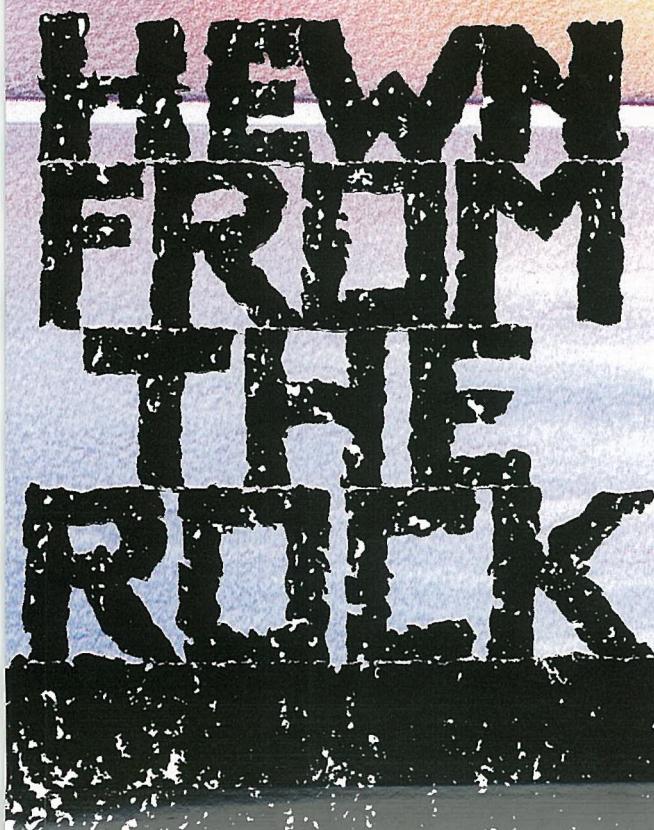


THE STORY OF FIRST ANTRIM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



Hewn From The Rock

The Story of
FIRST ANTRIM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(formerly known as Millrow Presbyterian Church)

by
George Hughes, MB BCh BAO

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First Antrim Presbyterian Church
1996

The following verses are taken from a Poem written by Mr William McComb Belfast in June 1842, to mark the bicentenary of the formation of the first Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Two hundred years ago there came from Scotland's storied land
To Carrick's old and fortified town a Presbyterian band;
They planted on the castle wall the Banner of the Blue,
And worshipped God in simple form, as Presbyterians do.
Oh, hallowed be their memory who in our land did sow
The goodly seed of Gospel truth two hundred years ago.

Two hundred years ago our Church a little one appeared:
Five ministers and elders four the feeble vessel steered;
But now five hundred pastors and four thousand elders stand
A host of faithful witnesses within our native land.
Their armour is the Spirit's sword, and onward as they go
They wave the flag their fathers waved two hundred years ago.

Two hundred years ago the dew of God's refreshing power
On Oldstone and on Antrim fell, like Israel's manna shower;
The waters of the Six Mile stream flowed rapidly along,
But swifter far the Spirit passed o'er the awakened throng;
Where'er the fruitful river went, God's presence seemed to go,
And thus the Spirit blessed our sires two hundred years ago.

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Preface

My call to minister in First Antrim in 1980 has been a continual source of inspiration and blessing to me. To have been so divinely honoured to enter into the lives of this people has been, and continues to be, a glorious privilege.

This congregation's history is rich with insights into God's sovereign work in national and local affairs. It sets before us many examples of men and women who, shaped by His work in their lives, have felt called upon to go forth into His service in Antrim, in Ulster and even into remote parts of the world.

The present congregation is deeply indebted to Dr. George Hughes for this record of the congregation's life and witness. Painstaking research and meticulous attention to detail has enabled him to present an amazingly comprehensive and coherent picture, even of those periods for which few written records exist. Oral tradition has been thoroughly evaluated and has enabled Mrs Sham Simpson to present marvellous drawings of the buildings successively used by the worshipping people.

The re-telling of the story underlines for me the debt owed to those called to minister in Word and Sacrament before me. I was privileged to know only one of them personally, namely the late Rev TP Blackstock. This book reminds us forcibly of the tremendous contribution he made to First Antrim's life at a time of unprecedented population growth in the town. His vision and determination to glorify God laid the foundation for the blessings we have known in recent years.

I warmly commend "Hewn From The Rock" to all with the prayer that God, the Lord of the Church, will be glorified through its use.



S. JOHN DIXON

Minister, First Antrim Presbyterian Church

September, 1996.

Foreword

The title, "Hewn From The Rock" is adapted from Isaiah 51 v 1, *"Look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were hewn"* (NIV) The picture which the word "hewn" brings to mind is one of the persistent, dogged determination needed to construct something worthwhile in an unfriendly atmosphere and possible life-threatening dangers. Such a scenario mirrors to some extent the pressures and hardships with which our Presbyterian forefathers had to cope as they struggled to gain recognition and a rightful place in society in the early days of Presbyterianism in Ireland.

First Antrim congregation does not have in its possession documents, written records, or memorabilia relating to the first 200 years of its history! 'Oral tradition' relating to that period has not been of much help; what was obtained proved to be vague, incomplete and frequently unreliable.

The earliest written congregational records begin around 1840, but being both brief and incomplete they provided little or no useful information. Some of the older minute books have been damaged by water so badly that the paper is brittle and easily torn. In others, age has made the writing faint and virtually illegible. Long gaps in the records would indicate that either minutes were not written for those missing periods or else that some minute books were destroyed or lost. To bridge such gaps resort has been made to various general histories of Presbyterianism in Ireland and from these sources extract information relevant to the church in Antrim. Frequent references are made in these histories of Presbyterianism to the names "Clotworthy" and "Massereene". Agnes F Gawn, in a brochure written in 1912, and entitled *"A Guide to the Grounds of Antrim Castle and The History of the Massereene Family"* has given the following information about this family:-

Sir Hugh Clotworthy was an Englishman who first visited Antrim in 1573. Later he obtained a grant of Antrim and settled here in 1605 in the grounds where Antrim Castle was built later. His son, Sir John Clotworthy, succeeded him. He was a most zealous Non-conformist and a member of the Irish Parliament for the County of Antrim. *"One of his first acts in Parliament was in 1634 to present and support a petition for the abolition of Episcopacy. He became the avowed patron of the Non-conformists at Antrim and maintained two of their ministers, the Revs John Calvert and James Cunningham at his own expense. He was raised to the Peerage in 1660 and took the title of Viscount Massereene, Baron of Lough Neagh. He has been described as a man of simple and temperate habits, great capacity, courteous manners, unflinching courage, a staunch and loyal friend, a good hater and a bitter enemy"*. On many occasions the Massereene family supported the early Presbyterian settlers in the Antrim area and gave them support, encouragement and assistance, as and when needed.

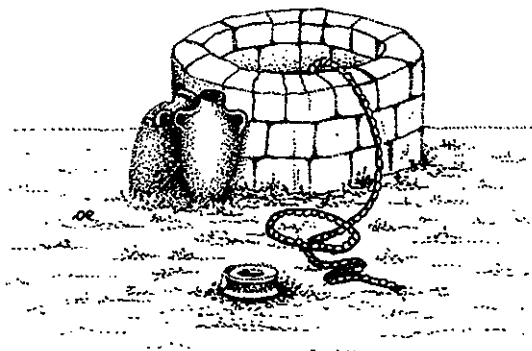
I am greatly indebted to many people within the congregation and others from outside who have helped, encouraged and advised me, and without whose assistance

this book might never have been completed. It is impossible to mention each individual but thanks *must* be expressed to a few. The Rev John Dixon, the minister of the congregation, has been a constant source of encouragement. His keen interest in the work and his helpful comments have brought much needed stimulation and inspiration on many occasions. Thanks must also be expressed to Mrs Sham Simpson who has given most willingly of her time and her artistic talents to brighten the text and make it more interesting. She is also responsible for designing the cover. The Kirk Session has given its full support and permitted me access to all the Minute Books and other documents in the congregation's possession. The Publication Sub-Committee of the Kirk Session, consisting of the Rev S John Dixon, Messers FJ Bownes, AA Chestnutt and J Winters has helped with advice on material to be included, the lay-out of the manuscript and its publication. For the assistance of all of these individuals I am most grateful.

Acknowledgement must be made of the help given by Dr Bob Foy and Mr S Alex Blair in reading the manuscript, giving helpful advice, correcting inaccuracies and in making helpful comments; also to Mrs Josephine Herbison and Miss Mary Baird for their careful attention to reading the proofs. Antrim Printers have been most co-operative in meeting the sub-committee's requirements and offering valuable advice on publication and printing.

Many individuals from within the congregation, together with some from outside it, have helped by supplying newspaper cuttings, photographs, books, memorabilia of various kinds and in clarifying incomplete and obscure information. Regrettably, these individuals must remain anonymous; the list is very long, and an attempt to mention all who have helped runs the risk of inadvertently omitting people whose contribution has been invaluable. It is not our wish to overlook any, so to one and all we express our sincere thanks. I am also deeply indebted to my wife for her patience, support, interest and understanding during the many months of preparation and subsequent writing, and to the members of my family for their encouragement.

George Hughes.



"But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." - John 4 v 14.

Introduction

Religious Life in the Antrim Area Prior to the Year 1600.

The early inhabitants of the Antrim district were pagans who, in time, adopted the practices of the Druids and performed many of their religious ceremonies, including human sacrifices. These they performed in oak groves because they regarded the oak tree and its fruits and the mistletoe as sacred. Their priests practised sorcery and were accredited with powers to alter the weather!

The Steeple Monastery

Aodh, a disciple of St Patrick, introduced Christianity to these people in AD 495. He built a monastery and a church in the Steeple grounds near where the Round Tower now stands. At one time this church was a Bishop's seat. The Round Tower was not built until the 9th or 10th century. It provided a look-out post, a place of shelter for the monks and abbots when the monastery was under attack, and a safe repository for ceremonial vessels and other valuables belonging to the church.

This monastic settlement was subjected to attack by different invaders, first the Danes, then the Norwegian Vikings and lastly by the Anglo-Saxons. It was ransacked in AD 761 and in 1147 it was burned to the ground. This time the site was abandoned and neither the monastery nor the church was re-built.

The old town of Antrum, known as Entrumnia, grew up around the monastery. It remained there until 15th or early 16th century when it was moved to the banks of the Six Mile Water to a place where a ford provided an easy crossing. During the following years it changed its name a number of times and eventually became GALL ANTRIM (signifying Antrim of the English). At that time the population of the town was about 600.

After 1500 AD, settlers from Scotland and England began to arrive in small numbers and make their homes in Antrim. Military and naval forces were stationed in the town and district to guard and protect the Lough from marauders. In 1596 the original All Saints' Parish Church was built on its present site, and served the newcomers to the town and the forces billeted in the surrounding countryside.

Muckamore Abbey

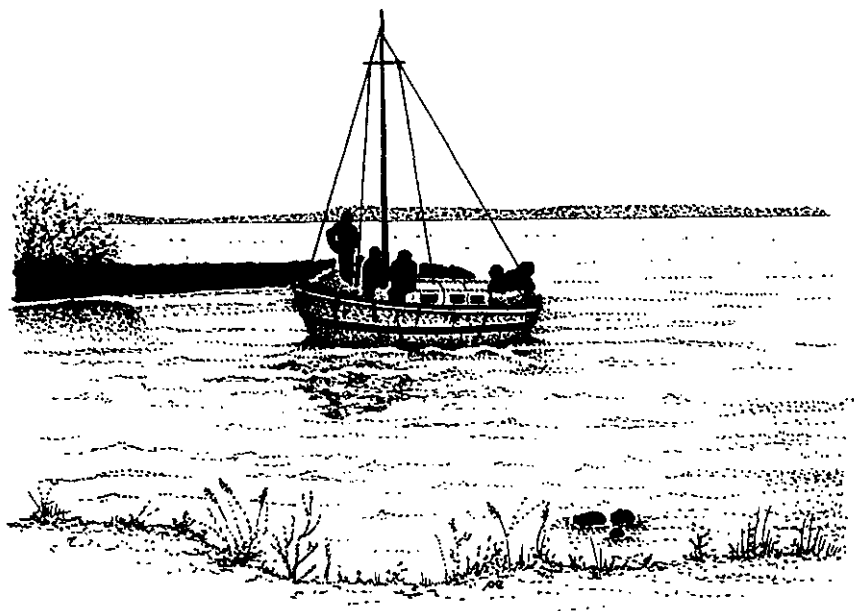
Muckamore Abbey, an Augustinian monastery, was founded by St Colman in AD 585. It was erected where the road now known as The Seven Mile Straight joins the Oldstone Road. Little is known about the Abbey except that it was an important centre of learning. It was destroyed by the Vikings but rebuilt about 1200 AD and re-dedicated to St Mary and St Colman. In the middle of the 16th Century, King Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of all monasteries and the confiscation of their property. The Abbey, like other monasteries, was destroyed completely.

In the late 1970's a road widening and re-alignment scheme at the junction of the two roads enabled a limited archaeological excavation of the site to be carried out. Some foundations and pieces of wall were unearthed, but it was found impossible to

re-route the road away from the site and leave the walls exposed. The walls were buried again beneath the new roadway.

Massereene Monastery

A third Monastery was founded in Antrim in the 15th century by a Mr Phelim O'Neill. It was The Massereene Friary of the Franciscan Third Order Regular. It too was demolished in the 16th century. It was situated on the south bank of the Six Mile Water, in the garden of the late Mr George Clarke and in line with Market Square. A bridge was constructed over the river in 1973 as part of a by-pass connecting the Ballymena and Dublin Roads. The work involved the demolition of some houses, including Mr Clarke's, and this provided an opportunity for a limited excavation of the site.



".... and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the world."

Acts 1 v 8.

Chapter One

Ulster In The Early 17th Century.

The years which bridged the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time of uncertainty and unrest in Ulster. Hostilities between the forces of the Irish clans (led by Hugh O'Neill) and the forces of the Crown broke out in 1594 and lasted until 1603 [The Nine Years' War]. Casualties, both military and civilian, were heavy. Many civilians were caught up in the fighting and perished; others succumbed to hunger, malnutrition, exposure and/or disease. Insecurity and the accidents of war compounded the situation forcing people to move from one district to another, often with little or no warning. Forests and bogs covered much of the land which had once been arable. Cultivation of crops had almost ceased and food was in short supply. Many of the people were too weak to work the land, farm implements were scarce and many of the farm animals had been killed for food. Seeds for planting were hard to obtain, and all too often what was grown was commandeered by marauding forces. The province presented a picture of desolation and despair.

Queen Elizabeth I died a week before the end of hostilities. She was succeeded on the Throne of England by King James VI of Scotland, her cousin's grandson. As well as being King James VI of Scotland he now became King James I of England. His accession brought under the one crown the three kingdoms of England, Ireland and Scotland. Hoping for an acceptable and lasting peace for Ireland James and his advisors allowed the Irish leaders to retain most of their former properties and granted some of them additional favours as well, but in spite of these concessions tensions remained. In 1607, the leaders of the Irish, O'Neill and O'Donnell who had been created the Earl of Tyrone and the Earl of Tyrconnell respectively, fled the country to seek asylum on the continent [The Flight of The Earls] and a degree of normality followed. The Crown laid claim to the lands which the Earls had owned and these played an important part in providing homesteads for those settlers who, a few years later, arrived in Ulster.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the Presbyterians and Puritans* in both Scotland and England suffered persecution for their faith. The persecution was initiated by the Episcopal Church and condoned by The King. Many of both persuasions, but particularly their ministers, suffered severe hardships. Some were imprisoned for prolonged periods in horrendous conditions and others lost their lives in barbaric ways. It was a period when their members, and especially the Scots, feared for their lives.

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*THE NAME 'PURITAN' WAS A TERM OF DERISION, APPLIED TO A PARTY WITHIN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND WHO WISHED TO "PURGE" OR "PURIFY" THEIR CHURCH. THEY DESIRED A PROTESTANT CHURCH GOVERNED ALONG PRESBYTERIAN LINES, FREE FROM VESTMENTS, CEREMONIES AND LITURGIES, AND ALL THINGS REMINISCENT OF CATHOLICISM.

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The Antrim area was one of the centres in Ulster which, on account of its proximity to Scotland, attracted the fugitives from across The Irish Sea. It offered a place where they could make new homes, settle and find safety and security, with freedom to practise their Protestant faith. Not all who came, however, had these noble aspirations; a considerable number came for personal and ulterior motives. The Rev Andrew Stewart¹, minister of the Church in Donaghadee 1645-1671 has described them as: *"....generally the scum of both nations, who, for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came thither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet, of the fear of God.".... "On all hands Atheism increased, and disregard for God—iniquity abounded, contention, fighting, murder, thieving, adultery, etc".... "....Their carriage made them abhorred in their native land, inasmuch that going to Ireland was looked on as a miserable mark of a deplorable person."*

The native Irish were no better than the settlers. Adair² has described them as *"Obdurate in their idolatry, idleness, and rudeness".... "the state of the people throughout all the country was most lamentable being drowned in ignorance, security [carelessness] and sensuality."* Writing three centuries later and with the benefit of hindsight, Dr Majury could comment *"these very same people were destined to be fashioned into a people of God"*.

Preparing The Way.

Before the arrival of the settlers there were Presbyterians already in the area but they were few in number, and mostly traders and prospectors. As far as religion and the Church were concerned they were only temporary residents, living in isolation and unorganised. In a remarkable way God was preparing the ground for the establishment of His Church in the Six Mile Water area. In 1596 an Episcopal church had been built in Antrim on the ground where the present All Saints Parish Church stands. It served both the military billeted in the area and the English people who were living in and around the town. The Patron of the Church was Sir Arthur Chichester, whose aunt, Lady Clotworthy, was a Presbyterian. Sir Arthur's wife too was of Presbyterian stock. Their marriage held the potential for fostering good relationships between the already established Episcopal Church and the newly arrived Presbyterians. The first minister in the Antrim Church was the Rev John Ridge MA. He was inducted vicar of the Church in 1619, and according to Dr Majury *"he may be regarded as the first Presbyterian minister in Antrim."* After settling in Antrim Mr Ridge formed a close alliance with the eleven Presbyterian ministers who between 1613 and 1630 had settled in or near the valley of the Six Mile Water and a fraternal bond developed between them, which was to prove of great benefit to the young Church.

In 1976, on the 250th anniversary of the foundation of the Millrow Church, the Rev TP Blackstock³ wrote in the congregational magazine as follows :-

"God used a strange instrument to bring about a reformation. He was the Rev James Glendinning, Incumbent of Carnmoney and 'Lecturer' to the army in Carrickfergus. His ministry there had not been very effective as he was 'poor in scholarship and rather unstable'. His colleague, the Rev Robert Blair of Bangor, a fellow Scotsman, advised him to relinquish his work at Carnmoney and Carrickfergus

and seek another sphere of service. Glendinning chose to settle at Oldstone: this was in 1625. He reported that he found the people there showed a great lewdness and ungodly selfishness."

Mr Glendinning began his ministry at Oldstone, a townland situated on the outskirts of Antrim. The Rev Andrew Stewart has written of him that he possessed a: - *"...great and vehement delivery"* which he used to good effect in arousing the people and making them aware of their sinful state. However, he was unable to bring peace to their troubled consciences as he himself *"lacked a clear understanding of the grace of God."* Although Mr Glendinning was considered mentally unstable, eccentric and given to delusions by his fellow ministers, his preaching had a profound effect on his hearers. Andrew Stewart⁴, while crediting him with obtaining results, had this to say of his methods: - *"he preached nothing but law, with threats of wrath and the terrors of God for sin"....."his hearers, finding themselves condemned by the mouth of God speaking in His Word, fell into such anxiety and terror of conscience that they looked on themselves as altogether lost and damned, as those of old who said, 'men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?.'*"

Conviction of sin and the need for conversion were topics about which Mr Glendinning preached with remarkable effect but he was unable to teach, counsel, reassure, lead or guide new converts. Again, in the words of the Rev Andrew Stewart⁵... *"for a short time this work lasted as a sort of disease for which there was no cure, the people lying under the spirit of bondage; and the poor man who was the instrument of it, not being sent, it seems, to preach the Gospel so much as Law, they lay for a time in a most deplorable condition, slain for their sin and knew of no remedy."*

The confusion and uncertainty which followed Glendinning's preaching were allayed in a remarkable way. About 1626 a Scottish settler named Hugh Campbell, a resident of the Oldstone district, opened his home on the last Friday of each month⁶ for *"...prayer, mental edification, and conference," "in gratitude for the spiritual renewal and peace they had experienced."* The Revs Blair, Cunningham, Hamilton and Ridge welcomed the offer and joined enthusiastically in the arrangements. For a time Mr Glendinning joined in with his colleagues, but feeling overlooked by them *"....he was smitten with a number of erroneous and enthusiastic opinions, and embracing one error after another he set out at last for a visit to the Seven Churches of Asia⁷."* After leaving Oldstone he was never heard of again in the Antrim district.

The Monthly Meeting.

The Rev Josias Welsh, grandson of the renowned John Knox, the Rev Henry Colvert [or Calvert] and the Rev George Dunbar joined in the work. Unlike Mr Glendinning they presented a balanced and Scripture-based message and, with the help of their colleagues, sought to redress the errors which Glendinning's preaching had created. The Rev Andrew Stewart⁸ described the situation as follows :- *"now, remember what fever the whole country was in, and hear how it was allayed; for God, sending Mr Welsh upon that water-side, the first of the work began. God gave him the spirit to preach the gospel, and to bring the word to heal them whom the other by his ministry had wounded, so the slain were breathed upon, and life came into them, and*

they stood up as men now freed from the spirit of bondage... indeed, the joy and spirit of that time in this place can't by words be well expressed."

Regarding Mr Ridge's contribution to the Revival in the Six Mile Water district, his contemporary, the Rev Robert Blair⁹ of Bangor, wrote:- "*Mr John Ridge, the judicious and gracious minister of Antrim, perceiving many people on both sides of The Six Mile Water awakened out of their security [complacency], and willing to take pains for their salvation, made an overture that a monthly meeting might be set up at Antrim, which was within a mile of Oldstone and lay central for the awakened persons to resort to and he invited Mr Cunningham and myself to take part and come prepared to preach. The Antrim Meeting began in 1626.*" Mr Blair has added that Mr Ridge was always present at these monthly meetings.

Numbers attending the Monthly Meeting increased so dramatically that very soon Mr Campbell's house was too small to accommodate all who came. Mr Ridge suggested that the meetings be moved to the Parish Church. Permission to do so was granted, and for a number of years this continued to be the venue. The ministers met together in the Antrim Castle on the Thursday evenings, (hospitality being provided for them by¹⁰ Sir Hugh and Lady Clotworthy*) and used this opportunity to discuss the work and make plans for the future. Fridays were devoted to fasting, prayer and the instruction of the people. Two ministers preached in the forenoon and two in the afternoon, but in the winter months the afternoon meetings were restricted to one. The people used the free time between meetings to gather in groups for Bible Study and Prayer, sometimes with a minister to lead them, but often the groups were led by one of their own number.

Preparation classes for new communicants were held on the Saturday and Communion was celebrated on the last Sunday of every third month. The people were so eager to join in all the Communion Services that many who lived at a distance from Antrim spent the weekend in the town so that they could join in the Thanksgiving service which was held on the Monday and marked the end of the 'Communion season'. According to the Rev John Livingston, Killinchy¹¹:- "*People thought it sweet and easy to come 30 or 40 miles to the solemn communions and there continue from the time they came until they returned, without wearying or making use of sleep, yea, little meat or drink, and, as some of them professed, did not feel the need thereof, but went away most fresh and vigorous, their souls so filled with the sense of God.*"

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*REV JS REID HAS MADE THIS COMMENT ABOUT THE CLOTWORTHY FAMILY, "SIR HUGH WAS VERY HOSPITABLE TO THE MINISTERS WHO TOOK PART IN THAT WORK; AND HIS WORTHY SON, THE FIRST LORD MASSEREENE, WITH HIS MOTHER AND SPOUSE, BOTH OF THEM VERY VIRTUOUS AND RELIGIOUS LADIES, DID GREATLY COUNTENANCE THE SAME."

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Chapter Two

Early Presbyterian Ministers.

Rev John Ridge MA (1619 - 1636).

The Rev John Ridge was the third protestant minister from Britain to come to Ulster in the wake of the arrival of the first settlers. He had been ordained as a priest of the Church of England in 1612 by the Bishop of Oxford, but finding he had¹²:- *"no freedom for the exercise of his ministry without submitting to impositions which were contrary to his conscience"* he left the Church of England and embraced Puritanism. The Church of Ireland at this time was in a sad state. A Royal Commission in 1622 found:- *"in the Diocese of Down and Connor only 16 churches were fit for the celebration of Divine Ordinances, whilst 150 churches and chapels were decayed or in ruins."* Anderson¹³ quotes from an address given that same year by the Rev Henry Leslie, (later to become the Bishop of Down and Connor), *"in some places there was no minister, in others as good as none. Others were of unworthy life, a stumbling block to them that are without."* ... *"divine service had not for years together been used in any parish church throughout Ulster, except in some city or principal towns."*

Although Mr Ridge was no longer a priest of the Church of England Sir Arthur Chichester, the Patron of the Church, presented him for the vacancy in Antrim. The Primate, Archbishop Ussher, consented and in 1619 Mr Ridge was duly inducted as The Vicar of Antrim. He remained in Antrim from then until 1636 when he was evicted for non-conformity. After his eviction he went to Scotland with some of the Scottish ministers and settled in Ayrshire. On occasions he preached for the Rev David Dickson in the church in Irvine. He died in Scotland in 1637, aged 47 years.

The Rev John Livingston¹⁴ of Killinchy has described Mr Ridge as follows:- *"...as he was in his carriage so he was in his doctrine, grave, calm, sweet and orderly, pressing weighty important points to good purpose. He used not to have many points in his sermon but he so enlarged those he had that it was scarcely possible for any hearer to forget his preaching. He was a great urger to charitable works and a very humble man."*

Antrim was fast becoming the centre of Presbyterianism for the surrounding area. According to the Rev WS Smith¹⁵, (minister of the Non-subscribing Church in Antrim over a century ago):- *"the Order of Service he [namely Mr Ridge] used was that common to The English Presbyterian Church of the time, and was as follows; Introductory Prayer, Psalm, First Scripture Lesson, General Prayer, Psalm or Paraphrase, Second Lesson, Psalm or Paraphrase, Sermon, Prayer, Benediction."*

Mr Ridge introduced some changes in the Communion Service. In a letter dated 1632 to The Countess of Eglinton, the Rev Josias Welsh of Templepatrick wrote:- *"...notwithstanding the great opposition it hath, it flourisheth indeed lyke the palm tree, and so, on the last Sabbath in Antrim, (an English congregation), the superstitious form of kneeling at the Sacrament was put away, and the true paterne of the institution*

directly followed." (Kernohan¹⁶). Under Mr Ridge the Church in Antrim was developing along Presbyterian lines.

Rev Archibald Ferguson AM (1645 - 1654).

From 1636, the year in which Mr Ridge and all the Presbyterian ministers in Ulster were expelled for their non-conformity, until 1645 no ministers had come to Ireland from Scotland. Like Churches elsewhere, the Presbyterian people in Antrim had been without a minister for these nine years. In response to a request for help, sent by the Ulster Ministers in 1645, The General Assembly of The Church of Scotland appointed two young men. One of these was Mr Archibald Ferguson, a graduate of The University of St Andrews. He had studied divinity at The University of Glasgow and had been licensed by The Glasgow Presbytery in 1645. He settled in Antrim, and after "*the due order of trials*" was ordained there by the recently constituted Presbytery of Antrim. He was the second minister to settle in Antrim.

In 1646 Mr Ferguson was elected Moderator of the Antrim Presbytery. In October 1649 he presided and preached in Templepatrick at the ordination of Mr Anthony Kennedy. That same year he was commissioned by the Presbytery to take a letter and a supplication to The General Assembly of The Church of Scotland :- "*to ask for new supplies of ministers*" "*to enquire for qualified expectants*" ... "*and to deal with the Assembly for an act of transportability to the ministers who, before the rebellion, had been settled in this country.*" [Adair¹⁷].

Following the execution of Charles I in 1649, the monarchy was replaced by The Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. One of Cromwell's first acts was to pass The Oath of Engagement which required all persons, including ministers to "*swear to be faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as then established without a King or House of Lords.*" Those who did not take The Oath were barred from holding public office or positions of trust. Most of the ministers, Mr Ferguson included, refused to comply. In 1650 Mr Ferguson was summoned to Carrickfergus by Colonel Venables, an officer in Cromwell's army, and imprisoned there. Three years later he was summoned to Dublin. He died in Ireland in 1654, aged 33 years.

Rev James Cunningham, MA (1654 - 1670).

The third minister to come to Antrim was the Rev James Cunningham MA, son of the Rev Robert Cunningham of Holywood, one of the Scottish pioneer ministers. Rev Andrew Stewart¹⁸ has referred to him as "*a prudent godly man*" and the Rev WS Smith¹⁹ has described him as "*a young man of polite literature and good address. He happened to pay a visit to the family of Sir John Clotworthy at Antrim, who were so much taken by his pleasing manner and other valuable accomplishments that shortly afterwards, upon the death of their former minister, they took steps to have him invited to Antrim.*" He accepted the invitation and in 1654 settled in Antrim in the dual role of Presbyterian minister and chaplain to Sir John. Sadly, Mr Cunningham died on the 2nd October 1670 aged 45 years and was buried in the Antrim church-yard.

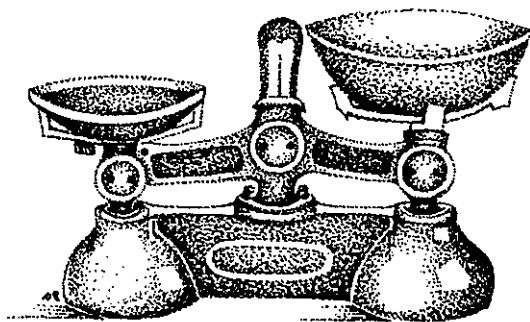
Rev John Howe AM (1671 - 1676).

Mr Howe was born in Loughborough in 1630. Educated at Cambridge he was a graduate of that University. His strong leanings towards Puritanism, earned for him the title, "The Platonic Puritan". He was domestic chaplain to Cromwell and to his son Richard from 1656 - 1659. Being a 'dissenting minister' he was ejected from his church in London under The Act of Uniformity, 1662*. Mr Howe came to Antrim in 1671 as the Massereene family's private chaplain and lived with them for five years.

Although Mr Howe was never installed as a minister of the Church, his close association with the Presbyterian ministers during his stay in Antrim, and the assistance he gave the Church, make him worthy of mention. The Presbytery permitted him to sit and deliberate in their meetings and take part in the various functions of the Presbytery. He was also granted permission to preach once a week in the Parish church, "after the reading of the liturgy."²⁰

With the approval of the Presbyterian Church he, and the Presbyterian minister in Antrim at the time, the Rev Thomas Gowan, started a school in Antrim where they taught philosophy and divinity to candidates for the ministry. Antrim was the only place in Ireland at that time where theological students could receive such training and, according to Latimer,²¹ "many Presbyterian clergymen were educated there."

In 1676 the school was taken over by the Church and moved to Belfast. In the same year Mr Howe returned to London as minister of a Puritan congregation. He died in London in 1705, aged 75 years. While he resided in Antrim he wrote a number of books, the most notable being "*Delighting in God.*"



"Honest scales and balances are from the Lord"

"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver." - Prov. 16 v 11 & 16.

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*THIS ACT REQUIRED, (AMONG OTHER THINGS), THAT CLERGY, WHO WERE NOT EPISCOPALLY ORDAINED, MUST SUBMIT TO RE-ORDINATION BY A BISHOP. IT ALSO DECLARED THAT ANY PERSON WHO ATTENDED A NON-CONFORMIST PLACE OF WORSHIP WAS COMMITTING A CRIME AND WAS SUBJECT TO HEAVY PENALTIES.

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Chapter Three

Opposition and Insurrection.

The early religious enthusiasm of the settlers in the Antrim area did not pass unchallenged. Opposition to it came from three sources:-

[A] From Other Religious Groups.

Two Roman Catholic friars sought a dispute with the ministers but failed to turn up on the day arranged for a public debate.

Some time later a body of Separatists [or Independents], a group with no denominational affiliation, arrived from London and began propagating their religious beliefs. They succeeded in attracting only one single individual who, a short time afterwards, rejoined the Monthly Fellowship. When they found they were having no success the disturbers withdrew.

A third objector was a Mr Freeman, a propagator of Arminianism*. Freeman debated with Mr Blair in public but Mr Blair defeated him so completely that on the second day of debate he fled in confusion.

Two itinerant preachers²², a Mr Taylor, a Congressionalist, and a Mr Weeks [or Wykes] a Baptist, came to Antrim in 1652 on a preaching tour and were given permission to preach in the Parish Church. In the course of their address they banded the Presbyterian ministers as "*troublers of the country*"²³ and challenged them to a public debate. As the topic for debate had not been decided beforehand, the ministers at first demurred but in the end took up the challenge. In opening the debate Mr Taylor dwelt on the relative merits of Independency and Presbyterianism, extolling the former and degrading the latter. In his reply the Rev Patrick Adair dealt with Mr Taylor's various points one by one, backing up his answers effectively with supporting references from Scripture. He so silenced Taylor and Weeks that their followers deserted them completely.

[B] From the Prelates.

