



River Itchen and Villages: Cheriton, Tichborne

Distance: 24 km=15 miles or 16½ km=10 miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 18-jun-2012

Author: Botafuego

Last update: 30-may-2017

Refreshments: Ovington, Tichborne, Cheriton

Map: Explorer 132 (Winchester) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

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Views, trout stream, woodland, villages, cottages, pubs, historic battle site, great house

In Brief

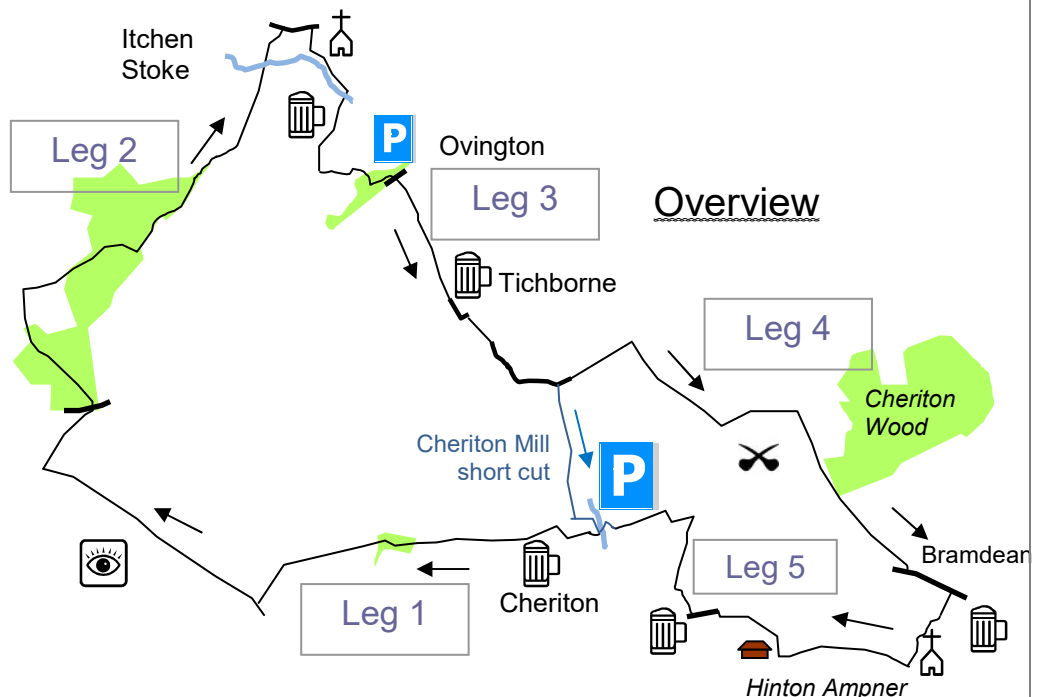
This walk is a magnificent day out through some of the prettiest Hampshire villages, with a delightful walk along the River Itchen and a visit to a battle site, with some excellent places for refreshment.



There are just a few nettles in Little Hampage Wood, easy to skip around. Boots are preferable because of the distance, although the going is generally easy. Your dog will be welcome, although you might decide to use the lanes to avoid stiles at the start in Cheriton and later in Tichborne.

It is best *not* to do this walk during **early August** because of the Boomtown Festival which closes the path at the end of Leg 1 requiring a long diversion. For info, do a websearch for *Boomtown Public Information*.

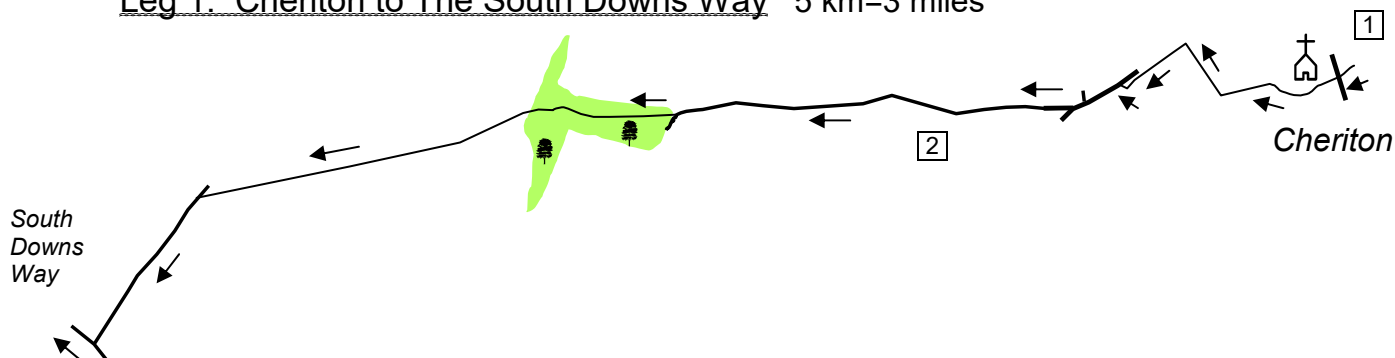
The walk begins in the village of **Cheriton, Hampshire, postcode SO24 0PX**. Park in the centre of the village near the green. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

