

# The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail

## ...by train or bus



Produced in association with:



near Brambridge

Winchester



Shawford



Eastleigh



Swaythling



### The Itchen Navigation

The Itchen Navigation is not a proper man-made canal, but a straightened and diverted part of the River Itchen. It has a long history, and although its industrial use ended around 150 years ago, today it provides a pleasant natural exercise. As the source of the water which fills the Navigation, the main river flows at its natural pace, twisting and turning along its course, the Navigation was designed to be mainly straight and have very little water current, so it is quite different in its nature.



### Walking the Trail

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail stretches from Winchester in the north, to Woodmill near Swaythling in the south. The trail is a flat and level, however there are some locations with stiles, gates or gradients. The walking route is well way-marked with the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail logo directional arrows on posts.

Thanks to the hard work of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the footpaths alongside the Navigation have been restored and improved for most of its distance, and are safe. Without this wonderful work, the waterway would have remained a stagnant, derelict and unappreciated shadow of its former self.

#### The route

The route is around ten miles, or 16km from Winchester to Woodmill, and can be walked in one day if you are an experienced walker, or in two days if you are a more casual walker. The route is a flat and level, however there are some locations with stiles, gates or gradients. The walking route is well way-marked with the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail logo directional arrows on posts.

#### Accessibility

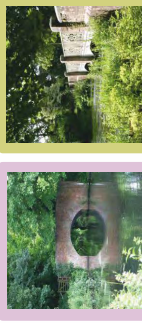
Whilst the majority of the route alongside the Navigation is flat and easy to walk, few sections are fully accessible, or suited to buggies, pushchairs, wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

#### Public transport access to the Itchen Navigation

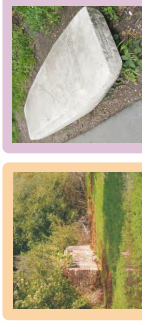
The route of the Navigation is never very far from a railway station, or local bus route.



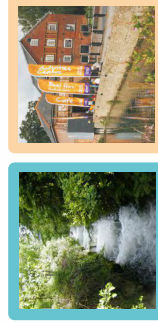
Brambridge



Wharf Bridge



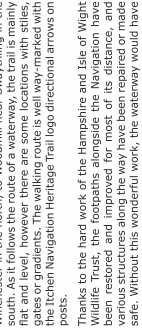
Mansbridge Lock



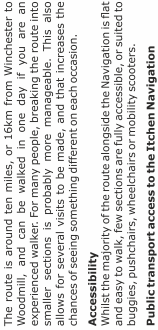
Weir at Allbrook



Allbrook Lock



Norris's Bridge



Stone barge



Woodmill

### History

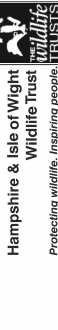
The first serious moves to improve the River Itchen for commercial use was contained in an Act of Parliament dated 1665. Progress was not very fast however, and it was not until 1710 that the necessary works were completed, and the Itchen Navigation was ready to use. A second act in 1767 established a Commission to oversee its operation.

The main role of the Navigation was to transport various items such as iron, coal, and other commodities such as corn, iron, timber or other bulky items were carried by the horse-drawn barges which used the waterway.

However, the commercial success of the Navigation was not great, and its use was quite limited. With the coming of the railway which paralleled its route in 1839, the speed and capacity of the trains led to an almost total loss of any remaining business. The last barges operated around 1899.

### Restoration and repair

After many years of gradual decline and the effects of riving on a quiet backwater, by the mid-1960s thoughts turned to making some use of the industrial relic. In 1976 a society was formed to restore and conserve the Navigation. In more recent times, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, along with various sponsors and other official bodies, has taken on the project, and has been restoring many of the footpaths and structures along the route.



### Features of the waterway

There are many reminders of the industrial past of the Itchen Navigation along its route. Look out for these on your walk.

#### Locks

These were sections of the canal closed off by gates between the water and the river. The lock gates were made of wood and were operated by means of a system of pulleys and ropes. These enabled barges to ascend and descend gradients between sections of canal.

