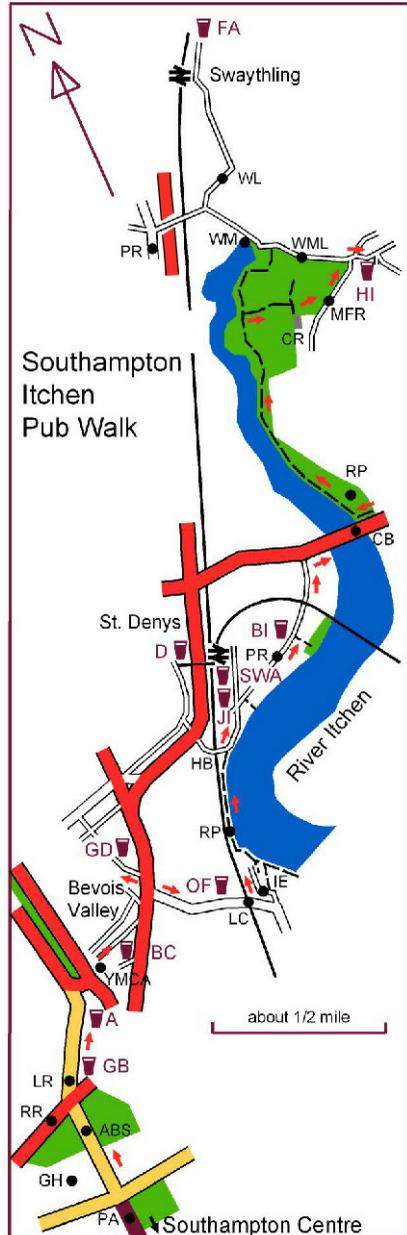


WALKING AND DRINKING (12) By Ray Massey

This issue of *Hop Press* is timed to hit the streets just before Southampton Beer Festival, so I thought it might be appropriate to describe a pub walk in Southampton. Great idea in theory, but how does it work out in practice? Well I think the walk is good in parts, and it does use the new Itchen Riverside path to good effect. But I would be the first to admit that not all the streets on this walk are beautiful. Hopefully the pubs will help make up; and whenever you walk, rather than drive or ride, there are interesting things to see – if you have the eyes to see them. So with that mild warning ringing in your ears, here is the walk. The sketch map shows all pubs mentioned and other features indicated in the text with bracketed initials.

Start from the upper end of the pedestrianised area (PA) of the main shopping street, Above Bar Street (ABS). Walk north, slightly uphill, away from the pedestrian area, on the right hand side. Immediately you pass a very useful street map of central Southampton. (Your possible first pub visit, the **Guide Dog**, is in square D1, at the top). Very soon you pass a new enormous open piazza, with an unobstructed view of the Guildhall (GH) (Southampton Beer Festival venue) beyond. Continue past the most northerly of Southampton's extensive parks, a result of WW2 bombing I believe, to cross the city ring road (RR) at traffic lights.

This is London Road (LR), although I couldn't see a street name here. However you very soon pass the **Giddy Bridge (GB)**, a well-know JDW establishment, which is a good landmark. Continue up London road, which seems to be the estate agent centre of Southampton. Nearing the top you pass



Bellvue Road on the right, with the **Alexandra (A)** just visible. Bend right as you reach the long green separating the opposing lanes of The Avenue. Ahead is a low but elegant building – the YMCA. Use the blue painted subway to reach it.

Here you have a choice of three parallel roads: Southcliffe Road and Rockstone Lane on the left of the YMCA, and Cranbury Place on the right. All lead you downhill into Bevois Valley. I suggest you pass just to the left of the YMCA, and cross a small green to reach the end of Rockstone Lane – a very pleasant cul-de-sac of small terrace cottages. At the end of the lane is the **Bevois Castle (BC)** (unfortunately currently closed). Here bear left into Onslow Road, which soon becomes Bevois Valley Road; and very soon turn left into Earls Road. Just after the first bend, you will see the **Guide Dog (GD)**. This small pub is a Mecca for real ale fans; it has often been the local CAMRA pub of the year. Generally eight beers are available, always including Fuller's ESB and a Flowerpots beer. Other beers are often from small and/or local breweries.



On leaving the pub, retrace your route to the main Bevois Valley Road. Turn right then immediately left by the Dungeon, into Mount Pleasant Road. After passing a school you will reach the **Old Farmhouse**

(OF), a grade II listed building. After the pub is a very busy level crossing **(LC)**, more often shut than open. (It is on the main line between Southampton and Waterloo). Soon after the crossing, turn left twice into a small industrial estate **(IE)**. Ignore a dirty looking footpath on the right, and instead continue ahead, then bend right through the estate. At the end, a short path leads to the new riverside path **(RP)**. Turn left along this broad tarmac path, and with interesting estuary views on the right, continue round the bend in the River Itchen. Ahead is the red lattice work of a road bridge, known locally as Horseshoe Bridge **(HB)**. The path ends after climbing the embankment by the bridge. Turn right here, downhill and at the road crossing is the **Junction Inn (JI)**, a Greene King grade II listed pub, and a recent Southampton Community award winner. It makes a good lunch stop.



There is a shorter route from the Guide Dog to the Junction shown on the sketch map, but the river route is certainly more interesting. The Junction is at the bottom of Adelaide Road, and just a little further up is the very well regarded **South Western Arms (SWA)**, another regular award winner, which serves up to ten real ales, always including Bowman's Swift One. Right behind the South Western is St. Denys station, and across the footbridge over the station is the **Dolphin (D)**,

completing the three very worthwhile pubs clustered around the station.



Resuming the walk from the Junction, go up Priory Road (PR), and immediately on the right there is a public hard giving access to and good views of the Itchen. Continue up Priory Road, and opposite the **Bridge Inn (BI)** another short path gives access to a pleasant riverside green with more interesting views of the Itchen. Continue along Priory Road under the railway bridge to the busy St Denys Road. Here turn right across Cobden Bridge (CB), cross the road at the crossing and go into Riverside Park (RP). The Park is a much needed and well used open space for the surrounding houses.

Walk down to the water's edge and follow the river upstream on a good tarmac path. Go past the model railway tracks, and after the sports areas turn right, still on a good tarmac path. Leave the orange roofed changing rooms (CR) well to the right and head slightly left across the cricket pitch towards a small car park. Here join and turn left along Manor Farm Road (MFR), then right into Woodmill Lane (WML). Soon you will see the **Hop Inn (HI)** ahead. It is a modest, friendly place quite to quench your thirst after the stride across the park.

Conveniently FirstGroup buses 3 and 8 pass the pub frequently, so getting back into

town should not be a problem. Alternatively you can retrace your route, staying on Woodmill Lane through the park, to Woodmill itself. Woodmill (WM) is the limit of tidal water in the Itchen. After the mill the narrow lane continues to Portwood Road (PR), where Bluestar 2 and FirstGroup 7/7A both run into town.



For train travelers, just after the narrow part of Woodmill Lane, turn right following the Swaythling station sign into Wessex Lane (WL). The station is about ¼ mile away. The station only has one stopping train each way per hour, so if you have a long wait the **Fleming Arms (FA)** visible ahead may help pass the time.

Maps: Maps are not really necessary for this walk but a city plan with street names would help.

Seasons: Town walks can be good at any time of the year. On this walk perhaps a tide table is most important, because the Itchen looks better full than empty.

Times: To reach St Denys station is about 2½ miles, plus 2 miles to the Hop Inn and a further mile to the Fleming Arms; so allow between 1½ and 2½ hours for the walking part.

Photos: Thanks to Bryn Massey for them.