

The residents of Groomsport in the early 1860s

This paper combines two sources of information about who was living in Groomsport in the early 1860s – Griffith's Valuation and an extract from the 1861 Census which has only recently become widely available.

Griffith's Valuation

The Primary Valuation of Ireland (usually called Griffith's Valuation, after Sir Richard Griffith, who oversaw it) was conducted on a county by county basis in Ireland between 1848 and 1864. All land and houses were valued to determine the level of contribution the occupier were to make to support the work of the Poor Law Guardians.

The report for the Newtownards Poor Law Union of county Down (which included Groomsport) was published in 1863 and reflected valuations assessed in 1862 and 1863. This report has been available since it was published. It lists the occupiers of each house and farm which was valued. It did not record any information about family members or others living in each house.

The report lists 79 houses in the “town” of Groomsport. 51 of these were on Main Street and 28 on Upper Row (later Hill Street and now known as The Hill). In addition there were 3 occupied houses in the rest of Groomsport townland – one of which was Groomsport House.

The map which accompanies this information on the Griffith's Valuation website shows the extent of the “town” of Groomsport – the area labelled 29.



Ordnance Survey map from www.askaboutireland.ie

VALUATION OF TENEMENTS:
PARISH OF BANGOR.

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.
	Tenants and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.	
				A. R. P.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
	GROOMSPORT— <i>continued.</i>						
	TOWN OF GROOMSPORT— <i>continued.</i>						
	UPPER-ROW.						
38	1	John Kennedy, . . .	Robert P. Maxwell, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	3 0 0	3 0 0
	2	William Clarke, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	3 5 0	3 5 0
	3	William Dryce, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	4 10 0	4 10 0
	4	Sarah Kilpatrick, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	5	Samuel Heyburn and another, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 15 0	2 15 0
	6	Samuel Cord, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	3 5 0	3 5 0
	7	Alexander Heyburn, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	3 5 0	3 5 0
	8	Daniel Morgan and another, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	9	Hugh Waterson, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 5 0	2 5 0
	10	Robert Waterson, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	11	Henry Macnamara, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	12	Robert Niblock, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 5 0	2 5 0
	13	David Waterson, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 5 0	2 5 0
	14	Robert McCann, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	2 15 0	2 15 0
	15	John Niblock, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	16	Mary A. Coulston, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0
	17	Anne McCullough and another, . . .	Mary A. Coulston, . . .	House (in rear), . . .	—	1 5 0	1 5 0
	18	Charles Heyburn, . . .	Robert P. Maxwell, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	3 5 0	3 5 0
	19	Mary Hunter, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	3 15 0	3 15 0
	20	Mary A. Murdock, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	2 15 0	2 15 0
	21	Jane Baxter, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 5 0	2 5 0
	22	George Heasley, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho., off. yd., & sm. gar.	—	4 10 0	4 10 0
	23	David Barr, . . .	Same, . . .	Ho. yard, & sm. garden.	—	2 10 0	2 10 0

Part of the Griffith's Valuation Report for Upper Row from www.askaboutireland.ie

The numbers recorded in Groomsport were not street addresses. They were the numbers given to the “tenements” (ie plots of land) which had been valued, most of which had houses built on them. In 1863, numbers 1 and 2 of Main Street were “small gardens”. Subsequent Valuation Revision Books recorded that houses were later built on these plots.

The land side of Main Street was numbered from the Bangor end to Violet Lodge, from 1 to 31. Number 32 was opposite Violet Lodge on the sea side of the street which was numbered in the Bangor direction, until number 51. This included houses on the road to the quay (Harbour Road today) and Cackle Row.

Upper Row was numbered from the Bangor end, from 1 to 25. Numbers 26 to 28 were Providence Place, behind the Presbyterian Church.

The numbers in Upper Row (by then known as Hill Street) changed in 1908. For example, number 9, occupied by Hugh Waterson in 1863 became number 12. At the same time, number 26, one of the houses in Providence Place became number 30.

1861 Census of Ireland

The detailed returns of all the censuses of Ireland from 1821 to 1891 were destroyed during the First World War when the government decided to pulp them.

