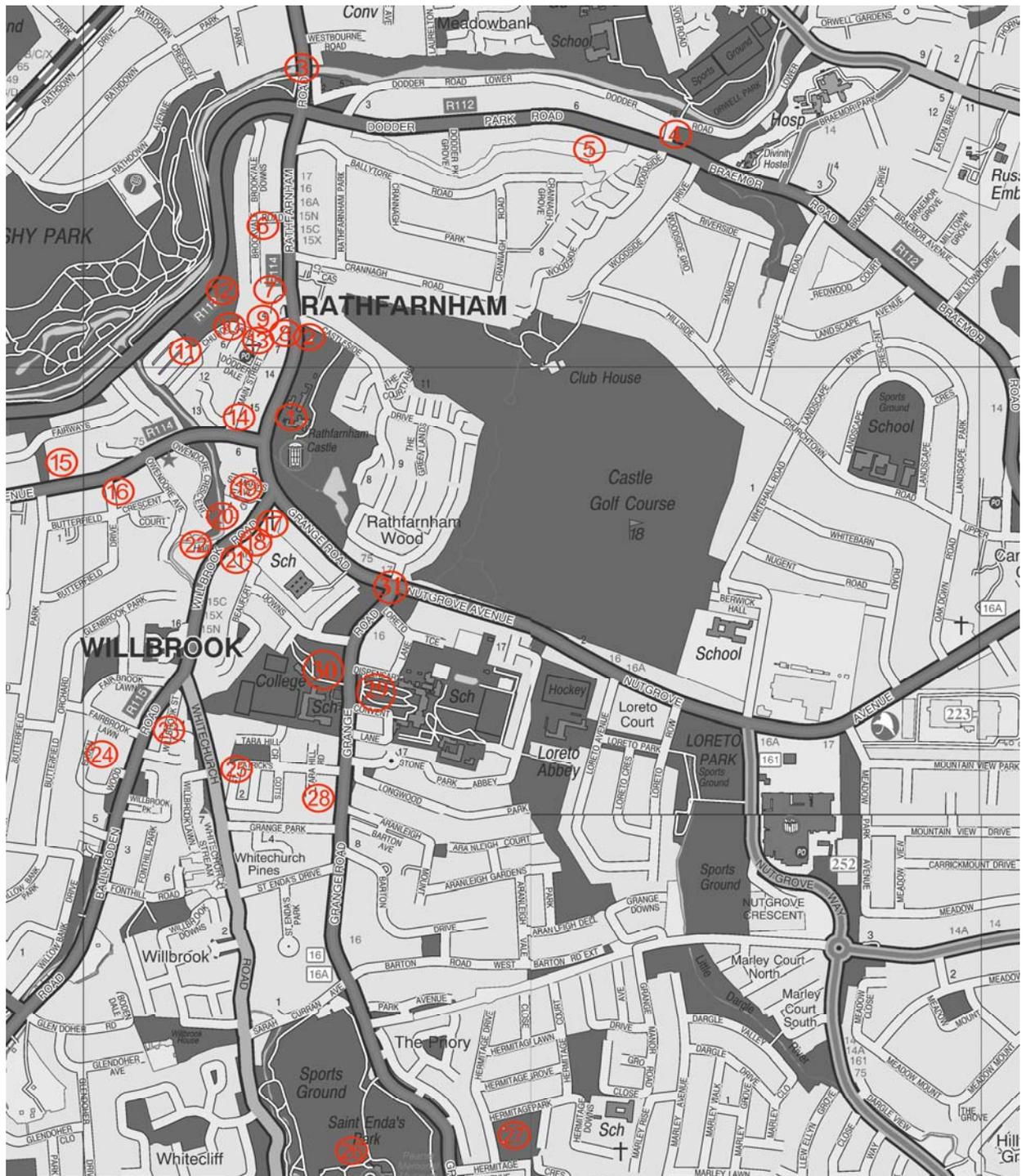


## Rathfarnham - Walking Tour

Taking in the Estate Village and Gentlemen's Seats - Rathfarnham Village and its Neighbourhood, a Guided Walk.

