

Archives; Wigan & Leigh

The Edward Hall Diary Collection

The Journal of Miss I E Verey

1889

EHC/24



Edward Hall, c.1932

Editor's Note

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Entitled 'Recollections' of a boating tour down the Severn from Shrewsbury to Gloucester thro' the Berkeley Canal, Stroudwater, Thames + Severn Canals, The Golden Valley of Stroud, Sapperton Tunnel, and into the Upper Thames and on past Oxford and Abingdon to Streatly - 1889!

SHREWSBURY TO STREATLEY

[This journal appears to have been written by Miss E Verey of Childe Court, Streatley, Reading.]

Page 1

"Recollections" of a boating tour down the Severn from Shrewsbury to Gloucester, thro' the Berkeley Canal...

[A small pen & ink drawing of 3 men & 2 women handling a sail on a small boat – entitled "Down Sail"]

..."Stroudwater", "Thames" & "Severn" Canals – The Golden Valley of Stroud, Sapperton tunnel & into the Upper-Thames & on past Oxford & Abingdon to

Streatley – 1889

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September 3rd 1889

We're afloat! We're afloat! On the swift Severn tide
A capital randan & baggage inside
The breeze from the westward blows fresh o'er the lea,
We're afloat in a boat, & the rovers are free!

So paddle on all, to yr. stout oars give play,
The way lies before you, no turnpikes to pay,

[A pen & ink illustration of the five people in their boat]

The rover may boast of his being so free,
But he's ne'er felt so free so easy as we.

What care we that Phoebus is sulky & grim,
If he d'outh mean to show, we can do without him,
We have waterproofs good, for no weather care we,
We're afloat, we're afloat, the country to see!

F.F.

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*[A black & white photo of half timbered "Old houses" –
Shrewsbury.]*

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We sent our boat, [a randan skiff, 28½ feet long) to Shrewsbury by rail. Having packed her carefully, at bow & stern, with what luggage we required, we started a party of five, about 10 o'clock September 3rd 1889.

It was rather a dull morning, with a threatening sky. The water was shallow in places & we soon came to a rapid, & several others followed, & our coxswain had to look out – the banks of the river were rather high, but it was very pretty. Our first excitement was going round a salmon weir, we shot thro' a small passage (left between the weir & right bank) almost before we knew it (with the exception of one of our crew) & were carried on at a tremendous pace –

A drizzly rain set in now, which...

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[A full page black & white photo “Our starting place”. It shows a bend in the river with cottage & landing stage on the near bank.]

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...soon increased to a steady downpour. Just after passing Uffington, we ran aground, & two of our party had to get out, & push us off – about one o'clock, we drew up at a cottage on the left bank, by Wroxeter, & the hospitable woman inside allowed us to come in & spread out the contents of our luncheon basket, & enjoying her fire – After this we walked to Viriconium, the Roman city, about ½ a mile off – had it not been pouring with rain we might have thought it more interesting than we did, but there was some very perfect mosaic – Getting in the boat again, we travelled on past the village of “Cressage” on the right & a long reach which opened out into a wide wooded valley, with a glimpse of ...

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[A watercolour sketch of] “Buildwas” – our first stopping place for the night. It shows a large house beside the river.]

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... the Wrekin – About six o'clock we passed under Buildwas bridge & drew up at the foot of the inn there, on the chance of being taken in for the night – we found we could be housed, & the landlord came down to meet us, & his wife soon showed us some rooms & lit a good fire in the best parlour. They gave us what fare they had for our dinner, which was not to say, sumptuous, & the potatoes oh!! But we were very glad to obtain shelter here, instead of going further in such weather –

4th. The next morning was more promising, altho' the dark clouds had not quite cleared away – After taking a look over the bridge at the river we went in to see for signs of ...

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[A watercolour sketch of “Buildwas Abbey” -]

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... breakfast & found on the table a plate of barley porridge & a cup of cold milk placed to each person. This was rather startling & altogether we had a good laugh over our Buildwas breakfast – however we made the best of it, & then went out to see the Abbey, a fine old ruin near – Afterwards, the landlord drove us in his dog-cart to Much Wenlock, to see the...

