

Divisions in the 2x2 Church

Divisions in the Two by Two Church

Victoria, Australia

Revised May 17, 2019

The Division and Purge in Victoria

For about the last ten years of his life, after his wife died in 1942, Bill Carroll lived in a home located about 80K south of Melbourne provided by his daughter May and her husband, Dolph Schulz. Personal letters written by W. C. Carroll during this time bear the address of: Greenhaven, Rosebud West, Victoria, Australia.

In Carroll's later years, "Two Sister Workers and a Brother stayed with him at Rosebud to look after him, when there were open homes who would gladly receive him and cater for his needs and do the superintending of his meals, necessitated by the fact that he was a diabetic. This went on for ten years. Reportedly, these Workers held no Gospel Meetings while at Rosebud."

The other Australian Head Workers disapproved of a Worker overseeing a state from a permanent residence. They also did not approve of Carroll using Workers to tend to his physical needs when there were Friends willing to do so. In his latter years, Bill visited outside Victoria less and less. Victoria was self-sufficient regarding Workers and had also sent a large number of Workers overseas. The amount of interchange between Victoria and the other Australian states continued to decrease until it was almost isolated from the other states.

During the 1950s, Bill Carroll began excommunicating Friends in Victoria, including parents along with their children, sometimes without providing a hearing or a reason to the victims. Mervyn Schmidt, son of Otto Schmidt, wrote: "I professed at 12 yrs of age. At 13, in the 1950s, I was excommunicated, along with my parents and many others in the states of VIC and SA, as a result of a purge by William Carroll. In my case, my only crime was I was the son of my father." A Bethel Mission family member wrote, "Week after week numbers were put out including whole churches. No one knew why and appeals were sent to Senior Workers to come over and help us, and give us a hearing."

For about four years, separate Fellowship Meetings were held for the various divisions. Children and teenagers from the various divisions attended school together, but did not assemble together for Fellowship Meetings. Mervyn Schmidt wrote: "For approximately 4 years, about 16 of us met in our home, unofficially...with others who had been put out of fellowship...We were reinstated again after this with the help of George Walker, U.S., and Jack Forbes from England." (Merve Schmidt Account in [Why We Left](#), on Expressions by Ex-2x2s)

1953 NOVEMBER 13: WILLIAM (BILL) CARROLL DIED. He had been the Head Worker of Victoria since 1913, for 40 years, when he arrived in Australia. As Alfred Magowan aptly phrased it, "Very soon reverberations of Australian thunders began rolling and crashing over the Bill's grave. "

The oversight of the Work in VIC went to Chris Williams, who was at that time over the Work in Tasmania. Chris was from VIC and started in the Work in 1914 in QLD. In 1918, he went to NSW; then to Tasmania for 1925-55. There are two stories regarding how Williams was chosen as the replacement. One was that the Victorian Workers elected him. The other was that Carroll designated Williams as his replacement, and did not consult with the other Australian Senior Workers, who thought "the responsible Workers should have been consulted with regard to getting their approval of who should succeed our departed Brother in the oversight in Victoria."

In 1954, the divisions within the fold remained a problem and some Australian Senior Workers asked Senior Workers from other countries for help. Meanwhile in 1954, Edward Cooney (then 88 years old) travelled to Mildura, Victoria, at the request of some twenty Outcasts. In 1955, Jack Carroll, Jack Forbes and George Walker arrived to help settle the disputes. They held Reconciliation Meetings in various locations where the Outcasts as a group could be reinstated without reprofessing. At the Reconciliation Meeting scheduled in Mildura, Cooney went uninvited, along with Jack Schmidt, disfellowshipped owner of the Mildura Convention grounds and a few other Friends. Tom Turner met them at the door and turned Cooney away. His Friends left with him.

1954 GUILDFORD MEETING. About three months after Bill Carroll died on February 20-24, 1954, the two Senior Head Workers of Australia, John Hardie and Tom Turner, called a Meeting of all Head Workers in New Zealand and Australia at Guildford, NSW. Guildford was a Convention ground situated near Sydney. This was the first Meeting of the Heads of the various States in many years.

