



A guide to My Belfast



My

Belfast



The best way to get to know a city is through a little local knowledge. So, we asked a selection of well-known people with strong connections to Belfast to reveal what makes the city special to them. What are their fondest memories of Belfast? What are their favourite attractions, areas, parks, pubs, arts venues, cafés and restaurants? What is their favourite Belfast activity and what do they most enjoy about life here? We've asked leading figures from the worlds of sport, the arts and the media to share their secrets with visitors to Belfast to help build an intimate and revealing picture of a remarkable city.

We hope the insights contained in this brochure will enhance your enjoyment of Belfast so that you too will have fond memories of a special city.

# Welcome to our Belfast

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Cyprus Avenue

CYPRUS  
AVENUE

## Stuart Bailie



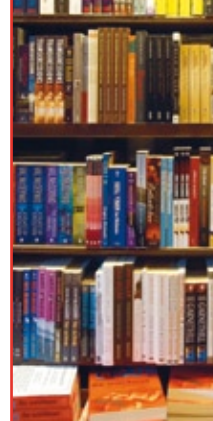
An influential journalist and broadcaster, Stuart is based in Belfast, where his BBC Radio Ulster show has welcomed guests such as Radiohead, REM, Snow Patrol and Brian Wilson. A musician himself, Stuart played in several bands in Belfast. Moving to London he worked as a journalist on the New Musical Express, becoming Assistant Editor between 1993 and 1996. He works as a freelance journalist, contributing to Mojo, Q and Hot Press among others, and wrote the authorised biography of Thin Lizzy, 'The Ballad Of The Thin Man', in 1997. He currently provides the editorial content for BBC Radio Ulster's 'Across The Line' website.



Cyprus Avenue is the place in Belfast that I value most. It's close to the old industrial heart of the east, but the style is completely different. Sometime in the 19th century, an unknown developer planted scores of trees, planning a wide boulevard even before the big houses were built. He imagined a future when the trees would be fully grown, when the view would be spectacular. And he was right. It's especially stunning in the autumn, but every season reveals something here. It's a short walk from Van Morrison's birthplace at Hyndford Street, and he loved the space and the stillness enough to write the song 'Cyprus Avenue'. But even without this reference, it would be a majestic sight. In my mind, there's some kind of ley line that connects CS Lewis, Narnia and Cyprus Avenue. There's magic running through it all.

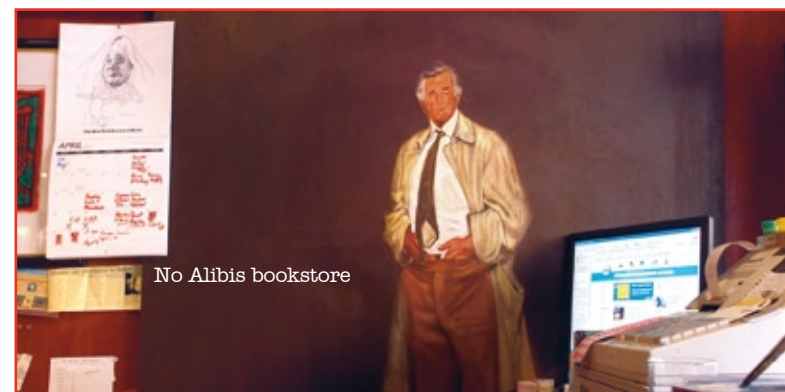


C S Lewis statue



## Colin Bateman

Colin was born in Newtownards in County Down in 1962 but grew up in Bangor, where he attended Ballyholme Primary School and Bangor Grammar School. After leaving school he worked as a reporter on a local newspaper, which he believes was the perfect training for a writer. He wrote the acclaimed 'Divorcing Jack' in his spare time and, after numerous rejections, it was published by Harper Collins in 1995. He has written 14 novels since then and has had three screenplays filmed, 'Divorcing Jack', 'Cycle of Violence' (his second novel) and 'Wild About Harry'. His television credits include the BBC series 'Murphy's Law'.



No Alibis bookstore

'No Alibis', the Botanic Avenue bookstore which specialises in mystery and crime, opened its doors nearly ten years ago. I was the first author to do a public reading there and I've been back almost every year since. It's where I launch every new novel. In these times of huge supermarket chains which all look identical and the impersonal internet, it's nice to find somewhere that's like a home from home - every customer is welcomed with a cup of coffee and a chat by owner David Torrance, and authors visit from all over the world to give readings ...or just to have a bit of a gossip! David has lately taken to hosting musical evenings with some of the finest artists in the country performing. It's like having your own private members' club. I've actually been so inspired by this place that I've written a short story set in the store called 'The Case of Mrs Geary's Leather Trousers' featuring a book shop owner turned private detective!

## Kenneth Branagh



Born in Belfast, Kenneth was educated at Grove Primary School. Though his family left for England when he was nine, his first great success as an actor was as the title character in a BBC television production of Graham Reid's acclaimed 'Billy' plays, set in Belfast. Since then he has won worldwide fame, and Oscar nominations, as an actor and director. He is probably best known for his film adaptations of the works of William Shakespeare, beginning with 'Henry V' in 1989 and followed with 'Hamlet', 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'Othello', 'Love's Labour's Lost' and 'As You Like It'.



