

# 救世軍

## SAVE THE WORLD ARMY

China missionary service of New Zealand Salvation Army officer Eva Ludbrook (nee Wilkinson)



*Eva in Chinese Salvation Army uniform – Peking c1920*

Eva Wilkinson was born into a pioneering Salvation Army officer family. In 1883 her father Alfred Wilkinson and mother Elizabeth Westlake found themselves separately at the first open air service of The Salvation Army in New Zealand. It occurred on 1 April at The Fountain in Dunedin. They joined The Salvation Army from that time and served as officers in those early years, eventually marrying in 1888. Part of their officer service was fulfilled in Australia and this was where Eva was born at Wallsend, NSW on 14 June 1890. This was tough service affecting the whole family - the eldest sister died of influenza in 1891 while the family was at Woolloomooloo.

Eva was one of five children and the pioneering Salvation Army spirit caught hold of her. She describes being converted at age five and in her teens wanting to do a missionary work among the Maori. In her own words "I have been brought up as a Salvationist." She was a Corps Cadet at age 14 at North Dunedin, then at 15 transferred to the senior corps. At 17 she was appointed Senior Secretary, a position she also held at Sydenham when the family transferred there around 1910. Sydenham Corps provided her with the opportunity to work with young people including as a Guard, and also organist.

She was accepted for officer training on 13 November 1913 out of Sydenham Corps. The training lasted from 12 March 1914 to 14 January 1915. Eva's first appointment was to Paeroa Corps until 20 May 1915. She then transferred to the Field Department at National Headquarters where she became aware of the scope of the Army's missionary work. Eva remained there until she was accepted for overseas service in China in 1917.



*The War Cry 24 February 1917*

## The China Party

A contingent of four New Zealand women officers were selected for China. Captain Louie Smith, Captain Avelis Andrews, Captain Eva Wilkinson and Adjutant Nellie Newton. After a special farewell service conducted by Commissioner & Mrs Hodder, these officers left for Sydney early in 1917 where they joined the Australian contingent. This China Party of 14 officers was given a final farewell by Commissioner Hay of Australia at Sydney Congress Hall. Commissioner Hodder was also present and introduced the New Zealanders.

Captain Wilkinson was the first of the Kiwis to speak and the War Cry of 10 March 1917 records her words – "... she told the interested audience that she had participated in the rough, early day fighting in the very street in which the Congress Hall was situated. For so young a lass this was a surprising statement, understood when she stated that she was being nursed by a Sister comrade at an open-air meeting, when a stone thrown at her father, the Officer, leading, glancing off, hit her in the forehead. The Captain still carries the mark of this early fighting all her days." The farewell meeting was described in the War Cry as "... a truly splendid meeting which will live for ever in the memory of many who participated."



*The War Cry - 10 March 1917*

## **Journey to Peking**

The China Party sailed for China via Hong Kong and Japan. After Eva's safe arrival in Peking she wrote to Commissioner Hodder on 4 April 1917 (Excerpts follow).

"As you will already know, we have arrived safely in Peking and are very comfortably settled. The sights and sounds which at first were so strange to us, we are becoming quite accustomed to, and are not much disturbed thereby.

"The journey from Sydney till nearing Hong Kong was very pleasant, but the night before reaching that port we encountered a typhoon and were somewhat tossed about. From Hong Kong to Japan ... the weather was getting cold.

"We were rather disappointed at not being able to get ashore at Nagasaki ... Brigadier Beaumont and several comrades met us [on board] ... The Japanese comrades were of great assistance in the transhipping of our luggage, which had to be done as hastily as possible, seeing the boat for China had been delayed an hour or two on our account.

"The weather continued very cold and we encountered a snow storm before reaching China. Our spirits have kept up all the time and altogether we have been a happy party. The railway officials at the place of landing, Tangku (possibly Hangzhou), and then further on at Tientsin (possibly Tianjin), showed us great kindness and helped in every way possible. This you will understand meant a great deal to strangers in a strange land.

"Commissioner Mitchell, who had arrived the day before us, Staff Captain & Mrs Chard, Ensign Drury, Captain Cunningham and several Chinese comrades met us at Peking and we received a very hearty welcome. After a short rickshaw ride, we arrived at the place which was to be our future home. Everything seemed to have been provided which was necessary for our comfort and we felt deeply grateful to God for all his goodness.

