

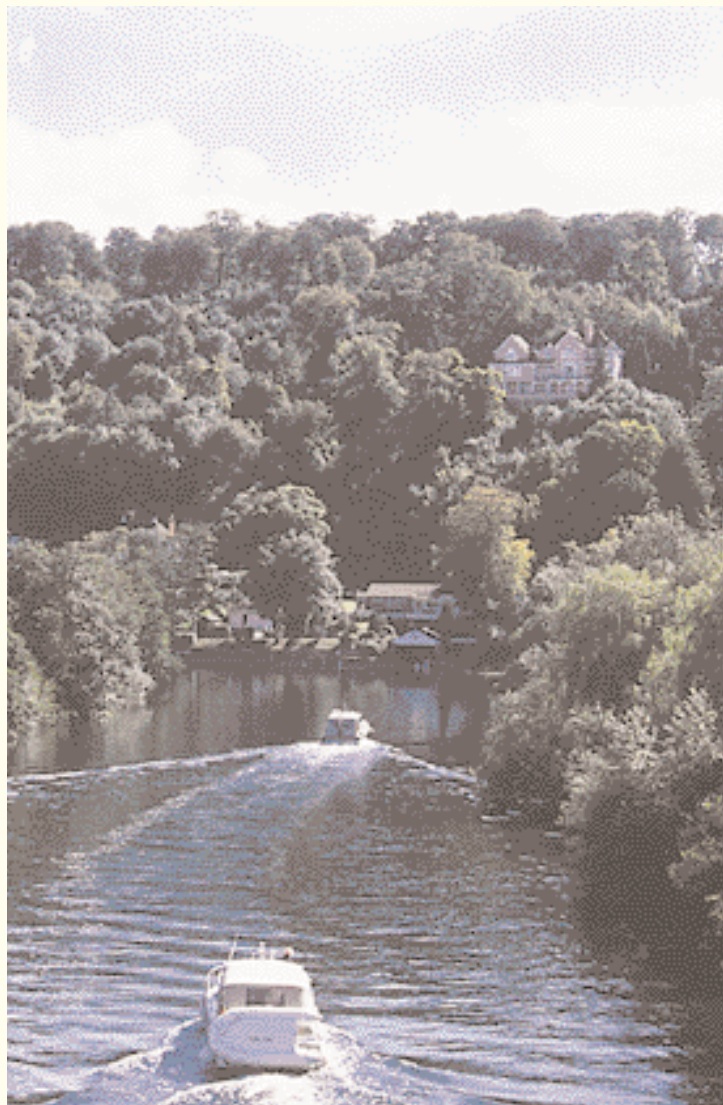
The Thames

London's lifeline, England's pride

London-Islamic Tourism

The Thames is so famous that in the 1920's some Arab poets eulogised the river even though they had never seen it. The river is famous for its history, its culture and its amazing variety. Based on its size, a mere 215 miles, from its source in the Cotswolds through to the estuary at Southend it could hardly be expected to evoke great passions. But the rise of the British Empire and the spread of English literature throughout the world made the river famous internationally.

For the natives of Britain, the river has something for everyone. If you enjoy peace and natural beauty, then the gentle and often remote stretches of the upper Thames will suit you. At Oxford, the river - locally known as Isis - springs to life. Here you can take a cruise, hire a punt or motor launch, or just sit at riverside places and watch the scullers from the world famous University Clubs in training or competition. The Thames then meanders through beautiful countryside and historic settlements through areas of great scenic variety. You can also walk through the Thames Path which stretches from the source at Thames Head down to the Barrier. Alternatively, experience the river from the water - you will be surprised how different your experience of the river will be when on board a boat rather than standing on dry land! Passenger boats can be found in many towns including Oxford, Abingdon, Henley,



The River Thames.

نهر التايمز.

