

Radcot and its Bridges



**A MEDIAEVAL
SUPER HUB
AND ASPECTS
OF ITS HISTORY**

Bridges and their magic

Bridges are a great paradox, they not only use nature against nature, but magically the best examples do not defeat or damage nature but enhance it, and, in ways that are sometimes hard to fathom, achieve a deep harmony with their surroundings.....

All can see that bridges stand for something more significant, for the indomitable human spirit, the love of daring and challenge, the power of invention.

Dan Cruickshank – Bridges –Heroic Designs that changed the World – Collins 2010 – a good overview guide

Three of Turner's Bridges



- Whalley Abbey
- St Gothard Pass
- Wind, Steam and Speed
[+Brunel Maidenhead
GWR Bridge today]



Journey of Discovery

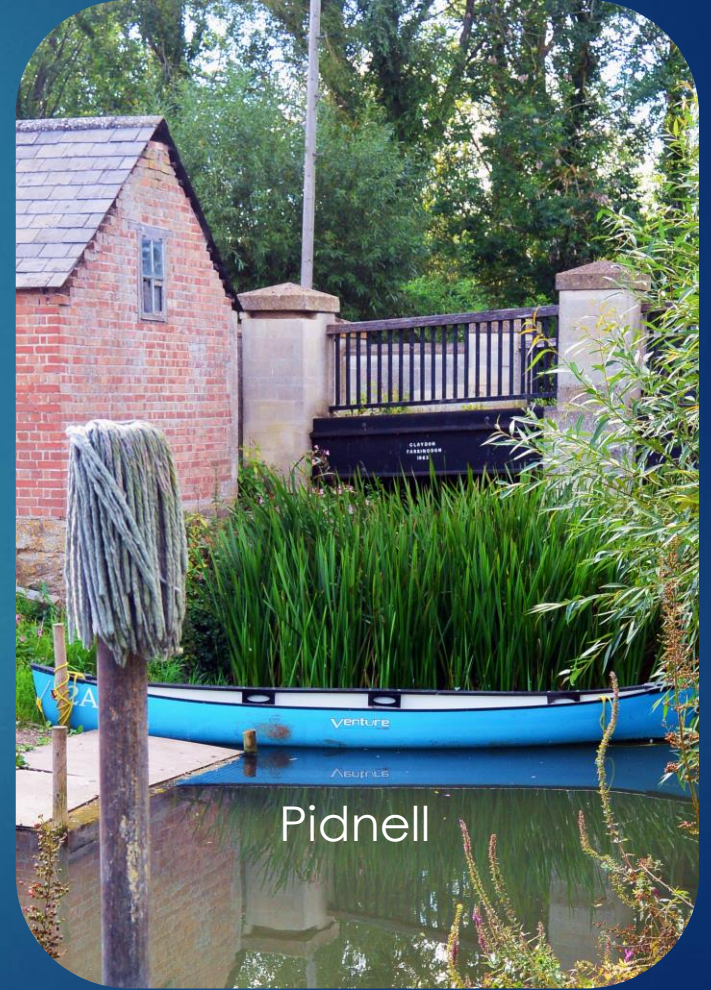
First Encounter with Radcot 1970





And then to
the river -
810 years old
and
counting –
Radcot is
defined by
its bridge

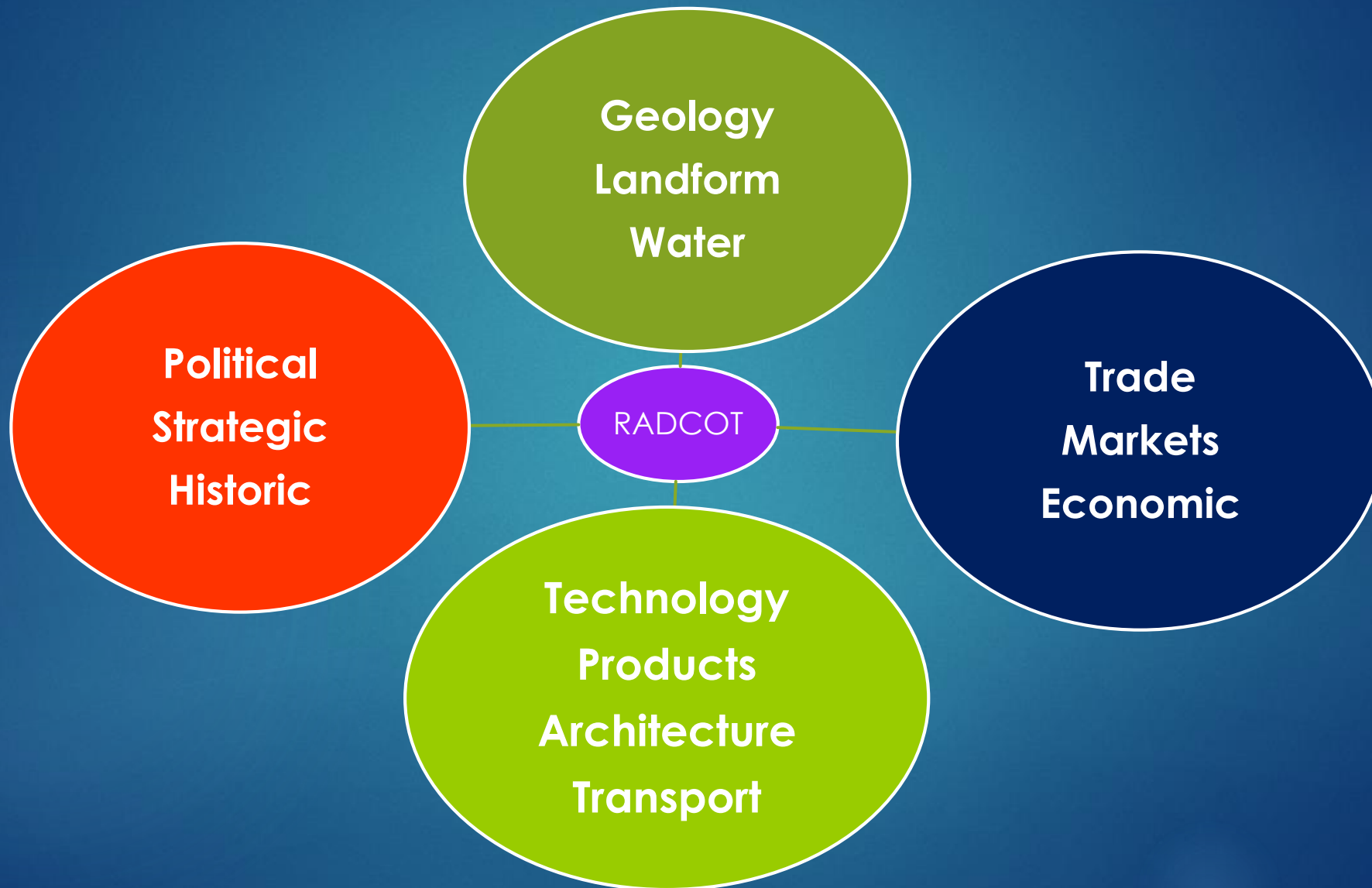
In fact three bridges



Radcot – the basic facts

- ▶ The name : Road cottage or Reed cottage
- ▶ 3 Bridges: Radcot, Canal and Pidnell
- ▶ One road - Causeway – Turnpike – A4095
- ▶ Radcot House
- ▶ The Swan Inn – old, improved and quite good beer
- ▶ Radcot Bridge Farm
- ▶ 4 other dwellings
- ▶ About 20 residents
- ▶ The river and perhaps too many boats ?
- ▶ Enough archaeology and history for 40 minutes!

Key influences for Radcot?



