

First Missions – Malaysia

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Malaysia

Malaya/Malaysia & New Guinea

Revised August 7, 2025

Malaysia, formerly known as Malaya and New Guinea

Malaysia was formerly Malaya. The Federation of Malaya achieved independence on August 31, 1957. On September 16, 1963, the independent Federation of Malaysia was formed following the merger of **Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah) with the Federation of Malaya**. Singapore was expelled from the Federation and became an independent country in August 1965.

When did the workers first arrive? 1932

Who were the first brother workers? Lindsay Stratford and Bert Cameron (from Australia)

Who were the first sister workers? Unknown if any before WWII. After the war: Norma Loechel (1946) and Daphne Bonney (1948).

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?

Where have subsequent conventions been held?

Where is the convention currently held? In 2020: Port Dickson, Peninsular; Kota Kinabalu, Sabah; Bintulu, Sarawak; Kuching, Sarawak.

Who have the Overseers been? Alex Mitchell was the Overseer of Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo, Thailand and Vietnam until 1974 when his memory failed. He returned to New Zealand where he died in 1980, aged 84. **Les Hawse**, from Victoria, Australia, went to Malaysia in 1947 where he was overseer.

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In 1932, **Lindsay Stratford and Bert Cameron** (from Australia) were the first Workers to arrive in Malaya. Arthur Shearer (from Australia) arrived in 1937 and Archie Wilson (from New Zealand) in 1940. When the Japanese invaded Malaya in January 1942, Lindsay Stratford was in Singapore. He attempted to escape by ship, but unfortunately, the ship was sunk and those on board were presumed drowned.

Lindsay Stratford from South Australia was a brother to Reg. He started in the work in Queensland in 1928 and went **Malaya in 1932**. In January 1942, in the face of Japanese onslaught, he attempted to escape by ship from **Singapore**. Unfortunately, the ship was sunk and those on board presumed drowned.

Bert Cameron born in 1883 in Tasmania, professed through Adam Hutchison in 1915 and went into the Work in 1923. **In 1932 he went to Malaya** and was there in 1942 when the Japanese overran the country.

Overseer: Alex Mitchell was born in Scotland, immigrated to New Zealand, professed in 1921 and entered the Work in 1922. After a year in Victoria, Australia, he and Jack Trigg pioneered Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1927. He then went to Singapore in 1936 (possibly the first Worker to go there), where apart from home visits, he spent the rest of his days in the Work. From 1942 to 1945, he was interned in Changi Camp, Singapore. He was the Overseer of Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo, Thailand and Vietnam until 1974 when his memory failed. He returned to New Zealand where he died in 1980, aged 84.

1937. Arthur Shearer, from New South Wales, Australia, entered the work in 1925. In 1929, he went to Sri Lanka. **In 1937** he crossed over to **Singapore and Malaya**. He was there at the time of Japanese invasion of January 1942, and with his companion **Archie Wilson** was interned with **Alex Mitchell** and later **Bert Cameron** in Changi Camp until mid 1945. After he was liberated, he returned to NSW, AU, to recuperate. In 1946, he returned to Sri Lanka where he was the Overseer until 1973 when he returned to NSW. He was succeeded by **Harry Morgan**. Arthur remained active in the work until 1977; he died in 1983, aged 86.

1940 & 1947. Archie Wilson, from New Zealand, started in the Work in 1938 and went to **Malaya in 1940**. With several other workers (**Arthur Shearer, Alex Mitchell and later Bert Cameron**), he was interned by the Japanese in Changi Camp from early 1942 to mid-1945. After a year home in NZ **in 1947 he returned to Malaya**. In 1962, he went to **Thailand** where he continued in the work until he died of leukaemia in 1971.

After WWII (1939–1945), Workers from Australia and New Zealand resumed missions in Malaya. Edgar Bell, Dan McNab and Norma Loechel arrived in 1946. The following year Archie Wilson, Arthur Lomas and Daphne Bonney arrived. Fred Allen was there from 1954 to 1957.

1946. Norma Loechel started in the work in Australia in 1933, went to New Zealand in 1939, then to **Malaya in 1946** where she continued to labour for 35 years until 1981 when she returned to South Australia.

1946. Edgar Bell, from Australia, started in the work in 1936. In **1946 he went to Malaya** and in 1956 to **Thailand** where **he and Ralph Joll** became **the pioneers** of that country. He continued there until 1986 when he was no longer able to preach and returned to South Australia where he died in 1991.

1946. Dan McNab, from Australia, started preaching in 1936, and in **1946**, he went to **Malaysia**. He spent some time in **Sabah and the Philippines**.

1946? Lucian Garth, from **Sri Lanka**, went in the work in 1938 and to **Singapore** that same year, where he remained throughout the Japanese occupation but was not interned. Apart from home visits to Sri Lanka he continued laboring in **Malaysia**.

1947. Arthur Lomas, from New Zealand, started preaching in 1939 and **went to Malaysia in 1947**. He returned to NZ in 1982 where he continued laboring.

1947. Les Hawse, from Victoria, Australia, started in the work in 1927. He went to **Malaysia in 1947** where he was overseer.

1947. Susan McCall, from Australia, started in the work in 1929, went to **Malaysia in 1947** and returned to Victoria, AU, in 1955 where she continued to preach until 1984.

1948. Daphne Bonney, from South Australia, started in 1946 and in **1948 went to Malaya**.

1946? Maurice Bowyer, from Australia, started in the work in 1939. He and Stan Berriman went to **Burma after the war**, but they were unable to stay. After a year in India, he preached several years in **Malaya** followed by a time in **Sarawak**.

