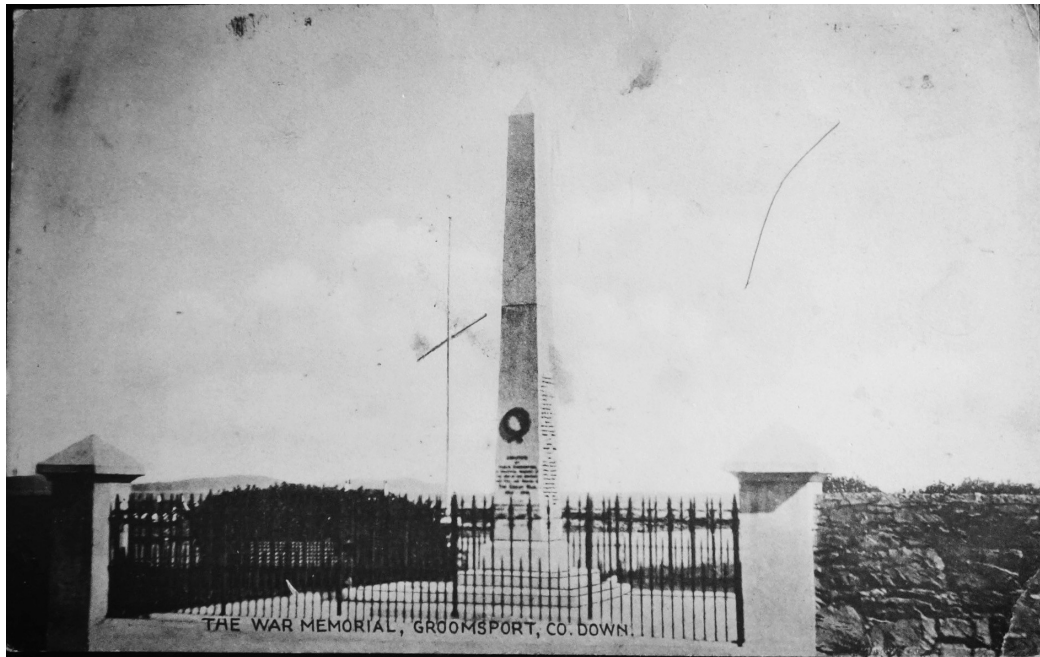


Groomsport War Memorial



Groomsport War Memorial

In its original position

Photograph provided by Perry Moore

The War Memorial, a white granite obelisk, was unveiled on 27 December 1924 by Right Rev John Morrow Simms, the MP for North Down. Having been the Principal Chaplain to the Forces, he also had the rank of Major-General.

The land on which the War Memorial was erected was donated by Miss (Anna) Perceval-Maxwell and her nephew, Colonel Right Hon. R D Perceval-Maxwell, DL.

The War Memorial was originally sited beside the footpath on Main Street (see photograph, above) before it was moved to its current location. The memorial was refurbished before the 100th anniversary of First World War in 2014.

Annual commemoration services are held at the War Memorial on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday. This allows local dignitaries (who attend a service in Bangor on Remembrance Sunday) to be present at the Groomsport commemoration.

The War Memorial commemorates:

- Four men who died in the Great War (1914-1916);
- Those who also served in the Great War – 51 who served abroad, 15 in the home service and 8 in the merchant service; and
- Nine men who died in World War Two (1939-1945).

A number of well-established Groomsport families are represented in the War Memorial by more than one family member. This is especially true of the Watsons. Two of those who died and five of those who served were from that family.

Those who died in the First World War

William Drennan was a Lance-Corporal in the 11th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles. He was killed in action on the first day of the Battle of The Somme – 01 July 1916. His name on the Thiepval Monument, which commemorates those whose bodies were never found.

James Orr was born in Belfast. His father, William Orr, was a sailor from Groomsport. James enlisted in Birkenhead was a Private in the Cheshire Regiment. He died of his wounds on 25 June 1917, aged 31 and is buried in a Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in France. At the time of his death, his mother was living on The Hill.

Robert Jordan's parents lived on The Hill. Before the outbreak of the Great War, he served for a short time with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He then worked as a sailor and he was in Australia at the outbreak of hostilities. He enlisted on 05 February 1915 at Liverpool, New South Wales and served with the 4th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was killed in action during the Dardanelles campaign in Turkey on 06 August 1915.

