



Walks from the Watercress Way 1/8: Steam, watercress, spies, sheep & eels

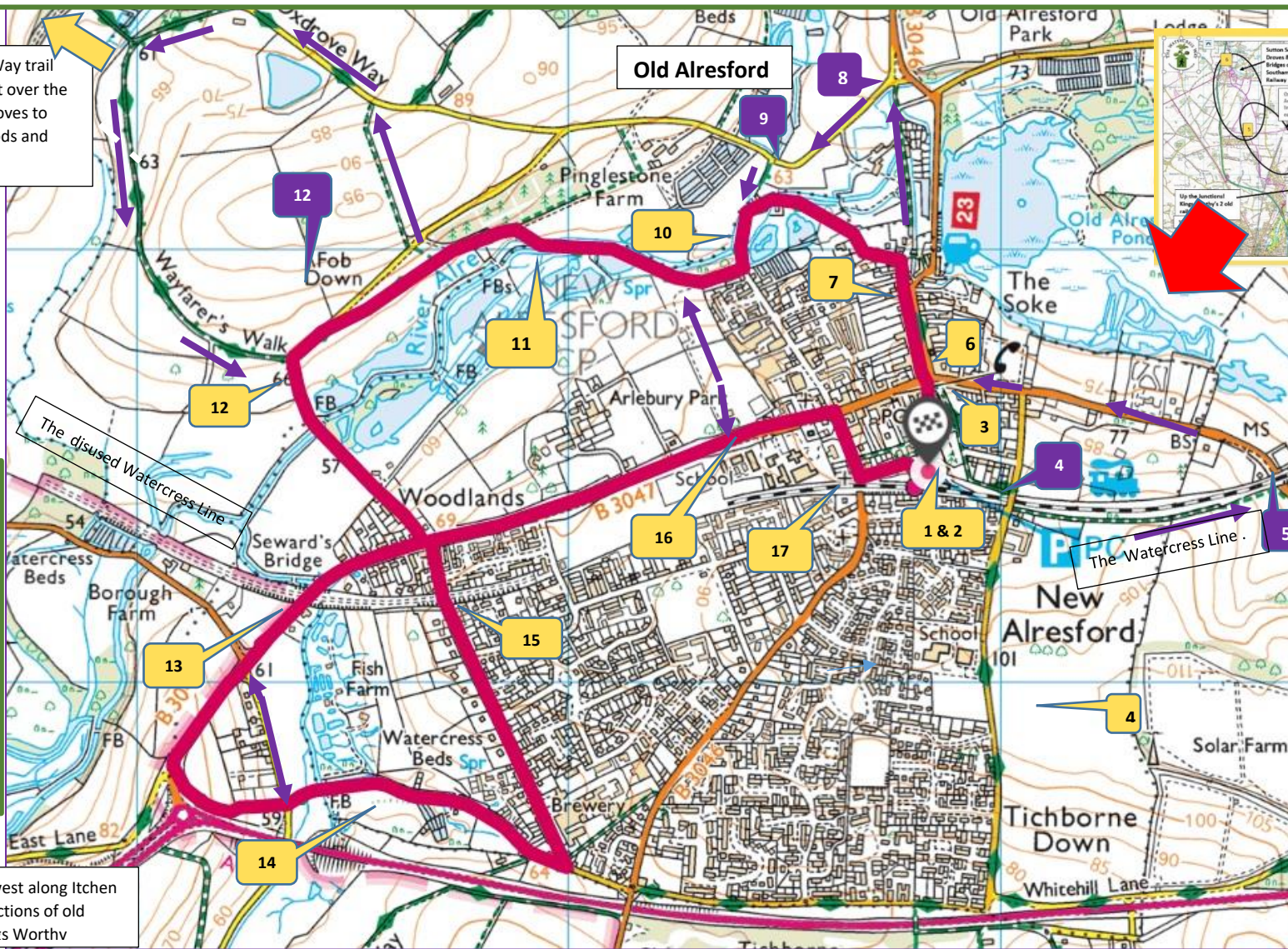
A flexible, circular 4/6/7 mile walk in and around New Alresford, a beautiful Georgian market town, rich with heritage. It passes the sparkling Rivers Arle & Itchen & watercress beds. It joins part of the northern and southern parts of the Watercress Way . Please follow The Countryside Code.

The Watercress Way trail heads North West over the downlands via droves to Micheldever Woods and Sutton Scotney.



This route in red, (purple extensions), is suitable for children, and dogs on leads. It is on pavements, grassy and gravel tracks, some muddy in winter. Some roads without pavements. **Wheelchair access** in town centre stages 1,2,3,6,7,15,16,17.

