

## Improvements in the 1970s and 1980s

Though the Church Trustees had discussed the reconstruction of the schoolroom several times, plans had to be shelved because of funding problems. At the **1974 AGM**, the trustees were faced with an ultimatum - either we build now, or we shall never afford to rebuild (inflation in the '70's was rampant). They were still reticent about the Church's ability to pay for, and build, a new hall. A compromise resulted. It was agreed that the building would cover just over half of the available free land behind the church, and that most of the work would have to be carried out by voluntary labour.

### **Building on a Shoestring!**

By **late summer 1975**, the demolition of the old schoolroom was under way, but the limited funding available meant that the building had to be constructed as cheaply as possible, so considerable use was made of second hand materials which included important items like the steel roof trusses.

The fruits of their labours were soon apparent. At a total cost of £8,000, the new hall was opened in **April 1976**.



It provided the same space as the present hall with, for the first time, a proper kitchen and toilets. The new facilities made possible a greatly increased use of the premises by the various sections of the church and outside organisations. The formation of the Boy's Brigade in **March 1979** by Ray Lee was a typical example. Under the Rev. Ernest Ball's Chairmanship of a meeting of the Church Council on 25th February **1980** the council approved the formation of the Girls Brigade.

The old organ was situated at the front of the Church, covering up most of the stained glass window. Early in **1975**, it was found that the cost of repair to the pipe organ was going to be prohibitive, and so a new electric organ was purchased and the older pipe organ ceased to be used. But it wasn't until 1977, that the pipe organ was removed, opening up a view of the beautiful stained glass window.



The old pipe organ – retired in 1975 and removed in 1977



The stained glass window – now revealed



Passageway between Methodist Premises and old third party buildings - note part of the wall is painted white to try to get more light into the kitchen!



At this time, there was car parking in the middle of the square. Note the stone walls and gate pillars of the church - now gone.

## **A New Sanctuary**

There was no resting on laurels with attention next focussing on the Church itself. The large space created by the removal of the organ, made possible the remodelling of the sanctuary area, which included some refurbishing with a new pulpit, lectern, font, table and communion rails, made by one of our organists, Mr. George Friday. These were arranged in a complete square for communion, but were light enough to be moved when the space was required. Half of the rails are still in use.



George Friday also designed and made the Communion rail, a screen round the new organ on the left of the front, and the pulpit on the right hand side.



Our minister at the time, Reverend Ernest Ball, is admiring the new Pulpit made by George Friday, one of our organists.

On 4th January, **1980**, a special Church Council meeting discussed the provision of additional rooms at the rear of the Schoolroom, costing £11,000 and the decoration of the church, £4,000. Within 3 years, the building of another large room (with a sliding partition to make 2 rooms) on the final piece of spare ground at the rear of the hall, with the added attraction of a storage shed, went ahead. Meanwhile, the TROGs (The Rather Older Group) was formed to provide a forum for the middle aged fellowship.



During the big snow of 1982/3, we had a wedding on a Saturday, and this shows the wedding party going into Church.



The Methodist Church interior at Christmas

The pews had been in the church for many years. Heating was by means of electrically heated pipes underneath the seats - legs occasionally got burnt!