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# Guide to the Gwen Coventry Papers

## RG 241



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2012

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New Haven, CT 06511  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Divinity Library  
409 Prospect Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 432-5301  
divinity.library@yale.edu  
<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

**CALL NUMBER:** RG 241

**CREATOR:** Coventry, Gwen

**TITLE:** Gwen Coventry Papers

**DATES:** 1958-1996

**BULK DATES:** 1958-1980

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** These papers relate to Gwen Coventry, an Australian nurse, who worked as a Christian missionary for Regions Beyond Missionary Union and the United Mission to Nepal in northern India and Nepal between 1959 and 1980. She served first as a hospital nurse in northern India and Tansen, Nepal, then as a community health worker in Bojha, Nepal, and finally as the director of the Community Health Programme for the UMN in Palpa District. She helped develop a structure of distributed rural dispensaries and traveling nurses, as well as founding agricultural programs as part of an increasingly holistic community development vision.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.241>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.241>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Heather Telfer

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Preferred Citation

Gwen Coventry Papers (RG 241), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

### Chronology

- 1930 Jun 13           ○ Born in Victoria, Australia to Roy Thomas Coventry and Evelyn Kathleen Coventry
- 1943 - 1946           ○ Attended Strathcona Baptist Girls' Grammar School in Canterbury, Victoria.
- c.1947               ○ Attended Scott's Secretarial College and worked as a secretary for the British and Foreign Bible Society in Melbourne.
- 1948 Oct - 1952 Jun   ○ Trained as a nurse at Children's Hospital in Melbourne
- c.1953               ○ Served as a bush nurse in New South Wales for six months.
- c.1953 - 1956       ○ Served as nurse in the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.
- 1956                 ○ Joined the founding staff at the Christian Service Center children's home in Melbourne
- 1958 Nov 22         ○ Departed for India as a missionary for the Regions Beyond Missionary Union
- 1958-1959           ○ Trained and worked as missionary nurse in north India and studied Hindi in preparation to travel into Nepal.
- 1959-1960           ○ Traveled into Nepal and worked as a nurse in the UMN Tansen Hospital in Tansen, Nepal.
- 1960 Mar - 1961 Oct   ○ Returned to Australia without permission of UMN and spent a year on the nursing staff at the Christian Service Center.
- 1961 Oct - 1962 Feb   ○ Returned to RBMU and UMN, assisted the UMN secretary in Kathmandu, and studied Nepali in preparation for the UMN language exam.
- 1962 - c.1967       ○ Served as nurse in UMN Tansen Hospital.
- c.1963               ○ Became Nursing Superintendent of UMN Tansen Hospital.
- 1966 Jun 6           ○ Published Nursing Notes, a curriculum for a two-year course for Auxiliary Nurses in Nepal.
- 1966 Nov - 1967 Oct   ○ Returned to Australia on furlough.
- 1967 - 1975         ○ Directed "Public Health" work in Palpa District, Nepal, based in Tansen until 1969. Traveled regularly through Palpa District, setting up clinics and providing basic medical care.
- 1969 - 1975         ○ Founded and worked out of the Bojha Disensary in Bojha in east Palpa District.

## Chronology

- 1972 Sep - 1973 ○ Returned to Australia on furlough.
- 1974 - 1975 ○ Severe famine affected Palpa District, especially villages near Bojha, leaving many Nepali without food and forced to borrow money at high interest from wealthier landowners.
- 1975 - 1980 ○ Directed efforts toward and for the Buling-Arkhala Project, a project of the UMN to significantly improve the agricultural and economic stability of the Buling and Arkhala Panchayats in east Palpa District.
- 1975 - c.1978 ○ Returned to Tansen to direct UMN's Community Health Programme.
- 1978 Feb ○ Submitted, with others, the formal proposal of the Buling-Arkhala Project to the UMN Economic Development Board.
- 1978 Sep - 1984  
Aug ○ UMN Economic Development Board approves plans for Buling-Arkhala Project and operates it until it is closed by order of His Majesty's Government of Nepal because of local politics and agreements with His Majesty's Government restricting UMN operations to certain geographic areas.
- c.1978 May - c.1979  
Mar ○ Returned to Australia on furlough.
- 1979 Jul - 1980 Nov ○ Studied in the Community Health Course at the Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences in Melbourne.
- 1979 Nov - c.1980  
Jan ○ Returned to Nepal to undertake a comprehensive census and economic survey of the villages in the scope of the Buling-Arkhala Project. This survey marked the end of Ms. Coventry's work in Nepal.
- 1980 Feb - 1992  
Aug ○ Cared for parents until Mr. Coventry died in 1981 and Mrs. Coventry died in 1992.
- 1980s ○ Obtained Bachelor of Education.
- 1981 Jan - c.1990 ○ Taught Child Care section at Box Hill TAFE in Melbourne.
- 1982 - c.2003 ○ Ministred to Cambodian refugees at Box Hill Baptist Church in Melbourne.
- 1995 - 1996 ○ Returned to Nepal in late 1995 to trek to Bojha and reunite with friends from missionary days.
- 2004 Aug 11 ○ Died in Melbourne, Australia, aged 74, from cancer.

