy ships, barges and guns we reported to the white men and they sent reports on the wireless to New Hebrides or Guadalcanal. Then the allied planes came over and dropped bombs on enemy positions. We did this until the Americans landed at Munda on New Georgia in August 1943.

After the landing, the previous District Officer of the Western Solomons sent orders to all the villagers on the nearby islands to come to Munda to work with the army as a Labour Battalion. We fourteen Bougainvillean students came too.

Nathan Sipisong had been working in the cemetery contingent for three weeks when a message arrived from the Australian headquarters on Guadalcanal asking the whereabouts of the fourteen young men from Bougainville. If they had survived the Japanese invasion they were to be sent to Guadalcanal by plane the next day. They were to be trained as soldiers and join the American forces to fight the Japanese on their island.

We were told, "Be brave and fight for your island. Save your people. They are in great difficulties. Many have died of hunger in the hush because the Japanese stole their food and spoiled their gardens".

The fourteen, which included Joel Lampo was well as Simon Donguhoring and Nathan Sipisong, flew south to Guadalcanal next morning. It was a frightening experience for none had ever flown before, but after a safe journey they landed and were met by an American military policeman who took them to the Australian Navy headquarters. There they met up with two Fijian Ministers of the Mission staff. Revs. Usaia Sotutu, and Eroni Kotosoma, some other Bougainville and New Guinea men, and some Australians who had been government officers before the war. The men were divided into two groups. An Assistant District Officer, Mr Keenan, Rev. Sotutu, two American Marines and Nathan Sipisong were chosen to be leaders of one group of thirty two. The other group was similarly made up.

The Commander said, "You are the first people who will go by submarine as spies [to reconnoitre] before the American marines. You will leave here on the 24th October [1943] because the American, Australian and New Zealand troops will be landing on the 1st of November. "They gave us guns, uniforms, grenades, and haversacks and many other things....

Nathan and the others were taught how to fire guns to hit the targets, and also, to throw grenades. On 24 October they boarded a destroyer and sailed for Tulagi Harbour which was the submarine base. There they were given more training - swimming, diving and paddling rubber boats.

After this, they put tickets on our haversacks and guns. The Captain of the submarine said, "We will leave here at six o'clock this evening. Two other submarines will go first - they are our protection from enemy submarines. "At

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about 5 o'clock all the big battleships saluted us by firing their big guns. At 6 o'clock the Captain said that everyone must get inside the submarine. This was 22nd October 1943.

Inside the submarine they divided us. One group to sleep on the deck, and the other group to sleep in the stern. On the deck were six big torpedoes near the place we used as a workshop. In the middle was our mess where we ate our three meals and two cups of coffee each day. I say that the food inside the submarine was better than the land food. I can't (not allowed) tell you anything about the inside of the submarine. We travelled for two days. We arrived at Torokina [Empress Augusta Bay] on the 24th October at about four p.m. The place where we anchored was between Keriaka and the Lamina River. We waited under the sea until about seven thirty p.m., then the submarine came up from the bottom of the ocean.

Before we got into our rubber boats the captain inspected the beach and bush by spyglass to see if any Japanese were there. There were none, because this place was a long way from Torokina beach. So our four rubber boats were got ready.

The first group went. The second was my group. Then the third boat and the fourth came. We went down to the beach in order.

As soon as we reached the sand, we carried all of our rubber boats full of fighting things into the bush. We put our rubber boats into the river, and stood guard over our things until the morning. In the morning the captain of our group said that five soldiers would stop there to watch until twelve noon. We started to walk through the large area of swamps for one day. After twelve noon, the five men we left at the beach as watchers were changed for another five until six p.m.

We did not know where we were going, but followed a compass course through the hush. For two nights we slept without a fire, and no smoking or cooking of food. We ate only tinned food. On the third day we reached the bottom of a mountain. In this place we found some people of Puruata Village. They had run away from the Japanese. We asked them if the enemy was nearby. Then we hound them, because we did not want them to go and tell the Japanese about us.

The group climbed to the top of the mountain where they cleared some bush and set up camp. They made shelters from the leaves of the wild banana plant, with a separated one for the radio. It was by now 31 October, the day before the landing. A radio report was sent to Guadalcanal telling of the safe arrival at the lookout post, and they were now ready to watch for enemy shipping or aircraft coming from Rabaul.

On 1st November 1943, American marines and army, and some New Zealanders, landed at Torokina. There was very heavy fighting on this day. Battleships shelled the land. Planes were dropping bombs everywhere on the coast and in the hush. Warships were fighting on the sea and planes fighting in the air. This day was a terrible day on Bougainville.

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On the 2nd November we left the mountain top and went down. We followed a track to a small village and we spent three nights there. From this village Mr Keenan and Sotutu sent Kungkang and I to go and spy out a village called Kareana. The people said there were no Japanese there. So we reported this to Mr Keenan and Sotutu. Next day we all moved to Kareana and made our camp there.

Messages were sent to the Americans and food and clothing were dropped by parachute. The group stayed there for a month and they fought with Japanese soldiers who were sent to capture them. A message was sent from Torokina that soldiers of the New Zealand and Fijian Army would come up the Numanuma

Trail. Nathan and the group moved up to the Rotokas area then camped with the Kiwis and Fijians at a Roman Catholic Mission Station at Ibu. There were many more battles with the Japanese troops but they eventually got back to Torokina. After spending another month there, the AIB Company were given leave in Australia and the fourteen Bougainvillean men returned to Munda in the Solomon Islands for leave on 2 April 1944.