The village of Cheriton is described in Cobbett's "Rural Rides" (1830) as "a little hard iron village where all seems to be as old as the hills that surround it". Today it is one of the best cared for and most progressive villages in the district. New Cheriton that lies on the main A272 road 1 km away is distinct from the old village with its ducks, green, willows and thatched and flintstone cottages alongside the infant River Itchen. Many cottages have the river by their front garden first on one side of the road, then the other. The colourful name means simply "church place". It has a general store, blessed by walkers at start of day and, equally blessed at end of day, a unique and most remarkable inn, The "Flowerpots", of which more later.

Leg 1: Cheriton to The South Downs Way 5 km=3 miles

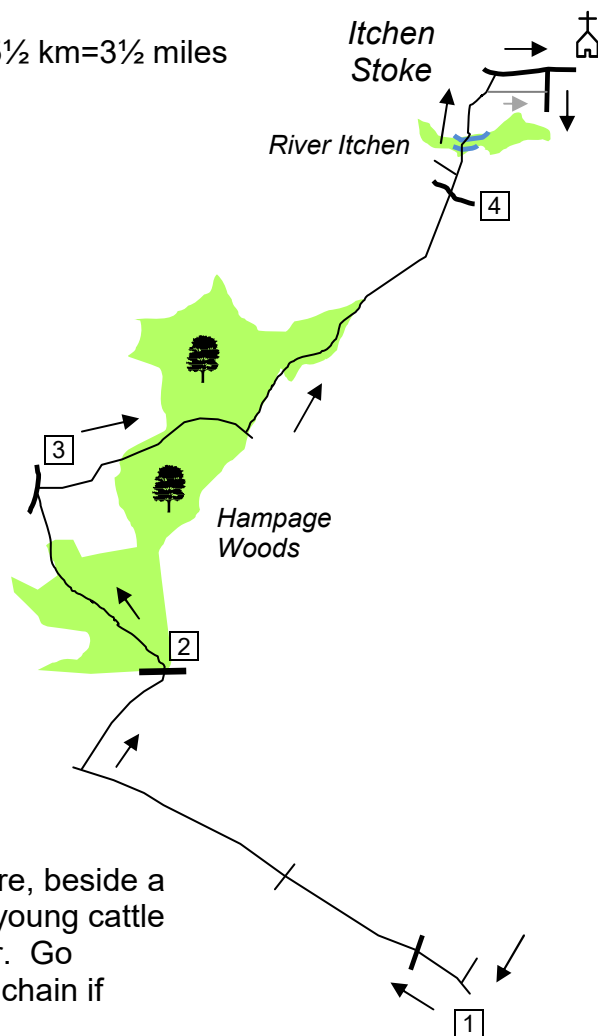


- 1** Beginning at the little village green, locate a wooden fingerpost bearing the words "Post Office and Shop" on one side and "Church" on the other. Cross the road in the direction of the church. Enter the churchyard and go past the Church of St Michael and All Angels, which is built on a prehistoric burial mound. Continue past the entrance on a grassy path and keep straight ahead along the left-hand side, veering **left** at the corner. At the far end, go over a stile and across the centre of a pasture. At the other side, go over a stile by a children's play area and turn immediately **right** over another stile. Keep ahead along the right-hand side of a field and turn **left** at the corner. Just before a small thatch, go **right** by a waymarker through a gap in the hedge, down to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. Avoid a footpath on the right (a tarmac drive) and, immediately after, fork **right** in the direction of *Hill House*. Pass some more thatches with *Hill House* itself with its droopy-eared canine figures, and continue on a byway. When you enter open country, keep ahead in the same direction, with fields on both sides.
- 2** Follow this semi-tarmac track down a gentle dip and ignore a byway on the left as you pass a barn. The track rises gently again. As the track curves left, leave it by taking a narrow path forking **right** into the woods. There are a few muddy patches and some nettles which should not present a problem to the seasoned walker. Keep going for some distance through the wood until finally the path takes you through a wooden gate into a large meadow. (If there are cattle here and they worry you, 5m before the gate take a path up the bank on the **right** which leads into the field on the right, walk round the left-hand side of this field to a large barn visible ahead, exiting the field onto a track, turn **left** on the track which joins the original track leading to the SDW.) Follow a faint path straight across the valley, often full of skylarks. At the far side, go through a metal gate and veer **left** as a track joins you from the right. Just before a flat area, you reach a 2-way signpost pointing left-right. *You have reached the South Downs Way, a long-*

distance path running from Eastbourne to Winchester. Turn **right** here on a pleasant grassy path.

