

Five Barley Loaves: An icon for Australasian Baptist Missionary Work.

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In 1978 The Evangelical Alliance "Directory of Missions" shows that missionary organisations based in Australia had a total of 2,512 workers in cross cultural ministry in some 73 countries.¹ In 1980 David Parker² did a survey of the Australian inter-denominational (Faith Missions movement) in Australia and came to the conclusion that about half of all missionaries in the 'Faith Missions' were Baptists.³

So while it is difficult to address the question of Baptist influence in the Australian Missions story for lack of manageable data, it is possible to examine the origins of Australasian colonial missions and the place of women in their history. Hence the choice of the topic of this paper 'The Five barley Loaves: an icon of Australasian Baptist missions' which examines the first decade of the sending of colonial Baptist missionaries from Australia and New Zealand to East Bengal.

The affectionate term for one of the earliest groups of colonial Baptist missionaries is 'the five barley loaves'⁴ Silas Mead, the minister of Flinders Street Baptist Church, (and to many the founder of Australasian Baptist Missions)⁵, preached at the farewell service for five women on October 22 1885⁶. He used as his Scriptural text the story of the feeding of the five thousand, and concluded with the comment regarding the women "What are so few among so many?"⁷ So while he is not reported as actually

¹ The Evangelical Alliance's 'Directory of Missions' (3rd edition) 1978 referred to by David Parker, "The Faith Missions movement in Australia" in *The Australian Evangelical*. September-October 1982, p.5

² David Parker was then a lecturer at the Queensland Bible Institute and a chaplain at the University of Queensland.

³ There is no recent composite data available on the Australian contribution to missions, nor is there any research available on the extent of Baptist influence in the overseas missionary movement. Modern trends in missions will have meant some marked changes in the statistical data in line with changes in church life in Australia

⁴ Abia Neville wrote in 1897 'These "five barley loaves" as they are frequently called, shared the joys and sorrows of mission life together for about eighteen months, during which time ties of affection were formed that have bound them closely together during the harder trials of later years'

⁵ For further details of Silas Mead's contribution to missions see R Gooden, "Silas Mead, Baptist Missions Motivator". *Our Yesterdays*, 2 (1994): 67-95

⁶ "Farewell Meeting to Zenana Missionaries" *Truth and Progress*. Nov 1 1885 p.135

⁷ Tonight we are bidding farewell to five women going to the millions of women in what I shall designate the Australasian District of East Bengal. What are these

using the term for them during that service, they became known as “the five barley loaves”⁸

These five were not the first Australian Baptist missionaries sent out by the colonial churches. There had been a failed mission to Nagasaki in Japan during the 1870s with Wilton Hack and family from South Australia⁹, and as has been mentioned there were the “Pioneers”, Ellen Arnold and Marie Gilbert who were sent out in 1882 by the South Australians to work in the Furreedpore¹⁰ District of East Bengal.

Baptists coming from Britain to settle in Australia in the early 18th Century brought with them a missionary interest, if not passion, fired by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) tradition of the voluntary society, the Serampore Trio of Carey, Ward and Marshman, working in India, and of separate Zenana work among women.¹¹ They had been encouraged by visiting BMS missionaries who came to the colonies to recover health rather return to England.

As a result the South Australians had been supporting the provision of “native agents” in Furreedpore, East Bengal since 1865-6, supervised by BMS staff from Calcutta or Barisal. Similarly the Victorians supported agents in Mymensingh, while their women sent money for the employment of Bible women to work in Calcutta

. One of the factors in crystallizing their interest had been a visit by South Australia’s first convert to South Australia in 1880-81. Punchanon Biswas was one of the agents supported by the Furreedpore Mission and he travelled to Australia to stimulate increased commitment by the churches. He had strongly preached that the woman of his country needed the ministry of women. This had influenced the Baptist women of South Australia, including Arnold and she had a life long friendship with him and his wife while she was in East Bengal. Arnold and Gilbert were delighted to find him in Calcutta at the Decennial Conference when they first arrived in the Indian sub-continent.

