

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?



MAIDENHEAD HERITAGE CENTRE



Jewel of the Thames

Maidenhead's
place in the
Universe



**Too close to
the River
Thames ?**



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Part I – *Early times – 18th Century*



Jewel of the Thames

**Before Maidenhead
was named**

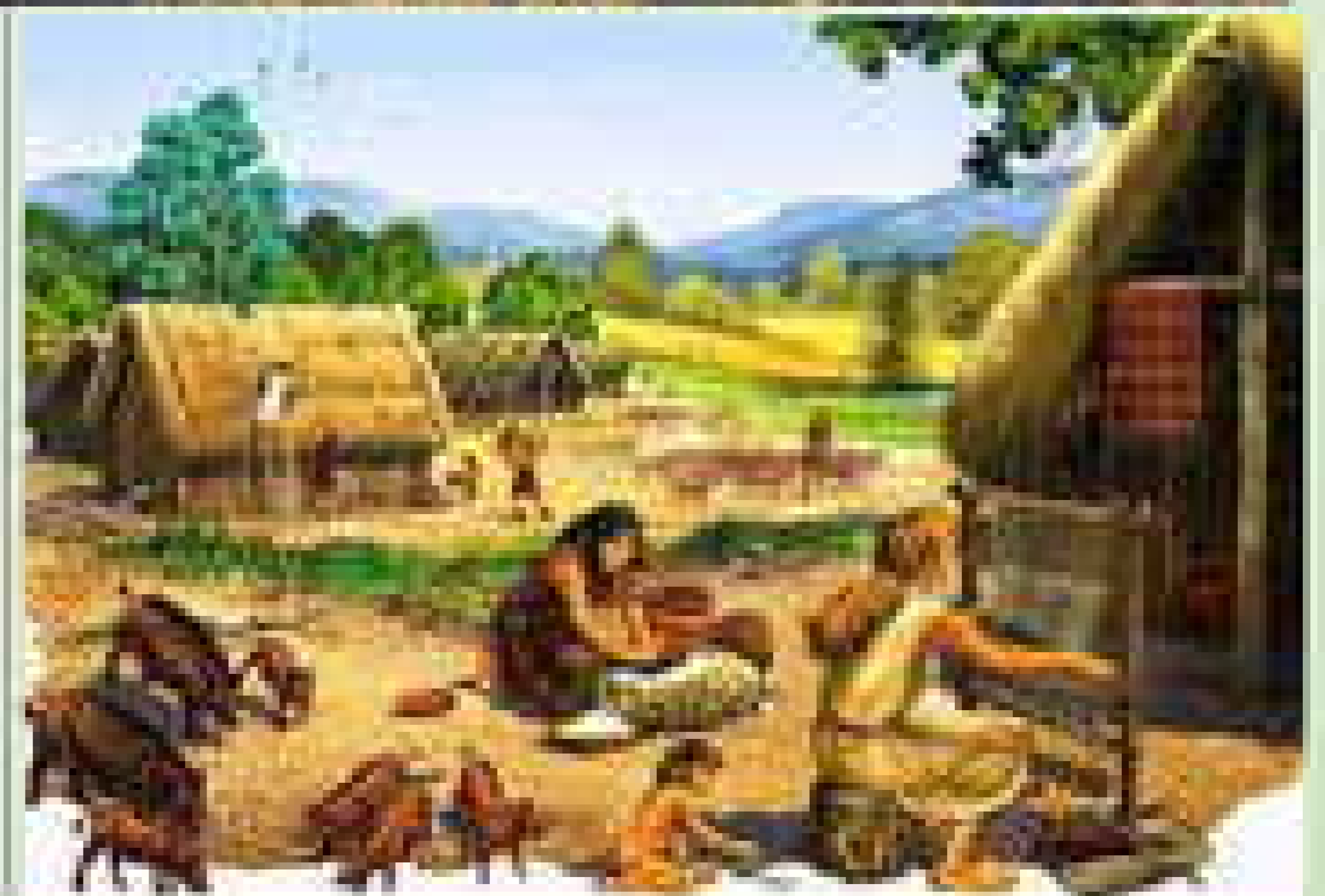
**Living on the
River.**



**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 3rd 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.



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**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.



