



**CICERONI**  
T R A V E L

## *QUIS SEPARABIT* EXPLORING ULSTER

SUNDAY 8 - SUNDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2024 (8 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£3735

- **Unique opportunity to visit this lovely part of ‘Lakeland’ Ireland**
- **Visits supported by a series of introductory lectures on Irish history**
- **Stay first in Belfast and then in a marvellous private castle on Lough Erne**
- **Remarkable levels of private access & hospitality**
- **Wonderful scenery throughout**
- **Unhurried pace suited to those who enjoy tranquillity**



Lough Erne, Belle Isle Castle

### OVERVIEW

*QUIS SEPARABIT*, “who shall separate” taken from St Paul’s letter to the Romans, was chosen as the motto of the newly founded (and now dormant) Order of St Patrick in 1783, and more recently as the motto of several Irish regiments, not least the Irish Guards. It was chosen to demonstrate the many connections which link together the entwined histories of Britain and Ireland. This motto seems an appropriate choice to introduce a tour which will seek to explore these links, seen against not only the magical scenery of this remarkable part of Ireland, but also through its cultural heritage – an ideal avenue of exploration and discovery.

By virtue of its geography, with endless lakes and small hill ranges, and the temperamental nature of the original Celtic settlers, Ulster was ‘a place apart’ from early times. While the Normans made headway in the east of the province, west Ulster remained unconquered. All changed with the ‘Plantation of Ulster’ initiated by James I (and VI) when long established links with Scotland were reinforced by the arrival of large numbers of new settlers. The consequent dynamic of Ulster’s economic, political and cultural development has created reverberations which to the outside eye and ear may seem impenetrable, even intractable. Yet, its history is remarkable, one which we shall explore via its literature, architecture, art and horticulture.

We begin in Belfast, the ideal base from which to explore the east of the province. It grew from simple origins as a ‘Plantation’ settlement into what became a thriving port. When the original Scottish, English and Manx settlers were joined by Huguenots from France (who introduced linen weaving), its fortunes were transformed. By the nineteenth century Belfast’s prosperity strengthened via shipbuilding and allied trades, reflected in its fine public buildings. The city’s more recent transformation since the end of ‘The Troubles’ is reflected in the development of the old Harland and Wolff docks area, centred on the justly popular ‘Titanic’ exhibition, which we shall visit.

Within easy reach of Belfast we shall visit a series of remarkable houses and gardens. Castle Ward is literally divided down the middle, one part Classical, the other ‘Gothick’. Hillsborough is the official residence of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and has an important art collection. Mount Stewart House and Gardens are truly outstanding and we shall spend a day there.

We then continue to the heart of ‘Lakeland’ Ulster, near Enniskillen, when we stay on Upper Lough Erne. Nearby we shall visit both mid Georgian Florence Court and James Wyatt’s Neo-classical masterpiece, Castle Coole. We shall also visit privately Barons Court, the seat of the Dukes of Abercorn; one of Ireland’s finest houses where we shall be entertained to lunch.

We spend three nights in Belfast at the 4\* Fitzwilliam Hotel situated in the city centre and four nights near Enniskillen at Belle Isle Castle, a private country house which is part of the Abercorn Estates, adapted for exclusive group lets and set amidst wonderful lakeside parkland - truly, a serene environment.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Sunday 8 September – We fly from Heathrow to Belfast City Airport (it should be possible to fly from other UK airports) and on arrival we have an **Introductory Bus Tour of Belfast** tracing its origins as a simple trading centre to one of the powerhouses of the Industrial Revolution. We continue to our hotel, the **4\* Fitzwilliam** and later that evening we have a group dinner in the hotel restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Monday 9 September – **Mount Stewart** is the ancestral home of the Vane-Tempest-Stewart family, Marquesses of Londonderry. On arrival we shall see the ‘Temple of the Winds’, a remarkable garden folly, followed by coffee. We spend the rest of the morning on a guided walk round the internationally famous gardens, laid out in the early twentieth century by Edith Londonderry, the great gardening Marchioness. It is considered the most important garden of its date in Ireland. After a simple group lunch, there will be time to visit the house to see the results of the recent restoration after which we return to Belfast. We have dinner in a local restaurant.

**Day 3:** Tuesday 10 September – This morning we continue our introduction to **Belfast**, looking at some of its more important buildings. Its more recent history is, of course, equally important and we will situate all these strands with visits to the **Ulster Museum** and the remarkable **Titanic Exhibition**. There will be a group lunch but dinner is not included today.

**Day 4:** Wednesday 11 September – **Castle Ward** is a Georgian mansion where the owners could not agree on the style, so they divided their house such that one façade is Classical and the other is “Gothick” with the rooms behind each front similarly divided. We continue to **Hillsborough Castle**, where we have a group lunch. Hillsborough is the former seat of the Hill family, Marquesses of Downshire, now the official home of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and it contains a fine collection of Irish decorative arts. After tea we depart for **Belle Isle Castle** in Co Fermanagh, for a stay of four nights and where we have dinner later that evening.

**Day 5:** Thursday 12 September – **Baronscourt** is the magnificent seat of the Dukes of Abercorn, rarely open and here we shall be entertained to lunch by the Duke, James Abercorn. The present mansion is the result of a complex series of additions and subtractions and it houses an exceptional collection of paintings and works of art. Having spent most of the day at Barons Court, we return to Belle Isle and later have dinner.

**Day 6:** Friday 13 September – **Florence Court** is a fine, mid eighteenth century Palladian house built for the Earls of Enniskillen. It suffered a major fire some decades ago but miraculously, much of the house was saved. It contains very good Irish furniture. After our private visit we continue to nearby **Killyreagh**, the home of Lord and Lady Anthony Hamilton, for a private visit including lunch. This is a modern garden not usually open to groups, close to Belle Isle, created with flair and imagination. We return to Belle Isle where there will be time to explore the grounds, and later have dinner.

**Day 7:** Saturday 14 September – **Castle Coole** is the classical masterpiece of James Wyatt, built for the Earls of Belmore and furnished in lavish Regency style and we shall have a private “connoisseurs” tour. After some free time in Enniskillen for lunch, not include today, we return to Belle Isle for some free time to explore the castle’s grounds. Later that evening, the Earl and Countess of Erne will host us at **Crom Castle** for our final dinner.

**Day 8:** Sunday 15 September – We leave Belle Isle and visit **The Argory**, a charming, early nineteenth century ‘gentry’ house, where we also have lunch. We continue to Belfast City Airport for our return flight(s).

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £3735    **Price without flights** £3595    **Deposit** £475

**Single Supplement:** £525 Castle Accommodation at Belle Isle (subject to availability), £185 Coach House / Courtyard Accommodation at Belle Isle

**Hotel** 3 nights at the 4\* Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast; 4 nights at Belle Isle Castle near Enniskillen

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA1416** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1345** arrive Belfast City Airport **1505**

Return: **BA1419** Depart Belfast City Airport **1735** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1855**

**Price includes** 6 dinners & 6 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities & services of Tom Duncan & Stephen Brook as Tour Manager

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 1 dinner & 1 lunch



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