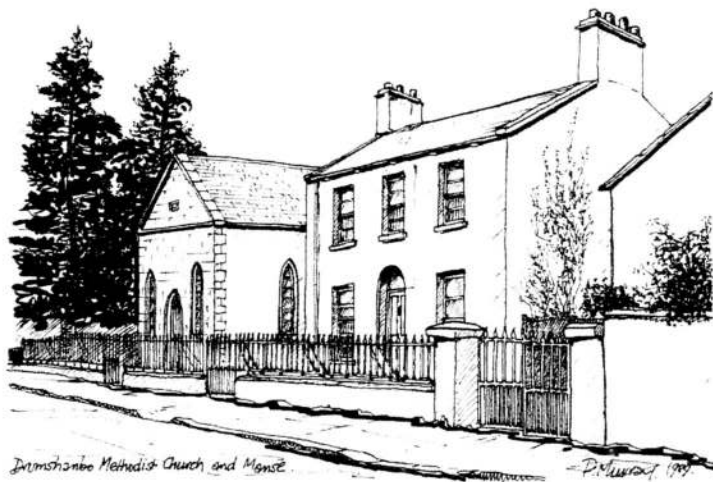


ROUND THE CHURCHES

113: Drumshanbo Methodist Church

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Drumshanbo is situated in County Leitrim, eight miles from Carrick-on-Shannon. During the 18th and much of the 19th century it was somewhat isolated as it was not on the main road. The opening of the Cavan and Leitrim railway in 1887 brought life to the town.

The story of Methodism in the area is largely associated with the faith and commitment of a few families, which began in May 1762 when John Wesley preached at Carrick-on-Shannon and was entertained in the home of Mr Glover Laird in Killukin, not far from the town. His son, John Laird, (1801-71) moved to Drumshanbo where he became a prominent leader and was Circuit

of Fossey Tackaberry. It was opened by Gideon Ouseley who had also done much to evangelise the area.

The present church was opened on 6 October 1861. Both it and the manse were designed by George Latimer who married Catherine, daughter of Mark Crawford. The manse was completed in 1863.

The Methodist congregation at Drumshanbo enjoyed a wide reputation for good singing, and in 1885 was thought to be the best 'in any provincial town in Ireland'. In 1910 Donegall Square Methodist sold their organ (according to tradition once played before Queen Victoria at the Exhibition in Dublin) to Drumshanbo

Steward for many years. His sister who married Mark Crawford was converted during a revival in the area in 1852 and she and her husband also became leading members at Drumshanbo.

The first chapel was built in 1826 and was closely connected with the work

where it was installed by Evans and Barr, Belfast.

Among the heroes of faith at Drumshanbo was Miss Sarah Fenton (1847-1944) who was for many years head teacher in the Drumshanbo Methodist School.

Caleb Shera Laird was not only a pillar of Drumshanbo Methodism, where he was Circuit Steward for almost 30 years, but also of the community. He brought electricity to the streets and homes of Drumshanbo in 1902; next came the sewage and sanitary system, then the saw mills and the purchase of the creamery. He opened wholesale stores at the bridge and built scores of houses in and around the town and then in 1934 he started a jam factory producing Bo Peep Jam, which continued to operate until the late 1980s. He employed hundreds and hundreds of workmen and always addressed them by their Christian names. He died in 1972 at the age of 92.

Today descendants of Mark Crawford are prominent members of Drumshanbo Methodist Church after more than 150 years. Though small in number, the congregation has been greatly encouraged over the last year by hosting the monthly joint services shared with the emerging congregation from Carrick-on-Shannon. There has been no resident minister since the 1970s, and the society now forms part of the North Connacht circuit.