The Watercress Way trail heads west along Itchen Valley to Winchester Junction. Sections of old track open at Itchen Abbas & Kines Worth



ACCESS: Car parks Alresford Station carpark (2) SO24 9JL or Arlebury Recreation Ground (16) SO24 9EP.

Start at Station OS Map SU588324 Postcode SO24 9JG. What3words: polices.will.trump et

Buses No 64 /67 Winchester.

Services: multiple pubs, cafes, shops. Public toilets: Station Rd (3)

www.thewatercressway.org.uk for information on walking, cycling & horse riding routes, heritage & wildlife, contacts & how to support our work on increasing access to the old railways & conservation. Charity No 1167675 . Find us on social media, TripAdvisor, YouTube. O.S. Map Licence 100063718. Please follow the latest Government Countryside Code



	Directions	Watch points . Look for Millennium Trail interpretation signs
The Watercress Line station	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start at the Station building, or in its garden up a short ramp. Then find the Edward Knight Visitor Centre. 2. Exit the station carpark by Station Rd. Stop outside the public conveniences .Then cross over to a narrow lane into St John's churchyard. 3. Exit churchyard via narrow passage onto Broad St / East St. Go to stage 6 unless you follow the extension of 2 miles to Long Barn, stages 4 & 5. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watercress production boomed after the building of the Alton to Winchester railway 1885-1973. The Watercress Line was partly opened up by volunteers for 10 miles east to Alton for heritage trains, but 7 miles was abandoned, now partly reopened as the Watercress Way trail. Apart from the station building & Old Goods Shed, all the infrastructure is a replica. The Edward Knight Visitor Centre in the Old Goods shed ,was named after Jane Austen's nephew, the railway's lead investor. • The toilets have a plaque about a Cold War spy ring. • In the churchyard to the left of the path are some French prisoners gravestones from the last Napoleonic war.
2 mile extension to Sun Hill & East St.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Exit the graveyard to the SE, behind the church to a row of small cottages. Follow the footpath along the fence of the railway garden to Sun Lane bridge. 5. Turn right over the bridge, then first left along narrow footpath east, away from the station. At Bishops Sutton Rd cross over & turn left under railway bridge back to East St. Continue to Broad St & the main waymarked WW trail. 	<p>To see the working heritage railway, old sheep fields, and historic East St.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun Hill bridge & footpath have great views of the working railway, goods yard, & Edwardian cottages. You will parallel a deep chalk cutting carved out by ' Navvies' through Fairfield, where once sheep were fattened up after their long walk to market & sold. • Look for Long Barn (lavender & coffee shop) lined to the Sheep Fair as was next door Hurdle House .On the right, is the old Sun Inn, home of cricketer John Arnott. On the left is No 9 ,once a drovers inn, now a house called Welcome. No 7 was the imposing brick residence of John Dunn , government prisoner parole officer in 1811.
New Alresford town centre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Walk down Broad St. The Watercress Way is signed on the left (west). Broad St merges into Mill Hill. Continue downhill to Ladywell Lane. Go to stage 10 unless you wish to follow the extended walk . 7. From Mill Lane, turn left down Ladywell, following a shady footpath by the River Arle, past beautiful Georgian houses & alongside a tree lined river bank with tall fences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Alresford actually dates back to a planned T- shaped !3th C Norman town, built by Winchester's Bishops. Broad St was wide to hold markets . Look for the burghage pattern of narrow frontages with long plots for servants, animals & market gardens, in the gardens, garages (once coach entrances) & shop layouts. Smelly sheep fairs were replaced by Victorian funfairs, but the tradition of a weekly market continues, and a newer Watercress Festival. Find Oxleys bookshop,(linked to the Cold War Portland Spy ring), the 400 year old Horse & Groom pub (frequented by 19th C race horse trainers), No 48 (one of many smithies) & No 50 (U.S. HQ in WW2) . The Old Fire Station is opposite unmistakable yellow Pineapple House, with its symbols of wealth on its roof. Find Old Timbers with its rarely preserved firemark, a sign to 19th C firefighters that the insurance was paid ! Fires were a feature of the town's history, only reduced by the use of tiles in Georgian times. • Stop at the interpretation board by Ladywell for information on the tanneries and mills. Just before the Fulling Mill is the Memorial Gardens, once an open air swimming pool.
1 mile extension to watercress beds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ignore the Ladywell turn, instead continue downhill to Weir House, then Arle Mill, past abandoned watercress beds to Abbotstone Rd (no pavement). 9. Turn left along this quiet road and take the first left, a byway to the Fulling Mill back to the main Watercress Way trail at stage 10. 	<p>To extend the walk north by 1 mile and see working and abandoned watercress beds:</p> <p>Look behind Weir House, to the cascading outflow of the Great Pond (fishpond of the Bishops of Winchester). Arle Mill has an old millstone propped up against its wall. The abandoned watercress beds are being deliberately rewilded since their closure in the late 1990's. Spot the terraces and concrete beds of the old farm, with a clever system of 'levada' like water channels. You are now in Old Alresford , recorded in the Domesday Book. On the right is Pinglestone Farm, large commercial watercress beds run by The Watercress Company.</p>



