

# CHAPTER 10

## Seeds of the Church: Missionaries and Martyrs

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‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.’  
(Psalm 116:15.)

**I**N THE INFANT church of the early 1st century, the word ‘martyr’ (Greek μαρτυρς) was used to describe believers who had *witnessed* the historic events of Jesus’ ministry – that is, his life and resurrection. As the persecution of Christians became more widespread, it became a term especially for those who, *by their suffering*, had been witnesses to their faith in Christ. And finally, the term became reserved for those who had *suffered death* under persecution, thus bearing the supreme witness. As church history progressed, ‘martyr’ came to refer especially to a Christian who, because of his or her faith, had suffered death as a result of an act of determined or intentional violence – or through being wilfully neglected or left to die. Jesus’ warning to the disciples was serious and predictive: ‘If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first... No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.’ (John 16:18, 20.)

Throughout the last one hundred years, over 3,500 students have graduated from Sydney Missionary and Bible College. Most have persevered and served their Lord faithfully. A not inconsiderable number have suffered in diverse ways for their witness to Christ; and quite a number – especially in the early decades of the college’s history – have died of disease or misfortune, as a result of their sacrificial service. Two graduates have been martyred in the narrowest sense of the word: murdered for their faith, as they went about their task of making disciples of the nations.

All those who honour Christ during their lives on earth, wherever they work and whatever their circumstances, are faithful. God’s people are not commanded in Scripture to seek martyrdom, but to seek faithful obedience. Christians who are killed for their witness may not be any more faithful, sacrificial, persevering or obedient than others; and God is sovereign over life and death. Yet in Scripture, there is nonetheless a sense in which martyrs are mentioned as an especially notable group amongst the broader group of the faithful people of God who persevere to the end. (Rev. 20:4-5; cf. Rev 6:9-10.)

For that reason, the stories of Fred Roberts and Stanley Dale are recorded here in some detail. But so that we may be reminded of the Christ-honouring service of so many graduates of the college, a few diverse cameos of other graduates’ stories are also included. Any history is, unavoidably, selective, and will disappoint some; and these short stories are just a handful from amongst thousands of stories of the triumph of the gospel and the steadfast faithfulness of God, seen in and through graduates of the college. Hopefully, all of these few accounts – whether longer or shorter – will be used by God to encourage the saints as they persevere.

### **Frederick John Roberts: 3.5.1902– ? 1935**

Brazil, by 2015, had the fourth largest number of evangelical Christians of any country in the world: about a quarter of its population. After centuries of Roman Catholic colonial overlay, the country saw an extraordinary Christian missionary zeal and influx during the 20th century. Five expatriate evangelical missionaries were martyred in Brazil during that century, all of them amongst the tribes of the Amazon. Two Americans working with the Nhambiquara Indians were murdered in 1930: Arthur Tylee and his baby daughter, and Mildred Kratz.<sup>1</sup> Then in 1935, the ‘Three Freds’ – Australians

Fred Roberts and Fred Dawson, and Irishman Fred Wright.

Given the cruelty and horror inflicted upon Brazil's Indian population by Portuguese colonists and traders from the 16th century onwards, their hostility towards outsiders was entirely unsurprising. Farmers, rubber collectors and gold hunters plundered, exploited and abused indigenous Indians, sometimes shooting them for sport. Those abuses, along with introduced diseases, had reduced Brazil's Indian population from 5 million in the 16th century to about 200,000 by the 1930s.

Fred Roberts was the fifty-ninth student to enrol at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, studying at Croydon under Benson Barnett in 1923–1924. He came to the college from the family home at Farm 113, Leeton, in south western NSW. Fred was the second son of ten children. He was born in Broken Hill, where his uncle was a lay preacher and evangelist. When Fred was ten years old, in 1912, the family moved to Leeton, not wanting their children to become miners. Although they were Wesleyans, the family joined Leeton Baptist because there was no Methodist church there. Fred grew up on his parents' farm – an orchard, which produced stone fruit, figs, almonds and grapes. The SMBC roll book gives his occupation as 'butter maker'. Fred had become aware of the College through the *Bible Recorder*, an evangelical newspaper of the 1920s and 1930s. He was passionate in his gospel commitment; his keen Christian parents were squarely behind him, and supported his training, and later mission work, prayerfully and financially.<sup>2</sup>

While studying at college, Fred became a good mate of Rita Barnett, the principal's daughter. Fred also met up with two recent SMBC graduates with a bold vision for taking the gospel to unreached people groups: Pat Symes (1921–22) and George Sharpe (1920–22). The three together decided to commit themselves to gospel work in the Amazon region. The principal wrote, with evident excitement, 'Mr Fred Roberts has offered to, and been accepted to, pioneer in Amazonia, amongst the Red-skinned peoples there. Mr A.P. Symes....and Mr G. Sharpe...have both offered to the World-wide Evangelisation Crusade, and expect to leave early in next year with Mr F. Roberts, in the company of Mrs. C.T. Studd, for England, on their way to the Amazon.'<sup>3</sup> Sometime before leaving, Fred had established a close friendship with Mabel Green, a part-time SMBC student studying through the college's city Bible class in Sydney. Mabel had been born in Morpeth, NSW and moved to Sydney with her parents. She was a treasured member of Ashfield Methodist Church.

Roberts, Symes and Sharpe sailed to the UK in 1925, to do further preparation at the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade's London Missionary Training Colony. Each day the three New South Welshmen walked eight miles to their lectures in the city, and eight miles back again. While they waited to depart for Brazil, Fred and his two companions were busy: they studied Portuguese and tropical diseases, and took evangelistic meetings. He rejoiced over two men kneeling in the street seeking salvation, and two young people who had offered their lives for missionary service. Fred was always outspoken and practical, with a great heart for the lost, and an unstinting desire to pour himself out so that others might hear of Jesus Christ and come to know him.

### ***Fred Roberts Writes from London in 1925, en route to Brazil***

*I have had an opportunity of taking some meetings in Slum Mission Halls. We read of our Lord weeping over Jerusalem, and I think he must have wept over London many times, for it is such a cesspool of iniquity. I was amazed to see such a large number of women and children around the public houses in the slums. On Sunday evenings they are crowded with men and women both inside and out. I have passed them in the slum areas at 9.30 pm on Sundays and have seen men and women staggering around the foot-path and inside, whilst babies and small boys and girls wait outside shivering in the cold. Many of the women have babies in their arms... It may interest some to know that though at present there is no cure for cancer, yet life may be prolonged for years by taking one teaspoonful of yeast three times every day.*

*Prayer Letter, 9th May 1925<sup>4</sup>*



**Pat Symes and Fred Roberts at an early jungle camp on the Rio Pindarè.**

Fred Roberts served two missionary terms in three different locations amongst the Indian people of the Amazon. In his first term, 1925–1933, he worked first for five years amongst the Guajajara Indians, in an isolated outpost called Sapucaia, on the Pindarè River. This work was

shared with Symes and Sharpe, although recurrent malaria and poor health forced Sharpe to return from the field after less than three years. The scourge of malaria and other insect-borne and water-borne diseases was malicious, as



**Fred Roberts (right, mounted) and Pat Symes at Sapucaia, Brazil, 1926.**

were the sandflies, piranhas and other jungle wildlife. Food was a constant concern, and on treks they sometimes shot and ate black monkey, apparently maligned as a food. Fred wrote, 'A few shots brought him [the monkey] to the ground, and I know some may say "Oh, how cruel," but that evening we put a bit of him below our belts. If you had

been there I have an idea that you would have done the same. In the canoe we carried a small quantity of salted meat, but it was green, stinking and alive. Some sat down and ate this; we preferred the fresh meat, although an evolutionist would say we ate our "relation".<sup>5</sup>

