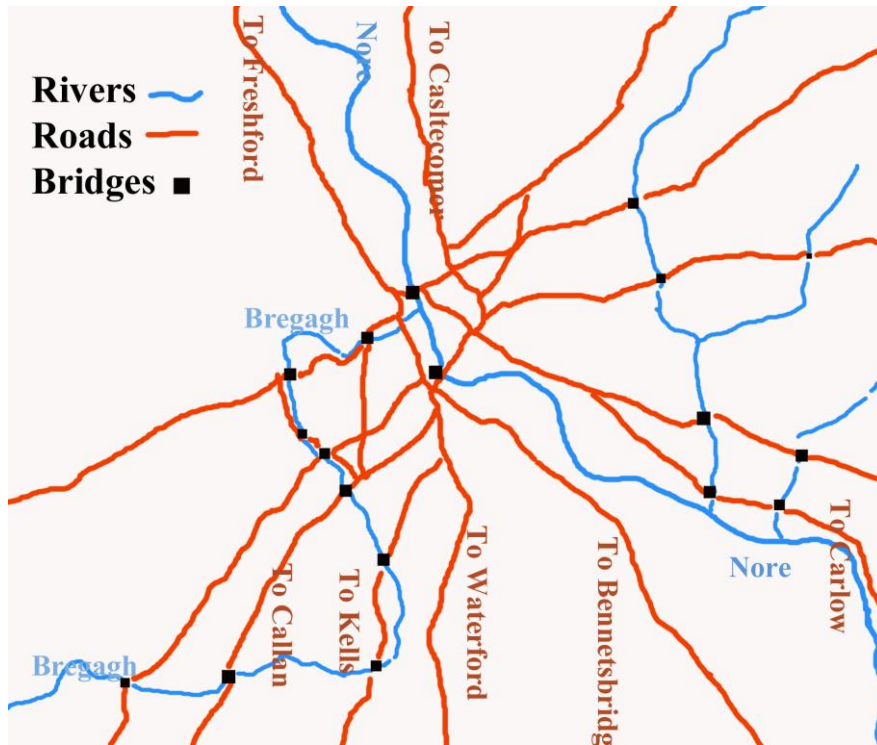


## The Nore and its Bridges

Kilkenny is built on the Nore. The name in Irish is An Fheoir, which probably means *the boundary*. The river rises far to the north in the Slieve Bloom Mountains between Laois and Offaly. The monastery, cathedral and small town which existed before the Norman invasion was built on the west bank of the river. Nowadays the Nore is crossed by three bridges – Green’s Bridge, John’s Bridge and Ossory Bridge.



The Bregagh flows into the Nore from the west and formed the boundary between the Irishtown and the Hightown. Its name in Irish, Bréagagh means *deceitful*. This is a fairly small stream which rises within a few miles of the city, but meanders (*wanders*) so much that it cuts across three of the roads to the southwest – The Kells Road, Callan Road, Ballycallan Road. It was necessary to build at

least nine bridges in the city or just outside to bring these roads over the Bregagh. The Ring Road around the south and east of the city also crosses the Bregagh as well as the Nore, but this road is not shown on the above map



There are two small streams flowing in from the east and joining the Nore below the city. You can see here that it was necessary to build a road bridge and a railway bridge to cross this tiny stream. There was probably a ford at this point in ancient times.

## Green's Bridge



There was a great flood in 1763 that washed away bridges all along the course of the River Nore. In Kilkenny City, John's Bridge and Green's Bridge had to be replaced. Of these two bridges, Green's Bridge is still standing, but John's Bridge was replaced in 1910.

Green's Bridge was built in 1766, and parapets were added in 1835. The parapet on the upstream side, not visible in this

picture was removed in 1969 and a footpath constructed on concrete supports. The bridge looks beautiful in this photograph, but the view from upstream is quite ugly. It was designed by George Smith and built in 1766 by William Colles. There was a mill on each side of the river and these weirs forced water into the mill streams, and operated the water wheels which worked the mill machinery. When the River Nore was being deepened, the old weirs were investigated by archaeologists. As well as the mills which were worked in modern times, they found remains of earlier mills, and earlier weirs.