After leave, all returned to Bougainville and twelve of the group decided to stay with the AIB but Nathan Sipisong and Nathan Kiha worked in the ANGAU hospital at Lauruma near the Roman Catholic Mission station at Morotona until word was received of the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

The Americans had dropped a bomb on Hiroshima City ...

The war was over, but Nathan was not discharged from his hospital work until 1947. By that time, Rev. Harry Voyce had come back to Bougainville. A meeting was held with the local teachers and pastors and they were appointed to various villages in the Buin and Siwai area of South Bougainville.

Nathan Sipisong worked for thirteen- years with his people, then in 1960 he, with other volunteers, were chosen to be Pastors and Teachers to the people of the New Guinea Highlands at Mendi, Nipa and Tari.

They, with their wives and families, left their homes in the islands to go to a people whose way of life was so different from their own. They went away from being people who lived in a warm climate by the sea, to serve a people who lived in the high mountains and spoke a different language.

Nathan Sipisong's story was first published by Rev. George and Mrs Nancy Carter as part of a series of school reading books for the pupils of a high school in southern Bougainville.

FIFTY YEARS IN THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHLANDS

by Fred Baker

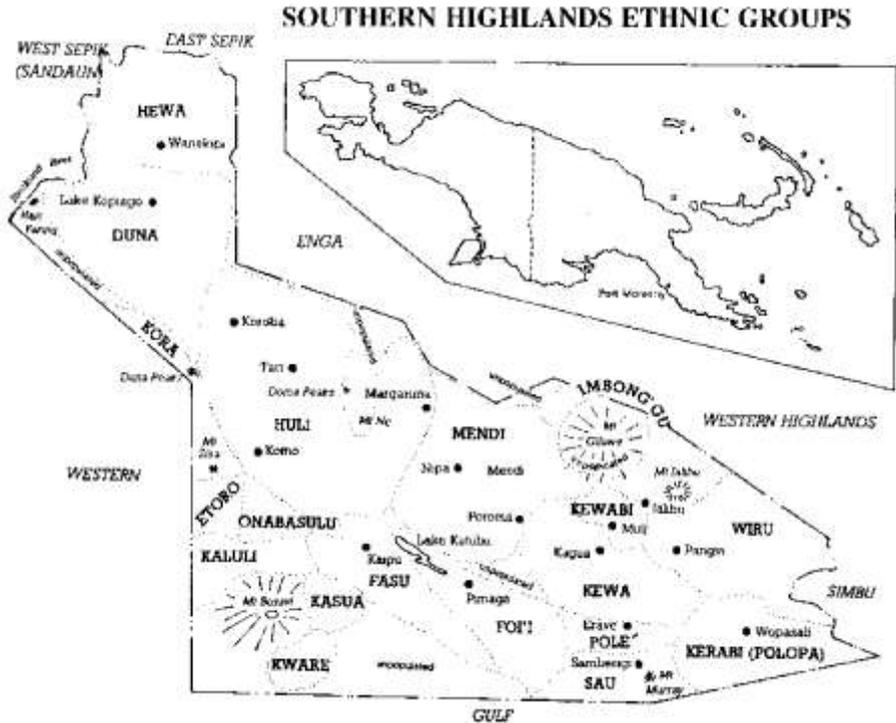
Until the late 1920s and early 1930s the mountainous area of Central Papua New Guinea was unknown territory to the world at large. Old maps had marked it 'uninhabited'. As explorers moved inland, they discovered large valleys 3,000 to 8,000 feet (1,000 to 2,500 metres) above sea level with a population estimated at near a million. This was a challenge to both the Administration and the Churches engaged in Mission work in the coastal areas. By the mid 1930s both the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches had established work as far inland as Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands. The Methodist Church had no work on the mainland. Their areas were the New Guinea and Papuan Islands as Districts of the Australasian Church, and Bougainville as part of the Solomon Islands District of the New Zealand Church.

The Second World War saw great destruction of property in these areas and more importantly, great disruption of the social, tribal and family life of the people. As the Churches faced the challenge of the ravages of war, the Administrator of Papua New Guinea called a conference of Missions and asked what could be done to establish work in the remaining unevangelised areas. In their report to the 1948 General Conference the Australasian Mission Board said that, as they were understaffed and short of funds, the question embarrassed them. However, they answered the challenge and in 1950 the Revs. Ern Clarke from the Papuan District and Gordon Young from New Ireland in the New Guinea District with local workers from the two Districts arrived in Mount Hagen to explore possibilities. Here they met the leaders of a patrol which had travelled from the south through the Mendi Valley to Mount Hagen. They were arranging to establish an administration centre and build an airstrip at Mendi so they recommended this area to the Methodists.

In October 1950 Gordon Young with two pastors, Kaminiel Ladi (New Ireland), Steven (Papua) and a helper, David Bulu (New Ireland), journeyed to Mendi and chose a site for Methodist work. This was about a kilometre from the proposed administration centre and airstrip. They returned to Mount Hagen and sent a report to the Mission Board in Sydney, which approved immediate action.

On 21 November, Gordon Young, Kaminiel Ladi, David Bulu and Thomas Tomar, also a Pastor from New Ireland, arrived back in Mendi to commence the mission. With all the problems created by language and cultural barriers, they faced the task of entering into a meaningful relationship with the local people. The Mendi people were naturally curious about these newcomers and thought they were the spirits of their ancestors. They soon worked out there was a difference between Administration and Mission, noting that one group seemed to have more resources and power than the other.

