



Fermanagh & Lough Erne in the Second World War

Lough Erne was selected as a base for flying boats because it was located at the most Westerly edge of the UK and had the potential to extend the existing range of cover over the Atlantic Ocean, from Lough Ryan in Scotland, by one hundred miles. This extra 100 miles would mean that the Mid-Atlantic Gap in air cover over the Atlantic could be bridged and the Allies could give more protection to the convoys carrying supplies to Britain.

However, one major problem had to be overcome: permission to fly in Irish air space had to be obtained, so that aircraft could take the shortest route to the Atlantic over Donegal Bay. Ireland was neutral during the Second World War and the Irish government had already refused permission to allow its ports to be used for Allied shipping.

However, on 21st January 1941, negotiations with the Irish Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, secured this permission. This agreement was crucial to Fermanagh's subsequent role in the war but, as it compromised Ireland's neutrality, it had to remain a secret until the war ended. The Fermanagh-based flying boats sank 10 U-Boats and prevented numerous attacks on Allied shipping.



Map showing the approximate location of the **Donegal Corridor**. Allied aircraft were permitted to fly across this corridor of the Irish Free State on the condition that they avoided flying over an Irish Army camp at Finner near Bundoran.
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