Map:



## Introduction:

The recorded history of Rathfarnham began at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion when in 1199 these lands were granted to Milo le Bret. The name Rathfarnham (Ráth Fearnáin in Irish, the Fort of Fearnan or the Fort of the Alders) suggests that there was a settlement before that time but we know nothing about the people who lived there. They left no remains of pre-historic burial places, no early churches and no records preserved in the annals.

## Getting there:

### Dublin Bus

15C (College Street - Whitechurch), 16 (Santry - Ballinteer), 16A (Dublin Airport - Lower Rathfarnham), 17 (Rialto - Blackrock), 75 (Dun Laoghaire - Tallaght)

Rathfarnham is signposted from the M50 and N81 roads

## The Walk:

This walk commences at the bus stop on the Rathfarnham Road, beside Rathfarnham Castle. Please use pedestrian crossings and apply the Safecross code when crossing roads.

**Distance:** Approximately 8km

**Duration:** The walk can be completed in 1.5 to 2 hours. Alternatively, the walk may be shortened by only visiting the features centred on the village.

From the bus stop, follow the signpost to Rathfarnham Castle (1)



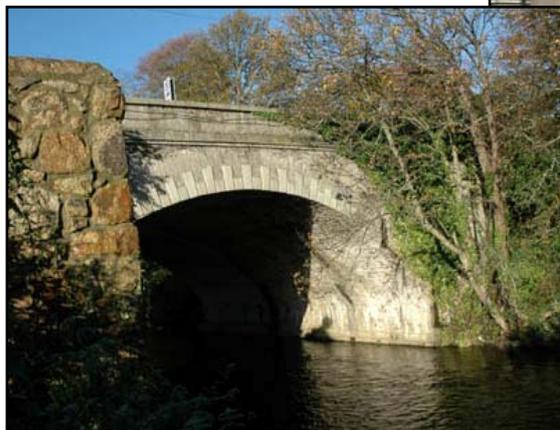
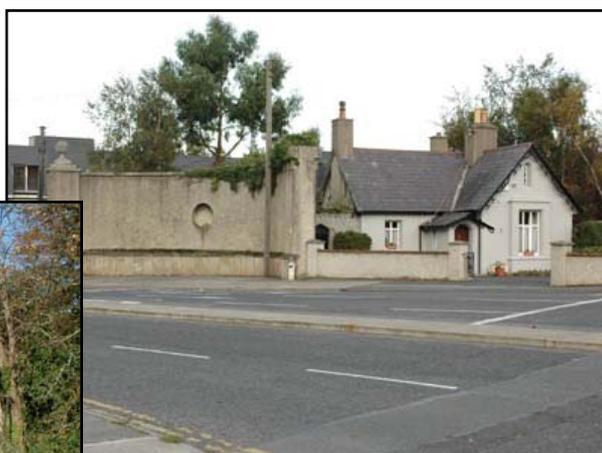
Formerly approached through a gothic archway from the River Dodder, this ancient fortress was erected by Adam Loftus, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin who was granted in 1583 what was then described as a "waste village". His new castle was not long built when in 1600 it had to withstand an attack by the Wicklow clans and again in 1641 it was able to hold out against the Confederate army when the surrounding country was overrun. In 1649, a few days before the battle of Rathmines, the castle, which was garrisoned by the Parliamentary forces, was stormed and taken by the Royalists but they probably evacuated it again when Ormonde withdrew with his army to Kilkenny.

The original castle consisted of a square building four storeys high with a projecting tower at each corner, the walls of which were an average of 1.5 metres thick. On the ground level are two vaulted apartments divided by a wall nearly 3 metres thick which rises to the full height of the castle. On the same level as the entrance hall were the library and reception rooms and above this, the former ballroom.

Today, the castle is open to the public and is well worth a visit. Check [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie) for current opening hours. The grounds are now a pleasant park under the care of South Dublin County Council.

From Rathfarnham Castle turn right and go 250 metres until you reach a crossroads. Across the junction is a portion of the former entrance to Rathfarnham Castle (2) along with its gate lodge.

