Booklet

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DESCENDANTS OF THE DREAMTIME

THE ADVENTIST MISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

By Milton Hook

Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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He spent three years as a mission director in Papua New Guinea. His teaching years include primary, secondary and college level experience, especially in Bible subjects, in Australia, New Zealand and America. He is an ordained minister, married and the father of two sons.

He would welcome any information which may enhance the content of this series.

The origins of the Australian aborigines are clouded in what they themselves call the Dreamtime. In times past their folklore was preserved only in the form of paintings. They have kept no written records. Stories of their ancestors were only told and retold from generation to generation at corroborees and around the evening fires. They were basically illiterate. This is one reason why it has been very difficult to convert them to Christianity. The reading of Scripture or a religious tract, indeed, the very act of reading was foreign to their culture. Seventh-day Adventist's traditional methods of evangelism, such as the distribution of literature, could not be used among the aborigines.

There were other problems in addition to illiteracy. A history of skirmishes between aborigines and white colonials created a legacy of mutual distrust. Also, the Australian aborigines were semi-nomadic and therefore Christians found it difficult to evangelise them over an extended period.

In the 1830's English humanitarians established the Australian Aborigines Protection Society because of reports about mistreatment and murders of aborigines by outback squatters. Government investigations at the same time prompted the appointment of Protectors to guarantee basic human rights for the aborigines. The scheme was largely ineffective. Later, areas were set aside as reserves for aboriginal settlements. However, these were often too small. The aborigines needed vast areas for game hunting purposes. Their plight was worsened because their bush skills were incompatible with employment in white society, despite

their natural intelligence. Those aborigines who lived in the settlements therefore came to rely on government and mission handouts. Flour, sugar, and tea became unhealthy substitutes for their bush tucker. The settlers' alcohol and tobacco, when introduced to the aborigines, drained the vitality from their ancient society which was renowned for its stamina and resourcefulness.

By the 1880's, when Seventh-day Adventist missionaries arrived in Australia, the aborigines had died out in Tasmania, and most mainland aborigines had retreated to the outback. At first the missionaries saw little of the native Australians because they confined their activities to the cities. It took approximately twenty-five years before the Adventist message was officially taken to the aborigines.

In the meantime there appeared to be only a few isolated examples of an Adventist awareness of the aborigines and a responsibility to improve their condition, Pastor William Baker, an American Adventist missionary, reported his 1892 visit to the Cumeroogunga Mission east of Echuca, Victoria. In the columns of the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times" he asked for clothing to be donated even though the enterprise was conducted by a different mission group.

During the 1897 Australasian Union Conference Session a committee was appointed to consider the evangelization of the Australian aborigines and Pacific Island races. This committee presented a report at the next Session in 1899. From this arose the resolution to appoint a group of seven members to organize mission work among the dark-skinned races, including the Australian aborigines. The appointed committee was composed of eight Americans, including Baker, and one New Zealander. Pastor Arthur Daniells was chairman. This committee did not meet frequently. Initially they decided to concentrate on Polynesian endeavours rather than those nearer to home.

Abraham Davis, an Adventist lay preacher in Victoria, published two articles on the aborigines in 1901. Appearing in "The Home

Missionary", these were mainly for American readership. They bore some typical prejudices but were token evidence of some sense of duty. He concluded by saying, "We are still deeply under obligations to these poor outcast people". Pastor George Tenney, in his 1904 book, "Travels by Land and Sea", also spoke sympathetically of "the poor natives".

In 1908 Henry Cooper felt compelled to share his beliefs with aborigines at the Barambah Settlement not far from Murgon, Queensland. Barambah was an aboriginal name meaning "where the wind comes from". The enterprise was a former Methodist Mission station which they abandoned for lack of results and had handed over to the government.

Cooper and his wife, Annie, had recently transferred north to Murgon, Queensland, from New South Wales. There were approximately four hundred aborigines at the settlement with a government appointed protector, Mr Lipscombe, in charge. Cooper obtained permission from Lipscombe to hold Sunday services. He held meetings for the juniors followed by Bible lessons for the adults, his first being about the image in Daniel 2. It is difficult to grasp what the listeners may have understood without any concept of ancient world history. The President of the Queensland Conference, Pastor Tom Craddock, visited soon after and spoke to the assembled aborigines too. Cooper's meetings lapsed to occasional ones but paved the way for more substantial work.