[small black & white photo of “The Prior’s House, Much Wenlock”]

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[Black & white photo “Arches” – Buildwas Abbey.]

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...beautiful Priory & ruins there. Coming back the shafts of the dog-cart broke, & we narrowly escaped a serious accident – a passing waggonette kindly took up the ladies of our party, but the gentlemen had to walk – soon after three we left Buildwas, having taken some time to pack the boat again – The afternoon was now quite fine & hot, & the commencement of splendid weather which lasted nearly all our boating time – we passed through Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge, several bad rapids, one very “fierce”, one close to a wall. The scenery here was fine, but rather spoilt by chimneys & foundries –

To avoid a weir, we had to go close to our right bank – the water was very swift & broken planks, which formed a foot bridge.

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[A watercolour sketch of “Church Spire Much Wenlock”]

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After this excitement we went on peacefully – ran aground by Apley Park – but were soon afloat again. River very pretty here “ Reeds & Willows bordered the stream, & cattle came & hung their wild heads over the banks” – We rowed on till Bridgnorth bridge was in sight, wherein by mistake, passing our landing place, we

had to return & found it hard work against the current – A hundred steps to mount up to the hotel (Crown & Royal. all very tired & much enjoyed the excellent dinner & comfortable rooms that were ready for us -

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[A black & white photo of “Leaning Tower”]

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Bridgnorth Sept 5th

Next morning fog & mist, but turned out a most lovely day – After walking to see the castle & leaning tower, we were glad to get in boat & glide along, passed Highley church. On left bank, the red brick tower showing up amongst the trees – Constant rapids here -

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[A watercolour sketch of “Highley Church” – Severn]

Page 18

We pulled up & rested in the shade by the pretty village of Arley close to the water – some sketched, & others enjoyed idleness – Soon after we heard a loud murmur in the distance, which proclaimed a big rapid near, & we were not long before we came to it – quite large!! waves, they broke over the boat, but careful steering carried us through & on to Bewdley, where we landed & went up to the “George” Hotel for lunch – Going on from Bewdley we had one or two small rapids, then we came to a big weir, & our first lock soon after, so no more...

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[A watercolour sketch “Arley on Severn”]

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..rapids – We were quite sorry they were all over, & no more excitement Had a long steady row now to Worcester, the evening was very beautiful but we were glad to see the bridge & cathedral towers in view. We landed about six o'clock on the...

[Black & white photo of Worcester & river, showing where the boat was landed.]

...left hand side by bridge, & went up to the Hotel "Hop-market" = Some of our party went to the theatre in the evening – Sept 6th. Very fine morning, all went to the cathedral service at 10 o'clock the...

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[A black & white photo Worcester Cathedral]

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... choir were absent at the Gloucester festival, afterwards, went over the Worcester china works, which were most interesting – Mr. Bins, connected with the works, showed us all over the extra museum, in which were beautiful works of art – lunched, down to the boat again, about 2 Bridges & Cathedral lovely in the noon-day sun – We came to a lock, & soon after passing through it, to the pretty village of Kempsey, where we landed & called upon a friend – The Malvern Hills now came into view, purple in the background, barges went by laden with hay, & the windings of the river were very lovely – “ A bargee's is a happy life, in his floating home, He may take his afternoon walk...

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[A print of an engraving “Sabrina's Stream” Kempsey church, showing the hamlet beside the river bank.]

Page 24

...in some foreign country on the banks of the canal, & then come home to supper at his own fireside.” – Rowed on towards Tewksbury, thro' Upton-on-Severn, a quaint picturesque old place with red roofs & church spire – A long row, Malvern Hills very beautiful behind us, then the massive tower of the Abbey in sight –

we turned up into the Avon, (which joins the Severn here) to disembark – landed on some barges that were loaded with sweet-smelling hay, bargees helped us out & took care of boat for the night – walked up to the “Swann” Hotel – after dinner, for a stroll, beautiful moonlight.

