

# Manorhamilton Methodist Church celebrates its 50th Anniversary

*Ian Henderson*

THE METHODIST CHURCH is part of the Protestant tradition, emerging out the evangelical revival of the 1700s. The world at that time was changing rapidly. The French Revolution, the American Revolution and the 1798 Uprising in Ireland were all major events. In Britain, the Rev John Wesley also wanted to see change in the Church and society. He wanted the Church to focus on teaching the Bible and living in a way that demonstrated that teaching. He wanted to see ordinary people benefit through changed lives from the power of what the Bible teaches about how we can experience God's love, joy and free forgiveness. So, to help achieve change in the Church and society, he founded the Methodist Movement, later to become the Methodist Church.

There have been a total of four Methodist Churches in Manorhamilton since Methodism was introduced to the town. The first was built in 1792. According to oral tradition it was located in Reilly's Row off Castle Street, but sadly no trace of it remains today.

A second chapel was built circa 1804 in St Patrick's Terrace off Main Street. The location was colloquially known as "Teapot Lane", apparently



because of the habit of the residents to discard the dregs of their teapots out into the street. This building is still extant and part of it is the Masonic hall, while the other part, now vacant, was used as a furniture store.

In 1816 there was a split in Irish Methodism. The breakaway group established a separate Methodist denomination and called themselves "Primitive Methodists" while the parent body became "Wesleyan Methodists". The Primitive "Wesleyans" built many chapels around the country and one of these was in

Manorhamilton, built in 1821 on what is known as the New Line.

So from 1821 until 1878 there were two Methodist Churches in Manorhamilton. In 1878 the two separate Methodist denominations reunited and the united congregations in Manorhamilton worshipped together in the Primitive Wesleyan chapel until 1964. It was in this church that the late Senator Gordon Wilson was baptised. Gordon Wilson's father owned a drapery business in the town and was a member of the Methodist Church.



In July, the Revd Ian Henderson will speak on “Methodism in Co Leitrim”, including Methodism in Manorhamilton. Revd Henderson was minister in Manorhamilton from 1991 to 1999 and was President of the Methodist Church in Ireland during the year 2011-2012.

In August, the Revd Ruth Watt will speak on the subject of the journey of Methodism in the 21st century. Revd Watt as a native of Sligo, grew up as a member of the Circuit (parish) and currently serves as the minister of the Methodist Churches in Lisbellaw, Maguiresbridge and Tempo in Co Fermanagh.

The Primitive Wesleyan chapel was sold to Mr George Thomson, (father of Mr Harold Thompson). It was subsequently sold to the local community and opened in 1993 by President Mary Robinson as the *Glens Centre*.

The current Methodist Church was built in the grounds of the former Methodist manse in 1964. The manse continued to be used until 1968 when the minister was withdrawn from Manorhamilton and the minister in Sligo was given responsibility for it. The manse was subsequently sold.

The current Manorhamilton

Methodist Church will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2014. There are four special events planned for that celebration over the period from June to September 2014.

The June event will be an outline of the seven visits to Manorhamilton by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, between 1769 and 1789 and some of the early Methodist preachers who established Methodism in the town. This talk will be given by the Revd. Peter Murray, who was minister in Manorhamilton from 1987 to 1991 and will by that time, be President of the Methodist Church in Ireland for the year 2014-2015.

The final event will be an Anniversary Celebration involving the annual Harvest Service. The special preacher will be the Revd Winston Good who was minister in Manorhamilton in 1964 when the current Methodist Church was opened. Revd Good was also a former president of the Methodist Church in Ireland in the year 1991-1992.

***EVERYONE is welcome to attend any and all of our events including our services on Sundays at 12 noon, and to join with us in celebrating 50 years in our current location.***

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