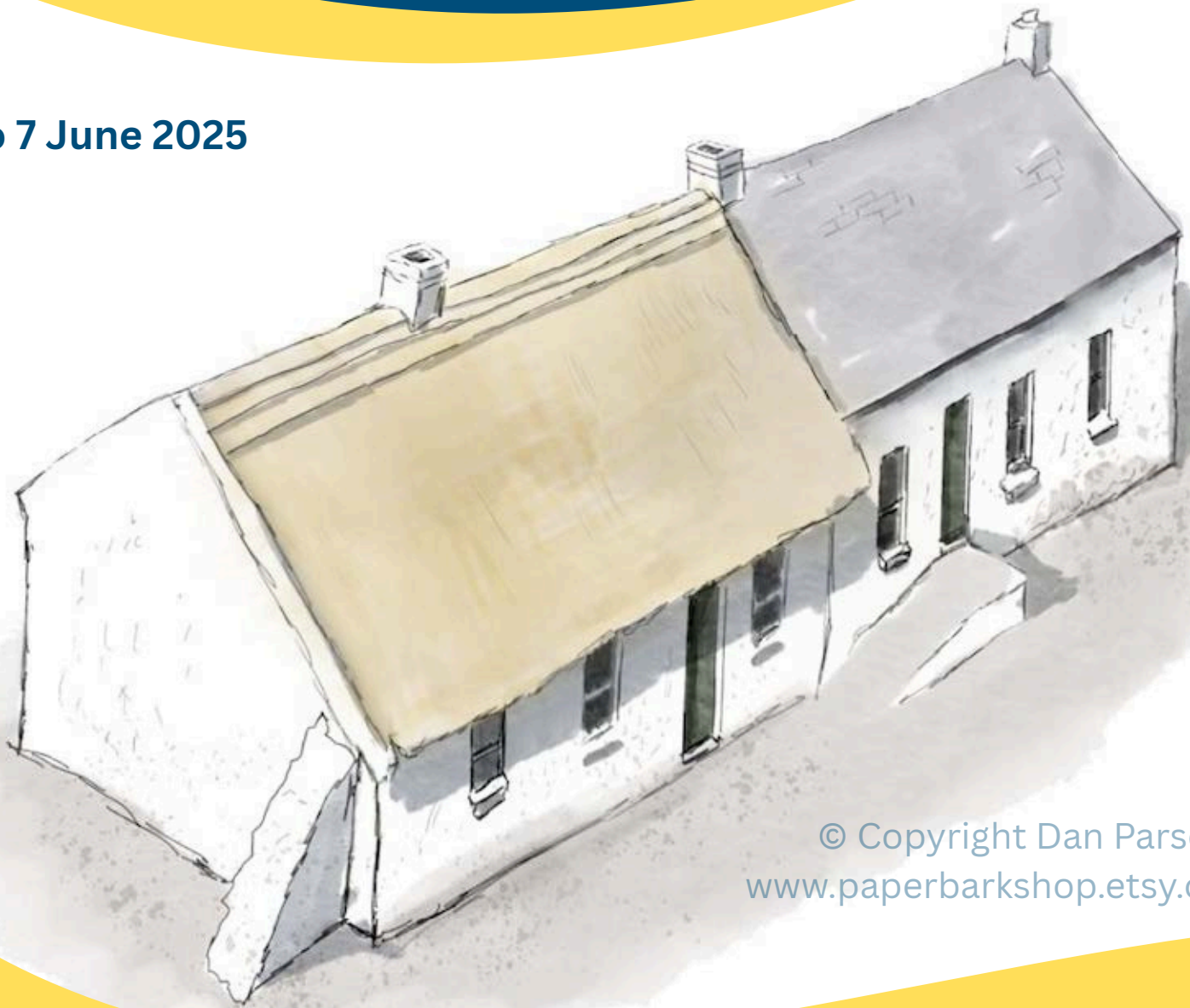


Cockle Row Cottages

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A little bit of Groomsport history from



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Cockle Row Cottages

Cockle Row cottages are, almost certainly, the oldest and, probably, the best known buildings in the village. They feature in many paintings and postcards of the village.

They are believed to have been built in the 17th century as fishermen's cottages. They were built at right angles to the sea as protection from the chilling north wind.

Groomsport had grown up as a fishing village and a number of small cottages were built around the harbour and along Main Street for the fishermen and their families. Later, fishermen also occupied the cottages on The Point which had originally been built for the crew of the Coast Guard station, which had closed about 1908.



This extract from a painting by James Lawson Balfour in the late 1890s shows Cockle Row cottages and the many similar cottages on both sides of Main Street.

The redevelopment of Groomspport in the 1960s

As Balfour's painting suggests, Groomspport's cottages, many of which were thatched, were very attractive. However, by the 1960s, they were no longer seen as meeting modern housing standards and it was believed that they contributed to poor health – many had no running water or electricity.

It was decided that all the old cottages along Main Street and the old Coast Guard cottages, should be demolished and replaced by modern houses.

John and Peg Barrons were the last residents of the cottage at Cockle Row with the thatched roof. They moved to a new house on Main Street. Miss Orr was the last resident of the other cottage. These were that last cottages in the village that were to be demolished.

Fearing that Groomspport would lose an important part of its history, Rev Dr David Irwin, then the minister of Groomspport Presbyterian Church, his wife Maureen, and other villagers, stood in front of the bulldozer that had been sent to demolish the cottages at Cockle Row.

They persuaded the foreman not to proceed and they asked for the decision to demolish the cottages to be reconsidered. The authorities then decided that Cockle Row should be spared.

Rev David and Mrs Maureen Irwin



New roles for the Cottages

Having been saved from demolition, the cottages were used by Bangor Art Club as a studio and exhibition space for several years.

In the late 1990s, the Council used EU funding to refurbish the cottages. Since then one cottage has been used as a Visitor Information Centre while the other has become a small heritage centre, reflecting the history of the cottages and the village.



A busy summer afternoon at Cockle Row

Especially in the summer months, Cockle Row is now the setting for many activities for residents of Groomsport and for visitors to the village.

Find out more about the history of the village and Groomsport Digital Archive at: www.discovergroomsport.com.

Contact us at discovergroomsport@gmail.com



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