1950. Cooper Sandosham, from **Malaysia**, started preaching in 1950. He studied dentistry before going in the work. **He labored in Indonesia and Sabah (North Borneo)** and died in 1981, aged 64.

1953-56. Ralph Joll, from New Zealand, entered the work in 1950, **went to Sabah in 1953, and to Malaysia** in 1956.

1954. Fred Allen, from Australia, went to **Malaya** in 1954, and from there to **Vietnam in 1957** where he pioneered the Work until 1975, when all foreigners were evacuated due to the VN war. He returned to the work in Australia.

1957. Jean Hogg, from Australia, started in the work in 1944 and went to **Sri Lanka** in 1947. In **1957** she crossed to **Malaysia** where she spent the next 20 years. In 1976 she returned to preach in Victoria, AU.

1962. Jean Gordon, from Australia, entered the work in 1951, **went to Malaysia in 1962**, then returned in 1975 to the work in South Australia.

1966. Gladys Randall started in the work in South Australia in 1961. In **1966, she went to Malaysia** where she preached for nine years.

1970. Ray Cruickshank, from Australia, started in the work in 1966, **went to Malaysia in 1970, then to Indonesia in 1987** but was unable to stay in the country. He returned to Victoria, AU, where he continued in the work.

1978. Alan Ritson, from Tasmania, started in the work in 1970. In **1978 he went to Malaysia**. In 1991 he returned to Tasmania. In 1992, he went to preach in Ohio, US.

1980. Graeme Thompson, from New Zealand, entered the work in 1977, went to **Malaysia** in 1980, then to Australia in July 1990 when his 10 years expired.

See also **Work of the Gospel in Singapore and Malaysia (Malaya)**

The following is from Fred Allen's Account of Early Days.

MALAYSIA~SINGAPORE

Then at the end of that year, **Alec Mitchell** had wanted someone to go to **Malaysia**, and I had offered to go, so after the Conventions in 1954, I left to go to Malaysia and **Alec** wanted me to get there for the Conventions, and I hadn't sort of bargained on that—I thought it was a bit later. But anyway, I had to get my injections, of course, but I couldn't get them tested—I had to do that when I got back to Queensland. I caught a boat from Brisbane—it had been in Perth but it was too late to get on it there so I caught it in Brisbane—so I went over by train to Queensland and caught the boat there and went around through the top, through Cape York and out to **Singapore** that way—got to Singapore on the 1st April. That was their Preparation time over there, so we went straight out to No. 7 Sandy Lane to do Preps, and I had to get used to the ways of Singapore.

I had a broken arm too—before I left Perth, we had gone up to the hills to get some poles for electric lights and when they were putting them on the truck, I was at one end, and there were three or four fellows on the other, and they let their end drop and my end shot up and then came back and caught me on the end of the thumb and broke a little bone at the base of the thumb. So when I went overseas, I had a broken arm, but anyway, when I got to Singapore it was so hot and humid, my arm began to itch so I got a hacksaw and took the plaster off. I never had any more worry with it afterwards, so it was all right.

And then after the Convention there, they had to shift from where they were out to Bedow. A nice place near the sea, which was just across the road and handy for **Baptisms**. They had a lot of work to do, there was an old pond there, a Chinese grave and the water from this grave ran into the pond and so we had to get permission to fill that pond up, but we couldn't touch the grave, of course. We had to dig out the hill side that was heavy clay, dig out coconut trees, and it was quite a big job.

Then after that, **Les Hawse** and I went up to Seremban—so it was good to have someone that knew the run of the ropes for a start, but **Les** not too long afterwards, went back to Australia and I had one of the other boys, **Kok Jing**, he was in the Work at that time, so he joined me.

So all the time I was in Malaysia, I was in the Seremban area. We used to have up to four Meetings on Sunday and two during the week. Sometimes two on Saturday as well. So we were kept pretty busy. Three men professed there, a Mr. Dudley, Mr. Rajahhe professed and another man. Mrs. Dudley did profess but not sure how she finished up. They were all Indians, the three of them. But this other chap, he went back to India, but I don't think he really finished up well—I never heard much more of him after he went back to India.

NEW GUINEA

In 1953, Syd Preshaw and Ken Kruger went up to New Guinea to start the Work there— there had been no one in that country before that. The same as when I went to Vietnam, well there was nobody there before we went there.

When **Syd** went to New Guinea first, there weren't many roads around, they had to travel by sea to go around to most places, or walk, that's the only way they got from place to place. But as the time has gone on, things have improved in that respect, but it's still a very hard country, for the health, and many of the Workers that have gone there have broken down in health. But it's good to see the results that they've had, and now they have Conventions in three different places. The two Conventions in the North, one is on an island, and they are both very small Conventions, but down at Hula, (they started at Rego I think, and then shifted to Hula afterwards), that is a Convention where there is about 300 with kids and all—so that's quite good for that country.

Edwin [Allen] went up after **Ken Kruger**—he was bitten with a snake a few years after they got there and he died—and **Edwin** went up to take his place. And then in 1960, **Edwin** felt he should come over to join us in Vietnam, so he came over there then. After we came back, **Edwin** went up again into New Guinea, and he also went over to the Solomon's and to Noumea and some of the islands but they couldn't seem to be able to get permission to stay in those places. And then of course, **Edwin**, he has come back to Queensland now, and **Alan Mitchell** has taken his place up in New Guinea. The number of workers up there at the present time are small so we don't just know what's going to happen in the future.

Additional or corrected information on this country will be very welcome.

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](#)