Mabel Green, who by 1928 was Fred's fiancée, sailed out from Sydney via London as a WEC missionary, leaving in 1928. She arrived in Brazil in January 1929, and she and Fred were married in Sao Luiz on 14 May. Mabel kept a daily diary, which is a remarkable account of joy, excitement, sickness and recovery. After an arduous nineteen day canoe journey up the Pindarè, mainly in the rain, Mabel and Fred reached their new marital home: Sapucaia, where, until Mabel's arrival, only male missionaries had lived. On her first full day there, she noted 'Had good night – woke refreshed – Drastic changes begun at Sapucaia – tablecloth on table, flowers, cutlery – groans from men!'<sup>6</sup>

From the outset, Mabel had a deep love and compassion for the burdened women and girls of the Guajajara Indians, and an ardent desire to help them to know Christ:

I was very interested in the women. As I looked upon them to whom the Lord has called me, to see many of them wives before they were maidens, there welled up in my heart a deeper love for them. Some of them marry about the age of ten years...Oh, you women in the Homeland, as I compare the difference of their position and yours! I remember much of the difference in social standing is caused because you live in a land where Christ

is known and honoured. Those of you who know him, and love him, will you listen to a call that comes from these people? Sisters in Christ, they are precious to him who died for them, as well as for you.<sup>7</sup>

Mabel threw herself into the work of language learning, cooking, house-keeping, typing up Bible translation work, teaching children, playing the organ and leading devotions. But she was not well. She had developed a chronically infected foot on the canoe journey, and frequently suffered attacks of malaria. Brief descriptions of her state of health are strewn throughout her diary entries: ‘bad day’, ‘extremely weak’, ‘head bad’, ‘very tired’, ‘fever again’, ‘abdomen tender’, ‘not feeling up to the mark’, ‘bad during night’. She pushed herself to continue, but by early September she was too weak to sustain diary writing.



**Mabel and Fred Roberts  
outside their home in  
Sapucaia.**

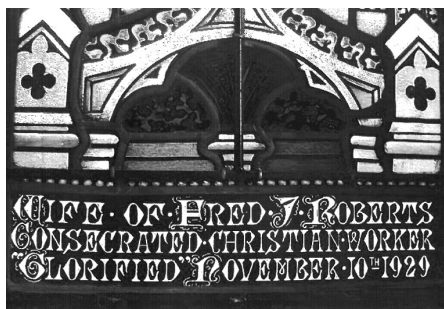
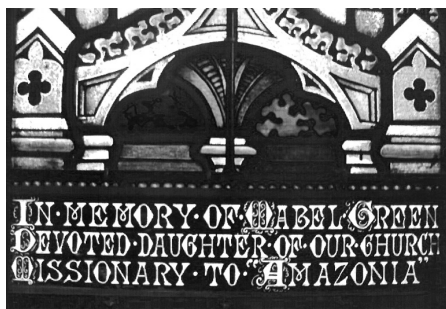
With the help of medical books, Mabel and Fred diagnosed erysipelas, an acute streptococcal disease, along with the ubiquitous malaria. Both diseases are now curable through antibiotic therapy. Her last diary entry on 7 September showed her trust in God in the midst of pain, frustration and disappointment: ‘Still in bed – low spirited – fair amount pain, felt a battle raging in my soul but I believe the Lord has given the victory. It is hard to see the

reason for this sickness, but the Lord does not make mistakes.’ By the time her illness had worsened, however, it was too late for Mabel. The river level had dropped to its lowest seasonal ebb, making it impossible to convey her downstream to civilisation and medical help. She deteriorated rapidly, and throughout October Fred was continuously occupied in nursing her. In early November, Fred wrote ‘Even as I write, I am expecting the Lord to take her at any moment. Her mind is a blank. She is also blind and deaf. How hard it is to sit and watch the one you love slowly sinking, knowing that at the same time you cannot help her.’<sup>8</sup>

She died on 11 November, 1929, in her twenty-ninth year. Fred buried his wife and unborn child next to Fenton Hall, another WEC pioneer missionary

who had died from malaria while evangelising the Guajajara Indians. Fred Roberts preached at the burial, surrounded by local Indians and the small missionary staff. Two months later, and 13,000 kilometres away, another memorial service took place in Mabel's sending church, Ashfield Methodist. Rev. P.J. Stephen preached with poignant sadness but triumph. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported his address. 'Great applause had been accorded to missionaries who had been permitted many years of service, and they had been rewarded for their labours; but in the hush of our spiritual lives we might hear the clapping of the pierced hands in approbation of Mabel Green's victory. The life she lost on earth would be found again in Christ.'<sup>9</sup>

The grieving principal, Benson Barnett, who in China had lost his own first child, Hal, and his friend from Bible college, William Fleming, wrote a short obituary for his old student, Mabel. His comments were eminently those of a realist: 'With what high hopes she left these shores! Her face shining with holy enthusiasm. What dreams she had dreamed! What plans she had for the Indian women, among whom she was to labour as a pioneer missionary, and for whom afterwards she was to give her life. But death is the great breaker of our dreams. Death upsets many plans...I believe she would have left her name written in capital letters among the forests of the Amazon had she lived.'<sup>10</sup>



**Mabel Roberts's memorial windows, Ashfield Uniting (erstwhile Methodist) Church.**

When the mission society tried to persuade Fred to return home for furlough and to recuperate, he declined: 'I would gladly do so, but my work here is not finished.' When his colleague, Joe Glenn, asked Fred if he thought it was worth it, he replied, 'Joe, if ever God should give you the task of laying me to rest beside her, I should still count it well worthwhile...I believe that God will give us to see fruit from these lives laid down.'<sup>11</sup> The Sapucaia mission

station was closed down, and the WEC missionaries were redeployed. Pat Symes moved to establish a pioneering work in Colombia which he continued for almost sixty years. Fred Roberts was deployed with George Sexton to the Gurupy River region to work with the Guaja Indians, a different, more primitive tribe in the Amazon, from 1930 until 1933. The first contact ever made with the Guaja tribe was in 1930.

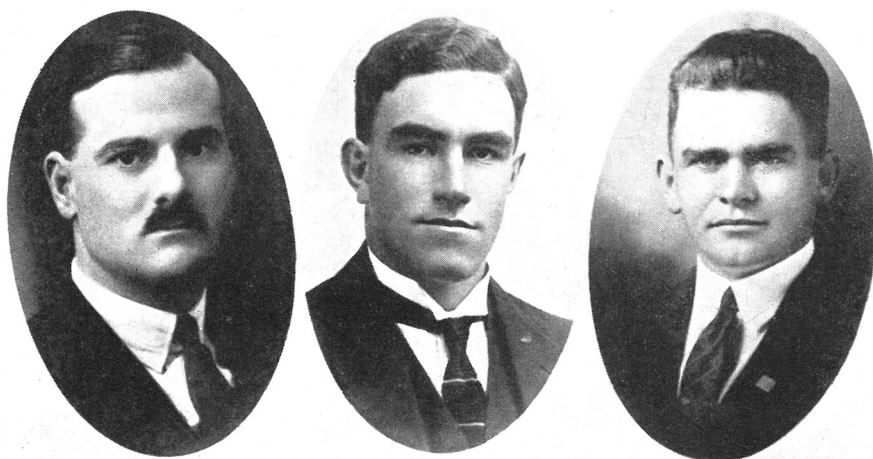
It was slow work even finding the elusive Guajas, let alone taking the painstaking steps of beginning to learn and translate their language. Often, all that the missionaries could find were the Indians' recent footprints: so they would build shelters, and leave small presents for them. But persevere they did, and by 1931 Roberts reported that 'We now have in the Indian language a translation on the 'Life of Christ' and portions of Old Testament Scriptures. Also a translation of Mark's Gospel. These we have typed out in book form, and are using them in the schools...The Indian tribes of Amazonas are that small and are dying out so fast that I do not think they will warrant a printing of the Scriptures in their own language. Therefore, we have adopted this plan to enable us to get on with the work ere the remnant disappears.'<sup>12</sup>

