

# WALKING TOUR OF GROOMSPORT MAP AND GUIDE

The village's history & important buildings

Illustrations & Paintings  
by Dan Parsons

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The village's history & important buildings

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## Welcome to Goomsport

For more information on the history and the buildings of the village, please scan this QR code.



### 1 The Watch House

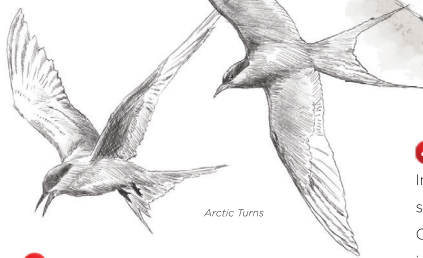
The Watch House was built in 1821 and used by the Coast Guard until 1908. A row of Coast Guard cottages beside the shore was demolished in the 1960s. The current owners have built a large extension to the rear, clad in black wood.



The Watch House

### 2 Cockle Island

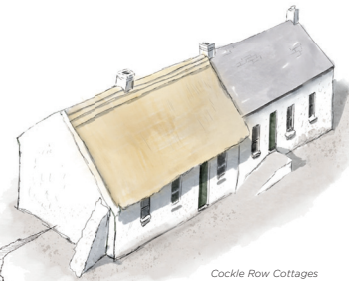
Cockle Island is a nesting site for many sea birds, including Arctic Terns which travel from Antarctica. The island can be almost covered during spring tides and, in some years, nests are washed away. The National Trust, which owns the island think that the birds may move to safer nesting sites on the Copeland Islands.



Arctic Terns

### 3 The Harbour

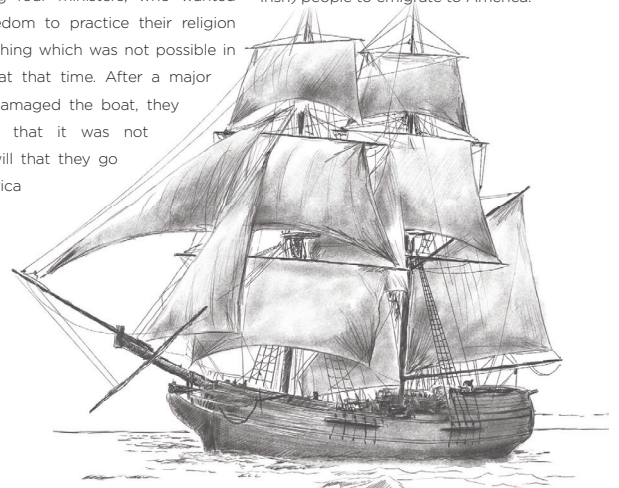
Goomsport harbour is sheltered, on the left by Ballymacormick Point, by Cockle Island, and by the rocky outcrop to the right where, over the centuries, a pier and quay were developed. In the 1970s a seawall was built and the dinghy park, car park and green space were created. Historically, fishing was a major source of employment for people living in the village. In the 19th century there was a fleet of 20 boats and 80 fishermen based in the harbour but today there is accommodation for just two commercial fishing boats in the harbour.



Cockle Row Cottages

### 4 The voyage of the Eagle Wing

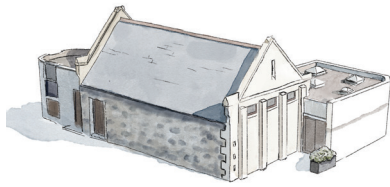
In September 1636, the Eagle Wing set sail from Goomsport for Massachusetts. On board were 140 Presbyterians, including four ministers, who wanted the freedom to practice their religion - something which was not possible in Ireland at that time. After a major storm damaged the boat, they decided that it was not God's will that they go to America



Eagle Wing

### 5 Cockle Row Cottages

These are the last remaining fishermen's cottages in Goomsport. Probably dating from 17th century, they were built at right angles to the sea to give protection to the wind. The cottages were saved from demolition in the 1960s, during the redevelopment of the village. For some years they were used by Bangor Art Club. The cottages are now a Tourist Office and a small heritage centre.



**8 Perceval-Maxwell's Wall**

In August 1856 Robert Perceval-Maxwell's built a wall out on to the rocks to prevent villagers and others passing in front of Groomsport House, where he lived. The locals, led by Rev Isaac Mack, the Presbyterian minister, protested. The Coast Guard complained that the wall was interfering with their nightly patrols. Under threat of legal action by the Admiralty in London, the part of the wall blocking the path was removed in February 1857.

**6 The Boathouse**

The Boathouse (designed by Sir Charles Lanyon) was built in 1858 to house the first lifeboat in Belfast Lough and the surrounding coastline. Over the years, Groomsport had four "pulling and sailing" lifeboats - large rowing boats, crewed by fishermen from the village. Between 1858 and 1920 Groomsport lifeboats saved 87 lives during 55 call outs. Groomsport Lifeboat station closed in 1920. Donaghadee Lifeboat station, which had a lifeboat with an engine, had opened in 1910.

**8 Groomsport House**

Groomsport House was built in 1848 by John Waring Maxwell of Finnebrogue, Downpatrick for his heir, Robert Perceval-Maxwell. The house has been

described as being in the "Jacobethan" style. It cost £6000 to build and the sandstone was shipped from Ayrshire. In its heyday Groomsport House required 40 staff to maintain and manage the house and grounds. The house was used by armed forces, including US soldiers, during the 2nd World War. The Perceval-Maxwells sold the house in 1968. It operated as a hotel for several years before being converted into apartments.



