

2. Templeglantine - Abbeyfeale [Great Southern Trail]

This disused railway line has recently been opened as a walkway. It is a pleasant walk through West Limerick's rolling countryside that passes through woodland and follows a meandering river. Walking distance 18 km round trip, Time 4.5 hrs. Terrain easy, gravelled path. O.S. Map 72: Start grid ref R198277

It is now possible to walk the old Railway Track starting from Barnagh Tunnel [Walk 3] all the way to the disused Railway Station at Abbeyfeale [Point7]. This section opened in March 2007 is not shown on this map. It joins this walk at [Point2].

Starting at Halla Inse Bhán, opposite the church at Templeglantine [Point 1] walk down the road beside the Hall passing the bottle banks. After a short distance the road crosses a small stream. It then passes some houses and bends sharply where you will find the entrance for the rail track [Point 2]. Continue left along the track where Meadowsweet, Goosegrass (also known as Sticky-back), Herb Robert, Meadow Vetchling and Purple-loosestrife grow in the ditch. A good warm summer will see Painted Lady, Red Admiral and Peacock Butterflies. A party of Long-tailed Tits with their cee-cee-cee calls may flit among the Hawthorn hedgerow. They are like balls of cotton with a long tail, rarely seen on their own. The track passes a road where you will find Dame's Violet under the Ash tree on the right. As the rail track bends around it eventually meets a wooden bridge [Point 3]. Tullig Wood gradually emerges ahead, which is mainly Beech, Oak and Ash with Hazel and Elm. There is also Sweet Chestnut growing amongst the Beech. The ground flora is best seen in spring, with many Bluebells, Violets and Primroses. A steep bank slopes down on the left where Badgers may be found and at night Barn Owls hunt. Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap give a blast of song during the summer, when Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and Ringlet butterflies are plentiful. Look out for the metallic blue/green Beautiful Jewelwing perching on the leaves of Beech. This is a scarce damselfly in Limerick that breeds in fast flowing upland stony rivers. As you come down the track and into open country look across the valley for passing Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. On reaching a small car park [Point 4], follow the road to the left and then turn left again under the dismantled bridge. Immediately after this bridge there is a flight of steps that will bring you back onto the rail track. Soon you will pass the old Devon Road railway station. Continue along the track.



Allaghaun River

2. Templeglantine - Abbeyfeale [Great Southern Trail]



Tullig Wood

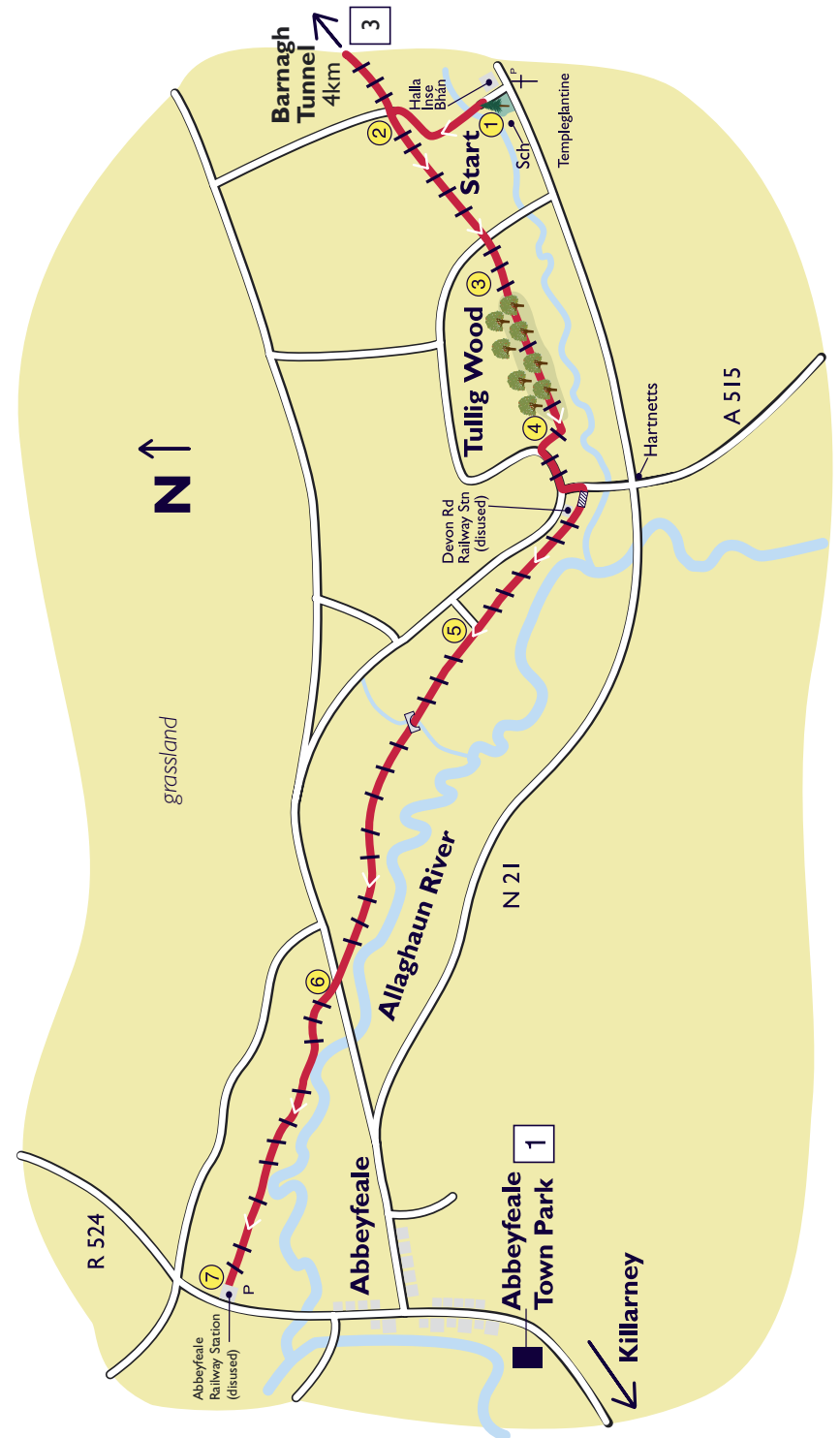
a road bridge. Grey Wagtails are often seen bobbling along the bank. The river comes quite close in places, which gives good views. There is a stand of Alder trees where the river disappears out of sight. After crossing a wooden bridge made from railway sleepers continue along until you reach the old railway station at Abbeyfeale [Point 7]. The walls of the station yard have Polypody fern, Rustyback fern and Maidenhair Spleenwort. We have now reached the end of the walk.