Tom Turner led the Guildford Meeting of eleven Workers: John Hardie, J. Williamson, Chris Williams, Walter Pickering, Willie J. Hughes, John C. Baartz, R. Les Hawse, W. Schloss, Alec R. Mitchell and Harry Morgan. A report of the Meeting was prepared. The major issues addressed concerned Bill Carroll's successor; the exchange of Workers within Australia; cooperation of Victoria with the other Australian states; dealing with the Outcasts in Victoria and South Australia; and the Rosebud dwelling of Bill Carroll. The Workers "separated at Guildford with high hopes that unity and harmony would prevail and all would be well."

After Chris Williams and Walter Pickering returned to Victoria, they held a Victorian Workers Meeting at Dandenong to discuss the Guildford Report. The Victorian Workers felt that the Meeting had been held to make a personal attack on the life and testimony of Bill Carroll. They also viewed the Meeting as an attempt by the other Heads of States to interfere with the Work in Victoria. They drew up a document expressing their viewpoints, signed by Chris Williams and delivered it to the Meetings in Victoria. Some Conventions were cancelled. Workers from other Australian states visiting in Victorian territory were considered intruders. In 1955, two South Australian and three New Zealand Workers were sent to preach in Victoria, but many did not welcome them.

Eventually Chris Williams wrote John Hardie that: "a breach even greater, seems imminent... Could it not all not be withdrawn?" George Walker and Jack Forbes traveled to Australia to help reconcile the situation. Over a year later, on April 20, 1955, all the Senior Head Workers, including Victoria indicated that they regretted their actions and unconditionally withdrew their statements. Three items they agreed upon were:

"Regarding the residence at Rosebud, we feel it is our duty to state that we cannot accept such an arrangement as a precedent that could be repeated."

"We would add that in our opinion, when an Overseer in any State or Country, through infirmities or other circumstances is unable to personally carry out his responsibilities, he should call to his aid a Brother who has the approval and confidence of his Brethren and who can eventually assume the oversight.

[They would] "find an impartial Brother from overseas who will supervise and cooperate in the Oversight of the Work in Victoria for such time as may be considered necessary." (Guildford Meeting 1955)

In late 1955, Chris Williams was replaced by Archie Turner, a Scotsman. Chris continued in the Work in Victoria. However, the situation was too much for Turner, and he returned to Scotland. Jack Forbes came and acted as the interim Head Worker for about six months until Willie Donaldson, age 57, from Ireland, arrived in August 1957. Donaldson was able to handle the situation and restored some harmony to the Two by Two Fellowship.

1957: WILLIE DONALDSON, NEW HEAD WORKER OF VICTORIA. Willie was born in Ireland in 1900 and entered the Work during the 1920s. In 1928, he pioneered the Work in Barbados, West Indies, and remained there for the next 30 years. In 1957, he assumed the oversight of VIC. He was sent to Australia with the difficult task of re-establishing unity among the Workers and Friends in VIC, as well as with the rest of the Australia states. He was successful, and was also much loved by the Workers and Friends who held him in high esteem. After a couple years, the holding of separate Conventions ceased and the Friends returned to common Conventions. Willie died in the West Indies in February 1987, and Evan Jones became the Head Worker of VIC.

After two of the divisions were reunited, the word *United* was added to their letterhead: "The *United* Christian Conventions of Australasia and New Zealand." Letterhead may be viewed in Telling the Truth Photo Gallery. Reportedly, the following names were also used at times: "Christian Assemblies of Victoria," "Christian Assemblies of Australia," "Christian Conventions of Australia and New Zealand."

Account by Geoff & Esther Schmidt Victoria, Australia 30 November 1998

I will try to jot down a few of the thoughts I have on the events that took place in Victoria, Australia, as I see it. This will be as I see it and of course, others may have a different view; Merv Schmidt will, because it affected him in a different way than it did me because of our parents. Merv has a real story to tell and I will leave it to him. At the time we were going to the Sunday A.M. mtg at Dad's Aunt's place, Martha Matz, and the Elder was Cliff Berret. [Mr. Berret wrote a number of Hymns some of which are still in the book today.]

My first recollection is an evening we had at Matz' place and an Australian worker was there that had spent a lot of time in USA. RON CAMBELL. I never took much notice at the time but not long after quite a few people were 'put' out.' We were changed to a different mtg, I didn't at first know why but I just know we no longer went to that meeting. At that time any who for some reason or other Bill Carroll thought that they did, or said, or knew something he didn't want them to do, say or know, he EXED them.

