

Impact of the Scottish Mission in the Development of Kalimpong

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Abstract

The Scottish Mission advent into India has had a profound impact in the Eastern Himalayan region and Kalimpong in Darjeeling District in particular. Its main objective was to evangelize Tibet but when it failed to do so, the Scottish missionaries laid their sights nearer. Kalimpong geographically situated in the Eastern Himalayan area was thus looked upon as the ideal place for them to start their mission. In due course of time, Kalimpong came to exemplify the Scottish way of existence in all aspects of daily life, not only uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the natives like the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis, but have made landmark innovations in all sectors. No doubt, to spread the Christian faith was one of their objectives but they also took upon themselves the "white man's burden" to free the natives from their age-old beliefs and superstitions. They have also been instrumental in bringing development in the educational, health and cultural fields as well.

Keywords: Scottish Mission, Kalimpong, Eastern Himalaya, Teaching, Healing

Kalimpong in the early days was ruled in succession by the Sikkimese and Bhutanese. In 1706, the King of Bhutan won the territory from the Sikkimese monarch. It was originally known as Dalingkot and it was later christened as Kalimpong. It was after the 1864 Anglo- Bhutan war and with the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865, that the Bhutanese ceded Kalimpong to the British East India Company. A year later it was added to the Darjeeling District. Kalimpong located at 4000 feet above sea level in the northern hills of present day West Bengal occupied a contact zone of singular importance between the Tibetan world and Western modernity. Its nearness to the Nathula and Jelep passes was an added bonus. It gained economic importance as the major hub for the exchange of Tibetan and Western commodities. The main items brought from Tibet were Tibetan wool, ponies, musk, yak's tails and they took back salt, copper and manufactured articles. These commodities were exported from Lhasa to Calcutta and back via Kalimpong.

Kalimpong was thus on the threshold of development. Together with development, there was an increase of population with the historical mix of various ethnic groups, namely the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. Though the pages of history designate the Lepchas as the original inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim, the Nepalis who had migrated from Nepal to these areas had become the most forceful of all the races. There was also the influx of Bengalis, the traders like the Jews, Marwaris, Biharis and others and also the settlement of British colonial officers, Christian missionaries and Tibetan dignitaries.

The Early Christian Advances

In Nepal, the process of rapid Hinduisation and Sanskritisation of the Nepali society was taking place but the same could not happen in the Eastern Himalayas mainly because of the Lamaist Buddhist politico-religious power structure in Sikkim and Bhutan. In Darjeeling, there was a

vacuum structure with neither a strong hold of the Hindus or the Lamaist Buddhism. This void was filled in by the Christian missionaries. William Start, an independent missionary arrived in Darjeeling in 1841 and he formed the Darjeeling Mission. His main focus of attention was the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. He was later joined by Reverend Carl Niebel, a German missionary and in 1846 they published the Gospel of St. Mathew in Lepcha. Some Lepcha primers were prepared and a primary school was also opened. But till then education was imparted through the Hindi language. Start retired in 1852 but Niebel continued to work till his death in 1865. The book of Genesis, part of Exodus, Gospels of Mathew and John were translated in Lepcha. Luke and Acts were translated in Nepali. These later became the foundation on which William Macfarlane and his colleagues of the Church of Scotland built. There were other Christian Missions like the Roman Catholics who had established their presence in Darjeeling in 1846¹ and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission who arrived in Darjeeling in 1892 and who focused on the Tibetans and Bhutanese. Its headquarters was established in Ghoom.

The Scottish Mission advent into India has had a profound impact in the Eastern Himalayan region and Kalimpong in Darjeeling District in particular. Its true agenda was the evangelization of Tibet, which was considered to be the pinnacle of salvation work for the missionaries. Unfortunately, their zeal was not reciprocated by the Tibetans and the missionaries laid their sights nearer. Kalimpong, geographically situated on the Eastern Himalayan area was the ideal place for them to start their mission. The rolling hills and pleasant climes reminded them of their Dundee and Glasgow homes. In due course of time, Kalimpong came to exemplify the Scottish way of existence in all aspects with regard to daily life, not only uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the natives but also made landmark innovations with regard to education, health and above all religion.

