

Main walk last checked	River short cut checked	Tourist route checked	Cathedral tour checked
18 December 2021	26 December 2021	26 December 2024	27 December 2021
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Winchester Circular

Length:

Main walk	18.0km (11.2 miles)
With river short cut	15.6km (9.7 miles)
With tourist short cut	9.1km (5.6 miles)

Toughness: 4 out of 10 - one big climb; otherwise gradients are gentle

Maps: OS Landranger 185, Explorer OL32 (formerly 132)

Features

Winchester is a cathedral city steeped in history. It was founded by the Romans close to a major iron age hillfort, it was the capital of the Saxon kingdom of Wessex under Alfred the Great, it was a major royal city under the medieval kings, and it is the home of one of the country's most famous public schools, Winchester College.

This walk takes in all of its major points of interest and some of its prettiest streets. It then carries on out along the idyllic River Itchen to St Catherines Hill, the iron age hillfort, from where there are spectacular views of the city. From here the route crosses some typical Hampshire downland, before descending to a section of ancient watermeadows and to a newly refurbished riverside pub for lunch.

In the afternoon, the walk again climbs up onto the downs, giving fine distant views of Winchester Cathedral, before descending to the ancient Hospital of St Cross, along the watermeadows and past Winchester College to tea in the Cathedral cafe.

Attractive though all this is, the walk does have one disadvantage, which is noise from the M3 motorway which was insensitively – and notoriously – routed just past the city (see **The real Battle of Twyford Down** on page 15 of this document). Which parts of the walk this affects to some extent depends on the direction and strength of the wind: but only in the section around St Catherine's Hill is the noise really intrusive - and then the fine views make up for it.

Walk options

For those who want to have more time to explore Winchester, two **short cuts** are possible. Both offer extremely pretty views of the watermeadows, but both also bring you right up next to the motorway at one point, with consequent heavy traffic noise. In both cases the noise fades as the short cut progresses, however. Paths are for the most part gravel-based.

- The **River Short Cut** takes you along the Itchen watermeadows from St Catherine's Hill to the lunchtime pub in Shawford, cutting **2.4km (1.5 miles)** off the morning of the walk and making the total walk **15.6km (9.7 miles)**.
- The **Tourist Short Cut** loops you back to Winchester after the climb up St Catherine's Hill. This route still takes in St Cross (including a pretty approach to the church along the watermeadows which is not on any other route) and is an excellent introduction to the environs of the city. It makes a total walk of **8.9km (5.5 miles)**.

It is also possible to **cut short the walk at Shawford**, just after the lunchtime pub, **9.3km (5.8 miles)** into the walk: see **Transport** below.

Transport

Winchester is served by up to two fast trains an hour out of **Waterloo** (stopping only at Basingstoke and Woking): there are also two slower trains an hour stopping at more stations. Journey time is about one hour. Catch **the nearest fast train to 9.30am**.

If you are cutting the walk short at **Shawford**, trains run hourly from the station (next to The Bridge), taking just 5 minutes to Winchester and 1 hour 15 minutes to Waterloo. Meanwhile, three **buses** an hour (two an hour on Sundays) go to Winchester from the **Shawford Down** stop, whose position is indicated in paragraph 81 on page 10.

Lunch and tea

The Handlebar Cafe on the old railway line on the outskirts of Winchester, 2.9km (1.8 miles) into the walk, offers cakes, teacakes, pies, pastries, and vegetarian and vegan dishes. It is open till 4.30pm daily (to 4pm if you want to sit down).

The Bridge, Shawford (01962 713 171) 9.4km (5.8 miles) into the main walk, or 7km (4.4 miles) into the River Short Cut, is a cosy and characterful Chef & Brewer chain pub with an extensive menu, plenty of inside seating and a garden, though it is also often busy and can get booked up. It serves food all afternoon to 10.00pm Mondays to Saturdays and to 9.30pm on Sundays, so it may be an advantage to arrive after the main lunchtime rush.

St Cross Hospital (a medieval almshouse: see **History** on page 4), 3km (1.8 miles) from the end of the walk, has a cafe, the **Hundred Men's Hall**, which is highly recommended by walkers: "a cream tea with a large pot of tea in very pleasant surroundings". It is open April to October from 10.30am to 12.30pm, and 2.30pm to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday, as well as 2.30pm to 4.30pm Sundays.

Winchester Cathedral Cafe is a large self service restaurant and tea room with both inside and outside seating (the latter in a pleasant walled courtyard). It is open to 5pm daily April to December and 4.30pm January to March. This is the recommended tea stop when the St Cross Hospital tea room is closed, but if you are doing the **Tourist Short Cut** and spending the morning or afternoon in Winchester seeing the sights, it is also an excellent choice for lunch.

Otherwise there are lots of **other tea options** in Winchester in and around the high street. For example The Square just beyond the cathedral (paragraph 131) has a couple of small cafes with outside tables, and opposite the Buttercross in the high street there is a **Caffe Nero**, open until 7pm Monday to Saturday and 6.30pm Sunday.

Winchester is not short of pubs: two recommended ones passed on the walk route are the cosy **Wykeham Arms** just before the Kingsgate (where some of the tables are former Winchester College schoolroom desks), and **The Old Vine Inn** in The Square, just by the Cathedral grounds.

History

Winchester was founded by the Romans, on site which commanded a ford of the River Itchen, and nearby a major Celtic hillfort, now called **St Catherine's Hill**. The city was originally known as Venta Belgarum (the Belgae being the local Celtic tribe), which became Wintoncaster in the Saxon period, and then Winchester.

The city was the capital of the Saxon kingdom of Wessex in the days of Alfred the Great (ninth century). He was buried in the Old Minster, the Saxon cathedral, but his bones were later moved to Hythe Abbey and lost in the Dissolution of the Monasteries. However the bones of other Saxon kings who made Winchester their capital, including the famous Canute (of hold back the tide fame) are still preserved in the cathedral.

Even after England was united in the tenth century, Winchester remained a kind of second capital after London: Edward the Confessor, for example, was crowned here. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, William the Conqueror also made the town a major royal residence, building a palace in the town and a castle above the city which in its day was as important as Windsor is today. William's successor, William Rufus, who was killed by an arrow while hunting in the New Forest, was buried in Winchester Cathedral, and Henry III (1216-1272) was born in Winchester and spent most of his life there. (He was known as "Henry of Winchester")

Given its importance as a royal residence, the bishop of Winchester in medieval times was also a powerful figure in the land, and the cathedral is full of the tombs of bishops who were brothers of the king, chancellors of England, or key royal advisors.

