

# THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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NEWSLETTER

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### MARCH MEETING

The March meeting of the Historical Society will be held on Sunday afternoon, 29th March at 2.30 in Wesley Church, Fullarton Road, Kent Town.

The lecture that afternoon will be given by **Rev Lewis Kelsall BA(Hons)**. His subject will be "**The Romance of Faith : the life and work of Brian Wibberley**".

The Rev Brian Wibberley, in the early years of this century, was a distinguished Methodist minister. Prior to church union in 1900 he was the minister of the Primitive Methodist church in Wellington Square, North Adelaide. Later he had notable

ministries at Kent Town and at Wesley Church, Perth.

He was also a prolific writer, producing several books and editing the Methodist paper in both South Australia and Western Australia.

Mr Kelsall undertook considerable research into Brian Wibberley's life for his recent Honours thesis for Flinders University.

The **Annual Meeting of the Society**, to be chaired by the President, Rev. Ron Hayward, will be held prior to the address. Members are urged to attend this Sunday afternoon gathering.



# MICHAEL PALIN AMONG THE MIAO

Arnold D. Hunt

Some weeks ago, while watching Michael Palin's program "Full Circle" on A.B.C. television, I was interested in his segment on southern China. This dealt with his visit to the Miao people, a tribal group distinct from the majority Han Chinese. I remembered that a century ago Methodism had been established among the Miao through the work of Bible Christian missionaries from England.

## South Australian Link

Bible Christians in the 1890s had a tenuous link with the mission among the Miao. They raised money for the mission and in 1893 sent the Rev Ernest J. Piper to China. He stayed until returning home on furlough in 1900. In that year the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion took place.

On Methodist Union, the Rev Edgar Caust (later the father of Rev Lloyd Caust) was designated for the China mission but was prevented from going because of unsettled conditions. He was then appointed to Rotuma in the Pacific.

## China Mission

The Bible Christian mission among the Miao people began in 1886. One of the pioneer missionaries, Samuel Pollard, became a legendary figure in Bible Christian history and his name is affixed to a House at Shebbear College in Devon.

Born at Camelford in Cornwall in 1864, Pollard went to work among the Miao in 1886. He remained there until his death from typhoid fever in 1915.

## Heber Goldsworthy

While on furlough in England in 1907, an address by Pollard had a profound influ-

ence on a twelve-year-old lad, Heber Goldsworthy. The name 'Heber' was given, one surmises, to the lad in his infancy because of the famous India missionary bishop, Reginald Heber, whose enduring legacy was the hymn "From Greenland's icy mountains" sung, until a generation ago, at countless missionary meetings.

Rev Heber Goldsworthy went as a Bible Christian missionary to the Miao in 1921. In 1938 he was murdered by bandits at a place called (in English) Stonegateway.

Listening to Michael Palin, I was reminded of the fact that I had in my files a circular letter written a year or so ago by Mrs Pat Shannon, the daughter of Rev Heber Goldsworthy. When he was murdered in China, Mrs Goldsworthy was in England with two young children. She never went back to China.

The letter from Mrs Shannon was sent to me by Mr Ted Lott, the custodian of Bible Christian lore at Shebbear. It describes a visit paid to Stonegateway and the graves of Samuel Pollard and Heber Goldsworthy by Mrs Shannon and her brother. This took place in 1995 and was organised by the British group, Friends of the Church in China, and the China Christian Council.

The letter is a moving account of a daughter's visit to the scene of her father's missionary work among the Miao. I give here some extracts:

### *Visit to Stonegateway.*

*September 7, 1995 was the day we had long awaited. We were told we were going to Weining, but would deviate to*



Stonegateway. We travelled by road, changing from Yunnan to Guizhou mini buses at the provincial border. Two hours later we left this rough arterial road and headed north along a bumpy track for a further hour. We passed many small communities who scratched a meagre living from the soil, some goats and the occasional buffalo or pig herded along. Crops of tobacco, maize, beans or buckwheat grew wherever the ground was fertile.

Towards Stonegateway we saw coal mining direct in the hillside. The road dropped to two dry river beds - possibly impassable at times - then rose winding up steep, narrow valleys. Occasionally we passed a lime kiln and the only other traffic was a few coal trucks and horse carts laden with lumps of coal or coal-dust. Vistas of mountains in all directions, rising from 6000 ft at the border to 10,000 ft at Stonegateway.

