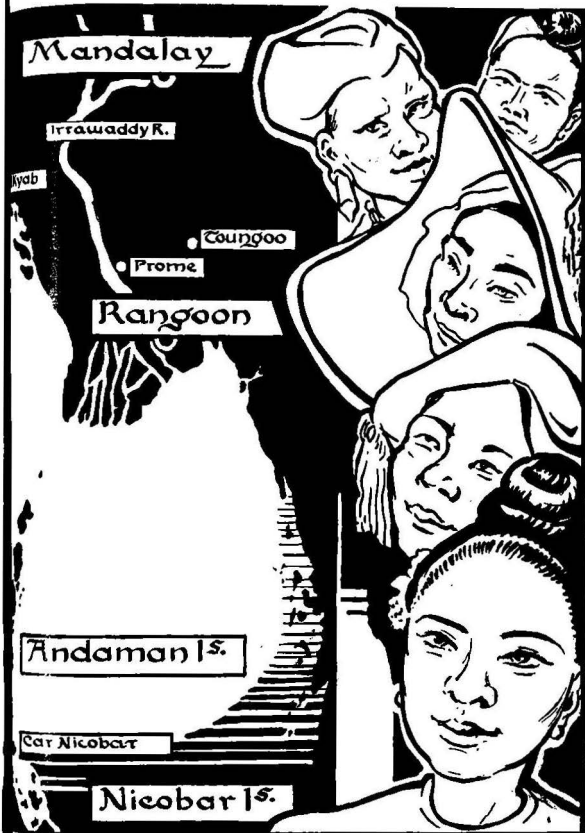


BURMA NEWS

522061



Burma New

QUARTERLY RECORD OF THE RANGOON DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Festival of the Association will be held on Wednesday, September 14th, which by a happy coincidence is Holy Cross Day. The day will begin with the Corporate Communion at 8.30 in the S.P.G. Chapel. Breakfast can be provided afterwards for a limited number; names should be sent to Miss Druitt, 298b, Ilderton Road, S.E.15, before September 10th. At 10.30 a.m. there will be the usual meeting of Committee and workers with Bishop Fyfe in the chair. The Annual Meeting will be at 3 p.m. in the Board Room at S.P.G., when Bishop Tubbs will be the chairman. There will be a good number of Burma workers and friends who have recently arrived back in England, some of whom will speak at the meeting. It is possible that several more workers will reach London in time for the meeting.

Among those who have promised to attend is the Rev. J. G. Caldicott, who is due to return to his work in Coimbatore on the next day. "Caldie" will be remembered by many British people formerly working in Burma for his wonderful work in the riverine chaplaincy in Central and Upper Burma. "In journeyings often" is his favourite text, for he was constantly on the move and seldom slept two successive nights in the same bed. During the Japanese occupation he maintained his work for Burma through devoted pastoral care of Burma exiles in South India.

The Rev. Harold and Mrs. Dyer will also be present, and the former will be able to tell us of his recent work at the Cathedral, where his wife's artistic gifts have been used to such great purpose.

It is also hoped that the Rev. Wilfred Crittle and his wife will be present, and be able to give us the latest news of the Kachin brethren won to the Church by the B.C.M.S. in Upper Burma.

Mrs. Nuttall, who has been helping the Bishop with his secretarial work, will also be at the meeting. Those who have met her since her return home have been most interested to hear of the conditions under which Bishopscourt has had to carry on.

Several other well-known Churchmen from Burma also hope to be present, including John Hedley and Rupert Thursfield, both of whom have adventurous stories to tell from their forest work.

Finally there will be the usual crowd of Burma friends and supporters, to whom the Annual Meeting is a joyful reunion. The meeting will end promptly at 4.15 and will be followed by tea and plenty of time for meeting old friends and making new ones.

