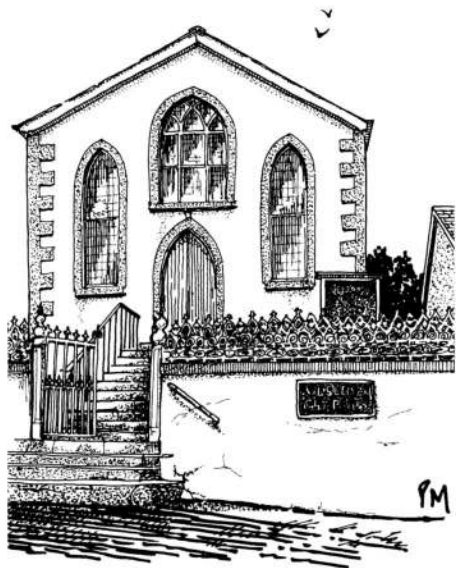


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

73: Pettigo Methodist Church

Text: Neville McElderry



Pettigo is half in Fermanagh, half in Donegal. In the 18th century it was regarded as a wild, remote settlement where drunken

fighting on market days were routine and the rector said that the inhabitants 'scarce knew more of the Gospels than the (unevangelised) Indians of North America'.

The first Methodist preaching was by William McCornock about 1775 and he was followed over the years by many very devoted ministers, such as Samuel Alcorn (1792), James Lynch (1836), who had gone with Thomas Coke to Sri Lanka, James Rutledge (1839) and Robert Devers (1855). The annual salary for a single minister in 1854 was £32, plus £7 for fires and candles and £2 for horse-shoeing.

The class system was central in those times. In remote areas people who lived far from the church might not be able to get there on Sunday but would walk for miles, by the light of a burning sod of turf, wading barefoot through streams, to attend their weekly meeting and bring their one penny fee – it would put many of us to shame. There were about 25 classes in 1875.

Later eight preaching-places (small

churches, schools and a mission hall) were established and the minister himself or his assistant would preach regularly. But the 20th century was to see all of these closed, mainly because of the dwindling Protestant population. More recently people have cars, making the smaller churches unnecessary.

However, Pettigo Church itself has been flourishing increasingly since the 1960s, when the hall was built. In it meet the Boys' Brigade with about 70 boys, and the Girls' Brigade with over 40 girls. Both organisations have officers and members not just from the Methodist Church but from the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church as well. There are also active Junior and Young People's CE groups and a large Sunday School. The congregation, which is now included in circuit with Irvinestown, includes an active retired minister, four local preachers and many other willing members doing various jobs.

With God's continued help we know we can face the coming century with confidence.