Geological Influences - Radcot

Filkins
stone
quarries

Gravel and
loose
deposits

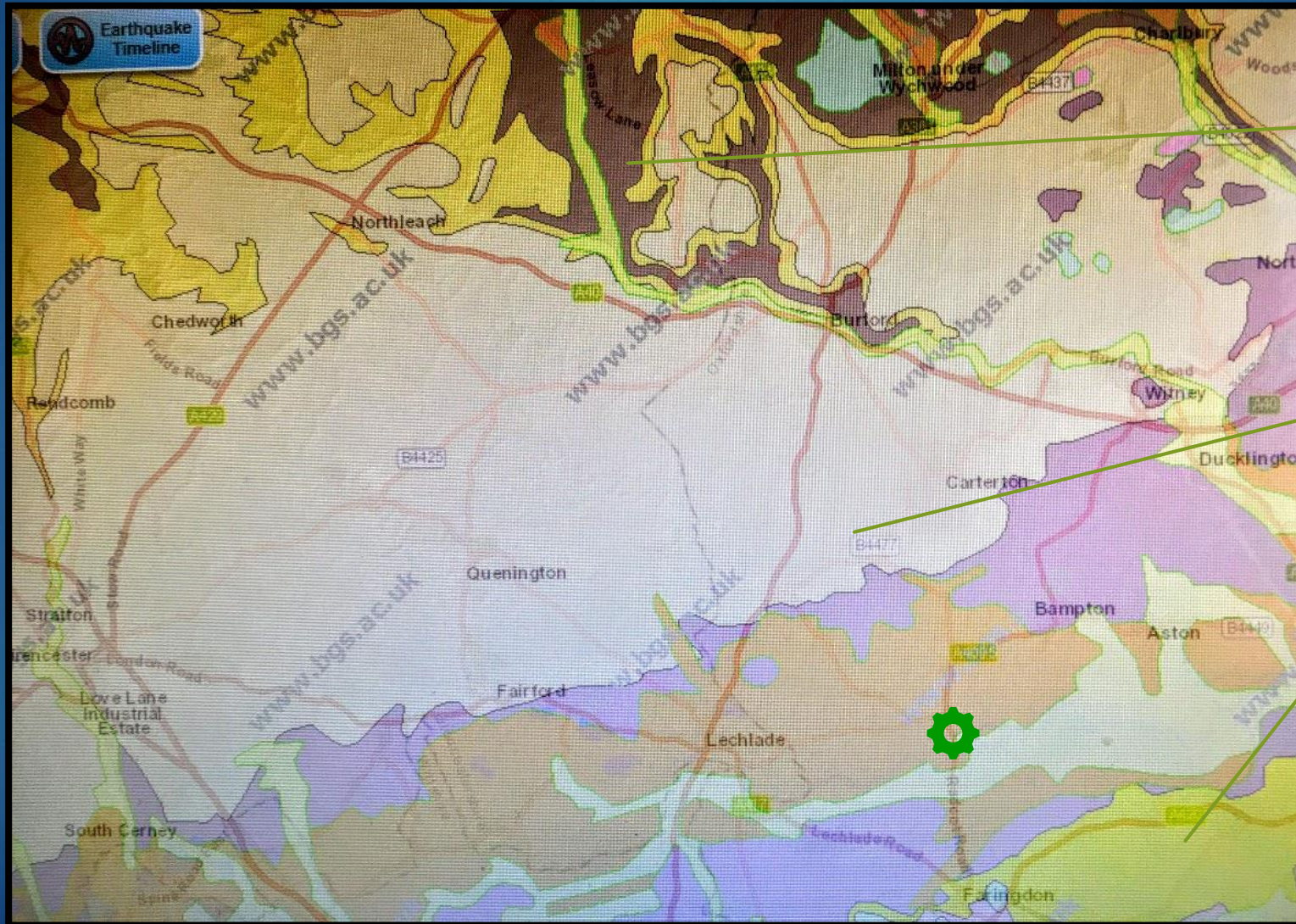
Alluvium

Clay



Superficial and
Underlying geology
Courtesy – British
Geological Survey

Wider Geology – stone sources



Taynton quarries

Filkins quarries

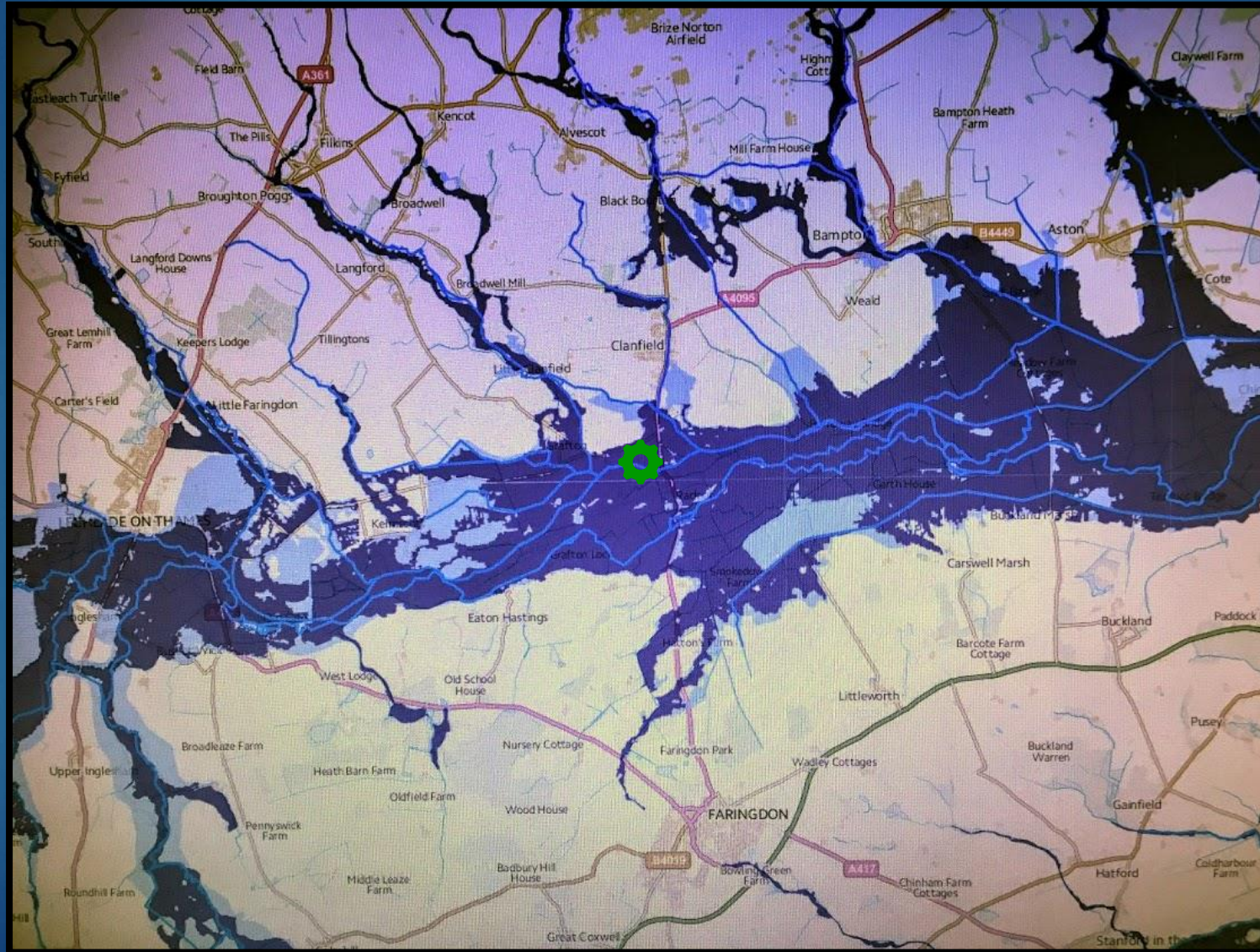
Corallian ridge

Thames : a Wider Braided River and Flood Plain



The Old Thames as a Barrier + Today's Floods

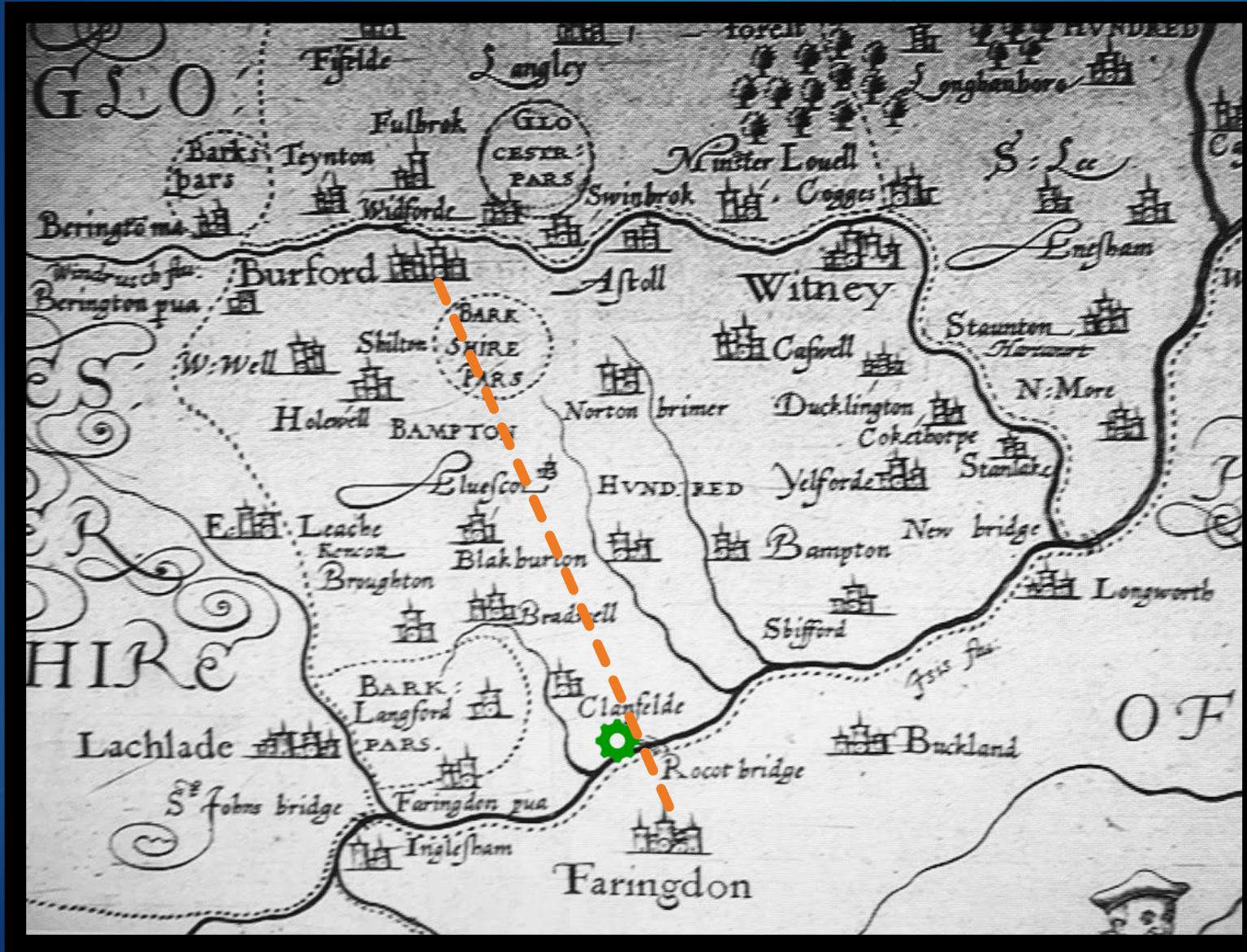
 : RADCOT



Why Radcot – Some Early visitors

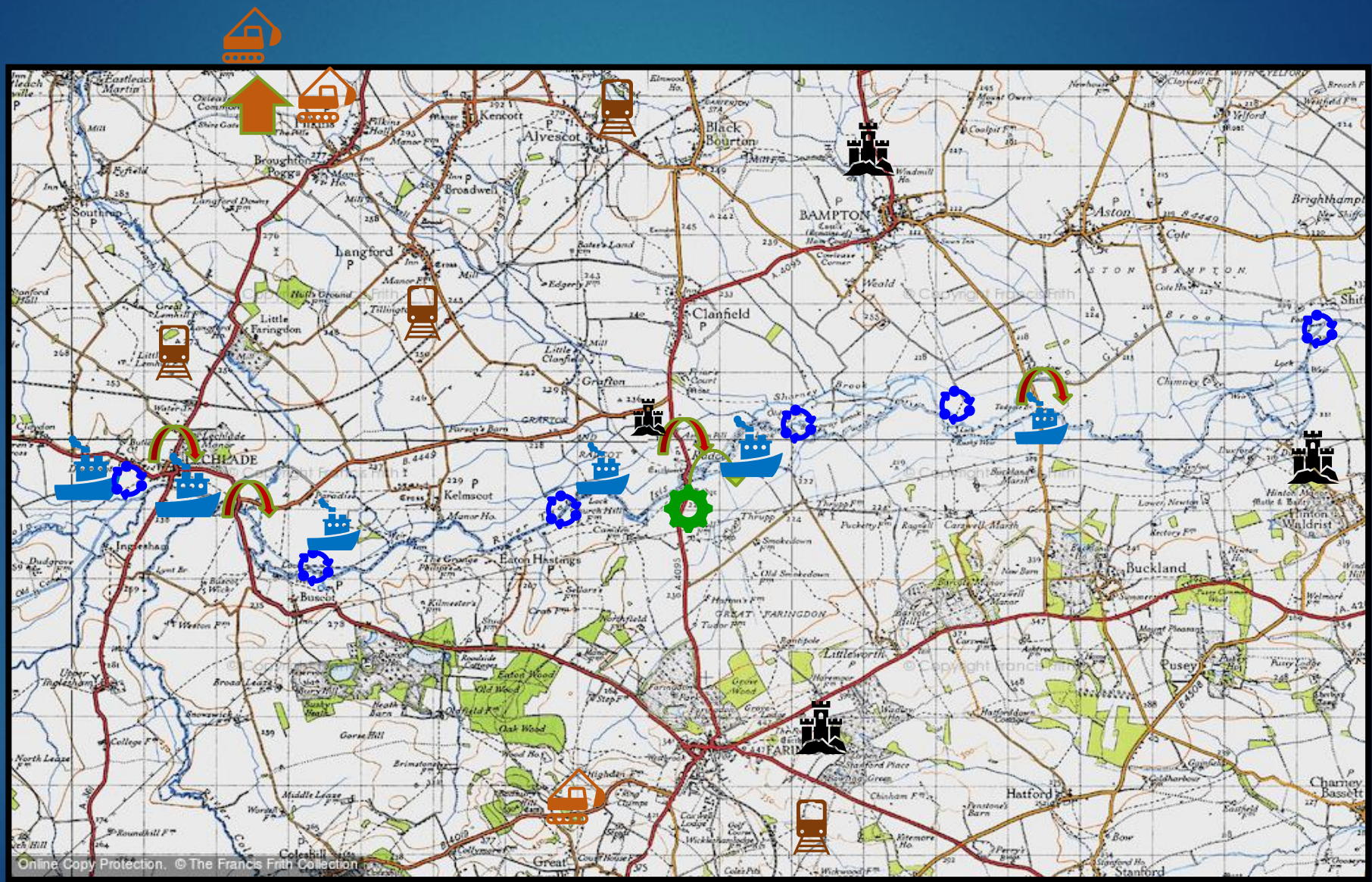