Roberts, a single-minded gospel man of steely determination, was exhausted. He finally took his first furlough in 1934, in Australia – after ten years in the Amazon with Pat Symes and (for part of the time) George Sharpe, his two Australian and SMBC colleagues. There was great excitement in the Roberts family upon his arrival. He brought bows and arrows as presents for family members. Fred urged his sister Millicent to return with him to the Amazon as a missionary. But their father, William Roberts, firmly believed that Fred should work not in the jungle but in the cities of South America, preparing and teaching national Christians to evangelise the regional areas. 'William was concerned for Fred's safety and said to Fred, "You're no good to God dead!" So Grandad wouldn't let Millie go with Fred.'<sup>13</sup>

He had already made his future plans, and had dedicated his proposed second term of service to the evangelisation of the wild and infamously murderous Kayapo Indian tribe. The Kayapos, who lived around an unexplored tributary of the Amazon called the Xingu River, were regarded by both other Indians and white Brazilians as the most savage tribe in that part of the Amazon. This mission promised to be a fulfilment of Benson Barnett's prayer for his students to 'go out and be strong and do exploits'.

While on furlough, Roberts toured his native land extensively, garnering support and enlisting the prayers of God's people for his new campaign

which he felt strongly was God's calling. He was a forceful, fearless speaker on deputation. 'He opened his mouth a lot and was single minded, passionate, and absolutely dedicated to missionary work.'<sup>14</sup> His mission society, now called the Unevangelised Fields Mission (UFM), twice offered to furnish him with an allowance for his furlough and travels: one offer came from the Melbourne office, and one from the Sydney branch; but the feistily independent Roberts declined, assuring them he had been amply supplied for his work.<sup>15</sup> Before he left Australia for Brazil in 1935, he bought a Chapman marine motor, which he took with him, anticipating their needs for the pioneering journey. During furlough, the widowed Roberts had also become engaged to a Victorian nurse, Blanche Huxley. By the time Roberts and his colleagues later disappeared, Blanche had left Australia for Brazil to join him, before marrying.<sup>16</sup>



**The 'Three Freds': Wright (Ireland), Roberts (NSW) and Dawson (Tasmania).**

On his return to Brazil, Roberts met up with the two UFM missionaries who were to be his expeditionary gospel colleagues. In God's quirky ordering of human affairs, all three were called 'Fred', and soon became known as 'The Three Freds'. Fred Dawson – a farmer, like Roberts – was a Tasmanian who had studied at Melbourne Bible Institute. At his Bible college graduation, the principal, C.H. Nash, described him as patient, persevering, adaptable, cheerful, adept at language learning, robust in physique and character, and manifestly devoted to Christ. He was a huge man, and an expert woodchopper. Fred Wright was an Irishman from Belfast: light-hearted, congenial, fearless, and an all-round sportsman known for his

rugby, swimming, athletics and boxing prowess. They were three remarkable pioneering men, immensely practical, hearts flaming for Christ, who could hardly wait to face the challenges they knew were coming. Neither the mission nor the three missionaries had any illusions about the dangers of their task. In his last letter from Brazil, Roberts wrote:

Right along the way from Australia to Nova Olinda, the Lord has given me signs of his guiding hand. We believe that the time has come for these savage Indians to receive the good news of salvation. The stories we have heard since we left Altamira have been enough to turn one's hair grey. This year they have murdered four Brazilians with arrows and clubs. We have before us a very difficult time, but we know that God is with us, and that with Him nothing is impossible.<sup>17</sup>

In April 1935, the intrepid Roberts, Wright and Dawson set out from their mission base in Santa Isabel. Their journey, by hired launch, canoe, motorboat and occasionally on foot, was to take them 1,300 kilometres upstream into the dark heart of Kayapo territory. The Kayapo tribe's land was known to lie beyond an enormous waterfall known as Smoke Falls, in the headwaters of the Rio Xingu. On the launch they travelled as far as Nova Olinda, the terminus of public river transport and the last Brazilian village. There, as at each stopping place, they gave out gospel tracts and Scripture potions to any who could read. They also extracted teeth, and treated ulcers and fevers. Then in San Felix (Felix being the patron saint of local rubber growers), the Freds purchased a partly built boat, which they enlarged and modified using local timber. They astonished local people when they produced the motor from their cargo, and fitted it into the boat. 'The boat is a bit narrow,' Roberts wrote, 'and rolls very easily when passing rapids and whirlpools.'

After storing some bulky supplies in the small village, the party was ready to leave with minimal equipment. The Amazon Basin insects were ferocious, so they took mosquito nets, but left behind metal plates and wire which they had been planning to fashion into rudimentary armour. Now they were entirely on their own, and independent. They wrote and left letters, and cast off from Nova Olinda in their motor boat in early May, 1935. Always acutely conscious of the need for prayer support, Roberts wrote in his last letter:

We shall have to fight our way up dangerous rapids. At one place, we must drag our boat overland for nearly a mile where a rapid is impassable. At any time we may expect arrows down on us. When we meet the Indians the Lord will need to work in a wonderful way to save us from their clubs. Maybe you will not hear from us again for some time, but keep on praying. Stand behind us as fellow soldiers in the Lord's battle to win these Indians for Christ.

The Three Freds were never seen or heard from again. Benson Barnett expressed the deep consternation many around the world were feeling as the months of 1935 went by with no news: 'Mr. Fred Roberts returned to his loved work among the Indians of the Amazon, and no word seems to have come since he left his base.'<sup>18</sup>

A UFM search party was finally despatched in April 1936, when river levels permitted. Twelve days after leaving Nova Olinda the searchers reached 'Smoke Falls', the last navigable point on the river. There at the base of the thundering waterfall they discovered the Freds' boat, waterlogged, the hull hacked, and half hidden in a creek, with parts of the motor stripped. 'The mutilated boat and motor spoke of savage blows with axe, knife and club. Could the 'Three Freds' have fared better than their goods? A search of the surrounding bush revealed a heap of what had been clothing, the cloth now almost destroyed by white ants.'<sup>19</sup>

Some weeks later, the truth was finally revealed and the searchers' surmise confirmed by some Indians who came to Nova Olinda and were shown photos of the three men. The tragic story was pieced together amidst the animated conversation; even the order of their deaths and the names of the Kayapos responsible were furnished. Roberts, Dawson and Wright had been clubbed to death at Smoke Falls, by some of the Kayapo warriors to whom they had travelled so far to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

God did give them fruit from lives laid down. The sacrifice of the Three Freds made a deep impression on many Indians, indicating the extent to which followers of Jesus Christ would go to win people for him. Indeed, even the retelling of the story of Mabel Roberts's death, six years before Fred's, moved some women of the Tembe tribe to put their faith in Christ. The martyrs' deaths resulted in a great harvest for the gospel, as Indian tribes – some from the Kayapo, and many more from other tribes – turned in repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the story of their sacrifice



resulted in a worldwide surge in numbers of people offering themselves for cross-cultural missionary work. Twenty years later, the SMBC *Evangelist* September 1955 issue reported Matthew's Gospel and hymns in the Kayapo language, and a number of Kayapo coming to profess Christ as Saviour. For decades, and continuing today, the Amazon Basin of Brazil has had thriving, growing, evangelical churches.

