

Tinworth, Charles William (1898–1976)

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Shirley Tarburton, M.Litt. (Distinction) (University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2008 after 40 years teaching church-school (mainly high school but including eight years at university). An Australian, she has taught in four mission fields, Australia, and New Zealand. She has authored five books and co-authored one on church history, biography and family history, as well as several magazine articles. She is married to Dr. Michael Tarburton with two adult children and four grandchildren.

Charles Tinworth was an Adventist missionary and Sanitarium Health Food (SHF) Company Manager.

Early Years

Charles William Tinworth was born on May 11, 1898, on his parents' small farm near Beaudesert, Queensland, Australia. His parents, John Elliot Tinworth and Annie Elizabeth Wilke (1871-1920, 1873-1948), both emigrated from England to Australia with their families as children and married in Brisbane, Queensland. Charles William Tinworth, the eldest of their four children, had two brothers and a sister—Albert James (1900-1983), Clarice Elsie (Mrs. Herbert Ford, 1903-1991) and Leslie John (1909-2009).¹

About 1906, a Seventh-day Adventist colporteur, J. H. Hewett, visited the Tinworth's remote farm. After buying a book from him and plying him with questions most of the night, John and Annie Tinworth wholeheartedly accepted the message he brought them.² John Tinworth felt compelled to do what he could to reach as many as possible of the settlers in the nearly inaccessible areas of western and northern Queensland. This meant that he was away from home for extended periods of time. As the eldest child, the responsibility fell upon Charles Tinworth to assist his mother on the farm as much as possible.³



Charles William Tinworth, c 1936.

Photo courtesy of the Sanitarium Health Food Company Archives.

While John Tinworth was away, Annie Tinworth would gather the children around the kitchen table on Sabbath afternoons to write out Bible verses and passages from evangelistic tracts and other material, making as many carbon copies as they could. On his next visit home, John Tinworth collected these to share throughout his next trip, leaving them in mail-boxes if no one was home when he called.⁴ In this way, Charles Tinworth commenced working for Christ before he was ten years old. He made his decision for the Lord and was baptized at age thirteen.⁵

Education and Family

When Charles Tinworth was old enough to sell books himself, he joined his father in his ministry for a short while in 1911, and again for a few months in 1912.⁶ At age 17, Tinworth enrolled in the business course at the Australasian Missionary College, Avondale. After graduating in November 1916,⁷ he was appointed to be a stenographer in the Australasian Union Conference office.⁸ However, early in 1917 he was transferred back to his home state to be stenographer in the Queensland Conference.⁹ In January, 1918, Charles was promoted to be the secretary of the Tract Society for Queensland.¹⁰

On May 14, 1919, he married Amy Ford (1897-1991) in the Brisbane SDA church.¹¹ She was the daughter of long-time family friends, John and Jane Ford of North New South Wales.¹² (Five years later, Charles' sister, Clarice, married Amy's brother, Herbert.)¹³ The following year, Neville Charles (1920-1994), the first of their four children was born. Their other children were Linda Daphne (Mrs. Roy Caro, 1922-2011), Jean Alene (1925-2005), and Loren Ross (1928-2013).¹⁴

Mission Service

In April 1921, Tinworth was called to Lucknow in North India to assist Pastor J. Fulton in the administrative office of the Indian Seventh-day Adventist church.¹⁵ In August of the same year, he accompanied W. W. Fletcher to Poona in order to acquire land for the building of the Division headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in India.¹⁶

Early in 1922 he was appointed to be Secretary-Treasurer of the South India Union, necessitating a move to Bangalore, over 1510 km (or approximately 1000 miles) to the south.¹⁷ He held this position for five years, during which he often travelled about the Union territory, assessing needs, providing encouragement and conducting meetings.¹⁸ He also taught Business classes at the South India Training School at Krishnarajapuram near Bangalore (now Lowry Memorial).¹⁹ Charles had a particular interest in promoting literature evangelism and facilitated the first education scholarships earned by Indian students in the South India Union.²⁰

Working for the SHF

At the conclusion of his term of service in mid-1927, the family returned to Australia. W. W. Fletcher, who had also returned to Australia and was now the secretary of the Australasian Union Conference, passed on an invitation to Tinworth to join the church's Sanitarium Health Food Company where he was appointed manager of the Sydney Café.²¹ He was to work for the SHF for the next 37 years.²²

In September of 1929, he was transferred to Brisbane to manage the SHF café there.²³ While overseeing the serving of healthy vegetarian food, he also expressed concern about his clients' spiritual welfare, and baptisms resulted from his interest and interaction.²⁴ By 1932, he was also on the Queensland Conference Executive Committee.²⁵

Tinworth's next appointment was to Christchurch, New Zealand, at the end of 1933, to be the assistant secretary for the Health Food Department with responsibility for the general supervision of the SHF Company throughout New Zealand.²⁶ He was also a member of the South New Zealand Conference Executive Committee,²⁷ and on the Papanui Central School board.²⁸ As the depression of the 1930s worsened, he reduced his salary to half-pay so that more people could retain their employment in the factory. During this time, he achieved his goal to make *Weet Bix* and *Marmite* household brands in New Zealand.²⁹

After the 1936 Union Conference Session, Tinworth was appointed sales and advertising manager of the SHF and joined the head office staff at Wairoa.³⁰ In 1938, when the Health Food work within Australia was reorganized into three districts, Tinworth was appointed to be the secretary (director) of the Southern District, comprising the states of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. This necessitated a move to Melbourne, Victoria, which was undertaken early in 1939.³¹

In October, 1942, Tinworth returned to Sydney, as the newly-appointed secretary of the Eastern District, made up of New South Wales and Queensland.³² Here he was to remain for the rest of his life. After a further re-organization within the SHF, his role changed to that of the Manager of the Sydney Factory and Wholesale Branch at Lewisham in Sydney, a position he filled until his retirement in 1964.³³ Tinworth endeavored to get to know all his employees and to call them by name. He took an interest in them and their families that extended beyond their time of employment with him.³⁴

Tinworth served in a voluntary capacity on a number of boards and committees. He was chairman of the Australian Honey Board for many years, chairman of the Wairoa Seventh-day Adventist School Board, and chairman of the Church Building Committee for the Division headquarters church at Wairoa.³⁵ He served on the Australasian Division Executive Committee, also as an elder of the Concord³⁶ and then Wairoa Adventist churches,³⁷ and was on the preaching plan for the Greater Sydney Conference for decades. He was offered ordination, but declined.³⁸ He had a strong interest in mission work and made visits to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, not only expanding the customer base of the SHF, but also providing gifts of finance and health foods to SDA institutions and projects.³⁹

Final Years

When Tinworth retired in 1964, he had completed almost 50 years of service. He and his wife remained in their home of the previous two decades and continued to participate in many voluntary activities.⁴⁰ In 1971, Tinworth had the honor of laying the foundation stone for the new School of Nursing for the Sydney Adventist Hospital.⁴¹ On August 23, 1976, aged 78 years, Charles William Tinworth died in the Sydney Adventist Hospital. He was buried at the Avondale Cemetery in Cooranbong two days later.⁴²

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