

MISSIONARY

HERALD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
CHEISTSTRASSE 31
8003 RÜSCHLIKON SWITZERLAND

NOVEMBER 1983 PRICE 20p



**WHAT FUTURE
FOR THE CHURCH
IN HONG KONG?**



NOVEMBER 1983

IN THIS ISSUE

- 203 **WHAT FUTURE FOR HONG KONG'S CHURCH?**
Preparing for 1997
- 204 **SEEING THINGS FROM THE OTHER SIDE**
Rosemary Williams meets a convert to Islam
- 205 **Q's by Deka**
- 206 **THE ALMS RACE**
Richard Henderson Smith talks about beggars
- 208 **BRIEF ENCOUNTERS IN PARANÁ**
Keith Boucher describes his brief visit
- 210 **BLACK RIVER COUNTRY**
Roy Connor's involvement in church renewal in Rio Negro
- 214 **MISSIONTALK**
- 216 **THE GLORY OF THE SONS**
The story of Eltham College by Frank Wells
- 218 **ASK HARRY**
Bernard Ellis takes a light-hearted look at missionary movements
- 219 **MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS ETC**

Cover Picture:
Hong Kong's future

We share in the work of the Church in:

Angola	Nepal
Bangladesh	Sri Lanka
Brazil	Tanzania
India	Trinidad
Jamaica	Zaire

COMMENT

HAVE we in the churches come to grips with the new kind of world in which we live? Are we facing up to the challenges of today's 'one world' of which we are part? Are we geared up to accept the need to change our approach to living and working within a multi-racial and multi-cultural community, not just on our doorstep, but worldwide?

In this edition of the *Herald* Rosemary Williams tells the story of a conversion away from the Christian faith to Islam, and of a re-conversion to the Sikh religion. It is timely to remind ourselves that we are not the only folk around.

Growth

Perhaps we have remained cosedly content for too long, lulled by stories of church growth around the world. It is, of course, good to read about increases in the world Christian population. We are told that there is an average net increase of 64,000 new Christians each day, and that numerically the Church is increasing in size each year. Today there are just over one billion active practising church members.

Unfortunately statistics can only tell part of the story. Such figures of growth represent the difference between births among the Christian communities and the deaths of Christians. We also have to take into account the many folk, like the girl in Rosemary Williams' article, who defect, or who, born within a Christian family, never come to a living faith themselves.

Decline

It seems that after more than a century of real growth, the Church is just beginning to lose ground. The world population growth is too rapid for the Church to keep up. The Church is growing each year, but proportionally it represents a declining percentage of the world population.

Statistically Christians represent about one third of the total world population, although only 23 percent could be described as active. The next biggest world faith is Islam with 17 percent, followed by Hinduism, 13 percent, and Buddhism at 8 percent.

Alongside the traditional world faiths a new group has mushroomed. More than 20 percent of the world population is now atheist or agnostic, and it is growing at the rate of eight and a half million each year.

Another point to note is that just at the time when the missionary ardour of our churches seems to be on the decline, other religions are taking up a more aggressively missionary stance. In fact Moslems have been studying Christian missionary methods in order to model some of their activities in the continent of Europe.

So where does that leave us? Do we accept the challenge? We would say yes, because the missionary job of the Church will remain as long as the Church exists. That is her reason for being, to make known in worship, witness and service the loving, saving acts of God through His Son Jesus Christ. If we cease to 'let the whole world know' we cease to be His Church.

If you read the pages of the *Herald* each month, you will read of how British churches, through the BMS are in partnership with Christians overseas and so actively involved today in presenting the challenge of Jesus Christ to the world. But that partnership needs to grow if decline is to be arrested.

MISSIONARY HERALD

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY
93/97 Gloucester Place, London W1H 4AA
Tel: 01-935 1482

General Secretary

Rev R G S Harvey

Overseas Secretary

Rev A T MacNeill

Editor

Rev D E Pountain

© 1983 Baptist Missionary Society

Photoset and printed by
Stanley L Hunt (Printers) Ltd
Rushden, Northamptonshire

Enquiries about service to:
Rev (Mrs) A W Thomas

ISSN 0264-1372



What future for Hong Kong's Church?

WHAT is going to happen to the Church in Hong Kong? As the British Government negotiates with China over the future status of the colony, church leaders are making preparations for the day when Hong Kong becomes part of the Chinese People's Republic.

The 99 year lease, which Britain holds on the New Territories, expires on 30 June, 1997, but China is taking this opportunity to discuss the future position of the whole of Hong Kong. Most folk fully expect that it will become part of China well before 1997. So what are the implications for the Christian community?

The BMS no longer has any workers in the colony, since the return of Dorothy Smith last year, but there is still a large missionary contingent there. In fact some missionary organizations have their headquarters in Hong Kong. The real question is not whether missionaries will be allowed to stay, but whether they ought to remain.

In 1950-51 all foreign missionaries in China were so hampered and restricted in their activities that they were virtually forced to leave the country. Some have seen this as the time when the Chinese church came of age. Isolated from all foreign influences it has emerged, through suppression and persecution, stronger than before. It is now a truly Chinese church without the denominationalism which is the hallmark of the Church in the west.

Nevertheless Christianity exists in China under severe restrictions and the question is whether Christians in Hong Kong will have to conform to the Chinese pattern when China has sovereignty over the area.

Seminar

Earlier this year the Fellowship of China Ministries organized a seminar for the missionary community in Hong Kong. They heard papers on the Chinese Church and later they met again to discuss mission strategy.

Some people were very pessimistic about the future, believing that there was no hope for the Christian missions. Others felt that nothing could hamper God's work which will continue in spite of all obstacles placed in its path.

Most, however, sought to come to grips with the political realities and to see how God works through history. Several felt that the future should not be regarded as closed. 'Even if we expect the worst in 1997, we must pray for change.' Of course everyone in Hong Kong does expect a change by 1997, but the nature of that change is unknown. The general feeling at the seminar was that two major alternatives lay before the Christian community in Hong Kong.

The first is a repeat of what happened in China in the 1950's. The foreign missionary community will be forced to leave and there will be pressure on the Hong Kong people to isolate themselves from foreigners.

There is a feeling that all Christian educational and charitable work and the distribution of Bibles and literature will have to stop, because this is what happened in China at the time of the revolution. Although in the former Portuguese colony of Macau the Christian schools have been allowed to retain their staff who have been severely regulated.

Differences

The second view expressed was that there are differences between the situation in the 1950's and the situation today. China is determined to become prosperous, and in order to do so she is seeking international co-operation and abandoning self-sufficiency and isolation.

Everyone agreed that there is a great challenge for Christian missions in Hong Kong. There was a call to increase efforts in church planting, and a feeling that, since Christian growth is often seen in times of crisis, there are now increased opportunities for communicating the gospel.

There is likely to be freer travel into mainland China after 1997, so the Christian population of Hong Kong will be able to witness further afield.

It was also felt that the time between now and 1997 should be used to prepare local Christians for a life under socialism and for a loss of some of the freedoms they now enjoy. Since the communists respect a well-organized voice, Christians need to know a greater unity and to have a better organization than at the present.

The church will be asked to conform to the standards of the church in China, so some people are arguing that the leadership of the churches must be handed over to local Chinese as soon as possible. Linked with this is the belief that it would be a good idea for the missionary community to leave well before 1997.

Some however felt that they were in Hong Kong because of the call of God and to leave because of political pressures would ignore that calling. All were nevertheless agreed that plans would have to be made for more difficult times ahead.

