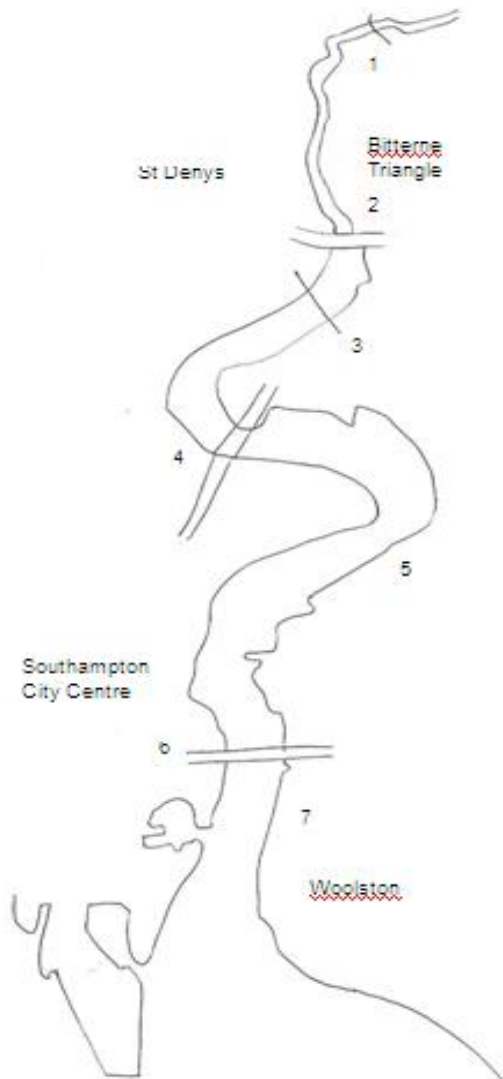


## Canoeing the Salt Water Itchen



The River Itchen is a very important river along the south coast and there are also some very pleasant walks along it too. This guide will detail some very pleasant paddles for the some of the sections. The River Itchen is in Hampshire and it flows under the Itchen Bridge from mid-Hampshire to join with Southampton Water in the city of Southampton.

The river can be broken down into 3 parts as far as canoeing is concerned, firstly the ring of the river and Navigation in Winchester city centre <http://www.visitwinchester.co.uk/> This is the home of Winchester Canoe Club. <http://www.winchestercanoecub.org.uk/>



The second section is another freshwater section between Woodmill and Gaiters Mill most of this mile and a half section is alongside Riverside park and tree covered land and then up into the Lower Itchen Country Park this is detailed in the Fabulous “Pub Paddles Book”.

The final section is the tidal section and runs from Woodmill to where the river enters Southampton water under the Itchen Bridge this covers a distance of around 5km.

**Start** - Woodmill Plage Grid Ref SU442154

Launch from the Beach outside the outdoor centre, <http://www.woodmill.co.uk/> its best done on when the tide is half full and head down stream. On the other side of the Mill building is the weir where the freshwater Itchen joins the estuary. The weir is affectionately known as the “Woodmill Death Gorge”, paddle downstream past the University Boat Hard <http://www.sportrec.soton.ac.uk/content/category/7/50/78/> round the double bends.

***At all times please be especially aware of other watercraft and in particular the fast moving rowing boats.***

2. Cobden Bridge – The bridge is named after Richard Cobden a politician and free trade campaigner. Just before the bridge is a gray houseboat based on the hull of a WW2 Motor Torpedo Boat.
3. Rail Bridge – This is the main Southampton to Portsmouth line which crosses the river at this point.
4. Northam Bridge – The bridge was originally built as a toll bridge and for a long time was the only means of crossing the river. Today this is the limit for larger vessels

using the river. The current bridge was the first major pre-stressed concrete road bridge to be built in the United Kingdom.

5. Paddle around the long sweeping bend, on the left bank of the river is Spitfire Quay where the Supermarine works were sited during WWII. During world war two spitfires were made here. A memorial has been made just under the Itchen bridge. The white crown on the right bank of the river is St Marys Football stadium home of Southampton FC. (the Saints) The Saints have been in residence since August 2001 when they moved from The Dell, which for the final years of its life, held just over 15,000 spectators - less than half the size of the new stadium.
6. The river bends to the left revealing a view of the Itchen Bridge. The bridge was built to replace the floating bridge that had been in use for 140 years. It is a high-level hollow box girder bridge. It is located approximately 1km from the river mouth. The bridge spans 870 yards (800 m), is 92 feet (28 m) at its highest point The Itchen Bridge is a toll bridge, under the bridge on the left bank is Southampton Water Activities Centre. <http://www.swac.co.uk/> There is a slipway and parking at Cross House Hard.
7. On the left is the site where Vosper Thornycroft used to build Warships and on the right is Dock Head where you can link to the Southampton Water Trail.

**Tide.** The Itchen is a tidal river and Southampton Water has the advantage of a double high tide this corresponds to the ebb being quicker than it may otherwise have been especially at springs. The entire length of the Tidal section is paddleable at low tide although it will be a bump and scrape and a muddy get out. It is important to check tide times and to know where you are at which point of the tide. Also check for weather conditions as windy conditions will have a bearing on timings and flow.

**Hazards on the river.** There are many boats and jetties on the river care should be taken to avoid these, also the river is used by fishermen please avoid their lines. When on springs the tide can drop very quickly, and can either carry you further than you want or trap you against obstacles.