So in 1881 the South Australians, despite their desire to send out a European Male missionary to head up their work at Furreedpore, took the momentous step to commence Zenana work when they received offers for service from women. The decision was not unanimous. It was felt that to send women on their own to a place where European residents were uncertain needed careful thought and prayer. (The

among so many? Possibly in some degree what the five loaves were to the hungry thousands around him in Judea. Yes, five Australian sisters;....

⁸ Donovan Mitchell in a hagiographic biography of Ellen written after her death in 1931 claims that she coined the term herself (Mitchell, Donovan F. *Ellen Arnold Pioneer and Pathfinder*. Adelaide: South Australian Baptist Union Foreign Missionary and Book and Publishing Departments, 1932, p.11)

⁹ Brown, Basil, “The Australian Japanes Mission” *The Baptist Quarterly* 19 (1962) 309-313.

¹⁰ More modern spelling is Faridpur

¹¹ See “Baptist Old Colonists in Relation to Missions” in Price, John, Mead S & Samuel Vincent, *Our Centenary Volume: 1792-1892* p 3-5. Also “English and Australian Baptist” in *The missionary Heritage of Australian Baptist*. P.5-7

pattern of the BMS was Zenana work done under the supervision of the wives of missionaries) But on September 18, 1881 the resolution to take up Zenana work at Furreedpore was passed.¹² And they enthusiastically accepted Arnold and Gilbert¹³

Marie Gilbert, living with her mother in Geelong had read in an English magazine of the Baptist Zenana Mission's interest in sending women to their Zenana work¹⁴ in India and applied. They accepted her application on the proviso that the necessary financial support came from Australia. Aberdeen Street Baptist Church was in the midst of a building programme at the time, and the money was not forthcoming, so she and her mother moved to Adelaide where she enrolled in the first intake of Teachers College students and attended Flinders Street Church. She confided in Rev Silas Mead her sense of call to missions work, and he was keen for her to be sent out for the South Australians. Marie was appointed to Moonta School on the completion of her course, but continued her discussions with Mead and eventually supporters of the Mission supplied the finances for her to be released from her financial bond to the Education Department.

Ellen Arnold's family had migrated to South Australia in 1879 and joined Flinders Street Church¹⁵. Ellen also enrolled in that initial intake for Teachers' College, and it was at the entrance examination to the College that Marie and Ellen first met.¹⁶ At the conclusion of her course she was sent first to the Adelaide Central School and as the first head teacher at Peterborough. She too had had earlier interest in mission work that had not eventuated before the family emigrated, Marie knew of this but Mead was unaware of Arnold's interest. At a Wednesday evening prayer meeting Mead announced the offer of a young lady for service in East Bengal and Ellen thought he was talking of her, while he was referring to Marie Gilbert. In subsequent conversations it was decided to send the two women together.

At the farewell service to the "pioneers" in October 1882, Rev A W Webb outlined the work expected of Zenana missionaries and added a passionate plea to the young men also to go.¹⁷ Abia Neville, who will be important in later events, was present as a 16 year old and claims the women could not be persuaded to mount the platform to

¹² *The Centenary Volume of the South Australian and Tasmanian Baptist Missions 1792-1892*. Adelaide: W K Thomas, 1892

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Zenana was the word used for the women's part of the Indian home and came to be used for the work of reaching women in their homes that developed. The BMS formed the "Ladies Association for the support of Zenana work and Bible Women in India" in 1867 that later was called the Baptist Zenana Mission (BZM) Rev A W Webb at the farewell to Arnold and Gilbert on Oct 1882 explained the term to the audience in outlining the women's work expected of these pioneer missionaries *Truth and Progress* Nov 1882

¹⁵ Ball, G B "Arnold, Ellen (1858-1931) in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne University Press.

