

HERITAGE WALKING TRAILS IN NEWTOWNABBEY BALLYNURE



Town of the Yew Tree

Ballynure Historical Group

TO GET TO BALLYNURE

Take the M2 motorway, leaving at Junction 4 (A8 Larne). From the main roundabout, follow the A8 through Corr's Corner roundabout and after about 6 miles turn right at the sign for Ballynure. Turn right and park at the Methodist church.

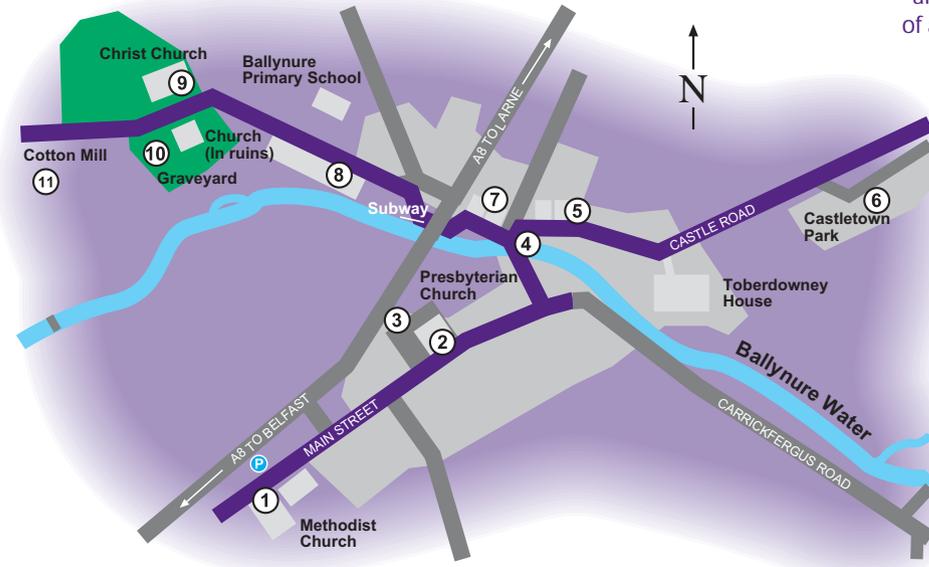
The walk will take 1 - 1 1/2 hours. Take care on roads at all times. Children should be accompanied by an adult.



1. Ballynure Methodist Church was the idea of Mr Robert Beatty, a prosperous village merchant. He assumed responsibility for the fundraising, design and construction of the building, assisted by his neighbouring farmers. The church, built in 1846, was the first formal meeting place for Methodists from the surrounding areas. Before this they met in private houses in the adjoining townlands. The building was extended in 1895 and again in 1992.

2. Walk on down Main Street. The Presbyterian church was established by a Mr Lorimer and built by public subscription in 1723. In 1797 the minister, Reverend Adam Hill, was imprisoned for a short time in Carrickfergus jail. His wrongdoing was that he had allowed a wake to be held in the church for the remains of one William Orr. Orr had been hanged in Carrickfergus earlier that day for his activities as a United Irishman.

3. Before the present village primary school was established in 1930, the education system centred around the now demolished National School built in 1856 in what is now the Presbyterian church car park.



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4. Turn left just after the church at Ivy Cottages. McKinstry's shop on this corner was of interest, not for its wares but for the activities in its cellar. It was used as a meeting place for local sympathisers of the United Irishmen movement in the 1790s. These activities apparently went unnoticed by the constabulary in the police station across the street.



5. From here, turn right up Castle Road to the old police station on the left. In the 1840s Ballynure Police Station housed four policemen. They may have used the vertical slits in the wall to view the local people and as an opening for firing rifles in their own defence.

6. Walk up Castle Road to Castletown Park, once the site of a linen-beetling mill. It was owned by the Girvan family and powered by a waterwheel driven by water from Straid dam through a man-made watercourse. The beetling process gave a finish to linen cloth. The mill was closed in the late 1930s and was used as an army camp during the war before being demolished and developed as a housing estate.

7. Walk back down to the village. The blacksmith's shop that exists today was originally a joiner's workshop. The original blacksmith occupied a site adjacent to the current one and was an important aspect of local rural life.

8. Continue through the subway and, on exiting, turn left and walk down this road. The land on the left, adjoining the graveyard, was named 'Preachers Green'. Dean Jonathan Swift, rector of the parish in 1695-6 and author of 'Gulliver's Travels'; is said to have preached here one Sunday when a congregation failed to turn up at the parish church.

9. Walk along the road to the Church of Ireland. This picturesque church was designed by Joseph Welland of Dublin and built between 1854 and 1856 at a cost of £2,000. The church replaced an earlier structure which only measured 12 metres by 8 metres (38 by 25 feet). The ruins of this earlier church remain in the graveyard across the road.



10. The graveyard opposite the church contains three burial vaults for the well-known local families of Dobbs and Ellis, and a corpse house used as an initial resting place to thwart graverobbers. Also buried here is Reverend Adam Hill, known for his support of William Orr, the United Irishman. The oldest grave, dated 1698, contains the remains of Elenor Clemens, an ancestor of Samuel Leghorn Clemens (Mark Twain), the author of 'Tom Sawyer' and 'Huckleberry Finn'.



11. Leave the graveyard and turn left. Walk a short distance and look across the fields on your left. You will see the ruins of a cotton mill, built in 1822 by Mr Robert Howe as a five-storey factory. The adjacent river was used to provide water power through a system of dams feeding a 9-metre (28-foot) waterwheel. Mr Howe also provided workers' cottages as part of the complex. The mill was closed in 1864 when the American Civil War disrupted the supply of raw materials.



The buildings were then used for a period by the McKerrel Brothers for the manufacture of farm machinery, and later for the storage of bauxite from the mines at Straid. The mill was eventually destroyed by fire. The mill ruins are on private land and access is restricted to the roadside.

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Selected books

OLD FAMILIES OF CARRICKFERGUS AND BALLYNURE
Compiled by George Rutherford, edited by Richard Clarke
Ulster Historical Foundation, 1995

THROUGH THE AGES TO NEWTOWNABBEY
Robert Armstrong, second edition, 1995

ORDNANCE SURVEY MEMOIRS:
Parishes of County Antrim XII, Vol 32
Institute of Irish Studies

SAILING SHIP AND SUGAR PLANTER
A history of Ballynure Methodism
Hubert Greer, 1996



This leaflet has been part-funded by the Economic Development Department, Newtownabbey Borough Council.

* The information in this leaflet is available in large print on request.