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[A watercolour sketch of the Malvern Hills from the river.]

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[A black & white photo of ‘Atcham Church & Bridge’]

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[A black & white photo of ‘Bridge – Tewksbury in distance’]

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Sept. 7th

Morning rather dull, out early & after breakfast to see the Abbey.

We were greatly delighted with the first sight of the interior, the massive pillars, the fine old glass windows, & beautiful sedilia –

[Black & white photo of Tewksbury Abbey]

After strolling about the old town went on board by the hay barges, & on the Severn again- then thro’ a very large lock (capable of holding several vessels) & on coming out of it, we hoisted sail, & sailed away to...

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[Two small watercolour sketches ‘Old Houses Tewksbury’]

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...Gloucester. A slight breeze took us along most peacefully, & all our party rested – We passed several pretty villages, a fine stone bridge & old houses; saw men fishing for small eels – past the redcliff & little sandy beach near Henload then the pretty church of

Ashleyworth, close to the river – A picturesque barge sailed along in front of us, & the sun came out now & then. We lunched in the boat & washed up in the Severn! Fine red cliffs at Wynard's Hill – sailed on till...

[Two small watercolour sketches - 'near Henload' & 'Ashleyworth Church']

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...we came in sight of “the square tower & four turrets of Gloucester Cathedral, rising above the wide meadows, with a background of purple, low-lying hills beyond”

[small watercolour sketch 'first view of Gloucester tower']

Soon came to “Partings”, a junction on the river, & turned to the left towards the city – At a bend of the stream we came upon a lovely view of the Cathedral, with a stormy sky behind it – then, soon after, to the lock of the “Gloucester & Berkeley” canal, the end of our Severn trip.

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[A watercolour sketch 'nearer view of Gloucester Cathedral']

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A little interested crowd gathered round us here, whilst we were lying at the side, waiting till we could enter the lock – after assaying for the care of the boat, we landed, & went to the “Bell Hotel”, where we had been able ...

[missing illustration of 'Gloucester & Berkeley Canal']

...fortunately to secure rooms, the whole place having been crowded for the musical festival, which was just over, the city was still decorated with flags &c – We shall not soon forget the beauty of the Cathedral...

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[A black & white photo of Gloucester Cathedral]

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...in the moonlight, & we wandered round it for some time –
On Sunday 9th we enjoyed the Cathedral service & a walk by the canal in the aft, & picked autumn crocuses –
Having some friends in Glamorganshire, we went to stay with them for a day or two, & they afterwards joined us for the rest of our journey – on Thursday the 10th we had a picnic by the Sea Coast to Colhough [Colhugh], coming home through the village of Llantwit Major, to see the church there, which is the oldest in Wales, & I believe in England too –

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[A watercolour sketch – “Gilestone Manor”, Glamorganshire.]

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[A watercolour sketch – “Gilestone”, from the sea coast.]

Page 39

[A watercolour sketch – “Colhough” – with St. Donats tower in the distance.]

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Sept 12th It was arranged we should endeavour to go back to Gloucester by steamer, so accordingly, on a misty morning, we all made an exceedingly early start down to the sea shore, to the little port of Aberthaw, to embark – owing to the state of the tide, & rather a ground swell, we had some difficulty & excitement in getting on board in small boats - & one or two were caught by the waves, but at last we managed it, with all our bag & baggage, and steamed away about 6.30. The mist cleared, the sun rose on the sea, & it turned out one of the hottest days of all the summer – The Captain said we should not....

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...be able to go further than Chepstow, & turned up into what he thought was the entrance to the Wye – But he made a mistake, for at the same moment, a peculiar grating sound was heard, & much to the surprise of every one, we were aground! Hard & fast, & all efforts of the crew could not move us! The tide was running out very quickly, so no time was lost in getting into the small boat & landing, which we were well able to do about 80 yds off – We felt quite a shipwrecked crew, & did not in the least know where we were – However, some of the party went on forward to...

