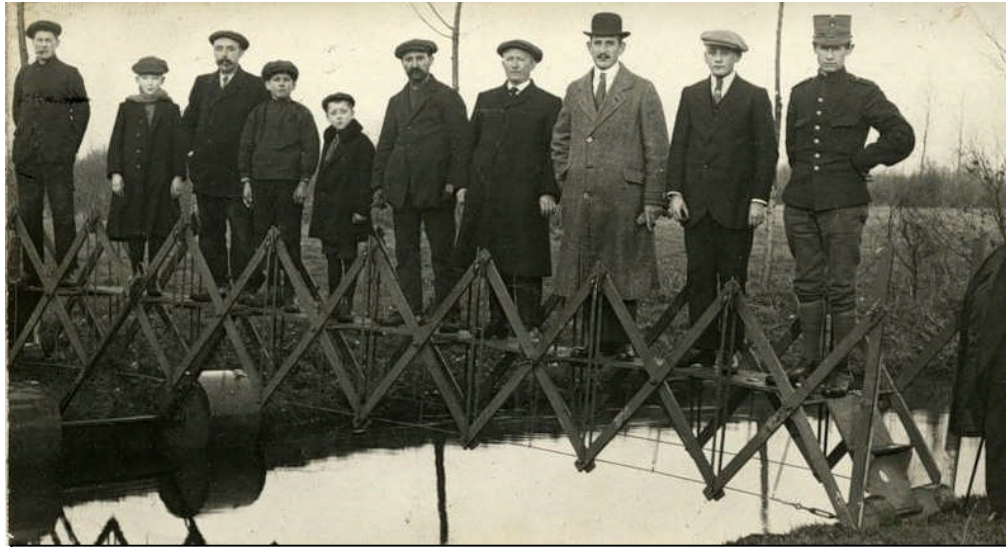


The Fall of London Bridge



The nursery rhyme, “London Bridge Is Falling Down,” is based on a true story. The first bridge to span the River Thames was built in the late Pleistocene Epoch by hunter-gatherers from Islington. In those days, little was known of the relationship between tension and torsion or compression and shear, let alone what a load-bearing cantilever was. As a result, bridges were typically fragile, dodgy and best avoided. A case in point was the Yondenbirj (London Bridge), which connected Wandsworth with Parsons Green. The Islingtonians built Yondenbirj in only a day (probably a Wednesday). So proud of their achievement were they that the entire construction team asked to stand on the bridge for the Cenozoic Era equivalent of a photo-op. Unfortunately, Islington planners, masons and contractors all trended towards the portly. And no sooner had they claimed a space on the bridge than it collapsed into the Thames. Nobody drowned, but the Islingtonians’ reputation for quality craftsmanship was forever tainted.