

# Early Days of the Two-by-Twos <sup>1</sup>

Presbyterian, Wesleyan (“Holiness”) and other Protestant traditions

Year	Events	Notes	Other
1886	Faith Mission: John George Govan founds the interdenominational Faith Mission outreach organization in Scotland.		
1893	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦January 8th: William Irvine professes through Presbyterian evangelist John McNeill.</li> <li>♦Irvine begins studying 2 years at the Bible Institute in Glasgow, Scotland.</li> </ul>		
1895	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦June 14th: William Irvine joins the Faith Mission in Scotland.</li> </ul>		
1896	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦November: William Irvine sent to the north of Ireland by Faith Mission. He quickly becomes dissatisfied with Faith Mission and that converts became “lost amongst the clergy” (i.e., joined other churches).</li> <li>♦February: first Faith Mission workers venture into southern Ireland (Irvine &amp; Deathe);</li> <li>♦March: Irvine meets John Long (a Methodist colporteur);</li> <li>♦March: first convert in southern Ireland (Dora Holland, who later became a worker).</li> </ul>		
1897	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦August: John Long obtains a church in Nenagh for a revival mission by Irvine. Over 30 profess; many become workers (including Jack &amp; May Carroll). Identified as the start of the independent movement;<sup>2</sup></li> <li>♦October: Irvine holds an independent mission in Rathmolyon. 40 profess &amp; many become workers, including Gills, Carrolls, Hughes, etc. Converts attend church of their choice;</li> <li>♦August–December: Irvine holds missions in Tarbert, Roscrea, Cloughjordan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦November: the Todds leave Faith Mission; start an independent mission with its headquarters at Enniscorthy in southern Ireland.</li> </ul>	
1898	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦Irvine holds missions in Borrisokane, Finnoe, Templederry. Large numbers profess, including Corcorans, Falkiners, Hodgins &amp; Tom Turner;</li> <li>♦February: Irvine holds Borrisokane mission. Cooney meets Wm. Irvine for the first time;</li> <li>♦March: George Walker meets Irvine;</li> <li>♦July: Irvine &amp; Long study Matthew 10; the possibility of preaching without clerical salary or support is raised;</li> <li>♦August: Faith Mission appoints Irvine as its Superintendent for Southern Ireland;</li> <li>♦November: John Long resigns from his Methodist colporteurage; preaches with Irvine and on his own.</li> </ul>	John Long joins FM Prayer Union (until 1915).	Todd Mission
1899	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦January: John Long begins preaching along “faith lines” (i.e., with no fixed financial support);</li> <li>♦George Walker (a sales clerk in Cooney's clothing store), Irvine Weir, Alex Givan, Tom Turner join as workers;</li> <li>♦July: The first annual convention is held at Portadown, Ireland;</li> <li>♦September: Irvine is “put out” of Faith Mission, though his name appears on their roster through Dec. 1900;</li> <li>♦October: The first outreach beyond Ireland is made with Irvine leading a group of 8–9 young men on a bicycle mission through Scotland on the basis of Matthew 10;</li> <li>♦December 26: St, Stephen's Day Special Meeting, which some have viewed as the movement's beginning.</li> </ul>	December: Last reference to Irvine as Faith Mission's Superintendent for southern Ireland.	
1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦July: First southern Ireland convention held at Rathmolyon on Willie Gill's farm at Ashmount; the event lasts 3 weeks with 40 attendees, and some going on to become workers;</li> <li>♦9 males enter the work, and the first 3 females enter the work: Sara Rogers, Jennie Gill and Emma Gill (for a total of 18 workers in the new movement).</li> </ul>	FM issues statements disassociating from Irvine and his followers. Six Faith Mission workers resign to join Irvine.	
1901	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦January: Irvine's name no longer appears on Faith Mission's roster;</li> <li>♦John Kelly leaves Faith Mission and joins Wm. Irvine. Over the next 4 years, 5 additional Faith Mission workers join Irvine;</li> <li>♦June: Edward Cooney sells all, donates the considerable proceeds and joins as a worker;<sup>3</sup></li> <li>♦10 new workers join during this year, for a total of 28 workers.</li> </ul>		disbands
1902	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦Separation from other denominations and exclusivity begins to be noted;</li> <li>♦Convention held at Enniscorthy;</li> <li>♦Cooney begins experimenting with Sunday home meetings; Irvine “shrank” from this development;</li> <li>♦23 enter the work, for a total of 51 workers.</li> </ul>		