Leg 2: South Downs Way to Itchen Stoke 5½ km=3½ miles

- 1 The Way takes you through a wooden gate and across a tarmac lane. The bridleway rises gently between rich hedgerows and goes through the remains of a wooden gate. At the top, with extensive views north and east, your path crosses a farm track, then another (used in August for the Boomtown Festival). You reach a 3-way fingerpost in front of a yard where the South Downs Way turns left. Leave the Way here by turning **right** on a tarmac track. The track comes up, via a metal barrier, to the main A31 road.
- 2 Cross the road directly over, a fraction left, to a fingerpost and take a path through a chain stile into Little Hampage Wood, a complete change in terrain. The path veers left, snakes its way past fallen trees and straightens again. In late spring bluebells are rife (and soon unfortunately are nettles). Continue under ash and high beeches to a gate into a pasture. Go ahead down the right-hand side of the pasture, beside a shiny new fence which separates you from any young cattle in the adjoining pasture, to the far bottom corner. Go through a large metal gate (releasing a bolt and chain if necessary) and turn **right** on a lane.
- 3 In only 20m, turn **right** through a farmyard. (2016: There's a new double metal gate, with a very strong spring bolt, at the entrance. It may be possible to squeeze round the side of it.) Continue up a track ahead. Where it bends left, continue ahead on a wide grassy path. At the first field corner, go through a large wooden gate onto a path running between a meadow on the left and a wood. (As a pleasant diversion, there is a wide path running parallel in the woodland on your right; it soon rejoins your original path.) Your path enters Hampage Wood and goes over a grassy crossing path. The woods thin out on one side. As you approach Hampage farmhouse, turn **left** at a 3-way fingerpost. Your path may be rather overgrown at first but soon it becomes an ever-changing woodland, starting with some imposing ash and firs. Your path continues straight ahead through a recently cleared area, avoiding a *no footpath* sign on your left. Later the path is sunken, running in a strip of woodland. Finally you emerge on a lane.
- 4 Cross straight over the lane onto a narrow path taking you through more woodland. At a marker post, ignore a footpath left. Suddenly you reach a long bridge taking you over the Itchen, a wonderful surprise. This is followed by another, even longer, bridge, doubling the surprise. You may well see anglers standing in their waders hoping to hook grayling and trout, especially in the sudden mayfly season when the fish jump furiously. *In fact, you are on the Itchen Way, a long-distance path running from Cheriton to the*



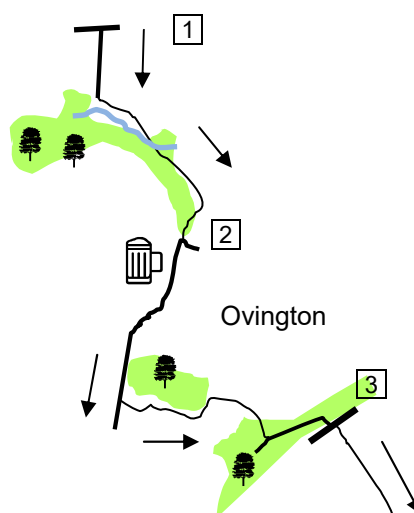
end of the river near Southampton where it is suddenly 300m wide. Keep straight ahead across a wild meadow, heading for old farm buildings. The path twists over a stream. Just before a house with solar panels go **left** over a stile. (If you don't mind missing the church to avoid the road, you can turn **right** by this house on a permissive path, keeping parallel to the houses, It comes out through a swing-gate onto Water Lane, as below. Turn **right**, back on course.) Continue through a wooden gate, past the delectable *Thyme Cottage* and *River's Keep*. Turn **right** on the road in Itchen Stoke, passing several cottages of character and reaching a junction with the tall church just ahead, which is worth visiting.



