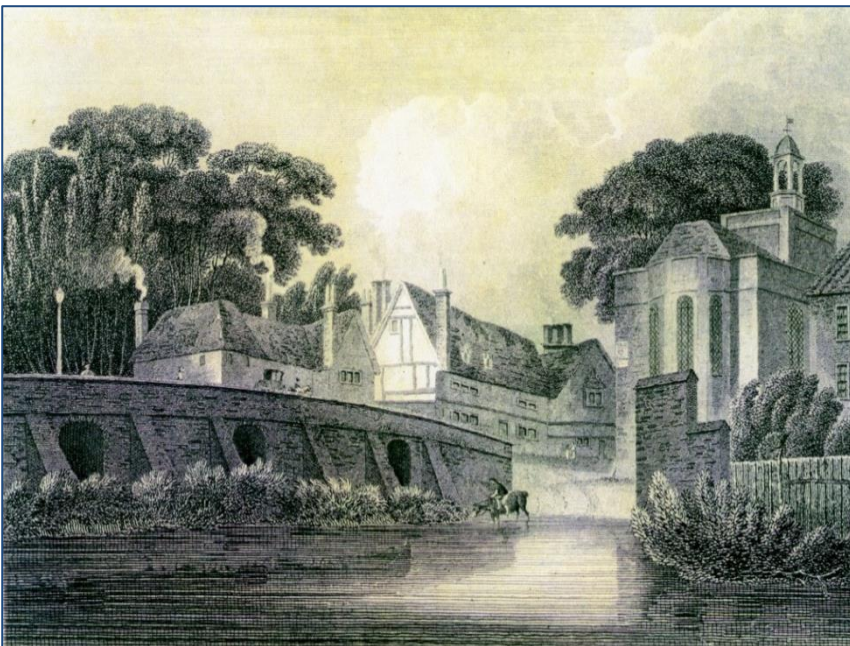


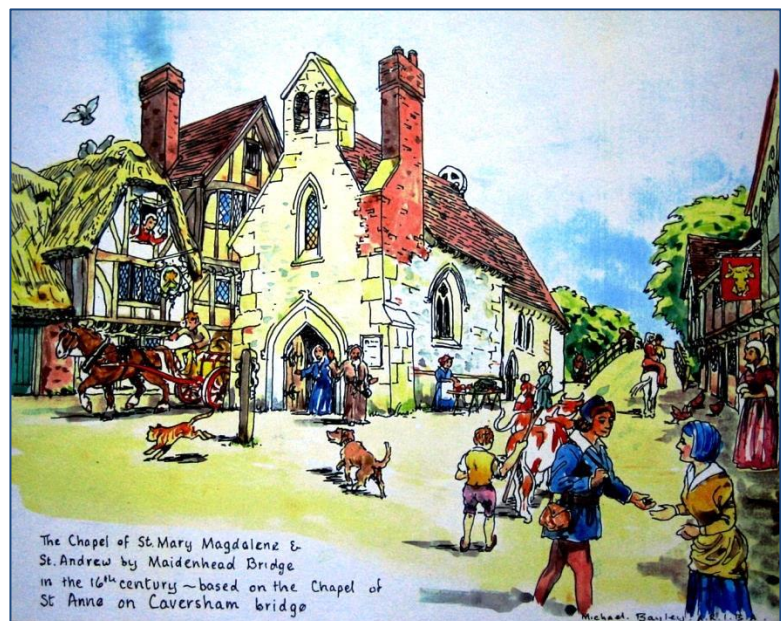
THE CHAPEL OF SS ANDREW & MARY MAGDALENE & CIVIC LIFE IN MAIDENHEAD

The Chapel was once outside the Bear Hotel. Civic life in Maidenhead started here in 1451 when a guild was established in the chapel with responsibility for the *maintenance of the bridge of Maydenhith over the Thames, whereby divers lieges of the king cannot pass without peril at certain times of the year through floods and the weakness of the bridge.* The chapel was expanded in 1724. Now known simply as St Marys, it was relocated to its present site in 1824 as the original chapel was causing an obstruction to coaches.



Drawing of 1813 of Chapel Arches showing the east end of the 1724 chapel

The late Michael Bayley produced this lively drawing of the chapel. The view is from the corner of the High Street with St Ives Road and shows the bridge in the distance



The Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene & St. Andrew by Maidenhead Bridge in the 16th century - based on the Chapel of St. Anne on Caversham bridge

Michael Bayley A.R.I.B.S.

