



*A white water alternative at Ballyconnell.*



*The concrete plant beyond Ballyconnell.*

increasingly complicated with loughs and channels which may or may not connect with each other although routes for powered craft are indicated on the water. Beyond Ardoohy there is a Bloody Pass route east to the River Erne.

The Crichton Tower stands on Gad Island in the middle of the channel as the River Erne is approached at Crom. By now any pretence at river is subsiding as Upper Lough Erne offers innumerable wider routes to explore.

It is dotted with islands covered in trees and surrounded by reeds. The water is clear despite the water level having been lowered in the 1950s for a hydroelectric scheme in Belleek. A Special Area of Conservation, it has bream, perch, pike and trout. Canoeing is one of the most popular activities, others including rowing, windsurfing, sailing, powerboating, water skiing and angling with a Lough Erne Canoe Trail from here. In the 15th century the Maguires had a private navy of 1,500 dugout canoes on the lough. Canoe hire is available today. A boathouse was the headquarters of the Lough Erne Yacht Club from the late 19th century with racing yachts here.

There are the remains of Crom Old Castle with two towers and a ha-ha. Built in 1611, it survived Jacobite sieges, only to be burnt down in a dramatic fire in 1746. A new castle of 1840 stands beyond. The estate has 8km<sup>2</sup> of oak woodlands, the most extensive area of natural woodland in Northern Ireland, and two yew trees thought to be among the oldest in Ireland, in excess of eight centuries. There are rare orchids, sedges, lichens, the largest heronry in Ireland, long eared owls, curlews, spotted flycatchers, coots, red squirrels, rabbits, pine martens, fallow deer, rare butterflies and all nine of the species of bat found in Northern Ireland. It is one of Ireland's most important conservation areas and also has a sculpture trail and an art workshop.

It may be possible to land at Crom, owned by the National Trust. Across the water there is a slipway with a gated track leading down from next to the church. Further along at Derryvore there is a Waterways Ireland jetty with parking, approached down a gated track through sheep fields.