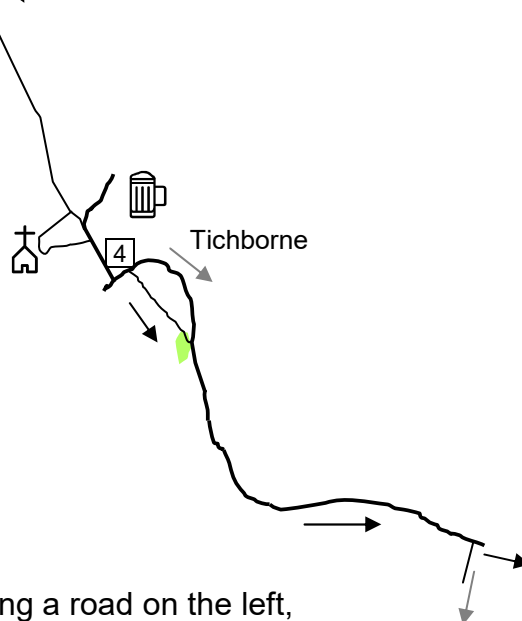
St Mary's church, built in 1866 by a local man, was inspired by the 13th-century Sainte Chapelle in Paris and is a dazzling kaleidoscope of pattern and colour to those who enter. All windows are stained glass and the high richly painted roof gives a feeling of a cathedral rather than a village church. To get the full effect, hopefully you are entering on a sunny day when the interior is bathed in light.

Leg 3: Itchen Stoke to Cheriton Mill 5 km=3 miles

- 1 Turn **right** just before the church on Water Lane. This takes you over a bridge across a lesser stream of the Itchen and left on the Riverside Walk. Soon the main fast-flowing Itchen appears *on your right*. This is an absolutely delightful stretch of the walk, with moorhens dabbling, dragonflies skimming and the clear swift water of the river itself. You will probably find it thronged by families and children. Your path goes over a bridge and through trees and shortly on your right is the *Bush Inn* in Ovington, one of the great Hampshire pubs.



Placed beside the River Itchen with a pretty front garden carelessly strewn with tables, the "Bush Inn" must be in the most perfect location of any pub. Indeed it is hugely popular and many people come to do the river walk and have a drink or two and a meal. Beer is Wadworth and not bad for that. Food is gastropub standard and not cheap but said to be worth the price. The pub is open all day at weekends. For reservations ring 01962 732764.



- 2 Keep straight ahead on the road, over a bridge, avoiding a road on the left, and so up into the village of Ovington, soon passing the church on your left. Soon Ovington House and its walled garden are on your left. Keep following this ancient wall and, just after it comes to an end, turn **left** on a footpath through trees into a field. Keep to the left-hand perimeter at all times as the path gradually rises with good views. As the path enters

woods, keep straight on past a house on your right. You emerge on a minor road which is in fact a lay-by of the A31 road. Turn **left** on this road.

- 3 On reaching the main road, cross both carriageways carefully and take a footpath opposite, leading up to a wooden barrier. Continue along the right-hand side of a wheatfield. At the first corner, turn **right**, go past a separating hedgerow and turn **left** along the left-hand side of the next field. *The houses of Tichborne are visible ahead with its church up on the hill to the right.* Soon your track runs between fields and you pass the first house of Tichborne. The normal route now is onwards to a junction where the *Tichborne Arms* is on the left. However, it is highly recommended to take the path shortly on the **right**, up some steps and between hedges to the church of St Andrew. This is a fascinating church with its square structure, its box pews in the puritan style and its side chapel dedicated to Sir Benjamin Tichborne and his wife Amphiliss and their children. Follow the tarmac drive back to the village, where the pub is to the left and your continued route is to the right.