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## Scope and Contents

The Gwen Coventry Papers consist of 1 linear foot of material divided into five series:

- I. Correspondence, 1958 - 1994
- II. Notes and Writings, 1958 - 1990, n.d.
- III. Documentation of Activities, 1975 - 1980
- IV. Collected Material, 1976 - 1993, n.d.
- V. Personal and Memorabilia, 1956 - 1979, n.d.

This record group provides a personal look at missionary work in northern India and Nepal between 1959 and 1979 and an institutional record of a United Mission to Nepal administrator between 1975 and 1980. In particular, it offers insight into the development of the UMN's activities in rural Nepal during these periods, especially the increasing distribution and diversification of services offered.

The first series, Correspondence, consists primarily of Gwen Coventry's personal letters to her parents, but also includes circular letters (addressed "Dear Friends") she wrote for UMN during her foreign missionary career.

The second series, Notes and Writings, contains observations of India and Nepal and personal reflections on the success of Gwen's missionary work, as well as outlines for talks and a series of handdrawn maps of the areas in Nepal in which Gwen worked.

The third series, Documentation of Activities, consists of reports, minutes, directives, and census data produced by Gwen or her colleagues primarily during her tenure as Community Health Director for Palpa District in Nepal. These papers include documentation not only of the Buling-Arkhal Project and the Food for Work Programme (both important UMN projects that Gwen helped to found), but also smaller projects like the Bojha Goat Improvement Project and census data and health records used to demonstrate the need for these larger projects.

The fourth series, Collected Material, consists of official UMN documents not directly related to Gwen's work, as well as some general material relating to Nepal or northern India. In this latter category is "Deforestation in the Mahabharat", a report on the economics of the region Gwen served prepared and published by her colleague, Gary Shepherd.

The fifth and final series, Personal and Memorabilia, contains newspaper clippings, a service bulletin, photos, and postcards, as well as an insurance policy and registration for a motorcycle in Gwen's name. It also includes a photocopied page from a book (possibly Jonathan Lindell's *Nepal and the Gospel of God*) which mentions Gwen's missionary work.

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## Arrangement

- I. Correspondence, 1958-1994
- II. Notes and Writings, 1958-1990, n.d.
- III. Documentation of Activities, 1975-1980
- IV. Collected Material, 1976-1993, n.d.
- V. Personal Items and Memorabilia, 1956-1979, n.d.

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## Collection Contents

### Correspondence, 1958-1994

#### Family

b. 1, f. 1	To parents before departure and shipboard	1958 Nov 22 - 1958 Dec 12
b. 1, f. 2	To parents from Mumbai (Bombay) and Motihari	1958 December 17 - 1959 January 7
b. 1, f. 3	To parents from Motihari and Chainpatia	1959 Jan 16 - 1959 Feb 19
b. 1, f. 4	To parents from Chainpatia	1959 Feb 26 - 1959 Mar 18
b. 1, f. 5	To parents from Motihari	1959 Mar 25 - 1959 Apr 15
b. 1, f. 6	To parents and "Aunt Maggie" from Landour and Motihari	1959 Apr 19 - 1959 May 1
b. 1, f. 7	To parents from Landour	1959 May 7 - 1959 May 24
b. 1, f. 8	To parents, handcopied letters	1958 Nov 28 - 1959 May 17
b. 1, f. 9	To parents from Landour	1959 May 28 - 1959 Jun 24
b. 1, f. 10	To parents from Delhi and Landour	1959 Jun 2 - 1959 Jul 22
b. 1, f. 11	To parents, handcopied letters	1959 May 24 - 1959 Jul 22
b. 1, f. 12	To parents from Landour, the train, Motihari, and Gorakpur	1959 Jul 25 - 1959 Aug 23
b. 1, f. 13	To parents from Gorakpur and Tansen	1959 Aug 27 - 1959 Sep 24
b. 1, f. 14	To parents from Kathmadu, Tansen, and Kalimpong	1961 Oct 22 - 1962 Sept 19
b. 1, f. 15	To parents from Tansen	1963 Dec 30 - 1968 Jun 1
b. 1, f. 16	To parents from Tansen	1979 Mar 8 - 1979 Apr 15
b. 1, f. 17	To parents from Tansen	1979 Dec 16 - 1979 Dec 30