Reading, Maidenhead, Windsor, Walton, Hampton Court and Kingston. Historic sites of interest abound, ranging from tiny hamlets such as Mapledurham, with its working water mill to grand castles and the palaces of Windsor and Hampton Court. Around Teddington, the river changes its rhythm: though still 60 miles from Southend and the sea, the Thames becomes tidal. When the river flows to the nation's capital, suburban gardens and parks rub shoulders with Georgian mansions set alongside new luxurious riverside homes built on former wharves. Passenger boats coming upriver from Westminster stop at Richmond, Kew, Chiswick and Putney en route to Kingston and Hampton Court. In central London you can choose from many different passenger boats plying the piers between Westminster and the Thames barrier. Rowing became increasingly popular, so clubs increased and regattas became annual events. (Regatta is a Venetian word meaning a rowing match of gondolas) The world famous ➤



منطقة القفل توفر فرصة جيدة للنزهة.
The lock provides a good day out.

Henley Regatta, held annually in July, dates back to 1839. Another famous race was also Henley's brainchild. In 1829, St John's College, Cambridge, challenged Christ Church, Oxford and the first Oxford - Cambridge Boat Race took place between Hambleden Lock and Henley Bridge. Oxford won! This annual event generates great interest throughout Britain.

Private pleasure cruising was a favourite Victorian pastime. Today over 19,000 boats are licensed to use the Thames above Teddington with over 6,000 boats visiting. The delights of cruising the river in summer have to be balanced against occasionally frustrating waits at the 45 locks that control the Upper Thames. Last century saw a gradual decline in the use of the river for trade, due to intense competition from rail and road.

The Thames is a lowland river - its landscape is gentle and in the surrounding flood plains you find a rich diversity of woodlands, water

meadows and grasslands with salt marshes in the estuaries. Some of the many creatures that inhabit the river stay in one place, others migrate along the Thames, among them salmon, which provides an important wildlife corridor through urban areas.

There are 14 million visits to the rural River Thames every year, and up to an additional 28 million casual local visits, supporting hundreds of businesses and thousands of jobs. There are also 26,000 boats registered by the Environment Agency which is responsible for the operation of the locks. There are about 9,000 privately-owned power boats. A total of 97 passenger service and charter boats and 101 house boats are registered for residential use. There are 23 rowing clubs, 23 canoeing clubs and 25 sailing clubs open to the public.

The amount of business generated by the river is illustrated by the following statistics from 2001:

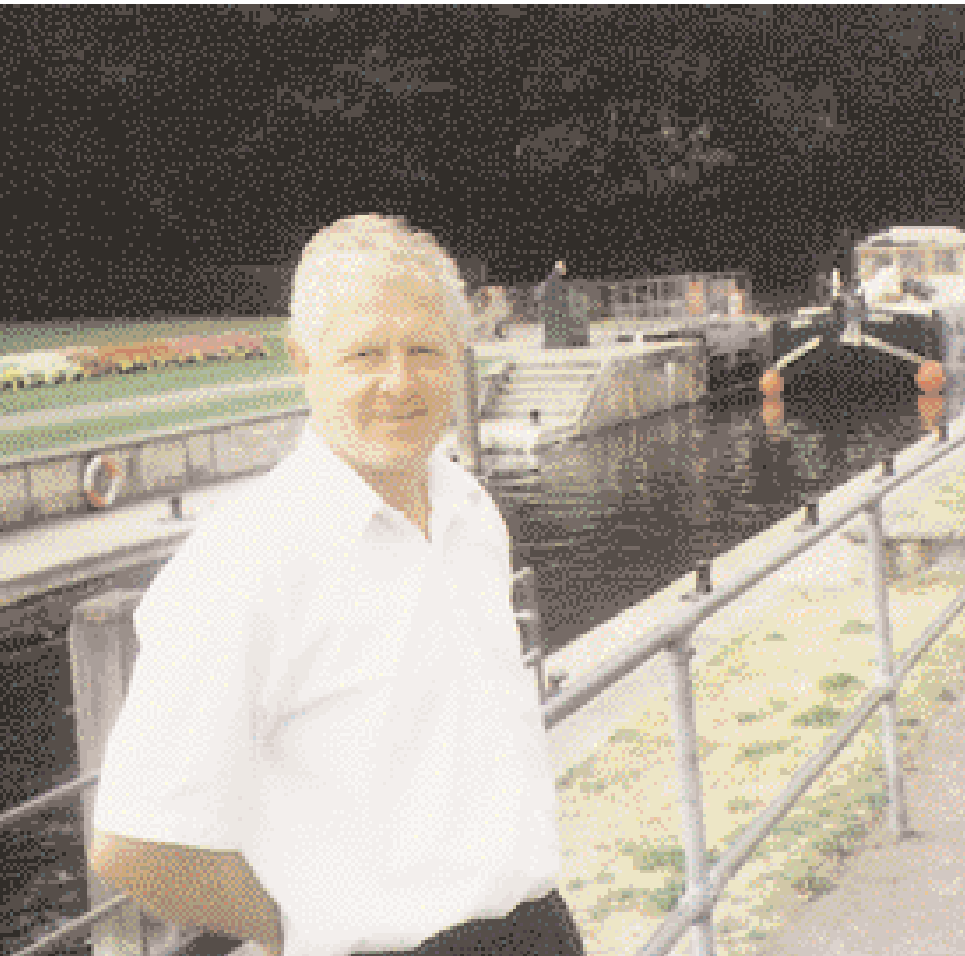
- Some 5.6 million staying visits accounting

