

# Groomspout Parish Church

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A little bit of Groomspout history from



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**GROOMSPORT**

# The creation of Groomsport Parish

Groomsport Church was built as a “Chapel of Ease” within Bangor Parish. Chapels of Ease were built to make it easier for people in rural areas, who lived some distance from their church, to attend services. The parish church for Groomsport was Bangor Abbey.



A drawing of the original church with the pinnacles that were later removed.

The ground on which the church was built was donated by John Waring Maxwell, of Finnebrogue, Downpatrick, the local landowner.

He also contributed to the building costs and later donated the church bell.

When John Waring Maxwell gifted the site, it was on condition that “burials are expressly prohibited either in the Church or the Churchyard” and “that the Church shall be called Groomsport Church”. Because of the second condition, unlike many churches in the Church of Ireland, the church has never been dedicated to a saint.

The foundation stone was laid in October 1841 and the first service was held in the church on 11 December 1842. From then until 1853 the services in the church were taken by a curate from Bangor Abbey.

Groomsport Parish was created in 1853 from eight townlands in the eastern part of the Bangor Parish, along with the Copeland Islands. Rev A H McCausland was appointed as the first Rector of Groomsport.

## The Church Building

The architect was the famous designer Sir Charles Lanyon, architect of many public buildings including the then Queen's College (which later became Queen's University), Belfast Customs House and Crumlin Road Jail and Courthouse. Lanyon gave his services free of charge. The cost of building the church was £700.

The original church was a simple building with a rectangular nave and a tower. Originally the tower had four tall pinnacles but these proved to be unstable and were removed.

In 1909, in memory of Major Robert Perceval-Maxwell (1813-1905), the chancel was added at a cost of £340.



Groomsport Parish Church, 1932, before the transepts were added.

Hurst and Co. Fine Art Warehouse. Real Photo Series. Copyright: North Down Museum.

In the 1930's the church, had seating for 130 people, but was regularly attracting 150 parishioners for services. It was decided to build two transepts which provided an extra 86 seats.

The vestry was enlarged in 1955 and, in 2018, the church underwent a major refurbishment. The church was given a new roof and some stonework was either repaired or replaced. A new underfloor heating system was installed. The church was rewired and new lighting was installed. A new 3-manual digital organ was also installed.

The church contains several fine stained-glass windows. Some of these, and other items in the church, are memorials to members of the Perceval-Maxwell family.

The Great Window, above the Holy Table, depicts the Transfiguration of Christ with the Patriarchs. It was created by the famous stained-glass maker, Franz Mayer of Munich. It was installed in 1877 in memory of John William Perceval-Maxwell (1840-1875), the eldest son of Robert Perceval-Maxwell.



The Great Window

Find out more about the history of the village and Groomsport Digital Archive at:  
[www.discovergroomsport.com](http://www.discovergroomsport.com).

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