



A FAMILY AFFAIR

DROMOLAND CASTLE

DROMOLAND CASTLE has loomed over the shores of Lough Dromoland in Newmarket-on-Fergus for nearly 500 years as the ancestral residence of the O'Brien family. Direct descendants of Brian Boru, the High King of Ireland 1,000 years ago, the O'Briens became the barons of Inchiquin in 1543. Over the years, their county Clare estate has served as the home to 18th-century racehorse owner Edward O'Brien and the 1840s M.P. William Smith O'Brien—as well as the modern-day Lord Inchiquin, who lives adjacent to the property at Thomond House. Maintaining a 16th-century castle—and current residence—as a contemporary resort is a delicate dance, one that Dromoland has been perfecting during an ongoing 4-year restoration. With the second phase of the \$20 million project complete, the hotel presents, in the words of general manager Mark Nolan, “a nod to the old world but in a contemporary way.”

Set on 450 breathtaking acres—with a championship golf course, a walled garden, and a trout-stocked lake—Dromoland first opened as a hotel in 1963. Today it features 98 lavish rooms and suites, many of which have been updated with modern Irish fabrics, custom lime-washed furnishings, original artworks, and pillows embossed with the Inchiquin coat of arms. There's also a fresh, new feeling in the castle's gallery and dining areas,

although the historic charm is still there—a knight's armor display greets you in the reception area and portraits of the O'Briens dot the walls. The 17th-century style continues in the ruby-toned drawing room, newly adorned with brocade wall fabric, cushy velvet chairs with piped cushions, and an elaborate chandelier.

Much of the work at Dromoland, however, has been behind the scenes, including installing new heating, cooling, and

water systems (which cut water consumption to less than half of what it was 2 years ago). Additionally, all the windows, including 130 historic ones, were replaced with double-glazed glass that retains heat and blocks out noise—like those howling Irish winds.

Dromoland's final renovation phases, scheduled for completion next year, will include a revamp of the indoor pool, the Club Wing, and the Queen Anne

Court guest rooms. Like the changes before them, the updates will bring a contemporary sense of comfort—both physical and familial—to the historic estate. “My test is, would you jump on the sofa? Can you sit and read a book in the chair for a couple of hours?” Nolan says. “That's my key. I want you to feel at home.” Even if you aren't Lord Inchiquin. —Devorah Lev-Tov

Dromoland Castle, dromoland.ie