The Virtual Treasury of Ireland (www.virtualtreasury.ie) is attempting to digitally recreate the public records destroyed in the fire in the Four Courts in Dublin in 1922. It is also seeking to digitise surviving fragments of the destroyed censuses.

The Virtual Treasury has transcribed a copies of the 1861 census for Groomsport townland and Groomsport village. These copies were located among the Clerks' Records of Bangor Borough Council which are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

The copies are not complete:

- They record the name of the heads of household and all the people living in each household. However, ages not recorded and in only one instance is an occupation recorded.
- The report of the 1861 Census (which was not destroyed) recorded that the village of Groomsport had a population of 428 occupying 91 houses. The transcribed copy records 379 people, occupying 90 houses.
- The census report records that the rest of the townland of Groomsport had 13 people living in 3 houses. The transcribed copy records 11 people living in 3 houses.
- Between the village and the townland, the names of 51 people appear to be missing.

The copy of the census does not indicate whether houses were on Main Street or on Upper Row. The houses for the whole village of Groomsport were probably listed in the order in which the details were collected by the census enumerators.

The Census Report for 1861 referred to Groomsport "town", as did Griffith's Valuation. The term "village" may have been used by the person who copied the information that was found in the Clerks' Records.

Combining the two sources

Below, I have attempted to match the census information to the list of occupiers in Griffith's Valuation to try to get a better picture of the population of Groomsport in the early 1860s.

After the possible matches, there were 117 people in the census return that I was unable to match to Griffith's Valuation households.

Transcription errors can lead to variances in the way that information is recorded. This is less of a problem for Griffith's Valuation as there was only one transcription – the surveyors' records were prepared for printing by typesetters. The census information has been transcribed at least twice – firstly by the creation of the copy found in the Council Clerks' papers and then by the transcription of that information on to a spreadsheet for the Virtual Treasury.

I have retained the versions of surnames that appear in the census transcription when I was matching information from the two sources. Thus, some of the "Heyburns" were recorded as "Heysons" and I am fairly confident that the "Willocks" were really "Niblocks". There are also some examples of the Groomsport surname with the most variants – Barr / Barn / Barnes / Barron / Barrons / Barrow.

Peter Gibson
January 2026

Sources:

Griffith's Valuation: <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>

1861 Census:

County Down: <https://virtualtreasury.ie/item/VRTI-CEN-Report-1861-1-3-5>

Groomsport townland: <https://virtualtreasury.ie/item/VRTI-CEN-1861-3-33-2-2-Groomsport>

Groomsport village: <https://virtualtreasury.ie/item/VRTI-CEN-1861-3-33-2-2-GroomsportVillage>

Griffith's Valuation 1863			1861 Census		
Number		Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
Groomsport townland					
1	John Waring Maxwell	Groomsport House	Robt P. Hugh Mary Ellen	Maxwell Neuman Morrison Jordon	head of household
1Ab	John McJury		John Susan David Peter Rosette Nathl James	Majury Majury Majury Majury Majury Majury Majury	head of household
1Ba	Rev Charles Allen				
36	Jane Taylor		Jane Jane Mary Anne John Mathw George Alex	Taylor Taylor Taylor Clancy Coulter Clancy Clancy	head of household
Main Street – land side					
1	Mary Agnew	garden only			
2	John Lindsay	garden only			
3	Nathaniel Murdock		Nathl Margt Cath[erin]e Ross Thomas	Murdock Murdock Murdock Murdock Murdock	head of household
4	Jane Heyburn		Jane Ellen Eliza Mary A. Robt William	Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn	head of household
4a	Robert Heyburn	house in rear	Robt Mary Mary Eliza Jane	Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn Heyburn	head of household
5	William Hunter		Mary David George Eliza	Hunter Hunter Hunter Hunter	head of household
6	Anne Bell				
7	Anne Bell				
8	James McCann		Jas	McCann	head of household
9	Alexander Perry		Alexr Ann Jane	Perry Perry White	head of household
10	Samuel Montgomery		Jas Catherine	Montgomery Montgomery	head of household
11		Unoccupied			
12	Anne Hamilton		Jas Ann James Agnes	Hamilton Hamilton Hamilton Hamilton	head of household

