

God's Country Training Ground

A History of the Yolla Baptist Church

1910 - 2010

Laurence F. Rowston

The original paperback copy, which contains photographs, can be obtained from the Yolla Baptist Church.

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of the Yolla Baptist Church.

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FOREWORD

This short centenary history of the Yolla Baptist church breaks new ground and is greatly welcomed. Having grown up in the small rural church of Lower Barrington, I feel a real affinity for Yolla Church. In fact there is a sense of joy and celebration that both Yolla and Lower Barrington are still functioning well and maintaining their good reputation in their communities. Yolla achieved its centenary just before Lower Barrington. The links between these two churches seem to have spanned the decades. My grandfather, John French, was a regular preacher at Yolla and the memory has lived on about the time he, in his enthusiasm when preaching at a harvest thanksgiving service, waved his arms to emphasise a sermon point and knocked down the whole display of sheaves and fruit. I have equally fond memories from people from Yolla visiting Lower Barrington and enjoying both farm hospitality and church life. Visits in the horse and cart days were not hasty or short events.

One of the things that fascinate me about country churches is the way the people are an integral part of the community. Having spoken recently to both church groups at Yolla and Lower Barrington, it is encouraging to see this wide community involvement and identification with the local churches continues, even if the people are not key active members of the church group. There seems to be an ongoing debate about whether churches are inward looking or out in the community, and in both these communities and churches this barrier is more artificial. Not everybody belongs to the church nor attends, but they certainly know where it is, who belongs and what it stands for.

The other reflection is that the concept of women being involved at every level in church life is something normal as far as small country churches are concerned. Small rural churches could not have kept operating if they had practised the "priesthood of half the believers" and ignored the female half of the church family.

One of our cherished family photos is of my grandfather and Keith Smith together on the ship heading for Victoria, presumably in 1937, when Keith was on his way for ministerial training at the Baptist College of Victoria. Several ministers have exercised their pastoral roles in both the Yolla and Lower Barrington/Sheffield churches. These include E.C. McIntosh Brown, William Heaven and Simon Bath while Richard Austin and Reg Wootton from the Kentish district exercised a ministry at Yolla.

During the years that Christian Endeavour reigned as the training ground for young Christians, the links between the Yolla and Lower Barrington churches were greatly strengthened.

The prayer and challenge for both churches is that their ministry and service will continue to bring glory to God. And as for the historian, Tasmanian Baptists are greatly indebted to Laurie Rowston, the author of this fine work, which adds greatly to his previous histories of our Tasmanian Baptist Churches. May he not cease in his research and writing.

Bruce French
Pastor Penguin Baptist Church

Preface

There are three kinds of small churches that dot the ecclesiastical landscape. One is the infant congregation that is most likely to grow out of its first setting to a medium or large-sized congregation. The second kind of small church is one that has declined from medium or larger size to the “small” classification. A third is one which steadily draws around fifty or so in attendance on a Sunday morning and doesn’t seem to be going anywhere in particular although it’s not about to go away. That third model is the one which is the subject of this book and it so happens that it is also in a rural setting. This is a history of a small church. That a small church can be vital and valid goes without saying. Caring is the essence of the small church. If such a congregation should be asked to list its strengths, overwhelmingly members will respond first with some version of being friendly/caring. Admittedly, smaller churches are the right size for the members to know one another personally. The small church does have a unique genius for caring for persons, for becoming a genuine Christian covenantal community. The priority rests on being together rather than trying to impress one another. Meetings are as much for catching up and telling stories as they are for conducting business. What some people might consider gossip, small-church folk view as essential data. Caring times are rarely by appointment or as part of a specific

agenda. Individuals and not committees count.

With small churches we cannot safely assume that the pastor is the shepherd and the laity is the flock. When a small church functions healthily, all will look out for each other. They function more on the person-to-person level.

The small-membership church at worship is much like a family reunion. All ages gather, most with some blood relationship or marriage bond. Worship is a time to exchange greetings and regrets, exchange good and bad news, baptise, marry and bury, pray, sing and listen to preaching.

Small churches, with few exceptions, will house their worship in plain, practical buildings or in a simple room. The “importance of place” principle holds true. It offers a place that is safe, inviting, and where people feel a part of the whole.

Persons in a body of fifty worshipers know that their presence and absence are significant to the congregation. Their singing and speaking make a difference. Their money in the offering plate adds up. Indeed a much higher percentage of attenders can have an active part in the worship service if the effort is made to include them.

At times small churches are criticised for being so good at intimacy and caring for one another that they do not get around to mission. But they must not be viewed as closed to visitors and new participants. Smaller churches can and do take their

mission seriously. Rather than judging the small church to be the wrong size for effective mission, consider the proposition that it might just be the right size for a style of mission that marked the early church and of much of Christianity today. But the church of fifty seems to focus more on *being* the church, than *growing* the church.

The laity and not the pastor hold the power of decision in the small church because of the relational nature of things. People do not always trust the pastor, but they can trust each other because of long-standing relationships. They know that pastors come and go rather quickly in the small church. Members, however, have often been a part of the culture of the congregation for a long time and have served to hold the church together in between pastors serving for short tenures. The small church makes decisions based on their world as they perceive it.

This history is the story of a small church located in a rural setting which fulfills the above criteria.

For fifty or so years the Yolla church was numbered among the Home Mission churches. Therefore its story, and particularly the stories of many of its pastors, are stories of at least seven of our churches, for they too were Home Mission churches at the time. All the Home Mission churches benefited (and sometimes suffered) from the exploits of these same pastors. Apart from telling the story of God's dealing with the Yolla church over its 100 years, this book also attempts to tell

something of the fortunes of the Home Mission's first fifty years.

This book has been a long time coming. In 1984 the Hobart Baptist church celebrated its centenary and I offered to assist in the writing of a history of this outstanding church in Tasmania's capital. More was asked of me. It was suggested that I might also write something on the forerunner to this church in the capital, the Harrington Street Particular Baptist Chapel (1840-1886). Both books were published and in my research for them I was introduced to much more of Tasmania's Baptist history than can be learnt from these two churches. I have been collecting information ever since, including photographs, and so I was pleased to be asked to produce this volume for the Yolla Church. Much of what I had collected needed to be put in an orderly way so the story of what Tasmanian Baptists have been doing on this island for the glory of God could be readily available to any who wished to read it.

I wish to thank those who have provided assistance. A number of the ministers profiled in this book over the years sent me valuable information. My thanks are also extended to a number at the Yolla church itself, especially to the Rev. Ivan Jordan and his wife Verl who both assisted where they could.

My thanks go also to proof-readers Graham Clements of the Hobart Church, to Brian Clarke of the Clarence Church and Susan Patterson (MA) of Ballarat.

This book is dedicated to Professor Rev.

Dr. Basil Brown who in the late 1960s, amongst other lecturers at Whitley College, the Baptist College of Victoria, introduced me a level of Biblical and theological study a trades person from RMIT could never been exposed to. I had known nothing but Technical School subjects and I had a deep desire to know more of the Christian faith and had resolved to also learn the intricacies of the Hebrew and Greek Biblical languages. For one who had never studied a language apart from English at Technical school level, to one who knew little of literature, and was untutored in history, my three years of study in this environment was a revelation in itself. It was ten years or so after the completion of the Diploma of Theology when I began to search out what could be found out about the Strict and Particular Baptist chapel in Harrington Street, Hobart Town, did I discover that Dr. Brown, who had taught me Exegesis and the Greek language, was a church historian and had researched the corresponding

period of Baptist life in early Melbourne and so dealt with people some of the people I was learning about. I will always remain grateful to Dr. Brown and other staff at the time and to the Baptist Union of Victoria in giving me the opportunity to spend three years of my life in this way.

Our Baptist faith, as described in the pages of this book on the Yolla Church, is something we share with the whole Church of God. Our Baptist history as found in this book, is something God has given us. My prayer is that those who read this history of the Yolla Church will be encouraged in the work they are doing in their own local churches. This book is our remembering of the grace of God. The church that has learned to remember, which finds in past mercies the sure ground of future hope.

Laurie Rowston, honorary historian for the Baptist Churches of Tasmania

Chapter One

Sea View

Beginnings

Yolla is a picturesque rural community on the North West Coast of Tasmania. It is situated approximately twenty kilometres south of the town of Wynyard and the city of Burnie and is the gateway for the West Coast of Tasmania. It is in the midst of a rural region rich in dairying, vegetable production, beef cattle, cropping, forestry and poppy production. Nearby attractions are Hellyer Gorge and the Oldina Forest Reserve. Further south there are extensive mining operations which extract gold, copper, lead, zinc and iron. Yolla was first settled in the late 1880s by James and Annie Diprose who were shortly followed by other families. The area was originally covered by myrtle beech forest, which was gradually cleared for farming.

Baptist Beginnings in Tasmania

The story of our Baptist beginnings as a denomination in Tasmania is well documented. First to come were the Strict and Particular Baptists under the leadership of the Rev. Henry Dowling.¹ Then in the second half of the nineteenth century William Gibson Senior and his wife Mary Ann provided us with a number of church buildings and they brought out pastors from

¹ Laurence F. Rowston, *Baptists in Van Diemen's Land: The Story of Tasmania's First Baptist Church* (Hobart: Baptist Union of Tasmania 1985).

Spurgeon's College in London.² Our Baptist Association, formed in 1884, provided the means of church planting without infringing the independence of local churches. Up to this time new churches were established at Perth (1862), Longford and Deloraine (1880). Following the establishment of the Association new churches were established in Evandale and Hobart³ (1884), Latrobe (1886), Sheffield (1890), Devonport (1897) and Burnie⁴ (1899). At the Annual Assembly in 1903 it was agreed to extend the work on the North West coast and that Edgar Harrison be so employed as a Home Minister. The outcome was the beginnings of the Ulverstone and Penguin work.⁵ In the same year, in response to the claims of the rapidly growing town and district of the Wynyard being presented to the Tasmanian Baptist Assembly, a mission was soon conducted. In 1905 Pastor W.H. Short transferred from Deloraine and commenced as Wynyard's first Pastor conducting

² Greg Luxford, *William and Mary Ann Gibson* (Gould Books 1984).

³ Laurence F. Rowston, *One Hundred Years of Witness: A History of the Hobart Baptist Church, 1884-1984* (Hobart, 1984).

⁴ Laurence F. Rowston, *Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow, A History of the Burnie Baptist Church 1899-1999* (Burnie, 1999).

⁵ Laurence F. Rowston, *Possessing the Future, A History of the Ulverstone Baptist Church 1905-2005* (Ulverstone, 2005).

services in the Town Hall until 1908. The Sunday school began in 1906, as did an outstation work at Myalla, about twenty kilometres from Wynyard. There Ambrose Walters gathered around him a group of men for the purpose of erecting a building that would serve as a school during the week and as a Sunday school on Sunday. In 1908 James Percy donated land in Wynyard, and he and Ashby Walters of Walter Bros. built the church. On 24 October 1908 the Wynyard church was constituted.

FORMATION OF THE HOME MISSION

By 1895 Gibson Senior and his wife Mary Ann had died and although their son continued in his parents' generous ways, new church centres needed to be commenced. To this end a Home Mission committee was formed. Its aims were: to establish new churches, missions and Sunday schools; to carry on evangelistic work; and to publish and circulate Baptist literature.

This Home Mission work followed the pattern of the earlier bush mission commenced from the Perth church. In the Bracknell District the first home missionary was William Kenner. Soon to follow was Vincent G. Britton who replaced him in October 1901. Britton saw a home missionary (and himself) as one "who can live on little, do a lot of work and come up smiling every time."⁶

⁶ *Baptist Church Chronicle* May 1923 p3. For the first written history of the Yolla church see *Baptist Church Chronicle* October 1931.

At the 1901 Annual Assembly it was proposed by W.D. Weston, the Union honorary legal adviser, that the assisted churches and the home mission stations be grouped into a Home Mission Union, with a Superintendent. The paid Superintendent would hold a small church and be paid jointly by that church.

FISHER AND YOLLA'S BEGINNINGS

Under the supervision of the Wynyard church, the work at Yolla began in 1907. Peter Clingeliffer was one of the Wynyard preachers conducting services in the local Yolla school room. The services were then conducted at "Sea View", the farm residence of Daniel Smith and his wife Isabella Maria (Belle) (nee Diprose).⁷ The first service at "Sea View" was conducted by the Revs. W.H. Short stationed at Wynyard and J.T. Piercey stationed at Burnie. When Pastor J.W. Fisher took over at Wynyard, he conducted evening services every alternate Sunday and afternoon services on the other weeks at Yolla. Evening services were particularly difficult to maintain as the milking and farm work had to be attended to before the walk or vehicle transport of some miles to the church. By April 1908 good numbers had gathered. Fisher had arrived from Victoria where he had been a member and active worker in the Port Melbourne Baptist church. He entered the Tasmanian

⁷ Prior to moving to Yolla Daniel and Isabella Smith lived at The Cam (Somerset). They were involved with the early Baptist services in the Burnie Town Hall and were signatories with twenty-nine others for the establishment of a permanent Baptist church building in Burnie.

Baptist Home Mission in 1906, working at Ulverstone for a short period before moving to the Longford. He commenced at Wynyard in 1908. He was a man of gracious personality, generous mind and deep spiritual conviction. William Bligh records that while he was “a man of few words”, he left in all the churches where he laboured “an affectionate memory and solid work”.⁸

A.E. SALISBURY

A.E. Salisbury followed Fisher in 1910. A Baptist Union Council meeting some years earlier, in August 1906, had agreed that “the distinctive truths of the denomination should be taught in every town along the coast.” Realising the importance of the Ulverstone work, Union Council had sent them the best man they could secure and that man was Salisbury because he and his wife were first class workers.⁹ He was employed as Home Mission pastor to the joint Ulverstone-Penguin pastorate until March 1909. He was then transferred to assist Britton in the Bracknell District. Wynyard followed.