Influence of the Scottish Missionaries in Education in Kalimpong

The real education in the Darjeeling hills started with the arrival of William Macfarlane of the Church of Scotland Mission. He was born on 5th January 1840 in Perthshire, Scotland. He was offered a scholarship for further studies to Cambridge but he declined, having dedicated his career to the Ministry. He was initially sent to Gaya by the Church of Scotland, Foreign Mission Committee and soon found that it was difficult to reach the people there. Instead when he saw hope in spreading the message of Christianity in Darjeeling, he persuaded his authorities for abandoning the Gaya Mission in favour of Darjeeling. He was transferred to Darjeeling on June 10th, 1870. He soon abolished the Mission headquarters in Gaya and also started a school in a rented house just above the Ging tea garden with twenty Nepali and Lepcha orphans. He was impressed by the Lepchas' nearly childlike simplicity in receiving the teaching of Christ.² He soon realized that for the development of the district and for raising the people in the scale of civilization, there was a need to develop a proper system of education. Towards this goal there was a need to have trained teachers who could impart education to the hill people. Therefore, a Training school was set up in Darjeeling which was attended by Lepchas, Nepalis and Bhutias. They were taught the ordinary branches of school knowledge, arithmetic, geography, history and Grammar. He believed in giving education through the Hindi language, partly because he had

¹ E.C.Dozey, *A Concise History of the Darjeeling District since 1835 with a Complete Itinerary of Tours in Sikkim and the District*, Calcutta, Jetsun Publishing House, 1989, pp. 73-74.

² R. K. Sprigg, "Macfarlane and the Macfarlane Church," *Macfarlane Memorial Church Centenary Magazine*, Kalimpong, 1991, pp. 1-7.

studied the language and also because he had seen the affinity between the Hindi and Nepali languages. He also realized that both Lepchas and Bhutias were able to converse in Nepali. The text books were thus prepared in Nepali. Special attention was devoted to the instruction in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. He also set out before him the task of learning the Nepali language, "direct preaching of the word to the Tribals, literature work to be built on the efforts of Start and Niebel and establish schools."³

Macfarlane was greatly assisted by his sister, Ms Margaret Ann, who was in charge of the training school. He also got the sympathy and support from the tea planters who were Englishmen and Scots and who also offered to build schools if he could supply the teachers. He could also enlist the support of the Bengal Government to start the primary schools all over the district. By 1872-73, there were 25 schools with 615 boys and girls receiving instruction including the ones in Dhotre, Chungthung, Gel and Mungpoo.⁴ In the hill regions of Darjeeling district, both the church and the schools have gone together ever since the advent of missionaries, who had chosen the pen rather than the sword in evangelizing and disseminating education.

The efforts of the missionaries soon bore fruit. In 1874, there were the first baptisms among the natives in Darjeeling. Bhim Lal Dewan was one of the first converts to Christianity. The others included Ganga Prasad Pradhan,⁵ Sukhman Limbu and others. After ten years, Macfarlane left Darjeeling to his colleagues and established his base eastwards in Kalimpong, seeing more favourable conditions for the spread of Christianity.⁶ Both Darjeeling and Kurseong were surrounded by tea gardens and employed immigrant labourers. Even though the planters were impressed with the work of the Scottish Mission, they were quite reluctant to give away the labourers in the fields. On the contrary, in Kalimpong, "the population was independent agriculturists, masters of their own time and therefore missionaries could concentrate more on local people."⁷

While on furlough Macfarlane in 1881, he addressed many meetings regarding the work of the missionaries in the Eastern Himalayas. In the process, the Missionary Association of four Scottish universities, St Andrew, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh were touched by his addresses. It was resolved to form a Scottish Universities Mission (SUM). Together with the Foreign Mission Committee, the task of selecting a suitable field for the new mission was entrusted to Macfarlane and Independent Sikkim was looked upon as the field for the SUM. With Kalimpong as the headquarters, he proposed that an Institution should be established at Kalimpong for the teachers and catechists for the three mission fields of Darjeeling, Sikkim and Kalimpong. On April 19th, 1886, the Training Institute was opened in temporary rented quarters with twelve students and on 1st April 1887, the Institution was opened in the building now used as the junior section by the Girls' School. At the end of June 1887, there were about 36 students.⁸

³ Cindy Perry, *Nepali around the World: Emphasizing Nepali Christians of the Himalayas*, Kathmandu, Ekta Books, 1997, p. 26.

⁴ Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature*, New Delhi, Sahitya Academy, 1984, p. 25.

⁵ Ganga Prasad Pradhan was the first ordained Nepali Pastor, translator of the Nepali Bible completed in 1914 after forty years of labour, pioneer of Nepali literature and owner of the first Nepali Press.

