

First Missions – Burma

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Burma

Myanmar/Burma

Revised August 31, 2019

NOTE: The British colony of Burma was part of the British run-state in India , the Empire of India , from 1824 to 1937. Burma was separated from the rest of the Indian Empire in 1937, just ten years before India became an independent country, in 1947.

See also "**Of the Gospel in India.**"

Burma is officially the **Republic of the Union of Myanmar**
commonly shortened to **Myanmar**.

The Work of the Gospel in Burma

Adam Hutchison left Australia about the end of 1921 for South Africa where he joined with Colin Watt for some months in meetings. About the 30th April 1922, Adam sailed from South Africa to Madras in India. In a letter written by Adam & dated 27-7-22, Adam wrote that he was in a large town about 200 miles from Madras. Next week, so Adam wrote, I am expecting Colin Watt to arrive. Adam added, "I have been alone now almost 3 months." Adam Hutchison was the first worker to arrive in India. Colin Watt... a South Australian, was the second. Colin left South Australia & went to South Africa in 1916, continuing there until he joined Adam in India 30th July 1922. Once Colin had joined Adam, they began to make their way North to Calcutta.

Sandy Maxwell & Ben Buys sailed from England on the 11th Nov. 1922 for Colombo at which place they arrived one month later. From there they went on to Calcutta where they met up with Adam and Colin. Not long & Sandy and Ben went on to Allahabad and held missions. A number decided.

In the month of November 1924, Adam with Alex Leadbetter left India and went to Burma. So yet once again, Adam is pioneering a new land. They began to hold meetings in the Insein Baptist Church about 10 miles North from the heart of Rangoon. On the night of Sunday the 11th January, 1925, on arrival home from their meeting, Adam felt unwell. He was sickening with Smallpox. By Wednesday, Adam was so sick he was admitted to the hospital. However, Adam grew steadily worse, and at 6:00am of Monday the 25th January, Adam breathed his last.

Alex Leadbetter who was Adam's companion, conducted the funeral service. Adam's mortal remains were interred in the American Baptist Church in Rangoon at the corner of Montgomery & Sparks Street. A Mr & Mrs Walkom, so Alex wrote, were exceedingly sympathetic. Alex added, "I do not know what I would have done without their help." Alex Leadbetter returned to India on the death of Adam, but in early 1926 went back to Burma with Stan Berriman, who had arrived in India from Australia in June 1925 with Syd Maynard. A few months later Alex felt unable to continue in the work any longer and returned home to Scotland. Stan continued on alone for 6 months and then crossed back to India & attended the Convention held in December that year, 1926.

Stan Berriman & Nelson Retchford, the latter, who with Percy Hill had arrived in North India from Australia just in time for the Convention at Delhi, returned to Burma in January 1927, arriving in Rangoon on the 10th of that month.

Cora Bailey & Doreen Blair arrived in Burma from Australia about 1927-8. Ron Schilling arrived in Burma from South Australia, having sailed from Fremantle, Western Australia on the 11th December, 1928. Ron arrived in Delhi, North India a few days before Christmas. He attended the Convention held in the home of Mr & Mrs Frost. Cora Bailey and Doreen Blair came over from Burma for that Convention. In January, 1929, Ron Schilling continued on to Burma. Tom Montieth went with him. Willie Jamieson was present at the Delhi Convention that year. Willie had come by the way of Singapore and Rangoon. He spent a few days in Rangoon with Stan Berriman and Nelson Retchford.

Tom Montieth & Ron Schilling had a few days in India after the Convention.

Una Hedderman & Muriel Paynter arrived in Burma from Australia, in January, 1929.

Tom Montieth went up to Frome with Nelson Retchford. Willie Hughes attended a small Convention in Burma in November, 1929. Willie then went on by boat to North India where he attended the Convention at Delhi. I should mention that Ron Schilling and Tom Montieth spent eight or ten days visiting in Lahore, Amritsar & Ambala with Sandy Maxwell and Fred Lewis. They then went on to Burma.

Una Hedderman had a home visit to New South Wales, Australia about 1936 and evidently returned to Burma in 1937.