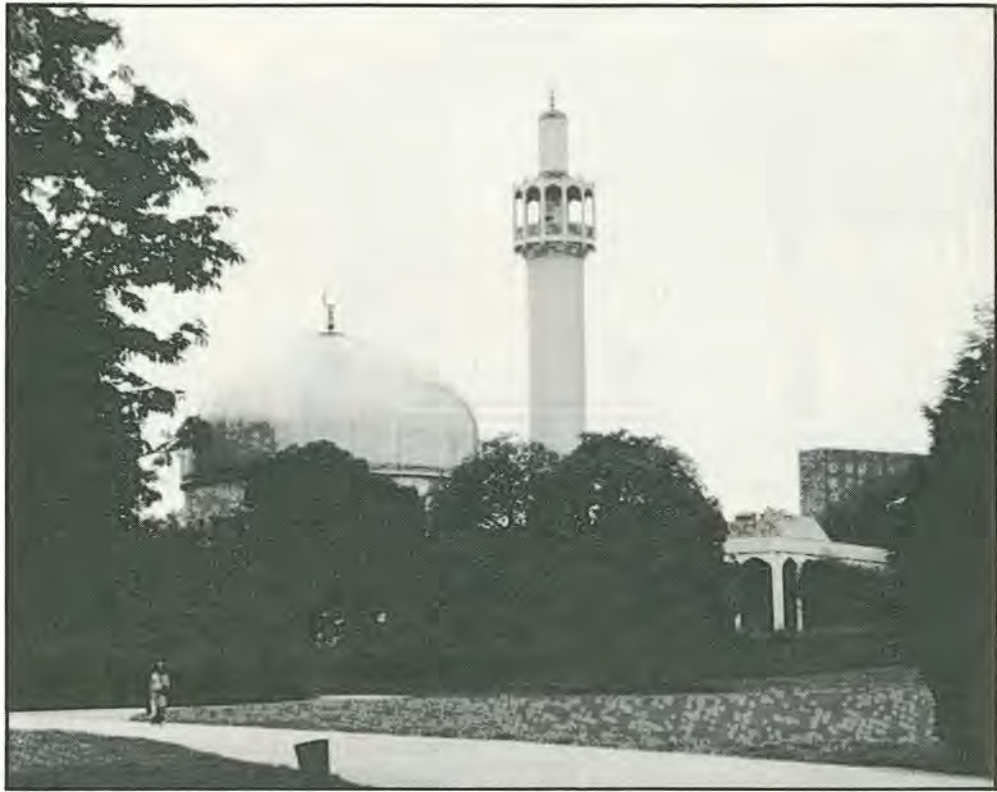
'In a multi cultural society converts are won away from as well as towards Christianity' –

Rosemary Williams

WE ARE all familiar with conversions from other religions to Christianity both in this country and overseas, and we naturally rejoice when such conversions take place. When we were working with the BMS in India we saw and heard of new Christian converts turned out of their Hindu or Muslim homes, cast off by their former friends and taking refuge with Christian families.

Recently, here in Birmingham, we have seen things the other way round. We were visiting our very good Muslim friends again and were introduced to a twenty year old white English girl wearing Muslim dress. She was living with them. She soon explained to us that she had recently taken a Muslim name, that she was learning Urdu and Arabic and studying the Koran. Our first thought was that she had met a Muslim boy and had in this way become interested in Islam. But no! She assured us she was a true convert to Islam with no ulterior motives; her family had strongly disapproved of her actions and she was temporarily being looked after by this very hospitable and helpful Muslim family.

Far from already having a boyfriend, the family was making marriage arrangements for her with a Muslim man in Leicester whom she had never heard of or seen. And what a life she will be facing, especially if like all the women folk of that family, she will be in complete purdah (rarely going outside the house and heavily veiled). Yet she was very happy and was fully convinced she was taking the right step. The family



Moslem mosque prominent in Regent's Park, London

Seeing things from the other side

too was rejoicing, but you can imagine that for the rest of that evening we felt somewhat uneasy.

In this inner-city now we have many opportunities of making friends with those of another faith. More recently at a local wedding, we met a very charming Sikh girl and she soon engaged in quite deep conversation with us. She told us how she was twenty-five and a University graduate, in Maths and Computer studies, going on to do further research at her University here. She came from a devout Sikh family and practised her religion quite openly. In her earlier days at University she was very much influenced by some Christian friends and after much careful thought and meditation decided that she would become a Christian. This was all right at University but when she went home there were hard family conflicts and great opposition. She resisted this for a while but it eventually became too intense for her and she prayed hard that she might do the right thing. She was

finally convinced that she should go back to her family's religion and for the rest of her life be the very best Sikh that she could be. Her devotion, her humility and her piety, like the Muslims', puts many of us Christians to shame.

These two incidents and several others recently, set me thinking about conversions from one religion to another. When it happens it is always an enormous step to take, and is certainly not as simplistic as some Christians imply. Also, today, we have to recognize that there is a two-way traffic. Converts are being won away from us as well as towards Christianity. This is bound to happen and we live in a multi-cultural society. I have written, in a previous article, about the joys and the blessings of getting to know people of other faiths and of discussing our religion with each other.

Much hard praying and thinking still needs to be done!

Q's Q's Q's *by Deba*

LETTERS from two different missionaries working in Bangladesh pose problems and questions that perhaps do not confront us in quite the same way. Some of them are questions that an individual may have to face; others highlight contrasts that present differing challenges for both the BMS and us to face.

Perhaps inevitably, but certainly very often, when we have not visited the different countries ourselves we may be tempted to think that all 'Third World' countries have the same conditions and problems before them. When we think more deeply we know this cannot be correct. Here some examples are highlighted for us:

There is a vast difference in Asia's and Africa's life-styles and culture. In Asia we struggle with exploding population and diminishing agricultural resource, while in Africa the small population has the immense Tropical Rain Forest resource at its disposal. A rough comparison – Zaire has five times the land area of Bangladesh and one sixth of the population. Church leaders in Bangladesh represent thousands of Christians, whereas Church leaders in Zaire represent tens of thousands of Christians.

These disparities underline the kind of problems the BMS must take into consideration when planning policy, and allotting funds and personnel. How do you decide priorities?

Q Q Q Q Q

Some problems seem unanswerable on a human level; and when a human life may be lost because of advice and teaching ignored it is hard not to be

discouraged. How does one get the teaching heard, accepted, and put into practice? What do you feel as you read the following?

The only son of one of our workers (a clinic worker) developed a fever – he forgot all he had learnt and went straight to two 'kobiraj' practitioners; how now will the local people believe what he says when they are sick?

The next question is really hard.

Apon Saheb is a little boy of about two, though his weight is less than that of a healthy one year old. His smile is enough to break your heart, but he doesn't smile very often, malnutrition takes away all zest from life. His father brings him most days for feeding, but sometimes he takes him when he goes

begging instead. Our suggestion that Apon Saheb be left with a local mother while his father tried to find work met with no success as no-one wanted to help. His mother died a few months ago of TB. His father is willing but not very able. What is Apon Saheb's future? Are we really helping or just prolonging the inevitable?

That is the kind of question that many of us may prefer to close our eyes to – in our own society the parents of a severely brain injured baby, for example, may ask themselves the same question.

There surely is no 'pat' answer to those questions, but are we awake to them? Do we listen to what they are challenging us about? Do we pray for those who have to respond to those imponderables because of the work they do?



Sue Headlam talking to a mother at an under 5's clinic



Richard Henderson Smith



I DELIVERED some visitors and colleagues to the airport, some twelve miles out of Chittagong town, the other day. After checking them into the departure lounge I waited in the car park, as I always do, to make sure their 'plane actually took off and they wouldn't be left stranded. As I stood there, one after the other, two mothers came to me begging. Tiny, young-old women, pale, drawn, worried – holding out their babies, each about a year old I suppose, but so thin. One had sores all over her face, the other a livid patch of impetigo surrounding his mouth. Each mother was resigned to her fate as a beggar and barely surviving as the recipients of merit-giving alms in this predominantly Muslim society. I, a doctor, on this occasion merely a taxi driver, was unequipped and about 40 miles from our hospital. But meeting these two was by no means a surprise. Had I gone to the railway station, or to a bus stand, there would have been perhaps a score of beggars including cripples, wasted or bloated children, amputees, the blind, old and not a few able-bodied men soliciting alms.