"Our first day in Peking was a Sunday and we felt glad of this, because it gave us an opportunity of seeing the work it was possible to do. A nice crowd assembled for each meeting and we were much inspired by the earnestness of the recruits, especially of the women. There have been some good cases of conversion ... For the afternoon a Junior meeting was held, with an attendance of just over 120 and 11 companies [classes] were

conducted. Each with a Chinese teacher, so you will perhaps be able to judge something of the progress which the recruits are making. At the close of the night meeting there were five seekers for salvation.

“The wonderful opportunity before us makes us feel that it was well worth coming for and we hope to be able to put in good service.

“The learning of the language will be a difficult matter, but we have commenced and are working at it as hard as possible. We have our own language school, which is considered to be the best plan. In addition to the united class, we study with individual teachers, thus what is taught in class is gone over again and by this means, the words and sentences are fixed on our minds.

“We remembered you in our prayers.”

### **Peking Wedding and Banquet**

On 12 December 1917 Ensign Arthur Ludbrook left England for China. He arrived in Peking via Canada on 5 February 1918. His appointment was as Private Secretary to the Territorial Commander and then as Accountant THQ in 1919.

This is where Eva and Arthur met. Captain Wilkinson and then Adjutant Ludbrook were married in Peking on 31 January 1920. Commissioner Pearce, Territorial Commander China North, had issued the wedding invitations to attend at The Salvation Army Hall in Morrison Street an Acacia-lined street where The Salvation Army also had its China North headquarters. Situated just to the north of the Legation Quarter, this street was always crowded. It was a location where foreigners and Chinese could readily mingle among clothing stores and curio shops, food outlets, drycleaners and medicine shops. This was where the wedding took place. The 6pm wedding was preceded by a 4pm banquet at Hsi T'ang Tju Hutung.

Their first child Nellie born December 1920 died 18 months later. In 1921 Arthur was appointed Secretary Trade & Printing Department. Daughter Myrtle was born 27 May 1923. In 1926 Kenneth was born but did not survive to the end of his first year. In 1923 Arthur attained the rank of Staff Captain. In September 1924 they enjoyed furlough in New Zealand and England before sailing for China in August 1925.



*Eva & Arthur with daughter Myrtle.*



*Eva wearing the 'Save World Army' hat holding Myrtle.*

### **Walking in Shanghai**

Eva and Arthur were appointed to Shanghai for 9 months in 1927 during which time son Allan was born.

While in Shanghai they walked to the nearby Army corps for Sunday meetings.

"I wish you could join us on our walk to the Sunday morning meeting. We turn right as we leave the large building in which we live – this faces what Shanghailanders call the Soochow Creek, really a very busy waterway, so we have buildings on our right and river on our left. After crossing the first street just ahead of us we come to a cobbled road ... good exercise for the feet, it is said. There are many things being sold by the side of the road, and also many people seeking ways and means of getting a living. Shoe cleaners, barbers, cigarette makers (with tobacco possibly extracted from cigarette ends picked up from the dirty streets), food stalls selling piping hot food etc.

“On the river side usually there is much business being done as commodities are being landed from the small river boats. Charcoal, for instance, and round the charcoal baskets children and grownups are seen with bags of varying sizes which they try to fill from droppings or from what they can steal. If it is rice or cotton wool, the sight is just the same. Wood, too, comes in great quantities ... from small pieces for kindling mostly tied in bundles, to much larger pieces can be bought.

“As we walk along there are all kinds of people to be seen, from the beggar to the very well dressed.

“At the third bridge from our building we cross the river and turn right again – here all kinds of food are offered for sale, it is a kind of street market. There is fish, pork, vegetables and fruit etc. We have a great admiration for the ordinary Chinese who is doing his best to find some means of earning a living. They are to be found on almost every street, selling shoe laces, buttons, elastic, stationery, and many other things, some with a little tray carried in front of them or a cloth spread on the side of the road.

“As goods arrive by boats some are taken away in lorries and seeing there is a shortage of petrol, new machinery has been attached to some of these vehicles ... so that wood can be burned to give the heat which generates the power. What a smoke this makes! ... As we pass along children call out in Chinese ‘foreigners, foreigners’ or sometimes in English ‘Hello, Hello’ and often seem pleased if we respond with a greeting.