More formidable opposition from both the Government and the Bishops of the Church of Ireland followed. The Bishops applied pressure on all who were not members of the Episcopal Church to force them to reject their beliefs, conform and join The Church of Ireland. In the face of intense pressure the Presbyterian ministers remained firm and refused to submit. When coercion failed the Bishops took a stronger line. In 1631 Bishop Echlin suspended the Rev Robert Blair and his colleague, the Rev John Livingston. The Primate, Dr Ussher, who had been a good friend to the Presbyterian

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*ARMINIUS ASSERTED THAT GOD BESTOWS FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE ON ALL WHO REPENT AND BELIEVE; THAT HE WILLS THAT ALL MEN WILL BE SAVED; AND THAT PREDESTINATION IS FOUNDED ON HIS FORE-KNOWLEDGE.

ministers, over-ruled the suspensions and had the two men re-instated. The Bishops next appealed to The King through Archbishop Laud in London. Their appeal was successful and the suspension orders were upheld. Several attempts to reverse the decision were made but proved fruitless and in the end the Revs Blair, Livingston, Welsh and Dunbar were deposed. A further appeal, this time directly to The King, had some success. While up-holding Bishop Echlin's decision The King's representative in Dublin allowed the ministers a period of six month's grace before he would put the order into effect. Bishop John Bramhall, The Bishop of Derry, protested forcefully to The Lord Deputy. The end result was that when the six month period ended in November 1634 the ministers were banned completely from preaching anywhere in Ireland. The Presbyterians in Antrim, as elsewhere, were once more denied their liberty and freedom of worship and for a time their ministers went about among their people *"..by stealth, encouraging them to hold fast."*²⁴

Bishop Echlin died the following year and was succeeded by Bishop Leslie. He persecuted the Presbyterian ministers more severely than his predecessors. He summoned the Revs Ridge, Brice, Calvert, Hamilton and Cunningham to appear before a meeting of Bishops in Belfast over which he and Bishop Bramhall presided. At this meeting the five were sentenced to *"perpetual silence within the Diocese."*²⁵ The other ministers could see by this ruling that their future in Ulster was bleak and the majority of them, including the Rev John Ridge, crossed over to Scotland.

The Revs Blair and Livingston remained in Ulster. Together with a party, numbering in all about 140 persons, they decided to follow the example of the Pilgrim Fathers and sail for America. The party set out from Groomsport, Co. Down on 9th September 1636 in a small boat of 150 tons, named **"The Eagle Wing"**. From the start the voyage was doomed to failure. Two months after starting out they arrived back in Carrickfergus and from there both ministers returned to Scotland.

[C] From Wentworth And The Prelates.

When James I was crowned King of England in 1603 he became the titular head of the Church of England. James was quick to realise that by maintaining a close link with the Church he could derive considerable advantages for The Crown. He therefore granted the Bishops a prominent role in matters of state so that, as he put it, *"he could rule the Bishops who ruled the clergy and hoped they would be able to rule the people."*²⁶

In the years following 1636, Wentworth and the Bishops focused their attention on the ordinary Presbyterian people and instituted harsh repressive measures against them. Innocent, peace-loving people were sent to prison for no reason other than that they were Presbyterians. Some *"...left the homes they had builded, and the fields made fertile by their sweat and toil, and fled to Scotland."*²⁷ According to Latimer²⁸, *"a Court of High Commission was set up in Dublin which could deal with the life and property of every individual in the kingdom; and from which there was no appeal."* It imposed on many Non-conformists such severe penalties as heavy fines, harsh imprisonment for long periods and sometimes both. No one was exempt,—age, sex, rank or position in the community counted for nothing. Even Lady Clotworthy²⁹ was ordered to appear before this Court to answer for her Presbyterianism.

Wentworth's plans failed to break the spirit of the people. It seemed that the more he oppressed them the more indomitable they became. In October 1639, he introduced **The Black Oath**, a more iniquitous demand than anything he had previously enforced. According to The Oath, every one over the age of 16 years was required:- *"to swear on their bended knee and upon the Four Evangelists, before specially appointed magistrates, that they would honour King Charles, never protest against any of his royal commands, and never enter into any covenant for mutual defence without His Majesty's sovereign and regal authority."* All Presbyterians were obliged to take this Oath or suffer *"the uttermost and most severe punishments which may be inflicted"* ³⁰ for their failure to do so.

The Oath made the Presbyterians more firm and determined in their resolve. A number of them succeeded in crossing over to Scotland to escape its consequences. Some others renounced their faith and embraced either the Catholic faith, or became members of the Episcopal Church. Either way, they avoided the hardships which were the lot of those brethren who refused to comply. Bishop Leslie's opinion of those Presbyterians who became members of the Episcopal Church appears to be less than complimentary. Of them he had this to say:- *"while divine service is reading they walk in the church-yard, and when Prayer is ended, they come rushing into the church as if it were a playhouse, to hear a sermon. I hope 'ere long a course shall be taken that they who will hear no prayers shall hear no sermon."* ³¹

From time to time groups of Presbyterians who had been denied the Church's Ordinances in Ulster, crossed over to Stranraer. The minister of the Church in Stranraer at that time was the Rev John Livingston, previously the minister of Killinchy, Co. Down, and one of the party who had sailed on the Eagle Wing. It is recorded that at Communion times Presbyterians in large numbers made the crossing to Stranraer to take part in the services. Adair records that at one time *"500 persons crossed the sea to receive Communion and as many as 28 children to be baptised."* ³²

Experience showed Strafford that The Black Oath was not the success that he had anticipated. It was obvious too that he could not rely on the complete co-operation of those who had taken The Oath. Many who refused to take The Oath became very obdurate and were willing and determined to face any penalty, (even death) that he might impose upon them. Rather than admit defeat he devised another scheme which was more extreme and more diabolical than his previous plans. Within a prescribed time he proposed to banish from Ulster all non-conforming Ulster Scots and set about making preparations for their removal to the south of Ireland. However, events in England were moving so fast that his plans never materialised.

The Earl of Strafford's Downfall.

King Charles' military engagements on the mainland were proving so very costly that he was left with no alternative but to recall Parliament and make peace with the Scots on terms which were more favourable to them than to him. Strafford was recalled to London to advise and help The King. Parliament, however, was in no mood to forgive and forget the way The King had behaved in the past. It openly criticised his policies and confronted him with the many grievances which he had imposed on his subjects. As soon as Strafford arrived in London he was arrested and

charged with high treason. This was a serious blow to The King. Sir John Clotworthy, who was a member of Parliament at the time, used his first-hand knowledge of Strafford's activities in Ireland to testify against him. According to Sir John the chief grievances against Strafford were that *"their learned and conscionable ministers had been banished, and the care of their souls committed to illiterate hirelings, who received only five or ten pounds a year; that the rectors, through connivance of their bishops, were non-resident, and the people perished for want of spiritual food; and that all this time masses were publicly celebrated 'to the great grief of God's people and increase of idolatry and superstition.33'"*

He created such a strong impression on the House that according to Reid³⁴. *"...his testimony was of great importance in bringing home to Strafford the general charge of an arbitrary and tyrannical violation of the fundamental laws of the kingdom."* Strafford was tried and found guilty of treason. The verdict of the Court was upheld by both Houses of Parliament and received the Royal Assent on May 8th. Strafford was executed on 12th May 1641, deserted at the end by both his King and the Bishops.



"Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord." - Eph. 5 v 9-10.

Chapter Four

Civil Unrest in Ireland — The 1641 - 1652 Insurrection.

Strafford's departure brought some respite to the Ulster Presbyterians, but it was short-lived. In the preceding years the Catholic population had lost much—their churches, their schools and the large and prosperous estates which had been forfeited to the Government. Physically too they had suffered and continued to suffer. Harvests had been poor, costs were rising and many had been reduced to living in conditions of squalor, poverty and hunger. Spurred on by hatred of the 'alien' settlers, by the desire to recover the lands they had lost, and encouraged by promises of help from France and Spain they embarked on a campaign of revenge aimed at the expulsion of the English from Ireland and the re-establishment of Catholicism. The insurrection was planned to start on the 23rd October 1641 with an attack on Dublin Castle, the seat of English power in Ireland. Due to a timely warning by *Captain Owen O'Connolly, the castle authorities were alerted in time and the Castle was saved. The rebellion spread to the counties around Dublin and northwards into Ulster. It took the settlers by surprise, exposing their poor defences and lack of weaponry. Numerically too, they were outnumbered considerably. Although defended by Sir James Clotworthy, (Sir John Clotworthy's brother) and his men, the town of Antrim did not escape. Irish forces, numbering approximately 4,000 men, under the command of Turlough Oge O'Neill, attacked the Castle and the town intending to destroy both. The garrison forces put up a brave defence and repulsed the attackers who, as they withdrew, set fire to the crops in the adjacent fields. That day many innocent people in Antrim were killed ruthlessly and their homes pillaged. Reid has recorded that³⁵ *"about 20 women with small children were knocked down and murdered under the Castle walls."*

The Rev Robert Magill, Minister of Millrow, (1820-1839), in random jottings made about 180 years later, has written that *"...947 individuals were murdered in Antrim on the 23rd October 1641."* While the accuracy of this figure may be questioned it does indicate that the loss of life in Antrim was considerable.

To restore peace in Ulster the Scottish Parliament offered 10,000 troops. The first contingent of these, under the command of Major General Robert Munro, landed at Carrickfergus on 15th April 1642. After establishing a degree of peace in the province he and his forces returned to their quarters in Carrickfergus.

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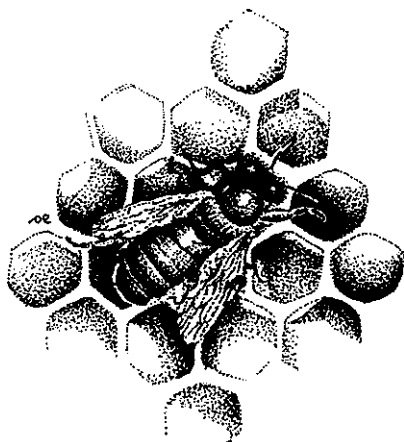
*O'CONNOLLY, BORN A ROMAN CATHOLIC, WAS A NATIVE OF COUNTY MONAGHAN. HE JOINED THE SERVICE OF SIR JOHN CLOTWORTHY AND ROSE TO THE RANK OF CAPTAIN. WHILE RESIDING IN ANTRIM HE BECAME A PRESBYTERIAN, AND IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST PERSONS IN THE ANTRIM CHURCH TO BE ELECTED TO THE ELDERSHIP. IT IS ALSO STATED BY REID³⁶ THAT *"HE OFTEN SAT AS SUCH IN MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY."*

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In 1649 trouble flared up in Antrim once again. Royalist troops, under the command of Colonel George Munro were in the area and posing a threat to the town. The garrison troops in Antrim, who some time previously had been on the Royalist side, switched allegiance and now supported the Parliamentary forces loyal to the Cromwellian party. O'Connolly, their leader, found that his force was not strong enough to engage the Royalist opposition and appealed to Belfast for help. By chance, on his return journey from Belfast with reinforcements he encountered a regiment of Royalist troops under the command of Colonel Hamilton. The two forces converged near Dunadry Bridge and engaged in battle. O'Connolly lost a considerable number of his men and he himself was wounded. After the engagement O'Connolly's embattled troops re-formed and, carrying their wounded leader, proceeded to Connor where he died the following day. His body was later brought back to Antrim and buried in the Parish church-yard.

After the battle at Dunadry, Colonel Hamilton's forces moved on to Antrim and attacked the Castle, demanding its surrender in the name of The King. When his demand was refused he made an unsuccessful attempt to take it by force. *"Unable to capture it, General Munro issued orders that the town was to be set on fire. Only three houses escaped. The Parish Church was damaged but how serious the damage was is not recorded."* Emergency repairs enabled it to continue in use. According to the Rev MHF Collis,³⁷ the Vicar of Antrim (1889 - 1945), *"...the church was soon repaired, but not rebuilt until 1722, and during The Commonwealth various Independent ministers officiated in it."*

Munro and most of his forces withdrew, leaving the ruined town under the care of a company of his soldiers. By this time the whole province was in a state of tension as Cromwell's men were embarking on a merciless campaign to root out all resistance, particularly from Royalist sympathisers.



"Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

- 1 Cor. 15 v 58.

Chapter Five

Presbytery Planted on Irish Soil.

Major General Robert Munro and his men were Scottish Presbyterians and each regiment had an ordained Presbyterian minister as its Chaplain. When he and his regiments returned to their quarters in Carrickfergus the chaplains set about forming a Session in every regiment. Besides the regimental chaplain there were in each regiment officers who, in civilian life, had been members of Kirk Sessions in churches in Scotland. The most pious of these officers, together with their Chaplain, were constituted a *Kirk Session* for that regiment, the Chaplain being their Moderator.

By order of the Council of Scotland the Rev John Livingston* was sent to Ireland in April 1642 “....to wait on the Scottish Army.” He spent six weeks in Antrim with Sir John Clotworthy. Before he left Antrim he celebrated Communion “*where sundry that had taken The Black Oath did willingly and with great expressions of grief, publicly confess the same.*” (Reid³⁸). Adair³⁹ has described Antrim at this time as a place where “*the people were very hungry in receiving the gospel which before these times had been preached with so great success, and for which both ministers and people had suffered so much.*”

The next step was the joining up of the Sessions in a district to form a **Presbytery**, a Court of the Church higher in rank than the Session. The first Presbytery met in Carrickfergus on the 10th June, 1642 and was composed of five chaplains and four ruling elders. Although this was *The First Presbytery in Ireland* it was, in reality, a *Presbytery of The Church of Scotland* and, as such, was subject to the laws of the Courts of that Church.

After the Moderator and a Clerk for The Presbytery had been settled, the first business on the agenda was to receive from each Chaplain his “*Act of Admission to His Charge or Regiment.*” This entitled him to sit as a member of The Presbytery. The Ruling Elders from each regiment, (those who had already been ordained members of Kirk Sessions in Scotland), also submitted “commissions” from their respective Scottish Churches. The ministers who took part in this historic meeting were the Revs Hugh Cunningham, Thomas Peebles, John Baird, John Scott, and John Aird. Two other Chaplains, the Rev James Simpson, and the Rev John Livingston, were on duty elsewhere, and were unable to attend. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland was now established on a proper Presbytery basis and was in a position to provide for the spiritual needs of its soldiers as well as the demands of the wider membership of the Church. A time of rapid growth and expansion for the whole Church followed and by

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*REID⁴⁰ NOTES THAT “THE PEOPLE OF ANTRIM, WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF SIR JOHN CLOTWORTHY, ENDEAVOURED, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS, TO OBTAIN MR LIVINGSTON FOR THEIR PASTOR IN ANTRIM.”

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the year 1660 the original Presbytery had expanded and became five Presbyteries, with a corresponding increase in the demand for ministers to supply the newly established churches.

To meet the needs of new congregations The Presbytery got down to business. It moved that *"there should be elderships erected with the consent of the congregations, and that by their help a present supply (of ministers) might be procured, and in due time ministers settled among them."* [Reid⁴¹]. The Presbytery accordingly petitioned the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for more ministers; their request was honoured and over the next few years a number of young men, each of whom agreed to serve for a period of six months, came to Ulster. Antrim was one of the first churches to apply for and be granted permission to become organised into a congregation and in 1646 the Rev Archibald Ferguson was appointed its first 'minister in charge'.

Discipline within the Church was not overlooked. Within the Church there were a few clergy who were suspected of activities likely to bring disgrace on the whole Church. To eliminate such, and at the same time curb and keep others in check until such time as their conduct could be considered satisfactory, Presbytery enacted that:- *"...at least twice a year on days of prayer ... there ought to be 'privy censures', whereby each minister is removed by course, and then enquiry is made at the pastors and elders, if there be any known scandal, fault, or negligence in him, that it may be in a brotherly manner censured."* [Reid⁴²]

Using the Presbyterian system as a basis, The Parliament at Westminster made an attempt to bring the Churches of England and Scotland closer together in a common form of Faith and Church Government. Parliament summoned The Westminster Assembly, (a body known as The Assembly of Divines*), which was drawn from the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent Churches of England, Scotland and Ireland. It met from 1643 until 1649, and produced a number of important documents, five of which were:-

- The Confession of Faith,
- The Larger Catechism,
- The Shorter Catechism,
- The Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and
- The Directory for The Public Worship of God.

These documents have had, and continue to have, a profound influence on The Faith and Practice of Presbyterianism world-wide.

Just as congregations and sessions in a district were grouped together to form The Presbytery, Presbyteries within a wider area were, in turn, grouped together to create a higher Court of the Church, *The Synod*. The first meeting of Synod (referred to as the first meeting of *The Synod of Ulster*) was held in Belfast on 26th September 1690. Its next meeting was held a year later on the 30th September 1691 in Antrim⁴³. It was attended by 32 ministers and 21 elders.

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*SIR JOHN CLOTWORTHY WAS APPOINTED "AN OBSERVER" AT THIS ASSEMBLY.

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As the number of congregations continued to grow it proved unwieldy for all of them to meet under the control of a single Synod and several sub-Synods were formed. These, in turn, were responsible to the General Synod, the ultimate Court of the Church.

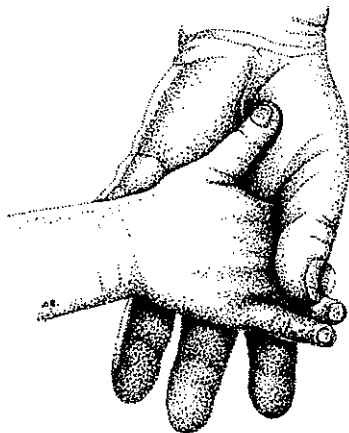
The Synod of Ulster in 1725 directed that a Presbytery of Templepatrick be created from portions of the original Presbytery of Antrim and The Presbytery of Belfast. This new Presbytery consisted of the congregations of Antrim, Ballycarry, Ballyeaston, Ballymena, Ballynure, Broughshane, Carrmonee, Carrickfergus, Connor, Crumlin, Donegore, Glenarm, Islandmagee, Killead, Larne, Randalstown and Templepatrick.

Twenty years later, in 1745, a new Presbytery of Ballymena was formed and the congregations of Ballymena, Broughshane, Connor and Glenarm were transferred to its care. Further changes took place in 1790 when the congregation of Glenarm was transferred back again to The Templepatrick Presbytery and Cairncastle was added to it; Carrmonee was removed from it and placed in The Presbytery of Dromore.

Glenarm was returned to The Ballymena Presbytery in 1830 and the new congregations of Dundrod (1829), Ballylinney (1837), Crumlin (1838), Raloo (1840) and Muckamore (1840) were included in The Templepatrick Presbytery.

Following the formation of The General Assembly in 1840 all the congregations were redistributed. Two Presbyteries were formed out of the original Presbytery of Templepatrick, namely, The Presbytery of Carrickfergus and a new Presbytery of Templepatrick. The reconstituted Presbytery of Templepatrick now comprised the congregations of First Antrim (Millrow), Crumlin, First Donegore, Second Donegore, Duneane, Dundrod, Killead, Loanends, Lylehill, Muckamore, First Randalstown, Second Randalstown, and Templepatrick.

The last alteration to the composition of The Presbytery of Templepatrick took place in January 1962 when, by direction of the General Assembly, the congregations of High Street Antrim, First Ballyeaston, Second Ballyeaston, Kilbride and OC Randalstown were placed under its care.



"Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the path of the righteous." - Prov. 2 v 20.

Chapter Six

Cromwell and The Commonwealth (1642 - 1652).

Differences between Charles I and Parliament came to a head in 1642. All attempts at reconciliation had broken down and the two parties became embroiled in Civil War. Sir John Clotworthy, who had been elected parliamentary representative for the Essex Borough of Malden, had moved to London. In his early days in Parliament he had befriended Cromwell and had helped him in his rise to power but when hostilities broke out his loyalty to The Solemn League and Covenant compelled him to switch allegiance and support The Monarchy. This action put him at variance with the "hardcore" party in the Commons, whose aim was the abolition of The Monarchy and the establishment of a Republic.

Matters came to a head in June 1648. Sir John and ten like-minded Royalists were expelled from The House of Commons and forced into exile because they were opposed to the majority in The House on the question of the future of The Monarchy.

A series of military defeats ended with The King being taken captive and eventually becoming a prisoner of Cromwell's Parliamentary Army. Early in December 1648 Sir John was restored to his Parliamentary seat, but his restoration was short lived. Following a prolonged debate on The King's future (a debate which lasted two full days and ended at 5 am on the third day) a resolution condemning the seizure of The King was passed by a majority of forty-six in a House of over two hundred voting members. Those members who voted in favour of the Resolution also voted to continue dialogue with The King, hoping that by limiting his powers, his life-style, and his finances he could be restored to the Throne. The following morning, December 4th 1648, soldiers of the Parliamentary Party under Colonel Pride were waiting outside Parliament. Sir John and forty fellow members (all of whom had voted in favour of the Resolution the previous night) were arrested as they were about to enter The House. During the day a further one hundred were apprehended. Several 'like-minded' members of Parliament managed to avoid arrest by escaping into the country. All those now remaining in The House were opposed to The King and supporters of the Parliamentary Party. On January 1st 1649 they met and appointed a High Court of Justice. The King, who had been charged with treason, was brought for trial before this Court. Following a three day sitting The King was pronounced guilty on January 27th 1649. Sentence of Death was passed and carried out three days later on 30th January 1649.

During the following years, there were at least five distinct political parties⁴⁴ in Ireland, each having its own army. These were (a) The Royalist Party, a party loyal to the Monarchy, (b) The Parliamentary (Republican) Party, which had supported and approved Parliament's action in toppling The Monarchy, (c) The Confederate Party which was made up of English ex-patriots and moderate Roman Catholics who desired religious toleration and a larger say in the Government, (d) The Romanist Party whose

aims were the promotion of Catholicism and severance of the Anglo-Irish union, and (e) The Presbyterian Party which supported the Presbyterian form of church government and remained loyal to The Solemn League and Covenant. It desired the continuation of the hereditary Monarchy, but with limited political power and restricted authority in matters of religion. It supported the restoration to the Throne of the late King's son, Prince Charles and the continuation of measures to curb the Catholic ascendancy in Ireland. It was opposed to the repressive activities of the Bishops. It condemned loudly the army's action in arresting and detaining legally elected members of Parliament as they were about to enter The House, the abolition of The House of Lords, the arrest of The King and his subsequent trial and execution.

On assuming power Cromwell set about suppressing all resistance to his rule. When opposition in Britain had been overcome, he turned his attention to Ireland. In a series of quick, harsh and cruel campaigns by 1652 he had brought the Civil War in Ireland to an end. Once peace was restored his Parliamentary Party drew up a document called "*The Oath of Engagement*." All who took this oath promised "*to renounce the right of the late King Charles' descendants to the Throne, and to be true and faithful subjects of the Commonwealth*."⁴⁵

The Irish Presbyterians refused to take The Oath and suffered as a result. Their ministers were ordered to appear before the Courts. Soldiers were sent to churches to overawe both minister and people, homes were raided by the military and some ministers were arrested and imprisoned. A number of ministers fled the country and others lived in concealed places. Later, an order was issued⁴⁶ that all Presbyterian ministers must leave the country. Six or seven of them were courageous enough to defy the order and remain. Dressed as farmers or as labourers they moved about the countryside conducting worship services in barns or in private houses or in secluded places in the open-air, frequently under cover of darkness. Cromwell's Government sent Baptist ministers and ministers of Independent Churches from Britain to Ireland to fill those pulpits which had been vacated by the Presbyterian ministers.

The Presbyterian people supported their ministers so well that the scheme failed⁴⁷. The next step which the authorities took was to prepare lists of leading Presbyterian ministers and prominent Presbyterians in military and civilian life. These were given an ultimatum; either they took The Oath within a specified time or they would suffer deportation to the counties of Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford.

In time Cromwell was convinced that the Presbyterians did not present a threat and in a gesture of friendship and goodwill, he cancelled his earlier orders and brought the persecution to an end.⁴⁸ Presbyterians now had freedom to worship in their own churches and the right to preach where ever they wished. He also granted to those ministers who applied for it a State Endowment with no conditions attached. The result was an upsurge in the erection of new Presbyterian congregations with a corresponding increase in the demands for ministers to serve in them.

Cromwell died on 3rd September, 1658 and was succeeded by his eldest son Richard. He proved incapable of carrying out the policies which his father had begun and within a few months of taking office he renounced his position and The Commonwealth came to an end. In May 1660 Charles II, son of Charles I, was proclaimed King.

Chapter Seven

The Restoration of The Monarchy.

Charles II, the eldest son of the executed King, was not a religious man. At one time he had shown some interest in Presbyterianism, and had even signed the Scottish Covenants, but later turned his back on Protestantism and, in secret, embraced Catholicism. If it could be said that he ever had any denominational preference when he ascended the Throne that preference was for Catholicism. He detested the Puritans and the Independents whom he held responsible for his father's execution. He was unsympathetic to Presbyterians, considering their attitudes and beliefs rigid and inflexible and disliked and detested their Covenants. Of all the Protestant churches, the one he favoured most was the Episcopal Church. It suited his purposes best and was in keeping with his own ideals and ambitions.

After the collapse of Cromwell's Commonwealth, a new Parliament with a membership drawn mainly from the Episcopal aristocracy was elected. Its composition ensured that once more Episcopacy was the "*Established*" religion of the land. Parliament lost no time in showing its intolerance towards those who were not members of the Anglican tradition.⁴⁹ It ordered the burning of The Covenant, banned all meetings of Presbytery, and declared that the Liturgy (without modification) was to be used at all church services. Before taking up a Church appointment all new clergy were required to submit to Episcopal Ordination. The Parliament in Dublin, being controlled by the English Parliament, endorsed these orders and applied them rigorously throughout Ireland.

The persecution of Non-conformists began once again; once the Bishops had regained their authority they renewed their efforts without delay to out-law non-conformity. Reid⁵⁰ has recorded that "*Mr Hamilton of Killead and Mr Cunningham of Antrim, through my Lord Massereene's intercession with The Bishop, obtained half-a-year's liberty after their brethren were silenced; only they must not lecture before preaching after their former practice.*" Dr Majury⁵¹ has added that, "*by the sympathy of the Massereene family, he [Mr Cunningham] retained his pulpit in spite of The Bishop.*"

The Rule Of The Bishops.

As in Antrim, there were other ministers serving in Episcopal Churches in Ulster who had not been ordained by a Bishop. Because the law had never been altered this situation was both permissible and perfectly legal. The introduction of ⁵²*The Act of Uniformity* in 1662 brought about a change. By this Act all those clergy who had not been episcopally ordained were required to submit to re-ordination by a Bishop and those who refused re-ordination were expelled from their churches. It was also declared a crime, subject to severe penalties, for people to attend a 'Non-conformist' place of worship such as a Presbyterian meeting-house. The Act marked

the end of Presbyterian-Episcopal co-operation which, 40 years earlier, had been so helpful to both Churches.

Bishops who had been deposed during the Commonwealth were restored to their Dioceses and new Bishops consecrated to fill those Dioceses which still remained vacant. Under these arrangements Bishop Bramhall, the former Bishop of Derry, became The Primate of All Ireland in succession to Archbishop Ussher who died in 1656, and Bishop Jeremy Taylor, son-in-law of Charles I, was appointed to the vacant diocese of Down and Connor. Bishop Taylor applied the Act of Uniformity rigorously. All meetings of Presbyteries and Synods were prohibited⁵³ and if news reached his ears of any such meetings being arranged or being held, troops were dispatched immediately to break up the assembly and arrest those present*.

Bishop Taylor harassed the 'non-conforming' ministers in every way possible and made life for them as difficult and as uncomfortable as he could. In one single day he expelled 36 ministers⁵⁴ from their churches and replaced them with Episcopal curates. He also sanctioned the use of force to prevent the expelled ministers from re-entering their pulpits. Later he deposed those he had expelled so denying them their right to preach.

In spite of all the hardships inflicted on them, only seven members of The Synod conformed and accepted re-ordination by Bishops. The remaining 61 members chose to suffer rather than compromise their beliefs. In 1661 these sixty-one were ejected formally and faced an uncertain future, having neither home nor church of their own. Yet, they continued working in remote and isolated places⁵⁵, preaching in the open air, in private homes and in barns. At night they led their people in services of Worship, Prayer and Bible Study,—always with the help of trusted 'look-outs' to warn them of danger from the authorities. From time to time they celebrated Communion fully aware of the fact that if they were caught they incurred a fine of £100 and/or imprisonment.

Encouragements and Setbacks.

Bishop Taylor died in 1667 and was succeeded by Bishop Boyle. He was a more tolerant man and took less drastic action against the Presbyterians. Under Bishop Boyle things began to improve slowly and even though he was censured by Bishop Leslie the Bishop of Dromore, for his leniency towards the Non-conformists he continued to act with restraint. Gradually, new meeting-houses⁵⁶ were built — simple, crude, thatched buildings which, because of their size, shape and their coarse workmanship, were called 'barn churches'. They were the best that the people could afford to build.

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*ON ONE OCCASION A FORCE WAS SENT TO BREAK UP AND ARREST THOSE ATTENDING A MEETING OF THE SYNOD IN BALLYMENA, BUT THE MEETING HAD FINISHED AND THOSE PRESENT HAD DISPERSED BEFORE THE TROOPS ARRIVED.

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Blood's Plot. (1662).

Just as ministers and people were beginning to see signs of hope and were looking forward to greater freedom of worship and a lessening of interference from the authorities a new difficulty arose which might have resulted in their being denied the small degree of liberty which they had gained so painfully. The trouble came through the activities of a Presbyterian minister, the Rev William Lecky, and his brother-in-law, Colonel Thomas Blood, also a Presbyterian⁵⁷. During The Civil War, Blood had served as an Officer on the Royalist side but afterwards both he and Lecky became ardent supporters of Cromwell and wished to see a Cromwell-style Commonwealth restored in England.

Under Charles II the Cromwellian Party was denied many of the privileges which they had enjoyed under The Commonwealth. Consequently they bore deep-seated grudges and an intense hatred of the Government, the Established Church and the oppressive rule of its Bishops. Hoping to enlist the support of other Presbyterian ministers and in particular those living in Ulster, they approached a number of them but were unsuccessful in getting the help and encouragement they sought. An informer within their ranks alerted the authorities to their activities. Their leaders, together with a number of their followers, were arrested. Some were imprisoned but others, Lecky included, were executed. Although Lecky was the only Ulster Presbyterian minister involved in the conspiracy suspicion was cast on others and a total of 19 Presbyterian ministers were arrested and imprisoned⁵⁸. Ten of them, including the Rev James Cunningham of Antrim and the Rev Robert Hamilton of Killead, were confined in Carrickfergus Castle. Lord Massereene intervened on their behalf and was successful in securing the release of both men.

The Duke of Ormonde, a man known to be more tolerant towards the Non-conformists than any of his predecessors, became The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Lord Massereene, now living in Dublin, was nominated a member of The Privy Council. Frequently, in meetings of Council, which were dominated by the Bishops, he pleaded for greater freedom for the ministers, but never received a satisfactory reply, his answer usually being:- *"the ministers must live according to the law and might serve God in their families without gathering multitudes together, they living peaceably and to that purpose"*⁵⁹.

After prolonged interrogations and investigations The Lord Lieutenant was convinced that the Ulster ministers had not been implicated in the plot and, contrary to the advice of the Bishops, he ordered the release of all who had been arrested. At the same time he granted them a six-months' period during which they were guaranteed *"six months' indulgence, during which time they were not to be troubled by the Ecclesiastical Courts for Non-conformity."*⁶⁰

Archbishop Bramhall died during this period and Bishop Margetson, his successor, became Bishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. He was a tolerant man and extended freedom to the ministers for a further period of six months. After this period no further restrictions were imposed. The Primate's action so displeased a number of the Bishops that they retaliated by using every possible opportunity to inform him of actions, even those of the most petulant and trivial nature, which in their opinion demanded the re-application of sanctions on all the ministers who refused to conform. They brought "offenders" before ecclesiastical courts on the most paltry and ridiculous charges but, as few of these could be proved, those ministers charged had to be released.

Chapter Eight

Presbyterianism Rooted.

Rev Thomas Gowan MA (1672 - 1683).

The Rev James Cunningham died in 1670 and in 1672 was succeeded by the Rev Thomas Gowan, a Scotsman. Mr Gowan arrived in Ireland in 1658 and for nine years ministered in the Parish Church at Glasslough, Co. Monaghan and "*enjoyed the tithes of that Parish*⁶¹" In 1667 he moved to Connor where he taught languages and philosophy. Although he was never called by the Connor congregation to be their minister, he frequently preached there. In 1672 The Presbytery approved a call to Mr Gowan to become minister of the Antrim Church, the reasons given by The Presbytery for this approval being⁶²:-

- (1) *the Parish of Antrim being more considerable than Glasslough,*
- (2) *the unhealthfulness of his body in his former place,*
- (3) *his usefulness in philosophy, and the accommodation in Antrim for his students,*
- (4) *the great difficulty of planting Antrim in the person of another with consent of all parties.*

In the mind of The Presbytery, "*these reasons prevailed, and his relation to Glasslough was formally loosed in August 1672*".

Mr Gowan settled in Antrim at a stipend of £40 per annum. In 1674, Mr John White, one of the elders, gave as the reason for the small stipend, the fact, "*that it fell on the town and little on the country!*"

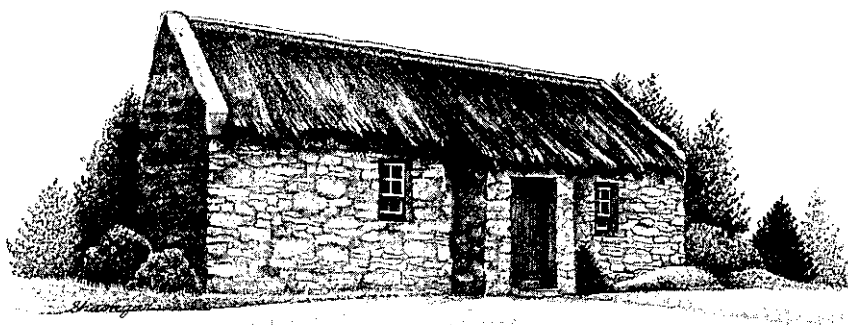
As well as his pastoral work in Antrim, Mr Gowan gave private tuition for a time. With the help of the Rev John Howe MA, who was then chaplain to Lord Massereene, the two ministers jointly conducted a school where philosophy and divinity were taught for the benefit of students studying for the ministry.