Griffith's Valuation 1863		1861 Census		
Number	Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
13	James Barn	Jas	Barron	head of household
		Susan	Barron	
		Jane	Barron	
		Isabella	Barron	
14	Hugh McCormick	Hugh	McCormick	head of household
		Mary	McCormick	
		John	McCormick	
		George	McCormick	
		Sarah	McCormick	
		Hugh	McCormick	
		William	McCormick	
15	David Stewart	David	Stewart	head of household
		Agnes	Stewart	
		James	Stewart	
		William	Stewart	
		John	Stewart	
		David	Stewart	
		Alexr	Stewart	
16	William Logan	William	Logan	head of household
		Margt	Logan	
		George	Logan	
		Margt	Logan	
		Mary	Clarke	
17	James Kennedy	James	Kennedy	head of household
		Agnes	Kennedy	
		Mary	Kennedy	
		Agnes	Kennedy	
		John	Kennedy	
		Henry	Kennedy	
18				Presbyterian Church
19	Jane Andrews			
20	John Agnew	John	Agnew	head of household
		Eliza	Agnew	
		Jane	Agnew	
21	Rev A McCausland			Building Ground
22	Rev A McCausland	Andw	McCausland	Head of household
		Barbara	McCausland	
		Charles	McCausland	
		George	McCausland	
		Marcus	McCausland	
23	Hannah Skillen & another	Hanna	Skilling	head of household
		Hugh	Skilling	
		James	Skilling	
		Margt	Skilling	
24	James Heyburn	James	Heyburn	head of household
		Ann	Heyburn	
		James	Heyburn	
		Eliza	Heyburn	
		Ann	Heyburn	
		Hanna	Heyburn	
25	James Heyburn			Office, yard and garden
26	Elizabeth Webster	Eliza	Webster	head of household
		Mary	Webster	
		Robt	Jackson	
		Agnes	Kenard	
27				unoccupied, dilapidated
28	Hannah Skillen			garden
29	Jane Andrews			garden

Griffith's Valuation 1863		1861 Census		
Number	Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
30	Jane Magee	William	Magee	head of household
		Jane	Magee	
		Mary	McKibben	
		Eliza	Magee	
		Agnes	Magee	
31	Robert Boag Violet Lodge			
	Main Street – sea side			
32	Robert Campbell	Ann	Campbell	head of household
		Sarah	Campbell	
		James	Campbell	
		Mary	Campbell	
		Margt	Campbell	
33	Daniel Morgan	Dani	Morgan	head of household
		Margt	Morgan	
		Eliza	Morgan	
		Mary Jane	Morgan	
		Sarah A.	Morgan	
34	Orange Lodge			
35	Grace McDaid & another	Ann	McDade	head of household
		Grace	McDade	
36	John Waterson	John	Waterson	head of household
		Eliza	Waterson	
		John	Waterson	
		Annie	Waterson	
		Hugh	Waterson	
		James	Waterson	
		Robt	Waterson	
		Henry	Waterson	
37	Eliza Kelly			
38	Jane Andrews	Jane	Andrews	head of household
		Hugh	Andrews	
		Robt	Andrews	
		Thos	Andrews	
		Elizth	Gorman	
39	Life Boat house			
40	James Gaw	Jas	Gaw	head of household
		Sarah	Gaw	
		William	Gaw	
		Mary	Gaw	
		Sarah	Gaw	
		James	Gaw	
41	Hugh Gray			
42	Henry Waterson	Henry	Waterson	head of household
		Sophia	Waterson	
		Elizth	Waterson	
		Anna	Waterson	
		Hugh	Waterson	
		William	Waterson	
		Ann	Farmer	