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### **Stanley Albert Dale: 26.6.1916–26.9.1968**

Stanley Dale was born in 1916 in Kyogle, northern NSW, along with his sisters Sadie and Elaine. The family later moved to Bowral; and there, as a result of the Great Depression, Stan and his sister Sadie had to leave school in their early high school years, to help support the family. There too, in 1933, aged 17, Stan heard the gospel clearly preached at a rally on Mt Gibraltar; and the small, outspoken, misfit young man, Stan Dale, was changed forever, as he trusted wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ. The speaker was Alec Gilchrist, a friend of the college and one of the Unevangelised Fields Mission (UFM) committee members who looked after Fred Roberts during his furlough in 1934. Gilchrist would later encourage Stan into cross-cultural mission, and recommend his acceptance by the UFM.

The family dynamics were far from happy, and his father, a baker, was a hard man who was not enthusiastic about his son. Another baker in Bowral, for whom Stan worked while a youth, revealed something of Stan's personality when he said of Stan: 'No one can ever tell Stan nothing!'<sup>20</sup> When the family moved to Sydney for his parents to make use of their skill set as baker/pastry cook and café owner, they settled at Balmoral Beach. Much to his family's horror, Stan was keen to demonstrate his fearlessness, his love of danger and his contempt for obstacles, by swimming far out into Middle Harbour despite the presence of sharks. When World War II broke out, his father joined the merchant navy as a baker. He was killed when his ship, the 'Ceramic', was torpedoed and sunk by the Germans.

Before the outbreak of war, Stan had followed his burning passion for the gospel and evangelism, and enrolled at SMBC. He lived and studied at the college in 1938–1939, graduating with his diploma. He was known as a rough

diamond, a roguish enthusiast who soaked up the Bible and meant well, but sometimes got himself into difficult situations. One of his fellow students, Ralph Chesson, remembered him as ‘a dear man, very sweet; a quick-minded maker of little jokes. And he was very impetuous. Once, there was a student called Sheila in college. Stan hadn’t even spoken to her, but he just gazed at her and said, ‘I would like to marry her’. This was in college. She was on a dairy farm in Queensland, or way up north somewhere, I’m not sure where – but way up north in southern Queensland or something. So Stan drove up all the way...and asked would she marry him! Of course, she gave him a very short answer, and he came back again. And he said to me, ‘Oh brother – I ran away before the Lord.’<sup>21</sup>



**Stan Dale.**

Another of the 1938–1939 group, Bill Spiers, recalled that ‘He was always a bit different from the others. He had a sense of destiny. He often said that he would be killed.’<sup>22</sup> Very much an individualist, it seemed that whatever Stan did, he did his own way: with gusto, steely determination, intrepid recklessness, and furious intensity. He loved poetry, and was very taken with Francis Thompson’s poem *The Hound of Heaven*, in which Stan saw depicted his own experience of God’s pursuit of him for salvation. Stan’s daughter, Joy, described him this way:

My Dad was single-minded, passionate, intense, hard-working, disciplined, energetic, didn’t suffer fools gladly and was not always gracious. (This is where Mum was a good balance for him.) Unlike

many people who know how to hide their flaws, Dad was very transparent – what you saw is what you got! However he was also a lover of the fine arts such as literature, painting, music, and poetry, and had an appreciation and depth of knowledge on many subjects, as well as an astounding ability to memorize and retain facts and figures! He was a gifted artist and a masterful story teller!<sup>23</sup>

That was Stan; and that was his style. It characterised him as a student at SMBC. It characterised him as a commando during World War II in Papua New Guinea, after he relinquished his officer's commission so he could be in the thick of the toughest fighting where his commitment and physical endurance would be tested to the limit. There, in the Owen Stanley Ranges, he looked out across endless serried ridges of jungle-covered mountains, and was inspired and captivated by the need to take the gospel there for the first time. It was his style as a Christian evangelist; and it was to be his style as a rugged, individualistic, enormously high-achieving pioneer missionary, who pushed himself to almost legendary feats of physical endurance. His family, his fellow students, his contemporaries and his missionary colleagues all recognised there was something unusual and 'different' about him: gifted, intensely focussed, reckless, and sometimes lacking empathy, social appropriateness and calm realism. These were the years before mental health diagnosis was as detailed and categorised as it is today. But his siblings and children later came to suspect very strongly that he was on the autistic spectrum.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Stan Dale at College and on the Field***

*It was at the college that I met Stan, in 1939. Poor Stan never looked as if he'd looked at himself in the mirror in the morning; but Dr. Rolls was very fond of Stan.*

*One day it was Stan's turn to milk the college cow and Dr. Rolls said to him, 'Now, Stan, when you've milked the cow, just put the buckets in the kitchen.' Well, there was a big business meeting going on in the main college lounge room – that was where all the meetings were held – and there was a knock on the door. I went to open the door, and there's Stan standing there with two buckets of milk! And Dr. Rolls said to him, 'Stan! Take it and put it in the kitchen!'*

*Well, we knew Stan was a bit of a problem. He was very adamant about what he believed. A little bit impulsive. Any rate, he applied to the Unevangelised Fields Mission, and he came up to the field in Papua New Guinea. My knowledge of him through college warned me! Soon after he arrived at Suki, where we were working, the mail came. We distributed the mail, and there was no mail for Stan. He was extremely upset. ‘Oh well,’ he said, ‘She’s gone off and married another boy: I knew I wasn’t worth anything.’*

*He went on and on and on, standing there. I said, ‘Stan!’ He said, ‘No, I’m going back home. I’m leaving the field. I’m going home.’ And I stood there and thought, ‘Oh dear.’ So I said, ‘Well, Stan, she probably just missed the mail; don’t worry, she might have been too busy. I’m sure that if she promised to pray and continue writing to you, she’ll be alright.’ ‘Oh no, no, no, no’ he said, ‘I’ve finished! I’m no good, I’m going home!’ So he began throwing things around the place.*

*I said, ‘Listen Stan, you’re going home, are you?’*

*‘Yes, when that boat comes I’m getting on board.’*

*I said, ‘Well, alright. Let me help you pack your bag.’*

*So we started packing the bag, trying to humour him down to think sensibly. And then I said, ‘Hey, Stan, when you get back to Sydney, what are you going to tell the mission? What’s the reason for you coming home? Are you going to say, “I didn’t get a letter from my girlfriend?” That’s a bit paltry, isn’t it.’*

*‘Oh,’ he said. ‘Yes. Unpack it all. I’ll stay!’*

*Now, that was Stan. He was impulsive. But nevertheless, the Lord blessed him. I can’t say anything against him. He was an unusual boy, but you get that type of person on the mission field.*

*Marjorie Deasey, SMBC friend and UFM missionary<sup>25</sup>*

Stan had an uneasy relationship with mission agencies. He first worked as an unmarried missionary in the Lower Fly area of Papua New Guinea from 1947 to 1949, with UFM; he did some fine work before he locked horns with the mission, whose council suggested he return to Australia. In 1949, he married Patricia McCormack, a registered nurse whom he had met while speaking and evangelising in Devonport, Tasmania. Their first child, David, died in 1950 aged one month. The Dales then spent four years together in

missionary work in the West Sepik area of PNG, this time with Christian Missions to Many Lands (CMML), a missionary arm of the Brethren Assemblies. As with his previous missionary service, it was terminated by the mission society: partly due to Stan's perceived discipline of nationals, which colleagues and superiors regarded as overly harsh. His strict enforcement of discipline probably resulted from a combination of his difficult family upbringing, his punishingly high expectations of his own performance, and his military combat experience in commando units. Their departure from the Sepik was followed by a period back in Tasmania, during which Stan worked as a school teacher.



**The last photo of the Dale family together, in early 1968: Hilary, Pat, Stan and Wesley (back row); Rodney, Janet and Joy (front).**

From 1960, Stan and Pat and their five children served in Dutch New Guinea (later, under Indonesian rule, called Irian Jaya or West Papua). They had persisted with applications to serve again overseas, and had eventually been accepted by a third foreign missions society: Regions Beyond Missionary Union. There, they pioneered gospel work amongst the primitive and hitherto uncontacted Yali people, in the incredibly rugged and inaccessible Snow Mountains. All the Yali lived in animistic fear, and the women, depressed and deprived of hope and most rights, had an extremely high suicide rate.<sup>26</sup> Like the Kayapo Indians of the Amazon, the Yalis – caught in a cultural web of vicious revenge killings, dread and despair – had never even glimpsed the light of the gospel. That is, until the Dales and a few other pioneer missionaries brought the momentous news to them.



