

Pamphlet
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The
Floriana Story

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ERIC H. FAWTHROP

The
Floriana Story

being
an account of Methodism
in Malta.

MALTA
METHODIST CHURCH
1963

Preface

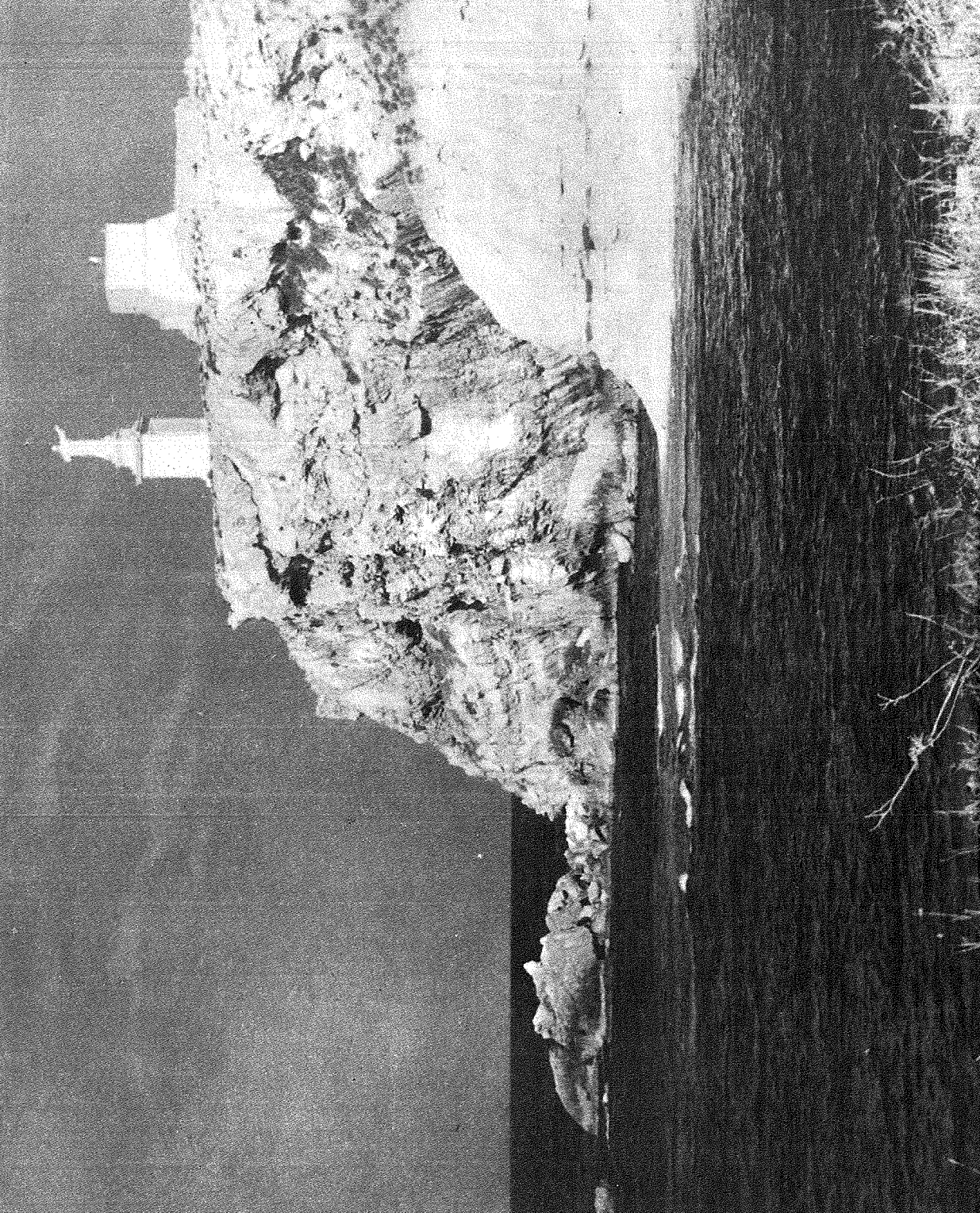
Those who have come to know and love the sunny Mediterranean island of Malta, have, no doubt, been thrilled by its exciting history. Few could fail to be stirred by its prehistoric remains and neolithic temples, its claim to eternal fame as the place where the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked, the glories of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, and the courage of its people in the Sieges of 1565 and 1940. And yet how many ever realise that to the glorious history of this island Methodism has its own distinctive contribution to make?

We, to whom the word "Floriana" has come to mean so much more than a certain suburb of Valletta, have long felt that the "Floriana" story must be one well worth telling if only it could be unravelled. To meet this need the present booklet is humbly offered in the hope that it will fire future workers here with the inspiration of its amazing story and be a souvenir by which in later years they may recall all that "Floriana" meant to them.

Malta.

February 1963.

ERIC H. FAWTHROP



The Beginnings

The date 1815 perhaps calls to mind the Battle of Waterloo, yet it also marks the beginning of the Floriana story, for in that year an appeal from soldiers stationed in Malta was received by the Methodist Missionary Committee in London asking that a minister might be sent out to them. Already they had hired a room for reading, quiet, and prayer; and preaching services, conducted chiefly by an officer of a foot regiment, were held thrice weekly.

No minister could be sent immediately, but Methodism nevertheless flourished to such an extent that when, in 1823, the Reverend Charles Cook, D.D., the Wesleyan Methodist missionary to the South of France (whom D'Aubigné has called "the John Wesley of the Continent" arrived to report on prospects, he found three regular preaching places: one in the quarters of a Serjeant Everard at Isola (Senglea) and the other two in rooms specially hired by Methodist soldiers at Valletta and at Floriana. The Artillery alone had one hundred and eighteen members who between them subscribed over fifty pounds annually to missionary and similar societies. Doctor Cook's imagination was caught by the strategic importance of Malta for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, and he advised the appointment of a missionary to Malta as soon as possible. He writes, "We have only to cast our eyes on a map of the Mediterranean to be convinced of the immense importance of this little island as a Missionary Station ... See this rock, with its crowded population, speaking the languages of Rome and Mecca, delivered into the hands of a nation blessed with the light of divine truth and the desire to communicate it and say if such a providence does not address a loud call to the Christians of our native country to avail themselves of the facilities thus offered to their enterprise."

So it was that in August 1824 the truly remarkable — some said eccentric — character, the Reverend John Keeling, accompanied by his wife, arrived to begin nine extremely eventful years in Malta. Mr. and Mrs. Keeling stayed at first with a Captain Pearson R.N. who, although a member of the Established Church, kindly invited them to remain with him until they secured a suitable house. This they subsequently obtained at Burmola (Cospicua), across the Grand Harbour. Most of the work seems to have been centred at Isola, where a room with accommodation for about forty was rented for about nine shillings a month. There were two Sunday services there, with a class-meeting on Sunday afternoons and another on Thursday evenings. Later there was a Wednesday evening class also.

In Valletta itself the work was rather hampered at first by the inconvenience and smallness of the room, which had been hired at a cost of about seven shillings a month, but on the 17th., September, 1824, Mr. Keeling was fortunate in being able to buy suitable premises from the Government of Malta for a house and church in Valletta. These were situated at 55, Strada Britannica (Britannia Street), and the cost was 4005 scudi.* The site remains on the corner of Old

* A scudi was worth about one shilling and eight pence.

Bakery Street. This was not only the first Methodist Church in Malta, but remained the only protestant church on the island until St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral was opened in 1839. The church ultimately seated about two hundred and fifty people when it was sold in 1843, so could fairly be described as commodious. Mr. Keeling moved into the house adjoining but still continued to visit the "country" chapel at Isola regularly.

The church at Valletta was not built in the shape of a church, because the law did not then allow any buildings to be erected as churches except by Roman Catholics; furthermore, because of the legal impediment at that time to the acquisition of such property by a protestant body, the premises had to be purchased and held by Mr. Keeling in his personal capacity and in fact remained nominally his until the 26th., December, 1843, when they were sold for £900 to the Free Church of Scotland (again being of necessity legally conveyed to individuals in their private capacity). The original church remained in the possession of the Church of Scotland first as a church, and then (after the present St. Andrew's Church was opened in 1858) as a schoolroom and store, until 1942, when it suffered extensive war damage and had to be demolished. The site still belongs to the Church of Scotland and their new manse was erected on it in 1955.

Just as early Methodist activity in England often provoked hostility, so the work in Malta also at first was attended by difficulty but, although primarily ministering to British military personnel, Keeling made some progress also among the Maltese and regularly gave instruction in the scriptures to many of them. Indeed, several Maltese were included in his congregation. One of his early practices was to read portions of St. John's Gospel in Maltese to groups of beggars and then to distribute a few coppers to them. This was actually a continuance of a practice which certain private individuals had established, but unfortunately proved rather provocative when undertaken by a missionary. As a result, a fierce attack was launched on the missionary's house at Burmola when a great force battered at the building with stones and beat in the windows and doors, so that Mr. and Mrs. Keeling and their family had to take flight across the flat roof-tops. Subsequently the stones, which lay in heaps on the floor both upstairs and down, had to be carried away in hand-barrows.

This was not the only occasion when the house was attacked, and Mr. Keeling describes how, on the 26th., March, 1825, some children were sent to the door about 8.30 a.m. to ask for alms. Mrs. Keeling suspected from their appearance that they were not the type who wanted anything, and the servant was told to send them away. Two men then attacked him with stones driving him into the house, and continued to throw stones at the doors and windows until a serjeant happened to appear and stopped the disturbance. About two o'clock, however, a mob of two or three hundred gathered and attacked the house with stones. The crowd only dispersed when three companies of guards with firearms arrived. Subsequently, on the Governor's instructions, a strong police guard was posted to protect the property.



Site of the original Methodist Church (1824-1843) in Britannia Street, Valletta.

Doctor Rule Comes — and Goes!

It had been the intention in 1824 that another missionary should join the Reverend John Keeling, but it was almost two years before he had a ministerial colleague. On the 22nd., March, 1826, the Reverend William Harris Rule landed at Valletta, partly with a view to preparing in Malta for a mission among the Druses on Mount Lebanon. He was another very remarkable character and afterwards, as Doctor W.H. Rule, became noted for his work among Methodist soldiers in many parts of the world and for his championship of their rights. He had been ordained only on the 14th., March, 1826, eight days previously, and he at once took up residence in the house at Burmola, vacated by Keeling on moving to Valletta. By this time things were beginning to settle down and, although there was no lessening in the spirit of antagonism generally, governmental firmness in protecting the freedom of religious worship enabled the Valletta congregation to assemble in peace and, in some degree, removed the hazard to Mr. Keeling's life, which had been a real one. Nevertheless, life was far from easy for the missionaries, and Rule has described how passers-by his house would utter "sincere and hearty" curses. However, he hit on the ruse of keeping a good house-dog and a blunderbus; the barking of the former would scare away casual thieves, whilst the discharge of the latter, besides being a deterrent against attack, also served as a signal for the neighbouring main guard. Meanwhile he pursued his studies daily to the accompaniment, as he himself puts it, of "the cursings of the passing crowds, and the dolorous Litanies, and the noisy discipline of lashes and groans in a conservatorio for females next door".

Space forbids recounting all the excitements of life for protestant missionaries in those days, and hostility continued unabated, but nevertheless progress was steadily made and many enquiries came from the more serious minded Maltese; though most of them had to be rather secretive about their attendance at protestant meetings. It would appear that the Maltese tended to meet separately from the English flock and Dr. Rule and Mr. Keeling preached to them in Italian. Dr. Rule says he had to write out his sermons until he became proficient in the language!