¹⁶ Gilbert, Marie and Ellen Arnold. "We Two" in *Our Indian Field*. Dec 22 1917 p.6

¹⁷ "The Farewell Meeting to Miss Gilbert and Miss Arnold" *Truth and Progress*. November 1882

give a farewell address.¹⁸ Their statements were read by Silas Mead¹⁹ even though at the time Emilie Baeyertz was exercising acceptable evangelistic ministries in South Australian Baptist churches.²⁰

Gilbert and Arnold arrived in time to attend the Decennial Conference in Calcutta²¹ and Ellen was inspired and recorded several comments in her diary.²² This was the era of tremendous growth of single women missionaries. They spent their first year 1883 living in Calcutta while a house was being built in Furreedpore for them. They studied Bengali and participated in a range of activities with the BMS women missionaries. They were dogged by ill-health and it is possible from Arnold's diary to track the debilitating effect of malaria.²³ They moved to the new house in Furreedpore in January 1884, and settled in with the help of Panchanon Babu and his wife. They had made little progress with Bengali, and so were very dependent, but continued with their studies and started visiting the nearby homes. Ellen's sister, Mary, came to visit her for a few months, while on her way to work in the Middle East.

Within six months of the move to Furreedpore Gilbert had to escort Arnold to Calcutta, and Arnold was shipped home broken in health, bitterly disappointed. Gilbert returned to Furreedpore, companioned by Mary Arnold for a few months, but then on her own until the "five barley loaves" arrived at the end of 1885. Unfortunately there is not much recorded of that year and how she managed to survive.

When Arnold reached Australia after the sea change, she found that the Doctors were not prepared to authorise her early return to the work. She had to spend 15 months in Australia and Mead decided to write to all the Baptist churches in the colonies and New Zealand²⁴, asking them to hear what Arnold had to say of the challenge of the work in Bengal. He wrote

We send forth, with all affection, esteem and confidence and prayer our sister, Miss Arnold, that she may be used of God so to present the interests of Bengal before you, as that your hearts may be stirred to engage enthusiastically in this evangelic work so dear to our ascended Lord. Miss Arnold returned most

¹⁸ Abia Neville in an address in Melbourne for the Jubilee (1905) reminisces on the "Beginnings of Our Work in India".

¹⁹ "Furreedpore Zenana Mission" *Truth and Progress*. November 1 1882 p.134-5

²⁰ Hilliard, David. *Popular Revivalism in South Australia from 1870s to the 1920s*. Gordon Rowe Memorial Lecture 1982, Uniting Church Historical Society, South Australia.p.13

²¹ "Our Indian Letter" written from Calcutta on January 9 1883, copy in the Archives of Flinders Street Baptist Church

²² Ellen wrote in her diary for Dec 28 "Such a gathering of missionaries has probably never been seen in the world before. Ladies were numerous, as Zenana work has increased so much of late years. From the first the Spirit was manifest. The very fact of meeting so many workers engaged in the same great field was most inspiring and invigorating." Of the Zenana meeting she wrote on 1 January 1883 "At 10am the ladies' meeting – all lady speakers, who gave first class addresses which were to the point. We gained much knowledge as to methods of work and were especially impressed with the desirability of missionaries obtaining medical knowledge." A cryptic further entry on 2 January said." An additional ladies' meeting in the evening. Rather flat owing to some old men getting up and holding forth without saying anything"

²³ This was at a time before the link between mosquitoes and malaria was known.

²⁴ Letter is reproduced in *The Victorian Freeman*. February 1885

reluctantly to Adelaide from Furreedpore on 1st August last, with impaired health, and it was no small disappointment to her to be advised by our committee here to remain in Australia another ten months before starting back again. We now believe.... That it is of the Lord that she be detained here Experience in this colony has shown us that she possesses unusual powers of clear expression and sympathetic appeal, by which she interests audiences, and she very successfully presents the highest claims of the mission enterprise

It was Mead's plan that each of the colonies organise their own Mission and work in contiguous areas of Bengal.(See Map for these areas) This travel of Arnold came to be known as the Arnold Crusade, and during this time she visited Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, New Zealand and Tasmania,²⁵ was invited to speak (preach) in a large number of Baptist churches and stirred interest and commitment to mission work. Each colony has its own story of these early developments and Arnold was certainly instrumental in being the catalyst for the formation of some Colonial Societies and in the recruiting of the four women who accompanied her to India in 1885.