#### Circulars

## Circulars (continued)

b. 1, f. 18	"Dear Friends" from Motihari, Landour, and Kathmadu	1959 Jan 18 - 1962 May 15
b. 1, f. 19	"Dear Friends" from Tansen	1962 Oct 10 - 1971 Nov 13
b. 1, f. 20	"Dear Friends" from Tansen	1974 Jul 18 - circa 1975 Jul
b. 1, f. 21	"Dear Friends" from Tansen	1975 Nov 19 - 1979 Apr 24
b. 1, f. 22	"Dear Friends" from Mitcham	circa 1979 Nov - 1980 Dec 5
General		
b. 1, f. 23	Bernhardt, Elfriede and Craven, Alison	circa 1974 Oct, 1976 Sept - 1977 Feb, 1996 Jan 13
b. 1, f. 24	Williamson, John and unknowns	1974 Jul 4, 1978 May 28, 1979 Oct 30



**Notes and Writings, 1958-1990, n.d.**

## Writings and Reflections

b. 1, f. 25	"My First Impressions of the East (Colombo)" and "Account of Our Journey to Tansen"	circa 1958 Dec, circa 1959 Sep
b. 1, f. 26	"Trek from 30th December, 1963 to 20th January, 1964", "Amongst the missionaries in Tansen", and "Some Health Beliefs and Practices amongst Magars in E. Palpa"	circa 1974 - 1978
b. 1, f. 27	"The fact that some of the principles of work in Bojha have been right", "I came to Nepal in 1959", and "Water is Life"	circa 1979-1980, n.d.

## Notes for Presentations

b. 1, f. 28	"Beautiful country and beautiful people", "How many people have a Bible?", and "Howard & Betty's Interserve Farewell"	circa 1979, 1990 Oct 27
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## Notes

b. 1, f. 29	"Bojha is...", "Irrigation Projects", census notes, "Alan's Report with my Comments", and "One year ago I was asked to present to the E.D.B."	circa 1976 Aug - 1979
b. 1, f. 30	Census data	circa 1978 Apr - 1979 Apr
b. 1, f. 31	"Notes from Animal Seminar", "Our knowledge of villages is very limited & very restricted", "Headmaster of Buling High School", and "First strike about 3 years ago"	circa 1979 May 21, n.d.
b. 1, f. 33	Medical census data	circa 1974-1978, n.d.
b. 1, f. 33	Census data	circa 1978 Apr

## Maps

b. 1, f. 34	"Darmandi to Bojha", "Bojha to Gidha", "Palpa --The Far East--", and Bojha travel times	circa 1970-1980
b. 1, f. 35	Arakhala and Buling Panchayats, Bojha travel times and villages, Villages of Palpa	circa 1970-1980

**Documentation of Activities, 1975-1980**

b. 2, f. 1	Reports on East Palpa, including B.C.G. Campaign Reports	circa 1972 Apr-1974
b. 2, f. 2	Administrative documents, including "Report on the goats of Bojha, with recommendations for improvement project", clinic reports, and nutrition reports	1975 Sep - 1976 Jan
b. 2, f. 3	Administrative documents, including progress reports on Goat Improvement Project, excerpt "Measuring Malnutrition" from "The Lancet", and clinic reports	1976 Jan 20 - 1976 Dec
b. 2, f. 4	"Report of Planning Process, Tansen Project Team" and "Notes on Community Health Survey Cards, Palpa Project"	circa 1977 Jan
b. 2, f. 5	"Second Progress Report of Bojha Improvement Project", resume of Prabhu Dan Gurung, and "Common Medical and Surgical Problems in Amp Pipal, Gorkha"	1977 Feb - 1977 Sep 3
b. 2, f. 6	"An Uncompleted First Draft: An Investigation of the Economics of Arakhala", "Draft Statement on Survey Instruments for consideration of Committee", and "Health Survey Form (For Test Use by Health Educator)"	1977 Dec - 1978 Jan
b. 2, f. 7	"UMN Furlough Questionnaire", "Observations - Notes - Ideas, from visit to Buling and Arakhala Pnchayat", and "Small Community Economic Development Project for consideration by the Economic Development Board"	1978 Feb
b. 2, f. 8	Administrative documents, including clinic records and "Buling-Arakhala survey"	1978 Mar 12 - 1978 Apr 11
b. 2, f. 9	Buling Panchayat census tables	1978 May
b. 2, f. 10	Arakhala Panchayat census tables	1978 May
b. 2, f. 11	Administrative documents, including "Feasibility Study in the Arakhala and Buling Panchayats", "Fourth Progress Report of the Bojha Goat Improvement Project", and "Proposed Buling-Arakhala Small Community Development Project"	1978 May
b. 2, f. 12	Administrative documents, including "Possibilities for increasing income from livestock in Buling and Arakhala Panchayats"	1978 May
b. 2, f. 13	Administrative documents, including paper "on nutritional status of children and birth rate, death rate, etc." and "Mejewa: The First Chapter in its Development"	1978 May 16 - 1978 May 30
b. 2, f. 14	Reports and minutes relating to Buling Arakhala Small Community Development Project and Bulingtar Irrigation Project	1978 Aug 16 - 1978 Sep 20
b. 2, f. 15	Administrative documents, including reports and minutes relating to Buling Arakhala Small Community Development Project, silk-worm culture, and "United Mission to Nepal Areas of Involvement in MCH & F.P. Work"	1978 Sep
b. 2, f. 16	Administrative documents, including "Appendix II: Magars and Development" and animal records	circa 1978
b. 2, f. 17	Integrated Rural Development Advisory Committee reports and minutes for first meeting, including Bulingtar Irrigation Project report	1979 Feb 12 - 1979 Apr 13
b. 2, f. 18	Administrative documents, including economic census data of Buling Panchayat, Ward No. 3	circa 1979 Apr

