

# History Tour of Groomsport

## Additional information

After a brief introduction to the history of Groomsport, this document contains additional information about the buildings and venues featured on the tour.

### Introduction

The tour starts overlooking the natural harbour that is the reason Groomsport came into being. The harbour is sheltered, to the west by Ballymacormick Point, by Cockle Island, and by the rocky outcrop to the east where, over the centuries, a pier and quay were developed.

It is said that, even at low tide, there was enough water to let a Viking long boat manoeuvre and shelter behind Cockle Island.

The Vikings are known to have attacked Bangor Abbey twice in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and it is believed that the large boulders at the base of the pier were laid by the Vikings.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this area was known as Clannaboy (from the Irish *Clann Aodha Buí* – the family of Hugh the blonde) and was the territory of the Irish chieftain, Con O'Neill, who lived at Castlereagh, in the hills above Belfast. Con got into trouble with the authorities and was jailed in Carrickfergus Castle. He managed to escape and get a pardon from King James I, in 1604, but he lost two thirds of his land. This was shared between two Scottish noblemen – James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery, so that they could “settle” it with Scottish tenant farmers. Hugh Montgomery was given the Ards peninsula and James Hamilton was given O'Neills land in North Down. Hamilton became the first Viscount Clandeboye.

In 1625, James Hamilton commissioned Thomas Raven to map all of his estate. Raven's map of Groomsport It shows group of houses and “The Harbor” with ships beside a quay and sheltering behind Cockle Island.



### **Thomas Raven's map of 1625.**

North Down Museum. Copyright Ards and North Down Council.  
Reproduced with permission.

In August 1689, the Duke of Schomberg landed in Groomsport. He was the commander-in-chief of King William's army. The tour includes a memorial to Schomberg (number 16).

### The Maxwell family

Earlier in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in 1674, James Hamilton's grandson sold 8 townlands, comprising some 4,500 acres, to Robert Maxwell of Killyleagh, the owner of the Finnebrogue estate, for £2,140. The Maxwell family were the major landowners of the district around

Groomsport for over 300 years – until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1791, Edward Maxwell, the head of the family, died. Because he had no children the estate passed to his sister, Dorothea who had married John Waring. The Waring family then changed their surname to Waring Maxwell (two words, no hyphen). Dorothea was succeeded by her son, John Waring Maxwell. He married Madeline Ker of Montalto but they had no children. His heir was his sister's eldest son – Robert Perceval. In 1839, before Robert got married, and recognising that he would inherit the “Maxwell” estates, he changed his surname to “Perceval-Maxwell” (two words, this time with hyphen!)

John Waring Maxwell and Robert Perceval-Maxwell played major roles in developing the village in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were responsible for a number of important buildings which are part of the tour.

Further information about the Maxwell family can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Maxwell-History-v3.pdf>

# 1 The Watch House

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries this part of the County Down coast was famous, or infamous, for smuggling. The most popular item smuggled was unmanufactured American tobacco leaf that was brought here from the Netherlands.

It is believed that there had been a customs officer in Groomsport since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1821 the Customs authorities built the Watch House for the “Preventive Water Guard” A year later this became the “Coast Guard”.

The main purposes of the Coast Guard were to prevent smuggling and to render assistance to shipwrecks.

The Watch House had a boat house on the ground floor and a watch room above. The officer in charge and his family lived in the house.

Later, a row of cottages was built for the crew and every night a different member of staff had the job as “look out” from the watch room as his colleagues patrolled the coast, by boat and on foot.

The Coast Guard station closed in about 1908 and the house became a private dwelling. The cottages were demolished in the 1960s.



**The Watch House and Coast Guard cottages in the 1890s**

Photograph from PRONI (D3244/E/42)

Our photograph shows the Watch House and the row of cottages. You can see that the original Watch House was a two-storey, rectangular building, much simpler than the current house which has been extended a number of times since 1908. Our photo also shows the pier before it was improved in the 1900s.



