

Jewel of the Thames

A Very Brief History of Maidenhead



Jewel of the Thames

Part III – *The 20th & 21st Centuries*



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Education and Training



Bray School opened in 1682. From 1817 National Schools provided education for the poor in church, setting exams in Church Catechism, reading the Sermon on the Mount, and questions on Scripture.

Gordon Road school opened in 1819. In 1848 the Maidenhead British School for Boys opened and became a municipal school in 1903. All Saints School opened in 1857, and the Wesleyan Day School opened 6 years later, and became a municipal school in 1907.

In 1871 Bridge Street Roman Catholic School opened and moved to Cookham Road in 1892.

What became the Technical Institute on Marlow Road in 1896 started as an Art Class at Brock Lane School in 1881.



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Education and Training

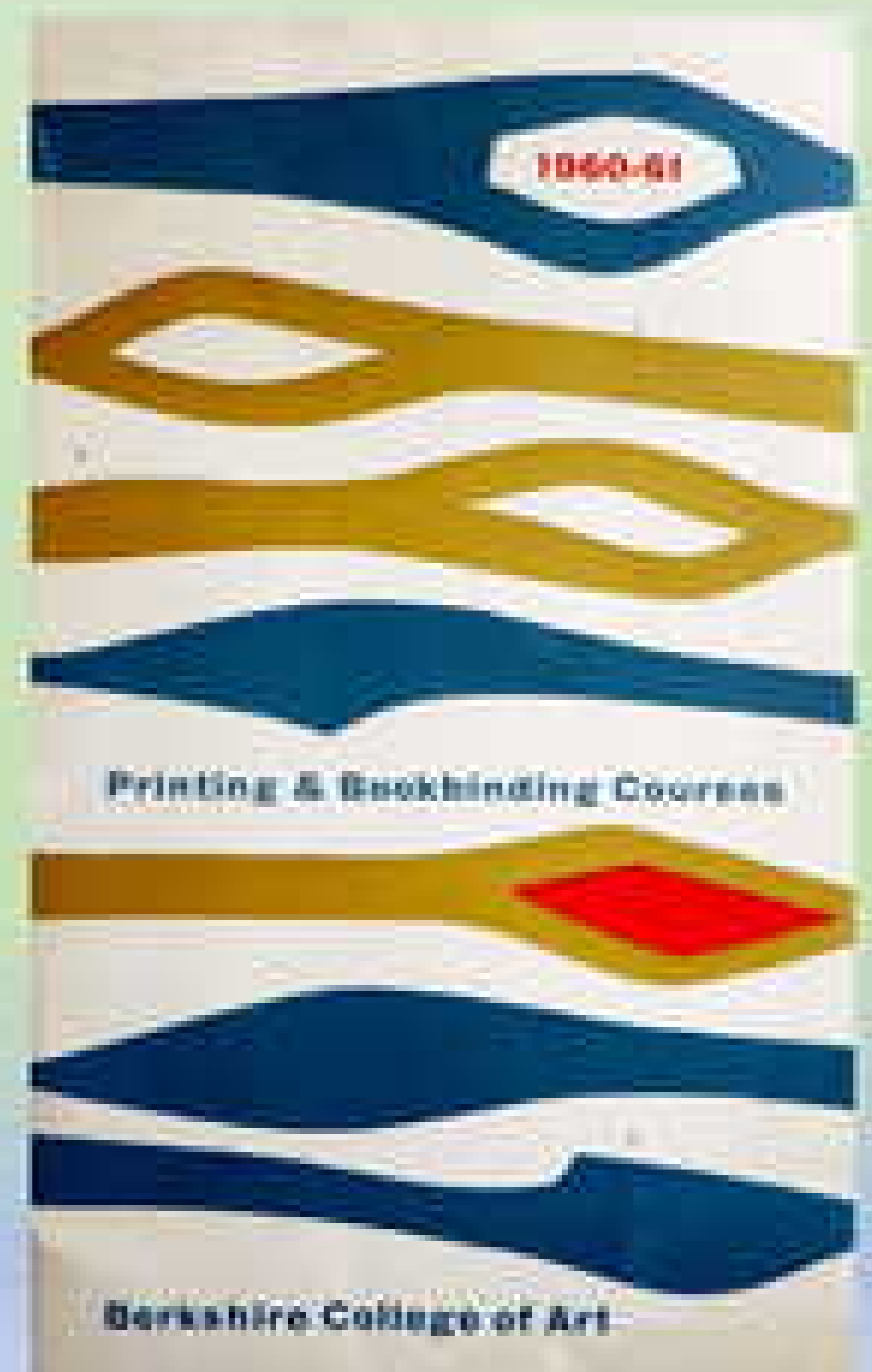
The Maidenhead Modern School opened in 1894, first at Cliveden Hall, then on High Town Road.