Victoria had been supporting missionary agents in the District of Mymensingh for about 15 years, first supervised by BMS staff from Dacca²⁶ and then by the location of John Ellison (BMS) in Mymensingh at the close of 1883. Victoria planned for their two workers eventually to commence Zenana ministry there. In the cases of Queensland, New South Wales and New Zealand theirs were much more recent societies and they had yet to decide where they would concentrate their work and workers. Those decisions were in effect to rest with the women both to make and execute.

The "barley loaves" were young single women, in their twenties, well educated for their times and eager for work among women in Bengal. Arnold had been enlisted by the various colonial societies to seek suitable workers for them while she was travelling around their colony. **Martha Plested**²⁷ had recently arrived in Queensland from England and the night before she heard Arnold speak at her church God had convinced her it was possible for a woman to be a missionary. So she responded to the challenge of her pastor at the end of Arnold's meeting at Wharf Street Church²⁸. She was accepted by the newly formed Queensland Baptist Foreign Mission as their sole representative and within a couple of months sent to join the assembling group in Melbourne and Adelaide.

In Victoria Mrs Martin, wife of the Minister at Collins-street Church and the force behind Victorian Baptist interest in Zenana work of the BZM, had been in contact with Ruth Wilkin of Castlemaine over four years and when Arnold came to visit the colony Martin asked Arnold to interview **Ruth Wilkin** when she was visiting Castlemaine. Arnold was so convinced of Wilkin's suitability for mission work that

²⁵ There was no Baptist work in Western Australia at that time and they started their Society later, but in East Bengal.

²⁶ Modern spelling is Dhaka

²⁷ Parker, David. *The Martha Plested Story*. Brisbane: Baptist Union of Queensland Department of Mission, 1986

²⁸ "Farewell Meeting to Zenana Missionaries" *Truth and Progress*. Nov 1 1885 p.136

she brought her to Melbourne to meet the Victorian Committee. At the meeting that the Victorian Zenana Mission accepted her they also accepted **Marion Fuller** from the Aberdeen Street Church, Geelong. There was some concern about the ability of Victoria to support two workers, but they accepted the wisdom of sending two together – a principle they found difficult to maintain over the years with fluctuating staff numbers. A special appeal at Collins Street Church resulted in a gentleman coming forward with the £150 needed for the first year's expenses, so they gladly made their plans and notified the BZM in London that money that had previously been sent to them for the support of Bible women in Calcutta would now be spent on their own staff.

The final member of the “five barley loaves” was the third South Australian Baptist missionary, **Alice Pappin**, from the North Adelaide Church. She had come from the country to Adelaide to train as a teacher, and her application was warmly endorsed by her church because of her gifts in Sunday School work. There was no doubt in the Mission's mind of her suitability, but there was doubt of their ability to finance another worker at that time. In this case it was the churches of the Northern District Baptist Association who formed an Auxiliary to the Furreedpore Mission and wrote asking that Pappin should be considered their “own” missionary and they promised to find the needed funds.²⁹ So she joined the outgoing party.

Arnold had hoped that her visit to New South Wales, New Zealand and Tasmania where she had aroused missionary interest would result in others offering for service, but nobody was recruited in time for the farewell in October 1885.

Within twelve months the New Zealand Missionary Society sent out its first worker, **Rosalie Macgeorge** in 1886³⁰. She came from Hanover Street Church, Dunedin, another trained teacher, who like Martha Plested had no time for training for the work she was going to. She was joined by **Annie Newcombe**, from Victoria in 1887, who accompanied **Jessie Clelland**, (Vic), **Fay Denness** (from SA for the NSW Society), and **Agnes Pearce** (SA). In that same party was the first male missionary sent out by Australian Baptists **Arthur Summers**, from Flinders Street Church.

It was not until 1892 that New South Wales sent any worker from their own colony. Tasmania on the other hand adopted one of the South Australians, **Lucy Kealley**, as their representative.