We suddenly arrived at Stonegateway beside the house my father had built for my mother's return to China with me. I had only seen it in a photograph, but was unmistakable. Into this house we were ushered for refreshments and a welcome from the Headman of the village.

We had been allocated one hour for our visit - not very long to take in a way of life and to recognise buildings from photographs taken 50-70 years ago! We took plenty ourselves, hoping to piece the 'jig-saw' together at a later date. Stonegateway has been one of the gems of Methodist Mission in S.W. China. It has a tradition in education and preaching.

We were all taken up to the graves of Sam. Pollard and Heber Goldsworthy - on a hill with a commanding view over the village - accompanied by many, both

Christians and government officials from the two provinces, who were curious about this place of which they had heard so much, as well as locals of all ages.

We had expected to see a derelict site with the graves damaged by the Red Guards during the cultural revolution. Instead we were amazed to find the graves had been rebuilt and beside them was an engraved pillar of stone stating that the site is now a national memorial, to be preserved for ever - dated July 1995.

The Government had also provided money for the building of a new school in recognition of the missionaries' work. We had seen the new school buildings in the village, then on its third storey. When completed, this school will be a living memorial given by the Communist Party acknowledging Christian teaching, dedication and final sacrifices.

There was a short ceremony at each grave. We put 6 dahlias - presented to us by a small, solemn Miao girl in her national costume - representing nearly 60 years since Heber Goldsworthy was killed - on his grave. The Rev. Harry Parsons had worked alongside Samuel Pollard, and it seemed very fitting that his granddaughter, Helen, should lay 8 dahlias on that grave.

On leaving the graves-site we walked back to our minibus, thronged by Miao in their colourful costumes as they sang their farewells to us in their inimitable way.

THANKS BE TO GOD

January 1996

Pat Shannon  
(nee Goldsworthy)

## NEW BOOK LAUNCHED AT BALAKLAVA

There was a full church at Balaklava on Sunday, 16 November, 1997 for the church's 126th anniversary. This was combined with the launching of the Historical Society's latest publication, The Spirit Comes, a history written by Rev. E.A. Curnow on the founding of Bible Christian churches on the Adelaide and Wakefield Plains.

The focus for the day was on the Bible Christians. In the service Dr Arnold Hunt spoke on the founding of the Church in 1815 in the North Devon village of Shebbear. He then gave a brief survey of the development of this branch of Methodism and its expansion overseas to Canada, China and South Australia (from 1849). The Church had several notable features, especially its emphasis on preaching and the seeking of conversions.

After a church luncheon, 96 people met in the Hall for a Society meeting chaired by the Rev George Potter, secretary of the Historical Society. The Rev Ted Curnow gave an address on the fruit of his researches into the establishment in the latter half of the last century of Bible

Christian churches - over 40 - on the plains north of Gawler.

The chairperson of the Balaklava parish, Mrs Barbara Chapman, responded to Mr Curnow's address. After the book's formal launching by Arnold Hunt, two members of the Society, Noel Brown and Rosemary Gallas, did very good business on the book stall. A total of \$363 worth of Society literature was sold.

Balaklava has a very good collection of Methodist memorabilia and the historical display evoked a great deal of interest.

Mr Curnow's book, The Spirit Comes, is available from the Historical Society, 19 Malvern Avenue, Malvern 5061. Price: \$5 plus \$1 postage. Copies are also being sold at Balaklava. Contact Rev. E.A. Curnow at the Uniting Church manse, Balaklava 5461.

The text by Ted Curnow is supplemented by several very old photographs. Altogether it was a good day for the Society and, we trust, for the people of Balaklava. *A.D.H.*

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Those whose subscriptions to the Society lapsed at the end of 1997 are reminded that renewals are now due.

The Society provides for the following:

- ⇒ One Year : \$8
- ⇒ Two years : \$14
- ⇒ Three years : \$20

Subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer, Rev George Wright, 26 Kyeema Avenue, Cumberland Pk 5041.



**The Beginnings of the Warradale Park  
Congregational Church : 1952-54  
Part 2  
by Rod Peppiatt**

Here we begin to look at why and how a Congregational Church came to be located in Warradale Park.