The 1902 Balfour Education Act led to changes to Gordon Road School, the opening of the County Girls (later Newlands) school in 1905 and the opening of the County Boys school in 1911.

In 1939 the WVS (Women's Voluntary Service) organized the movement of two residential schools & staff to private homes in Maidenhead due to the fear of German bombing.

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, parents have a right to choose which school their child should go to.

In 2016 Theresa May, Maidenhead's M.P., called for the return of Grammar Schools.



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Utilities

In 1710 Maidenhead's first drainage system (elm pipes) installed along the High Street.

In 1836 the Gas Company laid pipes to replace oil lighting in Maidenhead. Over 60 years later, in 1897, the Electricity Company was set up and Braywick Road Power Station opened in 1902. This generated 180 kilowatts between 2:00 pm and 6:00 am, enough for 28 services and c500 lights.

The Thames Conservancy was set up to maintain the River Thames in 1857 and licenced boats.

Water supply was improved from 1875 with the setting up of the Waterworks Company.

In 1894 Maidenhead Corporation built a sewage outfall. Improving the sewage system was not welcomed by everyone. In 1906 Councillor Frank Porter dismissed mains drainage as a 'waste of money'.



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Industry



Maidenhead industries include software, plastics, pharmaceuticals, printing and telecommunications. The town is part of the 'Silicon Corridor' along the M4 motorway.

Maidenhead's biggest employer was Vandervell Products (GKN Vandervell), making bearings, and the town was notable also for papermaking, Mountfield lawnmowers, Black and Decker and the famous Bray Studios where Hammer Horror films were made.



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Science and Innovation

In 1927 Dynatron was founded by the Hacker brothers above a grocer's shop in Maidenhead. Dynatron made high quality radios and undertook important war work. Later the brothers started Hacker Radios.

