

In His Name

A RECORD of ASSEMBLY
MISSIONARY OUTREACH
from New Zealand

Edition 1

Les A. Marsh

1974

Edition 2

Leslie A. Marsh,
Henry D. Erlam

1987

Mr A.E. Perkins (Edition 1)

Mr Alfred E. Perkins who had been working on Bible carriages for some time in New Zealand was commended by Maxwelltown assembly and left for India with Mr Geo. Humphrey in January 1904. He stayed with Mrs and Mrs Humphrey at Kamakerai in Mysore State for the first year while studying the Kanarese language. He then joined Mr Wylam H. King, and [sic] English missionary at Gunjur near Bangalore. In 1906 he married Miss A.C. Greatorex, the daughter of an officer in the Royal Engineers. She had been to a training school preparatory to engaging in missionary work in South India. They helped in the boy's orphanage at Malvalli and Gunjur as well as visiting in the villages before moving south to Diddapura in 1910 to commence a new witness. They were tremendously impressed with the poverty and disease, the filthy conditions and the effect of heathen idol worship. Within four miles walk of their house at Diddapura were 33 villages and with a simple medical work and constant visitation they set about presenting the Saviour to those people. A small quarterly paper for Christians in Kanarese was commenced to help believers in the Kollegal district. In those early days they had exciting experiences with snakes, tigers, leopards and hyenas as well as thieves and murderers at large. One time a tiger snatched an Indian at Mr Perkins' side while they were walking down the road! There was plenty of opposition to the message preached. Those who believed and were baptised suffered complete ostracism from fellow villagers and were often put out of their houses. In 1818 an English-speaking meeting was commenced on Sunday evenings and people such as the district magistrate, inspector of police, assistant surgeon and assistant revenue officer attended. But the major part of the work was amongst the very poor people, illiterate, and therefore unable to read the Bible for themselves. Many people heard the messages over and over again but countless others heard it infrequently. A low caste woman who came to Mrs Perkins' dispensary for treatment heard the gospel and showed keen interest. She remarked that the last time she had heard the message was 30 years before when a missionary had passed through her village. A children's magazine was added to the other literary efforts in 1919 because of the need for suitable material for the children attending their school. That year one of the couples baptised in the area were the only believers in their village and yet the message had been preached there for eight or nine years. Coffee plantations in the Mysore State were also visited at that time and a good response resulted. One group in 1920 offered to convert their temple hut into a meeting hall. The following year much closer to their home a young man was baptised who as a boy had been in the first mission school opened at Diddapura. He was the only one saved and then he was saved long after the school had closed. At that time they began experiencing disturbances in the area as the promulgators of "Home Rule" for India moved about. The work was not really easy in the 1920's. Some, in the assembly, wanted to "lord" it over the others. The head man in one village put a fine on every person of his caste who ate food or drank water touched by a Christian, but good things were happening too. New roads were opening up the area. The government in its school programme, was making thousands literate. They were able to distribute 60,000 tracts in little over a year. A coffee plantation foreman bought two acres of land to give the produce to the Lord. More were being baptised both at Diddapura and at the jungle outreach opened up at Doddagajanura. In 1929 a girls' orphanage was commenced to meet the pitiful need of some of India's unwanted girls. Twenty years after starting the work at Diddapura there were 65 in fellowship. When the Perkins had taken their furlough in 1913, there had been only one man and his wife. By 1933 there were two small assemblies with some very encouraging brethren though others were disappointing. Literature

distribution was an increasing activity in those years and at one time 2,000 copies of Mark's gospels were placed. The orphanage was still a challenge as they were presented with children unwanted because their parents were unable to feed them. In 1936 they commented on the 60,000,000 untouchables who were looking for a new deal. Visiting the jungle area of Doddagajanura was still a hazardous business in 1938 involving a cycle ride along a track about 18 inches wide with a murderer at large in the area. Mr Perkins was almost drowned that year when a bullock bandy he was in was washed away in a flooded river.

The 1940's seemed to be marked by triumphs and tragedies. People showed greater interest in their message. Mr Perkins was very ill with tetanus for a time and he broke his neck in a fall. Following the baptism of eleven believers, another believer of long standing disappointed him. In 1941 he had trouble with his throat and the following year two bad heart turns in one week and in 1943 he suffered from cholera.

The decade ended, however, with his translating Collett's "Scripture of Truth" into Kanarese. Health again failed and they had to relinquish the work at Diddapura in 1953. They left two assemblies and a Sunday School of 70 children and a women's meeting of 30 as a result of Mrs Perkins' work.

Their last months in India spent at Bangalore saw the production of a commentary on Acts in Kanarese and following their return to New Zealand in 1954 Mr Perkins was able to continue with Romans and 1st Corinthians. They celebrated their golden wedding [anniversary] in February 1956 at Wanganui where they had made their home. Mr Perkins died on January 20th 1959 after a full life and Mrs Perkins made a journey to her beloved India for 4-5 months in 1959. She died at New Plymouth on September 30th 1960.

[Source entry includes three photos with the captions: 'Mr and Mrs Perkins and family in 1914', 'The Perkins' homestead in 1905, Mysore State', and 'Mr and Mrs Perkins in Wanganui at the time of their golden wedding'.]