It was during Pastor Salisbury's term at Wynyard that a contract was awarded to Ashby White to build the present Yolla building on land donated by Daniel Smith which he had purchased from the Old

brothers. In November 1909 the Yolla folk had informed their fellow Tasmanian Baptist sisters and brothers that the dining room at “Sea View” was too small. They pleaded with them, “... there is great need for a church being built – great need for help, great need for you to ask the Lord how much you have to give towards this worthy object.”¹⁰ Eventually two foundation stones were laid, one by Daniel Smith and the other by the Rev. F.J. Dunkley, now Superintendent of Baptist Home Mission. Dunkley, from Wellington, NSW, had arrived in Tasmania in 1909. During his time a steady stream of young men began training for the ministry. Soon he had seven students and these home missionaries were supplemented by one or two ordained men. One of the students would be his assistant at Longford where he was based, while the others, generally under the care of senior ministers, would be assisted in their duties by local preachers. A Home Mission station was now operating at Smithton.

The Yolla building built at the cost of £160, was officially opened on 28 August 1910. It was the second church building in Yolla. The first official committee meeting was held on 21 October 1910 with Pastor Salisbury presiding. Others present were Daniel Smith Senior and Junior, Percy Holloway and Richard Diprose and Stephen John Smith. They were all related. It was resolved to raise four shillings per week by collections for the first six months to reduce the debt.

⁸ *Baptist Church Chronicle*, May 1921 p. 9. Fisher held pastorates at Longford (1906, 1914-1917), Deloraine (1909-1914). In 1914 Fisher was appointed secretary of the Union until his departure for Victoria to Rainbow in 1923. He subsequently ministered at Geelong (Marshall Street and Belmont) (1924-9), Warrnambool (1929-35), Ballarat East, Victoria Street (1935-9) and Regent (1939-46). He married Miss. R. Rawson of Launceston.

⁹ *Southern Baptist*, June 1911.

¹⁰ *Southern Baptist*, November 1909.

The first church building in Yolla was the 1896 weatherboard and shingled roofed Methodist chapel first situated at Camp Creek about 200 metres north of the village centre. It was enlarged in 1905 and moved into the town in 1922.¹¹

In 1910 struggling Baptist churches such as Wynyard, Deloraine, Bracknell and Longford had come under the Home Mission control. Dependent as they were on Union support, they received financial aid but in return they submitted control to the Home Mission Committee.

In contrast to present day social life, early settlers in Yolla had no outside entertainment. Indeed, as one settler remarked, "There was nowhere to go and we were too busy creating our livelihood."¹²

As the settlement developed so did social life which was mainly centred on the churches. The common bond of daily hardship was lessened by opportunities to exchange ideas and share experiences, happy or otherwise. One such church function was the fundraising concert and coffee supper held at the Yolla Baptist church in 1910. Percy Holloway and Steve Smith were appointed to look after the door while Mr. Gooch and Daniel Smith were to

look after the coffee pot. Daniel Junior volunteered to provide coffee and Thomas Diprose the sugar. Admission charges were one shilling for adults, six pence for children. The proceeds came to £2/17/6. The takings from another concert were £4. This can be compared with a typical Sunday church collection at the time of twelve shillings.¹³

At that time Miss Annie Holloway was engaged to scrub and clean the church, comprising only the main room and the porch, for a fee of one pound per year. Regular cleaning was necessary as the property lacked footpaths of any sort. In 1911 a picket fence was erected across the front of the church and paling fences to the other three sides. The metalling of the path finally took place in 1919.

But at the end of his time at Wynyard, Salisbury resigned from the Home Mission. He informed the Home Mission Committee that he was considering "taking up work in one of the sister states".¹⁴

¹¹ Originally Methodist services in Yolla were held in the home of James C. and Annie Diprose, the first settlers who arrived in 1888. As the congregation grew in numbers, the need for a church building became apparent, and so on 24 May 1896, the small chapel was opened. A new brick Methodist church was opened in Yolla on 17 September 1967, with the former chapel retained as a Sunday school. See Bessie Smith and Margaret Pegus, *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 17.

¹² *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 18.

¹³ The collection on 14 February 1911 was 12/11

¹⁴ Salisbury had in fact thrown his lot in with the Anglican Church and was placed at Bracknell in competition to the Baptists. See Rowston, *Possessing the Future, a History of the Ulverstone Baptist Church, 1905-2005*, pp. 11.

Chapter Two

Foundations and the Great War

ALFRED BUTLER & ERN WALSH

The Home Mission was heartened by the man who replaced Salisbury at Wynyard. Under Alfred Butler, who commenced there in September 1911, the work at Wynyard and Yolla prospered. It was reported, "At Yolla it is a pleasure to speak to upwards one hundred attentive listeners."¹⁵ He was remembered for his grey nag. While every Home Missionary was supporting a horse at the time,¹⁶ the animal was considered an expensive means of transport.

A good number of young men were now regularly attending the Yolla services. Further, a block of land on the Henrietta Plains, which was only five kilometres away, had been cleared, in November 1911, in preparation for the erection of a church hall.¹⁷ Church services were being held in Mrs. Graue's lounge room. While the subsequent hall was used mainly for church functions, it was made available for community use.¹⁸ The hot water for functions was prepared over the road at Crisp's home. A pole was inserted through

the kerosene container handle and two of the church folk carried it in. The hall lacked heating and there were no proper paths. Years later Nancy Herbert (nee Saxon), who lived next door to the church in her early years, recalled witnessing a wedding. "It was a very wet day," she said, "and with no proper paths. A row of potato sacks was put on the ground to the church for the bride to walk on."¹⁹ At the time another outstation commenced in the local school room at Moore's Plains (now Oldina), sixteen kilometres further in from Henrietta.²⁰

Butler was the son of Edmund Butler and his wife of Perth, Tasmania. In August 1909 he was farewelled from his home church for Home Mission work.²¹ He was the first to leave Perth with a call to ministry. Butler began at Bracknell in January 1911 as the Rev. Robert Steel's assistant. According to J.D. Williams, Butler was always trying to outshine Steel.²² He was twenty-two years of age. He was soon moved to Longford

¹⁵ *Southern Baptist*, February 1911.

¹⁶ Home Minute Minutes 23 April and 10 July 1912. The nag died at the end of 1922 and the Home Mission committee sent Butler £12 to help him out.

¹⁷ *Southern Baptist* November 1911.

¹⁸ In some of those early years Sunday school was conducted there by Methodists of the Yolla district.

¹⁹ Jennifer Hemsley, *Around the Country Circuits*, p. 158.

²⁰ *Southern Baptist* November 1911. Wynyard Baptist had actually commenced a work there two years earlier with both services and a Sunday school. See *Southern Baptist* November 1906.

²¹ Butler had worked at Perth's outstations of Lyminton, Eskdale and Cleveland.

²² From interview by Laurence F. Rowston in April 1988.

spending seven months working under Dunkley. The Wynyard-Yolla placement followed. He remained at Wynyard only six months, departing for the joint Ulverstone-Penguin pastorate in March 1912.²³

By 1912 at Yolla a Methodist missionary had been placed there and was conducting services.²⁴ That year the Yolla Baptist church was constituted with eleven members. The foundation members were Stephen John Smith and his wife Martha (Pattie) (nee Rattray), Ivy Opie Smith and his wife Rhonda Louisa (nee Holloway), Percy Holloway, Thomas Diprose, Miss Ivy Howard, Miss Dorothy Jeffrey and Mr. and Mrs. J. Rattray.²⁵ Ivy and Stephen Smith were sons of Daniel and Isabella Smith.

²³ After completing his college course, Butler attended the Hobart University. In 1913 Butler was transferred to the Deloraine Church. He served as a chaplain during the War. He married Laura Martha (nee Ball) of Longford. From 1916 to 1924 he pastored the Moonah Church. During the First World War he served as a chaplain. Following Moonah, he exercised his ministry in the large Baptist Churches in New South Wales and Queensland. He fulfilled the office of President of the Union in each of the three States, and also served on the Foreign Mission Committee of each State. In Tasmania he was President for 1921/22, a member of Union Council and for a short time editor of the "Baptist Church Chronicle". He died in 1947 while President of the Queensland Council of Churches and minister of the Brisbane City Tabernacle. He had been minister of the City Tabernacle for eleven years. His voice was frequently heard over the national radio network in devotional services.

²⁴ The arrival of the Methodist missionary in Yolla caused concern to the Baptists as the missionary was "deliberately" conducting services at the same time as the Baptists despite a mutual agreement that he would not do so. See Home Mission Minutes, 28 May 1912.

²⁵ Ivy Smith was elected a foundation deacon and continued in this position until October 1947.

Holloway was the first Treasurer and Stephen Smith the first secretary.

Butler was followed by Ern C. Walsh who was also from the Perth church. Walsh, a keen temperance advocate, commenced on 30 March 1912. He had previously been working under Britton's direction at Boat Harbour, Wynyard's outstation. His "assiduous visitation" in the Yolla district resulted in "splendid congregations".

On some Sundays he attended to the Wynyard circuit which entailed the conducting of three services including one at Wynyard's outstation at Boat Harbour. In all it required him to cycle forty miles. He returned to Yolla by bicycle from Boat Harbour on the Monday. A Home Missioner's labours were strenuous and his task a big one. Most of the Tasmanian Home Mission circuits were large - usually four or five stations in a scattered area - and considerable distances were traversed in the fulfilling of preaching and pastoral engagements.

It was during Walsh's time that the Yolla church conducted its first baptismal service. It took place in the Smith's artificial lake surrounded by its blackwood trees. The baptismal candidates were Daisy Bernton and Herman Roy Murfett. The service was conducted by Walsh on 1 February 1914 and the weather conditions were ideal. 150 spectators of all denominations gathered. At the close of the service the hymn, "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord" was sung. The day concluded with an evening communion

service in the church.²⁶ This was Walsh's final Sunday at Yolla.²⁷

Elsie May Crisp, (later Asar Smith's wife), was the first organist. She held the position until 1913 when Teresa Amy Smith (later Mrs. Arnold Jordan) was appointed to fill the vacancy, which she held for ten years. Amy was to be paid "... a present of not more than 2 guineas and not less than 1 guinea be given to her at the end of each year."²⁸ Amy taught Lucy Smith to play the organ when Lucy was a girl. Lucy took over from Amy when Amy and Arnold moved to Launceston.

The yearly Sunday school picnics were a highlight of the church calendar and a large community affair. They were held on the Mondays following the church's Sunday school anniversaries with a "Sea View" paddock as the venue. Being within walking distance of the town, transport was not a problem. The children played rounders, competed in races, enjoyed the swings and the lolly scramble, while the men played cricket and the women prepared a basket lunch. Hampers bulging with picnic fare were placed on tables under the trees. A treat vied for by most children was Elsie Smith's rainbow cake. Photographs of picnics reveal the very formal dress of the

people: men dressed in suits, tie and hat and the women equally formal in their attire.²⁹ In later years the beach at Somerset became the venue.

On the Monday evening a concert of songs and elocution items given by the adults was held concluding with a "coffee supper". In 1912 160 folk were in attendance.³⁰ In March 1912 there were thirty Sunday school scholars on the roll. Since the church building comprised only one room, classes were held in its four internal corners.

The annual Sunday school Anniversary and prize giving was also a highlight of the year. It was a large community affair. The children were prepared with special hymn singing. On the day overflowing floral arrangements decorated the stage and a visiting speaker was introduced. This event was usually followed by a concert on the Monday night.

Autumn saw Harvest Festival time, a time to acknowledge and give thanks that again the harvest had been plentiful. At the annual thanksgiving service home-grown produce was displayed: shiny red apples, bread, sheaves of hay, vegetables and eggs. There was usually a concert held after the sale of goods on the following evening.

S.W. SIMPSON, A. JAMES, K.J. CAMPBELL, ALBERT E. HOLLOWAY AND A.P. DAWSON

²⁶ *Southern Baptist*, February 1914.

²⁷ Walsh went from Tasmanian to study at the Baptist College in Melbourne for the two years of 1924 and 1925. He served in the South Australian churches, serving at Port Lincoln (1928-1937) and Peterborough-Ucolta (from 1937). He died at the Broadview Church in 1950.

²⁸ Amy Smith continued in this position for about fifty years but it is doubtful that she received the annual gift for each of those years.

²⁹ Bessie Smith and Margaret Pegus, *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 18.

³⁰ *Southern Baptist*, March 1912.

Walsh was succeeded early in 1914 by S.W. Simpson who had arrived from Victoria. During his time he conducted one baptismal service. Encouraging reports were sent to the Home Mission meetings from the Wynyard-Yolla churches during this time.³¹ By late in 1914 he had made application for admission to the Baptist College in Melbourne, and, as a requirement for entry, he visited the mainland to preach for two Sundays. The Yolla church understood, after all, that it was to some extent ministering to these young pastors. The church wrote, "We trust he may be successful in being accepted as a student. We shall be sorry to lose him, for we know that the desire of his life is an earnest endeavour to do the will of God, and to follow where He leads and a more genuine out and out disciple of Christ would be hard to find."³² During the next twenty-eight years Yolla enjoyed the distinction of providing the training ground for young men whose ministries at Yolla seldom lasted for more than a year. The main reason for their short stay was that they were there to gain pastoral experience before College training. But Simpson never entered College. In 1915, as soon as the call came for men to enlist in the draft of World War I, he responded. Once accepted into the AIF, he left immediately. But like so many other men, he was not spared to return home.³³

³¹ Home Mission Minutes, 15 September 1914.

³² *Southern Baptist*, November 1914.

³³ S.W. Simpson cannot be found on the War memorial Honour List but there is a Sidney Victor Simpson of Adelaide of the 27th Battalion

Simpson was one of a couple of home missionaries who signed up and left the work. In the churches the able bodied men were also absent. During those War years the Home Mission found it difficult to recruit men for its work and financial giving decreased. Further William Gibson Junior ceased his £60 pound annual subscription as did Joshua T. Soundy, whose annual subscription was £250.³⁴ The Home Mission worked ceased at Stanley, Smithton, Forest and elsewhere. But the War had made even a more marked effect. It was found that a considerable proportion of those who had gone from the churches to War did not return to them on their return. It was a time of mental and spiritual upheaval. The routine of their lives had been broken and the habit of church-going interfered with. The War introduced an age of doubt about everything. It has been said that until the War Australians were a nation of creedless puritans, a nation with a morality but without a faith. The War increased this lack of faith in a personal God and in the life of the world to come. For many who served in places of extreme danger, the Christian God was given a high place on the list of missing persons.