Groomsport Parish Church

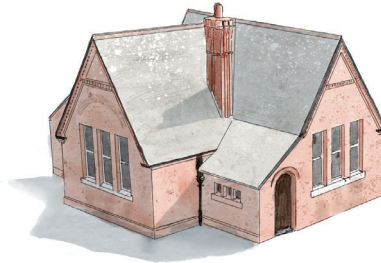
was appointed. The church has been extended twice. In 1909 the nave was built and in 1932 the transepts were added.

**9 Groomsport Parish Church**

The church, which is a "B1" listed building, was designed by Sir Charles Lanyon. It was built in 1841 as a "Chapel of Ease" and was served by a curate of Bangor Parish. John Waring Maxwell donated the land and made a contribution towards the building costs. Groomsport Parish was created in 1853 and a Rector

**10 The Lodge**

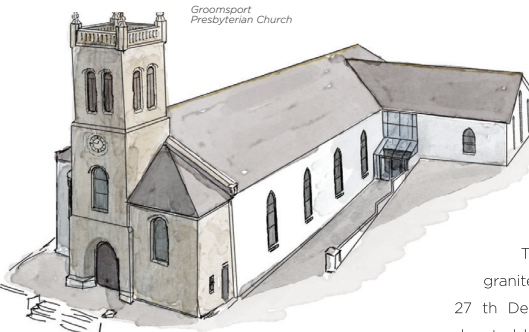
The Lodge was built in 1865 by John Waring Maxwell as a house for the first Rector of Groomsport, who lived there until 1880. Selina, the widow of Robert Perceval-Maxwell's eldest son, lived in the Lodge until her death in 1928. She added stables in 1901. After 1928 the Perceval-Maxwells sold the house.



**11 The Maxwell Hall**

When Robert Perceval-Maxwell built the Maxwell Hall in 1894, it was recorded as being a Sunday School. It was built beside the village's first Orange Hall which was demolished in 1934. The

Maxwell Hall has been the home of Groomsport Masonic Lodge since 1911. After the deaths of the Misses Perceval-Maxwell, who were the trustees of the Hall, in the 1920s, it was gifted to the Parish Church and a number of extensions have been added over the years.



Groomsport Presbyterian Church

Minister of the time - Rev Walter Nelson.

**16 Schomberg Monument**

The monument is a bronze plaque on a granite slab which was erected by the William the Third Club and was unveiled 14 June 1952. It commemorates the Duke of Schomberg who, tradition has it, landed in Groomsport on 13th August 1689. Schomberg was the Commander-in-Chief of King William's army which had been sent to drive King James II out of Ireland. The following year he died at the Battle of the Boyne, aged 74.

The rectangular shape of the old school can still be seen to be at the heart of the modern hall.

**15 War Memorial**

The War Memorial, a white granite obelisk, was unveiled on 27th December 1924. The land was donated by the Perceval-Maxwells and the cost of the War Memorial was met by public subscription. The monument commemorates both those who died and those who served in World War One. Later a plaque was added to commemorate nine local men who died in the Second World War. Annual Commemoration services are held at the War Memorial on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday attended by local people and dignitaries.

**12 The Hill and Providence Place**

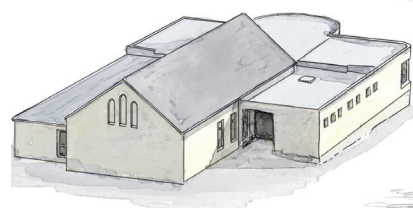
In the 1860s The Hill was known as "Upper Row". It consisted of a row of fishermen's houses with a communal back street behind which were long gardens used for drying fishermen's nets. From the 1920's on, some people spent the summer in "back houses" built in their gardens and let their main house to holidaymakers. Groomsport's first National School was built immediately behind the Presbyterian Church and opened in 1845. In the space between the school and The Hill, the Rev Mack built four small houses for the less well off and it was called Providence Place.

not willing to help by providing a site for a church. However, a church was built on Main Street, on the site of a house which had been owned by the widow of a Presbyterian minister. It was completed by 1843. The clock tower was added in 1863 and there were further extensions and refurbishments in the 1970s and 1990s.

**14 The Second National School and the Walter Nelson Hall**

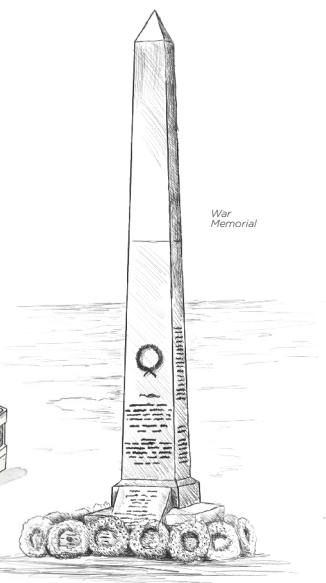
Groomsport's second National School was opened in 1895, opposite the Presbyterian church. When the second National School was replaced by Groomsport Primary School, in 1962, the building was completely refurbished to become the Presbyterian Church Hall and named after its long-serving

Walter Nelson Hall



**13 Groomsport Presbyterian Church**

The Presbyterians of Groomsport originally met in a small house on Main Street. The first minister, the Rev Isaac Mack, was ordained and installed on 10th April 1841. The local landowners, John Waring Maxwell and Lord Dufferin were



War Memorial