



WILTON PARK



a WALKING GUIDE to the

# Writers & Artists of the Grand Canal

IPUT REAL ESTATE DUBLIN

Great things come from good places

Wilton Park, developed by IPUT Real Estate Dublin, is an inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable place that engages with the people that work, live, and socialise there. The historic home to some of Ireland's greatest literary figures, Wilton Park is a place to commemorate the area's unique cultural heritage.



wiltonparkdublin.com

## About IPUT Real Estate

Our company was established in 1967, and today we are one of the largest owners of commercial property in Dublin.

We are a socially and environmentally driven investor with a reputation for delivering the highest standards of design and placemaking. Our portfolio is one of the greenest in Europe as we continue to set the benchmark for sustainability in Ireland.

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## Follow our map to see what you may find...

1



### Mary Lavin Place

Starting out at a brand new square: Mary Lavin Place is the first public space in Ireland to be named for an Irish woman writer, and the location is fitting. A decorated short story writer, Mary Lavin was born in 1912, and her first collection *Tales From Bective Bridge*, published in 1942, won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. More awards followed and Lavin, who also wrote for the *New Yorker*, published novels, and was renowned for her warm spirit. While you are here, look up and check out James Earley's *Signs of Life*, a glass ceiling installation commissioned by IPUT for the new street leading to Lad Lane. Around the corner is the Wilton Park Studios, where artists selected by the Royal Hibernian Academy create their new works.

2



### Home of Mary Lavin, 11 Lad Lane

Mary Lavin Place links Wilton Park to Lad Lane where Lavin lived in a converted mews she had bought in the 1950s. Known for her sociable nature, Lavin held regular gatherings here for artists and academics, poets, diplomats, and friends. Guests included Colm Tóibín, Frank O'Connor, Elizabeth Bowen, Eavan Boland, Paul Durcan and Thomas Kilroy. Patrick Kavanagh snoozed on the sofa, as red wine and spaghetti bolognese fuelled conversations, facilitated introductions and, as writer Frank Phelan remarked, brought a sense of Paris to 1960s Dublin. Mary Lavin died in 1996.

3



### The Catacombs, 13 Fitzwilliam Place

From Lad Lane, take a short excursion to 13 Fitzwilliam Place. Today this elegant Georgian terrace is a model of sober probity, but back in the 1940s, the basement of No. 13 was as close as Dublin got to a den of literary iniquity. The Catacombs Club was run by Englishman, Dickie Wyman; and Brendan Behan, Patrick Kavanagh, JP Donleavy, Joan De Frenay and Anthony Cronin were regulars. Donleavy even featured the club in his novel, *The Gingerman*, and once through its doors, pretty much anything could – and did – go.

4



### Home of Jack Butler Yeats, 18 Fitzwilliam Square

Jack Butler Yeats and wife Cottie moved to 18 Fitzwilliam Square in 1929. Brother to the poet William, and to sisters Lily and Elizabeth, Yeats reached the same levels of acclaim. William may have won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923, but Jack won Ireland's first medal at the Olympics in 1924, back when there was a category for artistic representations of sport. His *Liffey Swim* won silver. You can see *Liffey Swim* in the National Gallery of Ireland, a short walk away on Merrion Square.

5



### Homes of Elizabeth Bowen and Brian O'Nolan, 15 and 25 Herbert Place

Turn right onto Baggot Street, inspiration for Thomas Kinsella's poem *Baggot Street Deserta*, and walk down to the Canal, then turn left to find the birthplace of Elizabeth Bowen at No 15 Herbert Place. Born in 1899, the award-winning writer immortalised her childhood here in her memoir *Seven Winters*. She was Booker-nominated for *Eva Trout*, and died in 1973. Then at No 25 see the former home of writer Brian O'Nolan, who wrote brilliantly under several pseudonyms, including as Flann O'Brien for his bicycle-related absurdist novel, *The Third Policeman*.

6



### The Waterloo and Searson's

Crossing the Canal, make your way to Baggot Street Upper, and discover two famous literary haunts. Searson's and the Waterloo were on Patrick Kavanagh's route, as he would go to meet Irish Times editor, R.M. Smyllie, hoping to get his poems published. With money in his pocket, he could buy a round for himself and fellow writer Brendan Behan. Their friendship was tempestuous enough to get the pair barred from Searson's on one occasion. The Waterloo was also a watering spot for Seamus Heaney from time to time.

7



### Parsons Bookshop

At Baggot Street Bridge, we find the site of the former Parsons Bookshop. Established in 1949, Parson's was at the heart of Baggotonia. Run by owner May O'Flaherty with Mary King, it was a meeting place as well as a bookshop, and was a regular haunt of Lavin, Kavanagh, Tóibín, Brendan Behan, Liam O'Flaherty, Frank O'Connor and Seamus Heaney. Parsons shut its doors for the final time in 1989, but its memory lives on in the stories of literary Dublin.

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### Patrick Kavanagh Bench

Now, walk east along the canal to find the Patrick Kavanagh bench. The statue was erected by the poet's friends in 1968 to celebrate his *Lines written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin*, which begins so memorably: "O commemorate me where there is water / canal water preferably, so stilly / greeny at the heart of summer."



9



### The Grand Canal

Take your time on The Grand Canal, accompanied by the words of Brendan Kennelly, whose poem *Begin* was inspired by a morning walk here: "Begin again to the summoning birds / to the sight of the light at the window, / begin to the roar of morning traffic / all along Pembroke Road." Multi-award winning during his lifetime, Kennelly, who died in 2021 also inspired generations of students, writers and poets, in his role as a Professor at Trinity College Dublin.

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### Wilton Park

We conclude our walk at Wilton Park, where exhibitions and events take place throughout the year in the recently restored park. Look across to the elegant row of Edwardian houses to the east at Wilton Place, where Liam O'Flaherty, short story writer, lived in a flat kept by his partner, Kitty Tailor. In the Park itself, check out Eilís O'Connell's sculpture. *Dipping the Other Wing* was commissioned by IPUT in memory of the writer Mary Lavin.

# A walk in Baggotonia

Follow Dublin's literary footsteps along the Grand Canal, with some artworks along the way.

Is there something in the water? The stretch of the city at Wilton Park, along and around the banks of Dublin's Grand Canal has seen such a concentration of writers, poets, artists and thinkers, it is something of a wonder. Inspiring the likes of Mary Lavin, Patrick Kavanagh, Elizabeth Bowen, Maeve Binchy, JP Donleavy and more, it almost seems as if fresh ideas and well turned phrases may be waiting around every corner. The area is known as Baggotonia and, like its fame, its catchment has spread. Lucien Freud had rooms on Baggot Street for a while, and George Bernard Shaw, Seamus Heaney and Samuel Beckett all spent time with these streets. Pamela Lyndon Travers wrote parts of her Mary Poppins series while living on Leeson Street, her friendship with WB Yeats having drawn her to the area. And of course there are the famous bars that continue to fuel poetic and other imaginations today!

As a vibrant and living part of the city, Baggotonia is constantly changing and evolving. IPUT Real Estate is committed to creating spaces for art and culture to thrive now and into the future.

We hope you enjoy your Walking Tour of Baggotonia. We would love you to come back and spend more time here soon.



## A guide to the Grand Canal's cultural heritage.

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