

The Lodge, Donaghadee Road, Groomsport



Photograph from www.bloomfieldlaser.co.uk

There are two published accounts of aspects of The Lodge's history. Both contain inaccuracies.

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 The Lodge, on page 64:

B (c.1880): Two-storey building fronted in sandstone ashlar with ornate fretted bargeboards to gables and porch, mullioned windows, tall octagonal chimney stacks; rear construction in yellow brick. Slightly spoilt by a squat window in the right-hand bay, and rather more so by the much-altered extension to the west. Apparently it was built as a rectory by John Perceval Maxwell of Finnebrogue, but when he died shortly before its completion it became a dower house for his wife and children.

Patton's estimated date of construction (c.1880) is, almost certainly too late. We know from other sources that The Lodge was built by John Waring Maxwell, of Finnebrogue around 1865. In 1865 John Perceval-Maxwell (who was never "of Finnebrogue") was aged 25 and probably living in his family home, which at that time was Groomsport House. He died in 1875, which was some 10 years after the completion of The Lodge.

The current owners of The Lodge, the Bloomfield Laser Clinic, have a history of the building on their website, at:

<https://bloomfieldlaser.co.uk/how-to-find-us/history-of-the-building/>

The historical information about The Lodge, recorded on the Laser Clinic's website, was sourced from the List of Historic Buildings at:

<https://apps.communities-ni.gov.uk/Buildings/buildview.aspx?id=3452&js=false>

“The Lodge was built in 1865, on a site opposite the church, and used as a residence for the District Curate of Groomsport Church. The material used was Scrabo sandstone. The house first appears in Annual Revision records in 1867. It is occupied, after a period of vacancy, by the Reverend A.H. McCausland who was the District Curate of Groomsport until it gained its own rector in 1880.

When built, it was valued at £35.10s and leased from John W Maxwell (associated with Groomsport House and the Perceval Maxwell family). Reverend McCausland appears to have lived in the house at least until the arrival of the rector in 1880, who eschewed the name “The Lodge” in favour of “Albertville”. “The Bangor Season” of 1885 states that the Lodge “is occupied by Mrs. John Perceval Maxwell who resides here the greater part of the year.” The residence of Mrs. Maxwell is not reflected in the valuation records until 1906 by which time Selina Maxwell is both owner and occupier. In 1885 she had recently become a widow and the Lodge became a dower house. (A dower house is a moderately large house available for use by the widow of an estate after the heir marries and then occupies the now vacated principal). The main house would have been Groomsport House which then became Groomsport House Hotel and now currently a luxury residential development.

Mrs. Maxwell appears to have left the house for a period around 1900 when the occupier was Campbell Gardiner. He built a new stable 40 feet by 17½ feet which caused the valuation to be raised to £36.15s. ‘The Lodge’ is first shown, captioned, on the Ordnance Survey map of 1901 together with two extensions to the northern facade. One of these may have been the stables referred to in valuation records. The building is now in use as a commercial clinic and a modern extension has been added to the rear.

Before Bloomfield Laser Clinic took occupancy of the building, it had been derelict for several years and in need of complete renovation. Previous uses for the building included a Private Nursing Home and residential.”

While informative, the above contains a number of inaccuracies, including:

- Rev A H McCausland was the first Rector of Groomsport (not the District Curate) and served from 1853 (when the parish was established) until 1880.
- The reference to “Albertville”, a house which was at the other end of the village from The Lodge, is inaccurate.
- The stables were built on, or before, 1901, the year that the ownership of The Lodge was changed from “R P Maxwell” to “Mrs John Maxwell”. The Stables would not have been built by a tenant.
- Mrs John Perceval-Maxwell’s had not become “recently” widowed in 1885. Her husband had died 10 years earlier.

The Valuation Revision Books, erroneously, state that Rev McCausland lived in the Lodge until 1901. In fact, he moved to become the Rector of Wishaw in Warwickshire, where he died in 1893.

The Valuation Revision Books record Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell as occupying The Lodge only from 1906. However, given that “The Bangor Season” stated that she was living in The Lodge by 1885, it is possible that Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell lived there from about 1880, when Rev McCausland moved to England.

Anthony Malcomson, in “The Maxwells of Finnebrogue” states, at page 471, that the widowed Mrs Perceval-Maxwell lived in the Lodge from the time of her husband’s death, i.e. 1875, until her own death in 1928. Given that The Lodge was the home of the Rector until 1880, it is unlikely that Mrs

Perceval-Maxwell lived in The Lodge until this later date. Interestingly, Malcomson adds, in a footnote (on page 580), “Present day members of the family have no knowledge of the existence of this house”.