- ▶ Neolithic axe head + cursus and trackway?
- ▶ Bronze age burial mound?
- ▶ Iron Age 'fort' enclosure at Burroway
- ▶ Roman residents – pottery finds and more?
- ▶ On Mercia - Wessex boundary
- ▶ Saxon Canals around Radcot and Bampton
- ▶ A gravel 'island'
- ▶ Ferries and a causeway?

The lay of the land by Speed 1611



Bampton is gradually excluded by dominant Burford – Faringdon corridor and declines, to the advantage of Radcot

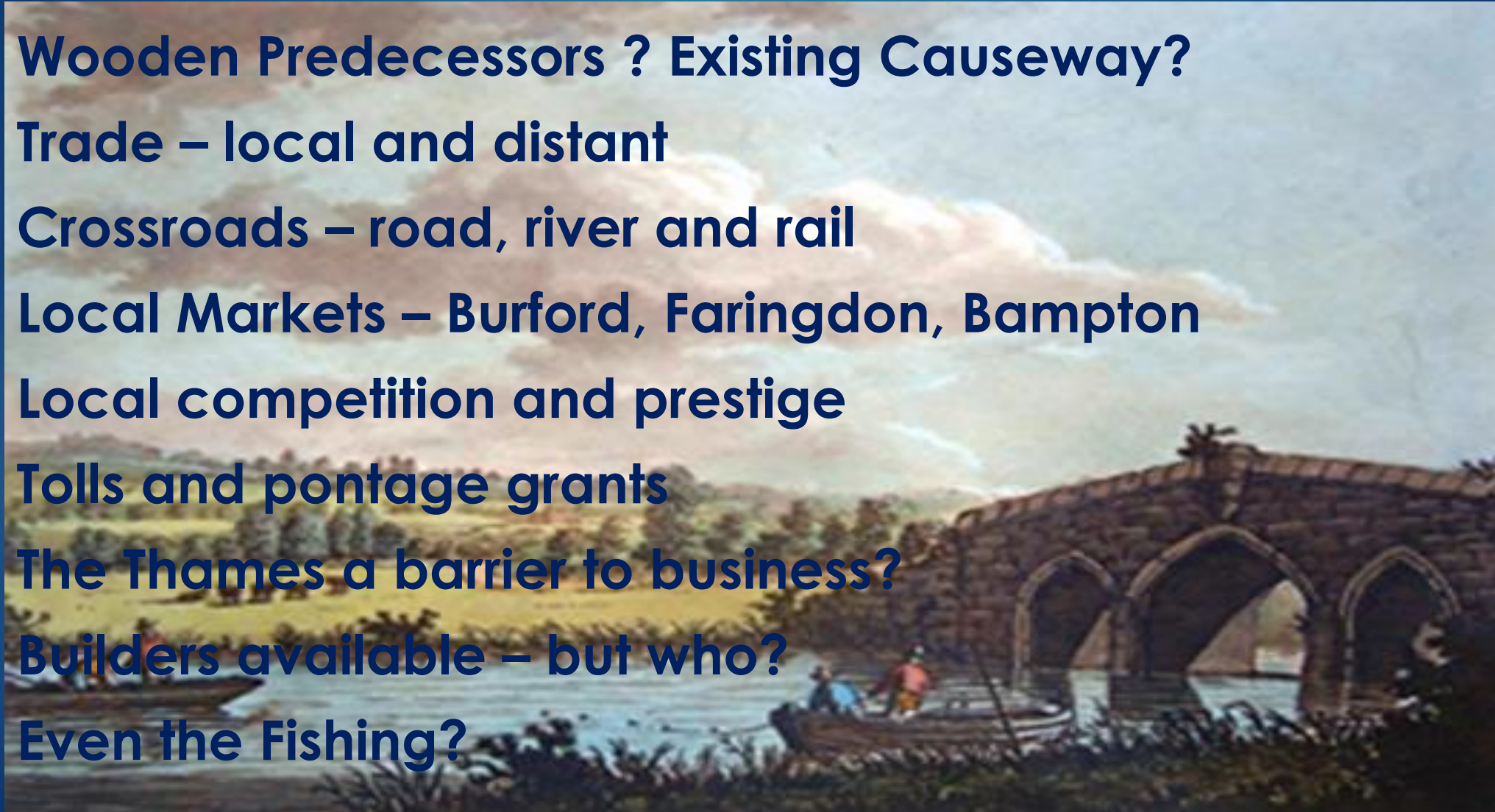
Landscape with historic features [O.S. 1947]