#### Weirs

These were an adjustable means of controlling and diverting the water levels in the Navigation. Weirs at Withymead lock and Allbrook lock are good examples. The rate of water flow was controlled with 'slice gates' - panels set against the water flow, which could be wound up and down to let more or less water pass through.

### Railway stations

The Itchen Navigation can be accessed from the following railway stations:

- Winchester** - This main station is served by all services on this line from London Waterloo to Bournemouth and Weymouth, plus all the main trains which run between the south coast area, the midlands and the north of England. The start of the Itchen Navigation walk is at the other end of the city, some distance from the station. Local buses call outside the main station entrance and will take you much closer to the starting point. Alternatively, the bus is very close to the starting point. Alternatively, the bus is very close to the starting point. Alternatively, the bus is very close to the starting point.
- Shawford** - This small country station has a service of one train per hour at most times of the day, with additional trains in the early morning and later evening on weekdays. It is very close to the Itchen Navigation and is a useful point at which to start or end a section of the walk.
- Eastleigh (for Bishopstoke)** - The village of Twyford is a short distance eastwards along the main road.

#### Swaythling

This small suburban station has an hourly train service, seven days a week. There is a walk of around half a mile to reach the start of the Itchen Navigation at Woodmill.

#### Bluestar 2 bus stop

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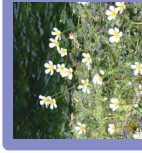
### Wildlife along the way

Today's Itchen Navigation is a linear nature reserve. Unlike some features of the industrial revolution, it is now a pleasant mix of habitats. The waterway is very much in harmony with its surroundings, and offers a wonderful variety of wildlife to observe and enjoy.

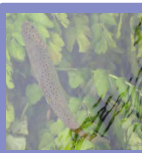
There are various plants, trees, flowers, birds, small water creatures and all sorts of insects to discover. Keep your eyes peeled for trout or pike in the water, water voles scooting about, and if you are very lucky - the flash of a colourful kingfisher!



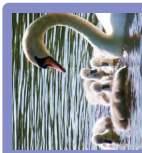
Banded Demoiselles



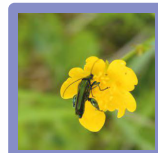
Water-crowfoot



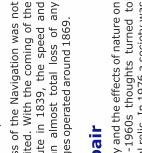
Trout



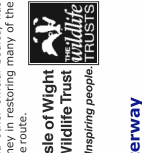
Cygnets



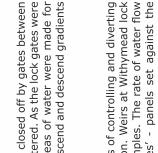
Bottle Oedemera Nabilis



Tadpoles



Water-crowfoot



Bottle Oedemera Nabilis

### Places to visit

#### City Mill

The River Itchen flows through Winchester where you can watch the water wheel working. There are milling demonstrations throughout the year. There are also various events at the City Mill, but admission to the gift shop and South Downs Information Centre are free.

#### The Hospital of St Cross

In Winchester's River Meadows is the Church and Almshouse of St. Cross, founded in 1132, now a Nature Reserve managed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It is a place to look out for spectacular views and the area abounds with chalkland flowers.

#### St. Catherine's Hill

This Iron Age hill fort is now a Nature Reserve managed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It is a place to look out for spectacular views and the area abounds with chalkland flowers.

#### Hockley Viaduct

This 600 metres long Victorian railway viaduct was once part of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton railway line. It has a wide view of the area abounds with chalkland flowers.

#### Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership

The rail routes which the Partnership covers run alongside or cross the Itchen, Test and Hamble rivers - hence 'Three Rivers'. Walkers



The Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership is a not-for-profit organisation which provides a link between the railway industry and local communities. Partners can include any individual, business or organisation who wants to positively develop the local rail route and stations. This includes enhancing the passenger experience, providing a better environment for passengers, and creating a better, more sustainable local railway.



**Train Information**  
For information about train fares and times, please ask at your local station, or contact one of the following:  
**National Rail Enquiries:**  
03457 48 50 or visit nationalrail.co.uk  
**South Western Railway:**  
0345 6060 650 or visit southwesternrailway.com  
**CrossCountry Trains:**  
03447 939 133 or visit crosscountrytrains.co.uk

 Worsled, engineering, works, may affect your train journey. Please check National Rail Enquiries for details.