“Some people look with great interest and wonderment at the three characters ‘Save World Army’ on our hats – so mysterious a designation it is to them ... A tremendously challenging name surely, but we remind ourselves that Jesus indeed came to Save the World.

“At last we reach our small Hall. It was at one time a military hut, but it has been in our possession for many years now. Last year it was renovated and it looks quite attractive inside. Painted green it gives a clean and bright appearance to the interior (Its seating capacity is about 200). As we enter, the red characters painted on the wall at the back of the platform stand out and we are told that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’. The white characters written just above the plain polished Penitent Form have their message too ‘Whoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved’.”

### **Worship - Shanghai Style**

“The Congregation! ... mostly very poor people, a few a little better class – some have been Christians for years, some are very young in the faith – some can read, some can’t – some of the people are clean in their dress, some are not and wear rather ragged clothing – one or two are crippled and almost blind. But to worship in the Hall seems to be the joy of their lives – lives which are ordinarily dull and monotonous and filled with many problems. Recently in one of our meetings we were singing ‘Count your blessings’ and as I looked around it seemed to me that most of these poor folk had very few to count, and yet they entered into the singing (Shanghai people can’t sing – at least the people who attended our corps can’t, but they make noise) as though they really had many blessings.

“Sometimes opportunity is given for testimonies and, while we understand very little of Shanghai talk (so different from what is spoken further north) yet we pick up enough to know that someone is telling how the Lord had healed him and another how the Lord had helped her in some difficulty; their faith is simple. The one who testified that the Lord had healed him told how he was trying to honour the Lord by giving just weights in his very small business.

“As I worship with them my heart is touched and I think how the Lord Jesus would have found pleasure in being one of a congregation of this description; of course He is, but invisible.

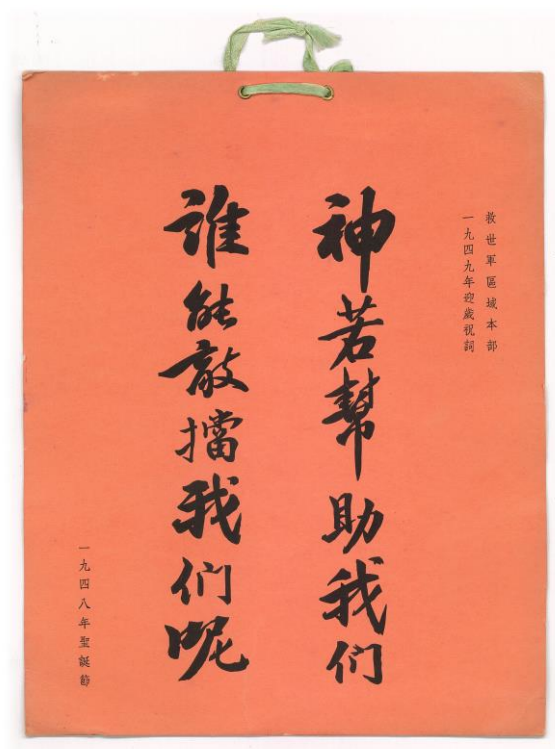
“To take this walk on Sunday evening is a very unsavoury business ... the night carts tip their contents into the river. Odour! Phew! ... Well, as we near the Hall and see the Flag flying, hear the drum beating and see a good crowd listening to the message, we feel it is worthwhile ... In the new state of the future all this [living conditions] is supposed to be wiped out and perfect conditions reached – say in 50 years time. I wonder!”

### **Tumultuous Change Ahead**

They left Shanghai for India in December 1927 where Arthur was to serve as Financial Secretary, located in Bombay. In 1928 Arthur was promoted to Major. Their service in India lasted until their departure for China on 29 November 1932. There was a time of furlough during 1933 to both New Zealand and England. In 1934 Arthur was appointed General Secretary China North with the rank of Brigadier.



The Japanese invasion of China which commenced 7 July 1937 included the capture of Shanghai, Beijing (Peking) and Nanjing – this was the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War and lasted until 9 September 1945. Arthur was promoted to Chief Secretary China North in 1940 based in Peking.