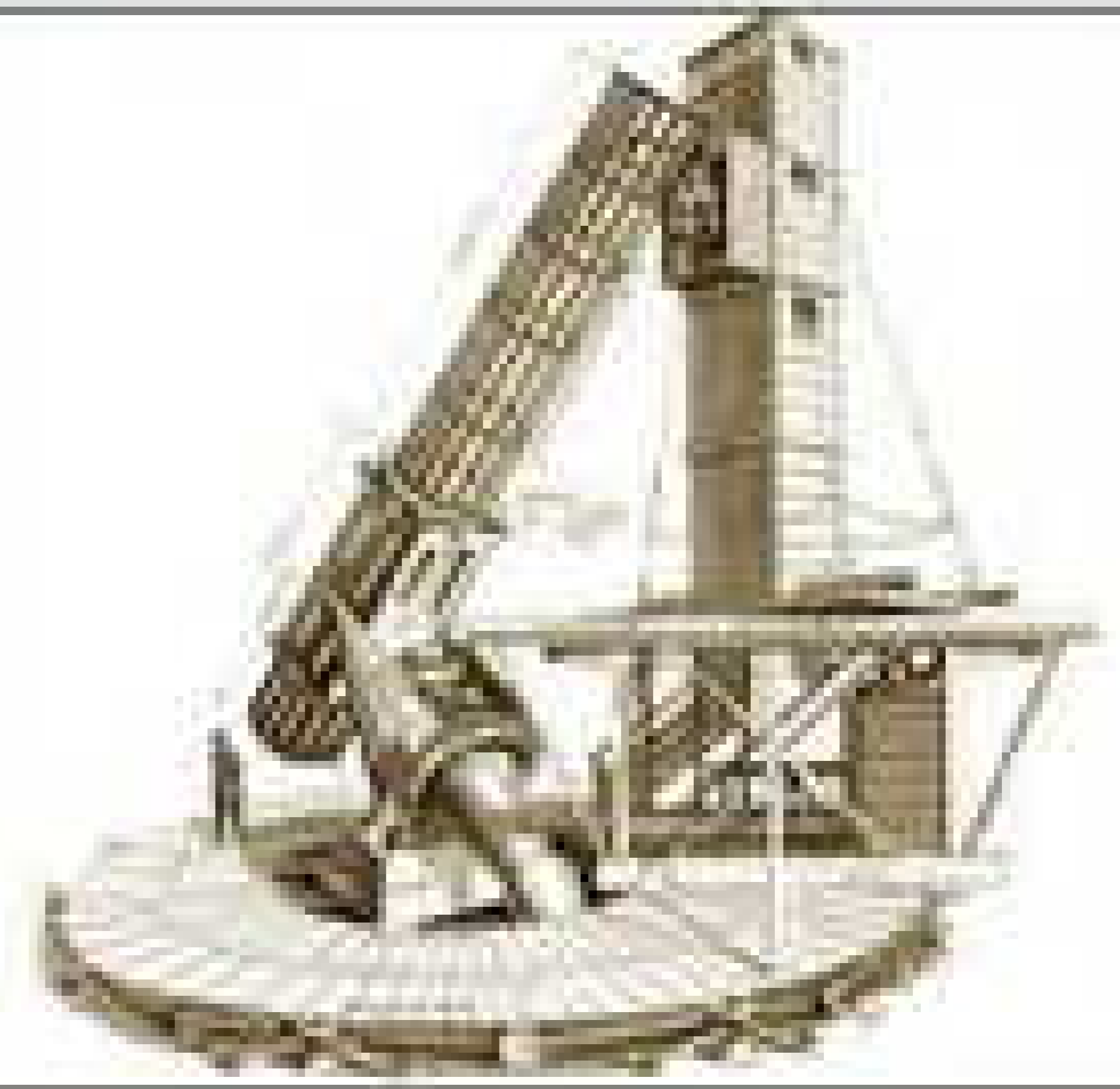
The first 'Vanwall' racing cars were assembled in Cox Green in 1954, won the British Grand Prix in 1957 and the first Constructors' Championship in 1958. Stirling Moss, from Bray, was one of Vanwall's drivers.

Hewland Engineering Limited, now at White Waltham, has developed and manufactured gearboxes and transmissions from 1959.

In 1957 the revolutionary Fairey Rotodyne made its first flight from White Waltham, but failed to secure orders.

Mountfield started making the first rotary lawnmowers in Maidenhead in 1962.

BT and Plessey Electronics were based at Taplow Court until 1988.



The astronomer William Lassell, discoverer of moons of Neptune, Saturn and Uranus, had an observatory in Maidenhead. He died in 1880 and is buried in St. Luke's churchyard.



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Sport and Leisure

The first organized sport in Maidenhead was probably archery. There are claims that regular practice was carried out at Oldfield (Guards Club Road) from 1340. King Henry VIII made it law for men under 60 to have bows in a series of Acts passed from 1511.

In 1541 the first Gaming Licences were introduced and from 1584 Maidenhead Corporation granted fishery licences. The Maidenhead, Cookham and Bray Angling Association formalized local fishing as a sport in 1873.

Horseracing became popular from 1773 and foxhunting became an established sport in the 1800s.

The first organized cricket match in Berkshire was in 1793 when Maidenhead beat the MCC.

The first Maidenhead football club was formed in 1870. The current club was formed after amalgamation with the Norfolkians Football Club in 1919.

The Maidenhead Golf Club opened in 1896 on land which had been part of the Grenfell (Desborough) estates.



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Sport and Leisure

MAIDENHEAD



MARLINS

MAIDENHEAD



R.F.C.



Sport on the River Thames became popular with Viscount Newry's team rowing to Westminster Bridge against the clock for a bet in 1820 and the Maidenhead Rowing Club set up in 1876.

From 1909 Dunkel's Challenge Cup was competed for by swimming between Cookham Ferry and Boulter's Weir.

The opening of the Waterworks led to swimming baths on Market Street in 1876 and Corporation baths in 1909.

A renewed interest in part-time military service after the Boer War led to the opening of a new drill hall and gymnasium on Marlow Road in 1903. The Market Street baths were re-opened as a miniature rifle range in 1906, and Lord Desborough opened the Maidenhead District Rifle Club open-air range in 1907.

