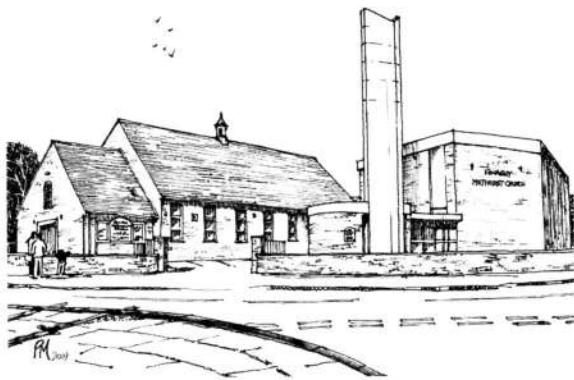


# ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

## 127: Finaghy Methodist Church

Text: Robin Roddie



In 1915, when Stockman's Lane was still country and Osborne Park was the last Methodist Church between Belfast and Lisburn, the Rev Thomas Gibson of Osborne Park started meetings in the home of Mr Joseph Holland, father of the Rev Dr Albert Holland. Five years later the numbers attending had grown to around 60.

In March 1920 at Osborne Park Circuit Quarterly Meeting, 'a discussion arose concerning the work in Dunmurry neighbourhood, and the necessity of something being done in erecting a Lecture Hall or some suitable building'. There were difficulties in the way at the time and it was not until 1926 that the plan materialised, when Mr Hugh Armstrong of Deramore

Park presented a site in Black's Road for the erection of a Church Hall.

Not long afterwards the Rev W J Oliver, while stationed in Osborne Park, began additional work in Finaghy in the home of Mrs Ballam and these meetings were continued by the Rev W T Clarke. In 1932 Wednesday evening meetings were held in Finaghy Schoolhouse.

The work developed further with a Sunday school organised by Mrs Ballam and Mr Alexander Kell, father of the Rev George Kell. These activities were so encouraging that building operations proceeded at Black's Road and the 'Randall C Phillips Memorial' Church Hall was opened on 8 December 1934.

The Finaghy/Dunmurry area had now become a rapidly developing suburb of Belfast. The Rev Henry Holloway, the first Methodist minister stationed at Black's Road, Canon J C Butler of the Col and the Rev Dr Alfie Martin, Presbyterian, visited every home 'so that none might be missed'.

With increasing congregations and youth activities it became evident that larger premises more conveniently situated would be necessary. While the Rev George

Ferguson was minister at Black's Road, the decision was made to move to the site adjacent to Finaghy Cross Roads and, during the ministry of the Rev Herbert Irvine, Wesley Hall was built and opened on 5 June 1954.

Like Black's Road, Wesley Hall became inadequate to meet the demands of the increasing congregation. Under the leadership of the Rev Walter Bingham, the decision was made to build an additional sanctuary to cater for the over 350 families by this stage connected to the congregation. On 4 March 1967 the new church, Dixon Hall and Day Chapel were opened. A feature of the new building was the circular Day Chapel and outside the distinctive tower which became a landmark in Finaghy. The architects of the new church, as they had been for the Wesley Hall, were Messrs Ferguson and McIlveen.

Finaghy congregation has maintained a reputation for the hard work, sacrifice and determination of those who first met in Dunmurry almost 100 years ago. Those pioneers would be glad to know that there are plans in hand to modify and enhance the premises so that this impressive suite of buildings will continue to serve not only the Methodist people but the wider community at Finaghy.