## Early Days of the Two-by-Twos (continued)

Year			
1903	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Inaugural 3-week convention at Rathmolyon: workers take vows of celibacy, poverty &amp; obedience; disavow doctrines of other churches. 70 attend;</li> <li>♦ First Sunday home church meeting held at Weir's apartment in Dublin;</li> <li>♦ Practice of rebaptism is noted;</li> <li>♦ Wm. Irvine, Irvine Weir &amp; George Walker sail to USA — first workers in N. America;</li> <li>♦ 34 enter the work, for a total of 85 active workers.</li> </ul>		Faith Mission (continues to present)
1904	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <b>September–October:</b> First large-scale convention held at Crocknacrieve (John West estate); lasts 4 weeks; 100s attend from England, Scotland and Ireland;</li> <li>♦ Worldwide outreach begins: workers sent to English-speaking nations: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, S. Africa, USA;</li> <li>♦ Enniskillen newspaper covers conventions &amp; workers with 20 articles during this year;</li> <li>♦ 42 enter the work for a total of 127 workers.</li> </ul>		
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <b>July:</b> List of First Workers is created, showing 201 workers, the date they joined and using the same format as used by the Faith Mission;</li> <li>♦ 74 enter the work (including 4 married couples).</li> </ul>		
1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Wilson McClung states in a newspaper interview that William Irvine started the movement “seven or eight years ago”;</li> <li>♦ Tramps accused of luring women into white slave traffic; Cooney files successful libel suit against an angry father who had 2 daughters and son disappear into the work.</li> </ul>		
1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ “Living Witness Doctrine” is refined to denote only Two-by-Two ministers as acceptable “living witnesses”, becomes a mandatory belief;</li> <li>♦ <b>July:</b> John Long expelled for refusing to condemn all Christians outside the new movement as being unsaved.</li> </ul>		Long returns to distributing literature & preaching, becoming influential in the beginnings of the British Pentecostal movement
1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Regular home-based meetings become the norm.</li> </ul>		
1909	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Convention at Crocknacrieve is mentioned in newspapers around the world; the prominent apocalyptic theme at this event is noted by most.</li> </ul>		
1910–1912	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Rapid expansion occurs in North America and Australia.</li> </ul>		
1913	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ First edition of Hymns Old and New is published;</li> <li>♦ Last of the large, month-long conventions is held at Crocknacrieve;</li> <li>♦ Cooney gives sworn testimony that the movement started “about 16 years ago.”</li> </ul>		
1914	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Irvine begins preaching a new revelation of a final period that will close the age of “Grace” and render the worker hierarchy superfluous;</li> <li>♦ Overseers begin expelling Irvine and his followers. Irvine is quietly excluded &amp; the church is split;</li> <li>♦ <b>August:</b> the First World War begins.</li> </ul>		
1914–1918	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ The first official registered name is taken in the U.K (“The Testimony of Jesus,” often abbreviated as “The Testimony” among older members) in order to obtain military exemptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Irvine is shunned &amp; isolated; more of his followers are expelled.</li> </ul>	
1919	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Princess Victoria hears Cooney preach in London, and supposedly professes secretly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Irvine moves to Jerusalem.</li> </ul>	Elim Evangelistic Band
1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Last convention at Crocknacrieve.</li> </ul>		British Pentecostalism

## Early Days of the Two-by-Twos (continued)

Year			Faith Mission (continues)	Pentecostalism (continues)
1921	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worldwide workers convention is held in Staffordshire, England (see photo following page).</li> </ul>			
1928	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>October:</b> Edward Cooney is excommunicated for refusing to submit to restrictions on his preaching. His followers, and those refusing to cut off all contact with him, are expelled.</li> </ul>		William Irvine continues writing volumes of letters to his followers, who continue to support him financially.	
		<p>Early workers who leave or are expelled with Cooney include Mr. &amp; Mrs. Tom Elliot, John Kelly, Joe Burns, Harry McNeary. Those expelled for keeping in contact with Cooney include Irvine Weir.</p> <p>Cooneyite movement dispenses with the offices of overseer and worker.</p>		
1939–1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Second World War begins;</li> <li>George Walker has letterhead printed and registers the sect as “Christian Conventions” with the U.S. government. Overseers in other areas do the same under similar names.</li> </ul>			
1947			<p><b>March 3rd:</b> William Irvine dies at age 84, in Jerusalem and is buried in Mt. Zion Protestant Cemetery. His last will leaves some £2200 (equivalent to over \$100k in 2013 US\$) in cash bequests to family, friends and charities. His followers continue to the present day, though in reduced numbers.</p>	
1960		<p><b>June 20th:</b> Edward Cooney dies at age 93 in Mildura, Victoria Australia. His followers continue in scattered groups until the present day.</p>		