Dr. Rule has described how it was usual, especially on the route to the Naval Hospital (Bighi) which he regularly visited, for him to be pelted with stones. The practice began about six months after his arrival when he became conspicuous among the crowds by remaining upright when everyone else knelt as a priest entered the house of a dying man; thereafter, he was invariably pelted with stones whenever he passed that way, the mob rapidly growing and shouting "Framason". (Since the Methodists claimed to be a "Society", it had been concluded that it must be secret and therefore Freemasons.)

After about three months during which these assaults continued with, luckily, no worse results than a few bruises. Dr. Rule and his wife were stoned by a mob one afternoon as they walked in front of their own house, and Dr. Rule felt the time had come to seek Government protection. The Governor, the Mar-

guess of Hastings, was not unsympathetic, and made certain suggestions. Accordingly, Dr. Rule arranged for a friend of his, a naval officer, to follow at a distance on the afternoon of January 12th., 1827, and when the rain of stones began this officer managed to collar a strong young man and two boys, though one of the boys wriggled free. Dr. Rule instantly ran to the main guard and a picket was sent to take the culprits into custody. Next morning however, a large number of false witnesses was produced to swear that the man seized, who had been kept in custody and brought thither by the very person who had taken him in the act of assault, had been in Gozo at the time and had remained there all that night! The local magistrate, "delivered their judgement with a cynical air of judicial impartiality, to the effect that the adult prisoner must be dismissed because, although many witnesses had attested his identity, a greater number had sworn that he was far away in Gozo all night, and that 'therefore' an alibi was proved!" The boy was condemned to a fortnight's imprisonment; but of course, Dr. Rule begged for him to be let off.

However, notwithstanding the legal defeat, the Lieutenant-Governor served a notice on all the inhabitants of the street in which the attack had occurred that, if there was any repetition of improper conduct towards Dr. Rule, the houses would be shut and the tenants evicted. This effectually put an end to the attacks in Burmola.

One other noteworthy incident of this period must be recorded, though it affected Mr. Keeling more than Dr. Rule. On the 5th., August, 1826, one of the most tumultuous scenes ever recorded took place. In the evening Dr. Rule crossed from Burmola to Valletta to preach at the weeknight service. On approaching the chapel he was amazed to see a great crowd of people kept at bay by fixed bayonets and soldiers ready to fire if the word were given. The chapel was lit up for the service but, to Dr. Rule's surprise, the Adjutant of the Regiment came running up breathlessly and begged to have the lights extinguished, or the building would be attacked and he had insufficient force to resist the rioters.

It was past midnight before order was restored and Dr. Rule was able to get back to his boat to return home, where there had been much alarm over his absence. The reason for this uproar Dr. Rule did not discover until later, but in fact it arose because one of the first Maltese to become a protestant had died and Mr. Keeling and the Reverend S.S. Wilson (a London Missionary Society missionary who was then staying in Malta) arranged for the funeral to be held. The garrison hearse was borrowed from a British officer and about 5 p.m. the procession started the half-mile or so from Valletta to the grave at Floriana. Soon a large crowd gathered, first by hundreds, then by thousands — indeed, Mr. Wilson estimated them at ten or fifteen thousand — and began shouting, hooting, whistling, and screaming. They closed in, hurling stones and clutching at the coffin, even stripping off half the pall and placing the lives of those present in obvious peril. Nevertheless, the procession did its best to proceed with dignity and eventually

IL CAVEAT

CONTRO

I METODISTI

NEL QUALE SI ADDIMOSTRA, QUANTO SIA MAL
SICURO A QUALUNQUE CRISTIANO L'UNIRSI ALLA
LORO SOCIETA' O L'ADERIRE AI LORO MAESTRI,

DEL VEN. E M. R.
RICHARD CHALLONER, D. D. V. A.

VERSIONE ITALIANA.

Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui
veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium,
intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces.
A fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos.

Matth. VII. 15. 16.

MALTA

TIPOGRAFIA DI F. CUMBO

1842.

reached the Piazza San Giorgio (the Main Guard) where military protection was sought. The Captain could not act officially until the Civil Authorities were present, but while they were awaited he kept the crowds at a distance with his soldiers.

At length the procession set off again, flanked either side by soldiers with bayonets charged. Even so they made their way with great difficulty through the dense crowd, "whose screams, and yells, and missiles", according to Mr. Wilson, "might have made a faint heart quail". Mr. Keeling and Mr. Wilson were in carriages. The glass of Mr. Wilson's was smashed and one soldier had his head gashed with a stone, but they bore all their indignities in silence while the mob continued to ever fresh violence.

As soon as they passed out through the gates of the city (Kingsgate) on their way to Floriana, the gates were closed against the crowds, though two of three hundred managed to press through along with the procession and were soon joined by others from the vicinity. Even during the prayers at the interment they surrounded the grave-yard shouting and yelling.

When the ministers re-entered Valletta afterwards, all the former insults were renewed, perhaps even increased. Both Mr. Keeling and Mr. Wilson had to be guarded to their doors by military escorts, or their lives would not have been worth much, and police officers with military sentries were posted at their houses until eleven o'clock at night; indeed, a patrol paraded the city all night to keep the peace.

Perhaps it was inevitable that two such strong-minded characters as Keeling and Rule should clash when thrown together to represent Methodism in one small island; at any rate, it was not long before an incompatibility of temperament revealed itself. Rule rather felt that much of the local hostility was due to Keeling's methods, such as referring to the Methodists as a "Society", and thus allowing the suspicion to gain ground that they must be a secret society akin to Freemasonry. Again, Rule doubted the wisdom of distributing food and alms to beggars and then preaching or reading excerpts from the Bible to them; this seemed to him unduly provocative, and he himself was inclined to make contacts among the more educated sections of the community. Ultimately we find him describing Keeling as eccentric while Keeling, who was, after all, the Superintendent, charged Rule with idleness and insubordination. At any rate, Rule's continued presence in Malta was considered unnecessary, especially since the proposed mission among the Druses for which he had come to prepare was abandoned, and he was therefore sent to Gibraltar. His subsequent ministry there and elsewhere among Methodist servicemen makes most fascinating reading and gives a wonderful insight into the robust character of this remarkable person. He left Malta on board a Genoese brigantine on the 31st., May, 1827.

Early Days

The Reverend John Keeling was born at Hanley in Staffordshire in 1785 and commenced his ministry in 1808. He was to spend no less than nine troublous and difficult years in Malta and, after Rule's departure, had to struggle on single-handed against great odds. The work progressed despite difficulties, however, and he left his mark in a number of translations into Maltese of some "rather elementary works". A few Maltese seem to have been included in his flock, through their meetings were apparently separate from those of their English brethren in the main and indeed for the most part held secretly in each other's houses. Open opposition, at any rate in its more violent forms, abated after a year or two, and by 1827 divine service both at Isola and Valletta could be publicly held without interruption; but of course, any Maltese who shewed interest or sympathy was liable to face hostility still. There were tradesmen, for instance, who lost their livelihoods. The most notable Maltese adherent was a Doctor Naudi who, incidentally, lost a good medical practice in consequence. At one time he is described as a Wesleyan Local Preacher, and he did considerable work among his compatriots, especially the country people who used regularly to call upon him for spiritual help. He preached and read the gospel regularly both in Valletta and in the village where he was born, and also translated Mr. Keeling's sermons into Maltese. After these sermons had been used either for the Wednesday evening meeting at the Mission House in Valletta, or at the Sunday service they were regularly circulated among various friends, who often copied them out. On Thursday evenings Dr. Naudi conducted a Bible Study Group and questions on religious subjects were answered. The more educated people at that time, however, spoke Italian, and Dr. Naudi also translated many of Keeling's sermons and other works into that language as well as Maltese.

The great advantage of circulating sermons (or translations of them) in this way was that many people who would not as yet dare to go to the Mission House might nevertheless read one of them at their own leisure. By 1828 not a few of these sermons were in circulation including, "Justification by Faith", "On the Natural State of Mankind", "On the Nature of Christ's Kingdom", and, "On the Dignity of the Messiah". As Dr. Naudi says, the aim was simply to "exhibit the truth, and to preach the gospel ... without any mixture of controversy"; they had "nothing to do with Popery nor with Anti-popery, but with Christ".

The Missionary Society sent out copies of the Catechism in Italian, which proved most useful both to children and to adults, but chiefly the literature in Italian which was used had, like that in Maltese, to be translated by Dr. Naudi and then copied. Among these translations into Italian by Dr. Naudi were two sermons by W. Vipond on the "Doctrines, Discipline, and Mode of Worship of the Methodists", which were very widely circulated and copied, as also was a tract entitled, "The Character of the Methodists".

Through these early days this work, unspectacular and attended with difficulty though it was, continued — not without result or encouraging signs. Indeed, in 1829 Dr. Naudi was engaged in translating into Maltese the New Testament with Mr. Wesley's notes, and has already written of a great satisfaction and pleasure which he never experienced before. He writes, "We do not doubt but the Lord in answer to the prayers of His servants resident in this town will ... give His people fully to see the light of divine truth for their guidance unto the knowledge of Himself".

Despite some encouraging progress, however, and the cessation of actual violence, work still went by no means smoothly, and hostility was still marked. For instance, when the church needed a new roof it was a simple matter to have the old roof removed, but putting on the new one was quite another affair; there were those who considered that the open air was sufficiently adapted to the heretical rites and incited the workmen to "go on strike"! It was not until the sanction of the Roman Catholic Archbishop had been obtained by the Methodists that anyone could be prevailed upon to continue the work.

We have a good description of the church in 1830 by a Mr. Bartholomew, who in that year spent some weeks in Malta on his way to Alexandria. He writes, "I was much struck with the place and the people. The chapel is lofty and fitted for a gallery — forms with backs to in the middle, and good English pews round the walls. In the pews were apparently very respectable people, and on the benches were principally soldiers. A spirit of devotion evidently pervaded the meeting The Congregation might be about 80. I have had the pleasure of seeing Dr. Naudi ... and I hope to know more of him. The mission now established here wears a promising aspect; there is a loud call for another missionary; and there is a good house and chapel on the other side of the island, in a very healthy situation, where a second missionary might reside."

Early in 1831 Keeling began the 'Malta Charity School' — a day school for poor Maltese children. This was supported by various local residents and patronised by His Excellency The Governor. The first day there were thirty-six children, the second forty-six, and the third seventy, by which time Mrs. Keeling, who seems to have been responsible for running it, decided to call a halt to increases until those already attending were got into some sort of order. Most of the children were orphans, and those from Burmola were brought by the footman. The work was exhausting but rewarding.

Keeling also visited Gozo, which he describes as being a century behind Malta, but no great work appears to have been undertaken there.

After nine years in this difficult station the strain was beginning to tell on him, and at the end of 1832 Keeling returned to the work at home where, after labouring in several English circuits, he spent many years in comparative retirement before falling asleep on the 15th., January, 1857, at the age of seventy-two.

