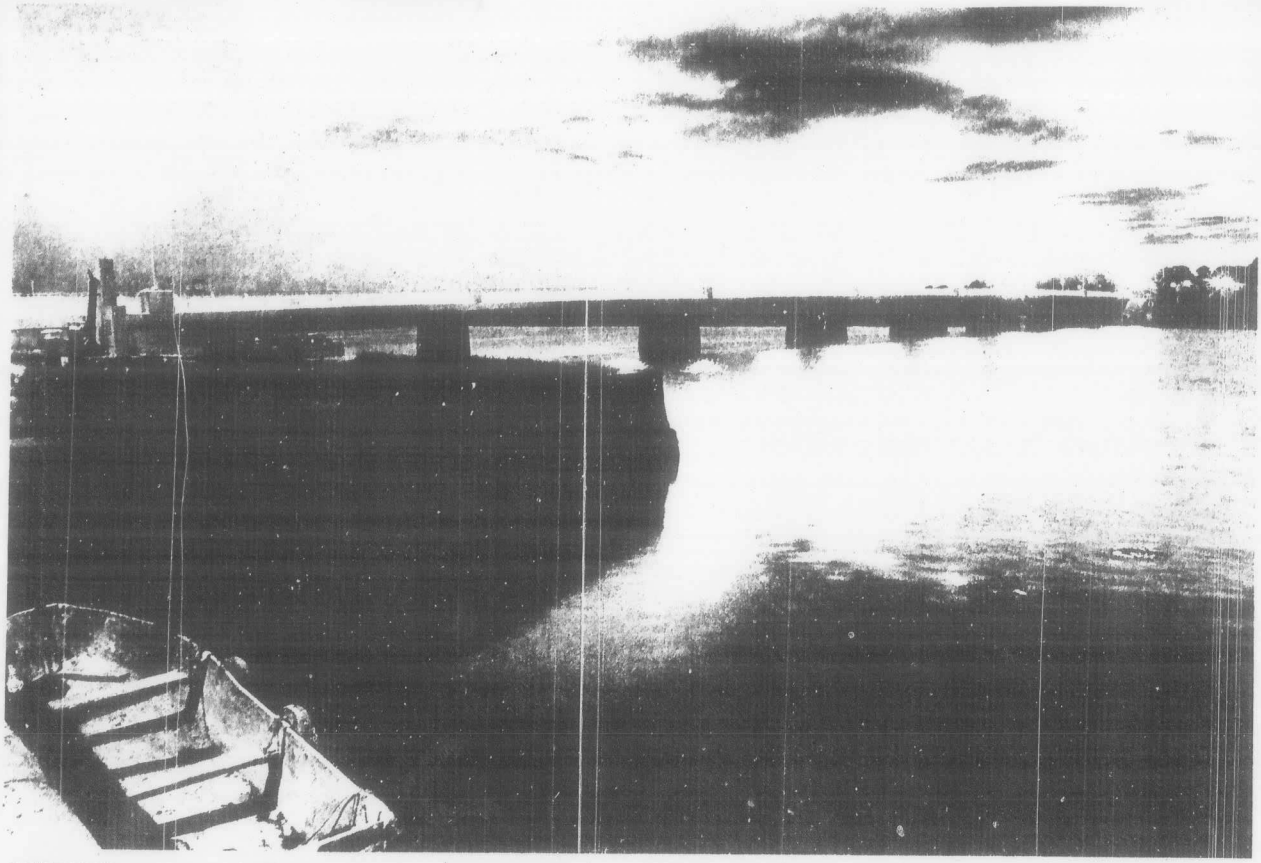
SHANNON BRIDGE



LIMERICK'S magnificent new £3.5 million bridge across the Shannon is already proving extremely popular with Limerick Corporation pleased with the amount of people using the new crossing.

With the major changes in the traffic system, and the new one way in operation, it is expected that once teething problems are overcome traffic congestion in the city will be down to a minimum.

The last bridge built in Limerick was O'Dwyer bridge in 1932, and this latest magnificent new crossing although different in style is a magnificent piece of workmanship by the workers of Ascon Ltd.

The new bridge was blessed by Bishops Jeremiah Newman and Rt. Rev. Edward Darling, on Monday, and almost immediately traffic was flowing over the new crossing.

It will prove a tremendous asset to people on the North and Southern sides of the city and indeed for those travelling from the Kerry and Cork directions going towards Clare and Galway.

The decision to construct a new bridge from Mallow Street to the North Bank, represents a major step in the history of the city.

While the last river-bridge to be built in the city was O'Dwyer Bridge in 1932, it must be admitted that the construction of that bridge stands in isolation, when compared with the great achievements in bridge building during the years from 1824 to 1846. These years saw the completion of Sarsfield Bridge, formerly Wellesley Bridge in 1835, and of the reconstructed Baal's Bridge in 1831, and Thomond Bridge in 1840.

Consequently, it may be said that Mallow Street Bridge will mark the first major step in bridge-building in Limerick city in 140 years.

Traffic

By the early 1970's Limerick Corporatin had become conscious of the traffic congestion on Sarsfield Bridge and Thomond Bridge and their approach roads, which were rapidly approaching their practical traffic capacity.

Consequently, in 1974, the Corporation appointed a firm of consulting engineers, McCarthy and Partners of Raheny, County Dublin to examine the matter of a third river crossing, and its effect on the city. In October, 1975, the first report was submitted to the Corporation, and as a consequence Limerick Corporation applied to the Minister for the Environment for a Bridge Order.

After having received a further report on the matter, the Minister for the Environment held a public enquiry into the Bridge Order application in October 1979, and in March 1982, he granted a Bridge Order sanctioning a two-lane bridge at Quay Level.

The consulting engineers were then instructed to proceed with the preparation of plans for this bridge, and its northern approach road. A report on the final design for the approach road was received in October 1983, the final plans for the bridge were received in February 1985.

Work had commenced in 1984 on the construction of the Northern approach road, and in early 1985, after obtaining approval from the Minister, tenders were invited by public advertisement for the construction of the bridge. The successful tenderer was deemed to be Ascon Ltd., of Kill, County Kildare, who submitted a bid of £3,367,555.00.

The bridge is constructed of prestressed concrete decking supported on re-inforced concrete piers. Overall length from bank to bank will be 213 metres, with 7 spans. The width of the bridge between parapets will be 14 metres, allowing for a two-lane carriageway of 10 metre width and two footpaths of 2 metres width. Freeway between the centre of the bridge and high water level will be 2 metres. Approximately 8,500 tons of concrete and 1,500 tons of steel were used in the construction of the bridge.

Approach to the bridge from the South Bank will be controlled by a roundabout at Mount Kennett, and on the North side, the approach road will have access only from Lower Shelbourne Road, and from the Ennis Road at Caherdavin and Clondrinagh. The construction of the Northern approach road involving slow consolidation on poor ground, is programmed to coincide with the construction and opening of the bridge.

The benefits of the bridge to Limerick city and to the sub-region will be both immediate and significant.

The initial impact will be to:

- Reduce the overloading of Sarsfield Bridge and Thomond Bridge with corresponding alleviation of traffic conditions on the Ennis Road, particularly at peak hours.
- Reduce the congestion in Patrick Street and on the Dublin Road with the diversion of traffic onto Parnell Street and Mallow Street.
- Enable the city centre street network to be more effectively utilised by the incorporation of the route system extending from Crescent to Thomond Bridge, and from the Quays to Parnell Street.
- Provide the basis for major improvements in the operation of the public transport by elimination of delays throughout city centre, and on the Dublin and Ennis Road approaches.
- Designed to carry 20,000 vehicles per day.

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