

We can say with the hymn writer Joseph Hart
“We’ll praise Him for all that is past and trust Him for all
that’s to come”.



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27th May 2007

**Meenies Field Meeting,
The first hundred years!**

**It is with great pleasure that we present to you this
account of the first hundred years of the Field Meeting
at Model Farm, Meenies, near the village of
Drimoleague in West Cork.**



The Lord is good and His love endures for ever; His faithfulness continues through
all generations (Psalm 100 vs 5)

It all began many years before:

The heritage of the field meeting goes back in Methodism to John Wesley himself. The Primitive Methodist Church sprang from a field meeting held on the hill called Mow

Cop in Staffordshire, the lay preachers responsible were expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It is interesting that May the 25th is the bicentenary of that event.

In West Cork there were field meetings in the Dunmanway / Bantry / Drimoleague Circuits for years before the meeting began at Model Farm, Meenies. There was a field meeting in Inchingeerig, some hooliganism disrupted the meetings and after some years the meetings stopped, seems like disruptive behaviour by some in society is not a new phenomena!

There was a field meeting at the home of Barnabas Jennings in Kiloveenogue in Drinagh, this continued until the death of Barnabas and the sale of the farm. There was also a field meeting at the home of Robert Shannon, Meanvour which ceased at his death.

In 1908 there were at least 5 field meetings on these Circuits.

So we come to Meenies. Why is it that this field meeting runs against the pattern of history? All the other West Cork field meetings have ceased. Maybe it is just the vision of the original open air preacher that keeps it alive, one who 2000 years ago seldom preached in a Church but had crowds of 5000 plus in the fields – and He gave them food as well!



Rev. Johnstone Hunter, Rev. D. Watkin Jones (British President), Rev. Alex McCrea.

There are few references to the field meeting in the early days and no photographs!

There are references to meetings in the Irish Christian Advocate around the time of the half century. We think that Rebecca Kingston could well have been at the first Meenies field meeting, but she would only have been 9 months old, she is now in a nursing home in Hillsborough and not well enough to come to the Centenary! Beckie is the only living contact we have with happenings 100 years ago.

We presume that the field used for the first meeting is the same one still used, it is a natural amphitheatre close to the farm house.

There would have been a guest preacher or two - maybe even three! The field meeting has been honoured by the presence of Presidents of Conference both from Ireland and the U.K. down through the years, especially when the Conference was in Cork, apparently the railway offered a return fare for the price of a single to the Drimoleague station. Horses and ponies & traps which would have brought people from far and wide would have been 'parked' in the haggard.

There would have been tea and eats. People would have been in their best clothes, it was a great event! The Pentecost skies sometimes rained showers on the event but the Spirit always was present showering His blessings on the people.

It would have been a great opportunity in the days when transport was slow and difficult for the people of West Cork and further afield to come together for fellowship, to renew friendships and make new acquaintances while socialising over tea, this still continues.



An early history (1930's) of the Dunmanway Circuit records the Drimoleague Convention and the Meenies field meeting as being "Household names on the District and their influence is incalculable." It goes on to say "Here is to be found a little colony of Methodist people whose integrity of character is to be respected by the whole community." The field meeting has always been at the centre of this respect and has been attended by many people of different traditions over the years. It is a very open and welcoming event.

In 1958 a record in the Christian Advocate says over 400 people were present, the preachers were Rev. R.E. Ker, Principal of Edgehill College and Rev. J.A. Kells from Pakistan. There were musical items by Ruth and Florence Perrott and Robert Beare.

1962 was a memorable year, Conference was in Cork and many came to the field meeting, it rained so the meeting was in the dwelling house which was heaving with people, some were outside in cars and others standing under umbrellas, the speaker system enabling them to hear. Rev. Paul Kingston (A) who was then a minister on the Circuit welcomed everyone. The speakers were the British President, Dr. Maldwyn Edwards and Mr Wisheart, Vice-President. The Advocate records that tea was served afterwards with 'wonderful dispatch' as the Kingston family and friends threaded their way through the crowds in every corner of the house including the stairs! Now days the silage silo doubles as a bad weather venue.

In 1968 the Advocate reports that the scriptures were read by Paul Kingston from Kilronan who was a candidate for the ministry.

We are delighted that Paul is with us again this year. He is now our District Superintendent.

We give a special welcome to another Rev. Paul Kingston who is the guest speaker at our centenary celebration. Paul was born in Drimoleague and spent much of his childhood at Meenies, has faithfully served the Church in Nigeria and in Ireland where he was President 1984-85, he now enjoys a 'quite' retirement!

All through the years it has been Abraham Kingston's family who have been the hosts for the Meenies field meeting. Abraham's grandfather started it in 1908, the year after his son Abraham (Abie) was born. Abie was present at 77 field meetings before he died, Abraham the third is working on beating his father's record! It was tough in the early days, through the lean years it took a lot to provide for the 'tea', water had to be collected from the well and boiled in old cast iron boilers on the stove. The Drimoleague Convention is older than the field meeting but we don't know how old. However the Convention was cancelled several years during the 'troubles' in the 1920's but the field meeting never faltered.

It is a credit to the Abrahams of Meenies that we still are able to celebrate this wonderful occasion for the 100th time. Credit too to their wives and families, and credit today to Eleanor and their daughters who put so much effort into the preparation for the meeting.

This year's meeting is a bit special, all the usual ingredients are there, we also have a choir under the direction of Peter Jeffers who for many years provided music and amplification for field meetings.

There will be testimonies and singing of hymns old and new! Paul (B) will be our speaker, Alan & Valerie Kingston will be running the children's programme. After tea and the cutting of the 'centenary' cake there will be games and a BBQ in the field back of the farmhouse, this is for all young people and those who are 'young at heart'. The celebration ends with praise and worship round the fire.

What of the next hundred years?

Who could have envisaged 100 years ago that we would be celebrating the centenary this year, or the many lives that have been touched and blessed by the field meeting?

Although we are all getting older the Methodist Church in Drimoleague is getting younger! On Palm Sunday 6 new members were added to our membership by Confirmation, they were aged between 12 and 17 (1 was a daughter of Meenies!).

We know the future is in God's hands and His people here are willing to serve Him, there is a spark which will not be extinguished in Drimoleague. There are plans to build an extension to the Church Hall to provide better kitchen facilities, and an enlarged meeting room (it is often standing room only in the weekly Prayer meeting prior the service) there are also plans for a youth space in the loft area. How our ancestors must be rejoicing as they see the fine work of evangelism continuing in both the old traditional way and in new ways, through Alpha with local Churches, Bible study groups and involvement in community activities.