When Ruth Cozens arrived at Murgon in 1910 to begin a little church school for the Adventist members she soon developed a regular Sabbath, School at Barambah. Up to one hundred children and twenty adults attended.

The interest which Cooper and Cozens demonstrated drew praise from government officials as well as the attention of church administrators. It is significant that Pastor John Fulton had just begun as President of the Australasian Union conference. He was one who had a special interest in missions, having served in Fiji.

Furthermore, the Vice-president of the Queensland Conference at the time was Pastor Benjamin Cady, another former missionary in the Pacific.

At the time of the Brisbane camp meeting in August 1911 Fulton, Cooper, and others met with Richard Howard, government Chief Protector of the Aboriginals. The outcome of this meeting was that Seventh-day Adventists were allowed to have a more active role at Barambah. Phillip and Isabella Rudge were appointed by the Australasian Union Conference to work in conjunction with Lipscombe, serving as the Christian leaders for the settlement. They arrived at Murgon in November 1911. The Sabbath School offerings throughout Australasia during the first quarter of 1912 were allocated to pay Rudge's wages.

The government did not allow Rudge to live at the settlement. Instead, he resided at Murgon and travelled to and from the settlement about three days a week, the remainder of his time being occupied with the Murgon church. Twice a week he would conduct religious instruction in the settlement school. A Bible class was also held for about twelve of the adult aboriginal women. At least two of these could read and write simple English and had been instructed in the elements of Christianity at a mission station near Cairns. Rudge also visited for Sunday services. In all his witnessing he had to be careful not to teach Seventh-day Adventist standards and doctrines such as the Saturday Sabbath. Hymn singing proved popular so Rudge taught the basic gospel with songs.

On one occasion Rudge and the Murgon church members organised a picnic for the aborigines. A good supply of bread buns were taken and ginger beer flowed freely. The gala day was an outstanding success, especially with the children.

Fulton visited in November 1912. An approach had already been made to Howard exploring possibilities for operating an independent Seventh-day Adventist mission for aborigines. Such

an enterprise would allow the teaching of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines in addition to discouraging gambling and the use of tobacco among the aborigines.

Howard liked the idea of a separate venture. On the advice of the Commissioner for Lands, Rudge, together with the new Vice-president of the Queensland Conference, James Branford, embarked on a search for a suitable site early in 1913. Approximately 1600 hectares north of Kuranda near Cairns, Queensland, had been reserved by the government. After inspection, application was made in March for this portion. Eventually the government agreed to give the land for mission purposes. The government reserved the right to send aborigines to the mission and gave Rudge the opportunity to chose four aboriginal adults from Barambah to help pioneer the new endeavour. The government also stipulated that $2000 be spent by the church developing the property during the first year. It was also to work towards a self-supporting status, and a coupon system was to be introduced for work done on the property by the aborigines in exchange for food.

The Rudges made their last visit to Barambah on Friday, August 1, 1913, amid a demonstrative crowd of aboriginal children and some of the parents. Murgon church members agreed to continue the Sunday School at the settlement.

In late August 1913 Branford, the Rudges and son Victor, as well as a twenty-nine-year-old aboriginal women named Koranang or Dora qook, all took ship for Cairns. Koranang had shown a keen interest in the women's Bible 0lass at Barambah and was acquainted with the aboriginal language near Kuranda. Tents for temporary shelter, a spring dray, as well as farming and building tools were taken north with this advance contingent. The women stayed at Kuranda while the men went on ahead to the property with all their equipment and provisions on the dray.

The pioneers called the property Monamona- the aboriginal name for the creek bordering the property which meant "crooked" or "winding". Its European name, Flaggy Creek, also described its wavy or serpentine course to the Barron River. The area was covered with timber and scrub, some of which had to be cleared for homes and gardens.

