



Bismarck Solomons Union Mission administrative office, Palm Beach off Malaguna Road, Rabaul, 1964.  
Photo courtesy of Kenneth Boehm.

## Bismarck Solomons Union Mission, Australasian Division

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### BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

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The Bismarck Solomons Union Mission existed as a constituent union mission of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Australasian Division between 1953 and 1972.<sup>1</sup>

The territory of Bismarck Solomons Union Mission was the "Admiralty Islands, St. Matthias Group, New Hanover, New Ireland and adjacent islands, New Britain and adjacent islands, Bougainville and adjacent islands, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate; comprising the Bougainville, Eastern Solomon Islands, Malatia, Manus, New Britain, New Ireland, and Western Solomon Islands Missions."<sup>2</sup>

When first organized, there were seven local missions in the union. They were the Bougainville Mission, the Eastern Solomons Mission, the Malaita Mission, the Manus Mission, the New Britain Mission, the New Ireland Mission, and the Western Solomons Mission. The administrative office of the union was at Palm Beach, Rabaul, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea. The administrative office of the New Britain New Ireland Mission is located at Butuwin Street,

Kokopo 613, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea.

In the *1954 Annual Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventists*, the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission was listed as having 163 organized churches. Church membership at the end of 1953 was 5,339. The union had forty-five active employees. Its tithe receipts for 1953 totalled US\$31,611.32. Its tithe per capita were US\$5.84.<sup>3</sup>

In the *1971 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, Bismarck Solomons Union Mission was listed as having 173 organized churches. Church membership at the end of 1971 was 15,130. The union had 702 active employees. Its tithe receipts for 1971 totalled US\$145,106.05. Its tithe per capita were US\$10.11.<sup>4</sup>

## The History of the Development of the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission Structure

In 1947, the Bismarck Archipelago Mission was formed with Charles Mitchell the first president. The territory of this mission had been previously included in the Papua-New Guinea Mission. In 1947, New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Buka, the St. Matthias Group, the Admiralty Group, and adjacent islands were taken out of the Papua-New Guinea Mission and organized as the Bismarck Archipelago Mission.<sup>5</sup> The mission did not include the Solomon Islands. The remaining territory of the Papua-New Guinea Mission was organized as the Papua North East New Guinea Mission under superintendent Robert R. Frame.

Until 1949, all of the local conference and mission entities throughout the territory of the Australasian Union Conference, reported directly to the union conference with headquarters in Sydney. But at a specially called session of the Australasian Union in August 16, 1948, a major reorganization was approved. Australia and New Zealand were divided between two union conferences known as the "Trans-Tasman Union Conference" and the "Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference." The mission territories were also divided into two union missions known as "The Coral Sea Union Mission" and "The Central Pacific Union Mission."

In the reorganization which took effect at the beginning of 1949, the Bismarck Archipelago Mission, encompassing the territory of New Britain and New Ireland, became one of the local missions of the Coral Sea Union Mission. The territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was "Papua, the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate."<sup>6</sup>

In 1953, the territory of the Coral Sea Union Mission was divided into the Coral Sea Union Mission and the Bismarck-Solomons Union Mission.<sup>7</sup> The Bismarck-Solomons Union had its headquarters in Rabaul on the island of New Britain. Its territory was "Admiralty Islands, St. Matthias Group, New Hanover, New Ireland and adjacent islands, New Britain and adjacent islands, Bougainville and adjacent islands, and the British Solomon Islands Protectorate; comprising the Bougainville, Eastern Solomon Islands, Malatia, Manus, New Britain, New Ireland, and Western Solomon Islands Missions."<sup>8</sup>

In 1955, The New Ireland Mission and the Manus Mission were combined and named the North Bismarck Mission. The headquarters of the mission were initially at Bolliu, Mussau, with Leslie Webster president of the combined entity.<sup>9</sup> In 1956, the headquarters of the mission moved to Kavieng.<sup>10</sup>

In 1957, the administrative office of the New Britain Mission was moved from Palm Beach to Kamarere Street in Rabaul. It was to remain there until the volcanic eruption of 1994.

