

ROUND THE CHURCHES

Drawing: Peter Murray

87: Omagh Methodist Church

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The first hint of Methodism in the Omagh area was in 1767, when a travelling preacher, John Smith, based in Armagh, was invited to begin a class at the home of John Gray, near Newtown Stewart. John Wesley himself first came to Omagh on

a market day in 1787.

The first Methodist church in the town was built in 1811. By the 1850s it was too small and the existing church was opened in 1857. A manse was built adjacent to the church in 1865, and housed the ministers until

1959, when a new manse was purchased at Dergmoney Place. The old one was demolished in 1968 and the site now serves as valuable car parking space.

Significant alterations were made to the church building in 1976 during the ministry of the Rev John Dowse. This included the replacement of doors, internal replastering, and the provision of carpeting.

In 1995 the late Rev Peter Good led a small team of members in an extensive repair and new building scheme, which included the demolition of the existing church hall and the erection of a new hall which doubles the area of the previous facility. New central heating and a sound system were installed.

Traditional pews were replaced with comfortably upholstered chairs to allow greater flexibility for modern worship. The basement classrooms were rationalised. The completed project was opened in 1997.

Omagh's new premises, the Peter Good Hall and the Dick Bell Room, are used extensively by the MWI, the Kidz Sunday Club, and Senior and Junior Youth Cells. During the week the Mums and Toddlers Group, Bowling Club and Youth Club meet. It is hoped that the members of the church will continue to benefit from this expansion, and that the new premises will facilitate the outreach of the church in years to come.