### Notes:

- 1 It is sometimes unclear as to when a particular practice or belief was adopted by the new movement, as the first participants only observed what they personally experienced. In an age without telephones or email, and because of their itinerant lifestyle, individual workers did not necessarily pick up new developments, even for many months after they had been adopted. Thus, John Long did not note the practice of rebaptizing new converts for some 2 years after it had begun. Others seem not to have noticed the exclusivity until well after it had been widely preached. Early workers were not mind-readers, and they only wrote and told what they personally experienced, which in many cases reveals much about their inner thinking, and only a framework for what was occurring in Irvine’s new movement as a whole. The chart above contains pivotal points attested to by multiple sources.
- 2 There is no record of any group closely resembling the Two-by-Twos prior to this date, nor any person who has been shown to have been a member of the Two-by-Two fellowship before this event. On closer examination, every group purported to have been a previous embodiment of the Two-by-Two church has proved to have major differences in doctrine and/or practice of such a serious nature that they would be excluded from today’s Two-by-Two fellowship (church buildings, salaried ministers, infant baptism or baptism other than by immersion, political involvement, etc.). Although many have attempted to produce a narrative that supports the Two-by-Two fellowship as continuing from the time of Christ, not a single reliable instance has been produced that bears witness to any of the following being in existence prior to 1897: a hymn written by a friend or worker; a printed hymnbook containing such hymns; a photograph of a person who was a worker or friend at that time; a workers’ list; a letter written by a worker or friend; a list of convention dates or speakers; notes of any convention, funeral or meeting; a family member or acquaintance who professed through a worker prior to 1897; or an account mentioning Two-by-Two workers preaching prior to 1897.
- 3 Most references only say that Cooney gave his money to “the poor” although one prominent early source stipulated that it was given to Irvine for the work. As charities at this time were tied to religious groups, Cooney would have either contributed his small fortune to another church, spent significant effort identifying and disbursing to needy individuals, or directed the money to be used to support the workers (“those that have made themselves poor, homeless, and strangers for the Gospel’s sake”). The latter alternative helps explain the notable ability of the workers immediately afterward to engage in activities which required considerable funds: travel, construction of chapels and portable halls, conventions, etc. Donating to the overseer the proceeds of “selling all” also became the norm thereafter. Acknowledging that the money went to either another church or to Irvine would have become an embarrassment to Cooney later on and may explain the lack of detail in subsequent accounts.



