

# Thomastown Bridges

## Nicholas Mullins Bridge, Thomastown

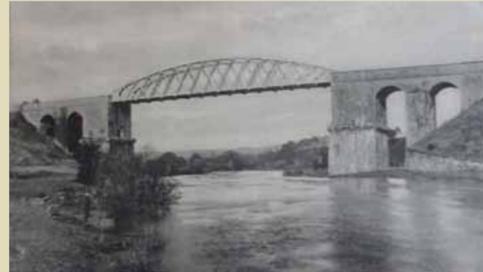
The first documentary reference to a bridge in Thomastown was in 1346 when a royal charter was granted for the repair and construction of the town's bridge and the right to charge a customs toll on all merchandise coming through the town for four years. It is not clear if there was an existing bridge at the time or a fording point. Whenever it was built the bridge remained the only such structure between Thomastown and New Ross for hundreds of years. IN 1649 the bridge was broken down by the Earl of Ormond and his men during the Cromwellian offensive in Co. Kilkenny. The bridge was later re-built and remained in place until 1763 when the Great Flood swept it completely away. The bridge was one of several re-built by George Smith, a well known classical architect of the time. Unfortunately it was severely damaged by another big flood in 1787. A temporary bridge was erected, followed by a new structure in 1792 which incorporates parts of the post-1763 bridge. The bridge was again damaged by flood in 1797 and repaired



following a subscription. A plaque on the downstream bridge facade reads : "This Bridge was repaired in the year 1799 under the inspection of Edward Hunt, Esq., and Anthony Sing Oxiciferous, Thos. O'Bryan Mason". The bridge was further damaged in the floods of 1947. In 1978 a parapet wall was removed and a cantilevered slab constructed to widen the deck. Thomastown Bridge comprises a substantial five-arched bridge structure spanning the River Nore between the townlands of Thomastown and Grennan. The bridge structure has been classed as being of regional importance and of technical/architectural significance. It is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as "an elegantly-composed substantial bridge forming an important element of the late eighteenth-century civil engineering heritage of Thomastown."

## Thomastown Railway Viaduct

This 65m span bridge was completed in 1877; it replaced an earlier wooden structure. The main body of the bridge is an iron girder structure with twin arched masonry approached. It is still used by the main Dublin-Waterford railway line.



# Smaller Bridges

## Dinin Bridge

This stone bridge crossing the Dinin River was built in 1792 and has three epiltical arches. It carries the Kilkenny to Ballyragget road.



## New Dinin (Gragara) Bridge

Designed by S. Carter and erected in 1840 by J Wright and T. Meehan, it has a decorative decorative stonework band and voussoirs (individual stones making the bridge's arches)



## (Old) Ennisnag Bridge

The old Ennisnag Bridge has been amended and extended over the centuries. Due to the amendment made it is difficult to date this bridge, it may have replaced earlier bridges. The earliest mention of a bridge in this area goes back to the thirteenth century. The current bridge is six segmental arch bridge, eighteen feet in width. A v shaped recess in the parapet wall it is said to be where the toll collector, as up until 1827 this was the original road between Kilkenny and Waterford



## Piltown Bridge

Spanning the Pill River, this bridge is made of rough or rubble stone, which may at one stage have been rendered. Built circa 1750 it consists of a pair of segmental arches with squared stone voussoirs (individual stones making the bridge arches). It has important design elements of the mid eighteenth century.



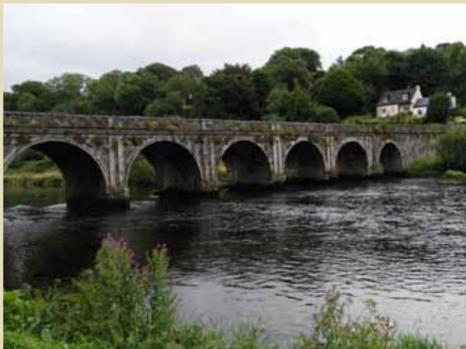
# Bridges OF Kilkenny

# Inistioge Bridge

Mentioned in the Annals of the Four Master's in 962, Inish-tee-g (Inistioge) was a place of victory for the Osraighi (Ossory) over the Norse "foreigners" of Dublin. It was the founding of the Priory of Inistioge in 1210 by Thoma Fitzanthy that lead to it's development as a market-town. The Charter of 1607 granted to Inistioge the right to hold markets and fairs and the preamble describes Inistioge as

"an ancient and royal borough, and from its strength, and situation on a navigable river, was of great importance for the service of the crown and the safety of the inhabitants of the counties of Kilkenny, Wexford and Carlow" Samuel Lewis A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland

Spanning the River Nore this eighteenth century bridge was built under the directive of the Navigation Board costing £900.00. The bridge replaced a previous bridge destroyed in the flood of 1763, consisting of 10 arches of equal size and was designed by the architect George Smith. It has been suggested that the bridge has withstood floods because the pressure on the bridge is equally divided. Decroative Columns known as Ionic pilasters decorate the southern side topped with volutes (decorative spiral scrollwork).



