

ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

114: Boyle Federal Church

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Boyle Federal Church is the result of an early co-operation agreement between the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church in the town of Boyle. The small congregations in the two separate churches agreed in 1959 to join together and to meet for worship in the Presbyterian church, as it was the one in better repair. Since then, services are conducted on alternate Sundays by Methodist and Presbyterian preachers. Meanwhile, the old Methodist church was sold in 1965 to one of the local Methodist members, Logan Knott, who has built his home on the site.

The original Methodist church was built in 1796 under the patronage of Sir Edward King of Boyle Abbey, Earl of Kingtown. He became interested in Methodism through the preaching of Adam Averell, not only

in the town but in the soldiers' barracks and as a result he gave the site, and timber, and a generous donation for the building.

The cause in the area was greatly strengthened by the missionary work of Gideon Ouseley and Charles Graham who inaugurated periods of revival as in 1805 when 100 were converted in the town.

One of the early influential members of Boyle was Allan Edmondson, an Englishman, who built several cotton mills

in England and Ireland. One which he built at Button-bridge, near Dublin, was unfortunately destroyed by fire. Despite this and other setbacks he subsequently married and settled in business at Boyle, and played an important role not only in the local society but became a sounding board for many in the wider Irish Connexion, particularly during the sacramental controversies of 1816-18.

The other family name prominent throughout the 1800s in Boyle was that of Shera at whose home the circuit ministers received hospitality for over 100 years. Then towards the end of the century, in 1890, Arthur Crawford and Robert Boles, both recently arrived in the town, joined with Mrs Edward Shera to initiate 'a forward movement' and they brought new

life to the cause, renovated the church and persuaded the Connexion to station a junior minister in the town.

For much of the early 20th century it was the name of Robert Boles who symbolised the spirit of Methodism in the town as he built up his drapery business. He opened his shop in 1886 while he was still a bachelor. His former minister, Robert Byers, who had moved to Fivemiletown in 1891, suggested to him that he might find a suitable bride there among one of three daughters in the Methodist Stuart family. He cycled the 85 miles to Fivemiletown and fell in love not with the designated daughter but her sister, Jane, and they married a year later in 1892. In Boyle as their shop expanded they took in live-in apprentices and they encouraged their employees to attend worship.

It was partly to facilitate social activity for their apprentices that Robert Boles Junior bought an old Nissen hut in 1948 and brought it to the town where it served the church and community for many years, though it is now no longer in use.

The Presbyterian congregation in the town was formed as the result of fortnightly services conducted in the Methodist church and their building was opened in May 1859. Though modest in scale, it has a commanding presence in the town through its elevated site. It is now home to the two congregations who enjoy a happy relationship and, united, they provide a continuing witness in the town.