

Mr. and Mrs. Gornold

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By Carl Whiteley



Mr. and Mrs. Royal Gornold
C.T. Photos.

WHENEVER we think of missionary work our minds usually turn to such places as the West Indies, darkest Africa or some little known island in the Far East.

In these places great work is being done for the Christian faith by a gallant few who have devoted their lives to God's work.

But here in Hampshire and only three miles from busy Christchurch what could be described as similar work is being carried out every week. Again by a small band of gallant people.

Holmsley South is often referred to as the forgotten settlement of problem families. Whatever may be thought of Holmsley South and the encampment of little huts among the pines the need for spiritual guidance is prevalent there as indeed it is in all parts of the world.

Mr. and Mrs. Royal Gornold, of 4, Boscombe Spa Road, realised this need in 1949. Mrs. Gornold, a former Hampshire County Children's Visitor, took an interest in the families of Holmsley South while doing welfare work.

STARTED SUNDAY SCHOOL

They decided to start a Sunday school in one of the huts and their great work has gone on ever since. Every Sunday afternoon, winter and summer, hail or snow, Mrs. Gornold, another helper, Miss Cynthia Edwards, of Branksome, and on occasions Mr. Gornold, travel to Holmsley South to open up their Sunday school for between 25 and 30 children between the ages of two and a half and 15.

Mrs. Gornold told me that she was led by God to do this work. "At times I have been disheartened and felt like giving up but always on these occasions something has told me that I must carry on," she said.

FORMER R.A.F. MESS

The Sunday school was first started in an old dilapidated hut, formerly an R.A.F. mess. Traders used to hold a market in the hut on Fridays and when the Gornolds arrived on Sunday afternoon they had to sweep the cabbages away and heat the place before the children arrived.

Their first scholar was an 11-year-old boy who, said Mrs. Gornold, could be extremely good or extremely naughty. He was a regular attender but on occasions would deliberately sing out of tune.

"That boy," recalled Mrs. Gornold, "could be one of the worst behaved in class but when I gave a talk one Sunday about accepting Jesus as their Saviour he was one of the 10 boys and girls who put up their hands to accept Jesus. My husband gave him a Bible and he regarded it as one of his most treasured possessions. This proves that there is good in every child. We are there to bring out that good and I think we are succeeding."

NOT EASY GOING

It has not been easy going for the three local missionaries. On one occasion Mrs. Gornold had a mother charging at her because her little boy who had been naughty was turned out of class. "This ended up happily with an invitation to the child's home for his birthday party," said Mrs. Gornold.

"You see." she added, "everything is worth while and when you receive letters from old scholars saying how wonderful God has been to them you realise that your work is receiving God's blessing."

The present Sunday school is in quite good condition but it has not always been so comfortable. One of the previous huts leaked and one class had to be held on the stage because the floor of the building was flooded. In another hut Mr. Gornold put in 33 panes of glass and six doors with the help of some of the children.

FREEWILL GIFTS

The Sunday school is supported entirely by freewill gifts. It is not attached to any particular church but is given good support by Canon R. P. Price, Vicar of Christchurch, who visits periodically to conduct a mass Christening ceremony. On such occasions there are sometimes as many as nine babies and young children to be christened.

Mr. and Mrs. Gornold have very little spare time. Mr. Gornold is a director of St. George Films, a company which produces religious films. He is also secretary to the Julia Kershaw Mission, a mission for Jews, and hon. treasurer of the Christian Road Safety League, of which Mrs. Gornold is local secretary. The league was founded by Mr. Gornold's sister, Mrs. B. Mackie, of Bournemouth. Miss Edwards, who joined the Sunday school about 1952, was trained at a London Bible College and teaches religious knowledge at a Poole county school.

SEEK NO REWARD

The Gornolds seek no reward other than that the children of Holmsley South have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. Mrs. Gornold has become known by some of the parents as "The Friend of Jesus". What better reward could a person have?