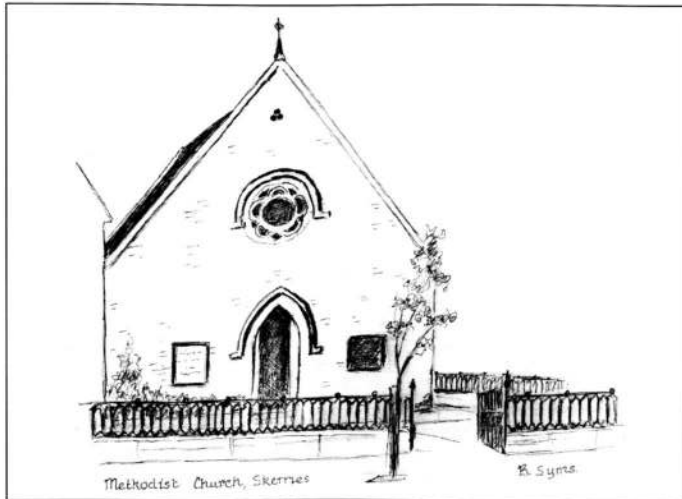


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: B Syms

97: Skerries Methodist Church

Text: Conrad Hicks



'In the afternoon I rode over to Skerries,' wrote John Wesley in 1760, 'but before I came thither wind, which was fair before, shifted to the east, and blew a storm. I saw the hand of God, and after resting awhile, rode cheerfully back to Dublin.'

The hand of God has often been seen in Skerries; if Wesley had visited on more than that one unfortunate day, he might have been blessed with slightly

more positive manifestations of his presence!

By 1840 a Methodist chapel had been built on the land of John and Anne Rae. A stone, which possibly was set over its doorway, exists to this day. It is simply marked 'Wesleyan Chapel 1840'.

In 1852 two ministers and nine lay people took a lease of the land on which it stood. Only one lived in Skerries, most of

the others supporting the work from Drogheda and Dublin.

The leading family in Skerries was that of Robert and Alice Carey at Blacklands. It was in their home, over a meal, that £300 was raised towards the cost of a new building.

A site was acquired in Strand Street and the present church was opened on 4 June 1880.

Alice Carey paid for the building of a manse beside the church, but it was never used as such. The Careys are remembered in the beautiful stained glass windows that adorn the building.

During the first half of the 20th century attendance was boosted by the presence nearby of summer houses run by the Methodist Female Orphan School in Dublin and the Dublin Central Mission.

The decline following the closure of these was offset by numbers going to two holiday camps, Butlins at Mosney and Red Island at Skerries.

Attendance could be up to 150 in the summer, though the membership was down to just two by 1957. Before long there were summer services only.

The loss of most of the holiday trade in the 1960s was followed in the 1970s by a doubling of the size of Skerries with new housing. The chapel could sustain services all year round again.

In 1978 a toilet and kitchen were put in, and the replacement of the pews with chairs created flexibility in the use of the building. Local groups now use it during the week.

Attendance has quadrupled in the last couple of years, with about 15 children using the Church of Ireland primary school for Sunday School.

We look at what God is doing, and at our small and beautiful building, and hope that soon we, like our forefathers and mothers in Skerries Methodism, will have the challenge of having to adapt what we have for the needs of tomorrow.