

St. Francis Abbey

Although this is known as St. Francis Abbey, it was actually a Friary. The friars who lived here were Franciscans. It was founded in the thirteenth century by Richard Marshall, Lord of Leinster. His brother, William had founded the Black Abbey some years before. The lands of St. Francis Abbey lay within the Hightown, the main part of the town of Kilkenny. The River Bregagh separates it from Irishtown, and the River Nore is on its eastern side. Today it lies within the grounds of St. Francis Abbey Brewery, founded by the Smithwick family. For many years it produced Smithwicks Ale. It was taken over by



Guinness, and is now part of the Diageo Group.

In 1540 King Henry VIII had the abbey suppressed along with many other monasteries in the parts of Ireland controlled by the crown. The buildings have been in ruins for a very long time. Only the chancel and

the bell tower are still visible.

This tower is at the corner of St. Francis Abbey Brewery grounds. It was part of the city walls and was formerly known as Evans Turret. The River Bregagh is seen here just where it entered the River Nore.



The drawing on the right shows the scene in 1851. It exaggerates the height of tower of St. Francis Abbey other buildings. Evans



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Turret is also much taller than it is today. It may have been built on in the eighteenth century as a garden feature. The original turret may have been built in the 15th century. The artist, James George Robertson was standing on the far bank of the River Nore and his picture also shows a mill, which is now in ruins.