

# Jewel of the Thames

## A Very Brief History of Maidenhead



# Jewel of the Thames

## Maidenhead's place in the Universe



Maidenhead developed because it was on the River Thames.

It had a bridge across the river and was a day's travel, by horse, from London.

An army which controlled Maidenhead controlled the road to London.

**Why Maidenhead?**



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# Jewel of the Thames

Maidenhead's  
place in the  
Universe



Too close to  
the River  
Thames ?



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# Jewel of the Thames

## Part I – *Early times – 18<sup>th</sup> Century*



# Jewel of the Thames

**Before Maidenhead  
was named**

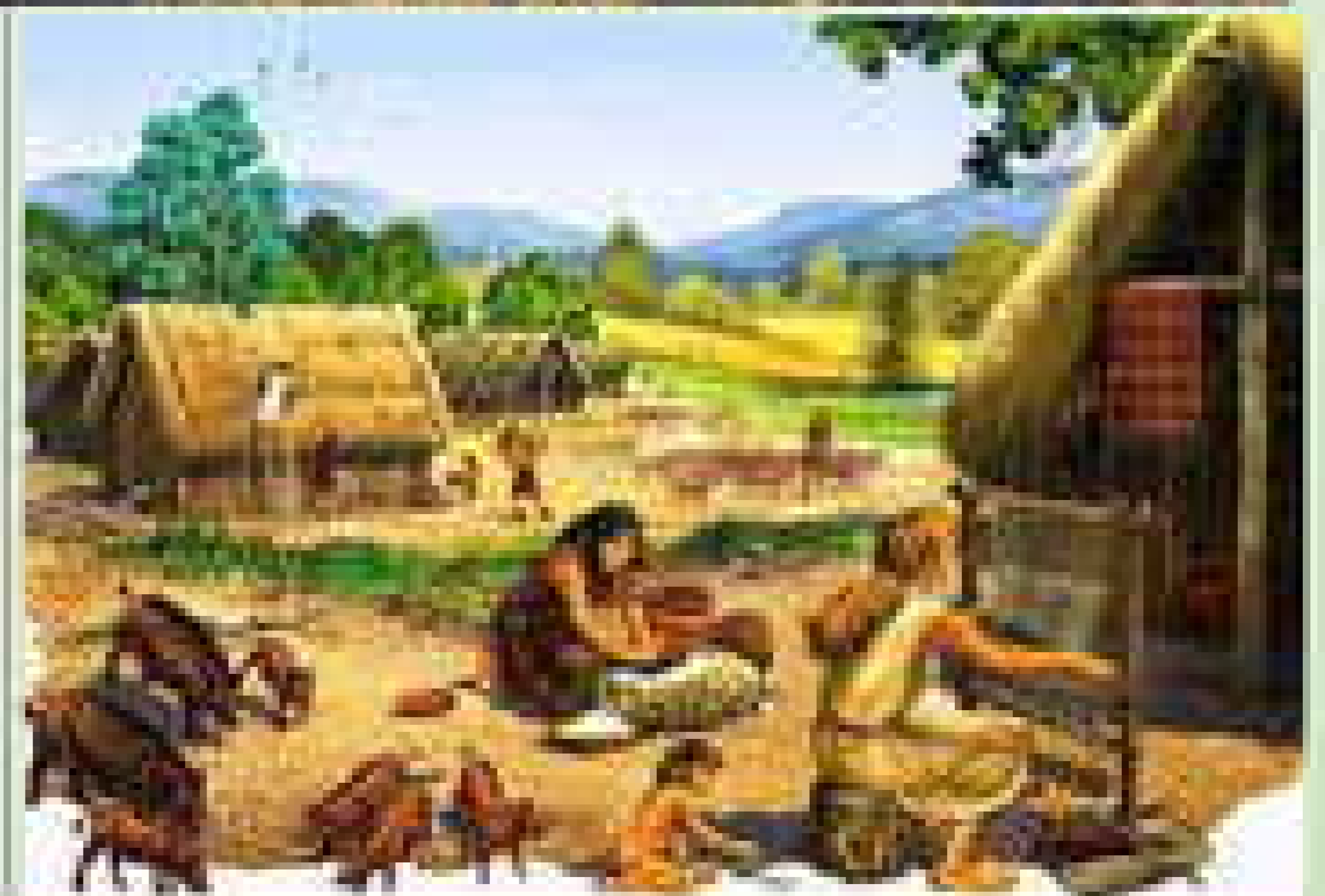
**Living on the  
River.**



**Pre-History Hunter Gatherers came to the  
riverside to fish for food.**

**They settled on high ground for defence, in  
what became known as Maidenhead Thicket.**

**They built shelter, planted seeds and  
cultivated land.**



**By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC Celtic tribes from  
Europe settled in Britain.**

**They fished and cultivated the land.**

**They used the River Thames for transport.**

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**Before Maidenhead  
was named**

