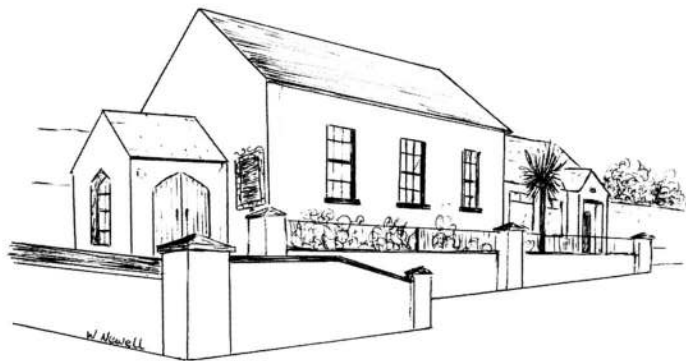


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: William Newell

121: Battlehill Methodist Church

Text: Robin Roddie



The Methodist congregation at Battlehill emerged from class meetings being held in the area under the leadership of Thomas Street, Portadown, in the early 1800s.

Class meetings are recorded as early as the 1830s in Battlehill, and it is included in the earliest extant preaching plans from 1846 when a service was held on the last Sunday of the month at 3.00pm.

As the cause in the area strengthened, the decision was made to build a chapel at Battlehill in 1861, and it was

completed the following year on a plot of land leased to Averell Shillington for 300 years from 1 November 1862.

Times were difficult and the cost of the building was £143, of which just short of £58 was collected. The debt of £85 was not cleared until 1872. Adding to the difficulties was the fact that the weekly Sunday collection didn't even cover the modest costs of lighting and heating the premises, leaving an annual shortfall of five or six shillings.

Nevertheless, over the

years continual repairs and improvements to the building ensured that the Battlehill premises have been kept in good order. A stable and porch were added in 1868, mostly for the benefit of travelling preachers to accommodate their horses.

Much later, in 1959, it was refurbished as the first make-shift kitchen for the use of the society, and later came to be used for children's church, midweek Bible study and women's meetings.

The same year, the church was licensed for marriages and the first wedding took place on 25 September which was that of William Newell and Agnes Holmes, parents of William Newell, artist for this month's feature, and about to be stationed on circuit this Conference.

Battlehill society owes much to the work of class leaders and local preachers who sustained and developed the work in the area. The spiritual life of the

members in the early years was sustained through weekly class meetings and cottage meetings, and on Sundays by both local preachers and ministers.

A feature of the work in the 20th century was the 'mission' form of evangelism. In 1922, 1927, 1928 and 1969, missions were held in Battlehill, each resulting in large numbers of local people making a Christian commitment and strengthening the life of the church.

In 2003, the church was reopened after extensive renovations and extension. The pews which had been installed in the 1880s were replaced by comfortable seats, and many new facilities were added, including a well-equipped kitchen. The porch was enlarged, and a new pulpit and communion table and rail installed.

Between 40 and 50 members attend Sunday morning worship, and the Sunday school is thriving.