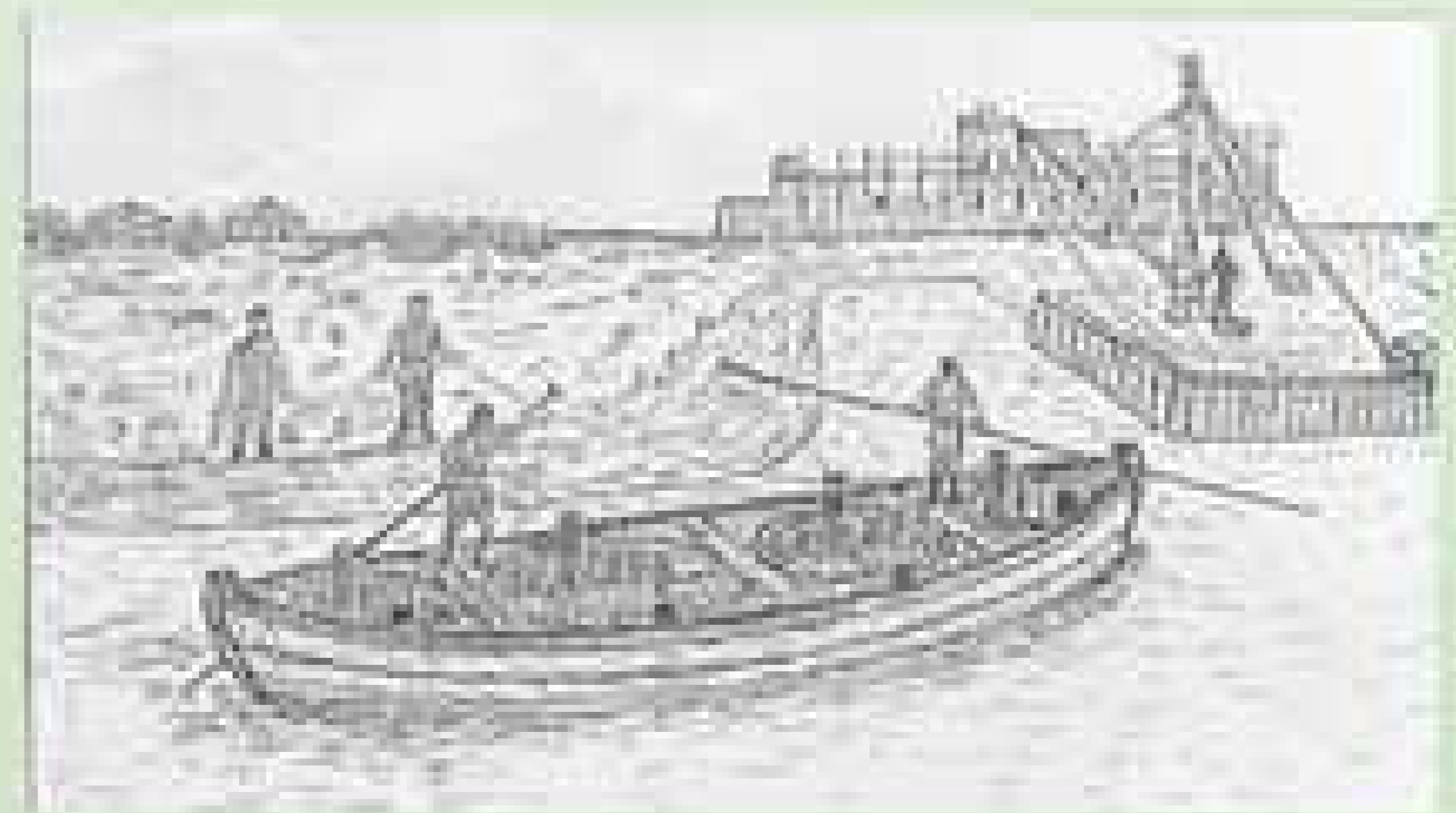
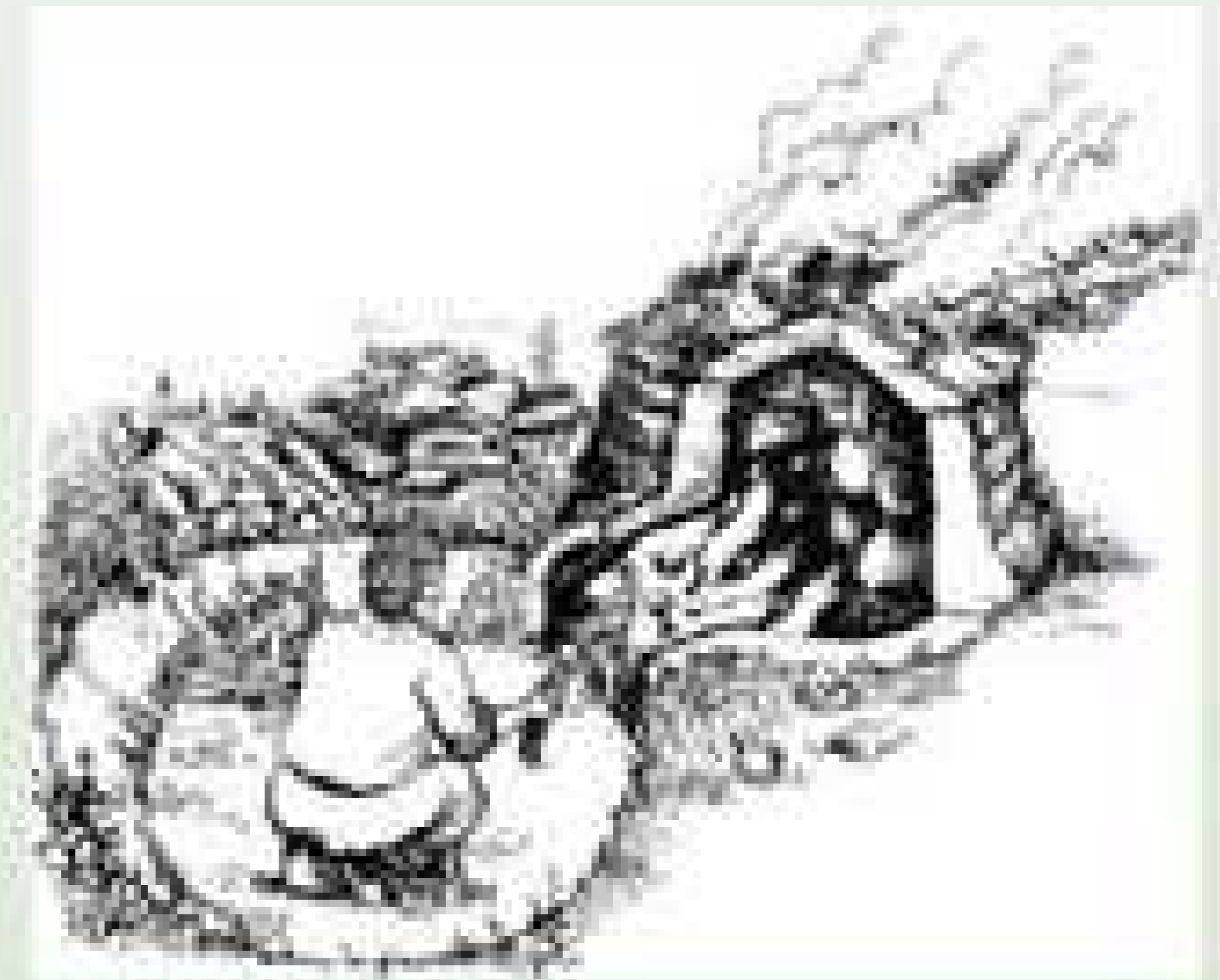
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**Before Maidenhead
was named**

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.