The End of the Beginning

Keeling's successor in Malta was the Reverend John Brownell, who stayed in Malta five years. He threw himself with enthusiasm into the work of sustaining the society but found his activities, especially so far as the Maltese were concerned, ever more restricted and frustrated. The walls of the chapel in Valetta were frequently disfigured by the local population, and communicating with the Maltese was rendered yet more difficult when the Governor, the Honourable Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby, forbade him to engage in open-air preaching. The Charity School, too, proved a disappointment, as it was not permitted to give any religious or scriptural teaching, and in March 1834 Mr. Brownell felt bound to withdraw from it. It was, however, decided to continue the school purely as a secular institution under a local committee the property being divided between the committee and Mr. Brownell on behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Indeed, by this time serious doubts were beginning to be entertained about the worthwhileness of continuing a mission in so apparently unprofitable a part of the field as Malta, especially since resources were insufficient to meet the clamour for labourers elsewhere in the vineyard. However, it was decided to leave it for a trial period and meanwhile to curtail expenditure in those parts of the work which seemed not to promise any spiritual results. The minister was to concentrate his work chiefly upon the English residents and the troops henceforth, though still endeavouring to promote the spiritual interests of the Maltese, and to report to the next meeting of the Missionary Society.

Prospects had brightened somewhat by 1835, and Mr. Brownell had the assistance of a pious young man with many talents who was employed as an agent by the Society and who could write and preach in Maltese. He was helpful in translating many religious publications, and also visited Gozo. A mission day-school for the Maltese was also begun that year to be run on strictly scriptural principles. The expense of fitting up the room was defrayed entirely by two or three people, the chief benefactor being a member of the Society of Friends. The missionary subscriptions were raised to £30, compared with £17 in 1834.

Such advancement was very encouraging, and in fact by 1837 the work had prospered to such an extent that the chapel in Valletta had to be enlarged. Nearly £100 was collected for this purpose in advance and in addition the collection on Palm Sunday 1837, when it was reopened for divine worship after the alterations had been carried out, amounted to £7.3.10 which Mr. Brownell considered "quite equal to fifteen times that amount raised in London, Manchester, Leeds, or Sheffield". The chapel previously accommodated about seventy to seventy-five in the pews and one hundred and four in the "free sittings", but after the enlargements one hundred and ten could sit in the pews and one hundred and eleven in the free sittings. Even this extra accommodation proved inadequate, however, and at the end of the year there was demand for a gallery to be



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THE SALVATION ARMY

MARKET STREET

added. By this time Mr. Brownell's health was feeling the strain, and he was succeeded by the Reverend Thomas N. Hull, who ministered here from 1838 to 1841.

The son of an army officer, Hull was born on the 14th., August, 1806. His infancy was spent in Egypt and his boyhood at Donaghades, County Down. He entered our ministry before he had completed his twentieth year, but after eleven years his wife's health compelled him to seek an appointment in a milder climate and for ten years he laboured in Malta and Gibraltar, thereafter going to Australia until 1853, when he returned to Cornwall and two years later to Ireland. He retired in 1867 and died on the 6th., December, 1903, aged 98.

When he first arrived there were encouraging signs of a quickened religious spirit: the Valletta chapel, though lately enlarged, was still insufficient to accommodate the Sunday evening congregation at times, and a new class was begun at Burmola; indeed, he wrote, "We need nothing but a more copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and a faithful discharge of our stewardship to bring in a remunerating harvest of souls." This early promise soon faded, however, and in 1839 the Roman Catholic Church in Malta started reacting officially to the Methodist activities with a warning by the Archbishop of Malta to the faithful inviting the priests and confessors to assist against proselytising by the Methodists. It appears from his pastoral that Maltese Roman Catholics had begged alms and been taken into Methodist homes where they had heard the Gospel preached: they must no longer betray their holy profession in this manner; the needs of the body must not so endanger their souls.

The situation was becoming increasingly difficult for the Methodists. Nevertheless, Hull laboured on hopeful and undaunted, and in 1840 we find seventy-five full church members and many more who regularly worshipped and met with them. It was already becoming apparent, however, that as a mission station Malta would never be likely to show the spectacular achievements and advances which the Home Committee was looking for and indeed gaining elsewhere in the world. Hull never doubted the importance of the station though and, whilst resigned to a largely solitary, unexciting undertaking, continued to look for the reward of knowing he served God. Great fluctuations in the society were always encountered with the arrival and departure of the servicemen; and in 1842, because of the removal of the 92nd., and 47th., Regiments, together with one Artillery Company, the work had almost to be begun afresh. It was discouraging to lose the fruits of years of labour overnight, but some compensation lay in the knowledge that they were not lost to the church as a whole and in the receipt of letters afterwards from all parts of the world. The chapel services continued to be well attended and they looked forward to making up their losses in a year or two.

In 1842 the Reverend Thomas N. Hull was succeeded by the Reverend John Jenkins. Already the need to continue stationing a missionary in Malta was beginning to be questioned, and the Wesleyan Missionary Society had regretted

having to send Jenkins out in view of the vigorous advances taking place in the rest of the world with which their resources could hardly keep pace. It was undestandable that to send an ordained man to a small island where, from their viewpoint, the work was so unprofitable and circumscribed did seem rather an extravagance when resources could be used to apparently better advantage elsewhere. Notwithstanding this, Jenkins came. He called on Mr. and Mrs Hull in Gibraltar on his way out, incidentally and helped them to take over the work there.

On Arrival, Jenkins found prospects most discouraging for, not only had he to contend with all the usual setbacks, but he found that during the interregnum between Hull's departure and his own arrival many of the congregation had lapsed. Soon he began to feel lonely, especially before his family joined him, but he still considered there was a "great work to be done", especially among the English residents. He also set about learning Italian, which suggests there were still contacts among the higher class Maltese. This supposition is supported by the fact that it was found necessary in 1842 to publish in Valletta a pamphlet in Italian warning against Methodism and its teachings.

Meanwhile, an unfortunate Mr. Izzo, printer, along with his compositors, was "interdicted . . . from partaking the spiritual succours of religion" for supposedly undertaking the printing of a Methodist paper, "The Illuminator". The Bishop also refused to accept any further printed papers from Izzo's press, although Izzo contended that as printer he was not responsible for the contents of papers he printed. The "Malta Times" joined in the controversy, referring to the impossibility of publishing a paper of this kind in a country like Malta without disturbing the public peace, and saying such was "calculated to excite rebellion in this colony". The point was settled on the 7th., April, 1843, when Mr. Jenkins wrote to the Malta Mail denying any connection with "The Illuminator".

Through 1843 the work went on, but it was becoming increasingly obvious that the stationing of a Methodist minister in Malta was a luxury which could no longer be afforded. Little or no access could be gained to the native Maltese by a protestant minister, whom they were taught to regard as a dangerous man to be shunned and whose labours were consequently largely confined to the English and Scottish residents and the troops. At the beginning of the year the transfer of one regiment to Corfu had reduced numbers by half, which shews the enormous fluctuations with which the society had to contend. The minister was not withdrawn because it would have meant Malta's being without an evangelical clergyman, but the Scottish Church at home was considering taking up work in the island, being encouraged by learning that "the Methodist minister there required only £150 a year for everything, and that living in Malta cost only half what was needed in Scotland"! The Methodists seemed only too eager to withdraw their minister when the work was begun by the Scottish Church, and a General Committee of the Missionary Society passed a resolution

of your influential paper, the addressability of the Railway Company running a train which would suit the requirements of those detained in town until 6 o'clock P.M., the present train which leaves at 5, is altogether unsuited to the majority of those living in the country as well as the large number of the working class who are unable to leave work at that hour; even if the present 5 o'clock train was altered to 6, it would be a decided benefit to the Company and the Public. I am also in hopes that the Company will lend a favorable ear to the petition of the people in the neighbourhood of Cassal Balanz, the desirability of establishing a station at that place is apparent. I have also to hope that for the safety of the passengers and the maintenance of good order and regularity, the officials be invested with the same authority as their brethren upon the large English lines, where they are empowered to act as police in their sphere of duty, a fact which would impress upon the lower class, would materially tend to maintain order, I would also suggest, situated as we are in a place where almost everybody smokes, to attach, not a Smoking Carriage, but a Non-Smoking Composite Carriage where the non-smoking element of the three classes might repair in peace.

May I subscribe myself

Dear Mr. Editor

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will (D. V.) be opened on
SUNDAY, 12th MARCH
when the

Rev. John Kilner

of London, Secretary to the Wesleyan Foreign Missionary Society, will preach at 10.30 a.m. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be administered to Members and Communicants at 3 p.m. and the

Rev. R. W. Allen

of London, Secretary to the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee will preach at 6 p.m.

On Tuesday, 20th March the Rev. John Kilner will preach at 3.30 p.m.

A PUBLIC TEA

will be held in the School Room of the new premises at 6 p.m. Tickets 5d. each, followed by

A PUBLIC MEETING

at 6.30 p.m. in which Rev. John Kilner, Rev. R. W. Allen, Mr. B. Blachie, of Liverpool, Messrs. Vintus of Cambridge, and local ministers and gentlemen will take part.

A collection on behalf of the Building Fund will be made at each Service.

Ladies and Gentlemen

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VALLETTA and NOTABILIS

AND INTERMEDIATE STATIONS AT
Floriana, Hamrun, Msida,
Bircbircara, St. Antonio, Attard and
St. Salvatore

TRAINS WILL BE RUN AT THE UNDERMENTIONED TIMES.

UP TRAINS

Notabilis	St. Salvatore	Attard	St. Antonio	Bircbircara	Msida	Hamrun	Floriana	Valletta
A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
5.18	5.19	5.30	5.39	5.34	5.38	5.42	5.48	5.59
7.12	7.13	7.24	7.29	7.23	7.27	7.31	7.45	7.49
10.12	10.13	10.24	10.29	10.23	10.27	10.31	10.45	10.49
P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
12.12	12.13	12.24	12.29	12.23	12.27	12.31	12.45	12.49
3.12	3.13	3.24	3.29	3.23	3.27	3.31	3.45	3.49
4.12	4.13	4.24	4.29	4.23	4.27	4.31	4.45	4.49
6.12	6.13	6.24	6.29	6.23	6.27	6.31	6.45	6.49
7.22	Empty	train						

DOWN TRAINS

Valletta	Floriana	Hamrun	Msida	Bircbircara	St. Antonio	Attard	St. Salvatore	Notabilis
A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
5.24								
6.33	6.34	6.38	6.43	6.46	6.50	6.55	7.17	7.18
8.03	8.04	8.08	8.13	8.16	8.20	8.25	8.31	8.37
11.01	11.02	11.06	11.11	11.14	11.18	11.23	11.31	11.37
P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
1.01	1.02	1.06	1.11	1.14	1.18	1.23	1.31	1.37
3.03	3.04	3.08	3.13	3.16	3.20	3.25	3.31	3.37
5.03	5.04	5.08	5.13	5.16	5.20	5.25	5.31	5.37

FARES

DISTRICTS	SINGLES			RETURNS		
	1st cl.	2nd cl.	3rd cl.	1st cl.	2nd cl.	3rd cl.
From Valletta to Floriana	3d	2d	1d	6d	4d	3d
" " " Hamrun	4d	3d	2d	8d	4d	3d
" " " Msida	4d	3d	2d	8d	4d	3d
" " " Bircbircara	5d	4d	3d	10d	6d	5d
" " " St. Antonio	7d	5d	4d	14d	7d	6d
" " " Attard	8d	6d	5d	16d	8d	7d
" " " St. Salvatore	10d	7d	6d	18d	10d	8d
" " " Notabilis	14d	10d	8d	28d	14d	12d
Workmen's Tickets—Single 3rd class						
From Valletta to Notabilis	3d			6d		
" " " Bircbircara	4d			8d		
" " " (and vice versa)						
Workmen's Tickets only available by the first train in the morning and the last train at night.						
FARES TO BE PAID FOR IN ENGLISH MONEY.						
F. A. B. GENESTE, C.E.						
General Manager						

Villa Paris Hotel

(LATE MALLIA)

Casal Lia, Malta.