Winchester's importance came to an end as a result of the English Civil War in the 1600s. The city was not surprisingly a royalist stronghold, but was captured by Oliver Cromwell in 1642. He bombarded the town with cannon placed on a hill still called **Oliver's Battery** to this day. The bombardment shattered the great west window of the cathedral, and Cromwell later rode his horse into the cathedral, scattered the bones of the Saxon Kings, and used the building as a stables.

When the monarchy was restored, Charles II planned a massive palace on the hill behind the now destroyed castle: it was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and might have become a major royal residence, had it been completed. But Charles died before construction was finished, and his successor, James II, did not care for Winchester. The palace became a barracks, and later burnt down. Winchester reverted to being a quiet country town.

The city has one more melancholy claim to fame, however, as the place where novelist **Jane Austen** died. She was brought to a house in College Street (passed near the end of this walk, but not open to the public) for medical treatment in May 1817, and died in in the arms of her beloved sister Cassandra in the house on 18 July 1817, aged just 41. Cassandra wrote: "I have lost a treasure, such a Sister, a friend as never can have been surpassed. She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow. I had not a thought concealed from her, and it is as if I had lost a part of myself." Jane was buried in Winchester Cathedral for no other reason than that she was a daughter of a clergyman, and because it would have been impractical to move her body back to the village of Chawton, where she lived with her sister and mother. Cassandra, as a woman, was not allowed to attend the funeral.

The **Great Hall**, passed on this walk, is all that remains of the medieval castle of Winchester. It was built around 1235 by Henry III, and is one of the best preserved medieval buildings in the country. This was the banqueting hall of the castle and its walls would have been hung with coats of arms and tapestries. More than twenty parliaments were held here in medieval times and Sir Walter Raleigh was tried and condemned to death here in 1603. High on its wall is **King Arthur's Round Table**, which was actually made by Edward I to try and create a spirit of unity amongst his barons, and painted during Tudor times (it is Henry VIII who is depicted as Arthur). The hall is open from 10am to 5pm year round, though is occasionally closed for private functions. Admission is £4, which includes an exhibition on the history of the castle. You can see the table from the doorway without passing the desk collecting the entrance fee, however.

The **Westgate** and **Kingsgate**, both passed on this walk, are the survivors of five medieval gates of Winchester. The others were demolished in the 18th century, or fell down – the Northgate, for example, collapsed while it was being used for a wedding party. The insides of both the surviving gates can be visited. The **Westgate** has a small museum (admission £3) on its upper floor, open 10-5pm Saturdays and 11-4pm Sundays from mid February to October. There are pleasant views from its roof, where holes for pouring boiling oil can be seen.

The **Kingsgate**, on the site of the Roman South Gate, is surprisingly topped by a 13th century chapel of St Swithun (in medieval times, this was a common way to use the space above city gates, but the Kingsgate is now a very rare survivor). The entrance to the chapel (assuming you are visiting it towards the end of this walk) is on the left just after you have passed under the

arch. At the top of the stairs, just after you enter the chapel, look out for the touching memorial plaque up on the wall to your right to William Widemore, "an honest Englishman ... who was (which is most rare) a friend without guile."

The current **Winchester Cathedral** dates back to 1079, when it was started by Bishop Walkelin shortly after the Norman Conquest: the transepts are unchanged since that time. But even before the Norman building, there had been a cathedral – called the Old Minster – on this site for over four hundred years. Its ground plan can be seen laid out in the graveyard to the left of the west front. The grassy area in front of the cathedral has an even earlier origin as the forum (central square) of the Roman city. Though lacking the dramatic unity of architecture and soaring spire of the more visited Salisbury (a bit of local rivalry coming out here), the cathedral is full of historic interest, and well worth a visit. See **A tour of Winchester Cathedral** on page 13 of this document for a guided tour. The cathedral is open to the public until 5pm Monday to Saturday and 3pm on Sunday, but there is a £9.95 entrance fee. This does give you a year's worth of entry, however. If you go late in the afternoon, you may be lucky and get in for free.

Incidentally, if you are only interested in a quick photograph of the cathedral, the best place is up the hill from the west front, by the railings and in front of the fine Georgian house. On your way back to the west front, look for a famous tombstone among the graves to your right to a grenadier who died from "a violent fever contracted by drinking small beer when hot". Whether it was hot beer or a hot grenadier that was at fault is not clear.

St Catherine's Hill is a fine example of a Celtic iron age hillfort, and later in the walk you get to appreciate what a magnificent fortified position it must have been. The rampart and ditch of the fort are still in evidence, and the crown of trees at the top of the hill has a rather mystical feel, perhaps because they grow on the site of a medieval chapel. The **Mismaze** on the hill (passed on the walk) is a complete mystery. Some say it is ancient, perhaps a penance for monks, while others reckon it is more modern. Local tradition preserves something of the penitential flavour by suggesting it was carved with a penknife by a naughty schoolboy from Winchester College, sent up onto the hill as a punishment

The **watermeadows** are a precious rarity, as they show signs (visible from the top of St Catherine's Hill) of ancient medieval (or even Celtic?) field systems. In their natural state they would have been marshier, and seasonally flooded, but in medieval times they were drained by a clever system of rivers and channels on different levels, which still remain in use to this day, and which can be seen in several places on this walk. The section from St Cross Hospital (see below) to Winchester is said to have inspired the poet John Keat's ode *To Autumn*, which contains the famous line "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". Incredibly, in the 1970s, the Department of Transport tried to build the M3 through these meadows (See **The real Battle of Twyford Down** on page 15 of this document).

St Cross Hospital is an almshouse founded in 1136 Bishop Henry de Blois, and expanded in 1446 by Bishop Henry de Beaufort. Twenty five "distressed gentlemen" still live there, and can be seen around the town wearing either the black robes of de Blois or the red robes of de Beaufort. You can still ask at the porter's lodge for the "Wayfarer's Dole", a square of bread and a thimbleful of mead (it is quite a big thimble, mind). The attached **St Cross Church** dates from 1131 and is a wonderful landmark from the surrounding hills. The Church and its complex can be visited (admission £5) from 9.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday and 1pm to 5pm on Sundays from 1 April to 31 October: at other times of the year it is open 10.30am to 3.30pm Mondays to Saturdays only.

