

# Blunden, Harold Murray (1885–1974)

---

## 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.

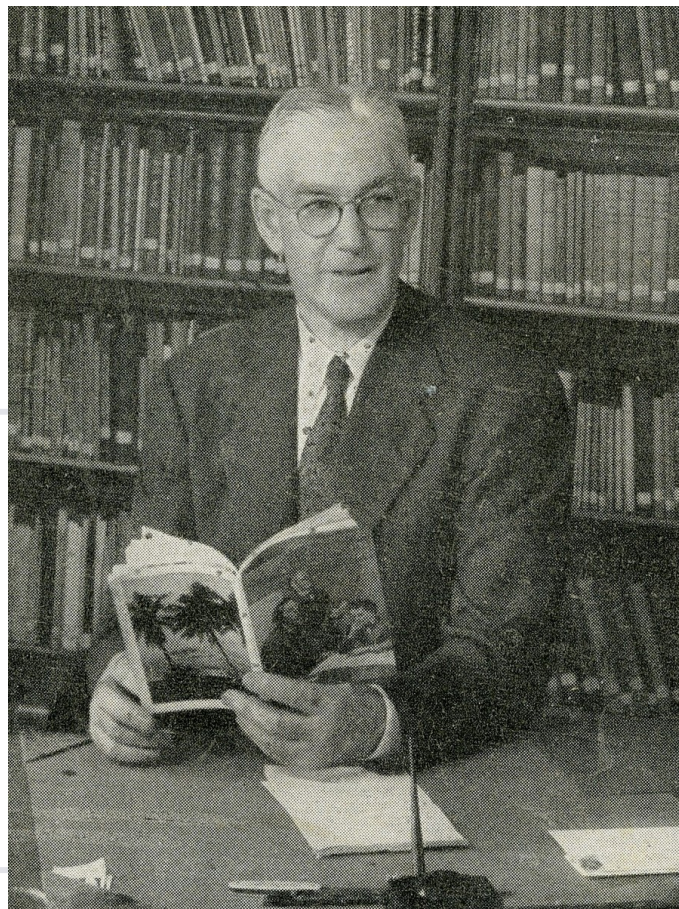
---

Harold Murray Blunden was a missionary to China, church administrator, including General Field secretary and Home Missions secretary for the Asiatic Division.

Harold Murray Blunden was born in Colac, Victoria, on May 2, 1885.<sup>1</sup> His parents, Godfrey and Alice Blunden, arranged his christening in Christ Church Anglican (Episcopalian), South Yarra, Melbourne, on April 29, 1890.<sup>2</sup> There were six children in his family: Randolph Godfrey (1878-1888), Alma Gladys (b. 1879), Clarice Essie (b. 1881), Verge Cyril (b. 1884), Harold Murray (b. 1885) and Doris Dulce (b. 1889).<sup>3</sup>

## Church Career

Beginning in Warburton, Victoria, during late 1902 Harold tested his salesmanship by selling *Desire of Ages* in a largely Seventh-day Adventist community.<sup>4</sup> In 1903 he made a similar brief foray in Gosford, New South Wales, with the book *Coming King*.<sup>5</sup> Showing promise he was then appointed to sail to New Zealand while still a teenager to sell *Coming King* in places such as Timaru. He toiled faithfully and was rewarded with excellent sales totals each month.<sup>6</sup>



H. M. Blunden

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

In 1905 Harold began studies at the Avondale School for Christian Workers,<sup>7</sup> graduating from the Teacher's Course in 1906.<sup>8</sup> His training as an elementary school teacher was only utilised for twelve months in his entire career. Instead, his book-selling successes led to his initial appointment as Publishing Secretary in the South Australian Conference for 1907, establishing much of his subsequent career path. While training to be a teacher Harold had met Nellie Mountain who had graduated in the 1905 class<sup>9</sup> and went to teach in the Prospect elementary school, suburban Adelaide, South Australia. They married on March 18, 1907, in the Adelaide Seventh-day Adventist church.<sup>10</sup> The following year, 1908, Harold accepted a teaching role at the infant Darling Range School in Western Australia.<sup>11</sup> It proved to be his only year in traditional classroom work. Instead, much of the time he taught others how to sell denominational books.

Harold began as Field Missionary agent in 1909 with the New South Wales Conference, a role effectively meaning one supervising and training the colporteur team.<sup>12</sup> Over the next five years he became a leading exponent of this form of evangelism, publishing a long-running series of articles titled "Gospel Salesmanship."<sup>13</sup>

The expertise with canvassing that Harold consistently displayed was noticed by church officials and prompted an appointment to transfer from Australia to the Asiatic Division as Field Missionary Agent. His brother-in-law, Arthur Mountain, received a similar appointment. Arthur and Leila Mountain, together with Harold and Nellie and their three children, Erie, Vivienne and Dulcie, all sailed for China on July 29, 1914, aboard the "St. Albans." The vessel reached Townsville, Queensland, maritime authorities considering it a safer option to continue the voyage on a Japanese ship because of war-time conditions. For that reason the mission party changed to the "Tango Maru," a merchant ship that took two months to reach Shanghai via Hong Kong,<sup>14</sup> giving real meaning to the common phrase "a slow boat to China."