### **The Watch House**

Donal McCann Photography for Bradley McClure Architects

The current owners purchased the Watch House in 2015 and have added a large extension to the rear. As you can see from the photograph, the extension is clad in black wood which means that it does not stand out. Depending from where you look at the Watch House, you may not notice the new extension at all.

Further information about the Coast Guard and the Watch House can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Coast-Guard-and-Watch-House-v3.pdf>

## **2 Cockle Island**

Cockle Island varies greatly in size, depending on the tide. During the highest spring tides very little rock is visible. In the breeding season it is home to hundreds of nesting birds, including Arctic Terns, who travel all the way from Antarctica to breed. However, in some years, including in 2022, the high tides wash the nests away.

The National Trust, which owns the island, expects that, if these unfavourable conditions continue, the terns and other birds may choose to move to more favourable locations, such as the Copeland Islands, to breed.

## **3 The harbour**

In 1901 Robert Perceval-Maxwell donated the harbour to the newly-created Down County Council. Within a few years, the Council had the pier and quay improved and that is the pier we see today.





[www.britainfromabove.org.uk](http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk) Photograph from [www.marinas.com](http://www.marinas.com)  
[/image/XPW02869](http://image/XPW02869)  
© Historic England

As can be seen from the older aerial photograph, the boathouse and the pier were approached by a path which had the sea at both sides. In the 1970s a seawall was built and the dinghy park, car park and green space were created.

An anchor was placed on the top of the one of the few rocks which were left protruding in the newly-landscaped area. This can be seen in the middle of the car park. The rock was the top of the “Tarred Rock” where, in earlier years, fishermen would sit and tar their nets and ropes. The origin of the anchor is unknown. It was caught in a fishing net by John Waterson (a member of the well-known Groomsport sea-faring family) in the 1960s.

## Fishing

Historically, fishing was a major source of employment for people living in the village. Belfast Lough and the Irish Sea provided a rich source of a wide variety of fish.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a fleet of 20 boats and 80 fishermen based in the harbour. However today there is accommodation for just two commercial fishing boats in the harbour.

In the 1901 Census 33 men (45% of males aged 15 and over) were recorded as being fishermen or sailors or had retired from those occupations. Of those 12 were members of the Waterson family and 7 were Orrs.

By the 1911 Census, the number had dropped to 23 men (28% of males aged 15 and over) who were fishermen or sailors, or had retired from those occupations. The number of Watersons had increased to 14, but there were only 3 members of the Orr family.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century fishing declined as fishermen found new, more lucrative employment elsewhere and many of the original cottages were demolished to make way for new homes.

Later the tour visits The Hill (number 12), where the long back gardens of the houses were used to spread out nets to dry.

Further information about the harbour can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Harbour-v4.pdf>

## 4 Eagle Wing



**Painting by Dan Parsons**

One of the most important events in village's history, was the voyage of the Eagle Wing to America in 1636.

The Eagle Wing was probably built in Groomsport with wood from the Dufferin estates. It was almost 150 tons with a length of 70 feet, breadth 21 feet and depth 10 feet.

Its name refers to the Book of Exodus Chapter 19, verse 4 – “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and know I will bear you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself”.

At this time Presbyterians were not welcome in Ulster. The 140 passengers were led by four Presbyterian ministers.

One was Rev John Livingston of Killinchy. Later in life he lived in the Netherlands and was painted by the famous painter, Frans Hals. There is a John Livingston Centre beside Killinchy Parish Church. It has excellent information about his life, including his voyage on the *Eagle Wing*.

The other ministers were Rev Robert Blair of Bangor, Rev James Hamilton of Ballywalter and Rev John McClelland of Newtownards.

The *Eagle Wing* left Groomsport on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1636 to sail 3,000 miles across the Atlantic to America. The passengers had been promised 30,000 acres of land by the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Conditions on board were awful – cold, damp and smelly. No heat. Little food or water. The deck leaked and was cluttered with livestock pens. Below deck there was only 5 feet of headroom.

September was quite late in the year to attempt the crossing and, when the ship was quite near Newfoundland, they hit a terrible storm which

damaged the ship and sails and broke the rudder. It was decided that it was not God's will to get to America and so they returned to Belfast Lough on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1636.