Winchester College was founded by Bishop William of Wykeham (college alumni are called Wykehamists) in 1387 to cater for needy scholars. As one of the country's leading public schools, it now caters for very rich ones, though it also has rigorous academic standards. Wykeham (whose motto was "manners makyth man") also founded New College, Oxford (one of the oldest Oxford colleges), and not surprisingly the entrance quadrangles of the school look remarkably like their Oxford counterparts. It used to be fairly easy to sneak inside from College Street (paragraph 121) to see them, but these days the gate is more closely guarded. There is, however, a small museum, The Treasury, containing ancient artefacts from around the world, which you can visit for free from 2pm to 4pm daily, getting a peek at one quadrangle in the process. There are also hour-long guided tours of the college throughout the year, and you get good views of it towards the end of this walk, including its famous playing fields.

Wolvesey Castle was the medieval home of the powerful Bishops of Winchester, and the walls around the castle grounds still preserve a section of Winchester's medieval city wall. The whole south eastern third of the city was essentially an massive ecclesiastical enclave. The ruins of the castle are worth a quick look if entrance is free (as it was last time I looked), but are not really worth paying for. Next door is **Wolvesey Palace**, the current home and offices of the Bishop of Winchester, which is in fact just a surviving wing of a much grander palace that once stood on the site.

The **City Mill**, which in its current form dates from the 18th century, is a National Trust property not far off the morning route. It is an actual working water mill, driven by the fast flowing river Itchen, which grinds flour that is on sale in its shop. There are also some information boards about the wildlife of the River Itchen. It is open from late May to December from 11am to 4pm daily.

See also **two appendices** to this section, which for space reasons have been put at the end of the document: **A Tour of Winchester Cathedral** (page 13) is a visitor's guide to this wonderful medieval basilica. **The real Battle of Twyford Down** (page 15) details the controversial history of the building of the M3 motorway past Winchester.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Winchester station to St Catherine's Hill (4km/2.5 miles)

1. Coming off platform two (the southbound platform) of Winchester station, exit its foyer through the sliding glass doors and turn right along the front of the station.
2. At the end of the station buildings keep straight on uphill on a paved footpath with a road to your left.
3. In 200 metres ignore the road to the right across the railway bridge and instead veer left down a road signposted 'City Centre and Great Hall'.
4. In 100 metres you pass a **monument to plague victims** on the left and a road merges from the left. Keep on downhill and in 40 metres you come to a T-junction with the main road. Straight ahead of you you can see a courtyard at the end of which is the **Great Hall of Winchester Castle** (see *History* on page 3).
5. Assuming you don't want to visit the Great Hall, cross the main road and turn left through the **Westgate**, one of Winchester's two surviving medieval city gates (see **History** on page 3). *Beyond the gate, you get a fine view of Winchester's High Street, and St Giles Hill behind, where a famous fair used to be held in medieval times.*
6. Walk down the hill towards the High Street. In 70 metres note a statue of horse and rider by renowned sculptor Elizabeth Frink on the right.
7. In 80 metres more cross Southgate Street to the right and keep on downhill into the High Street. In 50 metres you come to a pedestrianised area.
8. In 120 metres more, just before the 15th century **Buttercross** (a spire-like stone monument), **turn right under a covered passageway.**
*In 10 metres note a plaque to the right pointing out some **stones from a palace built by William the Conqueror**, and in 10 metres more note tiny **St Lawrence's Church** on the left, which was also apparently once part of the palace.*
9. In 50 metres more you come to a road T-junction: veer slightly left, passing the **City Museum** on your left, into the cathedral grounds, keeping straight on down an avenue of trees.
10. In 120 metres you come to the west front of **Winchester Cathedral**. *You can visit the cathedral now or at the end of the walk, but to continue the walk turn right along the west front (noting a possible lunch or tea stop, the **Cathedral Cafe**, up the steps ahead to your right).*
11. At the end of the west front turn left through a buttress arch into a passageway, signposted Wolvesey Castle and Watermeadows. *Before you pass through it, note a faint Latin inscription scratched in the stone on the left of the arch at about head height: "Illac Precator" ("That way those who want to pray") pointing left and "Huic Ambulator" ("This way walkers") pointing right.*
12. Keep on under the buttress arches of the cathedral. In 20 metres an open

space can be seen to your right: here veer right out of the line of buttresses and carry on along the road alongside them in the same direction as before, with a grassy area to your right.

13. In 60 metres as the road turns to the right at the end of the grassy area, go straight on under a covered passageway.
14. In 30 metres, at the end of the passage, continue straight on with the east end of the cathedral to your left.
15. In another 40 metres keep to the left of a red brick Georgian house, following the path between metal railings to your left and a stone wall to the right. (*Look back towards the end of this section and you can see that the east end of the cathedral tilts outwards: see **A tour of Winchester Cathedral** on page 13 for more on this.*)
16. In 80 metres there are walls on both sides of the path and it seems to be coming to a dead end, but in 30 metres more it turns left through a low doorway.
17. In 15 metres you pass a pretty water garden to the left, *a reminder that this whole part of Winchester was originally part of the River Itchen watermeadows and is still drained by a medieval system of channels (see **History** on page 4).*
18. In another 15 metres you come to a road, where you go right.
19. In 200 metres follow the road around to the left.
20. In 50 metres more **turn right into a tiny public garden**. In a further five metres go down some steps on to a walkway alongside the **River Itchen**.
*The onward route is straight on from the bottom of the steps, in the direction of the flow of the river. But if you go in the opposite direction, upstream, there are two items of historical interest. Just beyond the steps, on the left there is a gated chamber in which is a tiny fragment of Winchester's **Roman Wall** – surely one of the most comical Roman remains in the country. If you carry on upstream for 50 metres, you also get to the **City Bridge** – the original point around which Roman Winchester was built, and beyond it is the National Trust-owned **City Mill**: see **History**.*
21. However **to continue the walk**, follow the walkway downstream along the bank of the River Itchen. In 150 metres, where the path forks, keep left, *but note to your right the high stone wall. This is the wall of Winchester Cathedral Close, which is also the only remaining section of Winchester's medieval **city wall**.*
22. Keep to the edge of the fast-flowing Itchen. (*Note the amusing way the ducks somehow manage to paddle fast enough to keep stationary in the current.*) In 100 metres note to the right a weir, *one of many that you will see throughout this walk more evidence of the medieval system put in place to drain the watermeadows (see **History** page 4).*
23. In 70 metres more, at a path T-junction in front of a mill converted into a block of flats, turn left.
24. In 20 metres you come to a car park. In 5 metres more turn right along the side of the converted mill.
25. In 70 metres merge with a road coming downhill from the left. In 70 metres more, where the road turns right, keep straight on down a side road, signposted "Itchen Navigation".
26. In 50 metres **ignore** a gate to the right signposted with footpath arrows, and keep on the tarmac driveway.
27. In 80 metres more, just past New Barge Cottages 1 & 2 to the right, fork right down a signposted path.
28. In 40 metres curve left with the path onto the riverside. *This is actually the former **Itchen Navigation**, rather than the Itchen itself, which explains why there is no current: note more weirs to the right, part of the medieval drainage system.*
29. Keep along the path, with the river to the right (if it is to your left, you have turned off the tarmac drive too early). In 250 metres a broad meadow opens up to your left and you can see St Catherine's Hill, which you are about to climb, ahead of you to the left.
30. In 400 metres more you come to a bridge and a road. Cross over the road and go (more or less) straight on into a car park. *Just at the start of the car park look to the right and you can see the Church of St Cross, also passed towards the end of the walk, to the*