**Rev. Charles Watts**

The cause began as an outreach activity by the Glenelg Congregational Church, and particularly by its ordained minister from 1950-55, Rev. Charles Watts. He is strongly acknowledged as a key driving force behind the beginnings of Warradale Park Church.

Charles Watts was a man of action, strong-minded and dynamic, who is remembered as an evangelist and an entrepreneur. The latter is perhaps best demonstrated by the move to create four shops in front of the Jetty Road frontage of the Glenelg church hall in 1954. Rental from these provided funds not only for church maintenance but also for a range of mission activities.

It seems likely that he became interested in establishing a Congregational Church at Warradale Park early in his time at Glenelg, given that land was purchased for this as early as May 1952.

On the Glenelg side of the initiative, Charles Watts was the strong motivator. Equally important was the group of Congregationalists (and other denominations) in the area who wanted to see a church built in Warradale Park.

One of these, Mrs Edna Gursansky, approached Charles Watts after noticing a sign announcing a future Congregational Church, which had been placed on the block purchased in 1952. From this contact began the process of canvassing interest and raising money. There was a small Congregational presence in the area, but the project was primarily seen in terms of providing outreach into the young and fast-growing community which lacked a church.

**Support**

This was a new church community, drawn from within its own locality, rather than

people moving from Glenelg to form a congregation. Although the 'flavour' of the new group was Congregational, people from other denominations who lived in the area began to show some interest. For some, it was a case of 'when you get the church built, I'll come along', but others joined in at the planning/fundraising stage.

Financially, support for the cause came through a combination of local initiative and external generosity. The former involved letter writing to various bodies within the Congregational Church to ask for loans or gifts to help at Warradale Park. Two notable examples are letters to the Glenelg Ladies Auxiliary, requesting a re-direction of funds previously raised for a mobile church - a project unlikely to go ahead - and also an approach to the Home Mission committee. This letter requested consideration of the sale of land held by the Committee in places where it was impractical to build, with proceeds of such sales being re-directed to Warradale Park.

**Grovene Church**

A major source of material assistance was realised in 1953 with the donation of funds as well as furniture and fittings from a church closure. The Grovene Congregational Church, at Morphetville Park, had opened in November 1922. By the early 1950s, the congregation was struggling and in July 1953 the church was closed, with most members transferring to Glenelg. Disappointing in itself, the timing of this closure was fortuitous for the cause at Warradale Park.

The Grovene community donated chairs, a piano, an organ, lectern, hymn books and cupboard, a gas copper and sundry other cash saving items. In addition, the proceeds of the sale of property, plus donation of funds from church, Sunday School and the Grovene Guild, contributed £1680 to the Warradale Park cause.

Substantial gifts from the Glenelg Church and its various organisations, as well as low interest and interest free loans from various individuals and groups, all helped to swell the coffers. It was, however, a slow process. It was felt to be important to have all the required funds in hand before building, and so visible progress on the building was fairly minimal.

### **Development**

The twelve to eighteen month period prior to the middle of 1954 could thus, perhaps, be described as the "what's happening with that church?" period! However, though not evident to the passer-by, the cause was beginning to take shape.

Formal meetings of interested members began in homes in Warradale Park in August 1953, by which time plans for building were being considered alongside fundraising possibilities.

Letters from Charles Watts to the Congregational Union's Home Mission Committee and Chapel Building Society express the sense of urgent need for funds so building could begin. A further letter in June 1954 to the Chapel Building Society recalled that a sign had been placed on the site in 1952, stating that a Congregational Church would be built there that year!

Some concern was also expressed about other denominations 'sounding out' the area, with the suggestion that this increased the urgency of the Congregational Church's task. In the meantime, work on gaining building quotations continued.

### **Contract approved**

Finally in June 1954, the quotation from William Smith and Son, of Brighton, was accepted by both the local group and the Chapel Building Society, which had the final approval. A loan of £500 was also sought. The completion price was £3200. Mr Smith also offered to build a 6 ft x 10 ft porch as a gift to the church.

### **Land for future needs**

At the same time, provision was being made for future needs in terms of land. Two blocks adjoining the Struan Avenue frontage of the church property became available in mid 1954. The Warradale Park

Committee recommended the immediate purchase of this land for future expansion and a manse site. This was agreed to by the Home Mission Committee, and the purchase was made by the Congregational Union for the use of Warradale Park. This decision was to prove very sound, given the need to expand Sunday School space very soon after the church opened.

