



Lucy Beavis

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

## Beavis, Lucy Mabel (1883–1951)

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### LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

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Lucy May Beavis, a teacher in the North Island of New Zealand, initially spent a number of years in office work for the Church. Then, for 41 years as a church school teacher,<sup>1</sup> she taught in small, one-teacher schools, often located in the rear of Adventist churches or in buildings that housed the school during the week and the church on the weekend.<sup>2</sup>

She quietly and prayerfully won the hearts of her pupils. It was said that “under her kind and careful rule the children are growing up in the fear of God.”<sup>3</sup> She witnessed many of her pupils go on to play significant roles in the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>4</sup> W. Austin Townend, President of the South Australian Conference and mentor to many younger people, reflected on the influence of Lucy Beavis on his life. He wrote:

My mind reached back thirty-six years to the day of my ordination to the gospel ministry. That day I had written two letters of appreciation to two teachers—my church-school teacher and my dean of men and Bible teacher at college. I felt that additional to my parents' influence those two teachers had been among the most powerful for good in my life.

Both teachers replied to my letter. The church-school teacher, Miss L. M. Beavis, dear soul that she was, said that often her job had seemed an almost hopeless one (understood!); but this she could say—every morning and every evening and often during each day she had *prayed for us each by name*. Bless her.<sup>5</sup>

While there are a few school records carrying Miss Beavis's signature and the occasional class picture including her, there is very little documentation of the life of this church school teacher, and it has not been possible to locate even a good quality individual picture of her. From the records of the *Australasian Record* it can be ascertained that her full teaching career was in North New Zealand. Often she was listed as the only practicing teacher in the conference.<sup>6</sup> Her service records at the South Pacific Division consist of a one-page note that as of May 19, 1950, her sustentation payments were in “continuance.”<sup>7</sup> But the contribution of Lucy May Beavis was typical of so many women (and men) who have given many years of faithful teaching service without complaint and who were evangelists in every sense of the word. Lucy May Beavis never held elected or senior office in the Church, nor was she ever perceived as a leader, but like so many others, she lived the gospel commission.

She retired to her hometown of Leamington in the Waikato region of North New Zealand soon after 1940. In retirement she was asked from time to time to care for schools that were waiting for teachers to arrive.<sup>8</sup> She died on November 27, 1951, at the age of 68 and was buried in the Leamington Cemetery.<sup>9</sup>

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## SOURCES

“Affairs in North New Zealand.” *Australasian Record*, March 8, 1943.

“Allocation of Church School Teachers.” *Australasian Record*, February 20, 1933.

Beavis, Lucy M. “A True Friend to Hundreds.” *Australasian Record*, September 5, 1938.

"Church Schools in North New Zealand." *Australasian Record*, April 13, 1942.

Faulkner, I. "Cambridge Church School." *Australasian Record*, July 12, 1915.

Gilson, W. J. "With Our Church Schools." *Australasian Record*, April 4, 1932.

Lucy Mabel Beavis Sustentation Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives. Folder: "Beavis, Lucy Mabel." Document: "Miss L. M. Beavis."

Parker, Alfred. "Lucy Mabel Beavis obituary." *Australasian Record*, March 3, 1952.

Townend, W. A. "He's Praying. . . ." *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1982.

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## NOTES

1. Alfred Parker, "Lucy Mabel Beavis obituary," *Australasian Record*, March 3, 1952, 7.
2. I. Faulkner, "Cambridge Church School," *Australasian Record*, July 12, 1915, 7.
3. Ibid.
4. Alma Coombe, interview with author, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia, July 18, 2017.
5. W. A. Townend, "He's Praying. . . ." *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1982, 5.
6. See for example, W. J. Gilson, "With Our Church Schools," *Australasian Record*, April 4, 1932, 3; "Allocation of Church School Teachers," *Australasian Record*, February 20, 1933, 4.
7. Lucy Mabel Beavis Sustentation Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, Folder: "Beavis, Lucy Mabel," Document: "Miss L. M. Beavis."
8. "Church Schools in North New Zealand," *Australasian Record*, April 13, 1942, 8; "Affairs in North New Zealand," *Australasian Record*, March 8, 1943, 6.
9. Parker, "Lucy Mabel Beavis obituary."

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