right on a bearing of 230 degrees: see **History**.

31. In 40 metres, at the far end of the car park, turn left under a brick arch, passing under the former route of the Great Western railway line from Newbury to Southampton, closed in the 1960s. The **Handlebar Cafe** is on top of this arch, a possible coffee stop. To reach it, curve left with the tarmac track after the arch to find its entrance in 30 metres on the left.
32. Otherwise ignore the tarmac track and keep straight on uphill from the arch, in 10 metres passing through a kissing gate. *The paths on the next section can be **very slippery when wet** due to the underlying chalk.*

To the left and right of you at this point was the route of the **Winchester by-pass** (see **The real Battle of Twyford Down** on page 15), a dual carriageway which cut a big chunk out of the hill and formerly made pedestrian access to it from the city very difficult: in 1994 when the M3 opened, it was removed and the hill re-landscaped, and it is now impossible to imagine that it was ever there.
33. In 80 metres turn left with the path onto a level section, ignoring a fork to the right (which is a very steep and direct way up to the top of the hill, but use of it is discouraged to avoid soil erosion).
34. In 130 metres the path turns right and climbs straight uphill on steps.
35. In 130 metres more, at a T-junction, turn again onto a level section under trees along the ditch of the hill fort.
36. In 100 metres you emerge from the trees into the open and go right at a crosspaths. In 10 metres more you emerge onto the hilltop. *You are now inside the ramparts of the Celtic hillfort on **St Catherine's Hill**.*
37. Keep straight on towards the clump of trees on the hilltop (there was once a chapel there, apparently) and in 50 metres you come to the **Mismaze**, which is cut in the ground (see **History** on page 4).
38. After viewing the Mismaze, take the path to the right from its far right-hand corner, going very gently downhill towards a view of the valley.
39. In 50 metres, at a four-way junction, fork half left. In another 50 metres,

once free of the thorn bushes, stop to enjoy the **panoramic view**.

*This consists of the **Cathedral** to the right, due north, and a clear view of the site of Winchester, at a point where the Itchen Valley narrows to an easily defensible point underneath the steep face of **St Giles Hill**.*

*Just in front of the cathedral you may just be able to make out **Winchester College** (which looks a bit like a church from this angle) and to the right of the cathedral **Wolvesey Palace** and **Castle** (see **History** on page 5), though all are obscured by trees.*

*In the valley directly ahead **St Cross Hospital** and **Church** can be seen clearly, as can the **watermeadows** with evidence of their Celtic field systems.*

*The high hill covered with housing behind and to the left of St Cross is **Oliver's Battery**, from where Oliver Cromwell bombarded the cathedral and town.*

*Lastly to the far left one can just about see and certainly hear the **M3 motorway**, which was so nearly built right along the bottom of the valley you see in front of you (see **The real Battle of Twyford Down** on page 15).*

40. From the viewpoint turn left, following the contour of the hill on a faint grassy path, more or less directly towards the distant motorway.
41. In 150 metres you pass an oak tree on your left. Here fork right across the grass, slightly downhill (*not essential, but you get a good view doing this*).
42. In 100 metres this brings you to the rampart of the hillfort. Turn left on this for about 40 metres to come to another fine **viewpoint** over the valley below.

*The side valley that meets the watermeadows here is **Plague Pit Valley**, so-called because plague victims were buried here. The grassy space between the valley end and the straight line of trees running along the base of the hill that mark the route of the **Itchen Navigation** are the former route of the dual-carriageway **Winchester bypass**, removed in 1994. (see **The real Battle of Twyford Down** on page 15).*

43. Carry on along the rampart, with Plague Pit Valley now to your right. In 50 metres, you pass some wooden steps going downhill.
- **To do the River Short Cut or Tourist Short Cut**, turn right down these steps and refer to paragraph 44.
 - **For the main walk** continue with paragraph 62 on page 9.

St Catherine's Hill to Five Bridges Road (0.9km/0.6 mi)

44. Go down the wooden steps to the very bottom of the hill.
45. At the bottom, ignore a gravel path to the right and instead turn left for 20 metres and then turn right to take the **rightmost** (and less obvious) of two grassy paths that climb up the far side of the valley.
46. Ignore ways off. In 300 metres, at the top of the hill, pass a green information board (currently blank) facing the other way (*look back here for a fine view of St Catherine's Hill and Winchester beyond*). 15 metres further on, just before a fieldgate, turn right onto a footpath into the scrub.
47. The path curves left and contours along the hill. In 100 metres it merges with a path from the right.
48. In a further 150 metres pass through a kissing gate and keep on, now descending slightly.
49. In 300 metres pass through another gate to come to a junction of car-wide tarmac paths.

If you think this junction is noisy now, the exact spot where you are standing was once the traffic light-controlled junction between the main Winchester-Portsmouth road and the old Winchester by-pass: a notorious bottleneck that was always choked with traffic.

- For the **Tourist Short Cut** ignore the tarmac path to the left and a cycle path curving half left uphill, and instead go **straight ahead** down a tarmac lane with faintly visible former road markings. Continue with paragraph 53.
- For the **River Short Cut** turn **left** onto a level path, ignoring a cycle route curving half left uphill and

continue with the directions in the next section.