Rudge and Branford pitched their tents in the bush. In order to utilize the good water supply from the creek they opted to settle in the south-east corner of the property. They began to clear the area to build a four-roomed cottage high off the ground for the two families. Underneath would be used as their kitchen and church. By November it was completed to the stage where they could live in it. Branford's wife, Rose, was about to leave Brisbane and move into Monamona when one of their daughters, Ruth, was suddenly stricken with typhoid fever and died. Nevertheless, soon after, Rose joined her husband and helped to pioneer the property.

During the hot summer a few hectares were planted with corn and sweet potatoes. Later, peanuts and mangoes were tried. Church members throughout Australia were asked to save their peach stones and send them to Monamona because it was planned to grow about six hundred grafted peach trees. Snakes were prevalent in the area and the men reported killing a boa constrictor measuring over four metres long. Others grew to twice that length. Two small homes were built to accommodate some of the aborigines who began to settle there too. Two aboriginal couples, Fred and Nellie Murray and Charlie and Katie Lawrence, transferred from Barambah and tried to gain the confidence of local aborigines. They had little success. In the early years numbers increased on ly because the police rounded u p aborigines and forced them to relocate at Monamona. Many of these individuals were part-Chinese.

In the opening months of 1914 Maitland and Miriam Roy moved from Cooranbong to help at Monamona. Another four-roomed cottage was eventually built for them, the weather boards rough

split and the frame and floor made from pit-sawn timber felled on the property. Miriam began teaching seven aboriginal children in the kitchen under the house during the afternoons. It was customary for the mothers to sit in with their children and in this way they too learned something. After twelve months numbers in the school rose to about thirty and Branford's youngest daughter, Pearl, assisted with the teaching.

Church members in the south sent quantities of clothes for the aborigines. The young people of the Queensland Conference gathered $60 for a strong four-wheel buckboard so that supplies could be hauled safely across the many creeks and rugged terrain from Oaklands railway siding (later renamed Oak Forest). Torrential rains would often cause the creeks to overflow and isolate the property. At times horses and men had to swim the rivers to get supplies. Eventually many substantial bridges were constructed and the government built a proper road into the settlement.

In mid-1914 Rudge wrote of his work among the aborigines, saying, "I find after nearly three years of labour among them that l am only beginning really to understand the depths to which these people have sunk into ignorance and superstition". Most of the aborigines sent by the government to the mission were opium addicts and the missionaries struggled to wean these people from their vices. They had to be monitored day and night. A few were dismissed because they persisted in bringing opium into the settlement. Branford also frowned on the traditional dancing at corroborees as the aboriginals recounted their folklore. He was unsuccessful in stopping these events. Friction also developed over burial practices, Branford urging a quick Christian burial. The aboriginals preferred their traditional lengthy ritual and mourning for weeks with the clap-sticks (kokolo) as they rehearsed the life story of the loved one. Branford sounded a note of discouragement when he wrote, "The prospect of reaching these people with the message does not appear to be very hopeful, as they know so little about God". Perhaps part of Branford's pessimism was due to the

fact that one in every five of the aboriginal adults chose to leave in the first twelve months of operation, including their right-hand helper, Dora Cook. The children and youth were seen as better prospects for conversion and assimilation into western culture.

Rudge had to abandon his work at Monamona later in 1914 and move south to a cooler climate for his wife's health. They settled at Kempsey in New South Wales and began mission work among the aborigines in the Macleay River area. The Branfords and Roys continued on at Monamona. More land was cleared and crops planted in order to feed the increasing number of aborigines at the settlement. By the end of 1914 additional buildings included a school room, a dining room for all which doubled as a church, and thirteen small cottages for the aborigines. The aboriginal population numbered seventy-two at that time and only some could be accommodated in these cottages, the remainder living in bush gunyahs. The large tract was fenced, enabling twenty-five head of cattle and six horses to be grazed. During the first twelve months $2400 were spent on buildings, cattle, and equipment.

