



THE HARP & THE CROWN GEORGIAN DUBLIN & ITS HINTERLAND

SUNDAY 3 – FRIDAY 8 JUNE 2018 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£1935

- **Introduction to Ireland's history**
- **Medieval & Georgian Dublin explored**
- **Remarkable levels of private access**
- **Wonderful Georgian houses to include Russborough & Castletown**
- **Landscapes & gardens including Birr Castle and Jimi Blake's Hunting Brook**
- **Gentle pace with time to explore**
- **Visit based at historic Barberstown Castle**



The Custom House, Dublin, 1799, from the engraving

OVERVIEW

Ireland has a wealth of great houses and public buildings of international stature, many of which have remained largely unknown to all but the specialist historian and enthusiast. These date from the Medieval to the Victorian period. Undoubtedly, many of the finest are of the Georgian era, when Ireland enjoyed a period of unprecedented, though temporary, peace and prosperity.

Our visit will introduce you to these buildings, their architects and owners, their outstanding collections of pictures, furniture and decorative arts and their surrounding landscapes and gardens. This will be done through a series of visits in and around Dublin, one of the great European cities of the eighteenth century. You will be taken on several gently paced walks around the city, together with time spent in the picturesque Irish countryside when we visit three of Ireland's greatest country houses, Birr Castle, Castletown House and the magical Russborough, which we shall see under special 'connoisseur' viewing conditions.

We stay at Barberstown Castle, a *very* good four-star country house hotel. The original castle, a defensive tower, was extended several times to create the elegant house of today. It is set amidst quiet countryside, a short drive from Dublin. There will be free evenings on the second and third evenings and bus transfers into and out from Dublin will be included as part of the visit. This will allow members of the group to attend the theatre or to eat in one of Dublin's many fine restaurants.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 3 June – We fly from Heathrow to **Dublin**, arriving late morning and travel by coach directly into the city centre where there will be time for a snack lunch, not included. An afternoon **Introductory Coach Tour** will reveal the historic evolution of the city. Beginning with its Viking and Medieval origins, we then explore Dublin's great period of architectural splendour during the Georgian era as we chart the construction of fine public buildings such as the **Parliament House** and the **Customs House**. We continue to **Barberstown Castle**, where we shall stay for five nights. We have our first dinner in the hotel - wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Monday 4 June – We drive into Dublin and visit the medieval **St Patrick's Cathedral**. It is in a sense the 'Westminster Abbey' of Ireland, with a fine array of tombs and monuments. Of course, the Cathedral is also connected with Jonathan Swift, its Dean for many years. We continue to **The National Museum of Ireland** for coffee followed by our visit. It has an unrivalled collection of material related to the early history of Ireland: magnificent metalwork from the Bronze, Iron and Early Christian periods, including such pieces as the Ardagh Chalice and the Tara Brooch. After a pause for lunch, not included, we spend the afternoon at the adjacent **Trinity College**, founded by Elizabeth I in 1592. It has a wonderful array of buildings and we shall visit the Long Library in order to see the famous **Book of Kells**, now the centrepiece of an exhibition devoted to the introduction of Christianity to Ireland. We return to our hotel and there will be a group dinner this evening.

Day 3: Tuesday 5 June – This morning we return to Dublin to continue our exploration of the city’s Georgian heritage when we visit a number of historic interiors which chart the development of Georgian architecture in the city. Many of these feature remarkable figurative stucco plasterwork, introduced by a family of three Swiss-Italians, the Lafranchini brothers, further developed by local craftsmen. There will be an extended free period for lunch (not included). We return to Co. Kildare to visit Ireland’s most important Palladian mansion, **Castletown House**. Built in the early Georgian period for ‘Speaker’ William Conolly, it was completed internally by his great-nephew, Tom and his English wife, Lady Louisa, daughter of the 2nd Duke and Duchess of Richmond. It contains a spectacular series of staterooms displaying most of the major styles of the eighteenth century. We return to the hotel and a free evening. There will be a transfer into and back from Dublin tonight.

Day 4: Wednesday 6 June – This morning we visit glorious **Russborough**, where we shall have a ‘connoisseur’s’ private tour of the house. Russborough contains the finest art collection in Ireland, bringing together many of the original ‘Grand Tour’ treasures purchased by the 1st and 2nd Earls of Milltown and the renowned Beit collection which is particularly rich in Old Master paintings of the Dutch, French and English schools. It also has a superlative decorative arts collection and if that were not enough, the house sits in a landscape which Claude might have designed – heaven on earth. We lunch at Russborough after which we drive a few miles to visit **Hunting Brook**, the deservedly famous garden created in recent years by Jimi Blake. It is an extraordinarily rich and multi-layered experience with swashbuckling cultivars and zingy colours in informal beds creating great richness of form and texture. In contrast, the nearby woodland glade is an oasis of meditative calm. After tea we continue down the hill to **Tinode**, to visit June Blake, Jimi’s equally talented sister, where her garden is set out amidst winding bark paths with stands of mature beech trees all about. June grows and trials perennials, shade loving plants and ornamental grasses with incredible flair. We return to the hotel and a free evening. There will be a transfer into and back from Dublin tonight.

Day 5: Thursday 7 June – **Birr Castle** is the seat of the Earl and Countess of Rosse, who will host our day spent exploring their magnificent house and garden. The Parsons family have lived at Birr for over four hundred years and their home is a treasure trove of wonderful contents. However, the surrounding landscape garden is world famous as it contains Ireland’s most important collection of trees and flowering shrubs. We have coffee on arrival, spend the morning in the garden, lunch in the State Dining Room followed by a leisurely tour of the Castle’s State Rooms. We return to Barberstown and our final group dinner later that evening.

Day 6: Friday 8 June – Our last morning will be spent at the just restored and rehung **National Gallery of Ireland**. Indeed, here is a collection that truly ‘punches above its weight’! All the major European schools are well represented and there are masterpieces by Caravaggio, Vermeer, the Dutch landscape school, Velazquez, and a magnificent selection of both British and Irish pictures from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We then have some free time for a final lunch in Dublin, not included, after which we drive out to visit the most unusual building we shall see, **The Casino at Marino**. This is not a gambling den but a witty piece of architectural *trompe l’oeil*, designed by Sir William Chambers for his great Irish patron, James Caulfield, the first Earl of Charlemont, in the new Neo-classical style then sweeping Europe. We continue to nearby Dublin Airport for our early evening return flight to Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £1935 **Deposit** £275 **Price without flights** £1770

Single Supplement £195 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at the 4* Barberstown Castle

Flights Aer Lingus Outward: **EI155** Departs London Heathrow **0950** (Terminal 2) arrive Dublin **1115**
Return: **EI178** Departs Dublin **1800** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 2) **1920**

Price includes 3 dinners & 2 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Tom Duncan

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 2 dinners & 4 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