⁶ Darjeeling was to be looked after later by Rev. A. Turnbull.

⁷ Cindy Perry, 1997, *op cit*, p. 48.

⁸ J.S. Rai, "Scottish Universities' Mission Institute (1886-2011): A Compendium," *Sumite*, 2011, Vol. LIV, pp. 32-41.

The Training Institute was mainly designed to prepare Christians to preach in Sikkim and also to train school teachers. It became a highly important centre for the dissemination not only of Christianity but also of western modernity through education. By the end of the Century, 11 of its graduates were teaching over 300 pupils in Sikkim and a great number of Christians were employed in the region as teachers and medical compounders. In the entire Kalimpong District, there were 542 Christians and in the three allied Missions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong Guild Mission and Sikkim Universities Mission there were about 1100.

It was Macfarlane's efforts that laid the foundations of education and the Educational Department of the Church of Scotland Mission work can be said to be the most important factor in the spread of knowledge among the people. Macfarlane died at the age of 47 on 15th February, 1887 and on the day of his death, he was busily engaged in the erection of a building to be the Training Institute for native catechists. Macfarlane was followed by Rev. W.S. Sutherland to supervise the work of the Kalimpong Mission and that of the SUM. Sutherland was an exceptional educationist and as Principal of the Institute, he devoted his heart and soul to teaching and training teachers. By 1889, nine schools had been established at Kalimpong like in Chhobo, Bam (Bong Bustee), Mangwa, Mongpoo and Sitong with a total of 274 students.⁹ The number of scholars in 1891 was 1601 and in 1901 there were 3540 scholars.¹⁰ Sutherland returned after twenty years in Kalimpong and was followed by other Principals like John Macara, R.E. Taylor, W. G. Mckean and others. In 1907 Sutherland returned again and retired in 1920. He was followed by other stalwarts like Dr. G. Ogg, G.S. Mill and others.

The SUM evolved slowly and gradually and by the beginning of the 20th Century had been raised to a high school and was the only High school in the sub-division. In February 1914 "of the 57 students in training, all of whom were Christians, 5 are Mechis, 5 are Tibetans, 22 are Nepalis and 25 are Lepchas. Of the 238 pupils in the Middle English school, the Nepalis number 153 and of these 30 are Christians and 123 are Hindus, Lepchas number 36, of whom 31 are Christians and 5 Animists. Tibetans number 21 of whom 3 are Christians and 18 Buddhists. Marwaris and others from the plains of India number 17, of whom 14 are Hindus and 3 Mohammedans. Chinese number 11, all of whom are Confucians."¹¹ (The first qualified native doctor, Dr. Ongden Rongong, son of Namthak Rongong, who was the first ordained Native pastor; the first native District Inspector of schools, Nandlal had been educated in this Institution).

The Teacher's Training School recognized by the Government as the Guru Training was started in 1908. All teachers of Primary Mission Schools were sent to SUMI for their refresher courses. In fact, this Training School was the only one centre of training for the whole Eastern Himalayan region stretching from Sikkim to Assam and from Bhutan to Nepal. Thus, there was the steady flow of students here from Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Nepal and Bhutan as well. In 1921, the old Junior Certificate was abolished and the passing out standard was raised to Middle English for all teachers. In 1922, the High School was recognized by the University of Calcutta to present candidates at the Matriculation Examination.¹² Later the Government also recognized

⁹ R.K. Sprigg, 1991, *op cit*, p. 7.

¹⁰ "Life and Work", *Magazine of the Church of Scotland*, 1882-1905.

¹¹ D.G. Manuel, *A Gladdening River: Twenty-Five Years' Guild Influence among the Himalayas*, London, A & C Black Ltd., Edinburgh, R & R Clark Ltd., 1914, p. 133.

¹² J.S. Rai, 2011, *op cit*, p. 32-41.

the Institution as an Intermediate Arts College and classes were started for the session 1933-34. This Institution, the foundations of which were laid by the Scottish Missions is carrying on its legacy of imparting education to its native population. At present, there are about 2800 boys receiving education in it. In 2011, it celebrated its 125th Anniversary and is still going strong.

