

First Missions – Sri Lanka

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka

Revised October 3, 2017

Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon

Ceylon gained independence in 1948 and changed its name to Sri Lanka when it became a republic in 1972.

Friends refer to their group as "*The Fold*"

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When did the workers first arrive? Reportedly in 1927

Who were the first brother workers? Where were they from? Jack Trigg, Australia and Alec/Alex Mitchell, from Scotland/New Zealand. **[View Photo of these 2 men.](#)**

Alex/Alec Mitchell was born in Scotland and immigrated to New Zealand. He professed in 1921 and went in the Work in 1922. He labored in Sri Lanka from 1927 to 1936 when he went to Singapore. In 1942, during WWII Alec, along with Arthur Shearer, Archie Wilson and later Bert Cameron were interned in Changi Camp until mid-1945. He was overseer of Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo, Thailand and Vietnam until 1974 when his memory failed and he returned to NZ where he died in 1980, aged of 84.

Jack Trigg (John Samuel Trigg) from Victoria, Australia. His mother professed in 1908 through Laura Falkiner and Aggie Hughes, who both professed through Wm Irvine in 1898. Jack started in the work in South Australia in 1922 where he had three years before going to Victoria, then to Sri Lanka in 1927 with Alec Mitchell, where he spent about 20 years. He was born in 1894 in Winchelsea, Victoria and died August 9, 1982, aged 87 and is buried in Winchelsea Cemetery. The Trigg family were dairy farmers from Bambra, Victoria, and professed in the 1920s. He was put out of the work for child sexual molestation but was allowed to sit in meetings. There were 8 children in the Trigg family. Jack's twin sister was Violet (Vi) Ann Trigg. Violet was in the work for awhile also.

Who were the first sister workers? Alice Morris from Tasmania went in the work in 1919 and was one of the first sister workers to go to Sri Lanka in 1928 where she continued to preach until she died there in 1962.

Who were the first to profess, what year and where? Reportedly Minnie Jayewardene (not sure of spelling) who was a Methodist College school teacher was the first Ceylonese to convert. Another was a Mrs. Keegal (not sure of spelling), about 1929-1930.

Who were the first native workers to go in the work and when?

First Native Brother Workers: Lucian Garth in 1938 to Singapore, died 2004; and Christie de Silva from 1942-1988.

First Native Sister Workers: Elaine Felsing 1951-56 (b. abt 1996; married F. Wm Charles "Dick" Colin-Thomé in 1965); Gloria Karunaratne (deceased), Mary David (b. abt 1929), Rochelle Jayasinghe (b. abt 1975)

When & Where was the first Gospel Meeting? —

Called by outsiders the: "*Trigg and Mitchell Mission*" and the "*Tent Mission*"

When & Where was the first Sunday fellowship meeting? —

When & Where was the first baptism? —

When & Where was the first convention? Nugegoda (about 1973-2013)

Where have subsequent conventions been held? In a rented facility in Arunodhaya, Athurugiriya.

The Overseers have been:

Arthur Shearer from NSW, Australia entered the work in 1925 and went to Sri Lanka in 1929. In 1937 he crossed over to Singapore and Malaya. He was there at the time of Japanese invasion of Jan. 1942, and was interned along with his companion Archie Wilson, Alec Mitchell and later Bert Cameron in Changi Camp until mid 1945. On being liberated he returned to NSW to recuperate. In 1946 he returned to Sri Lanka where he was Overseer until 1973 when he returned to NSW. Arthur remained active until 1977 and died in 1983 at the age of 86.

Harry Morgan from Victoria, Australia entered the work in 1930 and went to Sri Lanka with **Clem Geue** in 1937 where he continued until his death in 1988 at the age of 80. He was given the oversight of Sri Lanka when Arthur Shearer left for Australia in 1973. **Clem Geue** labored in Sri Lanka from 1937 to 1964 when he returned to Western Australia where he had the Oversight until he died in January 1980, aged 69.

John Blair was born in 1927 in New Zealand; started in the work in 1957; and went to Sri Lanka in 1962. When Harry Morgan died in 1988, John succeeded him as Overseer until 2014 when he retired in Sri Lanka from bad health. He died on September 17, 2017 and is buried in the Borella General Cemetery (Kanatta).

Peter Morrison (born abt 1963) from Queensland, Australia succeeded John Blair and became Overseer around 2014.

Native Language? Several languages are spoken in Sri Lanka. Official status is given to: **Sinhalese** and **Tamil**. Most are fluent in English.

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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**