Five Bridges Road to Shawford (2.1km/0.9 miles)

50. In 100 metres **turn left** with the path (ignoring another path carrying on straight ahead) to cross a busy junction at traffic lights. On the far side, turn right along the edge of a road, ignoring the road straight ahead under the bridge.
51. In 50 metres fork left away from the road on a tarmac path downhill. In 40 metres this brings you to the banks of the River Itchen, where you curve left with the path under the motorway. 30 metres beyond the bridge the path becomes gravel.
52. You now stay on this path, with the river on your right, all the way to Shawford, a distance of 1.8km (1.1 miles). You will know that you have got there because you come to a road, with **The Bridge** pub immediately to your right.

After lunch continue with paragraph 80 on page 9.

Five Bridges Road to St Cross (1.2km/0.7 miles)

*This is the **Tourist Short Cut**.*

53. In 80 metres pass through a gate to the left of a fieldgate and keep on down a former road. (*This was once the main Winchester to Portsmouth road, known locally as **Five Bridges Road**, made redundant when the motorway opened in 1994*).
54. In 300 metres you cross the broad River Itchen on a bridge: there are fine views right and left.
55. In a further 150 metres you pass a metal car-blocking barrier
56. 40 metres later **turn right** up a tarmac drive to St Cross Mill and Farm.
57. In 70 metres, where the tarmac drive turns right, go straight ahead through a footpath gate between two fieldgates and keep on along a path with a fence right and a ditch to the left.
58. In 20 metres pass through a metal kissing gate and keep on along a gravel path on the left-hand edge of a field.

- 59. In 300 metres pass through a kissing gate and keep straight on along an avenue of trees with a ditch to your left. You can now see **St Cross Church and Hospital** ahead to your left.
- 60. In 130 metres pass through a kissing gate and keep on along the left-hand edge of an open space.
- 61. In 120 metres, where the wall ends to the left, keep straight on along the path which curves slightly right, with a ditch to its right. *Continue with paragraph 114 on page 11.*

St Catherine's Hill to Shawford (5.4km/3.4 miles)

- 62. Ignoring the wooden steps, keep straight on along the ramparts. In 120 metres turn right downhill on a clear chalk path that descends across the ramparts and keep on downhill on a grassy path beyond (or take any obvious route down to the valley bottom).
- 63. When you get to the bottom of **Plague Pits Valley**, in 200 metres, turn left along it.
- 64. Follow the path along the valley bottom, ignoring all ways off. In 200 metres the path becomes an earth and stone track and starts to climb a bit more steeply into a wood.
- 65. In 100 metres you come to a gate, and cross a bridge across the M3 motorway (*in its famous cutting across **Twyford Down**, the cause of the protestors' fuss*).
- 66. At the far end of the bridge, where the tarmac road bends left downhill, go right through a wooden gate. Beyond it veer left with the path, climbing uphill with a line of scrub to your left.
- 67. In 200 metres pass through a gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate. *Here look back for a fine view of St Catherine's Hill with the Cathedral beyond to its right.*
- 68. Beyond the gate keep straight on along a clear path between fields, climbing gently.
- 69. In 150 metres there is a golf course to your right. In 300 metres more the path starts to descend.
- 70. In another 400 metres, at the bottom of a dip, turn right at a crosspaths.
- 71. You keep to this clear path for 2km until it comes to a main road. In more detail: in 250 metres there are tall hedges left and right and in 200 metres more the hedges end to the right and there is a golf course to your right. Just beyond the end of this, in about 500 metres, the path narrows again between tall hedges. In 800 metres you cross a broad track and keep straight on, and in another 300 metres you come to a main road.
- 72. Turn right along the pavement of the main road.
- 73. In 250 metres, just before some houses start to the left, cross the road with care (it is a bit of a blind bend). On the far side, ignore Church Lane forking left, and keep straight on down a track following a footpath sign.
- 74. In 80 metres, at the bottom of the hill, pass over a mill race with a converted mill to your left and keep on down the track under trees.
- 75. In 100 metres, where the track ends, go straight ahead through a gate to the left of a metal fieldgate, ignoring a fieldgate to the right, your direction still 250 degrees.
- 76. Keep on along the left-hand edge of the field on a car-wide grassy path. You are now back in the **Itchen watermeadows**.
- 77. In 250 metres cross a footbridge with gates either end, and 10 metres beyond this, ignore a fork to the right, to keep straight on.
- 78. In 100 metres go across another footbridge and through a kissing gate, ignoring paths to the left and right before it, and in 30 metres more turn left along the bank of the **River Itchen** (*the real river this time*).
- 79. Stay on the riverbank path until in 600 metres you come to a road. In 30 metres on the right you come to **The Bridge**, the lunchtime pub.

Shawford to St Cross (5.6km/3.5 miles)

- 80. Coming out of **The Bridge**, turn right and pass under the railway bridge. On the left just beyond the bridge is the entrance to **Shawford station** for those that want to cut short the walk.
- 81. Otherwise, keep on uphill on the road, keeping to its right-hand side. Follow

this all the way to the top of the hill in 250 metres, (ignoring two side roads to the right just before the top of the hill) until you come to a T-junction with a main road. **Cross this with care**, so that you are now overlooking the motorway immediately below.

- **To catch a bus back to Winchester**, turn left here to the bus stop 60 metres away ('Shawford Down' if you are searching for bus times online).
82. **To continue the walk**, turn right on the main road, crossing the motorway on a bridge. *There is a distant view to your right of the infamous Twyford Down cutting and the rather awkward way the motorway snakes across the landscape to the south of it.*
 83. At the end of the bridge go left down Hurdle Way and curve left with that road.
 84. In 90 metres turn right through a metal kissing gate: it is at the far end of a concrete turn-off to the side of the road, but somewhat hidden behind bushes.
 85. Immediately beyond this kissing gate pass through a second one and keep on along a path under trees between fields.
 86. In 200 metres, as the path descends and curves right, turn sharp left up some steps with a wooden hand rail.
 87. In 30 metres, at the top of the steps, keep straight on up a steep grassy slope.
 88. In 120 metres pass through a kissing gate and turn right onto a road. *From this road there is a view of St Catherine's Hill on a bearing of 40 degrees, and you can also just see Winchester Cathedral in a gap in the hills on a bearing of 20 degrees, to the left of a long curving line of trees on the hill opposite.*
 89. In 700 metres the road becomes a gravel track. In 100 metres more pass a metal fieldgate and keep straight on, ignoring a track to the left
 90. In another 750 metres, **fork right off the track** onto a path that descends slightly downhill, with a wire fence to your right and a line of scrub to your left.
 91. The path gradually curves right. In 120 metres a footpath merges with it from the left.
 92. In 200 metres more, at a fork, the path ahead along the fence seems to be getting overgrown*. Instead take the path forking to the left, away from the fence, which merges with another path from the left in 40 metres, and in another 10 metres comes out into a field. Turn **right down the field edge**, ignoring a path ahead which crosses the field diagonally.

