

Trail	: HAMPTR0021
Activity	: Walk
Type	: Pub
Terrain	: Country Lanes
Author	: Nigel Vile
Distance	: 5.6 miles / 9 kms
Ascent	: 312 feet / 95 metres
Location	: SU588325 / SO24 9JL



The Fulling Mill, New Alresford
© John Smitten



Alresford Train Station
© Tony Wood



Lane to Fobdown Farm
© Peter Standing

Trail Summary

Explore the watercress beds and meadows around Alresford with this gentle walk across an undulating landscape.

Trail Details

1. Walk down Station Road to West Street, turn right and take the first left into Broad Street. Towards the bottom of Broad Street, veer left into a cul-de-sac called Mill Hill. In 50 yards, turn left into Ladywell Lane. Follow this lane, it becomes a gravelled path, for 300 yards along to a thatched property spanning the River Alre called Fulling Mill. Immediately past this property, turn right, cross the river and follow a gravel drive up to a quiet lane. Turn left along this lane and, in 100 yards, turn right onto a gravel track, a footpath, leading to a number of properties. Just before the last property, follow the left edge of a grassy area along to a stile, before following the right edges of the next two fields, cress beds behind the hedgerows on the right. Cross a stile in the corner of the second field, and continue along a track for 200 yards to a junction in front of a whitewashed cottage.
2. Turn left along Ox Stone Drove, and follow this track for 1.25 miles to a lane on the fringes of Abbotstone, ignoring two left turns along the way. Follow the lane ahead for 300 yards to a junction in the hamlet of Abbotstone, just past a brick-and-thatch cottage. Turn left along the lane signposted to Itchen Stoke and Winchester. Follow this quiet lane for 600 yards and, at the top of a hill, turn left

along a track, the Wayfarer's Walk. Follow this track for 0.75 miles to a junction just past a cottage and a series of cress beds. Turn right, and follow what is still the Wayfarer's Walk for 0.5 miles to a lane.

3. Turn left and, in 40 yards, veer right off the lane to follow a footpath across a field bordering a belt of trees. Towards the far side of the field, keep right into the trees and continue along the path until it emerges onto a lane by some properties. Continue along the path alongside these houses, before dropping downhill to reach the banks of the Alre. Follow the riverside path for 400 yards through to a footbridge, before turning right into The Dean. Follow this road up to West Street, turn left and then first right into Station Road, opposite the Bell Inn.

Alresford

Alresford, literally the ford over the river where the alder trees grow, is a delightful market town located on the River Alre. Pronounced 'Allsford', this beautiful Georgian town enjoyed prosperity based upon the wool trade for many years. Old Alresford is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but the present town of New Alresford did not come into existence before 1200 at the time when the Great Weir was being built to create Old Alresford Pond as a reservoir for the Itchen Navigation.

The colourwashed Georgian houses that line Broad Street and West Street, arose from the ashes of a series of great fires in the 17th century. To the north of the town lies rolling open countryside, and it is here, along the River Alre and its feeder streams, that we find vast watercress beds.

Watercress-growing became industrialised in the 1860s following the undercutting of cereal crops by imports of cheap maize, and the simultaneous arrival of the railway to carry the perishable cress to distant destinations. The local line, known as the Watercress Line, enabled the cress crops to be transported to markets in London and beyond. Following the closure of the railway in 1973, a group of enthusiasts rallied around to preserve the line, which today operates between Alresford and Alton.