In the beginning, for safety reasons, there were restrictions of movement. The mission party could not go outside a one and a half kilometre radius from the administration centre without an escort. It was eight months later on 28 July 1951 that Grace Young was permitted to join her husband in Mendi. She was the first white woman in the district. By this time other coastal pastors and workers had arrived in Mendi. They were occupied as teachers, gardeners and builders and their contribution to the task of sharing the gospel cannot be overestimated.



As the work was being consolidated in Mendi, the mission was already looking ahead and planning to start new stations in other areas. On 27 October 1951, the Rev. Roland Bames and his wife Miriam, nurse Joyce Walker, and teacher Elsie Wilson, arrived in Mendi. The local people at once decided Roland was a very influential man because he had three wives! He remained in Mendi until 1953. When recalled from furlough he became the pioneer missionary in Tari one hundred miles north of Mendi. The Huli people here spoke a different language and had different customs from the Mendi people, but like them were also intrigued by the new arrivals.

Those first workers came from Australia and the coastal districts of Papua New Guinea but it had always been the goal of the Mission Board to have Pacific Islanders also sharing in the task. The Rev. David Mone from Tonga came to the Highlands in

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1955, the first of several Tongan and Fijian ministers who have served there. He began work in Tari with Roland Barnes but soon moved to a new station at Kip in the Lai Valley, an eight-hour walk across an 8,500 ft. (2,500 metre) ridge from Mendi.

Although still engaged in post war rebuilding and rehabilitation in the Solomon Islands District, the New Zealand Conference responded to the invitation to participate in the Highlands mission. In 1953 a draft statement of co-operation was accepted by Conference and the Papua New Guinea Highlands Mission appeared on the list of Stations. The Rev. Cliff Keightley was appointed, with a builder, a teacher and a nurse to be appointed later. An appeal for £10,000 was launched and started with a gift of £1,000 from the Women's Missionary Union.

The first worker from New Zealand to arrive in the Highlands was Gordon Dey, a builder from Hamilton East. He arrived in November 1954 and was followed shortly after by Cliff and Noreen Keightley who had spent a year at All Saints College in Sydney. In 1955 Edith James, a nurse, joined the team and in May 1959 the target of four workers was achieved when Joyce Rosser (Dey) arrived to undertake secretarial work. Discussions between the two Mission Boards resulted in the decision that New Zealand would now undertake the responsibility to move into a new area and that Cliff Keightley would head up this work.

The area chosen was Nipa in the Nembi Valley, over a further ridge from the Lai Valley. Cliff Keightley, who had first gone to Tari, moved to Mendi to prepare for this task and months of frustration were experienced. At long last permission to enter the Nembi Valley was received and on Tuesday, 1 December 1959 Cliff and Gordon Young left Mendi by motor bike (*below*) travelling to the end of the road at Wombip, eight miles north of Mendi, then setting out on foot for Kip which they reached eight and a half hours later.



Here they met up with the patrol officer from Nipa and, after overnighiting, walked together a further five hours to the Nipa patrol post. Gordon Young returned to Mendi on the Friday. In his diary Cliff Keightley wrote, "I am now left with the sobering

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thought that a great responsibility rests on me - the responsibility of beginning God's work among these people". Cliff designed the Nipa station which was set out in the form of a cross (*below*) and Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilots remarked that when seen from the air this was the most impressive mission station in Papua New Guinea.



The languages of the Lai and Nipa people were dialects of Mendi. North of Nipa was the Wage Valley where the people were Huli speaking and it was natural that expansion here should be initiated from Tari. Roland Bames visited the area in 1959 but it was 1962 before two young Tari men were stationed there and they were joined by the Rev. John Hutton who in January 1963 moved from Tari to Margarima in the Wage Valley. The gap between Mendi and Tari was thus finally closing and a new phase of mission beginning.



Rev. Wasun Koka who accompanied Cliff Keightley to Nipa and later became the first Highlander to be ordained.

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The 1950s were a time of consolidation and extension with little visible response from the people. In 1961 the first baptisms were conducted in Tari and Mendi and the rest of the decade saw great growth in the Church. It was more the result of quiet local witness than any great scheme of evangelism. Sitting around the fire at night people gossiped the gospel, sharing with clan members and relatives the new faith they had discovered. This growth has continued and today there are 70,000 members in the Highlands Region of the United Church. The leadership is in the hands of the local people. The Bishop and most of the ministers are Highlanders.

Fifty years ago the people of the Southern Highlands lived in the stone age. Today Mendi is the capital of the Southern Highlands province and is a bustling town with the variety of shops and businesses you would expect to find in any small New Zealand town. Many of these enterprises are part of Menduli, the business arm of the United Church Highlands Region, which has grown from the small Bulk Store, started through Cliff Keightley's vision. It is locally managed with its own Board of Directors.

Over thirty New Zealanders have worked in the Highlands Region and we count it a privilege to have been the guests of the Highlands people and to have lived and shared with them. They taught us much. As one of the early leaders of the Church there said, "You did not bring Jesus to us, you came to show us he was already here".



Highland students, wives and families at Rarongo Theological College, 1998.



The same area, the lower image showing ten years of development, 1969 – 1979

VERNA MOSSONG FAREWELLED

A widely representative group of some 30 people met to honour retiring Auckland Archivist Verna Mossong at a luncheon in the Auckland Methodist Offices, 409 Great South Road, on Tuesday, 14 August 2001.

Rev. Donald Phillipps deputised for Conference President Rev. Dr Mary Caygill to lead the proceedings. The range of service cheerfully rendered by the Archives, personified in Verna Mossong, was demonstrated by the appreciative references by numerous speakers and in the conversations during and after the meal.