WHITSUNDAY, 1949

The Consecration Service at St. Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, on Whitsunday, was a memorable occasion. God be praised for this definite step forward in the growth and development of the Church in Burma under the mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

The great nave of the Cathedral was almost full of worshippers, among whom were several old Burma friends, the sight of whom brought joy to the heart and memories to the mind. Some thirty priests, come together from all parts of the Province for a month's refresher course at Bishop's College, in white cassocks and surplices, formed the choir. Derek Catley, Chaplain of Khargpur, played the piano, for the organ is under repair, and made a worthy contribution to the beauty and inspiration of the service. The Metropolitan was vested as celebrant in red chasuble and mitre. The Bishop of Chota Nagpur and the Assistant Bishop of Calcutta as Epistoller

and Gospeller respectively were vested in cope and mitre. Three other Bishops were present in chimere and rochet—of Bhagalpur, Bombay and the Assistant of Lahore. There were thus six consecrating bishops. Throughout the service an atmosphere of still devotion and calm expectancy pervaded the church.

The service began at 8.30 a.m. with the procession, during which was sung the hymn "Alleluia sing to Jesus." The three bishops-designate (for together with John and Francis was consecrated Joseph Amritamand to be Bishop of Assam) made their entrance in chimeres. There followed the service of Holy Communion up to the sermon which was preached by the Assistant Bishop of Calcutta. The bishops-designate were then presented to the Metropolitan by the Bishop of Bombay and the Assistant Bishop of Lahore. Ronnie Bryan, the Archdeacon of Calcutta, read aloud the three Instruments of Appointment; and the bishops-designate took their Oaths of Obedience to the Metropolitan. This was an impressive part of the ceremony reverently conducted. There followed the examination of the candidates, after which they retired for a few minutes to put on their copes. John was apparelled in gold, Francis in red and Joseph in blue. The colours seemed to live and speak prophetically; the gold, of the glory that awaits them together with all faithful ones; the blue, of the hardships and sufferings these men must embrace and endure at the calling of God; and the red, the colour of the Holy Ghost, of the power from on high, and the "sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," whereby they were being endowed by God for the fulfilling of their calling. Pentecost is not an historical event that happened 1900 years ago: it is a living experience that began then and has been going on ever since. As the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles on that Whit-Sunday for the conversion of the world, so He descended upon John and Francis for the conversion of Burma. As we invoked the Holy Spirit by the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the six Bishops laid their hands on them, they became candles in the Church of God aflame with the Holy Spirit. The Metropolitan invested them with pectoral cross, ring, mitre and crosier, and they took their seats in the sanctuary. The Communion Service was then concluded. The service was indeed a memorable one, a fitting start of a new chapter in the history of the Church in Burma.

R. V. L. PEREIRA.

CAR NICOBAR REVISITED

Although we said in our last issue that the Metropolitan was about to visit Car Nicobar, circumstances eventually made the trip impossible. The Bishop, however, with Mrs. West, has just succeeded in getting there by air, thanks to the extreme helpfulness of the R.A.F. We give below Mrs. West's account of the visit, which tells of still further advance of the Church on the Islands. Our final article in the series "Rangoon Retrospect" also touches the same subject, so perhaps it would not be out of place to give here a few facts about John Richardson.

One of the first twelve boys to be collected "by force" and taken into Mr. Solomon's little school on Car Nicobar, he was baptised in 1901, went to Rangoon in 1907 and then stayed for a time with Bishop—then Mr.—Fyffe in Mandalay, with whom he had daily Scripture lessons. In 1912 he was sent back to Car Nicobar while still only a student, to take over the school, and since 1918 he has been in sole charge of the Mission. He was ordained in 1934 and until now has been the only priest on the island. He has watched the Church grow from fifty souls to more than half the population. He has seen it become stronger under persecution, and now he appeals for qualified teachers to educate his eager but simple village people.

Mrs. West says—At long last, and after many setbacks, the Bishop and I have again visited Car Nicobar. We felt that God had been very good

in opening the way for us because it is not easy to get there from Burma nowadays.

