



## Riding and cycling the Watercress Way

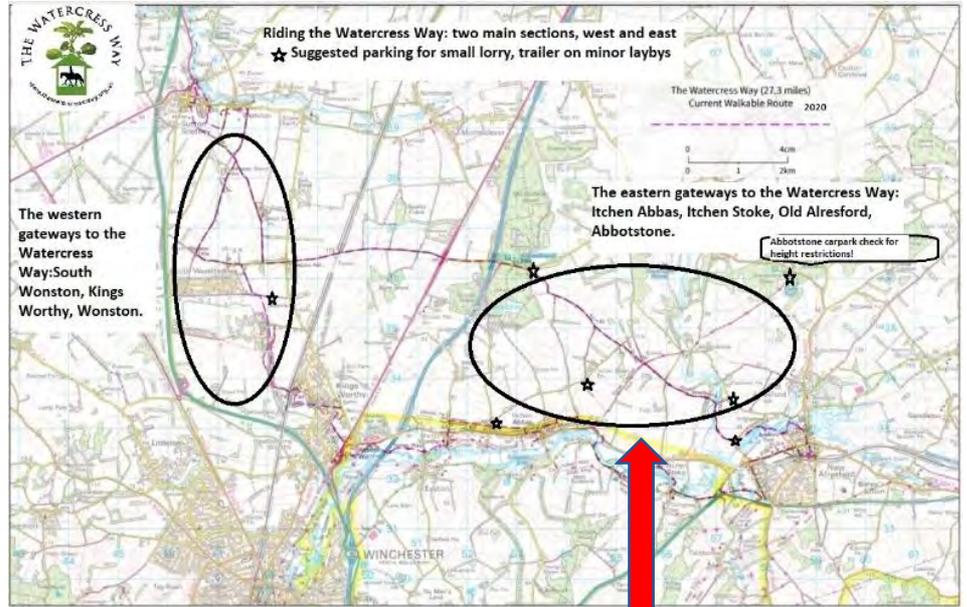
### The Abbotstone Gateway: Abbotstone figure of eight

12.8 km (8 mile) circular route

There are two main areas for riding the Watercress Way: west and east

To **extend** your ride/cycle see the two orange arrows below. There are many services available that include pubs and cafes :

<https://www.thewatercressway.org.uk>



Map of route



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. A donation online for this publication would help! [www.thewatercressway.org.uk](http://www.thewatercressway.org.uk)



Sections and directions with approximate distances in Kms		<b>Points of interest(italics) and comments for horse riders and cyclists.</b>	
		<p><b>Please be sensitive to other users of the route: walkers with children and</b></p> <p>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 with two short road sections on a quiet road with grass verges. This ride is a figure of 8, so for a shorter ride you can just go from 1-6 and then 12-13 on the map. The whole ride is 12.8km (8 miles) and the shorter ride is 5.8 kms (3.6 miles) and very suitable for horses and off-road cyclists.</p>	
<p><b>Parking</b>  <b>Abbotstone Rd either Pt 1 on map above SO24 9TE</b>  <b>OS SU 566 346</b>  <b>Alternative spot: North of Fob Down SO249TD</b>  <b>OS SU 457133, Pt 4 on map above</b></p> 		<p><b>Access the start of the route</b> is Abbotstone Road</p> <p>From the East/North, turn off the B3046 just North of New Alresford signposted to Abbotstone. Follow Abbotstone Rd past Fobdown Farm, through the site of the abandoned medieval village then before you drop down the hill with the few houses of Abbotstone on the right, is an off road parking space.</p> <p>Or from the south and west turn off the B3047 at Itchen Stoke (church on right) and head north up minor road past Folly Hill and drop down to junction with Abbotstone Rd. Turn right (east) along Abbotstone Road and the parking spot is on the left at the top of the hill, before the medieval village.</p> <p>There is space to park two small lorries or trailers beside the road on a gravel/grass patch. Do not block the farm gate please. Please pick up any droppings!</p>	
P-1	<p><b>From Abbotstone Road take the farm track signposted Oxdrove way. Approx 0.25km (0.16 miles)</b></p>	<p><b>Undulating farm track between hedges heading away from the road until you reach a Y junction and take the right fork.</b></p> <p><i>The origin of Abbotstone is said to derive from Abeds Dune the fortified hill or dune of a Celtic chief of that name, or Abbotston, the settlement of a Saxon tribe. There is much evidence of early occupation in these hills and valleys.</i></p>	
1-2	<p><b>Take the right hand fork 1.3 kms (0.8miles)</b></p>	<p><b>A nice grassy track between two hedges undulating uphill with nice views. Good going for horses and bikes. At 2 on map above, take a right turn just before some chain fencing. This is part of the Ox Drove Way, an old cross country route called a drove on the downs to the North of Winchester, sometimes called the Lunway. It was used before the railway era to move cattle to markets. It is traceable west to Stockbridge( clue in the name here!)and east beyond The Woolpack Inn. Drovers are often wider than packhorse routes, because of the volume of animals passing along them.</b></p>	
2-3	<p><b>Turn right just before some chain fencing 1km (0.6miles)</b></p>	<p><b>Follow the grassy track past the building called Oxdrove Yard on your left until you meet the road. Turn right on to the road.</b></p> <p><i>The road runs between Alresford and Abbotstone. New Alresford was founded by the Bishop of Winchester in the C12th/13th and planned as a T shaped town. The Great Weir carrying the B3046 today was a dam to make Old Alresford Pond, features which are still in existence today.</i></p>	
3-4	<p><b>Turn right on to the road 0.5km (0.3 miles)</b></p>	<p><b>This is a quiet road with a grass verge along the side.</b></p> <p><i>It is also part of the Ox Drove Way. Good views of the new vineyards for sparkling wine from here. There have been an increase over the last decade of vineyards in Hampshire as the climate warms. This area was important in Romano-British times, there is a settlement on Fob Down hill to your left( south, which gave a good vantage point across the Arle and Candover valleys .</i></p>	
4-5	<p><b>At a gravel layby turn left under height restriction barrier 0.3km (0.2 miles)</b></p>	<p><b>When you reach a gravel layby with a barn on the left, turn left off the road towards a height restriction barrier. This marks the entrance of a bridleway, a stoney track downhill. Turn right at the junction crossing over small stream .This is the Candover, a tributary of the R Itchen famed for fly fishing and watercress. It has been heavily modified by people over the centuries, especially by owners of Northington Grange from the 17th C onwards. It is part of extensive land holdings of the Baring family, and the Grange is a popular opera venue in summer months.</b></p>	
5-6	<p><b>Turn right to cross the river 1.7kms (1.1 miles)</b></p>	<p><b>You are now on the Watercress Way trail. It slopes gently uphill and is nice going for horses and cycles with a smooth grass / earth surface. When you reach 2 height restriction barriers and a big log, you cross over the minor road which leads south to Itchen Stoke . Follow signs for the Watercress Way. Look out for a memorial to a WW2 spitfire crash during training, due to be erected 2021</b></p> <p><b>At a 5 way path junction with a post signposting TheThree Castles Path you have reached the mid point of this figure of 8 ride.</b></p>	



