

John Appleby

1925-2011



Clifford Pond recalls a visit from the then pastor at Wood Green, John Appleby. 'John looked absolutely awful. I asked him "Whatever's the matter, John?" and he said, "I think the Lord wants me to go to India and I don't want to go." John explained what was convicting him and Clifford told him this was a call from God. John sailed to India in 1952, the beginning of nearly forty years service with what is now GBM. He was already engaged to Eileen, and they married in Madras in 1955.

John's early years in India were spent learning Tamil and becoming immersed in the work. Churches, schools and clinics all belonged to the Mission, and the missionaries operated as managers, keeping the accounts, paying the preachers, maintaining the buildings and governing the schools. John soon saw that this had to change. The missionaries were not there to rule the Indian churches as imperial masters, but to train Indians to lead the churches and become independent of the Mission. The policy of indigenisation was not easily accepted by some of the missionaries, but was vital to the future growth of the Tamil Baptist Churches.



John had served in the Royal Navy at the end of the war, sailing to Australia on HMS Perseus as a Wireless mechanic. While there, he had built a PA system for Belvoir St Baptist Church, Sydney, and had used it to give an open air talk in a nearby street. This had led to him preaching his first ever sermon in A. W. Pink's old pulpit. Looking back, he said 'The Lord was preparing me for beginning the GBM radio ministry, at His Majesty King George's expense.' So it was that in 1957 the missionary conference asked for 4000 rupees to purchase a tape recorder and other equipment. John started making Tamil radio programmes the following year, broadcast into India by FEBC. The studio in Kovilpatti was basic, but served its purpose, until a purpose-built recording suite could be built in Dindigul in 1966.



Churches had been planted and run by Indians, but how many of them really had a grasp of Christian doctrine? This led John, with others, to found a ministry committee to train Indians to be able preachers and pastors, teaching them Bible-handling skills,

Christian doctrine and sermon preparation.

John and Eileen returned to the UK in 1970, and based themselves at the Mission house in Breakspears Rd, London, sharing the house with Frank and Hazel Ellis, as Frank explains. 'At Mission house, our family occupied the ground floor, the Appleby's the first floor and in the attic John created what became known as the egg - box studio. In order to achieve some semblance of sound-proofing, John hit on the idea of a second skin of old doors within the attic, lined with egg boxes. Despite such an unprepossessing environment, John and his helpers produced a stream of high quality pre-recorded programmes which were then sent off for use by FEBC. So began the Mission's radio ministry in the UK; it soon gained a reputation for being of consistently high quality both in terms of the material recorded and the recordings themselves.'

'It was clear to John from the start, however, that if the work were to develop, proper studio provision would be essential. With that vision clear before him, John was wholeheartedly behind the move to Abingdon. And there is no doubt that his expertise, and his insistence that the highest standards should be maintained throughout, contributed greatly to the quality of the finished suite of studios at Abingdon. John's strong doctrinal foundation made mission a holy necessity; it brought depth to his work and the greatest assurance that sovereign success would attend his calling.'

John and Eileen moved into Mission Centre with Chris and Faith Richards in 1976. Chris describes their shared experience. 'You didn't actually work with John, so I discovered! We had our respective roles and he was helpful and supportive in that context. A clear mind, a sharp intellect, a grasp of the essential truths of the gospel was all very evident. 'I'll let it simmer' was his favourite response to requests or proposals, and the result was usually worth waiting for.'

On a trip to India in 1981, Chris and John were both struck by the needs of the preachers in the village congregations, as a new generation of preachers was emerging. What were they preaching, and what impact



were they having on their churches? Praying over this together, they concluded that John must leave the radio work and focus on literature. John developed the preachers' study papers in Tamil, the prototypes for a work that has spread around the world.

John had a precise mind, and an impish sense of humour, which were of great value to those of us who worked with him on the *Praise!* hymnbook. A quiet, thoughtful comment from John often had much more effect than other more bombastic contributions. Above all, people will remember John for his preaching, exemplified in his retirement sermon at the 1990 Annual meetings, on Isaiah 52:7. Missionaries have beautiful feet, suitable for the job of mission, ready to run anywhere if we knew our message was good for every situation. That one sermon expressed the drive that was at the heart of John's life.



Alarms and excursions

The GBM holiday experience!



GBM's 2011 summer holiday season began at Hothorpe Hall in sunny Leicestershire. Whilst not up to the glorious weather of some recent 'Hothorpes', we were blessed with mostly dry

days and a good time was had by all. This was not withstanding the early morning fire alarms which made the first few days interesting to say the least. It was put down to the harvesting in the adjacent field which had released millions of thunder flies into the atmosphere! I am just glad that it was a Christian conference where the forbearance of many who were rudely awakened was a testimony to the power of grace!

John Benton was our main speaker and he brought a challenging series of addresses entitled 'God's Big Deals' designed to help believers to see the way that modern thinking was attacking the gospel and how it must be defended. This also gave

opportunity to bring a clear gospel challenge to the unconverted among us. We were also blessed with missionary input from Jonathan Bayes and Pat Davies and with reports from Mission staff. The consensus was that it had been a first rate holiday.

Later in August we held our annual youth camp at Root Hill Farm. We had 75 campers with the usual mix of regulars and new campers. Mick and Gill Lockwood were with us for the week and shared in the whole camp in their warm hearted way. Mick brought six excellent daily Bible readings under the title, 'Questions and Answers'. We also had missionary input from Anthony Green, Linja and Nam Hun Lim and GBM staff, and preaching from David Skull, Barry King and Andrew King. We enjoyed the usual excursions to Box Hill and Littlehampton and a rainy day Laserquesting in Horsham! It was a camp that was clearly enjoyed and we rejoice to say that in both holidays the Lord was at work as testified by baptisms that have taken place since. We look forward to next year with great anticipation!

John McDonald

