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Department for

Communities

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Buildings(v1.0)

Historic Building Details

HB Ref No:

HB05/03/023

Extent of Listing:

House, outbuildings, gate screen and railings.

Date of Construction:

1800 - 1819

Address :

Rockport Lodge 2 Castle Park Cushendun Co. Antrim BT44 0PT

Townland:

Castle Park

Survey 2:

B+

Date of Listing:

24/08/1976 00:00:00

Date of De-listing:

Current Use:

House

Former Use

House

Conservation Area:

Yes

Industrial Archaeology:

No

Vernacular:

No

Thatched:

No

Monument:

No

Derelict:

No

OS Map No:

17/10SW

IG Ref:D2504 3344

Owner Category**Exterior Description And Setting**

Two-storey four-bay white painted rough-cast rendered late-Georgian house; rectangular plan-form with a canted bays to the South-west side under a slated hipped roof with a deep overhanging eaves; hipped roof has four tall white painted rendered chimney stacks with stepped cornices and three buff clay pots; there is series of white painted rough-cast rendered outbuildings adjoined to the main house at the NE side extending along the coastline. The main house was constructed c. 1813 to designs by unknown architect; however the house was built by General Edmund McNeill, a local landowner. Rockport Lodge underwent extensive renovations in c. 2010 which included the installation of cast-iron rainwater goods throughout. Situated on the very edge of the bay in a salt-swept garden with anthemion cast-iron railings, just SE to the ruins of Castle Carra. Located to the North-east of the Village of Cushendun. At the time of the survey the building appeared to be occupied primarily as a summer residence. White painted rough-cast rendered walling, wide painted Georgian casement windows with glazing bars; hipped slate roof has lead ridge and four rendered chimney-stacks having octagonal buff clay pots; deep overhanging eaves has timber panelled soffits; half round cast-iron guttering supported on out-and-up iron brackets discharging to circular section downpipes throughout. Principal elevation faces North-west accessed via a tarmac avenue to the West side from Torr road; four bays wide with chamfered corner to the West side all set on a rendered plinth, painted in contrasting colour; ground floor bays are aligned with bays on first floor above; recessed doorway (not centred on elevation) containing a painted timber door with decorative glazed top panes, side lights to either side and a transom light over having decorative glazing bars; wall-mounted lantern style light fittings to either side of entrance doorway. North-east elevation has a single-storey extension to the ground floor having a slated hipped roof over; extension has a mixture of square headed and semicircular arched openings leading to an enclosed rear yard and amenity area; first floor above is three bays wide, square headed left side bay, semicircular arched opening to central window bay, right side bay is blind. There is a small

rectangular roof light to the NE slope of main house. Main elevation is abutted at the left side by a white painted linear outbuilding which extends back to the NE side of the main house. South-east elevation directly overlooking the bay is set back behind a low stone wall with high iron railings above having a single entrance gate to the right side; main elevation is of three bays wide, slightly irregular fenestration pattern, ground floor bays align with bays on first floor level however there is a larger 3/3 timber sliding sash window to the right side on ground floor level; the main elevation is abutted on the right side by a white painted linear outbuilding which extends away from the NE side of the main house. South-west elevation is of rough-cast render with white painted finish set on a rendered plinth painted in contrasting colour; main elevation is formed of three two-storey canted bays set under a deep eaves so that the triangular recesses between them make a fascinating pattern enhanced by the arrangement of the windows, five on the ground floor, three above on first floor with two oculi above one either side of central bay. White painted two-storey outbuilding extends to the NE side parallel with the coastline; walling is of rough-cast render; slate hipped roof over has two large modern roof lights to the SE slope and three white painted rendered chimney stacks, centred on ridge, with stepped painted cornices and buff clay pots; there are series of rectangular door and window openings to the SE side having timber windows with glazing bars, immediately overlooking the bay; the SW side contains a pair of timber doors with large glazed panels opening out onto the SE side of the main house; NW elevation contains a series of square headed window openings and a single wall dormer overlooking an enclosed rear yard. NE elevation is blank. Setting: Situated on the edge of the bay in a salt-swept garden with anthemion cast-iron railings to the SE of Castle Carra ruins, accessed from the West side just off the Torr Road. Located to the North-east of the Village of Cushendun. Materials: Roof: Natural Slate RWGs: Cast-iron painted Walling: White rendered Windows: Timber sliding sash / timber casements.