Griffith's Valuation 1863		1861 Census		
Number	Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
43	Mary Lindsay	Jas	Lindsee	head of household
		Jane	Lindsee	
		Mary	Lindsee	
		Rosette	Lindsee	
		Jane	Lindsee	
44	William Orr	William	Orr	head of household
		Sophia	Orr	
		William	Orr	
		Elizth	Orr	
		Sophia	Orr	
		Hugh	Orr	
		Mary	Orr	
45	David Stewart	David	Stewart	head of household
		William	Stewart	
		Wm	Barrow	
		Sarah	Barrow	
		Jane	Barrow	
		Hugh	Barrow	
46	Sarah Agnew	Sarah	Agnew	
47	James McIntosh & another	Jas	McEntosh	head of household
		Doritha	McEntosh	
		Joseph	McEntosh	
		Sarah	McEntosh	
		Sarah	McConnell	servant
48	Alexander Lightbody	Alexr	Lightbody	head of household
		Mary	Lightbody	
		William	Lightbody	
49	John Lindsay	John	Lindsey	head of household
		Ann	Lindsey	
		Thomas	Lindsey	
		Jane	Lindsey	
		William	Lindsey	
50	John Bell	John	Bell	head of household
		Jane	Bell	
		Eliza	Bell	
		Ann	Bell	
		William	Bell	
		Margt	Bell	
51	John Agnew	John	Agnew	head of household
		Eliza	Agnew	
		Jane	Agnew	

Griffith's Valuation 1863		1861 Census		
Number	Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
Upper Row				
1	John Kennedy	John	Kennedy	head of household
		Doritha	Kennedy	
2	William Clarke	Mary	Gillen	head of household
		William	Gillen	
		William	Clarke	
		Ann	Clarke	
3	William Bryce	William	Brew	head of household
		Ann	Brew	
		Edward	Brew	
		William	Brew	
		James	Brew	
4	Sarah Kilpatrick	Sarah	Kilpatrick	head of household
5	Samuel Heyburn & another	Saml	Heyburn	
		Margt	Heyburn	
		Eliza	Heyburn	
		Mary A.	Heyburn	
		Saml	Heyburn	
		Ellen	Heyburn	
		Hugh	Heyburn	
6	Samuel Cord	Saml	McCord	head of household
		Mary	McCord	
7	Alexander Heyburn	Alexr	Heyson	head of household
		Eliza	Heyson	
		Robt	Heyson	
		Mary Jane	Heyson	
8	Daniel Morgan & another	Danl	Morgan	head of household
		Jas	Hanborough	
		Mary	Hanborough	
9	Hugh Waterson	Hugh	Waterson	head of household
		Mary	Waterson	
		Ann	Waterson	
		Jane	Waterson	
		Eliza	Waterson	
		Hugh	Waterson	
10	Robert Waterson	Robt	Waterson	head of household
		Mary	Waterson	
		Abiguil	Waterson	
		Jane	Waterson	
		Mary Jane	Waterson	
		Peter	Waterson	
11	Robert Macnamara	Henry	McNamara	head of household
		Agnes	McNamara	
		Eliza Jane	McNamara	
12	Robert Niblock	Robt	Willcock	head of household
		Jane	Willcock	
		Robt	Willcock	
		William	Willcock	
		Hugh	Willcock	
		Mary	Willcock	
		Agnes	Willcock	
		John	Willcock	