Desborough was a keen sportsman, the president of the 1908 Olympic Games in London, and a supporter of local sports.

A cycling club was formed in Maidenhead in 1881 and encompassed athletics from 1884.

Bert Bushell won Gold in the Men's Double Sculls at the 1948 London Olympics. Since then Maidenhead has produced many Olympic and Paralympic athletes.



MAIDENHEAD
HERITAGE CENTRE



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Law and Order

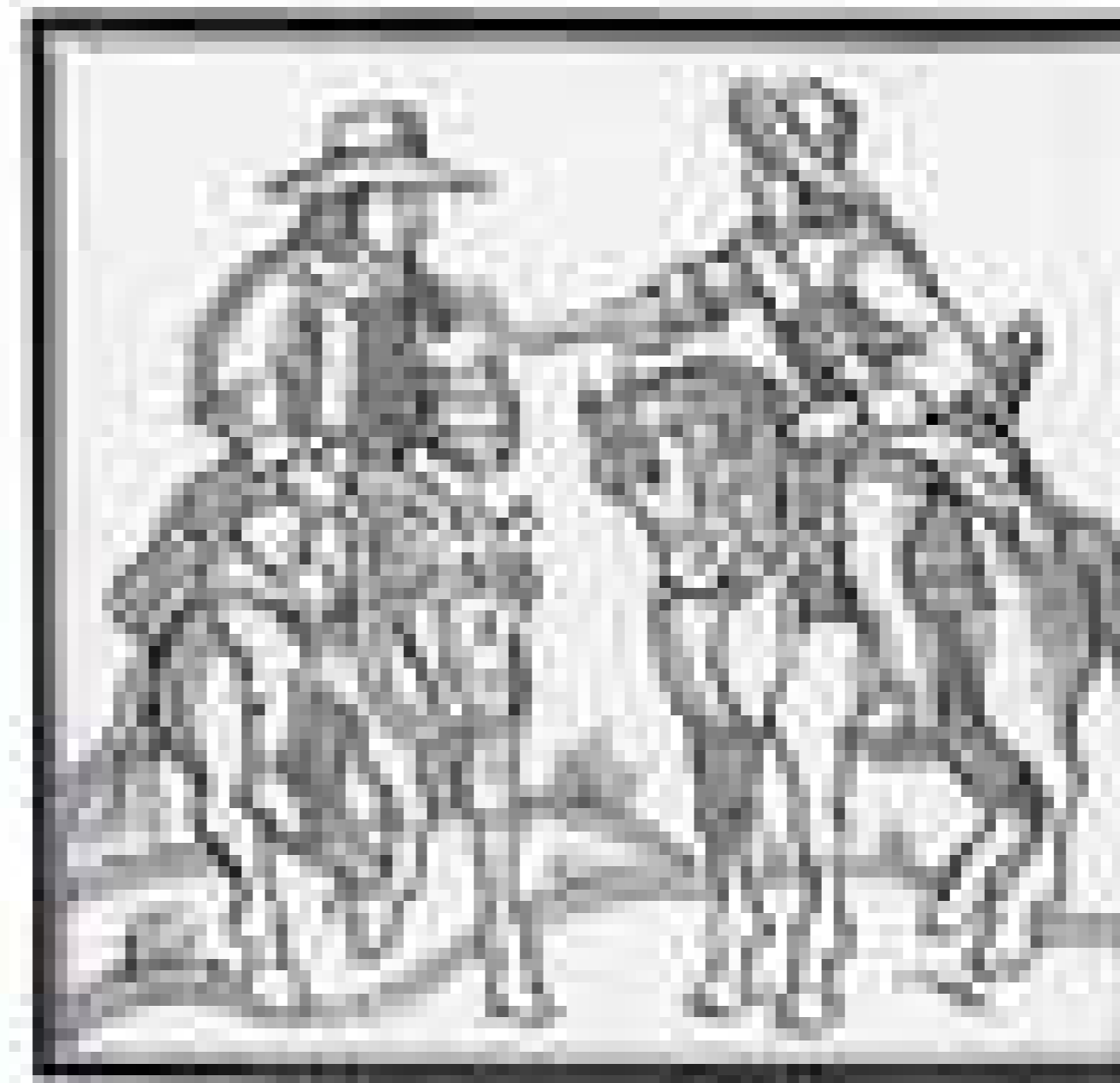
The 1835 Municipal Reform Act gave Maidenhead its own Police from 1836. The Berkshire County Constabulary policed the town from 1889. Today Thames Valley Police enforce the law.