Two infants were born on the mission station in 1914, but one of the mothers died five days after giving birth. Her little son survived only three months. Another six-month-old infant died of whooping cough. These circumstances stressed the need for some medical assistance to be on hand at the settlement. The nearest doctor was fifty-eight kilometres away. For this reason newly-weds Reuben and May Totenhofer left their nursing at the Sydney Sanitarium to pay special attention to the health of the aborigines. They also found themselves employed in the routine of farming and cooking. They shared Branford's home until one for themselves was built.

Together the missionaries tried to change some of the thinking and habits of the aborigines. Branford wrote, "These people do not like work, but they will work if a white man works with them, and directs them". His judgement, of course, could also be applied to many white workers. Miriam Roy reported that most of her pupils were quite unruly at first. The discipline of book learning was foreign to

the youngsters. Traditionally they picked up information from their tribal members and daily experience in the bush. One custom was to eat a large meal and then sleep. The missionaries had difficulty altering this habit to three smaller meals at the call of a bell. Children would often be found smoking and this sometimes developed into the early use of hardened drugs such as opium. Clay eating was also discouraged. Traditionally, folk medicine for the treatment of diarhoea prescribed the swallowing of little balls of absorbent clay found in the area. There was always the danger, of course, of overdosing and causing a bowel obstruction. One three-year-old boy died at Monamona in 1915 after this treatment, Their terror of spirits and their superstitions surrounding death led them to burn down any home in which an aboriginal died. This practice had to be forbidden with respect to the mission huts.

The government always required the mission to ensure the aborigines had food, clothing, and shelter. None of these needs were met from church conference funds. At first the mission was operated strictly on a self-supporting basis. Only from 1915 onwards did the government give cash grants, beginning with $600 annually. (This increased to $1,000 by 1940 and over $30,000 dollars by 1960). Clothing and lengths of cloth were sent by church members. The women-folk at Monamona made many garments on donated sewing machines. The mission gardens of sweet potatoes, tapioca, bananas, pineapples, peanuts, corn, pumpkins and other vegetables provided for an average of one hundred and fifty people. Adult aborigines supplemented their diet with a little hunting and fishing. Pit-sawn timber on the property gradually provided more huts. An eight-by-seven metre girls dormitory was' constructed alongside Branford's home. A home for Totenhofers was also built and under this structure the boys lived until their dormitory was constructed in 1919. May Totenhofer continued as resident nurse for the inevitable ills -stomach upsets, earaches, influenza, whooping cough and measles epidemics, and the occasional accident. The menfolk were occupied almost entirely with the strenuous physical work.

Homes for the aborigines could not be built fast enough. Many remained camped in gunyahs close by. The Muluridji tribe located to the west of the little settlement. The Djabugay and Bulway tribes congregated north of the buildings. The food coupon system in payment for work was never instituted. Instead, the settlement operated basically as a family community. No cash circulated in the early years. They worked and came to the dining room for food. Some adults, as well as the youngsters who had misbehaved or rejected mission ideals, took their food back to their camp to eat. All children in the school system ate in the dining room. Reluctantly, by government order, Branford was also obliged to hand out tobacco to the adult workers. Not until the Second World War years were there any complaints about meagre meals. The soil produced good crops but over the years became impoverished. Later, additional land was obtained nearby for garden purposes. Cereal coffee was always provided on the table. It was made by boiling bran and treacle together in old kerosene tins. Butter was made by shaking m ilk in used treacle cans.

Those in the school system were required to follow a strict discipline of work and study. The rising bell rang at 6.00a.m. and the dormitories were then unlocked. Some milked the cows while others prepared breakfast. The morning was spent working on the farm. Lunch was taken at noon, followed by school lessons lasting from one to three in the afternoon. (These hours were extended later). More work preceded the evening meal at 5.00p.m. The dormitory doors were locked again at 6.00p.m. and all lights were extinguished by 9.00p.m.

The school children were allowed free time on Friday afternoon to socialise with their relatives camped nearby. Schooling terminated for those about fifteen years of age and then they engaged in full-time work until marriage. At that time they transferred from dormitory life and set up home in one of the five-by-three metre wooden huts. Living conditions were austere and somewhat cramped, but in retrospect the aborigines thought of those days as happy ones.