Walk past the gate lodge and keep straight on for 600 metres until you reach the River Dodder.



Following widening on the west side in 1952, the

Dodder Bridge was renamed Pearse Bridge (3) in honour of Patrick and William Pearse. This bridge of one stone arch was built in 1765. The first record of a bridge on this site was in 1391. In those days, the demolition of

bridges by the flood waters of the River Dodder was a common occurrence. Drainage works in 1912 revealed that there was an ancient causeway here, seven metres below road level. The road from Dublin City to Rathfarnham follows the route of the Slighe Chualann, the ancient highway that at the time of Saint Patrick was used by travellers from Dublin to Wicklow and Wexford.

Walk back to the crossroads. Turn to your left and follow the river for about 800 metres until you reach the junction of Dodder Road Lower. Ahead, on the left, is the Roman Arch, also known as Lord Ely's Arch (4) which was the original entrance to Rathfarnham Castle. The arch was built during the time of Henry Loftus, Earl of Ely between 1769 and 1783. It is named the 'new gate' on Frizell's map of 1779. After the division of the estate in 1913 this became the entrance to the Castle Golf Club but it was later abandoned in favour of the more direct Woodside Drive. In 1841 the arch was the scene of a brutal murder,



when the dead body of an Italian named Garlibardo was found lying on the open ground in front of the gate. Although arrests were made at the time no one was convicted of the murder.

Return to the River Dodder and retrace your steps towards Pearse Bridge. On your left hand side as you walk, behind the houses is a **motte and bailey (5)** which probably formed part of the defences around Rathfarnham Castle.



A motte and bailey is a defensive earthwork, introduced to Ireland by the Normans in the twelfth century. They consisted of a high earthen mound surrounded by a deep ditch. They had a flat summit on which a wooden tower was built. The one here was probably built by Milo le Bret in 1199. This picture shows the motte and bailey around 1977 when it was to the rear of Young's Caravan Sales.

From Pearse Bridge, head back in the direction of Rathfarnham Castle for 200 metres. The first turn to the right will take you into the Brookvale housing estate. Take this road and at the next t-junction facing you is **Ashfield House (6)**.



This house was occupied by the Protestant clergy during the eighteenth century. In the early part of the nineteenth century it was the home of Sir William Cusack Smith, Baron of the Exchequer, and from 1841 of the Tottenham Family who continued to reside there up until 1913. After this it was occupied by the Brooks of Brooks Thomas Limited up until about 1950 when the estate was divided up and houses built

along the main road.

Walk back to the entrance to the estate and continue towards Rathfarnham Castle for 200 metres until you get to the junction with Rathfarnham Main Street. Rathfarnham Credit Union is on the corner. Look right and the arched entrance to the **graveyard (7)** can be seen.

This graveyard contains the ruins of a church which was dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul. This was a medieval church and was used for Protestant worship up until 1795 when it was too small for the congregation and a new church was built further down the Main Street. The end walls of the old church are still standing, the west gable containing a bell



turret and the east contains a chancel arch, the chancel itself having disappeared. The north wall is gone and all that remains of the south wall is an arched opening.



Slightly further up the Main Street on the left is the **Court of Petty Sessions (8)** built in 1912. The public entrance is to the left of the building while the room for the judge which was behind the bench is to the right. The Courts of Petty Sessions were forerunners of our modern day District Courts. This building served as a courthouse until the Boys' School in Willbrook Road became available when it was converted to a courthouse.

Behind you, to the right, is the **AIB Bank building (9)** which is built on the site of an RIC Barracks which was blown up during the troubles in 1922.



Church Lane runs between the AIB and the church. Proceed down the lane and an **early eighteenth century doorway (10)** can be seen, which is now blocked up. Continue up Church Lane to the very top for 100 metres and follow the path around.