# Kells Bridge

After the Norman invasion of Ireland in 1170, the Barony of Kells was granted to Geoffrey Fitzrobert De Monte Maurisco by William, Earl Marshall. On the advice of Strongbow (Richard de Clare), he founded the Priory of Kells. He then built a Castle and subsequently the medieval town of Kells around 1193, which lies south of the castle.

The medieval town was located on the same site as the present village of Kells. The town grew throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and extended east of the Priory. The layout of the town was one main street with smaller street of the main street at right angles. With such street names such as Common Street, Royal Road, and Mid Street.

The King's river played a prominent part in the lives of the people of Kells. 16 Mills at one stage existed on the King's rivers between Callan and Ennisnag, four of these in or around Kells. Milling in the area was first mentioned in the charter of Kells Priory (1204-1206). Downstream from Kells Bridge stands Mullins Mill (although no longer in use as a mill) it is on the same site as the first mill in the area. Kells Bridge has played an important access point as it carries the main Kilkenny Road. The stone bridge originally made of 8 semi-circular arches has been widened over time on the down steam side with a five span addition of epiltical and semi-circular arches.



# Credits

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## Title Cover Images

John's Bridge  
Ossory Bridge Mural  
Inistioge Bridge—detail  
Thomastown Bridge

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## Introduction

Kilkenny is a County bounded by and dissected by rivers. From the earliest period of human settlement, rivers have both presented barriers and also access to what in the past was a heavily forested landscape. Crossings, fords and confluences of various rivers often provided the focus for settlement, e.g. Kilkenny City itself and Castlecomer. The construction of bridges at these points became essential for both

communications and commerce.

Kilkenny earliest bridges availed of both the technology and materials available at the time. Most were composed of timber and later stone. Most of the County's current bridges are from after the great flood of 1763 that destroyed most of the major bridges in the County. The legacy of this spate of bridge building is a rich collection of often Palladian influenced structures. Bridges role in communication was to be vividly illustrated shortly afterwards by the role many of these bridges played in the 1798

Rebellion namely in Castlecomer, Goresbridge and Graiguenamanagh.

In Kilkenny City itself recent growth has seen the construction of two new bridges across the Nore and also a pedestrian bridge in the City itself. These bridges like all before reflect the materials and technologies of the time.

The selection of bridges detailed below capture some of the wide selection that exists across the County.

Green's Bridge (circa 1710). The current Bridge was built in circa 1764 from a design by George Smith and consists of 5 elliptical arches. This was one of a number of bridges in Kilkenny rebuilt by Smith after the 'Great Flood of 1763'. The bridge is Classical in Style reflecting the Palladian Style then popular in Ireland. The inspiration for the design was the Roman Ponte di Tiberio bridge in Rimini, Italy one of the finest surviving Classical bridges. Like the Ponte, Green's Bridge has five arches with high quality dressed Limestone carvings visible from the City's other bridges.

St. John's Bridge is first mentioned in a charter from William Marshall (circa 1211) and first referred to as the Bridge of Kilkenny and St John's Bridge (circa 1707). The current bridge erected in 1910 of reinforced concrete, a new building method at the time. The single arch bridge spans 43 metres and was designed by L.G. Mouchel. This replaced a three-span bridge also designed by George Smith to replace an earlier one lost in the flood of 1763.

The Ossory Bridge was created as part of a traffic management system for the City. Designed by De Leuw ,Chadwick O'hEocha consulting engineers, the bridge spans 200 metres in length. At the end of the parapets of the bridge sculptural panels representing ancient events and people from Kilkenny's history, including Aenghus founder of the Kingdom of Ossory, Earl William Marshall builder of Kilkenny Castle, and St Canice can be seen. The sculptures were created by Joan Smith. In 1906 the village of Talbot's Inch was created by Lady Desart to accommodate her workers, a suspension bridge was created linking the village with the Greenvale Woollen Mills also owned by Lady Desart on the Bleach Road. This bridge was washed away in the great flood of 1947.