The next year, the four ministers returned to Scotland as they feared arrest in Ulster.

Although this first attempt by Ulster Scots people to emigrate to America failed, others followed and it is thought that over 250,000 settled in the American colonies and became known as the Scotch-Irish.

Further information about the voyage of *Eagle Wing* can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Eagle-Wing-v2.pdf>

## 5 Cockle Row Cottages



**Painting by Dan Parsons**

Cockle Row Cottages are some of the oldest buildings in the village and are also probably the best known buildings in the village. They are believed to have been built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as fishermen's cottages. They were built at right angles to the sea to give protection from the chilling north wind.

John and Peg Barrons were the last residents of the cottage with the thatched roof. They moved to a new house on Main Street in the early 1960s. Miss Orr was the last resident of the other cottage.

All of the other old cottages in the village, including the former Coast Guard cottages on

The Point, were demolished in the redevelopment of the village in the 1960s.

The Cockle Row cottages were also about to be demolished when Rev Dr David Irwin, then the minister of Groomsport Presbyterian Church, and his wife Maureen, stood in front of the bulldozer.. They persuaded the foreman to stop work and won time for reconsideration, after which the demolition was called off.

The Bangor Art Club used the cottages for some years. In the late 1990s, the Council used EU funding to refurbish the cottages. Since then one cottage has been used as a Tourist Information Office while the other has become a small heritage centre, reflecting the history of the cottages and of the village.

The open space that we see today, running from Main Street to the harbour was originally the back gardens of the cottages on Main Street which were demolished in the 1960s.

Further information about Cockle Row Cottages can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Cockle-Row-Cottages-v2b.pdf>



## 6 The Boathouse and Lifeboats



**Painting by Dan Parsons**

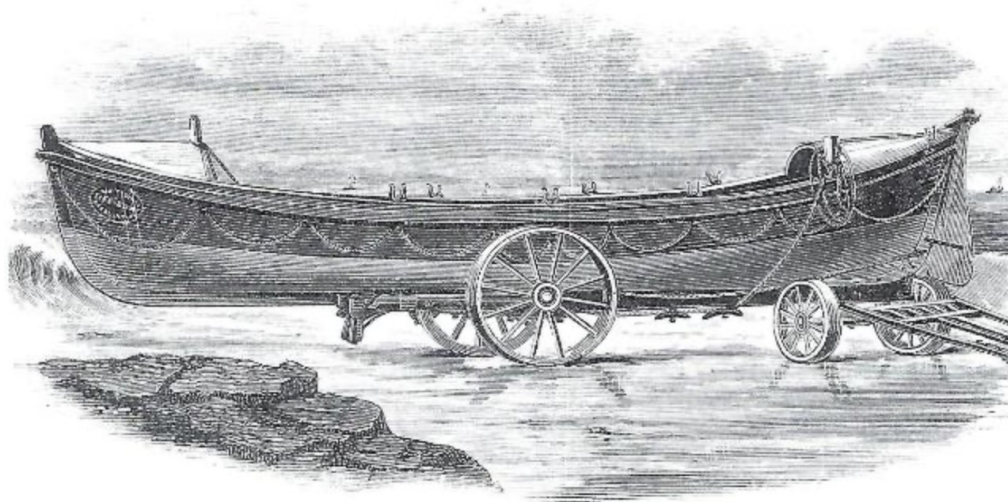
In 1857 the RNLI decided to provide a Lifeboat based in Groomsport. This after several wrecks had occurred in Belfast Lough with the loss of ships and many lives. In December that year the Groomsport branch of RNLI established. Lord Dufferin, of Clandeboye was the chairman. Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell was the Treasurer and the Rector of Groomsport, Rev. A.H. McCausland was the secretary.

They raised £200 from the local gentry and businessmen to pay for the building of the boathouse. Land for the boathouse was donated by John Waring Maxwell and it was designed by Sir Charles Lanyon, architect of many notable

buildings in Belfast including Queen's University (and indeed Groomsport Parish Church which we will see later).

