

A walk (for a drink), Upham

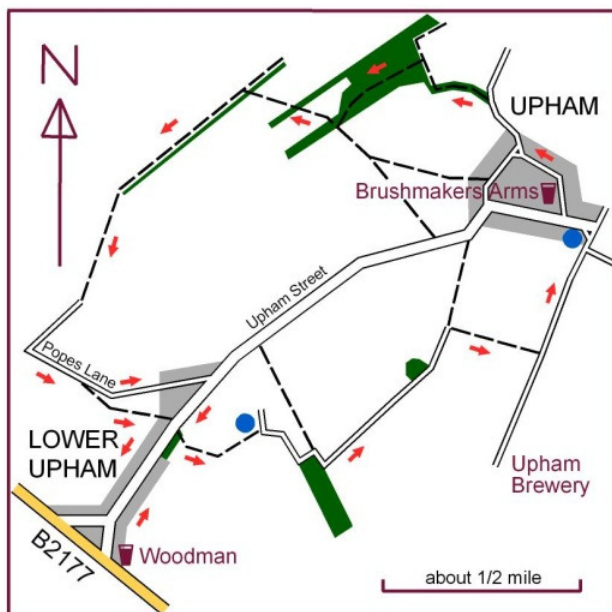
Ray Massey

This short, circular walk, in central Hampshire, links two excellent pubs. **The Woodman** is in Lower Upham on the B2177 Fisher's Pond to Bishop's Waltham road. **The Brushmakers Arms** is in the isolated, bijou hamlet of Upham, about 1 ½ miles north-east of Lower Upham. The countryside hereabouts is mainly gentle, rolling chalk land, with surprisingly good views. Much of this walk is along very quiet tarmac lanes, and the footpaths used are generally good. Note that the Woodman does not serve food, but the Brushmakers definitely does. Even more vital to note is that both pubs close during weekday afternoons, the Woodman from 2.30 to 7.15 and the Brushmakers from 3.00 to 6.00. The weekends are better but there are still gaps.

The walk starts at The Woodman. The pub has a very good reputation for the quality of its beer and the range of its whisky selection. Excepting 2006, it has been in the *Good Beer Guide* continuously since 2000. The entry in the new 2013 edition is on page 187. The number 69 Winchester to Fareham bus service stops practically outside, although, sadly it does not run on Sundays or into the evenings. Beers on when visited were Palmers Best Bitter and Sharp's Doom Bar. A third beer is available over the weekends, to check, the pub's number

is 01489 860270. Tony, the landlord is generally ready for a chat if he is not too busy.

On leaving the pub turn right then right again into Upham Street, past a pleasant mix of semi-rural houses. As the housing thins, look out for a belt of woodland on your right. Opposite Arbour Cottage on the left and just before the end of the wood, turn right on a good path through the wood. Immediately ahead is a strange stile leading into a large, unkempt field. Keep to the left hedge on a good path, soon to cross another complex stile. Turn left at the field corner along a tiny path heading for a bent steel gate. Next to the gate is



another stile to cross, and a duck pond on the left. Turn right on a good tarmac track that immediately bends left, and then right. Follow the track to the corner of woodland, and keep on the track as it turns away from the wood to go almost straight gently uphill between large open fields.

The track bends very slightly left by a copse

on the left, and heads towards a rusty gate. At this gate go through another gate on the right, held shut by binder twine (what else?), onto an overgrown path. Where the path gets even more overgrown walkers have resorted to using the field margin, and it looks like a considerate farmer has restricted his ploughing for the walkers' benefit. At the end of the path/field, turn left onto a good small lane. Incidentally, The Upham Brewery (one of many micros springing up in Hampshire) is just a few yards to the right down this lane at Stakes Farm.

The lane curves gently uphill, giving good views of a long dry valley on the right. Trees now arch over the road, which enters a small chalk cutting. Note the fine but not quite vertical flint wall on the left, and an imposing tree house behind it. Suddenly you are at the edge of Upham. Turn left at the green, go past another duck pond, take the next right by Pond House and The Brushmakers Arms is immediately ahead.

The Brushmakers is an immediately appealing pub; it looks very cosy, hemmed in by houses on both sides and fronting onto the small lane. The interior is appealing and cosy too. Their website www.brushmakers-arms.co.uk will tell you more, the telephone number is: 01489 860231. Beers on when visited included London Pride, Oakleaf India Pale Ale, and, perhaps to be expected, Upham Stakes Bitter.

When it is time to leave, turn left up the narrow lane towards the top of the village. At another small triangular green turn right onto a road curving left. Very soon there are extensive views on the left to the west. Certainly parts of the New Forest are visible from here, and I am reasonably sure I could see the distinctive fields of the hillside near Pepperbox Hill which is only a few miles from Salisbury! Very soon the road starts to drop steeply, and about 50 yards downhill take a good path on the left with two signs. The path

runs through a narrow belt of woodland, gently downhill, now with good views to the north of a steep dry valley.

At a fence ahead, turn right and go steeply down along the edge of the field. At the bottom of the steeper part of the slope (before the woodland edge ahead), turn left on a good path into the wood. After some time the path curves left and begins to climb, soon passing between two old chalk pits. Turn right at the path junction onto Monarch's Way, one of a few long-distance footpaths in the area; and immediately pass through a small gate. Go diagonally left downhill with the fence on your right, to another small gate at the woodland edge. Go through this thin belt of trees to cross a stile (one of the few damp parts of the walk). Now walk diagonally gently uphill to a stile in the corner of the field.

After the stile, turn left and walk along the field edge on a well-marked path for about 500 yards, keeping the line of trees on your left. Ahead you will soon see a cross hedge belonging to the cottage beyond. Go through the gap (with a gate) at the left end of the hedge onto an improving path, which soon joins the track from Sweet Briar Cottage. After a few gentle bends the track again improves into a good small lane by Dell House.

Stay with the lane where it bends sharply left, and just before it begins to curve left again, look for a small stile hidden in the hedge on your right. Cross the stile and bisect the angle of the hedge corner, to go towards a gate with a white notice on it. Go through the gate and keeping to the left follow the hedge up towards some modern housing. This field may get increasingly wet towards the top gate. There is a simple diversion in wet weather – see next paragraph. Go through the gate onto a short grassy track, then onto a short concrete drive which leads to Upham Street. Opposite you is your first footpath at the beginning of the

walk, so all you need do now is turn right and go back down the lane to the Woodman.

Wet ground diversion: Ignore the hidden stile in the hedge and stay on the lane and continue up towards the start of Lower Upham. At the end of the lane (Pope's Lane) turn right very sharply into Upham Street. Finally, walk back through the village to the Woodman.

Once more I hope you find the beer, the pubs, the walk, the countryside and the gentle, comfortable feel of the area all to your liking.

Maps: Maps are not absolutely necessary for this walk, my sketch map should help. However I always feel happier with a map; the relevant OS 1:25,000 Map is Explorer 119 Meon Valley

Seasons: Another walk for all seasons. In Summer the trees will not be overbearing, because much of the walk is in the open. The going underfoot is generally very good, so Winter could be a good time. Autumn is upon us, and the Autumn colours may well make this the best time of all.

Distances: The outward walk is less than 1 3/4 miles, the walk back about 2 1/2 miles.