

All's Well That Ends Well on the Severn and Avon - Karen Macey

On Saturday 15th April - I arrived at Lechlade marina in bright sunshine just after 11am to embark (as I thought) on our planned River Thames trip from Lechlade to Desborough. There to greet me was Robin Carter *Moonfleet* (920). Due to weeks of heavy rain we already knew that the Thames was on red boards, but having delayed twice, and with river levels dropping we hoped that we could launch in a day or two. Sadly the river was unlikely to open for navigation within the next 7 days ! By chance another Shrimper owner, Chris Harnan *Magic* (952), was at Lechlade and suggested we change our plans and move to the Severn and Avon. He even lent us his Imray pilot book - *Inland Waterways of Great Britain*. While we waited for Mike Everett *Alice Rose* (417) to arrive, Robin and I retired to the nearby pub, revised our itinerary and made the necessary arrangements to cruise the River Severn from Stourport-on-Severn to Gloucester then back up to Tewkesbury and onto the Avon.

Sunday 16th – We drove from Lechlade to Stourport, and our new start point at Tingdene marina, where we quickly launched, parked our vehicles and trailers and set off on our new adventure down the River Severn. At Lincomb, our first lock, we bought a 7-day licence for the Severn and continued down to Holt but as that lock had closed for the evening, we moored up for the night

Monday 17th – Once through Holt lock we headed down to Worcester, arriving at lunchtime and mooring in the centre of the city. After lunch we explored Worcester on foot and visited the Abbey before returning to our boats and setting off again, this time for Tewkesbury a total distance of 24 miles.

Tuesday 18th – In the morning we walked around Tewkesbury and visited the Abbey before entering the next lock to Gloucester. The lock keeper advised us that Gloucester lock closed on Tuesdays for maintenance work but we decided to continue on downstream and tied up near a sailing club - which was also shut for refurbishment. So we revised our plan again and headed back upstream to the Avon lock and bought a licence for the River Avon. We chatted to the lock keeper and asked if there was anything we needed for the trip (all the locks upstream are self service) but his only recommendation was a Waterways Guide which we already had, so we happily entered the Avon and stopped at the first pub for yet another planning meeting. On reaching Strensham lock we all entered and Robin went to close the lock behind us but unfortunately he couldn't find the handle! He asked a fellow boater who was tied to the other side of the lock who kindly lent us his but said we should have bought one from the lock keeper at Tewkesbury! At the next lock with some improvisation from Mike (he dived into his toolbox and found a huge adjustable spanner), which we used to close the lock and so continued on to Eckington where we tied up just past the bridge.

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1. River Thames the week before our trip



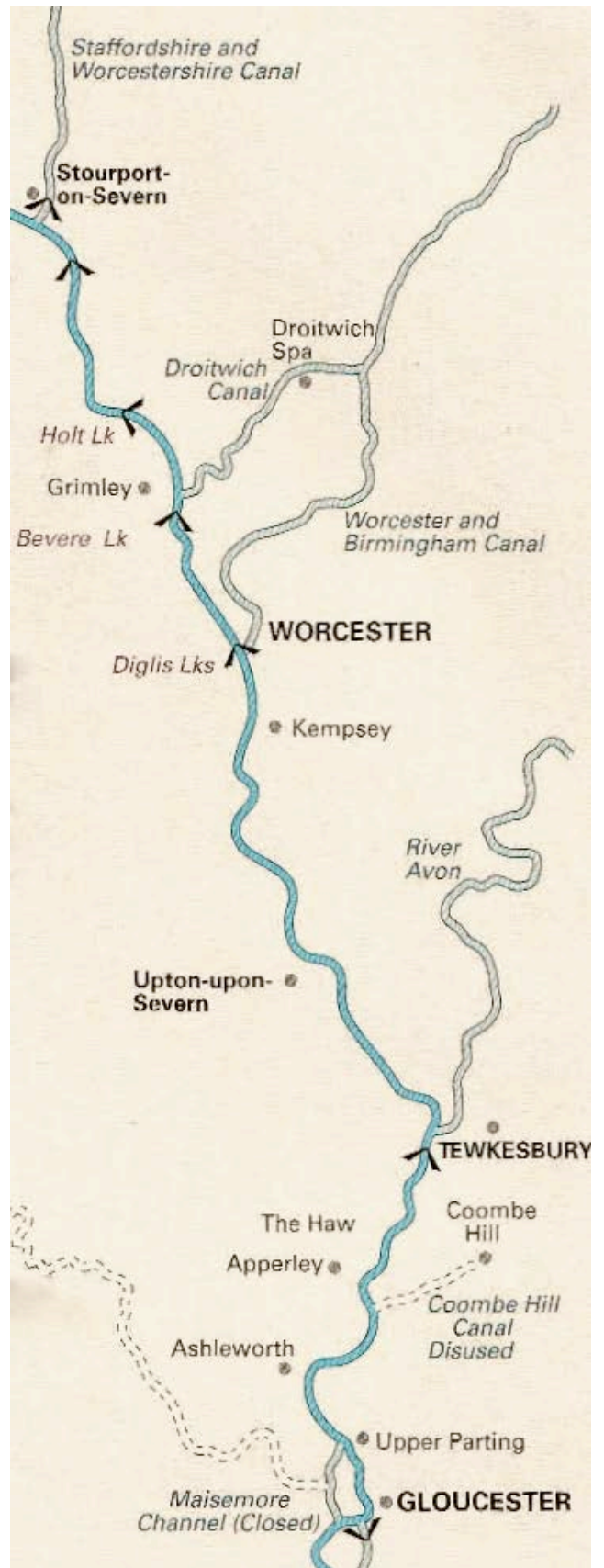
2. Launch site, Tingdene marina, Stourport