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Breakfasts, Luncheons, Dinners and Refreshments always ready, and at very moderate prices.

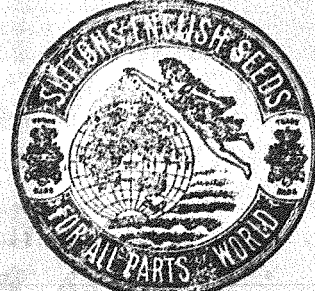
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N.B.—Gentlemen wishing to send oranges to England will be punctually served.

The undersigned begs to inform his numerous friends and the public in general that he has disposed of his Erated Water business (which has been established over twenty years) to the "Malta Erated Waters Co." and hopes that the extensive patronage which has been accorded him will be transferred

Just Received
Officers proceeding to Egypt, will do well to supply themselves with a copy of the new Egyptian phrase-book whereby much inconvenience may be avoided and a speedy insight into the language obtained. To be had at the Malta Times Office, 7, Strada Zecca, Valletta.

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EMMANUEL PACE.
Valletta, 23rd June, 1892.

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on the 12th July, 1843, that the Malta station be discontinued with a view of reducing expenditure. So it came about that by a transfer dated 26th December, 1843 the house, church, and premises in Valletta were sold to the Free Church of Scotland for £900. Since protestant churches were still not allowed to own property as a church the transaction had to be between the Reverend John Keeling, nominally still the owner, and four Convenors of Committees in Scotland in their private capacities.

John Jenkins preached his farewell sermon in the chapel in Valletta on the 12 February, 1844, when there was a "numerous congregation"; then he had his family left on the next packet for England. His going was by no means so bleak as his coming to Malta and at the end of 1843 congregations were on the increase. For that year the statistics are given as one minister; one subordinate paid agent; three unpaid agents; sixteen full church members; four on probation; and thirteen male and thirteen female scholars. The total number of attendants at public worship was normally about two hundred.

So ended the first phase of Methodism in Malta. For the next eight years it was to be kept alive only by the meetings held among themselves by Methodist soldiers and sailors and by class meetings held by a layman, Mr. J.V. Allan, who later purchased a reading room and himself conducted public worship on Tuesday evenings in premises rented from the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The Re-awakening

It was 1851 before a regular Methodist place of worship was opened again in Malta, but during that time small bodies of Methodists continued to gather in their class-meetings nearly all over the garrison. In that year, however, the Durham Light Infantry arrived in the Island. In its ranks were thirty godly Methodists, their leaders being Serjeant (later Major) Henry Sladden, and Corporal (later Major) John Smith, who years after became Assistant Financial Secretary of the Methodist Foreign Missionary Committee. At first the Regimental schoolroom was allotted to the Methodists as a meeting place, and they held their services there, but they soon discovered that small Methodist meetings were being held all over the garrison in practically every regiment and among naval officers and men and Dockyard employees.

So it came about that one of these Dockyard men (who later became a minister in Canada) attempted to band together these scattered groups and shepherd them. He opened his own house as a meeting place, but it soon became

quite inadequate and other premises had to be sought. This was easier said than done because the Maltese, being Roman Catholics, were naturally suspicious of such meetings as these, and military regulations at the time were not favourable to the gathering of soldiers except under military supervision; but one of the chaplains — evidently non-Methodist — having re-assured the authorities that the men were of good character and trustworthy and that the meetings would be conducted with due regard to military discipline, eventually a house in Vittoriosa was rented, surprisingly enough, from a Roman Catholic priest whose only concern seems to have been that the rent should be guaranteed! Several of the men belong to the Royal Engineers and made the furniture for a large room which was used as a chapel and lecture hall; other rooms were fitted up as class-rooms, sitting-rooms, and so on. Indeed, the establishments became the forerunner of the Soldiers' Homes which afterwards were to spread throughout the world and in which Methodism was to play such a leading part. Officially, the first Wesleyan Methodist Home in Malta did not open until 1870, but its beginnings were really at these premises opened in 1851.

When everything was ready the house was opened for the worship of God and as a resort for soldiers and sailors, and in no time at all a large congregation had gathered and a strong Sunday School had been established. The work prospered greatly until 1854, when the Crimean War broke out. Malta then became a collecting point for thousands of soldiers and sailors going to the front and magnificent work was done by the "Home". Indeed, it has been suggested that Florence Nightingale slept there on her way to the Crimea. Although the Durham Light Infantry was among those which had to depart for the Crimea (where, incidentally, John Smith was commissioned for his gallantry in action) the work in Malta was nobly maintained by two dockyard men until their removal from the station too. Owing to the constant changes of troops it then became very difficult to continue renting the house at Vittoriosa, so the work was transferred to a room in the Bible Depôt in Valletta which the agent kindly made available and thither the furniture was removed.

In 1855 a War Department armourer arrived and undertook the work of pastor among the men. In fact, he continued so to act until the next ordained Methodist minister was sent to Malta in 1868, and in all that time the room at the Bible Depôt served as church and meeting place.

Long before that latter year, however, complaints were reaching the Wesleyan Conference that no proper pastoral oversight or adequate chapel premises had been provided in Malta. For instance, in July, 1859, an army captain requested services for Wesleyans since half the company of his regiment of Royal Engineers were Wesleyans. However there was no church to which the soldiers could be paraded so no services were provided. Again in 1865, a Mr. Patterson sends an outburst to the Wesleyan Home Missions Committee that the 84th., Regiment, with at least eighty Wesleyans in it to his knowledge, has just

gone to Malta, where they will find neither Wesleyan chapel nor minister. Another writer in early 1867 exclaims angrily. "May God in His mercy interpose and stir up the Conference to send a Methodist minister to this garrison and naval station!". A minister in Ireland wrote to say that the 64th., Regiment had recently sailed for Malta, the Methodists among them expecting that they should "as a matter of course" find a Wesleyan minister there. He goes on, "What are Methodists doing to neglect such a place?"

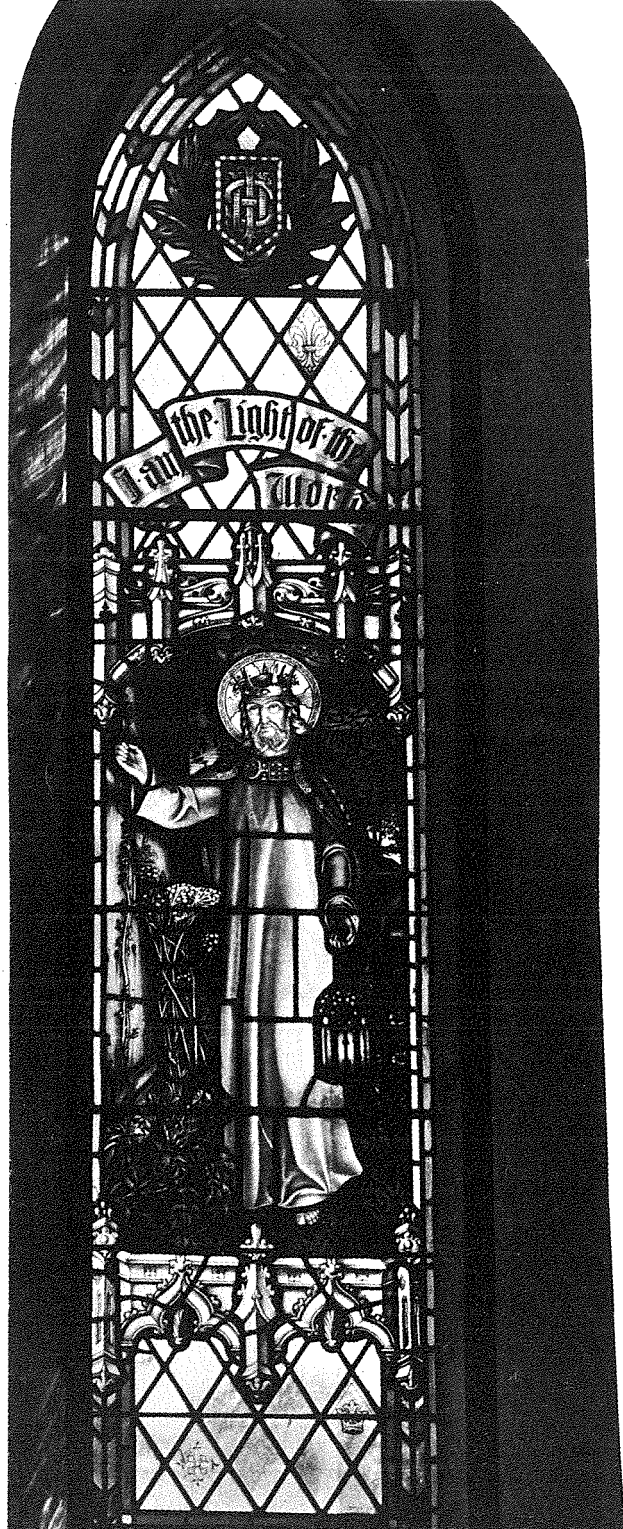
By 1868 the storms of protest were such that Conference could no longer delay in sending a minister, and in that year the Reverend W.S. Caldecott arrived; in consequence of which the Home Missions report for 1869 can thankfully record. "A great want long felt and complained of by Wesleyans in H.M. Service has thus been supplied."

Some idea of the impression created by Malta in those days can be gauged from a letter of 1863 — one of those complaining about the lack of a minister — in which the writer says, "This is a very wicked place, especially in the town on Sundays, when fiddling and dancing and all kinds of games are going on as if people did not know it was the Sabbath."

Settling Down Again

The Reverend W.S. Caldecott soon found himself more than fully occupied with three Sunday services and a host of weekday activities. One of his first acts was to transfer the work to a better room in Strada Stretta, Valletta, where it very greatly prospered. From this time onwards, however, more formal services such as marriages seem to have been conducted by Mr. Caldecott and his successors in the Baracca Church [Castille Square] until the new Wesleyan Church was opened at Floriana in 1883. The centre of work among servicemen was transferred again in 1871 from Valletta to Piazza Maggiore, Floriana, where, at last, in fairly adequate premises, the Floriana Soldiers' and Sailors' Home was founded. These are the premises occupied at the present day by the Salvation Army.

The next year (1872) Mr. Caldecott was joined by a second Wesleyan Methodist minister, and thereafter for many years there were always two ministers regularly engaged in the work in Malta among the English and servicemen. A period of intense activity and development was now approaching, in which the absence of a proper church was to be felt more and more acutely. Sunday services came to be held in what was known as "The Recreation Room" at Floriana Parade Ground, and also in H.M. Dockyard, whilst weekday activity centred upon the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Floriana; and all three places increasingly proved totally inadequate, whilst the room at the Floriana



Parade Ground was additionally of doubtful suitability anyway since the preacher had to take his stand between two bagatelle tables and the congregation had to suffer "smells more savoury than pleasant" from the adjoining coffee room. The surroundings were not exactly conducive to worship and many strangers hesitated to come. Apart from this the Sunday evening prayer meeting which followed the evening service could not be held there, so after the service there had to be adjourned to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home eight minutes walk away.