The next pastor to follow Simpson was twenty-three year old Alfred Harrald James who had come from the Knightsbridge Baptist Church in South Australia, the son of G. James of Norwood. But soon James

(Infantry). He enlisted on 28 May 1916 and died on 5 November 1916 in France but he is listed as a labourer.

³⁴ Home Mission Minutes, 15 September 1916.

enlisted in the War effort and trained at the Claremont Training Camp in Tasmania. He embarked with the troops on 17 June 1915.³⁵ James was followed in quick succession by K.J. Campbell in February 1915 and then Albert E Holloway who was inducted in December 1915. Born in Tasmania in 1878, Holloway, a nephew to Keith A. Smith. Holloway was one of Sheffield's "most prominent Endeavourers". He commenced with the Home Mission in the Bracknell circuit under Britton in the second half of 1912 and was moved to Wynyard-Yolla in January 1913. Late in 1917 or early 1918 he married and had to move on as Wynyard was still a single man's station at that time. There was no manse. He was farewelled from Wynyard-Yolla in February 1918 for his next posting at Smithton. According to J.D. Williams, Holloway was a "talker" who "lacked a sense humour in that he could not see the funny side of himself".³⁶ He is remembered for his black hat, but more importantly, for his ministry in various Tasmanian pastorates between 1912 and 1929, and again from 1946 to 1952.³⁷

³⁵ James served in France with the 3rd Field Ambulance and returned to Australia on 26 July 1919. Marie Lines supplied this information.

³⁶ From interview by Laurence F. Rowston in April 1988.

³⁷ Late in 1918 to Holloway returned to Bracknell from Smithton. He concluded at Bracknell in March 1922, the year in which he and A.P. Dawson were ordained. His final Home Mission appointment was at Deloraine, until 1925. Three years at Sandy Bay concluded his first stint in Tasmania. He and his wife, Ruth, who originated at Smithton, moved with their family to Wagin in West Australia commencing in early 1929. He had a keen interest in Foreign Missionary work.

Holloway was succeeded by nineteen year old A.P. Dawson in April 1918. He had a short pastorate of six months, having married. During Dawson's time seven members departed "from our small company" and he was placed at Deloraine.

He became President of the WA Baptist Union. Holloway returned to Tasmania in 1946 from Freemantle, WA and began at Ulverstone on 17 February that year, concluding in May 1952. An appointment at the Clare Baptist Church in South Australia, followed. He died in January 1959 while pastor at the Georgetown Circuit in SA. "He left some amusing memories, not because he was a comedian - far from it - but because of some idiosyncrasies," recorded Stuart McDonald in the history of the Ulverstone Baptist church. See *Possessing the Future, a History of the Ulverstone Baptist Church, 1905-2005*, pp. 19, 30ff.

Chapter Three

Between the Great War and the Great Depression

H.R. TUNKS & G.W. ELLIS

Dawson was followed by H.R. Tunks in May 1919. Tunks, who had been in charge of the Longford Baptist Sunday school and who could deliver a recital of the Anthem of Praise “Calvary”,³⁸ had received only a State School Education to the sixth grade. In his application in 1924 to the Victorian Baptist Candidates’ Board for training he spoke of a “Christian Mother whose teaching and influence made an early impression on my boyhood.” He continued,

Though I cannot quite explain, Jesus Christ has always been intensely real to me, and I know that my belief in Him came with understanding years. It increased as I grew, and then in my teens, during a mission conducted by the late Rev. (J.T.) Piercey, (of the Victorian Evangelisation Society) I definitely consecrated my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and was baptized. My conversion was not a sudden change. After my consecration I took up Sunday school work, and was a teacher for some time. Then an opportunity for local preaching presented itself to me, in which work I was engaged for six months. I was not

*happy until I had offered myself, and my calling has been confirmed by the blessing of God upon my work.*³⁹

Tunks cycled the Yolla district visiting his folk. Many years later, when visiting Yolla friends he said that he initially came to Yolla under protest as he was a town boy and therefore didn't think he would mix well with country folk. He said,

The young chaps in the district challenged me to ride a horse but they didn't know that I had been trained to ride by a jockey. To begin, I mounted the wrong side on purpose. The wager was a horse race. The boys were to attend the service if I won the race. I did win and the boys attended church but sang out of tune! This episode helped me to be accepted by the community.

He continued,

I boarded at Gran Neal's⁴⁰ and I remember a trip that I made to Wynyard and Myalla on my bike as a relief for the Baptist Minister Rev. E.C. Walsh.

It was a very wet night and I arrived home at 2 a.m. drenched to the skin. Mrs Neal told me to rub myself down and gave me a drink. I thought it was 'black',

³⁸ See Longford church news in the *Southern Baptist* for January 1913 and April 1914.

³⁹ From his application papers.

⁴⁰ Gran Neal was the wife of Mr. H. Neal. Gran died on 17 June 1950.

straight whisky but others who knew Mrs Neal well, told me that it was one of her favourite remedies 'O.T.' which was a general 'pick me up' used in many households. Another of her cures was brandy, sugar and hot water.

During my ministry there was an epidemic of 'Black Flu' and services had to be conducted in the open. Seats had to be apart and people were not to sit close together, just three to a pew. The epidemic went on for some weeks. Mrs Neal organised visitations to light fires in the homes and help feed patients. Mrs Richard [Hetty] Smith, a nursing sister, organised the nursing.

I remember the week night study group. After I had lit up the church, I would stand on the hill and watch people coming with their lanterns, the lights bobbing along in the dark. It was quite inspiring, like fairyland, like fireflies.⁴¹

Tunks transferred to the Victorian Sunshine Baptist Church.⁴² Now the Yolla church was without a resident pastor for some months. Mr. G.W. Ellis was then appointed but he resigned that year from Home Mission work.

ERNEST ERIC WATSON & A.P. DAWSON

Ellis was followed by Ernest Eric (Wattie) Watson for twelve months. Watson's arrival

in July 1921 saw the conclusion of Yolla as a single man's station as a manse had been purchased for £500 (later the Yolla Post Office house). Wattie was born on 2 February 1900. At the age of two his parents moved from Bedgerabong, near Forbes, N.S.W., to Perth, Tasmania, the home of his father's people. "Tiny Tim", Ernest' childhood name, was to be the eldest of ten, a lad who was never a stranger to firm parental discipline, work, prayer and love. At thirteen he went to a Launceston bakery to earn his own way. He was reported by a customer for "endlessly reading novels while delivering bread"! Wattie became a member of the Perth church about 1915 but later transferred to Cimitiere Street. Its pastor, the Rev. H.H. Jeffs, influenced him greatly and Wattie returned to studies.

There arose in Wattie a strong desire to serve his beloved island's Baptist people. At Yolla he was a great favourite with the young people. Church attendances increased and baptisms now took place, at Wynyard for as yet the Yolla church had no baptistry. While at Yolla, he felt a definite call to the foreign field and the call crystallised on Bengal. Years later he recalled that the call to go to the East Bengal field was like a call to "go to Nineveh". Wattie concluded on 5 March 1922 and proceeded to the Baptist College of Victoria, entering a maze of new influences and being introduced to disciplined study. In response to the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission's call for

⁴¹ Bessie Smith and Margaret Pegus, *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 51.

⁴² Tunks was appointed to the Victorian Sunshine Baptist Church for eighteen months. Positions followed at the Eaglehawk and Ballarat churches, the last under the guidance of the Rev. S.A. McDonald. He was ordained following four years at the Baptist College and began at Coburg steadily maintaining the work for eight years.

five men to go to East Bengal, he joined four other ordained men - Cyril Baldwin, Wilf Crofts, Austin Rogers and Ted Smith, in responding. In 1925 Ted and Wattie set sail for the mission field.⁴³ In 1921 Alvin Higgs of Yolla, who had conducted missions at Upper Mount Hicks and elsewhere with good results, applied to work with the Home Mission and although he was not accepted

⁴³ On 17 December 1927 he married Victorian Elsie May of Eaglehawk in William Carey's own Baptist Church in Bow Bazaar, Calcutta. With that marriage began a partnership of over fifty years. They met while Wattie was taking Victorian country pastorates. Elsie had been prepared for missionary service by the many visits to Eaglehawk by the Rev. Hedley Sutton. Having served briefly in Serajunge with the Kellys, and in Mymensingh and Birisiri, they finally settled in Comilla for about seventeen years. He was one of the most competent linguists that the mission has ever had. When the Language School for Missionaries in Darjeeling reopened after the war, he was made its principal for three years. Throughout his senior years he also shouldered his share of field administration. He was field secretary from 1937-1939 and from 1946-1947. During 1947, just before partition, they returned home. He spent four years with Frank Marsh in the B.M.S. Melbourne office as associate secretary. To be effective as writer of missionary themes for the Australian Baptist public he went back to school to learn journalism. Then he turned the periodical, "Our Indian Field", into "Vision". He also wrote a short history of Australian Baptist missions called, "Our Heritage" and two biographies of Bengalis who became Christians. He wrote "An exile Returns", the biography of Mozahar Munshi, a muslim who turned to Christ. He also wrote "Son of Light", the story of Aksoy, the Bengali convert. One of their daughters, Heather, served with the A.B.M.S. at the Joyramkura hospital as the wife of Dr. John Spicer. In 1952 Wattie finally served his beloved State of Tasmania with all that was in him as General Secretary, Home Mission Superintendent and Book Room manager. At first the first position was part-time: he also served as pastor of the Central Church in Launceston, but these two part-time jobs were each full-time positions and the task at Central was relinquished. He died on 19 January 1981. See *Tasmanian Baptist Advance*, July 1991 for a fuller account of E.E. Watson's life story.

immediately, he became assistant to Britton at Latrobe in 1922.⁴⁴

With Yolla now a married man's station A.P. Dawson returned and was welcomed on 12 March 1922. His wife won her way into the hearts of the people. During Dawson's time services were commenced at Takone and Sunday school commenced at Upper Mount Hicks and recommenced at Henrietta. Dawson commenced preaching classes for some of the young men. About a year later he moved to Wynyard, being farewelled on 11 June 1923 as he was considered a man to "do the work in the back country", hence the appointment.⁴⁵ All Home Missioners were now being paid a salary of £180 a year and each Home Mission station was required to forward to the Home Mission a return the amount of up to 60% of the pastor's salary which was paid for by the Home Mission itself.⁴⁶

A.T. JESSOP, WILLIAM J. BLIGH & E.C. MCINTOSH BROWN

A.T. Jessop of Beulah, part of the Sheffield Baptist circuit, commenced on 25 June 1923. A welcome was extended also to his wife and family. Mrs. Jessop prepared the children in singing for the Sunday school anniversary. Services commenced at Upper Mount Hicks and Upper Henrietta. The influenza which had been prevalent during Tunks' time

⁴⁴ Higgs also served at Bracknell from January 1925 to August 1926.

⁴⁵ See the Wynyard church news in the *Southern Baptist* for July 1923. Following Wynyard, Dawson transferred to the South Melbourne Baptist Church.

⁴⁶ Home Mission Minutes, April 1923. At the end of 1937 it was as much as 115%.

continued, curtailing attendance numbers. Through these years the church made good use of the Rev. A.C. Jarvis, lately removed to Wynyard from Queensland, and his son, with the gifted evangelist Dr. Wilfred L. Jarvis of the Queensland Evangelisation Society who was conducting missions at Wynyard and at a number of other Baptist churches in Northern Tasmania. W.L. Jarvis was soon to begin a world tour with his father and J.R. Morgan. By now a number of the men Dawson had trained were participating in the services. Jessop was on leave from the Education Department and at the end of his twelve months resumed teaching. At his farewell he was given Papini's "Life of Christ" and his wife was presented with Weymouth's "New Testament in Modern Speech".⁴⁷ The church also farewelled Hilton J. Preece, formerly of Bracknell, as he set off to engage in Home Mission work at Preolenna and Myalla.⁴⁸ The debt on the Henrietta church was cleared and an organ was purchased for the property.⁴⁹

Jessop was followed by Tasmanian born William J. Bligh who was welcomed in June 1924. Bligh began as an assistant to V.G. Britton at Latrobe in 1923 but soon was stationed at Deloraine on his own right, until

⁴⁷ Jessop resumed with the Home Mission at Bracknell in March 1926. In 1929 he resigned from the Home Mission to take charge of a Congregational church in the Sorell District.

⁴⁸ Following his time at Preolenna, he spent a short time at Latrobe and then moved to Sydney to train at a Missionary College.

⁴⁹ The Home Mission had not assisted financially with the erection of the 1913 Henrietta building. It was a local effort. See Home Mission Minutes, 26 March 1913.

May 1924. He was a native of Deloraine and his parents were amongst the oldest members of the church. In time he made an outstanding contribution to our understanding of our Baptist history in Tasmania by writing "The Altars of the Mountains" in 1935 his post-graduate diploma exit thesis. He left Yolla for college training for the full-time ministry commencing in 1926.⁵⁰ Bligh was among the eleven students Tasmania sent to the Victorian College between 1898 and 1938. Other Tasmanian home ministers received help as was available through local ministers. Tasmania lacked the resources to establish its own college and over the years was extensively helped by the Federal extra-mural course.⁵¹

E.C. McIntosh Brown, who entered the work of the Baptist Home Mission in April 1925, followed Bligh at Yolla. At his welcome Britton said that Brown "came to Yolla with the Baptist Union's fullest confidence". Brown carried a letter of recommendation from the Methodist Home Mission of

⁵⁰ During his four year his time of study William J. Bligh pastored the churches at Hawthorn West and Colac.