Through the influence of Lord Massereene, Mr Gowan was granted liberty to preach in the Parish Church "*after the liturgy was read*⁶³" The Presbytery considered the arrangement and came to the following decision⁶⁴:- "*...a case being propounded by Mr Gowan concerning an offer of liberty to preach in the Church, the question was put whether if Mr Gowan should embrace this liberty, so that the people who own him be not ensnared to countenance the Liturgy, or to profane the Sabbath by attending at the church door when it is reading, and withal, so that a considerable number of the people do not absent themselves from the public ordinances in the congregation; whether these cautions being observed, the brethren will take offence at this practice?*" *It was answered to this query, '... the brethren would not take offence'.*"

The matter did not rest there. A month later the people of Muckamore complained about the arrangement. At the next meeting of Presbytery the matter was considered more carefully but no definite decision was reached. The opinion of The Presbytery was that:- "*upon the whole matter, if it were not for the great respect for Lord Massereene and his family, they would be clear to advise Mr Gowan to withdraw*

altogether from using the church." Lord Massereene's reply was that *"...he hoped to get all grievances and difficulties removed,"* and the arrangement continued.⁶⁴

In the wake of the Scottish Covenanters' uprising of 1679 and their crushing defeat by the Royalist forces at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, Mr Gowan and the Rev Robert Patton of Ballyclare were nominated delegates to go to Dublin and give satisfactory proof to the Government that the Presbyterians in the North of Ireland *"did not approve of the proceedings of the Scottish Covenanters, and had no part in it."*⁶⁵ Both men fell seriously ill on this trip and Mr Patton died shortly after his return. Mr Gowan died in August 1683, leaving a widow.



*Antrim's first Presbyterian Meeting House.
Built in 1684 (artistic impression).*

The New Meeting-House in Antrim.

From 1670 onwards the Episcopal Church exhibited less and less antipathy towards the Presbyterians and, in some cases, reluctantly granted them permission to purchase sites for the erection of Meeting-Houses. Mr Gowan was able to obtain a site for a "Meeting-House" on the Steeple Road, Antrim, but unfortunately, he was not spared to see his dream of a church materialise. The new building was situated-*"beside the road leading from Antrim to the Steeple."* Its exact location is not known today but it is thought to have been built in a field which for many years was called *"The Meeting House Field"*. Today this field cannot be identified precisely.

The Rev WS Smith⁶⁶ has described the building as being:- *"...doubtless like most of the early meeting-houses, a rude, barn-like structure, with a thatched roof."*

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*SUCH PROOF WAS DEEMED NECESSARY BECAUSE A CERTAIN WILLIE GILLILAND, AN ESCAPEE FROM THE BATTLE OF BOTHWELL BRIDGE WAS BELIEVED TO BE IN HIDING IN THE GLENWHERRY/ANTRIM DISTRICT AND TROOPS FROM CARRICKFERGUS WERE SEARCHING FOR HIM IN THAT AREA.

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Like other Non-conformist churches, its doors were closed by law soon after the church was opened and public worship in it was forbidden. The situation altered some three months later with the death of The King, Charles II.

The new Church attracted worshippers in increasing numbers. In a letter written by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to Lord Massereene⁶⁷ he wrote: "*according to information received, not more than half a dozen people could be found at any religious service in the Parish Church of Antrim, though a meeting-house, erected and frequented without (and contrary to law) was much better filled, and that was in some measure attributed to His Lordship, who, it was stated, never went to church, but was constantly present at a conventicle in his own and in his mother-in-law's house.*" In his reply Lord Massereene stated that he had been:- "*...often at Church where the 'legall orthodox minister' conducted the services. Sometimes as many as 100 people were present, and more at the time of sermon; but as he had been 'disobliged' by the minister (one George Evans) he did not 'give him the same countenance' as formerly. He had done all that he prudently could do to prevent the building of a Meeting House, which was a 'thatcht house' without the town, erected at a distance from the highway and never used at the time of the Church service.*"

The Rev John Anderson AM (1685 - 1688)

The Rev John Anderson from Scotland succeeded Mr Gowan as the fifth minister in Antrim. He came to Glenarm in 1680. After serving in Glenarm for five years he received a Call to the Antrim congregation. He accepted the Call and was ordained in Antrim. The new Meeting House in Antrim was opened in 1684 just the year before he came to the town. Mr Anderson's stay in Antrim was brief. He and some fifty others ministers returned to Scotland in 1689 to escape the Revolution which was beginning in Ireland.

Before Mr Anderson arrived in Ireland he had been deposed by the Scottish Church in 1662⁶⁸. The following year, 1663, was a time of severe persecution for the Presbyterian ministers in Scotland and Mr Anderson was cited before the Privy Council. By an Act of Parliament passed in April 1690 he was restored to the ministry of The Church of Scotland and received a Call to the Church in Auchtergaven which he accepted. Two years later he became Principal of the colleges of St Leonard and St Salvator in the University of St Andrews. After the hostilities in Ireland ended The Synod of Ulster invited him back but he declined the offer and remained in Scotland. He died there in 1708, aged 78 years.

Following Mr Anderson's departure The Presbytery recommended a **Mr Neil Grey** of Clogher but "*...⁶⁹the congregation would not accept him, as his voice was considered to be too low.*"

Rev William Adair MA (1690 - 1698)

The sixth minister in Antrim was the Rev William Adair, son of the Rev Patrick Adair of Belfast, (one of the pioneer Scottish ministers), and nephew of the Rev James Cunningham, the third Presbyterian minister in Antrim. He had been installed in Ballyeaston in 1688, but through the influence of the Massereene family he moved to Antrim in 1690, the congregation promising to pay him a salary of £48 per annum.

His ministry in Antrim was brief. He died in 1699 at the early age of 48 years and was buried in the Antrim church-yard.

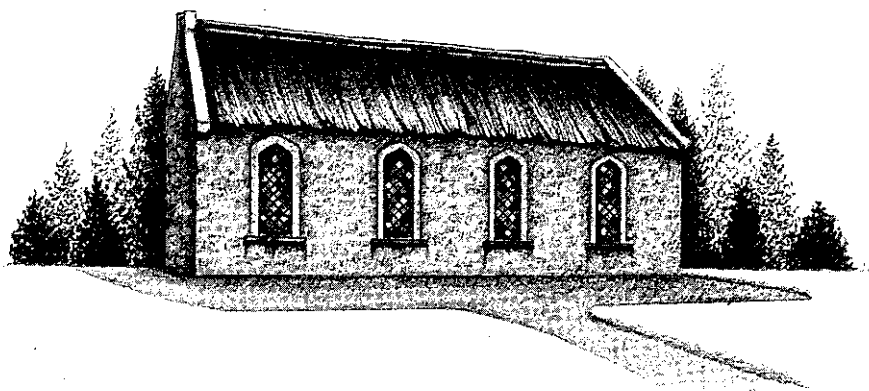
Concerning Mr Adair, WS Smith⁷⁰ has written: "*he was a man of very considerable abilities and elegance of taste, and was among the first in this kingdom that showed a more liberal and generous way of thinking than his brethren.*"

Mr Adair is specially remembered for two reasons:-

(1) he had the honour of being one of two ministers deputed to wait on King William of Orange when he arrived in Belfast on June 10th 1690. This delegation presented The King with '*An Address of Loyalty*' from the Presbyterian Ministers "*and those of their persuasion in the North of Ireland, assuring him of the consistent and unalterable attachment of its members to his cause.*"⁷¹

(2) Mr Adair is perhaps best remembered for undertaking the mammoth task of "*copying out his father's Collections*", a manuscript better known as '*Adair's Narrative*', *A History of Irish Presbyterianism from 1621 until 1670*⁷². This book gives a detailed account of the hardships and obstacles which the early Scottish Ministers had to contend with when they and the Scottish settlers first arrived in Ulster.

After the new church on the Steeple Road re-opened in 1689, attendances increased rapidly and very soon it was too small to accommodate all who came. A new and larger meeting-house was needed. A site was obtained in the Scotch Quarter [now known as Church Street], and a new church built there. It was opened for worship in 1701. Though it is no longer used for church services, the building still stands on the original site opposite the gates of First Antrim. It is used now as a Boxing Club.



*Antrim's second Meeting House.
Built in 1701 (artistic impression).*

Chapter Nine

King James II ~ (1685 - 1690).

James II succeeded his brother Charles II in 1685. Although both kings had been brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, Charles showed little favour towards his Catholic subjects. He did, however, give some consideration to the Protestants. On the other hand, James made no secret of the fact that he was a devout Roman Catholic and that his desire was to see the nation restored to the Catholic faith. After he became King he dismissed Parliament and replaced a number of Protestants who were holding positions of power in the army, in the universities, in the government, and in the judiciary with Roman Catholics, an action which proved to be highly unpopular with many of his subjects.

By his first marriage James had two daughters, Mary and Anne, both of whom were later to ascend the Throne. By his second marriage he had a son, also named James. Both daughters were brought up as Protestants, but his son was instructed in the Catholic faith. Mary married her cousin William, Prince of Orange in 1677, but Anne never married. Prince William, Mary's husband, was a member of the Dutch House of Orange and a Protestant. They had no family. Mary's half-brother James, being next in the line of succession to the Throne, posed a problem. If he became King the Protestant succession would come to an end. This possibility, seen in the light of The King's various attempts to restore Catholicism, spurred a group of English nobles to take action. They sent an invitation to Prince William requesting him to come to England and claim the Throne. William accepted the invitation and arrived in England in November 1688. On his arrival the army deserted King James, and switched their allegiance to Prince William. Realising that he had lost the support of the military James fled to France where he hoped King Louis XIV would grant him asylum and provide him with the necessary financial and military help to enable him to regain the English Throne.

Aided by the Irish Catholics and backed by the French, James attempted to regain the Throne and attacked England through Ireland. After some initial successes he suffered a series of major defeats, particularly at the Siege of Derry and at the Battle of The Boyne*. After his defeat at the Boyne he fled back again to France where he remained in exile until his death in 1701.

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*DR THOMAS WEST⁷⁴ HAS RECORDED A REMOTE THOUGH INTERESTING CONNECTION BETWEEN ANTRIM AND THE BATTLE OF THE BOYNE. MR DAVID KINLEY OF ENNISKILLEN, WHOSE SON WAS A MEMBER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ANTRIM, SHOWED "THE KING THE PASS AT THE BOYNE ON THE DAY OF THE BATTLE". COULD THIS 'PASS' BE THE ONE UPSTREAM WHICH ENABLED KING WILLIAM AND HIS MEN TO CROSS THE RIVER AND ATTACK THE ENEMY ALONG A POORLY DEFENDED FRONT?

During the years of unrest the town of Antrim suffered several attacks from James' troops under General Hamilton. In one of these the Castle was taken and plundered. The Massereene family were not in residence at the time and according to Reid.⁷³ *"...a servant of Lord Massereene's for a bribe of ten guineas discovered to the Irish plunderers money and plate to the value of between three thousand and four thousand pounds concealed at his lordship's Castle at Antrim, which was also rifled of all its valuable furniture."*

Presbyterians Under The Rule Of Queen Anne.

Queen Mary died in 1694 and her husband and joint Sovereign, King William, died in 1702. That year they were succeeded by Queen Mary's sister, Queen Anne. From the Presbyterian point of view, the story of Queen Anne's reign is a catalogue of restriction, oppression and suppression. Like her sister Mary, Anne was brought up a Protestant but, unlike her, she was much less kindly disposed towards the Presbyterians. Hamilton has summed up the situation as follows:- *"during the entire reign of Queen Anne, Irish Presbyterians were down-trodden beneath the feet of Episcopacy"..... "and harassed beyond endurance"*⁷⁵.

As far as religion was concerned the Queen's objective was the total suppression and the eventual extirpation of all faiths within the realm except the Anglican faith. Parliamentary laws and ecclesiastical edicts were so framed that neither Catholics nor Presbyterians could hold a position of authority unless they first became members of the Anglican Church and agreed to accept Holy Communion in that Church according to its rites. Those who refused were ostracised and subjected to harsh and severe penalties.

The State Penal Laws which had been passed between 1695-1698 but never strictly applied, were revived and rigidly enforced. Non-conformists (dissenters)* could not open schools for the benefit of the children of their own people, and Non-conformist teachers were not permitted to teach in any day school. Non-conformists were debarred also from intermarrying, from serving in any capacity in the armed forces, and from practising as solicitors.

The **Sacramental Test Act**⁷⁶ of 1704 declared that:- no person could vote at an election, or hold office (civil or military) without first taking

1. ***The Oath of Abjuration*** declaring that the son of James II had no right to the Crown, and the
2. ***Oath of Allegiance*** affirming loyalty to the Sovereign and support for the Protestant Ascendency.

The Act also required that all who served as Judges, Customs and Excise Officers, employees in the Courts of Law, workers in such Government places as the Post Office and the Municipalities, etc must receive The Sacrament in an Episcopal Church and according to its rites. Those who refused to comply were automatically dismissed and those already working in one of the listed positions expelled unless they obeyed the Law, changed their religious affiliations and conformed.

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*NON-CONFORMIST (DISSENTER) WAS A TERM APPLIED TO NON-ANGLICANS WHO REFUSED TO CONFORM AND JOIN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

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Ecclesiastical strictures⁷⁷ allowed landlords the right to refuse tenancy to Presbyterians, and to charge rents higher than those charged to Episcopalian tenants living on the same estate. When leasing church lands Bishops could insert clauses prohibiting the erection of Presbyterian Churches on, or close, to these estates. They could insist that farms should not be let to Presbyterians and that no new Presbyterian church be built in close proximity to an existing Episcopal church—they must be sited at a distance, in some cases as much as 5 miles away!

Regulations regarding marriages were offensive. Marriages conducted by Presbyterian Clergy were deemed illegal and couples who were married clandestinely by Presbyterian ministers were looked on as '*living in sin*' or, as '*having been given a licence for sin*.' In such cases both the minister and the parties involved could be brought before a Bishop's Court and formally excommunicated for the sin of '*fornication*'. The 'off-spring' of any such union were stigmatised '*bastards*' and the Laws of Inheritance excluded them from sharing in their parent's estate. The minister who solemnised the marriage was liable to a fine of up to £100 and/or a term of imprisonment, or both.

The Episcopal Church had control over Burials too. Permission from the local Rector was required before an interment in the Parish graveyard could take place. Permission for burial could be withheld unless the local Rector was asked to read the funeral Services⁷⁸. All fees paid to Presbyterian ministers in respect of marriages or funerals could be claimed by the Episcopal church and, if demanded, had to be paid over.

Besides such harassments, an objectionable and blatant inconsistency existed. Presbyterians were eligible for nomination as Churchwardens in the local Parish Church, an office which they were '*in duty bound*' to fulfil even though it violated their consciences and required them to take an obnoxious oath. Presbyterians were also required to pay tithes for the upkeep of the Parish Church.

Towards the end of Queen Anne's reign, further strictures were applied. Dissenting ministers were banned completely from preaching in churches, barns, homes or in open-air conventicles. If a minister was apprehended while celebrating The Lord's Supper in secret he was subject to a heavy fine, imprisonment, or both. Payment of the Regium Donum* was stopped and there was a general tightening of all the oppressive measures which had been introduced previously. Presbyterian school masters were liable to imprisonment for a period of up to three months if found "*discharging the duties of their office*." In 1714⁷⁹ the doors of the meeting-houses in Downpatrick, and Rathfriland and of the newly erected church in Antrim were "*nailed up*". Another storm of persecution was about to break on the struggling Church.

Queen Anne, who had been in failing health for some time, died on August 1st, 1714. The way was now open for her successor, King George I, of the House of Hanover, to relax some of the hardships she had imposed during her reign.

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*THE REGIUM DOMUM WAS AN ENDOWMENT PAID BY THE GOVERNMENT TO SOME
PROTESTANT CLERGY.

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Chapter Ten

Schism in the Church.

Rev John Abernethy MA (1703 - 1730).

Rev William Adair died in 1698, two years before the new meeting-house in Church Street was opened but a shortage of ministers meant that the vacancy could not be filled immediately. Their new minister, the Rev John Abernethy MA, was ordained in Antrim in 1703. He has been described by the Rev JB Woodburn⁸⁰ as:- "*a man of high moral character, a painstaking minister, who gave much time to his pastoral work and who endeavoured with success, while in Antrim, to bring the knowledge of the Gospel to the Roman Catholics who dwelt on the shores of Lough Neagh. He was an ardent student who prepared his sermons carefully, and who had scholarly tastes and great intellectual power.*"

In 1705 Mr Abernethy founded an association of ministers for "*their mutual improvement in Theological knowledge.*" The meetings, which were held monthly, started in Antrim but later moved to Belfast as it was considered that Belfast was more central than Antrim. The association then took as its name, '*The Belfast Society*'. Its proceedings followed an agreed pattern. Members took it in turn to preside and preach the sermon. "*Essays were read, and discussions held on interesting theological topics*⁸¹."

At the meeting of the Society of December 9th 1719 Mr Abernethy preached a sermon on the text, "*Let every man be fully persuaded in his mind*" (Romans 14:5). This sermon was later published in pamphlet form under the title, "*Religious Obedience Founded On Personal Persuasion.*" and had a wide circulation. The Rev Thomas Witherow, has listed some of the '*new*' ideas which Abernethy expressed in it⁸², viz:-

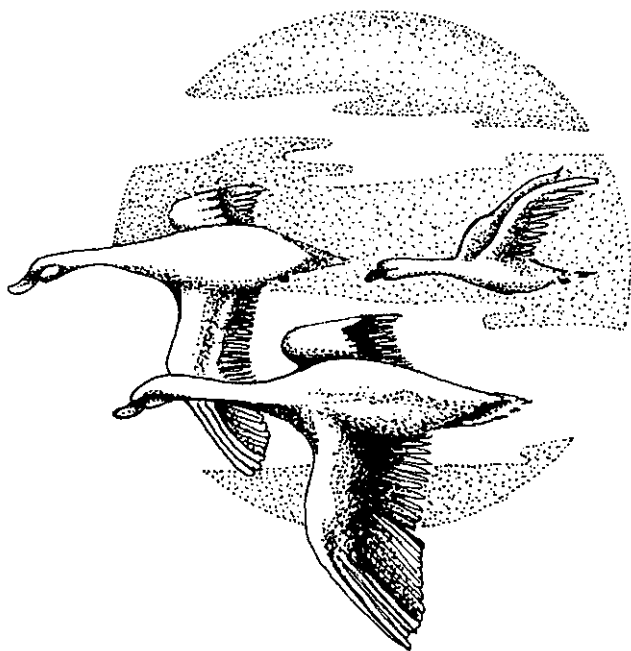
- (1) *a sinner's acceptance with God depends, not on the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, but on his own personal sincerity,*
- (2) *belief in any positive doctrine is not essential,*
- (3) *error, if not wilful, is innocent,*
- (4) *to require from any man subscription to a creed drawn up by men is at variance with the principles of Christian liberty,*
- (5) *the sole rule of faith and practice to a man is his persuasion of what is right,*
- (6) *if a man walks according to his own persuasions it would be wrong to exclude him from church fellowship on the ground of mere doctrinal differences,*
- (7) *error is not culpable if cherished by one who has made a sufficient search for truth.*

Over a number of years Abernethy's pamphlet was a regular topic for discussion at the meetings of The Synod of Ulster. Conciliatory measures were suggested to avoid disruption and to bring Mr Abernethy and the 'like-minded' members of The Synod back into line with the views of The Synod, but these failed. Abernethy and his associates remained inflexible and opposed to a synodical requirement that at their

services of licensing all young licentiates must make public declaration of their faith by signing, or subscribing to, The Westminster Confession of Faith. Older ministers, if they had not already done so at their licensing, ordination or installation services, were also asked to sign. This requirement proved unacceptable to a considerable section of The Synod with the result that it became divided over the issue,—those who agreed to sign (called “The Subscribers”), and those who refused to sign (“The Non-subscribers”).

As discussion and debate failed to resolve the impasse, The Synod, in 1725, decided to place all ‘*Non-subscribers*’ in a separate Presbytery of The Synod which they called ‘*The Presbytery Of Antrim*’.⁸³ This arrangement proved unsatisfactory, and a year later The Synod had to take further action and sever all connections with this newly created Presbytery. The orthodox members who remained in The Synod were advised to cease holding ecclesiastical communion with their now separate non-subscribing brethren. Seventeen non-subscribing ministers, together with members of their congregations, withdrew completely from The Synod and formed themselves into a new and separate Presbytery which they named, “*The Non-subscribing Presbytery Of Antrim*.”⁸⁴

The Subscription issue did not end there. It continued to rumble on for over a century.



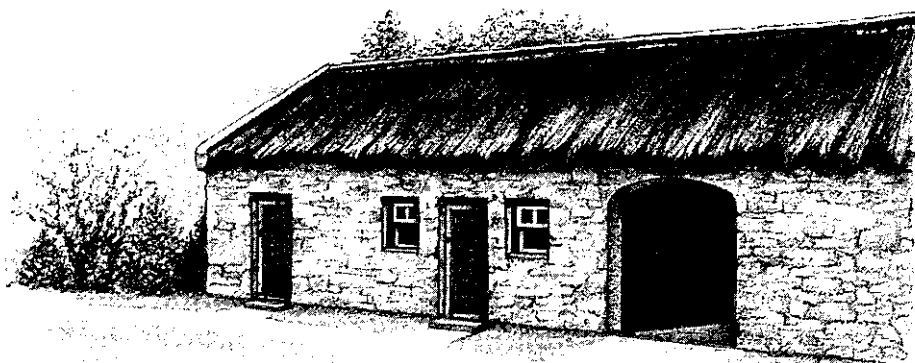
“All nations will come and worship you for your righteous acts have been revealed.” - Rev. 15 v 4.

Chapter Eleven

The New Congregation of Millrow.

Following The Synod's decision to place the non-subscribers in a separate Presbytery and under an ecclesiastical ban denying them synodal rights, those members of Abernethy's congregation in Antrim who continued to hold orthodox beliefs took action. For some time many had been unhappy with the doctrines which their minister was declaring from the pulpit and eventually ninety families severed their connection with Mr Abernethy and his Church. They petitioned The Synod to recognise them as a new and separate orthodox congregation⁸⁵. The Synod granted their request and in October 1726 they were declared a separate charge and placed under the care of The Presbytery of Templepatrick.

The new congregation had no church building in which to worship. As a temporary measure the people met in the home of one of their members who lived in Pattie's Lane⁸⁶ [known today as Railway Street]. Very soon this house was too small to accommodate all who came and alternative accommodation had to be found. The Massereene Family came to the rescue and provided temporary accommodation in 'out-housing' at the Castle. Later, they made it possible for the Church to lease a piece of ground in Millrow, the industrial part of the town [now known as Riverside]. The congregation was in a position to move ahead and plan a Meeting-House of their own. One of its members, Mr Robert Rainey⁸⁷, was commissioned to attend The Synod, "*to ask for some assistance to build the new Meeting-House*", a request which was granted. Another member, Mr David White, was appointed to assist Mr Rainey, "*to acknowledge the assistance received from several congregations.*"



*The original Millrow Church.
Built: 1728 - 1729 (artistic impression).*

Building work began in 1728. Nothing is on record about the size or shape of the building, but in keeping with the design of other Presbyterian churches of the time, it was most likely similar to the original church on the Steeple Road, namely a crude, simple, rectangular, 'barn-like' structure, built of stone, mud and mortar with a thatched roof and walls white-washed on the outside and inside. The pulpit was situated in the middle of one of the long walls opposite the main door. It is probable that there was a door in one or in both gable walls and it is likely that there was a window on each side of the pulpit as well as one on each side of the main door. The floor was smoothed earth, covered with straw matting, which according to an old church register, "*needed to be renewed often.*" The building was unheated and there was no artificial lighting. Seating was scant, with most of the people either standing during the service, leaning against the walls, or sitting on logs or on straw matting. A few benches were provided; these were rented annually to those who were able to afford the luxury of having a seat in Church! In front of the pulpit, but at a lower level, was the desk for the Precentor whose function was 'to raise the singing' during worship, there being no choirs or musical instruments in churches in those days. The building was opened in 1729, and because of its location in the town was named **The Millrow Presbyterian Church***.

The Rev William Holmes MA (1730-1750).

In the same year as the Millrow church was opened the congregation presented a Call to Rev Samuel Hemphill, the minister of Castleblaney but The Synod refused to allow the transfer. The following year a Call was presented to Mr William Holmes, a licentiate under the care of the Presbytery of Strabane. He accepted the Call and was ordained the first minister of the Millrow Congregation on 7th September 1730. He remained minister of Millrow until his death on 1st May 1750. Soon after he settled in Antrim Mr Holmes became involved with Mr Abernethy's successor, the Rev. James Duchal, in a pamphlet controversy on "Non-subscription."

According to Dr West⁸⁹, Mr Holmes also wrote, "*some controversial pieces*", but we do not know what the nature of these 'pieces' were. Under one title, "An

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*DR JOHN W NELSON⁸⁸, CLERK TO THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE NON-SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND IN HIS INTRODUCTION TO THE **REV WS SMITH'S MEMORIES OF '98** HAS GIVEN SOME STATISTICS RELATING TO THE NON-SUBSCRIBING CHURCH IN ANTRIM:- "IN 1816 (24 YEARS BEFORE THE FORMATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY) THE CONGREGATION NUMBERED 1417 INDIVIDUALS. IN 1858 (18 YEARS AFTER THE FORMATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY) THE FIGURE WAS 545. IN 1896 IT NUMBERED SOME 70 FAMILIES, WITH AN AVERAGE ATTENDANCE OF 35 AT THE ONE WEEKLY SERVICE. TEN YEARS LATER THE NUMBERS WERE 50 FAMILIES, WITH AN AVERAGE ATTENDANCE OF 25." THE CONGREGATION CONTINUED TO DWINDLE UNTIL THERE WERE ONLY 2 OR 3 WORSHIPPERS ATTENDING THE SERVICES WHICH HAD BEEN REDUCED TO ONE AFTERNOON SERVICE PER MONTH. EVENTUALLY THE CHURCH WAS CLOSED COMPLETELY AROUND 1976, AND THE CONGREGATION AMALGAMATED WITH THE TEMPLEPATRICK NON-SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. THE BUILDING IS NOW USED AS A BOXING CLUB.

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Essay Upon Religious Melancholy", he published two sermons which he had preached in the church. These were based on the text, Psalm 42:11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." The only other work which he is said to have published was a tract entitled "The Magistrate's Power."

The first Kirk Session in Millrow Church was elected in 1731. The method of selection of the 'elders elect' would appear somewhat irregular to us today. First, he divided the Parish into fourteen districts. Next, he himself personally chose the men whom he considered suitable for the eldership, taking care to ensure that each district was represented on the session by one of its own members. Having made his choice, he submitted the names to the congregation for approval. When approval was given he, acting alone, ordained the fourteen new Elders*.

Magee College Londonderry and The Antrim Connection.

Mr Holmes' grand-daughter, Miss Martha Stewart of Lurgan, married the Rev William Magee, minister of First Lurgan congregation. Mr Magee died in 1801 leaving her in very straightened circumstances and with two young sons to care for and educate. Both sons later joined the army and both died early in life. Some time after their deaths her two brothers, both of whom were unmarried and in the service of the East India Company, also died. During their time in India the brothers had amassed considerable fortunes which Mrs Magee inherited, making her a very wealthy person.

In her Will, Mrs Magee bequeathed £60,000 to the Presbyterian Church for the erection of a College in Ireland where young men who were training for the ministry could receive their under-graduate education and avoid the need and expense of going to a University in Scotland, as had been the previous custom.

With the help of the Magee bequest The College was built in Londonderry and opened in 1865. It remained under the control of The General Assembly until 1978 when it became absorbed into The University of Ulster. The Divinity Department of The College, was then transferred and amalgamated with The Assembly's College, Belfast to form the present **Union Theological College**.



"O Lord, open his eyes so that he may see." - 1 Kings 6 v 17.

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*IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY THAT PRESBYTERIES WERE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPERVISING THE ELECTION AND ORDINATION OF ELDERS.

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Chapter Twelve

The Church in The Doldrums.

Millrow congregation continued to grow for a number of years as more and more new members joined it. Then followed a period when its membership remained static before going into a slow decline. This was not peculiar to Millrow for the same was happening in many other churches. It was a phase in the life and witness of the Church as a whole which Professor Witherow has called,⁹⁰ *"a season of spiritual torpidity"*, and was evidenced by a decline in Christian behaviour and morals. Professor Killen has given the name *'The Dead Age'* to this same period. It was a state which persisted for well over seventy years. Dr West has described it as follows:- *"The Sabbath was desecrated by political meetings and the secular spirit carried away many ministers from their religious duties: drunkenness, profanity and Sabbath breaking were fearfully prevalent"*⁹¹.

Strong and exemplary leadership from the top was lacking. Instead of encouraging evangelism The Synod was instructing Presbyteries to pay attention to such mundane matters as

- (1) *"directing ministers to study decency in their clothing and wigs; avoid powderings, vain cravats, half shirts and the like,"..*
- (2) *drawing attention to the fact "that some ministers, their wives and children are too gaudy and vain in their apparel", and "that several Presbyteries reform these faults in themselves and theirs,"..*
- (3) *"refraining from sumptuous dinners at ordinations and on Mondays after Communion,"..*
- (4) *.."refraining from going to public-houses during any sederunt."*

There was also a regulation prohibiting ministers and their families under pain of censure from attending stage plays!⁹²

Sadly, in the minutes of The Synod 1694-1790, there is only one reference to 'Mission'. It referred to a scheme for *"preaching The Gospel to the Irish Roman Catholics."* Rev A C Anderson⁹³ in his book, *The Story of The Presbyterian Church in Ireland* has written about this work as follows:- *"The Synod published Confessions and Catechisms in Irish, as well as Bibles: these were to be used by 8 or 10 ministers and licentiates who knew the language during the three months when each pair would be 'labouring among the Irish.' Circumstances hindered the work from developing just as a similar proposal by the Church of Ireland a year or two earlier had come to nothing."*

A scientific principle states that "Nature abhors a vacuum," a principle which could be applied to the state of The Church at the time; in the absence of "Mission", Abernethy's doctrines re-emerged. *The New Light Movement*, as it had come to be known, was gaining ground and creating problems for the church in two spheres:-

- (1) for those students studying for the Ministry in Scottish Universities, and particularly in The University of Glasgow. Some of the Professors there were

known Moderatists and supporters of The Movement. They were suspected of using their lecture theatres to propagate the New Light Movement's unacceptable doctrines.

- (2) for The Synod. There remained within The Synod some ministers who, though they were in agreement with the views of the non-subscribers and had given tacit support to them, had not openly declared their stand when The Presbytery of Antrim was created in 1725. At heart they were 'non-subscribers' yet they remained members of The Synod of Ulster and continued to maintain a close relationship with their orthodox brothers, and on occasions exchanged pulpits with them.

The Scottish Seceders.

Events were taking place in Scotland which, in a remarkable way, brought the situation in the Ulster Church back on course. The Scottish Presbyterian Churches were subject to The Law of Patronage⁹⁴, a Law which among other things did not allow congregations to have the final say in their choice of a new Minister. When a vacancy was being filled, voters could choose their minister but the final decision lay with the patron who could be a person outside the Church, someone from another denomination, or even someone with no religious belief at all! The patron had the power to set aside the people's choice and impose on them a minister of his choosing, who was possibly quite unacceptable to the congregation.

Matters came to a head in 1732. The Scottish General Assembly suspended Rev Ebenezer Erskine from the ministry and deprived him of his congregation because he dared to speak out boldly in The Assembly against the operation of this Law. Three other ministers joined him and together the four formed *The Associate Presbytery of Scotland*. Later they were joined by other ministers and a new Church '*The Seceders*' was formed. This Church was made up of men who were said to be: - "*deeply imbued with a love of sound evangelical doctrine and with a burning desire for the spread of true religion.*"⁹⁵

The Seceders were well received throughout Scotland and eventually some of them came to Ireland. At first they came as individual preachers each staying for just a few months at a time. The first Seceder minister to '*settle*' in Ulster was the Rev Isaac Patton. He was ordained by a Commission of The Associate Presbytery of Scotland and installed on July 9th 1746 in Lylehill, near Templepatrick. The Seceders provided the stimulus which the lethargic churches of The Synod of Ulster needed and brought out into the open lapses in doctrine and witness which the Churches had allowed to creep in and failed to correct. They protested vigorously and fearlessly against the prevailing errors and ungodliness of the times and insisted that all ministers and elders at their ordination subscribe to The Westminster Confession of Faith. It is impossible to say to what extent this outside influence affected the Presbyterian Church in general, or the Millrow Church in particular; it can be said that the coming of The Seceders made a marked and lasting impression on the religious ethos of the whole Province.

The movement spread rapidly. A vacancy in a Church in The Synod of Ulster sometimes caused disagreements especially if the minister chosen to fill it was not

acceptable to the whole congregation. Such a situation, if not resolved quickly, often lead to an irreconcilable division. In these circumstances it was not unusual for one of the parties to approach The Seceders and ask that their faction be taken under the care of the Seceders and declared a new Seceder congregation.

Between 1696 and 1703 there was a severe famine in Scotland. It is estimated that during these years and the years which followed 50,000 Scots, many of them Presbyterians, attracted by reports that rich arable land was available at cheap rates, crossed over to Ireland. These new-comers greatly increased the Presbyterian population of Ulster necessitating the erection of new churches and providing ministers to supply them. The Synod of Ulster did not see its way to engage in Church Extension at the time and the opportunity for expansion was lost to The Seceders.

The Formation of The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Ireland ~ (1840).

By 1818 there were over 100 Secession Churches in Ireland with 97 ministers serving them. Those churches which began as Secession churches and which are now within the present Presbytery of Templepatrick are Lylehill, 2nd Randalstown, 2nd Ballyeaston, Loanends, and 2nd Donegore.

Although both the Synod of Ulster and The Secession Synod were scions of the same parent stock (The Church of Scotland), they remained totally separate for many years. Both had internal problems of their own which needed to be settled, and there were differences within each of their Synods which needed to be put right before reconciliation and union could be contemplated and one single united Synod formed.

The old subscription controversy of the 1720's re-opened in 1822, and for the next seven years it was the subject of debate at the annual meetings of The Synod. The crisis came in 1827 when The Synod of Ulster met in Strabane. The high-light of the meetings was a very heated debate between the Rev Dr Henry Cooke, supported by Rev Robert Magill of Millrow, Antrim and some other members of the Synod of Ulster. The Rev Dr Henry Montgomery with supporters represented the non-subscribers. The final debate took place at the annual meeting of The Synod in Lurgan in 1828. Dr Cooke made a powerful speech in which he refuted completely all the charges levelled against The Synod by its opponents⁹⁶. The Arians* lost their case and seventeen of their ministers left The Synod and formed themselves into a separate Synod called *The Remonstrant Synod of Ulster*,⁹⁷ later known as *The Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland*.