The Bell

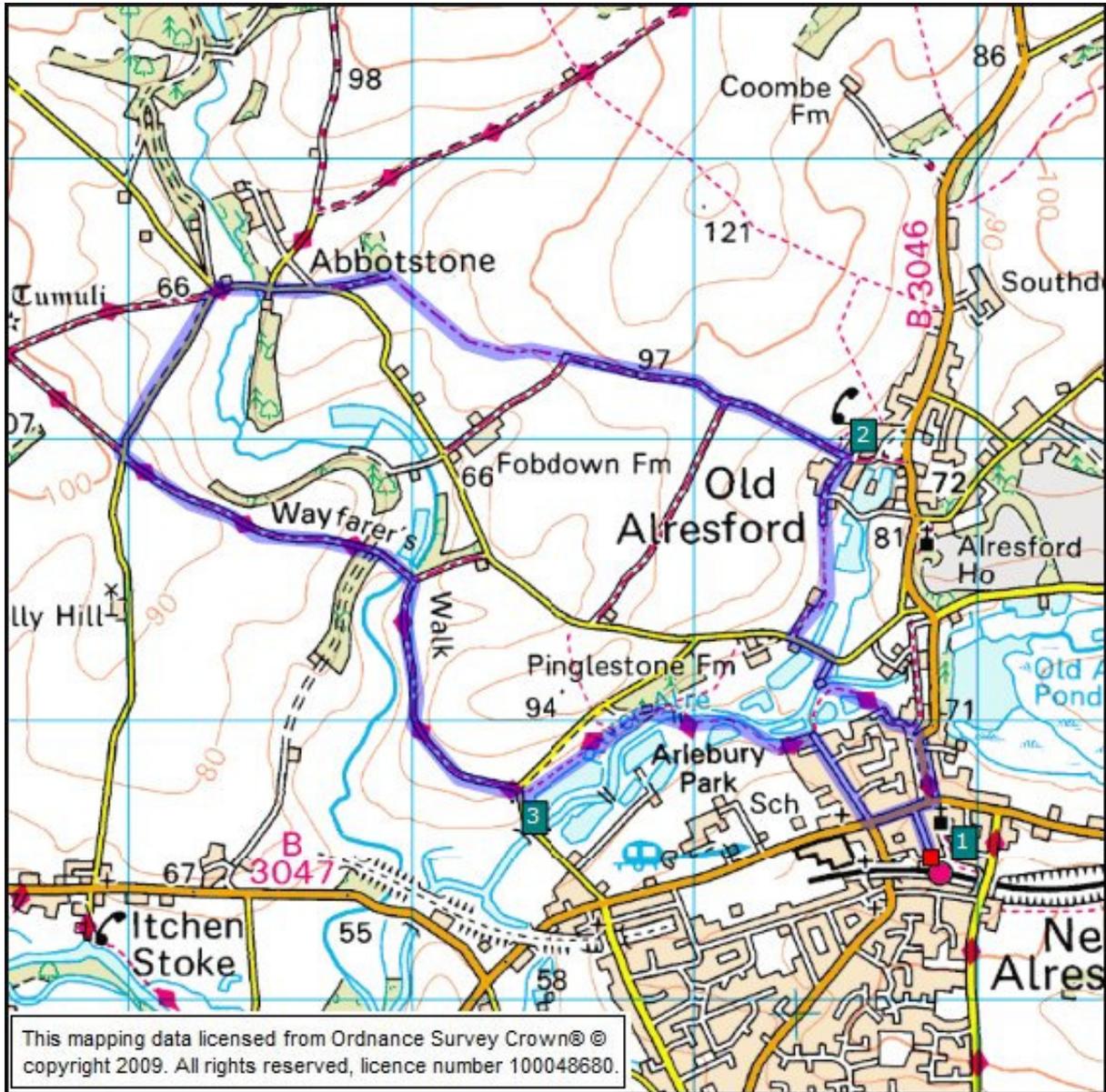
The Bell, a freehouse dating from 1767, was originally a Georgian coaching inn. Fronting onto Alresford's West Street, its handsome exterior, with fine floral displays, readily catches the eye of the passing traveller. The atmosphere at the Bell is relaxed and informal, and centres on the provision of fresh seasonal produce cooked to order. With its extended bar and dining room, well-kept beers and friendly service, the Bell is quite the perfect place to relax following a gentle stroll through the watercress country of Hampshire. The Bell is an hotel as well as a free house, and as a consequence is open all day.

The Watercress Line

The Watercress Line, running from Alresford to Alton, offers a nostalgic trip back to the days of steam. Known more properly as the Mid-Hants Railway, at Alresford visitors will find a goods shed and shop, as well as a buffet and reconstructed goods office.