Why are the streets so full of these unfortunates? Simply because under Islam they perform a most important service in receiving the alms of believers. Alms giving is one of the 'Five Pillars' of the Muslim faith, and giving to beggars is actually a purifying act. Was not Mohammed himself once an orphan and poor? The payment of alms (for in the Koran it is described in terms of a Tax) legitimises the Muslim's ownership of his remaining property. For this reason



The alms race

by Richard Henderson Smith

What can you do when all the time you are faced with arms outstretched begging for money?



beggars do not express any gratitude for what they receive, or else the reward which God will give to the donor may be lost.

So beggars have a definite role within this society but, by any reckoning, in performing it they are denied human dignity. They must persist in their pleas since in doing so they know that from each crowded bus (single decker with up to 100 people on board) they may collect perhaps the equivalent of 1/2p or 1p.

After I had spoken to the women at the airport and given each the price of a couple of eggs I fell into conversation with the driver of the car parked next to the Mission van. It turned out that he

had come to collect six very fat and extremely wealthy members of a Bangladeshi family, who had just returned from the USA. Before their arrival and after his initial, 'What is your country, where are you working?' question, he was happy to chat in Bengali. He asked me if we have any people like those beggars in our country. Thinking quickly and realising that, indeed, we do have some who are severely deprived, I answered 'No, because they can ask the Government for help'. And I realized that he was prompted to ask out of genuine ignorance and that not only had he not known ('though working for a 'jet-set' family) that the beggarmom he takes for granted is not universal, but that the corollary is true. Very few of my own



countrymen appreciate the vast extent of these, the most poor, and the near completeness of their loss of human dignity throughout the South Asian Subcontinent.

Seeking to escape

As a European in such situations you are, to put it most baldly, pestered whether you pretend not to notice such unfortunates or not. So, for example, on boarding a night train, you tend to get into a first-class compartment and quickly put down the shutters. You close the door and sit in the dark, suffocating on the bunk, simply to escape the beggars, admitting only fellow travellers, ticket inspectors or a little boy selling Coca Cola until the dynamo gets going and the lights and fans come on. If you merely glance towards a beggar, curious to know why he is creeping along the road crabwise, although on his back, he will catch your, albeit fleeting interest with his professional eye and home into your ken and, like the widow, persist. You will feel ('though your head is buried in a book') perhaps like the unjust judge, deeply guilty about your seat in the bus (moving on), about your healthy family, about your satisfying job, or about the safety of knowing that home and the wider family are 'over there', secure in Britain.

What do you do? Well we began, when we first came to Bangladesh, to give coppers to almost everybody except the obviously fraudulent, just like the Muslim rich. But the motive for them is not that of showing love to those in need but to

gain merit in Paradise. Soon culture-shock set in and I steadfastly set my face against the system, turned away from the suffering and refused every request for aid, without thought, but with a great deal of caring and often a nigh breaking heart.

Pretending not to notice

And now, after three years? Well, if one's on the move, without a moment to talk, I pretend not to notice, at least the beggar will be exactly where he was when my pale face flashed past, conscious that one leaves behind only perhaps a moment's disappointment that this time his ship didn't come in. But often one has got enough time to ask the beggar why he has lost his arm above the elbow (one man even had both hands cleanly chopped off at the wrists – very odd, suspicious of clan vengeance or worse, a perversion of the ancient and at present illegal Muslim laws). Or one can ask the lady how old her child is, what he eats, why he should at one and a half years now be taking solids and a little protein, sing the praises of protein and fat rich crushed peanuts. Perhaps if opportunity allows I buy a few ounces of roasted peanuts from a vendor's basket and give them to her. More often I give her 5p or 6p and advise her at least to buy one egg, cook it, and give it to the child *today*. Those pence are possibly half of what she might expect to collect in a day.

Able-bodied men I tend to encourage by pointing out that they have two good hands, two good feet, two good eyes so they should be working for their families, not begging. But I know how difficult it is for a poor, unskilled man to find work if there is none to be found in his village. So, if, for example, a man tells me he has one or two wives and several children 'only babies', after trying to encourage him I may even give him 30p or 40p, which is a full-day's wages here for a day labourer, in the hope that he might be freed, if only for today, from his beggarmom, to reflect about possible alternatives. Many of our maimed leprosy patients have become beggars by profession, as it were.

What to do?

There are no social services in countries as poor as Bangladesh so beggars are everywhere here, on every station and ferry, outside every hotel, naturally in the airport car parks, footbridges in the business quarters of towns, and so often too, they beat a path to our front door. As people say here, 'What to do?'

The condition of beggars is not discussed as such in detail in the Gospels though evidently they were commonplace, hence Jesus' illustration using Lazarus, the beggar, in Luke 16. But the subject of alms giving does come up and significantly in Matthew 6, a chapter dealing largely with the subject of hypocrisy. Surely our pattern is outlined in the first four verses, where it is taken for granted that we will give to the needy; it is the manner that Jesus is discussing.

We should give as an expression of love, thus in serving the poor we will avoid the trap of serving money and things (v. 24) and perhaps find that we have been dealing with our Father God all the time.

LET THE WHOLE WORLD KNOW

A UNITED MISSIONARY RALLY

Friday 18 November 7.30 pm
All Souls
Langham Place, London W1

Speaker:
Dr Helen Roseveare
Music:
London Emmanuel Choir

*Missionary Exhibition –
including BMS display –
5.00 pm – 7.15 pm*



Shopping Precinct, Curitiba



Curitiba's skyline

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS IN PARANÁ

I WAS very privileged a few months ago, to have the chance of staying with some of our missionaries in southern Brazil. I was under no illusion that my whistle-stop tour could give me all but the most superficial impression of the work. Yet I found it a most rewarding experience thanks to the generous hospitality afforded to me.

Having travelled for weeks virtually on my own around Brazil, I very much looked forward to sharing some family life and leaving officialdom and bureaucracy alone for a few days. I landed at Curitiba airport and to my surprise found the concourse full of Baptists! What a welcome – but I might have guessed, not for me. One of the Brazilian pastors was retuning after a long absence and his church members were there to welcome him. It was David Grainger who was there to welcome me and take me to my hosts – the Holmwoods. But did I have the documents? Yes, as it happened, Derek Punchard had somehow got to hear that I was taking a flight from Foz do Iguaçu and found me just as I was about to board the plane for Curitiba. I was able to carry the missionary mail safely across the state of Paraná.

David and Pat Holmwood had only just moved into the fast growing district of Piraquara, some fifteen miles east of the

state capital city of Curitiba. At the request of the Brazilian Baptists, David had come to assist a fellowship that had been pastorless for some time. Scarcely had I arrived than we were off through the cool evening air to David's first 'house' service. One of the members had built his own house – well almost! Some finishing touches were needed but nobody minded that the walls were rough and the windows missing. It was time for God's blessing upon the house.

So with accordion, Bible, Portuguese phrase book and faith the service was duly held. And then, no such family gathering would be complete without the slicing and eating of an enormous cake.

As we jolted our way back home beneath the twinkling eye of the Southern Cross, I had time to reflect upon my first missionary 'happening'.

Worshipping Brazilian style

The next day was Sunday – hot and sunny, and the noise was deafening! It had been practically all night long. Goodness knows when the local Catholic Church disco eventually subsided but it was well after midnight. Sunrise heralded a change in the style of music but not its volume. Miraculously, so it seemed to me, the blast of popular religious music ceased for the duration

of the Baptist Church service. The service itself was preceded by Bible Study – men on one side and women on the other with two deacons leading the study simultaneously. I was told that the service was short by Brazilian standards. I found it quite informal with hymns, prayers and sermon being interspersed with items of church business.