## Simon Callow CBE

The British actor, author and director, Simon Callow CBE, studied at Queen's University, Belfast, then trained as an actor in London. He joined the National Theatre in 1979, where he created the role of Mozart

in Peter Shaffer's 'Amadeus'. While still at the NT, he gave a one-man performance of all of Shakespeare's sonnets – a show that he has subsequently toured internationally. As well as numerous theatrical roles, he has appeared in many films and TV dramas, including 'A Room with a View', 'Four Weddings and a Funeral', 'Shakespeare in Love' and 'Dr Who'. He directed the film of 'The Ballad of the Sad Café', among others. His many one-man shows include his famous 'The Mystery of Charles Dickens' which had its world premiere at Campbell College, Belfast. He has also written several acclaimed biographies.



Belfast Castle



Napoleon's Nose



Fashion show, 1970s

I was born in Belfast and lived there with my family until I was nine years old. The city I remember growing up in seemed to be full of parks. The nearest to our house and my favourite, was Alexandra Park. It's still there today, and still divided in two, between the more formal northern part with lawns, flower beds and bowling green, and the southern part, which is more of a glen. I loved this slightly wilder part, which constituted the more interesting part of my daily walk to and from the Grove Primary School.

In the evenings, and at the weekends, it was where my friends and I played football and tried to catch tiny fish and gather frogspawn. Today the wildlife in this part of the park is sufficiently interesting for a conservation area to be planned. Bird spotters should look out for the dippers. Just a walk away, across the

Antrim and Cavehill roads, is the Waterworks, an even bigger park, where as the name suggests, there is plenty of water. This park provided a childhood playground for my father, who sailed his first paper boats here. Then there's Dunmore, and Grove Park Gardens, and many more.

As children, we walked everywhere, and where sensible, I would encourage visitors to do the same thing. Aside from the parks in this tiny part of north Belfast, there are so many places to explore on foot, and the obvious ones are no bad place to start. Belfast Castle, for instance, and the favourite of many, 'Napoleon's Nose' – the great Cave Hill itself.

Enjoy your Belfast!

Belfast was a shock in many ways to someone who arrived from London in 1968 – the London of shops like Mary Quant, I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet, and Biba - that was briefly the capital of style and sex. Belfast, on first encounter, was grey, net-curtained, uptight, with it seemed, a church on every block. Setting foot in it was like stepping out of a time machine into a Britain of half a century earlier.

My destination was Queen's University, and that is where I spent most of my time, acting, drinking, making firm friendships, occasionally even attending lectures. Slowly, I began to venture outside of the campus and into the mirrored pubs where a different Belfast was evident – witty, convivial, sometimes rough but warm-hearted and full of ripe characters. Then I got to know the city centre – not beautiful,

but not without nobility either, of a formal civic kind – the great markets, then the winding Lagan and the still busy and majestic docks.

Then, after nine months, I was gone – ran away to become an actor. I came back as soon as I could, at the height of the bombing, and again and again over the years, and watched its face change almost out of recognition till it finally stepped out of the shadow of both Dublin and London and became a great European city in its own right, almost a beauty. But if its face has changed, its identity hasn't – it's still witty, captious, cussed, tenacious and defiant, which is of course why one still keeps coming back.



## Barry Douglas

An internationally renowned musician and conductor, Barry was born in 1960 in Belfast, where he attended Methodist College. He first studied music in his native city. Among his many awards he became the first non-Russian for many years to win a gold medal at the prestigious Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow in 1986. Barry has performed with every major international orchestra and collaborated with conductors such as Ashkenazy, Davis, Previn and Rostropovich. He received an OBE in 2002 for services to music and holds an honorary doctorate from Queen's University, Belfast.

“ You can get a feel of the whole panorama of Belfast from a height. Being partly surrounded by hills enables the admirer to embrace the whole city in one go. As a child I loved books on architecture and my favourite photos were of downtown Manhattan. I got excited if I could get a vantage point above my city that gave the feeling of a thriving and impressive metropolis as well.



Ashby skyscraper

© Queens Image bank

I would gaze for hours at the Union Building beside the Albert Clock or the white Queen's University 'skyscraper' on the Stranmillis Road.

Positioning myself at Belfast Castle and peering down on Belfast Lough at the ships arriving from Liverpool or Heysham excited me. Better still was driving down the M2 and being dazzled with the view of Belfast port. But, the best way to catch Belfast in all its beauty and roughness and strength was from Knock. I would be returning with my parents from visiting relatives in the undulating hills above and the descent into the city always made me gasp with admiration. My city had tall buildings, giant cranes, a downtown, parks, an estuary, highways, noise, smoke and purpose. This was a picture worthy of any book. And the view just gets better!