The “five barley loaves” went to live with Marie Gilbert in Furreedpore, travelling overnight by train and by small river boat the rest of the way.³¹ The South Australians decided to extend the house so that the group of women could live together and learn language and methods of Zenana work there, rather than living in Calcutta. Wilkin wrote of these early experiences of group living while she was invalided home in 1891.³² She describes the camaraderie, pressures of living in a fish bowl, the debilitating effects of the climate, and the intense desire to be able to communicate

²⁹ “Farewell Meeting to Zenana Missionaries” *Truth and Progress*. Nov 1 1885 p.136

³⁰ Margaret Davison in a paper Rosalie Macgeorge: Pioneer Missionary

³¹ Wilkin Ruth, *Gleanings from a Foreign Field*. P.4

³² Wilkin, Ruth. *Gleanings from a Foreign Field*. Geelong: Thacker, 1891

particularly with the women restricted to their homes. There is little mention of the tensions that came with differences of personality and disagreements over food, housework and work. But they must have been there. These were strong-minded women. In time other annual groups of newcomers arrived and initially came also to Furreedpore. It was this sense of corporate identity that is summed up in the icon, and applies in general to the women of the colonial missions and not just the initial five. They were the founders.

The Victorians paid £50 towards the house extensions and the work was under Arnold's supervision. Arnold felt personally responsible when the budget was overspent and so agreed to become the agent for the New South Wales Mission when they determined to start to work from Comilla in Tipperah District to ease the financial pressure on South Australia.. By that time there had been other changes in the occupants of the house. Marie Gilbert had decided that once the group was settled she would take time to go to England to gain needed medical training and experience and when she returned she sought to work independently. A real character!. In 1887 Wilkin and Fuller decided to transfer to Mymensingh and eventually a house was built for them there, supervised by Punchanon Babu from Furreedpore. Clelland and Seymour joined them in Mymensingh, as did later Victorian arrivals.

Once the group divided to take up the work for their particular societies, travel was difficult and time consuming. However they instituted two methods of maintaining their corporate identity, despite the fact that they were working for different societies, with different demands and expectations. The first was the introduction of a round robin of letters.³³ The first extant letter is from Rosalie Macgeorge written Feb-March 1889 and the series went the rounds of Comilla, Noakali, Pubna, Furreedpore, Nariangunge and Mymensingh, with an additional letter added from each station. Eventually in 1893 it was decided to print a paper for distribution between staff instead of these letters and it picked up the name already used for the letters *Our Bond*. This publication, produced in India, and not in Australia and New Zealand was printed until 1933³⁴ and was distributed also to supporters at home. So this does provide some interesting points of comparison with the editing of news at the home end.

The other result of their need for each other was their decision to come together for a Convention once a year in the cool season. This was planned to be a time for inspiration, study, corporate prayer, and discussion of missiological issues. In the early Conventions there was no place for binding decisions. They had no power for that with their societies for they had to relate to their own societies on financial and other matters. Much time was spent on prayer requests and their subsequent answers.. At the first Convention held at Furreedpore from Dec 31 1887 to Jan 3 1888 there were 12 present -. 3 women from Mymensingh, 3 from Comilla, 5 from Faridpur, and only one man Arthur Summers who had just arrived in Bengal and was living with the BMS at Madaripore. The particular issues that are noted in the official record are the

³³ The handwritten original letters are in the Global interAction archives in Hawthorn, Victoria
³⁴ Bound copies in the GiA/ABMS archives

inadvisability of single women having to live in the homes of married couples.³⁵ They showed greater sensitivity to the culture than later generations of staff. Also they discussed the inadvisability of lady agents having to wait to have new stations opened up by men, whether they be European or Bengali.³⁶ The final issue was stated to be the desirability of building any house for gentlemen missionaries at some distance from any Zenana house, “so as to avoid any appearance of evil”³⁷

By the time the next Convention was held at Mymensingh one worker had already had to return home. Jessie Clelland had been unable to adjust to the climate and had been sent home after six months in the mountains at Darjeeling. There were 13 present, 12 women and still the one man. Summers by this time had opened up a second station for South Australia at Pubna. In their discussion they considered issues like regular holidays, visiting other stations, what to do with women secret believers on the question of baptism. Language examinations were obviously conducted by the BMS in Calcutta, but the group was voicing opinions on substitute texts, and the need for standards. It is interesting to note that Fuller chaired the discussion, not Summers.

