

Jewel of the Thames

A Very Brief History of Maidenhead



Jewel of the Thames

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.**

Jewel of the Thames

The Railway

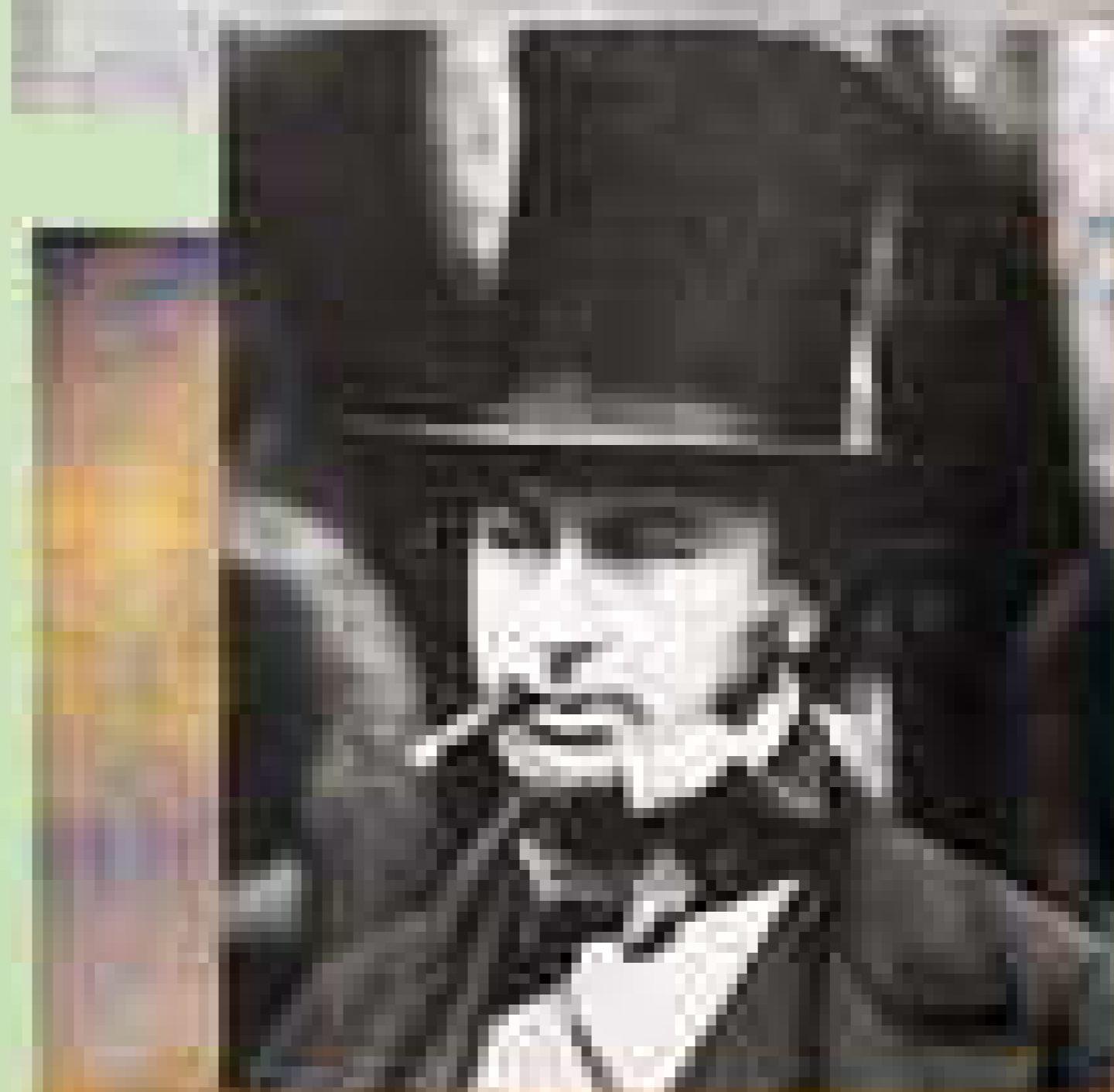
One of the greatest achievements of the Victorians was the railway system. On 4 June 1838 the first part of the Great Western Railway (GWR) opened from London to Maidenhead. The first train carried 1,479 passengers. Knowing that the coaching trade would decline the GWR pays compensation to Maidenhead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



**Are you married or
do you live in
Maidenhead?**



MAIDENHEAD
HERITAGE CENTRE



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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.

