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Excursion of the Society to Maidenhead.

N Wednesday, October 28th, 1891, the members of the Berks Archæological and Architectural Society, to the number of about 30, travelled to Maidenhead, where a paper on "The History and Antiquities of Maidenhead and the Neighbourhood" was read in the Town Hall by Mr. J. RUTLAND, F.G.S., Hon. Secretary of the Thames Valley Antiquarian Society. The excursion, the last of the present season, was made at the invitation of the Maidenhead Field Club, who after the lecture kindly entertained the visitors to tea. The chair was taken by Dr. PLAYNE, President of the Maidenhead Field Club, who briefly introduced the lecturer.

Mr. RUTLAND commenced his lecture by remarking that Maidenhead itself could not boast of much archæological interest, but was in that respect the child of Taplow. As regards its geology, it was situated on the Thames Gravel, which extended from above Maidenhead down to the sea, interspersed with deposits of sand, clay, &c. In what was known as the "drift gravel" in those parts, had been found mammoth molars, with molluscan and saurian remains. One of the most interesting "finds" in the neighbourhood had been the fossilised remains of fruits, one specimen of the palm fruit having been discovered at Bray. In the bed of the Thames several bone

instruments had recently been found, and also on the Maidenhead Court estate and the fishery estate. A human skull (female) and a deer bone had also been taken from the bed of the river, and two skulls had been dredged up at Bray a short time ago. In rebuilding Hambleden Lock the skeletons of a deer and a horse had been found, together with a fossilised tree, probably an ash. The peat deposits on the neighbouring hills contained also the teeth and bones of deer. The drift gravel found under the Thames pointed to the fact that its bed had once been dry ground, covered with trees, while bison and oxen roamed on the neighbouring hills. A wide lagoon must have extended from Castle Hill to the Taplow hills, about six miles across, covered in places with the "stake dwellings" of primitive man. "Pit dwellings," or rude holes dug in the ground had also been discovered near Maidenhead Thicket, and at the G.W.R. extension works, close by, had been discovered cinerary urns, drinking and food vessels. Mr. Woodhouse, of Bray, possessed a fine bronze sickle which had been dug up in the neighbourhood; and a bronze rapier, a knife, and a sheath were the most important of the antiquarian discoveries in the same locality. An iron sword, 34 inches in length, with a bronze scabbard, was another recently-discovered memento of past ages. Three years ago several similar swords had been found at Maidenhead Bridge, which appeared to have been hammered out from flat iron bars. Bray, from its position, must have been originally a place of refuge in the woods. Not far from it ran the old Roman road between Bray Wick and Cockmarsh. In fact, part of this ancient causeway could be still traced near Taplow, passing by the present church of St. Luke. It eventually met the Cookham Road, where it disappeared. About 440 yards due east of this Roman road, remains of ancient earthworks had been discovered, with ditches and vallums connected with the road, which must have formed an important military outpost. Close by was a well, two feet in diameter, doubtless of the same period. While it was being dredged, the labourers came across a bronze fragment, probably part of a boat. In a ditch near the earthworks had been found flints, knives, pottery, and a coin of Antoninus. At Waltham Cutting, about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Maidenhead station, on November 3rd last year, had been found the remains of three Roman wells; one of them was 3ft. 2in. in diameter, and contained quantities of broken pottery, bones of domestic animals, tiles marked with the print of a sandal and dogs' feet, and a human skeleton. The second well also contained pottery, and the bones of boars, horses

and dogs. The third well contained an iron key, a whetstone and a quantity of *débris*. The three wells lay immediately north of Waltham St. Lawrence church. Perhaps the most important of recent discoveries had been that of a Roman villa at Castle Hill, on October 4th last year. It contained numerous examples of Roman and British pottery, and the remains of a furnace. Two Gallic coins were found near its mouth. Specimens of roof tiles were also found, supported by 27 pillars *in situ*. Several of the bricks were marked with foot-prints, and pieces of wall plaster and mural decorations were unearthed, though little could be guessed of the interior decoration of the rooms. There was also a bath, with its usual appurtenances, a hypocaust and apodyterium. In a neighbouring field was found a Roman quern or handmill for grinding corn, and a few months ago, opposite the villa, a coin of Constantine and other remains were dug up. As regards the name Maidenhead, it was originally "Maiden-hythe." The word "Maiden" might, perhaps, be derived from the Celtic *Mai*, a field or expanse, and *den* (Saxon), a wooded valley, the vicinity of Maidenhead Thicket probably giving the name to the town. The ancient name was Alunodum. The old chapel and chantry which marked the river ford stood till 1724 at Chapel Arches. Maidenhead had produced among other eminent men, Robert Aldridge, Bishop of Norwich, and Thomas Scott, Lord Mayor of London. The Corporation seal was very ancient and was originally a private seal. It was probably used from 1582, when the first charter was granted. Taking the neighbouring villages, Bisham Abbey contained the bones of several famous men, including those of Henry V., Richard Neville, Earl of York 1460, and Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick 1499. Queen Elizabeth visited it in 1592. White Waltham was the birthplace of Sir Constantine Phipps, a famous Lord Chancellor of Ireland. Burnham was the residence of William Cole, a famous antiquarian.

The visitors then inspected the various specimens of pottery, bronze and iron implements and weapons, bones, &c., which had been discovered in the neighbourhood, and were exhibited in the room. Much interest was also displayed in the old town mace, dated from Charles II., which had been discovered in a broken condition and skilfully mended. After tea the party returned by train to Reading.