** As of December 2022 the path along the fence was just about passable, however: if you take it, it emerges into the same field as is mentioned in the previous paragraph in about 70 metres.*
 93. In 200 metres exit the bottom right-hand corner of the field, to resume the path along the fence.
 94. In 150 metres more, at a three-way path junction, turn right downhill following a line of mini-pylons.
 95. In 50 metres the path starts to climb again between barbed wire fences.
 96. In 450 metres more, at a four-way junction at the top of the hill, turn left, slightly uphill.
 97. You soon pass into a tunnel of trees and scrub. In 130 metres, just before the path descends to a busy road 60 metres away, fork left onto a higher side path.
 98. In 40 metres turn left with this path, parallel to the road (unseen when the foliage is out) to the right.
 99. In 40 metres turn right across a footbridge across the main road.
 100. On the far side of the footbridge, keep straight on, ignoring paths to the left, but instead veering somewhat to the right with a gravel path.
 101. In 30 metres more fork left.
 102. In another 80 metres pass through a wooden kissing gate and carry on down the right-hand edge of a gently descending downland ridge, with a fine view of Winchester Cathedral ahead (*and with a large housing estate to your left: the hill top at the far left-hand end of this is **Oliver's Battery**: see **History** on page 3*).
 103. In 130 metres you pass an island of scrub midfield, just beyond which there is a bench to your left.

- 104.** In 400 metres more pass through a kissing gate to the left of a metal fieldgate. Beyond, ignore a kissing gate in the fence to the right and instead keep straight on down the ridge on a broad grassy path.
- 105.** In another 130 metres turn right through another kissing gate in the fence to your right. Descend a short bank (made a bit tricky by exposed tree roots) to come in 10 metres to a crosspaths with a broad path in a gully.
- 106.** You can turn left down this path (a right of way) to come to the footbridge over the railway in paragraph 108 in 300 metres, but **a more scenic route** on a permissive path is to go straight across the crosspaths to emerge in 20 metres in the top corner of a field.
- 107.** Go **left** downhill along the field edge. *There is fine view of St Catherine's Hill across the valley, with the Church of St Cross in the foreground.*
- 108.** In 250 metres, at the bottom of the hill, turn left through (or past) a fieldgate to exit the field, and then turn right to come to a footbridge over the railway line.
- 109.** Cross the footbridge and on the far side go right downhill on a residential road. *There is soon yet another fine view of St Catherine's Hill, ahead of you.*
- 110.** In 250 metres you come to a main road: **cross this with care** and turn right on its far side. In 20 metres, just before the Bell Inn, turn left down a tarmac driveway.
- 111.** In 120 metres you pass the entrance to the **Hospital and Church of St Cross** on your right: see **History** on page 4. The **Hundred Men's Hall** makes a charming tea stop from April to October.
- St Cross to Winchester Cathedral (2km/1.2 miles)**
- 112.** Carrying on past St Cross Hospital (or turning right out of its gate after a visit), cross a stream and pass through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate. Beyond this, keep straight on, with the high pebble wall of the hospital to the right.
- 113.** In 50 metres, 20 metres before the wall ends and just after a ditch to the left, fork left onto a grass path, which soon merges with a path coming from the wall along bottom edge of the St Cross compound.
- 114.** In 100 metres cross a stream on a footbridge and in 15 metres pass through a metal kissing gate. Beyond this, keep straight ahead on a car-wide gravel path, with a charming water channel to your left (*again part of the ancient drainage system for the watermeadows*), and yet another fine view of St Catherine's Hill to your right.
- 115.** Ignore all ways off for 450 metres until you come to a road.
- 116.** Turn right on the road over a bridge across a stream, and then left through a derelict metal kissing gate to the left of wooden fieldgates. Keep on along this car-wide gravel path, with a water channel to your left, and beyond it the playing fields of **Winchester College** (see **History** on page 4), whose buildings can also be seen ahead left.
- 117.** In 170 metres you can see the River Itchen close by to the right: *note the difference in level between it and the water channel to your left: this again is part of the medieval drainage system in the watermeadows.*
- 118.** In 350 metres more there a bend of the Itchen close by to the right, and in another 150 metres you pass through a gap between metal fences, to go right on a road.
- 119.** In 100 metres, when you come to a road junction, turn left, following the sign to 'Wolvesey Castle, College, Cathedral'.
- 120.** In another 100 metres go left with the road, unless you want to visit the ruins of **Wolvesey Castle**, whose entrance is just to the right in the wall ahead, to the right of the entrance gate to **Wolvesey Palace**.
- 121.** Having turned left, you are now in College Street, with the buildings of Winchester College to your left. Walk up the right-hand side of the road for a better view of these, including the college chapel.
- 122.** In 80 metres the road crosses a bridge over a stream and 40 metres further on you pass the gatehouse to Winchester College on your left. *From 2pm to 4pm daily you can enter the first quadrangle to visit The Treasury, a small museum on its right-hand side:*

otherwise, access to visitors is only by guided tour.

- 123.** Otherwise, keep on up College Street. In 100 metres note the yellow-painted 8 College Street on your left, which is **the house where Jane Austen died** (see **History** on page 3): this is a private house, however, not open to the public. *Also at this point notice some remains of the **medieval city wall**, which have been incorporated into houses on the right-hand side of the street.*
- 124.** In another 80 metres turn right through the **Kingsgate**, one of Winchester's two surviving medieval gates.
- *Before you do, however, you might also like to have a look at the very picturesque **Kingsgate Street** to the left, a street closely associated with Winchester College. 30 metres down it, just before the **Wykeham Arms** (a very cosy pub, incidentally, and a possible pub stop), you might also like to turn right up **Canon Street** and walk little way up it: this quaint street is much in demand for filming period dramas. After all this, return to the Kingsgate and pass through it.*
- Having passed through the Kingsgate**, don't miss the opportunity to visit the chapel of **St Swithun in Kingsgate** over the top of it: the door is just to the left after you pass through the arch, but it is sometimes locked: see **History** on page 3 for more on this. Also note the high **Cathedral Close walls** ahead of you, which date to the medieval period.*
- 125.** **Beyond the Kingsgate** turn right, and in 35 metres pass through the 16th century **Priory Gate** into **Winchester Cathedral Close**.
- 126.** Turn immediately left after the gate onto a paved pathway to the left of the road.
- 127.** In 60 metres, at the end of this, re-join the road and veer half left to pass to the left of the cathedral Deanery (with its three pointed 13th century pointed arches: the rest of the building is 17th century), ignoring a road to the left.
- 128.** In 40 metres you pass into a square, with the cathedral on its far side. Keep up the left-hand side of this.

