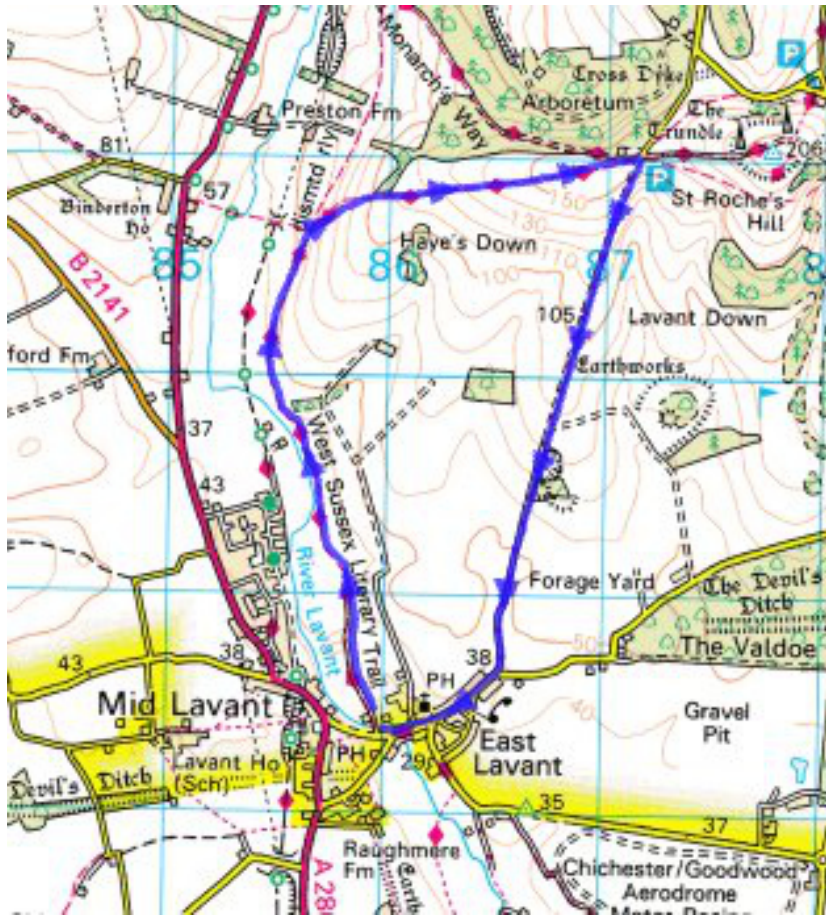

Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

by David & Lynda Thornley

Around Hayes Down, Lavant



This short walk is easy to get to but passes over traditional downland with excellent views. It's only 4.4 miles so it's ideal if a quick walk needs to be squeezed in and can be taken in wet times as the paths are all well drained bridleways.



The start is in East Lavant where you can park adjacent to the cricket field. The Literary Trail forms the first part which can easily be found over a small bridge leading away from the road. This leads north parallel to the old railway line with the river gently meandering between the two. In early May it usually flows strongly and even though the splashes have dried up there will be plenty of mallard about enjoying the fresh water. Spring is the ideal time to see the valley as the river dries for much of summer and autumn; it usually only starts to flow again, well in to the winter, at the end of year.

Spring's a fine time to watch the birds as they're active then, especially on a sunny morning. There are Yellowhammers to be seen along the path and skylarks above the down. Unfortunately there are all too many corvids are about but at least the Jackdaws add some variety to the crows and rooks.



Once clear of the ribbon development that is Mid Lavant the view north is particularly attractive with traditional downland on either side of the valley where the river and road run with a few farms for interest. Just after lambing time The fields are particularly busy with the local South Down sheep looking after their offspring.

A bridge over the old railway track marks the path that leads up the hill towards The Trundle. It's a short, steep climb but the views over the valley make it well worth the effort. Once past a gate on the edge of a wood the way is across farmland with a gentle climb to the top of the down. Just like the Trundle, the views are magnificent on a fine day with Langstone, Chichester and Pagham harbours all clearly visible as rivers of silver snaking through the countryside.



Just before the Trundle there is a small car park on the edge of Chalk Pit lane which leads down, back to Lavant. The underlying chalk is only too evident and it's clear that water gushes down at times from the erosion that has cut channels down the path. Halfway down is the original chalk pit which gives the lane it's name, now a clay shoot.

It's a pleasant amble down hill with walkers coming up in the opposite direction; well, it is an easy ascent that way! Back into the village it's only a short walk past the Royal Oak (which looks all too tempting) back to the cricket green