- MILL / LOCK FLASH
- WHARF
- CASTLE
- STONE BRIDGE
- STATION
- QUARRY

Why a stone bridge at Radcot

- ▶ **Wooden Predecessors ? Existing Causeway?**
- ▶ **Trade – local and distant**
- ▶ **Crossroads – road, river and rail**
- ▶ **Local Markets – Burford, Faringdon, Bampton**
- ▶ **Local competition and prestige**
- ▶ **Tolls and pontage grants**
- ▶ **The Thames a barrier to business?**
- ▶ **Builders available – but who?**
- ▶ **Even the Fishing?**



Who built the bridges

- ▶ Monks from Beaulieu Abbey / Faringdon Grange / Monks Mill
- ▶ + A possible Hermit
- ▶ Masons
- ▶ Labourers for the Thames and Severn - Canal
- ▶ Farringdon Iron works – Pidnell
- ▶ Toll keepers

and how?

Later Mediaeval Bridge building



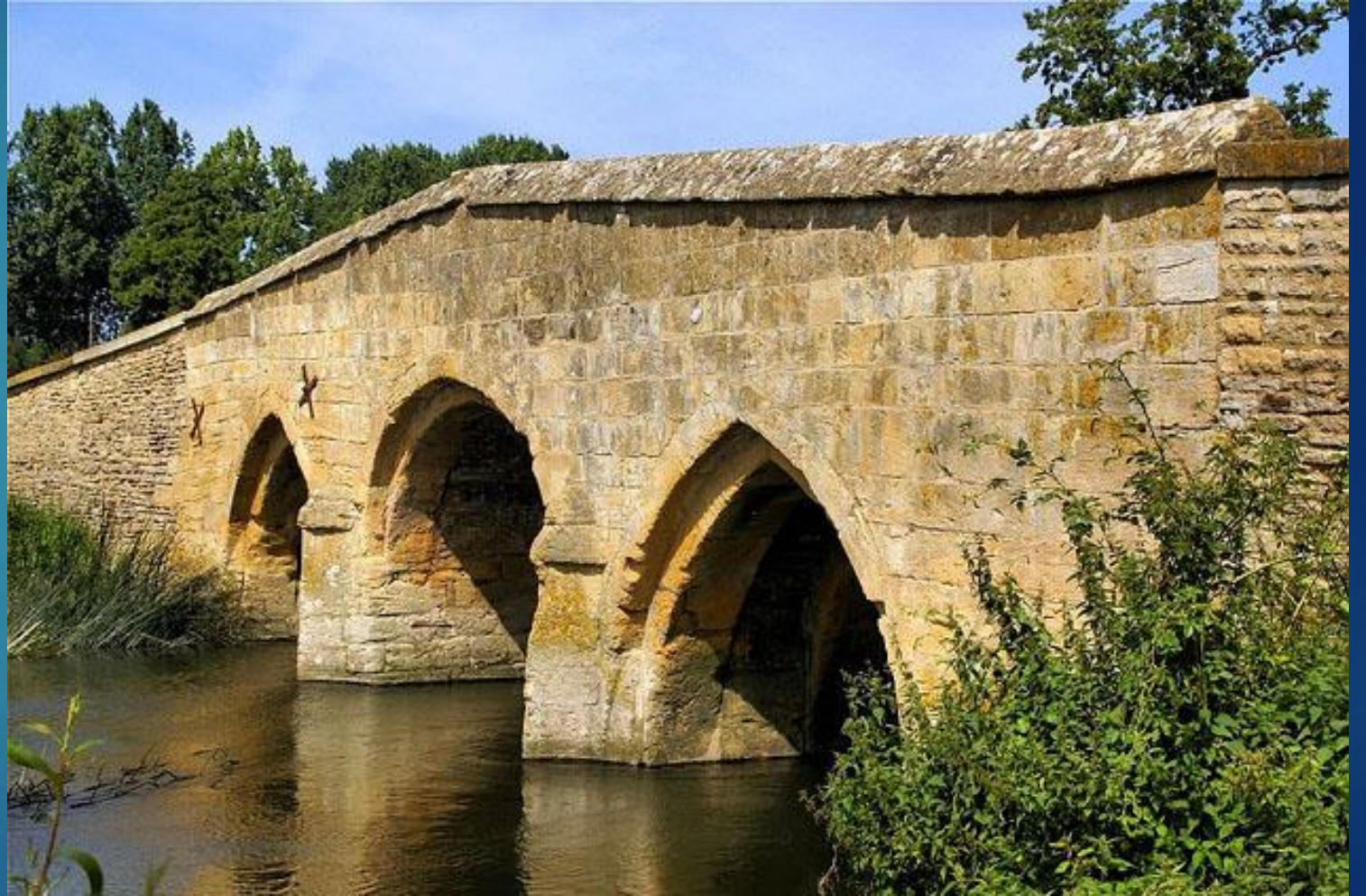
Thornborough – built circa
1340 – now by-passed

Buckingham to Bedford road

Gateway to the Wash from
Buckingham on the Great
Ouse



Which is the oldest – Salisbury or Radcot



Answer Radcot – started by 1209. Finished by Salisbury's start in 1220 [finished 1320]

The Barriers to Navigation

- ▶ Severe Drought – 1921 - 1825
- ▶ Mills and Flash Weirs [in conflict with each other]
- ▶ Floods -1764 -1894 the worst
- ▶ Ice 923 & 1410 - both blocked for 14 weeks
- ▶ Poor maintenance and control [often in the Lower Thames]
- ▶ Phasing of supply and demand [e.g. Stone transport needs water depth]
- ▶ Competition – bridges, canals and rail



Getting the
Curves right

Viking ships
could get a
long way
upriver in
shallow water
– and cross the
Atlantic!

Oslo Viking Ship
Museum 2009
Radcot 1009?

Competition - Newbridge – circa 1240 and Tadpole bridge - 1784



Radcot flash weir 1811

Simple – but
waste water, are
hard to navigate
upstream and
slow traffic – but
are around until
1937!



Drawn by S. Owen.

RADCOT WIER.

Engraved by W.B. Cooke.

Open Flash near Eynsham c.1900



Exports, Imports and Passing Trade

- ▶ Exports : Stone, Wool, Cloth, Salt, Fish, Dairy, Hay, Fruit, Grain, Malt
- ▶ Imports : Pottery, Coal, Metal ware, Fodder, Lime/chalk, Misc. Goods
- ▶ Passing by road : Salt, Wool, Sheep, other livestock, Cloth
- ▶ Passing by river [canal] : Cheese, Coal, Slate
- ▶ Passing for pleasure: Turnpike, tourists

MAIN LOCAL MARKETS

Radcot, Faringdon, Bampton, Burford, Lechlade, Shellingford, Stanford, Hanney

Main routes link Midlands [e.g. Droitwich salt] , Wales and Northampton with Southampton, London and Newbury as well as Thames towns such as Oxford and Wallingford

Typical Upper Thames vessels – Shillingford - about 1830

J.T.Serres [detail]

Keen Edge Ferry

National Maritime
Museum



The other end of the Journey



Lambeth
Wharf

Caleb
Stanley

1822

Strategic Site 1 - The 'Anarchy' Pop-up Castle - Time Team 2008-9

- ▶ 'Gesta Stephani' [1242] reference to Matilda's fortification of Radcot and Bampton
- ▶ Aelside or Hugh of Buckland perhaps built castle at the end of the 11th century
- ▶ Demolished by 1250?
- ▶ John Blair's research and geophysics exposes portion of wall 2008?
- ▶ Time Team 2009
- ▶ Many 'lumps and bumps' in a field named Garrison



2009 Time Team Dig Main Discoveries

- Roman possibilities
- The footprint of the keep →
- Kitchen found but no obvious gatehouse [gate on 1st floor?]
- Old road before turnpike
- Site of chapel
- Civil War fort location
- Huge amounts of dating pottery