Amy Parsons (SA) and Iris Seymour (Vic) arrived in 1888, and in the following year Pillow came from New Zealand.

The third Convention at the end of 1889 was held again at Faridpur and 9 workers attended. (8 women and Summers) They recorded some of the changes in their ranks

Since the last gathering Miss Newcombe returned, through ill health to NZ.. Miss Pearce left the Mission and married to a gentleman in Cuttack. Miss Clelland still in Australia. Misses Denness and Gilbert detained in the stations of Comilla and Noakali, and unable to be present.³⁸

At this Convention there was also a delegation from the BMS, Rev Kerry from Calcutta and C H Baynes from England. Baynes wanted to come to an understanding with this group of Australasians as to their relation with the BMS. He was given to understand in the meeting that the colonies preferred to carry on independent work, and they believed they would accomplish more. In consequence he felt that the BMS staff ought to be withdrawn from the places where the Australasians were working (i.e. Comilla and Mymensingh) and that those colonial societies take responsibility for distinct areas. This marked a major step for these women and a further development in the history of the colonial missions. They were not just commenting on the women’s work but on a pattern for the future: independence. Baynes and Merry only stayed the one day .

³⁵ This had been a particular tension in Mymensingh with the Ellison family (BMS) when housing proved unobtainable.

³⁶ It is easy to see why this was such an issue, both the New Zealanders and Plested for the Queenslanders preceded other staff by several years and they were not content to wait commencing their work. Macgeorge decided on Brahmanbaria, after trying to live in Naryangunge. And Plested went to Noakali

³⁷ Minute Book of Australasian Convention First Convention – Faridpur 1887

³⁸ Minute Book of Australasian Convention typed copy p.3

They also discussed on the need for a refuge for women, but they felt that for the present they should use the facilities provided in Calcutta. At this early stage they were not looking for institutions, although these were to come in and some of these institutions are now celebrating their centenaries. Another issue was the detailed procedure for the printing and circulating of *Our Bond*. They were also at pains to indicate that they did not want a permanent Hills station for holidays as they desired to go to new places for a change. There was no need yet to consider the needs of families.

Within the next 12 months Annie Hearne arrived to marry Arthur Summers and there was also Kate Allanby (Q) Bessie Bethell (Vic) Freddie Ehrenberg (Vic) and Bertha Tuck (SA). Then too Lucy Kealley, and Emily Chambers arrived with the second man, Abia Neville (a South Australian but appointed by the Victorian Mission) in 1891.

So we come to the end of a decade. As Abia Neville said “These five pioneers were always affectionately known among the members of the Mission staff as the “Five Barley Loaves” and some irreverent wag amongst us referred to Arthur Summers and myself as the “Two Small Fish”³⁹ And that sums it up – a small group of women commencing work for the Australasian Baptists, and gradually the rounding out of the groups to include men and their wives for the task of winning East Bengal for Christ. There were always so few for such a task.

There were important issues that arose in this band of workers. It was always believed that satisfactory achievement in learning Bengali was essential. Men had to complete their language learning before their fiancées were able to come out and join them, in those days this meant two years of full time study. Ehrenberg found language very difficult, and for several years she worked among English speaking students in Mymensingh, but eventually the home committee demanded that she take the exams. She was not able to reach the standard and so moved into other work in India. But perhaps the most disruptive issue was the principles of financial support. It influenced Gilbert’s decision to work independently, supporting herself by tutoring students in Calcutta. For some like Parsons it became the issue to cause her to join the Poona and Indian Village Mission. For Arnold it was an abhorrence of the Mission borrowing money to pay her allowance, for others it was a desire to live frugally so that more workers could be sent out. It affected all the colonial societies. But this paper has not the space to consider this matter in depth. It was not until after the Federation of the Australian colonial societies in 1913 that uniform terms and conditions were introduced, and a Field Council (with a proportion of women members) was set up

Finally I’d like us to look at the list of staff sent out in this first decade and what became of them for this is informative of missions of those times. There are 26 names listed. The St Dalmas were an English couple who the New Zealanders invited to superintend their work, after the death of Rosalie Macgeorge. Otherwise these are colonials: 2 men and 24 women.

