



## **The Burning Bush - Online article archive**

### **New Church Hall Opened at Kilskeery, 17th August 1974**

Report from September '74 "Revivalist"

The new Free Presbyterian Hall at Kilskeery, to which there was strong objection at the planning stage has been opened.

The ceremony was performed by Dr. Ian Paisley, MP, Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, in the presence of several hundred people from many parts of Fermanagh and Tyrone and farther afield.

About half-a-dozen RUC men were on duty controlling traffic and a UDR patrol was in Kilskeery village.

The new building, costing approximately £4,000, was built almost entirely by voluntary effort on the site given by Mr. Robert Edwards. It was designed, by Mr. Ivan Morrison, a committee member of Bethel Free Presbyterian, Church, Enniskillen.

The hall is surrounded by a car park for about 40 vehicles, and it is intended that it should be extended later when Sunday School rooms and a kitchen will be provided. At present the hall has accommodation for more than 140 people. The outside walls are finished in white limestone chippings and the fascia and woodwork painted a mustard colour. A new electric organ has been installed.

#### **"An outreach"**

The Kilskeery congregation, composed of about a dozen families, has been described as "an outreach" of Bethel Free Presbyterian Church at Enniskillen by the minister, Rev. Ivan Foster, who said that it was intended that Kilskeery should eventually be constituted as a separate congregation with its own minister.

On his arrival Dr. Paisley was requested by Mr. Ivan Morrison on behalf of the Kilskeery congregation, to formally declare the new hall open, and he afterwards unveiled and dedicated two brass plaques at the entrance to the main hall one to Mr. Robert Edwards and his family for donating the site and the second commemorating the opening by Dr. Paisley.

The hall was filled to overflowing and the proceedings were relayed to a second congregation in a large marquee in the car park. A considerable number of people gathered outside.

The opening prayer was led by Rev. Kenneth Elliott, Portadown, who prayed that Kilskeery would become a centre of great revival. The organist was Miss Myrtle Vance, of Lisbellaw.

A welcome was given to the visitors by Mr. Foster, on behalf of the Kilskeery congregation, and he went on to refer to the history of events leading up to the building of the hall. When the first Free Presbyterian Church in County Fermanagh opened in Lisbellaw a trickle of folk from the Kilskeery area began to arrive and greatly increased until there was quite a flood of people. In those early days in the small church in Lisbellaw they were pleased to see the people coming from Kilskeery.

#### **Opposition**

Among them were many people who had left other churches in their desire to bring their children up in the gospel. As a result, weekly meetings were arranged in Feglish, but there was opposition. It was therefore decided that something would have to be done to provide a permanent building for the people in the Kilskeery area.

Plans were submitted to Tyrone County Council, Mr. Foster went on, and permission was obtained from the local council for the sewerage system. It looked as if they were going to get approval.

"Then the opposition was mounted," he said. "Petitions were got up. We were accused of building a hall which would be a major traffic obstruction, and there were all sorts of reasons. I think history was made



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many times in connection with this hall.

"On one occasion the whole County Council came out to meet here on the site to see whether it was possible to give planning permission. On that particular day a lot of people had it in their mind to go out at the same time as the Councillors arrived. The road was very, very busy for a little while. One of the major objections to the site was that it would create too much traffic.

"They had first said why build a hall, there will be nobody to go to it? Then they said there will be too many people going to it. There was this comic opera on the day the Council was here: husbands out on their bicycles, wives in the cars and sons on the tractors," Mr. Foster added amid laughter.

In spite of all this activity, permission was given and the project which began in June, 1972, had reached the stage where they had opened their new hall.

### Happy

"I am happy that though fire surrounded people in this place, and there was great opposition against them, God sustained them," said Mr. Foster. "He looked after the people here and courageously they have emerged from that atmosphere; they are a strong people that is why they are Free Presbyterians.

"You will not get the people of Kilskeery going back again. They intend to go on until they have their own church established here.

"The people of Kilskeery say 'We want to do this ourselves.' The work has been done almost exclusively by the men and women of this area who belong to our church. We rejoice and we give high praise for what God has done among the people here, and we rejoice in this hall today. We thank God for this building and the declaration that they intend not only to be Christians, but they intend to give others every opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved just as they did."

He expressed thanks to all who had laboured in the erection of the hall and assisted in other ways, particularly Mr. Thomas Armstrong, a member of Tyrone County Council. He knew that the reasons put forward in opposition to the plans were weak and should not be allowed.

"I would like on behalf of the people to thank Mr. Armstrong for his support," he went on, and he also thanked Mr. Richard Morrison for the work which he had done.

### Tribute

A special tribute was paid to Mr. Ivan Morrison for preparing the plans for the hall, and on the request of Mr. Foster, Dr. Paisley presented him with the first volume of the expositions of Matthew Henry.

Dr. Paisley said he longed to see the day when Mr. Ivan Morrison would be employed full-time in the Lord's work.

Afterwards collection was taken up towards the outstanding debt on the hall and later it was announced that £444 had been received, including a cheque for £125, Presented by Dr. Paisley on behalf of the Martyrs Free Presbyterian Church, Belfast, and £50 from the Omagh congregation.

In the course of his address Dr. Paisley said that Kilskeery would go down in history as the place where they had "marched in Kilskeery fashion" some years ago.

### Marching

Proceeding, he said: "We are marching today, marching publicly and marching without apology. We are marching in the army of the King of Kings. The battle lines are drawn; the armies are engaged; we have heard the clarion call, Who is on the Lord's side?"



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"God takes pleasure in the opening of this building today." Dr. Paisley told the congregation. "God has great things to do in Kilskeery. He is going to put a church and congregation in this area of Tyrone so the other congregations will have to look to their laurels when this church starts moving. There is going to be a moving of the spirit of God. God takes pleasure in this building and nothing is going to stop Him. The message Of the Reformation will be hurled forth from here without any apology."

Dr. Paisley attacked the World Council of Churches for giving support to terrorists. Some of the money provided by the Council had been used to buy bullets that had laid waste Portuguese territory. Many of the groups attending the IRA conference in Dublin had received money from the coffers of the World Council of Churches. That was what was happening and the ecumenical ministers talked about love and at the same time they were sponsoring those guilty of the worst atrocities across the world carried out by various guerilla groups.

"It is not hard to know that this same Organisation in other countries is at work in our own country," he went on, "and if not directly, then indirectly the IRA is being sponsored by the World Council of Churches. And, of course, we have also the student movements subsidised by the world Council of Churches."

In conclusion, Dr. Paisley forecast that they were going to see great things happening in Kilskeery.

After the ceremony, everyone was entertained to tea provided by the women of the Kilskeery congregation assisted by friends from the other Free Presbyterian congregations.