Time Team Survey Site

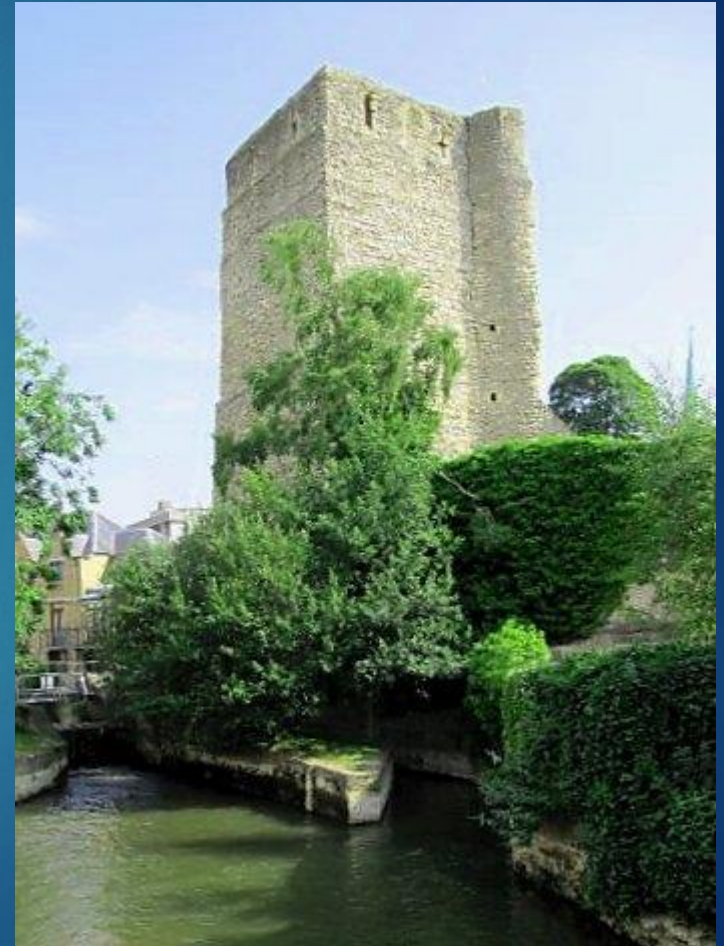
Castle
Church
Round Barrow
Old Road
Civil War Fort

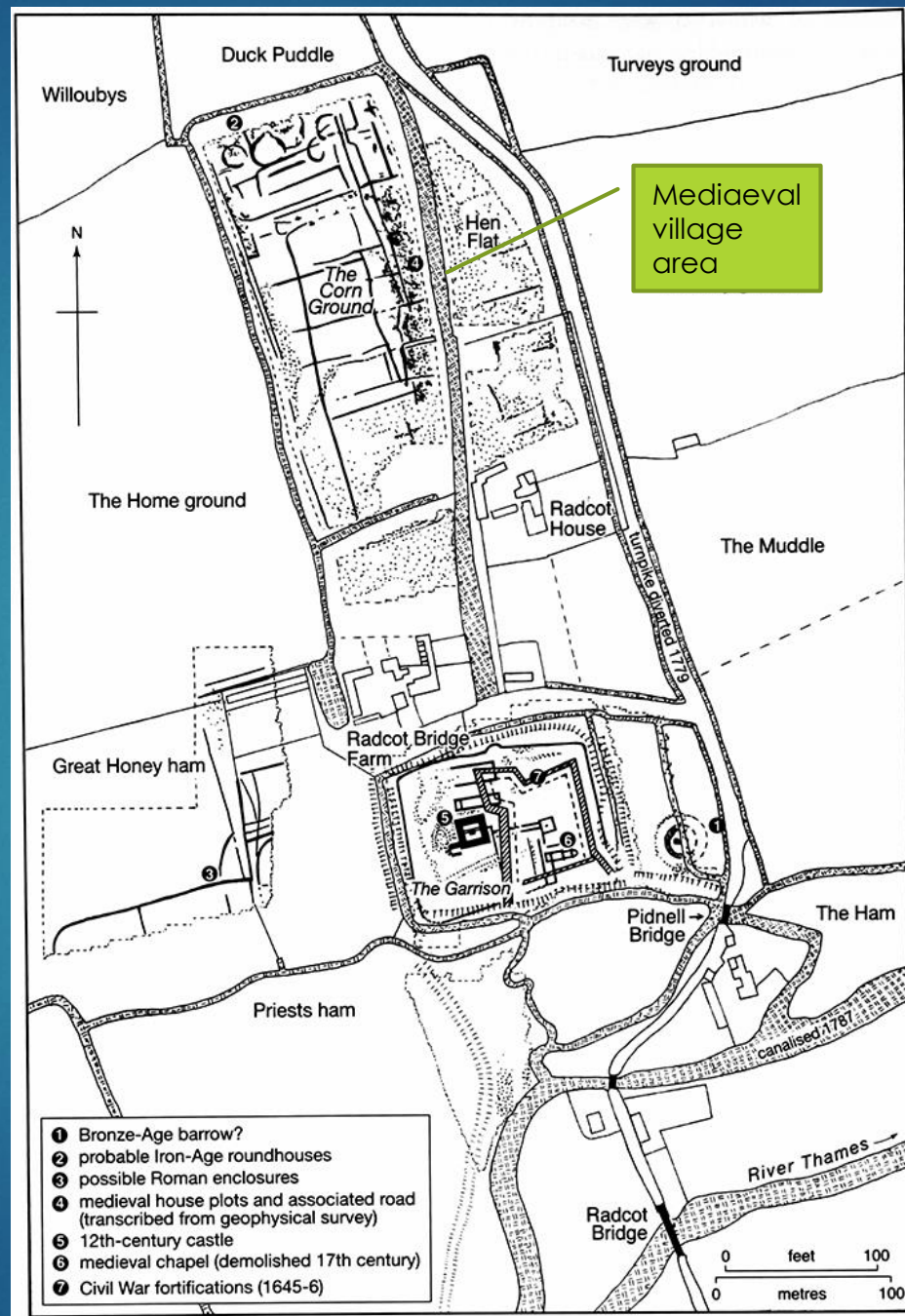


Matilda's castle: a view from Time Team



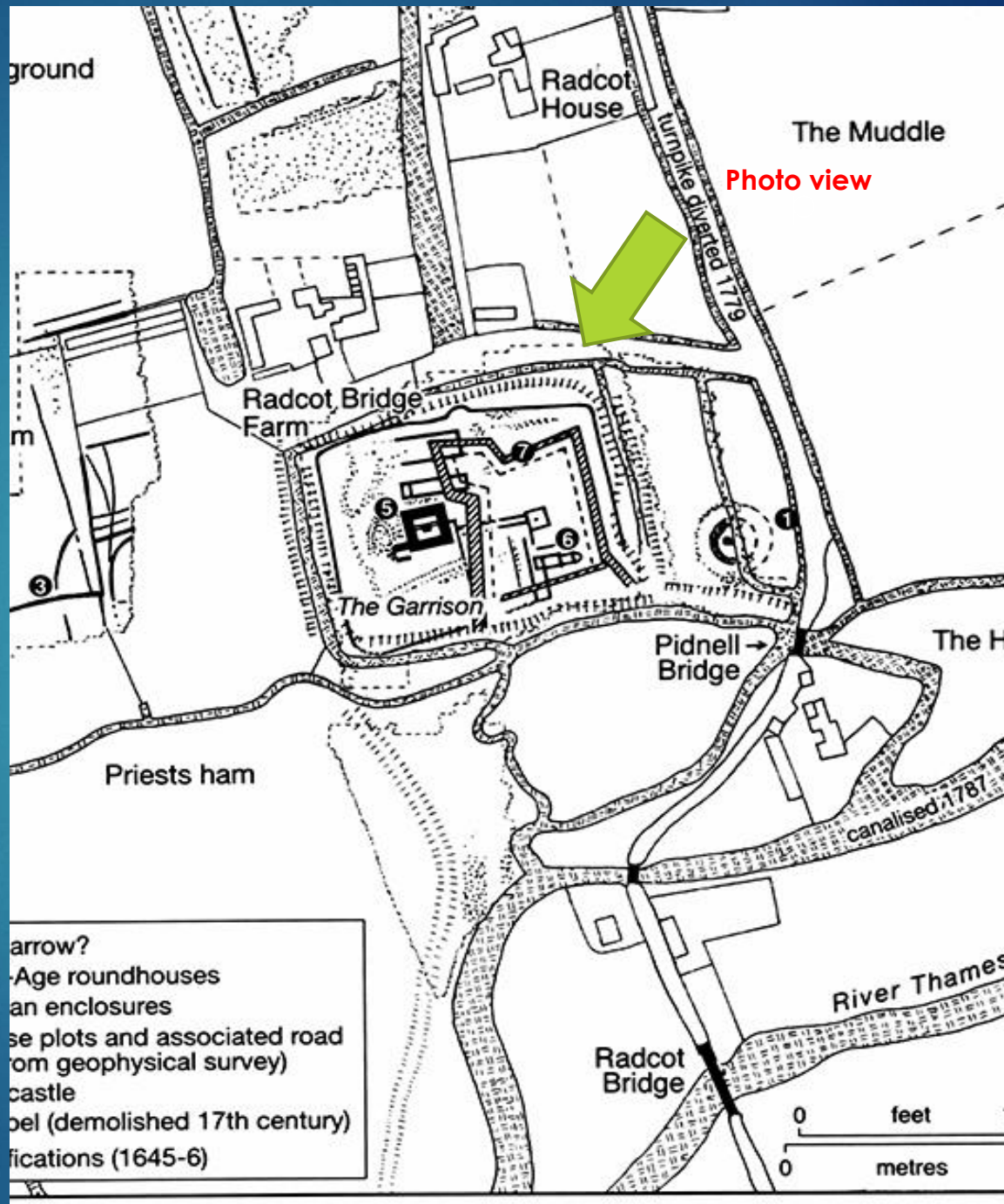
Impression
of Radcot
keep
cf.
St George's
Tower at
Oxford
Castle





Radcot Archaeology and Geophysics Plot

Radcot Garrison Detail



arrow?
-Age roundhouses
an enclosures
se plots and associated road
om geophysical survey)
castle
bel (demolished 17th century)
fications (1645-6)

Photo view

Is 15C Radcot Farm a Hall House?