From here you can return back the same way or avail of the hourly Bus Éireann service from the Square in Abbeyfeale to Limerick. There are options of shorter loop walks at **Points 4, 5 and 6.**



Badger (John Carey)

The sound of water is never far away. At various points along the way there are good views of the Allaghaun River, the banks of which are sandy and steep. This provides the ideal home for Sand Martins, and this area holds the largest known colony in the County. Swallows and House Martins may also be seen flying over the water amongst them. The stony riverbed attracts the Common Sandpiper where young have been seen during the summer months, suggesting that they have bred here. Look out for the green flowers of Irish Spurge growing on the track. Further along you will cross over a bridge made from sleepers. There is an area of Hazel before the track passes under



3. Barnagh Tunnel [Great Southern Trail]

Situated 6 km to the west of Newcastle West on the Killarney road [N21], this tunnel was developed as part of the old railway system from Limerick to Tralee. A deep gorge had to be blasted out by navvies in the 1870s. Since the railway has been disused the wild life has taken over. There are also scenic views of the Golden Vale below. Now developed by Great Southern Trail [www.southerntrail.net], this is one of those 'must visit' places in the County, if only to discover and try to appreciate the achievements of those early pioneers who built the railway with dynamite, shovel and bare hands.

Walking distance 2km round trip, Time 30 min. Terrain easy. O.S. Map 64: Start grid ref R234308.

It is now possible to walk the old Railway Track starting from **[Point 12]** to the disused Railway Station at Abbeyfeale. After 4km this walk joins Walk 2 at **[Point2]** which is shown on Map 2.

Starting at the lay-by [Point 11], a set of wooden steps beside the Heritage Council signboard leads the way down onto the disused rail track. Proceed down these where you will meet a gate on your right. Enter this and follow the track past a Sycamore tree. Bullfinch and Goldcrest can be seen in the Willows and Hawthorn where Tutsan, Tufted Vetch and Maidenhair Spleenwort are found on the ground. Soon you will reach a road bridge; cross this and continue past the old Barnagh Gardens. Wild Strawberries, Ox-eye Daisies and Bird's-foot Trefoil (also known as Old Granny's Toenails because of its seed pods) spread across the limestone ballast, which tempts butterflies to visit. Yarrow and Dandelion can also be found; both of these plants were used in times gone by for medicinal purposes. If you had a liver complaint and you could not go-to-the-toilet, you would be prescribed to eat Dandelion leaves. The next day you might find that you have wet-the-bed, hence its nickname "pissy bed". Spotted Flycatchers sit on the wire, occasionally swooping down after insects and returning to the same spot. When you pass a metal gate the hedgerows thicken and a gorge appears ahead. Ravens have nested here for many years. When approaching the tunnel entrance you will be greeted by their barking calls. The Kestrel can be seen hovering overhead looking for prey below.



View from the starting point

3. Barnagh Tunnel [Great Southern Trail]



Barnagh Tunnel (John Considine)

Blackcaps also breed here; listen for their fast and loud blast of song. A very distinctive feature of the deep and damp rock cutting are the well-developed shuttlecocks of Lady Fern and Scaly Male-fern. Walk through the tunnel where you will find green netting has been placed at the western entrance. This is to stabilise the air conditions to benefit the bat population. Under this netting the wall is covered with Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage.

A little further on is a fine example of Royal Fern growing on the face of the gorge. At this point the track becomes waterlogged and wellington boots are needed. Ragged Robin and patches of tall Water Figwort occur here. In sunny weather during May look out for the brightly coloured Orange Tip feeding on Lady's Smock. Speckled Wood are to be found in shady areas most of the summer. Over one hundred Spring Redtail damselflies have been seen in the waterlogged area near the old station. Moorland Hawkets patrol the cutting and a few Common Darters may also be seen. About one hundred and forty different kinds of plants, nine species of butterfly and three species of dragonfly have been found along this walk. Return back the way you came.