Travellers through Maidenhead were often attacked by robbers. King Henry III (1207-1272) ordered the clearing of trees and bushes from road to reduce robberies.

Around 1650 the Royalist soldier turned highwayman Captain James Hind robbed travellers passing through Maidenhead Thicket. Although he was arrested and executed for treason in 1652 robberies continued. In 1736 the landlord of the Bear Inn offered £20 for information leading to the capture of highwaymen.

The Maidenhead Yeomanry Cavalry, raised in 1798 in fear of invasion from Revolutionary France, was used to patrol the Thicket. In 1803 140 Special Constables were sworn in because of fears of 'revolutionary ideas' and civil disturbances complaining against food shortages and rising prices.

More Special Constables were recruited during both the Great War (1914-1919) and the Second World War (1939-1945).



A Court of Record was held every third Monday after the granting of a Charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1582. The Court prosecuted trespassers and bridge toll debts. A 'Pie Powder' (Pied Poudreux) Court administered fairs and markets.



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Hospitals

Jesus Hospital, Bray, was founded in 1609, with a group of 34 almshouses for the poor. Built between 1623 and 1628. Although administered now by the Donnington Hospital Trust this is not a hospital as we understand it today.

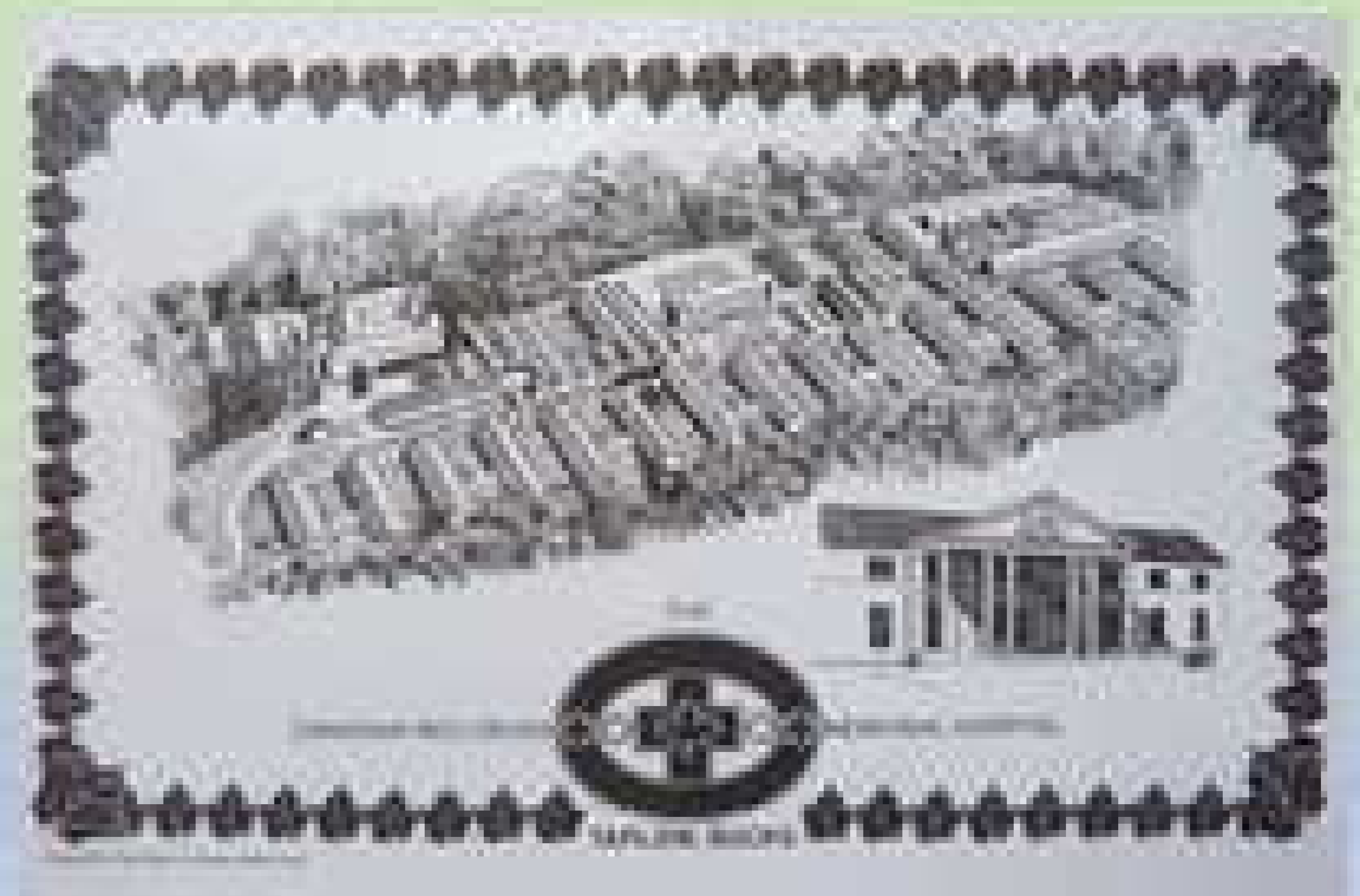
St Mark's Hospital was founded in 1835 by surgeon Frederick Salmon. It had seven beds and 131 patients in its first year. It became part of the NHS in 1948.

