
Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

by David & Lynda Thornley

Fishbourne to Ichenor And Bosham



This walk is a little longer at 10 miles but passes through some particularly attractive and varied stretches of the harbour. The coastal path is followed down to Ichenor where you can cross the channel using the ferry and walk up to Bosham then back to Fishbourne; fortunately Ichenor is just past half way and The Ship makes an ideal break for lunch.

It's usually quite easy to park in Fishbourne near the Bulls head in one of the side roads nearby which is only a short walk to the pond and the start of the walk. The pond is managed by the Chichester Wildfowl's Association together with the reed beds at the top end of Fishbourne channel. Regular conservation work parties are held to keep the pond clear of excessive weed and to cut the reed beds on a rotational basis in order to maintain this particularly attractive area.



Opposite the pond there is a gate that leads along a small stream and out into the meadows which surround the reed beds to the east and form a peaceful haven as well as a nature reserve. From here the path leads down to Dell Quay; the short walk along the sea wall jutting out into the harbour is not to be missed as it provides a wonderful feeling of being in the harbour rather than beside it. From here, at low water, you can get a good view of the remains of the tidal mill that used to be in the middle of the channel as well as the barrier that once held the water back; now there's not much left apart from a few stones and what looks like a causeway.

Dell Quay soon comes into view as you pass through another meadow and a stretch of coastline that's particularly attractive to wildfowl in the winter who are drawn to the fresh water that's flowing out of



the sewage works, good job it's pure most of the time now! Anyone with an interest in boats would find the area just before the Quay appealing as it passes the boatyard and a few gently rotting wooden hulls; I hope many others would too.

Once past the quay with its sailing club and pub it's possible, and rewarding, to walk on the foreshore southwards although it's easier and quicker to stay on the path. This busy stretch is described in "Bonnie's Walk" which is a short circular walk down to the marina and back that's both pleasant and popular. Once clear of the delightful copse you approach the busy marina with its lock which has to be closed to be crossed as there's no bridge; if it's in use it's usually not long before the gates are closed again.



The Salterns way is then taken through Birdham marina to Ichenor which winds its way along bits of coast and around houses; not the most attractive part close up but with wonderful views in places of the reach leading south west to the sea. Closer to Ichenor there's a particularly interesting stretch of waterside that changes character totally, dependent on the tide; at low water it's a mass of mud with boats aground and popular with wildfowl, at high water springs the sea is lapping at the path.



The path leads past the sailing club and, conveniently, out in front of the Ship where they serve excellent beers and good food. It's a pleasant break after about 6 miles of walking to have lunch there.

Ichenor is a good spot to tarry, it's pretty and there's lots to see as folk struggle with boats of every type, in and out of the water. Eventually it's time to move on and take the ferry across to Bosham Hoe, just a few hundred yards away on the other side. This is only available at weekends in winter but in the summer operates every day from 9 to 6pm; you can catch it from the landing pontoon.



Once on the other side there's a reasonable path around the shore north to Bosham provided it's not high tide, don't try it then! The whole area is rather muddy and the path is no exception but the view across to Cobnor is well worth the inconvenience and in summer there's plenty of samphire to pick as well. Gradually the distinctive church and then the rest of Bosham comes into view which must be one of the most attractive spots in the harbour. The road around the harbour floods at high tide with adds a bit of spice to the scene. Houses as well as cars are vulnerable here when there's a high spring tide and low pressure.

Just before reaching Bosham you need to take a lane going east that leads to the foot-path across the



fields back to Fishbourne channel. This makes a pleasant agricultural interlude with the odd hare and deer for company rather than sea birds. Eventually you see water in the distance and shortly after are back on the coastal path which leads along the sea wall back to the pond.

This area has many reed beds, which, in spring are full of life. The last time we went it was a joy to see so many reed buntings, sedge warblers and reed warblers flitting about, the air full of their song and calls.

Finally there are a few bridges to pass over, across the meandering streams then through the reed beds to the rather ugly Mill House and back to the Bulls Head and the start of the walk.