Strategic Site 2 - Froissard's Chronicles and the battle of Radcot Bridge 1387

De Vere defeated by Derby [future Henry IV] in
December 1387. Few killed but many drowned [800?]
De Vere escapes to France. Bridge demolished in
centre. Rebuilt 1393



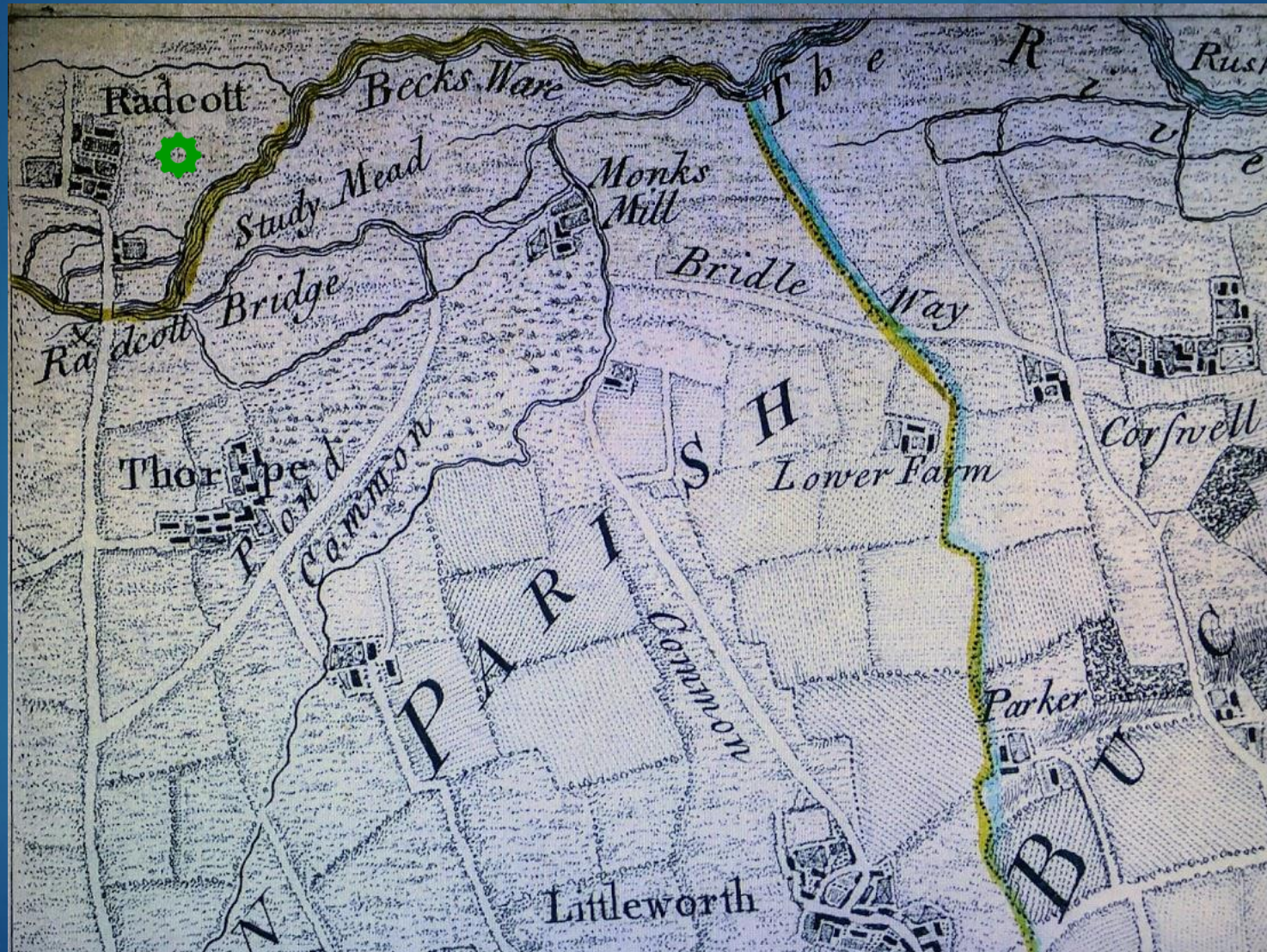
Strategic Site 3 - Civil war siege fort and mortar fire on Radcot House



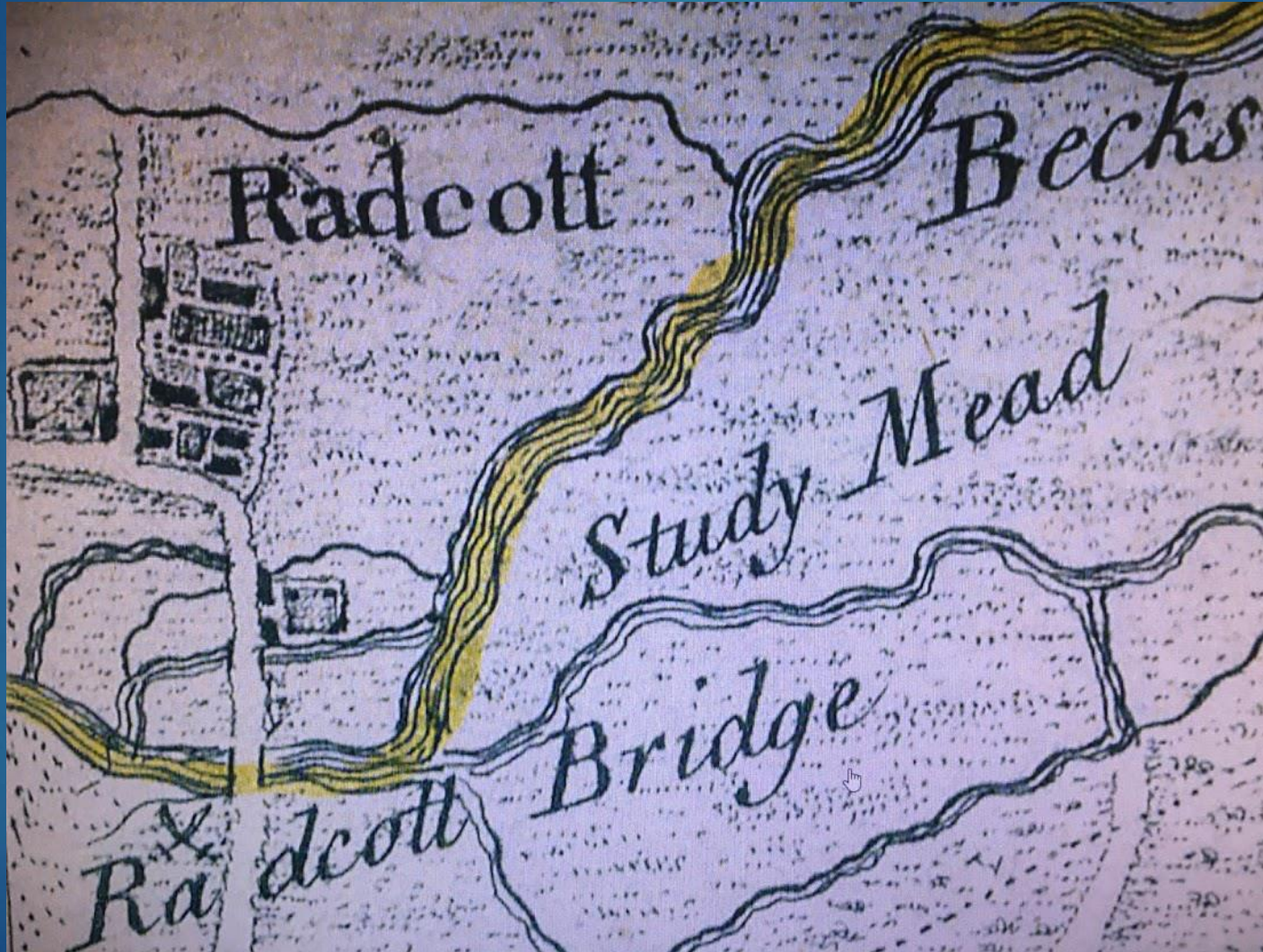
Radcot House rebuilt by 1680



Roque Map 1740



Roque Detail



- Road shown in pre-turnpike but post castle position?
- Canal cut channel shown as a pre existing route before the new reshaping?
- Is Study Mead a reference to a place for [monastic?] contemplation?

