



Kildare County Council
Comhairle Contae Chill Dara



Welcome to

Rathangan

Discover the stories of this picturesque town situated in the heart of Ireland's Ancient East. Please download the free accompanying Rathangan audio guide through the QR code above or visit www.abartaheritage.ie/rathangan-audio-guide

1. INTRODUCTION

Rathangan, County Kildare lies on the edge of the vast Bog of Allen and on the banks of the River Slate and the Grand Canal. The town has a long and fascinating history with stories about the ancient Kingdom of Uí Fhailge, the Norman conquest and the 1798 rebellion. Many notable literary figures came from Rathangan including Maura Laverty and the poet William A. Byrne. This guide will walk you through the story of Rathangan by visiting the many tangible reminders of the town's history and heritage.

2. THE RATH & CHURCH OF IRELAND

The large rath or ringfort near the Church of Ireland gives Rathangan its name (**Ráth Iomgháin**) and was the stronghold of the kings of Uí Fhailge before it was seized by the Normans. In the Church of Ireland graveyard are the graves of two men, Captain James Spencer of Rathangan House and Captain John Doorly, who were on opposite sides during the 1798 Rebellion.

3. LEINSTER STREET

Notable people associated with Leinster Street are the 19th century novelist **Bithia Mary (BM) Croker** (a forgotten figure in Irish literature) and the geologist **Sir Richard Griffith**. BM Croker was a prolific novelist who produced more than 50 books. Sir Richard Griffith was a pupil in the school here on Leinster Street during the 1798 Rebellion. He is best remembered for **Griffith's Valuation** in the mid-19th century and his role in overseeing the valuation of every piece of land and building in Ireland.

4. MARKET SQUARE

As you walk along Leinster Street towards Market Square, you will notice many fine examples of **Georgian architecture**. These buildings date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They reflect a period of prosperity and growth in Rathangan following the arrival of the Grand Canal in 1784. Market Square has been the commercial heart of Rathangan since the Normans developed the town in the 13th century. During the 20th century, the growth of the **peat industry** in Rathangan's hinterland helped the town to thrive.

5. NEW STREET

Many buildings of importance in the **social, educational and religious life** of Rathangan can be found along New Street. They include two former primary schools, the former church (now a community centre), the former Mercy convent and the modern Church of the Assumption and St Patrick.

6. QUAKERS IN RATHANGAN

The **Quaker** cemetery brings to mind the important contribution of the Quaker community to the social and commercial life of Rathangan. The nearby **Sally Corn Mill** was an important enterprise throughout the 1800s. Here you can admire the distinctive yellow brick bridge which was erected in just seven days.

7. MAURA LAVERTY & THE POUND

The memorial to **Maura Laverty** reminds us of her prolific output as a writer from the 1920s to the 1960s. Born in Rathangan in 1907, she wrote drama, novels and cookery books. Close by is the **old Pound**, which was used to hold stray animals in the 19th century.

8. RIVER SLATE

The banks of the River Slate are a haven for flora and fauna, including **birds, butterflies, bats and flowers**. **Otters, brown trout and eels** can also be found. Many of the plants and animals found along the Slate are protected by law. Keeping this natural area clean and unpolluted allows these creatures to flourish.

9. WILLIAM A. BYRNE & THE CANAL STORES

A monument close to the bridge commemorates William A. Byrne, a **Rathangan-born poet** of the early 20th century who drew inspiration from the local landscape, especially the bogs. The Purple Heather planted around the monument to Byrne, evokes his poem of the same name which celebrates the work of turf cutters. Nearby are the Canal Stores, a **former malthouse** which was one of Rathangan's largest industries during the 1900s.

