

**ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
ASSESSMENT
OF PROPOSED INFILL WORKS AT
TEMPLEMORE,
COUNTY TIPPERARY**

**ON BEHALF OF:
TOBIN CONSULTING ENGINEERS**

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ABSTRACT

IAC Archaeology has prepared this report on behalf of Tobin Consulting Engineers to study the impact, if any, on the architectural heritage resource of the proposed works to infill a river channel at Templemore, Co. Tipperary (OS Sheet 29). The report was undertaken by Rob Goodbody for IAC Archaeology.

The river channel runs approximately north to south through the western end of the town of Tullamore and crosses beneath two bridges. O'Dwyer Bridge carries Patrick Street/Richmond Road and Small Bridge carries Church Avenue. Both bridges were included in the record of protected structures in the Templemore and Environs Development Plan 2012-2018, though this plan has now expired.

The brief historical note indicates that the most likely date of construction of the two bridges was around 1812.

The survey shows that both bridges are single-arched with shallow segmental arches having dressed limestone arch rings. In each case the parapets are of rubble limestone and appear to have been rebuilt at some later date. Both bridges have plaques set into the parapets in memory of those for whom the bridges were named.

The report finds that the proposed works would remove the parapets from O'Dwyer Bridge and would result in the bridges no longer being visible due to the backfilling of the former watercourse. This would have moderate impacts on the character and setting of each of the bridges. It is recommended that the two bridges are recorded in detail with written descriptions and photographs by way of mitigation. Following mitigation, the impacts on the bridges would remain as moderate, though there would be a record of the nature of the bridges preserved for posterity.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

This report has been prepared in response to a request from Tipperary County Council that two bridges in Templemore be assessed in the light of proposals to infill a river channel that both of the bridges cross. O'Dwyer Bridge carries Main Street over the channel, this being the N62 connecting Roscrea with Thurles, via Templemore. Small Bridge carries Church Avenue over the channel, this being a local road connecting Templemore Garda Training College with the town (Figure 1).