⁵¹ After ordination in 1930, Bligh returned to Tasmania and pastored the Bracknell District churches until 1935. He then transferred to Victoria to minister at Rainbow, Malvern East and Armadale. With the Rev. Howard Crago he wrote the book, "Champions of Liberty". Bligh was the president of the Baptist Union of Victoria in 1952-53. For six years he and his wife, Ida, managed "Weller Lodge", a young men's hostel in Canterbury. In 1960 hoping to return to pastoral work, he took an interim pastorate at the Canterbury Congregational Church until a Baptist position became available, but when this did not happen he resigned from the Baptist ministry and entered the Presbyterian ministry. Bligh died in Hamilton on 17 June 1993 aged eighty-seven.

Tasmania; he had been stationed at Waratah. The Rev. Edward B. Woods of Burnie had introduced him to the Baptist ministry. Brown was an outstanding preacher, with his military bearing and moustache. He was also a man with a conviction born of experience and study of history. Brown defined a home missionary thus, "He must know his God, but he must also know his fellow man, and to know them he must go where they are, live amongst them, share their tasks and their burdens, and throughout it all point to Jesus Christ." For himself, he felt that his work was among men. Brown could also handle a hammer and soldering iron. While he was at Yolla, he made a very fine baptistry thus saving the church much expense. Further, a vestry was added to the building.⁵² The first candidates to use the baptistry in July 1925 walked five miles on very rough terrain in very wet weather for the occasion. Brown stayed for less than a year, departing January 1926. That year he spent six months on the Osmiridium Fields at Adamsfield as evangelist for the Tasmanian Council of Churches.⁵³

⁵² The vestry was added in 1927 and enlarged in 1960.

⁵³ In 1926 a Home Mission posting to Sheffield followed for Brown. Sheffield at the time had five outstations and required a large amount of travelling and some power of endurance, especially during the winter months. In 1930 Brown completed his examinations and was ordained. In February 1932 he requested a change and was moved by the Home Mission to Latrobe. Brown took over oversight at Ulverstone in January 1939. At the end of the year he transferred to Wedderburn near Bendigo in Victoria but was soon found at Red Cliffs, at the Knox Memorial Presbyterian Church. The

E. MACKEY, C. W. JOBLING

The next to come was E. Mackey who was welcomed in February 1926 but who soon proved unsuitable for Home Ministry work and resigned. After some months, Cecil W. Jobling from the Launceston Tabernacle was appointed to the vacancy. Jobling and his wife are gifted singers. He was inducted on 10 January 1927, but after a short pastorate was moved to Smithton.⁵⁴ After this the church was without a pastor for some months and Burnie supplied most of the services.

While World War I years proved a real struggle for the Home Mission (some of the outstations were closed), there was progress between its conclusion and 1931 (during the economic depression). A real bonus was the Sustentation Fund which had been set up by William Gibson Senior as long ago as 1887. In 1926 the Home Mission's yearly grant from this fund was £660 and this was added to the £2000 that the Home Mission had that year but the Home Mission income was still short by £600. It had twenty-eight outstations. Its buildings - churches, halls, and manses

Victorian Baptist Superintendent, the Rev. J.E. Newman, had temporarily eased him out of the Baptist ministry. Newnham expected all his men to make an appeal for Christ at the end of every church service and Brown refused to do so. He was not an evangelist. Interested in the Oxford Movement, he lived a sacrificial life: he literally gave away the shirt on his back. A strong Labor man, he stood for Parliament. In 1945 he was back with the Baptists at the South Yarra Church, and in 1947 at the Rainbow Baptist Church.

⁵⁴ Because of the state of finances at Smithton, Jobling resigned from the Home Mission in March 1929, rejoined Launceston Tabernacle and then moved to live in Smithton in 1931 and ministered at Irishtown.

were generally in a bad state of repair. While help from the churches for the Home Mission work in 1930 came to £1887, £665 came from Sustentation Fund.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Home Mission Minutes, p156, 157

Chapter Four

The Great Depression Years

A.J. BLAZELY & JOHN J. ENGLISH

A.J. Blazely from the Longford Baptist church was appointed in March 1929 on the basis that he would stay until a replacement could be found as he had his heart set on mission work in Bolivia, South America. Fortnightly services were commenced at Oonah. With the arrival of John J. English in June 1930 (to 31 July 1931) Blazely moved to the Bracknell church but remained only a short time.⁵⁶ English "came to us all smiles, but his ability to keep it up was tested since. The first few months were a heavy up-hill fight but praise God, they have won through," reported the Yolla folk.⁵⁷ Early in his time he was allowed to marry. As a young man, he had been converted during an evangelistic campaign in England. He had entered the well-known "Cliff College", Derbyshire, under the eminent principal, the Rev. Samuel Chadwick. After completing his studies, he was engaged for six months as a full-time evangelist. English migrated to South Australia in 1924 and joined with the Church of Christ, for he had come to see the truth of believers' baptism. Subsequently, he entered the College of the Bible at Glen Iris, where he studied for three years. He

⁵⁶ Blazely applied for a Home Mission placing in 1938 but no opening was found.

⁵⁷ The circumstances behind this statement are unknown.

was later received into the Baptist Union of Tasmania as a Home Mission pastor. He had a heart for outreach into the community in which he encouraged others to join him. At Yolla a number of young people were baptised and received into membership. English transferred to Elphin Road in October 1932 and so became Newstead's first minister. He was ordained in 1935.⁵⁸

By 1931 it was admitted that the Home Mission progress since its beginnings had been slow. The Mission was now in financial straits. The reasons given were the limited population of the island and the high number of removals to the mainland. Yolla was one of many places which suffered badly through removals. Valued church members would move to the population centres or move interstate. For generations Tasmanian Baptists have greatly increased the strength of the mainland churches and the pattern has continued.

Home Mission income fell during the Depression. In 1931 the Home Mission had an overdraft of £230, £130 over the limit that

⁵⁸ After completing a three year extra-mural course, English was ordained at Sheffield on 4 April 1957. English also served in pastorates in Victoria (St. Kilda, Regent, Warrnambool and Frankston), Queensland (Greenslopes in Brisbane) and South Australia. He lectured at the Melbourne Bible Institute. He died on 14 September 1982.

the bank allowed. All staff, including its Superintendent had salaries reduced by 10%.⁵⁹ The bank soon lifted the overdraft to £200. New work was out of the question. "Most of the churches had met their assessments and had faced the acute depression with brave hearts," reported the Home Mission. On account of shortage of funds, the number of additions on the rolls was small. There were 400 members in the Home Mission churches, 600 children in its Sunday schools with sixty-six teachers, eighty Christian Endeavourers and thirty-five local preachers. The shortfall for 1931-32 was £67 of an income of £1943.⁶⁰

Yolla hosted its first ministers' retreat in 1933 as "from the East and South, from East to West the weary pilgrims came. They climbed the hills, and wondered what could be behind [them] till Yolla burst in sight. And what a sight it was!"⁶¹ Late in 1935 the hall at Mount Hicks was burnt down which required conveyance of the Sunday school children to Yolla Sunday by Sunday. A year later the hall was rebuilt. In 1934 member Mr. Pearce, became a "bush missionary" in NSW.

At the end of 1934 Britton's twenty-one years of Home Mission leadership came to an end. His work as a pioneer worker had entitled him to the affectionate appellation, "The grand old man of Tasmanian Home Missions". "A long, fruitful and practical ministry in the beginning days when stout

hearts and virile faith could alone surmount the many difficulties had made him a household name among the churches."⁶²

The Rev. R.W. Dobbinson took over and his assessment in 1935 was sober, to say the least: "We have [in the Home Mission] no men with any degree of evangelistic fire coupled with balance and the whole field shows our lack in this respect. I want to make a big change in the field here and am everywhere beset by the traditions of the last century."⁶³ In January 1936 Dobbinson wrote again about the work. "I want no cranks. Sane and energetic men are needed before any other qualifications. At the same time we must have college trained men. If I can only get hold of a few fellows as above who are not burdened with large families and can make a do with a small salary, both they and the work will quickly advance."⁶⁴ He was referring to the fact that the Home Mission pastors up to this time were not necessarily trained and that in the future they would be.

That year there were 431 church members in the Home Mission churches and by now the finances were in a "healthy state". Three years were taken as the time of

⁵⁹ Home Mission Minutes, 14 January 1931.

⁶⁰ Home Mission Minutes, 2 November 1931.

⁶¹ *Baptist Church Chronicle*, March 1933.

⁶² During his fifty-six years in the ministry, Britton was pastor of only six churches. Apart from Bracknell and Deloraine, there was Sheffield (4 years), Ulverstone-Penguin (3 years), Latrobe (11 years), Deloraine again (2 years) and then Perth (8 years). "VG" held the position of Home Mission Superintendent for over twenty years. He died in 1950. For an extended profile of Britton see Rowston, *Possessing the Future, A History of the Ulverstone Baptist Church 1905-2005*, chapter 2.

⁶³ Letter to Rev. W.C. Black in Sydney.

⁶⁴ Letter of 8 January 1936.

apprenticeship with the Home Mission.⁶⁵ Many of the Home Mission's buildings were now "worthy of demolition".

The 'lighting up' of Yolla, including the Baptist church, by hydro-electric power took place on 18 December 1929. The town's property owners were required to pay twenty-five shillings in advance as a guarantee. Its coming coincided with the diamond wedding celebrations of Daniel and Isabella Smith and so added to the pleasure of the celebrations. Power became available to outlying districts much later.⁶⁶ Prior to the connection of power to the Yolla Baptist church, water for Sunday morning tea time was boiled in a kerosene tin out the back of the church and internally candle lanterns were used to illuminate the building.

Like so many, farmer Ivy Smith depended on a lantern to make his way to church meetings. Year by year Smith milked on his home farm until early December and then drove the herd to nearby Parrawee for the rest of the season when rainfall promoted late summer and autumn feed. He and his seven brothers all owned blocks at Parrawee. His hut at Parrawee was originally the 'Pig and Whistle' building at Yolla.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Home Mission Minutes, p196.

⁶⁶ Bessie Smith and Margaret Pegus, *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 37. Henrietta trailed behind for a further seven years, being connected to the Henrietta hall in March 1935. Electric power was connected to the Yolla manse also in 1935.

⁶⁷ *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 30. Ivy and two of his sons converted it into a comfortable two-roomed hut. It had a wooden chimney which they lined with stones.

Keith Smith, local preacher, junior deacon and President of the United Christian Endeavour Society, departed early in 1937 to Home Mission work at Turiff in Victoria. In 1938, even though the Yolla district was not affected, the Sunday schools were closed for some time due to the restrictions imposed in connection with the infantile paralysis or poliomyelitis epidemic.

In the first thirty-three years of the church's history, there had been a total of three secretaries and three treasurers. By 1930 there were thirty-seven members on the roll, all resident members. The first twenty-one years were marked by periods of little progress.

WILLIAM L. HEAVEN & JOHN D. WILLIAMS

The Rev William L. Heaven was inducted in August 1932. Born in 1867 in Gloucester, England, Heaven accepted Christ when he was twenty-one. He was baptised and became a member of a Baptist church. Ten years later he began local preaching. He migrated to New Zealand and there entered the ministry in 1902. He married Ivy while in Kaipoi. In 1909 Heaven came to Tasmania to enter the Home Mission work at Ulverstone and concluded there in February 1911. Heaven's other ministerial charges included Hopetown in Victoria, Bracknell (1911-12, 1922-24) and Sheffield (1914-1922). Heaven bore the burden of keeping the Yolla church together through the trying years that shook off the Depression. He was remembered for his popular lantern lectures

on New Zealand. As most rural districts, Yolla was unable to provide suitable employment for its young people. The increasing use of agricultural machinery, too, had decreased the demand for men on the land. In many cases Sunday school book prizes had to be posted to children who had left the district. In June 1938 Heaven retired from the ministry. He was seventy-one years of age and in good health. He had always been in charge of Home Mission causes.⁶⁸

The Home Mission report of 1936 indicated that "the year's work had resulted in good and effective results. The field was well maintained and much had been done in the care of buildings." Finances continued in a healthy state. In 1937 salaries were raised by 5% (to make up the 10% reduction earlier), with the other 5% increase to come.⁶⁹

In August 1938 the young John D. Williams commenced his all-too-brief six-month ministry. During his time he felt that the church rediscovered its responsibility of stewardship and also its sense of honour.⁷⁰ Williams, baptised on 3 September, 1933, was the third generation of his family to come into membership at the Hobart Tabernacle.

⁶⁸ Heaven died on 10 July 1944, aged seventy-seven years.

⁶⁹ Home Mission Minutes pp. 212, 216, 237. Receipts for 1932-33 were £1671, for 1933-34 - £1776, for 1934-35 - £1776, for 1935-36 - £1808.

⁷⁰ The Home Mission report of 17 July 1939 confirms William's assessment. It reads, "Yolla has raised itself out of the depths of despair and has pulled up much of its earlier arrears."

Williams, educated at the Hobart High School, found employment in his father's joinery business. He was the fourth generation in the business which had commenced in 1853 in North Hobart. He was converted under the teaching of his Bible Class teacher, Rex Townley. In the Young People's Guild of the Hobart Tabernacle, he learned to speak on his feet. After he left school he became involved in the Ware Street Mission in North Hobart and this encouraged him, with the guidance and help of the Rev. Harold Hackworthy, to train for the ministry. Before going to the Victorian Baptist College, he spent time as assistant to Rev. Robert Steel in the Deloraine district. Of Steel John said, "Robert taught me that a good minister must work hard and be out among his people". After six months at Deloraine, John was appointed to the vacant charge of Yolla and Henrietta.

Reflecting on his days at Yolla,⁷¹ he recalled how the debt was still hanging over the church when he arrived. It was a long-standing debt of £8/3/6d. It troubled him:

When I arrived in Yolla they had an eight pound longstanding debt on their property. To pay it off they had been collecting a penny a time. Now Robert Steel invited me to the annual fair at Deloraine and asked that I stay over for a couple of days. So on the next Sunday, I said, without malice or forethought, "Mr. Steel has asked me to go down for a

⁷¹ From interview by Laurence F. Rowston in April 1988.

couple of days but it is going to cost me twenty-five shillings. I don't think it right for me to spend that money enjoying myself while we have this debt of £8 on our church.