There were four lifeboats based in Groomsport, from 1858 to 1920. They were all rowing boats and their crews were made up of local fishermen. The longest serving of the four coxswains was Robert Waterson, from the well known local family who served for 28 years.

- The first lifeboat, name unknown, served from 1858 to 1867. It was 28ft long, had six oars, was launched twice with one life saved. The photograph is believed to be an image of the first lifeboat, on her carriage.



- “Florence” served from 1867 to 1885, had ten oars, was launched 10 times with 36 lives saved.

- “George Pooley” served from 1885 to 1901 was launched 17 times with 32 lives saved.
- Finally “Chapman” served from 1901 to 1920. This was a Liverpool class lifeboat, 38 feet long with 15 crew including 12 oarsmen, launched 16 times with 18 lives saved. The Chapman was restored in 2002 and is now in the Lifeboat Museum in Lytham in Lancashire.

Over a period of 62 years from 1858 to 1920 87 lives were saved during 55 call-outs.

As you can see, the slipway faces almost due north. On at least two occasions, during northerly gales, high seas prevented the lifeboat from being be launched at its slipway. Instead, horses had to tow the lifeboat on its carriage to Bangor to be launched.

Donaghadee lifeboat was established in 1910. Its lifeboat had an inboard petrol engine, was berthed in the harbour and did not have to be launched. In 1920 it was decided to close Groomsport lifeboat station.

Further information about the Boathouse and Lifeboats can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Lifeboats-v3b.pdf>

## 7 Perceval-Maxwell's Wall and the Right-of-Way Dispute



If you have been to Groomsport before, or if you live in the village, you may have noticed the rather grand wall, with turrets, that is built out along the rocks, between the two beaches.

Around the time that Groomsport House was completed in 1848, the road to Orlock and Donaghadee, the current road, was built. It replaced a road that ran along the coast, in front of where the house was built.

In August 1856, Robert Perceval-Maxwell built the wall to prevent villagers accessing Cove Bay and gave his family more privacy.

Perceval-Maxwell's action led to protests from the villagers – expressed by Rev Isaac Mack, the Presbyterian Minister – and from the Coast

Guard, who patrolled the coast every night to deter smuggling.

The Admiralty threatened to take Perceval-Maxwell to court in London for building the wall without notice or permission. However, in February 1857, he reached agreement with the Admiralty and removed the obstacle.

Further information about the Right-of-Way Dispute can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Right-of-Way-v2.pdf>

## 8 Groomsport House



**Painting by Dan Parsons**

Groomsport House is a fine 'Jacobethan' (Jacobean/Elizabethan style) mansion built with sandstone shipped from Ayrshire at a cost of £6,000. It was built in the 1840s by John Waring Maxwell for his nephew and heir, Robert Perceval-Maxwell.

Perceval-Maxwell lived in the house, with his wife and 10 children, from 1849 until, on his uncle's death in 1869, when

he moved to live at Finnebrogue, the "headquarters" of the Maxwell estates, near Downpatrick.

1901 census recorded that the house had 33 rooms and 44 outbuildings.

From 1905, until their deaths in the 1920s, Groomsport House was the home of two of Robert Perceval-Maxwell's daughters - the Misses Isabel and Anna Perceval-Maxwell.

In its heyday Groomsport House required 40 staff, many people from the village, to maintain and manage the house and grounds.

The house has many a story to tell, evolving from being a family home to be used by armed forces during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

Sgt. John S Blankenhorn, a U S soldier who was billeted in Groomsport House in 1944, wrote about it in a letter in which he refers to two novelists who wrote about the English aristocracy. He said:

*“We are somewhere in Northern Ireland housed in an enormous, great, cold, gloomy manor house with a facade which suggests the England of Hugh Walpole and Warwick Deeping. What a line [queue] they must have had for the plumbing during a big house party!”*

The house was returned to the Perceval-Maxwells in the 1950s.

The Perceval-Maxwells sold the house in 1968. It operated as a hotel for several years before being converted into apartments.