³⁹

Address “Beginnings of Our Work in India” delivered in Melbourne by Rev A Neville n/d

The longevity of service of some was amazing. Arnold is still the longest serving ABMS missionary, and nobody today is going to get anywhere near her length of service. Of the five barley loaves themselves, the Victorians were the shortest on the field. Fuller died of cholera and is buried in Mymensingh, and Wilkin having married Abia Neville returned to Australia because of the educational needs of her family with just 23 years of service. The rest stayed on the field for over 35 years. Is it any wonder that unlike the BMS the establishment of Australasian Baptists missions were shaped by the women? And the wives never supervised the women's work. The single women were too senior for that. In fact within our list of this first decade there are three women who marry with the Missions family. Ruth Wilkin married Abia Neville after he completes his language requirements, Alice Pappin married Cecil Mead, the son of Silas Mead, and Annie Bacon married fellow New Zealander Walter Barry and later they serve in the New South Wales work. These women change official status, and their allowances are transferred to their husbands, but still paid at virtually the same rate. But their work among women does not seem to change, until they are restricted by the needs of their families.

In the case of the two who chose to marry out side the Australasian mission family, there was automatic resignation, and they disappear from the story of the missions work. Pearce who married a gentleman from Cuttack is an interesting story. He was an English secretary for the Rajah of Morbanj. As his wife Agnes could not engage in mission work, but she was able to persuade her colleagues to consider work in Morbanj. Gilbert was the first approached, and she referred on the request to Allanby on leave in Queensland. This ultimately resulted in Allanby establishing the Morbanj mission⁴⁰. Bessie Bethell, on the other hand, married a widower Peter Lindemann, in Darjeeling. He and his first wife had been very hospitable to missionaries and many of the Australasians had stayed in his home. Bessie continued this ministry after marriage, and she is very linked with the story of the missions when their house was split in two during a landslide and a number of children staying with them from the nearby school lost their lives. Two of the Australian women were holidaying there at the time and were traumatized by the event and their roles in climbing out to get help. Bessie, after his death that was shortly after the tragedy, reapplied to Victoria, and served in Mymensingh and Tangail for a further 14 years.

Obviously ill-health took its toll on some. New Zealand lost two of their staff very early – Macgeorge is buried in Ceylon and Pillow in Calcutta, but on the other end of the scale there were Gilbert, Arnold, Plested and Parsons who all died of old age in service. Some were sent home prematurely, disappointed like Clelland. But even there the story does not end.. Newcombe sought to find an opportunity for mission service in a more congenial climate and joined the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union in work in Simla. But that mountainous climate was unsatisfactory and she returned to Victoria and New Zealand, where she married H H Driver, the secretary of the NZBMS. She established a training college for women missionaries and trained

