

ROUND THE CHURCHES

82: Ballynure Methodist Church

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Text: Hubert Greer



Robert Beatty was born in Ballynure in 1814. He was a man of some social standing, being a merchant in the village and also believed to have been the manager of the village cotton mill. Robert's brother worked in the West Indies slave trade where he was influenced

by a converted slave owner. Feeling unable to continue in this business, he returned to Ballynure and in turn influenced Robert, who resolved to 'cease to do evil and learn to do well'.

Robert then joined the Methodist society at the age of 19, and immediately established

a Sunday School in his mother's home. At this stage no formal church existed and 'cottage meetings' were held in various townlands.

In 1846 Robert Beatty designed a simple church building, organised help from neighbouring farmers and supervised the erection of the structure. He was able to complete the building free of debt.

Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland* refers to Ballynure in 1859.

'An open air service was held at Ballynure. At least one thousand persons were present. One and another were stricken and carried into the Wesleyan Chapel to be prayed with and spoken to until scores were thus removed.'

In 1895 the property was doubled in size by enlarging the sanctuary and providing Sunday

School premises. The work was now done professionally, a Mr Elliott from Enniskillen being employed as architect and the builder, Mr Ferris from Larne, receiving £719 3s 11d for the work.

1907 saw the installation of a central heating system, a choir platform and a pipe organ, all at a cost of £300. The organ was of a very high quality and it is believed that an identical one existed at Windsor Castle before the fire of 1992.

Following the demand for improved facilities 1992 saw, under the guidance of the Rev Kenneth Robinson, the buildings further expanded by the provision of a church hall, kitchen, vestry, toilets and 'upper' meeting room. Initial costings of £200,000 were reduced to an actual cost of £120,000 through the use of voluntary labour.