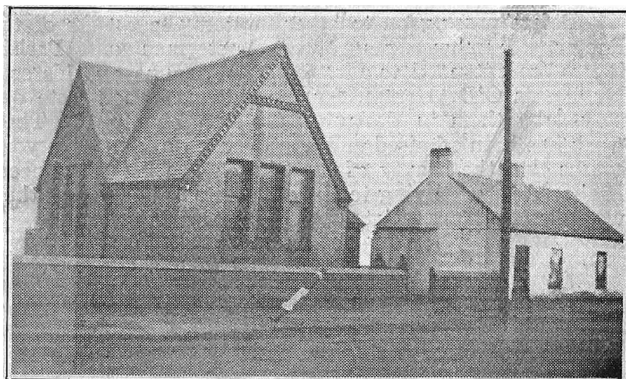


The Maxwell Hall, Main Street, Groomsport



The Maxwell Hall, 1893—1934.



The Maxwell Hall, 1934.

Photograph (showing the Orange Hall) supplied by Barry Greenaway, Parish Archivist

Photograph from: <https://bloomfieldlaser.co.uk>

Marcus Patton, in “Historic buildings, groups of buildings and areas of architectural importance in Bangor and Groomsport” (Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1984), has the following entry for the Maxwell Hall, on page 61:

C (1893): Small but rather grand hall of slightly-glazed red brick with terracotta eaves moulding to gable, intricately moulded tall brick chimney and bell-cast roof to main hall behind. Built by Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell and given to the Parish Church in 1929 along with the adjacent Orange Hall which was demolished in 1934.

Following Griffith’s Primary Valuation of County Down, published in 1864, subsequent changes were recorded in Valuation Revision Books until they were replaced in 1930. These are available online at the PRONI website at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/valuation-revision-books>

From 1864 to 1930 the Orange Society occupied a house, yard and small garden in Main Street. Its Poor Law Valuation (PLV) was £2 per year.

By the time the valuation staff visited Groomsport in 1894, a “Sunday School and yard” had been built beside the Orange Hall. Because it was being used for educational purposes, like the National School in the village, it was exempt from being valued and from paying rates. (VAL/12/B/23/8A, page 203)

The Sunday School had replaced two houses and small gardens one of which had been occupied by “Grace McDaid and another” and the second by John Waterson. By 1893 these houses were recorded as “down” (i.e. demolished). (VAL/12/B/23/7G, page 183)

The Sunday School and yard continued to be recorded in the Valuation Revision Books until they ended in 1930. The hall was probably fortunate that it continued to be exempt from paying rates. It is clear from press reports that it was used for a range of activities, many of which could not be classed as educational.

The hall was the home of Groomsport Masonic Lodge, whose illuminated address presented to the Misses Perceval-Maxwell in 1911, is still on display.

The following are examples of other activities which were reported in the press:

- On 7 February 1912, the Groomsport Branch of the Catch-My-Pal Total Abstinence Union held a public meeting in the hall.
- On 19 September 1912 a Jumble Sale was held in the hall to raise funds for the Recreation Hall and Reading Rooms.
- On 14 December 1915 there was a "jumble and general sale..with the object of providing comforts for the Ulster Division".
- On 16 April 1921, the Herald and County Down Independent reported that the North Down Women's Unionist Association had held a meeting in the Maxwell Hall. The vote of thanks to the chairwoman was seconded by Mrs J [Selina] Perceval-Maxwell and the vote of thanks to the speakers was proposed by Miss A [Anna] Perceval-Maxwell.

The Belfast and Province of Ulster Directories in the early 1900s recorded that the Misses Perceval-Maxwell were the trustees of the Maxwell Hall.

Marcus Patton states that the Maxwell Hall was handed over to the Parish Church in 1929. However, on 07 November 1931, the North Down Herald reported that Colonel R D Perceval-Maxwell had made a "free gift" of the hall to the Trustees of the Parish Church.

By 1928, both the Misses Perceval-Maxwell (who lived in Groomsport House) and Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell (who lived in The Lodge) had died. After Miss Anna died in July 1928, it is probable that no members of the Perceval-Maxwell family lived in Groomsport on a permanent basis and, therefore, there was no one on hand to act as trustees and oversee the use of the Maxwell Hall.

Peter Gibson
January 2023

Sources:

Griffith's Valuation: <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>

Valuation Revision Books: <https://apps.proni.gov.uk/Val12B/Search.aspx>

Belfast and Province of Ulster Directories at: <https://www.lennonwylie.co.uk/index.htm>

Newspaper reports accessed at the Irish Newspapers Archive of www.findmypast.co.uk