So I have decided that in addition to paying my fare, I am going to pay that much off the debt." I didn't say anymore, but before the people had got out of church, I had the whole £8 in my hand. The debt was paid in one hour, in full!

At Yolla (and elsewhere) he soon found out that church folk have long memories:

Soon after my arrival at Yolla the church began to grow. My predecessor, an aged minister, only got four or five. All the Methodists began coming Sunday nights to hear this young minister who was full of life. I was soon pleased with the way things were going but the Yolla Baptists would say, "Ah, yes, but you should have been here when Mr. Watson was here. We had two services every Sunday and the church was full." It didn't matter what I said, the reply would come, "Ah, but when Mr. Watson was here." ... He was the minister they talked about. They idolised E.E. Watson.

For John the impressions of the stately Tabernacle in the capital were etched on his memory making comparisons easy,

The Yolla church was just a hall. It had a platform across the front. At one end of the platform was a seven foot high post on which hung a slate to write the hymn numbers. I looked at this thing in horror, for I had come freshly from Hobart where

things were done decently and in order. I wrote to my builder father to get a price for a hymn board. When the deacons' meeting came I said, "Now this is what we should do." All were in agreement except one who said, "Look young fella, you're here and all you want to do is to make us into a city church!"

Williams took with him the lessons he learnt in the building trade. In supervising the painting of the Henrietta hall he gained a name for himself:

The church at Henrietta, three miles from Yolla, was a weatherboard building in pretty poor condition. I had just finished my time as a carpenter so I organised a working party. I knew a bit about painting. My father had always insisted on the paint not being too thick and rubbing it in so that it gets into the grain of the wood. He would say, "Rub it in Jack, rub it in!" These farmers thought differently. They had the idea of making the paint cover as much area as possible, not realizing that they were not going to have a good job when they put the second coat on. So I said to them, "Rub it in. Aub!⁷² Rub it in, Tom!" After that, every time one of them saw me he would say, "Rub it in J.D! Rub it in!"

And in the district city ways were not country ways:

At Yolla I was a dapper little twenty one year old, all neat and tidy and full of pious language. One Sunday after the morning service I was walking home with

⁷² Aubrey Crisp.

two men, one who was not quite all there. He had done some Sunday trading at the corner shop and had bought some sweets which he had begun to eat in church. As we walked he took out one of the lollies and put it in his mouth. I held out my hand and he gave me one which I handed to our companion Dick. Then I held out my hand again and he gave me another. A bit further on he took out another and began to eat it. So I held out my hand and he gave me one. He didn't offer one to Dick so I passed mine to Dick. Then I held out my hand again for another one and he looked at me and said, "Gore, you're a greedy guts!"

Williams also oversaw the opening of a Sunday school at Mount Hicks. Williams departed for ministerial training at the Baptist College of Victoria.⁷³

⁷³ After completing his course in the college, under the guidance of the Tasmanian Baptist Home Mission Department, he gained his B.A. with honours and B.D. from Melbourne and also London; he was ordained in Hobart Tabernacle on 20 December 1942. He then went to South Hobart and helped to establish a church in a hall where the Hobart members had conducted a mission for some years. Later he was persuaded to become Interim Minister of the Tabernacle while Rev. E. Roberts-Thomson was away on chaplaincy work with the R.A.A.F. Devonport Baptist Church followed from 1942 to 1948. In 1949 he accepted a call to North Adelaide where he stayed until 1958. Williams was President of the Baptist Union of South Australia in 1956. In South Australia he was chairman of both the Overseas and Home Mission Committees. In 1958 Williams then took over from Rev. Frank Marsh as General Secretary of the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission, a position he held until 1982. In 1959 the mission became the Australian Baptist Missionary Society. During this ministry the work expanded tremendously and whereas the work was confined mainly to

Bengal, India and New Guinea when he took over as Secretary. William's influence saw it involve work in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, New Guinea, Timor, Indonesia, Zambia, Hong Kong and also among Muslims in Australia, as well as aborigines in Central Australia. His position as General Secretary of the ABMS lasted a quarter of a century. He served the Baptist Union of Victoria as its president in 1973-4. In 1981 he became the President General of the Baptist Union of Australia. In 1985 the Queen made him a member of the General Division of the Order of Australia (A.M.) for services to religion. He died in Melbourne on 21 May 2010.

Chapter Five

World War 2 and Its Aftermath

WILLIAM T. BARNES & REGINALD T. WOOTTON

In January 1939 William T. Barnes commenced at Yolla and the church hoped "his stay will be a longer one" but this was not to be. The Home Mission saw his placement at Yolla as only a temporary one owing to a lack of Home Missioners.⁷⁴ Gifted and virile, young Barnes did an excellent job. Born in South Australia, the son of Rev. Frank J. Barnes and his wife Queenie, he came to Tasmania with his parents in 1926 when his father became Pastor of the Longford Baptist Church. William attended Longford Primary School and Launceston High School. He was heavily involved in the church from an early age. But at Yolla, Barnes also discovered that country church folk have long memories. John Williams continues,

I came across him in Launceston. "Oh, you're Jack Williams," he said. "Yes," I replied. "Look here," he said, "there is many a time when I wish I could have met you and cut your throat." I was quite taken aback. I said, "Bill, whatever for?" "Well," he replied, "every time I try to do something at Yolla, they say, 'That is not how Mr. Williams did it!'"

During his time a Women's Auxiliary was formed with a membership of ten. Other

church activities included a weekly Wednesday evening Bible study. From time to time missionaries visited the churches and spoke of their work in lands across the sea. Their talks were often illustrated by lantern slides.

In November 1939 Barnes was farewelled as he moved on to the fledging church of Newstead from where he enlisted in the R.A.A.F.⁷⁵ Others enlisted too, and they included Mr. R. Costello, Yolla local preacher for both the Methodist and Baptist churches, Arnold Jordan and Mr. T. Goldston.

By the beginning of World War II Dobbinson had retired and a number of short term Superintendents followed, namely: the Revs. Allan C. Prior of Memorial, F. Clifton Aldis of Burnie, and Sydney E. Dorman of Devonport.

During the World War, in January 1940, the Yolla church was linked again with Wynyard. The Rev. Reginald Talbot Wootton of Wynyard acted as moderator for the first two years of the War. Early in 1940 there was a "considerable" increase in the attendance at Henrietta,⁷⁶ and there was steady progress all round. But in mid 1941 the Wynyard-Yolla circuit refused to raise its

⁷⁴ Home Mission Minutes, 19 April 1939.

⁷⁵ As a Flight Sergeant with the 27 Operational Training RAF units, he died accidentally in England on 21 January 1944. He was twenty-four years of age.

⁷⁶ Home Mission report for April-June 1940.

Home Mission assessment when asked to do so. Wootton was born on 1 August 1906, the third of the thirteen children to Thomas Wootton and his wife Edith Mary (nee Hall) of "Wattle Grove", Staverton. Staverton, an area where three families could produce thirty-seven children meant ready-made Sunday schools. The Staverton Baptist church was part of the Sheffield Baptist church circuit. Wootton was baptised and became a member of the Staverton Baptist church in 1927. Although his mother was married in a Baptist church, prior to her marriage she had been a long serving Sunday school teacher in the Wesleyan church at Dairy Plains. She also attended the Roland Brethren Assembly.

Wootton became Britton's assistant at Deloraine before leaving for the Baptist College of Victoria at the start of 1933. Four years later, fresh from Victorian Baptist College, Wootton commenced at Wynyard as a young single man in April 1937 and was ordained that year. He married Jessie Hammerton on 16 April 1938. She met Reginald at a social tennis outing when he was a student at the Victorian Baptist Theological College. She was actively involved in the West Melbourne Baptist Church. At Yolla the Woottons were popular leaders. Wootton travelled around the district on a big Indian motorbike during the early period of his appointment. He played football and on one Sunday morning service at Wynyard he took the pulpit sporting a

spectacular black eye.⁷⁷ He was well respected, very popular and enjoyed his sport. He had a broad outlook on life and mixed well with his peers. Wootton remained until July 1941. His next posting was Perth.⁷⁸

LIONEL JACK AUSTIN

The subsequent Pastors of Wynyard continued the supervision of the Yolla church with its three outstations of Oonah, Henrietta and Mount Hicks. Nearly all the children in the district attended the Sunday school at Mount Hicks. Austin and Breguet each required the help of several lay preachers to maintain the work. During the War years there were very gratifying attendances even though there were the handicaps of long distances, petrol restrictions and shortage of manpower.

Lionel Jack Austin commenced at the Wynyard and district churches of Boat Harbour and Myalla on 31 July 1941. Austin

⁷⁷ Max Austin, *To God Be the Glory – A History of the Wynyard Baptist Church*.

⁷⁸ Wootton was welcomed to the joint pastorate of Longford and Perth on 20 August 1941 and remained there until 1 February 1943. He had enlisted in the Army and served as a Padre in New Guinea. After the war, in 1948, he served in the following South Australian Churches: Edwardstown - Colonel Light Gardens circuit; St. Mary's, (commenced during his ministry at Edwardstown) Colonel Light Gardens; Port Pirie; Black Forest; Salisbury; Bellvue Heights, now Blackwood Hills; and West End Baptist Mission, now Westcare. Wootton died on 10 February 1977 at his desk at West End Baptist Mission. They had five children: Barry Thomas, Margaret, Reginald Deane, Wilfred Garth and Coralie. Garth followed in his father's footsteps and became a Baptist Minister. He has served in Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia. Information supplied by Reg and Jessie's daughter, Margaret Gould, and nephew, Des Wootton.

was born at Sheffield on 26 January 1915. He was the youngest of four sons of Abel David and Mary Ann Austin, who owned and worked a farm at Paradise and he attended the small, local, one-teacher school. After a time helping his parents on the farm, he became for eight years a motor mechanic at Lockett's Garage in Sheffield. He was converted at a Brethren Meeting at ten years of age and several years later was baptised at the Sheffield Baptist Church and became a member. He was involved in the Christian Endeavour Movement and took up local preaching. Eventually he went to New Zealand to attend the New Zealand Bible Training Institute, graduating in 1939. Austin returned to Australia in 1940 and received a call to Elphin Road. He married Florence Riley. His call to Wynyard necessitated the purchase of a car, a 1933 Plymouth. During his time there a home service recommenced at Oonah, a women's auxiliary was formed, a United Junior Endeavour Society commenced as well as a Sunday school teachers' class. In January 1945 Austin moved to South Hobart⁷⁹ and soon the Yolla manse was sold for £575. The others who oversaw the Wynyard-Yolla churches during the War were the Revs. Frank T. Belot and Ken P. Finger, both of Wynyard.

⁷⁹ After a year at South Hobart Jack Austin moved to Launceston for a six months' interim at Newstead. He was ordained in 1946 on the successful completion of the extra-mural "Federal" course (LTh standard) of six years. While at Newstead, with his brother Cyril, Jack wrote *Bunyan's Wonderful Book*, for children. It won the Examiner "Book of the Year". Later that year, Yolla asked the Home Mission for Jack to oversee and stabilize their separation from Wynyard.

At the War there were eight circuits or centres of Home Mission enterprise, with seven Home Missionaries on the staff. These were Smithton circuit (T.C. Cronau), Wynyard and Yolla circuit (L.J. Austin), Latrobe and Sasafrass churches (K.P. Finger), Deloraine circuit (R.B. Kingsmill), Bracknell circuit (Alec Menzies); also suburban centres Newstead (Rev Robert Steel) and South Hobart (Rev. J.D, Williams). Twenty percent of the Tasmanian Baptists were enrolled in Home Mission churches while the Home Mission had one half of the churches in which regular services were conducted. A large proportion of local preachers produced by the Baptist churches in this State were to be found either serving in Home Mission circuits or having received their early opportunities through its appointments. More than one minister of the gospel had come from some lowly Home Mission cause where circumstances made it possible for his amateur and elementary attempts at preaching to be encouraged and appreciated. There were opportunities for preaching which did not exist in the larger city churches.

Looking back from 1910 to 1947, the Home Mission, apart from handing out grants to the older Home Mission churches and outstations and being provided with low level giving from the same churches, had been able to do little in acquiring sites, starting new works or erecting buildings. The overdraft in 1947 was £322. Up to 1947 the statistics also told a sad story. The

increase in the membership of the Baptist Union churches between 1921 and 1947 was only 50! In 1946, what had been the subject of discussion for many years finally came about - co-operation between the Baptist Union of Tasmania and the Baptist Union of Victoria. When it was first suggested the comment was made, "Men sweltering on the Mallee would be glad to cool down in Tasmania for a year or two!" The co-operation proceeded for the advantage of each and without infringing on the autonomy of either. The agreement also covered the Home Mission where the help was most needed. The Rev. E.C. Smith of Burnie served as honorary deputy superintendent while the Rev. Jack Manning, superintendent of the Baptist Victorian Home Mission, became Tasmania's Superintendent also.

The outcome was that major ministerial problems were greatly reduced and long standing debts turned into credits. The Tasmanian churches were on the same rising tide as the churches in Victoria. A "Sites, Building and Loan Fund" was established. Stipends were lifted to Victorian standards. The old churches such as Latrobe and Deloraine ceased to talk of defeat. New churches were born. Victorian pastors moved to Tasmania and Tasmanian pastors moved to Victoria. None appreciated it more than the Tasmanian Home Mission pastors. In the end though, the agreement between the Baptist Union of Tasmania and the Baptist Union of Victoria

was never cancelled, it simply faded when the Rev. E.E. Watson took over in 1952.⁸⁰

Late in 1947 Yolla asked the Home Mission for Jack Austin to return and oversee and stabilise its separation from Wynyard. The Yolla-Henrietta church members had requested their own minister.⁸¹ Austin returned for two years. By 1950 Yolla-Henrietta, designated one of the "old churches" had become a self-supporting cause, as did Bracknell, Deloraine, Latrobe, Wynyard and Smithton. It had taken Deloraine eighty-four years since its constitution and Latrobe a similar time period. But the Home Mission warned that in becoming self-supporting they also had to be self propagating. The Home Mission had on its hands new churches and centres. In the north they were at Montello, George Town, Somerset, Kings Meadows, Rossarden and West Devonport. In the South they were Taroon, Goodwood, Warane, Glenorchy and Lenah Valley.⁸² Even with its self-supporting status, Yolla still reported to the Home Mission. In January 1949 Austin and his wife Florence

⁸⁰ Wrote J G Manning, "The Tasmanian Union called Ern Watson to the composite double task of the Union Secretaryship and the Home Mission Superintendency. Since funds were still inadequate, he was also for some years the part-time pastor of the Central Church, Launceston. The agreement between the two Unions gradually faded. With local leadership operating in Tasmania, it was no longer necessary for me to pay regular visits to the Island State at the expense of the Tasmanian Union, but the 6-year Tasmanian interlude is one of the happiest events in Victorian Home Mission history. See *Builders for God*, pp. 99ff.

