

Another Adventure in SKUNA by Richard Courts and Angela Allen

Inspiration

What turned out to be an exciting and successful adventure of rowing and sailing “Skuna” TW15 down the Thames started as an idea in the last week of December 2013. This came about from reading John and Penny Donnelly's articles on forays into the Thames with their Walker 12 dinghy and from Paul Blake, fellow Tideway Skipper, who also traversed the freshwater section in his canoe.

We both felt we would like to do the journey over the largest section of the River Thames possible. For all practical purposes it was found the furthest inland point to launch the Tideway was at Lechlade and then we thought why not cover the salt water section as well to finish at Leigh-on-Sea, the spiritual home of the Tideway dinghy. Nevertheless we realised this might be a difficult task to accomplish, the route overall covers 173.76 miles and there are 73 bridges and 43 locks on the freshwater section alone.

Preparation and Planning:

It was essential to have the fullest information on the bridges, especially the air draft measurement. Distance between locks and where the bridges occurred was also important. Having measured Skuna's mast head height, laden and with a safety allowance we believed any bridge must give us a clearance of 12'3" to get under. Air draft was especially critical with the bridges between Lechlade and Oxford where one was as low as 7.6" (Osney Bridge). Angela takes the credit for the research into the bridges, locks and regulations whilst Richard did the more extensive practical work on preparing Skuna for the voyage ahead.

Navigating the freshwater Thames is one thing but passage over the salt water stretches is another. We have previously experienced the difficult wind over tide situations the lower Thames can generate together with all the additional hazards of fast ferries, ribs and power boat wash one may encounter in London. Skuna had to be fitted out “above class” to cope with all this. Unfortunately her sheer is relatively low as she is an aged Tideway, however this potential problem has been solved on earlier expeditions with a tightly fitted canvas deck cover stretching over two removable hoops which can extend to the centre thwart. This will deflect any on board water or spray without resorting to baling and keep our equipment dry underneath. We also have to thank Dean Sephton for his design for a yoke tiller which Richard made and proved very useful. The other innovation that we use is Angela's idea for storing the oars. A simple use of the forward rowlock holder of a nut and bolt with Velcro attached keeps the oars stowed in a handy, easy accessible manner which proved invaluable navigating through the numerous locks. This takes a bare 5 seconds to have the oars available.

Next was to provide a solution for possible living on board as there are no accessible campsites on the tidal Thames and in fact camping sites on the lower reaches of the freshwater Thames are few and far between. It was in our initial grand plan to use B & B facilities when necessary but these again proved not very convenient plus we were also concerned about leaving our boat unattended overnight. Finally as

Tideway purists we elected not to use any outboard or mechanical power relying solely on sail and oar. Skuna has never been used with an outboard and hence no bracket.

We paid a visit to Camping & General at Canvey Island, an Aladdin's cave to some, and found to our surprise they had a small Gelert Quickpitch SS Compact Pop Up tent at the princely cost of £39.99 this can actually fit inside the Tideway! Our first exercise with the tent was to erect it in the lounge and climb in! - it was very cosy! Taking it down and putting it back in its bag proved to be quite a feat as it had a mind of its own and took us three attempts but eventually we succeeded. Richard made 3 plywood panels that fitted across the middle/stern area providing a firm platform for this tent and these were able to be stacked and stowed on the rear thwart whilst we were travelling without any inconvenience. As a precaution we also fitted a small whale pump for Angela's "health & safety" and obtained two light 50 feet lines for warping or extending the anchor cable.

When we did our first review of the equipment roster - it was staggering. There were 4 waterproof bags containing personal clothing, our beds, pumps and sleeping bags and an additional waterproof bag for essential extras. Then there was a small plastic tool box that contained basic tools and lastly an old watertight flare box containing stove, torches, batteries, 2 flares & held hand VHF. Lastly but separately stowed were the kettle, 1 pan, 2 plastic boxes with tea etc and basic supplies. Initially Richard was horrified that all this could fit into the little Tideway but with careful positioning trim was maintained and the boat performed quite satisfactorily.

