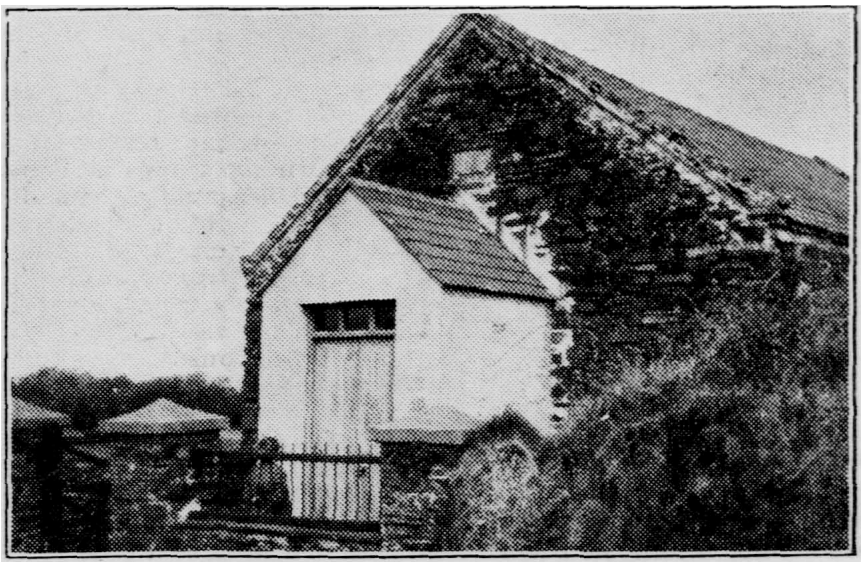
THE CENTENARY OF THE BALLAUGH CURRAGH CHAPEL *

(1958)



One feature of the Manx countryside is the number of Methodist Chapels. Most are now closed and stand forlorn, their need gone as the numbers have ebbed from the land along with the increased secularisation of society. The centenary of a Chapel was the occasion for celebration often in the form of commorative booklet with snippets of the history of the chapel in question. Newspapers also carried accounts as here with the Ballaugh Curragh Chapel which was founded in 1858 and so was celebrating its own first hundred years of existence in 1958. The land on which such a chapel was built was a gift from two of the local landowners and in the case of the Curragh Chapel the original chapel was originally a sod-built one and was erected in just three days. The coming of the harmonium is often mentioned as this ended the practice of unaccompanied hymn singing and the need for someone to raise the tune. Here, it was William Kaighen of Close Rhennie, Ballaugh, one of the original

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trustees, who performed that task. Reproduced here are the two accounts from the *Ramsey Courier* from 1958.

1. RAMSEY COURIER (18 APRIL 1958)

One of the most isolated Methodist Chapels in the Island is the Ballaugh Curragh building which was erected 100 years ago. The little Chapel—one of the smallest in the Island—is 100 years old, it was built in 1858 to replace the original building of sods put up in three days by the people of the district. In 1858 a body of Trustees was appointed and a second body of Trustees was appointed in 1893. A Sunday School was held in the Chapel at one time and superintended by Mr Robert Kneen and Mr Thomas Corlett. At first, for many years there was no instrument of music, the hymn tunes having to be "raised" by one or two members of the congregation. In about 1893 or 1894, a small harmonium was installed, Miss Esther Cashen being the organist, an office which she held until about 8 or 10 years ago. William Callister was Chapel Steward from about 1864 until 1901 (when he died) and William Corlett was Society Steward from 1901 until 1918 or 1919. In 1916 a fortnight's Mission was held, conducted by a Miss Kelly, of Onchan, and later a three weeks' mission was held about 1927, conducted by Mr Francis Rome, then of Ramsey, and these memorable services are still recalled by the older generation. In 1928 it was decided to re-floor the re-seat the interior and in 1953 a new ceiling was put up, and in 1954 a new porch was erected. In 1904, during the ministry of the Rev. G.H. Bellamy, he suggested holding a Chapel Anniversary for the benefit of the Trust, and this in later years added much to the income of the Chapel. For years these services were held in the open air and were very successful. But of late years, owing to weather conditions, they have been held indoors. The present trustees are: Alfred Corlett, Ellan Rhenny, Ballaugh; William Stephen Kneale, Hollygrove, Ballaugh; Edward Clague Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Edith Jane Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Mrs Esther C. Kneale, Lough Dhoo, Ballaugh; Thomas Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; Mrs E.M. Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; J.L. Cashen, Ballacain, Jurby; T.K. Kneale, Hollygrove, Ballaugh; B.K. Kissack, Sandygate, Ballaugh; W.D. Teare, Golane, Sandygate; Mrs L.E. Curphey, Ballacrye, Jurby. Stewards Society: Mr W.S. Kneale, Mr T. Callister. Chapel Steward, Mr T. Callister. Organists, Mrs E.M. Callister and Mrs E.C. Kneale.