3. Avon Lock



4. Tied up at Eckington Bridge

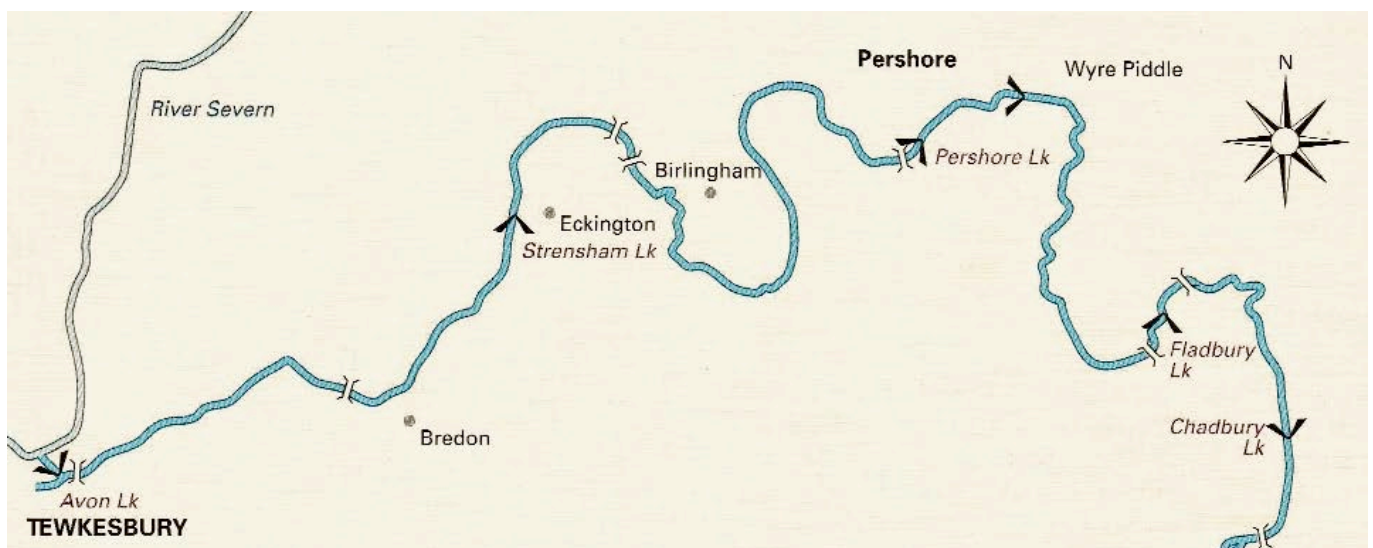


Map courtesy Imray pilot book *Inland Waterways of Great Britain* by Jane Cumberlidge

Wednesday 19th – Casting off at 8.00 am, we motored upstream to Great Comberton for a coffee break and stopped for a hike up Bredon Hill, which is over 1000 feet above sea level. You can see 5 counties on a good day but unfortunately when we reached the summit it was overcast with a cold easterly wind. Mike being a keen walker navigated our way to the top - a 3.5 hour walk. We returned to our boats had a late lunch and continued on to Pershore where we tied up for the night.

