

Extract and footnote from

George Benn's *A History of the Town of Belfast*, Marcus Ward, Belfast, 1877

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... King John came to Ireland in 1210. On this occasion he travelled by known routes to the North, and was ten days in Carrickfergus. He returned to Dublin, as recorded, "by way of Holywood* and Ballimore," the former place being the nearest to the Ford of Belfast mentioned as in his course; the second was Ballymorran, in Killinchy. For more than a century after this time, the Anglo-Normans increased and consolidated their power in North-Eastern Ulster. Castles were built, the sites of many of which are yet known ...

*John must either have crossed to Holywood by water, or else passed by the Ford. There is an old bridge still known by the name of the King's Bridge, said, traditionally, to be so called because King John passed over it. It is across a small stream near Con's Water Bridge; has one arch about four feet wide, but is not likely to be that which existed in the days of King John, The route was the direct one from the Ford to Holywood. It is, however, a singular-looking structure, and of some antiquity: but how varying and uncertain is tradition!

King John has not the undisputed honour of association with this small bridge. A person living near it said he had heard it called King Con's Bridge, meaning Con O'Neill of Castlereagh, from whom the adjoining river, Con's Water, derives its name. Another said he had known it called King William's Bridge, because King William, when in Belfast, had passed over it on his way to Orangefield, not very far distant, and where he had passed a night. Of the three kings, King Con was the most likely to have given his name to this bridge, even if so old as his time. There is no proof whatever that King William was ever at the place now called Orangefield.