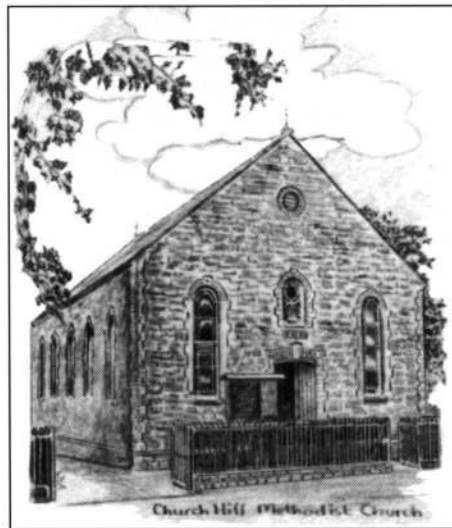


ROUND THE CHURCHES

60: Church Hill Methodist Church

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The Methodists of Church Hill, County Fermanagh, are this year celebrating the 125th anniversary of the building of their church and manse in 1878. The date is, of course, of wider historic significance, representing the union of the former Wesleyan Methodist Connexion (the

'Wesleyans') and the Primitive Wesleyan Methodist Connexion (the 'Primitive Wesleyans') to form the Methodist Church in Ireland, a division dating from 1816.

The union had major implications for the Methodists of Church Hill which had the distinction in that part of the country, otherwise mostly 'Primitive Wesleyan' in persuasion, of being 'Wesleyan' and belonging to the Enniskillen Wesleyan Circuit, that is apart from two classes which at one stage, according to the minister's visiting book, worshipped at the parish church. This explains why the earliest baptisms of Church Hill Methodists were in Enniskillen, the first being James Gordon of Shean on 20 April 1825. The new circuit consisted of Church Hill (Wesleyan), Springfield, Derrygonnelly and Cosbystown (all Primitive Wesleyan), with another manse in Springfield.

The first 'preaching house', of which, sadly, few records survive, is mentioned in a survey of 1837. Perhaps it was the plan to create the Springfield and Church Hill

Circuit, which came into being in 1879, and the need for a manse in Church Hill that prompted the building of a new church.

Very influential in the building of the church was Thomas Gordon of Londonderry. Born in Shean, Church Hill, he was by 1878, according to his obituary, one of 'the pillars of the business life of the Maiden City, trading in City House at the Diamond'. The ceremonial trowel used at the laying of the foundation stone, and bearing his name, was very generously presented to the church recently by Mr Gordon's granddaughter-in-law, Mrs Hazel Gordon of Bangor.

The *Irish Evangelist* of 1 November 1878 described the new building as 'beautiful... and would do no discredit to any town or city and... without parallel in any country district in Ireland'. The total cost of building church and manse was £1,226.

Church Hill has given to the Church two ministers of word and sacrament. The Rev William Corrigan (1863-1936) was President in 1924/25. The Rev Austin N Hassard still has strong family links with the place.