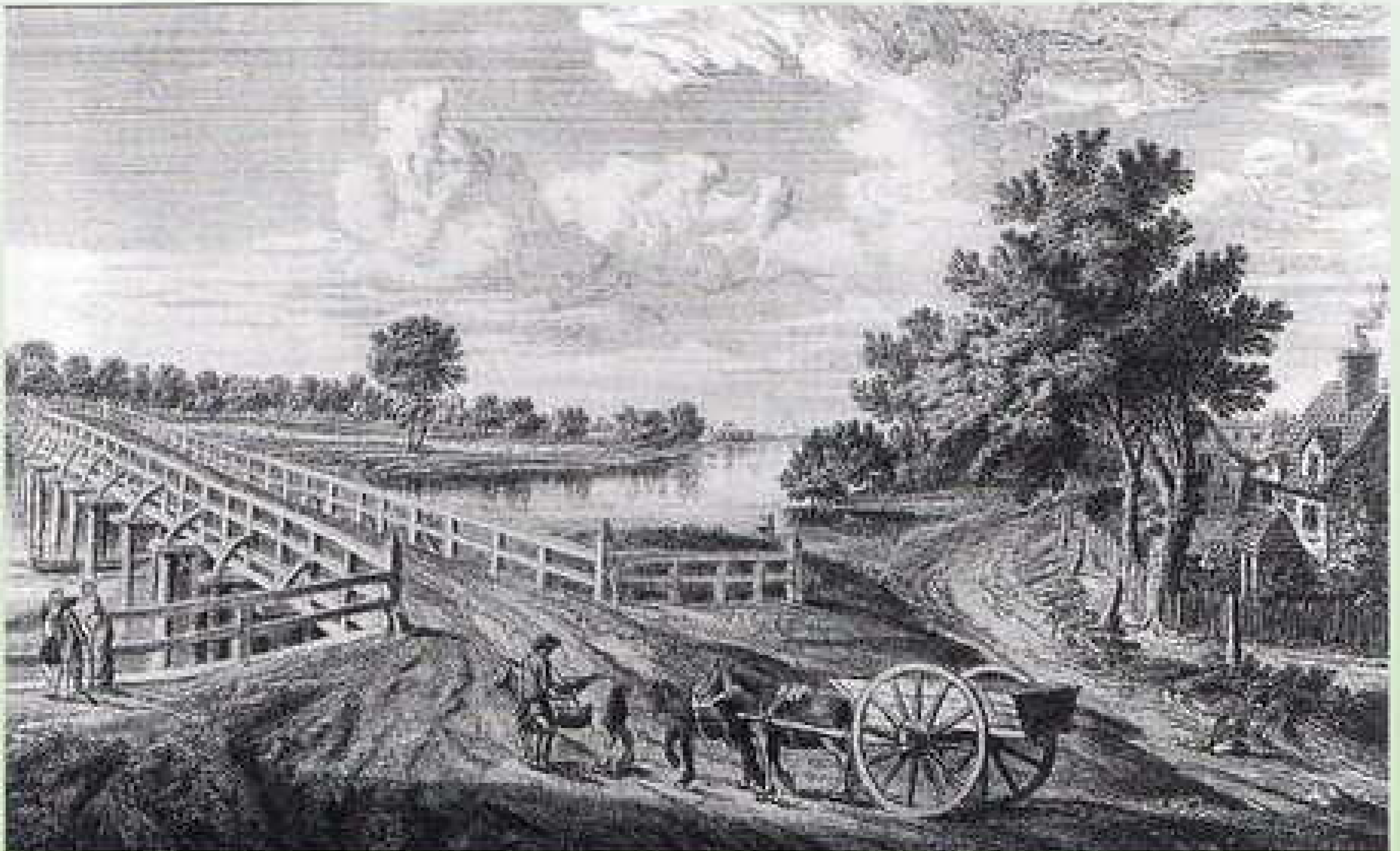
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**Before Maidenhead
was named**

**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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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 ?



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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.

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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!**



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Part II – *The Victorian & Edwardian eras*



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The Victorians

Victoria became Queen in 1837. Although we remember the achievements of the Victorians times were not good for everyone.

In 1840 every week 180 people were admitted to Cookham Union Workhouse (now St Mark's Hospital) as 'vagrants'. In 1855 a trade depression made one in eleven 'paupers'.

Maidenhead continued to grow. from 949 in 1801, to 3,603 by 1851 and 12,980 in 1901.

In 1866 a Volunteer Fire Brigade was set up and a Horticultural Society in 1878.

Maidenhead became a Municipal Borough in 1894.

Kidwell's Park opened in 1890 and Grenfell Park in 1899.

The century ended with volunteer soldiers from Maidenhead fighting in South Africa during the Second Boer War (1899-1902).