Problems with petrol (garages are closed at the week-end) prevented me from travelling to Curitiba to take part in the evening service at Moises Amorim's newly built church and so David Holmwood volunteered very nobly to translate a brief message during evening service at the local church. I spent most of the time trying to think of simple phrases that could easily be translated. Warm handshakes replaced the more usual 'cheek to cheek' farewells. Our improvised contribution seemed to have been appreciated.

A small miracle

Monday morning in any family household can be hectic. The Holmwoods were no exception. The children had to be taken to school through the morning mist and traffic to Curitiba. There was the daily help, Regina, to collect and the normal household chores to do.

Regina's own story is a small miracle. She is in her early thirties and has a child of



Contented stock at Potinga

twelve. She was brought up in a wooden hut not much larger than a garden shed where life was an almost impossible struggle to survive. She was 'found' by local Baptists and persuaded to attend church. Now her new faith shines out in a quiet but most attractive way. She still faces many of the problems of a one parent family but now – not alone.

Pastor Moises Amorim who had recently returned from two years study at Spurgeon's College, was waiting to meet us in Boqueirão – a sprawling poor district of Curitiba. We were taken around the one room houses which had been recently built under a city housing scheme. One *favela* consisting of shacks made from any available material had been bulldozed down, but another was in the very process of springing up further down the dust track. Children played in the open-ditch-sewers. Men and women stood motionless in the shade of doorways without hope of employment. With generous help from the TEAR Fund, Moises runs a health clinic with dedicated enthusiasm. There are inevitable setbacks. Serious flooding of this low lying area has recently hindered the work and made hundreds homeless once more.

We returned to the city for lunch with David and Elidia Grainger in their apartment before visiting the Baptist Seminary. Many of the lectures are in the evening when students are free from work and other studies. I certainly wondered how some of our students would cope with an eighteen hour day! We stood for a moment by the rusting foundations of the new library. No further funds were available to commence the building which was so badly needed.

Before sunset we were bumping along the tracks around Piraquara dropping in on a preaching post – a wooden house where upwards of fifty people sat on benches whilst a preaching team from Curitiba led the study of the Scriptures. Fortunately I was by the door so that I had access to the cool night air during the long but powerful exposition. Before we dispersed at 10 pm the Sunday School children came in to sing the songs they had been practising!

Isolation

The journey next day down to the Litoral (the coastal plain) to meet Frank and Peggy Gouthwaite at CEBADER in Potinga was unforgettable. As we wound

our way down the escarpment, through the forest we could see the ground carpeted with 'Impatiens' or Busy Lizzie flowers. Eventually we arrived without warning at the farm. Well, with the nearest telephone 15 km away 'down the road' there was no ways of letting Frank know of our visit. It is difficult for those of us brought up in towns to realize the isolation of these rural areas. The nearest petrol station was 50 km away. Months might go by without a visit by another missionary.

Improvements have come. Electricity arrived in 1980 and has made a considerable difference to the working of the farm, although a generator is certainly a useful back-up facility. You will, of course, have met Frank philosophically examining passion fruit, pictured on the front cover of the August edition of the *Herald*. Unfortunately what you could not do was to taste the passion fruit cordial – *Maracajá*, most refreshing, though beware, I was told that it could slow down your heart beat.

After a delicious lunch, Frank and David went down to the recently built grinding shed to try to persuade some machinery to come to life. I wandered off to examine chickens (an Operation Agri project), pigs, snakes and other distractions. When we had all made a thoughtful stroll around the 'citrus grove' Frank suggested that we drive down to Tagaçaba to take a look at his tomato project which is laid out behind the Baptist Dispensary. Since many more people visit the clinic than just his farm, he hopes to introduce new crops and techniques to the local farmers and their wives, his way. As we were leaving, a car drew up with Pastor Altair, the General Secretary of the Paraná Baptist Convention, and two American Baptist nurses – a rare chance for Frank to catch up on the news of the outside world. Then we sped off through a trail of dust into the gathering darkness. The Holmwood children who were hopefully doing their homework in Curitiba would have to wait two more hours for our arrival.

Next morning, I laid back in my reclining seat on the inter-city coach to São Paulo reflecting on a memorable few days, thanks to the generosity of the BMS and the hospitality of our missionaries.

Muito obrigado!

Keith Boucher, a lecturer in Rural Development and Secretary of Loughborough Baptist Church reflects on some memorable days in Brazil

Black River Country

Working as far south in Latin America as the BMS as ever had missionaries, Roy and Margaret Connor have seen a demoralized Church renew its life.



Entrance to Rio Negro

'The new temple will be more splendid than the old one. . . . Haggai 2 v. 9.

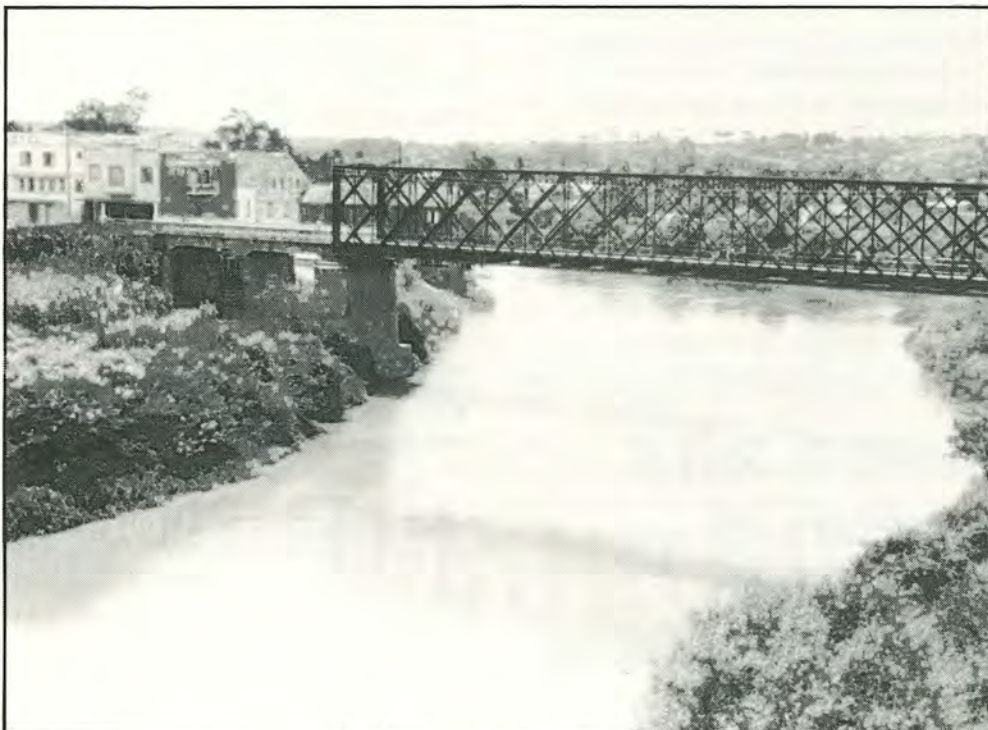
And a typical comment in Rio Negro would be — *'Well, it could hardly be worse!'*

But, like all good tales our story must begin at the beginning. . . .

History and Background

Rio Negro (Black River) situated on the border of the State of Paraná with Santa Catarina in the South of Brazil, is a 154 year old city with a current population of 38,000. Mafra is the adjoining town on the other side of the bridge which forms the state divide. Locals talk of Rio Mafra which aptly shows the affinity that the two towns have with their joint population of about 73,000.