The structure of their communal life effectively separated the aboriginal and European cultures. Those who remained in the camps continued to follow the aboriginal lifestyle. On the other hand the children brought into the school system were taught western ways. Initiation ceremonies for the boys lapsed. Traditional cooking was usually not learned by the girls until they married. The newways were, in reality, primitive by city standards. Once married, the women did their cooking on an open fire outside their little wooden home. There was no heating inside the huts. Therefore, on cold nights most would sleep outside by an open fire. Their crude furniture inside was constructed from timber scraps. Mattresses were nothing more than piles of grass and banana leaves.

At first the aborigines did not attend any religious meetings. They would cast a curious eye and then wander off again. For that reason Branford began conducting short worship services in the dining room after breakfast and supper. They came readily to meals, so Branford took advantage of the captive audience and taught them verses and hymns before they left the tables.

Gradually, the aborigines became familiar with such worship habits and gained confidence to attend Sabbath services. Their fondness for singing prompted Branford to conduct a lengthy sing-a-long as a regular feature every Sabbath afternoon. In Sabbath School the ladies taught the aboriginal women and children simple Bible biographies. Maitland Roy held a class for about twenty aboriginal men, teaching them from the book "Early Writings" - an experience which no doubt mystified them because of its foreign history. Nevertheless, at the end of 1915 Branford commented, "From a discontented roving lot of morphia fiends, they have developed into a very contented class of people".

The Roys left in the summer and the New Year of 1916 saw the coming of George and Grace Mitchell to Monamona. Grace took over the little school of approximately thirty pupils and was assisted by Pearl Branford. They only taught in the afternoons and concentrated on the elementary subjects such as Bible stories,

reading, writing, spelling and simple arithmetic.

Pastor Harold Piper visited the mission in July 1916. On Friday afternoon, July 21, he baptised five part-aboriginals in Flaggy Creek. This first baptismal group at Monamona included nineteen-year-old Molly Noble and four of the younger schoolgirls - Lucy Baker, Minnie Smith, Mary Douglas, and Dinah Fulton. On the following day the Monamona mission church was officially organised with twelve members. George Noble, Molly's part-aboriginal husband, was baptised by Branford on December 16 after a victorious struggle with the tobacco habit.

During 1917 the year's work advanced uninterrupted. A poultry run was started. The dairy herd and one hundred head of cattle continued to flourish. One bullock was generally slaughtered each Monday as meat for the aboriginals. Totenhofer and Mitchell worked full-time with the two bullock teams hauling oak, hickory, and kauri pine logs to the railway siding at Oaklands.

Each team was made up of twenty-six bullocks and required skilful handling. The dairy, poultry, and vegetable garden supplied their daily food. But it was the logging which brought a cash flow for further expansion despite the fact that the government took royalties on all the timber sold.

At that time approximately half of the 180 aborigines were still living in crude gunyahs. The need for many more huts became urgent. A boys dormitory, a church, a clinic, and other buildings were also required. To accomplish these ends a proper sawmill was proposed in 1918 to replace their primitive pit-sawing methods. A second-hand 28 horse power gas engine was bought and a milling plant was installed on the eastern side of the settlement. None of the men had any previous experience operating the sawmill so they had to learn by trial and error. By 1919 it was in running order and large quantities of timber were milled. Hardwood shingles were also cut for the new buildings to save buying iron for roofing. Branford estimated that each aboriginal hut cost the mission ninety

cents. That was the sum total for the nails as well as two hinges for the door. All else was made of timber and produced at their own mill.

Moreton Thorpe, with his wife Elsie, arrived in February 1918 to assist in the increasingly strenuous expansion program me. When the Mitchells left at the end of 1919 Ludwig or 'Lou' Borgas and his wife, Ruth, replaced them. Winifred Koglin also arrived in early 1920 to serve as matron and take charge of the cooking.

