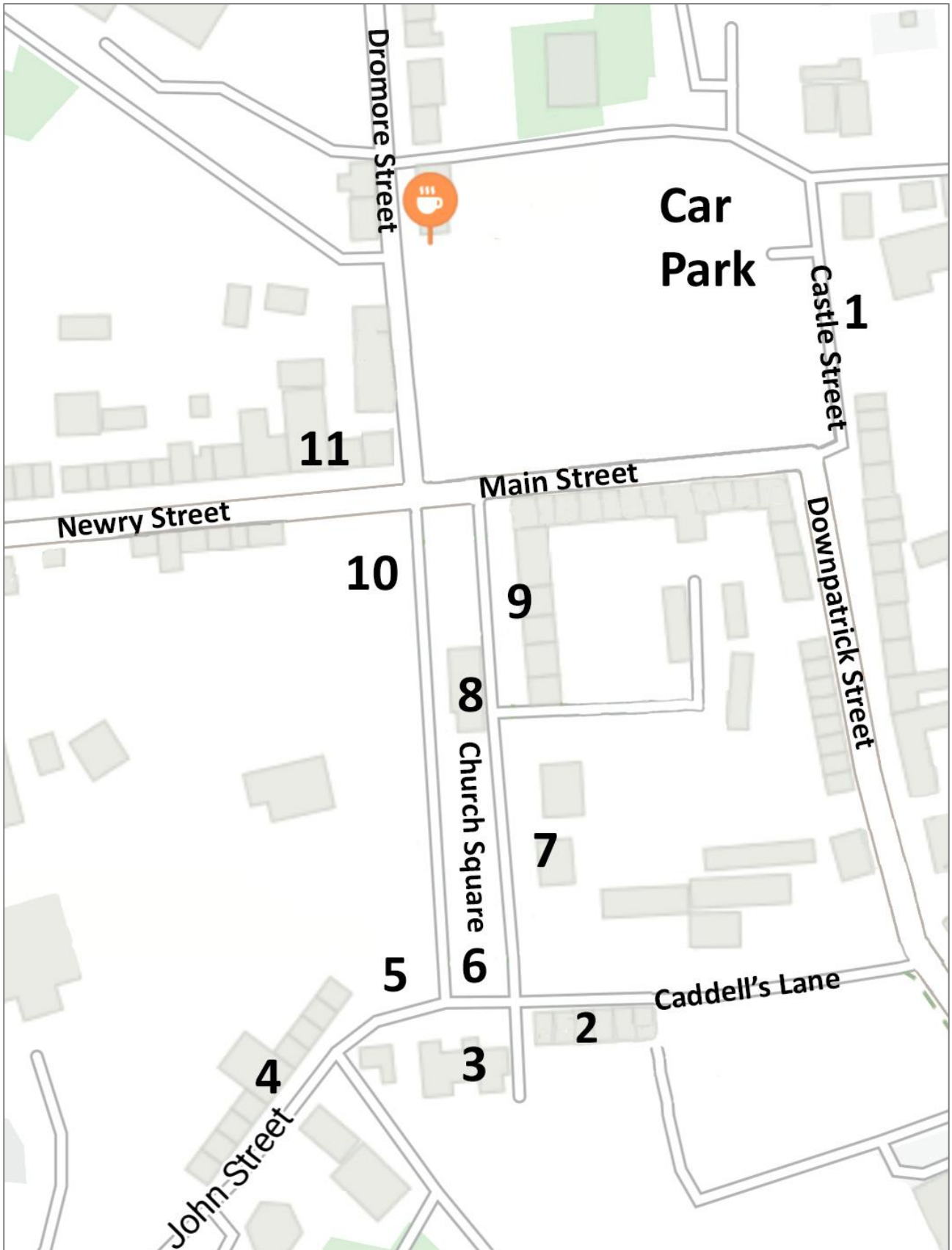


# Short Historic Walking Tour of Rathfriland

(adapted by ABC Family History Association from the Trail designed by Rathfriland Historical Society, to whom we give our thanks)



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### 1. Site of Catherine O'Hare's Family House, Castle Street



Catherine O'Hare was born in Rathfriland in 23 April 1836, the youngest of nine children, and decided to emigrate to the United States in 1851 as a 16 year old. She worked as a maid for a wealthy family in Springfield, Massachusetts and used her spare time teaching herself to read.

When Catherine was 19, she met a 27 year old German carpenter named Augustus Schubert. They married in 1855 and moved to St. Paul, on the Mississippi River. Catherine opened a grocery store and made bread while Augustus worked as a carpenter. Son Gus was born in 1856 and daughter Mary Jane was born in 1858. A depression hit the area in 1860 and the family packed up and moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba (then called Fort Garry).

