

**REPORTS
OF THE
FOREIGN MISSION
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF WALES
ON
SYLHET-BANGLADESH
AND
CACHAR-INDIA**

1886 - 1955

Compiled by
REV. VANLALCHHUNGA

**Reports
of the
Foreign Mission
of the
Presbyterian
Church of Wales
on
Sylhet-Bangladesh
and
Cachar-India
1886 - 1955**



**Cordially dedicated to
Missionaries who served and
brought about social
Transformation in Sylhet
and Cachar Plains and Hills.**

**Compiled by :
REV. VANLALCHHUNGA**

**Published by :
Shalom Publications
Silchar, Church Road, Assam**

Gen
First published
in this form 2003

Manuscripts are collected
and compiled by :

NE
285-254162
REP;1
Rev. Vanlalchhunga
Administrative Secretary
Barak Area, Church & Mission
Silchar, Assam

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Shalom Publications
Silchar - 4, Assam.

Typeset and Printed at :

Shrichaitanya Press
Hospital Road, Silchar - 788 001
Cachar, Assam.

Published by :

Shalom Publications
Silchar, Church Road, Assam.

Price - Rs. 400/-

53 Richmond Road, Caerdydd (Cardiff) CF24 3WI Ffon/Tel : (029) 2049 4913 Ffacs/Fax : (029) 2046 4293

E-Bost/E-Mail : EBCPCW@aol.com

Ysgrifennydd Cyffredinol/General Secretary : Parchedig/Reverend W. Gareth Edwards, B.A., BD
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dyddiad
Date : 7. 8. 01

DAJ/MEM

REV. VANLALCHHUNGA
Administrative Secretary
Silchar Mission Compound
Church Road
Silchar - 788 004
Assam, India

Dear Rev. Vanlalchhunga

Thank you very much for your letter of July 5th seeking permission to publish the reports that you have gathered together about the Mission Work in Sylhet-Cachar Plains and Hills 1886-1955. As this publication is seen in the same light as those previously published by the Rev. K. Thanzauva and the Rev. Dr. J. F. Jyrwg, I am very happy to agree to your request. I look forward to seeing your publication and to having a copy on our shelves in this office.

This publication will be very useful as little has been written, certainly in English about the work in the area you mention. I trust that your time in Wales was for you a source of blessing and encouragement.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely

D. ANDREW JONES
Mission Board Secretary

FOREWORD

Rev. Vanlalchhunga has taken great pains to collect and compile important reports and documents of the Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries working in Sylhet, Cachar plains and hills. It is a pioneering work of very great importance in knowing the development of the Ministry and Mission in the region (the Cachar Sylhet Mission).

The reports compiled in this book are the reports of the Welsh missionaries working in Sylhet Cachar, which had been written, from the perspective of Mission ad Evangelism work. I am certain that this book will be a great treasure for the Presbyterian Church of India and the Presbyterian Church of Wales and will also be a great help to all scholars, researchers and all those who are interested to know the contribution made by the missionaries in establishing the Church and the steps they have take to make the Church a witnessing community.

With great admiration and gratitude I recommend that this unique book will not only be a source of blessing but it should also involve us in reflecting and re-evaluating the mission work carried out in our times as we live our lives from day to day as persons and as Christians in communities in this new millennium. May this book give new insights and vision with commitment to many readers and glory be to God whose mission we share.



Rev. D. C. Haia

*Administrative Secretary
Presbyterian Church of India,
Central Wards, Shillong-1
Meghalaya*

PREFACE

I am glad indeed that the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod granted me three months leave i.e. May-July, 2001, to go to Wales, United Kingdom to study and collect important reports and documents of the Mission Department of Welsh Presbyterian Church. I also give thanks to the Secretary, Mission Board, Presbyterian Church to Wales for bearing all my expenses during those three months in Wales.

Formerly, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, was known as "The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist" and the Mission Board was known as the "The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, Foreign Missionary Society." It was founded in 1840 with its Head Quarter at Liverpool. The First Welsh Missionary to India was Rev. Thomas Jones, who arrived at Cherrapunjee, Khasi and Jaintia Hills (the present Meghalaya) with his wife on 22nd June, 1841. After eighteen months, Rev. and Mrs. Williams and Dr. Owen Richard joined him on 22nd January, 1843.