Harold began his service in China by assisting through interpreters with general meetings for workers and believers in the central provinces of Honan (now Henan), Hunan and Hupeh (now Hubei).<sup>15</sup> In 1915 he was chosen for the role of General Field Secretary and Home Missions Secretary for the Asiatic Division.<sup>16</sup> In these roles he began by pioneering the training of Chinese canvassers from his base in Shanghai. The canvassers were initially trained to sell annual fifty cent subscriptions for *Shi Djao Yeuh Bao* (*Signs of the Times*).<sup>17</sup> Later, they were trained to sell books, the first being a Chinese translation of *Health and Longevity*.<sup>18</sup> These training institutes were eventually extended to places such as Seoul in South Korea and Soonan (now Sunan) in North Korea, Mukden (now Shenyang) in Manchuria<sup>19</sup> and the South China provinces of Fukien (now Fujian), Kwangsi (now Guangxi) and Kwangtung (now Kwangdong).<sup>20</sup>

Mission growth in the Far East brought about a subdivision of territory in 1917 and Harold was appointed to be Publishing Secretary of the North China Union Conference.<sup>21</sup> It was a difficult period for canvassers because the region was suffering a political vacuum and local warlords were taking advantage of the lack of law and order.<sup>22</sup> In February 1919 Harold was elected as the superintendent of the North China Union Mission<sup>23</sup> and ordained at the same time.<sup>24</sup> However, the stress of work had taken its toll on his health and he had been functioning in this

role for only a few months before it became necessary for he and his family to return to Australia.<sup>25</sup>

Harold recovered his health in Australia and in 1920 was selected to take the role of Home Missions Secretary for the Australasian Union Conference (AUC).<sup>26</sup> Late in the following year he was transferred to the portfolio of Island Missions Secretary which entailed considerable time away from home while travelling among the Pacific Island stations.<sup>27</sup> He held this responsibility for little more than twelve months, only time to familiarise himself with the vast territory before his election as president of the North New Zealand Conference.<sup>28</sup> Ineffective short-term appointments continued. He was in the North New Zealand chair for two years, 1923 through 1924, before a recall to be AUC Home Missions Secretary for a brief time again.<sup>29</sup>

At the General Conference Session in Milwaukie, Wisconsin, mid-1926, a request was made to the AUC to release Harold so that he could take up work in the Pacific Union Conference (PUC), California.<sup>30</sup> Headquarters apparently had some long-range plans for Harold. For a decade, 1926 through 1936, he served in the PUC in pastoral roles,<sup>31</sup> his teenage children benefiting in their education with a home that was not frequently changing location. Nellie worked as head of the occupational and heliotherapy departments in Glendale Adventist Hospital. In 1937 Harold became the first manager and the associate speaker for the Voice of Prophecy radio broadcasts.<sup>32</sup> This twelve month assignment was followed by a term as president of the Antillian Union Mission in Cuba, Inter-America.<sup>33</sup>

Harold served as secretary of the nominating committee at the General Conference Session in San Francisco, mid-1941. At that gathering he was elected as the General Conference Publishing Department Secretary,<sup>34</sup> a portfolio he held for five years.<sup>35</sup> His final five years of service were as one of ten General Field secretaries for the General Conference.<sup>36</sup>

## Retirement

Harold and Nellie retired to California in 1950. For the next thirteen years Harold worked as a district pastor and some-time Field Secretary for the Northern California Conference until his second and final retirement in 1963. He had given almost sixty years of service.<sup>37</sup> Harold passed away on July 23, 1974, and was laid to rest in the St. Helena Cemetery.<sup>38</sup> Nellie was buried alongside him when she passed away on May 6, 1982.<sup>39</sup>

---

### SOURCES

"At a recent general meeting..." *Australasian Record*, May 12, 1919.

*Australasian Missionary College Annual Announcements* Avondale Press, Cooranbong, New South Wales.

Adventist Heritage Centre, Avondale University College, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box 663. Document:

"Australasian Missionary College Annual Announcement, 1946."

Avondale School Register of Students. Adventist Heritage Centre, Avondale University College, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box 1487. Document: "Avondale School Register of Students, 1892-1906."

Blunden, H[arold] M. "Colporteur Institutes in the Far East." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, September 1, 1916.

Blunden, H[arold] M. "Colporteur Work in China." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April-June 1917.

Blunden, H[arold] M. "Gospel Salesmanship - No.20." *Australasian Record*, March 2, 1914.

Blunden, H[arold] M. "North New Zealand Conference and Camp Meeting." *Australasian Record*, March 5, 1923.

"Brother and Sister H.M. Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, October 1, 1919.

"Brother Harold Blunden..." *Union Conference Record*, April 1, 1907.

"Brother H.M. Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, October 1, 1914.

Christian, L[ewis] H. "Fifteenth Meeting." *ARH*, June 8, 1941.

Crisler, C[larence] C. "Notes From the Spring Council." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, March 1, 1919, Supplement.