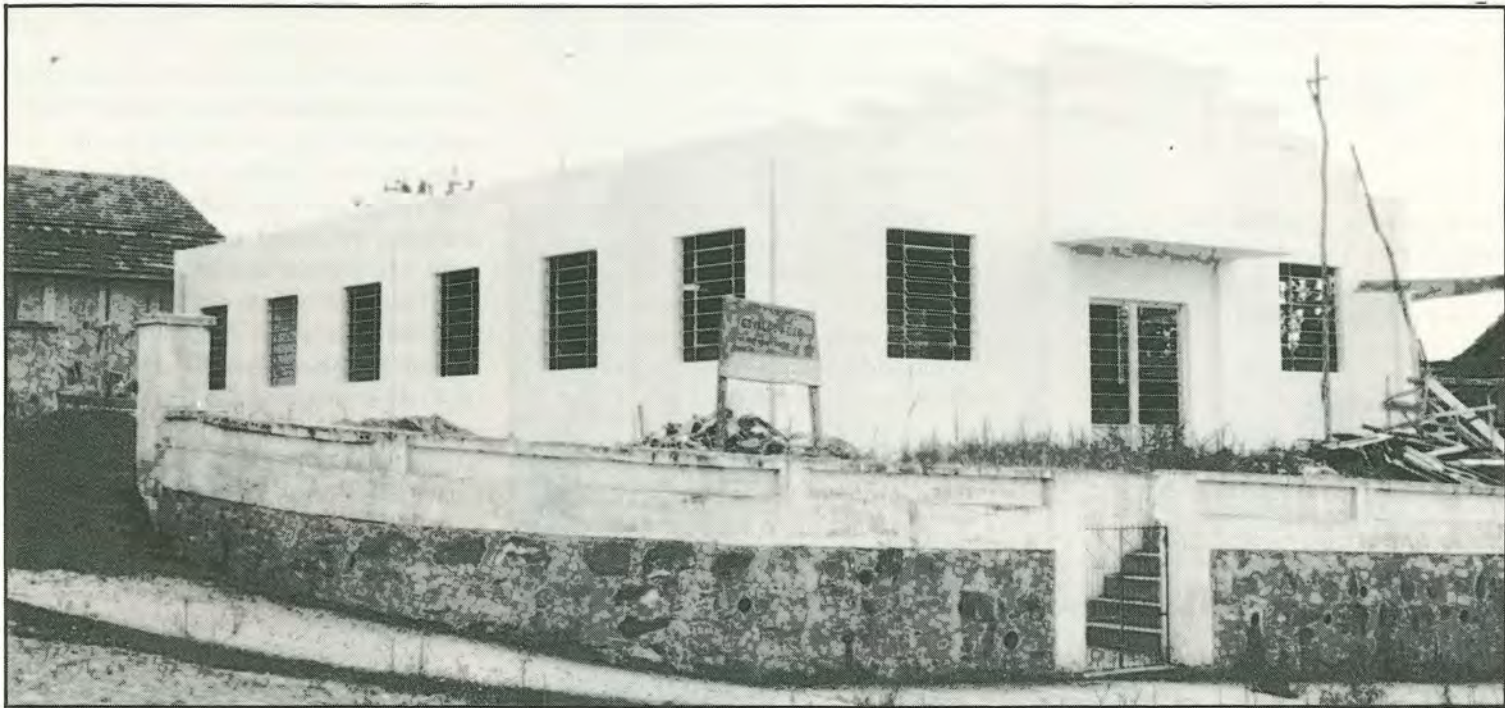
The Baptist Church in Rio Negro was founded in 1925 and as such is one of the oldest in Paraná State. Ten years later



The bridge crossing the river which is also the state border



The Old Rio Negro Church



The New Church

a daughter Church was formed in Roseira – 15 kms away. Today, as often happens, the daughter has outgrown the mother, and whilst Roseira has 100 members, Rio Negro has a mere 40. I am the first fulltime pastor that either Church has ever had. Due to lack of capable leadership there have been sad divisions in the churches in past days and both communities have suffered much.

The past

1 Samuel 7 v. 12 – ‘The Lord has helped us all the way.’ The Fellowship in Rio Negro has known more than it ought of

personality problems, doctrinal divisions and upsets. In spite of these setbacks the Church has been numerically strong. About five years ago the old and original wooden church building was condemned as being unsafe. This building was therefore demolished and worship took place in a ‘temporary’ hut (measuring 7m x 3m) put up on the building site. A new brick building was planned to seat 200 and situated on a crucial corner site with the manse next door, the prospect for advance was set. On the very day that the foundations were started, over 40 members left and joined a Maranata group in the town –

thus separations from the Baptist Family over the years founded a ‘Renewed Baptist Church’, a ‘Chapel of Blessing’ and a Maranata group in the area. How sad! O that we might be one. At Roseira where the Church is set in a forest working community this also has suffered with like problems and from a membership of 230 dwindled to about 100. Lack of understanding and teaching (especially about the charismatic movement) and lack of trained leadership left marks on the fellowship.

The demoralized Rio Negro members slowly raised the walls of the new ▹



Roy and Margaret Connor

construction to window level and then stopped building altogether through lack of leadership and money. For 15 months things remained in this state lacking hope and future.

But, as always, God heard the plea of the faithful few and in 1981, Margaret and I were appointed to be the first BMS missionaries in the town.

The present

Psalm 46 v. 1 – *'God is our shelter and strength (a very present help) always ready to help in times of trouble.'*

In January 1982 when we arrived on the scene the place of worship in Rio Negro was delapidated and pathetic. One visiting preacher described it as the worst *templo* that he had ever preached in – and he had served as a missionary in Africa! Another said that it was the only church that he had preached in where he could touch the ceiling! Nothing more than an extended builders hut, it was a disgrace. And at the side an abandoned building site in danger of being lost to the weeds!

The Paraná Baptist Convention loaned money and with other sums coming in from all sources, the building was started

up again. We were reminded of the labours of Nehemiah and of Ecc. 3 v. 3 which says, *'A time for tearing down and a time for building'*. Stage by stage the new *templo* was erected and made ready for worship. The Flock was given new vision and faith and numbers attending increased to a regular 60-80 at night. Many more worshippers had to stand around the hut outside listening to the service as space inside was severely limited. The youth group reached a 'high' of 40-45 strong, and the Ladies' Group met regularly to work, visit, pray and worship. The whole town was made aware of the existence of the Church in a new way because whereas before it had had a bad image in the eyes of many – *'Look, these people who began to build and could not finish it!'* – now the community came to know the Church as a caring, outreaching fellowship concerned with the life and affairs of all.

We spend one Sunday at Roseira and one at Rio Negro alternating the weekly programme in the same way. With the special services, home meetings, outreach, visitation, caring, baptismal services, preaching, praying and the regular ministry in general 'growth' has been the result. How good God is! He gives the growth.

I became so well known in the town that quite seriously one Town Councillor suggested that I should stand for Mayor in the 1982 elections – in the event I would have got more votes than this particular Councillor!

In the 1983 floods of May and July through generous financial help from Richmond (USA Baptists) the BMS and Tearfund, the Rio Church has been able yet again to be deeply involved in the community and offer practical help in the name of the Lord. Four thousand five hundred were made homeless.

When a new gallery was inaugurated at the Town Council Offices, the President of the Council asked me along to offer the blessing prayer – a Baptist instead of the customary Catholic Priest! All a sign of how God was seen to be present in the renewed life and optimism of the Church. And it was the same Councillor who immediately offered us his new home into which he had not yet moved when he heard that our home was threatened by the rising waters in the July flood.



A children's gathering



Baptismal candidates

The future

Hebrews 13 vv. 5-6. *'For God has said — I will never leave you; I will never abandon you. Let us be bold then and say — The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'* As we leave for furlough the Churches have the stability and conditions to invite a Brazilian pastor. The new *templo* will be officially opened in October and will add greatly to the prospects of attracting greater numbers and other types of people. There is a need to reach out to the more capable members of the community and see the Church filled with families of all types. Is this not our vision?

The prophet Haggai asked if there were any among the people who could still remember the old Temple. How splendid it used to be. The present one, he said, must seem like nothing at all in comparison but the people were not to be discouraged, any of them, but to work, for the Lord had promised to be with them.

This message has frequently been with us during the long, hard building programme. The Lord Almighty spoke to us as to the people in Haggai's day saying — *'I will fill this House with my glory. The temple will be filled with wealth. The new Temple will be more splendid than the old one, and there I will give my people prosperity and peace.'*

What a word! What a promise! What a future! The people believe that the future is in Jesus who is the same yesterday (the past), today (the present) and forever (the future).