In March, 1849, Rev. Williams Pryse also came to Cherrapunjee with his wife. At the end of the year, Mr. Pryse visited Sylhet and he came back with a heavy burden in his heart. With Mr. Lewis, he wrote a letter to the Directors of Wales for permission to open a Mission Station in Sylhet (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). The Directors allowed Mr. Pryse to establish a Mission Station in Sylhet. Mr. Pryse and his wife moved to Sylhet in 1850 from Cherrapunjee. He begins his missionary operations in the plains somewhat similar lines to those followed on the Hills.

Silchar, the Chief town of Cachar District was the second Welsh Missionary Station in Sylhet-Cachar Plains. Rev. Dr. T. J. Jones, Miss Elizabeth Williams and Miss Laura Evans were the pioneer Missionaries in Silchar. They moved to Silchar from Sylhet in May, 1893. The third Missionary Station in the plains was Karimganj. Karimganj was the principal town of the sub-division of Sylhet province. The first missionary stationed at Karimganj was Rev. Dr. and Mrs. O. O. Williams in 1894.

The fourth Missionary station in the Sylhet Cachar plains was Maulvi Bazaar. In January, 1898, Rev. T. W. Reese and his

wife moved to Maulvi Bazaar from Sylhet. Besides the plains portion of Cachar District, the North Cachar Hills also formed a part of the Welsh Mission Field in 1905, the work was supervised by Garlan Williams from Silchar. In 1912, Rev. J. M. Harries Reese was stationed in Haflong, the Chief town of the North Cachar Hills.

The Welsh Presbyterian Church of America had a strong desire to have a field of their own. Ultimately the sub-division of Habiganj was transferred to their care. They continued to labour until 1922, when those Churches joined the Presbyterian Church of America. The Mission Work in Habiganj was taken over by the Welsh Missionaries. Meanwhile, the Directors had no Missionary to send to this new field, therefore the Directors requested Miss Laura Evans and Miss Andrew to move there from Sylhet. The two lady Missionaries began their work in Habiganj in April, 1922.

Sunamganj Mission Station was established in 1923. But, at no time had a resident missionary been stationed there, the Missionaries in Sylhet town paid occasional visits. Besides, the Welsh Missionaries established Mission Station at Shaistaganj, they also opened Bible School at Bhatara.

As already stated, the Sylhet-Cachar plains Mission field was opened in 1850, but, unfortunately it was discontinued from 1872. After fifteen years of abandonment, the General Assembly of Aberdare held on 13-15th July, 1885 decided to resume Missionary operations on the plains without delay. Rev. and Mr. J. Pengwern Jones and Miss Sarah A. Jones arrived at Sylhet on 28th November, 1887 to resume the mission work on the plains.

Since 1887, the Presbyterian Church of Wales continued its Mission Work in Sylhet-Cachar plains and Hills upto 1966. In the North Cachar Hills, 8 Missionary couples and two lady Missionaries worked from 1905-1961. The last two Missionaries in Silchar were Miss Gwen C. Evans and Rev. and Mrs. Henry R. James, they left Silchar in 1958. Likewise, Miss L. M. Thomas was the last Missionary in Karimganj and she left Karimganj in 1955. The last Welsh Missionaries in Sylhet were Miss Winifred A. Thomas and Miss L. M. Thomas. From 1966, the Welsh Missionaries handed over the Mission Work in Sylhet to the Norwegian Missionary Society.

During these seventy years, the Welsh Missionaries, served faithfully for Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world in Sylhet Cachar

plains and Hills. They introduced education by opening schools. They opened boys and girls schools in the town and also in the villages. They also taught practical subjects like Cookery, house keeping, child welfare, care of the sick, Hygiene, needle work and weaving to the Indian and Bangladeshi Girls. They opened teacher training schools. The lady missionaries worked among the Zenanas and they taught them about Jesus Christ and they also instructed them sewing, needle work, weaving etc. The Missionaries tried their level best to uplift the Namasudras in various ways. Besides these, they established a 'Home' for widows and orphans at Karimganj called Dipti Nibash which means "Light House."

All the Missionaries who came to India and Bangladesh were praiseworthy, they rendered their precious life, time and ability for the extension of God's Kingdom in Sylhet, Cachar plains and Hills. We the Presbyterian Church of India and Bangladesh will never forget their names and their works. The Scripture says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" (Rom 10:15)

However, this book contains the reports of Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries giving us about the growth and progress of Christianity in Sylhet, Bangladesh Cachar plains and Hills, India. Read and you will find God's Miracle Changing the life and thoughts of the people in these regions. May God bless you.

Rev. Vanlalchhunga

Administrative Secretary,
Barak Area, Church & Mission
Mission Compound
Silchar, Assam.

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