Rev McCausland’s successor, Rev Frederick John Hearne, who took up his post in 1880, was the first Rector of Groomsport to live in Albertville, on the Bangor Road. Albertville had been built by Rev Isaac Mack, who, from 1841 until his death in 1877 was the first minister of Groomsport Presbyterian Church. The Rev Macks’s successor, Rev James Latimer, was the first Presbyterian minister to live in the new manse which had been built further along the Bangor Road.

Some Perceval-Maxwell family history

An understanding of aspects of the Perceval-Maxwell family history may throw some light on who was living in Groomsport, and when, from the 1860s to the 1920s.

John William Perceval-Maxwell (1840-1875) was the eldest son, and heir, of Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell of Finnebrogue and Groomsport House.

In 1868, John William married Selina Frances Imogen Ker, of Montalto, Ballynahinch. They had two children:

- Robert David, who was born at Moore Hill, Waterford in 1870; and
- Anna Violet Madelina, who was born in 1875.

John William died of typhoid fever in 1875 at Tyrella House, his home. As a result Robert David, aged 5, became his grandfather’s heir.

On census night, 1901:

- Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell (1813-1905) was living in Finnebrogue with his three unmarried daughters – Isabella, Anna and Alicia (who married the Rector of Inch later that year);
- His heir, Robert David Perceval-Maxwell, aged 30, and his wife, Edith, were at their home – Woodlodge, Castlewellan; and
- Their three young children, along with their nurse and another female servant, were visiting Groomsport House. The only permanent members of the Groomsport House household were a housekeeper and a dairymaid.

On census night 1901, Selina Perceval-Maxwell was living at 11 Landsdowne Crescent, Great Malvern, Worcestershire. She was recorded as being the head of the household, not a visitor, living of her own means. Also in the household were her daughter, Anna (aged 25) and Agnes Bingham, a ladies’ maid.

They may have been living in Great Malvern for a period of time to enable Anna to “take the waters” at this well-known spa town. The house is about half a mile from the famous St Anne’s Well.

In August 1902, Anna Perceval-Maxwell died of Phthisis (Tuberculosis) at Ashleigh, Newcastle, County Down, aged 27. Her death was registered by Agnes Bingham, the ladies' maid who had lived with her in Great Malvern. Agnes Bingham was one of Selina's servants recorded as living in The Lodge on census night 1911. It is therefore likely that all three women who had lived in Great Malvern had returned to Ireland before Anna's death.

1905 saw great changes in the Perceval-Maxwell family. Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell died, at Finnebrogue, on 09 July, aged 92. His grandson (Selina's son) Robert David Perceval-Maxwell succeeded him and moved from Castlewellan to live at Finnebrogue.

On 23 November 1905 the Belfast Weekly News published an account of Robert Perceval-Maxwell's will. This included:

"he left his Groomsport estate to his unmarried daughters during their lives or spinsterhood...[and] he left also to his unmarried daughters an annuity of £400 charged of his Ards estate".

As a result, Isabella and Anna ("the Misses Perceval-Maxwell") moved from Finnebrogue to live in Groomsport House. This may have been the first time since 1869 (when Robert Perceval-Maxwell succeeded his uncle and moved to live in Finnebrogue) that members of the Perceval-Maxwell family had lived permanently in Groomsport House..

Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell continued to live in The Lodge until her death in 1928.

After 1928

After Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell died, the contents of the house and "outside effects" were sold at auction, as were her motor car and her Pony Landaulette (a carriage for two passengers and a driver).



Northern Whig 28 June 1928

At some point following the auction, the Perceval-Maxwell family sold The Lodge. Newspaper reports indicate that the house was occupied by the Patterson family in 1930 and Mr and Mrs F W White later in the 1930s and in the 1940s.

Newspaper advertisements have been found that show that The Lodge returned to the market for sale in, at least, 1957, 1964, 1967 and 1975. In 1964 The Lodge was offered for sale along with "The Stables Teahouse (as a going concern)".

From the early 21st century, The Lodge has been occupied by Bloomfield Laser Clinic. The adjoining building is used as an office and The Stables restaurant completes the row of buildings.

The large block of apartments behind The Lodge and the smaller block to the left (both of which provide modern social housing) were built in The Lodge's former grounds in the 2000s.

Peter Gibson
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Additional research by Perry Moore.

Sources:

"The Maxwells of Finnebrogue" by Anthony Malcomson, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2023.

"The Bangor Season" compiled and published by W G Lyttle, Bangor ,1885. Appletree Press reprint, 1976.

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

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