In Branford's 1918 report he declared the mission had become self-supporting, no doubt with the government grant taken into consideration. Seven more youth had been baptised. Separate evening classes for the aboriginal men and women were also held in an attempt to teach reading and writing. But "one by one they dropped off", he said, adding, "The adults do not like to use their minds other than in the art of hunting and fishing. With the young people, however, it is quite different". Two young girls were baptised in 1919, bringing the total number of baptisms after six years of operation to fifteen, i.e., two adults and thirteen youngsters. At that stage most aboriginals at the settlement would attend religious services voluntarily, but tobacco and the eating of snakes, lizards, and rats proved to be the big obstacles to full membership with the church.

In the early morning hours of February 3, 1920, a cyclone struck which devastated the mission. The barometer dropped to 27.7 inches (938 hectopascals) and the very worst of the tempest hit their immediate neighbourhood. The forest was left standing stark, some of it uprooted and its leaves and most branches stripped off. Crops and fences were levelled. The mission buildings flew apart or collapsed. Even the dining room walls, which were wired with guys to posts set in the ground, were destroyed. Only the girls dormitory, one aboriginal hut, and the homes of Branford and Borgas were left somewhat intact.

At the height of the cyclone, between 4.00 and 5.00a.m., about

eighty aboriginals were sheltering under Thorpe's home. Then it collapsed around them but not one was injured. The Thorpes struggled in the pitch darkness to find refuge in the lee of the hen house, still upright nearby. It too disintegrated, leaving Moreton to shield his wife and two-week-old baby against the driving wind and rain until sunrise.
Miraculously no-one was killed, but thirteen aboriginals died of exposure during the following days before clothing supplies could be brought in. Rain continued for days. Branford wrote,

> *The whole country is a bog. All the people are wet through, with little hope of getting dry .... It is no easy matter for my wife and Miss Koglin to manage to cook for one hundred and eighty people out in the open with the rain teaming down.*
>
> *You do not know how undone I fee/. I have worked so hard for six long years to make this mission what it was...but now it is all swept away in one short hour.*

The clean-up and rebuilding took many months. Gus Borgas, brother, of Lou, came to help in this mammoth task. Boxes and bags of clothing, as well as cash donations for emergency food, were sent by church members in the south. Crops had to be replanted. The sawmill roof was put back on and a good supply of timber enabled construction to proceed apace. At the end of the year Branford was confident the mission was on the road to self sufficiency again. Twelve months later he reported fifty huts for aboriginals were rebuilt, in addition to a storehouse, dormitories, four homes for Europeans and other smaller buildings. There were two hundred thriving head of cattle, sixty bullocks divided into three work teams, eleven horses, and about twelve milking cows. Work had also begun on a six-by-seventeen metre church building.

After four years service the Thorpes left at the end of 1921 and the

Mitchells returned again to fill their place.

The first European-style wedding at the settlement was when Charlie Levers and Lucy Baker were married on Sunday, August 19, 1922. The next was a double wedding two years later.

There were no baptisms in the years immediately following the cyclone. Ten candidates were baptised in the years 1923 to 1925, once again most of them being youth. It was of some concern to Branford that the pressure of farming, logging, building and gardening left little time for a positive spiritual thrust except for Sabbath services. For that reason Borgas assumed the superintendent's mantle in 1926 and Branford worked as the chaplain for the mission. At that time, too, the church building project revived after lagging for some years. Ben Worth arrived from New South Wales to erect the wooden structure which was eventually strengthened with guy wires at the sides as protection against another cyclone. Worth completed most of the building and Branford put the finishing touches to it. On Sabbath morning, March 27, 1926, a communion service was held in it and a dedication service followed in the afternoon. For some years it remained the most northerly Seventh-day Adventist church located in Australia.

The Borgas family transferred to the Solomon Islands in 1932 and Branford briefly took charge again until he retired from his beloved work among the aborigines later that year. Borgas returned in 1935. Various people assisted these men throughout the 1925 to 1935 span of years.

From the time the Rudges were forced to move south to a cooler climate in 1914 another centre of Adventist activity on behalf of aboriginals began to form in the Kempsey area, New South Wales.