### Station Walks

Have you got the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership book yet? This lavishly illustrated, 88 page book offers over 30 self-guided river themed walks from rail stations in South Hampshire. It costs just £1.20 plus a small donation to the Trust. Send your email address to threeiversrail.com for details.





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**CrossCountry trains serve Winchester, and Southampton Central stations.**  
[crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://crosscountrytrains.co.uk) or via the Train Tickets app.



Download the XC Community Hub app from the App Store or Google Play, then hold your phone over the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership logo on the back of this leaflet to play your latest video.

### Local buses

Several bus routes come close to sections of the Navigation and the main river. These can be used either as a part of your walk, or to start or finish your day at a railway station.

**Bluestar 1** operates frequently between Southampton city centre, Chandler's Ford, Shawford, St. Cross, and Winchester City centre. There are comfortable, modern, double-decker buses on this route, featuring luxury seating, seats at some upstairs seats, free WiFi and lovely views. Next Stop announcements and displays. Mon-Sat every 15 mins daytime. Surs every 30 mins daytime.

**Bluestar 2** operates frequently from Southampton city centre, through St. Denys, Swaythling, Eastleigh town centre, Bishopstoke and Fair Oak. Mon-Sat, every 15 mins daytime. Surs every 30 mins daytime.


**Winchester Park & Ride (Stagecoach)** The South car park is close to Hockley Viaduct, and Barfield car park can be used for reaching the start of the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail. The Park & Ride services to the St. Catherine's car park call at the stops in Chisle Street, which are also very close to the start of the walk.

**Stagecoach E1** operates between Eastleigh town centre, Alibroke, Twyford, Hockley Viaduct, St. Cross and Winchester city centre. Mon-Sat approx. six journeys each day.


**Stagecoach E2** operates between Eastleigh town centre, Alibroke, Otterbourne, Shawford, St. Cross and Winchester city centre. Mon-Sat approx. five journeys each day.

**Stagecoach 69** operates from Winchester to Fareham via St. Cross, Hockley Viaduct, Twyford and Fair Oak. Mon-Sat hourly daytime.

**Bus times**  
For all current bus times, either consult the operator's own website, or plan your journey using Traveline 0871 200 2233. A 15 minute per minute from BF Travellers, other operators charge extra daily.



Bluestar 2 bus stop  
Bishopstoke



Stagecoach  
01202 338421  
bluestarbus.co.uk

# Getting to the Icthen Navigation Heritage Trail by train and bus.



- Railway station
- Bus station
- Place to eat
- Nature Reserve
- Park & Ride site
- 1 Bluestar 1
- 2 Bluestar 2
- 69 Stagecoach 69
- E1 Stagecoach E1
- E2 Stagecoach E2
- Building or feature of interest
- Site of canal lock
- Icthen Navigation
- Icthen Navigation (dry)
- Suggested walking route
- Footpath
- from railway station

### Winchester

Exit from Platform 2. Walk down Station Hill, and at the bottom use the subway to reach City Road which is directly ahead of you. Walk along City Road and at the end (look the right) turn right into Jemmy Street. Walk along Jemmy Street, passing the Discovery Centre on your right. At the end of Jemmy Street, cross the stile of King Alfred. (Here you can turn right through an arch into the Square to the City Museum then bear left to reach the river bridge with White Horse. Alternatively, as the butchers, carry on down the High Street. After the river bridge with White Horse, shortly afterwards you will reach the City Bridge, with the City Mill on your left. Turn sharp right just before the bridge at the South Downs Way, and Valdict Way, signs, and walk alongside the River Itchen through the gardens, until you reach the converted Wharf Mill building which is the Black Boy pub, named after the small boys who got dirty from the barges at the Navigation. This pub has very interesting buildings, making it a very interesting place as well as a refreshing one. After a short distance cross Wharf Mill into Downham Road. At the end is a signpost pointing left, marked 'Icthen Navigation Heritage Trail'. Mills and Meadows, and Icthen Way way-markers. This gate is the northernmost entrance to the Icthen Navigation footpath.