The Calendar of Patent Rolls licensing the guild in 1451 recorded: *The members of the gild would elect wardens annually with the chaplain and his successors being surveyors of the gild, the surveyor, wardens and members be capable of acquiring possessions, and of pleading and being impleaded in any court, having a common seal and able to meet to make statutes; grant also that they may acquire lands, rents and possessions not held in chief to the value of 10 marks a year for the repair and maintenance of the bridge and other premises; grant also to them of pontage for ever, and of the whole water under the bridge and for 50 feet on either side thereof on either bank with the soil and fishery thereof.*

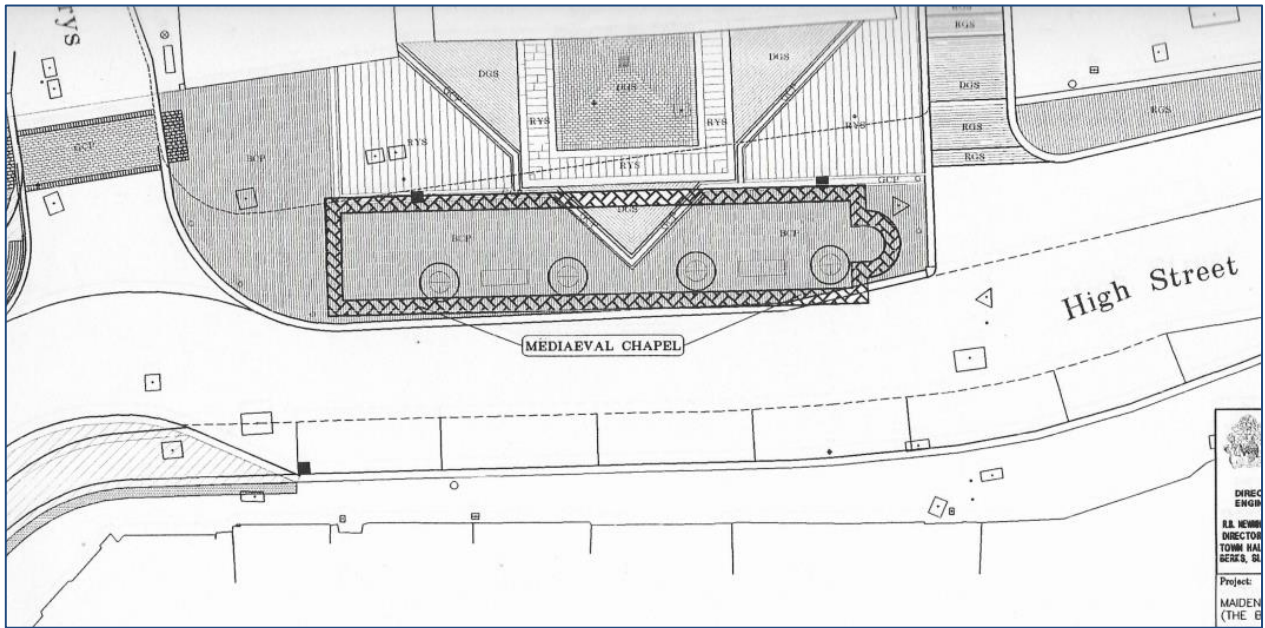
This collection of “pontage” became the tolls that lasted until 1903!

Until about 2005, when the new mayor was made, councillors would process to St Mary’s Church led by two people, often members of the police, carrying the Bridgemasters’ staves.

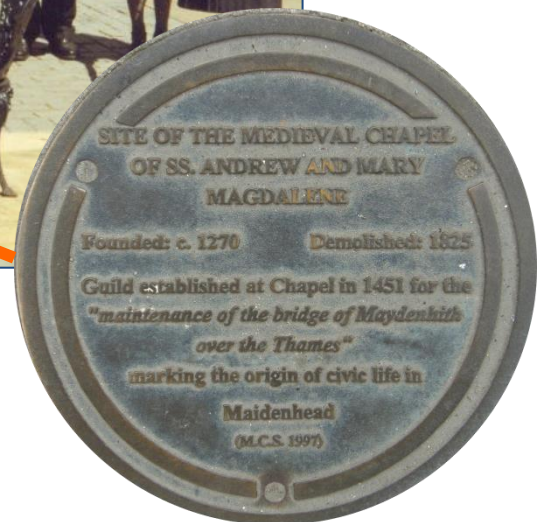


The new mayor and council processed from the town hall to St Mary’s, the Borough Church, for the mayor making ceremony

In 1995 when work was being done to extend the pavement outside The Bear, the chalk foundations of the chapel were found. The Civic Society funded a plaque to mark the site which was unveiled by the new mayor in 1997. At the same time the Royal Borough placed a number of brass marker studs in the ground to demarcate the chapel foundations.



1995 RBWM engineering dept. drawing of the 1724 Chapel Outline based on a diagram produced by Brian Boulter and Pam Knight. According to Elias Kupfermann the dimensions were: length 19.8m; width 3.4m.



Mayor Cllr Eric Wiles unveiling the plaque outside the Bear in 1997, local historian Elias Kupfermann and Ann Darracott carried the Bridgemasters' staves – can you spot the esteemed patron of our Society?

However, in 2019, when the pavement was being retrenched as part of the Chapel Arches development, all the studs on the south side of the chapel outline were lost. Evidently both the planning department and the highways department were unaware of their presence as they had not brought the presence of the studs to the attention of the developer. We are grateful to Peter Humm, Senior Technical Manager of Shanly Homes, for sourcing new studs and organising their placement in March 2021. The studs on the south side of the chapel outline are in a new cycle lane. Other studs mark the approximate east and west extremities of the 1724 chapel.



The area in front of The Bear where the chapel once stood



Replacement brass studs, and close-up, along the southern side of the chapel outline, now in the new cycle lane. I have suggested that the highways department be made aware of their presence to avoid any future problems such as road resurfacing.

Ann Darracott, May 2021