10. THE TOWPATH, TANNERY PARK & SPENCER BRIDGE

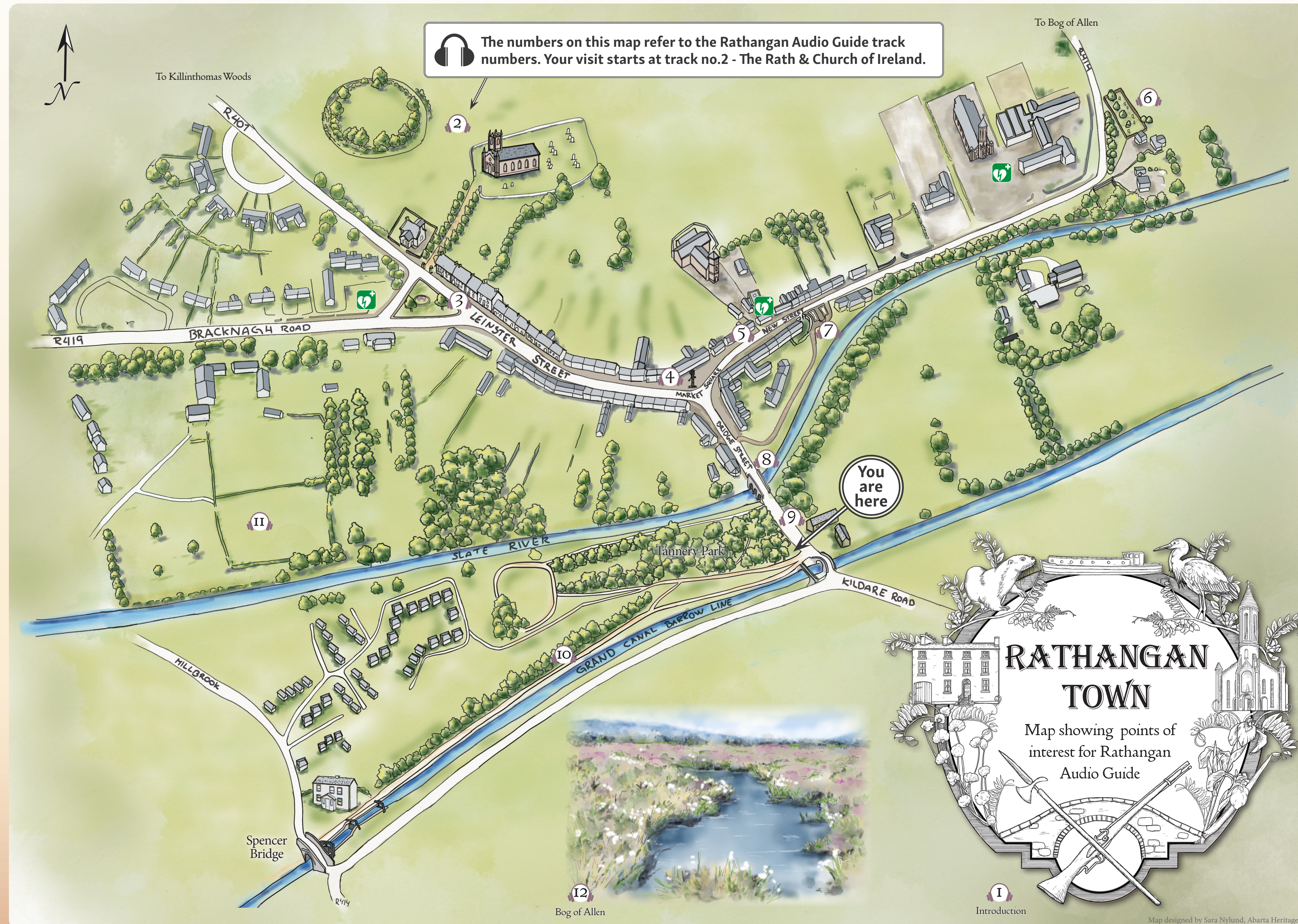
A stroll along the towpath will give you an appreciation of the importance of the **Grand Canal to Rathangan**. When it **arrived in 1784**, the canal connected Rathangan to the outside world and helped trade to flourish. Spencer Bridge and the adjacent double lock are fine examples of canal infrastructure.

11. RATHANGAN CASTLE

Although no trace of Rathangan Castle remains today, it was central to the story of the development of the town in medieval times, when Anglo Normans were in conflict with the native Irish. The castle was the site of numerous military engagements, most notably during the **rebellion of Silken Thomas Fitzgerald** in 1534.

12. CONCLUSION

We hope you enjoyed your tour around Rathangan. There are many more interesting sites and stories to be found in the surrounding area. Other places of interest in the locality are **Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park**, the **Bog of Allen Nature Centre**, also in Lullymore, and **Killinthomas Wood**, which has a number of looped walks.



BE SAFE Use the footpath when walking from one location to the next and take care while crossing the road. Keep children under close supervision along the road as well as along the waterways. In case of emergency, phone 999 or 112. Public accessible defibrillators are available in three locations along the Rathangan Heritage Trail (see AED symbol on the map).

LEAVE NO TRACE Help us keep Rathangan clean and tidy. Please dispose of waste in the street bins along the Heritage Trail. Dogs are welcome on the Heritage Trail. Please keep them on a leash and dispose of their waste in the street bins.