

Groomspout Presbyterian Church

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A little bit of Groomspout history from



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GROOMSPORT

The formation of the Groomsport Congregation

We know, from Presbytery records, that, in October 1839, and perhaps even earlier, monthly Sunday Services for the 150 Presbyterians in village were held at the “Preaching Station” at 17 Main Street.

This was the house of Mr James Kennedy. It was demolished to make way for modern apartments.



17 Main Street

The services were being conducted, and pastoral care given, by neighbouring ministers and Student Probationers awaiting ordination.

The Presbytery recognised the Groomsport Congregation and, on 10th August 1841, the first Minister, Rev Isaac Mack was ordained in a marquee on the Village Green (or Holme Field), as it was the only place with space for a large gathering.

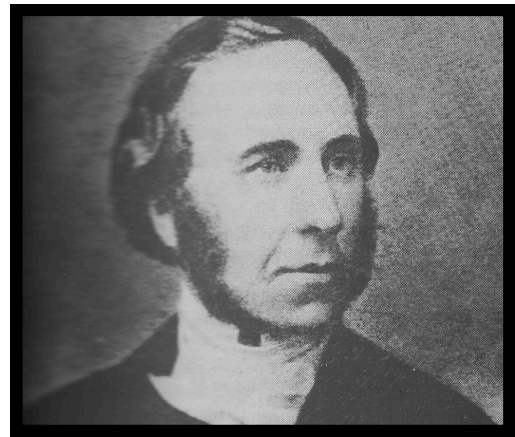
Building the church

The congregation needed a church building to meet to worship. Unfortunately, the two local landlords, John Waring Maxwell and Lord Dufferin, were not willing to sell, rent or give a piece of their land to enable a church to be built.

The widow of a Presbyterian Minister owned property right in the centre of the village, She was willing to part with the land on reasonable terms and Groomspoint Presbyterian Church took possession of it on 28th June 1841.

No records remain about the purchase of the property, the building costs of the church or its actual date of completion. However, it is reported that the church was opened for worship about two years after Mr Mack's ordination, possibly in 1843.

Once the church was completed, Rev Isaac Mack built and opened a National School immediately behind the church. He later built four houses for people of limited means, known as "Providence Place", in the space between the school and The Hill.



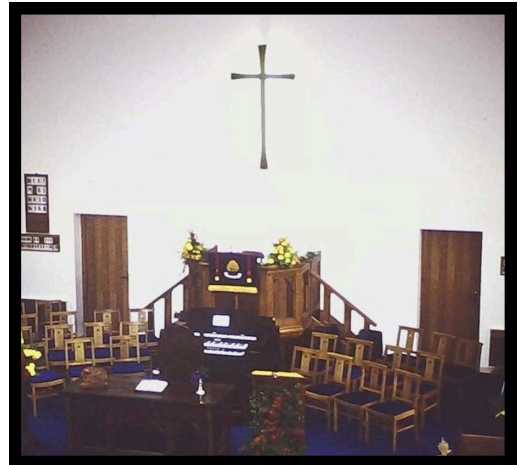
Rev Isaac Mack,
Minister 1841-1877

The church's tower and clock were added to the simple "Meeting House" style of architecture in 1863 by Mr William McMurray, a former member, who became a successful businessman in London. Mr James Kennedy of 17 Main Street also owned property in what is now the church car park. This was purchased and demolished in 1863.

In its place two semi-detached properties were built. One of these houses, the entrance of which faced the street, was rented out, enabling the church to be free of debt. The other house, with its door facing the church was known as the "Side Manse". This was where Rev Isaac Mack lived.

Church extensions in the 20th century

A major extension of the church, with new rooms at the rear, and the total refurbishment of the roof, was completed in 1971. The old National School (which had been converted into six dwellings), Providence Place and the unused Side Manse had all been demolished.



After the 1971 refurbishment

When the church re-opened in 1971, it had one of the first crosses displayed in a Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The church was further extended and refurbished in 1991 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Groomsport congregation. A gallery was built to seat 150 people. As well as a complete redecoration of the church and adjoining rooms, other improvements were the provision of new pews and flooring. Outside the front steps were remodelled and the car park was extended.

Find out more about the history of the village and
Groomsport Digital Archive at:
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