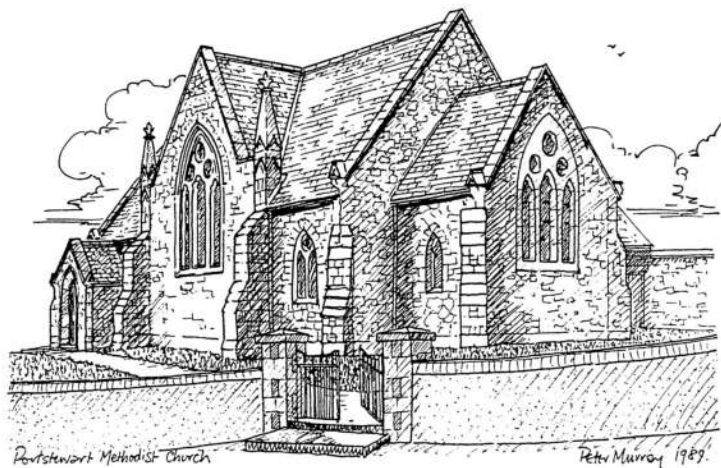


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

13: Portstewart Methodist Church



The Adam Clarke Memorial Methodist Church, Portstewart, to give its full title, is built on the site Dr Adam Clarke purchased in 1831 for his retirement home. Sadly, Dr Clarke died in 1832 and the house was never built. Methodism came to the Portstewart area through meetings held at Burnside and at one of these, in 1778, Adam Clarke was converted. In 1783 he went to England and became a pupil of John Wesley and eventually

a minister in the church in England. He was an able and diligent scholar who gained fame for his commentaries but he never forgot his roots and raised considerable sums of money to erect six schools between Cookstown and the North coast. It was therefore natural that following his death a memorial should be erected in his memory. A Methodist Church had existed on the Promenade since 1824 but on the instigation of the Revd RG Cather, the

Superintendent of the Coleraine Circuit, it was proposed that a new church be built on the site purchased by Dr Clarke.

This proposal had widespread support and became a community project much wider than Methodism, being carried forward by a committee of people of different denominations. The total cost, which included the obelisk to be erected in Portrush, was £2,250. The foundation stone was laid on 31 August 1859. The day was so stormy that the ceremony had to be shortened. Some expressed their concern at the wisdom of building a church in such an exposed position above the town but the ties with Dr Clarke and the prominent position the site afforded outweighed any reservations. Since then storms have played their part in the church's architecture. Part of the original parapets, which were the central feature of the roof, crashed through it in a storm in 1884. The remainder was not removed until 1912 when the church took on its present shape. Our recent storms have again dislodged slates and brought down guttering but this is the price of having a church with the best view in all Ireland!

Bert Montgomery