**Stan baptising new Yali believers, 1966.**

Life for the Dales was very tough indeed. Ninia, the base and home they established at a high-altitude Yali village, was extremely isolated. But Stan was enormously resourceful. Before Pat and the children could even fly in to Ninia from the mission's Irian Jaya base, Stan and his missionary colleague Bruno de Leeuw, with a small number of local Yali men, laboured for many months to build a tiny, 450 metre-long airstrip right on the edge of the precipitous Heluk Gorge. God graciously watered the seed of the gospel the Dales planted, and gave it growth – slowly but invincibly. Stan evangelised, trekked to other villages, and began translating the Bible into Yali; Pat provided nursing care for the village, looked after the family, and shared the love of Christ with those around her. In late 1966 the first Yali converts were baptised.

In that same year, while on a trek to investigate the murders of two faithful Christian Yali men, Stan was ambushed and shot with five arrows. After a nightmarish six-hour, all-night walk through pitch darkness along a river gorge, Stan reached an outpost from which he was airlifted to hospital care for surgery. As well as a torn pleura and diaphragm, his small intestine was so damaged that a bowel resection was necessary. After some months of careful nursing and convalescence, he recovered and was able to return to work at Ninia. The deaths of the two Yali converts was a heavy blow, and Stan

wrote, somewhat proleptically: ‘We had lost two boys who were not only our own sons spiritually, but were like our own sons in fact. Even the death of our own first child was not a greater blow to us than the death of these two whom we had grown to love...We trust that these strongholds of Satan still remaining in the Heluk Valley will yet be smashed by the hammer of the word of God, that from this baptism of blood there will rise a sanctified, self-sacrificing church...A corn of wheat has fallen to the ground and died. May it bring forth much fruit in the days ahead.’<sup>27</sup>



**A Yali man helping Stan Dale prepare literacy material. With Stan is his daughter Joy.**

Then in September 1968, Stan and his missionary colleague Phil Masters, from Iowa, were on an evangelistic and language-reconnaissance trip by foot to neighbouring valleys unreached by the gospel. Masters and his wife, Phyllis, and four children were based at Koruppun, also among the Yali people. On their reconnaissance trip, Stan and Phil were trekking with three Dani carriers and one Yali man. Probably in an attempt to prevent further missionary challenges to their traditional sacred objects and fetishes, a group of warriors from Kibi, who had been shadowing the trekking party, moved in to attack. First Stan, then Phil Masters a little way ahead, were attacked and killed in a relentless rain of arrows. Probably, about a hundred arrows hit Stan alone. Two of the three Danis, and Yemu, the Yali, were able to escape, and later reported the tragic events.

The missionaries’ clothes and equipment were retrieved later from among the scores of arrows at the two killing sites. But their bodies were never found. Initially, Stan Dale and Phil Masters were thought to have been eaten in a ritual cannibalistic feast.<sup>28</sup> Later research by Don Richardson concluded

that this was not the case: that rather, the men had been beheaded, and their bodies cut into pieces and scattered widely to prevent their much-dreaded resurrections.<sup>29</sup> However, subsequent interviews of the killers by expert linguists and missionaries more fluent in the Yali language have suggested that it is most likely that Dale and Masters were, in fact, eaten.<sup>30</sup> Dr. Grahame Martin, a missionary and anthropologist who worked for decades in Papua New Guinea before joining the SMBC staff, concurs: it was almost certainly ritual cannibalism.<sup>31</sup>

At Ninia and Koruppun, Stan Dale's and Phil Masters' home bases, the remaining missionaries had feared that the Christian people of the two villages would disappear into the bush, too frightened by the slaughter to hold onto their new faith. But the opposite happened: they were strengthened and inspired by the two men's sacrifice. The Ninia Christians bonded together, reaching out to others with the gospel they had believed.<sup>32</sup> On the Sunday after Stan's murder, his widow, Pat, attended the infant church God had established among the Yali people at Ninia, and reflected: 'I was able to realise that Stan had left a lasting monument – a living church in the eastern highlands of West Irian.' Four years later, in 1972, thirty-five more Yali people in the Seng Valley were baptised into Christ; among them were some of the men who had killed Stan Dale and Phil Masters. Before his death, the irrepressible Stan Dale had translated the Gospel of Mark, and was making substantial progress on Luke and Acts. Thirty years later, the translation of the whole Bible had been completed by others, and was finally in the hands and the hearts of the Yali people.



**Stan and Pat Dale in Irian Jaya.**

A memorial service was held in Karubaga, a major mission base in Irian Jaya, a week after the martyrs died. There, fellow missionary Don Richardson spoke these words which testified to God's powerful transforming grace in the lives of the two men:

Stan and Phil seemed at first to be so different from each other in personality, and yet both were Christlike. How can this be? The reason is, I believe, that their personalities consisted of the same qualities, but those qualities in Stan had a different polarity from the same qualities in Phil. Stan was the disciplined Australian whom Christ had made gentle; Phil was the gracious American whom Christ had made firm. Both men, to be sure, needed the firmness and the gentleness of Christ to face the trials of Ninia and of Koruppun.<sup>33</sup>

Later, memorial services were held in both Melbourne (where Pat Dale had studied at the Melbourne Bible Institute) and in Sydney. When Patricia Dale arrived back in Australia in 1968, with their five children to support and nowhere to live, she discovered Stan had left an estate of just \$939. At the two memorial services, people generously contributed money to help the family begin to re-establish itself. The Sydney memorial service was held on 8th December in the chapter house at St. Andrews Cathedral. It was presided over by SMBC's principal, Rev. Arthur Deane.

Stan Dale's New Testament, found at the scene of his martyrdom in the Seng Valley, had been pierced by an arrow. The point of the arrow had stopped at Matthew 16:24:

Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will find it.'

When the Roberts-Dale Campus at SMBC was opened in 2010, it was named to honour Fred Roberts and Stan Dale – not because they died, but because they showed in their lives *and* in their deaths what it is to be a faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, who takes up the cross to follow the Master and proclaim him.

## **Roy Seaman (SMBC 1916-1917)**

On 15 April 1916, when Ben Corlett and Roy Seaman started as college students on the opening day of the college, they were – for a short time – the only two students. Following graduation, Seaman, encouraged by the principal, Benson Barnett, joined the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1919. In Shanghai, in 1922, Seaman married his wife, Gertrude – also a missionary. He was decorated by the Chinese government for his selfless service during an earthquake in 1925 which took 200,000 lives but also brought about some wonderful spiritual revival. Seaman served as an effective evangelist and Bible teacher for twenty-seven years, first in Kansu and later in Hopei.

The last few years of the Seamans' China missionary service were spent in very trying conditions in Shandong, imprisoned under Japanese occupation forces in the Weihsien internment camp for Allied civilians. Amongst the 1,800 internees in the squalid, semi-starvation conditions there were many missionaries, including Eric Liddell, the Scottish Olympic athlete, 400m gold medallist and rugby international. Liddell, a London Missionary Society missionary, died in the camp in February 1945, five months before the internees were liberated. The Seamans and 1,400 others were liberated by paratroopers in August 1945.