Lechlade 12th May 2014

We arrived at Lechlade approximately 2.30pm after a slow journey which included being stationary on a section of the M25 delayed after an accident. For convenience purposes we had arranged for a friend, Danny, to accompany us and take the car and trailer back to Maldon. The Trout Inn charge £5 to launch at their slipway and a Thames Water Licence can be purchased from St. John's Lock which is a short walk from the launch site. Danny then set off with the car and trailer leaving us to journey down river. The weather looked mixed at this point and heavy rain was forecast, however, the picture was quite idyllic as we slowly rowed out of the cut of the Trout Inn into the main stream. Within a few minutes our first bridge Bloomers Hole (11'6") appeared requiring the mast to be lowered together with sail and spars which were temporarily rested on Angela's shoulder for the few seconds required to pass under the bridge. Water fowl abounded with their young and we observed Moorhens, scores of pink footed and Canada geese. Next came Buscot Lock which is listed as the smallest lock, followed by Eaton Footbridge (9'9") and then Grafton Lock. Beyond Grafton Lock lies Radcot Bridge (11'4") , an aged structure where there is the Swan Public House. Our list of bridges and locks goes on and on and we have therefore minimised our reference to those we feel have relevance.

Initially The Swan appeared inviting with sandwich boards outside offering B & B accommodation and under "new management". The actual response was far more disappointing, the Proprietor was away and not expected back until after 9pm and the inexperienced bar girl could not confirm any B & B accommodation was in fact

available. With the darkening clouds threatening an imminent cloud burst Skuna was rowed up a gut way and moored beside staging; there was room to erect the tent beside the staging and as Richard dealt with the dinghy and Angela put up the tent the heavens opened. There was only time to cover the dinghy with the canvas cover and fall into the tent. I slept quite well but Richard said he didn't!

End of Day: We had rowed 6.34 miles

13th May. We awoke about 4.45am and decided to breakfast on porridge and fruit which ultimately became our staple diet for the rest of the week. It was a beautiful bright morning and we set off for Radcot Lock, which was further away from Radcot Bridge than we expected! This lock was operated by ourselves as the keepers usually start at 9am. We passed through with no difficulty. There was negligible wind that early in the morning which tended to make the scene even more beautiful. Again wild fowl abounded. One thing which was very evident was the considerable damage to trees and erosion of bank corners caused by the winter's flood waters. There were trees pushed right over in many places with their root bowls literally torn out of the soft flood bank soil. A large collection of cows gathered together full of curiosity and walked right to the bank side to view us.

We have to say we found all the lock keepers were friendly and extremely helpful, in this case our friendly Lock keeper at Rushey suddenly reappeared at Pinkhill Lock further down the Thames. Next came Tadpole Bridge (built 1789)(14'10") followed by Tenfoot Bridge (12'2") We traversed beneath the lower bridges by leaning on Skuna's sides to give us a safety margin of a couple of inches but it can be breathtaking.

Eventually up came Newbridge (c1250), the second oldest bridge across the Thames and when it was built it spanned 725 yds with 51 arches; not so many arches now but the series of stone arches are delightful and which for the few cabin cruisers that reach this area requires very careful negotiation. It was here on 27 May 1644 that a garrison of King's Dragoons delayed the Parliamentarian army of Sir William Waller by over a week allowing Kings Charles 1 to escape from his capital at Oxford. We stopped for lunch at the Rose Revived.

Later a short rain shower was experienced which we avoided by closing with the bank at Bablock Hythe and mooring beneath a large overhanging oak tree. This is an area where much of the waterside has been given over to holiday caravans. Today's target Eynsham Lock was reached at approximately 6pm after passing under Swinford Toll Bridge (14'9"). We didn't go through the lock as camping was on the island between the lock and the weir area. This is a very attractive spot to stay overnight and restricted to cyclists, walkers and "pure" boating types (like us hee hee!). Water, toilets and showers are available and the Talbot Pub is a short walk away.

End of Day: 17.1 miles mostly accomplished by rowing but managed about 6 miles of sailing.

14th May. We rose and breakfasted at 6am and prepared for the lock nearby. Being aware that the next stretch had particularly low bridges Richard arranged the

mast, gaff and boom with sails facing forward like two separate bow sprits. Then onto Godstow Lock, we passed the ruins of Godstow Nunnery 1138, House of Benedictine Nuns, although now in ruins one could easily visualise its grandeur in earlier times. History tells us that Fair Rosamund (Clifford) the mistress of Henry II joined the order but was thought to have been poisoned by Queen Eleanor, she was buried in the Abbey but Hugh Bishop of Lincoln decided she was not suitable and removed her bones. But afterwards the indomitable nuns collected her bones into a silken scented bag and reburied them in honour where the one surviving gable stands. We could see the A34 Oxford Road close by and passed under Godstow Bridge (8'5") thence onto Osney Lock, Later we saw Osney Bridge (7'6") Osney Bridge is successful in keeping the large "Gin Palaces" away from the upper Thames reaches by the low head room.