**Read all about it!
Maidenhead
Advertiser first
edition 1869.**



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The Railway

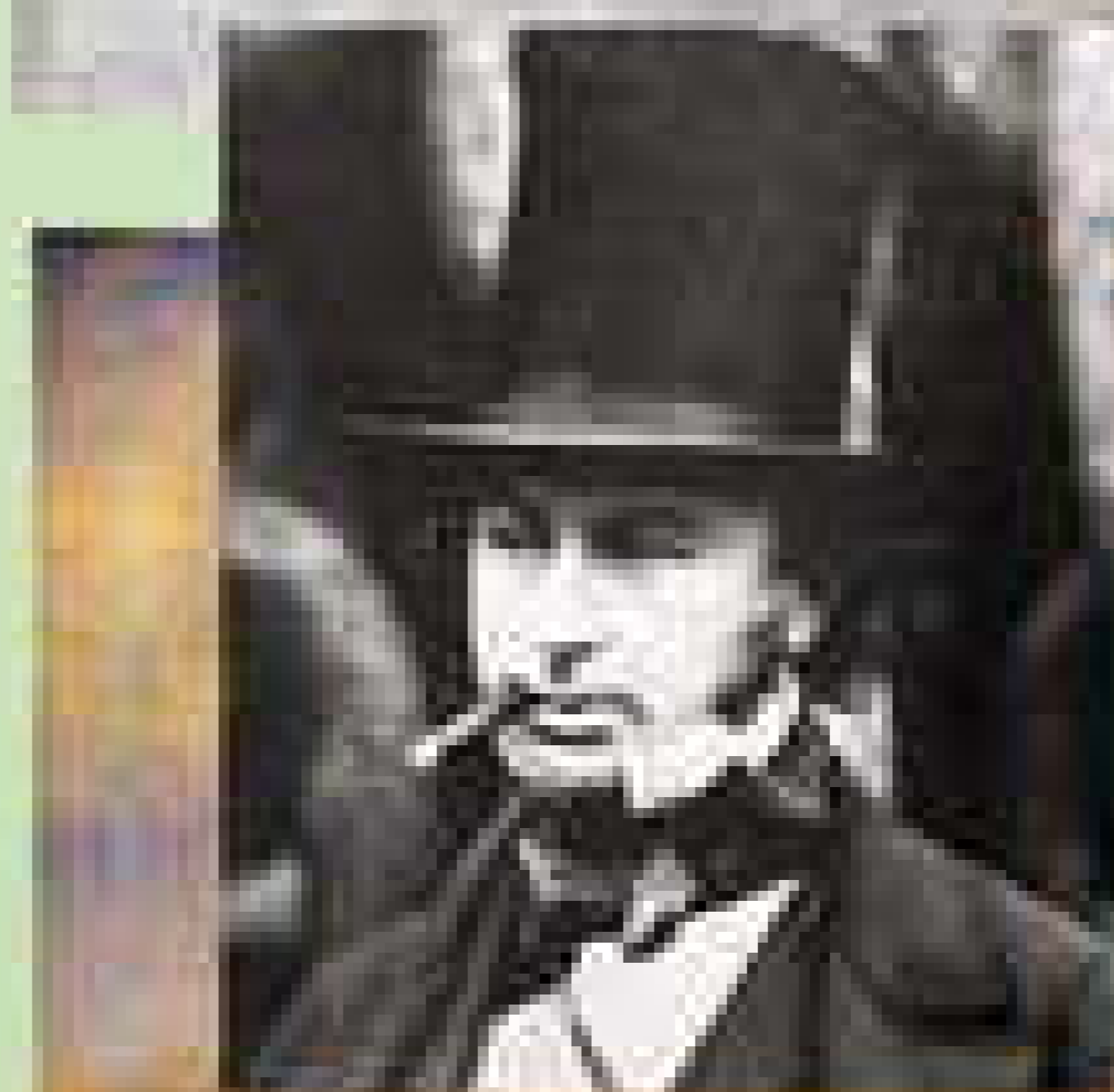
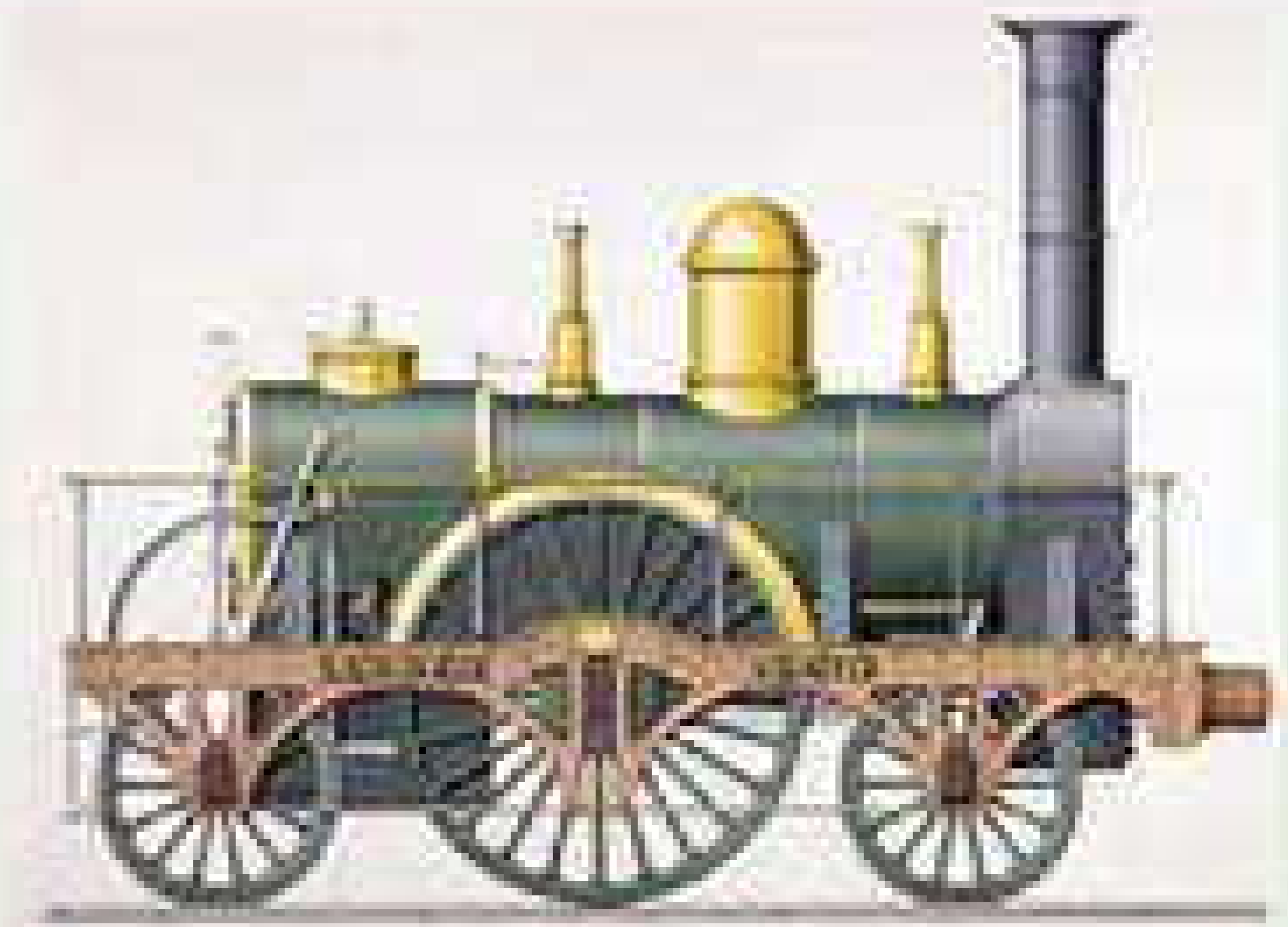
One of the greatest achievements of the Victorians was the railway system. On 4 June 1838 the first part of the Great Western Railway (GWR) opened from London to Maidenhead. The first train carried 1,479 passengers. Knowing that the coaching trade would decline the GWR pays compensation to Maidenhead for 6 years of lost bridge tolls.

From August 1838 Bath to Bristol stagecoaches travelled by rail from Paddington to Maidenhead.

In 1839 Brunel's railway bridge opened as GWR extended to Twyford. Rail soon replaced road as the main transport through the town, and the inn trade suffered as overnight stays were not needed. The Bristol to London, via Maidenhead, stagecoach service ended in 1843.

New Coach, and later horse omnibus, services were set up to take people to and from railway stations.

From 1840 the Royal Mail was carried by rail instead of by road.



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The Railway

Cost of Rail
Travel in 1838.

From Paddington Station to	Horses	Carriages			
		If property of one person		4 wheel	2 wheel
	1	2	3		
Windsor	8s. 6d.	13s. 6d.	20s.	11s.	11s.
Taplow	9s	14s.	21s.	12s.	9s.
Maidenhead	9s. 6d.	14s. 6d.	21s. 9d.	12s. 6d.	9s. 6d.
Cookham	10s	15s. 6d.	23s. 3d.		