In Journal 2000 an historical survey of the Methodist Archives by Donald Phillipps included a description of the establishment of the Auckland Archives by George Carter in 1984, and Verna's active participation from the outset until she took over as Auckland Archivist after George Carter's death in 1990. Under her leadership the Archives have become a readily accessible research centre. Also in Journal 2000 the award to Verna of QSM for community service was featured.

Verna paid tribute to various people who took part in setting up the Auckland Archives or are working in their particular capacity in building up the collections and providing reference service. She drew attention to the skilful assistance received for many years from her daughter, Irene, recently deceased. Verna was presented with a mohair knee rug in appreciation of her outstanding service.



Verna Mossong receiving farewell bouquet from Rev. Donald Phillipps.

Obituary **ONE LIFELONG LESSON IN LOVING THY** **NEIGHBOUR**

by Gordon McLauchlan

in the *New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 2000.

Reprinted with permission.

Selwyn Dawson, MA, QSO, who died this week, was born in Dunedin in 1918, raised in Gisborne, was a chaplain with J Force, ordained in the Methodist Church in 1946 and became a big-city minister in Lake Rd, Takapuna, in Durham St, Christchurch, and Pitt St in Auckland.

He was president of the New Zealand Methodist Church in 1972, and president of the National Council of Churches in 1968-69. He was a two-term Auckland City councillor, worked for Amnesty International and, after his retirement in 1981, served part-time at St Mary's cooperating parish in Glen Innes.

That was the stuff of his professional career, the milestones that pegged out his life, but it gives only one dimension of a man, who, improbably, I came to love.

I first met Selwyn soon after he had retired 18 years ago when he joined a writing class I was conducting. He introduced himself and said he lived over the road from the house we'd just moved into in Orakei.

The chance of my becoming the friend of a retired Methodist minister was very slim. You see, my father was an atheist, mostly because his father had been a bigoted member of the Free Church of Scotland in Dunedin. And I've always been agnostic: if there's a God, good on him; if not, bad luck.

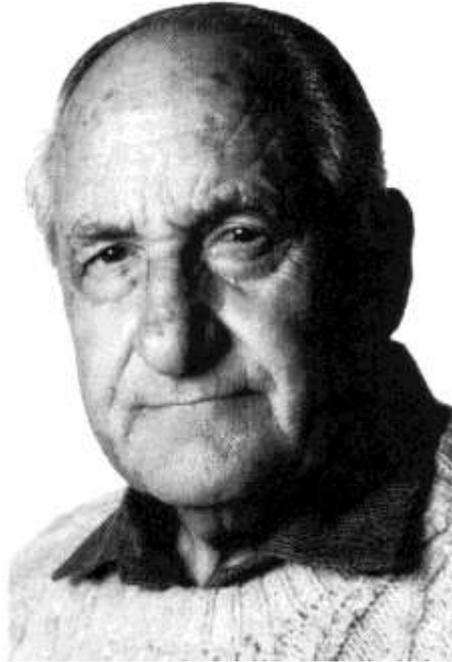
After the course, he went on, of course, to broadcast many Morning Comments on National Radio, and to write several books, hundreds of newspaper columns, and enough letters to editors to fill a mail train.

We talked, as neighbours do, and gradually I came to understand what a remarkable man he was. I have from time to time savaged organised Christianity and after such a column appeared, he phoned me and quite formally said he wanted me to know he was writing a letter to the Herald rebutting my case. I said, "I'd think less of you Selwyn if you didn't." He did, of course, and did it very well.

I was approached to join the Rationalists Society. It was Selwyn - and I never told him this - who made me decide not to. You see, I listened to some of the rationalists and found in them some of the same bigotry, the same certainty of rightness, that my grandfather had; but when I talked with Selwyn on any subject, I discovered this deep well of tolerance.

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If you read his book about Jesus, called *Meet the Man*, you'll understand how foreign to his nature bigotry was.



Rev Selwyn Dawson MA

Without knowing it, I'm sure, he so instinctively embraced the philosophy of Gandhi - hate the wrong but not the wrongdoer - that I told him once he was in danger of giving Christianity a good name.

He smiled but fixed me with a gimlet stare. He made me think about tolerance and I realised it's a much more important quality than so-called cultural sensitivity.

I mean, there are things about some other cultures that I feel are uncongenial -I can't join an appreciation of them, I feel I must argue against them - but I must be tolerant and understanding without necessarily accepting them.

That was Selwyn's attitude towards politics and politicians. His intense and continuing interest wasn't about the art of the science or the shrewdness of it all, but about how political actions affected ordinary people - an unfashionable attitude often considered naive.

Let me catalogue his physical problems since I've known him: emphysema, a long-standing heart condition, diabetes, surgery for serious cancer, a broken hip and a shattered elbow. And all the time he battled on. When his emphysema was getting

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worse he walked for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon, in rain and shine, with a transistor radio clamped to his ear with one hand as he listened to news and current affairs programmes.

He was engaged with life. I remember once when I visited him in hospital after surgery, he said cheerfully that he'd woken up in the recovery room, seen the nurse, realised where he was and rejoiced that, as he put it, he was alive and still had all his marbles.

After his legs were amputated last week, he was asked what he wanted done with them. He told the doctor he wasn't much fussed, and chuckled to me that perhaps they should be scattered over the Domain: "they've walked over it so often, I think I've got the right."

He made me think of the nature of goodness because he was as good a man as I've known. He was an instinctive liberal tending compassionately to take the side of the disadvantaged and underprivileged but, fundamentally, his goodness was this; he could argue strongly on any matter, disagree with you stoutly while exuding - without unction or being patronising - that he loved you anyway.