*North China Territory motto for 1941 – “If God be for us who can be against us?”*

By 1941 the Japanese had silenced The Salvation Army and by 1943 foreigners including European Salvationists were interned in camps. The Army's 93 evangelistic centres were shut, along with the girl's home, boy's home, medical centres such as hospital, clinic and sanatorium, men's shelters, discharged prisoners aid department, beggars camp and relief for foreign persons. Just prior to this occurring the Ludbrook's daughter Myrtle was en-route to England to take advantage of a scholarship gained in China. Because of the war situation she was diverted to Canada and while there took up the profession of nursing. It would be over five years before she saw her parents again.

Arthur, Eva and son Allan were interned at the Lunghua Civil Assembly Centre until being freed in 1945. In the New Zealand War Cry of 24 November 1945 Eva related their experience of freedom from internment based on a letter received by her sister Mrs Brigadier Jessie Bracegirdle.

“On the 15 of October – exactly two months after the cessation of hostilities – the way opened up for us to leave camp. Things have moved slowly here, and many people are still in camp, but the Australian Government went ahead and opened a Hostel for its people, and also offered accommodation to New Zealanders. So here we are!

“How wonderful it is to be here, too, after camp. Nicely prepared meals, a room to ourselves, and also a bathroom. Then it is central, and means a great deal from a business standpoint. Our camp – Lunghua – was an hour’s motor ride from Shanghai, over a very rough road, and it was exceedingly trying to undertake the journey to and fro.

“Yesterday a New Zealand representative flew from Hong Kong and visited us here. He was Brigadier Clifton (nephew of Lieut.-Commissioner Bladin), and he informed us that New Zealanders were to be accorded the same privileges as Australians. We are here now on our own merit as well as by the courtesy of the Australians. Tomorrow, therefore, I will be collecting £10 (which is a gift towards repatriation) whether leaving immediately or not. The Australian Red Cross has also made gifts of clothing to all Allied internees. This has been very acceptable, especially as everything was a very good quality and worth having.

“We are fairly well but feeling the need of change and quiet. Major Su and other Chinese Officers are anxious for Arthur to return north and pick up the threads again. This will be a great privilege for him. The Chinese have carried on very courageously and preserved The Salvation Army Work (on a smaller scale, of course) during these two and a half years. Up north the situation is rather chaotic, and communications are disrupted. Travelling is difficult and railway lines seem to be cut. Perhaps Arthur will be able to go by plane. Allan and I will probably stay here until he returns from the north.”

By the time this report was published The Salvation Army Flag was again flying from the Headquarters building in Peking.



*An officer believed to be Arthur unfurling the Army Flag at Peking after WWII.*

In 1946 the Lubrooks left China for England. By the end of that year Arthur was appointed Territorial Commander for North China and returned to China in 1947 to fulfil that role. By 1948 Chinese Communist forces were exerting power within China and coming closer to Peking. The Salvation Army in North China found it necessary to move the Headquarters from Peking to Shanghai in the south.

In 1949 the Communists had won their 'War of Liberation' and on 1 October 1949 Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed "The people of China have risen up!" This new government saw missionary work in China as 'driven' by foreign powers. The Army and other churches were required to follow new guidelines:

1. No foreigners could hold executive positions or any other positions.
2. There must be no connection with any foreign agencies.
3. Properties must be transferred to the China Christian Council, and its land belonged to the People's Government.

This was an exceptionally difficult time for Arthur having to manoeuvre through the ever increasing strictness of Government requirements which included the 'accusation meetings', and ultimately the obligation to hand over control to Chinese Officers and to sever connections with International Headquarters (IHQ) of The Salvation Army – no authority for IHQ and no communication permitted. Arthur felt the International Secretary had left him to sink or swim. By 1952, having completed all he could for the Chinese Officers and Salvationists,

Arthur left for England where he arrived 18 February 1952. With Eva they remained in service at National Headquarters until retirement in England on 29 November 1954.



*Colonel & Mrs Ludbrook.*

Eva was Promoted to Glory 26 October 1978 and Arthur on 8 September 1989.

A private Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for Eva was held at the home of her sister Lila Wilkinson in Christchurch on Friday 17 November 1978. The final song was written by John Oxenham and the words of the first verse make a fitting reflection:

*In Christ there is no east or west  
In him no south or north  
But one great fellowship of love  
Throughout the whole wide earth.*

**Written by Selwyn Bracegirdle (Great Nephew of Eva) February 2016**

## SOURCES

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