Paddington to	1st class		2nd class		3rd class	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
Brentford	1	11	1	6	1	1
Windsor	4	9	3	7	2	5
Taplow	5	2	3	11	2	6
Maidenhead	5	7	4	2	2	10
Cookham	6	3	4	7	3	1

12d = 1s (5p)
20s = £1.00

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RAILWAY
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“Messing about on the River”

Unmarried Victorians needed a chaperone for most things except playing tennis and going on the river.

The railway helped develop Maidenhead as a leisure retreat for London Society.

The Brigade of Guards opened their own Boat Club. On Ascot Sunday 1904 over 1,200 launches and small craft passed through Boulter's Lock as people gathered to see the rich and famous, and the latest fashion.

Ettie Desborough (Taplow Court) and Nancy Astor (Cliveden) competed as Society Hostesses for artists, politicians and royalty.

Skindles Hotel offered the opportunity for infidelity in a genteel setting.

Maidenhead became associated with a socially acceptable form of 'Bohemian' lifestyle.



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The Edwardians

Edward VII became King in 1901 and reigned until 1910. He knew Maidenhead well and made the town fashionable as a retreat for London Society.

In 1903 tolls to cross Maidenhead bridge stopped.

In 1904 Andrew Carnegie funded Maidenhead's first public library, built on land provided by Lord Desborough. The same year Maidenhead's first museum opened.

In 1905 Maidenhead traders formed a Chamber of Commerce.

Maidenhead purchased its first steam-powered fire engine in 1905.



Berkshire Yeomanry at the opening of Maidenhead Library.



Plaque from Maidenhead Library gates.



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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

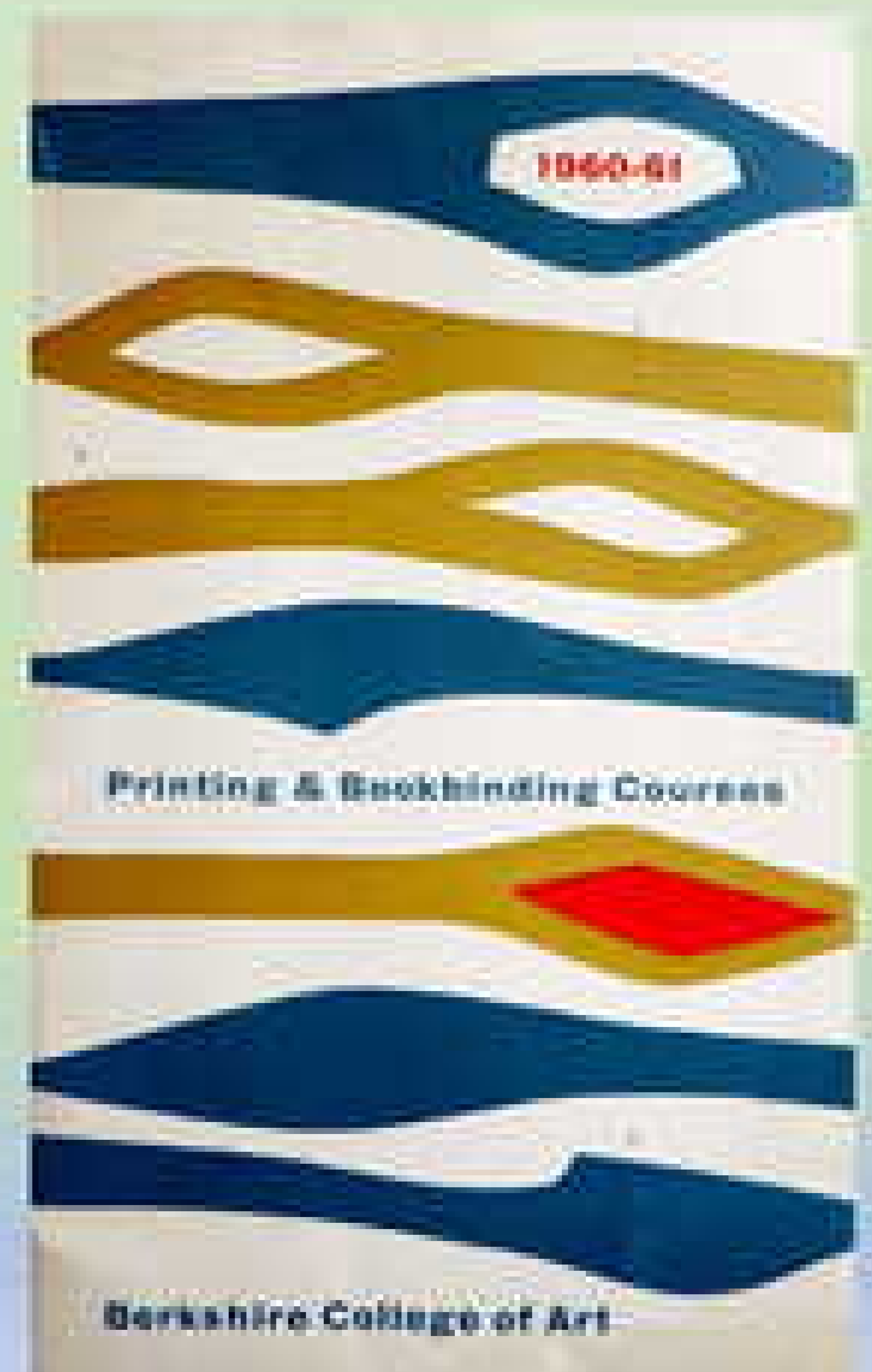
The Maidenhead Modern School opened in 1894, first at Cliveden Hall, then on High Town Road.

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.