Roy Seaman and his wife left China in 1946, to return to Gertrude's native Canada where they served on the mission's home staff. After thirty-six years with the mission, Roy retired from CIM (by that time, renamed OMF). He began a teaching ministry at Central Baptist Seminary and Calvary Church, in Toronto. There, he taught for another thirty years. For many years the 'pioneer students' of 1916 and 1917 – Seaman, Corlett, Henry, Jago, Schenk, Jensen, Cain, Hunt, Nosworthy and others – kept closely in touch with each other and with the college.

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## **Alan Beard (SMBC 1917-1918)**

Alan Beard enrolled in the second intake of students at SMBC, in 1917. Straight after graduating, he was accepted as a missionary with the China Inland Mission, travelled home to London to farewell his parents, and left for China in 1919. He married a missionary whom he met on the field. The Beards' years

of Chinese missionary service included several periods of dangerous political instability.

In January 1927, there was a sudden, unexpected, large-scale riot directed against westerners in the city where they served. The Beards and others on their mission station had been advised to leave for Shanghai, for safety reasons. They were still packing their suitcases when a rioting crowd of several hundred students and dissatisfied Chinese locals broke through the mission compound gates, and began destroying buildings, equipment and goods. The Beards and three other missionary women were harangued and intimidated with axes and long bamboo poles. Mrs. Beard was threatened with a revolver when she returned to the bedroom for her engagement ring. Their home building was left blazing, and almost the entirety of their furniture and mission equipment was destroyed by the insurgent mob. Finally, three Chinese leaders helped them to escape through the mob to the magistrate's house, where they were given asylum until a boat was ready to transport them to safety. There, Beard recalled, 'the five of us missionaries had to sleep in one room. My dear wife's nerves were all broken up, and all through the night she just kept moving on the bed in jerks.'<sup>34</sup>

Alan Beard was eventually to spend forty-four years serving with the CIM/OMF. Beard and his wife worked first in inland China, from 1919; then following the revolution, they were forced to leave China in 1951 after two years of Communist rule. The Beards were later reassigned to Formosa (Taiwan), where they spent many more years in fruitful ministry.

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### **Stuart Bryson (SMBC 1918-1919)**

Stuart and Elise Bryson, who had met and befriended the Barnetts in Manly in 1916, studied together at the college as day students. After graduating, Stuart was ordained by Rev Benson Barnett at Leichhardt Congregational Church. Following that, they left for Kenya with the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) – an organisation whose Australian branch, like SMBC, was founded in 1916.

Bryson had a longstanding desire to translate the Scriptures into the language of an unreached people group. He first taught at, and supervised the building of, the Moffat Bible School at Kijabe, amongst the Kikuyu people of

Kenya. While he was there, one day a very tall, unknown African man arrived and simply announced to him, ‘I am from Nandi country, Bwana. I have been sent here by God to teach you our language and prepare you for coming to our country.’<sup>35</sup> Later, Bryson took sole charge of the busy AIM station at Kapsabet in Nandiland, north-west Kenya; during this time he translated the Bible into Nandi, a ten-year project which he undertook with a sole Kenyan assistant, Rev. Samuel Gimnyige. Many Nandi Christians referred to Stuart Bryson as the ‘father of the Nandi’. The Nandi New Testament was published in Sydney in 1933; the completed Bible was published and distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1938, the first complete Bible in one volume in East Africa.

The Brysons returned to Australia in 1938, where Stuart continued his devoted and diverse service: as a deputationist for the Bible Society, pastoring Baptist churches, and as the secretary/director of the Australian branch of the AIM. He also served in the role of vice-chairman of the SMBC Board for many years, and was instrumental in sending out more college graduates to the Nandi people and elsewhere.

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### **George (Dick) Harris (SMBC 1928–1929)**

For thirty-six years, Dick Harris shone the light of the gospel of Christ among indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory. Harris was accepted for work with the Church Missionary Society even before he graduated from the college, and arrived at Oenpelli in November 1929. It was a remote mission station, and every bit as isolated as many mission locations in Africa, Asia and South America. Harris (and later his wife, Nell) served first at Oenpelli, then at Roper River, Angurugu and Umbakumba. He guided the establishment of the new CMS mission station at Umbakumba.

During World War II, Harris spent two and a half years doing vital work on Groote Eylandt, separated from his wife and family. At one stage he was the only missionary on the island. Harris’s great love for the indigenous Groote Eylandt people was accompanied by a deep knowledge and understanding of their culture. The Aborigines’ Committee appointed him as the senior missionary in the field, and asked him to serve as their representative.<sup>36</sup> He was tough but compassionate, and widely respected as a trouble shooter,

a man of initiative, and a wise advisor on policy. Harris and his wife were particularly gifted in staff welfare, and Nell, who taught at the mission school, also translated the Gospel of Mark into Kunwinjku.

The couple made an enormous contribution to evangelism and cultural understanding in Northern Australia. In 1966, SMBC's jubilee year, Harris was honoured with the award of an MBE in recognition of services rendered in the cause of the welfare of the Aboriginal people.

Ordained as an Anglican minister in 1954, Dick Harris served in several short-term pastoral positions when family circumstances made it necessary for them to leave the field for a time. After finishing as CMS missionaries in 1966, the Harrises moved back to western Sydney where Dick again took up parish ministry.

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### **Mary Andrews (SMBC 1935–1936)**

After completing her SMBC diploma, Mary left Australia for China with the Church Missionary Society. She sailed in late 1938, on the eve of World War II. Parts of China were already under Japanese occupation as a result of the Sino-Japanese war, and her location of Lin Hai was not immune from the conflict:

The European war has indirectly as well as directly depleted the numbers of missionaries in China. New recruits have not been able to come, and some others are being kept at home who were formerly on the field...We have had no less than twenty-nine air raid warnings in six or seven weeks. I am getting quite used to them now – although they were not too pleasant at first... Life is all upset by these warnings, because everyone has to leave the city or run into a dug-out. Only once since I came here have the planes actually bombed the city, followed by machine-gun firing.<sup>37</sup>

Through the war years, Mary Andrews worked, watched and taught the gospel, as God grew the Chinese church despite peril and difficulty – flood, fire, famine and fighting. Often, Japanese forces were not far from Lin Hai. Two weeks after the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and

the declaration of war by the United States, the Americans formed a plan to bomb Tokyo in a surprise token raid which would raise morale for the USA and China and send a strong message to Japan. Nicknamed the ‘Doolittle Raid’ after its commanding officer, in April 1942 the B-25 Mitchell bombers took off from a US aircraft carrier. After successfully bombing Tokyo, and knowing their fuel was insufficient to return to the carrier, the bomber crews then flew south-west, intending to fly to small airfields in eastern China to refuel and continue their journey west into Free China.

Two of the B-25s crash-landed near beaches in the South China Sea, just east of Lin Hai. Some members of the five-man crews were badly injured, and local Chinese residents, who had suffered under the Japanese, hid the airmen and helped as they were able. The Chinese magistrate in Lin Hai requested that Mary nurse them at the Christian hospital where she served. Mary willingly agreed, and the wounded crew members were brought to Lin Hai. Some had serious injuries including infected compound leg fractures, which required amputation in primitive conditions without general anaesthetic. Mary sterilised the few available surgical instruments in an iron wok over a charcoal stove.<sup>38</sup>

Miraculously, all the airmen survived, and their presence was successfully concealed from the Japanese. When they were stronger, the Americans escaped westwards – some on foot, others carried on sedan-chairs by Chinese helpers. They finally flew out of Kweilin just an hour before the Japanese bombed that airfield to prevent their escape, and returned safely to the USA. Two years later, in 1944, driven to flee as the Japanese advanced, Mary herself had to make a similar journey through Japanese lines into Free China. She and others travelled on foot, by boat, and eventually by aeroplane, to escape across the Himalayas into India.