"Centenary of Ballaugh Curragh Chapel." *Ramsey Courier* 18 April 1958: 4f.

2. RAMSEY COURIER (25 APRIL 1958)

It was fitting for the occasion that the Chairman was Mr T.K. Kneale, member of a family who have had a life-long association with the Chapel.

The Kneales' homestead is at Lough Dhoo, one of the nearest farms to the Chapel. His father, Mr Stephen Kneale, now of Holly Grove, who is one of the

Trustees, is 83 years of age and it was a disappointment that he was not well enough to be there in his pew for the centenary. But Mr Tom Kneale did nobly in his stead. Lough Dhoo is farmed now by Mr Kneale's other son, also named William Stephen Kneale, and their daughter Jean, played the organ at the Sunday evening service which began the centenary celebrations and Jeans's mother play for the soloist.

If Mr Kneale, senior, had been able to attend there would have been three generations taking part. In spite of his years he takes a keen interest in the Chapel and it is very gratifying to him that the Kneales who for many long years have worshipped on this spot are keeping up the family tradition.

Chairman Tom told us that a sod Chapel existed there formerly and that it was put up in three days.

The people in the district rallied round to the task—they were determined to have a place of their own in which to worship and which would serve the Curragh community.

The Curragh is a sparsely populated area these days but 100 years ago it was a busy place—Mr Kneale stated that there were 28 to 30 thatched cottages from Ballamoar, Jurby to the Curragh.

He also spoke of an old Manx character, Chris O'Finn, who lived in a corner of the field nearby and whenever there was a storm or thunder and lightning she would move into the back seat of the Chapel for she felt she was safe in the House of God.

A word of tribute came from the chairman for Miss Esther Cashen who died just recently at the age of 80 years and who from the time she was 14 years of age was organist of the Chapel.

Mr Kneale's picture of the Curraghs 100 years ago can be enlarged by the Manx authority, Mr David Craine, Captain of the Parish of Ballaugh, who was in the congregation last Thrusday night.

He staes: "The Curraghs was the centre then of a very busy farming and fishing community. These crofters eked out a living on the soil—they would each have a few acres of land—and by going to the fishing for about 10 weeks in the year. They raised big families and of course the population in the area was three times what it is now. These hard Manx folk worked on hedging and in helping in the harvest in an age when so much work was done by hand and there was a little community in the Curragh distinct from the rest of the parish."

Mr Craine points out that whereas the population of the parish is now about 500 it was 1,500 a century ago. Many of the cottages, however, were not substantially built and soon became derelict when unoccupied and disappeared from the face of the countryside.

Originally much of the population was centred round the old Church at Ballaugh but this is some distance away from the heart of the Curraghs where the Chapel is situated.

Another speaker who contributed something to the picture of old Ballaugh at the Centenary services was the Rev. T.D. Corlett, a retired Methodist minister, who now lives in Ramsey.

Mr Corlett said: "I was born in this parish and my forebears lived here for a considerable number of years. Looking back many years one of my earliest rcollections is trudging along 1½ miles of road to school with my dinner in a bag, how we did it I don't know for so long and there are some here who remember travelling along that same road to school. One other recollection I have is that the Rector of the parish at that time, Canon Edward William Kissack (appointed 1890) who was a real father-in-God used to come to my house when I was a little boy. We did not go to school so early in those days and we learned the alphabet at home and my grandfather used to teach me from the Bible and when Canon Kissack used to come he would put me on the chair and get me to spell some of the Bible characters for him.