Arthur Jones, the elder of the Kempsey church, took an interest in the aboriginals at the Burnt Bridge Settlement southwest of the town. Jones held Bible studies with some each week. The

aboriginals at Burnt Bridge were relatively sophisticated. Many were literate and from 1903 other Christians, especially some with Pentecostal teachings, had operated a church at the settlement. However, Jones' witness stimulated considerable interest among the aboriginals and they began to show a preference for his teachings.

At the September 1914 Australasian Union Conference Session Rudge was appointed to the Macleay River area and made Kempsey his home to capitalise on Jones' breakthrough. Rudge arrived at Kempsey on October 15 and immediately began to familiarise himself with the various places where the aboriginals were living. In addition to those at Burnt Bridge he noted a few downstream at Kinchela, sixty at
Rolland's Plains, and on the road to Armidale there were some at Green Hills and
a hundred at the N ulla Nulla Settlement about fifty kilometres from Kempsey.

Aboriginal George Davis and his wife, Maggie, who attended Kempsey church journeyed with Rudge as he first toured the settlements. Rudge held at least one meeting at Rolland's Plains but then concentrated his efforts at Burnt Bridge. Other Christian s denied him access to the church at the settlement so he held meetings nearby in the open air. Then, before the year was out, he pitched a meeting-tent in an open space near the settlement for a public crusade. Alfred Bullas arrived to assist and play the organ. About fifty aboriginais attended and the Pentecostal leaders began circulating literature against Seventh-day Adventism. Rudge seemed to adapt his preaching for his audience, making numerous altar calls and emphasising revival. Repeatedly he reported public confessions of sin, tears flowing freely, and stirrings of the Holy Spirit in sessions of prayer. This was an entirely different situation to what he had experienced at Barambah and Monamona.

After finally gaining permission to use the church on the settlement in mid-1915, and attracting a following of about twenty-five, Rudge

reported "most of them could not stand the stress and strain of the Christian life and fell away". Perhaps the aboriginals were subjected to persecution from their peers or they discovered Rudge's standards to be too rigourous. It is apparent the aboriginals in the area had grown accustomed to a Christianity characterised by extreme emotional swings. But it is uncertain what Rudge meant by "the stress and strain of the Christian life".

A small core remained interested at Burnt Bridge and Rudge slowly developed a more stable group of about thirty over the next few years. Bullas transferred in August 1915 and was replaced by Fred and Edith Parkin the following month. Over the Christmas-New Year period of 1915/16 they settled at Nulla Nulla. Once again Rudge conducted a tent mission but just as the interest was blossoming the aboriginals dispersed to harvest the summer crops throughout the area. The Parkins remained and visited from farm to farm Wherever the aboriginals were working. In this way the contact interest was kept. Tragically, Edith died prematurely of heart trouble in December 1916, leaving her sorrowing husband with three little children. Soon after Fred transferred to Victoria and the Rudges carried on alone.

The Macleay River basin and environs was a vast region for Rudge to cover. He would visit aboriginals as far north as Nambucca Heads and up the river valley to Hickey's Creek and beyond Nulla Nulla to Joegla and Fairbur. These were slow and arduous treks by phaeton. This gypsy-style ministry could not possibly establish a strong base in any settlement. The southern Californian Conference heard of his predicament in 1918 and donated a Ford motor car for him to use.

During the July 1918 Australasian Union Conference Session Rudge reported, "We have been rewarded with souls .... We have an organised body known as the Macleay River Aboriginal Church of Seventh-day Adventists, with a membership of fourteen and each member has reached the standard of character acceptable in our white churches". We are left to assume he means he had

baptised these members for there is no record of any such services.

In early 1919 Rudge definitely reported that he had baptised seven more aboriginals. Most of the membership were part-aboriginal women. The menfolk had a greater battle giving up their tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. Rudge called them an organised church but there was no central meeting place for them all. The membership was composed mainly of individuals from the widely separated Burnt Bridge and Nulla Nulla Settlements. The first time an attempt was made to congregate together was in May 1920 at special services in the little school house at Nulla Nulla.