The Mission had also opened an Anglo-Hindi school in the late 1890's because there had been a desire to learn the language of the ruling class. Harkadhoj Pradhan had served as its Head-Master. (The first pupil of the Anglo-Hindi school to pass the Middle English Exam, direct from Kalimpong was Ongden Rongong. His younger brother had also gained a scholarship in the lower primary education). This school was later amalgamated with the Training Institute. The Government had also opened a Bhutia Boarding School in 1874 mainly to have western educated Tibetan speaking youths to assist in future British contacts with Tibet. Thus, both the Government and the Mission benefitted from each other's activities. The Tibetan school was then under Evan Mackenzie and Chopa was the teacher there and had been a Christian since 1890. Mackenzie helped in the revision of the Tibetan New Testament.

Dr. John Anderson Graham

The Young Men's Guild was formed in Scotland in 1881; their main motto was "[w]e seek the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." Their objective was to unite societies to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by promoting the spiritual and intellectual life of young men and by encouraging them to undertake works of Christian usefulness. Professor A.H. Charteris was the founder and Honorary President of the Young Men's Guild. Dr. John Anderson Graham was the Secretary of the same and was ordained as the first foreign missionary of the Guild on 13 January 1889 and was sent to Kalimpong as a missionary. He married Ms. Katherine Conachie and both of them arrived in Kalimpong in April 1889. Graham was soon busy preaching the word of God to people in Kalimpong, Sikkim and Bhutan. But his work went far beyond the creation of a series of Christian congregations. As a missionary, he was responsible for the growth of Christian churches, schools and hospitals. "Many boys have gone out from these schools to be teachers and preachers or to undertake other work and the Christian community itself contains a large percentage of literate people. The teachers are expected to assist in the various services and in this way, get training in Pastoral Theology and the promotion is to the place of a Catechist."¹³

He was also keenly involved in economic development activities. He encouraged local farmers to improve their farming techniques. In 1891, he started the Agri-Horticultural Exhibition, a *Mela*, to instill the spirit of competition among farmers, which through the generous efforts of the Government and local planters grew rapidly. Various kinds of agricultural produce and animals of the district were brought together. Tea was brought by the planters; the Tibetans brought mules, ponies, silk and other merchandise. He also established the Co-operative Credit Society which helped local people to escape the high rates charged by money-lenders.

On 1 January 1889, there were 522 baptised Christians in Kalimpong District, 333 at Kalimpong, 45 at Mangwa, 86 at Sitong and 58 at Sunathong.¹⁴ Majority of those converted were

¹³ J.A. Graham, *On the Threshold of Three Closed Lands: The Guild Outpost of the Eastern Himalayas*, Edinburgh, R&R Clark, 1897, p. 126.

¹⁴ E. Panlook, "Dr. J.A. Graham and Macfarlane Church," in *Macfarlane Memorial Church Centenary Magazine*, Kalimpong, 1991, pp. 11-12.

Lepchas including their spiritual healers known as Bongthings(males) and Bijwanis(females); for example, in Sitong there were 800 Lepchas and 1/6 had become Christians. Graham saw that there was the need of a House of Worship to accommodate the increasing number of Christians in Kalimpong. It was under the stewardship of Sutherland that a plan was made for the building of a church and it was Dr. Graham who appealed to both Scotland and India for financial help. The Church would be named Macfarlane Memorial Church in memory of William Macfarlane, the pioneer of the Scottish missionary activity in the Eastern Himalayas. The opening of the Church was done on 1 November (Sunday), 1891 in which at least 700 were present. "On that day, sixteen years before, there was not a single native Christian in Kalimpong." An appropriate location had been chosen for the Church, which could be seen from all the five surrounding valleys.