On one occason he presented me with a Prayer Book hoping that one day I might be a parson. Of course that did materialise but not perhaps in the way that he thought. It was from this parish that I started to preach and I remember my first appointment was in the little Chapel in Sulby Glen now closed.

But my greatest achivement was when I was appointed to preach in Sulby—that was where the critics were and they used to speak of it as the College."

"I left Ballaugh 45 years ago," said Mr Corlett, to go to Didsbury College."

He added that he had read the deed of the Chapel and was very impressed by the way it was beautifully written and clearly expressed. He noticed that the building was decribed as a "house" which was the legal term in those days. The idea of a Methodist building being a Church or Chapel had not been accepted entirely 100 years ago and these places of worship were known as meeting houses or preaching houses. He noted too that there was a mention of starting a Sunday School which was a great thing in those days also that his father was one of the original trustees of the Chapel. [...]

Mr Corlett pointed out that a century ago there was a lot more illiteracy and the majority of people could not read or write and many learned in the Sunday School. He also declared that often village communities were divided into three sections—Church, Chapel and Pub. [...]

Mr Blain [*ie*, Rev. A.C. Blain, Superintendent Minister] stated that he has discoveed an old plan in respect of the Ramsey and Peel and Circuit as it was then, dated 1851 and the Curragh Chapel (which would then be a sod building) was mentioned and the preachers appointed were: James Cleator, Barregarrow; William Cain, Kerrowgarrow; John Cain, Ballaugh; Thomas Crennell, Sandygate; Edward Gale, Jurby West; P. Taggart, Bride; John Cottier, Andreas; Robert Corlett, Ballaugh; Thomas Corlett, Ballaugh; John Corkhill, Glen Auldyn; Daniel Craine, Sulby; Lace Radcliffe, Kirk Andreas; John Martin, Smeale; John Kaighin, Jurby East.

Mr Blain said that the congregation might be surprised to learn that he himself could go back 50 years in that locality because he used to be taken to Sulby Glen by his mother for a holiday as a boy and they walked a good many miles in visiting Ballaugh, Kirk Michael and other places.

He remembered going about too in a horse-drawn trap. It was pulled by an old horse which had been in the Boar War which had a silver tube in its throat with the result that when they went uphill there was a whistle through the tube and the following year when they came over again they asked for the whistling horse. [...]

Mr Blain's address was followed by another "flash-back" of exceptional interest by one of the most faithful adherents of the Chapel—Mr Tom Callister of Castle Lake.

His memory of the Chapel goes back 64 or 64 years and he emphasised that from very early age he was brought up to join in the worship of God in the Chapel each Sabbath—that was a rule which had to be observed.

He said that when the second body of trustees was appointed in 1893 the Superintendents of the Sunday School were Mr Robert Kneen, of Ballamona beg and Mr Thomas Corlett, of Close-e-Corvalley.

About the same time the first musical instrument—a small harmonium—was installed. Prior to that the tunes had usually been "raised" for the congregation by William Kaighen, one of the original trustees, of Close Rhennie, Ballaugh. If he was not present it was his (Mr Callister's) father who would start the tune.

In 1893 three of the trustees—John Corlett, of Baldromms, Lezayre, William Kaighen, and William Quayle, of Close Moughtin, retired from the Trust on account of age. Mr Quayle died at Ballachrink, Jurby East, where he had resided some time and he was one of those on the original Trust Deed. He died in 1896 at the age of 85 years.

Mr Callister said that the collection boxes which had been used in the Chapel that evening were the same that Mr Quayle, whose duty was to take up the collection, had employed and it was though that they were as old as the Chapel itself.

In 1928 during the Ministry of the Rev. C.H. Brown, on the advice of Mr H.K. Callow, builder, of Ramsey, it was decided to renew the floor and seating.