Another change in the territory of New Britain and New Ireland occurred in 1961 when the Talasea Mission Station was separated from the New Britain Mission and attached the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission.<sup>11</sup> The territory served by the Talasea Mission Station was southwestern New Britain and the adjacent islands. The headquarters were at Silovuti in the Kombe area of West New Britain with Cyril Pascoe the district director. The Silovuti School with four teachers was established at that time.<sup>12</sup>

In 1964, all of the entities in New Britain and New Ireland were renamed and reorganized. The New Britain Mission was reorganized and renamed the East New Britain Mission.<sup>13</sup> Its territory was designated as "the northeastern portion of New Britain and the southeastern portion of New Ireland."<sup>14</sup> The president was Joseph Mave. It had 624 members meeting in nine organized churches. The headquarters were in Kamarere Street, Rabaul.<sup>15</sup> Also, in 1964 the Talasea Mission Station, previously attached directly to the Bismarck Solomons Union Mission, was organized as the West New Britain Mission.<sup>16</sup> Its territory was designated as "southwestern New Britain and adjacent islands."<sup>17</sup> The president was Cyril Pascoe. It had 235 members meeting in six organized churches. The headquarters remained at Silovuti.<sup>18</sup> The other major change that occurred in 1964 was the separation of the former North Bismarck Mission into a Manus Mission with headquarters at Lorengau, Manus, and a New Ireland Mission with headquarters in Kavieng.<sup>19</sup> The territory of the New Ireland Mission was "northern new Ireland and adjacent islands. The president was Roy Harrison. It had 1758 members meeting in twenty-eight churches. The headquarters were in Kavieng."<sup>20</sup>

In 1972, there was a major reorganization of the union missions in the Australasian Division.<sup>21</sup> The Bismarck Solomons Union Mission was disbanded. Its local Solomons Island missions became a part of the new Western Pacific Union Mission and the Papua New Guinea missions became part of the Papua New Guinea Union Mission.

## List of Executive Officers

Presidents: E. A. Boehm (1953-1962); A. R. Mitchell (1963-1969); G. A. Lee (1970-1972).

Secretary-Treasurers: J. J. Dever (1953-1957); E. R. Piez (1958-1965); A. E. Jones (1966-1972).

### SOURCES

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Mitchell, A. R. "We Are Glad We Came to the Mission Field." *Australasian Record*, July 22, 1963.

"Only thirty days at home in one year . . ." *Australasian Record*, January 8, 1962.

*Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*. Various years. <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks>.

### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise credited, the information in this article comes from the personal knowledge and experience of the author as a former general secretary of the South Pacific Division (1997 -2007), and President of the South Pacific Division (2007 – 2015).?
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," Page 83, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf?>
3. *1954 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 1953*, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1954.pdf?>
4. *1971 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 1971*, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR1971.pdf?>
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Australasian Union Conference," page 75, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1948.pdf?>
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Coral Sea Union Mission," page 78, accessed February 14, 2020 <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1950.pdf?>
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," page 83, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf?>
8. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," page 83, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1954.pdf?>
9. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Bismarck Solomons Union Mission," page 68, accessed January 20, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1956.pdf?>
10. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "North Bismarck Mission," page 70, accessed January 20, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1957.pdf?>
11. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Talasea Station," page 75, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1962.pdf?>
12. Ibid.; "Only thirty days at home in one year . . .," *Australasian Record*, January 8, 1962, 8.?
13. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "East New Britain Mission," page 86, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf?>
14. Ibid.?
15. Ibid.?
16. A. R. Mitchell, "We Are Glad We Came to the Mission Field," *Australasian Record*, July 22, 1963, 6.?
17. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "West New Britain Mission," page 87, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf?>
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Ibid.?

19. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Manus Mission," page 86, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf>; *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "New Ireland Mission," page 87, accessed January 22, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf?>
20. Ibid.?
21. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Papua New Guinea Union Mission," page 87, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1965.pdf?>

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