**Woodview cottages (11)** are on your left. The half-brick cottages are built partly on the site of an old paper mill. The mill race passed under Butterfield Avenue to the paper mill and continued on below Ashfield to turn the wheel of the Ely Cloth Factory. The earliest reference to a paper mill here was in 1719 when a petition for financial aid was presented by William Lake of Rathfarnham but we hear of one at Milltown as far back as 1694. To the right of where you're standing, on the grass verge beside Springfield Avenue was formerly the site of a **mill pond and extensive mill buildings (12)**. On a 1779 map it was called the "Widow Clifford's mill and mill holding", by 1843 it was the Ely Cloth Factory and was later converted into a flour mill. It closed in 1880 and the only trace of it now is some of the ruined mill walls in the trees.





Walk back through Church Lane to **Rathfarnham Church of Ireland Parish Church (13)** which was built in 1795 to replace the church in the old graveyard. Beside the church is the old school house which dates from the early nineteenth century.

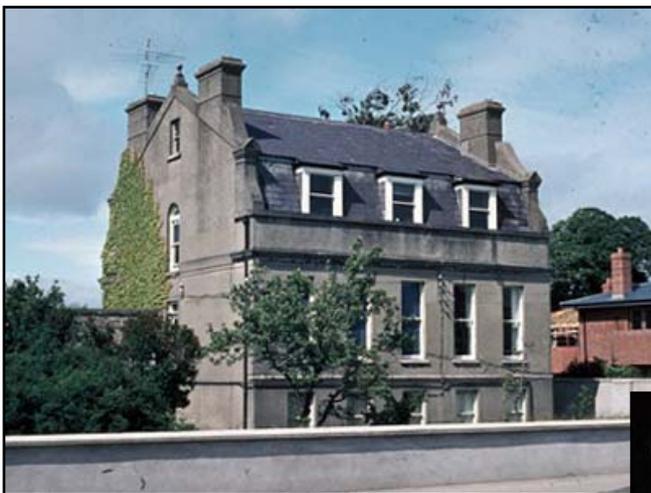
Turn right past the Court of Petty Sessions building until you reach the end of Main Street



where the road opens out at a junction.

**Anne Devlin's statue (14)** is located just to your left. Appropriately, the statue stands looking in the direction of Butterfield Avenue. The work is by sculptor Clodagh Emoe, and was officially unveiled by Mayor of South Dublin County Maire Ardagh on the 4th of March 2004, the anniversary of Robert Emmet's birth. Anne worked with Emmet in Butterfield Avenue, then known as Butterfield Lane, where he planned the 1803 Rising, and she suffered imprisonment and torture in the aftermath of its failure. The Anne Devlin Statue project was realised through the efforts of the citizens of the Rathfarnham area and was grant-aided by South Dublin County Council.

Turn right onto Butterfield Avenue and walk for 250 metres. On your right, there is a redbrick apartment complex with car parking to the front. At the left of the apartment block, obscured by trees, is **Butterfield House (15)**, which is thought to have been Robert Emmet's residence before the 1803 Rising. In order to avoid being arrested before the rising took place, Emmet rented the house in April 1803 under the name of Robert Ellis. In charge of the housekeeping was Anne Devlin, already



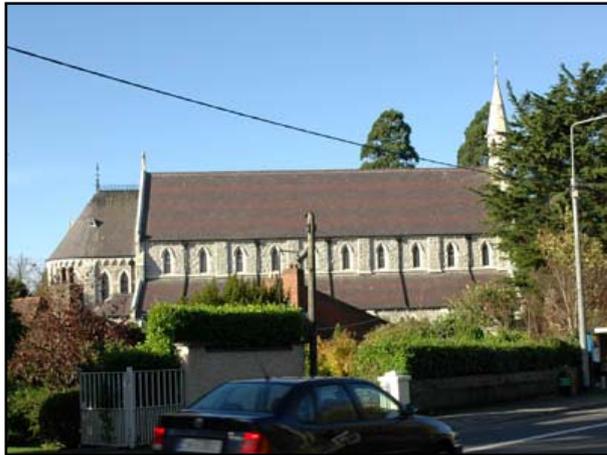
mentioned, whose father Brian Devlin had a dairy farm nearby.