Referring to the missions which had been held in the Chapel, Mr Callister said that the 1916 Mission was by Miss Kelly of Abbeylands, Onchan, and on the last visit of this Mission there were as many as 70 people in the Chapel.

"It was during that Mission," added Mr Callister "that I had the privilege of joining membership of the Methodist Church and I have never regretted that step. I think it is rather a pity that these revival meetings have been allowed to drop because they are the means of stirring up members of the Church as well as those outside."

He also referred to the Mission held in 1927 by Mr Francis Rome, of Ramsey.

In reference to the beginnings of the Curragh Chapel, Mr Callister said there was no doubt that this meant a sacrifice on the part of the people and much of the labour would probably be given voluntarily.

"Let us now do out part," he said, "in keeping open the doors of this House of God, that is our great privilege today."

He added that he had himself been Chapel Steward since 1931, and he wished to thank all friends who had come to support the services. He referred especially to the Rev. T.D. Corlett, who had preached on Sunday evening and Mrs Clague, of Ballasalla, the soloist, also those who had taken part in the service that evening including the chairman, the speakers, the Rev. R.E. Wharton who had offered prayer, the Rev. I.S. Duncan, Mr Norman Kaighen, Mrs Kelly and Miss Eliza Kelly, of Douglas, who had given vocal items.

The accompanist for the service was Mrs Callister.

FIRST TRUST DEED

The following details included in the First Trust Deed will be of particular interest:

Indenture made 2nd April, 1858, between Thomas Kaighen, Close Rhennie and wife, John Corlett of the Loughdhoo and wife in Ballaugh of the one part, Stephen Kneale, John Mylcraine, Patrick Callister, John Corlett, Wm Kaighen, Thos Kaighen, junior, Thomas Corlett, Wm Quayle, Thomas Callister, Thomas Craine of the Glaick, Thomas Caley of Ballaugh, and Daniel Caley of Ballaugh, and Daniel Caley of Lezayre, on the other part; Consideration 5s receipt thereof acknowledged. Doth give grant—pass over and sell to the above mentioned parties of the second part, a parcel or plot of ground part of Loughdhoo and Close ne Rhennie, being intack land—whereon a House is now built, comprising the whole land in front of said House, with two yards in breadth on the West, two yards in breadth on the North Gable, and two yards in breadth on the East side of the House when required, the said House to be a Preaching House. To Have and to Hold said plot, House and appurtenances for the following and no other purposes whatsoever, to them the parties of the second part forever and to such persons as shall represent them at all times, said premises to be used as a Preaching House with liberty to conduct a Sunday School therein, so as not to interfere with public worship, said trustees to permit and suffer the Society of people called Methodists of the Curragh to be possessed of and interested in said Chapel and premises upon the trust that at all times hereafter to permit and suffer such person or persons only as shall be appointed by the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, also to permit said Chapel to be used for a Sunday School. The collections to be made in said Chapel to be applied in defraying expenses connected with Chapel, also seat rents—and also towards the support of the preachers for the time being appointed by the Conference. Provides that when trustees by death or otherwise be reduced to the number of five—the Leaders of said Society in conjunction with Supt. Preacher to nominate seven fit and eligible persons for trustees. The surviving trustees or a majority of them shall elect four new trustees, to keep up the number of nine

trustees, the Supt. Minister to give notice in writing to surviving trustees of the persons nominated by himself and the Curragh leaders.

Thomas Kaighen, John Corlett, Ann Kaighen, Mary Corlett (Trustees).

Witnesses: Danl Craine, John Clucas.

To Stephen Kneale, John Corlett, William Kaighen, Thomas Callister, Thomas Craine, Daniel Caley, John Mylcraine, Patrick Callister, Thomas Kaighen, Thomas Corlett, Thomas Caley.

APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES 20TH APRIL, 1893

John Corlett of Ramsey, and Wm Kaighen and William Quayle retire from the Trust being very old men.