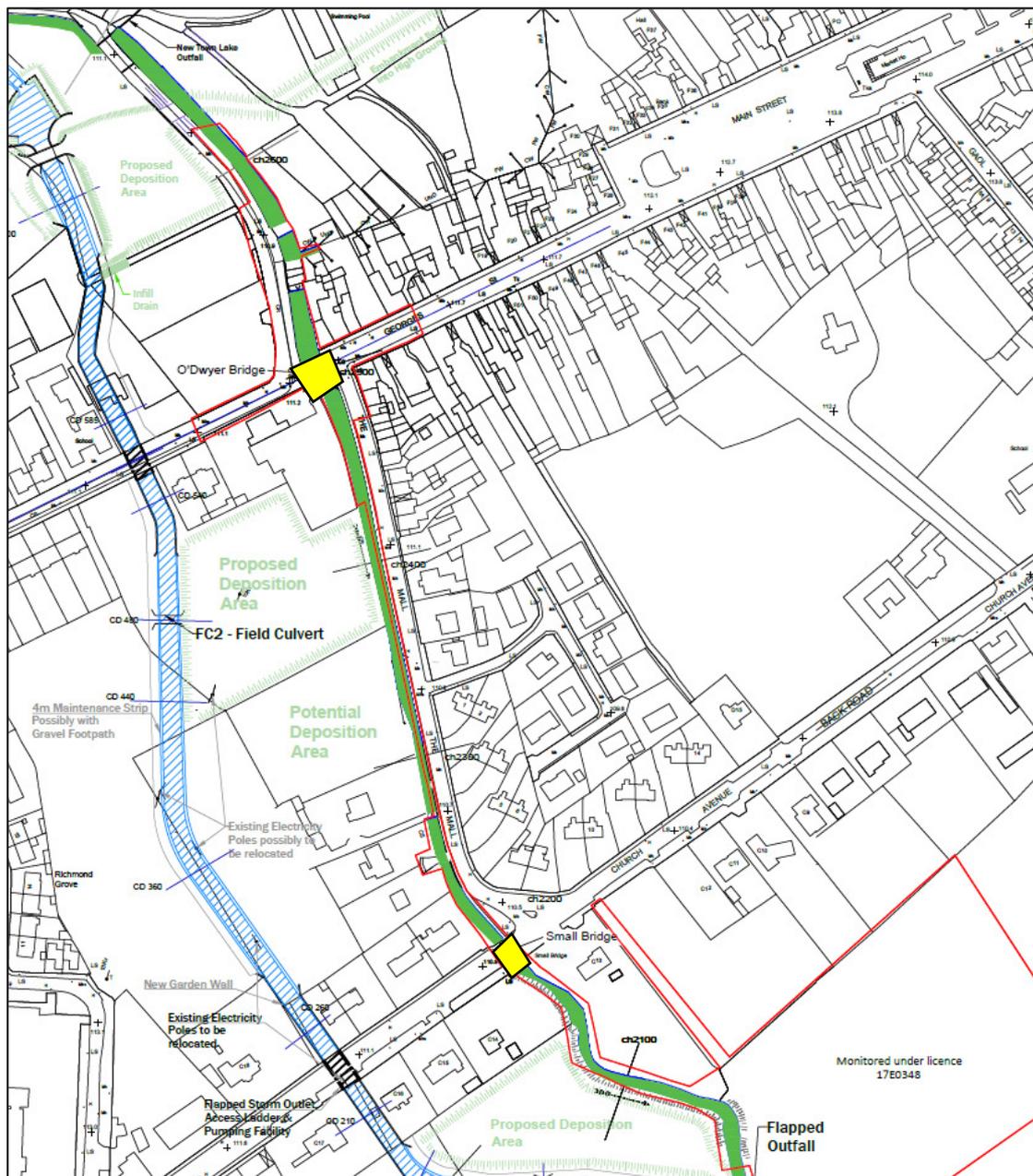


Figure 1: Location of the bridges showing proposed channel infill in green

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to infill sections of the river channel, providing for a variety of treatment of the new surface created at ground level, to include streetscape, pavement and topsoil with grass in various locations. The works would involve the removal of the parapets at O'Dwyer Bridge and the infilling of the channel would bury both bridges up to ground level.

A more detailed discussion of the proposals is set down below in the Impact Assessment and Mitigation Strategy section.

1.3 CONSERVATION STATUS

Neither of the two bridges is included in the record of protected structures in Volume 4 of the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028. However, both bridges are included as protected structures in the Templemore and Environs Development Plan 2012-2018 with the following entry in the record of protected structures:

Ref. TMS73: O'Dwyer Bridge, Richmond Road, Patrick Street; Single-arch road bridge over river, build 1850. Segmental arch with ashlar voussoirs with limestone rubble parapet walls, plaque to north parapet.

Ref. TMS89: Small Bridge, Church Avenue; Single-arch road bridge over river, built c.1930. Rebuilt rubble limestone walls with ashlar limestone voussoirs. Plaque to north-west parapet.

Under the legislation that provided for the amalgamation of the county councils of Tipperary North and Tipperary South the development plans for the towns in Tipperary were extended and each of these plans remains in force until new development plans are adopted for the town. As a result the Templemore and Environs Development Plan 2012-2018 remains the development plan for the town and under the provisions of that plan the two bridges are protected structures.

The Templemore and Environs Development Plan 2012-2018 also defines an architectural conservation area (ACA) along Main Street and Patrick Street and the western boundary of this ACA includes O'Dwyer Bridge. Small Bridge is not within an architectural conservation area.

The two bridges are not included in the www.buildingsofireland.ie website of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). However, this website does not include those structures that were deemed to be only of local interest.

The NIAH survey of Templemore was carried out in 2004 and at that period the NIAH included a wide variety of buildings and other structures, assessing each to be of international, national, regional or local significance. Where a structure was deemed to be of regional significance or higher the relevant minister would request that the planning authority would include that structure in the record of protected structures. No such request would be made where the structure was deemed to be of local

interest. Since that time the NIAH generally no longer includes buildings that are of local interest.

Both O'Dwyer Bridge and Small Bridge were included in the NIAH in 2004, where they were assigned a local significance.

2 HISTORICAL NOTES

The town of Templemore is an eighteenth-century estate town, planned and laid out by the Carden family. The town is centred on Main Street, which is a substantial street, 440 metres long and 48 metres wide, with a market house in the centre. Church Street and Mary's Street approach from angles at the north-eastern end, while Patrick Street is the continuation of Main Street running to the south-west, becoming Richmond Road when it crosses O'Dwyer Bridge.

During the Napoleonic wars and in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion the government undertook a programme of barrack construction. An initial intention to site an infantry barracks at Thurles was changed in favour of Templemore and construction commenced in 1809 following donation of the required land by the landowner, Sir John Carden. The site is outside the town to the south-east and the barracks was built to a rectilinear plan orientated slightly off the cardinal points and at odds with the orientation of the town. The barracks was named Richmond Barracks in honour of the then Lord Lieutenant, Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond and the street exiting the town toward the barracks was named Richmond.

The road to the south of the town centre, Church Avenue – Talavara, was originally known as Barrack Street and was laid out as an alternative approach to the barracks at the time that the barracks was under construction.