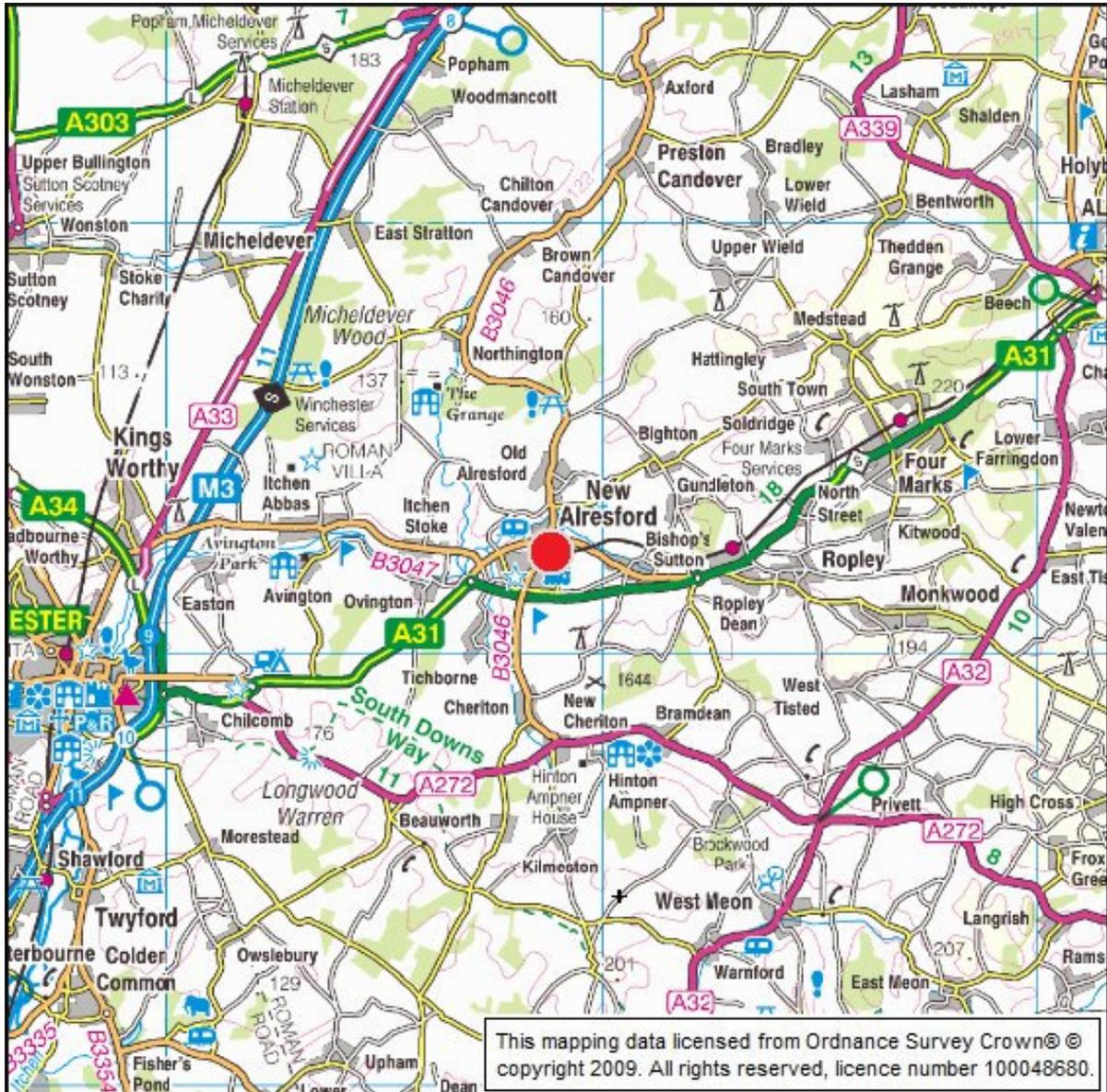


Trail Map





Trail Location



Location Details

The public car park alongside Alresford Station (fee payable) is the starting point of this trail. By car, leave the A31 six miles east of Winchester, drive into the centre of New Alresford and follow the signs for the Watercress Line. This will take you via Station Road to Alresford Station, where there is a pay-and-display car park. Alternatively, arrive in style by steam train from Alton. There is a regular bus service connecting Alresford with Winchester, Alton, Farnham and Guildford.