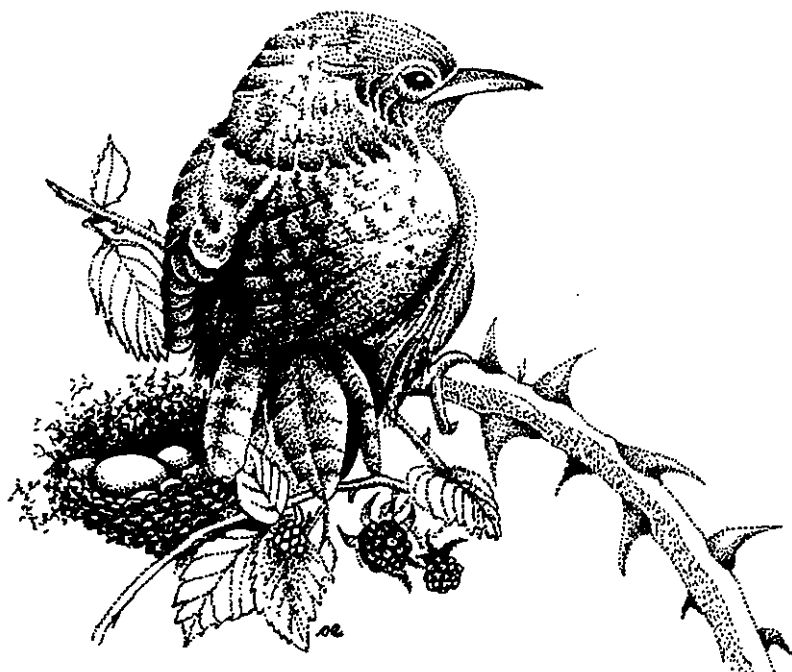
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* THE NON-SUBSCRIBING PARTY OR NEW LIGHT MOVEMENT OR THE ARIAN PARTY WAS ALSO KNOWN AS THE UNITARIAN PARTY BECAUSE ITS MEMBERS BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE GOD AND THAT HE HAD CREATED JESUS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. DIVINITY, THEREFORE, SHOULD BE ASCRIBED TO GOD, THE FATHER, ONLY. SUCH A DOCTRINE IS AT COMPLETE VARIANCE WITH THE SHORTER CATECHISM. QUESTION NO. 6 OF THE CATECHISM AFFIRMS THAT: "THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD: THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY GHOST; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE GOD, THE SAME IN SUBSTANCE, EQUAL IN POWER AND GLORY."

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The Synod of Ulster got down to "*setting its house in order.*" Church buildings were repaired, new congregations established, and new churches built. Congregations were re-distributed within 24 Presbyteries, and better facilities provided for the education and training of theological students. A Missionary Society was formed and, most importantly, mandatory subscription to The Westminster Confession of Faith was required of all licentiates, ministers and elders at their services of licensing, ordination and installation.

As the main differences between the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod had been overcome the way was now open for their eventual union. This took place on July 10th 1840 when *The General Assembly Of The Presbyterian Church In Ireland* was formed. The union brought into the newly formed united church 292 congregations from The Synod of Ulster and 141 churches from The Secession Synod.



"In His love and mercy He redeemed them: He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." - Isa. 63 v 9.

Chapter Thirteen

Rev John Ranken (Rankin), MA (1751-1789).

The second minister in Millrow was the Rev John Ranken MA, a native of Coleraine. He was ordained in Millrow on 16th October 1751 and spent his whole ministry in Antrim. Throughout his ministry the evangelical apathy which had been affecting the whole of the Presbyterian Church was still prevalent.

Little is on record regarding either Mr Ranken or his ministry. Although he seems to have been a well educated and cultured man, he published nothing, and no biographical details are available either of his life or his work. Expressing amazement that such a 'learned' man should leave behind him so small a mark in the history of the Church, Professor T Witherow⁹⁸ has remarked. *"It is not always the best man who makes the loudest noise."*

Taking as his text 1 Corinthians 14:20, *"In understanding be men"*, Mr Ranken preached a sermon at the meeting of The Synod of Ulster in Lurgan in 1772 and at the request of The Synod this sermon was printed. Concerning this sermon the Rev Thomas Witherow wrote:- *"...an excellent discourse, sound in sentiment, and polished in diction."* Two years later, when he was chosen to be Moderator of The Synod, he took as the text for his retiring address, *"Titus 2:5, 'These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.'*" Apart from these two addresses no other records concerning the man exist. Mr Ranken left a Baptismal Register for the years 1754-1785 in which he has recorded the names of 504 boys and 476 girls who were baptised by him during that period. During his ministry the church was enlarged in 1769. The wall opposite the pulpit was opened and the building extended outwards, converting it into a T-shaped building.

Mr Ranken died on 16th May, 1790, aged 63 years, and was buried in the Antrim church-yard. He had been minister of Millrow congregation for 38 years.

The following is a copy of a curious agreement for the payment of Stipend to Mr Ranken⁹⁹:- *"Know all men by these presents, that I, Robert Pinkerton, of the town of Antrim, Paviour [that is a 'Paver' of roads, lanes, etc.] am holden and firmly bound unto the sum of One Pound Two Shillings sterling, good and lawful money of Great Britain, to be paid to the said John Rankin, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, firmly by these presents. Sealed with my Seal and dated this fifteenth day of September, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty-one."*

"The condition of the above obligation is such that if the above bounden Robert Pinkerton, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns do well and truly pay, or cause to be paid, unto the said John Rankin, his heir, executors, administrators or assigns, as stipends the full sum of Three shillings and three pence sterling, yearly and every year, commencing from the first day of May last past, preceding the day of the date hereof, during all the time that the said John Ranken shall be the Presbyterian minister of the second congregation of Presbyterians in the Parish of Antrim, and

during the residence of the above bounden in the said Parish or contiguous thereto; then the above Obligation to be void, otherwise to remain in full force and Virtue both in Law and Equity."

"Signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of;-

William Thomson (Seal).

Chichester Moore

..... Robert Pinkerton.

Date.....17..."

Rev Alexander Montgomery MA (1791-1820).

Mr Montgomery was the third minister in Millrow. He was born near Broughshane in 1750. He entered the ministry late in life and was aged 40 when, on the 31st May 1791, he was ordained in Millrow, his one and only charge. His ministry in Millrow lasted for 30 years and continued right up until his death on 17th October 1820. He was buried in the family burying ground in Broughshane.

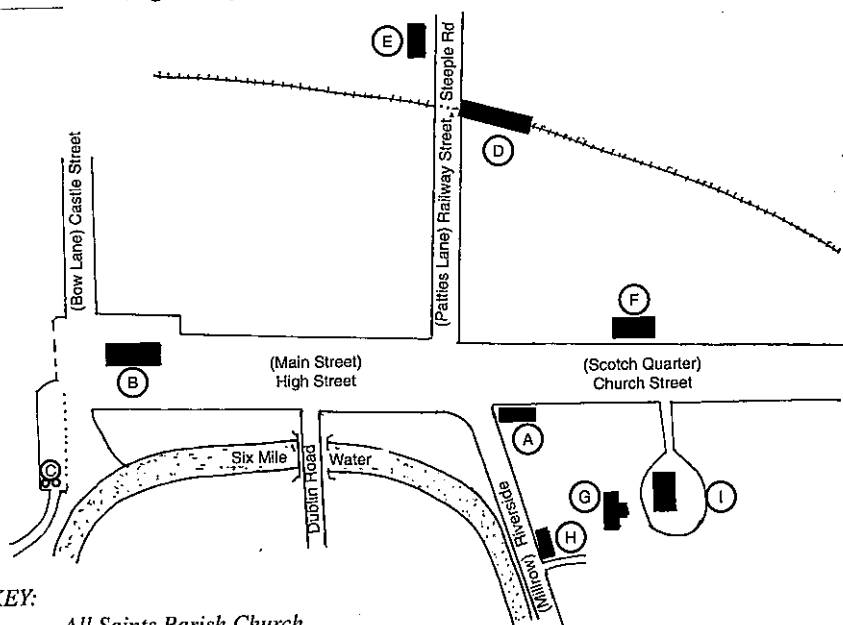
As in the case of Mr Ranken, there are few records available concerning Mr Montgomery. What do exist relate to his weaknesses rather than to his strengths. In 1806 The Presbytery suspended him for "*two Lord's Days*" for "*celebrating marriages in an irregular manner.*¹⁰⁰" He was restored again to his pulpit by The Presbytery at the end of his suspension.

It would seem that the reason why Millrow congregation appointed its first congregational committee in 1819 was to look into the Church's finances. It was the congregation's original intention that the Church committee should remain in office for one year only, but at the end of the year it was decided that it "*should exist and continue to act until dissolved by the congregation.*" The committee took its work very seriously. It began by formulating strict rules for the conduct of its meetings, rules which included the levying of fines for "*absenteeism without an acceptable reason*", for "*arriving late and/or leaving before the meeting ended*" and for "*entering the House in a state of intoxication.*¹⁰¹"

During the investigation of the finances it was noted that Mr Montgomery was carrying full responsibility for virtually every department of the congregation's work. He was "*the congregation's clergyman, the session, the committee, the collector of funds and the book-keeper!*" Those who signed his accounts had done so without inspecting or investigating what they were signing, with the result that over a period of time the finances had fallen into arrears which had gone undetected. A scrutiny of the books revealed that Mr Montgomery's records were far from being in order. Some people, who had either died or had moved away from the district, continued to be assessed for arrears of Stipend. Others, who had never been members of the Church, had been assessed for periods of up to 10 years. [*Initially, these people had applied*

for "Church Privileges" for which they were required to pay one year's Stipend. They were then counted "nominal" members for that year only, and their names should have been removed from the Register after that time. This had not been done and they continued to be assessed.] The committee's first action was to correct such mistakes, acknowledge and rectify wrongful assessments, before they could proceed to collect Stipend from those *bona fide* members whose payments were in arrears.

The committee considered the Stipend issue. In an effort to sort out the problems they met with Mr Montgomery. There is no record of what decisions were made or what action, if any, was taken. The committee probably decided to overlook the mistakes believing them to be attributable to Mr Montgomery's age and to the state of his health. A few months after this meeting the Session minutes record that Mr Montgomery "*had become infirm*" and that an assistant and successor to help in the work of the congregation was considered necessary. This assistant was Mr Robert Magill, also from Broughshane. Mr Montgomery died soon afterwards, on the 17th October 1820, aged 70 years.



KEY:

- A. All Saints Parish Church.
- B. Antrim Courthouse.
- C. The Castle Gatehouse.
- D. The Railway Line and Station, constructed in 1847.
- E. Probable location of the first Presbyterian Meeting-House in Antrim (1684).
- F. Location of the second Meeting-House in Antrim (1701).
- G. Location of the Millrow Church (1729).
- H. Situation of the first Millrow Manse.
- I. First Antrim Presbyterian Church. Erected 1837.

Rough plan of Antrim in the early Nineteenth Century, showing the principal streets with their original names. (Not drawn to scale).

The United Irishmen.

In 1791 an organisation known as *The Society of United Irishmen* came into being. It was the brainchild of Dr William Drennan of Dublin, a Presbyterian medical doctor.¹⁰² Theobald Wolfe Tone, a southern Protestant, was also a leading figure in the movement¹⁰³.

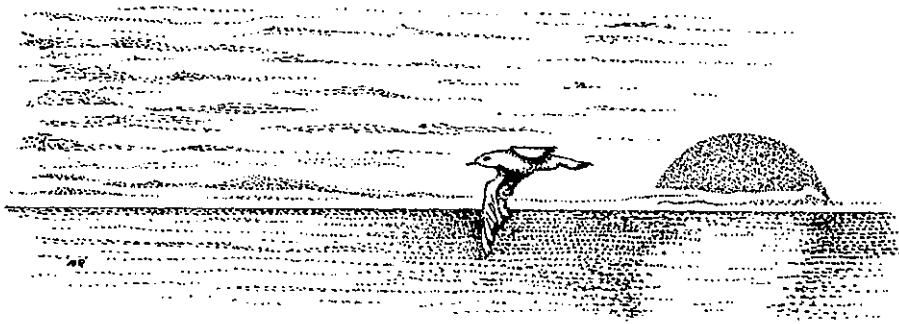
The organisation had two main objectives:-

- (1) the abolition of the restrictive Penal Laws which for years Catholics and Dissenters had endured and which they considered unjustifiably discriminatory and offensive and,
- (2) parliamentary reform in Ireland.

In 1795 the organisation became a secret, 'oath-bound' society and the authorities, considering it to be seditious and treasonable, took steps to suppress it. Tensions mounted and matters came to a head in 1798 with the eruption of open rebellion.

Mr Montgomery was the minister of Millrow during the time of the United Irishmen's Rebellion and the Battle of Antrim on the 7th June 1798. Whether he took any active part in the events of the time is uncertain. There is no record of his having had any association with Mr William Orr of Antrim, who according to the Rev JB Woodburn MA¹⁰⁴, "*was aged 31*" and "*...a man of generous, impetuous temperament who bore a stainless character and had a great influence over the district. He was a large farmer and belonged to the Millrow congregation in the town. He was born and reared in Farranshane, outside Antrim. He was a man of strong convictions, and early in life became a champion of religious liberty for all, becoming a leader of the United Irishmen in 1796.*" "*Six feet two inches tall, his whole appearance spoke of strength, gracefulness and manliness. Arrested in 1796, he was imprisoned for a year, tried in September 1797, convicted on false evidence and hanged in Carrickfergus on 14th, October, 1797.*"

He was buried in Templepatrick Old church-yard.



"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men." - Ecc. 3 v 11.

Chapter Fourteen

Rev Robert Magill AM (1820-1839).

Robert Magill was Millrow's fourth minister. Though brought up in Broughshane, his father, George Magill, was an Antrim man, and lived in Bow Lane [Castle Street] Antrim. Robert Magill began life as a school teacher. In 1811 he decided to enter the ministry and began his studies at The University of Glasgow in preparation for entering the University's School of Theology. Studying in Glasgow meant for him a long walk at the start and again at the end of each term. As well as his personal baggage and books, he often took on the outward journey a bag of oatmeal to supplement his diet during the new term. Starting from Broughshane he walked to Donaghadee and crossed over by boat to Portpatrick. From there he had a wearisome 4 or 5 days' journey on foot to Glasgow.

After a brilliant academic career, which included many Academic awards, he graduated in 1816 with a First Class Honours degree in Arts. While at the University of Glasgow he enrolled in classes in the medical school and there gained some medical knowledge which he was able to use in later life in Antrim.

According to the Church's requirements Mr Magill preached '*on trial*' in Millrow on four successive Sundays after which the congregation invited him to be their minister and on 30th June 1820 he was ordained '*Assistant and Successor*' to Mr Montgomery.

During his ministry in Millrow Mr Magill resided in his father's house in Bow Lane,—the Magill family home for four generations. Helped by members of the congregation, he farmed a small holding attached to the property and to augment his stipend of £60* per year he also kept a cow, some pigs and a few hens.

Mr Magill loved books and was an avid reader all his life, not just for his own pleasure but also for the benefit of others. He read classical works in Greek, Hebrew and Latin and being proficient in Hebrew he was frequently invited to act as an examiner for students in the divinity classes.

Robert Magill's qualities may be dealt with under five headings:-

(1) Pastoral Work. He was a man deeply committed to his people. While visiting the old, the sick, the poor and the troubled, he gave them what spiritual help and advice he felt was appropriate. Commenting on his pastoral care, Dr WD Killen remarked that he was a living proof of the phrase that¹⁰⁵ "*a house-going minister*

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*BESIDES HIS STIPEND HE RECEIVED A SHARE FROM THE REGIUM DONUM, OR STATE ENDOWMENT, WHICH AMOUNTED TO ABOUT £35 PER YEAR. SOME COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR HIS EXPENSES (TAKEN FROM HIS DIARY DATED 1839) ARE:- SHOEING A HORSE 5s. 0d. ; A HAT 1s. 2d.; 19 LBS. BEEF AT 3d. PER LB.; 14 LBS. POTATOES 7d.; 28 LBS SUGAR 15s. 0d.; TEA 4s. 10d, PER LB.

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makes a church-going people." From time to time Mrs Magill and his children accompanied him on these visits. Poor families in need of medical help were treated by him at home and he often made arrangements for serious cases to be seen by a doctor—he himself bearing all the expenses. Sometimes he performed minor surgery and, if needed, assisted the doctors with major surgery.

Those young people who showed an aptitude for learning but whose parents could not afford the expense of further education found a helper and friend in their minister. He taught some of them himself and others he encouraged. One such was John Houston of Antrim¹⁰⁶. In 1820 he gave this young man 10d. for repeating nineteen Psalms from memory. When the same young man repeated the whole Book of Psalms he gave him 10s. 6d. and two months later when he repeated the whole New Testament he received £1.1.0! This student went on to become the minister of a Dublin Congregational Church. A colleague of Mr Houston's once told Mr Magill that "*he had heard the boy examined on the New Testament and that he could begin at any chapter or verse and repeat accurately as far as required.*"

Another student was Robert Gamble of Islandreagh. Mr Magill taught this young man Latin and Greek; in his notes he records that he "*examined him for two hours in his mother's house at Islandreagh on Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Xenophon, and Homer!*"¹⁰⁷

Mr Gamble was licensed in August 1848 by the Presbytery of Templepatrick and ordained in Castledawson on August 1st, 1849. He remained there for the whole of his ministry (38 years) and died on 28th November 1887.

(2) **Pulpit Ministry.** Mr Magill's preaching was simple, direct and challenging. Some of his congregation described it as:—"*...like life from the dead.*"¹⁰⁸ Latimer¹⁰⁹ has added, "*he, [Magill] had a voice of such marvellous sweetness that the mere sound of his preaching produced a feeling of peculiar pleasure in the hearts of his hearers. The Arians, jealous of his eloquence, called him 'a noisy fanatic'.*" Crowds flocked from far and near to hear him and all were impressed by his message and his eloquence.

In keeping with the times he preached two sermons at each Sunday morning service. The first sermon was a brief exposition of a Psalm or part of a Psalm; the second (or long sermon) was based on a text taken from one of the Scripture passages which had been read. It lasted about an hour*, (timed by an hour-glass in the pulpit!). From November to February there was only one Sunday service, but from March to October there were two. In Mr Magill's time ministers occasionally wore a Pulpit Gown; in his diary, dated 23rd March 1828, he wrote, "*I wore the bands today but did not wear the gown.*"¹¹⁰

(3) **Personality.** Mr Magill was loved by all who knew him. He had a very sympathetic nature and was always ready to help whatever the need was, whether spiritual, physical, or financial. He had a discerning nature and could pick out imposters quickly.

He cared deeply for his family, especially his wife who was a 'sickly' individual and needed much care and attention. She died of cholera in 1832 just five months after

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*ON ONE OCCASION, WHEN PREACHING IN 1ST BALLYMENA, HIS SERMON IS SAID TO HAVE LASTED 2 HOURS 10 MINUTES!¹¹⁰

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the death of their only son. Mr Magill remarried seven years later. Sadly he died suddenly on 19th February 1839, a few months after the wedding. Contrary to his wishes he was buried in the Templepatrick church-yard. This upset the members of the congregation so much that at the earliest possible opportunity his remains were exhumed and, in accordance with his wishes, re-interred beside those of his wife and son in the Donegore church-yard. A colleague wrote of him that "*he was married twice and buried twice!*"

Mr Magill was renowned for his gift of repartee, a gift which he used in debates in the Synod to good effect. When the Subscription controversy re-emerged he took his stand for orthodoxy and used his debating skills to good effect. His greatest contribution at this time was a satirical poem of over 1,000 lines which he entitled:- "*The Thinking Few*"ⁱⁱⁱ The Arians [a term often used when speaking about the non-subscribers] were said to be greatly hurt by the sting of his satire. He took the title of his poem from a speech made by the Rev. William Porter,* the Clerk of The Synod of Ulster. Porter, when giving evidence before the Irish Education Commissioners, had alleged that:- "*Arianism was gaining ground among 'The Thinking Few' in The Synod of Ulster.*" In his condemnations of The Arian or New Light Movement, Mr Magill was very outspoken, on one occasion referring to the followers of the movement as:- "*highway robbers who would rob the Saviour of His Crown of Glory.*"

(4) **Lifestyle.** Robert Magill was a man of simple tastes. He enjoyed walking and walked long distances on his congregational visitations, church business, and his supervision of the schools. In 1828 he wrote in his diary that on the previous Saturday "*I walked the 12 miles from Antrim to Glenwherry to assist at their Communion Services. The journey took 3 hours and 50 minutes. I preached at two Preparation Services on the Saturday and on the Sunday assisted at tables.*" On the Monday he returned home on horse-back!

(5) **Writings.** Mr Magill was an enthusiastic keeper of records. He made a daily note of important events which took place in Antrim during the 17 years of his ministry. Each day he recorded what he did, his financial transactions, the special people he met or entertained, the names and addresses of important people from whom he had received letters and the names of some of those to whom he had written replies. Other records which he kept were:- details of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths, the genealogy of some of the families in the congregation (including rough maps of their Burial plots with the names of those buried in each grave), attendance records for the Sunday Schools and the Bible Class, the Communion Roll (indicating clearly all deletions, transfers and new additions), the number of Bibles and New Testaments which were in the homes of the members of the congregation, and the Scripture texts which he had used for his sermons. He wrote a great many poems, his most famous being "*The Thinking Few*" (already referred to). In 1834 he published some of these in book form.

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*MR PORTER, ALTHOUGH HE WAS THE CLERK OF THE SYNOD OF ULSTER, WAS AN ARIAN OR NON-SUBSCRIBER. LATER HE MADE HIS POSITION CLEAR BY OPENLY DECLARING THAT HE SUPPORTED ARIAN DOCTRINES.

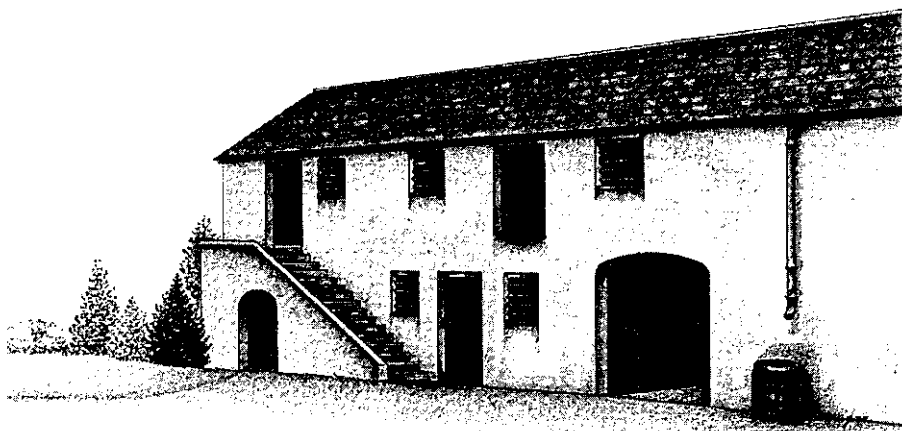
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The following are notes taken from The Session Minute Book of Mr Magill's time:

- (a) Those members asking for help from The Poor Fund can have their names added to the list *only* if they have been recommended by a member of Session and are approved by the Session at one of its regular meetings.
- (b) Any member of the congregation attending or encouraging cock fights will be excluded from Communion until such individuals have given satisfactory evidence of repentance before the Session.
- (c) Mr Magill baptised 640 boys and 640 girls during his ministry in Millrow Church. During his entire ministry he baptised a total of 965 boys and 990 girls.

Following Mr Magill's death the following minute was recorded in the Session Minutes:-

"Our esteemed pastor, Rev Robert Magill, departed this life on Tuesday night, the 19th February 1839, within a few minutes of 10 o'clock, aged 50 years, and in the 19th year of his ministry. He preached his last sermon on 3rd February 1839. A month earlier he made the following record at the Church Service that day, 6th January 1839. Explained Psalm 146, verses 1-4. Preached from Jeremiah 23 ;24. Collection 8s. 9d. Read obituary for the year: Inflammation 10, Consumption 9, Frailty 7, Pox 6, Nervous Debility 5, Measles 3, Fever 3, Contractions 3, Burns 2, Killed in Mill 1, A Fall 1, Cancer 1, Misent. Fever 1, Croup 1, Chin Cough 2, Sore Throat 1. Total 56."



*Enlarged Millrow Church , showing outside stairway to a gallery.
Built about 1800 (artistic impression)*

Chapter Fifteen

Church Developments.

Sunday Schools — Sabbath Schools.

In common with other congregations 'Family Worship in the Home' was a practice which the members of the Millrow Church were encouraged to follow, a discipline which not only brought personal blessings to the family but exposed the children to the teaching of The Bible in the home from an early age. The practice had, however, one drawback. The high level of illiteracy in the adult population meant that some parents had only a meagre knowledge of The Bible and were poorly equipped to lead Family Worship in their homes. The minister and the district elder gave what assistance and help they could by making regular visits to such families and conducting family worship. On such occasions neighbouring families often joined in and all shared together in worship.

As elsewhere, some children of the congregation (as young as 8 or 9) had to forego school and work to supplement the family income. To help these children gain some education Mr Magill established a number of small schools in the townlands of Islandbawn, Bush, Ballyno, Potterswalls, Ladyhill, Trench [Rathmore], Oldstone, Ballyrobin and Milltown, as well as one in the Millrow church itself. Religious Education was given a prominent place in these schools. Mr Magill not only drafted the course of Bible study to be followed, but visited each one frequently, helping and advising the teachers and testing the pupils on their knowledge of the Scriptures.

In 1831 the Government passed The Education Act establishing The National Education Board. This Board had responsibility for running schools (now called National Schools). It appointed teachers, drafted the curriculum, approved the prescribed text-books and carried out periodic inspections. Religious instruction was dropped from the timetable and relegated to "out-of-hours" —either before or after, but not during school hours!

The National Education Board did not have control over the property which had been rented from the church and the church reserved the right to use their buildings on Sunday afternoons for Sunday Schools. Afternoon Sunday Schools were started by Millrow Church in the Oldstone, Ladyhill, Ballyno and Rathmore school premises.* In 1838 Mr Magill recorded 135 scholars attending the Ballyno Sabbath School, 55 of whom were over the age of 15 years and that 15 teachers were required to cope with this number.¹¹²

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*THESE SUNDAY SCHOOLS DIFFERED FROM THE FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL, POSSIBLY THE FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL IN IRELAND, STARTED BY MR WILLIAM GAULT IN 1770 IN THE DOAGH BOOK CLUB WHERE THE THREE R'S WERE TAUGHT AND SOME BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION GIVEN. BY CONTRAST THE CHURCH IN 1834, (SIXTY-THREE YEARS AFTER THE NATIONAL EDUCATION BOARD HAD TAKEN OVER THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS) TAUGHT ONLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THE CATECHISMS AND WERE TERMED "CATECHISING CLASSES".

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At its meeting in 1834 the General Synod of Ulster discussed the position of Sunday Schools within the framework of the church and recommended that every congregation should provide such a facility for the religious education of its children¹¹³. There is no record of the actual date when Millrow congregation put this recommendation into effect; the earliest reference to be found in the Session minutes is a brief statement (half of which is illegible due to water damage) and bearing the date 1836. It reads¹¹⁴: "...be set aside for the upkeep of the Sunday School." The Session minutes of 1843 record a collection "of £5. 14.s 0.d being taken for the Sabbath School of the congregation."

A non-sectarian society known as "The Sunday School Society for Ireland" was established in 1809 for the purpose of facilitating the spread of religious knowledge among the young. The Presbyterian Church happily co-operated with this Society until a dispute arose in 1861 concerning the appointment of a Presbyterian minister to a seat on the Committee. The result was that The Presbyterian Church severed its connection with the Society and on March 4th 1862 founded its own Society called **"The Sabbath School Society for Ireland in Connexion with the Presbyterian Church."** This Society is still in existence.

All the afternoon Sabbath Schools connected with First Antrim/Millrow congregation are now closed. The Bruce Hall afternoon Sabbath School closed in 1962, The Oldstone Sabbath School in 1966, the Rathmore Sabbath School in 1984 and the Ladyhill Sabbath School in 1989. An afternoon Sabbath School was started in the Muckamore Orange Hall in December 1963 and has been operating from Ballycraig Primary School since 1992. It continues to do very useful work.

For many years the main Sabbath School connected with the Church met at 10.15am in the church halls. In 1990, the Sabbath Schools were re-organised. Those children over the age of 11 and about to proceed to secondary level of education, have been grouped into the Junior Bible Class, and meets at 10.15am, along with the Senior Bible Class. Children under the age of 11 are divided into two sections according to age. Those in the P1 to P4 classes in Primary School constitute the Junior Sabbath School and those in the P5 to P7 classes form the Senior Sabbath School. Both sections attend Church for the first part of the service and leave after the children's address for their Sunday School classes in the halls.

Appreciation and thanks must be expressed to the many dedicated people who, over the years, have taught in the Sabbath Schools and who have given unreservedly of their time, their knowledge and their experience to this important work. There has been a long line of superintendents who have given excellent service and to whom the congregation is indebted. It is impossible to mention each and every one, but it would be remiss to omit a reference to the sterling service given by Miss Sadie Murphy who served as Sabbath School Superintendent from 1962 until 1990.

Miss Murphy's successor and the present Superintendent is Mr Hugh Matchett. His quiet, masterful efficiency and careful planning has ensured that the 1990 re-organisation programme of the Sabbath Schools was carried through smoothly and with minimal disruption.

Extensions And Repairs.

In spite of the general lack of interest in religion which had been prevalent for years throughout the country, the attendances at Millrow church services were increasing. Between the beginning of the Millrow Church in 1726 and Mr Magill's ordination in 1820, the number of families on the rolls had risen from 90 to 1,000 (approximately). Accommodation was now a problem. Enlarging the building by the addition of an annex had been tried but the benefit gained was only temporary. The next step was raising the roof enough to accommodate three small galleries, one over each of the three "wings" of the church. Each gallery had its own stairway situated on the outside of the building. Pews were added throughout the church. In 1819¹¹⁵, (the year before Mr Magill's Ordination) the congregational committee met to, "*examine and reckon the seats in the Meeting-House.*" "*They counted 41 seats on the ground floor and 10 seats in each of the three galleries, a total of 71, sufficient to provide seating for about 400 people.*"

When Mr Magill came to Millrow in 1820 the Church was in a dilapidated state. The following year extensive repairs were undertaken at a cost of £200. All the doors and windows were renewed, a new roof put on and a new ceiling erected. The seats were repaired and repainted and the grounds enclosed by a wall. But all this expense and work proved unsatisfactory. The building was old, its walls were crumbling and in constant need of repairs so maintenance costs were rising.

By contrast, a much more satisfying problem, was crying out for attention. As Mr Magill's preaching was attracting more and more people the problem was how best to provide accommodation for all who came to hear him. In 1828 the congregation took the bold decision to build a new church. Lord Massereene and Ferrard offered the congregation a very desirable four acres of land in the nearby Bog Park (Belmont Park) for £400. This ground lay about 100 yards to the east of the old church and included a few houses in Scotch Quarter [now called Church Street]. By selling these houses and some pieces of the land, the cost of the site was realised. Building work on the new Church began in 1834 and was completed in 1837. As soon as the new Church was ready for use, the old building was sold and demolished by the new owner. Today, all that remains of it is a small piece of one of the outside walls.

An old register of accounts dated 1821-1829 gives some interesting insights into the life of the Church at that period.

(a) The weekly offerings averaged about fifteen shillings, though occasionally a special offering for a specific object brought in more than this. The only sources of income seem to have been the weekly offerings and the Pew rents. Out of this had to be paid £6. 6s. 0d. per annum to the Singing Clerk (or Precentor), £3. 13s. 10d. per annum to the Sexton and the heavy costs of maintenance, repairs and other running expenses. The Minister was paid from whatever balance remained in the accounts! Although he had been promised an annual stipend of £60 he was the one to have to forego his stipend or part of his stipend if the church was short of money! When the new church was opened in 1837 Mr Magill's Stipend was raised to £90 per annum, and the Pew Rents raised proportionately. Even so, the minister frequently had to wait for his money until the cash was on hand!

(b) Some people shelved their responsibilities for maintaining the church. It is sad to read such entries as "1821, lost in bad halfpennies 1s. 1d."; "1827, lost in bad halfpennies 5s. 6d."; "1828, lost in bad halfpennies and errors in counting £1. 7s. 6 1/2d." Today these sums seem insignificant but in the 1820s they represented a considerable proportion of the church's income.

(c) In spite of the poverty of its members the Church managed to take care of "*the widows and the poor*". The amounts paid out to each individual was, by today's standards, pathetically small; money was scarce and there were many people needing care and financial help. It is gratifying to note that the congregation designated special days for collecting funds for the poor. On one occasion the offering, amounting to the magnificent sum of £32 1s. 5d, was given "*for the purchase of clothing for the poor.*" The Christmas Day collection of 8s. 2d. that same year was devoted "*to the poor in the congregation.*"

(d) The weather seems to have had a profound effect on church attendances, especially for those who had to travel long distances on foot over rough earthen tracks and across fields. The absence of such people when the weather was bad is understandable. However, not all church members lived at a distance and judging by remarks in the account books, only a relatively small number of those who lived close by were brave enough to venture out when the weather was inclement!

(e) Due to the lack of alternative accommodation church services had to be suspended when extensive repairs were being carried out. The church building needed frequent and extensive shoring up so there were many interruptions in the regular services of worship.

(f) The communion season lasted for a full week and began with *Preparation Sunday* observed on the Sunday preceding Communion Sunday. The following Wednesday was the *Fast Day*.* On this day new members (that is new communicants and those transferring from other congregations) were accepted into the membership of the church by the Kirk Session and cases of church discipline were dealt with. Also pew rents were received, and tokens of admission to the Communion service were issued to those who were entitled to receive them. These tokens were collected at the church door as the people entered for the Communion Service on Communion Sunday. The *Pre-communion service* was held on the Saturday. Sunday was *Communion Sunday* when all who were full members of the Church and eligible to be present partook of the Sacrament. This service could occupy most of the day depending on the number who were partaking. The congregation met again the next day, Monday, for a *Service of Thanksgiving*.

