

Magdalene Bridge called “Great Bridge”

During Roman times, the River Cam was fully navigable from the Wash as far as Cambridge and was the northernmost point where transport from East Anglia to the Midlands was practicable. Therefore, Magdalene Bridge marks the site of an important Roman era river crossing. It used to be known as “Great Bridge”. All routes, both local and long- distance, had to converge on this crossing point, giving it immense strategic importance in times of peace for trade and in terms of war to control armies and supplies, which happened during the English Civil War, when the city was divided between those who supported the King and those who supported Parliament. The River was the most important means of transport for goods and services for Cambridge between 1118 onwards, but this all changed in 1845 with the opening of the railway to London, which dealt the river trade its death-blow. Up until then the River Cam was the essential travel and trading route by which Cambridge was fed and built with boats bringing fish and grain, meat and salt, coal and reeds, timber and stone.

