

Belvoir Park Forest



Trail Route

Before you begin the walk, pause to admire the views from the main car park, and then follow the main path downhill from the viewpoint. Take the second path on your left that passes the bottom of the steps up to the Norman motte **(1)**.

Continue along the path until you reach a junction. Take the path to your left which crosses a stream, then left again under the large pipe, following the course of the River Lagan. Along the way you will have good views across to Moreland's Meadow (Walk 14).

Continue on this path for some distance as it meanders alongside the river, with oak woodland **(2)** on your right. It eventually leaves the river and leads uphill through a Scots pine woodland.

Route description

This trail explores an historic estate in Lagan Valley Regional Park through mixed woodland on gravel paths, with some steep hills.

Distance

1.4 miles 2.3 km.

Average Time

45 - 55 mins.

Access

By bus - Metro Services: 78, 79.

By car - Car park off Belvoir Drive, signposted from A55 Outer Ring Road at Belvoir Road and Milltown Road.

Further along, the path runs adjacent to Belvoir golf course; soon you will see a low wall around a medieval graveyard **(3)** on your left.

From here take the path downhill, turning right through the arboretum **(4)**.

Cross the wooden bridge then turn right. Any of the paths on your left meander uphill towards the car park.

Things of Interest

Motte (1)

The Belvoir motte dates back to Norman times when John de Courcy invaded Ulster and set up settlements at Dundrum and Carrickfergus. This example was one of a defensive ring of mottes

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shielding the southern approaches to Carrickfergus. Just beyond the motte is an ice house, a common feature of 18th century houses. It was used for storing fresh foodstuffs such as meat.

Woodland (2)

Thirty-five species of birds have been recorded in the forest. These include common resident species such as blackbird, song thrush, robin and woodpigeon and more unusual species such as jay and long-eared owl.

Medieval Graveyard (3)

This private graveyard, which sadly has been heavily vandalised, dates

from the 14th century and holds the now empty tomb of the Dungannon family.

Arboretum (4)

Previous estate owners, the Dungannons and Batesons, planted many trees in this area. Today there are fine mature specimens of trees such as redwood and cedar.

History

In the early 18th century the Hill family settled at Belvoir, enclosed the estate and built a large house that stood on the site of the present car park. Arthur Hill-Trevor was created the first Viscount Dungannon in 1765. The family sold the estate in the early 19th century to the Batesons, whose son became Lord Deramore in 1885.

The Deramores returned to England at the end of the 19th century, leasing the estate to Walter H Wilson, a partner with Harland and Wolff. The last private tenant at Belvoir was Sir James Johnston, who was the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1917/18.

Look out for

- kingfishers from the riverside paths. These colourful birds fly fast and low over the water.
- red squirrels, which are best seen at the feeding station in the car park.