At Butterfield House, cross the road. Walk for 60 metres to your left. The whitewash-finished house is **Old Orchard House (16)**. This is another of the four



18th Century Houses on Butterfield Avenue. The name Old Orchard does not appear before 1845, previous to which there were apparently two houses named Butterfield House. It would appear, however, that in 1836 Old Orchard was named Brasvillanne, which was recorded by the Ordnance Survey that year.

Walk back past the Anne Devlin statue and keep walking until you are at the set of traffic lights at a T junction. Turn right and walk for 20 metres. The Catholic Church of the Annunciation (17) is just on the corner of the road. It was built in 1878 to replace the old chapel on Willbrook Road.



Outside the church door is a font (18) on a pedestal bearing the inscription

"FONT USED IN MASS HOUSE OF PENAL TIMES IN PARISH OF RATHFARNHAM FROM 1732". The appearance of this font would suggest that it was originally a bullaun stone and much older than penal times.



Opposite the church, you cannot miss the famous Yellow House (19), a pub built on the site of an inn of the same name which is marked on Taylor's map of 1816. According to tradition, in 1798 it was owned by a Michael Eades, who sheltered wanted men in his house. It was also frequented by the soldiers of the Rathfarnham Guard whose careless talk was carefully noted by the United Irishmen

hiding on the premises. In 1804 when the truth came to be known, the inn was wrecked by the same military.

Facing the Yellow House turn left for 60 metres down Willbrook Road. On the right is the parochial house, St. Bridget's (20), where the old church stood which was replaced in 1878. This was described by the historian D'Alton as a "cruciform edifice with galleries disproportionately low."



A little further along the road, on the opposite side, a **pedestrian entrance to Beaufort Downs estate (21)** can be seen. The fine carved granite pillars here are of the former entrance to Beaufort House. At the pillars, cross the road again and walk a short way up the road.



The former **Boys' School** is on your right (22). A school first opened here in January 1842. In January 1977, St Mary's Boys' National School was opened and the building became a district courthouse until the opening of the courthouse in Tallaght in 2000. At the same time the Court of Petty Sessions at Main Street, Rathfarnham, which was operating since 1912, was closed.

Continue up the Willbrook Road for 500 metres. Go straight past the junction with Whitechurch Road. Just on the left after The Tuning fork pub you will see a small side road.



This is **Willbrook Street**, formerly the main street of Willbrook Village (23). It remains largely unchanged within the past hundred years. Many of the surrounding residences were built about the beginning of the 19th Century. Some small cottages at the end of the road are reminders of its once having been a rural village.

A short distance further up the Willbrook Road, turn right into a housing estate, Boden Wood. It has a Cul De Sac sign at its entrance. As you walk into the estate, turn to the right and **Riversdale (24)** is the last house on the left. Riversdale was the last home of W. B. Yeats in Ireland.



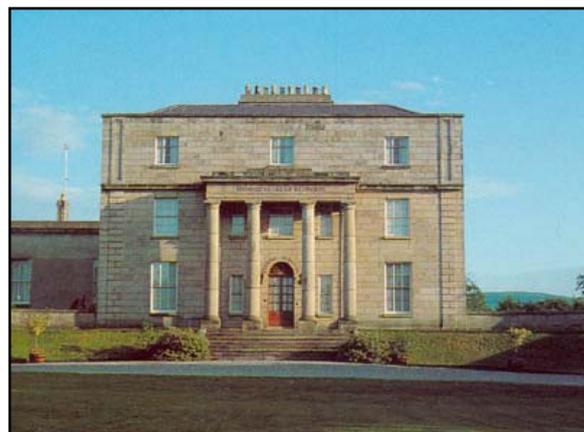
Retrace your steps back down the Willbrook Road as far as The Tuning Fork. Walk around the corner of it and there is a ruin of a mill 30 metres to your left. The site of the river which was its source of power is to the right.



