

Great Country Houses & Gardens of  
Northern Ireland  
April 29- May 6, 2018

Sponsored by  
The Institute of Classical Architecture & Classical America

**Arranged by Classical Excursions**

Inspired by the architecture of Inigo Jones, who was the first to establish the Palladian style in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, followed by Lord Burlington, William Kent, Colen Campbell and other early 18<sup>th</sup> century English architects, Ireland at the same time developed its own dramatic Palladian movement starting with the new façade for the country house.

Over the past several years a bright new political and economic era has been ushered into Northern Ireland and the glorious country houses of the province are an architecturally classical heritage to be discovered. This exclusive tour will include a stay at the privately owned Ballywalter Park, an Italianate Palazzo built in 1846 and now the family home of Lord Dunleath, along with a three-night stay at the privately owned Belle Isle Castle, home of Lord Nicholas Hamilton.

This exclusive tour is led by Lani Summerville of Classical Excursions, who has organized five previous tours to Northern Ireland, along with Mark Donnelly.

**TOUR HIGHLIGHTS**

**\*A private tour and lunch at Seaforde House and gardens** hosted by the owner Lady Anthea Forde, elder sister to the present Earl of Belmore and brought up at Castle Coole. The house was redesigned in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and contains magnificent Greek-revival interiors. The house is not open to the public and is rarely seen. The renowned gardens containing rare specimen plants and trees from around the world, as well as a maze are open to the public, however we will have a private tour with the owners.

**\*Mount Stewart**, Newtownards, County Down: Originally built in 1804 and later extended, the first architect was George Dance, the teacher of Sir John Soane. Filled with magnificent antiques, the Regency-styled house contains 22 chairs used at the Congress of Vienna (1815) and given to Mt. Stewart's owner, Lord Castlereagh, British Foreign Secretary and member of the Londonderry family. Mt. Stewart's gardens cover 80 acres and are considered the most complete in Ireland, thriving in the area's subtropical microclimate. Overlooking Strangford Lough is the exquisite small banqueting pavilion inspired by the Temple of the Winds in Athens. Our visit includes cocktails with **Lady Rose Lauritzen in her private apartments** at Mount Stewart with a private tour of her personal gardens.

**\*Florence Court**, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh: An important Irish Georgian mansion, it was named after Lady Florence Cole, the wife of Sir John Cole, the owner who probably had built around 1730 the finally proportioned center block of the house. A later generation

in the 1760s added flanking arcaded wings with end pavilions. The vigorous treatment of the exterior is repeated in the interior. Lavish Rococo plaster decoration is featured which was painstakingly restored after a fire in 1955. The Venetian Room, staircase and dining room have the most elaborate plasterwork. The house is filled with 18<sup>th</sup>-century Irish furniture.

\***Castle Coole**, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh: Considered the finest Neo-classical country house in Ireland, it nearly bankrupted its owner, Armar Lowry-Corry, Earl of Belmore, in his attempt in the 1790s to outdo his brother-in-law and neighbor, the Earl of Enniskillen, at Florence Court. The quality of the Portland stone masonry is exceptional, with the design on all four sides of equal perfection. It continues inside, with harmonious unity and balance in the joinery and plasterwork. The final plans were executed by the English architect, James Wyatt. The plasterer was Joseph Rose, who had been hired by Robert Adam to work at Syon House and Harewood House in England. Another glory of Castle Coole is that almost all of the Regency furniture is original and still in place. Our tour is hosted by Lord Belmore who will show us the original Wyatt drawings from his personal collection.

\*A three-night stay at the privately owned **Ballywalter Park**, hosted by Lord Dunleath. Built in 1846 for Andrew Mullholland (whose son became the first Lord Dunleath) and designed by the prominent Belfast architect, Sir Charles Lanyon, the house is the best-preserved example of the Italianate palazzo style in Ireland.

\*A private visit and tea at **Barons Court**, hosted by His Grace, Duke of Abercorn. The house was started in 1779 by the architect George Steuart (who also designed Attingham Hall in Shropshire 1783). Later architects involved in redesigning and completing Barons Court were John Soane and Richard and William Morrison. The result was a powerful seven-bay house with a rotunda located in the heart of the building. The main pediment contains the family coat of arms. The interiors range from the classical coffered rotunda encircled by a ring of Ionic columns to a typical Morrisonian library redecorated by the prominent English decorator, David Hicks.

\*A three-night stay at **Belle Isle Castle**, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and currently owned by the Duke of Abercorn for his son Lord Nicholas Hamilton to reside in.

\*A private tour and luncheon at **Grey Abbey**, the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Montgomery. The Georgian house was built in 1762 and has continuously been occupied by the Montgomery family. We will also visit the lovely gardens.

\*Lunch and tour of the privately owned **Killyreagh house & gardens** with the owners Lord and Lady Anthony Hamilton, brother to the Duke of Abercorn.

\* A visit to the privately owned 18<sup>th</sup> century **Finnebrogue House**, which has been meticulously restored by the owner Noel Lamb.

The tour is limited to a small number of participants. Early registration is therefore suggested. Please contact Lani Summerville of Classical Excursions to register [lani@classicalexursions.com](mailto:lani@classicalexursions.com) or 413-446-8728.