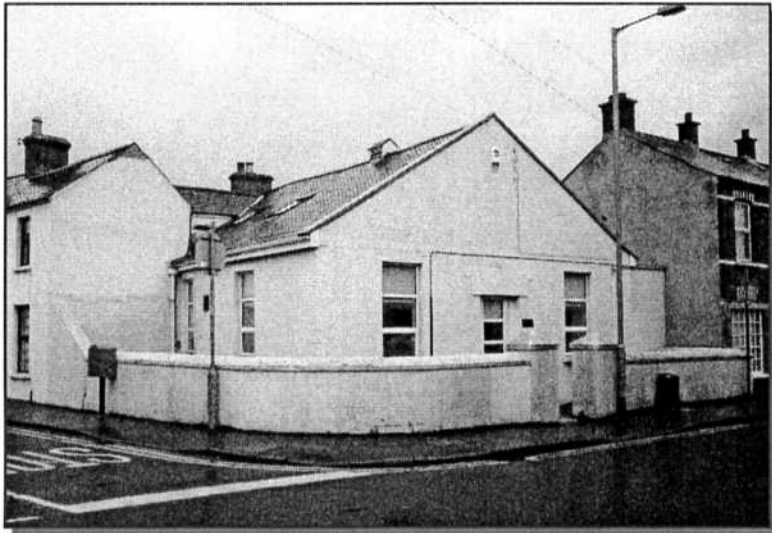


*"Lord, for the years Your
love has kept and guided"*

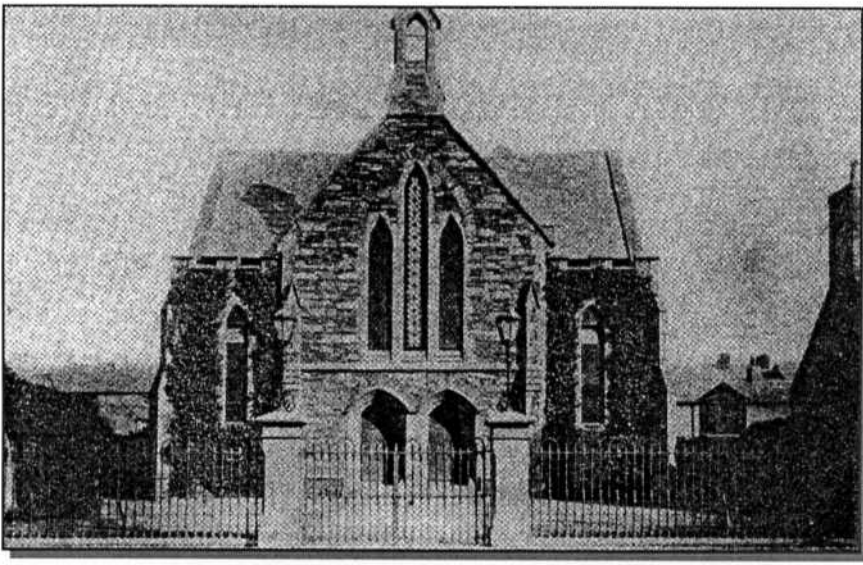
A Beginning for High Street Holywood Presbyterian Church



Mr Johnston's House, Downshire Road

Before the coming of the railway, Holywood was little more than a fishing village. However, the opening of the Belfast and County Down Railway on 4th August 1848 heralded a significant increase in the town's population. By 1855 the first Presbyterian Church, Bangor Road, was starting to become overcrowded so the heads of 52 families sought permission from the Belfast Presbytery to establish a second Presbyterian congregation. Permission having been granted, the new congregation called Second Holywood started meeting in a small Mission Hall originally Mr Johnston's house, then the Loan Fund Office, and later used by the Golden Age Club. This building, at the lower end of Downshire Road, is now used as a structural engineer's office. In September 1856 the Rev J S Denham was called to be the first minister and in December of that year the congregation celebrated its first communion.

The ground on the South side of High Street, where the present Church stands, was bought in 1857. A row of old dwellings fronting the street



High Street Presbyterian Church in about 1910

was removed and work began in May of that year. When it was opened for worship in February 1858, a collection taken for it in Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast raised £275. Built of dark grey stone in the early English style at a cost of £1,000 the architect was Robert Young, later to establish the well-known firm of Young and MacKenzie, and himself a former assistant to Charles Lanyon. The builder was Samuel Moore of Morrow's Lane and the plasterwork, rather fine and delicate in itself, was the work of William Hayes of Marino. Set well back from the street the front gable was topped by a distinctive bell-cote which accidentally fell down while the church was being extensively renovated in 1956. Gas lighting was installed in 1860 and in 1864 the gallery was added increasing the number of pews from 70 to 106. The organ was built in 1904 and electric lighting was installed in 1937.

After the early death of Rev James Denham in 1862 and the installation of Rev Henry Osborne, such was the growth of the Sabbath School that in 1866 the committee of the Church were urged to build a school on the grounds adjoining the Church. With the completion of the new Schoolhouse and Lecture Room the connection with Mr Johnston's house ceased.
