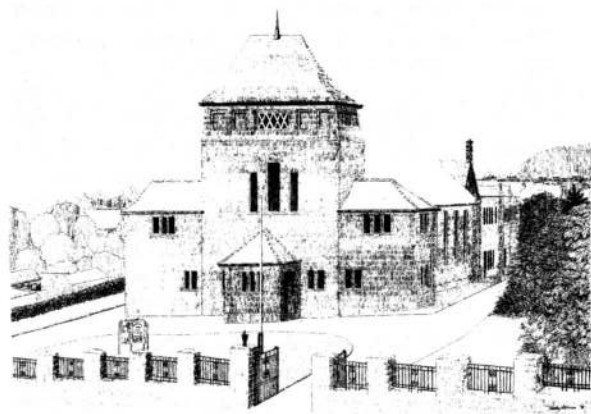


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Stanley Robinson



Cavehill Methodist society came into being in the immediate post 1939-45 war period when the north Belfast area was rapidly expanding. The Revd J B Jameson and the Carlisle Memorial leaders realised that a growing population with young families close to their doorstep created a challenge which had to be addressed.

In 1947 the first meetings were held in the former Cavehill Preparatory school; subsequently rented for a period of three years, during which time it came to be known as the 'Wee Hall.' Such was the support and attendance at these early Sunday evening

services that it quickly became clear that more adequate accommodation was required. As a result in March 1948 a site was purchased on nearby land in anticipation of the time when it would be possible to build a new church and manse.

Over the next years a full range of activities was carried on in the Wee Hall. Nevertheless it was not until 1952, at a time when there were 200 members on the roll, that the first morning services was

held. The practicalities of accommodating the increasing demands of organizations and a worshipping community had reached crisis point.

At this stage a war time tragedy was the means whereby substantial funding became available to the Cavehill congregation. This was the result of a decision of the leaders of the former Duncairn Gardens Methodist Church which had been destroyed during the 1941 bombing of Belfast.

After a great deal of difficult negotiation it was announced in 1954 that the Leaders and Quarterly Meetings had reached a

settlement with the War Damage Commission for the porting of £58,000 compensation to the Cavehill site. Three years later the new Cavehill Methodist Church and halls, designed by Messrs Young and McKenzie, were officially opened on Saturday 27 April 1957.

If the beginnings of Cavehill work was the result of post war movement in population, the succeeding years to a great extent have been determined by the continuing change in patterns of population as the result of civil unrest.

North Belfast has suffered more than most in a city which has itself experienced massive relocation of families and the Carlisle Memorial/Cavehill circuit has reflected those changes. Carlisle Memorial church closed in 1980 and Cavehill has suffered a substantial reduction in membership. Nevertheless the congregation retains its original concern for witness and outreach to the community. The society and ministers have worked to maintain a spirit of reconciliation and have helped to form closer relationships with neighbouring churches and the nearby Columbanus Community.

Robin Roddie

12: Cavehill Methodist Church