

<p>In the 1800s, most of the drinking water for towns was pumped straight out of the Thames and into homes without being cleaned.</p>	<p>During the Second World War some of the water treatment pipes were damaged so that dirty water went straight into the Thames without being purified. A lot of fish and plants were killed.</p>
<p>Many poisonous chemicals, from farms and industries still drain into the Thames.</p>	<p>The fishing industry in the Thames stopped when the water became too dirty for the fish to live in, and they died. Now fish are gradually starting to return.</p>
<p>People began to farm around the Thames about 6 500 years ago. They sharpened stones to make axes that could cut down forests so that they could plant fields of crops.</p>	<p>As time has gone on, the farms around the Thames have grown quite considerably in size.</p>
<p>People made boats to fish on the Thames. The first boats were rafts - made of tree trunks tied together. Later canoes were made out of hollowed-out tree trunks.</p>	<p>Before good roads and railways were built, cargo was transported along the Thames in long, flat-bottomed boats called barges, especially built to carry heavy cargo.</p>

<p>Harbours, near the ocean were built to unload cargo onto smaller ships that could sail up the Thames to reach London and further inland. Tilbury was the most important harbour.</p>	<p>There are still a few barges that carry cargo along the Thames today. Most boats on the Thames now are used by tourists, and some to help passengers commute.</p>
<p>Before bridges were built, people had to cross the Thames at special crossing points, called fords.</p>	<p>The first bridge across the Thames was built by the Romans in Britain. It was made of wood.</p>
<p>Before there were bridges, to help people cross the Thames, 'watermen' would ferry people cross the Thames in rowing boats.</p>	<p>In 1842, the first tunnel under the Thames was opened at Rotherhithe.</p>
<p>Oxford is the first city on the Thames as you travel down the river from its source.</p>	<p>Just before London, is Windsor. This small town grew up around a castle that was built by the Normans in 1070.</p>

<p>In the Western areas of the Thames, most of the land is used for sheep farming.</p>	<p>In the Eastern areas of the Thames, farmers grow a lot of cereal crops like wheat and barley.</p>
<p>Soil near the Thams was often fertile so crops grew well.</p>	<p>People also used water from the Thames to turn mills that ground corn and made woollen and cotton cloth.</p>