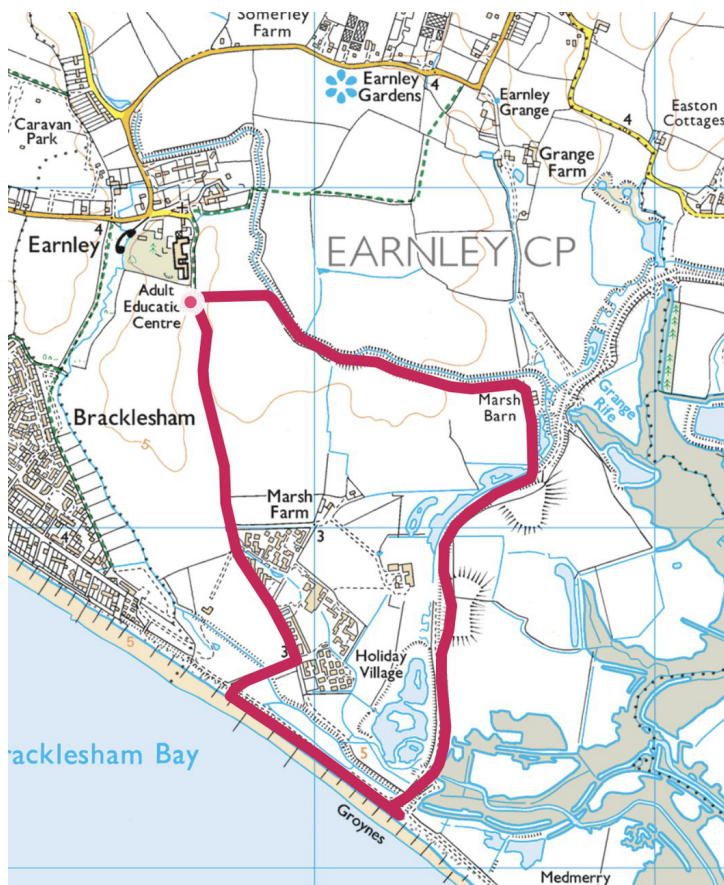

Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

by David & Lynda Thornley

A Short Walk Around the West Side of Medmerry

Sometimes a short walk is all that you can fit in, this three mile ramble many not but long but fits in some bracing sea



views as well as one of the more active areas at Medmerry. This large flood area has matured since it's construction a few years ago and has become an important home for wildlife. The start is from the RSPB car park at Earnley which is well signposted.

The first stretch is down the lane, past the holiday camp, which soon opens out onto fields leading to the shingle beach. It's best to stay out of the camp but fortunately there are a couple of stiles

to negotiate which keep you on the right path.

The beach stretches from Wittering in the west to Selsey in the east, with the remains of groynes that are gently rotting away since the defences have changed. There are fine views across to the Isle of Wight of Bembridge and Culver Down; The Spinnaker Tower and Portsmouth can also be seen. If the weather is vigorous there are impressive breakers, always inspiring to watch.



Further to the east it's possible to see the inlet that allows the marshland to flood as the tide rises. It's a shame there are dire warnings about how unstable the beach is, it's a pleasant spot. This short stretch of coast used to be a range in the Second World War; shells and cases can easily be found on the mud at low tide left over from Spitfire training sorties.

Heading east it's not far to the sea wall which is the inner line of defence around the flood area. Massive granite blocks mark the exposed end, walk round them and up onto the permissive path that follows the earthworks. The top makes a good vantage point to view the channels on the right that wind around, filling and emptying with the tide. To the left are several lakes that attract a variety of wildfowl,



perhaps as they are not tidal. On most days there are plenty of mallard flying about, herons, cormorants and little Grebes. If it suits them there's often a skein or two of Canada geese honking and making a nuisance of themselves.

Heading north along the bank the terrain turns from mud to meadow which is grazed by the Three Harbours herd. This is where there are many skylarks nesting, hopefully undisturbed, where they can be seen close to the ground rather than high in the air. All too soon the



path drops down towards a signpost and the bridleway leading to Marsh Barn. Here you head left either along a path or the track returning to the car park after a pleasant meander along some fields.

It's one of the largest flood protection schemes formed by re-aligning the coast. The variety of habitats is impressive and well worth seeing.