He had genuine humility and courage - not the sort of courage that bravado and a bottle of whisky gives, not the sort of flashpoint courage that you need to crank up for an hour or two, but the sort that enables you to endure for years, without whinging, pain, discomfort and the indignity of dependence.

Through him, I understood that you don't have to be built like Buck Shelford to be enduringly tough and resilient. He was a tiny man in stature but as big as they come in spirit.

After seeing him last Saturday, I was convinced he was going to recover yet again. I was going to say to him once he was better that for a clergyman he seemed excessively, even improperly, reluctant to leave this world for the next. He'd have enjoyed that.

He's been a constant in my life for a long time. I wouldn't see him for two or three weeks at a time, but it was good to know he was there. He was a kind of decency touchstone in an often nasty world.

So, while it's not news to the many thousands of people who've known him, I'd like everyone else to understand that Auckland and New Zealand this week lost one of that rare breed, a good man.

MAY 2002 : SOLOMON ISLANDS CENTENARY

To help commemorate the 100 years of Christian outreach in the Solomon Islands and the neighbouring island of Bougainville, the Wesley Historical Society intends publishing a Proceedings giving the story of some twenty Melanesian and Polynesian men and women. The theme is the "ever widening circle" as the Gospel spread across the islands and from coastal village to remote mountain hamlet. Hopefully, each decade is represented, in some cases by only one person. But behind each named person there are dozens more who were just as worthy to be recorded. This booklet is an effort to commemorate their work as vital in the flow of mission endeavour across this corner of the Pacific.

Phil Taylor

Obituary

REV. DR ARNOLD D HUNT 1918-2001

A highly regarded Australian preacher, lecturer and historian, Dr Hunt gave a presentation, 'Bible Christians in Australia', in 1980 at a gathering in Sydney attended by 20 New Zealand WHS members and visited a WHS event at Paerata College in 1987.

After serving as a missionary in India, 1945-51, mainly in Benares among Hindus, he was appointed principal of George Brown Missionary Training College, Sydney.

In 1959 Dr Hunt began 14 years in charge of Wesley College; he was President of the Methodist Conference in 1970.

From 1973 he was head of the History Department at Salisbury College of Advanced Education and associate minister in Adelaide West 1976-1984.

He was author of *In the City of the Indus* and *This Side of Heaven* (a history of Methodism in South Australia). - *Abstracted from edited eulogies.*



THREATENED CHURCH IS A KEY LANDMARK

by John Wilson

Reprinted from the Canterbury Newsletter of the Historic Places Trust, Feb. 2001.

When the Colombo Road Methodist Church was opened in February 1878 it was described as standing in a "central and commanding position" and as being "surrounded by a dense and growing population". The fact that it remains a "central and commanding" landmark in Sydenham is one reason why the possibility it may be demolished is distressing so many people. But the reason the building is at risk is that Sydenham, far from having a "dense and growing population", is now largely a commercial and light industrial rather than residential area of the city. But finding a new use for the building should not be impossible - if, that is, the present owner can be dissuaded from proceeding with his plan to demolish it.



Originally Colombo Road Methodist Church with (left to right) Juliette Bryant, Dr Edith Devonish and Cr Sue Wells. *Star Photo: Martin Woodhall.*

The present church was not the first Methodist church in the area. It had two predecessors - a Chapel on Waltham Road which was built in 1869-70 and St James Wesleyan Church on what was then Harper Street (now Orbell Street). The St James building had been erected originally on Montreal Street. Bought by the Methodist in 1870, it was shifted to its Orbell Street site in 1876. Neither of these churches was well situated to serve the rapidly growing population of Sydenham. In the late 1870s the decision was made to build a new church on the corner of Colombo Road (now Street) and what was then Pound (now Brougham) Street. The site was across the road

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from the Agricultural and Pastoral Association's showgrounds, today's Sydenham Park.

On 5 July 1877, 200 persons gathered to watch Mrs G Gould lay the foundation stone for the new building. The building was designed by TS Lambert, the architect of the United Service Hotel and the Gloucester Street Synagogue, both demolished.

The original plans were only partly carried out and to this day the building looks unfinished at its western end, where there were to have been transepts. Construction was in blue stone from the Port Hills with Oamaru stone facings, a slate roof and interior woodwork of kauri. The interior, sixty feet by forty (approximately eighteen by twelve metres), could seat 400. It was reported that for a stone church it had been built at moderate cost and that it had an attractive outside appearance and a "neat and comfortable" interior.

Construction went ahead rapidly and the church was ready to be opened on 3 February 1878. The building was "crowded to excess" for the service. The children of the Waltham and Harper Street Sunday Schools "mustered in force", each with a bouquet. A soiree was held on the following Thursday in a marquee on the showgrounds to help raise money to pay for building the church. The congregation grew rapidly and just a year after the opening, on 3 February 1879, a gallery which could accommodate a further 250 people was opened.

The grounds for opposing the demolition of the church are based mainly on its architectural and streetscape values. But this was also a church whose pulpit and congregation played an important part in the social and political history of Christchurch. The Rev. L M Isitt and the Hon. T E Taylor led great moral and social movements from Sydenham, notably the early anti-liquor crusades. A Sunday School had been built behind the church in 1886, combining a hall that could seat more than 300 with more than a dozen classrooms, and in 1889, during Isitt's ministry, a gymnasium was added, to provide the youth of Sydenham with somewhere for healthy, uplifting pursuits. Church, Sunday School and gymnasium were important centres of religious, social and political life in Sydenham in the days the "model borough" was at the forefront of progressive change in New Zealand.