## 1921 International Workers Meeting Staffordshire, England

1. John Brady	29. George Gumpie	55. Willie Turner *	82. George Waince	109. Annie Walker	136. Mrs. Jackson *	163. Lena Rutledge	190. Lilly Wilson *
2. Frank Stephens	30. Willie Bales *	56. George Clark	83. Jack Wellwood *	110. Dot Cavanagh *	137. Lizzie Boyd *	164. Kitty Westery	191. Laura Falkiner *
3. Frank Brown	31. Percy Fletcher	57. Bert Pavison *	84. Alex Leavitt	111. Mah Henke *	138. Jennie Clarke	165. Polly Hodgins *	192. Kate Anstrom *
4. Elmer Hicks *	32. George Scott	58. Jim Beagle *	85. Sam Maxwell *	112. Maggie Connolly *	139. Lizzie Moore *	166. Annie Rowan	193. Ed Swanson
5. Bob Miller *	33. John Connor	59. Jim Gibson *	86. Jacky McLean *	113. Cora Conry	140. Nellie Davison	167. Belle Reid *	194. Minnie Wilson *
6. Andy Blair	34. Tom Davidson	60. Hyman Chase *	87. Jim Chapman	114. Lillie Loftus	141. Sally White *	168. Mrs. Elliott	195. Mae Deunham
7. Willie Driver (Driver)	35. Max Dickson	61. John Holland *	88. Donald Davidson	115. Maggie Patton *	142. Mrs. Carroll	169. Lizzie Moore *	196. Maggie Girvan *
8. Peter Saxon	36. Hugh Mathews	62. Set Marshall	89. Jim Moore	116. Willie Cooper	143. Helen Harrison	170. Clem Patton	197. Maggie Davison *
9. William Reid *	37. John Battison *	63. Albert Mason	90. Willie Setz *	117. Sarah Walls	144. Ethel Hoecine *	171. Fanny Tappett *	198. Maggie Salween
10. John Elliott *	38. Howard Walker *	64. Harry Saw *	91. Bill Carroll	118. Annie McQuaid *	145. Kate Goodsey *	172. Annie Crilow	199. Lillie Howland
11. Andy Scott *	39. Jim Henderson	65. Tom Kinglake	92. Wilson McIlroy *	119. M. Wix	146. Jennie Gill *	173. Emily Hownd	200. Mrs. Howland
12. Jim Jarline *	40. Jim Martin *	66. John Andrew *	93. Jack Carroll	120. Annie Long	147. Annie Hughes	174. Edie Willis *	201. Ray Cottrell (John)
13. Bob Graham	41. Stanley Brown	67. Ben Alden *	94. Anne McClung *	121. Molly Long *	148. Rebecca Elliott *	175. Lizzie McDulligan *	202. M. Jean
14. Willie Stewart *	42. Tom Miles *	68. Edward Barrett *	95. Hosa Barrett *	122. Mrs. Cunningham	149. Katie Bond *	176. Ann Davis	203. Jess Pattison *
15. Jim Suggison *	43. Jim Neely *	69. Edie Cooney *	96. May Baker	123. Lizzie Kerr *	150. Anna Heagle	177. Pump Webb *	204. Anne Hughes *
16. Tom Elliott *	44. Willie Wilson	70. Alex Ovan *	97. Ruth Jordan	124. Maude Slater *	151. Fatenne Bateson	178. Florrie Lhat	205. Jennie Campbell
17. George Walker	45. Willie Neeson	71. John Brady	98. Jennie Wilson	125. Jean Weir	152. S. Bakerson	179. Grace Douglas *	206. Jennie Dougal
18. Tom Watterson *	46. Willie Kerr	72. John Stafford	99. Maggie Colhouse *	126. Daisy Bee	153. Nellie Taylor *	180. Kate McKie *	207. Miss St. Clair *
19. Andy Tubb *	47. Jackie Mills	73. Tom Setz *	100. Willie Colhouse *	127. Sally Battison *	154. Martha Overritt	181. Joe Pattison *	208. Maggie Knapp
20. Jim Jennings *	48. Harry McLaugh	74. Thomas Colback *	101. Mrs. Setz *	128. Edie Anderson *	155. Sarah Stewart *	182. Wina Kelle	
21. Andrew Bellin *	49. Jim Bales *	75. John Thimster	102. Nellie Bateson *	129. Adie McGark *	156. Jennie Chapman	183. Maggie Johnston *	
22. Joe Fleming	50. Willie Gill *	76. Willie Finkler *	103. Miriam Battison *	130. Florrie Loftus	157. Lilly McKie *	184. Joe Lary *	
23. Ben Cunningham *	51. Jack Forster	77. Annie Turner	104. Edie Giles	131. Fanny Northridge	158. L. Gooden	185. Maude Davis *	
24. John Egge	52. Eric Smith	78. George Chambers	105. Hannah Sullivan *	132. Coraie Leslie	159. Willie Cunningham	186. Mattie McGivern *	
25. John Winter *	53. Jim Rowan *	79. Willie Bales *	106. Sarah Taylor	133. Sarah Hury *	160. Betty Lyman	187. Maggie Taylor *	
26. Bob Williams *	54. John Shields (Shilow) *	80. Peter Smith	107. Lizzie White	134. Edeline Perkins	161. Lizzie Barrett *	188. Edie Weir *	
27. Bob Gray	55. Arthur Howland *	81. Annie Coone *	108. Mary Lewis	135. Mary Fox *	162. Sadie Marshall *	189. Mary Modie *	