



Aveondale faculty, Charles DeVere Bell standing in the back on the right, c. 1920

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

Bell, Charles de Vere (1868–1948)

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Charles Bell was a versatile teacher, minister, and director of the Advent Bible School for the Australasian Union Conference.

Charles de Vere Bell, known as Vere, was born on April 24, 1868, in the market town of Uppingham in Rutland County, England, to Thomas and Louisa Margaret (Harding) Bell.¹ He migrated to Australia and settled in Queensland where he married twenty-year-old Elizabeth Margaret Orchard in 1900.²

Bell was enrolled in a medical course when he converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A field appointment in the New South Wales Conference was offered to him in 1905,³ but he preferred to continue his studies. However, the following year, when he was just a few months short of completing his course, church leaders persuaded him to terminate his studies and teach physiology at the Avondale School for Christian Workers.⁴ Bell had no training as a teacher and was better suited for a career in the fledgling Sydney Sanitarium. His appointment underscored the importance of the college's health emphasis and the training of nurses in particular for which physiology was an essential subject. Bell was a gifted and versatile man who adapted to the task.

Bell arrived at the Avondale School for the 1907 opening of classes.⁵ He and his wife were given lodgings in the under-utilized Avondale Health Retreat.⁶ Towards the end of 1907, he was assigned the added responsibility of managing the struggling health food business on campus,⁷ which he continued to do until October 1909 when the food factory enterprise was transferred from the school to the medical department of the Australasian Union Conference.⁸

Bell was a multi-talented teacher. An amateur astronomer, he occasionally taught a unit of astronomy in the science department. During his first year at the Avondale School, he and the science teacher were instrumental in building a ten-inch reflecting telescope situated between the ladies dormitory and the chapel.⁹ Bell also taught Bible subjects,¹⁰ and as an extracurricular subject, the St. John's Ambulance First Aid Certificate course.¹¹ Some years he served as school librarian as well.¹² Between 1917 and 1920, student achievement cards acquired his signature alongside the subject of art, principally blackboard art in the teacher training curriculum.¹³

Bell became a member of the faculty of the Darling Range School, Western Australia, in 1922.¹⁴ He remained throughout 1922 and 1923¹⁵ and then accepted ministerial duties for two years in the West Australian Conference. He held a ministerial license.¹⁶

During the last twelve years of Bell's working career, from 1926 through early 1938, he directed the Advent Correspondence School located at Australasian Union Conference headquarters in Wahroonga. Students who successfully completed studies from this institution were entitled to use the units as credit towards any course offered by the Australasian Missionary College.¹⁷

At eighty years of age, Bell's eventful and fruitful life came to a close following a short period of heart trouble. He died in the Sydney Sanitarium on May 30, 1948. He was buried in the Avondale Seventh-day Adventist Cemetery, near the institution he served for many productive years.¹⁸

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NOTES

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3. "Distribution of Labour," *Union Conference Record*, October 1, 1905, 5.

4. Elizabeth May (Bell) Warden, interview by Milton Hook, Cooranbong, May 7, 1996.
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