⁸¹ Home Mission Minutes, 23 July 1946.

⁸² Wynyard became independent in 1958.

moved to the mainland, but not before the Baptist Church Chronicle reported that in Oonah he "is rapidly becoming famous as an electrician". Austin had concluded at Yolla on 23 December.⁸³ For many years Christian Endeavour was a very important part of the Yolla church work, and for much of that time there was a large membership of Yolla United Christian Endeavour Society met in alternate weeks in Methodist and Baptist Churches. This arrangement began in 1929. At one time it was the largest Christian Endeavour Society in Tasmania. At Christmas time the more youthful members clambered on the back of truck and toured the district singing Christmas carols. Local girls, such as Loys and Verl Murfett, and boys, attended the Methodist church service in the morning and the Baptist service in the evening. Such gatherings as Christian Endeavour were of course opportunities for the boys to meet the girls and vice-versa! In early 1935 H.

⁸³ Jack Austin's first posting on the mainland was to Sale Baptist church where he conducted a devotional weekly broadcast from 3 TR radio station, and broadcast a church service once a month. In January 1953 they moved to Oakleigh, as first resident pastor of the new church. While there. Jack became the Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Baptist Department of Evangelism. South Yarra Baptist Church followed in 1958. Whilst there he was Victorian State President of the Christian Endeavour Movement. Glenroy followed until 1966. For health reasons Jack had to vacate the full time ministry and he and his wife moved to Surrey Hills, and for three to four years operated a small printing business. For the next year or so Jack preached at Sunday services at Upwey and Lilydale while these churches were pastorless. He and Florence concluded their days in the "Karana" and "Hedley Sutton" Baptist Aged homes. Jack died in October 1989 aged seventy-four years.

Diprose, the United Christian Endeavour Treasurer, left for studies at the Melbourne Bible Institute.

Apart from the Baptists and Methodists (the latter opened a new building in 1967), the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans also built churches in Yolla. St. Joseph's opened in 1927 while the Anglicans began with a church hall named St. David's and fifty years later referred to as St. Mary's.⁸⁴ The Brethren also met in Yolla, with meetings first held in a home at Camp Vale. Later the congregation met in homes with the leaders frequently attending from the Wynyard Gospel Chapel. Later meetings were held in the Yolla Memorial Hall. When these ceased members travelled to either Wynyard or Burnie. Eventually a Gospel chapel opened at Upper Mount Hicks.⁸⁵ Prior to this opening of the chapel, a Sunday school was held in the 'Tin Hall', Smart's Road. Among the group of dedicated teachers who rode their push-bikes down from Yolla each Sunday were Amy and Arnold Jordan.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Stephens, *The Anglican Church in Tasmania, a Diocesan History to Mark the Sesquicentenary: 1922*, p. 185 (Hobart 1991).

⁸⁵ On 11 November 1956.

⁸⁶ Bessie Smith and Margaret Pegus, *Yolla – The First Century*, p. 52.

Chapter Six

Post War Years

D.S. BREGUET

Following Austin, a probationer, D. Stanley Breguet, went to Yolla from the Aberdeen Street Baptist Church in Geelong. He was inducted into the pastorate on 5 May 1949 and soon conducted house to house visitation throughout the Yolla-Henrietta area. Breguet went to Queensland to work and later joined the Medical Corps of the Army after spending his childhood and youth in Geelong. He had worked as a nursing orderly with the AAMC in New Guinea during the War. Following his discharge from the Army at the beginning of 1945 he returned to Victoria and entered MBI for two years of study. He was there 1945-6.

He married Verna in 1948 and in 1949 applied to the Victorian Baptist Home Mission. He was accepted and with Verna, now aged twenty-one, was sent to Yolla. These were the days before fixed stipends and "nice manses. During their time at Yolla their two children, Joy and Ian were born in Burnie. Stan and his family lived in a small four-roomed house owned by a deacon. Writes Verna, "There were no conveniences then but lessons were learned: happiness does not depend on possessions. The love

and warmth of the Yolla-Henrietta people will always be remembered."⁸⁷

Having been a medical orderly, Stan found caring for people with illnesses and preparing them for death was a natural and rewarding work. His longer ministry of five and a half years proved to be of great benefit to the church; the Young People's work particularly being blessed.

Breguet was ordained in the Devonport church on 27 February 1954 after four years of extra-mural studies. Sunday evening film services began in June that year with the screening of "The Bible on the Table". Church services were also extended to West Calder. Local preachers lightened Breguet's load. At the end of 1954 the Breguets were farewelled as they had responded to a call to Semaphore in South Australia.⁸⁸

During Breguet's time, Herman R. Murfett, church secretary, died after thirty-four years of office. He had also given "scores of years in ministering the music of the church" and a lifetime of service to Christian Endeavour. His wife, Queenie, was the daughter of the Rev. C. Chenery. A suite of communion table and chairs were presented in 1951 as

⁸⁷ Letter of 27 April 2010.

⁸⁸ Following Semaphore, Breguet ministered at Mildura, Bendigo, Brighton, East Kew and Nicholas Street (now Barrabool Hills) Geelong. He died on 3 August 1990 after a two-year battle with cancer.

a memorial to Herman.⁸⁹ In 1950 a Sunday school was recommenced at Takone with seventeen scholars in attendance. In August 1952 the Yolla church became self-supporting in that it no longer depended on the annual Home Mission grants.

ROBERT L GIBB & MURRAY LING

Robert L. Gibb returned from Western Australia in 1955 and began on 3 July of that year as a Home Missioner at Yolla. He soon took up extra mural studies. After six months he was transferred to the Home Mission work at Rossarden where he had worked for about a year with the Baptist Home Mission Committee, from 1952.⁹⁰

Recently married Murray Ling, fresh from four years of studies at the New South Wales Baptist College and a honeymoon, was inducted on 26 February 1956. On his arrival a manse was in the planning stage. The project steadily advanced until, in December that year, he and his wife moved in. In July 1951 Murray Ling had been appointed Burnie's Associate Pastor, to be located at Montello. He was ordained at

Yolla on 18 January 1957. A time at the joint Perth-Longford churches followed for Ling,⁹¹ but there was a dividing of loyalties at Yolla when this move was mooted. A number at Yolla didn't want to lose him. In 1957 the church roll was pruned leaving the membership at twenty-three. Ling was farewelled on 24 March 1958.

COLIN D. HOWLETT & DON CAMERON

Pastor Colin D. Howlett succeeded Ling on 30 March 1958. Howlett was born in Victoria and during his childhood and later was deeply involved in the Northcote Baptist Church, with its Sunday school, Christian Endeavour, youth group and men's society. Eventually Howlett became a deacon. As a lay preacher he ministered to churches both in suburban and country Victoria. In 1954 as a young company accountant, he and his wife relocated to Hobart where Howlett became Head Office Accountant with Tasmanian Orchardists and Producers Ltd. He commenced a monthly youth rally for the young people of all the Baptist Churches and served as a lay preacher for Baptist,

⁸⁹ See *Baptist Church Chronicle*, February 1950.

⁹⁰ As Gibb's LTh studies progressed he took exception to the prescribed books considering that they undermined the authority of scripture. In 1956 he commenced at Elphin Road Baptist church and was advocating the doctrine of Unconditional Election and Limited Atonement (Hyper-Calvinism). A schism ensued with Gibb's departing with a number of the church folk. In 1958 he was amongst those who formed the Evangelical Society which was based doctrinally on the Westminster Confession. See R.S. Ward, *Presbyterianism in Tasmania 1821-1977*, pp. 36-51.

See R.S. Ward, *Presbyterianism in Tasmania 1821-1977*, pp. 36-51.

⁹¹ From 1958 to 1962 Murray Ling ministered at the Perth-Longford Churches. From there, he and his wife, Helen, found rich fellowship with different groups and other denominations. Twice they served as relief missionaries for the A.B.M.S. Murray served as superintendent on three aboriginal settlements, for the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration, worked with handicapped persons and special groups and finally became a marriage counsellor. God's providence had very much touched their lives. On the Tasman Bridge over the Derwent in Hobart, on the night of 5 January 1975, two spans of the bridge were knocked down by a ship and Ling managed to stop his car just short of the resulting gap. God's providence had also been most evident for Murray in a childhood accident involving a train in which he lost an arm, but not life. Murray died in 1998.

Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In 1957 he accepted the pastorate of the Bracknell District churches. At the same time he commenced extra-mural theological studies under the auspices of the Baptist Union of Australia. Howlett's preaching load initially comprised Sunday mornings at Henrietta and Sunday afternoons and evenings at Yolla. There were the mid-week Bible study meetings at Yolla and Religious Education classes weekly at the Yolla Area School where Fred Watson was the Headmaster. Far-reaching changes at Yolla now took place. The work at Henrietta which had been part of the Yolla work from 1913 was centralised at Yolla with the closing of the Henrietta church. This act lessened Howlett's workload. Even so, the Henrietta Sunday school continued. The advent of the motor car and the building of better roads had lessened the rigour of the Home Missionary's lot. The eventual sale of the Henrietta church provided the finance to enable a hall to be built onto the Yolla church. Attendances at worship increased, finances improved, missionary giving was raised and the church debt greatly diminished. Apart from the combined Methodist/Baptist Christian Endeavour meetings, there was no other fellowship opportunity for the young people at Yolla, so Howlett commenced a Saturday evening gathering. At Yolla the Sunday school became a most successful morning pre-church fixture. Ivy and Rhonda Smith remained on as the two

surviving foundation members. Ivy was now a Life Deacon. Although a report to the Home Mission Council in 1958 said that the work was "in good heart", a further report the following year gave a different picture saying that the Yolla area "appears to be rather static". The reason given was: "The loss by migration of young people to the cities is a cause of some concern."⁹² By the end of that year church attendances were "rather poor".

In August 1960 the church held its 50th Jubilee celebrations in the renovated church building and an extended Sunday school hall with speakers the Revs. E.E. Watson, Keith Smith and John J. English. At the end of 1961 Arnold Jordan began as Pastor of the joint pastorate of Summerhill and Kings Meadows churches in Launceston. His departure and that of his wife Amy left a number of positions vacant. Arnold had been church secretary and Sunday school Superintendent for many years. Howlett's visitation in the district was first carried out by car but soon the costs of running and providing for a family of a wife and then four children necessitated the disposal of Howlett's car and visitation on foot. Now Howlett preached at Henrietta for morning services and at Yolla for afternoons and evenings, walking the distance "come hail, rain or shine". As Jennifer Hemsley recalls in *Around the Country Circuits*,

He remembered one day when there was no shine, only teeming rain and

⁹² Home Mission Minutes, 22 September 1958 and 29 April 1959.

*blustery winds. Although he wore a coat which came below the knees, it made little difference. 'The wind was blowing so strong,' he recalled, 'and the rain was just pelting. I was absolutely drenched from the knees down. As I stood in the pulpit, I had the radiator on and you could see the steam rising. One fellow in the congregation called out, 'You're steamed up, preacher! He's really with it today!'*⁹³

Howlett also remembered the dairy farmers who, although they worked long hours, turned up at night during the church alterations and worked until midnight. On one occasion he attended a funeral at the Henrietta cemetery after very heavy rain which saw the grave filled to the top with water. The coffin had to be left floating. On two occasions this city-born accountant alone, with much difficulty, rounded up stray cattle. He also worked on the installation of fences and gates to the front of the manse which itself needed rectification due to faulty construction work. Howlett concluded at Yolla on 28 January 1962 by which stage the church was struggling owing to removals from the district.

The move for a joint pastorate with Somerset had been put to both churches at the end of 1959 and began in 1962. The first minister of the dual pastorate was the Rev. Don Cameron who commenced on 18 March. Although a joint pastorate, both

churches had a full program and Don enthusiastically threw himself into caring for both, with the aid of lay preachers. He was much appreciated by both congregations. Don's parents managed a saw mill at Burns' Creek, thirty-five kilometres east of Launceston where he was born in 1930. The timber industry took the family to Smithton in 1939 where Don became involved with the Smithton Methodist Sunday school and youth group. That year he had left school after completing grade eight to work as a farmhand at Mella where his father "share-farmed". In early 1951 he was converted through the ministries of the Rev. Alex White, the pastor of the Smithton Baptist Church, and an American evangelist who ran a combined mission with the Methodists and Baptists. A two year course with the Melbourne Bible Institute followed. Cameron was exempted from doing Greek Studies so that he might master English Grammar. Since his asthma condition closed the door to his working with ABMS work overseas, an opening was found for him to work as a Home Missioner at the recently established Baptist Fellowship at Marawah. He served there for two years as he pursued studies by correspondence with Taylors of Melbourne. He then embarked on a four year theological course at the Baptist College, gaining an L.Th. During those years he served as pastor of the Southwark, Semaphore Park and St. Mary's Baptist Churches in South Australia. In 1960, now married to Ruth, he was ordained at the Smithton Baptist church and shortly after,

⁹³ Jennifer Hemsley, *Around the Country Circuits*, (Regal Press, Baptist Union of Tasmania, 1996), p. 162.

was inducted into the Penguin Baptist Church. Cameron delighted in his transport progression at this point, "Having begun with a push bike at Penguin, and having subsequently graduated to a two-stroke, with £25 in hand, I took delivery of my first car, owing a princely sum of £900!"⁹⁴ In 1966 Cameron accepted a call to the Lilydale and Wandin North Baptist churches in Victoria.⁹⁵

SIMON HENRY BATH &

JEFF NEWNHAM WILKINSON

The joint Somerset-Yolla pastorate continued with the arrival of the Rev Simon Henry Bath of Sheffield in January 1966. The Yolla church now had twenty-three members. Bath was born at Sandstone W.A. on 19 September 1912 to Jessie and Simon Bath. His father was a mining engineer. Simon grew up in Ballarat and studied at the Junior Technical College. He attended a Methodist Sunday School but in his late teens moved to the Ballarat West Baptist Church under the ministry of the Rev. S. Whitchurch where he was baptised and received into membership. He involved himself in

⁹⁴ Hemsley, *Around the Country Circuits*, pp. 198ff.

