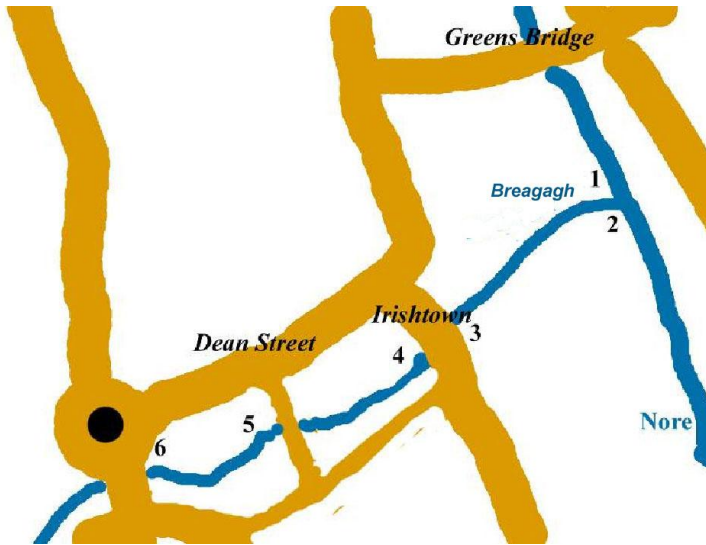


The Breagagh and its bridges



The River Breagagh rises a few miles to the south-west of Kilkenny City.

1. It enters the Nore just below Green's Bridge.



2. The old tower partly hidden by trees is Evans Turret.

It was part of the wall of the Hightown of Kilkenny. The bridge beyond the turret connects one part of St. Francis Abbey Brewery with another.

3. The Watergate bridge separates Irishtown from the rest of the city. Though the present



bridge is fairly modern, there has been a bridge on this site since the thirteenth century. This was the site of the Water Gate, one of the gates in the city walls. On our left was the Hightown and on the right was Irishtown, a separate town with its own walls and gates, and its own Corporation. Just upstream, the city wall was on the south bank of the river.

4. This stretch of the Breagagh has the old city wall on the south bank, seen on the left of this photo. On the far side of the river is Irishtown. There was a weir at the bend, which diverted a small mill stream under what is now Parliament Street and down into the Nore through what is now St. Francis Abbey.



5. Friars' Bridge is named for the Dominican Friars of the Black Abbey, which stood just beside the bridge. It has three arches. The structures sticking out from this side are called cutwaters. They helped prevent the floodwater from pushing at the pillars of the bridge, and knocking them over.

Note the remains of another bridge on the right.



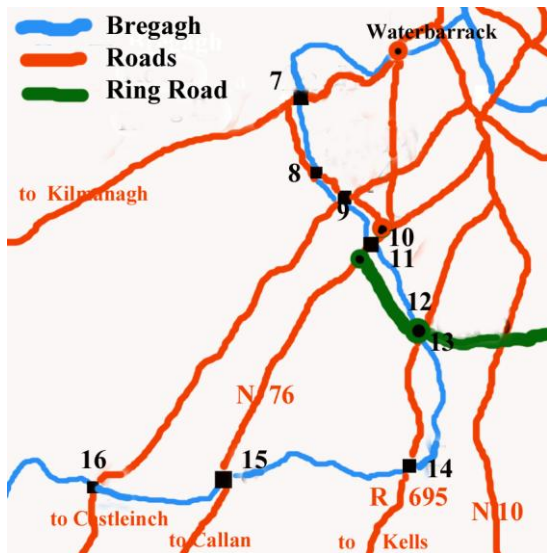
The Black Abbey stands on the bank of the Breaghagh. The Abbey buildings were once much more extensive than they are today. As well as the church, there would have been a cloister and various convent buildings. Can you see the remains of an arch below the old window? The level of the ground inside the wall may have been a good deal lower in the past.



In the photo on the right above you can see Blackmill Street. There was a bridge in line with the high wall facing you on the right bank of the river. This very old bridge was demolished to ease flooding in Blackmill Street.



6. Waterbarrack. This modern bridge connects Dominic Street with the Butts Roundabout. It is a reinforced concrete slab laid on piers.



West of this bridge the Bregagh is crossed by the road to Kilmanagh, by a road which goes out by Castleinch, by the Callan Road, the Kells Road, and the Ring Road. As you can see from the map, it flows in a slow winding course, crossing the Callan road twice, and the Kells Road twice. Some of the bridges are modern, and others are quite old. All along its course, this little river has, in the past, caused serious flooding.

This is the Waterbarrack football pitch. The small white building is Kenny's Well, named after St. Canice (Cainneach or Kenny). The Bregagh is hidden from our view, but you can see where it flooded the pitch. From the well, a very short stream flows into the river, one of several small tributaries which join the Bregagh.



7. This hump-backed two-arch bridge is on the road to Ballycallan and Kilmanagh. In recent years, it has been found necessary to put a traffic light on both ends of the stretch of road crossing the bridge, because cars and lorries have been using the Circular Road and this bridge to bypass Stephen Street and Dominic Street. On the right you can see damage done to the parapet of the bridge.

A short distance upstream is a concrete slab bridge put in to enable the owner of the field to cross the stream. You can get some idea of the force of the Bregagh in flood by the way the new channel has been carved out, making the little bridge useless. The Circular Road is beyond the trees to the right of our picture.





This little bridge allows a small tributary stream to cross under the Circular Road, and enter the Breagagh.

8. A modern concrete bridge brings the Circular Road across the Breagagh.



9. The road leading from Walkin Street, crosses the Circular Road near here, and after crossing the Breagagh over this bridge it divides in two a few hundred yards to the west. The left fork leads on through Wetlands and Castleinch to join the Callan Road near Cuffesgrange.

10. Between the roundabouts at Hotel Kilkenny and at the start of the Ring Road is this bridge which is just on the Borough Boundary – the line which has marked the limits of Kilkenny City since 1844. The concrete bridge with its unlovely pipe spoiling the view from the Ring Road replaced an earlier stone bridge.



11. Upstream of this spot, behind the gardens of Hotel Kilkenny is an old ford on Coote's Lane (also known as Quarry Lane). This lane formerly led to a house which is now tumbled down and is cut off from the rest of the lane by the Ring Road. In the 1940's there was a simple wooden footbridge on the right, so that pedestrians could cross dry-shod. Horse and cart traffic could go through the ford, which was cobbled.

12. At the Kells Road Roundabout, the Breagh is crossed by two bridges. One allows it to cross under the Ring Road.



13. The second is a widening of an older bridge. Seen here from the south, the old bridge is under the road just where the car is, and the new bridge is under the rest of the road.



On the left is the view from upstream. On the right is the downstream view.



Farther out the Kells Road, at Birchfield, a bridge was built on private property to bring the avenue to Birchfield House over the river.



14. This bridge allows the Kells Road to cross the river for the second time.

Upstream of the bridge, the bank on the left had side of the photo has been built up to match the height of the far bank. Why do you think this was done?



Farther upstream the Breagh crosses the Callan Road for the second time and the road to Castleinch. Because of the way the river winds about to the south-west and south of Kilkenny City, it has been necessary over the years to build a large number of bridges to carry roads over it. The fact that it winds about through low-lying land makes it liable to flooding.