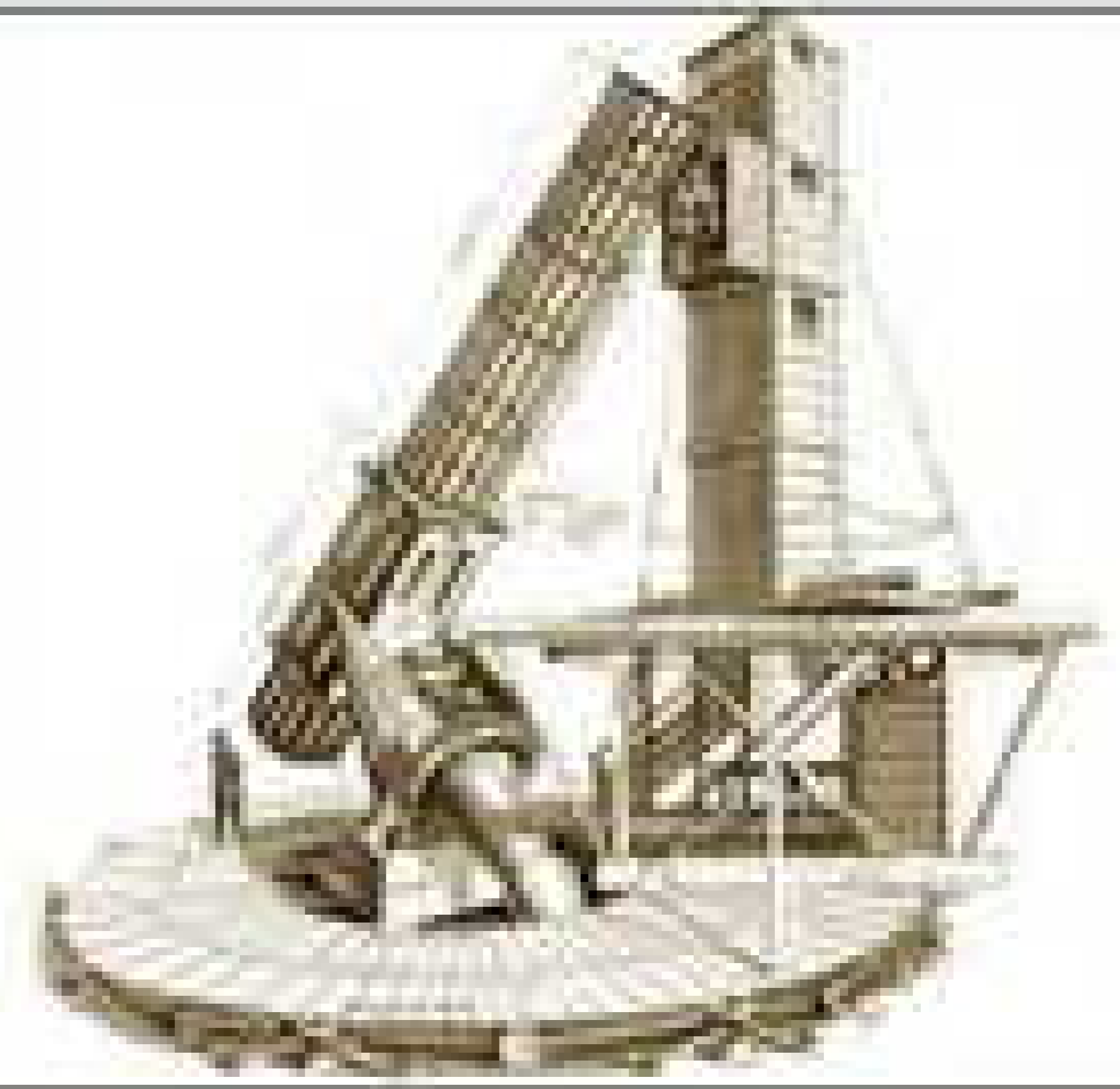
The first 'Vanwall' racing cars were assembled in Cox Green in 1954, won the British Grand Prix in 1957 and the first Constructors' Championship in 1958. Stirling Moss, from Bray, was one of Vanwall's drivers.

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.

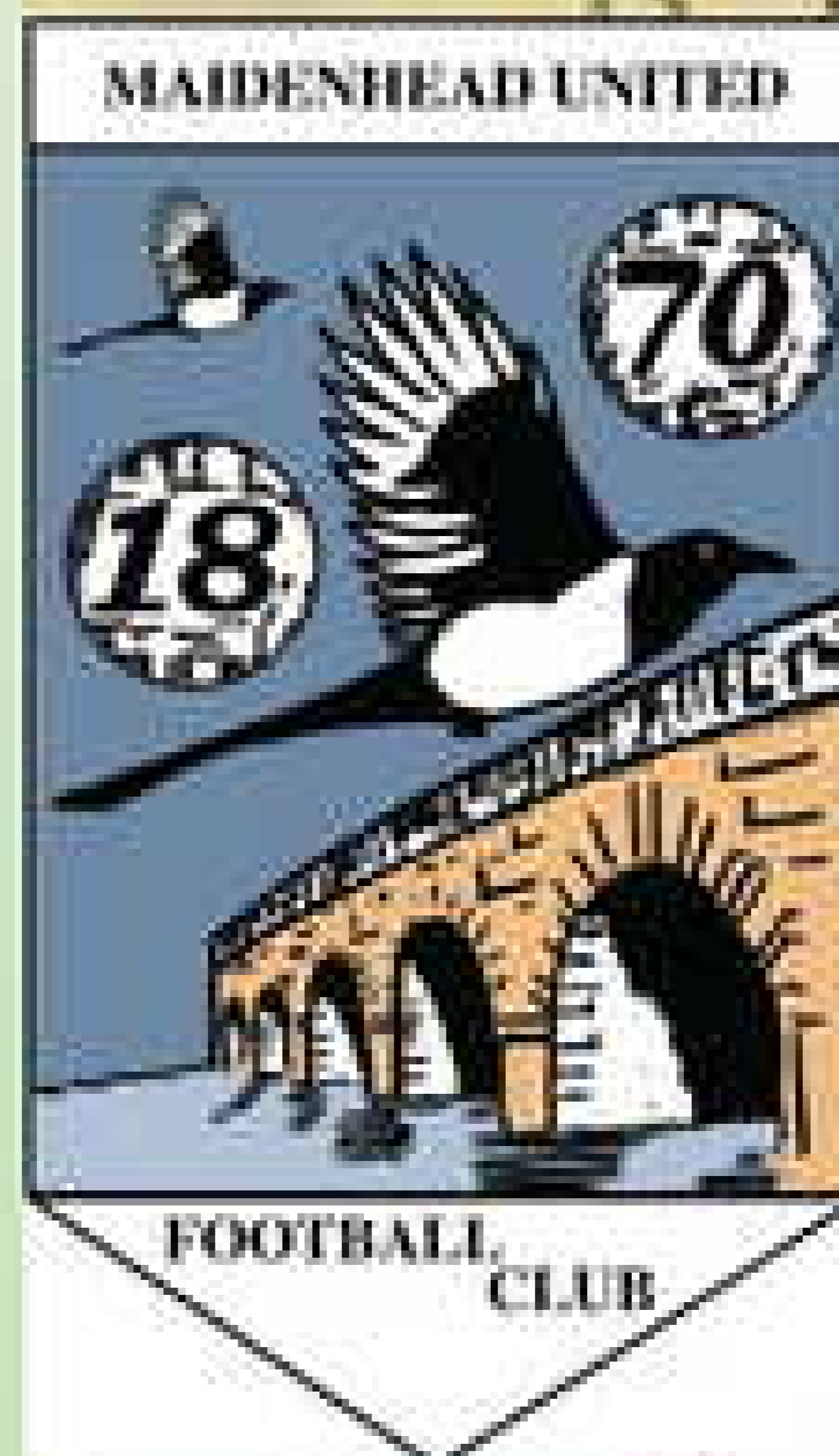
In 1541 the first Gaming Licences were introduced and from 1584 Maidenhead Corporation granted fishery licences. The Maidenhead, Cookham and Bray Angling Association formalized local fishing as a sport in 1873.