⁹⁵ After three years at Lilydale Cameron next served in the Latrobe Valley at Morwell from 1969 to 1972. Early in 1973 he returned to Tasmania and the work at Moonah, Lenah Valley and South Hobart. It was in September 1981 that he joined the I.T.I.M. team and became Industrial Chaplain with the H.E.C. at Tarraleah, covering Hydro families in the Tarraleah area with quarterly week long visits to Poatina and Strathgordon. During this time Ruth died, on 12 April 1983. Three years later he served at Latrobe/Sassafras until early 1989 and during this time he remarried, to Doreen on 12 September 1987. Finally he served at Marawah/Smithton from 1990 to 1995, concluding on 5 February 1995.

Christian Endeavour, Sunday school teaching and subsequently the Men's Society. He became a deacon. In 1938 he commenced studies at the Melbourne Bible Institute gaining his diploma. It was here that he met his wife, Florence Furlong. During 1941 he worked with the Melbourne City Mission's Men's Hostel. At the end of the year he enlisted for war service, serving with the RAAF ground staff in New Guinea and subsequently as a YMCA Welfare Officer. At the conclusion of the War he commenced his ministries in Tasmania at Latrobe and Sassafras (1946-51). The Deloraine and District churches followed for five years (1951-55) as did the Sheffield and District churches (1955-66) where he was ordained on 4 April 1957. Simon was elected President of the Baptist Union for 1961-1962. He commenced at the joint Yolla-Somerset churches in 1966. During his time in the Yolla-Somerset area, he extended his interest to the Savage River community and saw the school rise from a room in a house to a High School. He travelled each week for about four years to take religious instruction. Simon concluded at Yolla-Somerset on 26 April 1970, transferring to the Longford and Perth churches (1970-75).⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Bath undertook a further term at Deloraine and District (1975-79). He was elected to several committees of the Baptist Union of Tasmania including Union Council for about twenty years. He also served on the Home Mission and Missionary Departments. Wider denomination service was given as a state representative on the Executive Council of the Baptist Union of Australia and the Federal Home Mission Board. His long association with the Karingal Home

Bath was followed by the Rev. Jeff Newnham Wilkinson on 13 December 1970 as the joint Yolla-Somerset pastorate continued. Wilkinson, of the Kyneton Baptist Church in Victoria, was born in Shepparton, Victoria, on 4 December 1925, the youngest of seven children born of farmers Sam and Ada Wilkinson. Both his parents were members of the Shepparton Baptist Church. For the rest of their working lives they farmed in areas where there were no Baptist churches so involved themselves in the local Methodist churches. Jeff attended Sunday school at North Mooroopna, just outside Shepparton, and then when the family moved to Upotipotpon where there was no Sunday school, the children did their lessons through the Postal Sunday School movement. Again the family moved, this time to Boho South where young Jeff finished his schooling and attended Sunday school again. The Shepparton Interdenominational Convention in 1944 and a missionary meeting were decisive for him. He commenced teaching Sunday school and later became a local preacher in the Violet Town Methodist Circuit. After leaving school he worked on the farm until in 1949, when it was sold. His parents retired to Bendigo. Wilkinson studied at the Melbourne Bible Institute for two years. Whilst at the Institute he was baptised at the Bendigo Baptist Church and joined the membership. In 1951 he was invited by the

Board of Management continued until his death on 14 September 1982.

Victorian Baptist Home Mission (which was also in charge of Tasmania at that time) to become assistant to the Rev. Max Brewer at Devonport with its Spreyton and South Spreyton outstations. He was inducted at Spreyton on 22 April 1951. He spent 1952 at the Roelands Native Mission Farm, near Bunbury in Western Australia, returning to Tasmania to be married early the next year. He undertook an interim Home Mission pastorate at Montello until June 1953 when he and his wife left Tasmania to minister at Port Campbell, Victoria. For the next seventeen years he ministered in Victorian Churches and completed Ordination Studies through the old Victorian Baptist College. Wilkinson, reflecting on his time at Yolla, said,

We spent a wonderful five years there and saw both the churches and the Sunday Schools grow. During this time we had twenty-two baptisms. The new manse at Somerset was beautiful - a split level home with views of the sea - and we greatly enjoyed living there. We spent a great deal of time getting the grounds in order but were rewarded by the church having several "Garden Parties" there in the spacious manse grounds and these were greatly used to reach new folk, especially children for Sunday School. Having been a farmer I used to enjoy visitation in the Yolla area. The preaching of God's Word was always well received in both churches and Religious Instruction at both Somerset and Yolla was encouraging

especially the Annual School Service during Education Week which we held in the Somerset Church. The youth group was a great joy to us and a great source of encouragement as were the "Work Camps" we had with them at Araluen. These were much used of the Lord. Our son married and still lives in Somerset and our daughter returned to Victoria with us in 1976, so we still make regular visits to "Tassie" which is the birth place of my wife and we have many treasured memories of our ministries there.⁹⁷

The church at Yolla was repainted externally using voluntary labour in 1970. Special services were held in August that year to mark the church's 60th anniversary. The Rev. D.S. Breguet was guest speaker. At the end of 1976, the Rev. Ivan Jordan and his wife Verl were welcomed home on furlough from Lajamanu (formerly Hooker Creek). The Wilkinsons were farewelled on 11 January 1976 to the Warracknabeal-Wilbur South Baptist churches in country Victoria.

⁹⁷ Letter of 21 July 1989 to Laurence F. Rowston.

Chapter Seven

KEITH A. SMITH & JOHN GOLLAN

A son of the Yolla church, Keith A. Smith, commenced pastoral ministry at the Yolla church on 7 March 1976. Keith was the son of Ivy and Rhonda Smith. He shared his childhood with three sisters and three brothers. His first real personal commitment to Jesus Christ came in response to a challenging message from local Yolla preacher, Hilton Preece. Some years later he was baptised. In 1926 Keith concluded his formal education at the single room state school at Yolla and took up employment for several years in the office of the Yolla Dairy Company. During this period, he accepted opportunities for preaching experience in regional Baptist and Methodist churches.

A "call" to pastoral ministry emerged in Smith's mind in the mid 1930's. He submitted himself to the preparatory study required by the Baptist Union of Victoria, which, at that time, was responsible for training prospective Tasmanian ministers. He commenced pastoral ministry in 1937 in the Turriff district, in the heart of Victoria's Mallee country. Prior to his commencement of formal ministerial studies in 1941 at the Baptist College of Victoria, he pastored the then outer-suburban East Ringwood Church. Following college pastorates at Kyneton and Abbotsfield, Smith was ordained on 28 November 1944. Following

his marriage to Nellie Maynard of Ulverstone in January 1945, four fruitful years at Hamilton began. In November 1948 with a young family, they moved to the Murrumbeena pastorate. After two and a half years of effective ministry, Smith accepted the appointment as the first full-time State Baptist Missionary Society deputationist, a service spanning a period of about five years and involving periodic visits to most Baptist churches around Victoria. In 1955, the family returned to Tasmania, firstly to Moonah and subsequently to pastorates at Wynyard, Perth and Longford. There followed a significant period of leadership as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Tasmania and a concluding pastorate to retirement at Somerset and Yolla in February 1978.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Keith Smith was twice called to the office of President of the B.U.T. Since the Assembly of 1956 he served the Union Council for thirty years. He was on the Missionary Department since 1955, and the Pastoral Committee almost as long. He served the Home Mission Department as its Superintendent and the Department of Christian Education as its Chairman. Golden Valley camp site and Karingal Aged Care Home have known his committed support from the time of their inception, and he has been a constant member and supporter of the Ministers Fraternal, serving it in various capacities. He has long represented Tasmania on the Baptist Union of Australia and its Boards. He was President of the Baptist Union of Tasmania in 1959/1960 and again in 1967/1968. Then in 1975 they further honoured him by electing him a Life Member of Assembly. He also served for thirty-two years on the ABMS Board, seventeen years on the National Board of Christian Education, and many years on the

Smith's sister (and Ivan Jordan's mother), Lucy May Jordan, died on 22 May 2007. Lucy was born on 16 December 1915, another of the seven children of Ivy and Rhonda Smith. Both Lucy and Keith grew up sharing in the usual daily events of family life on a dairy farm which meant milking by hand. In later years she recalled an aspect of her many childhood visits to "Sea View". She explained,

Although there were many visitors to Sea View, it was the custom that at 9 pm grandfather announced, 'Well, mother, I think it's about time you read, isn't it?', and to the guests, whether Christian or non-Christian, he explained, 'We're having our Bible reading now but if you prefer to go to your room that's all right with us. But you're quite welcome to stay.' Gran would read. Then she'd pray.⁹⁹

Council of the Baptist Union of Australia. In his closing years he was chaplain at the Karingal Home for the aged. "Looking back thoughtfully over the years," wrote Keith in 1988, "it is increasingly clear that much of the credit for any significant achievements must be shared by supportive and cooperative church officers and other people; by my wife, for dedicated care of family, for an open home (especially for young people), and for caring support of people with particular needs, and to God for His guiding hand through varied areas of service, and the personally enriching experiences that were never thought likely or even possible at the beginning of the journey." Sharing the Christian Gospel in a down-to-earth way was the passion of Keith's life. He did it diligently, throughout the long years, with young and old alike. "Let me commend my Saviour to you," are words that describe his keen, yet respectful, desire to bear witness to Jesus Christ in whatever way he could. Smith died on 4 December 1998.

⁹⁹ Hemsley, *Around the Country Circuits*, p. 160.

Lucy and Keith, with their brothers, loved to sing, and Lucy fondly remembered that sometimes on wet days their father would spend time teaching his children songs. Lucy inherited much of her father's easy-going and caring personality. Later Lucy's Auntie Teresa Amy (later Amy Jordan) taught her to play the organ and many years after she followed Amy as the organist for the Yolla Church. Lucy too attended the Yolla district school, walking the two miles to school across the paddocks through the logs and bracken fern. She left school at age of fourteen and helped at home. The family was actively involved in the Yolla Church. Consequently church was very much part of life and she made her personal commitment to faith on the 28 July 1930 and was baptised and received into membership, during John English's pastorate.

Lucy met David (Dave) Benjamin Ledgitt Jordan when he came into the district as a farm labourer and they were married in Bumie on 14 April 1934. That year Dave and Lucy moved to the western district of Victoria where Dave worked on various farms. In 1935 they returned to Tasmania and settled at Natone where Dave's family lived. The family moved to Yolla in 1940 and lived in a farm cottage on Mount Myrtle. Later Dave purchased a small acreage and began a small farm of his own, at the same time working for other farmers. In 1951 the family moved to "Seymour", East Yolla, where Dave share-farmed until chronic foot trouble forced him to give up farm work. In

1953 the family moved back to Yolla and Dave found employment. Over the years Lucy virtually never missed church meetings. In addition to being organist for many years, she was also a deacon for nineteen years and church treasurer for fifteen years. Dave was also a deacon and church secretary for many years. Lucy served on the Tasmanian Baptist Missionary Committee. She has regularly supported and corresponded with various missionaries in many countries around the globe. When she died, Lucy had twenty grandchildren and fifty-three great grandchildren.¹⁰⁰

In January 2000 the Yolla church hosted the visit of a number of aborigines from Lajamanu who were present for the National Baptist Convention in Hobart. The visitors shared in church services.

Church members who served as missionaries or pastoral couples included the family of Keith Richardson of Henrietta. They were strongly involved in the Baptist Church. Merv Richardson was Sunday school Superintendent for many years and his son, Keith, was strongly involved in Sunday school and youth work before serving for many years with the Roelands Mission in Western Australia helping young Aboriginal people.

The Somerset-Yolla churches welcomed Raymond John Gollan and his wife Robyn and their children on 19 February 1978 from Victor Harbor in South Australia. John was born into a farming family in Kyabram, Victoria on the 9 August 1949 to Christian

parents, George Allan and Catherine Hope Gollan. The family moved from one area to another in Northern Victoria and Southern New South Wales as his father purchased farms, each larger than the previous one. John attended Primary and Secondary School, the latter to grade nine and expected that he would become a farmer just like his father, grandfather, great, and great-great grandfather before him. As there were no Baptist churches in the areas where they lived, the family attended local Methodist churches and in his teenager years the Methodist Youth Fellowship played an important part in his Christian upbringing. He was converted at the Finley Methodist church in 1959 when a converted alcoholic named Snowy Royal preached the gospel. Not long after he left school, his father was tragically killed and the farm was sold. With the family moving to Sydney, John commenced work in the Rural Bank of New South Wales and went to night school to complete an HSC. Following National Service, he married Robyn Joy Wellings on 5 September 1970. The call to Christian ministry was confirmed as he accepted opportunities to preach in the local Methodist circuit. With a young child they moved to South Australia to commence Melbourne College of Divinity studies at the Adelaide Bible Institute. At the end of his second year he accepted a call as student pastor of the Victor Harbour Baptist Church and continued as pastor for three years after graduation. An article in the evangelical newspaper, *New Life*, challenged him to

¹⁰⁰ Details supplied by Ivan Jordan in 2007.

consider ministry in Tasmania and the Somerset-Yolla churches extended a call. Gollan writes of his time there:

From our perspective, these were years of happy service and ministry. The two churches were quite different in some ways and yet similar in regard to what we came to understand was typical Tasmanian generosity and hospitality. Outreach through Kids' Club programmes in both churches, camping at Araluen for the churches and youth, and all of the usual activities associated with church life. The Yolla Church was a rural community church with dairy farmers and retired folk comprising most of the congregation. One of the highlights at Yolla was the monthly Sunday evening family nights when folk from the other churches would gather with our own folk and, with a well lit fire in the fireplace, would enjoy an evening of fellowship and teaching. I still tell folk of those special jelly cakes Millie Dobson made each month for that meeting. Another highlight was the weekly Bible study and prayer nights when folk from the Baptist Church and the Mt Hicks Brethren Assembly would gather and share a time of fellowship, prayer and the study of God's Word. Basil Richardson and I would travel out together each week for these special times of fellowship. The annual ANZAC Day dawn service was a rather chilly introduction to Yolla and the overcoat

given to me by Lucy Jordan that first April 25th was worn for many years.

