

ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray



The present church is the third building built for the Methodist society in the market town of Limavady, which is set in the beautiful Roe valley, 16 miles from Londonderry and 13 miles from Coleraine, and a stopping place on the route which becomes the famous coast road to the port of Larne.

It was along this route from Londonderry that an itinerant Methodist preacher, Scotsman

Alexander McNabb, came in 1774. He preached in the open air in the then named town of Newtownlimavady.

Through the divine blessing of his ministry, Mrs Martha McGee was enabled to rejoice in a sin-pardoning God and became the mother of Methodism in the town. A small society was formed and was subsequently visited by John Wesley on three occasions.

The first record of a

31: Limavady Methodist Church

Text: Christopher Wilson

Methodist place of worship is a preaching house on the town boundary, but no trace of this building can now be found.

The second building, known as the Methodist Chapel, was built of brick, stone and slate in 1831 on a site close to the parish church of Christchurch at one end of Main Street. Indeed the Methodist people were so well thought of in the town that one of the side streets was at that time called Methodist Lane.

The numerical and spiritual growth of the Methodist society in Limavady as a result of the 1859 revival in Ulster demanded the building of a larger new chapel.

The building of this new chapel, today's church, was commenced in Irish Green Street in the early part of 1876 on a site 'granted in perpetuity at a normal rent by Samuel M Alexander, Esq, DL, lord of the soil'.

The official opening of the church was on Wesley Day, Thursday 24 May 1877. The guest speaker was a noted American Methodist minister, the

Rev W H Milburn, who was on a preaching tour of Ulster.

Limavady Methodist church was strategically placed as a spiritual home from home for the hundreds of servicemen and women who were stationed in the area during the Second World War. Sunday services became packed and there was a weekly after-church fellowship.

Even today men and women from all over the world return to renew memories of those years. Some of the servicemen and women found their life partners in the fellowship.

Each Sunday worshippers are drawn through the open doors of Limavady church, a late Victorian building of black basalt trimmed with yellow brick, into an atmosphere of peace and calm. The interior they see is beautiful, a place where God is found.

But, unfortunately, the ravages of the weather have taken their toll of the building's fabric. The society is at present planning a refurbishment which will, under God, maintain the witness into the new millennium.