

## Route Map

-  Challenge route = approx. 1.81 miles
-  Optional extension = approx. 0.73 miles

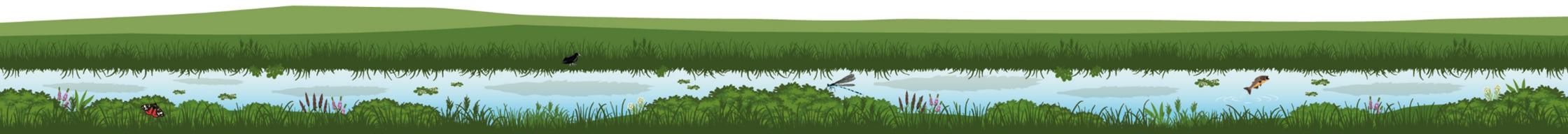


## Chalk Stream Challenge



### Challenge Route: The River Arle at Alresford

Watercress and Winterbournes is a Landscape Partnership Scheme that is protecting, enhancing and celebrating the seven chalk streams that make up the headwaters of the Rivers Test and Itchen: the Bourne Rivulet, Candover Brook, Cheriton Stream, Pillhill Brook, River Arle, Upper Anton and Upper Test. The scheme is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and brings together 16 partner organisations. To learn more visit [www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes)



## Route Guide

Park by New Alresford Town Council and the recreation centre and head out of the car park, turning left onto The Avenue. Continue along this road into town, The Avenue turns into Pound Hill and then West Street, and take the second turning on your left onto Broad Street.

At the bottom of Broad Street continue onto Mill Hill. The lane will be signposted to Arle Mill. Ignore the left hand turn signposted Riverside Walk (Ladywell Lane) and keep going straight towards the river. The Town Mill is the last building on the right hand side before you reach the river (1).

Stand by the river and look back up towards the mill. Look at the weir and the diverted mill race coming down the steps to the left of the mill. This is the River Arle, after which the town was named. This flow of water generates electricity to power the converted flats in the mill building.

Keep following the path along the river. Arle Mill is the next building on the right hand side (2).

The last brick building before the watercress beds was the watercress washing and packing barn. The beds are disused and have been left to naturally rewild, they are easier to see over the winter months when the vegetation has died back (3).

Continue walking and you will reach the stream which feeds the watercress beds. These old beds would have once covered the whole, flat area ahead and to your left at one time. Notice the clear water over the gravel.

You can continue along this path a little further, listening to the running water and looking for points where the path crosses over the water. Look for a brick structure on your right, hidden by vegetation (4). It houses a hydraulic ram that used to push water uphill to Old Alresford House. Stop before you reach the road and retrace your steps back to the Town Mill.



Take Ladywell Lane, now on your right hand side, and notice Ladywell House on the right (5). Winterbournes start as springs but it is possible to tap into the water at a greater depth if you dig down far enough. A well was dug down here, giving the house its name.

On the left you will see the Old Tannery (leather working). As you walk along the lane, look out for springs. Is the water flowing enough to measure the flow or play pooh sticks using a leaf?

Arriving at the Memorial Gardens (6) you will find a space for a picnic. You are below the level of the river here and the stream from the tannery flows through the foliage towards the sluice where it joins with the main channel. This would be a good place to carefully access the river as it is shallower and slower flowing. The best access point is by the commemorative sign in the ground, almost opposite where you enter the garden, but be careful as the access is narrow. You could scoop up some water to look for invertebrates and see which trees and plants are growing in the channel and along the edge.

Leave the gardens and re-join the path. The mill ahead is a fulling mill (7). Fulling is the process by which cloth is washed, cleaned, beaten and thickened. Beyond the mill is a good place to spot brown trout before you reach the duck feeding station. Here you can purchase seed to feed the well fed birds. Take care on this stretch of footpath as it has been eroded by the river and is narrow in places.

At the end of this footpath, the pool down to your right is the old town washing pool (8). Here laundry was undertaken in the days before everyone had plumbed water and washing machines.

The road ahead (The Dean) takes you back up to the town centre. On reaching the junction of West Street and Pound Hill, turn right onto Pound Hill and continue straight onto The Avenue. The car park will be on the right hand side.

Alternatively, you could carry on along the footpath towards the Eel House (9), details are overleaf.



You should be able to cover these parts of the challenge on this walk:

**Section 2:** 2, 3

**Section 3:** 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

**Section 4:** 12, 13

**Section 5:** 16, 18, 19



**European eel**

### **The Eel House (9)**

Instead of walking up The Dean, you could keep following the footpath round to the right towards the Eel House. As you follow the path, look for a gate on your left into the recreation ground. This recreation ground is behind the car park and Town Council building.

Carry on along the footpath, noticing the dog dip on the right hand side. This dog dip was re-instated and the footpath from here up to the eel house was resurfaced and fenced in the Autumn 2021. Prior to this, the path was badly eroded with some very narrow sections and the banks were undercut by the river. The latter would have led to further path erosion and failure in the future.

The fencing will encourage the bank side vegetation to establish itself and give it a rest from the footfall of both people and dogs. If the vegetation is able to develop a strong root system, it will bind the bank together and protect it from erosion.

At the end of this path you will reach the eel house. Built in the 1820s, iron grilles were used to catch the eels which were then taken by boat to the eel catcher's cottage and from there, still alive in tanks, to restaurants in London.

Turn and head back along the footpath until you reach the gate, now on your right, and walk across the recreation ground to the buildings and car park.

### **Interesting addition: Working watercress meadows**

W3W ///dumps.district.types

Individual group members may want to visit the working watercress beds off Spring Gardens in their own time with a responsible adult - group parking is not available, but individuals could park in the nearby residential roads e.g. Spring Way.

As the road names indicate, there are springs here that provide the clear, flowing water needed for watercress to grow. Follow the Spring Gardens no through road, bearing right at the fork, and past the allotments on your left. Areas of the watercress farm are not public access, but as you continue along the lane you will see watercress beds on both sides. Further on, you will reach a ford and the River Itchen.

### **Additional information (please check opening times and costs)**

- New Alresford Town Council / Recreation Centre car park SO24 9EP or W3W ///otter.without.initiates
- Toilets and café within the Town Council / Recreation Centre building at the car park; toilets at Station Road
- Once away from town centre the paths are bare earth so may be muddy after heavy or prolonged rain
- OS Explorer map 132 covers this area

### **Useful websites**

[New Alresford Town Council](#)  
(landowner)

[The Watercress Line](#)

[The Arlebury Cafe](#)

[The Itchen Way](#)

[The Watercress Way](#)

[Alresford Watercress Festival](#)

[The Eel House](#)

[The Alresford Millennium and Alre Valley Trail](#)

[Winchester City Mill](#)