Ann Street, mid 1980's

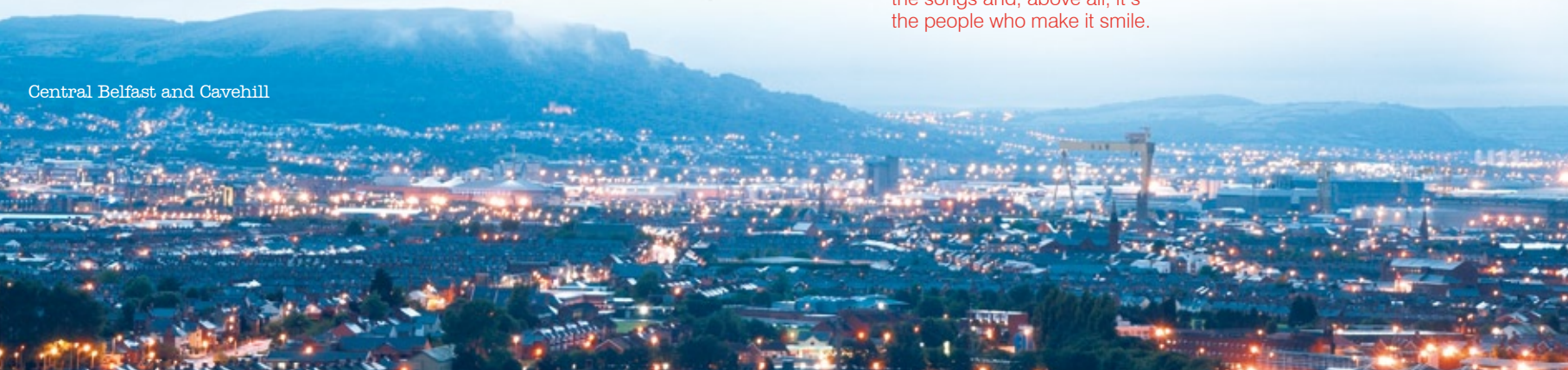
“ My Belfast is the world's biggest village. It's not that everybody knows each other in this city – it's just that it often feels that way. It's the walk along Royal Avenue or Ann Street where you cannot help but bump into someone you know. It's the fact that you have to forget whatever it was you were supposed to be doing because a conversation becomes absolutely necessary - a few wisecracks about anything from football and the weather to politics. My Belfast begins with the view from the hill on the M2 motorway near Glengormley, where the city and Belfast Lough are on full display. It's the shipyard cranes and City Hall, the Linenhall Library, and the places I used to work – the Belfast Telegraph building and the BBC. It's also the places for after work – McGlade's bar near the Tele building, and the smell of a pint of stout with oysters in the Crown Liquor Saloon on Great Victoria Street. My Belfast is the faces and the stories and the songs and, above all, it's the people who make it smile.

A presenter on the BBC TV Newsnight programme, as well as on BBC World, Gavin is also an author of three novels and an account of the United States during the Clinton years, 'The United States of Anger'. He has strong family connections with Belfast and has lived in and around the city on and off since he was a teenager. His first job as a journalist was on the Belfast Telegraph, and then with the BBC in Northern Ireland during many of the worst years of the Troubles.

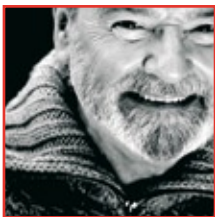
## Gavin Esler



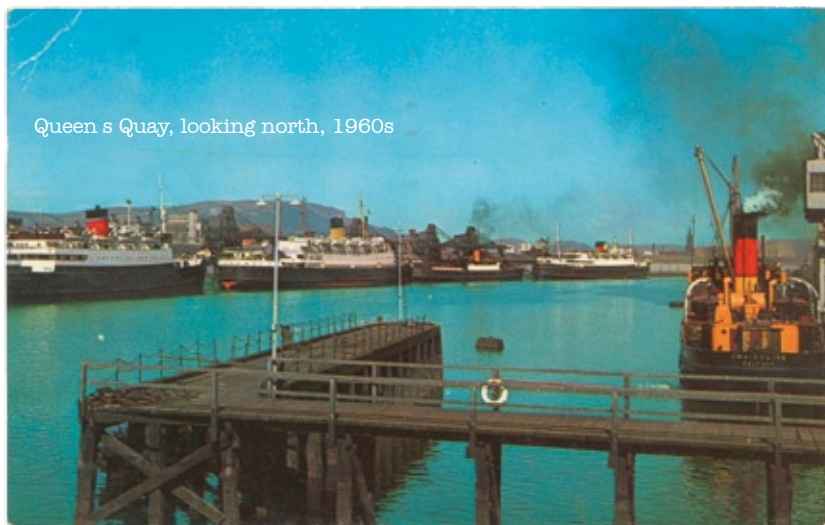
Central Belfast and Cavehill



## Sir James Galway



'The Man with the Golden Flute' was born in Belfast in 1939. He began playing the penny whistle as a small child before switching to the flute. He continued his studies at the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, followed by the Paris Conservatory. After several positions in prestigious orchestras, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, he launched his solo career in 1975 and is now acknowledged as one of the world's finest classical flautists. Among numerous awards and honours, he received an OBE in 1979 and was knighted for services to music in 2001.



Queen's Quay, looking north, 1960s

“ Growing up in Belfast gave me an education which set me on the road to a successful life. I don't mean Mountcollyer or Saint Paul's schools, but the city itself. There were many parks where we played after school and at the weekends, including the Waterworks where we would go and sail our little boats on its reservoir. It has a beautiful park attached to it as well, which I only came to appreciate later in life.

There was Alexander Park, just next to Mountcollyer School, which we crossed over once a week to go and play soccer and hockey in the Grove, another park with facilities for us to play games and a round of golf.

Then there was York Street Station, the Fire Station in Whitla Street, the docks and the shipyards. We would spend hours exploring these wonderful

places and being chased from them! I also remember the bands, both flute and general, in which I learned to play.

There were also many local orchestras where I learned the business as a youngster of 13 and which provided a good foundation for my career. The town has a very good opera house, the Grand Opera House, and wonderful places of entertainment like the Waterfront Hall, as well as many community theatres where you can see up and coming acting talent. Indeed for the modern visitor there is a lot to do and see in and around Belfast. For me Belfast was a wonderful place to grow up in and is a great place to visit. It is always a pleasure for me to visit and refresh the memories of my youth.



Belfast Castle

Ciarán began his career at The Glasgow Citizens Theatre. He has worked at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast, the Druid Theatre in Galway and at the Gate and Abbey Theatres in Dublin. He has also played leading roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre. His many television appearances include: 'Rome', 'The Mayor Of Casterbridge', 'Jane Eyre', 'Prime Suspect Three' and 'Persuasion'. Film credits include: 'Circle Of Friends', 'Titanic Town', 'The Road To Perdition', 'Jonjo Mickybo', 'Calendar Girls', 'Lara Croft', 'Veronica Guerin', 'The Phantom Of The Opera', 'Miami Vice' and 'Munich'.