Before the war, **Harry Waterson** was a sailor living at 10 Main Street. His father, William, was also a sailor. Harry served with the Royal Marine Light Infantry in France where he died of his wounds on 02 March 1917, aged 22. He was buried in a Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery.

Those who died in the World War Two

Robert Henry Cutler was born in Belfast and had spent some time in Groomsport. He was a major in the King's African Rifles in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). After being demobilised in 1944, he was appointed Director of Training in the demobilisation scheme of Tanganyika (now Tanzania). He died in an aeroplane crash at Eastleigh Aerodrome, Nairobi, Kenya on 12 July 1945.

Robert Heyburn Duff was born in 1918 at Ballymacormick, Bangor. During the Second World War Leading Stoker Duff served with the Royal Navy aboard HMS *Meteor*, a *Marne*-class Destroyer. He died of tuberculosis in Ards Hospital on 20 August 1946 and he was buried in Bangor Cemetery, Newtownards Road, Bangor where there is a Commonwealth War Graves headstone.

George Victor Lowry was born on 21 August 1919 in Groomsport. (His mother, Violet, was a Waterson.) Before joining the Royal Navy around 1937, George Lowry was employed by Messrs Ellis and Company in Main Street, Bangor. Able Seaman Lowry was aged 22 when he was killed on 02 March 1944 while serving on the HMS *Stronghold*. The *Stronghold* was travelling from Java to Australia when it was attacked and sunk.

Richard Mailey was educated at Groomsport Public Elementary School and, before joining up in June 1941, he worked in the Bangor Laundry. He joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve and was promoted to sergeant. He was one of seven crew of a Short Stirling aircraft which took off from RAF Chedburgh in Suffolk on 04 July 1943 and was lost without trace. Richard Mailey was aged 20 when he died.

Robert Patrick (Robin) Perceval-Maxwell was born on 9 December 1922. He was the eldest son of Major John Robert (Jock) Perceval-Maxwell, who, in 1932, inherited the Perceval-Maxwell estates. He was a captain in the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Robin Perceval-Maxwell was aged 20 when he was killed in action on 5 December 1943 at Mount Camino during the Allied advance in Italy and he is buried in Cassino War Cemetery, Italy.

William Robert Patterson was born on 30 January 1910 at 75 Clifton Road, Bangor. During the Second World War William Robert Patterson served with the Royal Navy aboard HMS *Jersey*. In 1939 he was awarded the OBE (Military Division) for his actions dealing with a fire that resulted from a torpedo attack. He was Lieutenant Commander when, on 02 May 1941, the HMS *Jersey* sank after striking a mine off Valletta, Malta. He was aged 31.

Alexander Arthur Fenwick Towry Steavenson (to give the correct spelling of his full name) was born in India in 1885. On two occasions, before and during the First World War, he served in the Royal Irish Rifles and attained the rank of Captain. After spending many years as a tea planter in India, by 1940 he was living at 15 Ballymaconnell Road, Bangor. In 1941 he was a Flying Officer with Flight Training Command, based at Ronaldsway Airport, Isle of Man. He died of pneumonia in hospital in Douglas on 31 August 1941, aged 55 and was buried at Maughold Church.

Arthur Hill Coates Waterson was born on 13 May 1903 in Groomsport. After working with his father, Robert, a fisherman, for two years, he joined the Ulster Steamship Company (Headline Shipping Company) and obtained his Master Mariner ticket at the age of 21. During the Second World War Captain Arthur Waterson served with the Merchant Navy and the County Down Spectator reported that he had played a gallant part in the Dunkirk evacuation. In 1941 he was captain of SS *Atheltemplar*, a molasses tanker. The ship was attacked by German bomber aircraft off Aberdeenshire on 01 March 1941. Captain Arthur Waterson, who was aged 37, was among those who were killed.

Peter Gibson
January 2023

Sources:

<https://ulsterwarmemorials.net/groomsport-co-down>

Information about most of those who died:

"The War Dead of North Down and Ards" at <https://barryniblock.co.uk>

Information about A A F T Steavenson:

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>