Communion was looked upon as a very important and special season in the Church's calendar and people made an extra special effort to be present and participate in as many of the services as possible.

Millrow congregation observed Communion at least twice a year, in May and again in November. A neighbouring minister, often accompanied by members of his congregation, attended to assist the minister at the tables. Participants sat at tables set in the aisles and covered with white linen table cloths. Two ministers took part, one presided over the tables in one aisle and the other at the tables in the other aisle. After the elements were consecrated, the minister passed them to the elders for distribution to the people. Several relays of tables (each relay being referred to as "a table") "were usually needed to ensure that all who came were served.

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*THE FAST DAY WAS OBSERVED DURING THE WEEK. CHURCH MEMBERS ABANDONED THEIR WORK FOR THE DAY AND ATTENDED CHURCH FOR A SPECIAL SERVICE. WHILE ABSTINENCE FROM FOOD WAS NOT REQUIRED, SOME DID OBSERVE A PARTIAL FAST AS PART OF THEIR RELIGIOUS DUTY.

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Chapter Sixteen

The New Church.

Preparations for building the new Church got under way quickly. The Foundation Stone was laid on June 9th 1834 by George J Clark, Esq, The Steeple, Antrim and building work was completed in good time for the Opening Ceremony on June 9th 1837, performed by the Rev A Nesbitt of Glasgow. The architect responsible for designing the building was Mr John Miller¹¹⁶, the contractor Mr Molyneaux, and the builder Mr Edmund Dickson. The new Church, towering as it did above the nearby low, thatched houses, was quite conspicuous from the street and it is probable that for this reason it was referred to locally as "*The Presbytery's Cathedral In Antrim*".

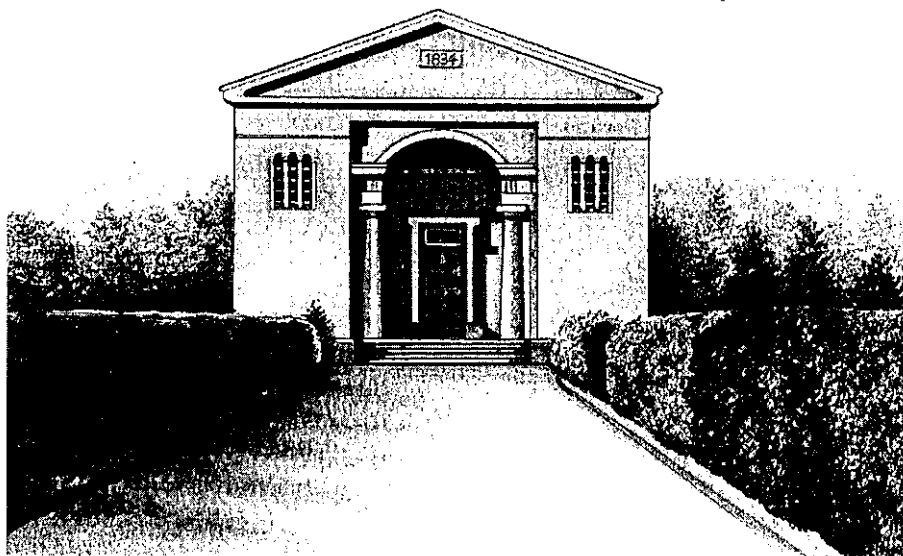
The new Church, situated about 90 yards from the main Antrim - Belfast Road, retained the basic 'barn' design, i.e., a rectangular building with a central pulpit on the south gable and the entrance doors at the north end. Its measurements were¹¹⁷, 78 feet long, 58 feet wide, with walls 29 feet high, and 3 feet thick. From the entrance gates the church, with its two sturdy Doric columns standing on a raised portico and supporting a simple yet attractive frieze on top, still presents an imposing frontage. Six wide stone steps lead up to the portico. Access to the church for the elderly and the disabled is facilitated by well placed hand-rails. The entrance doors to the ground floor are situated one at either end of the portico, and a central doorway leads to the stairways to the galleries. Originally, there were 74 pews on the ground floor and 58 in the gallery, providing seating accommodation for an estimated 1,000 persons. Various reconstruction needs over the years have involved the removal of a number of pews and reduced the present seating capacity to around 900.

The original pulpit occupied most of the centre of the south gable. It was an attractive structure with ornate, curved wrought-iron stairways, one on either side, leading from the floor of the church to the dais. The minister used these stairways on special occasions only, his usual pulpit entrance being by way of a concealed spiral stairway which led from the school-room in the basement to a door at the back of the pulpit. This stairway was set into the gable wall and had a door at its upper end, hidden by a curtain separating it from the pulpit. Regrettably, the whole pulpit complex, including the concealed stairway, was removed when the Pipe Organ was installed in 1932.

The total cost of the new Church was £3,000. Many methods were used to raise this sum including (1) Special collections taken "*at all sermons preached on its being opened.*" These 'sermons' raised £120. The special preacher at one of them was the famous Dr Henry Cooke. (2) Admission tickets for the opening were sold at one shilling each, (3) Pews (referred to as '*sittings*') were let. (4) Contributions were solicited from members of the church and from friends in other congregations. (5) The Synod of Ulster granted Mr Magill permission to appeal to Churches in Scotland for financial help.

The income from all these sources, augmented by £300 received from the sale of the old Church, was insufficient to meet the full cost of the new church and two years after it was opened the accounts still showed a deficit in excess of £1,700¹¹⁸.

Heavy ornate entrance gates were erected in December 1838. They were made of "wrought hammered iron" by a workman known as "the mechanic of the north." A superstructure was added in 1962. In 1980 this superstructure was raised to give 'high-sided' vehicles access to the property. Over the years rust corroded the gates very badly making them unsafe. In 1994 they were taken down and thoroughly repaired. While this work was being done the opportunity was taken to make "pedestrian side-gates," one on either side of the main gate, to provide safe access to new footpaths which had been constructed along either side of the avenue.



*The present Church.
Built 1834 - 1837.*

Education

Because of his keen interest in education it is not surprising that Mr Magill planned to start a school in the new church building. The basement underneath the southern or pulpit end of the church provided sufficient space for a classroom. It was quite separate from the rest of the church and had a door and two windows. Across what is the present Car Park was a small shed which when divided into three provided "dry" toilets and a store for turf. The school-room at that time was heated by an open turf fire set in a large iron grate. As part payment for their children's education those parents who could afford to do so provided turf for heating free of charge.

It had been Mr Magill's idea that the school should provide education for those children in the congregation whose parents could not afford to send them to one of the schools in the town. Although the Millrow school was usually crowded, children

whose parents were not members of Millrow congregation were admitted if there were vacancies. Sadly, Mr Magill died two years after the school began and did not live to see it reach its full potential.

Like other schools in the town, Millrow school was a National School under the control of The National Board of Education. About 30 years ago when workmen were re-plastering the outside of the church they uncovered a stone set above the door of the school-room on which were chiselled the words, **Antrim National School**¹¹⁹. Not realising the significance of the find the stone was covered over inadvertently when the wall was re-plastered.

The National Board of Education¹²⁰ gave grants towards the cost of school furniture, teacher's salaries, maintenance, etc. Textbooks and other requisites were obtained at subsidised rates from The Kildare Place Society in Dublin. In special cases poor children received their books free of charge. Pupils wrote with chalks on slates which also were provided at subsidised rates. To minimise costs textbooks were passed on from pupil to pupil; often children had to share their textbooks. Outstanding expenses were met by levying a charge on the parents, by gifts from outside sources, or by requesting the Church for funds. The room in which the school began is now incorporated into the Church complex and named *The Primary Room* in recognition of its association with education.

Rev Charles Morrison MA PhD (1840-1859).

Rev Charles Morrison was the fifth minister in Millrow. He was ordained in Antrim by the Presbytery of Connor on 24th March 1840. Like Mr Magill, he was a scholarly man and continued the work of the Church with the same care and attention as his predecessor. Large numbers attended public worship and at the Communion Seasons as many as 500 participated.

A few months after Mr Morrison's Ordination The Synod of Ulster united with the Ulster Secession Synod to form **The General Assembly Of The Presbyterian Church In Ireland**. This Union took place on July 10th 1840 and unleashed within the Church a fresh evangelistic zeal which was evidenced by its desire to become involved in missionary outreach both at home and overseas. Two days after The Union, on July 12th 1840, The General Assembly commissioned the Revs James Glasgow and Alexander Kerr as the Church's first missionaries to Gujarat, India. The ladies of Millrow rose to the occasion and sent £2. 0s. 8d. to, *"the committee of ladies in Belfast, to be presented as a mark of respect to the wives of the two missionaries who are about to sail for India."*¹²¹

The first annual collection for Foreign Missions, was taken up in 1841 and amounted to £12. 0s. 7d, a generous sum in those difficult days. The congregation did not forget other spheres of work as the following figures for the same year show :-

The Jewish Mission	£ 8. 1s. 4d.
For "Our portion of the money raised by The General Assembly for the defence of our privileges as to the validity of marriages celebrated by our ministers."	£ 5. 0s. 0d.
The Irish Home Mission	£ 5. 17s. 11d.
The Free Church of Scotland	£25. 5s. 0d.

The Foreign Mission collection in 1843 came to £14. 3s. 4d. which did not include a separate special collection for "*the building of missionary premises in India.*" Even in those days Millrow's support for Missions was generous.

The potato famine of 1846 brought terrible hardships to many. Millrow congregation observed Tuesday October 6th 1846 as:- "*a day set apart for prayer and humiliation.*" A special offering was taken up which amounted to 14s. 1d. On March 24th 1847 a general Fast was observed. The offering on that day amounted to £4. 15s. 5d., and this, together with the offering of March 17th, was given "*to aid the poor of the congregation.*" Eight months later a special service was held and 'A Thank Offering' taken up, amounting to £11. 15s. 2d., was given to the work of The Home Mission.

Mr Morrison was anxious to clear off the heavy debt which was hanging over the congregation. In 1841, the year after he had settled in Millrow, he made the following statement from the pulpit reminding the congregation of their financial position:- "*when I undertook the pastoral charge of this congregation in January 1840, I found it involved a debt of £1,700. During the last few months by a most extraordinary effort, a sum of nearly £400 was raised within the congregation itself. A debt of £1,300 still lies against us and almost threatens our existence as a congregation.*"

Strenuous efforts were made to raise this amount and by March 1854 the debt had been reduced to £295. One 'cost-saving' idea adopted was the reduction of the Insurance Coverage on the Church from £1,000 to £500¹²³. A few years later this misguided step was to cost the Church dearly!

During the next five years three unsettling incidents occurred within the congregation. The first concerned payments made to the late minister, Rev Robert Magill. However, this difficulty was resolved by The Kirk Session quickly. The second was a dispute between the congregational committee and the Treasurer concerning the keeping of accounts. The third related to rumours besmirching the conduct and character of Mr Morrison which were circulating within the congregation. For different reasons these last two difficulties had to be passed to the Presbytery for their consideration and action.

After a thorough examination The Presbytery found in favour of the minister and the congregation in both cases. Some sixty members of the congregation were so upset by these findings that they petitioned The Presbytery for permission to be erected into a new and separate congregation. Permission was granted and the new congregation, known as ***Second Antrim Presbyterian Church***, was formed. It met for worship for the first time on the 18th August 1850 in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Antrim, the preacher being the Rev William Wallace of Donegore. A short time later Second Antrim requested The Presbytery to be transferred from The Presbytery of Templepatrick to the care of The Presbytery of Ballymena. It remained within the Ballymena Presbytery until January 1962 when, in response to a request from the General Assembly that "The Templepatrick Presbytery be enlarged", Second Antrim (now known as ***High Street, Antrim***) and five other congregations were transferred to the Templepatrick Presbytery.

The Session Minutes show that Mr Morrison was a strict observer of Church Discipline. Some of the matters on which he and the session took a firm stand were:-

**THE NEW
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH,**

Mill-Row, Antrim,

WILL BE OPENED,

On SABBATH, the 18th day of June,

BY THE

REV. ARCHD. NESBIT, A.M.,

Moderator of the Presbytery of Glasgow :

WHEN A

COLLECTION

Will be taken up to liquidate the debt incurred in erecting the House.

Public Worship to commence at TWELVE o'clock.

THERE WILL, ALSO, BE

AN EVENING SERVICE, AT FIVE O'CLOCK.

Tickets of Admittance to either Service (1s each) may be had at Mr. M'COMB'S, High-Street ; Mr. JAMES REID'S, Bridge-Street, *Bel-fast* ; at Mr. WHITE'S, *Ballymena* ; Mr. JOHN BROWN'S, *Randalstown* ; and from the following Members of Committee, in *Antrim* :—

Messrs. SAMUEL SKELTON,
JOHN HARBISON,
JOHN TAGGART,
WILLIAM CRAWFORD,
JOHN VINT,
WILLIAM JOHNSTON,
ALEXANDER BRUCE, M.D.

May 22, 1837

*Copy of Poster advertising the
Opening of the new Millrow Church, 18th June, 1837.*

THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION IN ANTRIM, IRELAND, now under the pastoral charge of the REV. ROBERT MACGILL, in connexion with the Synod of Ulster, was among the first established in the kingdom, under the jurisdiction, and by the authority, of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. All its people were from Scotland, and it remained a flourishing Congregation till 1726, when its Minister departed from the Standard Principles of the Church of Scotland, and the majority of the people left his ministry, adhered to the General Synod of Ulster, and erected a House of Worship in strict accordance with the Faith of their Fathers. From the great increase of the numbers of the Congregation, a New House, fitted to contain 2000 worshippers, is in progress of building, to which a School-Room is attached where 800 children can be taught the knowledge of the Sacred Word, and which will be prepared for their reception as soon as the House is opened.

Several Scottish families, now members of the Congregation, have subscribed liberally for the House, and the Congregation at large have contributed to the utmost extent of their means. A debt, amounting to £600, has been incurred; and the Presbyterian Congregation of Antrim respectfully appeal to their Brethren in Scotland to aid them, in completing a work, the direct object of which is to advance the Presbyterian Cause and extend the Redeemer's Kingdom.

" We beg leave to state, that we are well acquainted with the REV. ROBERT MACGILL, and have great pleasure in bearing our testimony to the high respectability of his character, and we earnestly recommend the object of his Mission to the kind attention of the Religious Community.

STEVENSON MACGILL, D. D.

NORMAN M'LEOD, D. D. Minister, St. Columba.

WILLIAM BLACK, D. D. Minister, Barony.

Glasgow, 6th August, 1836.

*Document sent to various congregations appealing for funds
for the new Millrow Church.*

Baptisms:

- (1) All infants should be baptised in the Church at an early age, even as young as one week! Parents were expected to give prior notice to the Session of an impending Baptism and obtain Session's approval. If objections were raised the Baptism was deferred until the Session could be assured that all was in order.
- (2) If the child was ill and unfit to be brought to the church for Baptism a medical certificate to this effect was required. The child was then baptised in the home in the presence of the district elder.
- (3) Before a Baptism careful enquiries were made regarding the parents' church membership, church attendance, givings to the church, doctrinal beliefs and attention to their Christian duties in the home, especially with regard to the conduct of Family Worship. Only when the Session was satisfied on all points were the parents given a token of admission to Baptism signifying that the baptism could proceed.

Communion:

- (1) Those guilty of serious misdemeanours (e.g. adultery) and those who had "*strayed*" were required to meet the Session, confess their guilt, express sorrow for their actions and seek forgiveness and restoration to the Ordinances of the Church. They were then rebuked, admonished by the minister and required to give an undertaking that they would improve their ways. Only when the Session was satisfied on all counts were the individuals "*restored with prayer to church privileges*".
- (2) Those who intended to come to Communion for the very first time were required to attend a series of from four to six Preparation classes conducted by the minister. They then met with the Session who examined them at some length on their knowledge of The Catechisms and The Scriptures, particularly those sections relating to The Lord's Supper. If the Session members were satisfied with their answers the candidates were accepted into the membership of the Church. Before receiving their Communion tokens* the minister gave them some further words of exhortation which were followed by a prayer of blessing.
- (3) Transfer certificates, confirming the standing of new-comers within their former congregations, were carefully scrutinised by the Session before the applicants' names were recorded on the Communion Roll. The same scrutiny for accuracy was applied to those leaving the congregation to join another fellowship and needing a '*Disjunction Certificate*'.
- (4) The elders who distributed '*The Tokens*'¹²⁴ at the Pre-Communion Service were under strict instruction to keep a careful watch when giving out the tokens that no one received a token who was not eligible to participate.

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*"TOKENS WERE FORMERLY METAL DISCS, USUALLY MADE OF LEAD, AND HAVING A DISTINCTIVE DESIGN IDENTIFYING THE ISSUING CONGREGATION. TODAY, THEY HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY SUITABLY PRINTED CARDS. IT IS UNCERTAIN WHEN TOKENS WERE FIRST USED, BUT IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE SECRET SYMBOLS USED IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE TIME OF NERO TO ENSURE THAT ONLY THE "TRUE" COULD GAIN ACCESS TO THE LORD'S TABLE AND WERE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO, AFTER EXAMINATION, WERE CONSIDERED WORTHY TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AT 'THE TABLE'."

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In 1908 the Church received as memorial gifts, two sets of beautiful silver Communion vessels, each set consisting of a large tankard, two goblets and three plates. A member of Session, Dr William John Taggart*, left £100 in his Will for their purchase. The inscription on each tankard reads:- *"To the Glory of God. Presented to First Antrim Presbyterian Church by the late WJ Taggart BA MB 1908."*

Individual Communion Cups, Trays, Fillers and Pew Clips were purchased in 1935 by congregational subscriptions which amounted to £71. 4s. 6d. These articles were dedicated on 22nd May 1935 by The Very Rev Dr William Corkey BA, Windsor Presbyterian Church, Belfast.

Other Matters.

- (1) Elders who were neglecting to keep up *'...the stated worship of God'* both in their own homes (Family Worship) and in their Elder's District, were visited by Mr Morrison and urged by him, *"not to neglect such an important duty."*
- (2) Those who traded on Sundays were rebuked.
- (3) A weekly Prayer Meeting, which the Elders were urged to attend, was introduced.
- (4) From time to time, Session discussed "the best means to effect a revival of religion within the congregation."
- (5) Occasionally, the Session was asked to arbitrate in the case of quarrels within the congregation. One such incident is recorded in 1844, between S B, who had been wounded by a knife, and the families of R S, J H, and a Mr McV, all of whom resided at Islandbawn. After investigation by the Session the matter was settled amicably, the injured party receiving 10s. 0d from his attackers. All were admonished *"at great length and with great earnestness by Mr Morrison, on account of the most unchristian conduct and language of all parties."* He ended by requesting them all to join together in singing Psalm 101 followed by a *"most solemn and fervent prayer by Mr Morrison, and the Benediction."*¹²⁵

The church building, being new, did not need much by way of maintenance or repairs. The only alteration made to it in Mr Morrison's time was the installation of gas lighting in 1855/56 to replace the "mould" wax candles which had, up until then, been its only form of artificial lighting.

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*DR TAGGART, A NATIVE OF KELLS, WAS AN ORDAINED MINISTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS HE HAD BEEN *"THE MISSIONARY IN CHARGE"* OF A CHURCH IN THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES, BUT HEALTH REASONS COMPELLED HIM TO RETURN TO IRELAND. ON HIS RETURN HE STUDIED MEDICINE AND QUALIFIED AS A DOCTOR. AS WELL AS SERVING ON THE SESSION OF FIRST ANTRIM HE WAS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE AND WAS ITS SECRETARY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

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Chapter Seventeen

The 1859 Revival.

The Revival began in the Connor district of Ballymena in the summer of 1859. Its influence spread widely and rapidly throughout the Province, but sadly there is little on record concerning its influence on the Presbyterian community in the Antrim area. Two factors may have had some bearing on this:-

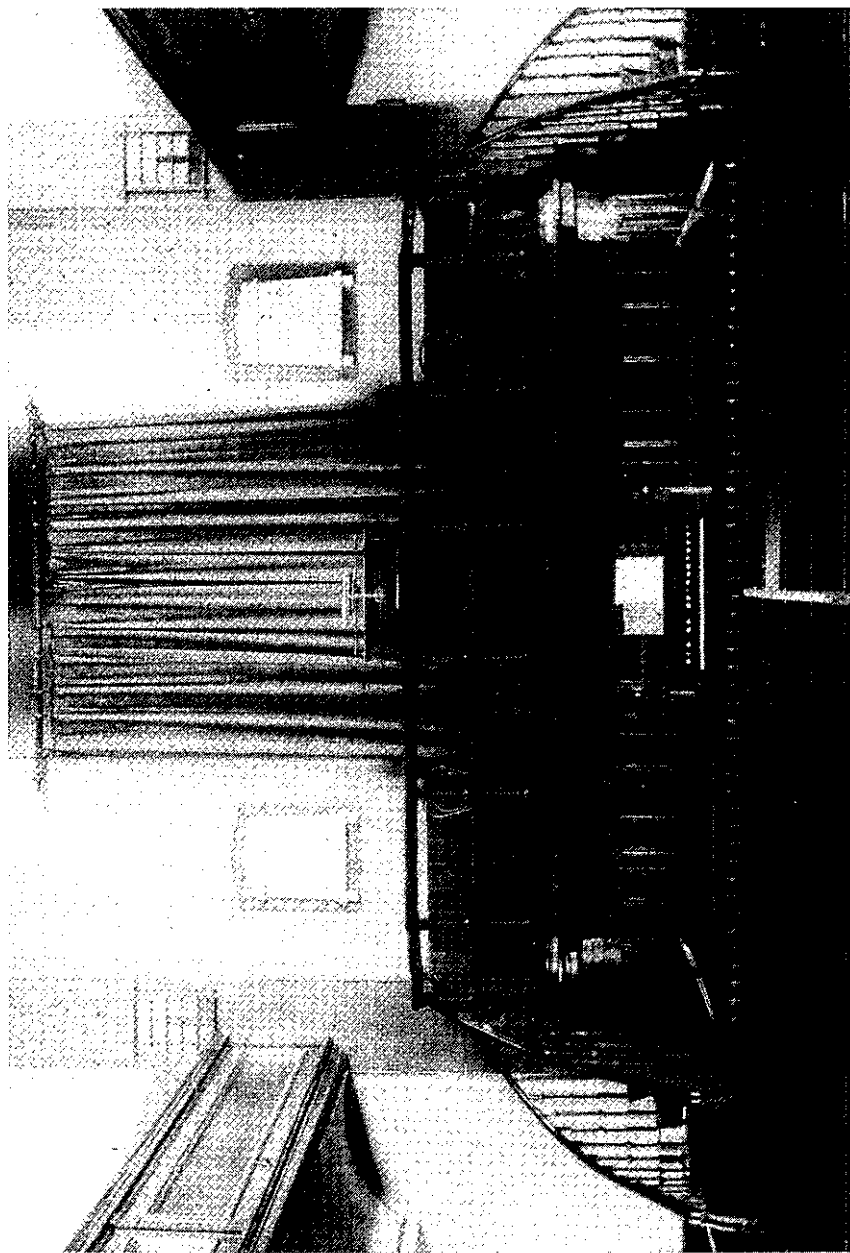
- (1) Millrow was about to lose its minister. Mr Morrison had accepted the Principalship of Hackney Theological College in London and resigned the pastorate of Millrow Church on 6th September 1859. By 1859 the congregation of Second Antrim had been in existence for nine years and for eight of those years the Rev J H Orr BA, had been its first minister.
- (2) The rift which took place within the Millrow congregation in 1850 and resulted in the formation of the new congregation of Second Antrim had left feelings of hurt and anger still smouldering in both churches. It took several years before cordial relationships were re-established.

The Revival did have some impact on Millrow. A decade later Dr West could write¹²⁶:- *"not a few in the congregation received spiritual blessing. It was a time of refreshing for many. Some have told me that the preaching was more practical, direct and searching. The truths which they had often heard before came home with new force under the power of the Holy Spirit poured out from on high. And, notwithstanding the extravagances, and the mistaking of bodily manifestations for spiritual renewal, and, though the movement was misunderstood and misrepresented by those who should have known better, yet fruit remains to this day to the praise of God's grace."*

Out of the 1859 Revival *The Antrim United Week of Prayer* was started. It changed its name later to *The Week of Witness* and recently it has become known as *The Week of Renewal*. This annual event is still observed by the Protestant Churches in Antrim during the first week of January.



"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." - Col. 4 v 2.



Interior of Church before the Installation of the Adams Memorial Organ.

Chapter Eighteen

Church Praise and The Psalms.

The Psalms in the metrical form have held a long and cherished place in Presbyterian worship. The versified form, when set to simple tunes, made them easy to sing, to memorise and to teach to those unable to read for themselves. As mentioned earlier, the Rev John Ridge, the Puritan minister who was the Vicar of Antrim Parish Church from 1619 until 1636, used an order of service which was based on *The Order of Service of The Presbyterian Church in England* at that time. It included Psalms and Paraphrases.

The first metrical version of the Book of Psalms was prepared in Scotland in 1564, and would have been familiar to the early Scottish ministers who came across to Ireland in the early seventeenth century. A revised version of this Psalter was prepared in Edinburgh in 1660 and is the one still in use in the Church of Scotland today. The Irish Presbyterian Church considered this version unsatisfactory and in 1880 undertook a further revision. According to The Preface to this Psalter the revision was considered necessary "*to remove ...portions where there are erroneous errors of syntax, faulty rhymes, obsolete words or want of correspondence between the rhythm of sense and the rhythm of sound.*"¹²⁷ The resulting new Psalter is the one currently used in the Irish Presbyterian Church. One new feature is the inclusion of "*second versions*" for twenty-seven of the Psalms.

The Antrim congregation sat for Praise and stood for Prayer. There is no record of when this practice was reversed and the congregation stood for Praise and sat for Prayer. The Praise was led by "*a Precentor*". His function was to "*pitch the tune and raise the singing,*" and for this he used either a pitch-pipe or a tuning fork. He sang the first line of the Psalm, (or portion of the Psalm, if such had been chosen). The congregation then joined in singing the same line over again with the Precentor. In the same way, the rest of the Psalm was sung, line by line first by the Precentor alone and then by Precentor and people repeating the line together,—a practice known as "*lining the psalm.*" Only a limited number of Psalms, probably not more than twenty or twenty-five, were ever used in Church. These were sung to a lesser number of tunes, possibly not more than ten or twelve.

The Precentor had a special platform placed in front of, but at a lower level than, the pulpit. As well as starting the Praise, the Precentor sometimes explained the Psalm before it was sung. The Millrow Precentors conducted "singing classes" in the Bruce Hall for the benefit of those members of the Church and outsiders who were interested in singing.

There is no record of when a choir was introduced but when the present church was built between 1834 and 1837 a "*choir box*" at the front of the church was constructed. This would suggest that a choir was either in existence at that time or that one was anticipated sometime in the future. The Office of Precentor in First Antrim

became redundant when the first organ was installed in 1904; his function was then taken over by the organ and the choir.

The Precentor was appointed by, and responsible to, the Kirk Session. He received a salary which ranged from £6 to £10 per annum. In November 1842 the minutes of the session record that the Precentor, Mr Robert Craig, resigned, "*in consequence of his voice being so impaired as to render him unable to officiate any longer.*" Mr Craig had been Precentor for about twenty years, and "*having conducted himself during that time to the satisfaction of the congregation, it was decided that he be paid £2 per year so long as he remains with the Millrow congregation.*"¹²⁸ His successor was appointed at a salary of £10 per annum.

Two issues followed in the wake of the 1859 Revival, neither of which was peculiar to First Antrim. The first was the introduction of instrumental music into church services. This issue proved to be both controversial and prolonged. The subject came up for debate in The General Assembly every year for twenty-three years. Eventually, in 1891, The Assembly without giving any definitive guidance, decided "*to pass from the matter*". It has never been raised in The Assembly since.

In 1904, Mrs A G Wilson, a member of the congregation, presented the congregation with its first organ¹²⁹. The congregation received the gift with mixed feelings. The first time the instrument was used in the church an irate member gave vent to his opinion by banging on the pew each time the organ was played. On one occasion when his actions did not produce the desired distraction he grabbed the offering plate from the hand of a steward and scattered the contents along the aisle! One other member announced his objections privately, adding that he would carry the organ outside if someone would volunteer to help him!¹³⁰ Feelings within the congregation subsided gradually and after a short time the organ became "*an accepted fact.*"

The first organist was Mrs Simpson (nee McMaster) of Riverside. She received a salary of £15 per annum¹³¹. A larger manually operated instrument was presented to the church in 1923 by a member of session, Mr John McAdam, when he was moving residence to Whitehead. This organ remained in use until 1931 when it was replaced by the present Adam's memorial organ.

The second organist was Mr James Simpson from Coleraine. He was appointed on 16th September 1923 and given responsibility for "*leading the praise at all Sabbath and midweek services and having a choir practice once a week.*"¹³² Mr Simpson resigned six months later and was succeeded on April 13th 1924 by Mr Samuel Wellington Thompson, ALCM at a salary of £45 per year. After serving for 45 years Mr Thompson retired on 2nd September 1969. His successor, and the present organist, Mrs Elizabeth McDowell, ALCM, took up duty on October 10th 1969. She has proved a worthy successor to Mr Thompson, maintaining the same high standards of musical competence, the same sense of duty and dependability and displaying the same willing and co-operative spirit which he brought to the Office.

Singing Hymns had become popular following the 1859 Revival, but the general opinion was that they were unsuitable for use in churches. Problems in First Antrim arose in 1924 when the Rev M Majury sought the permission of the Kirk Session to introduce "*one hymn*" into the morning service¹³³. Only one member of the Session

disapproved. This triggered off the second contentious issue. Gradually Hymns found their way into the Church worship. However, for a number of years it is said that a few members of the congregation continued to register their disapproval by such tactics as refusing to join in singing Hymns, not opening their Hymnals when a Hymn was announced or remaining seated when Hymns were being sung. Others, it is said, stood with their hands in their pockets or with arms folded and a few even left the service while the singing of a Hymn was in progress¹³⁴. The boycott lasted for only a short time and the singing of Hymns gradually became accepted as part of church worship.

In 1932 Dr John James Adams presented the church with a memorial organ in memory of his father, Mr Thomas Hugh Adams¹³⁵. As well as presenting the organ he undertook to bear all the expenses involved in its installation, including making good whatever damage was done to the fabric of the church by the workmen while the organ was being installed. The new organ was dedicated on December 30th 1932 by The Very Rev Dr J J Macauley BA (Rathgar, Dublin), and inaugurated on January 1st 1933 by The Rev Professor James Haire DD, Assembly's College, Belfast, a nephew-in-law of Mr Adams.



No major work was done on the Adam's organ from the time of its installation in 1932 until 1985. A complete and thorough overhaul, including modernisation of the instrument, was then undertaken, at a cost of £16,732.50 (including tax). To mark the completion of the work a Service of Praise was held in the church on Sunday evening, April 27th 1986. In the unavoidable absence of the Rev John Dixon, the assistant minister the Rev Ian McClean BA BD, led the worship and preached the sermon. The guest organist was Mr Adrian Anderson, organist in Ballysillan Presbyterian Church, Portrush, and the soloist Mr William Loughlan, Londonderry. Since then the organ's enhanced performance has justified fully the expense incurred in its restoration.

In recent years modern hymns set to modern tunes have been introduced gradually into the church services. A small Praise Band has added considerably to the musical accompaniment of these Hymns.

Chapter Nineteen

Rev George Magill MA DD (1859-1867) and The Fire Damage.

Millrow's sixth minister was the Rev George Magill, nephew of the former minister, the Rev Robert Magill. Like his uncle, he too was born in Broughshane. He was ordained in Lylehill on 30th May 1856, but three years later moved to Antrim and was installed in Millrow on 20th December 1859. The following year, (1860), the congregation changed its name from "Millrow Presbyterian Church" to "First Antrim Presbyterian Church".

Disaster struck the church on 10th January 1862, three years after Mr Magill's installation. The lovely new building was gutted by a fire which originated in the basement of the church. At the end of school on a Friday afternoon the fire in the classroom was not damped down completely and during the night some smouldering embers, fanned by a strong wind, were set alight. The fire spread rapidly and engulfed the school-room, the choir area above, and the whole pulpit end of the church. Before the flames could be brought under control considerable scorch damage had been done to the interior of the church¹³⁶. While the church was out of action services were held in the Court House. On the Sunday following the fire Mr Magill used as his text, "*Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised thee is burned with fire and all our pleasant things are laid desolate. Isaiah 14:11.*" The fire was a severe blow to the congregation which was still struggling to clear off a considerable debt, part of which dated from the building of the church twenty-five years earlier. Because the building was grossly under-insured as a result of the 'money-saving' exercise mentioned earlier the situation was aggravated even further.

From a financial point of view the situation was not a happy one. Church membership was falling due to a lack of employment in the area and more and more 'able-bodied' wage earners were emigrating to find work. With their main 'breadwinner' gone many families were left to survive on a greater restricted income, and the church finances were suffering accordingly. The situation was aggravated further by the formation of the new congregations of 2nd Antrim, Crumlin and Muckamore.

Restoration work got underway quickly and the church was repaired and ready for use before the end of the year. The cost of the repairs, alterations and redecoration was £2,000. When added to the other unpaid debts the church now needed to raise a total of £2,300.* At the re-opening service in November 1862, Mrs Malone, whose husband was a member of Session and also Sunday School Superintendent, presented the church with a Pulpit Bible and Psalter which had the following inscription on the fly-leaf:¹³⁷ - "*this Bible and Psalm Book was presented to the congregation of First*

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*IT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO RECALL THAT THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING COST £3,000 WHEN IT WAS ERECTED IN 1834-1837, ONLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY PREVIOUSLY.