Opening of the Thames and Severn canal to Stroud and beyond 1789

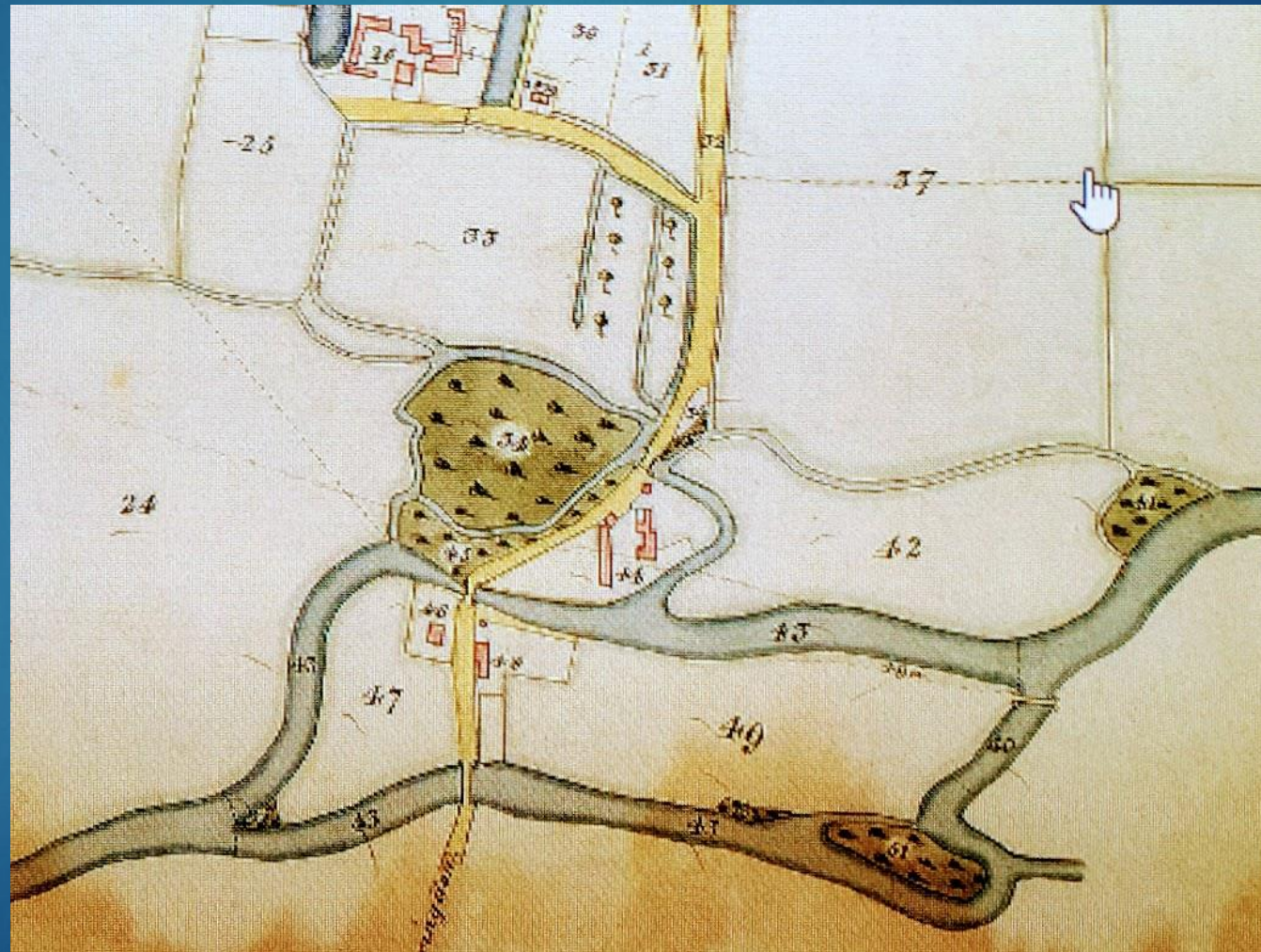


Wider and higher bridge which replaces mediaeval opening and adds a wider channel - above