In 1938, to mark the church's sixtieth jubilee, the building was remodelled. Less than a decade later, on 9 September 1947, the Sunday School and gymnasium burned to the ground. The church still had a vigorous congregation at that time and a youth centre, designed by Melville Lawry, was quickly rebuilt behind the church. This substantial wooden building opened on 18 September 1949 and has only recently been demolished.

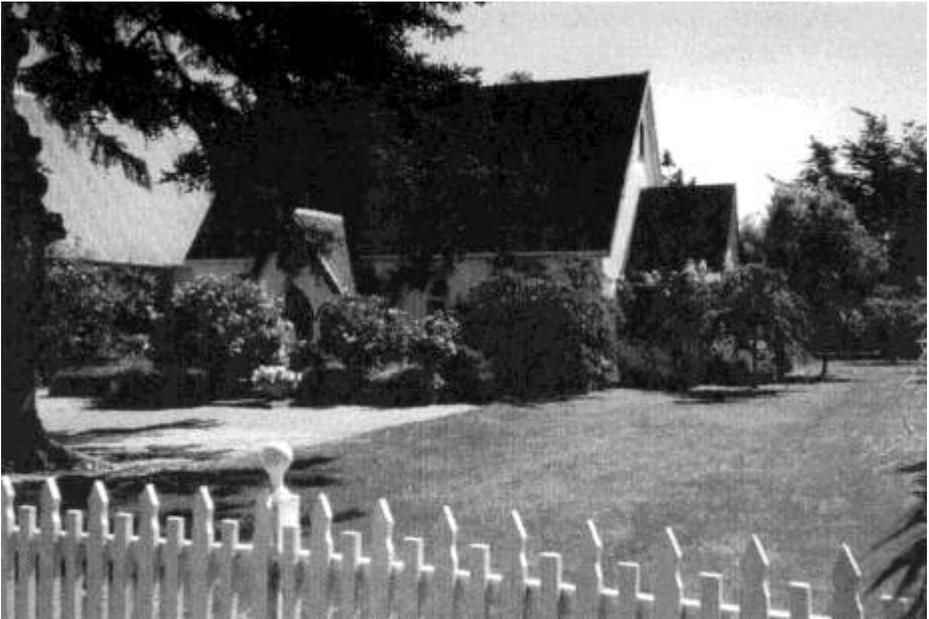
By the late 1960s, however, with churchgoing in decline and Sydenham's population falling, the existing Methodist congregation had dwindled. In 1971 the church was leased to the Seventh Day Adventists for some years, then was used as the city's Samoan Congregational Church, until that congregation built a new church elsewhere in the city. The church has stood empty ever since.

THIS IS THE HOUSE THE CHURCH BUILT

From Methodist Archives, in Crosslink, March 2001. by Marda Baker Have you ever wondered what happens to old Methodist Churches?

We know of some buildings now used for chapels at camp sites, or craft centres, museums, hay barns, wool sheds and even heard of one which was being transported to another site and left by the side of the road overnight. It disappeared without trace - or so the story goes.

Over the last few years we have received a growing number of requests for original plans of churches and descriptions of them. The persons inquiring have seen potential in the old buildings and have bought them often to restore as residences.



OHOKA Built 1878. Once known as Mandeville. Photo Dave Roberts

The earliest Ohoka Church near Kaiapoi was built in 1865 and 13 years later a larger building was erected close by. These two together became first a residence and centre for indoor ceremonies and garden photography and then, with the next owners, the basis of a folk art and craft teaching centre as well as a home with an aura of happiness, caring and love.



BROOKSIDE. Doug Burt with the present owner. *Photo: Dave Roberts*

The Brookside Church south of Christchurch was built in 1870 and described in Morley's History as a "neat building, an ornament to the district". It closed in 1972 and in 1999, after being lovingly restored, was sold again. This time, now called Hebron, it was described as "simply divine, a warm tranquil retreat". In a delightful woodland setting, with the original arched windows, it boasts a spiral staircase and mezzanine floor.



COAL CREEK. Just below the Roxburgh Dam.

Now a private residence after being used as a pottery. *Photo: Dave Roberts*

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Currently at other places our 'no longer needed' churches are being transformed. At Coal Creek the first Methodist church in the Teviot district was built in 1869, built of stone, with walls 18 inches thick and originally costing 150 pounds, at Mangaweka the first church built in the township in 1897 of a basic design, and at Sefton a building of brick, described as 'earthquake proof, with concrete buttresses, deep slate roof and mullioned windows, costing 1089 pounds, which opened in 1932 - all these buildings are being transformed and will once more be cared for, this time by those who will live in them.



MANGAWEKA

Photo: Dave Roberts

WRITING A PARISH HISTORY

Some Basic Guidelines

by Allan K Davidson

In an attempt to make these notes as accessible to a number of denominations the terms 'national', 'regional' and 'parish' have been used when describing different governing bodies in the church. In writing about the ministry of the local church the term 'minister' is used.

1. Why a Parish History?

The parish is an important unit in the life of a Church. It is where individuals and families find and express their sense of belonging within the body of Christ. Parish life is rich and diverse, inheriting traditions from the past, attempting to minister in the present. While not the centre for people's life, as in past generations, for many people the parish is an essential part of their identity. Telling the story of a parish is an important way of honouring the mothers and fathers in faith who in their day attempted to be faithful to the gospel as they understood it. As inheritors of the past, with some knowledge of our history, we in our own day can better understand the present.