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...investigate, & after waiting some time, on their return, we scrambled up the high bank, & all set out across some meadows to walk to the nearest village, forming quite a procession, with the sailors from the steamer carrying our bags on their backs – We came to the village of Mathern, & there met with the clergyman of the parish, who very kindly shewed us all over the old church –

“Here lies John Lee, a nice old man,
We ne’er shall see him more
He used to wear an old drab coat,
All buttoned down before.”

Inscription on an old tomb in Mathern Churchyard.

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[Missing illustrations ‘Steamer’ & ‘bags’]

Page 44

From here we secured a carriage which took us (by this time rather exhausted) to Chepstow, where we enjoyed an excellent, well-earned breakfast, at the Beaufort Arms – After strolling to see the Castle in the afternoon, which was very hot, we went by train to Gloucester & back to the Bell Hotel –

Sept 13th We revisited the Cathedral once more, & then went down to the docks, & after a good many preparations, at last made a start in the boats on the “Gloucester & Berkeley Canal”. After rowing about 7 or 8 miles, we lunched on a sloping bank, & shortly afterwards turned to the left into the Stroudwater Canal – very pretty

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[A black & white photo of Chepstow Castle]

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...all the way – banks quite low – passed Stonehouse Church – quite close to the water – We had to pay 10/- each boat on entering this canal – It was prettily bordered with trees, & we glided along very pleasantly – sailed a little, rowed a little, passed a great many swing bridges, had to open them, too low to pass under, several locks, & had to open them also – It was getting quite dark before we neared Stroud, so we landed & gave our things in charge to a cottage near for the night after some little difficulty we were able to procure a fly to take our luggage &c on to Stroud, about a mile, to the “Royal George” – dined about 8-30.

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[Missing illustration of Stroudwater Canal]

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Sept 14th Two of our party were up early, & brought the boats through the lock by Wallbridge, to Stroud, & into the “Thames & Severn Canal”, ready for our start, which we made about 10.30, to go up the Golden Valley. The water here at first was black & dirty, but the little bridges were old & picturesque, & the houses too. We secured a man to go on in front & open the locks for us, there were a great many, 28, & we had no time to lose, as we had a long distance to go – We towed here a good part of the way, & in one or two places the water was so shallow that twice we had to unpack...

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[Black & white photos of Canal Tunnel entrance & canal lock with 3 canoeists]

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...the boats & carry them over, the last time some little distance – We kept ascending, getting higher & higher, lock after lock, the scenery was very fine. At last we came in view of the old, grey-stoned village of Sapperton, & the mouth of the much talked of tunnel opened up to us! We passed through it; a most weird passage, with lighted candles at each end of the boat, & burning magnesium wire – just an hour punting thro it, & it was...
[small pencil drawing of the boat passing through 'Sapperton Tunnel, Burning Magnesium wire']
...7 o'clock & quite dusk when we emerged...

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[A watercolour sketch of 'Sapperton tunnel, 2 1/2 miles long']

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...again, very glad to have come to the end – we had to unpack...

[A black & white photograph of 'Exit from Tunnel']

...the boats & wait at the tunnel Inn, (where we had tea) for a carriage to take us on to Cirencester. It was late in coming, & it was nearly 10 o'clock when we drove past the fine old church up to the Courtyard of the "Fleece" Hotel, where the landlord & his wife were anxiously looking out & a ...

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[Watercolour sketch of 'Old Church, Cirencester']

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...banquet of nearly a dozen courses awaited us! – So ended an eventful day in our boating trip – On Sunday 15th, we went to church service, & for a walk in the park, the air was very fresh & bright –

September 16th After saying farewell to the hospitable "Fleece", we drove in the "Bus" (all outside)...

[Missing illustration of Fleece Hotel]

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[Missing illustration]

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...to see the Roman remains, old pavements &c – then a beautiful drive through the park, passing where the “ten rides meet” & so on unto the Tunnel Inn again, & to the boats, which took us some time to clean & pack before starting – fine & very pleasant day, several locks & pretty bridges – good towing path, & all did a little towing by turns,

[missing illustration of figures towing]

reached Cricklade about six – left our boats at the Wharf in charge of an old man & his daughter, who took care of every...

