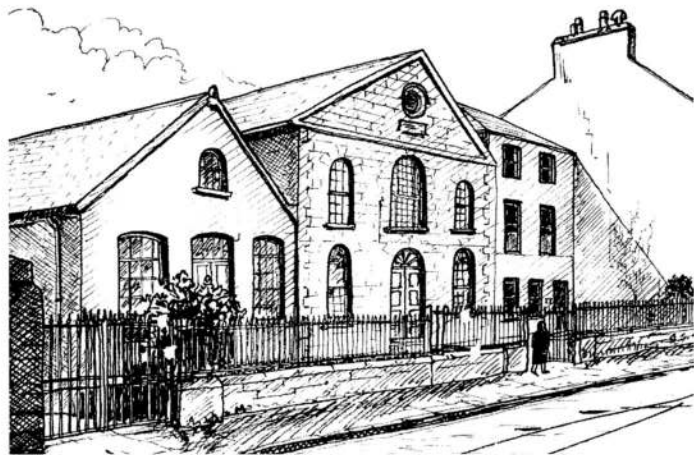


ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray



It was some unknown disciple who first introduced Methodism to Sligo. This member, settling in the town, invited the preacher on the Castlebar round to his home in 1757. John Wesley, hearing of the new opening, rode into Sligo on 27 May 1758. That evening he preached near the main street 'to a small, quiet, serious company', and twice the following Sunday in the Market House. The work was soon successful and, ten years later, Wesley found the work of God increasing in Sligo. Wesley visited the town 11 times in all. His last visit was in 1789.

The first Methodist chapel in

Sligo was 'a small, tumbledown structure with a thatched roof', erected in Bridge Street in 1775. This was so low that a tall preacher then on the circuit had to have a hole made in the mud floor in order to stand upright. A new and better church was built in Linenhall Street in 1802. The present church was opened in Wine Street in 1832. The hall and manse adjoining were erected at later dates.

Outstanding personalities within Irish Methodism began to appear in the wake of Wesley's visit. In 1770 a young Catholic, Edward Drumgoole, went to Methodist services, and was led

112: Sligo Methodist Church

Text: Robin Roddie

to study the Word of God for himself. After his conversion he emigrated to America and became a successful preacher.

Robert Strawbridge, when persecuted in Drumsna, took refuge in Sligo. Later he became known as the Apostle of Methodism in Maryland and shares with another Irish Methodist the honour of first introducing Methodism to America.

The most noted product of Sligo Methodism was Charles Graham who became known as 'The Apostle of Kerry'. He was born in 1750 at Tullinnagrackin, about two miles from the town. He was a noted pugilist whose motto was 'To conquer or to die'. As a result of being rebuked at a wake by a Methodist local preacher, Graham was convicted of sin and converted to God.

After working for many years on his home circuit he was challenged by the great Rev Dr Thomas Coke, to preach in Irish to his fellow countrymen.

He was joined in the Irish General Mission by another celebrated Connacht man, Gideon Ouseley. Settling in Ballymote, Ouseley preached in English and Irish to the people

and at one stage he was put in the Black Hole in Sligo for his troubles. During the great rebellion of 1798, Ouseley went to live in Sligo, starting a boys' school in Bridge Street.

One of those who joined the Sligo society in 1822, under Ouseley's preaching, was William Graham Campbell, who went on to become one of the great evangelists of 19th century Irish Methodism.

Over the years many notable preachers for the ministry candidated from Sligo circuit. Amongst those are: William Arthur; the three brothers Robertson from Collooney; John and Andrew Cullen of Drum; Warren Henry of Fermoy; James B Templeton of Glencar Valley; Stuart Irwin of Ballymote; and Ernest Young; and in more recent times, George Good.

Sligo is one of the regions of Irish Methodism which has suffered most as a result of emigration but in the last number of years the life of the church has been greatly refreshed in membership by those who have immigrated to Ireland and been welcomed into the life of the congregation.