The River Arle	<p>10. Pass the Fulling Mill, with the river on the right. Follow the River Arle, past Amy's wildfowl feeding station, the end of The Dean Rd, Hambone's grave, the Eel house, to Drove Road.</p> <p>11. At The Dean & also Arlebury Recreation Ground you can shorten the route by turning left, north to West St. Pick up the signs for the Watercress Way at Jacklyn's Lane, back to the station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fulling Mill dates to the 13th C, one of many cloth mills here (fullers earth was pounded into cotton to strengthen its weave) Watercress flatbed carts pulled by horses used to enter the shallow river here enroute from Pinglestone watercress farms via The Dean up to the station. Can you spot any alder trees (origin of the name of Alresford)?. • US Army mascot Hambone's dog grave is just before the entrance to Arlebury Recreation Ground. Here you can shorten the route by walking through the park north to The Avenue, otherwise carry on by the River Arle, looking for trout and pike, to the 1840 rare Eel House. Read the interpretation board on their extraordinary life cycle. From here you get glimpses across the Arle valley and its many fish lakes to Arlebury House.
Old Drovers	<p>12. At Drove Road, follow this minor road downhill to the left, south across the River Arle to Alresford Rd/ The Avenue/ B3047 .Diversion: cross over to New Farm Rd up to see the old railway bridge & cutting, then return to the Avenue. See Stage 15.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for Pinglestone vineyard and Fob Down hill at the junction of The Oxdrove & Wayfarers Way. Here the WW heads north west to Sutton Scotney . The meadows on the right of Drove Rd, used in WW II for tank training, hide the confluence of the Itchen and Arle. The Watercress Line embankment arcs west along the Itchen valley. • New Farm bridge has good views of an abandoned cutting of The Watercress Line, as of 2021 abandoned old pony paddocks, & up for sale.
Extension to Seward's Bridge & Spring Garden watercress farm	<p>To extend the walk by 2 miles</p> <p>13. From Drove Rd turn right along Alresford Rd to Seward's Bridge . Carry on & either take the first road left after Seward's Bridge, Tichbourne Lane, or carry on uphill to the roundabout of the A31. Cross carefully to the bridleway to the left, signed the Watercress Way. Follow the bridleway downhill to Tichbourne Lane .</p> <p>14. Cross straight over to Spring Gardens (no cars) to the ford. At New Farm Rd, turn sharp left, for 0.5 miles to the old railway bridge before returning to Alresford Rd /The Avenue, Stage 15.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Gardens has a deep ford through the meandering River Itchen, unsuitable for vehicles. There is a footbridge for pedestrians! The Itchen has SSSI status for its rare chalk ecosystem. You are back on the southern limb of the WW trail here. • You pass traditionally farmed watercress beds. The packing shed is on the right. Watercress is farmed all year. Plastic covers help frost prevention. The 'crossers' would have originally taken the crop to the station by horse and cart, thence to London to be sold in Victorian London as 'Poor man's bread'. A fragile crop, watercress needs to reach the market in less than 24 hours, unless refrigerated. Now vans take it to London by motorway. • New Farm Rd has a mix of industrial and increasing numbers of residential uses including post WW2 prefab houses.
Back to the station	<p>15. From New Farm Rd bridge return to Alresford Rd /The Avenue opposite Drove Rd.</p> <p>16. Turn right, east, into Alresford . Pass Arlebury Park Recreation Ground, and go down Pound Hill</p> <p>17. At The Dean cross over West St to Jacklyn's Lane, and at the bridge turn left up Station Approach back to Alresford Station</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This beautiful lime tree Avenue was part of the turnpike road, its redbrick toll house remains. Almost opposite is Bridge St, but the old railway was infilled in the 1980s & built on by Perins School. • Opposite the entrance to Arlebury Recreation Ground at Perins school entrance are some concrete blocks, remnants of a WW II anti- aircraft gun. Pound Hill was a Victorian stray animal pound. No 22 was one of 32 pubs in Alresford at the end of the 19th C, The Running Horse.. At The Dean is an interpretation board . A small diversion up West St past Shapla's leads to an old photo display at Oakleaf Stationary (both buildings originally Perins school). Also see www.arlesfordheritage.co.uk for photographs of bygone years. • The old bridge is used as a railway carriage park! .

The Trustees hope you have enjoyed this self- guided walk.... Written initially by Ben McIntosh, DoE volunteer updated by Kim Adams Trustee July 2021.

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