What a thrill it was, after misty glimpses of Great Nicobar and the shadowy Chowra, to sight Car Nicobar again—this time from the air! Seen from above, the tree-clothed scrap of land looked almost square, its sides indented by curving bays of surf-bordered sand. As we crossed over the centre where the evil spirits are said to dwell, I wondered how far fear of them might still hold the islanders in thrall.

We were given a wonderful "Wel-come," as the sign read over the bamboo, flower-decorated archway at Mus, and it was a joy to see our old friends again—Canon Richardson and his wife Ethel; the deacons Ezekiel, Benjamin and Watchful, and many, many more whom we had seen on our last visit exactly two years earlier. But whereas then, about one-quarter of the people had become Christian, now, "There are very few who are not Christians," Ethel told me, "much less than half," she added. "And these people are very interested in their religion," the Assistant Commissioner said. He, an Indian and a Brahmin, also saw God at work.

So God speaks through the humble and meek and one cannot but feel that He has laid His hand on that little island. Even the few remaining witch-doctors are being driven out of business. We were introduced to the son of one of them who had been converted and brought his whole village of 300 with him. "Before," John Richardson told us, "he was miserable. Now he is clothed and in his right mind." My question about the evil spirits was being answered.

The first day, in the morning, the Bishop ordained Ezekiel to the priesthood and administered the Sacrament. In the afternoon he confirmed 756 candidates—boys and girls, men and women—the oldest being an old lady of 80 with cropped white hair and patient kindly face. In the evening he consecrated the second coral Church on the island, Holy Cross, at the village of Tomalu. It had been beautifully decorated with palm arches, and on the altar were white flowers matching the white coral of the walls. The lovely blue and silver frontal was a perfect setting for the silver cross and candlesticks. There is evidently artistry, allied to humble reverence, in the make-up of the Nicobarese. Deacon Benjamin was chiefly responsible for the building of this Church.

Before the ordination of Ezekiel Joel, I had a meeting with 39 of the leading Nicobarese ladies, to see what they would like to do about organising the Mothers' Union work for the island. Ethel Richardson sat by my side. I wondered how the Membership Card and Office of Admission were to be translated for the mothers. At that point came Abednego. "I will do it," he said. So there was another stile crossed. I suggested that Ethel might be the enrolling member for the East side of the island, and Helen from Arong for the West; and it was agreed that Canon Richardson should be asked to hold an Admission Service on Whit-Sunday for those of the mothers who were thoroughly prepared and could help to train others.

Ezekiel, meantime, had built a little wooden Church at Nancowrie, on the site of an eighteenth century one built by Moravian Missionaries, and had left there a Christian congregation of eighty souls. He intends to return one day, for the aim of the people of Car Nicobar is not only to make their own island wholly Christian, but to carry the Gospel "to regions beyond"—to Nancowrie, to Teresa, to the dark island of Chowra, home of witch doctors and wizards, which in the past has cast a cloud of fear over its neighbours. Ezekiel also told us how the pagan rites and feastings connected with the yearly invasion of crabs on the beaches of Car Nicobar had been turned into a harvest festival to the glory of God. The crowning feature of this Ascension Day was the Ordination of Ezekiel himself, the first ever to be ordained priest on the island. At the supreme moment of his ordination, he really looked like one who was receiving the Holy Ghost.

RANGOON CATHEDRAL, 1949

Marjorie Dyer sends the following account of the work done so far to restore the beauty of the Cathedral:—

It is seldom that a Cathedral has the necessity and opportunity of renewing all its furnishings. Rangoon Cathedral is having this chance at the present time after the Japanese occupation of Burma.

The first thing that strikes me now, as I look towards the High Altar, is the continuity of the whole, and the subtlety of its colour. The walls have a cream wash, with details of moulding picked out in grey; the curtains in the ambulatory arches behind the Altar are a greyish blue, sometimes lighter, sometimes darker according to the time of day; the entire furnishings of the Sanctuary, Choir and Nave are of natural teak slightly polished. The old dark panelling remains in the Nave and in the screens between the Choir and the Chapels. All is waiting now for the splashes of pure colour which it needs.