Later Dr. Graham diverted his attention to the children of unofficial union of the locals and children of planters, the Anglo-Indian Community, known as Eurasians. The first batch of children was received on 24 September 1900. On 8 November 1900, the foundation stone was laid of the Woodburn Cottage, the first of the St. Andrew's Colonial Homes, later renamed as Dr. Grahams' Homes on behalf of the needy, orphaned and abandoned Anglo-Indian children and the numerous destitute from the streets of Calcutta and tea plantations of Darjeeling, the Dooars and the Terai. He was a strong believer of the cottage system, with the presence of House Parents in each cottage, providing the children with a home and teaching them to be responsible, interdependent and caring. The main object was to prepare the children with confidence for the battle of life. In addition to this, there was also the babies' cottage, known as the Lucia Cottage, opened in 1910. This was used not only for the youngest of children but also served as the training ground for Nursery nurses. The curriculum proposed was that the girls should get special training in (i) Management of young children, (ii) Kindergarten teaching so as to be able to begin the education of young children, (iii) Caring for the sick - nursing, hygiene and sick room cooking.¹⁵ The girls were given this training after they passed the sixth standard. It had and still has its own farm complete with dairy, poultry, piggery and agricultural yield. He also created the concept of the general provisions stores, which housed edible items, and attached to it was also the first bakery ever developed in Kalimpong. Furthermore, the need of medical health arose and so a hospital catering to the needs of his staff and students was established. Formerly known as the Steele Memorial Hospital, it is now known as the Steele Memorial Centre. Keeping in mind the local populace, a dispensary was also established and is known till date as the Brinceley Memorial Dispensary. At present, this educational Institute provides education to more than 1500 boys and girls, Eurasians, Anglo-Indians and locals. It is located in a 500-acre estate on the slopes of the Deolo Hill. Dr. Grahams fondly known as 'Daddy Grahams' was and is still revered by all, Christians, non-Christians, rich and poor, hill folks and plains people, planters and labourers.

Education of Girls

The Church of Scotland Mission has also done a great deal of work in the field of education for the girls and women of the region. Mrs. Katherine Graham was greatly instrumental in appealing to the Church of Scotland Guild Mission to send out a lady teacher in order to start a formal school for girls. Ms. Lucy Higginson, the first lady teacher, was sent in 1889 and stayed

¹⁵ Dick B. Dewan, 1991, *op cit*, p.195

for six years. There were already 33 girls on the rolls. The proportion of girls to boys attending the Mission School was 1 to 7 in 1891 and was 1 to 6 in 1901. Only in the centres of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong there were separate schools for girls taught by women teachers. The first lady Principal of the Girls' school in Kalimpong, Ms. Lily Waugh, came in 1899 and took charge in 1900. A new hostel was erected towards the close of 1913 to accommodate sixty girls and this enabled even girls from the remote areas to come to study and receive not only bookish knowledge but also instructions in cooking, cleaning and mending.¹⁶ Many church activities sprang from the training of the girl students here and many trained girls later took up the work of teaching in the school earnestly. Later, it was with the efforts of Ms. Edith Smith that the school was raised to the status of a High School in 1924 and its first candidate sat for the Matriculation Examination in 1926. Now the school has about 2000 students on its rolls.

The Women's Guild had also been formed in Kalimpong and the native women were gradually taking part in the various meetings, taking Sunday schools and contributing through their own means, objects like blankets to the hospitals, and robes for the catechists.

The Kalimpong Homes Industry

This was started in 1897 mainly to enable the native women in becoming financially independent and also to learn habits of usefulness and industry in their own homes. Women knitted stockings, socks, silk ties, crochet lace and table centers. They were paid when their articles were finished and Mrs. Graham took the responsibility for their sale. Weaving as a cottage industry was started and the Lace Industry was set up in the beginning of 1905 with the hope that many of the poorer members would be put in a possibility of earning their living, the community could be strengthened financially, and therefore would be better able to take the support of their own pastors and teachers.¹⁷ Work was done on Bhutanese, Lepcha and Sikkimese designed clothes. More than five hundred people used to work in this industry when it was managed by the Scottish missionaries. This industry later came to be known as the Kalimpong Arts and Crafts Centre and was converted into a Co-operative Society in 1956. Many skilled workers left the industry and started off on their own. It is regretful that during the GNLFF Agitation in the 1980's, this Industry was burnt down and it can only be hoped that it will again be revived to its former glory.

The Scottish Mission and Health

Teaching, Healing and Preaching were the three goals of the evangelical agencies. Soon after her arrival in Kalimpong with Dr. Graham, Mrs. Katherine Homes, who was a qualified nurse appealed to the Women's Guild, to complete the Guild Mission by erecting a cottage hospital at Kalimpong. Since it was a period of growing professional specialization, the Missionaries were anxious to avoid accusation of quackery, recognized the need for trained physicians to provide medical services at the mission.¹⁸ Dr. C. F. Ponder as a medical missionary arrived in Kaliimpong in August 1893. Dr. Ponder had initially worked as a tea planter in the Dooars and had gone back to study medicine in Edinburgh. Therefore, he understood the natives well

¹⁶ Manuel, 1914, *op cit*, p. 169.

¹⁷ "Women's Guild Supplement, Life and Work," November 1904.