In 1858, miners had discovered gold in the lower Fraser Valley, in what is now British Columbia. The Schuberts joined the 'Overlanders of 1862' to travel from Fort Garry to the gold fields of the Cariboo. The group consisted of 138 people, all men except for Catherine (who was pregnant), and their 3 children: Gus, Mary Jane, and James. They endured many hardships and perils over the 8 or 9 months that the journey took, with covered wagons and horses.

Catherine was the first European woman to enter British Columbia overland from eastern Canada and her daughter, Rose Anna, born on a raft on the Thompson River, near the end of their journey, was reputed to be the first European child born in British Columbia. Catherine moved to Armstrong, BC, where she died in 1918.

The O'Hare family home was demolished many years ago, but Rathfriland is now twinned with Armstrong, British Columbia and there have been a number of reciprocal visits from the peoples of both places.

<https://youtu.be/7Fmx-6XIC6c>

## 2. The Old George Hotel, Caddell's Lane

One of the oldest buildings in Rathfriland, the Old George presents an interesting picture of the town's past. It was built in 1798 as a residence for the seneschal of the manors of Rathfriland and Gilford, Mr Edward Caddell, attorney. A seneschal was an agent or steward in charge of a lord's estate in feudal times. Caddell's Lane takes its name from Mr Caddell. In 1799, Mr Caddell was appointed seneschal by the Earl and Countess of Clanwilliam. Theodosia, the countess, outlived her husband, and bequeathed her estates to her second son, Lt General, the Hon Robert Meade.

In mid-Victorian times, the building superseded the less-imposing Clanwilliam Arms as the town's main hotel. With the advent of the railway, which called at Ballyrone Station, it catered for commercial travellers from Belfast and Dublin as well as linen, wool and flax dealers attending the fairs and markets. It also became the venue for hunt balls and wine and dine parties and car-park at the rear was used for horses.

The hotel was called The Commercial Hotel in 1856, then it was renamed The Albert Hotel in 1865 and back again to The Commercial Hotel in 1870. It became the George Hotel in 1881 and subsequently became known as 'The Old George'.

The Peters family were hoteliers for a time and then in 1975 Charles McCrum of Newcastle, and his wife, Iris, bought it and set it on its feet once again. The Shaw family took over the hotel in 1979, but after their retirement in 2019, the hotel was sold and is now in private hands, leaving Rathfriland with no hotel.



### 3. St John's Church of Ireland, Church Square

The present church and adjoining graveyard was erected by Robert Hawkins Magill about 1730 and consecrated for worship on 13 September 1733. The Communion Plate, which is still in use, was the gift of Robert Hawkins Magill. It consists of a silver Chalice and Paten each bearing the inscription "Presented to Rathfriland Parish Church by Robert Hawkins Magill Esq, 1733."

The 1730 Church erected by Mr Magill consisted chiefly of the nave, the chancel, and transept with the gallery having been added since, probably when the church was enlarged and improved in 1818.



In 1933, just before the 200th anniversary of its erection, a new roof was put on the church. In 1954 the harmonium then in use was replaced by an electric organ. This organ was erected by the parishioners "to the glory of God, and in grateful remembrance of those from this Parish who served in the Second World War 1939-1945". On 14 January 1968, the Right Reverend FJ Mitchell DD, the Lord Bishop of Down and Dromore, held a special service of Thanksgiving to mark the re-opening of the Church after the completion of major renovations, costing over £3,500 and paid for by direct giving of the parishioners themselves.

#### **4. Masonic Hall, John Street, built by Alexander Whelan**

The Masonic Hall is a unique building, with its five distinctive porthole shaped windows was built in 1891 by Alexander Whelan (Great Great Great Uncle of Elaine Bleakney, one of our members) on a site donated by the Fegan family, who owned the row of houses on that side of the street. The windows have stained glass each with a different Masonic symbol at its centre.

Two lodges meet here and each lodge is run by its members headed by a Worshipful Master, supported by various other officers.



#### **5. Chandler's House, Church Square**

The first known record of a building on this site is from a 1776 map of Rathfriland, one of those which members of ABCFHA used to transcribe tenant names, and also from a lease document between Laghlin Fegan and the Meade estate. Laghlin's son John Fegan, born in 1793, set up a soap-making and candle factory on this site, which is how the building got the name 'Chandler's House'. The business was successful, with raw materials available from two tanneries existing in Rathfriland. One of these is clearly shown on the 1776 map, on nearby Downpatrick Street, and owned by John Caddell.