It was becoming very apparent that Skuna was entering residential/commercial areas. There were rows of cottages bordering some of the bank sides and a number of commercial sites and some boatyards appeared. We understood there is also an alternative route through parts of Oxford but on advice it appears suitable only for canoes. Eventually we entered an area that we can only call classic Oxford with wonderful riverside stone and brick buildings. In central Oxford we were delighted to find a mini Venice area with little waterways, very picturesque. There is the wonderful "Head of the River" Pub with extremely good beer and a fine menu. Space was found for us between the punts and rowing boats by a nice attendant of Salter's Steamers Ltd. a firm going back six generations. Leaving the "Head of the River" we encountered a further four road bridges before reaching Iffley Lock where the head room of all subsequent bridges was sufficient for us to keep the mast up, hooray!. At about this time we encountered a slight south/south easterly breeze and accomplished several miles under sail alone. Along this route we were amazed by the number of Oxford College boat houses which we enjoyed photographing, as each had their college badge displayed on the front. Now and again clumps of trees reduced our speed but overall progress was much better. Abingdon Lock was the target for the night. This waterways depot appeared quite important as we noticed groups of metal barges and dredging equipment in the vicinity. We were able to tie Skuna in a relatively private locality in the Lockkeepers grounds close to the barges and it was only a short walk along the river bank to Abingdon. Neither of us realised what a beautiful historic gem Abingdon is and made a note to visit it again. Dinner was passed in the Courtyard of The Crown & Thistle. Altogether it was a lovely warm evening and we enjoyed pleasurable conversation with other visitors. Nevertheless it was time to review our progress and overall Angela kindly reminded Richard the daily passage would have to be increased beyond 20 miles a day if we were to maintain a reasonable target to reach Teddington Lock by Sunday evening.

End of Day: 14.2miles rowed 9 sailed about 5 miles.

15th May It was a lovely morning when we set off and as Richard and I were taking it in turns to row we noticed a couple running along the bank taking photographs. The lady called out for our email and said she would send photos; we were absolutely delighted that this kind lady was true to her word and we received the photos when we got home. These were among the rare photos we obtained together on this trip.

Looking at the chart we realised we were rapidly closing Beale Park and looked for its river entrance where the previous lock keeper had advised a nights quite rest could be obtained. Unfortunately we were unable to detect the entrance into Beale Park itself although several large motor boats were moored along the Beale Park perimeter; this was a disappointment because of its connection with the small boat show which we had previously visited. There was no time to retrace our course so we elected to stay on the opposite bank adjacent to an uninhabited run down boat house. This was our first decision to sleep on board and proved the most comfortable. It took less than 15 minutes to unload and erect the tent and we camped and had our evening meal in a quiet and peaceful setting. The evening silence was punctuated by busy woodpeckers and hoots from early patrolling owls.

End of Day 22.44 miles

16th May Early next morning we had our breakfast and dressed in the side veranda of the boat house. Richard took time off to inspect an enormous Oak growing on the bankside which had a circumference of approximately 20'. He pointed out the rustications in the tree bark had produced at least three faces and did some quick sketches. Packing up is now down to a fine art and at 8am we set off for Whitechurch Lock which was only a mile away. Next came Whitchurch Toll Bridge and Mapledurham Lock. Mapledurham Lock was very attractive and we had an early tea stop. The lock keeper here recommended that Sonning Lock had a pleasant cafe and suggested it would be a good lunch stop. We decided to take up the recommendation and stop for lunch. It was about here that we noticed the Cootes abounded with their young and Moorhens noticeably absent. This was in contrast with our passage before Oxford where the Moorhens prevailed.

There was now an awareness that Henley was not far off, we encountered various rowing skiffs ranging from single skulls to 8 seaters. Then came some electric operated red Indian styled canoes. Grand style waterfront properties became very evident particularly extensive boat house properties which were either privately or club owned. Eventually Henley Bridge appeared and we were hoping to relax under sail but not a breath of wind appeared. We were so engrossed in the Henley scene that we wandered into the race lanes and Angela said "well you have at least got a head start!" Way into the distance we could see scores of poles in dead straight lines infilled with further floating poles. There were few sideways exits so we plodded on being overtaken by the occasional skiff, thankfully it was not competition time. At the end of the Regatta course Temple Island folly appeared. We decided to stop at Hurley Lock 3.66 miles further on and stay the night arriving at the lock at 20.31. From Hurley lock we enjoyed a pleasant walk into the village where the kind publican of the Rising Sun cooked us a meal even though we had arrived just after the end of serving time. The fare was splendid.