You have made all this possible. The building of bricks and mortar is finished. The building up of the people of God is never finished in a sense but we leave them with a renewed faith and the desire to be 'The temple of the Holy Spirit'. That is surely of more importance than any material building. Pray for them will you? This story of Black River country is new to BMS but with the telling of it, the work and people must not be forgotten. Pray that the Lord who makes *all* things new will constantly equip and expand His people bringing prosperity and peace. You have shared in this story and the brethren and sisters in Rio Negro and Roseira simply say — *'We thank God for every remembrance of you.'* □

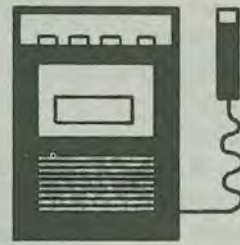


Church at Roseira



Baptism in the river

MISSIONTALK



NEWS AND VIEWS
FROM HOME
AND ABROAD

'Thank you BMS' says Brazilian Baptist Leader

THE MONEY sent from the BMS Relief Fund to aid flood victims in Brazil is being put to good use according to Pastor Altair Prevedello Secretary of the Paraná Convention.



'Assistance is being given to about 500 families,' he writes. 'Many of them did not own much, and then they lost everything in the floods. They have really suffered.'

The BMS sent an immediate grant of £5,000 when news of the floods was received and promised to look at the long term needs as they are revealed. Altair Prevedello explains how the money is being used.

'We are giving assistance in ten places. A pastor is serving as coordinator in each area. Information is being compiled



Rio Negro floods

on each family. In some cases, they need timber, others need house paint, quilts, food and/or clothing. Each case is being studied and assistance is being

given to the needs of each family.'

'Thank you for this help from the BMS.'

Hunger crisis in north-east Brazil

SOMETIMES they arrive because they hear that food is to be distributed. But most often they are not responding to any announcement. They begin filtering into the city at dawn. Soon their numbers swell to 2,000, 5,000, 8,000. They are crowds of families — men, women and children — desperate for something to eat. They surround the supermarkets and the large warehouses and begin tearing down doors with picks, axes and rocks. In a few minutes they are inside and quickly gather up all the merchandise, especially the rice, beans, flour, sugar and cooking oil. Then they leave the city as quickly as they had come.

Scenes like these have been a daily occurrence for the past

weeks in the major cities of Brazil's north-east. Their immediate cause is the drought that has plagued the region and 70 per cent of its 24 million inhabitants for the past five years. Yet the phenomenon of drought is as old as the history of the region itself, and is the result not so much of unalterable climatic conditions as it is of political and economic policies that fail to attack the roots of the problem.

The hunger caused by the present drought has lasted so long and is so acute that its repercussions are being felt throughout the entire country. Thousands of people can be seen daily rooting through garbage heaps on the outskirts of São Paulo, Rio and other large

cities. Children are the chief victims. According to a recent study by the World Health Organizations, a Brazilian child dies from malnutrition every 20 minutes. The rate of infant mortality in the north-eastern state of Ceara is 140 per thousand in normal times. Today even the state's governor admits that it has risen to 250 per thousand and could reach 400. In some parts of the north-east, acute anaemia affects as much as 92 per cent of the population.

The economy of the region has been wrecked by the drought, which has affected a 143,000 square kilometre area or 81 per cent of the north-east. The region's production has been

cut in half in the last five years. The north-east has lost 9.5 million tons of cotton, sisal and seed for castor oil plants, 33 million pineapples and 6,300 crates of bananas. The peasants have now used up all their reserved seeds and have eaten all the grain in their storage bins.

The government has announced an all-out 'war effort' to save drought victims from starvation, and has called out the army to help. But long-lasting solutions will have to be found. The problem of cyclic drought is an ancient one. It is predictable and can be planned and dealt with.

VITTORIA L BACCHETTA,
Latinamerica Press.

Organizing relief

THE last few months have been an anxious time for BMS missionaries Peter and Margaret Goodall now on furlough. As news of the acts of violence in Sri Lanka were published and broadcast they waited in suspense for information from their church in Colombo.

Recent letters have at last reassured them. The congregation are all safe and have in fact been engaged in

relief work. One family has been going to different camps bringing some comfort and reassurance. A deacon of the church has been acting as a relief officer based at a Hindu *Koril* (worship centre), where he has been helping many distressed families to find their relations and assist them to reach one another.

Others have been visiting the *Wattes* (the slums) and have



Peter and Margaret Goodall

discovered that the mixed-race shanty areas, which are not far from the church, have kept together and have not been flattened as folk had expected. Another member has been helping to organize relief amongst numbers of children, whose need is considerable, with homes gone and

sometimes with the loss of their parents.

The church in Colombo is busy working out its mission as Christ inspires them. They need our prayers that they may have strength for the new task that the riots have brought in their trail.

A worthwhile idea?

JUST recently we were invited to a Baptist church in London to lead the morning service and participate in the Sunday School. After the usual chat at the door and clearing away visual aids we were invited to stay on for lunch with some of the members. They turned out to be the Missionary Secretary and the missionary committee members plus all those who received our prayer letter.

After a delicious meal and our children revelling in all the attention we went into the coffee lounge to chat for an hour or so. We spoke to

everyone individually as folk arranged to move chairs so all had the opportunity to ask their particular question or for us to get to know them and their needs.

We left that day feeling that not only had we communicated information about BMS but that a group of interested people knew more about us as individuals and a family.

An idea that other churches might like to try?

SYLVIA HOPKINS.

1,000 Ladybirds go up in smoke

ALMOST the entire stock of Ladybird Books were destroyed in a fire at the Christian Literature Society bookshop in Sri Lanka. The fire, started accidentally during the terror campaign against the Tamils, destroyed books worth £20,000.

The Ladybird Books were the first gift for many years from FEED THE MINDS. The coloured sheets were supplied from this country and the Bible story printed in Sinhalese and Tamil in Sri Lanka. The books were ready for the Christmas market. Now thousands of children will have to go without one of their Christmas gifts.

The Rev Alec Gilmore of FEED THE MINDS has returned from a brief visit to the island where he saw the remains of the bookshop in the capital.

Temporary headquarters have been set up in a small bookshop in the suburbs of Colombo and the successful shop at Jaffna was not affected by the violence.

Even so, Mr Gilmore discovered it will not be easy to make good what has been lost. After many years of struggle, the book selling operation had begun to show profitability and publishing had been restarted.

Mr Gilmore also met church leaders and discussed how their churches might help to re-establish the literature work along with help from this country.



Cliff and Chris Eaton and family recently returned to Butwal, Nepal where Cliff is an architect