In the Cottage Hospital Fund launched in 1877 and the 73-bed hospital opened in Norfolk Park in 1879. It was enlarged to take 500 patients by 1930, became part of the NHS in 1948 and closed in 1974.

St Luke's Hospital opened a School of Nursing in 1884 with 9 students. By 2020 nearly 5,000 have graduated.

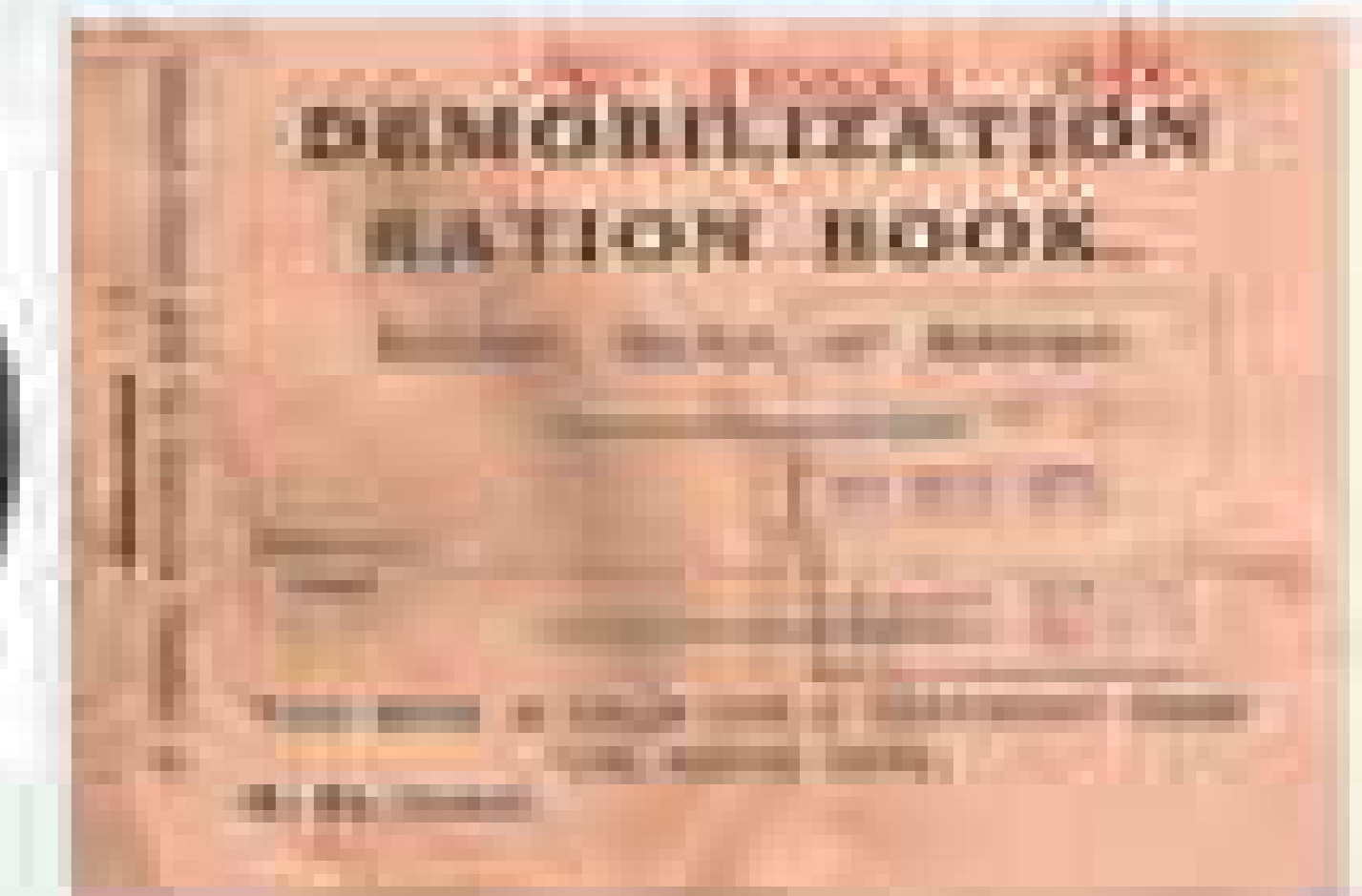
The Duchess of Connaught's Canadian Red Cross Hospital was opened in 1915 on the Astors' Cliveden estate for those wounded in the Great War.