Crisler, C[larence] C. "Division Notes." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1, 1918.

"Harold Murray Blunden." FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XT62-Q2G>.

"Harold Murray Blunden." FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/LHYM-LCJ>.

"Harold Murray Blunden." Find A Grave Memorial.com, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47730810/harold-murray-blunden>.

Johanson, E[ric] J. "Life Sketch of Pastor H.M. Blunden." *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, September 23, 1974.

"Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work." *Union Conference Record*, December 1, 1902.

"Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, October 1, 1903.

"Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work." *Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1904.

"Nellie Blunden." *ARH*, July 22, 1982.

"Nellie Mountain Blunden." Find A Grave Memorial.com, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47730811/nellie-mountain-blunden>.

"Nominations for Asiatic Division." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1915.

"On Brother Stratford's transfer..." *Australasian Record*, February 9, 1920.

"Pastor Blunden, our Island Mission..." *Australasian Record*, December 12, 1921.

"Proceedings of the General Conference." *ARH*, June 17, 1926.

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909-1963.

"Three general meetings are to convene..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, January 1, 1915.

Town, N[elson] Z. "The Formation of Union Conferences." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1917.

"We were glad to see Brother Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, February 1, 1917.

"Word was received from..." *Australasian Record*, August 24, 1914.

---

## NOTES

1. E[ric] J. Johanson, "Life Sketch of Pastor H.M. Blunden," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, September 23, 1974, 13.
2. "Harold Murray Blunden," FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed August 13, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XT62-Q2G>.
3. "Harold Murray Blunden," FamilySearch.org, Intellectual Reserve, 2020, accessed August 13, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/LHYM-LCJ>.
4. "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, December 1, 1902, 7.
5. "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, October 1, 1903, 5.
6. E.g., "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1904, 6-7.
7. Avondale School Register of Students. Adventist Heritage Centre, Avondale University College, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box 1487. Document: "Avondale School Register of Students, 1892-1906."
8. *Australasian Missionary College Annual Announcement* (Avondale Press, Cooranbong, New South Wales), Adventist Heritage Centre, Avondale University College, Cooranbong, New South Wales. Box 663. Document: "*Australasian Missionary College Annual Announcement, 1946*," 42.
9. Ibid.
10. "Brother Harold Blunden..." *Union Conference Record*, April 1, 1907, 7.
11. "Darling Range School," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909), 146.
12. E.g., "New South Wales Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1910), 93-94.



13. E.g., H[arold] M. Blunden, "Gospel Salesmanship-No.20," *Australasian Record*, March 2, 1914, 6-7.
14. "Brother H.M. Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, October 1, 1914, 6; "Word was received from..." *Australasian Record*, August 24, 1914, 8.
15. "Three general meetings are to convene..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, January 1, 1915, 10.
16. "Nominations for Asiatic Division," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1915, 17-18.
17. H[arold] M. Blunden, "Colporteur Institutes in the Far East," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, September 1, 1916, [1]-2.
18. H[arold] M. Blunden, "Colporteur Work in China," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April-June 1917, 18-19.
19. H[arold] M. Blunden, "Colporteur Institutes in the Far East," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, September 1, 1916, [1]-2.
20. "We were glad to see Brother Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, February 1, 1917, 4.
21. N[elson] Z. Town, "The Formation of Union Conferences," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1917, 13-14.
22. C[arence] C. Crisler, "Division Notes," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1, 1918, 6-7.
23. C[arence] C. Crisler, "Notes From the Spring Council," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, March 1, 1919, supplement, [1]-2.
24. "At a recent general meeting..." *Australasian Record*, May 12, 1919, 8.
25. "Brother and Sister H.M. Blunden..." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, October 1, 1919, 8.
26. "On Brother Stratford's transfer..." *Australasian Record*, February 9, 1920, 8.
27. "Pastor Blunden, our Island Mission..." *Australasian Record*, December 12, 1921, 8.
28. H[arold] M. Blunden, "North New Zealand Conference and Camp Meeting," *Australasian Record*, March 5, 1923, 4-5.
29. "Australasian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 200.
30. "Proceedings of the General Conference," *ARH*, June 17, 1926, 2.
31. E.g., "Ministerial Directory," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929), 363.
32. E[ric] J. Johanson, "Life Sketch of Pastor H.M. Blunden," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, September 23, 1974, 13.

33. E.g., "Antillian Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1939), 142-143.
  34. L[ewis] H. Christian, "Fifteenth Meeting," *ARH*, June 8, 1941, 203-205, 222.
  35. E.g., "General Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 13.
  36. E.g., "General Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 7.
  37. E[ric] J. Johanson, "Life Sketch of Pastor H.M. Blunden," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, September 23, 1974, 13.
  38. "Harold Murray Blunden," Find A Grave Memorial.com, 2020, accessed August 13, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47730810/harold-murray-blunden>.
  39. "Nellie Mountain Blunden," Find A Grave Memorial.com, 2020, accessed August 13, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47730811/nellie-mountain-blunden>.
- 

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000