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

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



R.F.C.



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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.

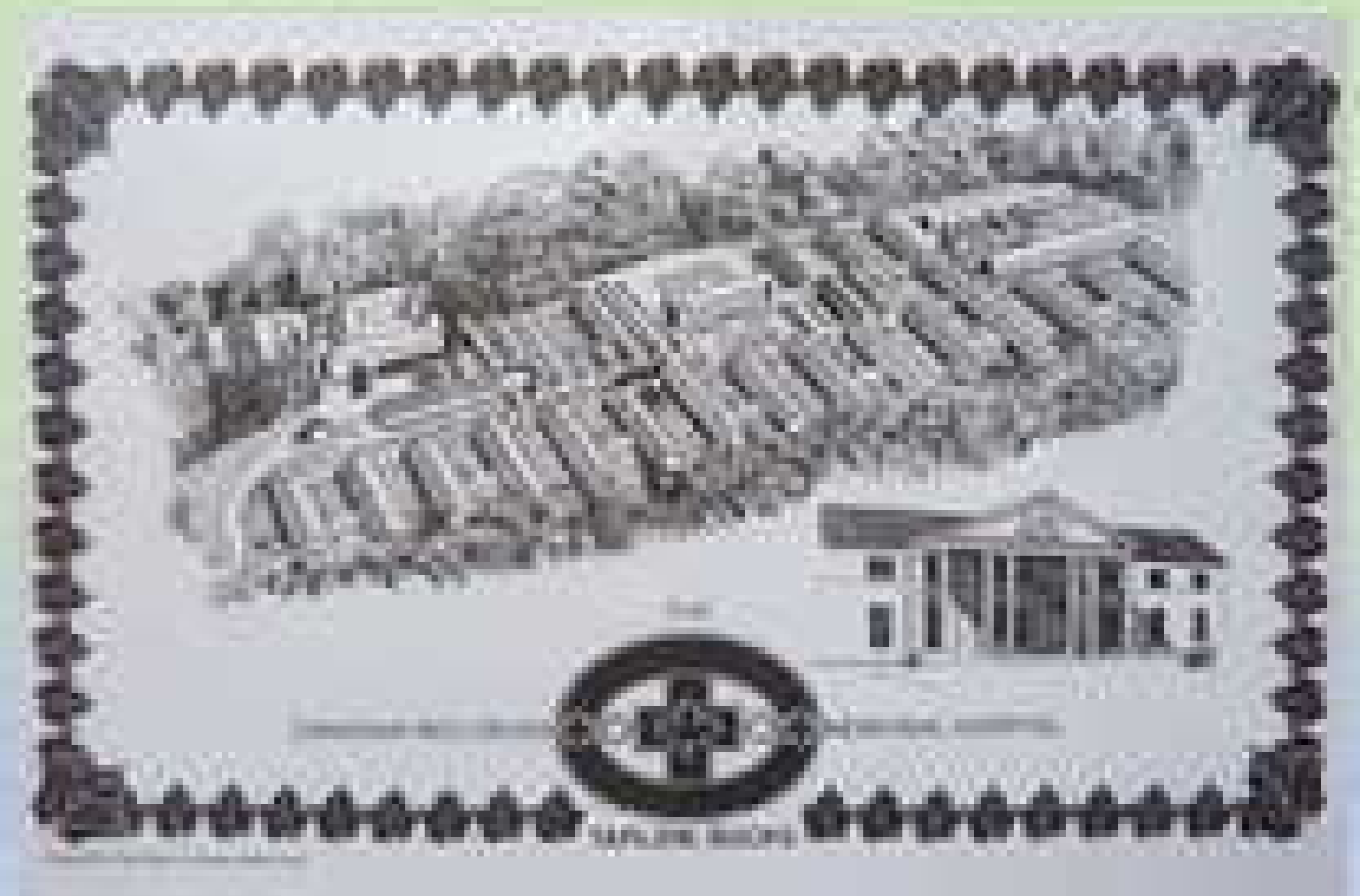
St Mark's Hospital was founded in 1835 by surgeon Frederick Salmon. It had seven beds and 131 patients in its first year. It became part of the NHS in 1948.

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.