b. 2, f. 19	Administrative documents, including "Food for Work Program for Buling and Arakhala Panchayats", "Report on M.C.H. Clinics and Seminar", and "Villages which have a complete water supply"	circa 1979 May
b. 2, f. 20	Administrative documents, including "Food for Work Program for Buling Panchayat"	1979 Jun 3 - 1979 Jun 11
b. 2, f. 21	Reports on Buling-Arakhala Project and Buling - Arakhala Food for Work Project	circa 1979 Sep-Oct
b. 2, f. 22	Reports on Buling-Arakhala Project and "Nepal - Food for Work Programme" circular	circa 1979 Oct - 1979 Nov 1
b. 2, f. 23	Administrative documents, including annual reports for 1979 and "8 years ago, I was asked by a Magar Community to live amongst them"	circa 1979-1980
b. 2, f. 24	Administrative documents, including "Survey of Economic Status of Residents Living in Hill Villages in Buling Panchayat and Bulingtar -- with a view to irrigating Buling Tar" and "Appendix A: UMN Executive Director's Report for 1979"	circa 1979-1980
b. 2, f. 25	Reports and minutes relating to Buling-Arakhala Project, including "Report on Relations with HMG Officials Concerning BAP" and "Report of Visit to Bojha, April 15th - 18th 1980" (includes handwritten letter from Valerie Collett)	1980 Jan - 1980 Aug
b. 2, f. 26	Administrative documents, including "Report of Trip to Bojha, August 14 - 20, 1980" (includes handwritten letter from Valeria Collett)	1980 Sep 17, circa 1980

**Collected Material, 1976-1993, n.d.**

## United Mission to Nepal

b. 2, f. 27	Letters and newsletters, including "Making a New Nepal", "A new flag, the bright symbol of the Philippenes", and "We have passed through and extraordinary season of change"	1976 Dec - 1979 Jun 26
b. 2, f. 28	Letters and newsletters, including "UMNEWS", "Regions Beyond", "Greetings from Nepal", and "Friends of Tansen"	1980 Apr 30, 1980 Sep, 1983 Oct, circa 1993
b. 2, f. 29	Reports and official documents, including "Report on United Mission to Nepal Conference, organized by Australian Member Bodies, held at Bible College of Victoria, Lilydale" and "Evangelism Among Hindus"	1978 Dec 11 - 1979 Feb
b. 2, f. 30	Reports and official documents, including "School Health Service - Sr. Philip" and "Rules for the Public-Health-Nurse", minutes of a Workers' Conference, and "General Agreement (between His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the United Mission to Nepal"	n.d.
b. 2, f. 31	Assorted documents, including pamphlet on "Living Water for Nepal: A United Mission to Nepal film" and "The Ministry of Healing"	1974 Jun, n.d.

## General Nepal

b. 2, f. 32	Assorted documents, including "Cotton in Nepal", "Assessment of Nutritional Situation in Nepal", printed map of Palpa District, and Nepali forms "E Stage" and "I Stage"	n.d.
b. 2, f. 33	"Deforestation in the Mahabharat" (book), by Gary Shepherd	1978 Feb

## **Personal and Memorabilia, 1956-1979, n.d.**

b. 2, f. 34      Assorted documents, including newspaper clippings announcing Gwen Coventry's missionary departure, farewell service bulletin, photocopy from book (possibly "Nepal and the Gospel of God" by Jonathan Lindell) with biographical material on Gwen Coventry, photographs of Gwen Coventry, postcards, and insurance and licensing information for a motorcycle in Gwen Coventry's name

1958 Aug 21,  
1958 Nov 22,  
1970 Oct, 1979  
Mar 11, n.d.

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Missionaries, Medical -- Nepal  
Nurses -- Nepal

### **Names**

Coventry, Gwen

### **Corporate Body**

United Mission to Nepal