

# Central Hall, Tollcross, Edinburgh

The building opened for worship at 11am on Thursday 17 October 1901, and became the permanent home of Edinburgh Methodist Mission. City redevelopment for a new tramway depot had made a site available, which with smaller surrounding properties cost £20,000. The building costs were £30,000. At the opening half of this money had been raised. Part came from individual subscription and public collections, and part by grant from the Methodist Twentieth Century Fund. This fund provided support for similar Central Halls in other major towns and cities.

Edinburgh Methodist Mission had been founded in 1888 when the Reverend George Jackson was appointed to the city circuit centred at Nicolson Square. But the appointment and the Mission were created by the Methodist Synod in Scotland, thereby ensuring wider support for the work than could be provided by a single circuit. The original contractor went bankrupt with the building only partially completed and a second firm of builders had to complete the work.

The main hall, spacious, with large Art Nouveau stained glass windows and a barrel vaulted ceiling, provided seating for two thousand people. Seating capacity was reduced in the 1930s with the provision of side corridors for ease of access to other parts of the building and the creation of a small chapel. Fine staircases lead to crush halls with mosaic tiled floors which in turn lead to a lecture hall and many smaller rooms. At the centenary of the Mission a lift was added and access and toilet facilities improved.

Central Hall has been widely used by many groups of people over the century. Cinematograph Exhibitions were held before the first picture house opened in the city. Musical concerts continue to this day. Occasionally the building is used for conferences. In many smaller rooms groups meet in committee, workshops and classes. Some voluntary organisations have office space. But at its heart lies a congregation which worships on Sundays with a strong musical tradition and the preaching of the gospel.