During the Gollan years the Somerset church embarked upon a rather significant ministry through the commencement of a Christian Church-based School called the Somerset Baptist Christian School in 1981. Towards the end of 1987 the Gollans were farewelled to the Gymea Peoples' Church in Sydney, NSW.¹⁰¹

RICHARD AUSTEN, ROD MORSE & IVAN JORDAN

At the beginning of 1987 Tasmanian Baptist layman Richard Henry Austen, former President of the Baptist Union of Tasmania, accepted the pastorate on a part-time basis while still working at TAFE. Austen was born on the 13 February 1930, the fifth child of George William and Elsie Rebecca Ella May Austen. Richard attended the East Launceston State School and the Launceston Junior Technical School. At the Senior Technical College he completed a course in Electrical Engineering. Austen made his commitment to Christ as a teenager. In his late teens and early twenties he undertook lay preaching at churches around Launceston. He married Judy Drinkwater in 1951. The family worshipped at Elphin Road Baptist Church until they moved to Newstead Baptist where

¹⁰¹ After four years at the Gymea Peoples Church, the Gollans moved to Brisbane to take up a position with Accelerated Christian Education as the first Principal of the Australian Christian Academy. In June 2001 he accepted a call to the Bribie Island Baptist Church, a holiday and retirement community to the north of Brisbane where they still reside and minister to a church family of about 240 people.

Austen played a leading role. During his time as President of the Baptist Union of Tasmania, he joined the Board of Karingal Home for the Aged. On their move to Burnie to take up the position with the Burnie TAFE, he attended the Burnie Baptist church. For two years during his time at Yolla, Austen served as a chaplain with Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission. The Yolla church attendance grew from an average of fifteen to twenty to sixty people during his six years there. In 1988 there were about thirty children attending the Sunday school, most of them coming from outlying farms. Repainting of the church and Sunday school hall internally and externally took place in 1988 leaving the external walls gleaming white with gold trim. New carpet was laid. Austen's position as pastor ceased with the coming of Rod Morse, but Austen stayed in membership and served as an elder.¹⁰²

In February 1993 Rod Morse was appointed pastor part-time and was inducted on 3 February. He became full-time two years later. Morse was born in Devonport in January 1949 but soon the family moved to Preolenna (south of Wynyard) where his father took up farming. Rod was converted when he was nine under King Harris' ministry and baptised when he was fifteen. Leaving school he worked with his father before being employed as a postman in Burnie. Two years in Queensland followed

where he worked at a tyre firm at Longreach for twelve months before running a satellite business. In Queensland he saw mission and pastoral work first hand, since his Uncle was the founder of Outback Aerial Mission. He secured his private pilot's licence and bought his own light aircraft and flew it back to Tasmania when he returned. He married Maureen in 1974 and they bought a property at Preolenna for dairy farming. Morse served the local Brethren Church for many years as a Sunday school teacher and Superintendent and as an elder, youth worker and preacher. He ministered at youth camps and served with Gideons. After nine years on the farm, he worked full-time with the Christian-based FM radio station in Wynyard. For some years the family was involved with the Wynyard Bible Chapel. Then the call to Yolla arrived.

As the Yolla Methodist church moved towards its century in 1993, its members were encouraged to think carefully about its future directions. Members were asked to consider the implications of having combined services with other churches on a permanent basis. Some were in favour while others opposed this option. It was decided to approach the Baptists to ask if they were interested in the proposal. Representatives of both churches met to exchange ideas about the benefits or otherwise of forming a combined community church with a full-time ministry in the district. Another point of discussion was that the Uniting Church people would wish to retain their affiliation with their own church and likewise the

¹⁰² In 1996 Austen and his wife Judy moved to Devonport and joined Devonport Baptist church. Richard Austen died on 16 February 2009.

Baptists with the Baptist Union. After much discussion the Baptists advised in January 1994 that they did not wish to proceed with the proposal.¹⁰³

By the end of 1994 the Baptist congregation had so grown that seating had to be added to the sanctuary. "Pub Teas" at the local Yolla Tavern began and were aimed at interacting with local people, taking the form of a meal and a guest speaker. 1996 the church was involved in the Bill Newman Crusade. In 1999 the church valued the input of Mobile Mission Maintenance in carrying out alterations to the building. Morse took leave for six months as his health began to deteriorate. The following year he moved to live in Somerset hoping the coastal climate would benefit his health. Arnold Oakley Jordan died on 16 July 2002 at ninety years of age. He was born at Forth and grew up at Upper Natone where he attended a small one-room school there. He left school when he was fourteen (he never attended High School) and worked in the bush and on farms. At the age of twenty he moved to Yolla where he was converted under the ministry of the Rev. John English. It was here that he met and married Amy Smith, in 1936. Although they had no children of their own, they were very committed to young people. In 1942, after the fall of Singapore, Arnold, a medical orderly was captured; and so began his trials on the Burma Railway. Forty years

later, Arnold relived something of those nightmarish three and a half years as prisoner of war through the pages of his published book, "Tenko on the River Kwai". After his return from the War, Arnold continued farming and, for a time worked with Websters in Burnie. He studied for a Diploma in Theology (L.Th) with the Melbourne School of Divinity and for a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) through London University. He pastored the former Kings Meadows Baptist Church, his first pastorate and its first pastor, and the Baptist Church at Summerhill. He worked in the Baptist Book Store in Launceston and taught New Testament Greek to college students. Amy died in July 1991. Arnold married Merle Duggan during the following year. Arnold was the uncle of Ivan.

In 2004 Ivan and Verl Jordan returned from Central Australia after thirty-one years and commenced in leadership at Yolla in February the following year, sharing leadership with Morse on a sixty/fifty basis.¹⁰⁴

Both Ivan and Verl were born and grew up in Yolla where they attended the Methodist and Baptist Churches with their respective Sunday schools and the United Christian Endeavour Society. In 1950 Verl (nee Murfett) gained the top marks in the year's Sunday school examinations with a mark of 93 and two years later 95.5 marks. In response to a message by the Rev. Ron

¹⁰³ Margaret Regus, *Seasons of Faith, a History of the Wesleyan, Methodist and Uniting Church in Yolla 1896-1996*, pp. 58f.

¹⁰⁴ In 2005 Morse relinquished his pastoral position but continues to be involved in the church today.

McLean at a Baptist Harvest Festival service in 1962 they were challenged to become better equipped for Christian ministry, and they entered the Melbourne Bible Institute where they each completed the two year diploma course and Ivan the third year LTh. Ivan continued studies as a ministerial candidate at the NSW Baptist Theological College and ministered at the Black Heath Baptist Church in the Blue Mountains. On their return to Tasmania, Ivan pastored the George Town Baptist Church for three years and was ordained on 5 August 1972. Their time at Lajamanu and Yuendumu followed.¹⁰⁵

In 2000 the Yolla church celebrated the 90th anniversary of its building with a special service on Sunday 27 August. The celebration service, which 130 people attended, was followed by a luncheon in the Memorial Hall. At the worship service addresses were delivered by the Rev. Don Cameron, the Rev. Ivan Jordan, and the

¹⁰⁵ While at Lajamanu in 1975 Ivan was loaned a paper discussing the use of aboriginal art forms in teaching Bible stories. The aborigines agreed that it had merit. Today they are being encouraged to express the Christian faith through their own cultural forms. In consequence, and through the activities of the people themselves, gospel stories have been depicted on shields, Christian corroborees have been developed and law songs - doctrinal statements in song - have been composed and sung at aboriginal gatherings. Most baptisms have resulted from this. By 1980 the church membership at the four centres where Baptists were working with aborigines, including Lajamanu, had risen to 272. The membership figures would have represented a significant proportion of the total population in each of the communities, much higher than in most non-indigenous Australian communities.

Rev. Ted Nibbs, Union President. The oldest and longest attending member was Lucy Jordan. By now the church was enjoying the regular attendance of people from towns as far away as Ridgley in the East to Boat Harbour in the West and everywhere in between. It was now a lively, fun loving, family oriented church with people involved in various ministries including Kids' Church, youth group, "Chat 'n' Choose", religious education, Christian Option, pub teas, indoor cricket, bowling, Baptist Women's Fellowship and home study and prayer groups. Currently the average attendance is between fifty and seventy on Sunday mornings. In the last fifteen years there have been over thirty baptisms; many of the people became Christians while attending the church. More than sixty people have been received into membership. In the 2006 Census, Yolla and surrounding district, was listed as having a population of 196.

CONCLUSION

The Yolla Baptist church did not commence as did a number of other Baptist and non-Baptist churches in the rural north-west: because of a visiting evangelist or because of the decision made by the hierarchal denominational leaders in either the two main population centres of Launceston or Hobart. It began and only began when an influential and reasonably sized Baptist family moved into the area and offered the use of its living room for the conducting of church services. John David Williams, who

had strong Baptist connections from his earliest years, later in life recalled rightly that the North West at the time of his youth was not important for Baptists.¹⁰⁶ But it must be said that at that point the Baptist State leadership followed with interest its development and made limited resources and personnel available as the need required.

Since the first settlers at Camp Creek (Yolla's first name,¹⁰⁷) arrived in 1888, it was too late for the early pioneer Methodist or Brethren who had as late as the 1870s deliberately entered Tasmanian settlements while they were still in the pioneer stage. The first settlers, James (J.C.) and Annie Diprose, who had arrived in 1888, opened their home for the first Methodist services in the settlement. That religious services were held in a home or schoolroom is usually seen as the earliest phase of religious settlement according to Anne Killalea in her article, "Frontier Religion in Tasmania".¹⁰⁸ The typical venue for worship following the residential home was probably a school room, which was occupied on successive Sundays of the month by different

¹⁰⁶ From interview with the author in April 1988.

¹⁰⁷ Yolla was first known as Camp Creek but the name change took place in 1897. The name Yolla is the Aboriginal word for "mutton bird".

¹⁰⁸ Anne Killalea, *Frontier Religion in Tasmania: Explaining the Success of the Christian Brethren in the 1870s* (Tasmanian Historical Studies Vol.5.2, 1997). For the stories of the Diprose families, see Elizabeth Parkes and Jean Doggett, *Thomas Diprose and Elizabeth Children Diprose of Kent and Van Diemen's Land: Volumes 1 and 2* (Lindisfarne, Tas. 2008).

denominations, but these venues in fact served the same congregation. In many settlements the schoolroom situation was followed by the erection of a non-denominational 'Union Chapel' where everyone worshipped together, but again, this never occurred in Yolla although the "Union Chapel" atmosphere existed there once the Baptists arrived. For most of the century the relationship between the Methodists and Baptists (and Brethren) at Yolla has been very good and cooperative.¹⁰⁹ According to Killalea, as years passed, small church buildings would begin to rise almost side by side and the attendees of the "Union Chapel" would no longer worship together. This was the final stage of religious settlement.

This history of the Yolla Baptist church has revealed that the Methodists were the first in the town; the Baptists were next,¹¹⁰ followed by the Roman Catholics (1927) and finally the Open Brethren. One could say, with the coming of the Baptists, the pioneer period was over.

This history of the Yolla Baptist church confirms the premise that small-membership churches value their past, treasuring memories and associations. For most of its life special events at weekends have been held to mark each decade's progress. It has

¹⁰⁹ This is the considered view the Rev. Ivan Jordan and backed up by the long existence of the United Christian Endeavour Society in the town.

¹¹⁰ The Methodists erected a chapel at Yolla in 1896 and a Methodist missionary began there in 1912. The Methodist chapel was enlarged in 1922.

been said that the smaller church can survive with its attention to the past while the larger church cannot.

This history also shows that the Yolla church can rightly boast of having more pastors in its hundred years than any other Baptist church in Tasmania. It was a training ground for Home Mission Pastors. While the city church of Hobart has had twelve pastors in its first century, the Yolla church “suffered” thirty-eight. The reason for Yolla being chosen as a training ground for Home Missioners is not clear but to its credit this rural congregation was willing to take on this onerous task. Its first home missioners would have known little more than what they had learned at their own home churches, notably from the men who were ministering there. From 1935 a change took place in respect to Home Mission men. Now a strong emphasis was given to having “college trained men”. There was the prevalent view that because they were untrained, Home Missioners were average characters who were not going to change the world, in fact would just pass on and be gone. In short they were the “left-overs” even if they were good pastors. Further, after a twelve months’ pastorate, it was believed that the congregation would hear the Home Missioner’s sermons all over again.¹¹¹ Even

so, as Rev. Donovan Mitchell, who pastored the Hobart Tabernacle from 1923 to 1927, said, “The Baptist Home Mission achievement will always be the result of heroic sacrifice.” This history of the Home Mission Yolla church illustrates this statement.

Finally when one considers the number who came from the Yolla church itself to work either in part-time or full-time ministry, it must be said that this is a church that has exercised an influence out of all proportion to its size. For this reason alone, Tasmanian Baptists cannot dispense easily with our smaller or rural churches. They deserve the careful attention that we give to our larger churches which serve in the more heavily populated centres.

¹¹¹ From interview by the author with John David Williams in April 1988. Williams was speaking of William Heaven and Robert Steel. But the claim that you would hear the same sermons again applied to some who were ordained. One such person warned the Launceston Memorial Church diaconate of this in the 1950s when the time for

renewing his call arose. Fortunately for that church he transferred to Victoria.

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