Further information about Groomsport House can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Groomsport-House-v3.pdf>

## 9 Groomsport Parish Church



Painting by Dan Parsons

Architecturally, the Church is probably the most important building in the village. It is the only building with a B1 rating as a “listed building”.

Groomsport Church was built in 1841 as a “Chapel of Ease” to facilitate parishioners of Bangor parish who lived at a distance from Bangor Abbey. In the early years, the church was served by a curate from Bangor parish.

The site was a gift by Mr. John Waring Maxwell and he also contributed towards the cost of the building.

The church was designed by the famous Sir Charles Lanyon, architect of the then Queen’s



College later Queen's University Belfast, and several other well known Belfast buildings, who did not charge for his services. Lanyon later designed the Groomsport lifeboat house which was built in 1858.

The total cost of building in 1841 was £750 (£62,000 in today's money).

When John Waring Maxwell gifted the site it was on condition that "*burials are expressly prohibited either in the church or the churchyard*" and in another "*that the Church shall be called Groomsport Church*". This second condition would seem to have been done to prevent the church being named after a saint at any time in the future.

In 1843 Mr John Waring Maxwell presented the church bell, cast by Thomas Mears and son at a cost of £34.18s3d. (about £3,500 in today's money). The company was later known as Whitechapel Bells, and is famous for casting the bell for Big Ben and also the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.

The first service was held in the church on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1842 but, for some unknown reason the church was not consecrated until 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1850.

Groomsport parish, which was comprised of seven townlands and the Copeland Islands, was created out of the eastern part of Bangor parish in 1853 and its first Rector, Rev A H McCausland, was appointed.



A drawing of Groomsport Church in its original form, showing the Spires.

From <https://groomsportparishchurch.org/history/>

Our photograph is of a drawing of the original church, which was a simple rectangle with a tower to the side when it was first built. The drawing shows the pinnacles on the tower that were removed as they were found to be unstable.

The Church has been extended twice. Firstly, in 1909 when the nave was added in memory of Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell and again in

1932 when the transepts were added to accommodate the increasing numbers of parishioners.

Further information about Groomsport Parish Church can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Groomsport-Parish-Church-v1.pdf>

## 10 The Lodge



Painting by Dan Parsons

The Lodge was built opposite the church by John Waring Maxwell in 1865 for the Rector of Groomsport, Rev A H McCausland, who lived in it until he moved to England in 1880. From then on the Rectors of Groomsport lived in Albertville on the Bangor Road.

Mrs Selina Perceval-Maxwell (the widow of Robert Perceval-Maxwell's eldest son, John, and the mother of his heir – his grandson, Robert) occupied the Lodge from the 1880s until her death in 1928. Records show that she added stables in 1901.

After 1928 the house was sold and changed hands a number of times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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.

Further information about The Lodge can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-Lodge-v5.pdf>

## 11 Maxwell Hall



Painting by Dan Parsons

The Maxwell Hall was built by Robert Perceval-Maxwell in 1894 and it was recorded in valuation records as a Sunday School. It was built beside the village's first Orange Hall which was demolished in 1934 and replaced by the present one on Springwell Road.

The Maxwell Hall has been the home of Groomsport Masonic Lodge since 1911. The Lodge's illuminated address of thanks, presented to the Misses Perceval-Maxwell in 1911, is still on display. The Misses Perceval-Maxwell (Isabel and Anna), from Groomsport House, were the trustees of the hall.

Although listed as a Sunday School, and exempt of rates, the hall was used for a range of community activities, including fund-raising sales and even political meetings.

A plaque in the hall states that it was handed over to the Parish Church in 1929. However a newspaper report suggests that this happened in November 1931 when Colonel R.D.Perceval-Maxwell had made a “free gift” of the Hall to the trustees of the Parish Church.

By this time both the Misses Perceval-Maxwell and Mrs. Selina Perceval-Maxwell (who lived in The Lodge) had died. After Miss Anna Perceval-Maxwell 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.

The building has been extended several times since it was given to the church, but the original hall can still be clearly seen.