Appointed: Robt Keig of Ballacain; Wm Callister of Castle Lake, Ballaugh; Thos Callister of Blackwood Cottage; James Corlett of Corvalla; Wm Corlett, of Ellanrhennie; Wm Boyde of Ballavolley; Thos Quayle, of Close Taggart, and V.C. Joughin, Ironmonger, of Ramsey.

Attested July 6th, 1893.

PRESENT TRUST APPOINTED JUNE 5TH, 1952

Alfred Corlett, Ellan Rhenny, Ballaugh; William Stephen Kneale, Holly Grove, Ballaugh; Edward Clague Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Edith Jane Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Mrs Esther Catherine Kneale, Lough Dhoo, Ballaugh; Thomas Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; Mrs Edith May Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; John Leslie Cashen, Ballacaine, Jurby; Thomas Kaighen Kissack, Sandygate; Wilfred Daniel Teare, Golane, Sandygate; Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Eleanor Curphey, Ballacrye, Jurby.

"[Peeps into the Past] Centenary of Ballaugh Curragh Chapel." *Ramsey Courier* 25 April 1958: 3a–d.

THE CURRAGH CHAPEL

NAMES FROM "PEEPS INTO PAST" PIECE

THE GIFTORS OF 1858

Thomas and Ann Kaighen, Close Rhennie; John and Mary Corlett of Loughdhoo.

WITNESSES TO THE 1858 DEED

Daniel Craine; John Clucas.

THE 1858 TRUSTEES

Daniel Caley, Thomas Caley, Patrick Callister, Thomas Callister, John Corlett, Thomas Corlett, Thomas Craine, Thomas Kaighen, William Kaighen, Stephen Kneale, John Mylcraine.

THE 1893 TRUSTEES

William Boyde of Ballavolley; Thomas Callister of Blackwood Cottage; William Callister of Castle Lake, Ballaugh; James Corlett of Corvalla; William Corlett, of Ellanrhennie; Robert Keig of Ballacain; V.C. Joughin, Ironmonger, of Ramsey; Thomas Quayle, of Close Taggart.

THE 1952 TRUSTEES

Mrs Edith May Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; Thomas Callister, Castle Lake, Ballaugh; John Leslie Cashen, Ballacaine, Jurby; Edward Clague Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Edith Jane Cannell, Blackwood, Ballaugh; Alfred Corlett, Ellan Rhenny, Ballaugh; Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Eleanor Curphey, Ballacrye, Jurby; Thomas Kaighen Kissack, Sandygate; Mrs Esther Catherine Kneale, Lough Dhoo, Ballaugh; William Stephen Kneale, Holly Grove, Ballaugh; Wilfred Daniel Teare, Golane, Sandygate.

NAMES (1958) FROM "CENTENARY OF BALLAUGH CURRAGH CHAPEL"

Stewards Society, W.S. Kneale & T. Callister.
Chapel Steward, Mr T. Callister.
Organists, Mrs E.M. Callister & Mrs E.C. Kneale.

OTHER NAMES

Rev. G.H. Bellamy, minister, 1904; Rev. C.H. Brown, minister, 1928; William Callister, Chapel Steward, *c.*1864–1901 (when he died); Miss Esther Cashen, first organist, 1893/94–*c.*1946/48 ["A word of tribute came from the chairman for Miss Esther Cashen who died just recently at the age of 80 years and who from the time she was 14 years of age was organist of the Chapel."—*Peeps*]; Thomas Corlett ran the Sunday School ["He [*ie*, Thomas Callister] said that when the second body of trustees was appointed in 1893 the Superintendents of the Sunday School were [...] and Mr Thomas Corlett, of Close-e-Corvalley."—*Peeps*]; William Corlett, Society Steward, 1901–1918/19; Miss Kelly of Onchan conducted a fortnight's Mission, 1916; Robert Kneen ran the Sunday School ["He [*ie*, Thomas Callister] said that when the second body of trustees was appointed in 1893 the Superintendents of the Sunday School were Mr Robert Kneen, of Ballamona beg [...]."—*Peeps*]; Francis Rome of Ramsey conducted a three week Mission, 1927.

STEPHEN MILLER