I left Rangoon at the beginning of April, 1949, and by Easter more had been done. In the central ambulatory arch a teak screen, carved in gentle vertical folds which catch the light and match the same design in Altar, Screen and Pulpit, has been placed and in front of it hangs a 5ft. 6in. painted wooden cross, so now no cross stands upon the Altar. It is proposed to place the one that was there above the pulpit. The cross is painted in red and gold. In the centre is the symbol of the Resurrection, the Lamb holding the flag, standing out white against a blue and green background. The colours from the stained glass windows above, which were little damaged, are thus repeated and brought lower. The candlesticks on the Altar were to be painted red and gold to match. The Altar itself is of lovely proportion with a design of rounded arches and plain pillars in low relief on the front face. The Bishop's Throne is new and massive with a lofty and austere canopy. The arms of the Diocese are carved on the back panel. The Choir stalls match the good solid pews in the Nave and now there is a new low Choir screen of similar design to the front of the Altar. The lowness and simplicity of this will help to emphasise the spaciousness of the Choir and Sanctuary. The Pulpit given by a member of the congregation in memory of his son, killed in the war, is one of great beauty and again repeats the design on Altar and Screen. The Lectern, given in memory of Miss Nichol-Jones, has yet to be finished as the head where the Bible rests was not satisfactory. The circular shaft and base are good. On the shaft are medallion carvings of the four evangelists.

The two side chapels remain to be done. The south chapel, already dedicated to Bishop Strachan and English missionaries, is to be "The Burma Chapel," a memorial to Europeans or those of the country who have lost their lives in Burma. Mr. Richard Hill, who designed the Altar, Throne, Lectern and Pulpit, has designed this too. The Reredos is of great height and Mr. Hill has used Burmese motifs. There will be a good deal of carving done by a Burmese carver. The design may not easily be liked by all at first but will, I think, be appreciated more and more as it is used.

The North Chapel is to be the Forces Memorial Chapel, and I am at present working on designs for it. There will be much colour here since the crests of the Regiments who took part in the Burma Campaign will be carved and painted on shields fixed to the panelling. The flag of the West Africans will hang in the Chapel. It hangs at present in the Choir. I have almost finished lettering the Memorial Book of some 10,400 names and when it is bound by Mr. Sydney Cockerell it will be kept in this Chapel.

Both these chapels and all the furnishing of the Cathedral cannot be thought of without reference to Donald Moxon who spent so much thought and care on them when he was Cathedral chaplain.

All of us who have been in any way responsible for the refitting of the Cathedral trust that future generations may not feel that we have misused this great opportunity which has come to us.

RANGOON RETROSPECT

V. S.P.G. PIONEERS (3) GEORGE WHITEHEAD

Fortunate is the young man who, going out to the Mission Field for the first time, finds there a colleague with the status of an elder statesman who, from his own long and hard experience is able to teach him that the chief difficulty he must contend with is neither the climate, nor the "natives," nor the language, but his own temper!

I was fortunate enough to find such a colleague in George Whitehead. He steered me through the first critical and perplexing years of my service in Burma, when everything and everybody seemed so different from what I expected. One or two of my contemporaries were less fortunate: they did not survive the ordeal and sooner or later gave up the struggle.

Whitehead had been brought up in a stern school and had early learned to endure hardness. He took his honours degree in London University and studied for his ordination examinations whilst he was still earning his living by teaching. His whole life from start to finish was directed by the imperative voice of conscience. He was ordained and became a missionary, studied languages, evangelised incessantly, and married a wife, not for any romantic zest for any of these things but because an inner voice said to him "do this" or "go there," and he must obey. "Necessity is laid upon me: yea woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!"

Whitehead went out to Burma in 1888, two years after the annexation of Upper Burma. The British occupation had been achieved practically without a struggle and there were some who imagined that the Christian Religion might be accepted by the Burmese as readily as they had accepted British sovereignty. Whitehead, however, was not the sort of person to indulge in illusions and started grimly on the task of learning Burmese and Buddhism.