6-7	At the 5 way path junction you take the second exit on your left 0.6km (0.4 miles)	Take the second exit on your left which is a pleasant grassy track with a gentle up and a steeper down slope. Follow this track down to the Northington road. <i>Amazing views here west along the R Itchen to Winchester. Signs of livestock farming can be seen: abandoned troughs and barns. The fields now are arable mainly, wheat, barley and rape, sometimes full of morphine poppies for the pharmaceutical industry.</i>	
7-8	Cross the road under the height restriction barrier and follow the gravel/grass track 1.7km (1.1 miles)	The first part of the track is nice and grassy but watch out for rabbit burrows. Then when you get to the top of the hill there is a disused windmill on your right( covered in ivy). From that point it is a gravelly track that leads you downhill. Continue on this track for around 1.25km (0.8 miles) The windmill would have pumped water up for the farm as a nearby trig.point (130m) shows this is the high point in the area. This is a good place to spot hares chasing through the arable fields in the spring and autumn. Can you spot the old concrete trig point used for surveying before remote sensing was used by the Ordnance Survey in the field to the right?	
8-9	Turn left between 2 hedges in to a big field 1.9km (1.2 miles)	Turn left at the first junction, between two hedges into a big field, which opens up into a wide field margin. This is a good opportunity for a trot/canter (or a gallop!). Then follow the fairly narrow undulating grassy path locally called Green Lane, which brings you back on to Northington road. look out for buzzards and red kites. There is a lovely specimen oak in the middle of the field. Green lane has several sharp bends, typical of droves for sheep, to give some shelter to the often hundreds of animals moved at a time often by corgi dogs before the mid 19 <sup>th</sup> C. The woods to the right are part of Micheldever /Itchen Woods, famed for bluebells	
9-10	Turn left on to the road 0.3km (0.2 miles)	Turn left onto Northington Rd which has a relatively wide verge. Head down this road until you reach two bridleways that are almost opposite each other and take the right hand path south, downhill. The Southern end of Northington Road, near the junction of B3047 is crossed by an imposing red brick viaduct for the old Mid Hants railway built in 1865. The railway helped start the boom in watercress production in Victorian times.You will see the line of the old railway called The Mid Hants Line or Watercress Line, masked in trees just to the left of the two large isolated houses on your right. This is how the Watercress Way got its name.	
10-11	Turn right on to the bridleway downhill 0.8km (1.3 miles)	Turn onto the right hand path, and head downhill on the gravel track with a grass middle. Then there are two lovely grassy hills which you could trot/canter up. Watch out for dancing butterflies in the summer .This path is another drove	
11-12	At the gate turn left onto the 3 Castles Path 1.3km (0.8 miles)	Head through the narrow metal gate which isn't very horse friendly, but is often open, and possible to open whilst mounted, and turn left onto the Three Castles Path. This is a nice grassy path between two hedges, good for a trot or canter as it has a gentle incline. Please be aware of pedestrians as it is quite narrow.The 3 Castles path is a 96 km (60 mile) footpath linking Winchester Great Hall via Odiham to Windsor Castle. It is based on C.13 <sup>th</sup> journeys of King John at the time of the Magna Carta	
12-13	At 5 way junction take the 3 <sup>rd</sup> exit on your left down hill 0.8km (0.5 miles)	You are now back at the five way junction. Head down the third exit which a grass/earthy track downhill. Follow this path all the way down until you reach the road at Abbotstone. Abbotstone today is described as a 'deserted village', but there was a very large mansion built here in 1680 called Abbotstone House, built by the Duke of Bolton after Cromwell destroyed his mansion called Basing House which had many important visitors including Elizabeth I.It seems that when the house destroyed after 1759, the gardens deteriorated too The villagers left, hence the deserted village seen at Pt 1.The gardens are protected by English Heritage listing.	
13-P	On the road follow signpost to Alresford and Bighton 0.4km (0.25 miles)	Once you are on the road head straight past pretty thatched cottages, over a bridge and head up the hill. You are now at the parking area Pt 1 on map above .	

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

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. A donation online for this publication would help! [www.thewatercressway.org.uk](http://www.thewatercressway.org.uk)