Griffith's Valuation 1863		1861 Census		
Number	Comment	Possible matches with Griffith's Valuation		
13	David Waterson	David	Waterson	head of household
		Eliza	Waterson	
		Rosette	Waterson	
		John	Waterson	
		Nathl	Waterson	
		Peter	Ledgerwood	
14	Robert McCann	McCune	Robt	Head of household
		McCune	Mary	
15	John Niblock	John	Willock	head of household
		Jas	Willock	
		Agnes	Willock	
16	Mary A Coulson	Margt	Coulston	head of household
16a	Anne McCullough & another house in rear			
17	Charles Heyburn	Betty	Heyburn	head of household
		Mary	Heyburn	
		Saml	Heyburn	
18	Mary Hunter	Thos	Hunter	head of household
		Mary	Hunter	
		James	Hunter	
19	Mary A Murdock	Mary	Murdock	head of household
		Jane	Murdock	
		Susan	Hamilton	
20	Jane Baxter	Jane	Baxter	head of household
21	George Heasley	George	Hasley	head of household
		Eliza	Hasley	
		James	Hasley	
		William	Hasley	
		Margt	Hasley	
		Jane	Hasley	
		Grace	Hasley	
		Ellen	McGowan	
		Anna	McGowan	
22	David Barr	David	Barns	head of household
		Susan	Barns	
		William	Barns	
		John	Barns	
		Ellen	Barns	
		Agnes	Barns	
23	Eliza Perry & another	Eliza	Perry	head of household
		Margt	Perry	
		Mary	Perry	
24				
25	House in progress			
26	Robert Coulter	Robt	Coulston	head of household
		Jane	Coulston	
		Elizth	Coulston	
27	Robert Niblock	Robt	Niblock	head of household
		Isabella	Niblock	
		Agnes	Niblock	
		Robt	Anderson	
28	Hugh Morrison	Annie	Morrison	head of household
		Eliza	Morrison	
		Margt	Morrison	
		James	Morrison	
		Annee	Morrison	

Residents of Groomsport in 1861 Census not matched to Griffith's Valuation records

Mack	Sarah	Head of household	McAloon	Alexr	Head of household
McDonald	Betty		McAloon	Mary A.	
Heyburn	Robt	Head of household	McAloon	Hugh	
Heyburn	Sarah		McAloon	Alexr	
Heyburn	William		McAloon	Margt	
Heyburn	Arthur	Head of household	McAloon	William	
Heyburn	Mary		Fash	Susan	Head of household
Heyburn	Jane		Fash	John	
Heyburn	George		Fash	William	
Heyburn	Robt		Fash	Mary	
Keenan	John	Head of household	Clifford	Saml	Head of household
Keenan	Elizth		Clifford	Ann	
Keenan	William		Clifford	Agnes	
Keenan	George		Hunter	Thos	Head of household
Boden	James	Head of household	Mealy	William	Head of household
Boden	Mary		Mealy	Jane	
Boden	John		Mealy	Mary Jane	
Boden	James		Baily	John	Head of household
Boden	Annee		Baily	Jane	
Boden	Henry J.		Baily	Hugh	
Boden	Mary		Baily	Margt	
Priestly	James	Head of household	Waterson	Jas	Head of household
Priestly	William		Waterson	Jane	
Priestly	Mary		Anderson	Robt	
Priestly	Christiana		Bell	John	Head of household
Morrison	Saml	Head of household	Bell	Ann	
Morrison	Sarah		Bell	Hugh	
Morrison	Elizth		Bell	Mary	
Morrison	Jane		Murdock	Joseph	Head of household
Morrison	James		Murdock	Susan	
Agnew	Mary	Head of household	Murdock	Alexr	
McCann	James	Head of household	Murdock	Jane	
McCann	Grace		Murdock	Mary	
McCann	Saml		Clifford	Jane	Head of household
McCann	Hugh		Ledgerwood	Jas	Head of household
McCann	John		Ledgerwood	Eliza	
McCann	Isaac		Ledgerwood	Charles	
Smith	Margt	Head of household	Ledgerwood	Nathl	
Morgan	Eliza		Ledgerwood	Isabella	
Aikin	William	Head of household	Jock	William	
Aikin	Mary		Wiley	William	Head of household
Aikin	Jane		Wiley	Annie	
Aikin	Annie		Wiley	James	
Aikin	Arthur		Wiley	Jane	
Aikin	Henry		Wiley	William	
Waterson	John	Head of household	Wiley	John	
Waterson	Mary		McDade	Sarah	Head of household
Murdock	John		Murdock	Mary	Head of household
Murdock	Susan		Murdock	Mary Ann	
Miskelly	Ellen	Head of household	Johnston	Robt	Head of household
Miskelly	Jane		Johnston	Mary	
Miskelly	James		Johnston	Sarah	
McQuoid	Mary	Head of household	Johnston	Hugh	
Savage	Hugh	Head of household	Johnston	William	
Savage	Margt		Johnston	Margt	