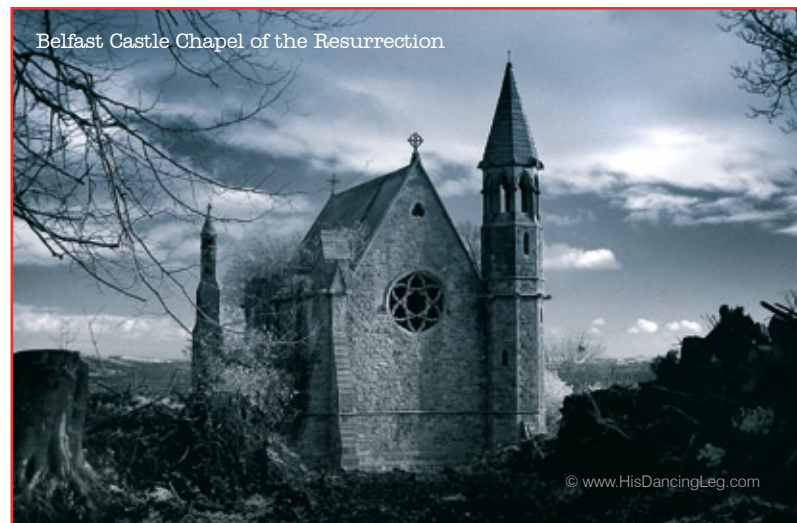
“ I grew up in North Belfast in the 1950's and 60's, which I remember now as a time of innocence, invention and imagination. The Waterworks on the Cavehill Road provided us with a great arena to indulge many pastimes, whether it was sailing homemade model yachts on the reservoir, playing whatever sport we had in mind - ranging from international cricket to Gaelic football via wheelbarrow racing - or picking off imagined hordes of Red Indians or Japanese soldiers

## Ciaran Hinds



who were advancing over the brow of the Cavehill Mountain high above us. The Cavehill provided us with many bicycle paths and cowboy trails; most school holidays Mitch Campbell, Joe McAuley and myself could be found up there, either in the bluebell woods that my Grandfather Gibson first introduced me to, or even higher up on the rocky incline known as Napoleon's Nose - we favoured the left nostril, as I remember.

The Cavehill Road turns into the Limestone Road where I attended Holy Family Primary School, and just behind it, in Newington Street, lived the woman who was to have a profound influence on my life, the remarkable Patricia Mulholland, who, from the 1940's to the 1980's, taught generation after generation the beauty of Irish dancing with patience, skill and supreme elegance.



Belfast Castle Chapel of the Resurrection



“ It is the place of the smells, noises and emotions of my childhood. I lived in the east - under the shadows of Samson and Goliath, the giant cranes at Harland & Wolff, the legend of Titanic and the gaze of Stormont.

My grandfather had a vintage car and we would go driving on a Sunday afternoon. We would arrive in grand style at the gates of Stormont, he in his driving hat and me in my best frock. Then there was the walk up the 'Royal Mile', the sweeping driveway to the front steps. It was probably the first measurement I ever truly understood after walking it a few times on very young legs.

Belfast for me is familiar and comfortable and yet never fails to surprise and excite. There is an energy and enthusiasm rarely matched anywhere else I have been in the world. "No problem" is the most used phrase you will hear – nothing is ever any trouble.

I have to confess I don't like Guinness (apart from the creamy head which I steal from my friends' pints) and I don't like whiskey (so all my Irish coffees have to be brandy coffees). But, I absolutely love potato bread (especially if it is potato-apple where pureed

apples have been put in the middle), and wheaton bread, and soda bread.....

I usually leave on an early evening flight, the sun setting as the plane swoops over the city of my birth. I know I will be back.

## Maxine Mawhinney



Now a leading presenter with BBC News 24, Maxine trained as a newspaper journalist in her native Northern Ireland, before working on radio and television for BBC Northern Ireland in Belfast. Since then she has worked for Ulster Television, ITN in London and Sky News, for whom she was their Ireland Correspondent. She was the Washington Correspondent for GMTV between 1992 and 1996, after which she returned to London and the BBC, initially with BBC World, then with BBC News 24. Maxine is married and has two daughters.

“



They were filming in our area the other day; a true World War Two story, starring Shirley Maclaine, about an American plane that crashed into the Cave Hill, and they found the pilot's ring. I bumped into three uniformed heroes and a permed, short-skirted officer out of the 1940's. They were filming here because some trees and windows and corners have not changed since Victorian times, never mind the Blitz. Despite the nearby rumble of the motorway there is an air of old-fashioned peace.

Because of the 30-year Troubles we are less built-up than other major cities. You still hear birdsong here, as I am told you no longer can in Manchester. At night from Belfast Castle, where I have been recently practising endless three-point turns and left-hand reverses for driving tests, the sense of a warm and vibrant community life in the lights below is widespread and consoling. At dawn, the massive ferries arriving and departing regally cleave Belfast Lough and bring with them a steady awareness of connection to the outside world and its commerce.

My Belfast is timeless, though the tobacco factory at Gallahers has become a leisure centre and the Capitol cinema where we held sticky hands is now a Tesco store. I rejoice that poets like Helen Waddell and Eithne Carbery walked here, while Leontia Flynn now dwells, however precariously, in a terrace house with an unexpected backyard, infamous as the scene of a gothic murder that everyone remembers and someone has just made into a book.