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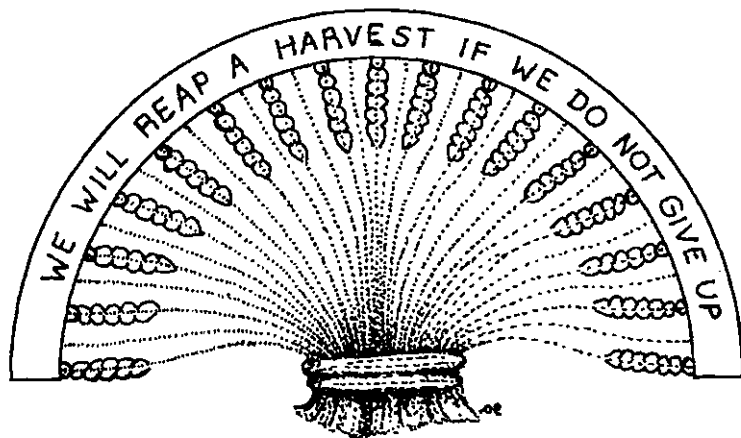
Antrim Presbyterian Church, Antrim by Mrs Malone, Antrim, on the occasion of the opening of the church, the former having been destroyed by fire on the night of 10th January 1862. The books were purchased with a donation of £5, handed to Mrs Malone by a gentleman on her restoring to him a sum of £50 which he had lost in Belfast."

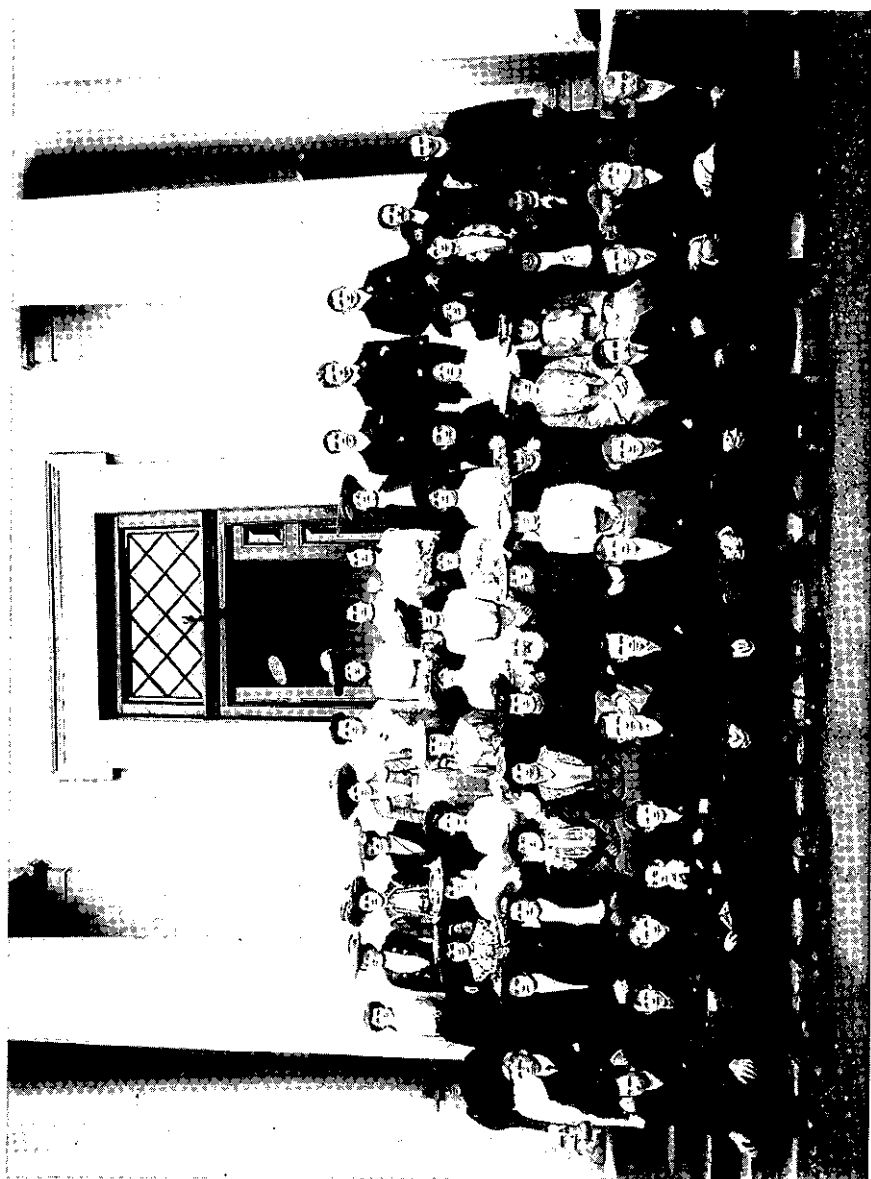
While repairs were going on the congregation made use of the opportunity to improve its facilities. In the original plans, the centre portion of the gallery sloped upwards and backwards to the north gable wall. By closing off the rear half of this central gallery a useful extra room, suitable for small group meetings, was made. A stairway leading up to it and a doorway were already in place. Heating was provided by an open fireplace, and natural light by a window which looked into the church and by two skylights. During weekdays this new room was used as an extra classroom for the primary school and later by the Bruce School. Its connection with education has been retained in its name, **"The Classroom."**¹³⁸

Mr Magill is remembered for his considerable agility and strength. When visiting members of the congregation he often took short cuts through the fields, leaping the fences and hedges as he came to them.

Like his uncle, he had a great interest in education and used every opportunity to promote The National Education System through the press, public addresses and discussions, as well as in debates in the General Assembly.

After a ministry of seven years Mr Magill accepted a call to Queen Street, Cork and resigned from First Antrim on 1st May 1867. While he resided in Antrim he occupied the Magill house in Castle Street where his uncle and his grand-father had lived.





"Reverend Thomas West's Bible Class - 1904."

Chapter Twenty

The Very Rev Thomas West BA DD (1867-1919).

Thomas West, son of Rev John West (minister of Second Newtownhamilton) was born on June 13th 1843. He had an outstanding academic record at Queen's College, Cork where he won many awards. He graduated from the former Queen's University of Ireland with a BA Honours degree in Logic, Metaphysics, History and English Literature. While in Cork he came under the influence of Dr William Magill who was considered to be one of the great evangelical preachers of his time and one noted for his ability to stimulate his students both spiritually and mentally.

On completing his theological studies at The Assembly's College, Belfast Mr West was licensed in May 1867. The following August he preached for the vacancy in Antrim, received the Call, accepted it and was ordained on 20th November 1867. He remained the minister of First Antrim until his death 52 years later.

Mr West married Miss Helen Buick, daughter of the Rev Dr Fredrick Buick of Ahoghill. She died on 13th April 1885, 13 years after their wedding. They had a family of four sons and three daughters. Three of their sons entered the medical profession, the oldest giving distinguished service in the Army during the 1914-1918 war rising to the rank of Major General. Their oldest daughter, Miss Matilda Buick West (who is still remembered by some senior members of the congregation), remained at home to look after her father. Their second daughter, Annie, married Mr Ezekiel Vance. He died on active service in France during The First World War. Their only child, the late Mr Patrick Vance, moved to England, married and settled there. He visited First Antrim on two occasions in recent years, the last time in 1986.

Dr West had a very genial disposition and a kindly sense of humour. He has been described as "*even tempered, tactful, kindly and sympathetic.*"¹³⁹ It is said that he never lost his temper no matter how much he was provoked. He was a well informed man, a lover of books and kept a well stocked library. Interested in poetry he wrote a large number of poems, some of which were published. Dr West was totally dedicated to everything he did, especially to the preparation of his sermons. These were always carefully planned and thoroughly prepared to ensure that the message was clear and unambiguous. Many of the congregation testified to the help and inspiration they received from his preaching and visitors from outside the congregation spoke of his clear exposition of 'The Word'. Some of his sermons were published in pamphlet form.

When he first came to Antrim Mr West lodged in Church Street, but after his marriage he and his wife took up residence at The Cedars, Riverside. In 1877 the congregation purchased a Manse in Riverside where the family lived until Dr West's death in 1920. The cost of the Manse, including necessary renovations and the purchase of an adjacent field, was around £1,000. In one week the congregation raised £600. A legacy of £50, which the testator had specifically 'ear-marked' for a Manse Fund, helped to boost the Fund and the remainder was raised by "Special Sermons" delivered by such

distinguished ministers as the Rev Dr William Magill of Cork, the Rev Dr Graham of Bonn, USA, and the Rev Dr JS McIntosh of May St, Belfast.

The early 1860s were years of poverty and distress for the people of Ireland. Like Irish people elsewhere, many First Antrim people were surviving on a very frugal diet. The Church finances suffered so severely that the Session and Committee were forced to take action. They sent the following stern letter to each defaulter:¹⁴⁰ *"At a special meeting of the congregational committee held on 13th July 1863, it was agreed that all arrears of Seat Rent, due at last May, should be paid immediately, and if not paid within a month from this date, the name of all such parties to be returned to the above committee to be dealt with as they may think proper, and I am directed by said committee to call on you for the sum of £....., being the amount of your Stipend due at that date. It is further requested that in future all Seat Rents must be paid within three months after becoming due in order that the committee may be able to meet the financial demands of the congregation without the difficulty they have had to contend with.*

Hoping this application will be favoured with your kind attention.

J. Clarke."

In his early years in Antrim, Mr West was greatly concerned about the debt on the Church. Besides £275 owing to the estate of the late Dr Bruce for money which Dr Bruce had advanced to meet urgent payments, there were other debts, some dating back to the building of the Church in 1834, to the fire damage of 1862 and to the more recent installation of gas lighting.

The Potato Famine of 1845/46 led to large scale emigration. Reports of better employment opportunities and better pay and working conditions overseas were attracting workers and robbing their families of their wage earners. The result was that many families were left in serious financial difficulty. To clear the debt on the Church, Mr Thomas H Adams¹²⁸, Ashville, appealed to the members of the congregation to give what they could. He suggested that members should meet him in the Classroom on Thursday evenings when he personally would receive, acknowledge and record for publication, subscriptions ranging from 6d. to £20! In this way Mr Adams received £173 in one year. He encouraged the people with the slogan, *"a strong pull, a long pull, and a pull together, and the debt will be cleared."* The remainder of the debt was cleared by a 'Special Sermon' preached by the Rev Josias L Porter*, son-in-law of the Rev Dr Henry Cooke.

In spite of set backs, Mr West had reason to be proud of the way the congregation continued to progress. Looking back he could write in 1874¹⁴¹ *"there was a time of spiritual refreshing surpassing anything during my ministry. There was an increased interest in spiritual things throughout the congregation and district. The Bible class was well attended by both the young men and women in spite of having to meet immediately after morning worship."*

In the same year, 1874, a united Sunday evening service was started, the venue alternating between the two Presbyterian churches. These united services continued for 100 years until 1974 the year in which High Street congregation moved to its new location at the Steeple.

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*MR PORTER WAS A PROFESSOR IN THE ASSEMBLY'S COLLEGE, BELFAST. HE WAS CALLED TO BE THE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 1875.

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On the 28th of December 1877 an important document was signed in Dublin. It was "**The Deeds**" concerning the church property. One part of that document reads¹⁴², "*Know all men by these present that the said James Coleman, Samuel Armstrong, Russel Hugh Gaston, Samuel Beattie, William Vance (junior) and John Gardner stand seized and possessed of the said hereditaments and premises in the said part recited Indenture, granted and conveyed to the intent that we, our heirs and assigns and such other person or persons as together with us, or any of us, or as our successors in office or successors in office of any of us, shall hold the same on behalf of the Millrow Presbyterian Congregation of Antrim, Being one of the congregations in connection with The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Irelandas long as the same shall remain under the jurisdiction of the said General Assembly and shall profess and maintain the doctrines in The Confession of Faith and the Catechisms larger and smaller compiled by The Assembly of Divines at Westminster or such persons, members of the said congregation for the time being or shall remain under or acknowledge such jurisdiction and profess and maintain such doctrines.*"

The improving economy of the country in later years was reflected in the congregational givings. In 1902 the Rev Thomas West was able to report that his people were contributing over £200 per annum more than they were doing when he was ordained in 1867. Their improved financial position enabled the people to make periodic presentations to Mr West in appreciation of his ministry. One such presentation was a gift of £200 given to him on the twenty-fourth anniversary of his ordination.

King Edward VII's Coronation in 1902¹⁴³ was marked by a Bazaar held at The Steeple. It lasted for three days, June 26th-28th. A unique feature of this Bazaar was the help and support given by neighbouring churches, especially by the Killead and Muckamore churches. Not only did each of these churches man a stall, but they supplied many of the articles for sale. The amount raised was £1,208. The Church was now in a position to clear off all its debts and at the end of the year turn its attention to urgent repairs and improvements. £500 was spent on painting and decorating the church and £630. 16s. Od. on erecting the present beautiful ceiling in the church and in the lobbies. Necessary repairs to the roof and windows were carried out also. The church was closed for four months while this repair work was going on and was reopened on March 27th 1904 by the Moderator of The General Assembly, The Right Rev Dr John McDermott, Belmont Presbyterian Church, Belfast. At this service Rev West appealed to those who were, "*representative of the old and historic congregation in Antrim to give quickly, generously and heartily, and to the strangers present to assist in the undertaking.*"

Although it had suffered several defeats in the Parliament at Westminster, The Home Rule Bill for Ireland for a time looked likely to become Law and be forced on the Ulster people against their wishes. Most Protestants were opposed to Home Rule. Many Presbyterian ministers became involved in campaigning against it. Some were forced by circumstances to declare their stand on the issue*. Within the membership of The General Assembly opposition to the Bill was very strong. Two

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*IT IS SAID THAT ANY MINISTER WHO DID NOT SIGN 'THE COVENANT' WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A MARKED MAN, AND IF SEEKING 'A CALL', HIS POLITICAL STANDING COULD BECOME THE DECIDING FACTOR!

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members of The Assembly, the Rev J B Armour of Trinity Church, Ballymoney, and the Rev Dr James Irwin of Killead were, however, strong supporters of the Bill.

Friday, 28th September 1912, was a notable day in the History of Ulster¹⁴⁴. On that day Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionist Council, presented The Solemn League and Covenant to the people of Ulster. All who shared his outright rejection of the Bill were invited to register their objection by signing "The Covenant". For this purpose First Antrim Church, the largest building in the town, was chosen as the Antrim centre for 'signing'. In accordance with a decision that all Protestant people of the Province observe this day as a day of dedication, Mr West conducted a service of worship in the church before the signing began.

Mr West was a staunch Unionist. Although a few of his ministerial colleagues and some of his parishioners voiced their strong opposition to 'The Covenant' and many disagreed with First Antrim Church being used for a political purpose, Mr West did not allow either attitude to interfere with the arrangements. A Minister friend is reported as saying that he encountered Mr West one morning about the time when it was feared that Westminster would impose Home Rule on Ulster and found him, *"almost beside himself, as if the end of the world had come."*

Three young men, who were brought up in the congregation during Mr West's ministry, responded to the Call to serve the Church. They were:-

- (1) The Rev EP Pelloe. He was brought up by a family in Ballyno and entered the Church of England, becoming Rector of Chiddingfold Parish, Godalming, Surrey.
- (2) The Rev Dr John F Steele. Dr Steele joined the Overseas Mission of the Presbyterian Church and in October 1883 he and his wife went to Gujarat, India, where he gave 36 years of distinguished, and outstanding service. Mrs Steele died of cholera contracted while caring for victims during the epidemic in India in 1900. Dr Steele died in 1919 while conducting a mission for troops in Dalhousie, North India.
- (3) The Rev Campbell M Young. Mr Young had the distinction of being the very first child to be Baptised by Mr West after he was ordained minister of Millrow church. His first 'Call' to Killymurrus Presbyterian Church was in November 1896. Ten months later he accepted a call to the new Church Extension charge at Bloomfield, Belfast, and spent the remainder of his ministry there.

The Bruce family was a well known and highly respected Antrim family. The three sisters, Sarah, Mary and Matilda, and their brother Alexander were devoted to First Antrim Church and to everything connected with it. Their generosity was unbounded and their philanthropic work unlimited, extending outside the congregation to all classes and creeds in the community. Of them Dr Matthew Majury has written¹⁴⁵:- *"No family has done more for the congregation than the Bruce Family. The late Alexander Bruce took an active and generous part in the Church, of which he was for years the Sabbath School Superintendent and a member of committee, and contributed generously to clear off the debt. He was an earnest Sabbath School teacher, and a distinct force for good in the district. His sisters Sarah (Mrs Leitch), Mary and Matilda were also of the excellent of the earth. In 1882 they erected a Schoolroom and Lecture Hall as a memorial to their brother who died on 1st May 1858."*

Dr Bruce was born in 1801 and like his father, entered the medical profession. He died in 1858 at the age of 57 years. His memorial tablet in the church reads as follows:-

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE
ALEXANDER BRUCE, ESQ.,
SURGEON, ANTRIM;
WHO, AFTER SERVING HIS OWN GENERATION
BY THE WILL OF GOD, FELL ASLEEP
ON THE FIRST DAY OF MAY, 1858, IN THE 57th YEAR
OF HIS AGE.
“HE WAS A GOOD MAN.”
“THE MEMORY OF THE JUST IS BLESSED”.

Throughout his long ministry, Dr West received many messages of appreciation from both his own congregation and from other churches and outside bodies. In 1912 the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him by The Theological Faculty of The Presbyterian Church. Four years later, in 1916, he was nominated Moderator of The General Assembly, a position which he filled with grace and distinction. In December 1917, when he had completed 50 years in the ministry the congregation marked the occasion with *“great enthusiasm, and the presentation of a cheque for £150.”*

Although age was limiting his activities, Dr West was unwilling to relinquish the pastoral care of the congregation. In 1917 the Session suggested to him that a young man should be engaged to help him in the work but he refused to entertain the thought. Later, however, he agreed to an alternative suggestion that a ‘**substitute**’ minister be engaged for 3-4 weeks to enable him to have a summer holiday. A short time after this holiday his health began to show signs of deterioration and by September 1919 he found he could carry on no longer. On the 29th September 1919 he announced his intention to retire. He had served First Antrim for 52 years and had reached the age of 76 years. He died 15 months later on the 27th December 1920 and was buried in First Antrim church-yard, the first minister of the congregation to be buried beside the Church.

In 1939 the congregation honoured Dr West’s memory by replacing the middle downstairs window on the east side of the church with a beautiful stained glass window. The window depicts Christ addressing a group which includes the disciples, some women and several children; with the turrets of Jerusalem showing in the background. Dr West’s daughter, Miss Maud West, unveiled the window and the Rev Campbell M Young BA, Bloomfield, Belfast dedicated it. The superscription reads:- *“LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN”* and the legend beneath:- *“To the glory of God, and in revered memory of the Rev Thomas West BA BD the devoted minister of this church from 1867 until his death in 1920; Moderator of the General Assembly 1916. ‘The memory of the just is blessed’. Erected by the congregation.”*

Following Dr West’s retirement The Union Commission, proposed that First and Second Antrim be amalgamated. The Session considered the suggestion and, rejected it as ‘*unworkable*’. The proposal has never been raised again.

Chapter Twenty-One

Rev Dr Matthew Majury BA BD (1920-1968).

First Antrim's eighth minister, the Rev Matthew Majury, the son of a well known and respected farmer, was born on 23rd March 1887 at Rademon, near Crossgar, Co. Down. He was brought up in the congregation of Kilmore and attended the local National School and the Newry Model School. From there he went to the Marlborough Teacher Training College, Dublin where he qualified in 1908. Between 1908 and 1911 he taught successively in Clough, Co. Down and in the Clifton Street School, Belfast. While he was teaching he continued his studies as an external student of the Faculty of Arts, The Queen's College (later University) of Belfast, and graduated Bachelor of Arts from The Royal University of Ireland in 1911. From 1913 until 1916 he studied at The Assembly's College, Belfast, and was subsequently licensed by The Presbytery of Belfast on the 9th May 1916. He continued to study privately and in 1919 gained the Bachelor of Divinity degree of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty.

Mr Majury was ordained and installed as minister of First Garvagh on 18th July 1917. He remained there for just under three years and on 31st March 1920, (a little more than 16 months after the ending of The First World War), he was installed in First Antrim as the assistant and successor to Dr West. Commenting on the situation in Antrim at that time he wrote¹⁴⁶:- "*...the elation that followed the peace was still at its height, the disillusionment of war had not begun. War had stopped emigration so the pews were filled with whole families and large numbers of young people were to be seen at the services. Prices were good and everything seemed in a flourishing way.*"

This happy situation did not last long. Though incomes were increasing, costs were rising disproportionately and financial hardship was beginning to bite. As labourers turned to industry in the hope of earning higher wages the number of workers on the land decreased. Individuals and whole families felt drawn to life "*in British lands across the seas*", and saw emigration as their only hope. In one year about twenty families from First Antrim emigrated to such countries as Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and America, creating a difficult financial future for both the congregation and the new minister.

Mr Majury was unsparing in his efforts to rally the people and rebuild the congregation. In 1921 he started an immensely popular Youth Guild. This Guild in later years provided leadership for other youth groups within the church, such as The Sabbath School, The Drama Group, The Christian Endeavour (Junior, Intermediate and Senior), The Scouts, The Young People's Monthly Fellowship, and The Girls' Auxiliary. Mr Majury came under criticism from time to time regarding the activities of those young people who attended the organisations. Some members of the church questioned their purpose, the nature of their programmes, the time which Mr Majury was spending in getting them up and running and in their supervision. His constant

reply was:- "...so long as they (the young people) are meeting under The Banner of The Cross and in a Christian atmosphere, that is all that matters."¹⁴⁷

The Women's Missionary Association, the forerunner of The Presbyterian Womens' Association, was started in October 1932. It and the Girls' Auxiliary met jointly once a month. A portion of their annual membership fee of 10s. 0d. was used for the purchase of "*print materials and wool yarn to make saleable articles.*"¹⁴⁸ Their first Sale of Work was held in November 1936, but the amount realised is not recorded. Their second Sale, held in September 1937, raised £155. 15s. 2d., a goodly sum in those days especially (as a note in the minutes adds) it was "a very wet day"! When war broke out in 1939 the W.M.A. decided to knit articles of clothing for the sailors. Because of the blackout regulations at the time they frequently held their meetings in the homes of their members.

An encouragement for his work came one day to Mr Majury in a most unexpected manner. When he was walking near the railway station he met an old Antrim woman who wandered the streets daily, talking to herself. As they passed each other he heard her mutter distinctly- "*It's a little more heavenly cultivation they need. Yes, Sir, a little more heavenly cultivation.*" "*That day,*" he wrote afterwards, "*I saw my duty as a Pastor in a new light. I was meant to be, A Heavenly Cultivator.*"¹⁴⁹

In 1921 the congregation decided to erect a memorial to the 131 members (14 of whom did not return) who had served in the 1914-18 war. For this purpose a sum of £245 was raised by congregational subscription. Miss Maud West unveiled the memorial on 2nd October 1921 and the Rev J G Paton MA MC, minister of Malone Presbyterian Church, Belfast, dedicated it.

During the 1939-1945 War years Mr Majury acted as Chaplain¹⁵⁰ to the forces which were stationed in Antrim. From time to time the soldiers paraded to the church and occasionally took part in conducting worship. From this began the congregational practice of minister and people repeating together The Lord's Prayer during the service. For many years Mr Majury also served as Presbyterian Chaplain to the Massereene Hospital.

In 1941, Dr Majury was chosen to be Moderator of The Synod of Belfast, and in 1954 the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him by The Presbyterian Faculty in recognition of his outstanding services to The Church.

Property and finance were two matters with which Mr Majury had to wrestle right from the start of his ministry in Antrim. In 1920 the congregational committee decided to '*redeem the head rent*' on the Church, Manse and Bruce Hall. A bazaar was held to cover the expense involved and the remarkable sum of £1,200 was raised. After the rents were paid off, the church was repaired, the Riverside manse redecorated, some minor repairs were carried out to the church property and £100 set aside for the re-decoration of the interior of the church.

In October 1920, a small house behind the Bruce Hall was purchased for £110. 6s. 0d., with the intention of converting it into a Teacher's residence. According to the scanty records available, it seems doubtful if any teacher ever lived in it. Instead, it became a Caretaker's residence.

In 1924 the congregation decided to adopt The Freewill Offering Scheme. This decision was put into effect on the first Sunday of January 1925. The scheme's

first secretary was Mr James Clarke. The Scheme has continued since then and has proved very beneficial. The present Freewill Offering Secretary is Mrs Harriet Moore. Her meticulous keeping of the accounts and her preparation of the annual financial statements (done in her distinctive copper-plate style) over a period of more than 35 years are matters for which the church is very much in her debt.

New heating systems were installed in the Church and in the Bruce Schoolhouse in 1926 at a cost of £135 and £78 respectively. Electricity came to the town a short time later, and in 1929 the congregation decided to change the lighting in the church from gas to electricity at a cost of £80. 15s. 0d. Unfortunately, a lack of funds at the time prevented the manse from being included in the work.

The idea of a new manse had been before the Session and the Church Committee for several years, but a final decision was never taken. The matter came before the Session once again in March 1929 when it was reported that an anonymous donor had given £393. 19s. 0d. marked specifically for "The Manse Fund." As on previous occasions the committee's opinion on a new manse was divided. Mr Majury made a touching appeal to the members of Church committee in which he said that the house in Riverside was affecting the health of his family and that this in turn was having an effect on his work in the congregation. If the people expected him to give of his best, a new residence for himself and his family was essential¹⁵¹. His appeal resulted in a unanimous decision to proceed with the work straightaway. A rider was added that as soon as the new manse was ready for occupation the old manse, together with the adjacent field, would be put up for sale. A three acre site on the Greystone Road was purchased for £350, and Mr Loughlin's tender for £2,230 (to include the sinking of a well) was accepted.

The new manse building was ready for occupation by April 1931. As had been decided, the old 'Riverside' manse and field were sold by public auction for £792. 3s. 7d. The people subscribed so generously to The Manse Fund that by the end of 1935 only £141. 1s. 10d was outstanding. A generous member of the Session paid this sum and the debt was cleared. A grass tennis court was made beside the manse and a thriving church tennis club was formed which survived until the outbreak of the Second World War.

In spite of the privations of War encouraging things were happening within the congregation. When Belfast was blitzed in Easter 1941 the congregation raised £70 towards the General Assembly's Air Raid Relief Appeal. In February 1944 Mr Jackson Buick of Milltown, Antrim was accepted as a Belfast City Missioner. He later studied for the ministry and was ordained as the minister of 2nd Newtownards on 27th June 1963.

On VE Day, 8th May 1945, Special Services were held in the church and on the following Sunday a Service of Thanksgiving. The offerings at both these services were given to The General Assembly's Appeal for The Reconstruction of Churches in Europe.

Dr Adams once again showed his generosity. In 1940 he bore half the cost of replacing the gallery windows with leaded lights. When the work was completed the windows were dedicated by Mr Majury on April 7th 1940.

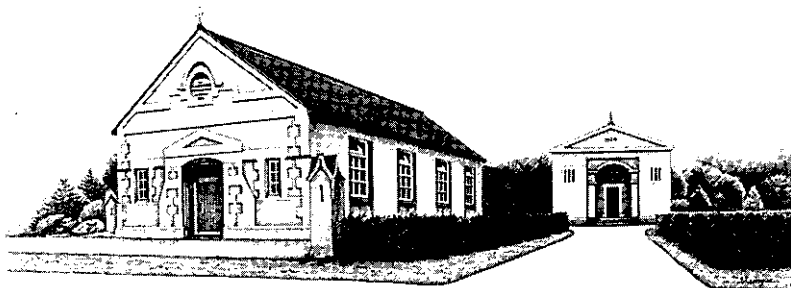
In 1944, the congregation honoured a clause in Dr Adam's Will bequeathing £500 "*to endow the Adams' Memorial Pew*" and "*to provide a Brass plate to identify it.*"¹⁵² This pew at the rear of the west centre of the church, was the one in which Dr Adams sat when he attended public worship.

The Session in 1946 approved the erection of a stained glass window in the lower middle window on the west side of the church as a memorial to Dr J J Adams. The cost was borne by friends within the congregation and in the district. The window depicts The Good Samaritan attending to the wounds of an injured traveller at the side of a road. The superscription reads:- *"BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER"* and the legend underneath:- *"To the Glory of God and in grateful remembrance of John Adams, Ashville, born 19th November, 1849, died 14th January 1941. A beloved physician and a devoted member and benefactor of this church. Erected by his friends in this congregation and district."*

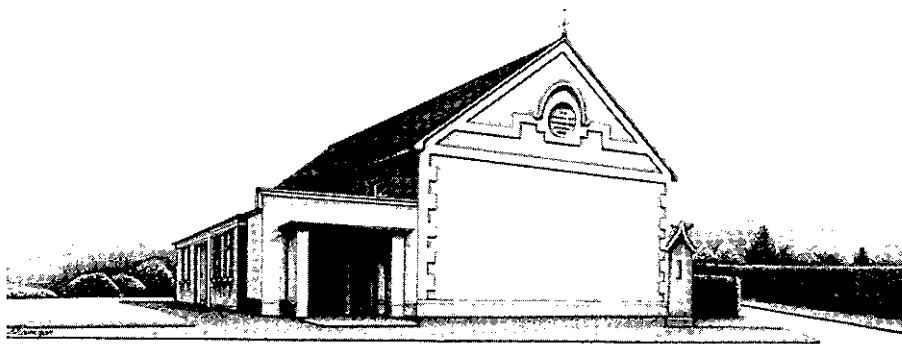
The Duncan property, the end house of a terrace to the east of the entrance gates, was acquired by the church in 1956 for £750. When it was demolished valuable space around the Bruce Hall was opened up permitting the property to be developed. A dividing wall between it and the adjoining house was built by voluntary labour. To make it more suited to Youth work, plans for altering the Hall were approved and a tender for £3,330 from Mr McIlvenna was accepted. The renovated Hall was reopened and dedicated on 7th November 1959 by the Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Rev Dr TAB Smyth, BA (Rathgar, Dublin). On this occasion a platform table was presented by Mr David Mawhinney in memory of his parents.

Some alterations were also carried out inside the church. For the benefit of the choir a stairway, leading from the downstairs Primary Room to the south-east corner of the church was constructed by voluntary labour in 1958. Two centre pews at the front of the church were also adapted to accommodate a Communion Table presented by Mrs Jean Sterritt in 1961 in memory of her late husband, Mr William Sterritt. He had been a life-long member of the Church and a member of Session.

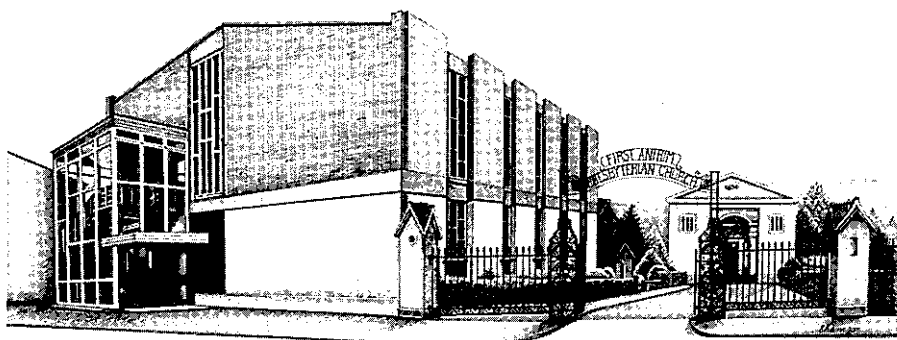
Due to the many War-time restrictions, the years between 1939 and 1945 were very difficult for the congregation. People were reluctant to leave their houses after night-fall because the 'Black-out' made the roads and streets lonely and dark. Strict petrol rationing denied many motorists the private and personal use of their cars. This, in turn, affected attendances at week-night church functions and frequently activities in the School-Room had to be curtailed or cancelled. Sunday morning services were not much affected. The time of the Sunday evening service was brought forward one hour from 7 pm to 6 pm., but on account of *"poor attendances and the blackout"* it was decided in March 1942 that the United Evening Services should be discontinued for an experimental period of one year.



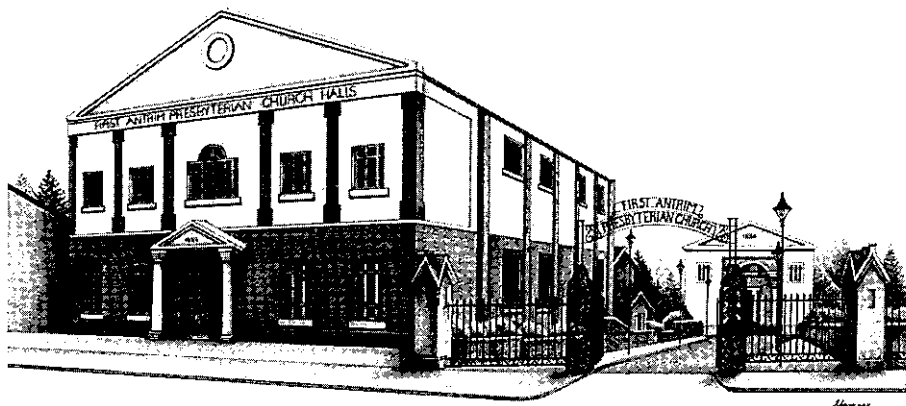
The Bruce Hall ~ erected 1882.



Extension added to the Bruce Hall ~ 1959.



Majury Hall built over the Bruce Hall ~ 1969.



*Frontage added to the Bruce Hall and Majury Hall ~ 1994.
(Bruce Hall almost completely enveloped).*

During the 1939 - 1945 War years a number of young people connected with the congregation joined The Forces. Unfortunately the Church has no complete record of their names. Mention must be made of one young man who served his country with distinction. He was James Herbert Stuart Majury, a son of the Manse. He was known familiarly within the congregation and the town as Herbert or Herbie Majury. Enlisting as an ordinary Private he moved quickly up the ranks, serving first in the Second World War and later in the Korean War. During his war-time service in Korea he was taken prisoner by the North Korean Communist forces and endured imprisonment in harsh inhuman conditions in a Korean Communist Prisoner-of-War Camp for 2½ years. Afterwards, Brigadier Majury* made the Army his career, and retired with the rank of Major General.