Blackfriars Bridge located in Abbey Street, is a three arch stone bridge spanning the river Bregagh. The earliest reference to the bridge that could be found is on Rocque's Map of Kilkenny in 1758 where it is referred to as "Fryars Bridge".

The Lady Desart Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge was opened on 30th January 2014 to improve access to the City centre. The bridge is 35 metres in length and links John's Quay with Bateman Quay. Named



## Bridges in Kilkenny

Most bridges in Kilkenny post-date 1650. The introduction of the Grand Jury system in 1765, meant that responsibility for local transport like roads and bridges passed from local parishes and communities to these larger bodies. Local taxes and tools were levied to raise funds and on 'presentment' of local roads and bridges by landowners and communities, funds were allocated.

Most bridges over small rivers and streams were single arch stone/rubble construction. On the larger rivers multiple arches were used to achieve the span – Nore, Inistioge 10 arches, 8 in use, Greens' Bridge, 8 arches, 5 in use and the Barrow, Goresbridge, 9 arches all in use and Graiguenamanagh, 7 arches, all in use.

As reported in Tighe's Statistical Observations relevant to the County of Kilkenny in 1800

' The Nore is crossed by three stone bridges above Kilkenny, and by two handsome ones in that city, built after the designs of Mr. G. Smith; below Kilkenny there are three stone bridges, at Bennet's bridge, at Thomastown, and at Inistioge; the first and last were built by public money, under the direction of the Navigation Board. Inistioge Bridge cost the public but £900, and has ten arches, the southern side is ornamented by Ionic pilasters; the architect was G. Smith: the bridge is flat, and the arches are equal, which is one reason that it has withstood the greatest floods, for the pressure being equally divided, and the water having room to spread on one side, its force is diminished; whereas the bridge of Thomastown has been several times carried away, or greatly damaged, because large buildings near each end confine the current. The last bridge on the Nore is the wooden one at Ross, built by the American Emanuel

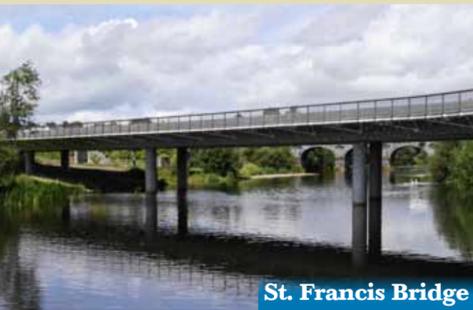
## George Smith - Architect

Architect, of Kilkenny. According to Cox, George Smith was a pupil of George Semple GEORGE SEMPLE and designed Graiguenamanagh bridge over the River Barrow in 1760. Soon afterwards he succeeded William Ockenden WILLIAM OCKENDEN as engineer of the Nore navigation following Ockenden's death in 1761. After severe flooding in 1763 had destroyed several bridges on the Nore, Smith designed two new bridges in Kilkenny - John's Bridge and Greene's Bridge - and a bridge at Inistioge. He would appear to be the same person as the George Smith whose widow was paid the balance due to him for building a house for Stuart Weldon - probably Kilmorony, Co. Laois - between 1779 and 1784 – Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940

## City Bridges

The exact date of the first bridges erected, to cross the, Nore within what is now the City of Kilkenny cannot be determined. There have been a number of different bridges located at various points throughout the City, over the centuries they have been demolished, destroyed, replaced and upgraded made. What follows is the brief history of some of the City Bridges

The earliest mention of a bridge in contained in a grant of land (circa 1200) by Bishop Felix O'Dullany to the First Priory or Hospital of St John and referred to as the Bridge of Kilkenny, and later the great bridge as it spanned the larger part of the river. This bridge is now referred to as



## Castlecomer Bridge – The 'Big' Bridge.

The Bridge in Castlecomer like many others in Kilkenny post dates the great flood of 1763, the older bridge was further upstream. The Bridge known locally as the Big Bridge is built at the junction of the Deen and Brokagh rivers. The junction of the rivers in Irish 'cumar' is part of the name of the current village.

The Brokagh river takes its name from the Irish –Brocach – a place of badgers while the Deen's name refers to the many floods it caused – Irish – Dithín- destroyer.