## Medbh McGuckian

Medbh was born in Belfast in 1950 and educated at a Dominican convent and Queen's University. She has worked as a teacher and editor and was Writer in Residence at Queen's University for several years. An acclaimed poet and writer, she has published several anthologies of poetry since her first publications in 1980, 'Single Ladies: Sixteen Poems' and 'Portrait of Joanna'. Her first major collection, 'The Flower Master' (1982), which explores post-natal breakdown, was awarded a Rooney prize for Irish Literature. Among other awards she won the 1989 Cheltenham Prize for her collection, 'On Ballycastle Beach'. Her latest collection is 'The Book of the Angel'.



## Barry McGuigan MBE



Also known as the 'The Clones Cyclone', Barry was born just across the border in the Republic of Ireland but fought as a British boxer and became a sporting hero to the people of Northern Ireland. He started boxing at

an early age and won the All-Ireland Amateur championship in 1976. He won international fame as an amateur with his gold medal at the Commonwealth Games of 1978. He fought as a featherweight after turning professional and won the WBA Championship in 1985, beating Eusebio Pedroza before 25,000 people at the Queen's Park Rangers football stadium. Over 20 million watched it on television. His triumphant return to Belfast, where he fought many of his bouts, was one of the city's greatest sporting moments.



Cafe Vaudeville

Katie Melua was born in Georgia (in the former USSR) in 1984. The family moved to Belfast, where her heart surgeon father was offered a post, when she was eight. The family lived in Belfast for five years before moving to London. Her singing career took off after she graduated from the Brit School for Performing Arts and teamed up with composer and producer Mike Batt. Her first hit single, in 2003, was 'The Closest Thing To Crazy'. Her two albums, 'Call Off the Search' and 'Piece by Piece' have sold a total of more than 5 million albums worldwide and she has won numerous music awards.

Barry McGuigan V Terry Pizzaro, The Ulster Hall, 1981



I won my first Ulster Senior Title at the Ulster Hall, which was built in 1862. I won the British Title there in April 1983, defended the British and European Titles there in December 1984, and really built up my following as a professional in that beautiful old hall. I loved boxing there because it was so atmospheric and because of its long narrow shape and where the ring was placed, it almost felt like the fans in the balcony were in the ring with me.

The King's Hall in Balmoral was not so claustrophobic but it equalled any atmosphere that you were likely to get in any passion-filled arena in the world. What a place to fight. I won the European Title there in November 1983, stopping a tough Italian called Valerio Nati in seven rounds. I fought several more fights there and

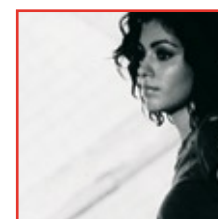
each time the noise seemed to get louder, culminating in my first defence of the World Title in September 1985 when I stopped the number one contender, Bernard Taylor from the US. The fans nearly lifted the roof off that night. It was magical and I'll never forget it.

The most majestic of all these stunning buildings and the one in the forefront of my mind is, of course, the delectable Belfast City Hall, which welcomed me home after winning the World Title on Monday 10th June, 1985. By the time our cavalcade started to roll down High Street 75,000 people were there to welcome me home. It was an incredible day I shall remember forever and I always think of Belfast as my spiritual home.



I moved to Belfast when I was eight and my first school was St Catherine's Primary School on the Falls Road. It was my first Western school after moving from Georgia in the USSR. When I was 11, I went to the Dominican College in Fort William, where I stayed for three years and completed my Key Stage Three. I made great friends at both schools.

We lived in a tower block on the Broadway Road, near the Royal Victoria Hospital. I love the people of Belfast, they are so warm and kind. It is a great place and it inspired me to write one of my first songs, called 'Penguins And Cats'. I recently went back there to see some friends of mine and we went to Café Vaudeville, which is a really funky, cool place to chill with friends.



## Katie Melua

*I've got a ticket to the fast city,  
where the bells don't really ring,  
getting off the plane the cold air  
rushes like bullets through my brain.  
And I'm divided between penguins and  
cats,  
but it's not about what animal you've got,  
it's about being able to fly  
it's about dying nine times.  
Walked on Broadway, going up to Falls,  
where the old man I used to know,  
the paintings on the walls of release  
are colourful but they are no Matisse.  
And I'm divided between penguins and  
cats,  
but it's not about what animal you've got,  
it's about being able to fly  
it's about dying nine times.*

"Belfast (Penguins and Cats)" 2003



Broadway apartments



One of the most popular presenters in British radio, Stephen was born in Belfast in 1973 and was educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and Queen's University. He won early fame with BBC Northern Ireland as a radio and television presenter and has been presenting an award-winning show on BBC Radio Five Live since 2005. He also presents a show for Radio Ulster. Known for his cheeky sense of humour and straight talking style, he was UK Speech Broadcaster of the Year 2003 and Royal Television Society Regional Presenter of the Year in 2005 and 2006.



## Stephen Nolan

“ A building which stands proudly in Belfast city centre completely transformed my life. The Royal Belfast Academical Institution, or 'Inst' for short, is quite simply an astonishing example of how a school is so much more than just a place to learn. I was born on the Ballygomartin Road, not too far away from the Shankill Road and when I reached secondary school age, I was determined to go to the Boys' Model school with the rest of my mates. Why? Simple. They wore white socks, played football and I thought I'd blend in with my hard man accent and tipped hair.