- 129.** In 150 metres, when you come up to the cathedral, turn left under its buttresses. In 30 metres you emerge by the main west front. The **Cathedral Cafe**, the recommended tea stop is ahead.

Winchester Cathedral to the station (1km/0.6 miles)

- 130.** **To continue the walk**, turn right along the west front, and in 40 metres, fork half left up a path to the left of a plinth with a statue of a soldier on it (a war memorial: but don't confuse this with the larger war memorial directly in front of the West Front).
- 131.** In 120 metres at the end of the Cathedral grounds, keep more or less straight ahead across The Square (with the **Old Vine Inn**, a possible pub stop to your left), carrying on up the unnamed street leading off from its far side. (There are a couple of cafes with outside tables here, possible tea stops.)
- 132.** In 50 metres pass under an arch to emerge in the **High Street** just to the left of the **Buttercross**, with **Caffe Nero** on the opposite side of the street.
- 133.** Turn left uphill. In 120 metres, you come to the end of the pedestrian area, and keep straight on uphill to the **Westgate**, clearly visibly up the hill.
- 134.** Ignore Tower Street to the right of the Westgate, and in 30 metres more, beyond the offices of Hampshire County Council to the right, ignore the Sussex Street to the right. But immediately beyond this, veer right up Upper High Street, passing to the left of the monument to the plague victims in 40 metres.
- 135.** In 100 metres ignore the railway bridge to the left but keep on along the tarmac walkway on the left-hand side of the road (now Newburgh Street), which in 20 metres becomes separated from the road by some greenery.
- 136.** In 200 metres this brings you down to **Winchester** railway station. Pass under the underpass to get to the London-bound platform.

A tour of Winchester Cathedral

Coming inside the entrance (which is usually through the door on the left-hand side of the west front), turn right and admire the enormously long nave, the longest Gothic nave in Europe, it is said (it looks even longer when seen side on from a distance). Walk up the nave a dozen metres and turn back to face the **Great West Window**. This was destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's canons but the glass was carefully collected by local people and replaced when the monarchy was restored. As the original pictures could not be reconstructed, the shards were replaced at random, giving it a curiously modern look. There is one panel which is nearly complete, however, which is four rows up and three columns in from the left. The West Window is the only remaining medieval glass in the cathedral.

Cross to the **south aisle** (on your right if facing up the nave). As you walk up this aisle look carefully at the east end of the cathedral: you should be able to see that the arches and wall of this are leaning outwards somewhat. This was the result of the cathedral originally being built on marshy ground, allegedly on a raft of beech logs. In the late nineteenth century when marshland in the city was drained, the back of the cathedral began to list dangerously. Between 1906 and 1911 a pioneering diver, **William Walker**, was employed to lay solid concrete foundations in the murky swamp water with his bare hands. The work was only just completed in time to save the south side of the cathedral from collapsing: today it leans foot for foot more than the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The cathedral crypt, underneath the choir, is still flooded in winter.

About half way up the south aisle, there is the **chapel and tomb of Bishop William of Wykeham** (1366-1404) who founded both Winchester College and New College, Oxford (one of the first Oxford University colleges). Note that he was also Lord Privy Seal and twice Chancellor of England: Bishops of Winchester were important figures. Further up, one comes to the **chapel and tomb of Bishop Edington**, who was treasurer to Edward III and also Chancellor of England. By now the leaning of the east end of the cathedral should be easy to see.

When you get to the **South Transept**, a surprise awaits. Both it and the North Transept retain their original 11th century Norman architecture with rounded Romanesque arches (in places somewhat

unevenly constructed), though the wooden roofs are apparently Victorian.

Climb the steps (turn around briefly at their top to get a fine view back down the cathedral) and in another 10 metres turn left through an archway into the choir (properly this bit is the presbytery, but never mind). The **Great Screen** to your right dates from the 15th century, but the statuary is all Victorian: the originals were smashed in the Reformation.

Near the Great Screen, there is sometimes a slanted mirror, designed to help you admire the decorated bosses on the roof. Look into it from the upper end, however, and it gives you an amazing upside down view of the whole length of the nave roof, showing just how long it is.

On top of the side walls of the presbytery you can see ornate chests which contain the **bones of the Saxon Kings** of Wessex and England (that is, the monarchs from before the Norman Conquest in 1066). The famous **King Canute** (who responded to the extravagant flattery of his courtiers by sitting in the sea as the tide came in, thus proving he was not all powerful) is over the archway on the north side. Also present are various Ethelwulfs and Egberts. But their bones are all mixed up: they were scattered by Cromwell's troops, who destroyed two of the original eight boxes and used the bones as missiles to smash the cathedral windows. When the bones and boxes were recovered, it was impossible to tell whose bones were which, and so each box contains one head, one thigh bone, and so on. The only skeleton which could be clearly identified was that of Emma, Canute's queen, who is in the chest bearing his name.

The part of the cathedral is also where **Philip II of Spain** (he of Spanish Armada fame) **married Queen Mary**, daughter of Henry VIII on 25 July 1554. Winchester was chosen because it was considered a safer venue for such a controversial match than turbulent London. In return for the expense of the wedding Mary gave the city the **City Mill**, now a National Trust property (see **History** on page 5). Mary's marriage to Philip proved childless and she was thus not able to restore England to the Catholic faith as she had hoped. She was instead succeeded by her half sister, Elizabeth I, whose long reign finally confirmed England as a protestant country.

Walk down towards the carved wooden **choir stalls**, which date from the 14th century.

