
Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

by David & Lynda Thornley

Chidham Circular Walk



One of our all time favourite walks around the harbour is this circuit of the Chidham peninsular

which is about 4.5 miles, long enough to be a good walk and take you through some differing areas of the harbour. On this particular occasion it was a birthday walk and the weather gods were kind with sunshine, showers and a bracing breeze.

The start is either the car park on the road leading to Cobnor or by the Old House at Home, dependent



on whether a pub lunch is to follow the walk. From the pub it's only a short walk north to the line of poplars alongside the path through the fields to the coast. We've often seen deer here on the

farmland, not just a one but several in a group who seem attracted to the relatively quiet fields.

Taking the coastal path leads south you have fine views over to Thorney Island with Printhead and Hambrook to the north; at high tide there are usually plenty of widgeon and other wildfowl around. A couple of days ago there had been a particularly vicious storm called Katie with 100+ knot winds that had blown too many yachts off their moorings and sadly, one was stuck on the mud nearby.



Whilst it's possible to shorten the walk by heading inland it's much more interesting to follow the old seawall around Chidham point and on down even though it's often damaged by storms. This spot, especially the bunny that flows under the path is usually good for waders and wildfowl, today there were only a few oystercatchers in view as it was low water and a spring tide for good measure. The fields to the left between the coast and the inland path are where the skylarks nest, it's such a joy to hear them so often above you. Further down, near the New Barn is where the Brent geese like to congregate but in late march they'd just disappeared north to Siberia. If you're lucky there are seals to be seen here too although they seem to prefer to keep their distance.

When the path leads onto the foreshore you're close to the marsh which is can be such a

wild place in inclement weather although only a few miles away from so many homes. The isolated line of wood stumps that had been a barrier erected long ago bear witness to the forlorn attempts to turn the marsh into agricultural land, clearly Nutborne marsh clearly prefers to retain it's natural form.



Past the birdwatching hide and up some steps Cobnor Point comes into view; this has recently been reformed into a tidal lagoon and gradually is becoming attractive to ducks and waders. Today only a few little Egrets were left after so many had flown away and the summer migrants were yet to arrive. The views are regarded as some of the best in the Harbour according to the Conservancy and it's here at the point that the character of the walk changes from the wildness of the marsh to the boaty feel of Ichenor and the channel all the way up to Bosham. The many moorings are largely empty in March but are soon occupied as summer comes and the dingy's come out to race from the activity centre nearby.



The dingy park and footpaths around the activity centre make a welcome change from the shingle and the bushes alongside the paths are an excellent source of sloes later in the year. Heading north the path then takes you between some ponds on the left and mud banks on the right with fine views north to Bosham with its characteristic church dead ahead. Bosham harbour, from this side of the channel, is has to be one of the most attractive views in the harbour from my perspective, perhaps it's the boaty feel; all very civilised compared with the wildness of the marsh past earlier.

Soon it's possible to head inland to the car park and then take the path that passes the lake, largely hidden, nearby. Here there are usually raptors, especially Buzzards that can come close by; in the hedges there are Yellowhammers to be seen if you're lucky. The sunken lane is particularly attractive but, unfortunately, marks the end of this particular walk although we'll be back again soon.