Further information about the Maxwell Hall can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Maxwell-Hall-v2.pdf>

## **12 The Hill, Providence Place and the First National School**

On early Ordnance Survey maps from the 1830s Groomsport had only two streets: Main Street and the street we now call “The Hill”. In the past it was called “Upper Row” and, later, “Hill Street”.

In the 1860s it consisted of a row of roughly 29 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 of the owners, in summer time, moved into additional properties built in their gardens, known as “back houses” or “huts in rear” and rented their main dwelling to holiday makers to augment family income.

## Providence Place and the first National School



**The Hill c.1900**

The photograph shows part of The Hill in about 1900. On the right, you can just see the chimneys of the houses that were known as Providence Place.

If you had been standing behind the Presbyterian Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century you would have seen that the space between the church and The Hill was occupied by a school and some houses.

Groomsport's first National School was built immediately behind the church and opened in 1845. The following year it was extended to accommodate "the Female School".



Today, in the church car park can be seen the stone which was in the school bell tower, above the entrance. It reads “Erected by the Minister and Congregation, 1844. Isaac Mack, Pastor.”

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.

Unlike the other dwellings on the hill, leased from Robert Perceval-Maxwell, the landlords of Providence Place were the Presbyterian Church’s trustees. Providence Place could be said to be the first social housing built in Groomsport.



**The old First National School**  
Painting by Christine Scholes

When the first school closed in 1895 and was replaced by the second National School, which is seen later on our tour (number14), the church trustees revamped the building to provide six dwellings. The only image we have of the first school was drawn by the daughter of one of the tenants of the dwellings in the school building. It was drawn from her mothers' memory.

Both the old school building and the four houses of Providence Place were demolished in the 1960s and, later, the church was extended at the back.

Further information about The Hill and Providence Place can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/The-Hill-v1a.pdf>

## 13 Groomsport Presbyterian Church



Painting by Dan Parsons

As early as 1839 Groomsport was simply a once-monthly “Preaching Station” for the 150 Presbyterians with services conducted in No 17 Main Street, the home of Mr James Kennedy, himself a Presbyterian. (Sadly that house is no longer there.)

The seemingly hopeless situation of funding a place to build a Presbyterian Church in Groomsport – because neither of the two local landowners, John Waring Maxwell and Lord Dufferin, would agree to either selling, renting or giving a piece of land for the purpose, was only reversed when it was discovered that a Presbyterian minister’s widow, holding a

tenement in the centre of the village was willing to sell it. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1841 it came into the possession on the new congregation.

The first minister, the Rev Isaac Mack, was ordained and installed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1841 in a service conducted in the Holme Field, to accommodate the numbers. The Church itself was opened and dedicated around 1843 and the Clock Tower was added in 1863.

In 1863, a building that stood in the present day church car park until 1970, was owned by the same Mr James Kennedy of 17 Main Street, was sold to the church trustees and replaced by a new one. In one half, facing the Church, the Rev Isaac Mack resided whilst the other half's entrance on to Main Street was rented out for Church funds.

Noteworthy extensions and renovations to the church itself, new rooms added to the rear, wholesale refurbishments and landscaping in 1970/71 and for the congregation's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1990/91, gives it today, its unique sea view setting.

Whilst Moderators of the General Assembly rededicated the Church on both occasions, a former member, the Prime Minister of Northern

Ireland, the Right Honourable Brian Faulkner, performed the Re-opening Ceremony in May 1971 during “The Troubles” with lunch served at the manse afterwards which was surrounded by Security Forces.