The Dockyard service was likewise handicapped through having to meet in a room too small, and on occasions as many as seventy people had to stay outside unable to find room. Meanwhile the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Floriana had to accommodate all the other activities including the Sunday School, the Sunday evening prayer-meeting, week evening prayer-meeting, class-meeting, preaching service, Bible Class, temperance, and Mothers' Meetings.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that successive ministers strove hard to acquire a site for a Methodist Church and ancillary premises, but for years all hopes of obtaining a suitable site were frustrated. About 1875 it was decided to obtain a site ideally situated close by the Floriana Railway Station — *the* site in fact on which the present Floriana Methodist Church was erected eventually and still stands. A non-commissioned officer in the Royal Engineers called together a small prayer-meeting which began praying that God would give them this site but, providentially as it happened, it was not immediately available for, when the senior Wesleyan minister here at the time, the Reverend Benjamin Broadley, made application for it to the War Department which owned it, he was told that it had been decided to use it otherwise. Mr. Broadley's successor, the Reverend Joseph Webster, met with no greater encouragement when he too made application for it subsequently. The prayer-meeting, however, continued.

Meanwhile at home, discussions took place in 1879 between the Army and Navy Committee the Home Missions Committee, and the Missionary Committee, and it was agreed that the work at Malta should again be taken under the direction of the Missionary Committee, but that the expenses should be defrayed by the Home Missions Committee. This arrangement persisted until 1903, when the work was again taken back under the direction of the Home Missions Committee.

By 1880 the need for a church and adequate premises was getting desperate; Mr. Webster obtained an interview with the Secretary of State for War and was granted a site adjoined the Central Civil Hospital. Before anything was done however, Mr. Webster was succeeded that same year by the extraordinary John Laverack, who was to exercise a remarkable ministry here for

the next twenty years and see the work develop to an amazing degree. Almost immediately on his arrival he was asked whether, instead of the site near the hospital, he would be prepared to accept the site on which the Floriana Methodist Church now stands! Thus as Mr. Laverack himself put it. "The Methodists had at last been solicited to take the site for which they had prayed" for the last eight years. Such is the power of prayer and such the providence of God for, as will presently be shewn, the delay in obtaining the site proved of tremendous advantage in enabling facilities and help to be provided when the church was ultimately built which would not have been available previously.

Once the site had been obtained the faithful set to work with enthusiasm for, as a contemporary leaflet explained, "The buildings will not be commenced until sufficient funds to meet all expenses are in hand or promised". Needless to say, the projected erection of a Methodist Church caused considerable consternation among the local population, and the proposal was vigorously denounced. There was even a petition against its erection — doubtless the more provoked because one of the stated objects was to form "a centre from which mission operations can be carried on" and to "be the means of spreading amongst the people the pure Gospel which once the great Apostle of the Gentiles preached on these shores".

Despite these objections the project advanced: Mr. T.M. Ellis of London prepared plans for a church to seat about 420 to 450 (with capacity for enlargement), and school-rooms, hall, and caretaker's quarters, and these were approved by the Missionary Committee. An inclusive tender was then obtained from Emmerson, a contractor who had erected some of the largest public buildings on the island (this was considered of no small importance considering local circumstances), for £3,448 (though another £450 was estimated for architect's commission and contingencies) and, on the 12th. December, 1881, excavations commenced. The work then proceeded rapidly under the direction of Mr. Webster Paulson C.E.

Of course, you cannot open a new Methodist church without a bazaar, and Floriana was no exceptional! The Malta Times for the 10th., December, 1881, records, "According to announcement, under the patronage of Vice Admiral Sir F. Beauchamp Seymour G.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of H.M. Mediterranean Fleet, and Major-General P.R.B. Fielding C.B., the Bazaar in aid of the new Wesleyan Church was held last week and proved a great success".

"The Commissariat Store, kindly lent for the occasion, was quaintly decorated with flags; the gracefully canopied stalls were supplied with a profusion of useful and ornamental articles, all (with the exception of the toys) being the work of ladies of the congregation and their friends, of soldiers and sailors of the Royal Navy." There were the usual refreshment stalls of course and a flower stall, and various ladies and gentlemen "at intervals enlivened the monotony of business by discoursing sweet strains on the pianoforte".

An Art gallery, a collection of scientific instruments, and an exhibition of "various models and curiosities" lent chiefly by officers of the army and navy added to the general interest, as also of course did the shewing of the "magic lantern". The bazaar raised the gratifying total of £130.

Providentially, a special "Thanksgiving Fund" of over £300,000 had also just been raised by the Methodists in England and a grant of £1,500 was obtained from that. It so happened additionally that a Mr. C.E. Lamplough of London had spent the previous winter in Malta and promised £750. Before even a stone was laid therefore a total of £3,082. 10. had been promised by various friends towards the cost of the new building, and it could now be seen how providential had been the irritating delay in obtaining the site.

Opening Up

The Reverend John Laverack was appointed Senior Wesleyan Chaplain in Malta in 1880, but he had already served here previously under Mr. Broadley, and he proved to be a man of immense energy and enthusiasm. While the Floriana developments were taking place, the work across the harbour centring on the Dockyard was likewise advancing, and in 1882 a second Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, known as "The Rest", was opened in a hired house at Strada Cospicua, in the Cottonera area. "The Rest" at once became a centre of great evangelical activity; two years later in 1884 an excellent property on Santa Margherita Hill was acquired and the "Soldiers' and Sailors' Rest" was transferred to it. Its lecture hall became also the centre of a vigorous and healthy church — though many years afterwards a separate church building became available.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian War of 1882 had broken out: a great base hospital was established in Gozo to which the sick and wounded were brought, and Mr. Laverack laboured tirelessly to visit the sick and comfort the dying. Indeed, one hospital orderly said years later, "Mr. Laverack is the best hospital visitor I have ever known. Merely to look at him bucks the men up, and you can almost trace him through the hospital by the sunshine he's left behind him in the wards".

On the 16th., March, 1883, two eminent Wesleyan Methodist ministers, the Reverend John Kilner, Secretary of the Wesleyan Foreign Missionary Society, and the Reverend R.W. Allen, Secretary of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee, arrived in Malta with a small party on the P. & O. steamer "Sutley" to take part in the opening ceremonies of Floriana Wesleyan Church (as it then was). The church was described in the *Malta Times* of the 10th., March, 1883 as

“occupying a commanding site close by the Floriana Railway Station”, and would “henceforth form a conspicuous object in the eye of every traveller from Valletta to Floriana”. Interesting features of the building were the flat roof (in accordance with War Department stipulations) and the fact that it was the first building in Malta to be fitted with the Lane Fox Incandescent Lamp — alias electric light — which aroused great curiosity. The whole scheme cost £4,200, of which somewhat over £200 had been raised locally, and on the opening day about £500 was still required. Mr. Lamplough, however, had generously promised to give the last £200 (in addition to his earlier gifts) if the £4,000 were raised. Indeed, in view of Mr. Lamplough’s many generous gifts to the Floriana Church, it is wholly appropriate that the hall beneath should be named the “Lamplough Hall”. Apart from his pecuniary gifts, the pulpit was presented by him also, and the font was given by his children. A grant was also received from the War Office.

The new church was opened for public worship on Sunday, March 18th., 1883, and at half past ten in the morning the Reverend John Kilner preached to a large congregation. In the afternoon a sacramental service was conducted by Mr. Kilner, assisted by the Reverend R.W. Allen and the local Ministers (Reverend J. Laverack and the Reverend T.D. Barnes). The service at 6 p.m. was a crowded one, and was conducted by the Reverend R.W. Allen. The real opening came on the following Tuesday though, the 20th., March, 1883, when at half past three in the afternoon the Rev. John Kilner again conducted divine worship and preached. Unfortunately, about half an hour before the commencement of the service there was a hurricane of wind and dust and rain, which doubtless deterred many from attending; but nevertheless for the tea afterwards the school-room was packed to such an extent that tea had to be taken in two sittings. In fact, about four hundred people were served with tea that day.

The evening meeting was quite an event and the church was crowded in all parts. Mr. Kilner took the chair and, after the Reverend D. Thom M.A., had offered prayer. Mr. Laverack welcomed the visiting ministers and outlined the history of the church — or rather that of the acquisition of the site and the building of the church! The band of the Shropshire Regiment accompanied the hearty singing at both afternoon and evening services and many visitors brought greetings; though one — the Reverend T. Greenbury, Secretary to the Sailors’ Orphan Home at Hull — said the harmonium reminded him of a little tug trying to tow a man-of-war, and hoped the church would soon have a suitable organ!

The benediction concluded a crowded, enthusiastic and successful meeting at about nine o’clock.

So began what has become known and loved to hundreds through the years simply as “Floriana”.



Progress

"The Rest" opened in its final form at Santa Margherita Hill, Cospicua, in 1884 and, although somewhat smaller than the Soldier's and Sailors' Home in Floriana, soon housed a ceaseless round of activities and more than justified itself. In fact, its perhaps cosier atmosphere was such that many found there an even happier family spirit and friendship than at Floriana. The same premises did duty for years as Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, Concert Hall, meeting place for religious and secular gatherings of all kinds, and church. Its open courtyard proved ideal for services and meetings in the hot weather.

However, the initial outlay on purchasing the property and furnishing it proved considerable and, by 1886, it was obvious that a really big effort must be made to extinguish the original debt on the place. So (Yes! You've guessed it!) a bazaar was arranged — the largest which had ever been attempted in the island. In fact, it was known as the "Grand Bazaar", and it took place in the Gymnasium, Valletta, on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 8th., and 9th., February, 1887, under the distinguished patronage of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, who had recently arrived in the island.

Long before the bazaar itself various misgivings were felt about it, especially from those who said that such establishments as "The Rest" were "continually compelled to appeal for pecuniary help". As a result of these and other criticisms Mr. Laverack found it desirable to issue a statement pointing out that the object of the bazaar was to assist in the raising of £2,000 to purchase the property outright and thus secure it for its continued use; otherwise its position would be a bit precarious. He further said that whilst a great sum had naturally been spent on initial expenses such as furnishings, "The Rest" was actually a branch of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home in Floriana, which institution was certainly not continually appealing for financial help; furthermore, beds were only added to the institution in December, 1886, but in future these would of course provide an additional source of income and there was every expectation that once the premises had been secured and adapted, and certain contemplated enlargements carried out (for they were already very overcrowded) "The Rest" would be quite self-supporting. He added that in any case it should not lack supporters if it was not, and that there had been no appeal for financial help for the last three years.

This outburst apparently effectually quietened the critics; the Grand Bazaar opened according to plan and proved itself abundantly worthwhile. The Gymnasium was decorated with pretty stalls and bunting put up by the signalmen from H.M.S. "Alexandra". As usual on these occasions, the ladies worked hard at selling the wares and their "genial pushing ability secured a brisk trade." The **Malta Times** reports: "As the hours for opening approached there entered the Gymnasium His Excellency The Governor (General Sir Lintorn

Simmonds) and Lady Simmonds, Captain Chesney ADC accompanying; and, punctual to the minute, came Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh and the Princess Louise, Marchionesse of Lorne (later Duchess of Argyll), attended by Captain the Honourable D. Monson and Lady Mary Fitzwilliam." Apart from the money raised at the bazaar itself, subscription lists had been opened and had been well subscribed by both English and Maltese; indeed, the help given by Maltese, supporters and friends was particularly gratifying to Mr. Laverack. No less than £400 had therefore been raised or promised before the bazaar opened.

The bazaar was opened by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, who expressed appreciation of the work done by the Institution and commended it to the support of the community. H.R. & I. Highness was graciously pleased to accept purses and then T.R.H. moved round the bazaar making purchases. Before they left they again wished the bazaar success and made a generous donation of £25, at the same time sending a further £25 for the funds of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Floriana. The band of the South Yorkshire Regiment played on the Tuesday afternoon and the "Alexandra's" band on the Wednesday.

£300 was raised at the bazaar itself, and the final total for the effort was £800 — a truly amazing achievement.