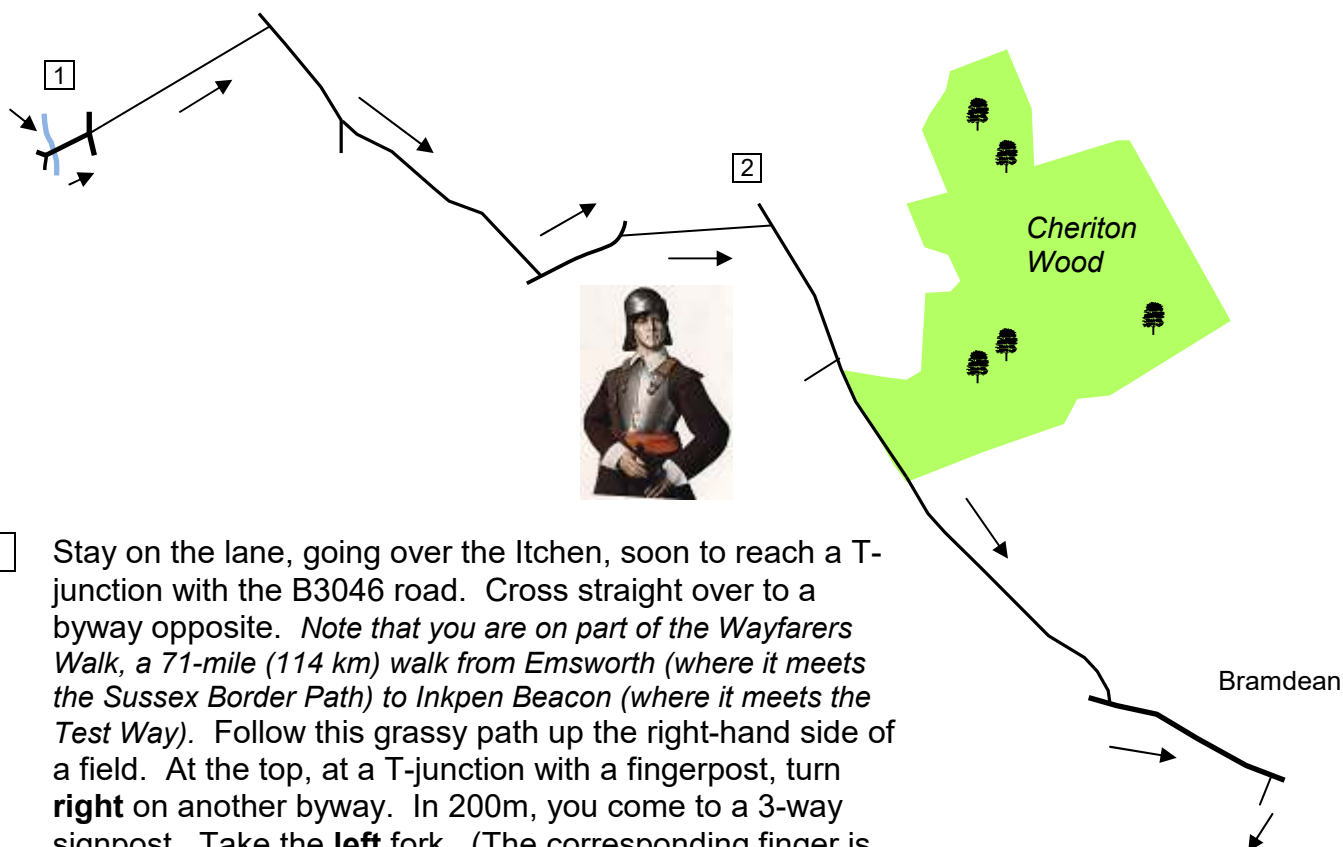
Tichborne goes back to at least to Saxon times, the manor having been granted its land by Edward the Elder (son of Alfred the Great) in 909. The name means "Stream of the Itchen" (which flows just on the east side). Most houses in the village have a thatched roof and most are Grade 2 listed, making a quick tour of the village a great pleasure. The manor has been occupied since the 1100s by the Tichborne family and two famous stories have come from them. One is the that of the Tichborne Dole, an annual festival for charity which dates back to 1150. It began when Lady Mabella Tichborne was dying and gave instructions for an annual donation of farm produce be made to the poor. According to tradition, her husband, Sir Roger Tichborne, grudgingly sanctioned her charity by cynically agreeing that if she could encircle any parcel of land carrying a burning torch, the produce of that land could be given to the poor. Much to his surprise, the lady rose from her death bed and managed to crawl round a 23-acre (nearly 10 ha) field before the torch went out. The land she encircled is still known locally as "the Crawls". The other story is the 10-year trial from 1865 of an imposter who claimed to be the slim long-lost son of the Tichborne family but was really a portly émigré butcher from Wagga Wagga in Australia. (For more details, see another walk in this series "Rudgwick, the Canal and a Watermill" from West Sussex.)

- 4 Continue down the main road of the village, passing many more thatched houses. (If you visited the *Tichborne Arms*, you need to retrace your steps.) Soon the lane bends left at Grange Farm. In 40m, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a footpath. (Some walkers prefer to stay in the lane as there may be livestock.) Keep straight ahead past the entrance to a yard, aiming for a large clump of trees, just to the right of some electricity poles. Go over a stile near the left corner of the trees and down a bank to the lane. Turn **right** on this quiet lane and follow it for some distance. In about 400m, before a bend, you pass footpaths left and right and the buildings of Sevington Farm. In another 350m, you approach a bridge over the Itchen under weeping willows with Cheriton Mill, now a small house, on your right.



