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# Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

## by David & Lynda Thornley

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### A Circular Walk Around Thorney Island



Thorney Island is a former airfield, now an army base, so it's relatively undeveloped making it a wonderful place for a ramble. The day was one of the last of the summer, it was warm, with a bright blue sky but a stiff southerly breeze. Parking at Prinstead is easier than Emsworth and it's only a short (but rather fiddly) walk past Emsworth marina to Wickor Bank and the path around the island.

It's a pleasant walk along the dead straight sea wall down to The Great Deep and the entrance to the MOD section of the island. To the left you can see the Deeps winding across the top of the island; being afternoon there were few ducks about, just a few Mallard but plenty of Coots

To the right, on the seaward side of the path, there was plenty of mud exposed as the tide was quite low and still dropping. This had attracted quite a few waders, Oystercatchers were there usual noisy selves, a few Redhanks poked around in the mud along with some Egrets for good measure. Not to be left out a pair of Curlews flew back and forth adding their cries to the sound scene.



Before you can enter the base you have to pass through a rather imposing gate topped with razor wire and festooned with security cameras. Sometimes you have to use the intercom to explain who you are, this time though, the guards opened the gate straight away. It seems daunting and there's lots of signs making sure you know it's MOD land and warning you not to stray from the path but walkers are quite welcome really.

Here the path becomes a bit more interesting, there were clumps of common fleabane on the shore side amongst many other late flowering plants. It then

peacefully winds around a couple of bays until reaching Marker point which felt quite remote; there were no other walkers, just a couple of fishermen. It's a lovely unspoilt view across to Hayling Island with just the occasional yacht passing through the channel to add interest. Just past Marker point there was a small bank of mud just offshore which had attracted many waders, it was covered with jostling birds. Presumably they felt safe from predators there; looking into the sun it was difficult to see what they were.



Passing on down towards Pilsey Island there are several stretches of beach that were gleaming in the sunshine but totally deserted; it was wonderful feeling to be the only one there. The Island itself was quite quiet, a short peace that should change in a few weeks time when the migrants start coming in.

The east side of the island has a very different character, it's more built up and in the Thorney channel there are plenty of moorings with yachts. Amongst the clumps of weed and mud there's plenty of Samphire, seems like the Army are not fond of it. Shame on them, it was delicious!

It's a pleasant change to pass through the village, church and sailing club, with so many reminders of their military past, then on to Stanbury point. Here there were plenty of lapwings, at least six maybe more. Most were picking their way over the foreshore and difficult to identify but once airborne their characteristic full, rounded wings with dark tops became clear. A joy to watch.

It's only a short walk from the point up to the slice where the Great Deep empties out into the sea which marks the end of the MOD area with another imposing gate. The Thornham wall is dead straight, just like Wickor Bank and, today, was rather quiet. A brisk walk soon brought us through Thornham marina and on to Printhead marking the end of the ramble. It's about eight miles but that passes all too quickly as it's flat with well made paths; a lovely afternoon.

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