for 20.9 million bed nights and £782 million in associated spending;

- Nearly 43 million day visits from locations outside the area generating a further £1.1 billion in expenditure;

- This tourism expenditure accounts for £1.75 billion local businesses turnover and supports nearly 72,000 jobs.

But the Thames, particularly in London, is now the focus of much public debate. The question is: What kind of river do we want for the future? Enormous demands are placed on the Thames. Over 7 million people depend on the river for water and 124 sewage treatment works dispose of the waste of the 11 million people who live in the Thames Valley. More and more people want riverside homes. Millions visit and enjoy all the delights of the river. How these demands are accommodated has far reaching consequences, not only for Britain but for many developing countries who are interested in optimal use of their own rivers. ➔



Mr. Stephen Newman, the lock keeper.



A lock on the river Thames.

قفل على نهر التايمز.

The life of a lock keeper

I live on Hamhaugh island in the river Thames and need to cross Shepperton lock and weir at least twice a day. Last month I strolled by the lock and met the lock keeper Mr. Stephen Newman. He lives by the lock with his wife and three children. We had a very friendly chat about the lock, his work and his family. He has worked here as a lock keeper for 20 years and is always busy maintaining the lock through which an estimated 250,000 boats a year pass. Summer is, of course, the busiest time because of the school holidays. In August alone about 5,000 boats pass through the lock. But winter days can be lonely. There isn't much commercial traffic on the river nowadays as firms use the roads. Most boats are privately owned and there is a higher percentage of hire boats that

can be used for a week or so. All boats on the river Thames have to be licensed by the Environmental Agency.

I have seen the boats coming and going and Stephen is always there to lend a hand - but what happens after working hours? Do the boat owners manage by themselves? It seems so. "Generally," Mr. Newman says, "the locks are supervised during the year. If a boat comes and there is no one there, owners can manage the boat themselves, either electrically or manually. The instructions are quite clear. If they have problems we advertise telephone numbers for them to ring and someone comes to help."

I looked around the lock. It has nice gardens but who is the gardener? Mr. Newman said "Most of the lock gardens are very beautiful. I take care of this one and

every lock keeper takes care of his garden. In fact we used to have a competition for the best-kept garden."


Stephen considers himself very lucky to have lived in this area. It is one of the most beautiful spots on the river. Besides, the lock is accessible by road. Some locks are only accessible by river. The other advantage is that Shepperton is only 15 miles from London. Above all, the people here are very friendly. I discussed the possibility of developing the area for different kinds of tourism. Stephen agreed and said that the management wants to attract more tourists to the river. We stopped at the cafeteria. Fifteen years ago the management encouraged Stephen to provide refreshments. It is a service to the public and it is also a way of getting people interested in the river. ■

Shepperton - A. S. Shakiry



View of Hamhaugh Island.

منظر لجزيرة هامهو.

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A river excursion.

نزهة نهريّة.