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[Two Black & white photos a) A bridge & canal lock b) a large church]

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...thing & cleaned them nicely for us – stopped at the old-fashioned “White Hart” Inn, very cold evening.

Sept 17th Cold bright morn. all out before breakfast looking round the church &c – Cattle coming in for the market, held that day in one long, straggling street – In boats & down canal again very dead water – entered the Thames by Inglesham Round House reaching Lechlade about 2, landed, & went to the New Inn.

[small black & white photo of bridge & lock]

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[Missing illustration of Lechlade]

After lunching on “Ham & eggs” we drove to Fairford Church to see the old windows there – the evening was very cold, had a fire, our first one, & made coffee –

Sept 18th Very cold, but lovely morning had some difficulty in getting our breakfast, - paid sundry visits into the kitchen, the landlady & ...

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...her daughter (who was just going to be married) not up – Started in the boats again about 9. In the freshness of the morning air – A long, dawdling summer’s day on the Upper Thames! From Lechlade to Eynsham, thro’ miles of quiet, country meadows, &

hamlets – a good deal of towing to be done, owing to the weeds, very easy for the sitters, & the towers did not seem to mind it, the paths were so pleasant – landed & had milk at Radcot, lunched about 1.30 on the River's bank on "scraps" – then on past Tadpole[bridge] & Shiff[ord] & under Newbridge, the oldest bridge on the Thames & very picturesque as we saw it in the evening sunshine -

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[A black & white photograph of Bridge]

... just [????] late & dusk as we passed out of Eynsham lock & after a most winding course of the stream with the osier high on each side, & the gathering shades of evening making it difficult work for the coxswain, we landed at Eynsham bridge about 7 o'clock – all rather tired after our long day – a cart was waiting to take our bags up to the Swann Inn, quite a village [public], where we...

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...were very comfortable, & contrasted our landlady favourably favourably with the one of the night before – 2 or 3 of our party had beds out – we were here met by a friend of one of the crew, an amateur photographer, Mr. Jameson of Hull, who considerably added to our pleasure for the rest of the journey – Sept 19th Morning road dull & gloomy, & when we walked down the old village street towards the ...
[missing illustration of Eynsham]

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...bridge, there was a nasty wind blowing that threatened rain, with clouds of dust, however we said goodbye to that when we were once more afloat on "Old Father Thames", & the wind gave us an opportunity of a good sail – The River soon opened out wide, & the bend of Wytham woods was pretty – One or two weirs, where the boats passed over our rollers, the old ruin of Godstone on our right & then a flat open reach brought us in sight of the spires of Oxford Here we begin to get on old ground, & I am afraid were not so much interested in nearing the great city as we had been at other times – we felt that we were coming to the end of pleasant outing – The mist came on ...

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...& rain, as we passed “Folly Bridge & Salter’s landing stage, so full of life and business in the summer time – Past Ifley church & on to Sandford, where we landed for luncheon, but we had a wretched welcome, & it was some time before they could give us the customary fare of ham & eggs – our other boat’s crew went on Abingdon, where we joined them afterwards, & were all glad to get shelter at the comfortable “Crown & Thistle” – The next morning was fine & fresh, we left Abingdon about 10-30 – our photographer having got a good view of the bridge before breakfast –

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[Missing illustration of ‘Abingdon’]

Had a splendid sail in the randan, going a great pace, down Culcham reach – Past Clifden, Hampden, where we stopped to photograph the boats –

[Missing illustration of ‘boats & Clifden]

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..then on to Dag’s lock , here we landed & walked across to Dorchester for lunch & to see the old Abbey Church –
[missing illustration of Dorchester]

Then packed the boats again for the last time! & were soon on familiar ground – past Wallingford, Moulford, Goring...

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...lock to Streatley, where we moored the old randan safe & sound in her home quarters, having carried us over a distance of about
100 miles!

[Missing illustration of ‘boathouse’]

[In pencil] If you are tempted to go the same trip

I hope you may enjoy it as much as we did -

