

RMAF



Retired Missionary Aid Fund



100 Year Anniversary
1914 - 2014

Looking at how the RMAF first began, its aims, growth, family and future challenges.

Small Beginnings

Anthony Norris Groves is recognised as the “father of faith missions”. He with his wife, two young sons and others, left the UK for Baghdad in 1829. Theirs was a circuitous route; leaving Gravesend in a yacht on the 23rd of July, a journey that took them via St. Petersburg, Russia and overland arriving in Baghdad on the 6th of December. In 1829 the work begun by servants of God who were not connected with any missionary society and had spread by 1871 into many countries of the world: France, Norway, Italy, India, Madeira, Turkey, Mauritius, South Africa, Honduras and Guatemala, to name a few.

The period 1815 to 1914 has been described as the “great century of expansion” in the history of missions. In 1914, 100 years ago, three “visionary” servants of God set up the Retired Missionary Aid Fund. They were Mr Arthur Boake, of Loughton, Dr.E.B.Roche, of Norfolk, and Mr.W.T.Bilson, of Buckhurst Hill, Essex. Their concern was the lack of provisions for elderly missionaries who returned home worn out by long years of devoted service for their Lord. They came back, sometimes unknown, or perhaps forgotten by a fresh generation of believers.

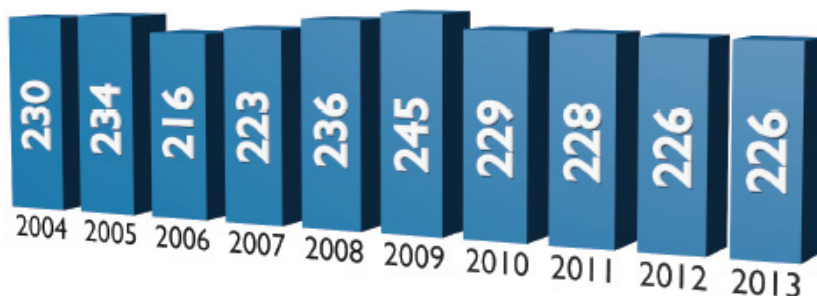
The three founders of the Fund received little support in the early years. Seldom was the annual income more than £500 for distribution to about 25 retired missionaries. In 1922 two others joined them to form the first Council of the Fund.

The Fund and its Aims

The RMAF is an independent Fund. It has close links with Echoes of Service and Interlink, who are represented on the Council. From its inception the main aim has been to provide some financial support. Not every member of the family needs it or receives it. The decision is mutual between the receiver and giver. A “family spirit” has been fostered between Trustees and members supported through correspondence, newsletters and personal contact. The 17 Trustees of the RMAF take the opportunity to visit and keep in touch with those in their locality. Over many years one helpful activity was the Parcels Service for birthdays and on other occasions when suitable parcels of clothing were made available for those who could use them and who resided in the UK. With changing circumstances, needs and cost considerations, this gesture now takes the form of gift vouchers which enable personal choice and use. Christmas hampers have also been a very welcome gift and indication of remembrance.

A Growing Family

Between 1914 and 1941 the size of the retired missionary family grew to 64, and by 1973 to 131. In that time the average support for retired missionaries increased from £20 to £214 a year. In the last half of the 20th century members continued to rise in number to well over 200. Over the last 10 years the size of the family has remained relatively constant; averaging 230.

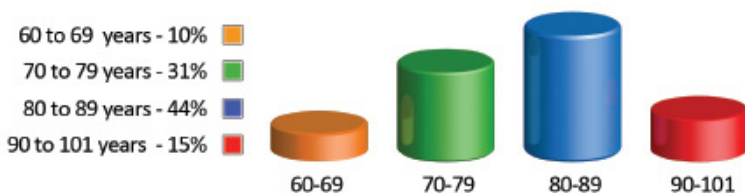


Future numbers cannot be assessed with any certainty. A review of the 2013 Echoes of Service Daily Prayer Guide shows that there is a significant number of long-serving missionaries in the “pipeline”. Of these:



This identifies the challenge facing the RMAF to offer them support in the time of their retirement.

Consideration of the age range of the 226 current members of the RMAF is revealing.



Retired missionaries are a hardy set and in line with the national trend life expectancy is increasing steadily. This all adds to the demands on the Fund.

How is the Fund Supported?

The RMAF does not solicit funds but looks to the Lord for the support it passes on. The analysis shows the percentage values of the sources of income over the last 10 years. The Fund pays tribute to the various groups which have sustained this level of giving. It can be seen that nearly three quarters of the Funds income has come from two main sources: legacies and support from Trusts. The level of support from church fellowships and individuals, whilst much appreciated, falls far short of that required to maintain the level of support at present passed on to the “family”. This highlights the challenge the Fund faces in meeting its aims in the future.



Keeping in Touch with the Family

For many years an Annual Report was printed and distributed, but in February 1993 this was replaced by a “Prayer and Newsletter” published quarterly and sent to Brethren church fellowships in the UK. Once a year an updated name and address list is sent to family members. The aim of these publications is to inform and to assist in daily prayer support for the family members. They and individual supporters, also receive a much more personal and detailed “Family News” once a quarter. This also started in 1993 and is organised on a “day of the month” basis to correspond with the Name & Address List.

Looking Ahead

Over the 100 years, the Fund has had to adapt to changing circumstances and continues to do so. The introduction of the "Welfare State" in 1946 provided certain benefits for UK citizens dependent upon the payment of National Insurance. For various reasons many serving missionaries did not keep up this contribution and so on retirement were not eligible for the "State Pension". Later the introduction of "Income Support" superseded by "Pension Credit" offered help to some who could meet the required criteria and who possessed a National Insurance number. Several family members claimed this "benefit" without detriment to the quarterly gift provided through the Fund. The challenge for the future to the upcoming generations of believers is to continue to generously provide the support to retired missionaries which had been previously provided by the commending believers. The size of the family will remain at a significant number for the foreseeable future thus the Trustees are looking to the Lord to provide them with the necessary resources to meet the Funds aspirations. The founder Trustees of the Fund rose to a need and a challenge, and current Trustees will need God given wisdom to adapt and change as circumstances demand. Prayer and support are vital.

The future will bring challenges on a number of fronts. State benefits may not be so generous, the outlook on legacies is changing, the support base is declining. Set against these issues the size of the family will remain at a significant level for a number of years to come. The challenge will be for an upcoming generation of believers to support retired missionaries as generously as the generation that commended them to the work.

It will be obvious to all our readers that God has richly blessed and expanded the work for the RMAF. But He still looks for some effort on the part of His people, through whom, over the past 100 years, He has brought relief to His retired servants. Comments are often received from members of the family that the gift came at just the right time to meet a need. "Eben-ezer, Hitherto has the Lord helped us" 1 Samuel ch7v12. 100 years have proved the faithfulness of God. In the knowledge of the past is the encouragement of the future.

*"Eben-ezer, Hitherto
has the Lord helped us"
1 Samuel 7v12*



www.rmaf.co.uk

The Retired Missionary Aid Fund is a Registered Charity (211454)

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