**The Romans**



**In 43 AD the Romans invaded Britain and ruled for nearly 400 years.**

**They grew grain for export to Wales & the North.  
They paid taxes in grain.**

**By 100 AD tax collectors & local government lived in villas at Castle Hill and Cox Green.**

**The Romans set up an administrative centre at Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) near Reading. They built a road system centred on Silchester.**

# Jewel of the Thames

**Before Maidenhead  
was named**



**Will new local  
archaeology  
change our  
ideas about  
the Saxons ?**

**The Saxons and  
the Vikings**



**The Saxons came from Germany, Denmark, Belgium and Holland. They settled in East Anglia and then along river valleys.**

**They farmed land and grew grain.**

**They built hithes (wharves) for loading/unloading on the river.**

**Saxon place names were given to Cookham, Waltham, Bisham, Hurley, Littlewick, Taplow and Holyport.**

**Berkshire became a disputed border between the Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex.**

**Vikings from Denmark, Norway and Sweden raided along the Thames.**

**The Saxons built a defence fort built at Sashes Island, Cookham.**



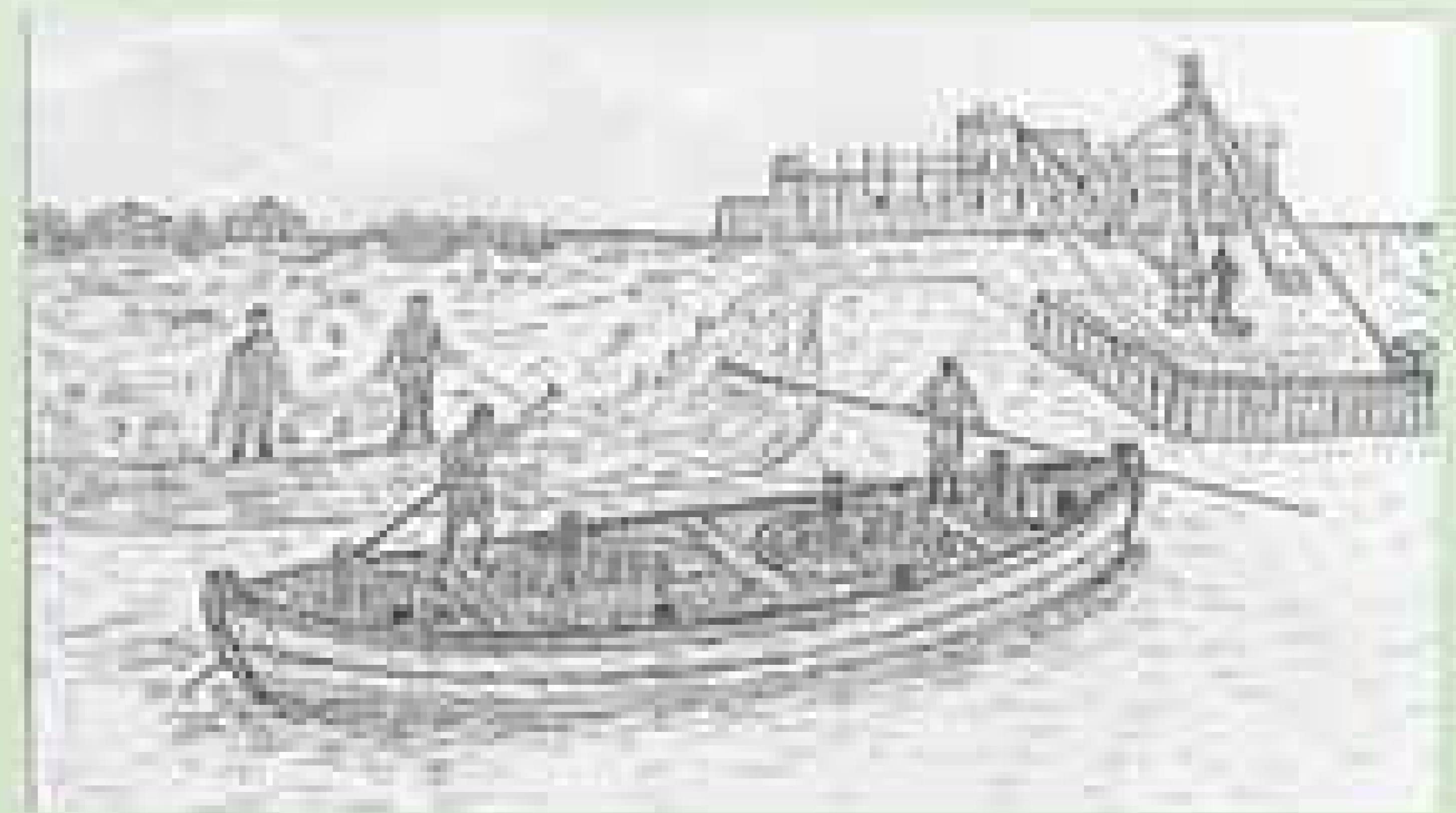
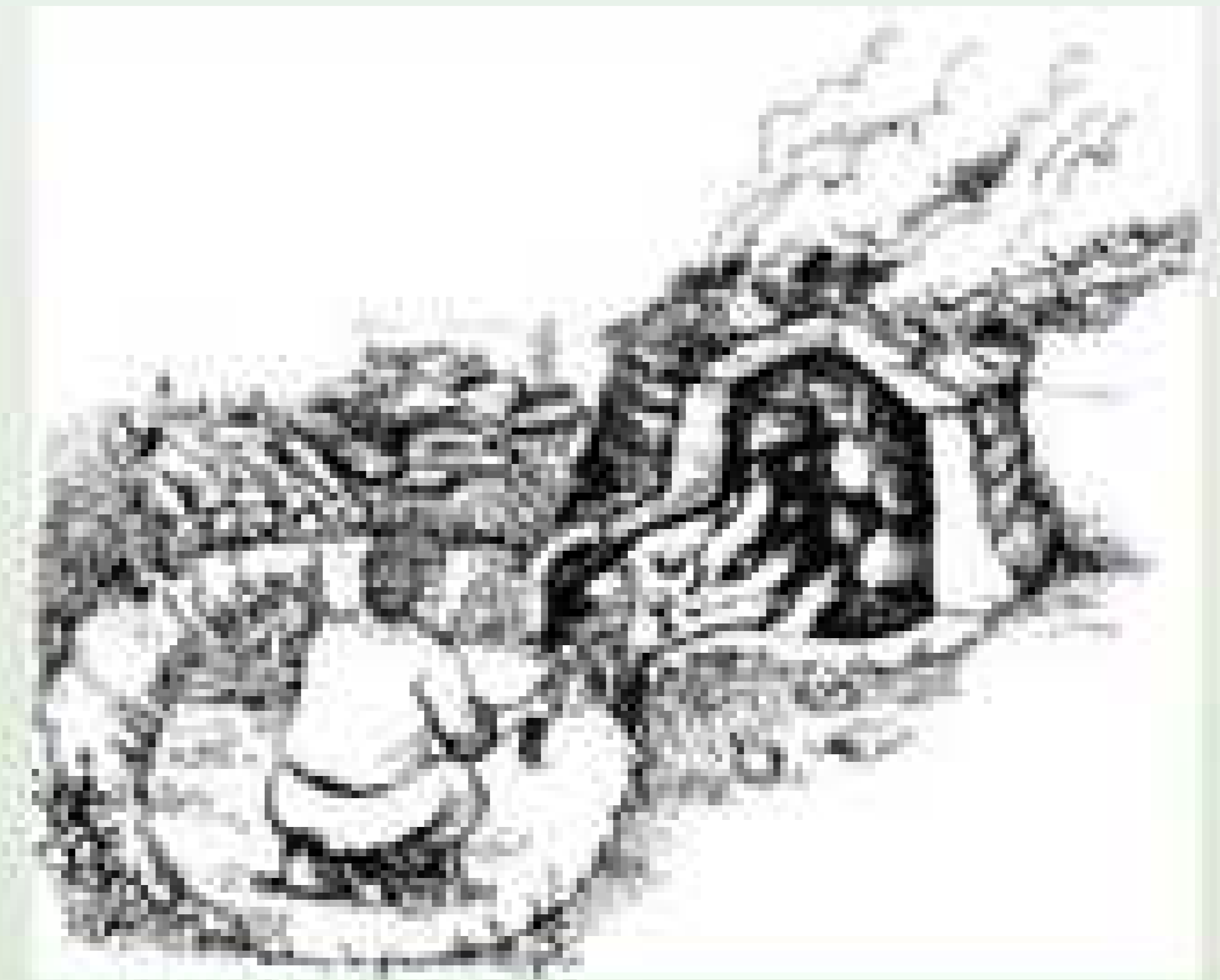
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**Before Maidenhead  
was named**