End of Day: mainly rowed 22.44 miles

17th May Leaving Hurley Lock after breakfast of porridge again we struck off for Temple Lock only 0.64 miles away. This turned out to be a fairly eventful sightseeing day. Later we spied a skiff rowed by three oarsmen with a cox rapidly catching us up. The cox was dressed in evening wear complete with bow tie whilst his oarsmen were similarly dressed in various Jeeves style wear. They had come

from Lechlade starting out later than us and had the advantage of being able to bypass most locks by pulling their craft over rollers.

Marlow from the River is very attractive and passing under Marlow Bridge we soon reached the Lock where a Cootie and Grebe had decided to nest alongside each other. Along one stretch Richard spied an ice cream van where we stopped for a cup of tea and Richard his ice cream. We were now approaching Windsor a very busy impressive riverside townscape with Windsor and its castle to starboard and Eton college to port. Passage is now under a low arched bridge and leads to the long, narrow cut for Romney Lock. Once we had reached Romney Lock it was a lot busier along the waterway and in the locks as we had to share them with numerous sight seeing vessels and small hire motor boats being used by those who didn't usually "mess" around in boats. Passing Royal Windsor we saw a horse show and we could see some of the riders and their beautifully turned out horses along the river bank. We were now thinking where it would be a good place to stop for the night and decided to continue to Old Windsor Lock 3 miles away.

The Lock keeper kindly permitted us to stay on the pontoon overnight just through the lock. This time we again tented on Skuna. It is a delightful little spot and contained a family of swans. We were surprised to find the careful parents rearing 10 cygnets. They took them out for their evening patrol avoiding us and other human contact. Not the usual scrounging often encountered with swans, in our opinion this family would go far. The only negative thing was that we were directly under the flight path but as we were quite tired it didn't really affect us.

End of Day: 22.71 miles – did manage some sailing today, though unfortunately not very much wind.

18th May By all accounts today would be the last day on the non-tidal Thames and we both experienced a measure of excitement and apprehension about reaching Teddington but sorrow too that our successful trip was coming to an end. The weather was holding and we were hopeful to be able to complete our voyage to Leigh.

The next stretch was to Bell Weir (Egham) Lock 2.92 miles away followed by Penton Hook Lock 2.84 miles. This included passing Runnymede where the famous encounter between King John and his Barons resulted in the Magna Carta. The site is now owned by the National Trust. Some sailing was achieved as the morning grew on with a strengthening wind enabling us to do some reaches. After Chertsey came Shepperton Lock where we decided to stop for lunch at their cafe. Richard asked if I could obtain him an ice cream from the other side of the lock but by the time I had returned he was already devouring another ice cream he had obtained from another source – I thought that was a bit greedy! But he seemed to enjoy them nevertheless. Little wind presented itself so pressed on with rowing. By now the Thames had become wider and very busy in places as the sun brought out the Sunday trippers. There were numerous families sunbathing and enjoying the banksides. Before Teddington was encountered we had to pass through two more locks Sunbury and Molesey (5.93 miles). This section included passing by Hampton Court and its beautiful bridge.

Teddington was reached at 7pm by which time we were extremely tired following a long day. This did not stop us from visiting The Anglers pub for a pleasant meal. The lock keeper like all the others was extremely obliging allowing us to moor and erect our tent on Skuna in a private section of the lock site. Teddington was a completely different lock complex. Here one could sense the meeting of the tidal with non-tidal Thames. There are three locks, one of which can be extended over a 100 yards to accommodate large numbers of vessels and looked more continental in appearance.

End of Day: 20.51 miles

If one could summarise the most noticeable experiences of the previous days, firstly it would be the range and enormous quantities of wild fowl encountered. Secondly the beauty of nature with the early morning starts and the heritage and history of this wonderful river. Last and not least our tributes and gratitude to the Lock Keepers and others who man and manage this historic waterway.