Of course, the Boys Model was a great school, but my parents had other thoughts and so I was dragged, kicking and screaming, to Inst. I was nearly sick at the thought of wearing

black socks (only toffs did that!) and rugby was for snobs. I'll never forget walking through those huge front doors for the first time, to enter a massive centre square called 'the quad' and the towering Assembly Hall straight ahead. The classrooms were old, the desks engraved with names of pupils who were now grandfathers, but even as an 11-year-old boy I quickly knew I had found my true home. I met people from the Malone Road for the first time, I picked up my first rugby ball within weeks and slowly threw the white socks into the uncool pile. I was starting to be moulded into the man I would become. Inst is an incredible place. It somehow instils a sense of pride and enthusiasm into every pupil, nurturing personality and creating an infectious desire to be a winner. It is a special place, set right in the heart of a special city.

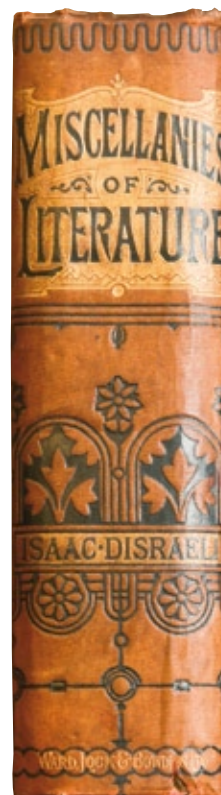
One of the foremost novelists to emerge from Northern Ireland, Glenn was born in Belfast in 1961 and studied Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of seven novels: 'Burning Your Own' (1988), winner of a Betty Trask Award and the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, 'Fat Lad' (1992), 'Black Night at Big Thunder Mountain' (1995), 'The International' (1999), 'Number 5' (2003), 'That Which Was' (2004), and, most recently, 'The Third Party' (2007). A collection of his journalism, 'Lapsed Protestant', was published in 2006. He teaches Creative Writing at Queen's University Belfast and edits the Ulster Tatler's Literary Miscellany.



## Glenn Patterson

and into its Super-Ser-warmth > there was no competition so far as I was concerned. In an era of franchises and identikit coffee houses, Bookfinders Café is one of a kind. A gallery on occasions, it is a regular venue for poetry readings as well as an ad-hoc information centre on literary events elsewhere in the city. It is also very conveniently directly opposite the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, where I teach Creative Writing. Actually before the Heaney Centre opened, relieving the pressure on space in the School of English, Bookfinders was more or less home to me and my Creative Writing colleagues. We still conduct many of our meetings there. And I still go there before most afternoon classes, to read, to sup soup and nourish mind and body.

“ There possibly are things in the world more beneficial for the study and writing of literature than Mary Denvir's lentil soup, but for the life of me I can't imagine what they might be. I'm not sure when exactly Mary's second-hand bookshop, Bookfinders, grew a café at the rear (then again these days I'm not always sure exactly how old I am), but from the moment I ventured past the Irish section, past the cabinet containing the signed first editions,



Bookfinders Cafe



Royal Belfast Academical Institution Library



Floral Hall, Belfast Zoo, 1960s

PHOTO COURTESY MICHAEL DONNAD

## Nick Ross



Born in 1947, Nick came to Belfast as a student to read psychology at Queen's University Belfast, where the Nobel-Laureate Seamus Heaney was among his teachers. He graduated with a BA (Hons) and later became a Doctor of the University. He remained in Northern Ireland for several years, reporting on the Troubles for the BBC. Since then he has become one of the best known broadcasters in the United Kingdom, covering news, current affairs, politics and crime. He is perhaps best known today for presenting the BBC programme, Crimewatch.

some of the best watering holes in the world it now has seriously fine restaurants, great cultural centres and a bustling nightlife.

The fabric of the city is incomparably improved since I first arrived there – but the place that for me became home, around Queen's University, is more or less unchanged. The whole campus district around University Road, College Green and University Square still has a classic, slightly battered, academic elegance. Beyond, you can cruise up Malone Road past university departments and into the posh suburbs.

But if you're visiting Belfast soak up its troubled history too. Unlike Chicago which tries to bury its Prohibition past, this town still bears defiant hints of what happened in the 1970s and 80s: tribal murals and territorial markings, and a Peace Line standing sentinel between two halves of the city. Travel west as I did every day up the hill to see my girlfriend in Ballymurphy, now rather more dapper than it was back then with its barricades; or head out towards the shipyards, still framed by the great Samson and Goliath cranes, where other friends lived, in more sense than one, on the other side of town. Belfast is buzzing; and beyond the city is one of the most beautiful provinces in Europe.

Mary moved to Ballymena in County Antrim with her family when she was 11 years old and Northern Ireland has been her home ever since. Mary lives in Belfast, although she has spent most of her life travelling the world, competing or working. She has been an inspiration to people throughout Northern Ireland, her sporting triumphs helping to bring them together during the Troubles. Now renowned as an ambassador for sport, Mary achieved international fame when she won the gold medal in the Pentathlon in the 1972 Olympic Games.



## Dame Mary Peters

City of Belfast Mary Peter's Track) and to this day I enjoy visiting the Lagan Towpath, the rose gardens at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park or even playing a round of golf at Malone Golf Club. Finally, a trip to Belfast would not be complete without visiting the beautiful Lanyon building at Queen's University where I received an honorary doctorate in 1998.

My first memory of Belfast was visiting my father who worked in the city and stayed in a B&B on the Antrim Road opposite Alexandra Park. The Liverpool boat would make its way up Belfast Lough and on the right I could see the magnificent Cave Hill and Belfast Castle and later I would get the opportunity to visit Belfast Zoo.

