

First Missions – India

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – India

Republic of India

Revised December 5, 2022

Wikipedia: India "is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by area, the second-most populous country, and the most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the southeast, it shares land borders with Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north; and Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives; its Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia."

See also "**The Work of the Gospel in Burma.**" 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, ten years before India became an independent country in 1947.

The Gospel in India

India, formerly a British colony, became an independent country in 1947

When did the workers first arrive? Approximately April 1922

Who were the first brother workers? Adam Hutchison and Colin Watt; then Sandy Maxwell and Ben Buys in Nov. 1922. Sid Maynard arrived around 1925.

Who were the first sister workers? in 1925: Teenie Walker (New Zealand), Gertie Barendilla and Dora McKenzie (both from South Africa)

Who was the first to profess? In Allahaba, *"In March 1923 the meeting was tested. Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, Ivy Taylor nee Permien, Mrs. Newton who died a few years later and Mr. Francis an Indian, professed."*

Who was the first native to go in the work? Lizzie Bux and Betty McAuley were the first to start in India, both in 1927. They were Anglo-Indians, among whom most of the first work was done. Gladstone Abraham and Austin Bevis were the first brothers to start in 1937, Gladstone of Indian blood and Austin an Anglo-Indian. Gladstone continued in the work for one year. Austin was in the work all his life, and after partition was overseer in Pakistan (his native area) until he died in 1985. James Paranjothy was the first Indian of Indian blood to start in the work and continue. He started in 1947 and continued in the work until his death in 1996.

When & Where was the first Sunday meeting? In the home of the Nicolls in Allahabad in 1923

When & Where was the first baptism? In Allahabad in 1923

When & Where was the first convention? In the Nicoll home at Allahabad in 1925.

Where are the conventions currently held?

North: Lucknow,

South: Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Bangalore, Coimbatore and Mysore, Karnataka

Who have the Overseers been?

FIRST: Adam Hutchison who died Jan. 19, 1925 in Burma of smallpox

Succeeded by Sydney Maynard from Kanowna, Western Australia (died Nov. 8 1954, aged 68)

The oversight for India was then divided into two areas, North and South.

SOUTH INDIA:

Reg Stratford took the oversight for South India until he returned to Australia in 1997. (died in Australia in 2002)

2009: Current overseer in South India is Bill Lester, originally from New Zealand.

NORTH INDIA:

Percy Hill took the oversight for North India (died March 29, 1977)

Bill Paynter then assumed the oversight until his death.

Succeeded by Norman Frost until his death (died in 2000).

2009: Current overseer in North India is Desmond Harding, born in India (native Indian blood, not European) and raised in Australia.

After WWII:

In 1949, after WWII, Alwilda Watkins from Michigan went to Austria with Irene Zahora.

The following account was compiled by EDGAR BELL, Overseer in Thailand for a number of years. He entered the work in 1936. In 1946 he went to Malaya and in 1956 to Thailand where he and Ralph Joll became the pioneers in that country. He continued there except for home visits until 1986 when ill health forced him to return to South Australia, where he died in 1991. Syd Maynard was the worker who took the gospel to Kangaroo Island where Edgar's parents professed.

Of the Gospel in India – July 1982

ADAM DICKSON HUTCHISON born 10th Dec. 1873 in Lauder, Scotland . Adam went forth to preach in 1902. Wilson Reid listened to Adam in 1903. Adam sailed from the U.K. early Sept. 1905 in company with 16 others on the ship GEELONG, bound for New Zealand. On the 17th Sept. their ship arrived in South Africa. Wilson Reid, Joe Kerr, Martha Skerritt and Barbara Baxter landed at Capetown. Alec Pearce and John Cavanagh at Port Elizabeth. Mary Moodie and Lily Reid at Durban.

The GEELONG sailed on to Melbourne, Australia arriving on the 11th Oct. 1905. Annie Smith and Fanny Carroll disembarked and on the 25th boarded the ship MONOWAI for Dunedin, New Zealand. The GEELONG continued on to Sydney arriving on the 15th Oct. They boarded the ship WARRIMOO; that is Adam Hutchison, Joe Williamson, Maggie McDougall and Frances Hodgins did, and sailed for Wellington in New Zealand, arriving there on the 25th of Oct. 1905. John Fraser and Jim Hodgins sailed from Sydney for Auckland per ship ZEALANDIA on the 18th Oct. 1905. Adam with Jim Murray arrived in Melbourne from New Zealand on the 16th March 1907. Adam was among those who attended Northcote convention, Victoria in March – April 1908, this being the first convention ever held in Australia. Twenty six workers were present.