After the war she returned to China, in a different role and a different location. She served the church there until 1951, when the communist takeover compelled the exit of all missionaries. Mary became the principal of the Anglican Deaconess Training College (Sydney), 1952-1975, and became a prominent leader in women’s ministry and training in Sydney and beyond. She was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1980. Since her years at SMBC, her vision for women in Christian ministry – whether in Australia or elsewhere in the world – was always firmly interdenominational.

## **Pearl Clucas (SMBC 1938–1939)**

In 1939 the college was affected by an epidemic of ‘three-day flu’. They were looked after by a Chatswood medico, Dr Clucas, who was a visiting lecturer at the college. Clucas had several daughters, at least three of whom became missionaries. One of them, Pearl Clucas, was studying at SMBC at the time of the epidemic. The lounge room (now the principal’s office) became a temporary ward, where Pearl Clucas helped her father by nursing the afflicted students.

After graduating from the college, Pearl was accepted by the Sudan United Mission (SUM). She worked in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan amongst the women of the nomadic Arabic Krongo people. Pearl developed a great love for these ever-travelling women, whom she contacted by visiting their mud huts. Gospel progress was excruciatingly slow:

When they are ‘dressed up’ their bodies are smeared with sim-sim oil...Even as their bodies shine on these occasions, will you pray that the light of the glorious gospel will enlighten their souls ‘to so shine before me that they may see their good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.’ To our knowledge there is NOT ONE KRONGO WOMAN in this position today, even after ten years of faithful witnessing in their midst. Prayer alone can change this. Will you pray for us, and me in particular, as only a woman can, through the power of the Holy Spirit, reach the women with the intimate dealing of soul transformation.

I am at the moment the only white woman for thirty miles around, and my only womanly companions are those of dark skins, and strange tongues. I will value your prayers, as you pray, that God will see fit to use even me to attract them to Jesus, and to the works of grace as they are accomplished by the indwelling Spirit of our Lord.<sup>39</sup>

Pearl’s twin sisters, May and Win, went to the Nuba Mountains (also in Sudan) with SUM, where they worked for about twenty years. May and her twin, Win, were ‘kept together’ by the mission, which allowed them to work on the same station. Pearl worked about thirty miles away, but transport was difficult and May and Win only saw her about once a year. They worked amongst tribal ‘people who had come out of pure paganism into Christianity’.<sup>40</sup>

## **Nancy Costello (SMBC 1958-1959)**

With a strong sense of God's calling specifically to Vietnam, Nancy Costello – a Sydney pre-school teacher – served there with Wycliffe Bible Translators from 1962 to 1974, through some of the heaviest fighting of the Vietnam War. Nancy was engaged in translating the New Testament into the Katu language, and was often called upon to interpret when US military personnel needed to speak with locals. She was able to assist in communicating to hundreds of displaced Katu people, who were continually wandering and travelling in search of safe locations. Many had lost contact with family members in the devastation of the war, and had had no news of their relatives for years. Nancy assisted such people by helping them to return to her village, Thuong Duc, as a marshalling and reunion point.

In the mid-1960s, she was stationed near Khe Sanh, which would become the location of one of the strategic major battles of the war. At times, she was summoned to the US Army base there, for her own protection, when fighting broke out. During battles in 1965 and 1966, she was sometimes given shelter in underground bunkers used by US Special Forces.<sup>41</sup> Her trust in God's sovereignty and protection was legendary: 'If something happens, well, it just happens. I don't go out knowing there will be trouble. But I believe I am here working for God. If I carry out my work, God will protect me.'<sup>42</sup>

Amid the horrors of the war, Nancy's ongoing Bible translation work was invaluable. Forced to move to Da Nang in 1969, Nancy continued her work, travelling back each month to the Katu camp in US military helicopters and transport aircraft, which would set her down in rice paddies to continue her journey.<sup>43</sup> On these journeys the aircraft were often shot at by the Vietcong. She was passionately committed to the spiritual and physical welfare of the Katu. In 1969 she wrote:

It is a wonderful answer to the Katu people's prayers to hear that their relatives are alive after ten years of no news, ten years under Communist control, continually moving, in the midst of war. God is still the God of the impossible...My prayer and concern now is that we may still have contact with these Katu. They are starving, yet if they come here to Thuong Duc they will not have land for fields, and who will feed them? Please pray that I will know the right contact for this, and that a good solution can be worked out. Some of the Katu people were new Christians ten years ago,

and have had no teaching since. It would be wonderful if we could give them the Katu Bible translation on this occasion.<sup>44</sup>

SIL/Wycliffe later published Nancy Costello's Katu-Vietnamese-English dictionary and other books recording and analysing Katu culture. Nancy, on furlough when Saigon fell in 1975, was unable to return to Vietnam. She spent the next fourteen years as a consultant with Wycliffe in Papua New Guinea, followed by another seven years in Laos, retiring in 1998.

Although the majority of Katu people sided with the Vietcong, Nancy kept praying for language contacts, to enable the translation work to progress. She saw God work many miracles, as he provided willing individual Katu helpers to enable her work to go on. Katu believers continued to meet after Nancy's departure in 1975. Now, in peacetime, although under Communism, the church is growing as Christian Katu have more chances to proclaim their faith in the unified Vietnam.

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### **Frank and Robyn Hawkes (SMBC 1969–1970)**

In Frank and Robyn's long cross-cultural ministry, they happily fulfilled very different roles, reflecting their strengths and training: Frank in agriculture and then church and pastor support; and Robyn in linguistics, translation and theological teaching.

Following their graduation from SMBC, they worked for two years with CMS in Numbulwar, Northern Territory, providing indigenous agricultural training and supervision. These were difficult years for them, and they returned from the field needing a break from their work.

They returned to missionary service in 1979, with Asia Pacific Christian Mission (APCM). For fourteen years, Robyn worked with a Bible translation project at Erave, in the Papua New Guinea highlands. The New Testament in Pole was completed and published in 1992. During these years, Frank worked in closely relational work, training national pastors. He frequently led jungle patrols: trekking from village to village in the PNG mountains, he would visit and encourage pastors in isolated locations, sitting around campfires and conversing in PNG Pidgin as he mentored nationals.

Frank and Robyn were back in Australia in 1992–1998, Robyn upgrading her theological qualifications and doing some lecturing, and Frank working as the Queensland representative for APCM as it merged and became linked in with Pioneers Australia. The mission was in the process of reassessing its strategy and directions: no longer engaged largely in primary evangelism (as it had been under its original Unevangelised Fields Mission banner), most mission staff now worked alongside national Christians, in supporting roles.

As Pioneers Australia missionaries, Frank and Robyn moved to Fiji in a different capacity, 1999–2007. Robyn lectured at the South Pacific Missionary Training Centre, a strategic interdenominational college focussed on training and sending cross-cultural missionaries throughout the South Pacific region. Frank served as team leader of a multi-cultural team working amongst Fijian Indians, who are mainly Hindus. His role in particular was to support churches in reaching out to the Hindu Indian population. Later, he also helped to establish evangelistic work amongst the Fijian Indian Muslim minority. They witnessed a greatly encouraging movement of God amongst Fijian Muslims, which continued after their departure from Fiji in 2007.

In 2008, Frank and Robyn Hawkes served as the Cross Cultural Missions Facilitators at SMBC.

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### **Philip and Leanne Zamagias (SMBC 1987–1988)**

Phil was already trained as a pilot when he and Leanne came to the college to prepare for cross-cultural mission with the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF). They had a keen interest in gospel ministry in Northern Australia. Over decades of diverse service, this would grow into a passionate commitment to mission in the North, especially to evangelism and support of church leadership in indigenous communities.

Their first Northern Territory ministry period was with MAF, based at Oenpelli from 1989 to 1996. Phil worked alongside a newly ordained Aboriginal pastor, Rev Peterson Nganjmirra. Taking a back-seat role, Phil and Leanne provided the transport, advice and logistical infrastructure for Nganjmirra to minister in villages throughout Arnhem Land. When the initial translation of the Kunwinjku ‘Mini Bible’ became available, Phil delivered

these to indigenous churches and communities in isolated locations across Arnhem Land.