19th May Leaving Teddington at 6.40am. The initial tidal stretches did not appear much different than the non-tidal part. It was high water when we left reaching the grassed banks and the ebb was quite slack, first came Eel Pie Island together with many grand old houses. Twickenham YC appeared and later Richmond Bridge. By now the banks of the river were covered with tall willow trees right through to Syon Reach and among the branches was a well established heronrey - in fact we saw more herons along this stretch than previously encountered earlier on the Thames

Passing Brentford we met a line of spindley islands some of which were built on and it was interesting to note many landing stages contained Dutch sailing barges and other laid up traditional motor boats. I doubt if many of these get to sea now although we did see "Lilian" a wonderful Edwardian Steam Yacht which we previously saw at the entrance to Faversham Creek two years previously. To starboard Kew and Chiswick appeared and it was nice to see a pagoda rearing up above the tree canopy and also the red brick buildings. After Barnes rail bridge we detected a reasonable SE wind and were able to raise sail.. Where curved bridges were met, as a precaution we would slide the gunter mainsail down and pass beneath and this became simply a matter of course with practise. Attractive well known waterside spots now came on thick and fast. We encountered the decorative Hammersmith Bride which is the lowest bridge on the tidal river but this was passed beneath with no difficulty.

Putney Bridge was rapidly approached in the increasing ebb, this bridge of course heralds the start of the Annual Boat race. Next came a succession of bridges and Chelsea Harbour Marina which did not appear particularly exciting from the Thames. Most attractive to us were the older style bridges built by famous Victorian engineers such as the Albert Bridge (1873) Battersea Bridge and Chiswick Bridge naming but a few.

We were in confident jubilant mood and the weather was bright when our enthusiasm came to a halt approaching Vauxhall Bridge. The wind had dropped to a light air. We were moving to starboard on a bend when a portly dark figure on an

official looking motor boat asked what we were doing and shouted at us to move across to the righthand side of the river. There was no opportunity to speak to him as he then persisted in shouting at us, then asking what type of power we had; Richard replied this is a vessel with sail and oar only and bound for Leigh on Sea. He then demanded to know if we had VHF to which we replied yes. This person became even more abusive and animated saying this would create a major incident. All we could say was that there was no problem; we would continue our course to starboard. He gave us no opportunity to say anything and eventually we had to shout he obviously knew nothing about small craft or sailing them. By this time the fellow was pursuing in a bullying, harassing manor. I told Angela we were now approaching the busier part of the Thames so I was going to take command of my vessel, lower the sails and row the next few miles, which had always been our intention. We quickly noticed the fast tide was setting us onto a moored lighter which had to be avoided by some furious rowing. By the time we had extricated ourselves from this danger this officious person had zoomed off in his patrol vessel. We were astonished by the abusive bullying attitude and glad to see the back of him. This was the only time in the whole trip we felt at risk. This person did no credit to the organisation he worked for especially as he never introduced himself.

Rowing now with sails stowed Skuna was moving fast along the fierce ebb leaving Angela busy photographing all the sights. It seemed as soon as we passed under Lambeth Bridge, Westminster Bridge and the Houses of Parliament were coming up fast. Then followed the London Eye, Festival Pier and the famous moored ships. It was a wonderful experience seeing all these sights from the water. Very quickly a view of the Tower of London appeared and HMS Belfast but before we could reach HMS Belfast there was a brisk wind squall which set up an extremely choppy stretch that made the rowing difficult. We pulled over to the northside to avoid the chop and noticed the river level was now so low it would be possible to row by the Belfast on the northside beneath the access bridge and avoid the choppy water (later I spoke to a bargeman about this choppy stretch who said it always seemed rough in this locality and put it down to shallower water over an ancient causeway).

Tower Bridge next loomed up and we passed under a subsidiary arch on the south side but by this time the ebb tide had virtually ceased and shelter had to be gained quickly before the flood returned. We spotted Hermitage Wharf just past St Katherine's Dock and rowed across, the time was now 12.30pm. Hermitage Wharf is a new modern structure comprising a short pier with two arms stretching out on either side. It forms the mooring quarters for a number of large converted motor barges and spritsail barges – one being the Ethel Ada which we previously knew was located on the River Orwell. The wharf master gave us permission to moor up temporarily until the flood tide passed. Never before had we encountered such rough water in a river. All due to the excessive wash generated by fast ferries, other slow ferries and a collection of large ribs driven by "Petrol Head" lunatics who gun up and down usually with only one or two passengers. The effect of this wash on the large moored craft set them rocking wildly like dinghies and we 're talking about heavy motor craft up to 100ft in length. We laid out additional lines for Skuna who had a space within this gyrating mass and hoped nothing would go wrong. The wharf master kindly put out some soft large fenders. Whilst we were enjoying coffee and shelter on the Hermitage Dock we spoke to the crew of a fuel bowser that had

called in relating our encounter with the PLA official. Their response about PLA staff was extremely blunt and unprintable to put in here.