The present bridge was not the first at this point on the river Nore. The remains of the bridge washed away in 1763 can still be seen in the river. The stonework of the old bridge can be seen when the river is fairly low due to a prolonged dry spell.

The next picture gives an idea of the extent of the remains. You can imagine the arches of the bridge based on the remains of the piers which supported it. You are looking here from the end of Green's Street. On the





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far side of the river there is a small bridge over an old mill race.

In 1568 the Corporation of Irishtown decided to repair the bridge and the town wall beside it and agreed:

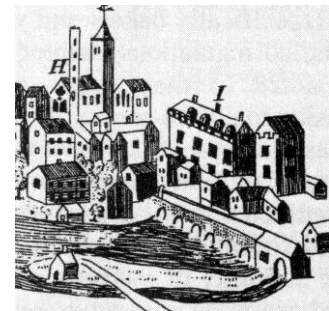
That Richard Poore and John Busher shall be overseers of the said work, and shall have for their daily wages a tester ... and shall have a quart of wine at the town charges ... and that Robert Roth, sergeant, every day that he attends the same work shall have two white groats for his pains. The overseers shall borrow of Richard Poore as much lime as shall be needful for the work ... and pay him ten harps for every barrel.

In 1586 the Corporation of Irishtown decided, "that no person whatsoever shall wash any cloths either above the bridge of the Irishtown or any place near the same, where the neighbours do draw water, upon pain of forfeiture of the cloths and imprisonment."

By 1623 the bridge was again in need of repair and the corporation made an arrangement with Michael Poore, one of the burgesses of Irishtown, that he would pay thirty shillings sterling towards the repair of the bridge, and that in return he would be freed for all time from the duty of becoming Portreeve of Irishtown. By 1632 the situation was indeed serious, and the portreeve and burgess, having viewed the ruins of the bridge under water, saw how dangerous it was "for horse or passengers to be cast over the bridge." They were given a grant of five pounds from the corporation of the City of Kilkenny and looked for contributions from the citizens of Irishtown "to pay labourers for digging of stones, and conveying the water from the bridge and breaking the weir."

The Bishop of Ossory, Jonas Wheeler gave two pounds for the work; the high sheriff of County Kilkenny gave two pounds; the Vicars Choral of St. Canice's Cathedral gave one pound ten shillings, and Mr. Patrick Morphy gave the use of 24 carriage horses, as well as paying for a boat to help in the work. In July the masons Teig O'Hegan and Patrick Lonan were to be paid 16 pence for their daily work and watermen and boatmen were to get twelve pence. The portreeve was instructed to send sixty labourers "to break the weirs of George Shee and Robert Wall to let go the backwater."

The drawing shows Green's Bridge in the seventeenth century. You can make out Green's Gate on the far bank, and a mill stream flowing under the nearest arch on this side. Today you can trace the course of this mill stream as it goes under a side arch of the 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge, and a short distance upstream an old bridge still spans the watercourse.



The weir in the next photo has now been lowered to help prevent flooding of Green's Street. In this view the far side of the weir is fairly intact but the near side has been badly damaged. However, you can just make out the start of the fish pass at the V of the weir. Fifty years ago, when the salmon were coming upstream to spawn, there was a strong flow of water down this pass. The salmon would swim against this current, and people would lean over the parapet of Green's

Bridge to watch them leap.

## John's Bridge



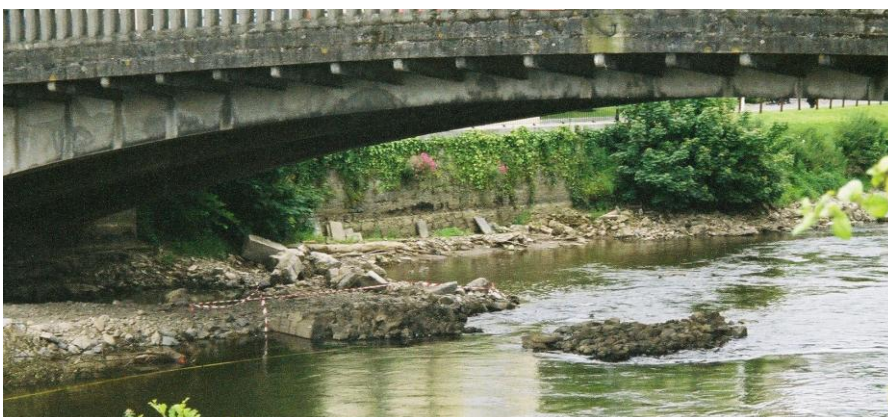
John's Bridge is a reinforced concrete structure built in 1910, to replace the bridge seen below which resembled Green's Bridge, and was