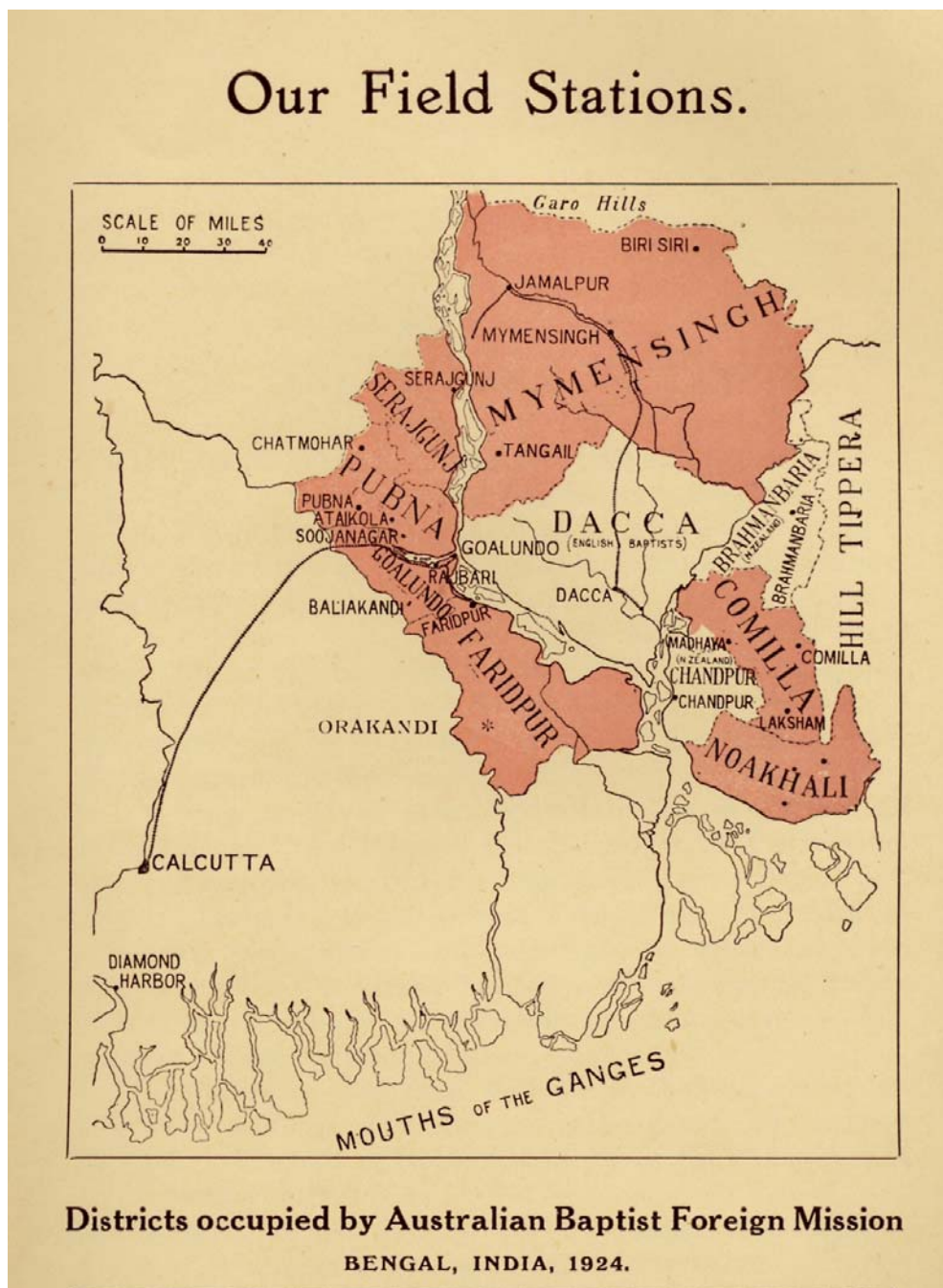
⁴⁰ the mission of Graeme and Gladys Staines.

many, before it was incorporated into the Presbyterian Training College in Dunedin. Emily Chambers became very involved in the committee work in Victoria. She organized the Prayer department, and when the societies federated in 1913 she was one of the few women appointed to the Board.

Little was achieved in that first decade, but among these women were Wilkin who commenced the Victoria Missions Girls' School, Fuller who first explored the possibility of European presence among the Garo people. Plested spent years on her own living at Feni in Noakali District, known and loved by all. Pappin, who married Mead, went to live among the underprivileged Namasudras in a village called Orakandi, where an holistic approach to community needs was the key – education, health, retraining of widows. Arnold was the loner traveling from village to village preaching. She made her home ultimately in the village of Ataikola, out from Pubna in property owned by the Bengal Baptist Union. There she died and is buried by the side of the road with this epitaph. "Jesus Christ said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" Ellen Arnold walked this way, preached this truth, lived this life." Even to day the Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship celebrate "Ellen Arnold Day" on the anniversary of her death

Mead asked in that farewell address "What are so few among so many?" May be not much but they were prepared to be broken for the people of Bengal.

Map of East Bengal



New Zealand occupied Brahmanbaria and Chandpur.

Five Barley Loaves



Left to Right: Ellen Arnold (SA), Martha Plested (Q) Ruth Wilkin (Vic), Alice Pappin (SA) and Marion Fuller (Vic)

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