Before you get to them, you pass an unmarked black marble tomb directly under the tower. Tradition has it that this is the **original burial place of William Rufus**, one of the few English monarchs not to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Rufus, the son of William the Conqueror, was killed by an arrow while hunting in the New Forest, which may have been an assassination made to look like an accident. There are even suggestions that he was killed because he was gay. The story is that Rufus was buried here in an unmarked grave as a sign of disgrace, and that the tower fell down on top of him, which is why Winchester does not have a spire. The tower certainly did fall down shortly after Rufus's death, but poor workmanship was as likely a cause as anything else. It is thought Rufus's bones were then moved to one of the funerary chests containing the bones of the Saxon Kings, and, of course, are now all jumbled up with them for the reasons explained above. Bishop Henry de Blois, founder of St Cross Hospital, may have ended up in the black tomb instead.

Before you leave this section, investigate the choir stalls themselves and the marvellous wooden supports under the tip-up seats in each stall. These supports were for monks to lean against while standing during long services: each is amusingly carved with different designs.

Return to the south aisle and walk to the eastern end of the cathedral. Here you find the most wildly slanting part of the south wall. The red floor tiles you see here are originals from 13th century and form the largest area of **decorated medieval floor tiles** in a building in England.

Just to your left is the **tomb of Cardinal Beaufort**, who was bishop from 1404 to 1447. He was even grander than his predecessors, being son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and thus brother to Henry IV. He was present at the trial of **Joan of Arc**, and in atonement for this, there is a statue of her diagonally opposite, to the left of the Lady Chapel (the centre chapel of the three at this end of the cathedral). It is a Catholic statue, note, as Joan is not a saint in the Anglican church. Just in front of Beaufort's tomb, against the pillar dividing the Lady Chapel from the one to its right, is a small **statue of William Walker**, the diver who saved the cathedral from collapse (see above).

The **Lady Chapel** itself is also worth a look for its 16th century panels either side of the

altar showing miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, some of which are rather amusingly drawn. The panels are actually copies: you can unclip them to see the original wall paintings underneath but you will get told off by the cathedral warders if they catch you.

Coming out of the Lady Chapel, the area ahead of you and behind the Great Screen was once the **shrine of St Swithun**, a major place of pilgrimage in medieval times. Swithun was a bishop of Winchester in the 9th century, revered for his goodness. After he died he asked to be buried in a simple tomb in the doorway of the Old Minster, as it was then, but due to the popularity of his tomb with visitors he was later moved inside the cathedral. The day on which this happened – 15 July – is now St Swithun's Day. Tradition says that "If on St Swithun's Day thou dost rain/for forty days it shall remain" – supposedly a curse on those who moved St Swithun's tomb, though more likely a wry joke about the English summer. It is worth remembering the second half of the rhyme: "St Swithun's Day if thou be fair/for forty day's twill rain na' mair." The shrine was destroyed in the Reformation, but you can still see the blackened archway through which pilgrims squeezed to get close to the Saint's remains.

Return down the north side of the cathedral. At the bottom of the steps to the **North Transept** you can see on the left-hand side in a small side chapel some remaining **medieval wall painting** - a reminder that even English cathedrals were once brightly painted. (*To see the paintings better, use the light switch set into a plinth just beyond the marble tomb that blocks the chapel's entrance*).

Turning right to face into the transept, you can again appreciate the austere beauty of the original Norman architecture, giving you an idea of what the whole cathedral must have looked like before it was renovated in the English Perpendicular style in the mid fourteenth century.

Before you leave the transept, don't neglect to go down into the **Crypt**. The entrance is a wooden door around to the right of the steps you have just come down (if the door is shut, try the handle: it is usually unlocked). The Crypt looks particularly beautiful in winter when it is often part flooded and the **Antony Gormley statue** in its centre stands surrounded by water.

Carry on down the north aisle of the nave. About halfway down you come to what is allegedly the most visited place in the cathedral, but which for all that is hard to spot unless you keep your eyes peeled or see someone else looking at it - **the tomb of Jane Austen**, the novelist. The actual tomb is a black stone slab set in the floor, but many visitors walk right over this and instead study the brass plaque on the nearby wall, which was added in late Victorian times. On the tomb proper there is a charming inscription (composed by Jane's brother Henry), which says nothing about her writing but instead talks about "the benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper and the extraordinary endowments of her mind".

The real Battle of Twyford Down

The insensitive route of the M3 motorway through Twyford Down, the hill behind St Catherine's Hill, and across the watermeadows on an embankment was a cause celebre in the 1990s. In what was dubbed "The Battle of Twyford Down" protestors chained themselves to bulldozers and made the national news. But in fact the story goes back much further, and the route could have been a lot worse.

The original plan, in the early 1970s, proposed three alternative routes: a westerly one, an easterly one, and one following the route of the Winchester by-pass, a dual carriageway that in those days ran right around the base of St Catherine's Hill on the town side. The dual carriageway had sharp bends and was mist-prone making it notorious for accidents. It also cut the hill off from easy access from the town. Had the government chosen to widen the by-pass into the motorway, it would almost certainly have had little opposition, however. Instead, rejecting the better eastern or western alternatives, it proposed to build the motorway *between* the by-pass and the town, right along the historic watermeadows and past the playing fields of Winchester College.

There was a massive outcry and environmental protestors - now long forgotten - made national headlines by disrupting the public enquiry on the route and refusing to allow it to proceed, arguing that the enquiry was a farce and that the decision on the route had already been taken. There was major national debate about such tactics, but in the end they succeeded. The Department of Transport retired to lick its wounds. The M3 to the north and south of Winchester continued to

be built, however, ruling out the more westerly or easterly options.

The next proposal was for the motorway to go in **Plague Pits Valley** - the valley behind St Catherine's Hill, with the by-pass being removed from the town side of the hill. This proposal had reasonable support among local people, but environmental studies found rare flowers growing in this valley and the plan was ditched.

It was at this point that the plan was changed to make a huge cutting through Twyford Down - then arable farmland - instead. Most local people supported this as the best compromise available: the M3 had by now been built to the north and south of Winchester anyway, and the traffic from it was being funnelled onto the by-pass, which had therefore become a horrendous bottleneck.

However, some campaigners bought Twyford Down and turned it into open space for the public (thus allowing a national newspaper to state erroneously that Twyford Down "had been a place of recreation for the people of Winchester for generations"). Environmental activists moved in, trying to get the road tunnelled under the Down.

As you can see on this walk, they failed, but the Battle of Twyford Down is credited with having deterred other major road building schemes. The building of the motorway did also have one huge benefit for the people of Winchester in that in 1994 the by-pass was closed and removed. The hill was then re-landscaped so that you would never know it had ever been there.