**The Normans**



**In 1066 William of Normandy invaded England and became king.**

**He gave land to his knights. The 1086 Domesday Book records that Ghilo de Pinkney owned Elentone. He gave his name to Pinkneys Green.**

**The ford & ferry south of Elentone was named South Elentone (later Maidenhead).**

**The Normans built grain mills at Cookham, Hurley, Bisham, Taplow & Marlow.  
They transported grain on the River Thames.**

**The Normans set up pottery kilns in Maidenhead Thicket.**



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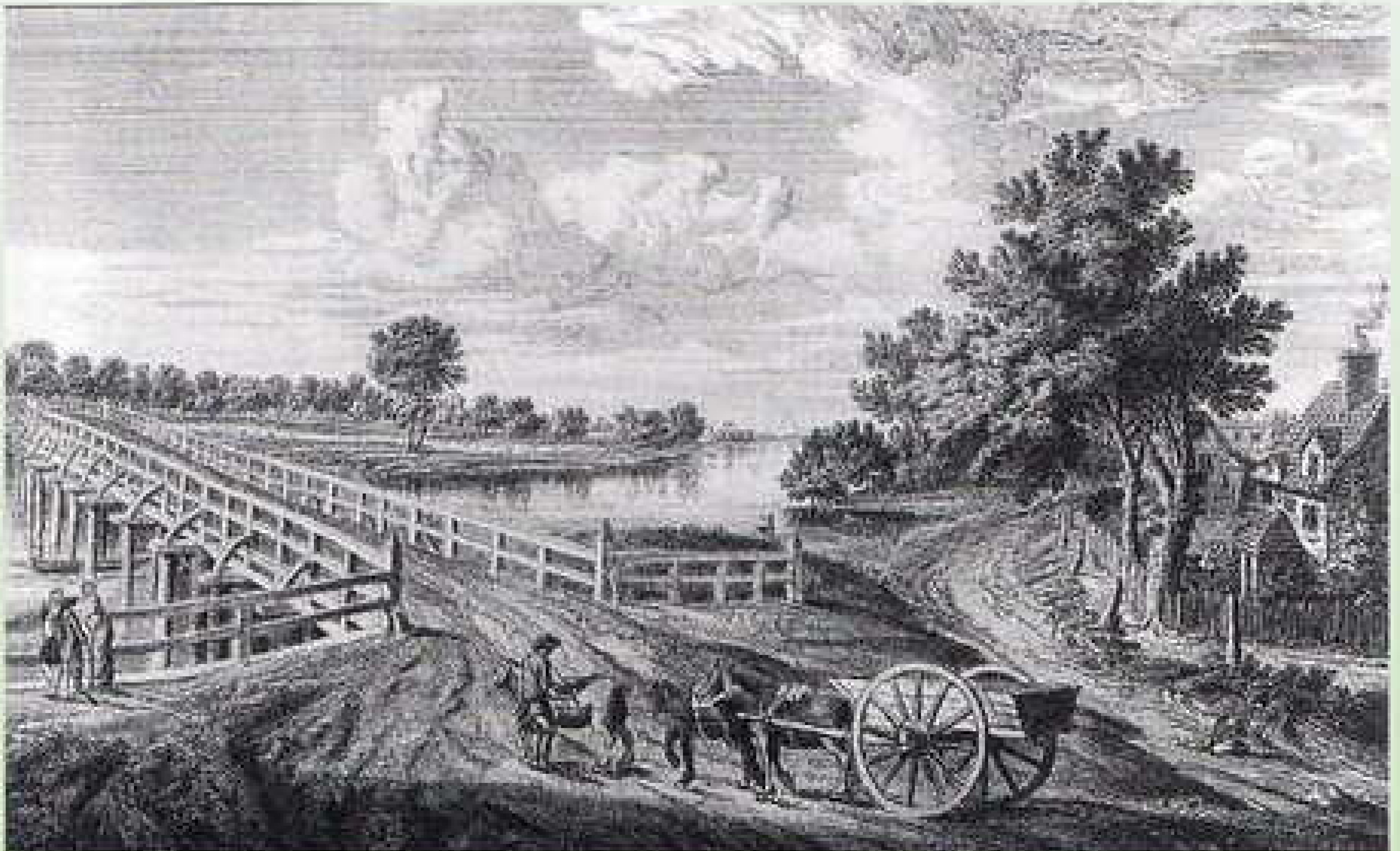




# Jewel of the Thames

**Before Maidenhead  
was named**

**Bridging the  
Thames**



**The first wooden bridge was opened at South Elentone (Maidenhead) in 1250.**

**The road was diverted to pass over the new toll bridge.**

**Inns opened for road travellers to stay and change horses.**

**Markets set up to sell goods to the travellers.**

**In 1750 there was a major reconstruction of the bridge.**



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# Jewel of the Thames

## How Maidenhead got its name

Maidenhead

(ˈmeɪdən hɛd) *n*

(Placename) a town in S England, in Windsor and Maidenhead unitary authority, Berkshire, on the River Thames. Pop: 58 848 (2001)

*Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014*

In 1296 there were 33 ways of spelling 'Maidenhead'.

