



Miss S. Shirtliff – 1898 (Edition 1)

Miss Sarah Shirtliff was another of the group of missionaries who went out to Malaya in October 1898. She was commended by the assembly at Nelson and engaged in work amongst women and children and in the leper compounds around Kuala Lumpur. In 1901 she helped in a dispensary in that town and later assisted in teaching in a day-school. She spent a year in language study in China in 1905 and later undertook medical training in U.K. to fit her for a wider sphere of service. In her first 20 years in Malaysia she helped in a number of different places and in a variety of ways. She relieved at Kampar in 1913 helping patients and visiting in homes. The following year she spent some time at Ipoh and Singapore visiting womenfolk in their homes. At Ipoh from 1915 to 1920 she helped in the "Elim" Home and the school, assuming responsibility in the Wilson's absence and visiting folk in their gardens and on the rubber plantations. She also relieved at Penang and visited Kampar.

In 1921 Miss Shirtliff made her home at Kuala Lumpur and was occupied in an extensive visitation programme with womenfolk in the town and amongst the villages. The Lord blessed her ministry amongst the lepers with whom she spent a considerable time in the following 20 years. That work was continually growing as the leper camp was enlarged. From a few hundred patients in 1921 it grew to contain 2,350 in 1939. The spiritual work amongst those poor people also grew. It was a great day in 1932 when they received government permission to have a piece of land for a hall in the camp and at the same time received an earmarked gift from U.K. for the purpose of building the hall. The government was responsible for all medical treatment in that large leprosarium but Miss Shirtliff and other helpers had free access for gospel ministry.

However, the Chinese people of the district also had a large place in her heart and Miss Shirtliff had many friends amongst the Christians who met at the gospel hall and she rejoiced with them when a new structure was built to replace their old one in July 1939. She also had many friends amongst the townspeople who proved how much they appreciated her help to them by visiting her when she was ill.

When she was evacuated to Singapore in December 1941 because of the Japanese invasion she elected to go to India to join her sister in Coonoor. However she was ill on several occasions during her four years in India and spent some time in hospital in Madras and Bangalore. She received a tumultuous welcome back to Kuala Lumpur in May 1946, being the first of our missionaries to return. The Lord had another welcome planned for her, however, and on February 22nd 1947, she entered her eternal home. She was 75 years old.

[Source entry includes photo of Miss Shirtliff captioned "Photo taken in 1938", also on p. 230 is a photo captioned "The group of five missionaries who left for Malaya in 1898. At back: Miss E. Drom (Mrs G. Wilson), Miss [M.] E. Davies. Front: Miss S. Shirtliff, Miss Reeve and Mr W. Blick." Photo on reverse of p. 242 of source has caption "About 1935. Back row, from left: Miss Prouse, Miss Parkinson, Mr Hardwidge, Miss Gibson, Mr Donaldson. MR BLICK, MR LEN CORNWALL, MR GEO. WILSON, MISS WILLIAMS (died 1936), Mr Adams, Mr Tipson, Mr Tom Angus, MISS TREWICK. Seated: Mrs Donaldson, MISS SARAH SHIRTLIFF, MRS BLACK

[sic], MRS LEN CORNWALL, MRS GEO. WILSON, Mrs Adams (with baby), Miss Gregg. Seated in Front: Miss Martin, Miss Faulkner, MISS PHILLYS [sic] WILSON. (N.Z. Missionaries names in capitals)"]