The river flows down from Kilmashogue Mountain. On the other side of the road is a partly choked up mill race which was taken from the river higher up to serve the Silveracre Mill. This was named **Brooklawn Mill (25)** on both Taylor's map of 1816 and on Duncan's of 1821. In 1836 Mark Flower had a pin and wire factory here which was then named Silveracres Mill. This closed down in 1853. The place was then converted into a flour mill by Robert Gibney who also owned the nearby Willbrook Mills.

From 1864 to 1893 it was operated by Patrick Gibney, after which it was taken over by Mr. J. E. Madden. Subsequent to 1899 it changed hands frequently and the last tenant was Mr. Murray from 1922 to 1933. The mill has since been demolished but the Mill House and some out offices still remain.

From the Mill House, keep going straight for 800 metres. Turn left at the crossroads with Taylor's Lane and walk for 150 metres. Follow the path into St. Enda's Park. Hermitage or **St. Enda's (26)**, is at the top of the driveway. This is the former home of Padraig Pearse, and site of his school. The house, which is entirely faced with cut granite and has an imposing stone portico, was occupied in the eighteenth century by Edward Hudson, an eminent dentist. He had a passion for Irish antiquities and installed a number of romantic ruins around the estate. The St. Enda's Park and The Pearse Museum are worth a visit in their own right.



From the house go back and return to the road, take the first left, on to the Grange Road for 200 metres. Take the next right into Hermitage housing estate. You will come to an open space surrounded by houses. Cross the open space to the other side.

What can only be described as an unassuming ruin is all that remains of **Priory (27)**, the home of John Philpot Curran, lawyer and nationalist. He represented several prominent United Irishmen after the 1798 Rebellion but refused to represent Robert Emmet after the 1803 Rising, when he discovered that Emmet was secretly engaged to his daughter, Sarah. The house was formerly



named Holly Park but when Curran bought it in 1790 he changed the name to Priory. He lived here for 27 years.



From here, continue on along the Grange Road. As you walk, on your left from the junction with Grange Park onwards, St. Patrick's Cottages (28) can be seen. These were designed by the renowned architect T.J. Byrne who worked for the South Dublin Rural District Council. He was an advocate for improved public housing in the Dublin county area and was responsible for many fine housing schemes, including these cottages. He was later responsible for the rebuilding of the Four Courts and

Customs House after the Civil War and he also designed the Carnegie Library at Whitechurch, which is nearby on Taylor's Lane.



Continue along the Grange Road and Loreto Abbey (29) will be on your right, just past the junction with Convent Lane. The mansion which now forms the centrepiece of the Abbey was built by Mr. William Palliser about 1725 and was known as Rathfarnham House. When Palliser died in 1768 Rathfarnham House passed to his cousin the Rev. John Palliser, who was rector of the parish. After his death in 1795 the house was purchased by George Grierson, the King's Printer, who resided

here for a few years. When Grierson removed to his new abode in Woodtown the house remained unoccupied for some years until in 1821 it was purchased by Most Rev. Dr. Murray for the newly founded Loreto Order. The foundress was Rev. Mother Frances Mary Teresa Ball. Many additions have been made over the years, the church was built in 1840, the novitiate in 1863 and six years later St. Joseph's wing which contains the concert hall and refectory. St. Anthony's wing was erected in 1896, St. Francis Xavier's in 1903 and the Lisieux building in 1932 for the accommodation of visiting prelates to the Eucharistic Congress. Mother Teresa of Calcutta began her religious life here in 1928. The Abbey was sold in 1999.



Directly across from Loreto Abbey is Beaufort House (30)

This is now the headquarters of the Loreto Order in Ireland. On the grounds is Loreto High School Beaufort which was founded in 1925.

Keep walking straight past Loreto for 250 metres to a crossroads. To the left and right is **Nutgrove Avenue (31)**. The avenue was widened and extended in the 1960s to link up with Churchtown. At the crossroads, take a left which will bring you past the Yellow House and towards Rathfarnham Castle where we started our walk.

Rathfarnham and the surrounding area are rich in heritage and history. A guided walk such as this can only hope to give a flavour of that history and heritage. Please see <http://www.southdublinhistory.ie> and <http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie> for more information or visit the Local Studies Collection at The County Library, Tallaght.