

History of the New South Wales Assemblies. Prepared by W. A. Slickley for Ian Taylor for submission at the Missionary Conference to be held in Jamaica March 1967.

The history of the N.S.W assemblies, so far as we can report began with the migration to this country of English merchants and others in the mid 1850's or so. As these had been in fellowship in the old country the Testimony to the Lord's Name was established as Assemblies were formed where they settled.

Among these were: An English draper named Austin who settled on a farm at Forbes in the western district about 300 miles from Sydney in 1888. Meetings were held in his house and three young farmers were converted and came into fellowship at The Lord's table. On his death the breaking of bread was continued on alternate Lord's days at the farm houses of Brothers Collier and Nicholls until around the year 1935 when as a harvest of their faithfulness and through the instrumentality of Bro. C. J. Bentley and other brethren and a visiting itinerant Glanton preacher several other families were converted to the Lord and came into fellowship. The assembly grew to about 35/40 and became located in the little township of Bogan Gate. Here it flourished until about 1950 or so when a number of older farmers moved from the district. The Testimony has been re-established again in the township of Forbes where it is going along quietly.

Another migrant was Bro Bickerton who settled in Boonah (Queensland) where he established a local general store. One of the farmers of Bogan Gate married a daughter and went to reside there. The Testimony in the area is now carried on in the two assemblies at Pittsworth and Toowoomba.

The impact of the "Raven" division seems to have been felt in the country around 1895. Up to that time the assembly in the city comprised some 500 believers and there were many country assemblies, but following the division the remnant who withdrew and remained in fellowship with the "Lowe" group in England and in Europe and Egypt comprised only a very small company mainly of older brothers and sisters. The effect of this division was that the Sydney assembly had virtually to start all over again and this the brethren did to the best of their ability as the Lord allowed. Meetings were held mainly in cottages where the gospel was regularly preached. One of these was in the home of a sister Mrs Tennyson.

In 1898 a young man from Sydney visited a country area at Moss Vale some 80 miles to the south of Sydney. He attended a meeting in the home of a brother Irving and was converted. Returning to Sydney he took his great friend C. J. Bentley along to Mrs Tennyson's home and on the very first night he went C. J. B was converted. He straightway began a vigorous witness for the Lord, preaching mainly in the open air at various vantage points around the city as well in the Hall. He eventually conducted the meeting in Mrs Tennyson's home and many were converted and came into the Assembly.

At that time the Assembly was meeting in a small Hall in a city suburb-Chippendale. Later it moved to the Town Hall Camperdown, then to Percival Street Petersham and finally to Charles Street Petersham where it remained for many years.

C. J. Bentley married a daughter of Bro Bickerton (Boonah. Qd), and set home on the north side of Sydney harbour, where he maintained a strong and consistent gospel witness. Through the cottage meetings the Assembly had grown considerably and as Petersham was on the western side of the city it was decided that an assembly should be formed on the northern side. This was done and brethren from that area first met in a room in North Sydney a little prior to 1912. The brethren finally became established in the City Mission Hall at Harrington Street in the quay area of the city proper. A large Bible Class was conducted by Bro Bentley among the younger generation but because the Hall was unavailable on Lord's day nights no Gospel meeting was carried on. As a result the brethren maintained a consistent open-air witness in various areas and this was carried on for many years.

Further cottage meetings were conducted by Bro Bentley on the North side of the Harbour and at one, held each Tuesday evening as many as 80 to 100 attended. Many were converted and these eventually comprised the nucleus of the Assembly which was opened in Greenwich around 1926. Among those converted was C. H. Flower who later went to live in Melbourne and was much used of the Lord in building up the little company which had continued there. The Greenwich Assembly purchased a fine meeting Hall in the area around 1960. This had been built by the London (Rowell) party, but the company dwindled and they offered it to our brethren. The Harrington Street Hall was requisitioned by the Government in 1942 and the Assembly moved into several City Halls until finally settling into the Bible Society's Hall in Bathurst Street.

(Raven)

In 1958, land was purchased in the suburb of North Ryde and since then two Halls have been erected. The work of the Sydney assemblies has been characterised by Gospel efforts in private homes as cottage meetings and then in the respective meeting Halls on Lords day evenings. For about sixteen years a Gospel effort was carried on in the City at Bible House on Monday night once a month and this proved a worthwhile and effective effort. A strong open-air witness was maintained for many years by brethren who are now older and unable to carry it on. Younger brothers have followed on with this. An effective witness by preaching and singing was first commenced by Bro Bentley in the Royal North Shore Hospital. Here many hundreds are witnessed to by a singing party with the opportunity to speak a brief word to each ward each Lord's day evening. With the new Halls at North Ryde a good young peoples work has developed and besides a large Sunday school every Lord's day morning, regular youth Clubs are conducted on four nights every week. In addition a youth fellowship meets once a month and a "Coffee- Evening", is held on Saturday night once a quarter. Many score of children and teenagers have professed acceptance of Christ as Saviour and this aspect of the work is most encouraging. Childrens Camps and Youth Bible Class Camps are held on a regular yearly basis the former in May for one week and the latter over the Easter fourday break.

No Missionary work has ever been undertaken by the Sydney Assemblies, chiefly because we have felt virtually incapable of coping with the opportunities which this large continent with its 12 million people affords. Assemblies are located in only three of the six capital cities in the States and there are many areas where there is no Testimony at all.

No visits were ever made to us by English preaching or Ministering brethren and until Bro Misser visited this country in 1951 Australia remained isolated from help by other assemblies. Since then we have had visits from Bros Hadley, Boston Simmons (Twice) Campbell and Wilts (Holland).

By the Lords mercy with the coming together of the Stewart-Grant-Lowe-Kelly groups there has been a free interchange of visits by brethren from and to New Zealand.

Bro Ken Beeby felt the call of the Lord into full time service in the Assemblies a few years ago and he has become our first laboring Brother. He regularly visits the assemblies throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Ulladulla. In the north Western area of Tamworth some 350 miles from Sydney there was a large assembly. After the "Raven" division only a few families remained in fellowship with "Lowe". A German migrant was converted while (FAUST) living in the area and through the ministry of a local schoolmaster who (JONES) was in our fellowship he came into the meeting. On his retirement he went to live at Ulladulla on the south coast where also Bro B. Lickley (senior) also went to live when he retired from business. An assembly was formed with the Breaking of Bread, Reading and Gospel meetings carried on. Both of these brothers and their wives went to be with the Lord during the past three years and the Testimony is still carried on by Bro W. McNab who retired from his farm at Bogar Gate and went to live there.

Narooma. Several families migrated from Holland in the 1940's and settled in the dairying district on the south coast. The breaking of bread and normal meetings are carried by the assembly there. An annual Conference is held in June.