From time to time attempts were made to bring First and Second Antrim congregations closer together. In 1948 the two sessions took a united decision that they would join in *"taking a definite stand against betting, and do all in their power to prevent the evil from spreading."*¹⁵⁴ There are no reports of how this co-operation worked or of its results.

In 1955 the two sessions approved the setting up of a united mid-week Prayer meeting in the Bruce Hall. Unfortunately, this plan did not work out and the meetings ceased after a year. Two years later they agreed to hold an annual united Communion Service on the first Sunday evening of January. This arrangement continued until 1994.

In July 1960 the Church sustained a heavy loss through the death of Mr Fredrick Thomas Smith JP. He was elected to the Kirk Session in 1925 and almost immediately was appointed Assistant Clerk of the Session to assist the then Clerk, Mr Walker who was in failing health. Mr Walker resigned the position two years later and Mr Smith was the natural choice as his successor. Mr Smith held this responsible position with honour and distinction until his death 31 years later. He was a man totally devoted to First Antrim and to everything concerned with its growth and development.

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*BRIGADIER JAMES HERBERT STUART MAJURY PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN MAINTAINING CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN HIS PRISON CAMP. UNDER EXTREMELY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS, IN CRAMPED SURROUNDINGS AND ALWAYS UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF HIS GUARDS HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS AND DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING OF COMPILING A PRAYER BOOK. IN SJ DAVIS' BOOK, *"IN SPITE OF DUNGEONS"*¹⁵³, BRIGADIER MAJURY HAS DESCRIBED THIS TASK:- *"UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE PRACTISED BY THE CHINESE, THE COMPILATION OF THIS BOOK (A BOOK OF SELECTED PRAYERS) WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. THE MATERIAL ON WHICH TO WORK WAS EXTREMELY LIMITED. THE PAPER USED WAS THAT ISSUED TO US WITH WHICH TO ROLL CIGARETTES, A CHEAP, ROUGH PAPER ON WHICH WRITING WAS A PROBLEM IN ITSELF. THE LETTERING WAS DONE WITH AN ORDINARY PEN NIB, THE DESIGNS AND ILLUMINATED CAPITALS WERE DONE WITH A FEW COLOURED CRAYONS WHICH WERE ACQUIRED. THE BOOK WAS SEWN WITH AN ORDINARY NEEDLE AND THREAD, AND THE STIFF BACK WAS ONE REMOVED FROM A COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA NOVEL! THE PRINTING WAS DONE IN SECRET DURING AUGUST 1953, SHORTLY BEFORE THE PRISONERS-OF-WAR WERE RELEASED."* *"THE BOOK CONTAINED SOME OF THE LOVELIEST PRAYERS IN THE PRAYER BOOK, ALL ONES WHICH FITTED THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH WE LIVED"* *"IN MY MIND THE BOOK IS A STANDING TESTIMONIAL OF THE PART RELIGION PLAYED IN UPHOLDING OUR MORALS AND THE TROUBLE MEN TOOK TO PUT THEIR FAITH BEFORE ANYTHING IN FACE OF THE SEVEREST OPPOSITION."*

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Another member of the Session who gave distinguished service to the Church and to the Community was Mr James D McDonald. He was appointed Principal of the Bruce Memorial School in 1925, and continued in that capacity until 1954 when he became Principal of a newly erected Antrim Central Primary School on Station Road¹⁵⁵. When this new school was opened Mr McDonald had responsibility for amalgamating The Bruce Hall School, The Orr Memorial School and The Massereene School into one single unit.

The British Enkalon factory started work in Antrim in the early sixties. Workers and their families came to Antrim from far and near in search of employment. This, in turn, created a problem for the new school which was not big enough to cater for all the pupils who were seeking admission and extra temporary accommodation elsewhere had to be found, and found quickly. Once again the Bruce Hall was brought into use and continued to be used until 1967 when new classrooms at Antrim Central School were finished and ready.

As a member of the Kirk Session Mr McDonald played his full part in the spiritual oversight of the congregation. For a time he taught in the Sunday School and for many years was its Superintendent. Education of the young, both in the spiritual and secular spheres, was very close to his heart and he used every available opportunity to impart his knowledge to those entrusted to his care. For many years Mr McDonald also served as the secretary of the church committee.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland honoured Mr Majury in 1953 by conferring on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity and the congregation marked the occasion by a special reception in the Bruce Hall at which they presented him with a Doctor of Divinity academic hood.

The following year Dr Majury suffered a very heavy loss through the death of his wife, Mrs Florence Majury (nee Stuart) who passed away on 14th September 1954 after a long and painful illness, which she bore with outstanding fortitude and patience. Her last days were cheered by having her son, Herbert, home again after his internment in North Korea. In his memorial address, the Moderator of Presbytery, the Rev James McBride BA, Duneane made special reference to Mrs Majury's selfless devotion to her home and her family, and to the support and inspiration she had given unreservedly both to her husband and to the congregation. On the 24th November 1963 the Majury family remembered her life and work by presenting the church with a beautiful oak Organ Screen in her memory. On the front of the screen is carved The Burning Bush, and on the reverse side the following inscription¹⁵⁶- *"To the Glory of God this screen is given by her family in loving thankfulness for the life and service of Florence, wife of Rev M Majury. She came to Antrim on 31st March, 1920 and entered into rest on 14th September, 1954."* The screen was dedicated by The Very Rev Dr RJ Wilson MA, Principal of the Assembly's College, Belfast. At the same service he also dedicated four Japanese oak bookcases to provide Christian literature in the vestibules. These were presented by Miss Margaret Smith. The inscription on the bookcases reads:- *"These bookcases were presented to this congregation in memory of Minnie Smith, Dumesia, Antrim, by her daughters, November 1963."*

In 1957 Dr Majury married Dr Charlotte Annie Stuart MBE, a cousin of his first wife. She had served as a missionary in Egypt for nearly 30 years. Those in the

congregation who still remember her can *"speak of the light and the joy and the vitality she brought to the Manse and to the congregation as a whole."*

Full Attendance Day on April 3rd 1960 was also the 40th Anniversary of Dr Majury's installation as minister of First Antrim. At the morning service the special preacher was The Rev John T Carson BA Trinity Church, Bangor and the Rev Walter R Entrican BA, Bovevagh, Co. Derry preached at the evening service. After the morning service, Mr Carson (in the absence of Dr Majury), presided at a specially convened meeting of the congregation. Mr John Sprott, the acting Clerk of Session, read a statement expressing the congregation's appreciation of Dr Majury's many fine qualities as their minister. In it he made reference to Dr Majury's dedication, to the inspiration and benefits which many had experienced through his preaching, to his attention to the needs of the house-bound, the sick and the bereaved, and to his diligence in the pastoral visitations of his people. The congregation heartily endorsed the resolution, a copy of which was forwarded to Dr Majury.

When Dr Majury had completed 50 years in the ministry in 1967 The Templepatrick Presbytery marked the occasion with a reception in the Presbyterian Hostel, Belfast at which Rev David McKinney BA, Dundrod, presented Dr and Mrs Majury with an oil painting, and other gifts. First Antrim also acknowledged the occasion by a congregational meeting, chaired by the Moderator of Presbytery, Rev Colin Corkey BA, Hyde Park at which Dr and Mrs Majury were presented with a wallet of notes and other gifts by the Clerk of Session, Mr Robert Kane.

Dr Majury retired from the active ministry in First Antrim in October 1961. The Kirk Session recorded a moving tribute to his ministry in their Minute Book¹⁵⁷, part of which reads as follows:- *"Noted as a preacher of outstanding merit, he faithfully, fearlessly and sincerely continued to proclaim the Gospel from the pulpit in terms so simple that all could understand. The dignity, solemnity and reverence which he brought to bear when administering the Sacraments never failed to impress anew the fact of a Crucified and Risen Saviour."*

After his retirement Dr and Mrs Majury moved to Greenisland where they spent 6½ happy years. Dr Majury passed away suddenly on 9th April 1968, aged 82 years and in the 46th year of his ministry in Antrim. He was buried in the family plot in First Antrim churchyard. After his death Mrs Majury moved to Carryduff where she lived a full and active life as long as her health permitted. She died peacefully on 4th August 1994, aged 95 years.

The 1968 Annual Report of the General Assembly has the following Obituary to Dr Majury. It sums up very accurately the type of man he was:-

"A man of commanding appearance, Dr Majury brought to his ministry his gifts as a scholar and teacher. His Marlborough College training stood him in good stead when it came to the preparation of courses of consistent Christian teaching. His rich voice and clear presentation of material contributed greatly to the impact of his sermons, and his prayers bore the marks of diligent preparation and deep personal devotion. Dr Majury planned his work with meticulous care, and as a result, his pastoral ministry was a model of efficiency and thoroughness. Although his ministry was exercised in a provincial town, Dr Majury was a countryman at heart. There was nothing petty or mean about him. He was warm-hearted and big-minded, a man utterly devoted to his congregation, and to the work to which he had been called."

Chapter Twenty-Two

Rev. Thomas Potter Blackstock BA (1962- 1979).

Thomas Potter Blackstock, (familiarily known as "TP"), was born in 1923 in Keady, South Armagh. His parents, John and Nancy Blackstock, were members of Second Keady Presbyterian Church. In later life TP could say of his early Church connections:- *"there I was subject to the helpful influence of dedicated Sunday School teachers and others in the Church."*

After leaving school Tom worked with his father in the family's drapery shop in Keady until he was old enough to begin his apprenticeship training in the outfitting establishment of Robinson Cleaver in Belfast. He remained there for several years.

While living in Belfast, three important events happened which altered his whole future life.

- (1) At the age of eighteen he came into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,
- (2) He joined the congregation of Berry Street Presbyterian Church. At that time a Christian Endeavour Society had just started in the church. Tom became an enthusiastic member of the C E, and eventually became its vice-president. The secretary of the Endeavour at the time was Miss Meta McIlvenna. She was later to become Mrs Meta Blackstock.
- (3) He became a regular attender at the annual Portstewart Convention meetings. At one of these meetings he sensed God speaking to him and calling him into the service of the Church. He was so convinced of this calling that he set about making preparations straightaway.

His first hurdle was the Magee College Matriculation examination, an examination which had to be passed to gain entrance to the College. All his spare time now was devoted to private study and attending evening classes in the Shaftesbury House School, Belfast. He passed the examination and in 1946 was enrolled as a student of the college. Four years later he gained the Bachelor of Arts degree and proceeded to The Assembly's College, Belfast where he completed his theological training. He was licensed by the Belfast Presbytery on the 27th May 1952, and four days later he and Miss McIlvenna were married.

His next three years were spent as Assistant Minister to the Rev Andrew McNabb in the Shankill Road Mission, Belfast. For him these were happy and rewarding years. A close friendship and a fellowship developed between the two families which continued until the deaths of Mr and Mrs McNabb.

On 28th January 1954, Mr Blackstock was ordained minister of *Cavan* and *'stated supply' of Ballyjamesduff.* On the 23rd May 1962 he was installed in First Antrim as successor to Dr Matthew Majury. It was no easy task for him to follow men like Dr West and Dr Majury whose combined ministries covered a period of over ninety years. After two such long ministries, the congregation had become 'set' in their ways and were not likely to accept change readily. Nevertheless, to the new

minister's mind there were several areas in which he felt changes were both necessary and desirable.

The first was Visitation. It had been the aim of both his predecessors to pay an annual visit to the homes of every family in the congregation, if that was at all possible. However, circumstances had changed and it was no longer feasible for one man on his own to continue this pattern. The large British Enkalon factory which had been erected a few years previously on the outskirts of Antrim was attracting workers from all over the Province and beyond. As housing was in great demand new estates were being built in the Ballycraigy and Dublin Road areas, both of which lay within the parish of First Antrim. Mr Blackstock was quick to appreciate the needs and the challenges which these estates presented. He was untiring in his efforts to befriend the new-comers, to give them what advice and help he could and to welcome them into the community and into the Church. The work was demanding and time-consuming but it was work which was greatly appreciated by those unfamiliar with the town and the district.

As the Estates grew it became increasingly difficult for any one minister to visit all the new-comers. The Antrim Ministers' Fellowship devised a plan to ease the situation. Each member of The Fellowship was allocated a specific area and given responsibility for visiting that district regularly and noting, among other things, the religious affiliations of the new arrivals. This information was passed over to the minister of the relevant denomination who then took over responsibility for the pastoral care of those who were members of his church.

The second was Accommodation. During the late forties/early fifties there had been signs that the congregation was growing numerically. In 1949 the Church Committee was experiencing difficulty in finding seating accommodation for new-comers. The problem was not a lack of seats—seating was just not being made available! A "Family Pew" system was in operation. As a "money raising" exercise pews were 'let' or 'rented' annually for a fixed sum. In time, the 'letting of Pews' had been stopped and those families in need of 'a sitting' made application to the church committee. When a pew became vacant it was allocated to the family whose name headed 'the list'. The allocated pew then became that applicant's "Family Pew" and was occupied by members of the family when attending Public Worship. Some families guarded their pew very zealously,—so much so that strangers often felt uncomfortable and embarrassed if, by chance, they happened to sit in such a pew.

The pew allocation issue came to a head a few years later. As a first step towards solving the problem a plea was made from the Pulpit inviting those who had spare 'seats' in their pews to share them with those who had none. The response was very disappointing —only two families volunteered! The seating problem cropped up again in January 1962, (just a few months before Mr Blackstock's installation). This time the committee decided to abolish completely the 'allocation and letting' of pews and all seats in the church were declared "open". People were now free to sit in the church where-ever a seat could be found, a practice which has continued since¹⁵⁸.

During the decade, 1960-1969, statistical returns showed that the congregation had increased by 930 individuals, or, in terms of households, 250 families—a congregation in itself! The primary and senior Sabbath Schools, Creche and Children's

Church were full to capacity and functioning under very cramped and difficult conditions. Apart from the Scouts which started in 1946, the Youth Club which was started in 1964 by Mr Ivan Stockdale, The Girls' Brigade, started in the same year by Mrs Badger, and The Boys' Brigade, started in 1969 by Mr William Carson, little had been done for the youth and the young adults of the Church for many years. Older people, interested in Badminton and Bowls, felt frustrated too because of a lack of accommodation for them to enjoy their leisure.

Everything has its price and for Mr Blackstock it meant that his regular pastoral visitation had to be curtailed even further. When he was confronted on this point by disaffected members of the congregation he was unrepentant. He saw the work he was doing as both necessary and vital and appealed to the Session and the church committee for the help of an Assistant Minister and for the provision of additional hall accommodation.

Mr Blackstock conceived a plan of building a Hall over and around the Bruce Hall, but it was not until 1967 that the members of the congregation caught his vision and gave their approval. Plans and estimates for the new complex were agreed and by the late summer of 1969 the work was complete. On 6th September 1969, Brigadier James H S Majury MBE, son of the late Rev Dr Matthew Majury, declared the Halls open, and The Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Rev Dr John T Carson BA, minister of Trinity Church, Bangor dedicated them "*To The Glory Of God.*"

The new Hall, named The Majury Hall, has proved a great asset to the congregation and has provided much needed extra space. A plaque near the entrance bears the following inscription:- "*THE MAJURY HALL. This Hall is named in honour of Rev M Majury BA DD, minister of this congregation 1920-1961. It was opened on Saturday, 6th September 1969 by his son, Brigadier JHS Majury, MBE, and dedicated to the Glory of God by the Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Rev Dr JT Carson.*"¹⁵⁹

The third area of concern for Mr Blackstock was *Evangelism*. When he came to Antrim Mr Blackstock took over responsibility for a week of Mission which for many years had been held annually during the winter months in the old school-house at Rathmore. This Mission was started in 1935 by the late Dr J J Adams, Ashville, Antrim. Mr Blackstock supported and maintained the Mission until 1971 when a road improvement scheme necessitated the demolition of the hall. After a new replacement Hall was erected, the Sabbath School restarted but the Mission did not resume. The Sabbath School continued until 1981 when, regrettably, after several years struggling against ever decreasing numbers, it had to be discontinued.

A year after Mr Blackstock came to Antrim he re-started the lapsed mid-week meeting in the Primary Room for Bible Study and Prayer. He had one great desire which was to hold an Evangelistic Mission. When plans for the church Halls were passed, he expressed this desire to the Session and suggested that once the Halls were finished and open the first major event to be held in them should be a two-week Evangelistic Mission. Accordingly, a Mission named "Mission '69", was fixed for November 9th-23rd, 1969. The missionary chosen was the Rev John Girvan BA, (then minister of Bethany Church, Belfast), the soloist Mr Eric Clarke, Lurgan, the Organist, Mr Sam Kirk and the Pianist, Mrs Betty McDowell. It was a very successful Mission and through it many within the congregation, as well as outsiders, found "*new life in Christ.*"

The Ballycraigy area was not overlooked. For the benefit of the people living there, the Rev T Hassan (Rector of St Jude's Parish Church, Muckamore) and the Rev Blackstock, started joint services in the Muckamore Orange Hall on Sunday afternoons. These began on the first Sunday of January 1969 but were so poorly supported that they were discontinued a few months later.

Other outstanding evangelistic meetings held in the halls were:-

- (1) Mr Arthur Blessitt (complete with the large cross he carried through west Belfast) visited the congregation in June 1972. Both the Majury and Bruce Halls were needed to accommodate the estimated 800 or so people who came to the meeting.
- (2) In February 1973, Mrs Doreen Irvine from Bristol spoke about her life and work to an audience of about 550 people in the Majury Hall. Before her conversion she had been deeply involved in witch-craft and black-magic, but after she became a Christian she abandoned these practices and dedicated her life to the establishment of a home in Bristol for prostitutes and addicts.
- (3) The Rev Brian Kingsmore BA, (then the minister of Ballywatt, Coleraine), conducted a week of Mission in September 1972 in the Majury Hall. This Mission, specially arranged for the benefit of students, was organised by The Inter Varsity Fellowship, Queens' University, Belfast, and was well supported.

The fourth area was the need for Help. In the spring of 1968 Mr Blackstock appealed once again to the Session for help. This time the Session's response was very positive. Not only was he given permission to apply for an Assistant Minister, but, as a temporary measure and to ease his heavy workload, he was given permission to engage the Rev Derek Weir BA BD, Killead to visit in the Ballycraigy district one afternoon per week, and conduct one evening service each month in First Antrim church. The following year, Mr Trevor Magowan BA BD was appointed the congregation's first 'Student Assistant Minister'.

Things were starting to move in other areas. The Church Extension Committee of The General Assembly responded to the Kirk Session's invitation to consider Antrim as a suitable place for a new congregation¹⁶⁰. After looking carefully at the situation they were of the opinion that a new congregation was both necessary and viable. Ground for building was secured and a temporary wooden hall erected. In November 1969 the new "*Church Extension Congregation of Greystone Road*" was started in the hall, with the Rev Derek Weir BA BD, Killead as its "*Interim Minister*". This brought to an end Mr Weir's commitment to First Antrim.

The Greystone Road venture from the beginning has been an unqualified success. Within a few years the congregation had built both a church and a new church hall and was well on its way to becoming an established congregation of The General Assembly, having its own elected Minister and Kirk Session. In its formative years First Antrim helped to get the church started. It provided two elders to serve on the "interim" session, a Sabbath School Superintendent, and a temporary Organist. To help with the creation of a Parish for the new congregation First Antrim forfeited the estates of Glenburn and Newpark.

Mr Blackstock's ministry was producing fruit. In September 1970 Miss Pamela Craig (a school teacher) informed the Kirk Session that she had decided to give up her

teaching post and go to a Bible College in England to prepare for overseas missionary work. Mr Ian McNie also informed the Session that he was starting studies in The Assembly's College, Belfast in preparation for the Presbyterian ministry* This news brought great encouragement to both minister and people. More significantly, these two were the forerunners of others who, in Mr Blackstock's time were to follow their example, namely Maurice Bond, Ivan Neish, Eddie Kirk, Brian Hughes, and Henry Wilson, all of whom entered the ministry. Other workers were Miss Cathy Bell (who trained for missionary service in preparation for work in Pringle Children's Home, Jamaica), and Mrs Jim Waring** (wife of the Rev Jim Waring). They served as PCI missionaries in Jamaica. At the same time God was preparing other young people who were later to offer themselves for His service, some at home and some overseas.

The needs of the youth were constantly kept in mind. In 1970 a conference, arranged for the benefit of members of the youth organisations of the Church, was well attended. The special speakers were the Rev Harold Allen BA, minister of Ballyclare, and Mr TS Mooney, of Londonderry. Those young people who attended benefited greatly from the advice given by two such popular and experienced speakers.

A series of three special meetings for young people was arranged in the Bruce Hall in the autumn of 1971. The topics dealt with were:-

Drugs (speaker: Professor John Dundee, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast),

Alcohol (speakers: The Rev Dr WGM Thompson, The Samaritans, Belfast, and Mr George Johnston FRCS, surgeon, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast), and

Christian Marriage (speakers: Dr Sidney McCann, physician, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast and the Rev Cecil Kerr, then Church of Ireland Chaplain at Queen's University, Belfast).

In the autumn of 1976, a similar series of lectures was arranged. This time the venue was The Antrim Grammar School. Being neutral, it was thought more likely to attract young people from the town and from other churches than a denominational setting would have done. Some young people from outside the congregation did accept the invitation and came but the response was considerably less than had been anticipated. The topics covered on this occasion were:-

Alcoholism (speaker: Mr G Johnston FRCS, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast),

The Drug Scene (speaker: Professor John Dundee, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast),

Authority and the Teenager (speakers: Mr J Russell LL B, Newtownards, and Mr J Robinson, Frontier Youth Trust) and

Present Day Moral Standards (speakers: Mr Oswald Mulligan, FRCS, Craigavon Hospital, and Mr D Hewitt LL B, Newtownards).

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*THESE WERE THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION SINCE 1944 TO CONSIDER FULL-TIME CHRISTIAN WORK. IN THAT YEAR MR JACKSON BUICK BECAME A MISSIONER WITH THE BELFAST CITY MISSION.

**MRS WARING, FORMERLY MISS LORNA CRAIG, A SISTER OF MISS PAMELA CRAIG, WAS A NURSE AND HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF FIRST ANTRIM BEFORE HER MARRIAGE.

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Members of the Session and Committee made special visits to the homes of all the members of the congregation at least twice during the sixties and seventies. The object was three fold:

- (1) to inform the people about activities going on in the church and stimulate an interest in them,
- (2) to encourage those with a record of poor attendance at Church Services, and
- (3) to remind one and all of the Mission arranged for October 1969. This Mission, entitled "God's Way" was held in the Majury Hall from October 22nd until November 5th 1978. The missionary was the Rev Robert Coulter BA, then minister of Clough Presbyterian Church, Ballymena. Again Mrs Betty McDowell and Mr Sam Kirk provided the music, and the soloists were Mr Eric Clarke and Mr James McIlroy. After some pre-Mission hitches the Mission got under way and everything went smoothly, many testifying to the benefit which they received.

Mr Blackstock's fifth major problem was Property, (closely allied to Finance.) When he came to Antrim, the church was in need of extensive repairs. These were completed in 1964 at a total cost of £5,000. The following year the church needed to be re-roofed and the walls re-plastered on the outside, at a cost of £2,000. Three years later, when the congregation agreed to build The Majury Hall, its estimated cost for the work was £30,000, (not including equipment and furnishings). All this expenditure left the Church in considerable debt.

Unanticipated problems were to follow. Shortly after the halls were completed, dry rot was noticed in the floor of the gallery in the church. Investigation revealed that it was much more extensive than had been at first thought. To allow a complete and thorough eradication to be carried out, the church had to be closed for a time. During this time the opportunity was taken to re-design the front of the church and give greater space for the Reading Desk and the Communion Table. Members of the congregation were asked to help with cleaning off the varnish and paint which was on the pews and leaving them ready for repainting. When all the work was completed the interior of the church was redecorated and the aisles and seats covered with carpet. Costs had been kept to a minimum through generous donations, interest-free loans, by the receipt of furnishings which had been donated as 'memorials' and by the considerable use of voluntary labour. The church was re-opened and re-dedicated in April 1972 by the Rev Andrew Rodgers BA, Minister of Dungannon Presbyterian Church. It was with a deep sense of gratitude to God that the congregation learned on 19th May 1975, 3 years later, that the total sum raised by the congregation since 1968 was £41,500 and that all the debt had been cleared.

The dry-rot menace was not over. Three years later a wall-plate and a portion of the south gable wall on the west side, above the ceiling level, gave way. Thankfully, no one was hurt as the fall occurred during an evening service when the gallery was closed. Two years later, a further outbreak was spotted in both the church basement and in the Primary Room. It too, required extensive 'eradication treatment'. While this work was in progress the committee decided to re-design the 'school-room' area of the basement and convert it into a choir room/committee room with attached kitchen and toilet facilities. The finished accommodation was named The Primary Room. A

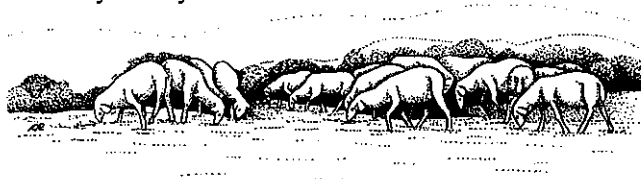
separate Ministers' Room was constructed beside The Primary Room and named *The Blackstock Room* in recognition of the services rendered to the Church by Mr Blackstock. These new rooms, costing in the region of £16,000, together with a large number of memorial gifts, were dedicated on Sunday 27th June 1979 by The Very Rev Professor JLM Haire MA DD, Assembly's College Belfast.

Communication was the sixth area of need which Mr Blackstock took in hand. A Public Address system was presented anonymously to the church in January 1969. It added considerably to the quality of the sound within the building.

Mr Blackstock realised soon after coming to First Antrim that there were many things happening within the fellowship about which its members were either totally unaware, ill-informed, or knew little or nothing. He decided that a Congregational Magazine was needed. The magazine, called '*The First Antrim News*', was started in September 1963, and has been appearing regularly since.

Mr Robert Kane, Clerk of the Session, died suddenly on April 12th 1968. He had been a most conscientious Clerk and a wise councillor and leader. He was succeeded in the office by Mr Ivan Stockdale. After 15 months Mr Stockdale found that, with his many other commitments, he was unable to give to the position the time, care and thought that it required and submitted his resignation. Dr G Hughes was appointed his successor in 1970. Dr Hughes had served as a medical missionary in India for 16½ years, and had been co-opted to the Session in 1967. When he resigned the clerkship in 1982, Mr F J Bownes, was appointed his successor. He has proved to be a most conscientious and meticulous Clerk, and a person eminently suited for the position.

The heavy workload carried by Mr Blackstock over the years had been taking an insidious toll on his health. On Monday morning, the 6th November 1978, (the morning after the end of Mr Coulter's Mission), this fact was brought home to the congregation very forcibly. During the night Mr Blackstock had taken seriously ill and required urgent admission to Hospital. His condition was such that it was realised very quickly that after his discharge from Hospital he would need a very long period of convalescence. The Rev David Clarke, then the minister of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, was approached and invited to act as 'Interim Convenor', an invitation which he graciously accepted. Mr Blackstock's convalescence was slow and although everyone hoped and prayed that he would be able to resume his work in the congregation, this was not to be. Acting on medical advice, he reluctantly decided to resign from First Antrim and accept a Call to minister in the smaller congregation of Ballyweaney Presbyterian Church where he was able to give six years of happy fruitful service. He died suddenly on February 4th, 1986 and was buried in the churchyard beside the Ballyweaney Church.



"Feed my lambs." "Take care of my sheep." "Feed my sheep." - John ch. 21.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Rev Samuel John Dixon BA (Installed 1980).

Samuel John Dixon, son of Mr J J Matchett Dixon and Mrs Elizabeth Dixon, was born in Clones, Co. Monaghan. He was brought up in the small Home Mission Congregation of Ballyhobridge where his father served as Clerk of Session, Sabbath School Superintendent, Congregational Treasurer and Church Officer. Because of its small membership Ballyhobridge Church was united with the congregations of Clones, Stonebridge and Newbliss Churches and the four churches shared the same Minister. During Mr Dixon's teenage years the Minister of these churches was the Rev Andrew Rodgers BA, presently the Minister of Dungannon Presbyterian Church, and Moderator of The General Assembly in 1993. Mr Rodgers proved a wise counsellor, advisor, encourager, and a reliable friend for the young man as he was preparing himself for his future in the Church.

Mr Dixon received his early education at Killoughter Primary School and at Clones High School. He entered Magee University College, Londonderry in 1961 and in 1965 graduated Bachelor of Arts. After a year of study at New College, Edinburgh he returned to complete his theological training at The Assembly's College, Belfast. He was licensed in Ballyhobridge on 18th June 1967 and served his assistantship in Carnmoney Presbyterian Church where he was ordained on January 4th 1968. Mr Dixon's first congregation was First Rathfriland. He was installed in First Rathfriland on September 3rd 1970 and remained there until his installation in First Antrim on 15th May 1980.

When considering the Minister to succeed Mr Blackstock, the Session drew up some guidelines. Their ideal minister should be under 45 years of age, married, interested in all age groups and capable of organising and developing leadership within the Church. How perfectly Mr Dixon has fulfilled all these criteria!

Mr Dixon preached his '*trials*' on Sunday 24th February 1980. He took as his text for the morning service those familiar words from St John's Gospel chapter 21, "*Feed my lambs*", "*Feed my sheep*". For his evening address his text was, Acts 1:8. "*ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" After hearing him preach there was no doubt in the minds of the people as to who should be their minister. At the congregational meeting to make "A Call" there was a large turn-out of voters. Mr Dixon received 100% of the votes of those present.

Bible Study and Prayer.

Although the congregation probably did not realise the fact at the time but Mr Dixon in his two "*trial*" addresses had set out the lines along which he was to base his future ministry. Since he became the minister of First Antrim he has consistently "Fed" his people on 'The Word' and the need for Prayer, and sought by both word and example to stimulate and lead the congregation in that direction. A congregational

Prayer meeting at 7.00am on Friday mornings was started, and an Elder's prayer meeting every Saturday evening. Twice each year the Session has devoted a full Saturday to Prayer for the work of the Church. Special Prayer sessions are also held before such events as the Convention meetings, Ladies' Day, and the summer youth camps connected with the various Youth organisations. Recently, a Prayer meeting for young adults has been started every Sunday morning from 9 am until 10 am in the Dixon Room.

Bible Study is actively encouraged in several ways. From the pulpit different books of The Bible have been worked through systematically, and serial sermons preached on biblical themes. Private Bible study has been fostered through the *Home Bible Study Groups* which were started in 1985. Since then, approximately 150 persons have been meeting weekly in small groups in homes within the congregation. Each group consists of ten or twelve people with a leader and an assistant leader. All the groups follow the same programme of study. After the end of the Bible study members have an opportunity for prayer followed by a time of fellowship over a cup of tea.

Antrim's first Convention* began as a part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Laying of the Foundation Stone and the opening of the church. The first week of Convention was held in September 1984 and the response was so encouraging that it has become an annual event. Many of those who attended these meetings over the years have experienced great blessing through the messages delivered by speakers renowned for their evangelical teaching and preaching abilities. After Convention expenses have been met out of the offerings received any money left is given to The Bible Society.

Mission

Missionary work has been encouraged in several ways. In 1981 The Missionary and Student Committee was set up. Its function is to advise, help and support those members of the congregation who are involved in mission work, whether at home or overseas as well as those in training for full-time Christian service. Believing strongly in the need to keep the congregation as up-to-date as possible concerning its workers the committee has, since 1989, issued a quarterly Missionary News-sheet which gives up-to-date information about each of them. A special annual Missionary Sunday is observed in the autumn when those members of the congregation who are on leave, young people who have recently visited missionary situations abroad and students in preparation for full time service, have an opportunity to address the congregation and tell of their experiences and impressions.

What has been accomplished during the past 15 years?

- (1) Ten members of the congregation have been commissioned as missionaries, two to work within Northern Ireland and eight to serve overseas.
- (2) Eleven young people have volunteered as 'short-term' helpers and gone

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*THE ANNUAL CONVENTION MEETINGS CONSIST OF A WEEK OF CONCENTRATED BIBLE TEACHING LED BY PROMINENT BIBLE TEACHERS AND PREACHERS. THE MORNING MEETINGS ARE DEVOTED TO BIBLE READINGS WHEN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE ARE EXPOUNDED. THE EVENING MEETINGS TAKE THE FORM OF EVANGELISTIC ADDRESSES. THE WEEK ENDS WITH A SERIES OF SERVICES SPECIALLY ARRANGED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

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overseas to serve in missionary situations for periods ranging from three months to two years. Reports received from fellow workers on the field tell of how quickly and how well each has adapted to the local situation, of the excellence of the work they have done and of their willingness and readiness to become involved in whatever tasks were allocated to them.

- (3) Over the past years nineteen young people from the congregation have visited mission stations in various parts of the world during their summer holidays. Such visits, each lasting from 2 to 8 weeks, enabled them to see and participate in mission work. The places visited included:- Albania, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, China, The Czech Republic, France, London, Malawi, The Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda.
- (4) Eleven young men have studied for the ministry. Of these, seven are now placed in churches of their own, three are awaiting placement and one is completing his studies.
- (5) Mr Raymond Hume was commissioned on 13th March 1988 as a Belfast City missionary. He has been doing excellent work in the Ballyduff/Woodford district of Newtownabbey. Raymond is centred in the new City Mission Hall in that area which was opened on September 22nd 1995.
- (6) Mr David McMahon was commissioned on 26th November 1995 as a full-time worker with The Stauros Foundation, an organisation dealing with those who are seeking to break their addiction habits.

The congregation of First Antrim received an unexpected shock when it was learned that on the evening of Friday January 16th, 1987 Miss Pamela Jane Craig had been shot while she was working in the office in her flat in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She died instantaneously.

In her memory the congregation provided a Pulpit Bible and 100 Pew Bibles for use in the church. As well, a congregational contribution was sent to Brazil to help furnish a lecture theatre in the Bethel Seminary in Rio where Pamela had taught for a number of years. This lecture room has been named *The Pamela Craig Auditorium*.