The factory provided employment for many workers processing the raw materials and also in soapbox-making for a shilling a day. John Fegan also owned 19 dwelling houses extending westward along the north side of John Street, which were needed to meet demand for accommodation in a fast-growing population, prior to the famine years.

By 1861 the property had been altered, and was a large 2.5 storey dwelling containing a Post Office, grocery store and dwelling. On his death in 1861 John Fegan left the dwelling house to his wife Mary, and his sons were bequeathed premises and stock to carry on the business. John Fegan's success had allowed him to buy properties and parcels of land around the town, one of which became Kiltariff Hall, built in 1880 by his eldest son William, and still in family ownership.

William Fegan inherited the dwelling house in Church Square from his mother Mary in 1873. In 1874 it was leased to the Hibernian Bank. In 1975 it became the Bank of Ireland, closing in June 2013.

In 2014 it was purchased by Rathfriland Regeneration Company and was officially opened as a community facility on 12 August 2014 by Mrs GME Shannon, née Fegan, great granddaughter of John Fegan.

Chandler's House was restored and repurposed by Rathfriland Regeneration Company and now Chandler's House contains 4 apartments and a music venue with an entertainment licence is on the ground floor. This listed building has been carefully restored to include many of the original features such as period fireplaces, doors, cornicing, and ceiling roses.



## 6. Rathfriland War Memorial, Church Square

The 20ft high granite clock tower stands at the head of Church Square, in remembrance of the 80 men from the town and district who died in the two World Wars. It was built in 1955.

The ground was donated by the Meade family and the £1100 required to build the memorial was raised by the local community. The clock cost £350, £300 of which was donated by Miss Jane Woods, teacher and member of the Royal British Legion. The upkeep is undertaken by the Royal British Legion.

The plaque in the front of the memorial was dedicated on the 1st March 1998, to those who died in the Northern Ireland conflict.



MOORE E.	SCOTT W. J.
MORROW W.	SKELLY J.
MURPHY W.	SMALL W. C.
MCCALLISTER JAS.	STRANACHAN R.
MCCALLISTER JOS.	TRAINOR P. A.
MCCALLISTER W. J.	VEACE C.
MCCUINNES A.	WALKER W.
MCCUINNES J.	WALSH R.
MCKNIGHT D.	WATT R.
MCKNIGHT W.	WEIR J.
NEWELL J.	WEIR JOS.
PATTERSON D.	WILSON D.
ROWAN J.	WILSON JAS.
ROWAN S.	WILSON JOHN
SCOTT JOHN	WOODS W.
SCOTT JOS.	WRIGHT D.
SCOTT S.	YOUNG W. J.
1939 — 1945	
CASSIDY J.	MAWHINNEY T. H.
CRORY WEIR	MCDOWELL J. I.
CRORY W.	MCDOW S.
HAIRE T. J.	MCKEE J.
'WE WILL REMEMBER THEM'	



<https://ulsterwarmemorials.net/rathfriland-co-down>

## 7. The Belfast Bank, Church Square

The first bank in Rathfriland was opened by the Belfast Banking Company in a room rented from Mr Robert Magill of the George Hotel on 19 June 1861. In 1862 the bank leased premises in the Square from a Mrs Osbourne, later building in 1910 the imposing purpose-built Bank House that can be seen in the Square. The architects were Graeme Watt and Tulloch, who designed many impressive buildings including libraries, villas at Purdysburn Hospital and the Provincial Bank in Abbey Street, Armagh.

In 1970 the Belfast Bank and the Northern Bank were merged by the owners, Midland Bank, and were known as the Northern Bank. A new sign was placed to cover the original 'Belfast Bank' name. In 1987 Northern Bank was sold to National Australian Bank, then sold to Danske Bank, which closed the premises in 2011. The building is now in private ownership but the name Belfast Bank is still clearly visible on the facade of the building, with the newer signs removed.





## 8. The Market House, Church Square



In March 1764 Henry Waring of Waringsford submitted to Miss Theodosia Magill what he called “A scheme for the improvement of the estate and town of Rathfriland.” Amongst things he recommended “That all proper methods be taken to promote and encourage the Linen Market, and that a Market House be immediately built for the accommodation of the buyers and sellers of Linen, Cloth, Yarn, Meal etc.”

Following this recommendation, the Market House was erected shortly after 1764. The top portion was first used as an Estate Granary where the small farmers, who had no barns of their own, threshed and stored their grain while awaiting the market. The bottom was used to facilitate the buyers and sellers of flax and other commodities, the access to this portion being through open arched gateways, three on each side and one in the gable facing North.