The Glory of the Sons

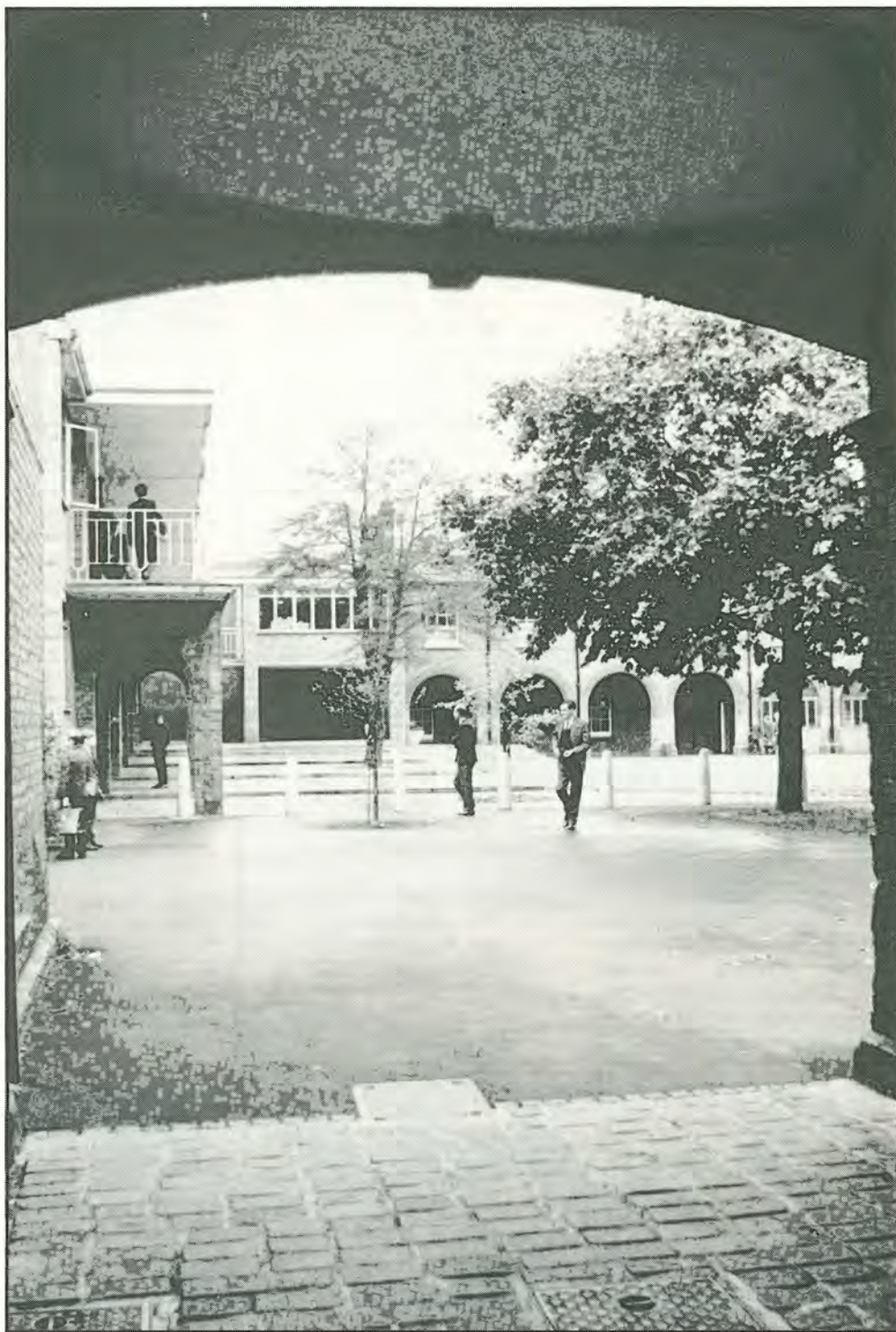
by Frank Wells, the School
Chaplain

'It is no ivory tower, but in its semi-urban setting, Eltham College is helping a new generation of boys to find their spiritual bearings.'

GLORIA FILIORUM PATRES — 'The Fathers are the glory of the sons'. Some may think this a strange motto for a school, surely, they may argue, it should be the other way round, 'The sons are the glory of the fathers:' but not if the school happens to be Eltham College, the School for Missionaries' children.

The school was founded in 1842 by the London Missionary Society, and was joined two years later by the BMS. After three moves from its original location in Walthamstow, to Mornington Crescent, to Blackheath, the school is now situated in Mottingham near Eltham in South London.

Over the years the number of boys who have followed their fathers into missionary service overseas has been noteworthy. David Stockley a veteran



BMS agricultural missionary in Bangladesh, is an example, and there have been others.

Among those volunteering for short term service with the BMS overseas has been Mark Pitkethly, a head-boy of the school, who followed his father to Zaire, and served as an agricultural missionary at Tondo.

Many others are serving the church in secular employment in this country, and

in distant places. Dr Robert Bradnock, for instance, an expert on Asia, is a lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and frequently tours in India. The son of BMS missionaries in North India, the Revd and Mrs Wilfrid Bradnock, Dr Bradnock and his brothers were educated at Eltham.

Olympic champion

In days gone by it was quite common for boys to come home from the unhealthy climates of Asia or Africa at the tender age of seven, and then spend



eleven years at the school as boarders. This was the case with Eric Liddell the Olympic 400 metres champion, of *Chariots of Fire* fame, who came to the school, then at Blackheath, before his seventh birthday. His brother Rob was only eight.

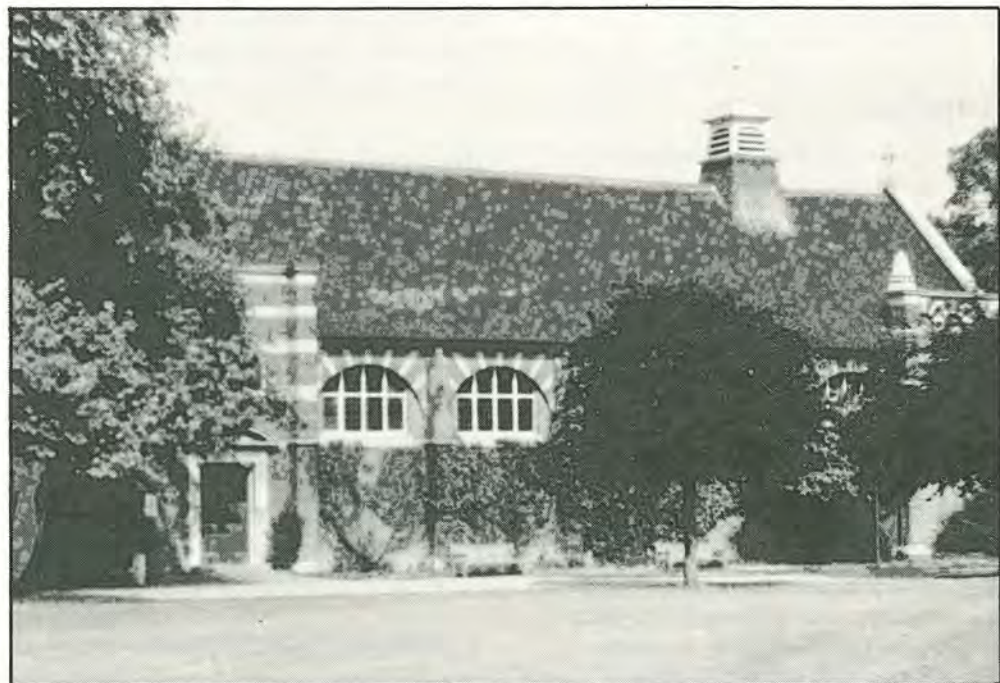
Eltham College has long been in the business of caring for missionaries' children, and the tradition is still continued in the aptly named Eric Liddell House, a specially designed Boarding House attached to the school. Those who remember the stark, uncarpeted dormitories of the old style Boarding School would be surprised and pleased at the level of home comforts available. But as well as material wellbeing the wardens also have the spiritual welfare of the boys at heart. BMS boys in the house at the moment are from Zaire and Brazil.

The School has always maintained good relationships with all Christian missionary societies, and this year there are children at the school from the URC's department for mission – The Council for World Mission, as well as two Anglican Societies – the CMS and the BCMS as well as our own BMS.

The school also has a link with the Edinburgh Medical Mission, through one of its Old Boys, Dr Peter Turnpenny, who with his wife and children has recently joined the staff of the Mission's Hospital in Nazareth.

Enough has been said to show the ways in which the missionary traditions of the school are being maintained. The majority of the pupils of the school, of course, are not from missionary homes in the accepted meaning of the term, though in addition to the 'missionary children', there are always a number of sons of the Manse or Rectory.

One such person has recently entered the Baptist Ministry after training at Durham, Oxford and Spurgeon's College. Another from a similar background is at present training for the ministry at Regent's Park College.



A young man whose father is ministering in an Anglican parish in the East End spent some months working in a *kibbutz* in Israel after leaving school. In 1979 a party from Eltham College visited Israel, and we hope that a second visit will be made this Autumn.

