

CLANE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



**ALEXANDRA BRIDGE, CLANE.**

The present bridge, called Alexandra Bridge, a fine strong masonry structure, which spans the river Liffey at Clane, Co. Kildare, was built in 1864 and replaced a medieval stone bridge which was constructed in the 1390s. The ancient bridge consisted of six arches supporting a very narrow roadway. It was decided by the Grand Jury in February 1864 to rebuild this older bridge at a cost of £2000.

A close examination of the stonework of the present bridge indicates that only the central part of the new bridge, i.e. three arches and two piers, was constructed in 1864 and that parts of the older bridge were integrated into the new structure. The county surveyor who supervised the design and construction of the new bridge was John Yeats from Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo who was a grand-uncle of the poet W.B. Yeats.

The building of the bridge was a relatively fast affair as Yeats reported at the spring assizes in March 1865 that the new bridge had been completed the previous November, although not to his complete satisfaction. One of the arches was defective in appearance due to settlement when the centring (a temporary timber structure used to support the arch during construction) was removed. The defect did not affect the stability of the bridge but owing to a misunderstanding with the contractor, who initially refused to rectify the defective arch, the Grand Jury wanted to dismiss Yeats from the project. However, they relented when he undertook to put matters right to the satisfaction of an architect designated by them.

The bridge at Clane is a strong well-built limestone structure and consists of three main arches resting on sturdy footings and a small flood arch. It was named Alexandra Bridge after Princess Alexandra of Denmark who married Edward, Prince of Wales in 1863.

In 2014 Alexandra Bridge will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The bridge, unchanged over the past one and a half centuries and which has the capacity to accommodate large volumes of heavy 21<sup>st</sup> century traffic, stands as a monument to the expertise and knowledge of bridge-building of the Kildare County Surveyor, John Yeats, who oversaw its design and construction in 1864.