



Beauworth



Just off the route, south of Cheriton is Beauworth, situated on the high ground of Millbarrows Ridge. The long barrows are evidence of the early settlements in this village, which has abundant natural springs. In the early 1800s many cottages even had indoor wells.

In 1833 local children found an old metal box by the village pond. The lead coffer contained around 6000 coins in mint condition from the reigns of William the Conqueror and William II. Sadly for the boys, the find was declared treasure trove and the coins are now in the British Museum.

The Milbury's ☎ 01962 771 248 – a corruption of Millbarrows – is the local pub famous for its man-powered treadwheel, which drew water from a well reputed to be 365 feet deep.

Bramdean

Along the A272 you come to the village of Bramdean. The stone circle you see beside the main road at The Dean is not a prehistoric one but a memorial to a favourite horse erected by one Colonel Greenwood.

To the north of the village, in the woods on Bramdean Common, is a corrugated iron Romany Church, known as the Church in the Wood. It was put up in 1883 for the gypsies who then camped on the common, and it still holds services in the summer. The land is owned by Magdalen College, Oxford, which receives an annual rent of five pence.



West Meon

From Bramdean the A272 reaches a junction with the A32 at the West Meon Hut public house. Turning south will quickly bring you into the village of West Meon. This sleepy village with its fast flowing river is the starting point of the Meon Valley Trail. It is also the final resting place of Thomas Lord, founder of Lord's Cricket Ground in London, who retired here in 1830. Marylebone Cricket Club (owner of Lord's) still maintains the grave. West Meon's churchyard also holds another secret. The ashes of Guy Burgess, the double agent who fled to Russia in 1951 with Donald Maclean, were interred in the family plot in October 1963. Guy's brother brought the ashes home after a cremation in Moscow and the ceremony at West Meon was held in the dark to avoid media interest.

Now continue down the A32 to Wickham or take a diversion to the following villages.



East Meon

Just off our route is East Meon. Here the ancient Celts took refuge when the Meonwara, a tribe of jutes, invaded the Meon Valley as far as West Meon. It is said that, even today, two very different cultures exist in the two villages.

The fine 11th century Church of All Saints houses a magnificent font, identical to the one in Winchester Cathedral. Carved from a single block of black marble from Tournai in Belgium, the fonts were a gift from Henri de Blois, Bishop of Winchester.



The village inn ☎ 01730 823 252 is named after Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler*, who is believed to have fished in the area.

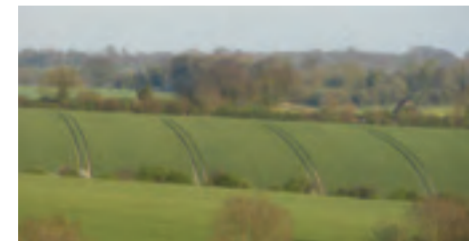
Warnford & Droxford

As you head down the A32 to Droxford, look out for the many watercress beds around Warnford. You might also like to take to the South Downs Way as it passes through Exton on its way up to Old Winchester Hill, a nature reserve on an Iron Age hill fort. You can enjoy fabulous views across Hampshire and even to the Isle of Wight on clear days. Droxford itself offers many walking possibilities, crossed by the Wayfarers' Walk, several local footpaths and the Meon Valley Trail.

It was in Droxford Rectory that Isaac Walton wrote *The Compleat Angler* whilst living there with his daughter and son-in-law, the vicar. The village also played a special role during the Second World War (see 'The Meon Valley Railway').

Soberton

From Droxford, the A32 takes you to Wickham. Alternatively, a small detour to the east brings you to the three tiny villages of Soberton (a crossing point of the Wayfarers' Walk and the Meon Valley Trail), Hambleton and Southwick. This area of Hampshire used to be part of the much larger Forest of Bere – a hunting ground of the Saxon kings – when it stretched from Romsey to the Sussex borders.



The licensed **Powderkeg Café** at Fort Nelson is set in the historic, brick-vaulted barrack rooms and is open all day, every day. Choose from a range of light snacks to three course meals which can be washed down with locally-produced Suthwyk Ales.

Hambleton

Continuing along the B2150, you reach Hambleton, a quaint village with Georgian houses and cottages and a 12th century church. It was Hambleton Cricket Club that standardised the rules of the modern game and the village is today considered to be the spiritual home of cricket. The cricket ground is two miles north east at Broadha penny Down.

Southwick

Unusually for these times, the pretty village of Southwick is still owned by the local estate, which is why the windows and door frames are all painted the same colour.

Visit the **Southwick Brewhouse**, ☎ 023 9220 1133, a scheduled ancient monument, where you can stock up on Suthwyk Ales, still brewed today on Victorian equipment.

The B2177 takes you to Wickham, rejoining the route of the Watercress Tour.

Wickham



Central to Wickham is the highly attractive square which is surrounded by specialist shops and places to eat. It was conceived by Roger de Scures, a Frenchman who bought the land from Henry III in 1269 and was designed to accommodate markets and fairs.

