

History on Your Doorstep

Tameside Inventors & Inventions

Rev Norman Driver - The Tibetan Typewriter

- Born 12 December 1907 In Pudsey a suburb of Leeds
- In 1929 studied at Fairfield Moravian College to be a minister and missionary.
- In 1933 Norman left for Bombay (Mumbai) from there to take up a post as a missionary in Leh.



- He met his future wife, Mary Shawe, at Leh. She was a practising doctor there. She had been taught at the Moravian Girls school at Fulneck. An extract from Norman's diary says:
*Sunday, October 22, 1933
 My salary starts today and I went to Church. It is very small and about 30 people were there. I dined with Dr Shawe and we talked about Fulneck and Fairfield.'*

Mary & Norman Driver



- After independence in 1947, they were both enlisted in the early formation of the Indian state and Norman was temporarily appointed Prime Minister of Ladakh with Mary as his Health Minister.



Mary with Pandit Nehru (the first Prime Minister of India) at the hospital in Leh on July 7, 1949 Norman is bringing up the rear.

- After China had invaded Tibet many Tibetans had fled the country and settled in Leh where some joined the Moravian Church there.

- After Br Eliyah, a Tibetan refugee, became minister at the Church in Leh he wanted to produce leaflets etc in Tibetan to keep in touch with other refugees but found it a very laborious job cutting the stencils by hand.

The Thirty Consonants and Their Pronunciation				of the Tibetan language
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Row 1	ཀ ka	ཁ kha	ག ga	ང nga
Row 2	ཅ cha	ཆ chha	ཇ ja	ཉ nya
Row 3	ཏ ta	ཐ tha	ད da	ན na
Row 4	པ pa	ཕ pha	བ ba	མ ma
Row 5	ཅྩ tsa	ཅྱ tsha	ཅྲ dza	ཅླ wa
Row 6	ཞ zha	ཟ za	འ a	ཡ ya
Row 7	ར ra	ལ la	ཤ sha	ས sa
Row 8	ཧ ha	ཨ a		

- A Typewriter was needed but two problems had to be overcome. Firstly the Tibetan language adds letters vertically as well as horizontally and secondly there is a dot between every syllable and this dot occupies only half the space of the letters.
- To solve this problem Br Eliyah suggested the use of a slightly modified script which reduced the vertical characters to the normal limits. Norman's task was to find a typewriter which could be adapted to do this. This took 5 years to do.



From right to left are the three ministers involved in the project Rev Eliya Phunthsog, Rev Norman Driver and Rev Pierre Vittoz. This was taken at a visit made by Eliya to Ockbrook Moravian Settlement Derbyshire in 1956 where he was presented with a Tibetan Typewriter.

- Back in England Norman served at Tytherton, Queen's Park and Fairfield. Mary died in March 1963, Norman died suddenly of a heart attack in December 1965. They are both buried at Fairfield, Droylsden.