He was first stationed at Mandalay but was very soon summoned to take charge of St. John's College, Rangoon, on the retirement of Dr. Marks. There his drastic economy and tireless energy early reduced to solvency the bankrupt condition of the College and set it on a sound financial basis prior to the arrival of the new principal from England. It was a just tribute to the success of his efforts which led Mr. Blencowe, when he rebuilt St. John's, to name one of the new buildings "Whitehead House."

Whitehead had his blind spots. He was totally unmusical: he was constitutionally unemotional: his severe asceticism and tireless energy made it difficult for other people to keep in touch with him: his jungle tours were a nightmare to his companions who returned with grim stories of starvation and exhaustion: he reduced life to its bare necessities: shaving, he said, was effeminate and a sheer waste of time! It was better to wear black clothes than white which were so quickly soiled! The use of tobacco and intoxicants he thought unfitting for the missionary to the Buddhists. He had no amusements or pastimes.

Language study was his absorbing interest. This was not due to his being "good at languages" or from a romantic interest in Oriental literature. It was his response to the categorical imperative to which he always gave implicit obedience. He suffered from an ugly stutter which rendered his exact Burmese difficult to follow and unpleasant to hear. This caused him no embarrassment. He wrestled aloud in spirit and the ardent souls who made the effort to listen went away with new light on the problems of life. It is not however by his work in Burmese that Whitehead will be remembered in Rangoon Diocese but for his pioneer work in connection with two obscure languages, previously unwritten, for which he perfected a script and in which he provided translations and catechisms.

He first began the study of Chin when in 1899 he took over the work from a lay-evangelist, Mr. C. R. Torkington, who had been a private in the British Army. Whitehead got together two or three of the most intelligent Chin youths—some of whom have since been ordained—and collaborating with them and at the cost of immense labour—worked out a

phonetic script which expressed with exactitude the niceties of Chin pronunciation.

For all its exactitude, the script was unsatisfactory for the purpose of teaching young children owing to its liberal sprinkling of diacritical marks. It will not be difficult however to simplify it. It was a disappointment to its author that there should be any difficulty about a matter which seemed to him as easy as A.B.C. He could not understand how other people could be less diligent than himself. Later he became reconciled to this kind of frustration: he became despondent ("a better Buddhist than any of them," he would say with a laugh) but his apparent lack of success only made him redouble his efforts.

In 1911 Whitehead was called upon to do for the Nicobarese language what he had already done for Chin. In Car Nicobar he worked out in collaboration with John Richardson (now Canon of Rangoon) a phonetic script of the language and prepared translations of the Prayer Book, of the Gospels and Acts.

He wrote in 1924 a very valuable book about this part of his career entitled "In the Nicobar Islands." To this volume Sir Richard Temple, the editor of "The Indian Antiquary," contributed a lengthy foreword commending it as a very valuable contribution to anthropological scholarship.

Sir Richard draws attention to the morbid self-centredness of the people due to the smallness of their little world and the isolation in which they live. They are so incurious that although there is only one steamer visiting their island and that only about twice a year, they will not take the trouble to walk the few hundred yards to the beach to see it when it arrives.

It is a tribute therefore to the work of Whitehead and his colleague Richardson, that during the last few years, half of the total population of the island have become Christians.

Whitehead returned finally to England in 1921 worn out in mind and body. He held a country benefice for five years but his health slowly deteriorated. His last years were brightened by the devotion of his niece and he died in 1935.

The motive which governed Whitehead's life and the message which he leaves his successors is expressed in the following lines:—

Lord! Grant me grace to bend

Until my years I end

Over the poorest tongues beneath the suns.

Such day may well supply

Gems for some liturgy

And God's thoughts clothe themselves from lowly lexicons.