As a student in 1958 I attended Belfast Tech and had digs on the Antrim Road. The Waterworks off the Antrim Road became a natural area to train and run and I also swam in the Grove swimming pool down on the Shore Road. I would catch the trolley bus down the Antrim Road into town and visit Smithfield market or gaze into Lunn's jewellers in Queen's Arcade.

After my success I took great pride in raising funds for the development of the athletics track in the Lagan Valley (the



Mary Peters Track

When, as a starry-eyed student from London, I first arrived in Belfast it was dreary and depressing. The weather on that autumn Sunday didn't help: leaden skies above bleak hills, an endless maze of mean and grimy redbrick terraces. It seemed a long way from home. On Monday the sun came out, the people emerged, and the city turned out to have a vibrancy I would never have guessed at the day before. I have loved it ever since. Belfast is a hugely friendly city – perhaps the nicer people are the harder they fall out – and along with



City Centre, looking west, 1970s

## Zoe Salmon



Zoe grew up in Bangor in County Down, just outside Belfast. In 1999, she won the title of Miss Northern Ireland. She is a qualified solicitor, and completed a four-year law degree at Queen's University, Belfast. In December 2004 she became the second former beauty queen to become a presenter of the popular BBC children's television programme, Blue Peter. Since joining the Blue Peter team, Zoe has sung on stage at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the Last Night of the Proms and made a film about Bangor.

“ My first memory of Belfast is posting my letter to Santa in his post box at the City Hall, beside the massive Christmas tree, which I did every Christmas as a child. Years later, as a city lawyer, the City Hall lawn became my favourite location to have lunch during the summer months.

I grew up and lived in Bangor so the first time I began to spend more time in Belfast was when I read Law at Queen's University. I then got a place to study at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies in Lennoxvale, so I hold special memories of Stranmillis and the beautiful Botanic Gardens.

Winning the title of Miss Northern Ireland 1999/2000 meant that I got to work all over the capital and really got to know it well. I won the title in the Europa Hotel, a key feature on the Belfast skyline, and have since spent many an evening in the famous hotel at various functions. I have



even abseiled down it and I can tell you that the view of Belfast from the rooftop is breathtaking! I've been to concerts ranging from Duran Duran to Oasis at the Odyssey and cheered on the Belfast Giants ice hockey team there. However it was the glorious King's Hall where I went to see my first concert (Kylie Minogue), aged nine.

My favourite zoo is Belfast Zoo. Not only because it has one of the largest giraffe herds in Europe but its location on the top of Cavehill provides a stunning view of the capital. I spent almost every weekend in the city because I love the buzz of the Belfast nightlife – I have fond memories of the Potthouse because that's where I had my leaving party before I went to live in London but I also enjoyed fantastic nights out in La Lea, Milk, Tatu and Thompsons. Belfast has so many quality eateries and I rate highly the cuisine in restaurants such as Shu and Cayenne.

Working in the heart of the City meant that I was perfectly placed for Royal Avenue and Castle Court, which are great shopping venues. The walk down Lisburn Road is idyllic and is full of lovely boutiques.

Belfast is brilliant!



## Raymond Snoddy



Born in Larne, Co Antrim, Raymond was educated at Queen's University. A freelance journalist who writes regularly for The Independent, he was Media Editor of The Times for seven years. Before moving to The Times, he was a reporter on the Financial Times for 19 years, mainly writing on media and communication issues. He has presented various television series on the media, including Hard News on Channel 4 and Media Monthly on Sky News. He is currently the presenter of Newswatch, the BBC News 24 accountability programme. His books include 'The Good, The Bad and the Unacceptable' and 'Greenfinger'.

The City Hall is impressive and Queen's University is interesting but there's nothing really to beat a proper pub crawl around the historic pubs of Belfast. To do the job properly you need to set aside a day, ideally starting at Bittles Bar in Victoria Square as close to opening time as possible. Then it's round the corner to McHugh's in Queen's Square before cutting across to Kelly's Cellars in Bank Street. There's just time for one in the Morning Star in Pottinger's Entry before lunch, a quick taxi ride away to either Cayenne or Rain City.

After lunch, a visit to the Crown Liquor Saloon in Great Victoria Street (proprietors, the National Trust) is essential. Linger a while in its wonderful snugs before a late afternoon trip to see a film in the Odyssey for a bit of a breather. A perfect day out in Belfast can then be rounded off with a visit to the Northern Whig - not exactly an historic bar but an historic newspaper premises that have been put to an entirely appropriate use. And the really great news is that there's more than enough historic bars in Belfast still left for another day out.



Crown bar



Kelly Cellars



Bittles

Also known as Duke Special, vocalist and pianist Peter is one of the leading alternative musicians in the United Kingdom. He went solo in 2002 after playing in various bands, including Booley and Benzine Headset. He has supported Van Morrison and toured with the Beautiful South and Divine Comedy. In December 2006 he supported Snow Patrol at the Odyssey Arena in Belfast, playing to 10,000 people. He has been nominated for three 2007 Meteor Music Awards, for Best Irish Male, Best Newcomer, and Best Album for 'Songs from the Deep Forest'

## Peter Wilson



East Belfast has been my home for the last 15 years and contains many places I love to visit when I get the chance. Just round the corner from my house on Holywood Road, for instance, is a great little library with a Ross Wilson sculpture of CS Lewis and his legendary wardrobe outside. Further up the Holywood Road is the Belmont Road which not only boasts modern eateries such as Bennetts and the Gourmet Burger Bank but also the Belmont café, which serves up one of the best Ulster Fry's in Northern Ireland – the Belmont Belly Buster!