From Winchester: Exit from Platform 2. Buses into the City centre leave from bus stop B right outside the station in Station Hill. From Winchester by bus: Exit from Platform 2. Buses into the City centre leave from bus stop B right outside the station in Station Hill. From the bus station: Alight at Winchester Bus Station. Turn left out of the bus station and with King Alfred statue on your left, cross the Broadway on the pedestrian crossing. Turn left and follow the instructions from \*\* above.

From Winchester by bus: Alight at Winchester Bus Station. Turn left out of the bus station and with King Alfred statue on your left, cross the Broadway on the pedestrian crossing. Turn left and follow the instructions from \*\* above.

### Shawford

From Shawford: Exit from Platform 1 or 2 down covered steps to emerge at pavement level. \*Staying on the pavement on the station side, turn right, and after passing The Bridge Inn over on the left, you will come to a wooden kissing gate with a wooden fence on the right. Pass through the gate and head straight down the hill towards Shawford Down Nature Reserve towards the station. The War Memorial is an iconic feature in the landscape. Pass through the car park and under the brick railway arch and follow the instructions from \*\* above.

From the bus stops: Alight at the Shawford Down bus stop. Carefully cross Otterbourne Road to a final and brick bridge named 'Shawford Hill No. 1'. Further on, towards Twyford, is Norris Bridge. This bridge which is brick-built with decorative white railings has no pavement. The road is quite narrow, so beware of traffic as you take in the view of the Itchen. Refreshments are available from Twyford Post Office and Stores, and the Bean below café.

A longer walk along Hazley Road brings you to Twyford Waterworks. For dates of open days, visit their website (see [overleaf](#)).

### Eastleigh for Bishopstoke

From Eastleigh: Exit from Platform 1. From the station, retrace your walk to the pavement. (Over the other side of Southampton Road is The Wagon Works which is a Waterspoon full of historic framed photographs of Eastleigh.) Turn right and up a curved slope to Bishopstoke Road, and cross the metal panel-edged road bridge over the railway. Walk along Bishopstoke Road carefully crossing the end of Chickenhall Lane. With playing fields over to the left, and the Barton River in a culvert close to the road on the right, continue until the road crosses the Bishopstoke Recreation Ground. Slightly further on are the access points to the Icthen Navigation Heritage Trail, either side of a larger metal-railed bridge over the water. \*To access the trail towards Southampton, turn right onto a gravel path between two concrete pillars and two wooden posts with 'Icthen Way' and Icthen Navigation Heritage Trail way-markers. There is also a Public Footpath metal sign marking the path, pointing to a metal kissing gate through which the path continues. Footpath metal sign marking the path, pointing to a metal kissing gate through which the path continues. and very old, make it clear that cycling is prohibited.

From the bus stops: Alight at the River Inn bus stop on Riverstoke. (Opposite you on the other side of Bishopstoke Road road is the River Inn which is a toy car garage.) Turn right and follow the instructions from \*\* above. By Bluestar 2 bus from Southampton: Alight at the Bishopstoke Recreation Ground bus stop. Follow instructions from \*\* above.

### Swaythling

From Swaythling: Exit from Platform 2. Turn right into the University Halls and follow the road past the University Halls as you come to the junction with Woodmill Lane. Turn left, and follow the road until it narrows to become a single width as it crosses the stone bridge. (To see more of the River Itchen and to explore further southwards, turn right to follow the path through the southern part of Riverstoke Park (with the river on your right), which leads to Cobden Bridge and Bitterne Triangle).

Alternatively, exit the railway station from Platform 2, cross the road immediately and turn left along Wessex Lane. At the end of the stream, you will see the 'Fleming Arms' pub, and traffic lights. Turn right. The road crosses the shallow 'Works Brook' over the Icthen Navigation. At this point you can take the footpath on the left and follow the path across a field, and head Or, you can turn right at Marshbridge and cross the Navigation by the old stone bridge and then turn right to follow the path alongside the water. This leads you through Riverstoke Park until you cross the single width bridge and when you see the junction with Wessex Lane on your right, turn right and follow it all the way along back to Swaythling station.

A useful Cycling leaflet is available to download from the South Downs National Park website: [southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Cycle-Rides-around-the-River-Icthen-2017.pdf](#) and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has produced an excellent leaflet about their Icthen Navigation Trail: [hwwt.org.uk/ictchen-navigation](#)