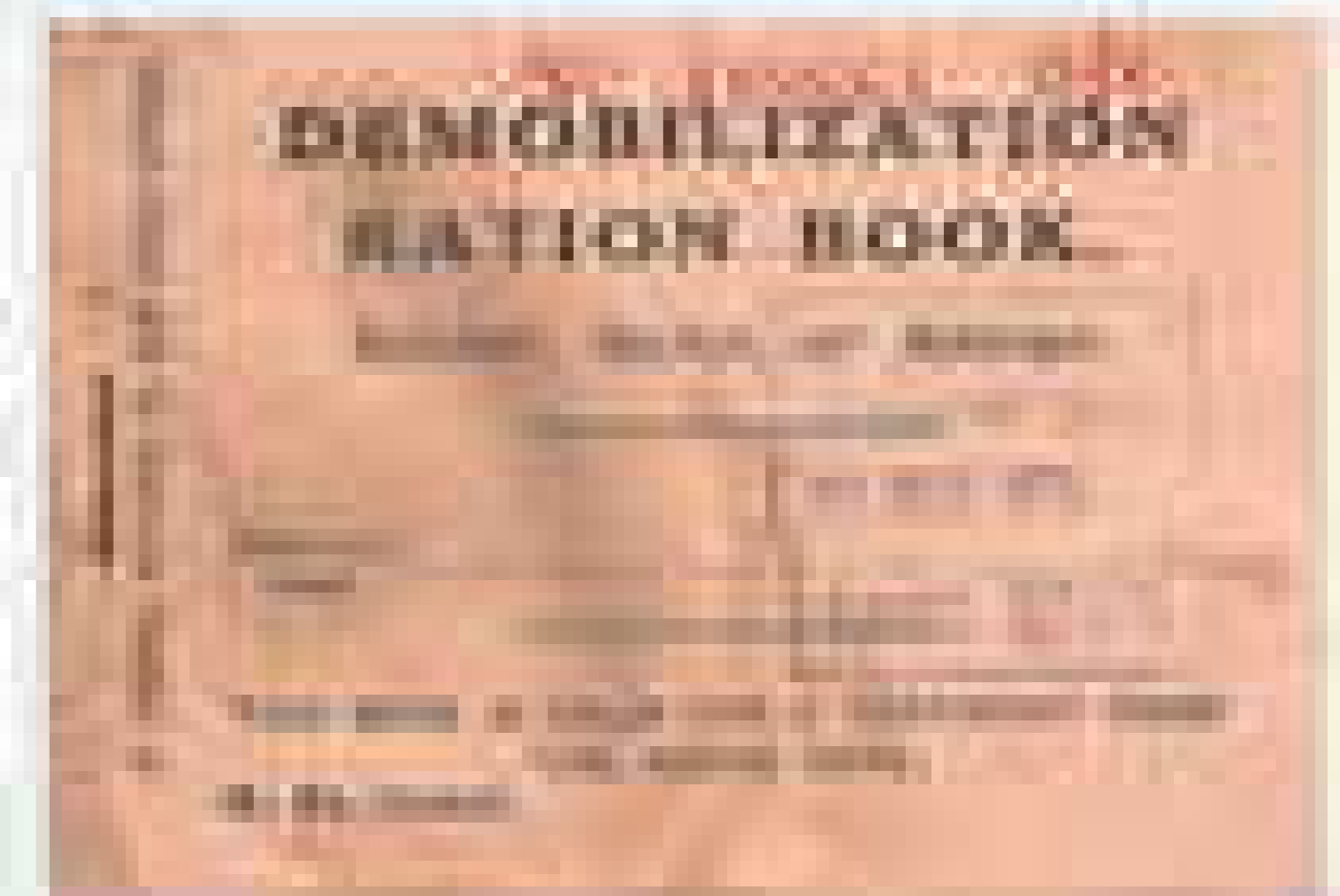
The Duchess of Connaught's Canadian Red Cross Hospital was opened in 1915 on the Astors' Cliveden estate for those wounded in the Great War.

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.



Jewel of the Thames

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'.



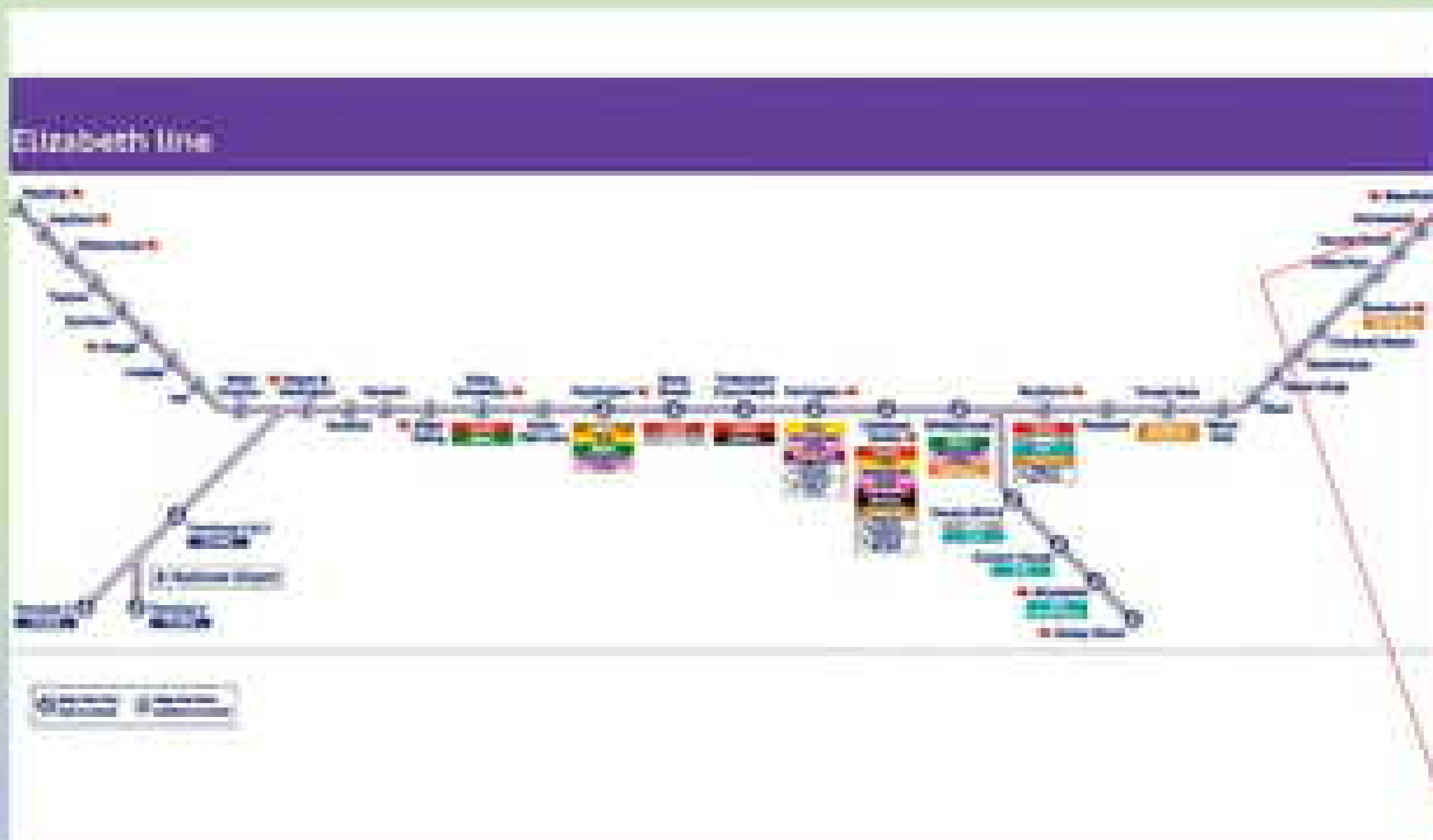
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Commuter Town



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



Jewel of the Thames

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 ?



Jewel of the Thames

The Future ?



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

