



CICERONI
T R A V E L

QUIS SEPERABIT EXPLORING ULSTER

SUNDAY 1 - SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2019 (8 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2885

- **Unique opportunity to visit this lovely part of Ireland in an unforgettable manner**
- **Stay first in Belfast and then in a marvellous private castle on Lough Erne**
- **Remarkable levels of private access**
- **Wonderful scenery throughout**
- **Unhurried pace suited to those who enjoy tranquillity**



Lough Erne, Belle Isle Castle

OVERVIEW

QUIS SEPERABIT, “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.

Thus, as we remember the sacrifices of those who fell in the ‘Great War’ (including the many Irish) 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 the island 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, it seems, ‘a place apart’ from early times. While the Normans made headway in the east of the province, western 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 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, some of them privately. Castle Ward is literally divided in two down the middle, one part Classical, the other ‘Gothick’. Glenarm Castle is the seat of the Earls of Antrim and is full of historic interest. Hillsborough is the official residence of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. 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 Baronscourt, 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 set in wonderful lakeside parkland, a serene environment.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 1 September – We fly from Heathrow to Belfast City Airport (it should be possible to fly from other UK airports), and once on our coach we then spend much of the afternoon on an introductory tour of Belfast, the perfect introduction to our week. 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 2 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 and a free evening.

Day 3: Tuesday 3 September – We travel up to the famous Antrim coastal route which leads to the remarkable ‘**Giant’s Causeway**’, an extraordinary array of 40,000 hexagonal stone columns stretching down a cliff into the sea! We have an early lunch (not included) after which we continue to **Glenarm Castle**, the seat of the Earls of Antrim, not normally open to the public. The McDonnells have been associated with this part of Ulster since the 1390s and they have never been far from major events in Irish history. Glenarm is today largely a romantic “castellated” house full of treasures. We return to our hotel and there will be a group dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 4: Wednesday 4 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 – a unique solution! There will be some free time for lunch (not included) after which we continue to **Hillsborough Castle**, 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 good collection of Irish decorative arts. After tea we depart for Belle Isle Castle in Co Fermanagh, where we have dinner later that evening.

Day 5: Thursday 5 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 included), weather permitting we plan to spend the afternoon cruising on **Lower Lough Erne**. Later that evening, the Earl of Erne will entertain us at **Crom Castle** and host us for dinner.

Day 6: Friday 6 September – **Baronscourt** is the magnificent seat of the Dukes of Abercorn, rarely open and here we shall be entertained to lunch by the Abercorns. 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 7: Saturday 7 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 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 and later have our final dinner.

Day 8: Sunday 8 September – We leave Belle Isle and drive to Belfast, spending the later morning at the **Ulster Museum** which contains a visual celebration of the region’s rich cultural past. After a final group lunch we end the tour with a visit to the **Titanic Exhibition** and then continue to the airport for the return flight(s).

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2885 (Castle Accommodation at Belle Isle) £2785 (Courtyard Accommodation at Belle Isle)

Deposit £325 **Price without flights** £2740 (Castle at Belle Isle) £2640 (Courtyard at Belle Isle)

Single Supplement: £250 (Castle Accommodation at Belle Isle subject to availability)

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) **1310** arrive Belfast City Airport **1435**

Return: **BA1419** Depart Belfast City Airport **1900** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **2020**

Price includes 6 dinners & 4 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities & services of Tom Duncan

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 1 dinner & 3 lunches



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