## Who knows ?

Before the bridge was built in 1250 there was no Maidenhead. Elentone or Ellington existed so the inns and houses built by the bridge, south of Ellington, were known as 'South Ellington'.

There are lots of ideas how Maidenhead got its name:

In Anglo-Saxon 'Maiden' means 'new' and 'hythe' means 'wharf'. Was Maidenhead named after a new wharf on the river, near the bridge ?

The land near the river was flooded. Was Maidenhead named after a causeway over marshes to the bridge ?

Was Maidenhead named after St Mary the Virgin ?

In Anglo-Saxon 'Maegden Hyo' means a landing place of the maidens. Was Maidenhead where nuns arrived on the river to open a new convent or did the convent own the wharf ?

A 'Mai-Den' or 'Mai-Dun' is a fortified hill. Was the town named after a river defence ?

## What do you think ?



# Jewel of the Thames

## Governing the People

In 1451 the Guild of St Andrew & St Mary Magdalene was formed by Henry VI to be responsible for religious rites and bridge maintenance.



Queen Elizabeth I granted a Charter of Incorporation in 1582. It created :

a Free Town

a new scale of bridge tolls

a bridge maintenance scheme

a bridge ferry

Monday markets

fairs on feasts of St Andrew & St Mary Magdalene

a law court

a council

bridge masters to act as church wardens.

**From 1604 Traders were fined £2.00 a month if they were not 'Freemen of Maidenhead'.**

King James I's 1604 Charter stated that all Traders had to pay £5.00 to be Freemen and voted in by the Corporation.

Maidenhead had a Mayor after King James II's Charter of 1685.

The Mayor was elected its Mayor for the first time in 1836.



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## *Beating the Bounds*



From medieval times parishes reaffirmed their boundaries by processing round them at Rogationtide, stopping to beat each boundary mark with wands and to pray for protection and blessings for the land. This was known as '*Beating the Bounds*'.

Saint Mark's Workhouse, during '*Perambulation of the Borough*', 2 June, 1891, outside Saint Mark's Workhouse (later hospital).

Maidenhead became a Municipal Borough in 1894 and part of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead from 1974.

In 1997 the Parliamentary Constituency of Maidenhead was formed.

In 2016 Maidenhead's M.P., Theresa May, became Britain's second woman Prime Minister.

Taplow Court resident Nancy Astor was the first woman M.P. to sit in parliament after she won the Plymouth Sutton by-election in 1919.



The Rotary Club of Maidenhead organizes an annual Boundary Walk along 13, 7.75, 6 or 2 mile routes.

# Jewel of the Thames

## Civil War

Control of Maidenhead Bridge controlled the road to London.



Civil War broke out in 1642 between King Charles I and Parliament.

In September 1644 Maidenhead bridge was broken down to stop Parliamentarian troops crossing the Thames. Instead they gathered in Maidenhead Thicket for an attack on Reading.

King Charles I was taken prisoner and sent to Caversham Park in 1647. From there he visited Maidenhead to see his children before his execution.

During the 'Glorious Revolution of 1688' the Maidenhead bridge was broken down to protect London from the Protestant army of William of Orange (King William III).



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## The Coaching Era

Turnpike toll roads were set up. In 1667 a Ludgate to Bath, via Maidenhead, flying coach service started. A London to Wallingford, via Henley, coach service began in 1704.

New inns, blacksmiths, harness makers, ostlers and feed merchants set up in Maidenhead to support the coach trade.

By 1750 69,000 tons of freight moved upstream on the River Thames.

A new Maidenhead stone bridge opened in 1777.

The road traffic through Maidenhead in two weeks in 1834:

118 pairs of post horses

2230 horse drawn wagons & vans

776 Four horse coaches

47 Two horse coaches

85 private carriages

456 gigs

287 horse drawn market cars

21 horse drawn lumber carts

42 horses

34 horse drawn coal carts

31 horse drawn hay carts

22 horse drawn straw carts

2803 sheep

38 pigs

102 beasts

**1834 Maidenhead:  
Britain's Busiest  
Town!**