Thursday 20th – We were up early and after a shower at the leisure centre and breakfast, Robin and I unfolded our Bromptons for a cycle around the town whilst Mike made use of the pool for an early swim. We found the market had a fabulous array of fresh fruit so we stocked up. Meanwhile Mike discovered he had an electrical problem with *Alice Rose* but Robin came to the rescue with his tools and 30 minutes later we left Pershore for Evesham. The sun came out and we passed through beautiful countryside teeming with wildlife and along the way we met a lovely couple who had two lock handles and they kindly donated one of them to us. Arriving at Evesham we explored the town before some friends of Robin joined us on the boats for a fish and chip supper

Friday 21st - Unfortunately chilly rain showers were due to persist all day so we made arrangements to move our vehicles and trailers to Welford Boat Station. We caught the train to Kidderminster via Worcester then a bus to Stourport. We hitched up and headed for Welford (a 30 mile drive) where we left 3 trailers and 2 vehicles and Robin drove us back to Evesham. Once on the boats we immediately set off along the river; it was very peaceful with deer grazing on the riverbank. We moored at the Bridge Inn, Offenham overnight and had a lovely meal in the restaurant.



Map courtesy Imray pilot book *Inland Waterways of Great Britain* by Jane Cumberlidge

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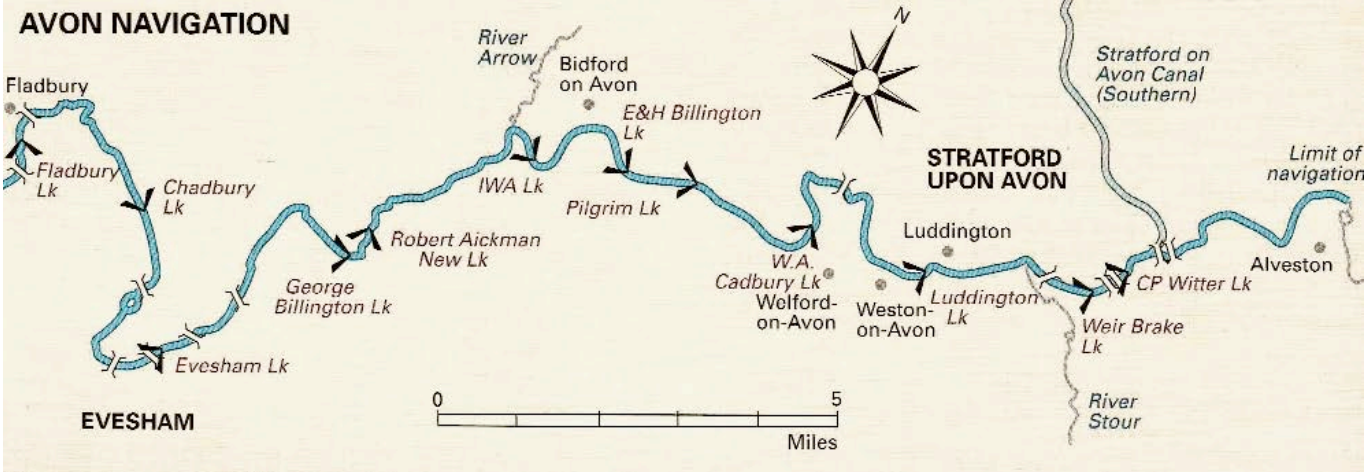
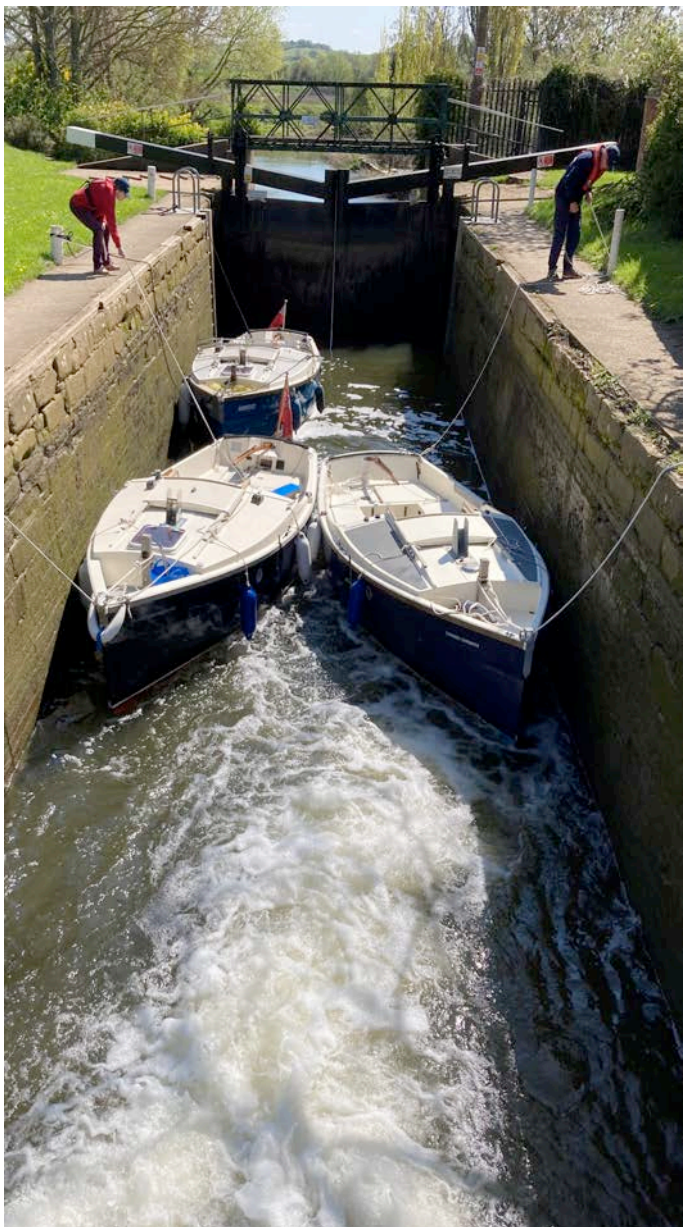
1. Pershore mooring at sunrise