Thankfully at 6pm most of the ferry activity quietened down and the river became suitable for small boat activity. The tide had turned and after rowing out into the centre of the river raised sail and had a blissful sail for one and a half hours passing Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs and its high tech buildings until we reached the famous Greenwich Maritime Waterfront. By this time we needed to find a night time stop and spotted the moorings and pontoons of Greenwich Yacht Club in Bugsby's Reach. Hooking onto a pontoon Richard spotted the club had a half sized lighter laying alongside full of mooring buoys, anchors and chain. However, an area beneath the foredeck had full ceiling height and was swept and clear; without more ado we pitched our little tent beneath the foredeck in the relative comfort and security of a big steel vessel at 8pm. Angela said "you certainly know how to treat a girl!"

End of Day 21.34 miles

20th May By the time we had breakfast and packed Skuna the Tide had started to ebb and we set off at approximately 6.30am. Using our portable VHF radio contact was quickly made with Thames Barrier Control who gave permission to pass through and lit up green one of the subsidiary passages in the giant structure. We rowed through and hoisted sail on the other side. There was a S/SE wind blowing which was very advantageous and kept tacking down to a minimum. Later the wind swung further to the south and it was sometime before we realised how lucky this would be in giving many broad reaches down the Thames. Few ships were encountered and then only minor ones such as dredgers and coasters. One had to be extremely careful and keep clear of the tugs towing refuse lighters. Beyond the Royal Docks complex the Thames becomes visually unattractive and is cluttered with all sorts of wharves and industrial installations often redundant. Crayfordness appeared just beyond Erith and opened onto Long Reach, a wide expanse of water leading up to Queen Elizabeth Bridge. In Erith Reach we observed 5 yachts slowly catching us up under engine. One of them turned out to be a SeaDog Yacht, like our own named, Kitty Jay, owned by a friend Martin Waterman. His initial reaction was one of complete surprise seeing us. We exchanged a few pleasantries as they continued on their way but if we had not been required to undertake a series of tacks on that reach Skuna would more or less have kept up with them.

It was necessary to put in a couple of tacks right beneath the QE Bridge as down draught produced head on winds. Afterwards it was fairly clear sailing until we reached Broadness Point, then a few short tacks to pass Port of Tilbury and the London Cruise Terminal. Beyond Tilbury, Skuna took full advantage of the broad reaching situation available and clawed along for the next 5 miles on the slackening ebb tide. At the mid Blythe Buoy opposite Hole Haven the ebb tide finally gave out so we moved across to the shallow side (Blythe Sands) and reached along until it became convenient to turn across towards the Chapman Sands. The flooding tide covered much of the sands on the Leigh/Southend foreshore but was insufficient for us to float across. We therefore entered the Ray Channel towards the Leigh Buoy and were obliged to anchor up for a couple of hours until sufficient water had arrived

in Leigh-on-Sea. During this wait we had lunch on board and Richard repaired a cleat that had come off the centre plate.

In fact the only equipment casualties experienced during the whole voyage- was this cleat and a blade section broken off one of the oars by excessive wash from a fast ferry at Greenwich.

Telephoning ahead Richard was able to arrange for one his Leigh-on-Sea sailing friends, Mike McLaughin, to meet him at Leigh Sailing Club who kindly conveyed him to Maldon to pick up his car and trailer; Angela remained with Skuna.

End of Day 29.46 miles

Our Nine day trip was over and both of us confessed we were sorry when the trip had ended. Neither of us had said to each other the wild thought in our minds that we could have gone on further along the Thames foreshore passing through Havengore Bridge into the River Crouch system of waterways then out to sea and Maldon via the River Blackwater. However, the Range Officer may have prevented this idea as range firing was in progress that week. Never mind that's another opportunity for the future.

Looking back on our trip, we had completed **173.76 miles** from Lechlade to Leigh-on-Sea. Our lasting memory will be one of excitement, the beauty of the journey, the wild life and the spectacular early morning light.

Would we do it again? Certainly we would do another river, watch this space; we don't feel that we could ever improve on our Thames journey.

Richard Courts
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on SKUNA TW15