2. What kind of Parish?

Parishes vary considerably - from the large single city church congregation, the suburban community church, the provincial town church, the rural parish with a number of preaching places and congregations. Seeing the parish within its wider context and against the background of the community in which it is located is important if the history is to try and see the parish as part of the world. Finding local history resources - town, rural and provincial histories, are important for providing this setting.

3. What kind of History?

A decision has to be made on the scope of the history to be written and published. This can vary from the small anniversary pamphlet through to the solid book. Look at what other parishes have done and see if they provide a model for the kind of history your parish wants to write. Remember that a lot of effort goes into researching and writing a history and that once it is done there is not usually another opportunity to do it again for a long time. It is therefore worth producing the best possible history you can. Taking account of the big events in New Zealand (for example the First and Second World Wars and the Depression) that impacted on the whole society helps provide a backdrop for the parish history. The local church is part of the wider community, so, for example, the growth of youth activities and the setting up of new parishes after the Second World War reflect the increased birth-rate and the mood of society at that time.

4. Who should write it?

History research and writing requires more than enthusiasm. Someone who has a flair for patient research and has the ability to tell a story through writing in a lively way is desirable. In telling the story of a parish there is a need for a sympathetic understanding of the past and yet a critical awareness of the way in which people relate to one another.

5. Where do you begin?

Parish histories are best written with the approval or support of the leaders in the parish. This means that the writer can gain access to parish records and have the full support of people in the parish. If the parish commissions someone to write their history then a formal agreement should be drawn up. If it is being done on a voluntary basis some recognition of the work being undertaken should be given. It is useful for the writer to set out their aims and objectives and to keep the governing body informed as to progress.

6. What are the resources available?

One of the first tasks in research is to try and establish what the resources are that will be helpful and where these are located. These include:

- a. Parish records - minute books of the various governing and management bodies in the parish. Women's Organisations, Youth Organisations, Marriage Registers, Baptismal Registers, Correspondence, Financial Records, Annual Reports, Burial Records.
- b. Parish material - copies of newsletters, orders of service, photographs, clipping files, plans of buildings, hymnbooks.
- c. Parish people - hold some records of their own such as photographs, certificates and prizes won for church attendance. Perhaps most important are their memories. The use of "oral history" is an important part in discovering the life of a parish. In some cases the researcher will be able to find collections of private papers that are still retained by family or deposited in a library. Published biographies and autobiographies of parish members are of particular help.
- d. Former Ministers and Parishioners - try to identify who they are. Write to them giving them a list of questions asking them to write down or record on tape their memories.
- e. Community resources - local histories - newspapers are an important source with their weekly notices of services and their reports of church activities. Statistics from the national five yearly census figures provide an interesting basis of comparison with parish statistics. The electoral rolls can provide interesting data on the employment of people within the parish.

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f. Regional Church records - minutes and correspondence of the regional church bodies have some information relating to the life of parishes. They also provide insight into the work of ministers and lay representatives from the parish on a wider stage.

g. National Church records - The published proceedings of national church bodies along with the Church newspapers give an indication of the issues which the Church was dealing with at a particular point in time. It is helpful to see the parish story against the wider trends influencing the denomination.

Parish records are often held by the local parish. In some cases they have been deposited in a local, regional or national repository. It is important to identify where these records are located and to check with those who care for them what conditions surround their access and use.

7. How do you begin Research?

General reading in local, regional and denominational history is a good place to begin. Having some awareness of the wider historical framework in which the parish fits is something which takes the researcher beyond the "parish pump".

As the researcher works through minute books, correspondence, newspaper records, gathers together the oral memory of past and present members of the congregation a great deal of material is accumulated. Taking these records in an accurate way, keeping a note of where the material has come from is important. Many researchers find it useful to store their information on large index cards (210cm x 130cm). These can easily be sorted later on when it's time to begin writing. Computers are increasingly being used in storing research data. Remember the importance of backing up and printing out a hard copy of your research notes.

8. What to look for?

In researching and writing it is useful to pose questions which then need to be answered:

When was the parish formed - by whom and why?

How has the parish changed over the years - buildings, boundaries, membership, organisations?

Who have been the ministers in the parish - what were their backgrounds - what contributions did they bring to the parish - what part did their wives (and more recently spouses) and their family have in the life of the Church?

What kind of ministry has the Church given to the parish and the wider community?

What kind of worship has the Church offered? (Try to find old orders of services, sermons etc.)

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Who are the people who have taken a leading part in the life of the Church - in the local governing bodies, choir members, Sunday School Superintendents and teachers, Bible Class Leaders and teachers?

What part have the women's organisations played in the life of the parish and the wider community? Who were the leaders in these groups?

How important and effective have the youth activities of the Church been?

How has the Church handled controversy and difference - whether it be over the introduction of organs in the nineteenth century, Sunday observance, prohibition, Bible Class dances, theological debate of the Springbok Tour, differences over sexuality?

What outreach has the Church had into the wider world - involvement with social services, people going overseas as missionaries, people from the parish offering to be ministers or deaconesses?

What impact have the changing tides of economic, political, social, moral and religious change had on the life of the parish?

How have ecumenical and church union developments influenced the life of the parish? (In Union and Co-operating parishes it is crucial that account be taken of the history of all people involved in the parish).

9. How do you put it all together?

Having done the research and found out a great deal about the parish and its people the difficult task of writing up the story now confronts the writer. Be prepared to write several drafts before the final text is ready. Access to a word processor or computer can save a great deal of time in this rewriting. The size of the text will in the end be determined by printing costs and what people are willing to pay.