Architects

Not Known

Historical Information

Rockport Lodge, a two-storey four-bay late-Georgian dwelling located in the townland of Castle Park to the north of Cushendun, was constructed in c. 1813 and was one of first summer residences, or bathing lodges, to be constructed in Cushendun. The village, located along the River Dun, was developed from the early-19th century when travel across mainland Europe was cut off by the Napoleonic wars. Ireland became a popular destination for British tourists during this period, necessitating the development of new routes and hotels between Belfast and popular picturesque sites along the Antrim Coast such as Dunluce Castle and the Giants Causeway. The previously isolated Glens of Antrim at once became accessible with the development of the Coastal Road between 1832 and 1842. Villages along the coast such as Cushendall and Cushendun were transformed from minor settlements into popular seaside resorts that soon became thronged with seasonal visitors. A number of summer houses (or 'Bathing Lodges') were constructed along the coast by city-based professionals and merchants, including the impressive residences of Glenmona Lodge and Glendun Lodge at Cushendun (Lewis; Bassett, p. 137; Cushendun Conservation Area Guides). In his *Five Big Houses of Cushendun* (1997), Brett noted that Rockport Lodge could be dated with some accuracy to 1813 as it did not appear on William Martin's conscientiously detailed map of 1811-12 but was noted in an contemporary account of the village (dated 1814) by a Ms. Ann Plumptre. Brett included a memoir of Ronald McNeill (Lord Cushendun) which noted that 'a great friend of my grandfather at Cushendun was the last Lord McNeill of the old creation. He had a mania for building and, having taken a great fancy to the neighbourhood, he built two houses there, one after the other, on my grandfather's property of which he took a lease, namely Rockport and Glenmona Lodge.' Rockport Lodge was first recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1832) which depicted it along its current general layout (a square-shaped dwelling possessing a long outbuilding range that hugged the coastline). In 1835 the Ordnance Survey Memoirs described the building as 'the summer residence of Major-General McNeill MP [of Cushendun House] ... a modern two-storey edifice and very commodious.' The contemporary Townland Valuations set the value of Rockport Lodge at £20 and 13 Shillings (with £2 added for it 'vicinity to sea, being a good situation for sea bathing' (OSM; Brett – *Five Big Houses*, pp 28-30). Griffith's Valuation (1859) records that Rockport Lodge