The current bridge is a five span structure of varying sizes; it is Palladian in style like most of the bridges constructed in this period. The bridge was built in time to witness the 1798 Rebellion when a group of croppies from Wexford allied with Miners from Doonane in Laois attempted to force their way into Castlecomer using bales of hay as cover. They were opposed by a local Loyalist Militia lead by Captain James Butler. In the ongoing confusion both sides abandoned a burning Castlecomer. The new bridge did survive.

in honour of the Lady Desart who was a great patron to the City and located near the City Library whose site she was responsible for the purchase of.

In May 2017, Kilkenny City's newest bridge, the St. Francis Bridge opened to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The five-span, 118 meter long structure is part of Kilkenny's Central Access Scheme and will help alleviate traffic on the older Green's Bridge. The bridge affords excellent views of the City's built heritage including St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny Castle, St. Francis' Abbey and Green's Bridge.



## Gore's Bridge



The village of Goresbridge partly takes its name from the Gore family who arrived in the area in the seventeenth century. It had also been referred to as Newbridge.

## Graiguenamanagh Bridge

The Barrow River has been a great source of activity for centuries a source of fishing, trade, and leisure. Over 800 hundred years ago the stone for the famous Duiske Abbey was hauled up the river in flat bottomed boats. It was from the 1760's onwards with formation of the Barrow Navigation Company and a grant of £2,000 from Parliament that lead to the further development of the river. George Semple the engineer responsible for the building of the Graiguenamanagh Bridge was in charge of the development project.



Built by Masons Samuel Biass and Thomas Dunn, the foundation stone for this bridge was laid on the Friday 18th of April 1760. Present were the Ralph Gore of Barrowmount and Nuttall Greene of Lowergrange landlords of the townslands on which the village of Goresbridge was built. This 9 arch bridge was built over the River Barrow over an old crossing called Roches Mill Ford.

The bridge was to be briefly involved with one of the most important Irish events of the eighteenth century. The 1798 Rebellion arrived at the Village of Goresbridge on Saturday the 23rd of June. The residents were aware of recent attacks in Wexford and Carlow and the blowing up of the bridge in Graiguenamanagh. Half a company of Wexford Militia and a party of dragoon guards prepared to defend the village from the United Irishmen. Carts and furniture blockaded the bridge and the streets were deserted. On their arrival that Saturday morning the rebels greatly outnumbered the defending soldiers of the village and easily defeated them. Over twenty members of the Wexford Militia were captured. This brief but bloody battle was over as the United Irishmen marched quickly on to Leighlin.

The development of the river took place, although not without difficulty and by 1766 only four miles of river between Graiguenamanagh and St Mullins had been completed. Parliament was satisfied with the work continued to fund development over the next 77 years. The creation of the canal, towpaths and the redevelopment of the docks, and the beginning of a passenger trade all came from this.

Hotels were built in the 1780's at Carlow and Graiguenamanagh to accommodate the Barrow passenger service. The boats accommodated up to 75 passengers and were drawn by two horses ridden by uniformed men with blunderbusses. The boats were divided into two compartments, food and drink were served, and cards were frequently played to pass the time. The boats had a flat roof or deck with a rail available for the first class passengers. Passenger paid 1d a mile, and disembarked at Graiguenamanagh at a landing stage that lead to the Company Hotel.

The variety of activities on the Barrow lead to the development of Graiguenemangh and can still be seen to the present day.

Graiguenamanagh Bridge was erected in 1764 by George Semple, the bridge is a 7 arch humpbacked bridge that spans the River Barrow. It replaced a previous 15th Century stone bridge. The bridge was badly damaged on June 13th 1798, during the 1798 Rebellion. When it is said First Lieutenant Michael M'Cormick of the New Ross Yeomanry laid a trail of gunpowder across the bridge. The explosion at six o'clock that evening blew the arch of the Carlow side of the bridge. The stones are said to have flown as far away as 200 yards upstream.

## Bennet's Bridge

This area has been mentioned as a bridging point on the River Nore since 1285. Named Drehidh-Binny- Addh, St Bennet or Benedict's Bridge, it is not clear why it is called after St Benedict. It may refer to St Benezet Patron Saint of Bridge Builders who was also known as St Benet. A twelfth century Frenchman who built a bridge known as Pont Saint-Bénézet at Avignon. The bridge is first referred to as St Bennet's bridge circa 1384. Ruins of an earlier stone bridge contained a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary upon it and smaller castle at one end for defence were recorded in 1743, as being a few yards from the current bridging point. The chapel was built and the castle was under construction as early as 1393. It seems donations were given by the bridge users to help support the upkeep of the chaplain and maintain the chapel. The present five arch bridge was erected in the late 1760's to replace the earlier bridge damaged in the great flood of 1763.