Encouraging results

Each working day starts with worship in the School Chapel, and each Sunday the boarders have their own service in the Eric Liddell House. Every year we send up children for the London University Religious Studies 'O' and 'A' level examinations, who obtain above average grades with encouraging regularity. During Religious Studies class all pupils are expected to attend.

About every eighteen months there has been a College Mission. The first three were conducted by members of Hildenborough Hall, the fourth was the responsibility of the Church Army. Adrian Snell the well-known Christian 'rock' musician came for one day of the mission and made a deep impression.

Situated in South London, the sights and sounds of contemporary urban culture cannot be avoided. Ours is no ivory tower, but we hope that even in a semi-urban setting, avowedly Christian education will help many to find their spiritual bearings – which, when they leave the protection of the school, will point them to ways they may work for the Kingdom of God.

Ask Harry

Bernard Ellis takes a look at today's Missionary Movements and remembers how it used to be

THINGS, as you might say, change almost imperceptibly. I look down the list of arrivals and departures in the *Herald* and sadly have to admit that most of the owners of the names are not known to me, now. But I think of them all and hope that everyone does the same.

Then I think of how they come and how they go. By air. I almost added, of course.

Going out, we wrestled with baggage. All those labels, ungummed. Not wanted on voyage (bung it in the hold); wanted on voyage (change of clothes); cabin (trunk, under the bunk, plus bits and pieces).

How to stick those on. Only by using the messy, brown, treacherous stuff beloved of railway porters for smearing LNER, LMS or GWR posters on hoardings. (First, catch your porter.)

Top hats

Those post-war days and nights of packing, for sea voyages, were as nothing compared with what it used to be. Mind you, there was always guidance from the BMS. They knew most of the answers. In the very early thirties there was a piece of official literature still floating around that suggested men should take top hats (what, no frock-coats?). And the general suggestion list included travel rugs and deck-chairs. Ladies were reminded of the need for opaque dresses, owing to the strong sunlight.

There used to be a saying in the BMS, 'Ask Harry Hemmens.' Harry knew everything and could do anything, from

editing to running the Baptist Laymen's Missionary Movement conferences at Swanwick.

Before the thirties wound up, it was the done thing for tourist passengers at sea to wear dinner jackets. If in possession, male missionaries in Calcutta disposed of a few white ants and wore them at the traditional BMS Christmas party.

At sea, tourist passengers were allotted around one-quarter of the P&O ships' space. And none the worse for that. At least we could take a constitutional round the full length of the ship, although the notice said otherwise.

The *Viceroy of India*, which brought Round Table conference delegates back to India, and the *Maloja* were still afloat. Wise passengers avoided going on deck when they took coal aboard in baskets, at Port Said. All those smuts.

Beef tea and ice-cream

Certain traditions never seemed to die out: beef tea, served on deck, up to Port Said; ice cream, afterwards (going out, that is).

Years later, I sat in the lounge of an Anchor ship and watched the sea through the very large lounge window, opposite. Slowly, slowly, the horizon moved further and further towards the top of the window, until there was nothing but sea to look at.

'Don't worry,' said an engineer. 'We can go up to 45 degrees.'

I wasn't worried. I never worried about anything on a ship, once I had made sure that most of the baggage was on board. In any case, there were those odd days of peace and tranquility: Anchor said that an Anchor ship broke down at least once. No sounds of thumping engines. Just a gently heaving ship. Wonderful.

One thing, on a P&O ship there were always plenty of missionaries, from the UK or Scandinavia or Germany. An American young lady balanced her camera on the deck rail and longed to take a picture of the Rock of Gibraltar. She said to her companion, 'I'm not sure that I should on the Sabbath day.'

'Madam,' said a gallant middle-aged fellow missionary (male, of course), 'Madam, allow me to sin for you.' And took the picture.

And unless I'm mistaken, that's when soundness and unsoundness began to creep in.

THOMAS LEWIS 1859-1929

MISSIONARY
BUILDER
TEACHER

by

M.J. WILLIAMS

The story of the Welsh pioneer missionary to the Congo (Zaire)

Published in both Welsh and English
price 50p
Available from

THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY
93 Gloucester Place
London W1H 4AA
Tel: 01-935 1482

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

Departures

Miss P. Clarke on 24 August to Mbanza-Ngungu, Zaire
Mr and Mrs C Eaton & family to Butwal, Nepal
Mr S Houghton on 6 September to Bolobo, Zaire
Mr & Mrs M Godfrey & Maria on 7 September to Upoto, Zaire
Rev V & Mrs Lewis and Owen on 7 September to Kinshasa, Zaire
Mrs S Samuels on 9 September to New Delhi, India

Arrivals

Mr D Sorrell on 14 September from Dhaka, Bangladesh

Births

On 10 September, in Birmingham, to **Mr & Mrs K Liu**, a daughter, **Cherk-Yun Andrea**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies and gifts sent anonymously. (8-22 September 1983)

Legacies

	£	p
Mr L G Coppard	500.00	
Mrs H C M Hamlin	1,450.00	
Mr F Honeywood	100.00	
Miss F M Lomas	567.67	
Mrs B M Macgregor	50.00	
Mr F W Madge	350.00	
Miss D M M Napier	300.00	
Rev G E Reed	56.87	

General Work

Anon: £5.00; Anon (Cymro): £35.00; Anon: £50.00;
Anon: £2.00; Anon (FAE-Aberdeen): £10.00; Anon (Wales): £100.00

Agricultural Work

Anon: £10.00

Medical Work

Anon: £20.00

NOTES FOR YOUR PRAYER GUIDE

Stephen and Carolyn Green
(4 November) are on furlough

Rosalie Harris (10 November) married Cit Kimbangi in July and is now no longer serving with the BMS

BAPTIST HOLIDAY FELLOWSHIP 1984

We offer a wide selection of holidays for all who wish to spend their time in Christian Fellowship, with experienced Hosts and Leaders, at home or abroad.

UK HOLIDAYS

Falmouth 26 May-2 June
Llandudno 16-23 June
Oxford 15-25 August
Lake District 1-8 September

LONG-STAY HOLIDAY

Spain 14 March-11 April

OVERSEAS TOURS

Holy Land 15-25 March
Majorca 25 May-8 June
Brittany 11-22 June
Norway 16-27 July
Romania 1-15 September

OBERAMMERGAU/AUSTRIA

12-21 June, 14-23 August, 4-13 September

OBERAMMERGAU/ITALY

16-26 August

EBF CONGRESS - HAMBURG

Congress Tour 30 July-5 August
Congress Tour and North Germany 30 July-11 August
Congress Tour and Copenhagen 30 July-11 August

THROUGHOUT SEASON - WESTHOLME, MINEHEAD

Our own seafront hotel, comfortably furnished, high standard of catering, guests' laundry room, games room, own car park.

NO INCREASE ON 1983 CHARGES. Our rates for young families are second to none. All Accredited Ministers receive 20% reduction. Special Senior Citizens' fortnight 1-15 September. Special BMS Week 15-22 September. (An opportunity to learn more of the Society's work.)

HOLIDAY FLATS, MINEHEAD

By the sea, near the shops, sleeping 2-9 persons. Spacious, well-equipped, with colour TV. Available 19 April-November. 10% reduction for Accredited Ministers.

Please write for Brochure to:
Baptist Holiday Fellowship (MH), 1 The Esplanade, Minehead, Somerset

PENZANCE

21 July - 4 August and
4 - 18 August



EASTBOURNE

28 July - 11 August
11 - 25 August

SUMMER

'84

GERMANY

29 July - 5 August

PITLOCHRY

11 - 18 August

SOUTH AMERICA

7 - 27 July

**FOR A YOUNG PEOPLE'S
HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER-
BOOK NOW!!**

Fuller details can be obtained from:

The Young People's Secretary,
Baptist Missionary Society,
93 Gloucester Place, London W1H 4AA.