Following this, they returned to Sydney, where Phil worked for six years as a mission education officer with the NSW branch of the Church Missionary Society. They maintained close connections with Christians in the North through these years.

Back in the Northern Territory from 2002 until 2012, they served with the Bible Society in Australia. Philip directed the Society's outback ministry, working with Leeanne to make Bibles and biblical resources available to people across about 40 per cent of Australia's land mass. Leeanne ran the Bible Society's Darwin resources centre, providing indigenous Bible resources. Phil, known as the 'Flying Bible Man', flew around the North assessing needs and providing resources for mainly indigenous pastors and churches. They helped develop *God's Story for the Outback*, a literary and biblical resource for children which also utilised Colin Buchanan's children's music, integrated with the teaching booklet. It was translated into seven Aboriginal languages.

In 2014, they returned to the Northern Territory, in new roles: this time, not with a mission agency. Leeanne became the registrar of the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory. Phil worked as development officer at Nungalinga College, the indigenous theological training centre in Darwin; and in 2016 began as rector of Fred's Pass parish, a Darwin Anglican church.

Despite discouragement and vicissitudes in the life and growth of Northern Territory churches, the Zamagias family saw God at work establishing his kingdom there, over three decades. They were often astonished by God's faithful provision, and the perseverance of indigenous Christians in isolated, resource-poor and trying circumstances.<sup>45</sup> In many locations, elderly Aboriginal Christians – women especially – have continued serving and ministering in the church in very sacrificial ways. On some occasions, Phil and Leeanne saw God provide dreams and visions, which drove people in remote areas to seek explanations of the message of the gospel from missionaries and other Christians. As a result, in God's mercy, seekers moved out of darkness into new life in Christ. Repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus has incurred great cost for many Aboriginal people, including financial loss or the contempt of their communities and families.

## **Mike and Jo Gibbs (SMBC 2000–2002)**

There is a Muslim people group in South Asia numbering over 200 million, which has no self-sustaining church. It is the least evangelised large people group in the world. Having developed a commitment to ministry among Muslims before and during their college studies, Mike and Jo worked with this people group through the Church Missionary Society and a partner non-government organisation. Mike, an environmental engineer, was engaged in a project to make arsenic-tainted groundwater safe for drinking.

After language learning, and then village cultural adaptation, they worked in a densely populated megacity for over a decade until ill health forced them to return home. Their goal was to help establish a structure of national leadership in the tiny, persecuted church. By intention, some of the future leaders they chose to train were women, and Jo in particular worked to set up training programs which would help to develop women leaders in the church. One of these female leaders ran a house church in her own home, attended only by women.

Mike worked in a supporting role with nationals, who would be the most effective leaders of churches. He did this by visiting believers in their homes, where he would read the Bible, pray with them, discuss various topical matters and help them prepare for their ministry work each week. He also instituted an English language learning centre in their city. There, he would present attenders with moral dilemmas and questions for discussion, and later invite them back to his home to continue one-to-one discussions.

The Gibbs family saw God working in remarkable and miraculous ways in people's lives, in a complex and difficult culture. However, discouragement was no stranger to their work. Perhaps even more than in other Muslim cultures, attrition in churches was high, and several national leaders came to grief due to moral lapses and other difficulties. Although the country is officially a secular state, the constant threat of family and community persecution and ostracism makes conversion to belief in Jesus Christ a costly decision. Leaders are reluctant to host house churches, because of persecution. One young man who came to faith was locked into his house by his family to prevent him talking further with Mike. Yet some believers are still standing firm and bearing fruit. Like many Islamic fields, the ground is hard and gospel progress is slow and frustrating. But as Mike and Jo observed, 'God is so much more patient than we are. We must keep on sowing seed no matter what the soil is like.'<sup>46</sup>

## **Brendan and Leaf Reilly (SMBC 2004-2005)**

Brendan and Leaf began by noticing, as they travelled, tens of thousands of travellers looking earnestly for spiritual truth. Wondering who was sharing Jesus with such people, they started to form and plan a dream of sharing Jesus with hippies, travellers and genuine spiritual seekers from all over the world. As Leaf commented, 'They're idealistic, and colourful, and musical, and hairy, and pierced, and tattooed, and so sincere!' They prepared themselves for this cross-cultural ministry by studying the Diploma at the college.

In an ancient city on the banks of the Ganges in northern India, they established an ashram: a beautiful, serene setting where seeker travellers could find a warm welcome, friendship and acceptance; and where stereotypes of Christians could be broken down. Their great desire is for people to hear about Jesus, learn about him, and experience him. People with no previous Christian contact would come and join them for spiritual retreats, for varying lengths of time, and shared in their meditations on the Bible. They were later joined at the ashram by a small team of friends, including another like-minded graduate couple from the college, the four of them serving through Pioneers.

We saw lives transformed, people becoming wonderful followers of Jesus, finding him as their treasure. It's like watching a birth; like watching heaven and earth meet each other...And years later, seeing the friendship grow, and their own walk with Jesus grow more beautiful and more sweet.<sup>47</sup>

Over about eight years at the ashram, they welcomed, fed and blessed about 4,000 travellers. Eventually forced by circumstances to relinquish their ashram building, Brendan and Leaf farewelled the place and people they had grown to love. They sought the Lord's leading, and moved to Thailand. There, they have set up a new retreat centre for seeker travellers: 'Shekina Garden'. In this warm community setting, friends from many nations share and contribute their skills and their fellowship. And global travellers seeking truth come to discuss life, suffering, faith and doubt, and the eternal promises of Jesus, with the 'Jesus Gypsies' from Australia.

## **Stephan and Claudia Pohn (SMBC 2006–2008)**

Strongly influenced by an SMBC graduate couple who served as missionaries in western Austria, Stephan and Claudia Pohn travelled to Australia from Austria in 2006, to do their theological studies at the college. Stephan, an engineer, and Claudia, a school teacher, had a long term ambition to be in gospel ministry – either in Austria, or cross-cultural mission elsewhere in the world.

On their return to Austria, both returned to the secular workforce, with extensive involvement in the limited ministry of their local church. Three years later, Stephan was appointed as the full-time pastor of a small church in Dornbirn, which had been founded in the 1970s as one of the first evangelical churches in the region. Very few Austrian churches support their own national full-time pastor. Stephan and Claudia discovered that even fewer have a program of systematic, biblical-theological preaching which feeds God's people by unfolding the Bible and its testimony to his plan of salvation through Christ. As Stephan preached and they both led Bible study groups, they found parishioners captivated by the gospel of grace in a culture which is heavily influenced by Roman Catholic theology and the institutionalised church.

They have found post-Christian Austrian society hard ground to plough: gospel-ignorant and very affluence-focussed, with a general reluctance to think about and discuss deeper questions and eternal matters. However, the Pohns' experience in particular was that faithful biblical preaching, leadership and one-to-one discipleship had a multiplying effect amongst local Christians. 'We praise God that in the hearts of many in our church he has caused a desire to share the gospel...As we sit down with people one on one, or preach the Bible from the pulpit, or discuss it in Bible study, we see people fall in love with the God of the Bible all over again – even some who have been Christians for decades.'<sup>48</sup>

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The convinced and constant testimony of all these graduates, and thousands more overseas and in Australia, is that God has been at work through them by his word and his Spirit to build Christ's church. The fruit of their faithful labour has often been slow to grow and ripen, and sometimes not apparent during their years of service, or even in their lifetimes. But God's gospel will always accomplish his purposes. That, Jesus said, is the nature of

the gospel and the kingdom: 'A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.' (Mark 5:26-27.) Out of the darkness, he brings light through his servants.