Some that went at that time were Merv's parents, Otto and Jenny Schmidt, Mrs Matz and Wils and Leleen Matz, Mr and Mrs Berret, John and Gwen Berret, Jack Schmidt [where the Mildura convention ground was] the Cottrols, and the Beverley's. These formed a meeting at Otto Schmidts place and they continued having meetings WITHOUT PERMISSION. This caused a lot of grief to others in the district and no doubt elsewhere in Victoria and a cry went up to workers all over the world: "COME OVER TO VICTORIA AND HELP US!"

This was taken from the Scripture that says 'come over to Macedonia and help us.' Next I know is that some strange workers we had never heard of were having a special mtg in Mildura. I don't know where. My parents kept following the Victoria workers and we just continued to go to the mission ran by the Victoria workers but at Shoal I heard a lot of things that made me think, and also affected how I thought of workers after that. I started to think that they were not always right. I was about 14 or 15 and had professed at Mildura Convention when I was 11 and that was 2 years before the convention was closed down because I was baptised at Mildura in the Murray River the last time there was a convention here so I remember a lot of the effects it had on me.

Looking back now it was good because it caused me to question a lot of things but that doesn't account for why it took me 40 years to make a move away. As we talked about it at school the fact that there were two different workers around I remember it being told to me what old Jim Morriss when he was speaking to some of the workers at the time, "You may be right and you may be wrong but one thing is sure you can't both be right but you might both be wrong." I often thought of that over the years and often thought a worker could well be wrong. I told our old overseer [E.J.] that on odd occasions and he always let it go. The people that followed the 'foreign' workers had their meetings and those that followed the Victoria workers had their meetings, so there was a bit of a shuffle.

The kids at school still got around together and had our own play time during Religious instruction and that was a very interesting time !!! That split up the meetings as we did not have fellowship one with the others. The ones that stayed with the Victoria workers, some of which were My parents, and of my older sister and I, Morrisons, Alma Schmidt, [Bevan and Sedley's mum] Bonds, Hanstocks, Brastrups, Hutchinsons, Tilley's, Helm's. Some that went with the other workers were the Cox' Schillings, Brebners, McDonalds, Morriss', and so we had 3 groups here. Those that were put out and went to Otto's Church, those that followed the foreign workers, and those that followed the Victoria workers. BUT THERE'S MORE!!

This went on for a couple of years I think and during this time Ritchie and Emily Greenaway came over from Ireland and settled in Mildura. They were put out in 1928 with Eddie Cooney because they were sympathetic with him. So then we also had genuine COONEYITES here. They started building a home in Mildura and as Old Jack Schmidt lived alone in his big house he took them in. Then Eddie Cooney arrived at Jack Schmidt's so now we had 4 groups of Two by Two followers all on different paths. Some time later [I will put how I view it, Merv may have a bit different recall of the events however it is quite some time ago and I'm not doing this with any notes its just of the top of my head.]

Jack Forbes, head worker from UK, was in Mildura with others and the called a reunion mtg. I'm fuzzy on this but it was to bring the people that were put out and those that followed the 'foreign' workers to come together. Eddie went but was refused entry so Jack Schmidt, Cottrols and maybe Beverly's went away with Eddie stating if reconciliation was to be made that Eddie had as much right as anyone else and they walked away and to this day one of the Cottrell girls still fellowship with the Greenaways and continue to this day with their Sunday AM mtgs. Mrs Elliott was at that meeting. She was here from Ireland. One of the very early workers there was put out with Eddie and they missed her as she went in!!!

After that there were big reunion mtgs all around the state and all were brought together again. At this time the workers had a lot of discussions and at Guildford. An agreement was made up and signed by the various workers known as the Guildford report. I have a copy of a summery put out from Dandenong [the then Victoria head office and convention ground].

Eddie Cooney stayed with Ritchie and Emily Greenaway in Mildura till he died in their home. Interestingly we had Ritchie and Emily drop in on us last Saturday week for a brief visit. They are a lovely old couple with a very broad accent. They still faithfully follow Eddie Cooney.

I hope this is of interest to some of you folk. I think that it is a bit like Canada at the moment. The issues are probably not the point, its the autocratic way the workers do things.

By Geoff & Esther Schmidt
Victoria, Australia
30 November 1998

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