built at the same time to replace an earlier John's Bridge washed away in 1763. When the new John's Bridge was opened, the old one was taken down. The new bridge, at the time it was opened, was the longest single-arch reinforced concrete bridge in Britain or Ireland. In the picture the Nore looks like a fine wide river, but this is because we are



really looking at a large millpond – the Town Pond. The weir downriver from John's Bridge can be seen on the left. It diverted water into a millstream on the right of picture.

In this picture we can see the base of one of the supports of the 1765 bridge. It was a little upriver of the modern bridge. Under the modern structure, you can make out part of the stonework of the bridge which was washed away in 1763. This photograph was taken during the drainage works on the River Nore. To lower the level of the water, the weir downstream of the bridge was breached. The width of the river here is something like what it would be if it hadn't been dammed to create the town pond.



The bridge which was washed away by the great flood of 1763 replaced an older bridge repaired in 1618. The remains of this bridge were visible when the work on deepening the river bed was going on in connection with the

Nore Flood Relief Scheme.

In 1618, James Conway and Teige O'Hegan were the builders chosen to replace two broken arches and the pillars which supported them. The agreement between the Mayor, William Shee, and these two masons was reproduced in the Kilkenny Moderator in August 1871. The



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masons agreed to provide the stone and other materials for the work, find lime and sand for making mortar, divert the course of the river from the side where the arches and pillars were to be built, and “*that they shall finde sufficient tyMBER for frames and find carpenders and workmen for making upp and laying of the said frame with Piles and Pales havinge astlers and pavinge stoanes according to the Plote layd downe for the purpose by Mr. Edward Shee one of the Aldermen of the said Citty, and agreed unto by the said James and Teige.*”

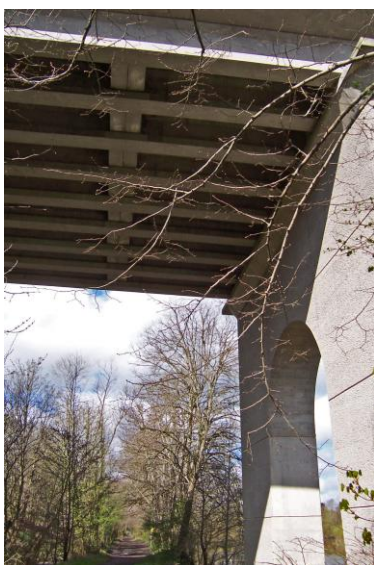
For doing the work and tidying up afterwards James and Teige were to be paid one hundred and fifteen pounds, forty immediately, forty when the work would begin and thirty-five on completion. Teige O’Hegan (*Tadhg Ó hAogáin*) also worked on Green’s Bridge in 1626.

[**astlers** or ashlar - squared blocks of building stone; **piles** - wooden poles driven into the bed of the river, **pales** - timber supports used during the building work, **plot** means plan]

## Ossory Bridge



Ossory Bridge brings the Ring Road over the River Nore. It was designed by De Leuw, Chadwick Ó hEocha and opened in 1984. The deck of the bridge is a reinforced concrete slab supported on precast beams. These are mounted on two piers and on abutment walls founded on the rock at either side of the river.



The Ring Road connects several important roads: the N 77 from Castlecomer and Athy; the N10 from Carlow which continues over Ossory Bridge and goes on to Waterford; the N 76 to Callan and Clonmel;

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regional roads to New Ross and Kells and a number of third grade roads. The only roads not connected are on the west and northwest of the city.



On the left is the bridge as it looked when newly built in 1984. The road surface slopes from the near side to the far. There is also a slight curve in the deck.

The sculpture in concrete on the approach to the bridge takes history as its theme. The six panels are repeated on each of the four corners of the approach roads. The sculptor was Joan Smith. The panels represent Kilkenny from the mythical founder of the Kingdom of Ossory, through medieval knights to the representation of an atom to remind us of the present time.

