

## **Hugh Ritchie**

**1839/1840 – 29 September 1879**

**By Samuel Stephenson**

**(Edited by Douglas Fix)**

Reverend Hugh Ritchie was born in either late 1839 or early 1840,(1) most likely in England to an English Presbyterian family. He studied theology at a college in London, and was selected by the Synod of the English Presbyterian church to travel to Taiwan as a missionary around 1867, filling the post of the recently deceased David Masson.(2)

Ritchie was married before leaving for Taiwan. He and his wife raised several children, including a son, Robert H. Ritchie, who died in Taiwan at the age of three in 1873.(3)

Ritchie began his missionary work on 13 December 1867 when he joined Dr. Maxwell of the English Protestant mission at Takao. During the next couple of years their mission suffered greatly from a substantial local antagonism to their teachings, culminating in the burning of a church (and some of its members) in May 1868. Ritchie was left in charge of the mission at Takao later that year, when Maxwell moved to Tainan.(4) Ritchie took up the study of local languages, learning both the Amoy dialect and Hakka, and he later opened the first Hakka church in Lam-gam.(5) Ritchie's mission was apparently fairly successful, as he founded ten churches in the Takao area and made extensive tours all over the island.(6) In 1875, he became the first missionary to visit the east coast of Taiwan.(7)

As early as 1871 Ritchie complained of his failing health.(8) He returned to England on furlough in January 1876,(9) during which time he studied wet plate photography. He returned to Taiwan sometime in 1877,(10) bringing a large box camera with him. He died of fever on 29 September 1879 at the age of 39.(11) Ritchie and his wife were proponents of the education of women, and had been planning on building a girls' school in Taiwan around the time of his death.(12)

### **Selected Publications:**

Ritchie, Hugh. "Notes of a journey in east Formosa." *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 6 (1875): 206-211.

Ritchie, Hugh. "Formosa and the gospel." *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* (1877): 329-349.

## Notes:

1. The only information available concerning Ritchie's birth date was a reference to his having died at the age of 39. This would result in a birth date fall somewhere between September 1839 and September 1840. See: Harold M. Otness, *One thousand Westerners in Taiwan, to 1945: A biographical and bibliographical dictionary* (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1999), p. 138.

2. Edward Band, *Working His purpose out: The history of the English Presbyterian mission, 1847-1947. Part One, The pioneer period* (London: The Publishing Office of the Presbyterian Church of England [1948]), pp. 77-78.

3. *The Messenger & Missionary Record of the Presbyterian Church in England* 4 (1871): 278; Otness, 1999, pp. 137-138.

4. George Williams Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa 1841-1874* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1978), pp. 256-257; A. Hamish Ion, *The cross and the rising sun* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), Vol 2, p. 20; Hollington K. Tong, *Christianity in Taiwan: A history* (Taipei: China Post, 1961), pp. 26, 28-29.

5. Edward Band, *Working His purpose out: The history of the English Presbyterian mission, 1847-1947. Part Two, Formosa* (London: The Publishing Office of the Presbyterian Church of England, [1948]), p. 107; Otness, 1999, pp. 137-138; Tong, 1961, p. 37.

6. Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China, From the Eighteenth Century to the present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 128, 135; Hugh MacMillan, *Then till now in Formosa* ([Taipei]: English and Presbyterian Missions in Formosa: 1953), p. 23; William Campbell, *Sketches from Formosa* (London, New York: Marshall Brothers, 1915), pp. 16, 150; Carrington, 1978, p. 265; Tong, 1961, p. 29; Band, p. 106.

7. Otness, 1999, pp. 137-138; Tong, 1961, p. 37; Band, p. 107.

8. *The Messenger & Missionary Record*, 1871: 279-280. Ritchie continued to complain of his failing health to the Frasers in 1874; see Carrington, 1978, p. 276.

9. Tong, 1961, p. 36.

10. Edward Band states that Ritchie returned from furlough less than two years before his death (on 29 September 1879). See Band, p. 106.

11. Tong, 1961, p. 37; Band, p. 106.

12. Tong, 1961, p. 36; Band, p. 107.