

Rathgar

Walking Trail

Map & Guide



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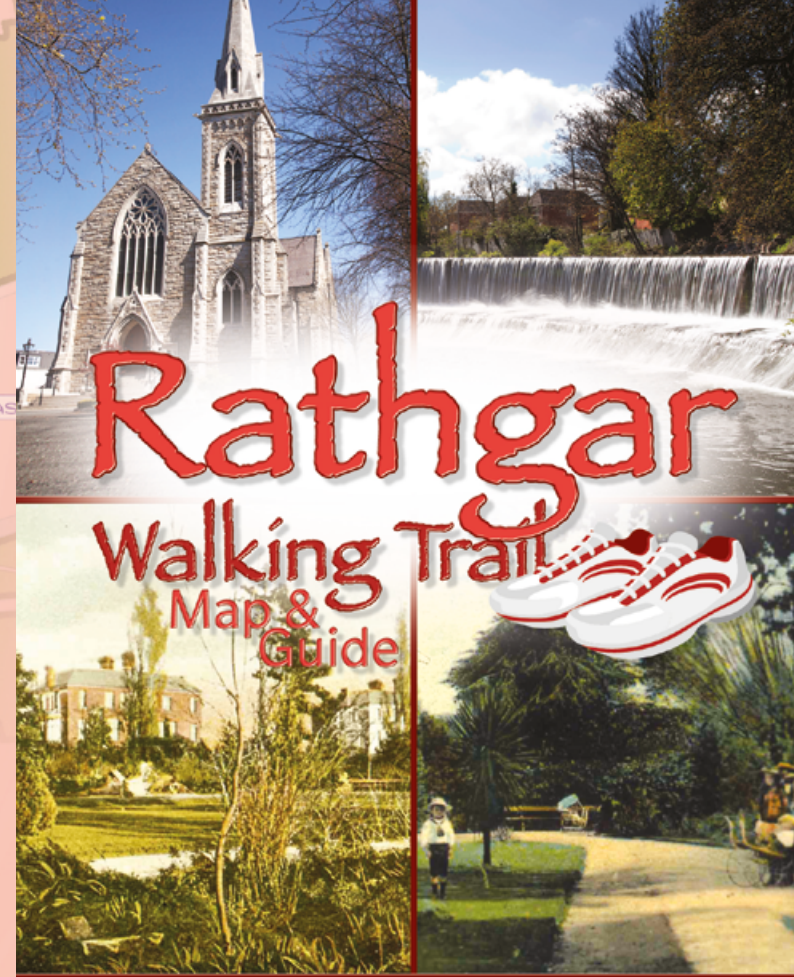
This Map & Guide was produced by Dublin City Council in partnership with Rathgar Residents Association.
 Thank you to the following for their contribution to the Rathgar Walking Trail: Committee of Rathgar Residents Association, National Library of Ireland and Dublin City Library and Archive.
 Photographs by Seamus Sullivan and Ronan O'Donnell.
 For further reading on Rathgar: 'The History of Rathgar' by F. E. & B. Dixon (AIB & David P. Luke), 'The History of Oakland Rathgar' by Regie Redmond (St. Luke's Hospital) and 'Down the Dodder' by Christopher Moriarty (Wolfhound Press).
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 For details on Rathgar Residents Association, log on to www.rathgarresidentsassociation.ie
 Design & Production: Kaelleon Design (01 835 3881 / www.kaelleon.ie)



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The name Rathgar has been known since the 13th century to describe a region bounded on the south by the River Dodder and on the north by the River Swan. 'Rath' was probably a reference to a fort or dun with 'Gar' referring to garth, meaning a farmyard or garden. This could be a reference to a farm in the area which was worked by the community of St. Mary de Hogges whose convent was at Les Hogges, where Trinity College now stands. The earliest mention of this farm was in 1300 when David Lugg was sentenced to be hanged for stealing from the farm building.



With the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, the farm-lands passed into lay hands. It is recorded that in 1609 "a house, 6 messuages and 120 acres in Rathgar, Co. Dublin" passed into the hands of Alderman John Cusack, Mayor of Dublin. The Cusack family continued to live at what was known as Rathgar Castle and manor for over a century.