Decision point. If you would like to return shortly to Cheriton, skip to the end of this text and do the **River Meadow Return**. Otherwise, continue onwards.

Leg 4: Cheriton Mill to Bramdean 4 km=2½ miles



1 Stay on the lane, going over the Itchen, soon to reach a T-junction with the B3046 road. Cross straight over to a byway opposite. *Note that you are on part of the Wayfarers Walk, a 71-mile (114 km) walk from Emsworth (where it meets the Sussex Border Path) to Inkpen Beacon (where it meets the Test Way).* Follow this grassy path up the right-hand side of a field. At the top, at a T-junction with a fingerpost, turn **right** on another byway. In 200m, you come to a 3-way signpost. Take the **left** fork. (The corresponding finger is broken off at the time of writing.) After some distance between meadows and pastures, you reach a tarmac crossing lane, Badshear Lane. Turn **left** on the lane. After 250m, the lane bends left. Leave the lane here by forking **right** on a wide track that goes up the right-hand side of a field, a permissive riders' path.

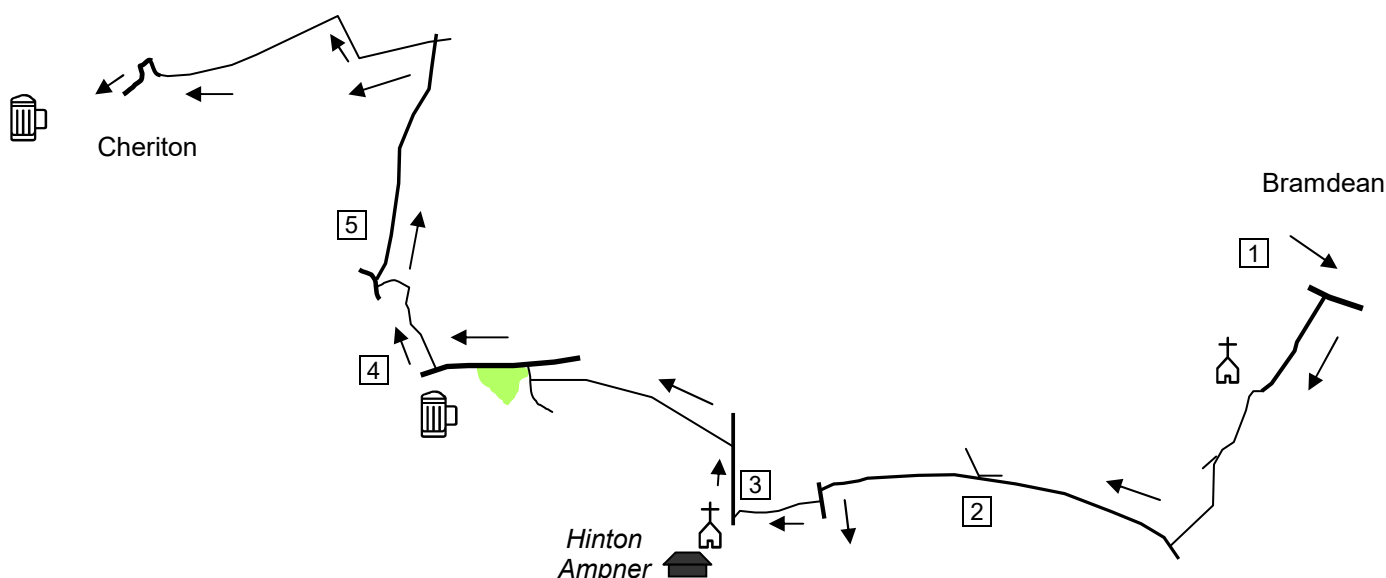
2 In 400m you reach the end of the field and a sunken crossing path. Turn **right** here. Soon at the highest point, to the right, you are looking over the site of the Battle of Cheriton. Scrubbs Farm, behind you, is where the Battle is re-enacted every year.