¹⁸ David Hardiman (ed), *Healing Bodies, Saving Souls: Medical Missions in Asia and Africa*, Amsterdam, New York, Rodopi Press, 2006, pp. 9-14.

and also knew their language. Together with treating people, he made tours in the villages of Kalimpong and even went down to the Dooars to preach. The 25 bed Charteris Hospital was soon opened in 1894 and it was the gift of the Women's Guild of the Church of Scotland. It was named after Professor A.H. Charteris of the University of Edinburgh, who had first influenced the Guild Mission in Scotland.

From the letter written by Dr. Ponder on 20 November 1893, to Mrs. Charteris, President of the Women's Guild of the Church of Scotland, we get an idea of the state of things in the field of health in Kalimpong. "I think some of the Scottish friends would be surprised at the filthy conditions of some of the patients. They almost seemed clothed in dirt. One who came with an ulcer on his leg told me that he had not bathed for 12 years. Certainly, one of the functions of the hospitals will be the teaching of cleanliness to the people."¹⁹

Mrs. Graham was later joined by Dr. Ponder's sister, Ms. Annie Ponder, who came to Kalimpong as a missionary nurse on 30 April 1895, and took charge of the Hospital nursing. Till November 1897, 16,011 cases were treated against 3,644 in 1896. P. Nolan, Commissioner of Rajshahi, 17 November 1897 writes, "[a]ll the medical wants of the people must be met with completeness unknown in any part of Bengal, perhaps of India." Dr. Ponder also trained men to be compounders. Laborious, intelligent and patient youth were selected and a thorough practical and theoretical coaching was given to them. After three years they were sent to Patna Medical School for the completion of the course. Some of the first native doctors were Yensing Sitling, Ongden Rongong, Prem Tshering Rongong, Lemsing Foning, Bishnual Diskit, Kashinath Chettri and others who had all had their first training here. Similarly, Nurses Training started here in 1913 and the Nurses Training is still going on.

Grants were given by the Government and both the Government and the Mission worked in co-operation. Various dispensaries were also opened like the one in Pedong which was opened in 1897 and was placed under a native compounder cum catechist, trained by the Scottish missionary doctors. Since leprosy was also rampant at that time and since it was not right to keep the lepers in the Hospital together with the other patients, a Leprosy hospital was also built later with its own church nearby.

Together with healing of the sick, anyone who came to the hospital was told about the Saviour and portions of the Scriptures were read to them. 'Bag of medicines' was thus an essential part of the missionaries' work. Initially it was difficult for the missionaries and doctors to deal with the native people who were superstitious by nature. They believed that those who died in the hospitals, their spirits would haunt them. Not only this, the Nepalese believed in the caste system and high caste patients who came to the Hospital like the *Bahun*s and *Chettris*, refused to take food fearing they would lose their caste. During 1900, the number of out-patients in the hospital was 4,360, in-patients were 343 and patients needing surgery were 31 in number.²⁰ Most of the patients who came to be treated belonged to Christian households. But there were also some Hindus and Buddhists.

¹⁹ "Life and Work" September, 1893.

²⁰ Letters from our Missionaries, Rev. Graham, Second Series No 40, Kalimpong, 23 July 1901, "Young Men's Guild Supplement, Life and Work," September 1901.

The operation theatre was opened in 1904. The Charteris Hospital became the main centre of Western medicine not only in the district but also had its reach far in Sikkim and Bhutan as well. It also became the main medical training centre for training medical staff who later served in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Dr. Ponder was succeeded by Dr. Macdonald and other doctors. The last British doctor who served Charteris Hospital was Dr. Craig Duncan but there are no doctors of foreign descent today. The hospital served the local people for more than eighty years. In 1972, the hospital was demolished except for the surgical ward. In 1973, it was handed over to the Bengal Government and is today known as the Kalimpong sub-divisional hospital.

Conclusion

The influence and impact of the Scottish missionaries proves the fact that their presence had far reaching effects. Not only did the reforms in the spheres of education, religion and health manifest profoundly in the region, contrary to what many other historians say, but also led to the progress and development of the region. The efforts of those few brave men and women who took it upon themselves, prompted by their noble calling for a cause, did make a difference in the lives of the dwellers of a land far from their home across the seven seas in this once remote Himalayan region. Today the infrastructure with regards to health, education and civic sensibilities emulate the model set up by those early pioneers who at times, regarded as unsung heroes, have done so much for the community of Kalimpong of the Eastern Himalayan region.

