

Number 1: Bray Methodist Church

Compiled by Bray Cualann Historical Society for National Heritage Week 2020.



Key Dates:

- Church on Florence Road opened 1864
- The Manse completed 1880
- Epworth Hall opened 1888

The Bray Methodist Church on the Florence Road was opened in 1864. The Manse house next door dates from 1880 and Epworth Hall was added in 1888.

The Bray Wesleyan Church was designed by Alfred Gresham Jones. He also designed the Methodist Church in Athlone. It has similar features to that of Bray. The foundation stone of both churches was laid on 25th February 1864. The Bray Church was estimated to have cost £1,200. Other works designed by Alfred Jones include The French Embassy in Dublin, The Davenport Hotel in Merrion Row, The National Concert Hall at Earlsfort Terrace and Wesley College. In 1888 Alfred and his family emigrated to Australia. He died in Melbourne in 1915.

From 1845 preaching in Bray was conducted in the meeting rooms at Brighton Terrace and in the houses of members of the community. It is reported that in 1845 there was 45 members of the community and this would increase in the summer months. A fund was established to build a new church and a committee under the chairman of Thomas Michael Gresham (founder of the Gresham Hotel in O'Connell Street). Thomas laid the foundation stone in 1864.

Thomas had a sad start in life. He was abandoned as a baby on the steps of the Royal Exchange in London, and was named after Sir Thomas Gresham the founder of the Royal Exchange. Young Thomas got employment as a butler at Parnell Square in Dublin. In 1817 he purchased 21 & 22 Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street), his wife died in 1840. Thomas (senior) died in May 1871, a few short months after the death of his son also name Thomas (junior) , he died in Feb 1871 and they at buried in the family vault in Mount Jerome.

Another contributor to the church was the railway engineer William Dargan. The first minister of the church was Rev Henry Ebenezer Henry who had been a minister in Downpatrick and Dublin.

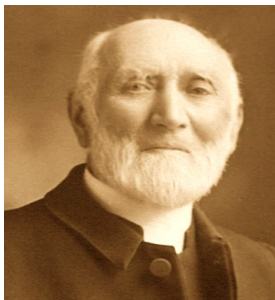
The Manse was named Madeley after a small town in Shropshire where Rev John William Fletcher died in 1785. The Rev John Fletcher was a friend of Rev John Wesley. The Epworth Hall opened in 1888 was named after the birthplace of Rev John Wesley, who was born in 1703.



Rev John Wesley

The Rev John Wesley was a frequent visitor to Ireland and was friends of the Tighe family of Woodstock, Co Kilkenny and of Rosanna near Ashford in County Wicklow. In 1789 after visiting Rosanna and making his way back to Dublin he wrote in his diary that Bray was a beautiful place and the scenery was outstanding.

The minister Samuel Dunlop was minister in Bray on three occasions 1863/64, 1873/75 and 1887/89. When he died at Bangor Co Down in 1928 aged 95 he was the oldest Methodist minister in Ireland.



Rev Samuel Dunlop



Epworth Hall