2. Fladbury Mill and opposite Fladbury Lock



3. The Bridge Inn, Offenham



Map courtesy Imray pilot book *Inland Waterways of Great Britain* by Jane Cumberlidge

Saturday 22nd – A lovely morning, so we left at 8.30 for Bidford-on-Avon. On arrival it looked idyllic - people playing cricket, others having BBQs and children playing - all good until we went into the village - it was like a ghost town! No pubs or cafes open so we decided to have a quick lunch on board and move on to Stratford-upon-Avon. This was a huge task - 10 miles, 6 locks, and lots of hard work. We arrived in Stratford at 6.30 in the evening, totally exhausted. We moored up in the centre of this beautiful market town right opposite the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and all sorts of celebrations were going on to mark Shakespeare's birthday, so it had been well worth the effort.

Sunday 23rd - Robin took us on a guided walk of Shakespeare's home town, before the final leg back to Welford to reunite us with our vehicles and trailers. The slipway was busy on arrival so we left Mike in charge of the boats and drove to Evesham to collect Robin's vehicle. When we returned the heavens opened so on went the oilskins to retrieve all three boats, and secure them to the trailers. Job done we spent the evening in a local restaurant for our farewell meal.

Monday 24th - After breakfast we said our goodbyes and trailed our boats home. My thanks to Robin for organising the original trip and for teaching Mike and I how to use locks and understand how the mechanism works. We can now be considered fully experienced in manual locks. Also thanks to Chris for the idea of switching from the flooded Thames to the Severn and Avon and the loan of his pilot book, and last but not least to Mike for his company. The benefits of going early in the season are many; there are very few other boats around and therefore no waiting to use the locks; plenty of berths available if needed but you can tie up anywhere along the river or canal. It was one of my favourite adventures in my Shrimper *Camaron (940)* and whilst initially we were disappointed by the flooding on the Thames, methinks - All's Well That Ends Well.



End of our adventure, tied up opposite the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon