

Trail	: HAMPTR0057
Activity	: Walk
Type	: Pub
Terrain	: Towpaths and Cycle Tracks
Author	: Peter Carne
Distance	: 1.4 miles / 2.2 kms
Ascent	: 62 feet / 19 metres
Location	: SU560318 / SO24 ORE



Bush Inn, Ovington  
© Jim Champion



St Mary's Church  
© John Browning



Fishing the Itchen  
© Pierre Terre

## Trail Summary

A more peaceful village than Ovington, and a more popular or delightful riverside walk than this one to Itchen Stoke, would be very hard to find. This is a prime example of an outing you will want to enjoy not once, but many times. Your children will love it too because of the host of water-loving wildlife always on view.

## Trail Details

1. With the Bush Inn behind you on your left, follow the road east for a few yards before turning left to follow a path through bushes and across the Itchen by a footbridge. River views here almost always include a greater or lesser number of water-birds: swans, wild ducks, coots, moorhens and possibly others. Pause to take stock of them before continuing left-handed as the path turns in that direction, now with the main river to your left and a minor side-channel to your right. The waterside section of this walk and the lane from the river to Itchen Stoke follow part of the Itchen Way.
2. A steadily widening swathe of trees develops between you and the main river as you head west, but the right-hand channel remains alongside you all the way to where your path bridges it close to its confluence with the main channel. This is as far as many walk before turning back to the Bush Inn, thus missing completely the delights of the rest of the route, which now follows a northerly lane flanked by trees and by Itchen Stoke's cottages. On the corner on your right where you soon reach and turn right alongside the King's Worthy-Alresford road is a

thatched dwelling built of exceptionally large flints - this was the village schoolhouse, but today local children go farther afield for their schooling.

3. Just across the road, on your left, is the parish church of St Mary, an elevated, spireless structure based in design on a Paris chapel. It was built in 1866 at the expense of the then vicar and closed just over a century later, now being looked after by the Fund for Redundant Churches, though occasional services are still held.
4. Continue east along a paved roadside path, at one point along which is a seat from which you can enjoy a southerly view across the lush, tree-bordered pastures of this peaceful stretch of the Itchen Valley. Where the metalled path ends turn right to follow a narrow downhill lane between trees to a watersplash flanked by a footbridge. A leftward twist of the lane passes Ovington Mill and bridges its millrace before crossing the main river.
5. You now turn right at a T-junction of narrow lanes to head back west with the broad sweep of the Itchen's mainstream to your right and a minor channel to your left at the foot of a steep, timbered bank. The Bush Inn now lies just ahead, on your right.

### Ovington and the Bush Inn

Approached by narrow, tree-lined lanes and well hidden from the world outside until you actually arrive there, Ovington's records stretch back to the time when land here was granted by King Edgar to a bishop of Winchester. Of Anglo-Saxon origin, its name means 'a place above' and might equally imply 'a place apart' from the hurly-burly of modern life, so steeped in calm does it remain. Clustering cottages and farm buildings are overlooked by a 19th-century church dedicated to St Peter. Just to the north of the present steepled building stood its Norman predecessor, of which the entrance arch is all that has been preserved where it always was, although the square font was transferred to the church we now see. Early 20th-century Ovington was a self-contained community with a working mill, a forge and a village bakery. Today the main centre of what might be called workaday activity is its riverside pub, the Bush Inn. Tradition has it that this was a stopping place for pilgrims en route to Canterbury, although how they can ever have found it seems today a matter of mystery, so well secluded is it that few modern travellers can claim to have discovered it purely by chance. Yet people come here from all over Hampshire and well beyond, attracted by its reputation as a place apart, like the little village on the edge of which it lies.

The 'olde-worlde' style is seen throughout the inn. High-back seats, a central bar, three real fires in winter and a waterside garden where you can sit out in warmer weather are distinctive features, and the pub's dark interior provides an ideal setting for cosy tete-a-tete meals and meetings. Brews on tap include Wadworths 6X, Bishops Tipple, JCB, Old Timer and Henry's. Good home-made food is a hallmark here. Game in season, including pheasant, partridge and venison, and local river trout are Bush Inn specialities. Pan-fried sirloin steak, crispy duck breast and supreme of chicken with asparagus cooked in cream, honey and whisky sauce are among other mouth-watering menu items, along

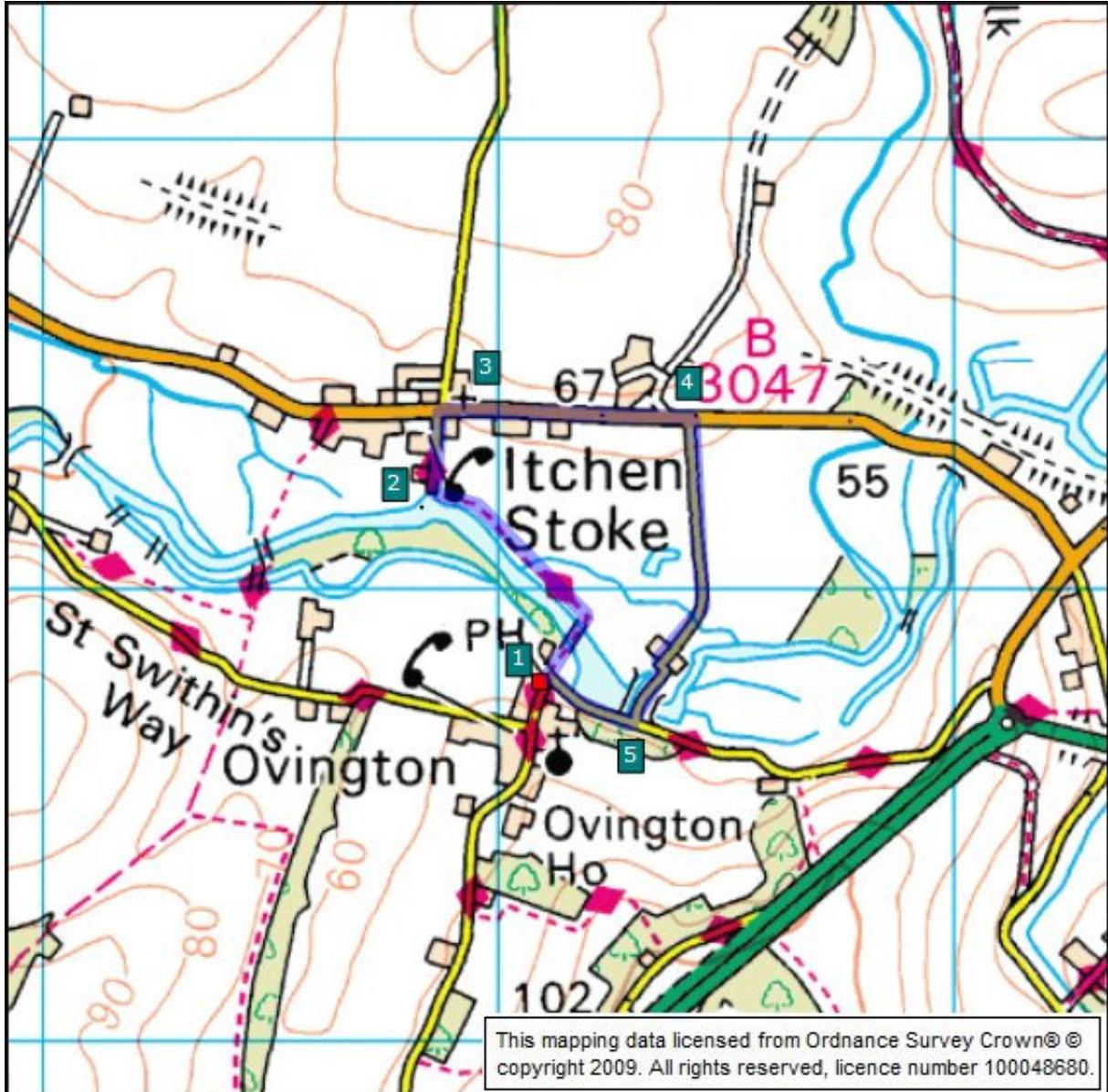


## Ovington and Itchen Stoke

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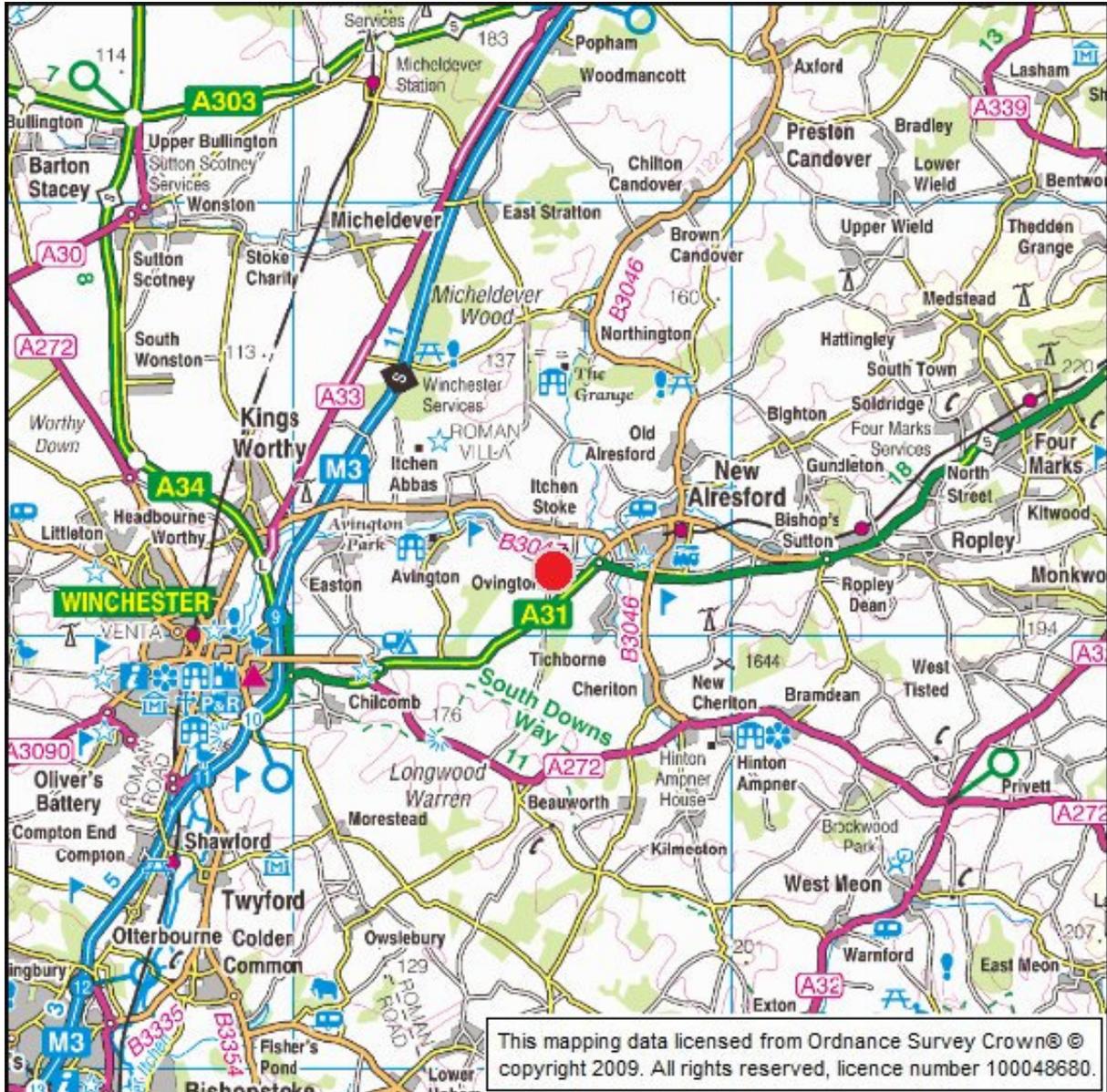
with a good range of starters, vegetarian dishes and sweets. Soups, sandwiches and ploughman's with home-made bread are very popular with walkers. Telephone: 01962 732764.

## Trail Map





## Trail Location



### Location Details

Ovington lies at a junction of lanes nearly a mile west of the roundabout at the western end of the Alresford bypass, the A31 Winchester-Alton road, the Bush Inn being on the right-hand side of a short cul-de-sac where the road into Ovington village bends left as you approach from this direction. There are no buses to Ovington, but Itchen Stoke, on the route of the walk, is served by the Stagecoach Hampshire Bus Company. The Bush Inn's rear car park is available to walkers who use the pub, and there is some parking space on the approach road from the east.