If I am going out for a drink it would have to be Madden's Bar in Smithfield. Madden's is small, old, friendly and has some of the best acoustic music in town. It, along with the Empire Music Hall on Botanic Avenue, are probably my favourite places to play in Belfast. Returning to the east, Belfast Music Supplies on Upper Newtownards Road is good for musical instruments and accessories, while Marcus Music in the city centre also provides a comprehensive service.

If you have kids and are looking for a park to go to in the east, I would recommend the Millennium Park on the Holywood Road with its great spider web or the park in the grounds of Stormont (home of the Northern Ireland Assembly) on Upper Newtownards Road. I like to think that when politicians have a break they play on the swings and swing or slide together.. maybe they should!



# Belfast

 Alexandra Park  
Belfast Castle  
Cave Hill


 Waterworks  
Belfast docks  
Waterfront Hall

 Cave Hill  
Waterworks  
Limestone Road

 Broadway  
Cafe Vaudeville

 Royal Avenue  
Linen Hall Library  
BBC Building

 St George's  
River Lagan  
Queen's

 No Alibis

 RBAI

 Bookfinders

 Ballymurphy  
Peace Line

Northern Whig  
McHugh's Bar  
Odyssey

Belfast Castle  
Belfast Lough

Samson and Stormont

Hollywood Rd  
Maddens Bar  
Empire Music Hall

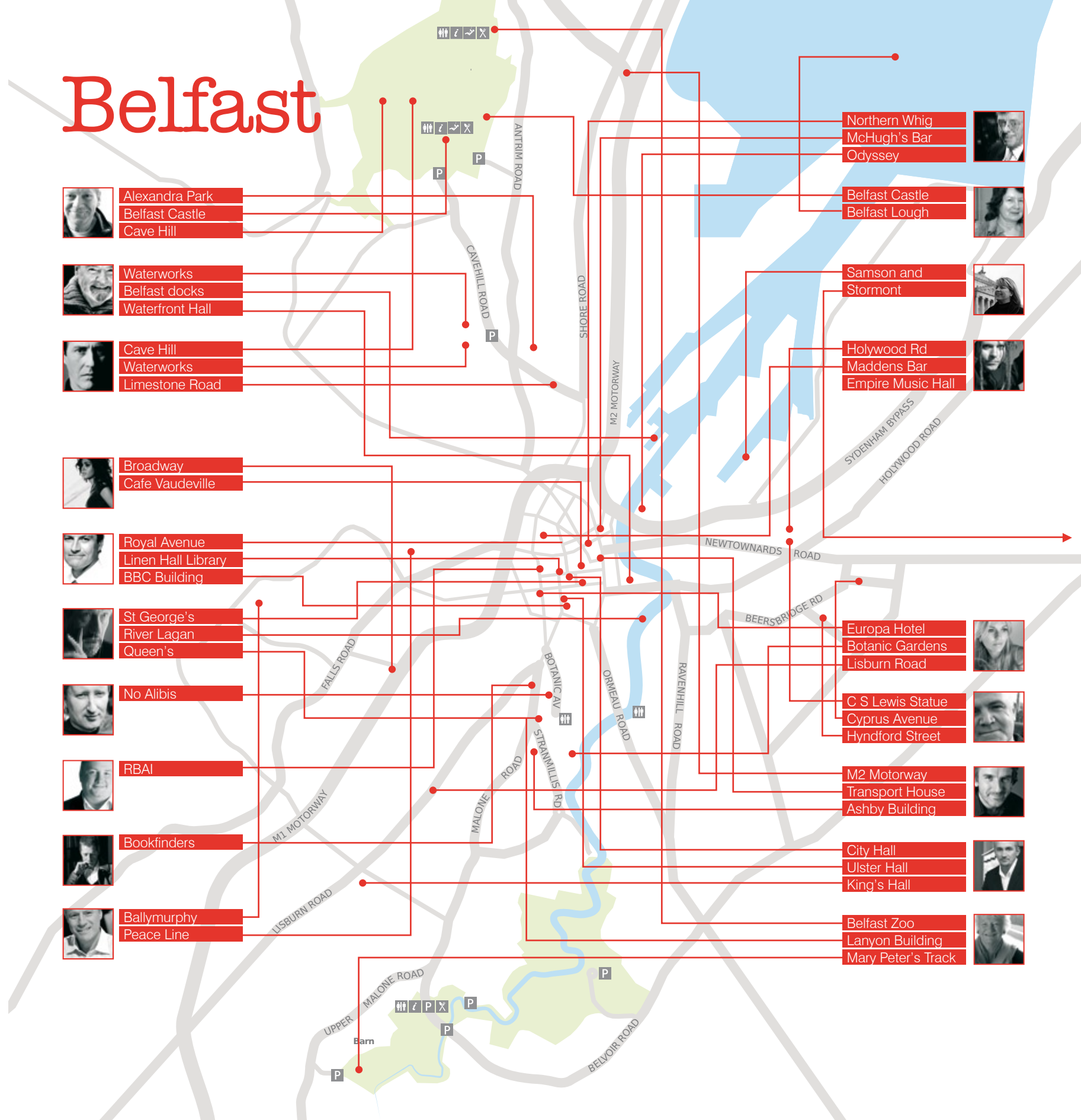
Europa Hotel  
Botanic Gardens  
Lisburn Road

C S Lewis Statue  
Cyprus Avenue  
Hyndford Street

M2 Motorway  
Transport House  
Ashby Building

City Hall  
Ulster Hall  
King's Hall

Belfast Zoo  
Lanyon Building  
Mary Peter's Track



Riley's Court, 1973



Fine dining, 1970s



< Map



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