✂ *The Battle of Cheriton took place in 1644 and was the first serious defeat for the Royalists during the first phase of the English Civil War. The Parliamentarians (or "Roundheads") were fighting for Oliver Cromwell against King Charles I and his belief in the "divine right of kings". They held London but needed to move on Oxford, a centre of Royalist power. The fierce encounter here at Cheriton was needlessly lost by the Royalists through sheer arrogance and resulted in brutal slaughter on both sides. The Royalists under Lord Hopton had set out from Winchester with the aim of cutting the Roundheads off from their main force from London and captured, lost and recaptured Cheriton Wood (which you will shortly pass). Hopton had intended to set up a defensive position here but an impetuous commander, Sir Henry Bard, decided to launch his foot soldiers against the Roundheads' armoured cavalry and was soon overwhelmed. The Royalist cavalry had no choice but to join battle but were soon lost in the chaos of the fields and narrow lanes. Panic and slaughter followed and Oxford now lay at risk.*

The path descends gently between hedgerows and rises again. At a marker post, ignore a bridleway on the right. Shortly on your left is Cheriton Wood which was lost and re-captured in vain by the Royalists. Your path runs under tall beeches and comes out into the open. Keep following the

main path between sometimes tall hedgerows, avoiding several paths leading off, left and right. Continue all the way down to the A272 road just outside the village of Bramdean. Cross the road and turn **left** making use of the sidewalk. In 400m, you reach a junction with a lane and a sign *12th Century Church*. *Bramdean House with its wrought-iron gates is immediately on your left*. If you would like to visit this attractive village, continue ahead, retracing your steps afterwards. The "Fox Inn" (Greene King) is a delightful white-weatherboarded well-provided hostelry.

Leg 5: Bramdean to Cheriton 4½ km=3 miles



- 1** Turn **right** on the lane (or **left** if you visited the village). At the end, go straight through the lichgate into the churchyard. The church is definitely worth visiting.



Bramdean church of St Simon and St Jude would be visibly unchanged to Giles the Englishman who was rector in 1289. In fact, by his time the church was already 100 years old, its wooden tower, housing two new bells, its chancel and pointed nave date from then. Inside, the stained glass windows, the two tapestries and the ancient door are remarkable. Notice the image of Jesus in the roundel above the arch.

Continue round the right-hand side of the churchyard, go through the metal kissing-gate in the corner and up the right-hand side of a sheep pasture. Go through a swing-gate and up a narrow path by a fence, through another swing-gate and into a field. Continue along the left-hand side of the field. The path veers a fraction **right** across the centre of this large field. On the other side, go through a gap in the tree line and immediately turn **right** on a bridleway.

- 2** At the next field corner and marker post, keep straight ahead. Finally, follow a farm drive to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane and in 20m turn **right** at a fingerpost through a wooden swing-gate (not the metal gate just before it which is exclusively for sheep). Keep along the right-hand side by a fence under beech, sycamore, lime and copper beech and go through a swing-gate. Your route here is right on a tarmac drive. *However, first you may wish to visit Hinton Ampner house which is on your left. At the very least you can cross the drive to the church and sneak a good view of the house and its exquisite garden.*



Hinton Ampner was originally a Tudor house made uninhabitable by a terrifying haunting. The present-day house was built in 1790 but what you see today is the vision of one man Ralph Dutton, the 8th and last Lord Sherborne, in 1960. It contains his collection of Georgian and Regency furniture and many art works. Most notable is the garden he laid out, now regarded as a masterpiece of 20th-century design. The house and garden are owed by the National Trust and are open almost every day. The River Itchen rises here. Hinton Ampner was also a camping place for the Roundheads at the time of the Battle.

- 3 As said, turn **right** on the drive coming from Hinton Ampner. Go out through the gates and continue down the lane. Opposite the drive to a house on your right, go **left** over a stile and go across this fine green park land, descending the slope only very gradually, passing to the right of a group of sycamores, past a very damaged oak and a horse chestnut, gradually getting nearer to the main road on your right. Ignore a fingerpost and swing-gate visible on your right: the gate is out of service. Continue ahead until you reach a drive, the visitor's entrance to Hinton Ampner. Turn **right** through a metal gate and the main gates and turn **left** on the main road, making use of the generous grass verge. Soon on your left is the *Hinton Arms*. This is a good eatery, claiming a speciality in game dishes and fresh fish. It also provides its own ale. *(However, for real ale, you should remember that a most remarkable and unique locale is coming soon, at the end of the walk, in the village.)*



- 4 Cross **right** directly over the main road from the *Hinton Arms* to go through a generous kissing-gate on a footpath alongside the Itchen stream on your left. *(Some walkers have encountered frisky young cattle in this pasture. If you believe they may crowd you or if you are nervous of cattle, bypass the field as follows. Ignore the gate, turn left on the road for 150m and turn right on a road signposted Cheriton, Alresford. Follow this residential road for 250m to before a left bend and skip the rest of this section.)* Ignore private stiles on your left and keep left to avoid nettles and go over a 1-plank bridge. Soon after, go **left** through a strange combination of half a kissing-gate and a stile. The path leads between gardens, bends left and comes out, via a little wooden gate, to a road. Turn **right** on the road.