In October 1988 the congregation freed Mr and Mrs Dixon to go on a six weeks' visit to the Overseas Missionary Fellowship stations in the Far East. This enabled them to meet OMF workers, bring greetings from 'home' and encourage them in their work. In particular, they were able to spend some time with those members of First Antrim who are working in SE Asia. It was a worthwhile tour and much appreciated by all those who were visited.

In July 1993 they undertook a similar visit, this time to Jamaica where they spent 5 weeks. Unfortunately the only time that suited them to go coincided with a period when the Revs Brian and Elizabeth Hughes* were on short leave in Ireland. Mr and Mrs Dixon made the Hughes' manse in Salem, Jamaica, their headquarters. In the Rev Elizabeth Hughes' absence, Mr Dixon took charge of the three congregations

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*THE REV BRIAN HUGHES AND HIS WIFE, THE REV ELIZABETH HUGHES, WERE MISSIONARIES IN JAMAICA FROM SEPT 1986 UNTIL APRIL 1995. DURING THEIR TIME THERE FIRST ANTRIM COUNTED THEM AS THEIR MISSIONARIES.

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where she was the minister. Besides preaching in each of them, he conducted meetings in several other churches on the island. This visit enabled Mr and Mrs Dixon to experience missionary life at first-hand without the help and advice of other missionaries on the same location.

Within the past two years, two different initiatives were spearheaded by members of the congregation. The Captain of The Boys' Brigade, Mr David Thompson, paid a visit to Jamaica in 1992. While there he saw the great need for a school at Mount Liberty, a very poor church situated in an isolated mountainous area of Jamaica, and one of the churches for which the Rev Elizabeth Hughes was responsible. Returning home he set about raising money for the project and collected £2,500. Two years later he paid a return visit to Jamaica and personally handed over to the church authorities the money he had raised.

The second project, this time to assist Wilson and Irene McMahon in the Philippines, went into action in November 1995. A party of five men (four of them elders), and one young lady went, at their own expense, to the Philippines for a three week working visit. Their objective was to construct a classroom in the village of Kibunkog where the McMahons live and work. The multi-purpose building which they erected will provide a school-room during the week, a place for Church services on Sundays, a conference room when required and a place for Bible teaching, study and prayer. The party completed the work in record time and were able to do some necessary renovations and repairs to the McMahon home as well. All returned home safely, happy and satisfied with what they had been able to accomplish, challenged by what they had seen and full of admiration and praise for the work that Wilson and Irene are doing in the Tigwa Valley of Mindanao.

In recent years the congregation has had the privilege of hosting three groups of young people from overseas who were visiting Northern Ireland under an exchange scheme promoted by the Youth Board of The General Assembly. The first party of fourteen came from Jamaica in August 1989, the second party of eight came from Malawi in August 1992 and the third party of twelve came from the Czech Republic in August 1995. Each group brought to the congregation something of their worship, their culture, customs and dress. Their presence emphasised the fact that although we are different in many ways we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and sons and daughters of the same God.

Property.

A second-hand bus for the use of the congregation and its organisations was purchased in 1980. It provided a useful service twice on Sundays, transporting to church and home again members who, because they had no transport, might not otherwise have been able to attend. Reluctantly, in 1995 it was decided that because of the rising cost of fuel and oil, the increasing maintenance charges, the age of the vehicle and its unreliability, combined with the fact that fewer people were making use of it, the bus had become both uneconomical and a liability and should be sold. It has not been replaced.

Since 1980 the attention of the Committee has been concentrated on the property. Over the years it became increasingly evident that its proper care and maintenance were more than one large Property Committee could handle and it was decided that the responsibility should be spread. Three separate sub-committees were formed namely:

- (a) The Church and Grounds sub-committee,
- (b) The Halls and Caretaker's Residence sub-committee and
- (c) The Manse and Manse Grounds sub-committee.

This arrangement has served its purpose well and ensured that no part of the property has been overlooked or neglected.

Considerable work was needed within the church. After attending to defects in the fabric, work in the vestibules was undertaken. Heating was provided by extending 'skirting' heating pipes into them. At the same time cupboards for the storage of Hymn Books, Pew Bibles, Church Library videos, and Library Books, were recessed into the three-foot thick walls. After improving the lighting, re-decoration and laying carpet on the floors the vestibules now present a warm, attractive and welcoming atmosphere to those entering the building. The Classroom upstairs was also improved by installation of a new heating system, carpeting the floor and the provision of new chairs.

A considerable amount of money had been spent over the years on the maintenance of the rest of the property. This included re-roofing the Halls, making good the damage done by vandals to both the manse boundary wall and the lamp standards on the church drive-way, treating outbreaks of dry rot in the church and rising damp in the Bruce Hall, renovating the caretaker's residence before the last caretaker Mr Andrew Taylor could move in, and again 10 years later when the present caretaker, Mr Andrew Ross took up residence.

Major alterations to the Halls were considered. Realising the high costs involved the Committee decided in 1991 to look carefully at all new work envisaged within the next seven years, and at all the major maintenance and repair work anticipated during the same period. With this information in hand a plan for completing the work and financing it within a seven year period was formulated. The estimated cost of all the work was £228,645.00. (This figure did not include Bank Charges for an overdraft.) To keep within their target and hold Bank Charges down to a minimum, the Committee made the following recommendations:-

- (1) to fix a target date within The Seven Year period by which all the work would be complete and paid for,
- (2) the plan would not be put into effect unless 25% of the estimated cost (that is, a sum of £57,161.00) was on hand by December 31st 1991,
- (3) regular progress reports would be presented to the congregation through periodic statements from the pulpit and articles in the church magazine,
- (4) the congregation would be encouraged to make regular sustained contributions through 'Capital Development Fund' envelopes,
- (5) members of the congregation would have the opportunity to study the proposed plans, discuss them at a special congregational meeting and come to a decision as to whether or not to proceed with the scheme. The meeting was held on June 13th 1991; the congregation approved both the plans and the committee's recommendations and gave permission for the work to proceed.

A closer scrutiny of the estimates received showed that if the work was to be done in a single contract a large Bank overdraft would be needed and would incur interest charges, estimated at around £81,000.00. If, however, the work was divided into two contracts and the first Phase completed and paid for before the second Phase

was started, the original estimates would be increased by about £20,000.00 but the Bank loan, and therefore the Bank Interest, would be considerably reduced. The committee decided on the second course, a decision which proved to be correct. When the work was completed it was found that no Bank loan had been needed and the church was free of interest payments.

Phase one involved alterations to the Bruce Hall complex, enlarging the committee room, making a new kitchen and providing new cloakroom/toilet facilities. All the work was completed and paid for within the projected time-scale. In Phase two a new frontage was added to the hall complex to provide a Church Office on the ground floor with a waiting room/store beside it and a Lift shaft. Upstairs a new kitchen for the Majury Hall was made and a small counselling room constructed beside it. The attic space provides a large storage room for various pieces of equipment and furniture. The end result is an attractive and useful suite of halls costing in all £315,506.25.

Both the committee and the congregation honoured their commitments. All the work was completed on schedule and money has been contributed by the congregation in accordance with the committee's suggestion. At the end of December 1995, and with two years of the Seven Years' Plan still to run, the amount outstanding was £53,619, a figure which the committee felt confident could be realised by the end of 1996. However, an unforeseen problem with the church heating system at the end of 1995 has raised doubts as to the feasibility of keeping within the target date.

Re-surfacing the avenue, including the paths around the church and the car park, together with repairing the entrance gates and painting of the front of the church, have added considerably to the appearance of the property.

Work on a scale such as this costs money. It is reckoned that in the last 15 years the church has spent nearly £640,000 on its property! The church owes a debt of gratitude to its Treasurer, Mr AA Chestnutt, for the meticulous care and attention he has given to keeping the accounts in order and for his expert advice on financial matters which has proved of immense benefit to the church on many occasions.

The foundation stone for the church was laid in 1834, and the official Opening Service was held in 1837. These occasions were recalled in 1984 and 1987 (the 150th anniversaries respectively) by special services planned to reflect as closely as possible the worship of 150 years ago. The congregation sat for Praise, which consisted solely of metrical Psalms, sung unaccompanied and stood for Prayer. Special Anniversary "Orders of Service" were printed for both occasions, each containing a portion of a brief history of the congregation. When the two sections were put together they provided a 'thumb-nail' sketch of the story of the congregation from its beginning in the Antrim area in 1619 until 1987.

Mr James Madden, a valued member of the congregation, died in March 1987. He had a great interest in the Tape Ministry and for this reason his daughters presented the church with modern up-to-date recording equipment in his memory. This equipment is used extensively at the Sunday services and at other special meetings in the church. The tapes are widely used and greatly appreciated by members of the congregation, by former members and friends and by those who are shut-in and unable to attend church.

Over the years several new associations have been formed within the congregation. These include The Friendship Group for Senior Citizens, The Spectrum Group (an activity group for those aged 20-30), The Engaged Couples' Group for those engaged to be married and The Stauros Group for Addicts in the community. In 1994 the '**Welcome-In**' was opened on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It provides a place where pensioners, disabled and unemployed men and women can meet and have fellowship. Meals are available at a modest price. An Arts and Crafts class, with a trained supervisor in charge, is also in operation.

A few years ago some Ladies in the congregation planned **A Ladies' Day**. This meeting, which was attended by women from all over the province, was so successful that it has been decided to make it an annual event. Many who came have spoken of the benefit they received from the addresses given and from the fellowship they enjoyed.

Since 1992 "Activity Weeks" during the month of August have been held in the church halls for the children. These weeks have been known by a variety of names such as The Light Factory, Body-builders, Ship-Shapes and News-Hounds. During these "weeks" the children participate in games, drama, stories, crafts, Bible Stories and short Prayer sessions. A children's address is also included.

A special feature of autumn 1992 was **Outreach '92**, an evangelistic outreach lasting from October 3rd to October 10th. The special speakers were Mr Derek Cleave and Mr Peter Anderson from Christian Ministries, Whitney, England. The object of 'The Outreach' was to contact as many "unchurched" people in the town and surrounding district as possible, special attention being focused on members of First Antrim congregation. Those invited came from a wide cross-section of the community, and included those recently married, couples who had babies baptised during the previous months, lorry drivers, members of Young Farmers' Clubs, Youth Groups, members of sports clubs, senior citizens, and 'the men' of the congregation. Special printed invitations were issued to each group to inform them of the time and the place of their meeting. The congregation provided a meal free of charge for each group. After the meal an evangelistic address was given by one of the visiting speakers. The response to this outreach was excellent and a number of those who came were influenced both by the talks and by the atmosphere in the meeting. The cost of the week was covered by voluntary subscriptions from Church members.

Professor G D Henderson in his book, 'The Church of Scotland' has written, "*we cannot appreciate any institution properly unless we know how it has come to be*". The story told in these pages outlines the birth, subsequent growth and the development of First Antrim over three and a half centuries. It has traced its ups and downs, its good times and its bad times, its successes and its failures - all of which have contributed to making it what it is today.

We cannot tell what the future holds but the indications are that at the present time there is no place for complacency within the Church. Groups, both outside and inside the Church, are at work seeking to erode the faith of its people and discredit its teaching. Vigilance, combined with preparations to meet these forces are necessary if they are to be contained and eradicated.

In his 1939 Christmas Day broadcast the late King George VI gave to the nation a stirring message of hope at a time of grave national danger. The same message is as relevant to the Church today as it was to the nation then. The message was: *"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'. And he replied, 'go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.' So I went forth and finding the hand of God, trod gladly into the night."*

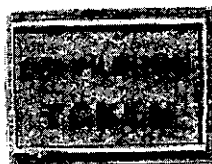
How good is the God we adore!
Our faithful unchangeable friend:
Whose grace is as great as His power
And knows neither measure nor end.

'Tis Jesus the First and the Last;
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come.

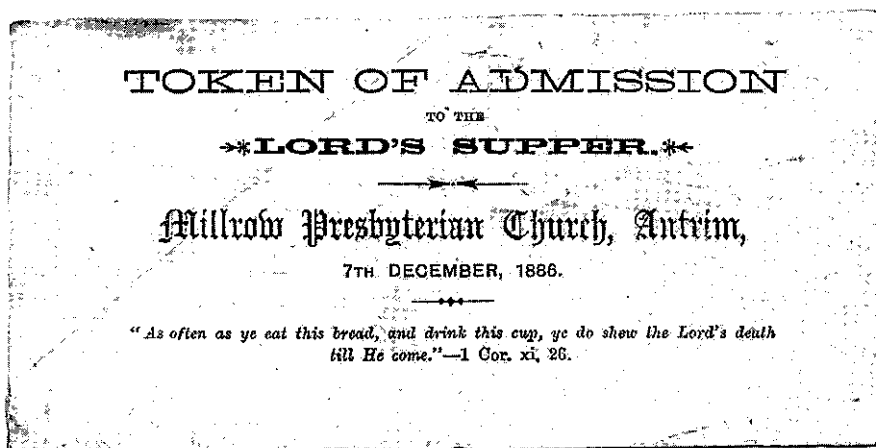
J Hart. 1728-1768.



"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint." - Isa. 40 v 31.



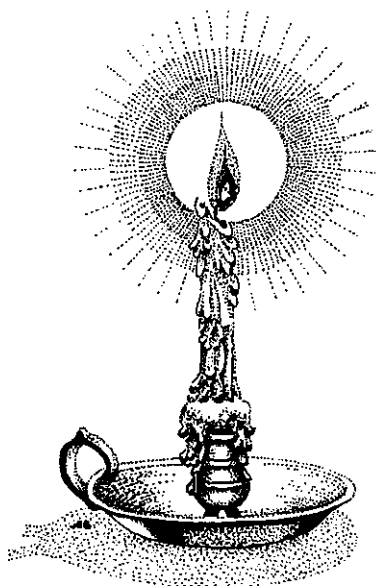
*Lead communion token
(in use up to about 1880).*



*Copy of a printed token dated 7th December, 1886.
Reverse side has spaces lined for:*

Name of Communicant:.....

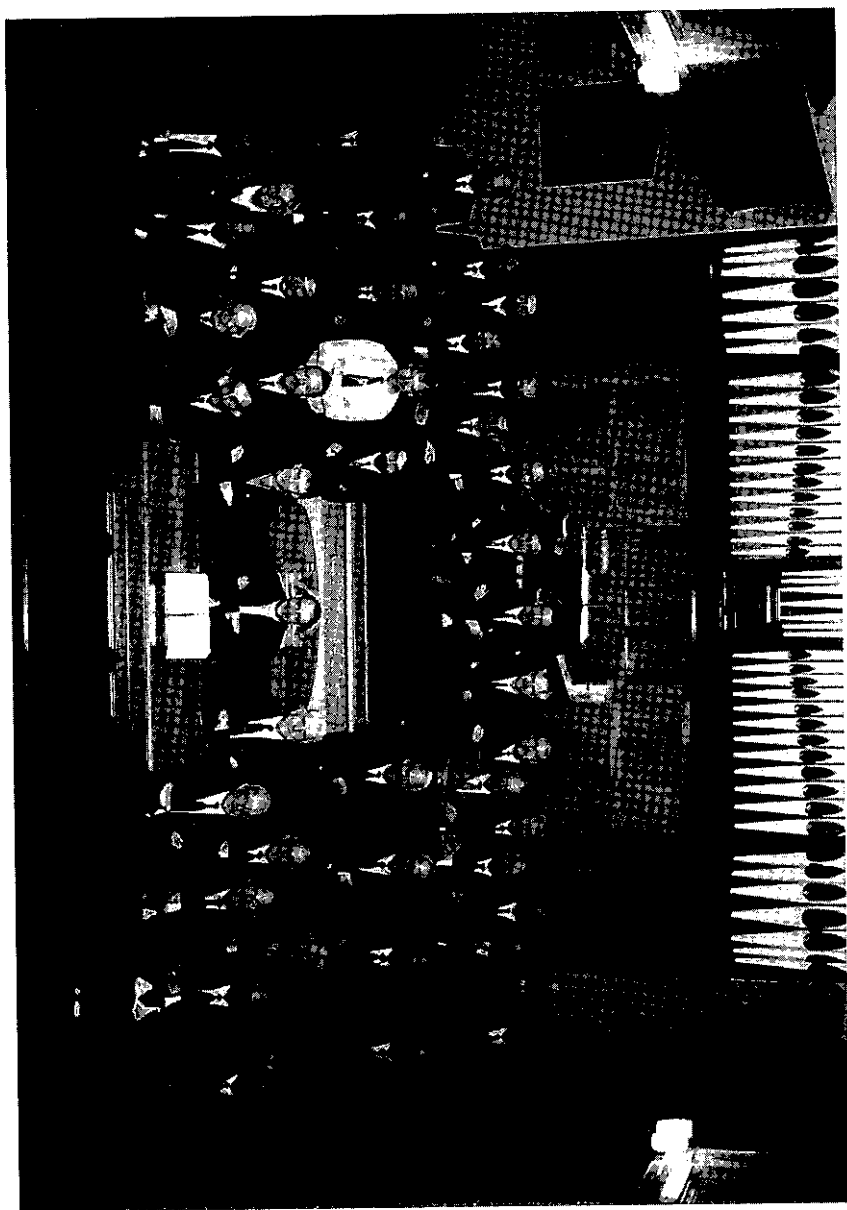
Name of Congregation:.....



"You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light." - Ps. 18 v 28.



"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." - Isa. 55 v 13.



First Antrim Presbyterian Church Kirk Session (1995).

First Antrim Presbyterian Church Kirk Session (1995)

Front Row (left to right):

RH Strange, J Steele, M McCullough, J Stirling,
A Thompson, Wm Ingram, J Logan, H Matchett.

First Row:

Miss Sadie Murphy, Mr Richard Gregg (Student Assistant),
Mr John Gilkinson (Assistant), Rev Peter Lyle (Retiring Assistant
Minister), Rev S J Dixon (Minister), F J Bownes (Clerk of Session),
Dr G Hughes, D McNie, G Martin.

Second Row:

R McCrory, J Murphy, I Stockdale, H Latimer, E Martin,
J McCloy, J McConaghy, A Cuthbert, D Whitney.

Third Row:

S Kirk, P McKibbin, Wm Donnell, K Alexander, N Glendinning,
D McMahon, F Wilson, M Herbison.

Back Row:

L Creighton, Wm Allison, R Hume, I Gillespie, I Hamill,
A Chestnutt, R Burns, F McFarland, N Allison, W Carson.

Absent:

A Collins, D Cameron, R Orr, J Matier, N Milway, R Cameron.

APPENDIX

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Ministers to the Presbyterians in Antrim Prior to 1762

1619-1636	Rev John Ridge MA
1644-1654	Rev Archibald Ferguson MA
1654-1670	Rev James Cunningham MA
1671-1676	Rev John Howe MA (helped Rev Gowan but was not ordained a minister of the church)
1672-1683	Rev Thomas Gowan MA
1685-1688	Rev John Anderson AM
1690-1698	Rev William Adair MA
1703-1730	Rev Abernethy MA

Ministers of the Millrow Congregation now known as The Congregation of First Antrim

1730-1750	Rev William Holmes MA
1751-1790	Rev John Rankin MA
1791-1820	Rev Alexander Montgomery MA
1820-1839	Rev Robert Magill MA
1840-1859	Rev Charles Morrison MA PhD
1860-1867	Rev George Magill MA DD
1967-1919	Rev Thomas West BA DD
1920-1961	Rev Matthew Majury BA DD
1962-1979	Rev Thomas Blackstock BA
1980-	Rev Samuel John Dixon BA (the present Minister)

First Antrim Presbyterian Church
Kirk Session
for the Year Ending December 31st, 1995

Mr K A Alexander	Mr H M Mackey
Mr N Allison	Mr E A Martin
Mr W Allison	Mr G Martin
Mr F J Bownes	Mr H McC Matchett
Mr R Burns	Mr J G Matier
Mr D Cameron	Mr N P Milway
Mr R Cameron	Mr J Murphy
Mr W J Carson	Miss S Murphy
Mr A A Chestnutt	Mr J McCloy
Mr A Collins	Mr J McConaghy
Mr L Creighton	Mr R J McCrory
Mr A McM Cuthbert	Mr R S McCullough
Mr W Donnell	Mr F McFarland
Mr T J Fleming	Mr R P McKibbin
Mr I T A Gillespie	Mr D G G McNie
Mr N Glendinning	Mr D McMahon
Mr I Hamill	Mr R J Orr
Mr M Herbison	Mr J Steele
Dr G Hughes	Mr J Stirling
Mr R Hume	Mr R I Stockdale
Mr S B Ingram	Mr B Strange
Mr W Ingram	Mr A P Thompson
Mr S Kirk	Mr D G Whitney
Mr T H R Latimer	Mr F Wilson
Mr J H Logan	

***First Antrim Presbyterian Church
Committee Members
for the Year Ending 31st December, 1995***

Mrs Marie Abercrombie	Mr I Mawhinney
Miss Mary Baird	Mr S Mawhinney
Mr M Ball	Mr E Mitchell
Mr W Ball	Mr J McDowell
Dr M Brown	Mr H McFadden
Mr A Cameron	Mr R McFetridge
Mrs Betty Carnwath	Mrs Norah McKnight
Mrs Florence Carson	Miss Lily Nicholl
Mr D Clyde	Mr D J Pattison
Mr Wm Dennison	Mr A Ross
Mr T Drummond	Mr J Smyth
Dr B Ford	Mr W T Stirling
Mrs Josephine Herbison	Mr W T Stirling (Jnr)
Mr S Hume	Mr D Thompson
Mr R J Johnston	Mr J Winters
Mr Laverty	Mr J Wright
Mr B Little	

***The following members of the Church Committee
were Ordained to the Eldership on June 11th, 1995***

Mr Wm Allison
Mr R Burns
Mr L Creighton
Mr I Hamill
Mr M Herbison
Mr R Strange

Members of the Kirk Session: Past and Present

August 1697-1715

Alexander Campbell
William Campbell
James Palmer
John Thompson
John Blakely

John Duncan
James Berry
Samuel Thompson
James Reid
Captain William Shaw

John Bones
James Luke
James Bryson
William Fleming

1731-1736

John English
Robert Maxwell
Samuel Martin
Andrew Johnston
William McConchy

Nathaniel McBride
Samuel Kinley
John Bruce
William Kennedy
David White

William Eagleson
James Cumming (Dunsilly)
Archibald Scott (Springfarm)
David Beattie (Ballycraig)

This was the first Session to be formed in Millrow Presbyterian Church

1800

James Kirk

1838

Samuel Craig (Antrim)
William Beck (Islandreagh)
James Ellison (Oldstone)
James Cooper (Oldstone)

William Walker (Ballyrobin)
David Beattie (Bush)
James E Moody (Oldstone)

Price Carey (Carngranny)
James Parker (Ballyno)
John Taggart (Antrim)

Co-opted 1850

Collins Hall (Anahilt)

Robert Henry (Ballysillan)

1860

William Burns
James Kirk
John Warwick

Thomas Fletcher
Alexander Thompson
John McCormick

James Forbes
Andrew Scully
Robert Johnston

1891

James Grey (Drumagorgan)
William Morrison JP

Hugh Gaston (Beech Cottage)
Alexander Thompson

James Coleman
Samuel Russell

1902

Dr J Taggart (Antrim)
Robert Anderson
Henry Groves
Andrew McKillop

Thomas Chisholm (The Folly)
John Gardiner (Fountain Place)
JJ Heatley
John Walker

John Parker (Ballyno)
Samuel Beattie
William Henry

1925

William S Orr
William J Millar

William Harper
Thomas Millar
William Parkinson

Frederick T Smith
John Gill

1934

James Abernethy
James D McDonald
James E Moody

Robert Barclay
Robert J McMillan
Alexander Rodgers

Samuel Boal
John Minford
William Stirrett

Miss Mary EJ Gillespie

Co-opted 1948
John N Sprott

Robert Dickey

Co-opted 1953

William Beattie
James W Craig
William French
Thomas D Hall

Ordained 22nd April 1956
Edward Harrison
Alexander K Hunter
James W Irwin
Robert Kane
James Stirling

William T Millar
David Moore
John Murphy
Robert Shaw

Alexander Stewart

Co-opted 1963

Edwin Hawthorne
Gerald Martin
Ivan Stockdale

Ordained 16th January 1966
Desmond Johnston
Robert McCrory
William Strange

Winston Kelso
Martin McCullough

William Carson

Co-opted 27th November 1966

William J Moore

Co-opted 28th April 1967
Dr G Hughes

Miss Sadie Murphy
James Ferguson
Noel Glendinning
James McCloy

Ordained 19th September 1971
Archibald Collins
Thomas Fleming
Hugh Mackey
David McNie

Robert Dickey (Junior)
Ivan Gillespie
Hugh Matchett
John Steele

FJ Bownes

Co-opted 2nd June 1974
DGJ Browne

Andrew Thompson

David Cameron
William Ingram
Joseph Logan

Ordained 27th March 1977
Alexander Chestnutt
Adam L Kirk
Jack Matier

Angus Cuthbert
James Logan

Ivan Boyd
Robert Orr

Ordained 19th June 1983
Samuel Ingram
David Whitney

Peter McKibbin
Dickson Woods

Raymond Hume
Norman McDowell

Ordained 11th May 1986
Thomas A Martin
Connor McKnight

John McConaghy
David McMahon

Norman Allison
Nicholas Milway
William Donnell

Ordained 13th May 1990
Kenneth Alexander
Rodney Cameron
Elliott Martin
Frank McFarland (Installed)

Samuel Kirk
Harold Latimer
Frederick Wilson

William Allison
Irvine Hamill

Ordained 11th June 1995
Ronald Burns
Matthew Herbison

Lyle Creighton
Robert Strange

Assistant Ministers up to 31st December, 1995.

Name	Year of Appointment	Year and place of Licensing	Date of Ordination in First Antrim	First Congregation and Date of Installation
Trevor Magowan	1969	July 1970 1st Larne	30.12.70	Loughbrickland & Scarva 25.04.73
William McKeown	1973	July 1974 1st Ballymena	12.01.75	Clogher & Glenhoy 21.04.76
Kenneth Simpson	1976	26.06.77 Wellington St.	08.01.78	Prison Chaplaincy 25.11.88
Edgar McKinney	1979	18.06.80 Dunlop Memorial	11.01.81	Gt James St, L'Derry 06.04.82
Hugh Mullen	1982	05.06.83 Killymurris	08.01.84	Castledawson & Curran 14.03.85
Ian McClean	1984	02.06.85 High Kirk	31.01.86	24.04.87 Toberkeigh
Steve Stockman	1986	28.06.87 Harryville	21.02.88	Youth Development Officer, Eire. 06.09.91
Peter Lyle	1991	09.06.92 Portrush	15.01.93	02.06.95 2nd Dunboe
John Gilkinson	1993	24.06.94 Pomeroy	29.01.95	
Richard Gregg	1995			

Members Who Trained For The Ministry before December 1995.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Licensing in First Antrim</i>	<i>Date and Place of Ordination</i>	<i>Installation Date and Place</i>
Robert Gamble	01.08.1848	01.08.1849 Castledawson	01.08.1849 Castledawson
John F Steele	01.08.1883	29.10.1883 First Antrim	29.10.1883 Foreign Mission
Campbell M Young	09.06.1896	24.11.1896 Killymurris	24.11.1896 Killymurris
Jackson C Buick	Belfast	27.06.63 2nd Newtownards	27.06.63 2nd Newtownards
Ian McNie	19.06.1977	04.01. 1978 Alexandra	13.03.1980 Kilkeel
Maurice Bond	15.06.1980	18.01.1981 Newtownbreda	09.03.1983 Ballynahinch
Ivan Neish	26.06.1983	11.01.1984 Rathcoole	24.05.1986 Portavogie & Cloghey
Eddie Kirk	10.06.1984	09.01.1985 Oldpark	24.10.1986 3rd Portglenone
Brian Hughes	10.06.1984	25.01.1985 Newtownbreda	03.10.1986 Overseas Board
Henry Wilson	29.06.1986	11.02.1987 Glengormley	26.08.1988 Waterford
Thomas A Martin		Knox Memorial Church Washington, U.S.A.	
Graham Stockdale	10.06.1992	12.05.1992 Ballymacarratt	08.09.1995 Newtownstewart, Gortin
Norman McDowell	16.06.1993	16.01.1994 Cullybackey	
Samuel Mawhinney	21.06.1995		
Rodney Cameron			

Missionaries Who Served either Overseas or at Home

<i>Name</i>	<i>Society</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Commissioned</i>	<i>Notes</i>
John F Steele	PCI	Gujarat, India	24.10.1883	Died in India 1919
Pamela Craig	EUSA (Latin Link)	Brazil	11.11.1973	Murdered in Brazil, 16.01.87
Cathy Bell	PCI	Jamaica	04.10.1981	Resigned
Paddi Power	PCI	Israel	25.04.1984	Resigned
Peter McKibbin	OMF	Philippines	25.05.1986	
Brian Hughes Elizabeth Hughes	PCI	Jamaica	21.09.1986 29.03.1988	
Raymond Hume	Belfast City Mission	Belfast	13.03.1988	
Ruth Platt	OMF	Philippines	14.02.1988	
Wilson and Irene McMahon	OMF	Philippines	12.02.1989	
David McMahon	Stauros		26.11.1995	

Short-Term Mission Helpers.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Society</i>	<i>Duration</i>
Brian Hughes	24.09.79	PCI Baroach	24 months
Karen Wilson	06.02.83	AIM Uganda	3 months
Brian Hughes	June 1984	PCI Canada	3 months
Nicola Stirling	Sept 1984	SU Birmingham	1 year
Graham Stockdale	09.09.85	London City Mission	1 year
Rosalind Stirling	29.09.85	UCCF York	3 years
Samuel Mawhinney	06.10.91	PCI Kikuyu, Kenya	1 year
Naomi Thompson	Sept 1993	John Moxon, Portrush	15 months
Maureen Stevenson	Spring 1994	PCI Ekewendi, Malawi	3 months
Pamela Henderson	May/June '94	OMF Manoram, Thailand	6 weeks
Ann Little	Sept '94 - June '95	PCI Youth Board	9 months

Missionary Visitors and SPOT Workers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Society</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Duration</i>
Karen Wilson	1983	AIM	Uganda	3 months
Robert Poots	1984	Ballymena Academy SU	Malawi	3 weeks
Joanne McConaghy	1988	Latin Link	Brazil	6 weeks
Julianna McNeice	1989	Operation Mobilisation	France	4 weeks
Julie Dixon	1990	OMF	Philippines	8 weeks
Lorna McMahon	1991	OMF	Philippines	5 weeks
Beverley Parkhill	1991	PCI	Spain	2 weeks
Simon Magowan	1991	PCI	Malawi	4 weeks
Michelle Parkhill	1991	OMF	Philippines	8 weeks
Cheryl Dixon	1992	Campus Crusade	Albania	4 weeks
Anne Little	1992	Latin Link	Brazil	6 weeks
Richard Matchett	1993	Latin Link	Argentina	6 weeks
Shauna McKinley	1993	PCI	London	2 weeks
Maureen Stevenson	1994	PCI	Malawi	3 months
Pamela Henderson	1994	OMF	Thailand	6 weeks
Martin Brown	1994	Arab World Ministries	Turkey	4 weeks
Fiona McFadden	1994	PCI	London	2 weeks
Alison McKee	1995	Latin Link	Bolivia	6 weeks
Michelle Parkhill	1995	OMF	China	6 weeks
Laura Stewart	1995	PCI	Czech Republic	3 weeks

FIRST ANTRIM CONVENTION SPEAKERS

- 1984 Rev Herbert Carson, Leicester.
- 1985 The Very Rev Dr William Craig, Moira.
Mr Derick Bingham, Belfast.
- 1986 The Very Rev Dr John Girvan, Bangor.
Rev Harry Kilbride, Bournemouth.
Mr Noel Agnew, Kilrea.
- 1987 The Very Rev Dr David Burke, Bangor.
Rev Nicholas Carr, Gloucester.
Rev Albert Baxter, Portglenone.
- 1988 The Right Rev Dr Godfrey Brown, Ballycastle.
Mr John Miller, OMF, Singapore.
Rev Alastair Morrice, Glasgow.
- 1989 The Very Rev Dr William Fleming, Abbots Cross, Newtownabbey.
Rev Robert Amess, Richmond.
Rev Geraint Fielder, Cardiff.
- 1990 Rev Denis Lane, OMF, Singapore.
Prof Harvie Conn, Westminster Theol Seminary, Philadelphia.
- 1991 Rev Philip Hacking, Sheffield.
Rev John Woodside, Kilkenny.
- 1992 Rev David Searle, Bangor.
Mr Derick Bingham, Belfast.
- 1993 Rev Cecil McSparron, London Bible College.
Rev Desmond Maxwell, Belfast Bible College.
- 1994 Dr Raymond Brown, Cambridge.
Mr Charles Price, Capernwray.
- 1995 Rev Howard Lewis, Belfast.
Mr Derick Cleave, Bristol.



Profile of *Dr. George Hughes* MB BCh BAO

Dr. George Hughes, a farmer's son, was brought up in the Finvoy district of Ballymoney, Co. Antrim and attended Finvoy Presbyterian Church. From an early age he developed a keen interest in missionary work through the Boys' Auxiliary.

He was educated at Carrowreagh Public Elementary School, Dalriada School, Ballymoney and The Queen's University, Belfast where he studied Medicine and graduated in 1947. The following year he made application to the Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church and was accepted for work in India.

At a service in Finvoy Church on 14th November 1948, he was ordained as a Missionary Elder and commissioned as a Medical Missionary for work in Gujarat, India. Four days later he left for India where he served for periods in the Hospitals in Dohad, Surendranagar (previously known as Wadhwan Camp), Broach, and Borsad.

In 1950 Dr. Hughes married Miss Dora M. Dunlop, a trained nurse. They have three daughters and two sons. Their older son, Brian, served as a short-term missionary in India before entering the Ministry. Later, he and his wife, both ordained Ministers, later served the Church in Jamaica.

In the years leading up to the ultimate exclusion of missionaries from the sub-continent freedom for Missionaries working in India was restricted increasingly. Dr. Hughes resigned from the Mission in 1965 and settled as a General Medical Practitioner, first in Portadown. Later in 1966 he moved to Antrim, where he has remained since. He is a member of the Kirk Session of First Antrim Presbyterian Church and served as its Clerk from 1970 until 1982.