In early 1906, about April or May, Adam Hutchison and Jim McCreigh arrived in Adelaide from Melbourne and made their way on foot some 20 miles to Woodside in the Adelaide Hills. There they held the first mission ever in South Australia. During the next few years Adam held missions in many parts of the state. In 1916 Adam crossed to Tasmania and worked there about 5 years, but Adam retained the oversight of the work in South Australia.

In late 1921, Adam sailed away to South Africa and joined in the work there with Colin Watt for a time. The latter professed in South Australia through Adam in 1911 and went forth to preach in 1912. Then Colin crossed over to South Africa in 1916.

At the end of April 1922 approximately, Adam sailed alone from South Africa for India disembarking at Madras. Three months later on the 27th July, Adam wrote a letter, saying that he was now 200 miles from Madras, seeking to do just what he could in the Gospel. Next week, so Adam wrote, "I expect Colin Watt to arrive from South Africa to join me. We shall then make our way North to Calcutta."

SANDY MAXWELL who had served as a member of the British Army in India, heard the Gospel in Scotland, his native land. Sandy sailed from the U.K. for Colombo [Sri Lanka] on the 11th November, 1922, arriving just one month later. BEN BUYS may have joined Sandy's ship in Durban, South Africa, or on the other hand, came up to Colombo on a separate boat and there became Sandy's companion. However, it is supposed that from Colombo (in Sri Lanka) at least, they journeyed together to Calcutta in India where they met up with Adam Hutchison and Colin Watt.

Sandy decided to go to Allahabad, taking Ben Buys with him. Sandy in his unsaved days had been stationed in Allahabad with his regiment. The Nicoll family were living there. On the 7th Jan. 1923, Sandy and companion held the first meeting in the YMCA, this according to Lois Nicoll. Nine people attended that meeting, including Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, the parents of Lois Nicoll. The latter now lives in Adelaide, South Australia. Lois wrote to me saying that her father at that time was ripe for the Truth, having joined many sects over the years, but because of disappointment had become very worldly.

Several homes opened for meetings, Nicolls being the first to do so. Mr. Nicoll accepted the Truth from the very first meeting, knowing it was from God. In March, 1923 the meeting was tested. Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, Ivy Taylor nee Permien, Mrs. Newton who died a few years later and Mr. Francis an Indian, professed. "Adam was often in our home," so wrote Lois Nicoll. This being when the family were living in Allahabad. The first time Adam was in the Nicoll home being in 1923. Adam, possibly with Colin Watt, went to Shimla in 1924, where they met the Wilsons and Frosts. A Mrs. Sowedia was the first to profess, the Wilsons and Frosts later, so wrote Lois Nicoll.

GEORGE WALKER went to India for a visit in October 1924 and special meetings took place to mark the occasion. Workers who were present being – Adam Hutchison, George Walker, Colin Watt, Sandy Maxwell, Ben Buys, Alec Leadbetter, Sydney Ashman. Also present were 5 saints. George Walker was then taken to Delhi to meet Mr. Wilson who was there alone. Mr. Wilson was baptized at that time.

ADAM HUTCHISON and Alec Leadbetter left Allahabad by train in Nov. 1924 for Calcutta, where they embarked on a ship for Burma. They commenced meetings in Insein some 10 miles out from Rangoon. Being invited to preach in the Insein Baptist church they gladly did so.

However not long – that is on the evening of the 11th Jan. 1925, Adam fell sick with what proved to be smallpox. He grew steadily worse and had to be admitted to the hospital in Rangoon, where he passed away on the 19th Jan. 1925. Alec Leadbetter was obliged to conduct the burial service of his own companion. Just a few members of the Insein Baptist church were present at the burial. A Mr. and Mrs. Walkon(?) made all the needful arrangements for the burial. In a letter dated the 20th Jan. 1925, Alec L. wrote, "The Walkons were exceeding kind. I do not know what I would have done without them."

In October 1925, Teenie Walker, Gertie Barendilla and Dora McKenzie arrived in India, being the first sister workers to that country. Teenie was a New Zealander and the others were South Africans. In June of the same year there arrived in India from Australia, SYDNEY MAYNARD and Stanley Berriman. These two stayed for a time in the home of the Nicoll family in Allahabad just prior to the convention that took place in Allahabad in November 1925.

JACK CARROLL came from the USA and attended that convention. Now that there were sisters, a baptism took place for those who had professed in Allahabad in 1923. Among those to go through the waters of baptism were Mr. and Mrs. Nicoll, Mrs. Lydia David of Jullunder [now spelled "Jalandhar"] was present at that baptism. NOTE: Lydia David of Jullunder finished her course with honour on the 18th Jan. 1982.