- 5 Immediately turn **right** on a signed byway. After a rather dark sunken path, go straight over a crossing path in the open. The path rises gradually to a its highest point. Here you meet a crossing path known as the Upper Lamborough Lane, where some of the bloodiest fighting took place during the Battle of Cheriton. Turn **left** over a stile into a field. Go along the top of the field and turn **right** at the corner. Go **left** through a gap and along the edge of a grassy meadow, avoiding a private track running diagonally across the meadow. *Note that you are on both the Wayfarers Walk and the Itchen Way.* Continue down a path between hedges, then by a fine line of beeches and between fences. Finally, veer **right** on a rough road into the centre of the village. Turn **left** on a road and **left** again, taking you back to the village green where the walk began.

For final refreshments, fans of real ale are uniquely placed with the remarkable *Flowerpots Inn*, a stone's throw away. It can easily be reached on foot but it also has an ample car park. With your back to the village green, turn **left** on the road, past the war memorial, and shortly turn **right** at a junction, signed *Winchester, Bishops Waltham*. The *Flowerpots Inn* is only 200m along the lane.



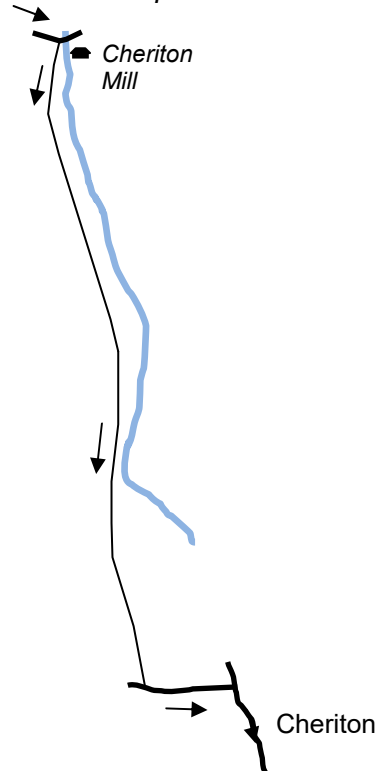
The "Flowerpots" is a pub and a brewery and a B&B for those who are driving or can't stagger home. All the beers are brewed right here on the premises, served direct from the cask, and they have won a host of awards that are

proudly displayed on the walls. This pub is the perfect example of a traditional country pub, welcoming but entirely unpretentious, without horse brasses, fruit machines or recorded music. The small rooms are usually filled with a wide mix of folk and during the summer the garden at the back is the perfect place to relax and enjoy a pint. For those of you who are hungry, the pub offers simple bar food.

The River Meadow Return 1½ km=1 mile

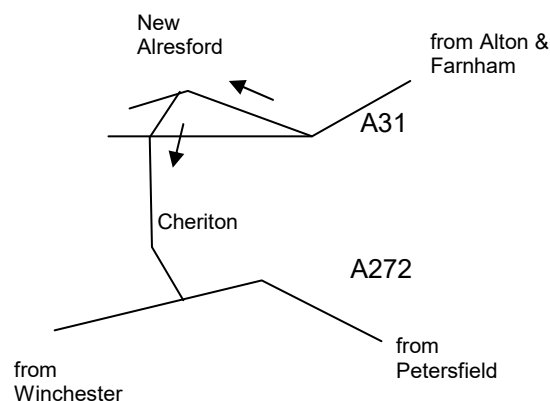
Take this shortcut if you are doing the shorter 16½ km=10m walk, returning to Cheriton directly, but missing the site of the Battle, a medieval church and Hinton Ampner.

By the mill house, turn **right** on its tarmac drive, going past the water channel and ahead on a pleasant grassy strip. You pass on your left the Itchen and its sluice gates. After the water meadow, the path narrows and goes through a large modern kissing-gate. Keep ahead along the left-hand side of a long sloping meadow. After stiles, a metal gate and a small horse pasture, your path finally takes you through a wooden barrier to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane and **right** at a T-junction in the village, returning to the village green where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: Cheriton is signposted 1 km off the A272 Winchester-Petersfield road. If coming from the A3, north or south, take the A272 westbound at Petersfield, lined with copper beeches just before a sign for *Cheriton*. If coming from the London area, possibly the best way, out of many, is on the A31 through Farnham, bypassing Alton, turn **right** at a roundabout for *Alresford Cheriton*, go through the beautiful town of New Alresford and turn **left** at the end of the high street, which is signposted *Cheriton*.



By bus: bus 67 from Winchester stops at Cheriton and Bramdean, hourly (not Sunday). Check the timetables.

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