During the Second World War The Canadian Memorial Hospital was built on the same Cliveden site. This became Maidenhead's maternity hospital in 1947 and specialized in treatment for Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. It closed in 1985.



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The Great War 1914-1919



The outbreak of war in August 1914 caused shortages and price increases. Food could not be imported from Europe and there was the danger of enemy attacking shipping. The price of sugar trebled as cane from the Caribbean replaced beet from Austria. Ration Books were not issued until 1918.

Reservists were recalled to their units and recruiting began. The part-time Territorial soldiers left for overseas. Conscription started in February 1916. Lorries, motor 'buses and horses were bought by the Army. Troops arrived to train in the Town.

In 1915 the first 130 Belgian refugees arrived in Maidenhead and relief funds were set up to help them.

A German prisoner of war camp was opened at Holyport for officers. Prisoner Other Ranks worked on local farms.

A hospital for the wounded opened at Cliveden in the grounds of Taplow Court.

In 1917 over 2,000 Londoners moved to Maidenhead to avoid German bombing.

Munition Workers help gain the Vote for Women over 30 in 1918.

Maidenhead's War Memorial commemorates 900 dead.

In 1921 the Council started building houses as 'homes for heroes'.

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Second World War 1939-1945



When war broke out in September 1939- Maidenhead thought relatively safe from German bombing. 6,000 evacuees arrived from London by train and London museum treasures were stored at Knowl Hill. After their countries were occupied in 1940 the Dutch Queen Wilhemina moved in to Stubbings House and the Norwegian King Haaken moved to Fifield.

About 1,500 incendiaries, 150 high explosive bombs and a V1 Doodlebug all fall in the area injuring 62 civilians.

Maidenhead has its own ARP (Air Raid Precautions) including a 'blackout' and air raid shelters. Anderson shelters were built in gardens and Morrison shelters were installed were kitchen tables. Everyone had to carry a gas mask because the Germans were expected to drop gas bombs.

Food and clothing rationing started and did not end until 1953.

The Air Transport Auxiliary headquarters moved in to White Waltham in 1940. The ATA made over 300,000 delivery flights of about 150 types of aircraft during the war.

The Local Defence Volunteers (later Home Guard) were set up in case of invasion and included patrolling the River Thames.

The Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) provided canteens for the troops, distributed ration books and collected metal scrap for salvage.

Maidenhead raised enough money to buy a Spitfire and the Destroyer 'HMS Matchless'.