Further information about the Groomsport Presbyterian Church can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Groomsport-Presbyterian-Church-v1b.pdf>

## **14 The second National School and the Walter Nelson Hall**



**Second National School, 1929**

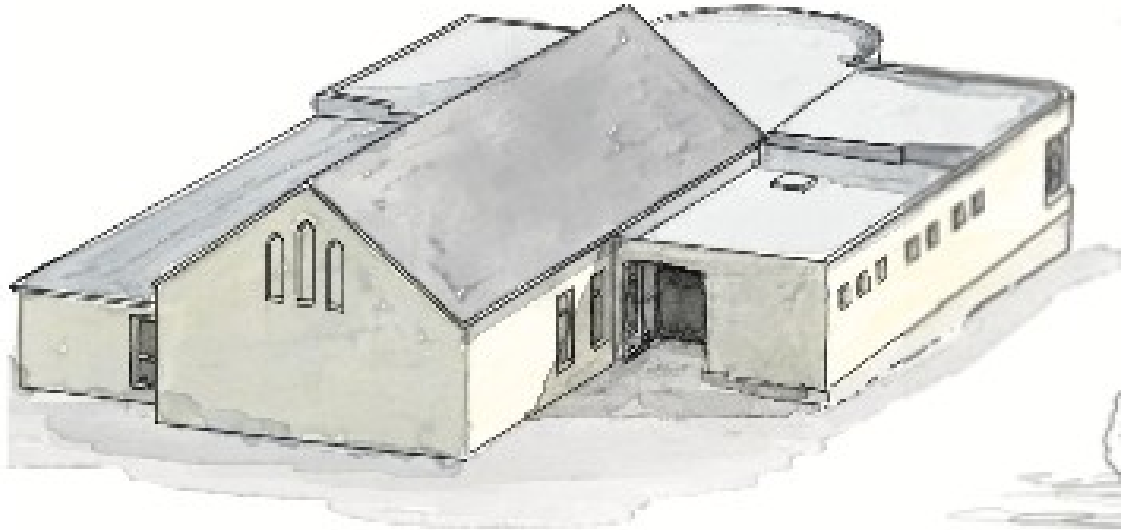
[www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/XPW028698](http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/XPW028698)

Copyright: Historic England

Groomsport's second National School was opened in 1895, across the road from the Presbyterian church. This simple rectangular building can be seen at the bottom of the photograph, which was taken in 1929 and it still visible at the heart of the present hall. The old First National School can also be seen – immediately behind the Presbyterian Church.

When the Second National School was replaced by Groomsport Primary School, on Springwell Drive, near The Hill, in 1962, the building was completely refurbished to become the much needed Presbyterian Church Hall and named after its long-serving Minister of the time – The Walter Nelson Hall.

In 1977/78 it underwent a whole extension plan with a brand new suite of rooms and purpose built Coffee Bar (in memory of four of the congregation's youth leaders and a baby, drowned on Easter Sunday 1977), with panoramic harbour views. Another Moderator of the General assembly performed that Dedication Ceremony in October 1978. Currently, there are plans for an extension to the front entrance to the hall.



## **The Walter Nelson Hall**

Painting by Dan Parsons

Despite the many extensions, the old school can still be seen to be at the heart of the Walter Nelson Hall.

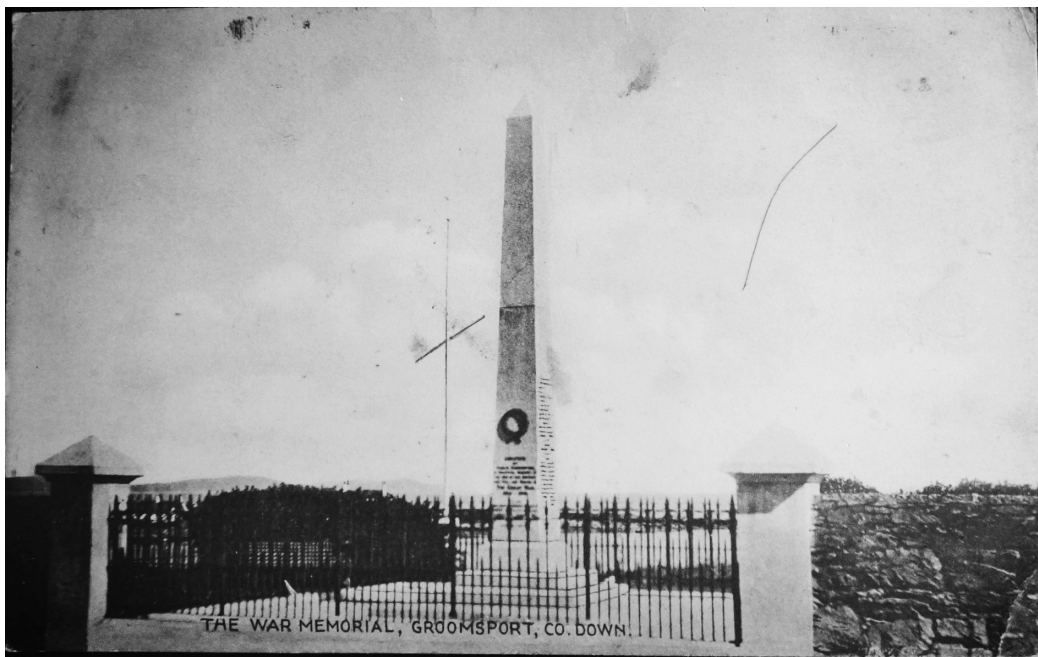
Further information about the National Schools and the Walter Nelson Hall can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/National-Schools-v1a.pdf>