By the late 18th century the River Dodder became a hub for industry with many water powered mills established along its banks from Rathfarnham Bridge to Clonskeagh. Until the 1840s Rathgar remained very much a rural idyll and much of the land remained under cultivation and used by market gardeners and dairymen to graze cattle. Names recalling the rural nature of Rathgar are still commemorated by the likes of Highfield, Ashgrove and Oaklands.



Rathgar saw major residential development beginning in the mid 19th century as demand grew for houses in the healthier environment of rural Dublin. Developments took place piecemeal on Highfield Road initially and then on Rathgar Road. Elsewhere in the area major developments took place from the mid to late Victorian period into Edwardian times, leaving a striking legacy of architecture and streetscapes.

Today, Rathgar is a charming residential area with an array of attractive shops, pubs and other businesses. There are many parks to enjoy and the River Dodder is home to countless plant, bird and animal habitats.

Rathgar is located south of Dublin city centre, bordered by Rathmines to the north and the River Dodder to the south. It is served by a number of Dublin Bus routes; 15, 15A, 15B, 14 and 65.

Welcome to Rathgar! This trail starts and finishes at Rathgar Village and is designed in two loops which can be completed in one or two walks. The route will take you along by the River Dodder, through beautiful parks and along leafy roads with many places of historical interest to be seen along the way. Walking at a leisurely pace, the trail should take you between 90-120 minutes to complete.

1 HERZOG PARK

Herzog Park is named after Chaim Herzog, the President of Israel 1983-93, who spent his childhood in "Little Jerusalem" in the Portobello area. The park was the site from the 1830s of Mr. Osbrey's limestone quarry, supplying stone for many of the garden walls in the area. The infilled quarry is now the location of a wooded area and Rathgar Tennis & Bowling Club.

2 THE HIGH SCHOOL

"Danum" on Zion Road was once the home of the Bewley family of Oriental Café fame. The High School which moved there from Harcourt Street in 1971 can boast Nobel prize-winning poet W. B. Yeats as one of its famous students. He came to the school in 1881 where it was noted that "he was mainly interested in natural history and was weak at English literature. He had a difficulty with spelling but his contemporaries noted the quality of his essay".

3 ORWELL ROAD

Inset on the roadside boundary wall of 68 Orwell Road is a milestone which informs us that it is 3 miles to the GPO on O'Connell Street. Writer, John Millington Synge once lived at 4 Orwell Park as did Bram Stoker, author of Dracula, in his formative years.

4 ORWELL PARK

At Orwell Park, the River Dodder, diverted through a millrace, provided energy for the Lord Chief Justice's Corn Mill from 1760 and Waldron's Calico Printing Mill from 1787. At the height of activity the Waldron Mill employed 300 men and treated muslin and silk as well as calico. The flat green area of the park was used as a bleaching green and an earthen dyke to protect the bleaching greens from flood waters can still be seen. As well as building a wooden bridge over the Dodder, Patrick Waldron built himself a handsome house overlooking his works. This is now the Orwell Nursing Home. Beside the footbridge is a lime kiln where limestone was once burned for use as a fertiliser.

5 DARTRY PARK

Passing under Waldron's bridge takes you along by the River Dodder which is abundant with wildlife. Note a metal plate marking the boundary of Rathmines Township 1847 and by the weir is another mill race. Passing close to a steep bank of glacial till leads to a widened area of parkland. Outside Dartry Park stand the buildings which once housed the Dartry Dye works. Vats of dye once stood on the right bank, accessed by the girder bridge which spans the river.

6 DARTRY HOUSE

Dartry House was once the home of politician and businessman, William Martin Murphy, noted for his role in the 1913 Lockout. He built his fortune on the success of the Dublin United Tramway Company and other tramway enterprises overseas. The tramway sheds for the terminus of the 14 tram can be seen on Dartry Road at the junction with Orwell Park. In 1905, the fare to O'Connell Street was two pennies.

7 PALMERSTON PARK

Following an official request from the local residents, the park area was enclosed by Rathmines and Rathgar Town Council in 1891. Residents relinquished any rights they had in the land and paid over a sum of £600, after which the Council accepted responsibility for the space. The park was laid out in 1894 by William Shepherd who also laid out Harold's Cross Park. Palmerston Park today retains many of its original late Victorian features. It is split into two by a central pathway and its original wrought iron railings still encircle its perimeter.