Most parish histories follow a chronological approach. Some use the periods served by ministers as a way of dividing up the material. Others tell the history through the various aspects of the parish's life - worship - ministry - women's organisations - youth organisations. There is no one way for writing a parish history. Each writer should see how the material that they have can most effectively be presented in order to tell the parish story.

Look for the human interest story in the parish history, the lively and colourful aspects which offset the more mundane. Try not to see the parish in isolation. Remember that the parish is made up of people who live and work in a wider world. Don't be afraid to deal with controversial aspects of the parish's history. A sanitised version is really a distortion of the reality. Sensitivity, however, is required, particularly when there are people still in the parish who have been involved in a controversy.

Try to see the parish in its fullness. Don't concentrate only on the ministers and

leading laity. The Church is made up of children, women and men who have all contributed in varying ways to parish life - whether it be making cups of tea, doing flowers, mowing lawns, working at the Church fair, painting the parish hall. Try to capture its worship, its buildings, its pastoral ministry, its impact on individuals and the community.

Illustrative material is a key part of any parish history. Photographs of ministers need to be complemented with scenes from the Sunday School picnic, the ANZAC day service, the opening of the new church.

10. Why Preserve the Past?

Without our past we do not know where we have come from. Our history gives us our identity. Preserving the past puts us in contact with our roots. The writing of a parish history, therefore is an important part of reclaiming people's life story. It needs to be undertaken with care and commitment and deserves the support of the parish. The writing of a parish history also draws attention to the important ongoing work of preserving the present story of the parish for a future parish historian. We need to save the records of the present for the future so that others can also know their past.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The following members have died since Annual General Meeting 2000:

Rev. Colin Clark
Rev. Selwyn Dawson
Mr Fred Long

New Members since AGM 2000:

Rev. Sylvia Akau'ola Tongotongo	Mrs Marcia Hardy
Mr & Mrs J Bush	Rev. Elizabeth Hopner
Mr Ken Christiansen	Mrs Grace Lewis
Mrs Enid Dawson	Rev. Vilma Loader
Ms Margaret Donald	Mrs Gwen Petch
Miss Rhonda Gibson	Rev. Keith Taylor
Rev. W Griffiths	Rev. Peter Williamson
Rev. Nigel Hanscamp	Mrs Joan Windsor

CORRECTION : THE FIRST DEACONESS HOUSE

On page 34 of Journal 2000 is a photograph of Deaconess House, Latimer Square, Christchurch, incorrectly captioned as St Asaph St.

We are grateful to Sister Joan Wedding for drawing our attention to this misinformation. To set the record straight - our picture showed the second Deaconess House, Latimer Square, in 1923, later demolished to provide the site for Morley House.

The first Deaconess House, in St Asaph St, is pictured below.



Training Home for Deaconesses, St Asaph St, Christchurch, Methodist Times, 30 July 1910.

THANK YOU, OBSERVANT READERS

We stand corrected; the following more accurate statements are based on information provided subsequent to publication of John J Lewis. Again, many thanks.

Page 6, Line 3: The reference to the siblings of John Lewis omitted his sister, Dora.

Page 8: Milton Church photograph. We depicted the first church, built 1874. 'JJ' would have preached in the second church, built 1922. Below is a photograph of both buildings. The 1922 building, on the right, is now a private residence. The older building, on the left, has a private residence at the rear.



Page 30: Trinity College 1955 photograph. The names listed as Second Row apply to the third row, and those listed as Third Row apply to the second row.

ACADEMIC THESES **Relating to NZ and Pacific Methodism**

Published in Journal 2000

1992 D Beniston. Wrong date. Should be 1922-1972.

Since included in Victoria University listing.

1993 E E Bolitho - In this World : Baptist and Methodist Churches in New Zealand 1948-1988 (VUW).

Also of Interest

1998 E E Bolitho: Honours Research Essay. Events and Issues influencing the Attitudes of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand to South Africa from 1947 to 1987 (VUW).

PUBLICITY for THESES

From time to time we review or publish extracts from theses relating to New Zealand and Pacific Methodism. If you know of a thesis of this nature that merits wider publicity beyond the universities please advise us so that we can follow it up.

RECORDING of TRIBUTES

The information in eulogies can be of great assistance to the authors of historical accounts - if they are available. We urge all who provide tributes at funerals or valedictory occasions to please send a copy to the Archives in Christchurch or Auckland.

ANNIVERSARIES FOR 2002

From *Significant Anniversaries* by Rev. Rugby Pratt

1852

2 May Rev. Samuel Leigh died

1902

8 Jan Ngaruawahia Church burnt

29 Jan St Albans School burnt

10 April Pungarehu Church stonelaying

11 May Durham St South hall opened

11 June Taihape Church opened

13 June Canvastown Church wrecked by tornado

15 June Otautau Church opened

5 Oct Ngaruawahia Church opened

19 Oct St Albans new school opened

20 Nov East Belt (Chch) school stonelaying

ANNIVERSARIES FOR 2003

1853 150th ANNIVERSARIES

None.

1903 100th ANNIVERSARIES (CENTENARIES)

1 February Drummond Church (Southland) opened.

10 April Canvastown Church opened.

3 May Helping Hand Mission opened in Foresters Hall, Newton, having moved from Pitt Street.

18 June Carrington Road Church (New Plymouth) – stonelaying (Opened on 6 August)

17 July Otorohanga Church opened.

19 July Roxburgh New Church opened.

6 August Waitoa Church (Upper Thames) opened.

13 August Mayfield Church (South Canterbury) stonelaying.

1 November May field Church (South Canterbury) opened.

5 November Waitara Church stonelaying. (Opened 10 February 1904)

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