3 SITE SURVEY

3.1 O'DWYER BRIDGE



Plate 1: Upstream face of O'Dwyer Bridge

O'Dwyer Bridge carries Patrick Street over the river without any rise in the street level as it crosses. The bridge consists of a single span with a segmental arch and with rubble-faced parapet walls rising on either side of the street and running a short distance beyond the arch in each direction on both sides of the road. At this location the river is running slightly to the east of due south and while the street is not at right angles to the river, the difference in angle is such that this could not be called a skew bridge.



Plate 2: Downstream face of O'Dwyer Bridge



Plate 3: Detail of arch ring on upstream side of bridge

The arch segmental with a very low rise in proportion to the span. The intrados and extrados of the arch ring are parallel, and the voussoirs of limestone are regular in shape and size with hammer-dressed faces and tooled margins.



Plate 4: Shelf beneath the bridge

The river channel beneath the bridge is narrower than the span of the arch, with a stone shelf projecting from the abutments. This suggests that there may have been a narrower bridge at this location previously, with the present bridge built with a shallower arch to remove a hump in the road, while the arch span was made wider to ensure that flood waters would be accommodated.



Plate 5: Upstream parapet on side facing the road

The parapet on the northern side of the street, or the upstream side of the bridge, is faced with limestone rubble and capped with coping stones of limestone. A plaque on the side of the parapet that faces the road records the naming of the bridge after Thomas O'Dwyer. The greater part of the parapet has been rebuilt, apparently with fresh stone rather than stone recycled from the original parapet. At the eastern end of the parapet a small section of earlier wall remains, with the faded remains of painted stripes to alert drivers to the presence of the parapet. The parapet above this painted area and that to the west of it are of later date. The coping stones are reused from the original parapet.



Plate 6: Detail of eastern end of upstream parapet showing remnants of paint



Plate 7: Downstream parapet on side facing the road

The parapet to the south of the road, on the downstream side of the bridge, is similar to that on the northern side. The stonework is of later date in the main, while the coping stones are reused from the original parapet. At the base of the parapet on the side away from the road, the base course of masonry is of limestone ashlar with a rough finish to the stones and this finish is similar to that on the sides of the coping stones. It seems probable that this represents the original nature of the parapet prior to its construction, though it is noted that the part of the northern parapet that retains traces of paint is not constructed with ashlar and may be a remnant of an earlier reconstruction of the parapets.



Plate 8: Detail of rear of downstream parapet

3.2 SMALL BRIDGE



Plate 9: Upstream side of Small Bridge

Small Bridge carries Church Avenue over the river with a slight hump in the road as it crosses. The bridge consists of a single-span arch crossing the river and with rubble-stone-faced parapets on either side. The roadway runs roughly north-east to south-west across the bridge, while the river runs beneath the arch at right angles. The bridge has a superficial resemblance to O'Dwyer Bridge, though there are significant differences. A plaque on the southern parapet is of relatively recent date and records that the bridge was named in honour of Michael Small.



Plate 10: Downstream side of Small Bridge



Plate 11: Upstream parapet of Small Bridge, seen from the road side

The parapet on the upstream, or northern, side of the bridge is faced with limestone rubble and has no coping stones. The rubble stonework is quite different to that on the parapets of O'Dwyer Bridge. The stones of the parapets are laid in a relatively haphazard way with initial approximation to courses soon breaking down and no coursing above the lowest levels. The absence of coping stones is notable, particularly given their presence on the adjacent river walls.



Plate 12: Upstream face and parapet of bridge

The arch is segmental, though it appears to have a greater rise than seen at O'Dwyer Bridge. The arch ring is similar, with parallel voussoirs having hammer-dressed faces with tooled margins. Above the arch ring is a projecting string course of limestone ashlar; this curves slightly in line with the surface of the roadway, though with a much longer radius of curvature than on the arch ring. The spandrels are of rough rubble masonry.



Plate 13: Downstream parapet of Small Bridge

The masonry of the southern parapet is similar to that on the northern parapet, being fashioned with rubble limestone and without coping stones. A square hole at the base of the parapet in the centre is spanned with a stone slab.



Plate 14: Downstream face and parapet

The arch ring is similar to that on the northern face of the bridge, with parallel voussoirs of hammered limestone with tooled margins, above which is a projecting string course.

4 ANALYSIS

The style of the two bridges – O’Dwyer Bridge on Patrick Street – Richmond Road and Small Bridge on Church Avenue – Talavara, is consistent with a late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century construction. The use of parallel arch rings of cut stone became usual during this period in a form similar to that found on the two bridges. While the two bridges differ in detail, the similarity in the stones of the arch rings suggests that they were built at around the same time.