was increased in value to £38 and was leased by the McNeill to Nicholas Crommelin, a former army lieutenant who resided at Carrowdore Castle in Co. Down but utilised Rockport as his summer residence. Crommelin continued to reside at the site until his death in 1869 after which time Rockport Lodge was briefly acquired by Joseph Richardson (PRONI Wills). Brett records that Richardson occupied the site for a period of four years from 1870 to 1874 whilst his own residence of Springfield underwent renovation work. Richardson vacated Rockport Lodge in 1874 when Charles Higginson, a lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who formerly resided at Springmount (Ballymena), acquired the site. The Higginson family continued to hold the property until the 1930s. Following Higginson's death in 1896 Rockport Lodge passed to his sister Louisa Olivia Higginson. In 1911 the Census of Ireland described Rockport Lodge as a 1st class dwelling that consisted of 19 rooms and possessed extensive outbuildings including a stable, coach house, cow house, a dairy, store and laundry. Louisa Higginson continued to hold the house as a summer residence until her death in 1935 (PRONI Wills). Rockport Lodge passed to Sidney Parry, a rubber planter of London, in 1936 and under the First General Revaluation of Property in Northern Ireland (1936-57) the value of the property was increased to £57. The Sidney family vacated the site in c. 1943 when Rockport passed to Robert Walshe, a local cinema owner. In 1953 the property was occupied by John Archer, a former Town Clerk of Belfast whose wife Brett described as 'a highly-strung lady who held séances in the house and was much troubled by ghosts.' Rockport Lodge continued to be occupied by the Archer family until c. 1963 when the site came into possession of Sir. William Cecil McKee (1905-2003), a unionist politician who had served as part of the British Expeditionary Force in World War II, served as Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1957 and was knighted in 1959. Much of the land and property in Cushendun, including Rockport Lodge, was acquired by the National Trust in 1954, however McKee purchased Rockport Lodge from the Trust outright in 1967. By the end of the Second General Revaluation (1956-72) the total rateable value of Rockport Lodge remained at £57. In 1972 the UAHS Guide for the Glens of Antrim described Rockport Lodge in the following terms: 'A most unusual two-storey house ... very handsome, with hipped roof, squarely-set down on the very edge of the bay, in a salt-swept garden with good anthemion cast-iron railings. The main front, of four-bays, has wide Georgian-glazed windows, and the glazing-pattern in the doorcase is similar to that at Glendun Lodge. The south front, facing across the beach to the village, is the most remarkable feature of the house; it is formed of three canted bays, set in a zigzag under the wide eaves, so that the triangular recesses between them make a fascinating pattern; this impression is enhanced by the arrangement of the windows, five on the ground floor, three and two oculi above' (UAHS Guide, p. 40). In 1976 Rockport Lodge was listed and in 1980 the building was subsequently included in the Cushendun Conservation Area, which was designated as a means of 'protecting and enhancing the special qualities of the village.' The NIEA HB Records note that the building continues to be occupied as a private dwelling. In c. 2010 Rockport Lodge underwent an extensive renovation which included the installation of cast iron rainwater goods throughout (Cushendun Conservation Area Guide; NIEA HB Records) References Primary Sources 1. PRONI OS/6/1/15/1 – First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1832) 2. PRONI OS/6/1/15/2 – Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1857) 3. PRONI OS/6/1/15/3 – Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1903-04) 4. PRONI OS/6/1/15/4 – Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1922) 5. PRONI VAL/1/A/1/15 – Townland Valuations Map (c. 1830) 6. PRONI VAL/1/B/133 – Townland Valuations (1834) 7. PRONI VAL/2/B/1/27B – Griffith's Valuation (1859) 8. PRONI VAL/12/B/2/8A-D – Annual Revisions (1864-1923) 9. PRONI VAL/12/B/2/15D – Annual Revisions (1909-30) 10. PRONI VAL/12/E/25/1 – Annual Revisions Town Plan (c. 1909-c. 1935) 11. PRONI VAL/3/C/1/5 – First General Revaluation of Property in Northern Ireland (1936-57) 12. PRONI VAL/4/B/1/11 – Second General Revaluation of Property in Northern Ireland (1956-72) 13. Ordnance Survey Memoirs (1835) 14. Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland (1837) 15. Ulster Town Directories (1861-1918) 16. Bassett's County Antrim: A guide and directory (1888) 17. PRONI Wills Catalogue (6 Dec 1869; 8 May 1896; 6 Sept 1935) 18. First Survey Record – HB05/03/023 (1971) 19. NIEA HB Record – HB05/03/023 Secondary Sources 1. Brett, C. E. B., 'List of historic buildings, groups of buildings and areas of architectural importance in the Glens of Antrim' Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1972. 2. Brett, C. E. B., 'Buildings of Co. Antrim' Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1996. 3. Brett, C. E. B., 'Five big houses of Cushendun and some literary associations' Belfast: Lagan Press, 1997. 4. 'Cushendun Village Conservation Area' Belfast: Department of the Environment, 1980. 5. 'Cushendun Conservation Area' Belfast: Department of the Environment, 1996 – includes Ordnance Survey Town Plan of 1922.

Criteria for Listing

Architectural Interest

A. Style B. Proportion C. Ornamentation D. Plan Form I. Quality and survival of Interior J. Setting

Historic Interest

R. Age S. Authenticity T. Historic Importance W. Northern Ireland/International Interest

Evaluation

A large late-Georgian four-bay white painted rough-cast rendered house with a deep overhanging eaves and a hipped slate roof ; rectangular plan-form with three two-storey canted bays to the SW side. Built c. 1813 to designs by unknown architect as one of the first summer residences in Cushendun, originally for Major-General McNeill MP of Cushendun House it was owned for a period during 20th century by the prominent unionist politician Sir. William Cecil McKee. Rockport Lodge exhibits much character both externally and internally along with the adjoining outbuilding. Detailing to the external fabric remains intact. The house retains its original plan-form although detailing to the interior has been partially altered. Situated on the edge of the bay in a salt-swept garden with original anthemion cast-iron railings and to the SE of Castle Carra ruins, the building is of special interest and makes a positive contribution to the heritage of the Cushendun area.

General Comments

Date of Survey

19 January 2015

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