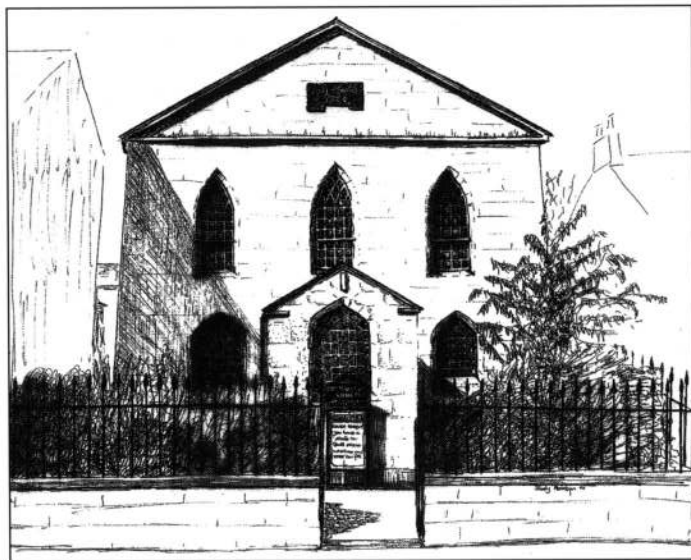


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Judy Pearson

52: Birr Methodist Church

Text: Irene Morrow



Although Methodism in Birr can trace its roots back to 1748, when John Wesley first rode into Birr (then Parsonstown), the present

building dates from 1820. It is located on Emmet Street, a short distance from the town square. Writing about the Methodist

Church, Birr, in 1826, Thomas Lalor Cooke in his book *The Picture of Parsonstown* said:

'This is a plain building ornamented with a well-executed cut-stone pediment and cornice. In front on the tympanum is a tablet with this inscription, "Wesley Chapel 1820"... the interior is exceedingly simple being without architraves, cornices, or mouldings. In the wall of the western gable-end stands the preaching desk, and on the floor are several rows of forms making so many concentric circles of which the preaching desk seems to be the centre.'

The interior of the church today is still simple but comfortable and welcoming with music provided by a small pipe

organ. The Morrison Memorial Hall was added in 1896: Mr Edward Morrison had a jewellery business in the town both making and selling jewellery. During the ministry of the Rev Dr John Parkin a kitchen was added behind the hall.

During the week the hall is used by a nursery school and for music lessons as well as for prayer meetings and Bible study. Over the years, events such as the departure of the British Army in 1921 have seen the congregation fluctuate in number. This year, four new members were received into the congregation and worship is further enhanced by the presence of some African refugees and asylum-seekers. Our small congregation is growing but there is room for more!