

Sauntering along the brief distance which intervenes between both railway stations and the east end of the town, the traveller crosses a sluggish stream dividing the counties of Oxford and Northampton. He must look out for it though, or he may happen to cross it without notice, and thus miss the river Cherwell, whose beauties were sung by Shenstone long, long ago: –

*“And sketch with care the Muse’s bower,  
Where Isis rolls her silver tide;  
Nor yet omit one reed or flower  
That shines on Cherwell’s verdant side -  
If so thou may’st these hours prolong  
When polished Lycon join’d my song.”*

But Shenstone wrote long before the ventilation of the subjects of drainage and sewage, things which came in with “Boards of Health,” and which certainly have not improved the sweetness of the Cherwell; so with “polished Lycon” we will pass on. [2nd edition; the 1st expresses much the same view, at greater length.]

At the eastern or Northamptonshire end of the bridge there stood a hermitage in former days, which must have dated back from a very distant period, as Baron Woodhull of Thenford, by his will dated March 29, 1531, ordered his executors sufficiently to repair the hermitage “at the Brigg foot at Banbury,” and when repaired, to place therein “an honest man, to pray for his repose, and for the souls of his friends.” But both the hermitage and hermit have long since ceased to have either “a local habitation or a name,” and the land is all that now remains to note this piety or superstition of the baron of Thenford.

The Oxford Canal, with its wharfs and warehouses, stretches away to the right and left, opening up a communication by water with the most distant parts of the United Kingdom. The act of parliament for its construction was passed in the session of 1768-9, and from the date of its opening down to the era of the reign of railways, the traffic, by this mode of transit was immense. Indeed, even now, when having to compete with so formidable a rival, numerous are the barges still plying on its waters, and the transport of heavy merchandise is by no mean inconsiderable.

Here stood the Bridge Gate – for Banbury had in its former days both gates and walls, although neither of them seem to have been of sufficient strength for the purposes of military defence... [followed by a brief account of the Battle of Edgcote in 1469].