Although, of course, much more money still was needed, "The Rest" was thus secured and in fact, fifteen years later in 1902 the freehold of the property was bought.

The years from about 1890 onwards saw Methodism at last equipped with men and buildings reasonably adequate to minister to the welfare — both spiritual and physical — of civilians and service personnel in Malta, and there followed a period in which cultural and religious activities were always taking place at the Floriana Church, or the Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Floriana (on which a new twenty-year lease was taken from the 6th., November, 1890), or at "The Rest". Sunday services by the two ministers were conducted at Floriana Church, at Pembroke Camp, and in the lecture room of "The Rest". By the early twentieth century a further Sunday service at Imtarfa had been added and, in fact, once again the number of ministers was proving inadequate. However, by having the Pembroke Camp and Imtarfa morning services at 8.30 a.m. and 9.45 a.m. respectively the ministers could get back to Floriana and Cospicua ("The Rest") in time to conduct the morning services there at 10.30 a.m. Evening service was at 6.30 p.m. in each case, so that at Pembroke (there was none at Imtarfa) normally had to be conducted by a local preacher. It is interesting to note that in those days the Sunday School, both at Floriana and at Cospicua, was at 2.45 p.m.

It would be an exaggeration though to say that everything was perfect even so far as premises were concerned. In particular the lack of a separate

church at Cospicua was felt, and likewise the increasing inadequacy of the premises occupied by the Soldier's and Sailors' Home, Floriana. At the latter establishment it was necessary to keep adding various rooms and incorporating from time to time bits of adjacent properties. The result was that the place, which in any event began as only an ordinary dwelling-house, was rather rambling, with many unsuitable rooms and a lot of wasted space. Apart from this the rental was heavy (£142 per annum) and it was some distance from the church. Whilst the work prospered incredibly under these difficulties, it became increasingly felt that new premises were needed.

Connaught Home

In 1907 permission was obtained to build a new Soldiers' and Sailors' Home on land adjoining the church at Floriana. Negotiations for the erection of a suitable building were soon completed and Mr. Bridgeford Pirie prepared the plans, which ingeniously linked up the new buildings with the existing church premises. By November 1907 the work had started, the estimated cost being £3,500, of which £2,000 was the builder's estimate and £347 was for carpentry work. The remaining £1,153 was for furnishing, drainage, and professional fees.

Four months later the **Daily Malta Chronicle** announced on the 26th., March, 1908: "A commemorative stone will be placed on Monday March 30th., at 12 noon on the front of the "Connaught Home for Soldiers and Sailors", Floriana (adjoining the Wesleyan Church) by Field Marshal H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, K.G., K.T., K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief British Troops in the Mediterranean, accompanied by their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia of Connaught... By kind permission of Lt.-Col. Montagu and officers, the band of the 1st, Battalion Suffolk Regiment will be present ... All traffic will be stopped from 11.30 to one o'clock.

The building had by then reached a fairly advanced stage of construction largely owing to the efforts of the Wesleyan minister then here, the Reverend H. Peverley Dodd. On the day of the stone-laying all went smoothly, despite inclement weather, and the building was decorated outside and in with plants and flags arranged chiefly by men of H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" (thanks to Captain Savory M.V.O.). Members of the Royal Artillery and the Suffolk Regiment voluntarily lined the approaches and, as Their Royal Highnesses arrived they were received by a Guard of Honour furnished by H.M.S. "Prince of Wales"



1883

1953

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF

IRVING DAVIES

METHODIST MINISTER.

CHAPLAIN R. A. CH. D. 1918-1919.

CHAPLAIN ROYAL NAVY 1919-1947.

HONORARY CHAPLAIN TO
H. M. KING GEORGE VI.

COMMANDER OF
THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

THIS TABLET

IS ERECTED BY MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SERVICES
TO WHOM HE MINISTERED

AND THE CHAPLAINS WHO SERVED WITH HIM.

HIS MINISTRY OF TEN YEARS IN THIS ISLAND.

IS REMEMBERED NOT ONLY IN THIS CHURCH
BUT ALSO AT "THE REST" ON MARGHERITA HILL
WHERE HE MAINTAINED A FELLOWSHIP OF WORSHIP
AND DEVOTED SERVICE UNTIL THOSE BUILDINGS

WERE DESTROYED BY ENEMY ACTION

IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

while the band of the Suffolk Regiment played "God Save the King". The Reverend H. Peverley Dodd received the Royal Party and conducted them through the fashionable assemblage in waiting to the first floor balcony immediately behind the commemorative stone. The verandah unfortunately could not be occupied because of the bad weather. Her Royal Highness and the Princess Patricia were graciously pleased to accept bouquets from Mrs. Dodd, and the Reverend Finlay Mackenzie (minister at "The Rest", Margherita Hill) was also presented.

In his speech the Reverend H. Peverley Dodd referred to the fact that the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board had at that time no less than thirty-five Homes for Soldiers and Sailors throughout the Empire and that this particular form of that church's work was then undergoing unprecedented activity, with schemes currently afoot at a further seven places; in fact, including the cost of the new building at Floriana an additional £53,000 was being expended.

After the Reverend Doctor Wisely had presented a silver trowel to His Royal Highness on behalf of the Army and Navy Board, His Royal Highness declared the stone well and truly laid and then spoke as follows:

"I desire to give expression to the very great pleasure afforded me on this occasion, in coming here to lend my name to an Institution so closely associated with a Church which has so constantly manifested such a Christian and kindly spirit towards the Soldiers and Sailors of His Majesty's Services I have had many opportunities of witnessing the interest which is taken in this form of work by the Wesleyan Church."

H.R.H. then shook hands with the architect (Mr. Pirie), the builder (Mr. Zahra), and the carpenter (Mr. Pirrotta), and afterwards expressed the wish to inspect the building, with the arrangement and progress of which he was highly pleased.

Among those present were H.E. The Governor (Lieutenant-General Henry Fane Grant C.B.) and Mrs. Fane Grant, Vice-Admiral H.S.H. Prince Louis of Battenberg, and H.G.D.H. Princess Louis of Battenberg, Lady Drury, His Honour Sir E.M. and Lady Merewether, Sir Henry and Lady Barry, Sir John Maxwell, and many others.

So it was that the Soldier's and Sailors' Home at Piazza Maggiore, Floriana, was transferred to its new site and became known as the "Connaught Home", the old premises being taken over by the Salvation Army.

It is said that not long after the "Connaught Home" opened, there entered one afternoon a typical British sailor who ordered eighteen poached eggs, tea, bread and butter, and the manager, thinking he was the advance agent for a small party which would shortly appear on the scene, and wishing to know how many cups to provide said innocently. "And how many will there be in the party?" The reply was, "See here, boss, this party consists of one and

that's me! I've had seven weeks afloat, until I'm sick of the sight of ship and messmates and I've come ashore to have a good square meal". He thereupon seated himself, got to work, and sixteen out of the eighteen eggs actually disappeared!

This not very typical incident does, however, shew the worthwhileness of the work and how much the Connaught Home was appreciated from the first, especially by men who had been cooped up at sea for six or seven weeks. Before the Great War of 1914 an excellent hot dinner consisting of meat, two vegetables and sweet could be had at the Connaught for a shilling. Ninepence was charged for a cabin and a hot bath cost sixpence.

Routine Work and the Great War

At last Methodist work in Malta was settled into some kind of satisfactory routine, being centred on the two points at Floriana and Cospicua with a minister based at each. A ceaseless round of activities, both secular and spiritual (insofar as the distinction can be drawn) went on at both. One may perhaps envy the concert goers at these places though, for admission charges are regularly advertised as 3d. and 6d. (though admittedly there was a rather special — and therefore expensive — concert at the Lamplough Hall on the 3rd., January, 1908, where admission was 6d. and 1/-).

On a typical Sunday at this period divine services would be advertised as:—

Wesleyan Church Floriana — Rev. H. Peverley Dodd.

Divine Service 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

Sunday School 2.45 p.m.

Margherita Hill — Rev. Finlay Mackenzie.

Divine Service 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

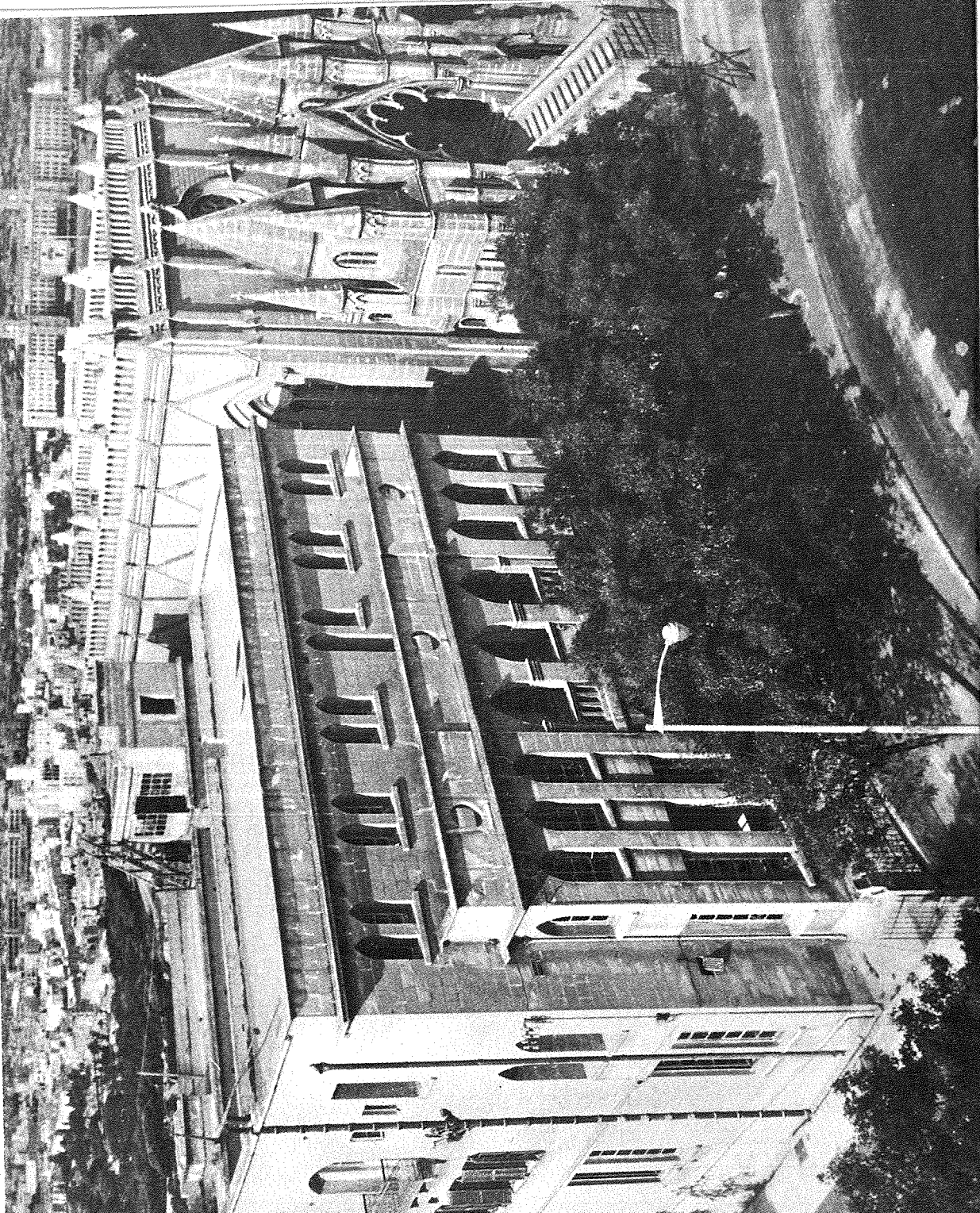
Sunday School 2.45 p.m.