A clue to a more precise date is in the names of the bridges and the location of the southern bridge. When first built, the bridge on Patrick Street was called King’s Bridge, while the southern of the two was called Regent’s Bridge. This is strongly suggestive of a date of construction during the regency period, which is more likely to be the actual period when the Prince of Wales acted as regent on behalf of his father, King George III, between 1813 and 1820, rather than the architectural period known as the Regency period, which spanned a longer time. Construction commenced on Richmond Barracks in Templemore in 1809, as noted in the historical notes above, and it was completed in 1813. The historical notes also identified the construction of Barrack Street, now Church Avenue – Talavara, as being part of the development of Richmond Barracks and hence a date of around 1811 to 1813, during the regency, is consistent with a date of construction of Regent’s Bridge, now Small Bridge.

While Small Bridge was constructed to facilitate the laying out of a new street, O’Dwyer Bridge was on an existing street. Its style is strongly suggestive of it being contemporaneous, or near contemporaneous, with Small Bridge and it seems probable that it was built or rebuilt at the time that the barracks was built. It is possible that there was no bridge over the river at that time, the road crossing the river via a ford. Given that it was a significant road close to a town, it is more likely that there was a bridge, though hump-backed and possibly narrow. The reconstruction of the bridge would facilitate the movement of heavy goods to supply the barracks through elimination of the slopes on either side of a ford or the hump back of a bridge, while it may also have facilitated movements through the provision of a wider bridge.

It was not possible as part of the survey carried out for the preparation of this report to examine the masonry beneath the bridges and only a slight view is possible when seen from ground level, largely obstructed by vegetation. Given that it is probable that there was a bridge on Patrick Street from an early date and that this may have been a narrower bridge, there may be remnants of an earlier bridge beneath the arch of the present O’Dwyer Bridge. Such remnants could be in the form of abutments on either side of the river, while the survival of an earlier arch within the bridge structure is less likely, as it is probable that any earlier bridge was hump backed rather than the present shallow segmental arch and hence an earlier arch would have been removed as part of the construction of the present bridge.

The survey of O’Dwyer Bridge has shown that the parapets are not original. The memorial plaque is of a relatively recent date and may have been placed on the

northern parapet at the time that the parapet was rebuilt. A small part of the northern parapet was not reconstructed at that time, though the presence of an ashlar base course on the southern parapet suggests that this may have been the form of the parapets originally.

The parapets on Small Bridge differ from those on O'Dwyer Bridge and they lack coping stones, though the adjacent river walls have coping stones, suggesting that the parapets have been rebuilt. It is noted that the record of protected structures in the Templemore and Environs Development Plan 2012-2018 gives a date of circa 1930 for the bridge and refers to the parapets as "rebuilt". It is possible that the parapets were rebuilt in about 1930, though the bridge itself was undoubtedly built in about 1811.

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGY

5.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

It is proposed that the parapet walls of O'Dwyer Bridge be removed. On the northern side of the street this will include the removal of a section of the wall running northward on the western side of the river. On the southern side the river wall would remain in place, except for a short section near the bridge and a new wall is to be erected, curving at a larger radius around the corner between the bridge and The Mall.

The river channel is to be infilled on either side of the bridge, with a streetscape at ground level to the north of the bridge without any wall to separate it from the adjoining streets to the south and west. To the south of the bridge the surface of the infilled river channel is to be paved.

At Small Bridge the parapets are to be retained, with the river channel infilled and topped with soil and grassed.

While the proposals would retain both bridge arches, they would have a negative impact on the character and setting of both bridges, permanently concealing them from view. As it is intended to retain rather than demolish the bridges it would be possible in the future to reverse the process and reveal the bridges again. Accordingly, this impact is considered to be moderate.

While the parapets of O'Dwyer Bridge are not original, they are part of the character of the bridge and the most prominent element of the bridge in the public view, marking the presence of the bridge to those passing by on the street. The removal of these parapets would be a negative impact, but as the parapets are not part of the original structure this impact is considered to be moderate.

5.2 MITIGATION

Prior to the removal of parapets and infilling of the channel the vegetation in the vicinity of both bridges should be cleared and a full photographic and written description of the two bridges should be prepared, including examination of the vault and abutments beneath the bridge and any projecting sills on either side of the river channel beneath the bridges. This investigation should include a determination as to whether there are any surviving elements of an earlier bridge within the present bridge structures.

5.3 RESIDUAL IMPACT

Following mitigation, the impacts arising from the burial of the two bridges would still be a moderate negative impact and the impact arising from the removal of the parapets of O'Dwyer Bridge would also still be a moderate negative impact. Notwithstanding the compilation of a record of the nature of the bridges, the character and settings of the two bridges would still be adversely affected.