## 15 War Memorial

The War Memorial, a white granite obelisk, was unveiled on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1924 by the Right Rev. John Morrow Simms M.P. for North Down. Having been 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 Col. Right Hon. R.D. Perceval-Maxwell D.L. and the cost of the War Memorial was met by public subscription.



**Groomsport War Memorial**



The photograph shows the War Memorial in its original position, beside the footpath on Main Street before it was moved to its current location.

Annual Commemoration services are held at the War Memorial on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday, allowing local dignitaries to attend the Remembrance Sunday service in nearby Bangor. As the village has grown so has the annual Remembrance Service which is attended by a wide range of organisations and public alike.

The War Memorial commemorates:

- Four local men who died in the Great War (1914-1918)
- Those who also served in the Great War
- 51 who Served abroad, 15 in the Home Service and 8 in the Merchant Service.
- 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 Waterasons. Two of those who died

and five of those who served were from that family.

Further information about the War Memorial can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/War-Memorial-v1a.pdf>

## 16 Schomberg Monument



The Schomberg monument commemorates the Duke of Schomberg's landing on 13 August 1689.

There has been a long-running debate about where exactly he landed. It is possible that Schomberg and a small number of men landed at Groomsport while the rest of his 10,000 strong army landed at the beaches of Ballyholme or Bangor.

The monument is a bronze plaque on a granite slab which was erected by the William the Third Club. The monument was unveiled by Mrs P L Perceval-Maxwell at a ceremony held on 14 June 1952.

Born Freidrich Hermann von Schonberg in Heidelberg, in the Palatine in 1615, he had a long military career, with the armies of many nations. He changed his nationality at least twice. For some years he was a French national and in 1688 became British and was made a Knight of the Garter (K.G.) and the first Duke of Schomberg.

Schomberg was appointed commander-in -chief of King William III's army which was sent to drive King James II out of Ireland.

Tradition has it that, while Schomberg spent his first night in Ireland with James Hamilton in Bangor, some of his troops "lay upon their arms" as they slept on the sites of the old forts at Islet

Hill and Nelson's Hill (where the Presbyterian manse was later built) and that seeds from their wilting orange lilies fell to the ground as they slept. Centuries later orange lilies were a feature of the garden at the manse.

The stump of "Schomberg's tree" can be found in Castle Park, Bangor. It is said that he set up his first headquarters in Ireland under the tree.

The following year, Schomberg's forces joined with William's army and took part in a major battle at the river Boyne on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1690. It is reported that, in disagreement with William, Schomberg believed that the enemy forces should be attacked directly by crossing the river. As he crossed the river, rallying his troops, he was shot dead. He was aged 74.

In the 1880s the Schomberg True Blues, Loyal Orange Lodge 589, was formed in the village. Since 1934 the Orange Hall has been on Springwell Road.

Further information about the Schomberg Monument can be found here:

<https://discovergroomsport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Schomberg-Monument.pdf>