### **Visible Progress at last!**

By the end of August 1954, members and those in the community were able to see work being done on the site. The foundation stone was laid in a ceremony on 4th September. To the regret of all concerned, Charles Watts, who was to have chaired the ceremony, was unable to do so owing to sudden illness. The stone was laid by Rev. K. Blackwell, Chairman of the Congregational Union, and an address was given by the Union's Secretary, Rev. E.G. King. Mrs E. Gursansky, secretary of the Warradale Park Committee, spoke of the hopes of the local people and asked for the support of all present.

### **Opening Service and Ministry**

At the October meeting of the Warradale Park members, a date was set for the Opening Service. This was to be conducted on 5th December, as an afternoon service, to be followed by Evening Church at 7.

At this meeting, discussion also concerned the fulfilment of ministry needs. A meeting of the Glenelg Deacons recommended that Glenelg and Warradale enter into a joint pastorate to enable another ministerial settlement to be made. The idea was to have a minister who would concentrate on Warradale's needs, but also help with youth ministry at Glenelg, and exchange pulpits with Charles Watts as arranged. Importantly, Glenelg was prepared to underwrite the stipend of the second minister, so as to make the call possible.

Not surprisingly, Warradale Park was very appreciative of this offer and quick to accept! Sub-committees from the two churches met to discuss the call. The name of Graham Pemberton was suggested. He was a final year student in training for ministry at Parkin



Congregational College. Though not ordained at that stage, Graham Pemberton was considered to be an appropriate choice as an associate pastor. The call was accepted.

### **Celebrations!**

December 1954 was a period of celebration and commitment for the members of Warradale Park. After some last minute concerns about building completion - and a hurried working bee to lay gravel - the Opening/Dedication went ahead as planned on 5th December. This time Charles Watts was present and opened the door to allow all worshippers to attend. The church building was dedicated during worship by Rev E.G. King.

### **Covenant Service**

On 15th December, the Covenant Service, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, occurred. This was a liturgical and formal act of commitment to the new community and its work in the area, and to each other as members of the community of Christ.

The message from Charles Watts concerned the responsibilities of church membership. Following this, the members (now including Graham and Betty Pemberton) shared in Communion and in the signing of the Covenant.

At the meeting which followed, Deacons were elected: Mrs E.M. Gursansky, Messrs K. Neil, J.H. Brice, B.C. James and M.R. Williams. To these fell the task of forming a Constitution and the arrangement of rosters. This meeting also decided that new members would be asked to accept and sign the Covenant as the basis of church membership. Following a decision to hold a 9 a.m. worship service on Christmas Day, to be led by Graham Pemberton, the meeting concluded with a benediction.

The work of establishing a congregation and worship centre was done, although fundraising and payment of debt was ongoing! The work of consolidating the life of this new congregation, meeting in its new worship centre, was just beginning.

### **Relationship with Glenelg**

Underlying much of what has been written thus far, is the relationship between Warradale Park and Glenelg churches. In terms of the initial enthusiasm of Charles Watts, the ongoing financial support of Glenelg and groups within its fellowship, and the ongoing pastoral links, this relationship was a very important one.

The financial assistance offered by Glenelg in

different ways during the intensive fund-raising period made substantial contribution to the Warradale Park project. Similarly, it seems, that Glenelg's assistance with ministerial expense made possible what otherwise might have been out of the question, or at least creating further financial difficulties.

As time progressed, the relationship became less formal, but it remained important to both churches that there be a spirit of co-operation. Glenelg continued to provide some financial assistance into the late 1950s.

### **Conclusion**

In this essay, I have looked at the period leading up to the Covenant Service which formally established Warradale Park Congregational Church in December 1954. My focus was narrow, given the stories that could be, and probably are, told of the forty years since that service.

I have examined the social and religious setting for the church and looked at how and why it came to be established. This included examination of support (people and finance) and the process of establishment, acknowledging the significance of assistance from churches at Grovone and Glenelg, as well as other groups and individuals.

The December issue of S.A. Congregationalist, reported that on 7th October, 1956, a service was led at Warradale Park Church by Charles Watts, with members of the former Grovone Church in attendance, to acknowledge their contribution to the Warradale Park congregation.