In the same year the town was granted a royal charter to hold an annual fair in May. This tradition continues today and includes an authentic gypsy horse fair. A walk down Bridge Street will take you past **Chesapeake Mill**, so named because its timbers came from the US frigate *Chesapeake*, used in the 1812 war with America. Now offering a unique retail experience, the mill is home to furnishings, gifts, jewellery and antiques and a fine café. ☎ 01329 834 078 or www.chesapeakemill.co.uk

Hampshire Delicatessen Delicatessen located in the Co-op in The Square ☎ 01329 834 555 stocks a range of locally produced foods such as cheeses, jams, chutneys, apple juice as well as home baked items.



Wickham Vineyard, Botley Road, Shedfield, ☎ 01329 834 042 sells a selection of wines produced from its own grapes, including the award-winning Special Release Fumé which is served at the House of Commons. The vineyard also has its own restaurant and terrace with views of the vines. Tours of the vineyard are available, and it hosts a selection of events through the summer months.

Fort Nelson, Fareham

A slight detour south from Wickham makes for an enjoyable visit to the **Royal Armouries Fort Nelson** on the outskirts of Fareham, with wonderful views over Portsmouth Harbour. Admission is free, and there are regular re-enactments during the day as well as the midday gun-firing. Fort Nelson's summer events include a spectacular tattoo.

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Waltham Chase

On the B2177 between Wickham and Bishop's Waltham is Waltham Chase. On the way, stop off at **The Moors Nature Reserve** where the source of the River Hamble rises through sand, appearing to make it boil.

The Chase was originally the area reserved by the Bishops of Winchester for hunting. The deer kept on the Chase were a nuisance to neighbouring farmers and led to the formation in the 18th century of the Waltham Blacks. Young men blacked their faces as a disguise and stole the deer. They also went on to rob stagecoaches which put travellers in fear of them. In 1742 Bishop Hoadley was asked to restock the deer in the Chase and refused on the grounds that enough harm had been caused already.

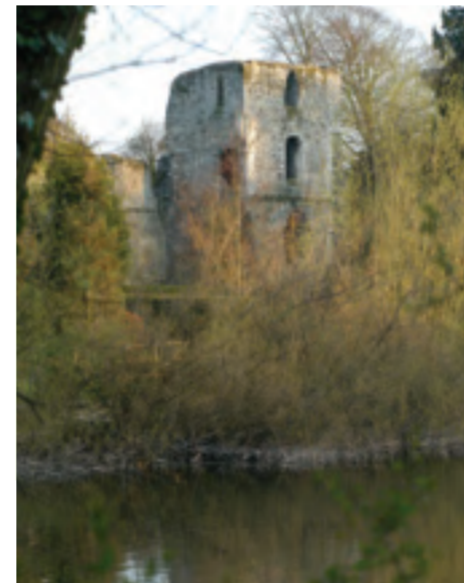
Bishop's Waltham



The Bishop referred to in the town's name is Henri de Blois, the Bishop of Winchester who began to construct **Bishop's Waltham Palace** ☎ 01489 892 460 as a castle in 1136. William of Wykeham – founder of Winchester College – subsequently finished it as a palace, and the ruins can be visited during the summer months.

The *Pilgrims' Trail* passes through Bishop's Waltham on its way from Winchester to Portsmouth, entering the town along another disused railway line – the Bishop's Waltham Railway. This branch line ran between Botley and Bishop's Waltham from 1863 to 1932.

Obtain a copy of *Discover Bishop's Waltham* from the Parish Council office in Little Shore Lane to help you explore its scenic streets and interesting shops. The town holds an annual arts festival in June with a traditional carnival and fête.



Colder Common & Twyford

Coming back towards Winchester from Bishop's Waltham you will travel through Colder Common on the B3354. **Marwell Zoological Park** ☎ 01962 777 407, www.marwell.org.uk, which is located here, is a leading conservation zoo and makes for a delightful day out in itself. Next on the route is Twyford, where the Edwardian **waterworks** are open to the public on selected Sundays ☎ 01962 714 716. The triple expansion steam engine is normally in steam on the first Sunday of each month, and a couple of times a year there are special steam open weekends.

In 1754 one William Davies, making his way home in fog, got lost and was only saved from falling in a chalk pit by the ringing of the Twyford church bells. The grateful man bequeathed £1 per year to the ringers provided the bells were rung twice on 7th October each year. The tradition is still upheld today and is followed by the Ringers Dinner at which Davies' will is read out.

Shawford

Shawford sits on the other side of the river from Twyford and is probably best known today for being the film location where Victor Meldrew – the grumpy old man from the television series *One Foot in the Grave* – was hit by a car and died. There are pleasant walks here along the river or up onto Shawford Down. The Down is public open space and a convenient point for walking along the Ichen Navigation and to Compton or Twyford.

And so you return to Winchester on the **B3335 – the start and end of your Watercress Tour. We hope you have enjoyed your journey.**



Map not to scale. The total distance around the route is approximately 40 miles.