Imtarfa

Parade Service 8.30 a.m.

Pembroke

Parade Service 8.30 a.m.



This happy state of affairs continued for several years, though "The Rest" still had no separate church building; but outside Malta the international storm-clouds were gathering and, as we all now know, a whole era suddenly came to an abrupt end on the 3rd., August, 1914 when the Great War broke out. Naturally, although Malta was not in the front line military and naval activity increased enormously, and the "Connaught Home" and "The Rest" both did great work not only among English soldiers and sailors but among colonial and dominion forces as well. Malta became the base to which wounded from the Dardanelles were evacuated and every available space appeared to be filled with hospital tents, while the Red Cross wagons which were used for the wounded seemed to ply continuously up the hill at Pieta to the military cemetery. The Methodist chaplains were constantly at work comforting the sick and dying and great was the appreciation of their services in this respect. At the outbreak of war Mr. Dodd was gazetted as a temporary chaplain to the Forces and until he left in 1919 acted as Senior Nonconformist Chaplain on the Island.

The Connaught Home and "The Rest" were both crowded with soldiers and sailors and wounded. There was, of course, no separate Air Force in the early days of the war, but about 1917 a sea-plane base was established at Kalafrana. The church services were naturally packed, and the class-meetings and the Friday concerts continued throughout the war. In gratitude for all that Floriana had done for Australian servicemen during the Great War and in memory of his son, who died here, an Australian, Mr. G. B. Vasey and other friends in Australia, presented to the Floriana Church the original stained glass windows above the communion table.

In the period 1918-1919 a certain amount of nationalistic feeling began to emerge in Malta, culminating in civil riots when Field Marshal Lord Methuen was succeeded as Governor by Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer. This was a rather frightening time: one Maltese was shot; English houses were shuttered; and an armed escort had to come for Mr. Dodd at service times since even he was hissed at by his neighbours. The navy was on manoeuvres at the time, but sufficient ships were recalled to enable an armed force to be available. Mr. Dodd and his family saw them arrive with relief, though in fact they merely stacked their rifles and waited for the crowds to melt away!

Mr. Dodd returned home in 1919, when his distinguished ministry was recognised by his inclusion in the first group of Wesleyan Methodist chaplains to receive permanent commissions and he was appointed to the Aldershot Command as the Senior Methodist Chaplain. Later he was awarded the O.B.E., and became in 1929 Assistant Chaplain General, Western Command. He died on the 8th., January, 1938.

Inter-War Years

Many still happily with us could tell of the wonderful times of fellowship which they enjoyed at the Methodist Churches at both Cospicua ("The Rest") and Floriana between the wars, and the happy times they had then are recalled nostalgically by countless numbers now scattered far and wide. There was a slight scare in 1922 when Malta was given self-government and the resultant local administration tried to put its hands on the Floriana site, but their acquisitiveness was successfully resisted.

In the early twenties life at Floriana was subject to many vicissitudes as the congregations fluctuated or the fleet put to sea, although overall the picture seems to have been an encouraging one. For instance, sometimes the choir had to be discontinued while the Fleet was away, and the Church Social Hour held after the evening service (it seems to have taken more the form of a concert then, and refreshments were served) was sometimes suspended during the summer if the Fleet was out of port. It is interesting to note that as early as 1924 the question of installing fans in the church was raised. (It was raised again in 1930, but by 1934 something seems to have been done because we find complaints that the fans are too noisy! In 1962 the question was still being considered!) Services also continued to be held at Pembroke and Imtarfa.

Life during this period at "The Rest" also had its ups and downs as the Fleet went in and out of port; in fact, being in the Dockyard area, it was even more dependent upon the fleet than was Floriana. "The Rest" consisted then of one large hall (used also for church services until 1926), an open courtyard leading on the left to the chaplain's house, and a number of smaller rooms. The large hall had to be used for badminton, concerts, church services, and for one of the Sunday school departments. One of the smaller rooms was a buffet and kitchen presided over by "Dear Old Dom", who used to cook the eggs and chips and brew endless cups of tea — helped by the ladies of the church who used to make meat-pies and jam and apple tarts. On Sunday afternoons a tea was laid on in the courtyard (for sixpence a head!). On Saturday afternoons there were excursions in old wooden 'buses with picnics on the beaches, at which Dom struggled with the primus-stove to brew the tea. Almost everyone went back from the picnic to the Saturday night prayer-meeting which was followed by badminton and a clearing of the hall for the Sunday services. Tuesday evening was the class meeting and Thursday the Social and Literary Society, at which there were usually about one hundred and twenty and the programme was varied, with lantern lectures and many distinguished speakers (including such notable ones as Lord Strickland and Sir Harry Luke). Choir practice was on Friday nights, as also was Girl Guides. Every night, however, something of interest was on, and badminton and "uckers" (a kind of ludo) seemed in continuous progress — as also did tea brewing! Each night a serviceman was appointed to the "I'll Go" chair, his job being to keep the tea-pot supplied. Then there were the "Competitive Social Evenings" — or concerts — at which the various groups vied with each other to present the best

item, and the annual Sunday school pantomime which was also performed at Floriana — as indeed were many of the concerts. After the evening service there was always a “Social Hour”, at which male voice choirs from different ships often sang, but which took the general form of an informal “sing song” of favourite hymns. Whenever a “Restite” was going home a special hymn was sung: —

“Let us sing a song that will cheer us on the way.
 In a little while we are going home.
 For the night will end in the everlasting day;
 In a little while we are going home.

Chorus: In a little while, in a little while,
 We shall cross the billows' foam;
 We shall meet at last
 When the stormy winds are past;
 In a little while we are going home.
 We will do the work that our hands will find to do;
 In a little while we are going home
 And the grace of God will our daily strength renew;
 In a little while we are going home.

“The Rest” also owned a tennis court a short distance away in a well sheltered spot with trees and shrubs which made it very attractive.

Opposite “The Rest” across the road was a set of buildings which had been a school. In 1926 these fell vacant and negotiations began for their acquisition as a Methodist Church and premises. Naturally there was some local opposition as soon as these plans became known, but in 1927 the buildings were obtained and opened as a separate Methodist Church and school premises, “The Rest” being used thereafter for the mid-week and social activities. At last, each of the two Methodist centres in Malta had its own separate church building.

To furnish the new church two hundred chairs were obtained from England and arrived in four crates. The chairs had to be assembled from their component parts, consisting of back, seat, front legs, and book-rest. As each piece was numbered 1 - 50 there should have been little difficulty and all the shipwrights and joiners volunteered to help assemble them. When they arrived on the appointed day, however, someone who thought he was helping had put all the backs in one heap, all the seats in another, and likewise the other parts, so that in each heap there were four number ones, four number twos, and so on up to four number fifties. In the words of an eye-witness, “The resulting chaos had to be seen to be believed. As each chair was assembled unless the assembler had been remarkably lucky, it could be seen that the parts did not belong to each other and the chair wobbled perilously. For weeks afterwards the joiners were occupied with saw and chisel cutting pieces off the legs to make the chairs stand straight.

The services in the new church were well attended and afterwards most of the congregation used to adjourn to "The Rest" for refreshment and the Social Hour. By this time the work at "The Rest" was under the care of naval Methodist chaplains, whilst that at Floriana was in charge of army chaplains, though naval parade services were normally held at the Floriana church and conducted by the naval chaplain. In 1928 an additional naval chaplain was appointed to Malta for duties afloat, and he was able to assist at both Floriana and Cospicua when he was available. So the work continued all during the nineteen-thirties.

There is one intriguing minute in the records of the Cospicua Church which reads, in connexion with forming a roster of door-keepers at the church, "The roosters to lay in the hands of the Secretary"!

We cannot leave any account of "The Rest" during these inter-war years without mentioning the Reverend Irving Davies. His sojourn of ten years in Malta is still recalled affectionately by countless men and women to whom he really was a Father in God, and a plaque in the Floriana Church today commemorates his ministry in the island.

The War and After

On the 3rd., September, 1939, the Second World War began and Methodist activities had to be stepped up. By 1940 we find Methodist Sunday services being held as follows:—

Methodist Church Floriana 10 a.m. & 6.30 p.m. Sunday School 11 a.m.
 Methodist Church Cospicua 10.30 a.m. & 6.30 p.m. Sunday School 2.45 p.m.
 Pembroke Church Room 9 a.m.
 Tigne (1st. & 3rd Sundays) 8 a.m.
 Imtarfa (1st. & 3rd. Sundays) 10.45 a.m.
 Kalafrana (2nd. & 4th. Sundays) 10.45 a.m.

In fact, for a short while a Methodist army chaplain was stationed at Imtarfa.



Interior of Floriana Church (1961)

However, the atmosphere was soon a very different one, for Malta was destined to take a severe battering during the war. The prudent decision was taken to send home all the wives and families and, as the last aeroplanes and ships left, those remaining behind just felt stunned at the realisation that things would never be quite the same again. Margherita Hill was in the heart of the target area and "The Rest" was badly damaged. The church at Cospicua, after being surrendered to the military authorities for use as a store, was destroyed in 1942. So ended abruptly all the activities at "The Rest", and thereafter all Methodist work in Malta was centred on Floriana. In 1942 also the original Methodist Church in Britannia Street, Valletta, was destroyed.

The Floriana premises by no means escaped unscathed, both church and Connaught Home sustaining damage; but services were maintained. Considerable damage was in fact done to both buildings from 1941 onwards, and the church was unusable for a long time; the roof was holed in four places; the windows above the communion table were broken, notwithstanding blast-proof walls which had been erected; and services had to be held in the Connaught Home, which somehow contrived not to close down.

Church life itself was not at all easy or normal: there were no women for some time (until the first W.R.N.S. came), and services had to be carried on against the roar of gunfire and the falling of bombs. But through it all the church services and Social Hour after Sunday evening service went on.

The close of the war saw the buildings in a sorry plight, with the Cospicua Church destroyed and that at Floriana badly damaged. (The font, given by Mr. Lamplough's children, was found in the Lamplough Hall.) For over two years all the windows had been missing, and the rough patching had made the church most unsightly within. However, the people set to work with a will putting in temporary windows, filling in the holes in the floor, repairing the front of the church, which had been badly blasted, and building new steps to the entrance. The pews were all re-varnished by voluntary labour. In fact, it was the first church to be restored after the blitz, and the re-opening service on the 29th., April, 1945, was attended by H.E. The Governor (Lieutenant-General Sir Edmond Schreiber) with his wife and daughter and the Heads of Services.

The Lamplough Hall was being used by the government as a china store, but weeknight services could still be held in the small rooms at the back or in the games room of the Connaught Home. Soon activities managed to get into something like full swing again and the Saturday afternoon beach excursions started once more, but as there were still no families on the island Sunday School could not be immediately restarted.

It was about this time that the local authorities made a further attempt to obtain the site at Floriana, this time under the guise of "Town Planning", on the grounds that it was needed for a proposed university. Again, however, the attempt was successfully frustrated.

In 1946, when the first families were beginning to return, it was arranged that the smashed stained glass from the windows above the communion table — originally given by Australian Methodists after the Great War — should be packed and sent back to the firm which had made them (Abbot of Lancaster). The new windows, a replica of the old, were brought out by the Navy and restored in 1947, a generous contribution towards the cost being again made by Australian friends.