To conclude, tribute must be paid to the efforts of Rev Charles Watts and to a group of people in the Warradale Park area, who felt that, to be a place to live, the area had to have a church. (*The text of the Covenant is given on the next page.*)

#### Primary Sources:

1. *Congregational Meeting Minutes, Warradale Park Congregational Church, August 1953-February 1955.*
2. *Conversations with Mrs Gursansky, Mr and Mrs Neil, and Mr and Mrs Williams.*
3. *Original Correspondence and Documents held at Warradale Uniting Church.*
4. *S.A. Congregationalist, 1952-62. Various issues.*

#### Secondary Sources:

- Cameron, J. *In Stow's Footsteps, S.A. Congregational History Project Committee, Adelaide, 1987.*
- Dolling, A. *The History of Marion on the Sturt, Peacock Press, 1981*
- Jetty Road Uniting Church, (formerly Glenelg Congregational Church), Historical Records, Sept. 1980*
- Kiek, E.S. *Our First Hundred Years, Adelaide 1950*
- Marsden, S.E. *Business, Charity and Sentiment: The South Australian Housing Trust (1936-1986), Wakefield Press 1986.*
- Phillips, W. "125 years of Congregationalism in South Australia" in *S.A. Congregationalist* (in 4 parts) March, April, June, September 1962.

(from the previous page)

*We, the undersigned, confessing our faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, and now assembling for Divine Worship in the building newly erected at the corner of Lascelles and Struan Avenues, Warradale Park, do hereby solemnly associate ourselves and unite together as a Christian Church, on the principles following, namely:*

*We believe in the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, which we are agreed to take as the sole basis of our faith, and the sufficient rule of Christian conduct.*

*We approve, speaking generally, the tenets and regulations usually maintained by Churches of the Congregational Order, and engage to conduct our own proceedings accordingly.*

*We acknowledge our duty to associate together, not merely for our own edification, as fellow-members, but also in order the more effectually to extend Christian principles and privileges in the World around us.*

*We recognise the essential necessity of conducting all our Church business in a peaceful spirit, with mutual forbearance, charity and goodwill; and we acknowledge the incumbent duty of conforming our daily lives to the requirements of Christ's Holy Gospel.*

*Finally, we believe that all good desires come from God, to Whom alone we look for grace needful to the fulfilment of every Christian duty.*

*In the spirit of these convictions we now, gladly, devote ourselves to the service of God, and for each other's good, in Holy and Spiritual Brotherhood, praying to our Divine Lord, and the Great Head of His Church, abundantly to bless our Communion.*

*"Save now, we beseech Thee, O Lord: O Lord, we beseech Thee, send now prosperity."*



## BURTON CEMETERY

Burton, four miles west of Salisbury, was an early Primitive Methodist Church on the Adelaide Plains. Built in 1858 it was the spiritual home for a number of pioneering families. The church was, for over a century, part of the Salisbury Methodist Circuit.

The original building was replaced by a new church in 1914. This survived, along with the small public school, until 1972. By this time it had declined largely because of easy access to the much larger church in Salisbury itself.

Today a small Methodist cemetery - still owned by the Uniting Church - alone survives. A Burton Property Committee is working to preserve the cemetery as part of a memorial park to honour the pioneer families

of the area. With the co-operation of the Salisbury City Council it is hoped to repair the graves that have been vandalised or fallen into neglect. The cemetery is now close to an expanding housing area.

The committee seeks the support of descendants of people buried in the cemetery. The last burial took place in 1971.

We give below a list of the surnames of people buried at Burton. Descendants are urged to contact the following members of the committee: Mr Doug Wright (secretary) 60 Park Tce, Salisbury 5108 or Mr Noel Brown (a member of our Historical Society), 10 Commercial Road, Salisbury 5108.

Barton	Drage	Hobbs	Menadue	Rosewarne
Bradshaw	Duck	Hodby	McGrath	Smith
Carslake	Fatchen	Jeffries	McNicholl	Thomson
Cavanagh	Goodier	Job	McNicol	Verrel
Chivell	Gilbertson	Julyan	Norris	White
Cope	Graham	Kelly	Norton	Wright
Curnow	Harber	Kennedy	Pearce	Wyatt
Dorling	Hart	King	Potter	
Dew	Helps	Lewis	Reedy	
Diment	Higgins	Magor	Riley	