John Look sailed from Queensland, Australia for Burma on the 11th October 1937, being accompanied by Tom Turner, elder brother in Queensland at that time. They went via Indonesia where Tom Kilpatrick joined them. From thence, on to Singapore on the 5th November, 1937. They arrived in Penang, Northern Malaysia on the 13th November. After a few days there with the workers and friends, went on to Rangoon in Burma, arriving on the 23rd November, 1937. They attended the small Convention. John Look remained in Burma to assist in the work. The brothers, Stan Berriman and Nelson Retchford were having a tent mission with about 20 unsaved attending. The Convention took place at that time. Tom Turner and Tom Kilpatrick sailed on to India. Nelson also left to labour in India. Cora Bailey and Una Hedderman were in good health... so wrote Tom Turner in his letter dated 10th January, 1938 in Ceylon.

In 1939, John Look fell sick... Bright's disease, and consequently, on the 7th February 1939, John sailed from Burma for Fremantle in Western Australia, a very sick man. He passed away on the 2nd November, 1942, and his grave may be found in the Lutwyche Cemetery, Brisbane, Australia.

Lindsay Stratford ... some time in 1939, Lindsay who was labouring in the Gospel in Penang, Malaysia, went up to be with Stan Berriman in Burma. He stayed about 6 months and returned to Penang. In July, 1940, Percy Attwood came from Australia to be Stan Berriman's companion, leaving Adelaide, South Australia on the 27th June, 1940, per East West Express.

Stanley Berriman had a home visit in 1941 and in the interval, World War Two broke out & Stan did not return to Burma until the latter half of 1946. His companion being Maurice Bowyer from South Australia. They stayed in Burma scarcely 6 months and left. No workers have been able to obtain permission to labour in Burma from that day to this October, 1981.

When World War Two broke out in December, 1941, Nelson Retchford and Percy Attwood were the only workers left in Burma. They escaped to India from the Japanese Armed Forces on the last plane out of the country in early 1942. All the friends also evacuated to India, some 70 in number, except for Jessie Brock who later became Mrs Victor Barretto. For a time, Jessie stood all alone. However, during the years that have passed since then, the only workers able to visit Burma have been those passing through. Among them, Una Hedderman and Nelson Retchford who both laboured in Burma in those early years. During the last 10 years, Thailand workers have paid regular visits to the friends in Burma, that is about every 6 months. Other workers have also visited from time to time as they have traveled to and from their respective fields in the Gospel. At this time, Jessie Barretto, nee Brock, has her husband Victor with her, her 12 children, her sister and brother & nephew. At this time, 1981, our hearts go out to our brethren in Burma, exceedingly. Next month .. November, Nelson Retchford will make yet another visit to Burma. Colin Boto from Thailand will accompany him.

When did the workers first arrive? November, 1924

Who were the first brother workers? Adam Hutchison and Alex Leadbetter (Adam died a couple months later on Jan. 25, 1925; and he is buried at the American Baptist Church in Rangoon)

Second Arrival: Early 1926 – Alex Leadbetter and Stan Berriman who was from Australia. However, Alex returned to Scotland due for health reasons a few months later.

Third Arrival: In January, 1927 – Stan Berriman and Nelson Retchford who was from Australia

Who were the first sister workers? 1927-28 – Cora Bailey and Doreen Blair who were from Australia. Una Hedderman & Muriel Paynter arrived in January, 1929 from Australia.

Who was the first to profess?

Who was the first native to go in the work?

When & Where was the first meeting?

When & Where was the first baptism?

When & Where was the first convention? in 2014 at Myanmar/Burma.

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention currently held?

Who have the Overseers been?

2014: The first convention was held recently in Myanmar/Burma. The workers have not been able to be there permanently for well over 50 years because of the government situation, but there was a good-sized group left from days when there was more freedom. A number of friends had emigrated to Australia, including some who went in the work there, but a number of others chose to stay. Workers visited as often as possible from India and Thailand, and a young Burmese lady went in the work a year or two ago, starting in Cambodia. The political situation seems to have changed quite a bit lately and they are now able to have more liberty for open meetings and workers.

TTT Editor's Note: Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for other countries.

Email TTT

TTT Editor's Note: In the absence of a written account, the above information has been compiled by the TTT Editor from various sources. Corrections or additions are most welcome; as well as other historical accounts for this country [Email TTT](#)