W. C. B. P.

IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM CHARLES BERTRAND PURSER, Priest

William Purser's death adds one more name to the list of those who have served the Church in Burma notably and passed to their rest and reward. He died suddenly on June 25th at the age of 73. After taking his degree at Cambridge he began his ministry as a curate, and after three years went to Burma, one of a number of outstanding men that Bishop Knight gathered round him. His first two years were spent as chaplain of St. John's College, Rangoon. He then went to Kemmendine where he worked for the remaining twenty years of his stay in Burma. He was a master of the Burmese language and had a considerable knowledge of Pali. He also learnt the language spoken by the Pwo Karens living in the scattered Delta villages, and produced a dictionary of that language as well as translations of parts of the English Church services.

It was through his influence that his brother-in-law, Father Jackson, went out to do his wonderful work of the blind of Burma; and he was also concerned with his brother, the late Rev. C. R. Purser, in the movement that centred round that remarkable figure, U Tha Dun, the Burman hermit, the story of whose conversion and devotion is one of the romances of the Church's work in Burma.

He saw that the type of school he found established at Kemmendine was not doing the work for the Church he felt he ought to be doing. He therefore closed the school and brought in promising young Christians from the Delta to be trained as teachers for Christian village schools. In this way he established a string of schools in the villages.

The result of this work, which involved incessant travelling, was to be seen at the annual "conference," when the people came together in Rangoon and had a completely Burmese service in the Cathedral, which they filled. His influence is also surely still felt in the lives of the simple native clergy whom he trained and guided.

He was a man of outstanding intellectual ability. He edited Dr. Marks' autobiography and letters under the title of "Fifty Years in Burma," and wrote for the S.P.G. the book the Society published as "Christian Missions in Burma." This book shows a really learned knowledge of Buddhism and other indigenous religions and customs, and is still a book to be read by anyone desiring a general picture of Burma. He was also joint editor, with the late Professor K. J. Saunders, of a very useful manual of Burmese Buddhism entitled "Modern Buddhism in Burma."

On his retirement from Burma in 1928 he was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal by the Government of India. In England he never ceased his work for foreign missions and was a well-known figure at committee meetings of the S.P.G. and at Edinburgh House. In 1930 he accepted the somewhat arduous post of honorary secretary to the Rangoon Diocesan Association and editor of "Burma News," and held it for seventeen years to the great advantage of the Association. He had heart trouble, and the sudden seizure that resulted in his death was probably caused by the heat-wave, then at its height. At his funeral, Bishop Fyffe spoke of the great help that William Purser had been to him, as primarily a man of prayer but also as a friend who helped him greatly throughout his tenure of the Diocese. He could always be depended upon for sound judgment in the questions that came before the Diocesan Committees of which he was a member. He cared little for prominence in this world, but was always ready to accept the post that involved hard work, and his happy family life was an important part of that untiring witness to the Master he served so faithfully.

R. S. FYFFE, Bishop.

MANDALAY

Canon Garrad writes from Mandalay, where he has remained all through the fighting: "I have no idea how long it is since we had a train from Rangoon, but it must be four months, I think. Maymyo was captured by the Karens on February 21st, and since then we have had no connection with the world outside." He goes on to describe the capture of Mandalay and the successive mis-management by Communists and P.V.O.s, the looting and promiscuous rifle-firing. Good Friday and Easter services were held during a temporary lull in the fighting. The Karens, who first took the town, created a good impression by their smartness, discipline and medical services, but confusion ensued when they departed and left the town to the other groups to administer. After the English women had been evacuated, Canon Garrad moved over to stay with Mr. Firth of the Methodist Mission, in his more solid house, but being near the Fort, they were constantly in danger of stray rifle bullets. The Commissioner of Mandalay was killed by a stray mortar shell, but there were no casualties among Canon Garrad's or Saya Chit Tway's congregations.

All correspondence with regard to the Rangoon Diocesan Association should be sent to the Rev. G. Appleton, 96, Pinner View, Harrow, Middlesex.

All contributions to R.D.A. should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. G. G. Court, 142, Pinner View, Harrow.

Any news or articles for "Burma News" should go to Miss Dorothy Lewis, Sandgate, Fordingbridge, Hants.

"Observer" Printing Works, Station Road, Harrow.