Some fine examples of Victorian residential architecture surround the park. Close by, behind Trinity Hall student residence, are Trinity College Botanic Gardens which relocated here from Ballsbridge in the 1960s. The Gardens support botanical teaching and research at Trinity College Dublin and house the Gene Bank for rare and threatened Irish plants.



8 HIGHFIELD ROAD

The houses to the south side of Highfield Road are among the earliest suburban developments in Rathgar. The houses at the Dartry Road end had a view right down to Portobello Bridge until the late 1880s. The houses to the north side are from the Edwardian period with a uniform design and were built for early commuters who made use of the tram service that once ran down Upper Rathmines Road.

The area around St. Lukes Hospital were lands owned in medieval times by the Priory of St. Mary de Hogges until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. This is believed to be the site of Rathgar Castle. In more recent times, before becoming a hospital, Oaklands was the home of well known Dublin businessmen Henry Todd (Todd Burns Department Store), Hugh Brown (Brown Thomas Department Store) and Charles Hely (Hely Printers & Stationers).

9 CHRISTCHURCH

Christchurch has been in use by the Presbyterian community for over 150 years and is very much an icon of the village of Rathgar. It was designed by Andrew Heiton from Perth in Scotland and built by Gilbert Cockburn who also built the National Gallery of Ireland and National History Museum.

10 RATHGAR ROAD

Houses on Rathgar Road were built in a series of terraces. Many of these terraces have common architectural features such as fanlights, pillared doors and flights of steps leading to the second floor. Iron railings were of cast iron, separating gardens and providing boundaries. The first terrace to be completed was Spire View (31/34 Rathgar Road) in 1834, followed by Belleville (132/137 Rathgar Road) and Malakhoff (184/188 Rathgar Road) in 1843 and 1860 respectively.

11 CHURCH OF THE THREE PATRONS

The Church of the Three Patrons is dedicated to the three Patron Saints of Ireland - St. Patrick, St. Bridget, and St. Colmcille. It was once known as the "Servants Church" because of the large number of Catholic servants in the Rathgar area who attended. Modelled by architect Patrick Byrne on the style of a Roman basilica, the Church was completed in 1862.

On her return from Paris in 1903, the politician and revolutionary, Constance Markievicz lived at 1 Frankfort Avenue. Artist and geologist, George V. Du Noyer also once lived on Frankfort Avenue.

12 KENILWORTH SQUARE

Kenilworth Square was built to a spacious design in the 1860s. Howard Grubb, who made astronomical instruments at his factory at Observatory Lane in Rathmines for observatories around the world, lived at 51 Kenilworth Square before moving to Aberfoyle on Orwell Road. Poet, playwright and mother of artist Louis Le Brocqy, Sybil le Brocqy, also once lived at 51 Kenilworth Square. President of the first Dáil, Eamon De Valera, moved his office to 53 Kenilworth Square in 1921 and it was here that Arthur Griffith presented Lloyd George's proposals for an Anglo Irish Treaty. Located in the square are the playing fields of St. Mary's College, one of the great academies of Irish rugby.

13 BRIGHTON SQUARE

Brighton Square dates to 1862 when it was known as Kensington Square. It is not square but in fact triangular in shape. The park is owned by the local residents and includes a tennis court and club house. James Joyce, author of Ulysses, was born in 1882 at 41 Brighton Square and spent his early years there.

14 RATHGAR AVENUE

Rathgar Avenue was one of several ancient routes going south from Dublin to the Dublin and Wicklow Hills and beyond. Rathgar National School was built in 1896 at a cost of £640. Poet, artist, economist and mystic George Russell, who wrote under the pseudonym AE, lived at 17 Rathgar Avenue. Fellow writer, Francis Sheehy Skeffington lived nearby at 8 Airfield Road for a period in the early 1900s.

15 RATHGAR VILLAGE

Located at 10 Terenure Road East is the internationally award winning publishing house of O'Brien Press. Rathgar Village remains one of Dublin's distinctive old villages and is the perfect place to end your journey where you can enjoy some food and a drink or browse through its shops.