Radcot in about 1800 with 1771 turnpike



Tithe map detail



Victorian Sheep Dipping



The Fairford branch 1861-1969- Competition and opportunity

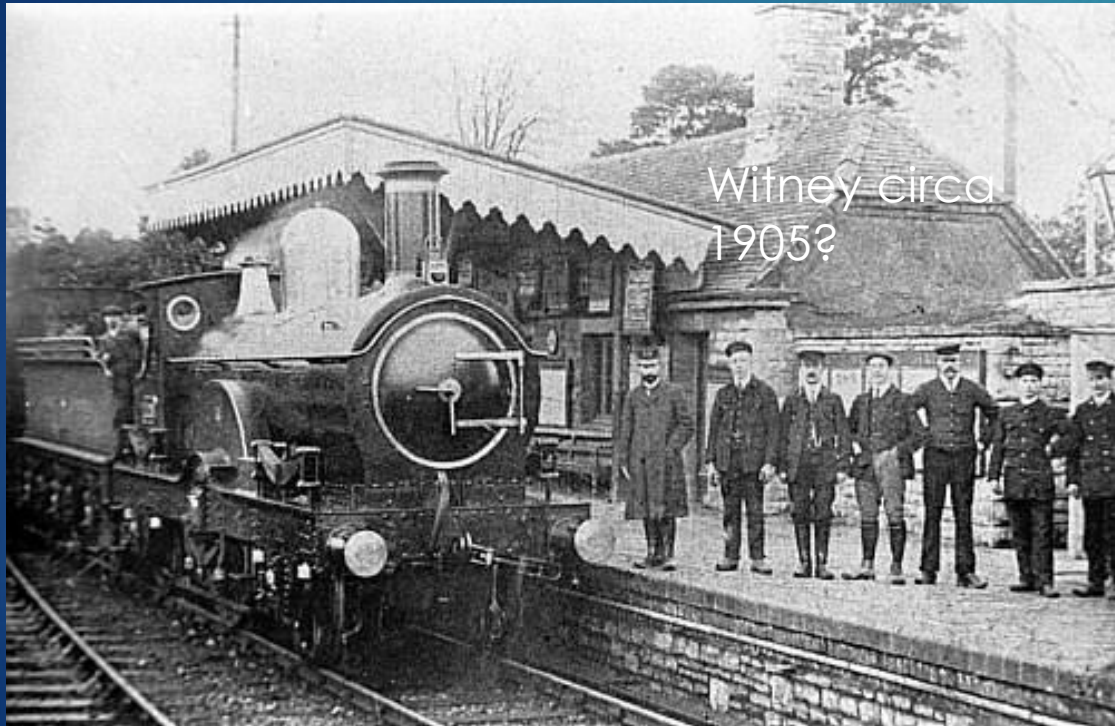


Photo by Hugh Ballantyne

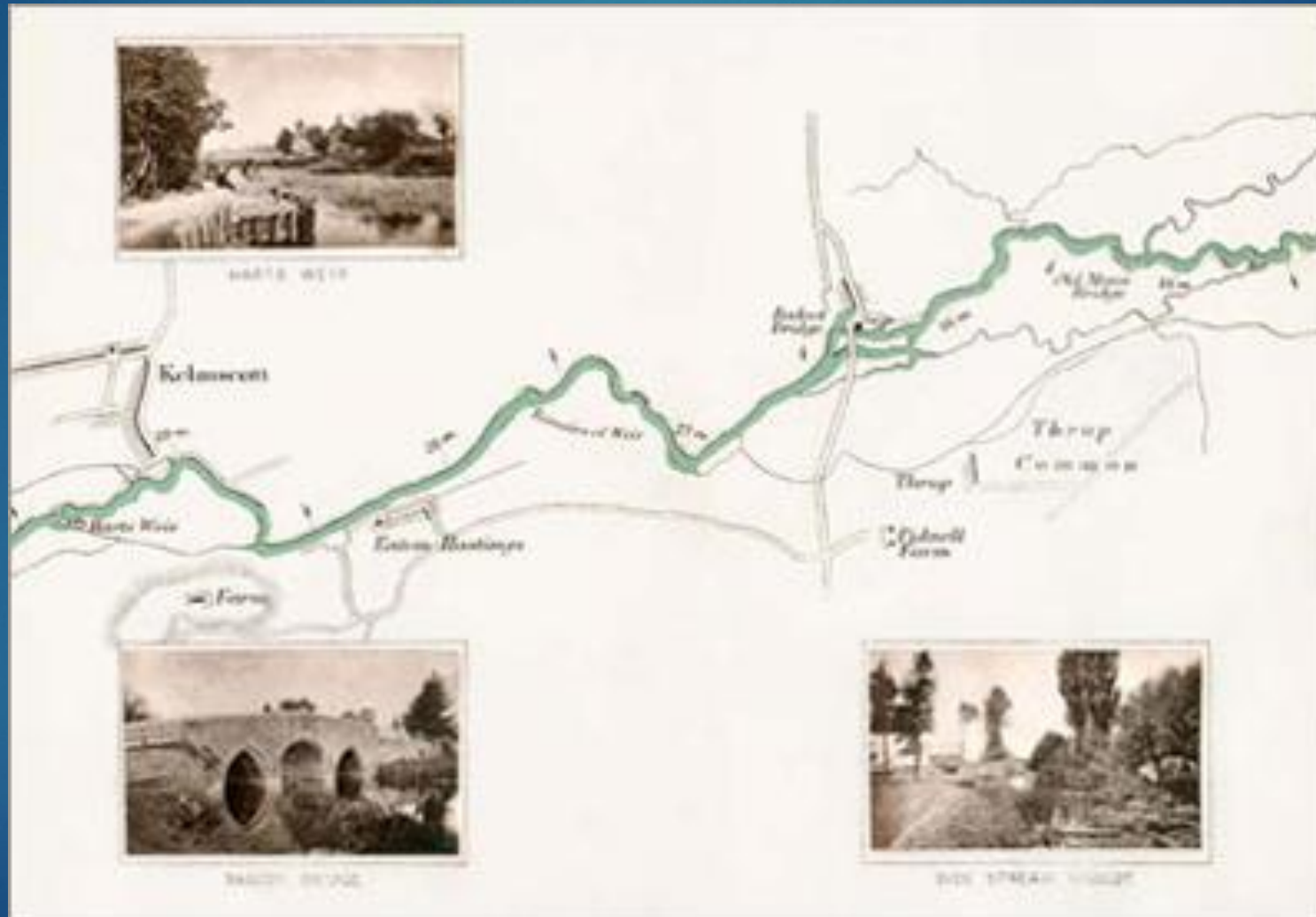
+ FARINGDON FOLLOWS IN 1865

The Bampton Flier



Local bus
from
station to
river
boating
pleasures

Taunt tourist map



The Swan upgrades 1860-2019



RADCOT OXON
about 1 1/2 miles from Farnham, Surrey

Sale of exceptionally useful
HOTEL FURNITURE
comprising the appointments of the
"Swan Hotel,"
DESIGNED BY THE ARCHT. OF THE

7 BEDROOMS
WITH LINCOLN

2 BEDROOM SUITES
WITH LINCOLN

TEA & SMOKE ROOMS
including Pianoforte (by A. & B. Edwards), Mahogany Sideboards,
CUTLERY and PLATED GOODS, BRASSFATHERS, CLOCK by Jas. Lord, Parquet, and PAIR of CHAIRS, etc.

2 SINGLE SKIFFS **2 DOUBLE-SCULLING BOATS.**

4 PLEASURE PUNTS, and an excellent FISHING PUNT

A. F. HOBBS & CHAMBERS

Have received instructions from Messrs. Bicker & Company, Ltd. to sell the furniture of the Swan Hotel, etc.

THURSDAY, JULY 3rd, 1919, at 1.30
Lighting may be obtained from the DISTRICT Bd. Farnham, Surrey.

Messing about on the Thames



Canoeing in the 1890's



Newbridge about 1900?



...and Radcot boating in 2009



Strategic Site 4 - Built very fast in 1940 - the remains of Stop Line Red



Population trends 1279 -2019

Date	Households	Population[M+W] [*=Census]
1279	35	60+ Garrison effect & Trading Boom ?
1400	6?	20-25 ? Post Black Death downsizing
1670	5	15 London starts rebuilding
1851*	8	29 [15+14] Turnpike gatekeeper, Coal merchant
1861*	6	24 [14+10] 2 Coal merchants, Toll collector
122871*	11[1Vac.]	39 [17+22] Gatekeeper, Innkeeper
1881*	7 [3Vac.]	26 [12+14] Innkeeper
1891*	6	33 [17+16] 9+labourers, 5+scholars, 1 servant
1901*	7	29 [14+15] Licensed victualler
1930	5	23 [14+9]
2019	6	24?

1901 Total Population - 29

Administrative County		The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the															Page 16
Civil Parish (Entire) of Radcot		Ecclesiastical Parish of St Matthew Langford (Part of)		County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District of		Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District of		Rural District of Witney (Part of)		Parliamentary Borough or Division of Mid Oxon or Woodstock		Town or Village or Hamlet of Radcot (Entire)					
Col 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
No. of Schedules	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES				Number of Houses occupied by less than five	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of		PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lame (4) Imbecile, feeble-minded	
		Inhabited	Uninhabited	In Cottage, etc.	Not in Cottage, etc.					Males	Females						
79	Radcot Buildings	1					Worcester Charles	Head	M	20		Gen. No. 1 Carter on Farm			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Isaac	Wife	M	29					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Ernest Constable	Son	M	18		Shepherd			Wittham, Leamington	/	
80		1					John Radwell	Head	M	59		Gen. No. 1 Cowman on Farm			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Sarah	Wife	M	58					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Arthur	Son	M	14		Gen. No. 1 Carter on Farm			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Walter	Son	M	5					Wittham, Leamington	/	
81	Swan Hotel	1					Margaret Temple	Head	M	34		Licensee, Victualler Employer	Alone		Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Maud	Son	M	18					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Frank Hayward	Brother	M	28		Licensee, Victualler Worker	Do		Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Gertrude, Manslow	Visitor	F	16					Wittham, Leamington	/	
82	Radcot Cottages	1					Stephen Fitchett	Head	M	25		Midwife on Farm Do			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Emma	Wife	M	22					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Clara	Son	M	2					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Stephen	Son	M	1					Wittham, Leamington	/	
83	Do.	1					James Alder	Head	M	35		General, General Haberdashery Do			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Agnes	Wife	M	24					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Alfred	Son	M	5					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Daisy	Son	M	2					Wittham, Leamington	/	
84	Do.	1					Robert Wingey	Head	M	42		Gen. No. 1 Cattleman on Farm	Do		Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Ellen	Wife	M	39					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Albert	Son	M	15		Do Do	Do		Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Alfred	Son	M	13					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							George	Son	M	9					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Clara	Son	M	6					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Mary	Son	M	4					Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Charles	Son	M	2					Wittham, Leamington	/	
85	Manor House	1					Frederick E. Clouston	Head	M	24		Gen. (Domestic) Wittham, Leamington			Wittham, Leamington	/	
							Edith M.	Wife	M	25					Wittham, Leamington	/	
End of the Civil Parish of Radcot.																	
7	Total of Schedules of Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms	7				3	Total of Males and of Females...				14	15					

NOTE—Draw your pen through such words of the headings as are inapplicable.

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Final thoughts

- ▶ Radcot has been several 'super hubs'
- ▶ It is still reinventing itself – Wigwams!
- ▶ The big house is in excellent order
- ▶ Population still static
- ▶ Most trade still passing and no Thames cargoes
- ▶ Too many plastic boats moored today
- ▶ Thankfully no talk of a bridge bypass
- ▶ Virtually no new building
- ▶ The bridge is timeless – could make 2819?

'Always it is by bridges that we live'

- ▶ Lost centuries of local lives that rose
- ▶ And flowered to fall short where they began
- ▶ Seem now to reassemble and uncloze,
- ▶ All resurrected in this single span,
- ▶ Reaching for the world, as our lives do,
- ▶ As all lives do, reaching that we may give
- ▶ The best of what we are and hold as true:
- ▶ Always it is by bridges that we live.

Philip Larkin ...on the opening of the Humber Bridge 1981



HHG Visit to Radcot house and gardens 6.00pm Tuesday 21st July 2020



More of Old Radcot?

- ▶ Immediately north of the old mediaeval village are some interesting crop marks – seemingly ridge and furrow enclosed in a square pattern – any ideas anyone?
- ▶ It sits immediately above a small stream and Radcot's fourth bridge which crosses Ashburton Pill. It does not seem to have been explored in the earlier geophysics as it is detached from the depopulated mediaeval area.
- ▶ It is can also be seen that removing a hedge leaves some similar patterns.
- ▶ The older map is dated 1945 and is from the Google Earth page. Interestingly the wider version eliminates Brize Norton Airfield completely [USAF censoring?] The other appears to be 2009.

A feature to explore?





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Google Earth

Imagery Date: 5/30/2009 51°42'03.69" N 1°35'20.08" W elev 68 m eye alt 879 m

1945

John Speed's 1605 view