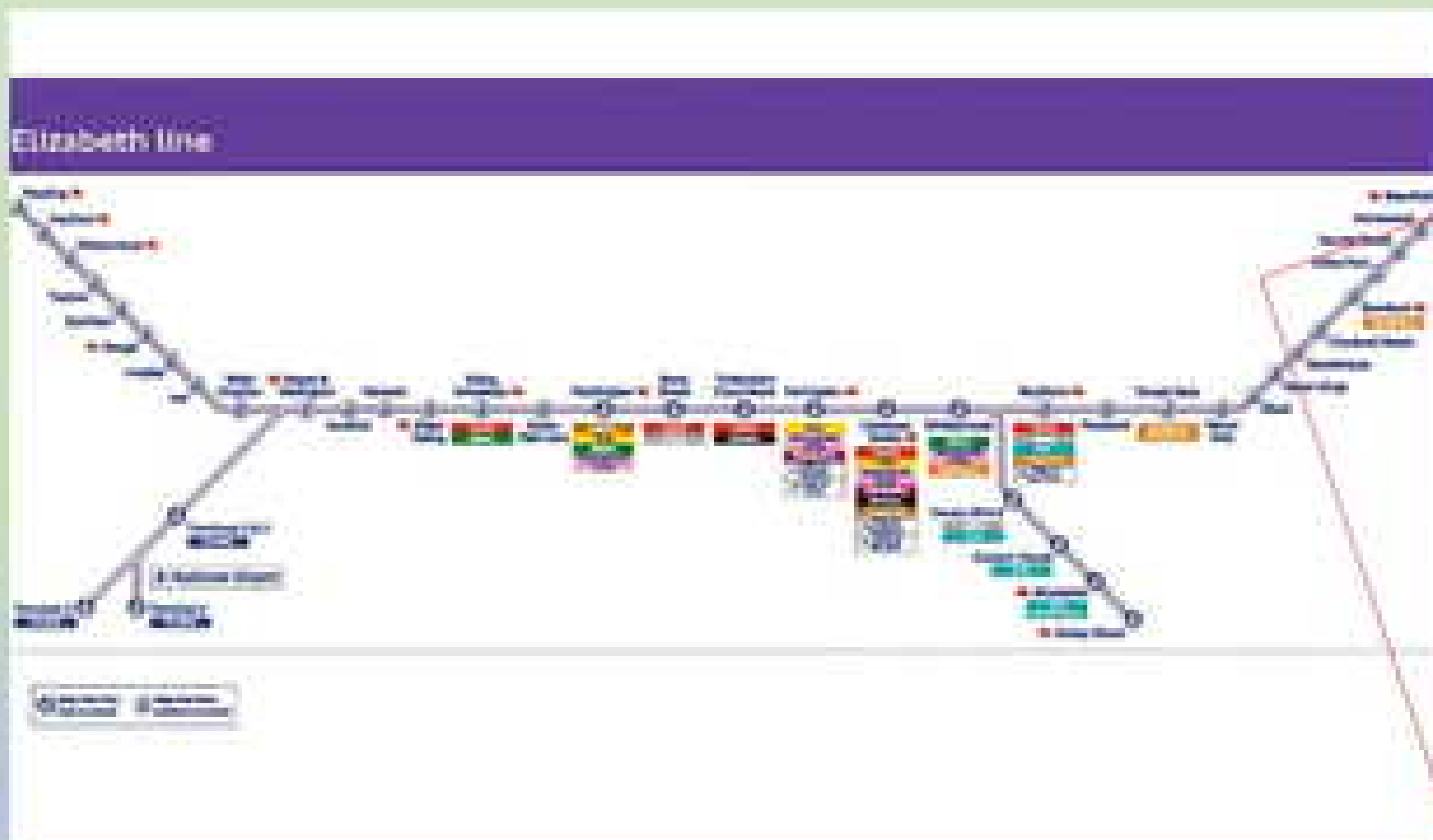
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Commuter Town



Since the end of the Second World War (1939-1945) the population of Maidenhead has increased as improved transport links have made the town attractive to London commuters. Current regeneration is focused on building more apartments.

In 1961 Maidenhead ceased to be a town for all traffic to drive through when a bypass opened. Ten years later, in 1971, the M4 motorway opened. The Crossrail electrification of the Elizabeth Line will reduce further commuter travel times to and from Maidenhead.



Population
1801: 949
1948: 26,790
1983: 48,820
2011: 67,404



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Home of the Rich and Famous

As well as its own 'home grown talent', Maidenhead's closeness to London and good travel links has made the town a very popular place to live.

During the Second World War (1939-1945) Maidenhead offered a relatively safe haven for exiled European royals

How many of these famous people can you name ?



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The Future ?



**14,000 new homes
in Maidenhead ?**