The upper portion of the building was subsequently used for holding the Manor Courts and later it was used for holding the monthly Petty Sessions Court, and for other purposes. Within living memory, the lower portion was used by women from the Hilltown district for the sale of socks and other garments made from wool, which had been spun by themselves on their spinning wheels.

In 1951 Major Meade added a room for the Magistrate of the Petty Sessions Court and new weighbridges were installed, one inside for the weighing of pork, and one outside for the weighing of lorries. A portion of the lower part of the building which had been used as a prison in connection with the Petty Sessions Court after 1821, was removed in 1951, when the work of reconstruction was carried out. Major Meade’s crest appears on a granite stone which is set into the gable on the southside with his initials JWM and the date 1951. The Market House remained was sold by the Meade estate in the late 70s and is now in private ownership.

## 9. The Methodist Chapel, Church Square

On 28 May 1760, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, visited Rathfriland and preached in a meadow near to the town. Protestant and Catholic flocked to hear him. He again visited Rathfriland on 12 June 1787, when he preached in First Rathfriland Presbyterian Church on the invitation of the Minister, the Reverend Samuel Barber.

Wesley again visited Rathfriland for the third and last time on 11 June, 1789 and preached again in Mr Barber's Church. He was then 86 years of age.

On 5 September 1831 David Allen, of Rathfriland, his son, and a Minister had a conference with General Meade at Burrenwood when they asked for a Deed or Lease before they would begin to build a meeting house for Methodists preaching. The General told them that they would undoubtedly get a lease when the building was completed, following inspection by Mr Brush, his agent.

They proceeded with the proposed plan, and the Methodist Chapel was open for worship in the following year.

It was the upper portion of the building subsequently occupied in the 1920s by Mr Robert Harbinson, druggist, in Church Square and there was an inscription on a stone in front of the building "Methodist Chapel 1832", now illegible.

Regular services were held in the building until early in the 20th century after which The Rathfriland Silver Band used the premises for practice for many years.

The building is currently unused.



## 10. The Clanwilliam Arms, also known as 'The Old Inn', Church Square

It was built by John Hawkins with stones taken from the Magennis Castle around 1682. The original three-storey building still stands and now houses the three businesses from the corner of Newry Street along the square. In 1688 a Town Guard was formed here by John Hawkins.



Dean Jonathon Swift, satirist, author and Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, stayed here on his way to Newry, probably around 1729.

In 1792 Wolfe Tone, leader of the United Irishmen on his second visit to Rathfriland, was refused food by the landlord, Mr Murphy. He recorded in his diary "stop at Murphy's Inn. Got paper and began to write to Dr Tighe (*Vicar of Drumballyroney, who coached Patrick Brontë*), Mr Barber (*Minister of First Rathfriland Presbyterian*), and Mr Lowry (*owner of linen mills at Katesbridge*). Stopped short by the intelligence that the landlord will give us no accommodation; the fellow absolutely refuses. He has cold beef and lamb chops but will give us neither and turns off on his heel."

The cellars of the building, which are extensive, were reputed to have been used by "The Hellfire Club." These clubs, popular in the 18th century, were often patronised by 'persons of quality' and promoted 'drunkenness, immorality and a disregard for social convention'. The last lessee, Daniel Keane, gave up the lease of the property in 1829, after which it ceased to function as an inn.

Crane Brush, agent of General Meade, lived in the Estate Office in the central part of the building. Tenants of the Meade Estate came to pay their rent and the steps in front of the hall door were known as 'Crane's Steps' or 'Brush's Steps'.

## 11. The Temperance Hotel, Newry St and Ulster Bank, Newry St/Dromore St

The second building down was the former Temperance Hotel, where alcohol was not served. In 1886 it was owned by Mrs Annie Dixon, a widow who stated in the 1901 census that she belonged to the Christian Brethren. In Rathfriland there were four temperance societies in existence around that time. On the night of the 1901 census there were just 2 people staying there, one of whom was a commercial traveller from Birmingham. Mrs Dixon employed two live-in servants to help in the hotel. Her unmarried son, Hugh, who was a watch maker, also lived at the hotel as did Annie's unmarried sister, Agnes McKee, who was listed as a shopkeeper. The hotel had 10 outbuildings, including a stable and coach house and other farm buildings.

The hotel passed through the hands of several other owners until in 1914 it became the Alexandra Hotel, owned by Hagan and Gosling. In 1928 it again became the Temperance Hotel and was owned by Joseph Carter, before becoming the property of the Davenport family in 1940.

The building on the corner was at one time the Ulster Bank. It now houses Fisher and Fisher, Solicitors.