After eight years and only twenty or less baptised members scattered over a wide area it was considered best to close the mission. Rudge worked in church endeavours elsewhere in New South Wales throughout 1923 to early 1926. When Rudge transferred, the work of visitation was taken up voluntarily by Kempsey church member Priscilla Nelson, then in her mid-fifties. She wrote in 1924,

> *Some places are difficult to reach, it being necessary to cross water by way of poles with the aid of a stick, and to walk over high hills, but it gives me joy to be able to help these dear people.*
>
> *One sister living right among the mountains came to me, walking over a flooded creek that I was unable to cross myself, and under the shade of a tree we studied and prayed and sang together.*

Unfortunately, Nelson passed away the following year. She had made a valiant effort. Twelve months later Rudge was constrained to return and revive the flagging work. At that stage both he and his wife were nigh on seventy-years-old, but again they travelled the

long distances between settlements to minister to the aboriginals. Isabella Rudge began to fail in health and passed away the day before Christmas 1926. Just a few weeks prior to her decease Eva Perry had arrived to assist with the aboriginal work. Knowing she had only a short time to live, Isabella suggested to her husband that he and Eva later marry and together carry on the mission for the aborigines. Twelve months later they did marry. They continued to minister in the Kempsey area until 1930. At that time Rudge retired and the mission for aboriginals in that area came under the control of the North New S0uth Wales Conference. Thereafter, ministers appointed to the Kempsey area worked among whites and aboriginals alike.

Rudge's work was fondly remembered by the aboriginals. A num ber remained loyal to Ch fist and others made a commitment later. Renewed work for aboriginals in North New South Wales in the 1960's built on the good reputation which Rudge left behind, and persists at Mirriwinni Gardens near Nulla Nulla. This is a private and self-supporting enterprise.

Monamona had petered out by 1962. An ambitious relocation programme immediately north of the original settlement had taken place from 1944 onwards. Larger, better designed, and more numerous buildings had grown to accommodate over 250 aboriginals. The gunyah camps became a fact of the past. Better homes were made available in the 1950's. At that time there was less regimentation in the settlement and each married couple tended their own garden adjacent to their cottage.

In December 1958 the Queensland government informed the mission of plans to construct a dam across Flaggy Creek to generate hydroelectric power. The trapped water would flood some of the settlement so over the next four years mission activities were fazed out. The aboriginals were integrated into the Kuranda community and church.

In the 1960's Karalundi Mission was pioneered in Western

Australia and another venture later opened at Wiluna. These enterprises had their difficulties, especially the conflicting standard regarding alcohol. The church only wished to operate providing a total ban on alcohol was practised on the settlements. The government, on the other hand, maintained it was the aboriginals right to choose whether or not alcohol could be consumed at the mission. The dry versus wet policies was one reason which brought about the closure of the mission to aborigines in Western Australia until more favourable days.

History testifies that Europeans gate crashed on the aboriginals free-roaming society, took over their territory, and introduced vices which eroded their domestic life. Alcohol, tobacco, and gambling became rampant and fragmented their traditional culture. Spears and bark shields were no match for European rifles.. Then numbers steadily diminished as they perished in squalid camps on the creeping edges of white expansion. It was a fenceless prison, trapped in the predicament of no livelihood and no hunting grounds. They naturally despaired and grew skeptical or suspicious of anything whites had to offer, including Christianity.

Aboriginal illiteracy and their nomadic tendencies were serious obstacles encountered by the Adventist witness. Furthermore, it was unfortunate that Christian missions had to work so closely with the government officials and police. Government law forced drug addicts and delinquents to remain in the settlements under watch-care. In the aboriginals mind Christianity unavoidably became associated with coercion, exploitation, and tyranny.

It took time for the aboriginals to discern that a small minority of sincere whites were desperately trying to patch up the ruin and present Christ as the Saviour to all. The Rudges, Branfords, Totenhofers, Mitchells, and Borgases were some of the prominent names among Seventh-day Adventist missionaries who, in the early pioneering days, worked strenuously to that end.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Home Missionary", the "Australasian Record", the "Missionary Leader", the "Monamona Aboriginal Register Book", and Shane Collins' unpublished 1987 BA Thesis entitled "Monamona: A Culture in Transition", and the author's persona/collection of pioneer data.

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