Meanwhile a decision had to be taken whether to restore the premises at Cospicua. At first it was hoped at least to restore "The Rest", though various difficulties, including a strike of quarry workers and the difficulty of getting a decision from the Malta Government as to whether the building could be re-erected anyway, had to be contended with. In 1944 the Reverend S.H. Keen, then Principal Chaplain (Methodist) to the R.A.F. arrived to consider the position and decided that the work at Cospicua would not be restarted but that henceforth Methodist work would be concentrated at Floriana. Although at the time this decision doubtless caused much heart-breaking, subsequent events have undoubtedly proved it to be the correct one.

An innovation undertaken shortly after (1946) was the construction of a minister's flat for use by the chaplain at Floriana. This was made by taking up some surplus space in the Connaught Home and reducing slightly the size of the billiard room there.

During 1947, largely owing to the efforts of the Army Chaplain, the Reverend J.S. Naylor, a party of about twenty-five German prisoners of war was allowed to attend the evening service at Floriana and also the community hymn singing afterwards. A number spoke English, of course, and to some extent they were able to take part in the service. They had their own pastor — Pastor Dreus — who gave a reading and prayer in German, and they could also say the Lord's Prayer in their own language. Eventually they were able to take part in the community hymn singing — forerunner of the Floriana Fellowship — and their own male voice choir used sometimes to sing some delightful German folk songs to the accompaniment of a battered old fiddle. Later, as regulations eased, they could acquire musical instruments and formed an orchestra which did its share in entertaining people at Floriana.



They were also allowed to manufacture articles from scrap material and sell them, the proceeds being used to send food parcels back to Germany. There was quite a wide variety of these articles, and many were displayed on the counter of the Connaught Home and on a special table in the Lamplough Hall each Sunday evening.

When these men first came to Floriana many were sullen and suspicious, but with time a spirit of respect and comradeship grew, especially when they could take part in the Fellowship, and they took a particular delight in the children, teaching them verses and the Lord's Prayer and "Silent Night" in German — the latter being sung at Christmas 1947. For their part, the Floriana people came to regard them as friends and fellow-worshippers in God's House. They slipped them many little gifts and despite all the barriers the Germans were drawn into the fellowship of the church.

So the time came for them to return to their own land: many of them were returning to the Russian Zone of Germany; it was mid-winter; few had knowledge of their families; but all knew the heartbreak that lay ahead. When the final "Goodbyes" came to be said there was much sorrow and sadness on both sides.

Their last Sunday was the 25th. January, 1948, and in his farewell speech in the Lamplough Hall Pastor Dreus said, "We came to you as homeless weary men; you have given us the right to make this church our home. We came to you as embittered and despondent men; you have given us your trust and respect. Till the end of our days we shall be able to tell this in our own country."

Where are all these men now? Do they ever think of those far-off days when they worshipped in Floriana Church, when they joined in the music and merriment in the Lamplough Hall, and when they were all Brothers in God with the people of Floriana? Do they ever speak to their children of these things? We like to think that they do.

No story of the last forty years would be complete without a mention of Mr. and Mrs. "Mac" Stephens. "Mac" first came in 1916, but left again the next year, returning with Mrs. Stephens on the 3rd. November, 1924, to begin a memorable stay of thirty-five years. Before the war they were active workers at "The Rest" and afterwards at Floriana, and it was surely appropriate that Mrs. Stephens should have been asked to unveil one of the stained glass windows in the Floriana Church when these were replaced. "Mac" regularly took the chair at the social hour after the evening service at post-war Floriana — by this time the social hour was called the Floriana Fellowship — and when he finally retired and left Malta in September 1959 many of us felt that in a sense an era had closed.

Modern Times

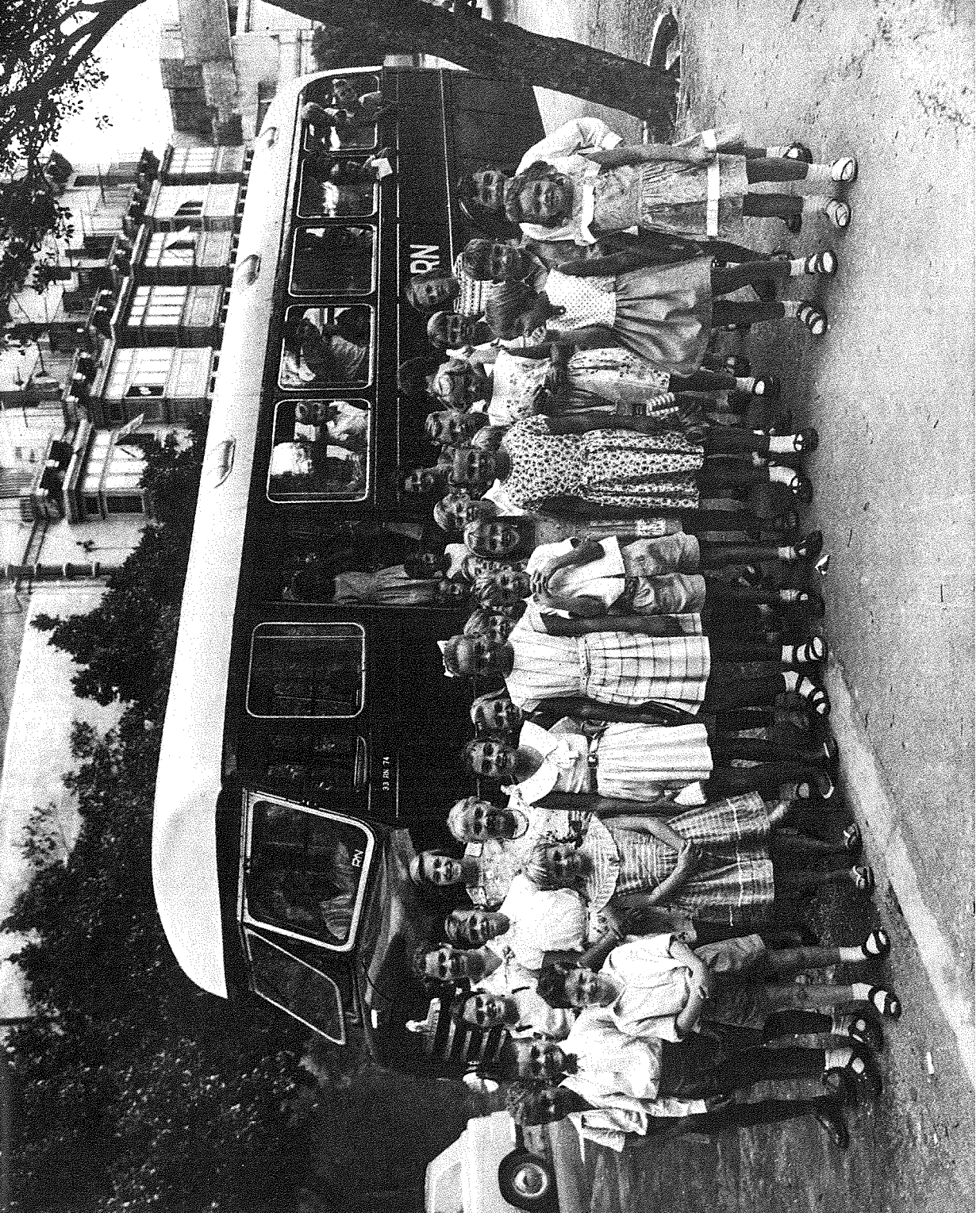
In the late nineteen-forties much still remained to be done to restore church life to normally as activities restarted with the return of the families. One of the most pressing needs by 1948 was for a new organ since the old one almost weekly was refusing to produce any more music until some more rubber bands or bits of wire had been adjusted. However, in spite of all the difficulties life did settle down again into something of the old routine; indeed, there were those who felt the fellowship and family spirit at Floriana in those post-war year to be at least the equal of, if not surpass, anything that had gone before.

Then came the blow of the closure of the Naval Dockyard in 1958 and some viewed the future with apprehension. Certainly the number of civilians greatly diminished after this event — though it proved to be a gradual process — but the round of activities and the strength of the spirit of fellowship which had for so long characterised Floriana never waned.

By 1961 Floriana had become much more of a serviceman's church, but that in no way detracted from its life. The regular programme of church life was as full as ever. There were Sunday services at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., and after the evening service there was the Floriana Fellowship, which still preserved the community hymn singing basis and which gave opportunity to greet newcomers and say farewell to those who were leaving. Following Mr. Stephen's departure, a roster of chairmen took charge of the meeting by turns, and for many the Floriana Fellowship undoubtedly became one of the highlights of their week. Invariably the concluding hymn was:—

Father, who art alone
 Our helper and our stay,
 O hear us, as we plead
 For loved ones far away,
 And shield with Thine almighty hand
 Our wanderers by sea and land.

We all are travellers here
 Along life's various road,
 Meeting and parting oft
 Till we shall mount to God;
 At home at last, with those we love,
 Within the fatherland above.



The Sunday School, re-opened in 1947, soon got back into its stride and by 1960 had about three hundred children regularly attending. There was a crèche for the tiniest children during the morning service and also during the Ladies' Fellowship meeting on Wednesday mornings at 10.15 a.m. The Wednesday Fellowship met on that day at 7.30 p.m. with a varied programme, and the Bible Study Group at 7.30 p.m. on Fridays. Then there was the Music Circle on Monday evenings, the Drama Group (The Floriana Players) on Tuesday evenings, the "Brownies" on Wednesday afternoons, the Sunday School teachers' preparation classes on Thursday evenings, the choir practice also on Thursday evenings, the youth club on Friday evenings, and of course, the Saturday afternoon excursions by bus to the beaches in the summer and to various places of interest in the winter. On Saturday evenings there was Olde Tyme Dancing and other social functions. In fact, no-one could really complain that the premises were not adequately utilised!

Meanwhile, the Connaught Home was giving some cause for concern, both on account of the need to redecorate and refurnish it, and because the type of service and accommodation it provided was not in so much demand as hitherto. Accordingly it was decided that some of the accommodation be altered to make it suitable for families. Naturally the question arose next as to how these alterations and redecorations could be paid for. So it was that a bazaar was held in the Lamplough Hall and the Connaught premises on the 4th. March, 1961, with the title "Spring Fair". For months previous to this date, though, all sections of the church were hard at work preparing for the day.

The day itself was, as seems usual on these occasions, very wet, but nevertheless a great crowd gathered and there was actually a queue outside in the street at times since there was no more room in the Lamplough Hall. After a brief devotional opening the minister introduced Lady Bingley who declared the Fair open. Various stalls and sideshows were provided by different sections of the church, and in the evening there was a variety concert. The nett financial result was over £1,160 — a most gratifying total in return for all the hard work put in over so long a period by so many people. In the same year most of the alterations and refurnishings required were actually carried out.

And so we come to the present day (1962). To hundreds now scattered far and wide across the globe, the term, "Floriana", does not mean the Valetta suburb of that name, neither does it conjure up pictures of St. Anne's Street or The Granaries, the Argotti Gardens or The Mall; it means simply the Methodist Church and Connaught Home, and the memories of happy times spent within

its fellowship. So much has happened since Nelson's sailors requested a chaplain or Doctor Cook had his vision, and certainly the work has not developed along the lines dreamed of by the earliest Methodist missionaries; but as we look back to the work of Keeling and Rule and Caldecott, and the great host of those who have laboured before us, and as we think of all those who through the years have owed their Christian experience to "Floriana", we are conscious of the privilege of inheriting a great tradition. Of the future none can tell, but we do know that those who are to follow us in Malta have the inspiration of a wonderful heritage and history to uphold them as they labour at Floriana.

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