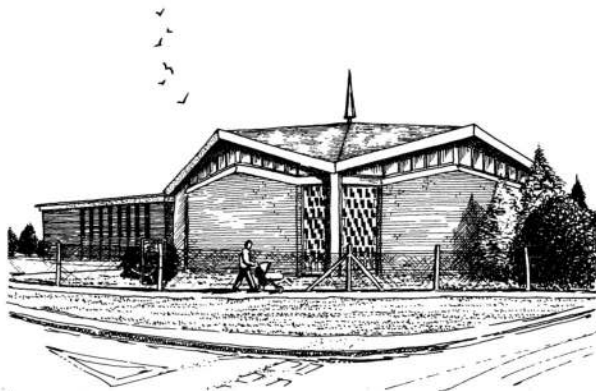


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

41: Craighill Methodist Church

Text: Uel Falconer



Compared to some Irish Methodist churches, Craighill has quite a short history in that the work commenced in 1957.

At that time the Leaders and Stewards of Larne Methodist Church felt the need to start services in the home of Mr & Mrs Alan P Gabbott in the then rapidly-developing housing complexes at Antiville and Craighill.

Mr Gabbott came from England to work in the new British Thompson Houston Factory on the Old Glenarm Road (now the premises of F G Wilson Engineering Ltd). Others, including quite a number from the

Belfast area, also came to work in the 'BTH', as the factory was known locally. Some of these families were Methodists and they eventually had a considerable influence on the work at Craighill.

The meetings in the Gabbott home were a prelude to the establishment of a new congregation soon to be housed in a dual-purpose timber building.

The building was opened by Mrs S J Crawford on 18 January 1958. The President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Rev J Wesley McKinney, dedicated the premises to the glory of God and the service of the community.

Over the following years the congregation and the organisations associated with it grew rapidly. It soon became apparent that more permanent premises were urgently needed to enable the congregation, not only to serve its own needs, but those of the community, to best advantage.

Accordingly, plans were formulated to

build the present church and halls. Craighill Church owes a great debt of gratitude to the late Rev J W Young and the Rev Thomas A Noble for their ceaseless efforts in pushing forward the project.

The official opening of the premises was performed by Mr Alan P Gabbott on Saturday 28 April 1969. The sermon was preached by the President, the Rev G G Myles, The following day, Sunday 29 April, services of Thanksgiving and Dedication were conducted by the Rev Thomas A Noble.

Craighill ministers and their families had, since the commencement of the work in the dual-purpose building, been housed in various premises belonging to the NI Housing Trust/Executive. A new manse adjacent to the church was planned and eventually dedicated by the President, the Rev Cecil A Newell, on 16 September 1983.

Three former Craighill members, Wesley Blair, Brett Barnhill and David Rock, are now serving the Church in the full-time ministry.

Craighill is still very much in a mission situation due to the great influx of private housing developments in the area and so there are many people still to be reached for Christ.