The first convention in India was held in Nicoll home at Allahabad in the year 1925. Conventions were held in Delhi from December 1926 until 1937 in Frost home. From 1938 to 1946, conventions were held in the Nicoll home in Lucknow. (From 1947 till 1988 conventions were at Bareilly in Ritchie home. From 1989 conventions are taking place at Lucknow.)

During 1926, Teenie Walker held some meetings in the Nicoll home in Allahabad and Gwen Strife professed. At that time Gwen was engaged to Christie Permien and a little later they were married. At the present time these two are living in Devon in England. L. Nicoll wrote to me as follows, "Marjorie Wilson told me that they had professed in Oct. 1924. Mr. Wilson was alone in Delhi, for Mrs. Wilson was still in Simla at the time that George Walker went to Delhi to see Mr. Wilson.

SANDY MAXWELL held meetings in several places in Allahabad; at a club, in several homes, besides two places where they lodged. In his diary Sandy wrote "closed at Allahabad 26 July, 1923."

SYDNEY MAYNARD on arrival in India in June 1925, took the oversight in place of Adam Hutchinson who died in Burma. Sydney Maynard first heard the Gospel in 1906 through Laura Falkiner and Aggie Hughes in Kalgoorlie, Western Australian gold fields. During that year Sydney professed and 6 months later went forth into the work. This being about the beginning of 1907.

TOM BEATTIE arrived in India also in 1925. In 1926 quite a number of workers arrived, among them were Percy J Hill, Nelson Retchford and Dora McKenzie. Bill Tibbs, Alec Matz, Ethel Nagel and Vivie Hawse came in 1927. Jack Zantuck, a Tasmanian, came in 1932. BILL PAYNTER arrived in 1928. There were others who also joined in the work in India, among them Hettie Roodt and Martha Roy from South Africa.

Not long after World War 2, India gained independence and as a result many of the Anglo-Indian friends left India and went to live in other countries. This was a serious set back to the work of the Gospel in India. In 1954, Sydney Maynard took sick and passed away. (Syd passed away on the 8th Nov. 1954. Jack Zantuck and Jeff Kely took the service at the home. Reg Stratford and Charles Hall at the graveside.) His grave is to be found in Bangalore, South India.

REG STRATFORD then took the oversight of the work in South India. The responsibility for North India fell on the shoulders of PERCY HILL. Since that time the work has prospered in the South, chiefly amongst the native people. In the North the work has been much more slow but during the last 10 years or so is gaining ground. The people in the north are vastly different to the Tamils and Telugus of South India.

Percy Hill left India for the last time in 1974 and passed away on the 29th March 1977. BILL PAYNTER then assumed the oversight in North India and continues in the capacity unto this day, 1982. (Bill P. passed away on the 2nd Jan 1987. NORMAN FROST is the overseer in North India at present.) Nelson Retchford left India for home in 1968 but has continued to preach the Gospel in his home state until now. He is presently aged 80 years. (Nelson R. passed away on the 29th Nov. 1989.) During the last 20 years many other workers have joined in the work in India, particularly in the South and a work is being done. (There are 23 Indian workers in the South – 10 brothers and 13 sisters. 2 Indian brothers and one Indian sister, in N. India) Percy Hill, Reg Stratford and Nelson Retchford are South Australians.

NOTE: Ivy Permien married Ernie Taylor and they now are living in Devon, U.K. Ivy has a brother Christie who with his wife Gwen live in Devon – they both profess. Ernie Taylor had 2 sisters – Alice and Winnie. Both professed and continued faithfully in the way until their final call came from God. Alice became Mrs. De Beaux and Winnie became Mrs. Jackson. Both had children and the 2 families settled in Western Australia. Some of their children are professing. John De Beaux is a brain surgeon in U.K. He and his wife are professing.

Written for the Eight who Sailed from Australia to India

By T. M. Turner

Brave souls, farewell, God is with you.
Then fear not storm nor tempest wild,
The Lord's strong arm will you uphold,
He loves, He guards each blood bought child.

Above "the Line" a harvest waits
He longs to see it garnered home
Beloved, how good you lingered not
You answered India's pleading, "Come."

What matter then the falling tear?
Or riven heart with each adieu?

He watches, weighs, He knows the cast
To each who would to Him be true.

Who leaveth all an hundred fold
Shall have from Him who cannot lie
Hush, hush, be still my human soul
For such a prize, tis worth to die.

A hundred souls set free from sin
A hundred homes where He can reign
Oh, righteous soul: Oh, jewelled prize
Deter me not, Oh, death and pain.

Our hearts are knit to you, beloved!
The cords are spun by heaven's hand.
We cannot fail to pray for you,
Who now obey Christ's last command.

Additional or corrected information for 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](#)