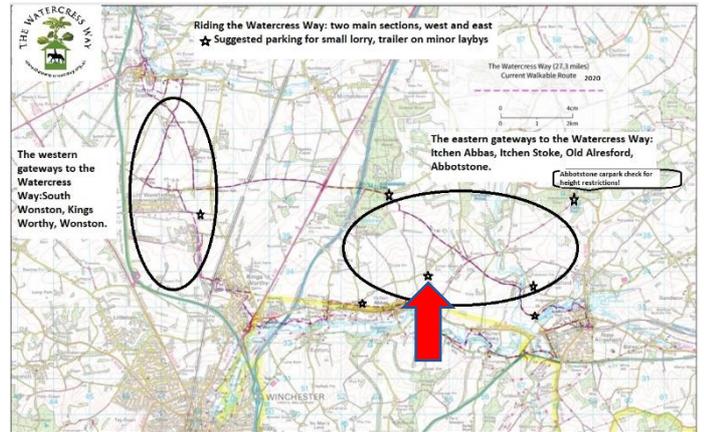




## Riding and cycling the Watercress Way

The Itchen Abbas Gateway: Itchen Down and Oxdrove Way  
6.4km (4 mile) circular route  
(anti-clockwise)

To **extend** your ride/cycle you can head west to Itchen/Micheldever Woods, east to Abbotstone Down, or southwest into New Alresford town (cyclists only) where there are many services including pubs and cafes. : [www.thewatercressway.org.uk](http://www.thewatercressway.org.uk)



### Map of route



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The Watercress Way 26 mile circular trail, NE of Winchester, Hampshire, is waymarked for walkers, set up by volunteers 2016. It follows parts of two Victorian railway lines closed mid C.20th, linked by historic livestock droves. The charity (No 1167675) welcomes supporters & sponsors. See our website and social media posts. [www.thewatercressway.org.uk](http://www.thewatercressway.org.uk) A donation for this publication would help!



Sections and directions with approximate distances in Kms		<i>Points of interest(italics)</i> and comments for horse riders and cyclists. <b>Please be sensitive to other users of the route: walkers with children and dogs</b>	
<b>Parking Northington Road SO21 1BS</b>		<b>Access the start of the route</b> from the B3047 then Northington Rd. Just east of Rectory Lane are small grassy/gravel laybys, with enough room for a small lorry or trailer. <b>Care needed</b> as no fencing to road. All the route lies on the well-drained beautiful rolling chalk downland, just North of the South Downs National Park. (SDNP). Most is off road.	
1	<b>From Northington Road head South East on bridleway 0.8 km</b>	<b>Undulating gravel track with grass sections at edge of open fields. Good cantering uphill.</b> <i>The treelined embankment to the SW is the line of the disused Mid-Hants railway or Watercress Line. It is used as the SDNP boundary. The tributary dry valleys in this area, leading down to the Itchen River, were probably formed when the chalk was frozen during the IceAge.</i>	
2	<b>After the metal gates turn left heading NE on enclosed bridleway 1.3km</b>	<b>Go through the small gate, which can be opened from horseback, but is narrow. Grassy path between two hedges, good for trot and canter as it is a gentle incline but be aware of pedestrians/cyclists.</b> <i>This is part of the Three Castles path, a 96 km (60 mile) footpath linking Winchester Great Hall via Odiham to Windsor Castle. It is based on the C.13<sup>th</sup> journeys of King John at the time of the Magna Carta.</i>	
3	<b>Turn first left at 5 way path junction on to Watercress Way NW to Northington Rd height restriction barrier. 0.6km</b>	<b>At the five way junction take the first left. A grassy hedged track with a gentle downwards slope.</b> <i>The Oxdrove Way is a historic droving route used for moving cattle from west to east across Hampshire to markets in Alresford and Petersfield. Part of this is used by the Wayfarers Walk, a 70 mile trail from Inkpen Beacon to Emsworth. The Watercress Way follows some of this route.</i>	
4	<b>At Northington Road go straight across under another metal height restriction barrier 0.7km</b>	<b>This is signed the Watercress Way and Oxdrove Way. Mainly grassy track uphill, good for cantering.</b> <i>To the right(east) is Itchen Stoke Down, grassy or arable crop fields today but where Hambledon versus England cricket matches were played 1778-1806 .</i>	
5	<b>At the top of the hill keep straight on/bear slightly right heading NW. 1km</b>	<b>At the top of the hill is a disused windpump hidden in the trees. Go straight on, a wide gravel track used by The Watercress Way for 1.25kms.</b> <i>The early 20<sup>th</sup> C windpump pumped water up for Itchen Down Farm. The concrete trig point (130m) in the field to the right shows this is the high point in the area, the north side of the Itchen valley.</i>	
6	<b>At junction turn left heading S. 0.3km</b>	<b>Look out for the first bridleway on the left, between two hedges. This opens on to a wide grassy field margin. Lovely opportunity for a canter up the hill. Lovely specimen oak trees in the field. Look out for buzzards and red kites. The woods to the right are called Courtney Copse and Itchen Wood, famed like Micheldever Wood for spring bluebells.</b>	
7	<b>At top of hill bear right then left following the bridleway heading SE 1.4km</b>	<b>A narrow undulating grassy path locally known as Green Lane, brings you the 1.2kms back to the Northington Road.</b> (Great for picking up speed but cyclists be aware of pedestrians and horse riders coming round the blind corners). <i>There are lovely wildflowers along the verges. Great views SW across Itchen valley to St Catherine's Hill and Winchester</i>	
8	<b>On Northington Road turn left back to the parking area. 0.3km</b>	<b>You come under a metal height restriction barrier on to Northington Road, then a short downhill road section to return to the parking area.</b> <i>The southern end of Northington Rd, near the junction with the B3047 is crossed by an imposing red brick viaduct for the old Mid-Hants railway , built by 1865. The railway helped start the boom in watercress production in Victorian times.</i>	

Designed, mapped, and written by Ysella and Anna, Duke of Edinburgh volunteers June 2020, edited by Trustees.

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