

Walk 2 - THORNEY ISLAND

A walk along the shoreline of Chichester Harbour around the perimeter of Thorney Island with splendid views over the harbour. This is a circular walk of about 8 miles,

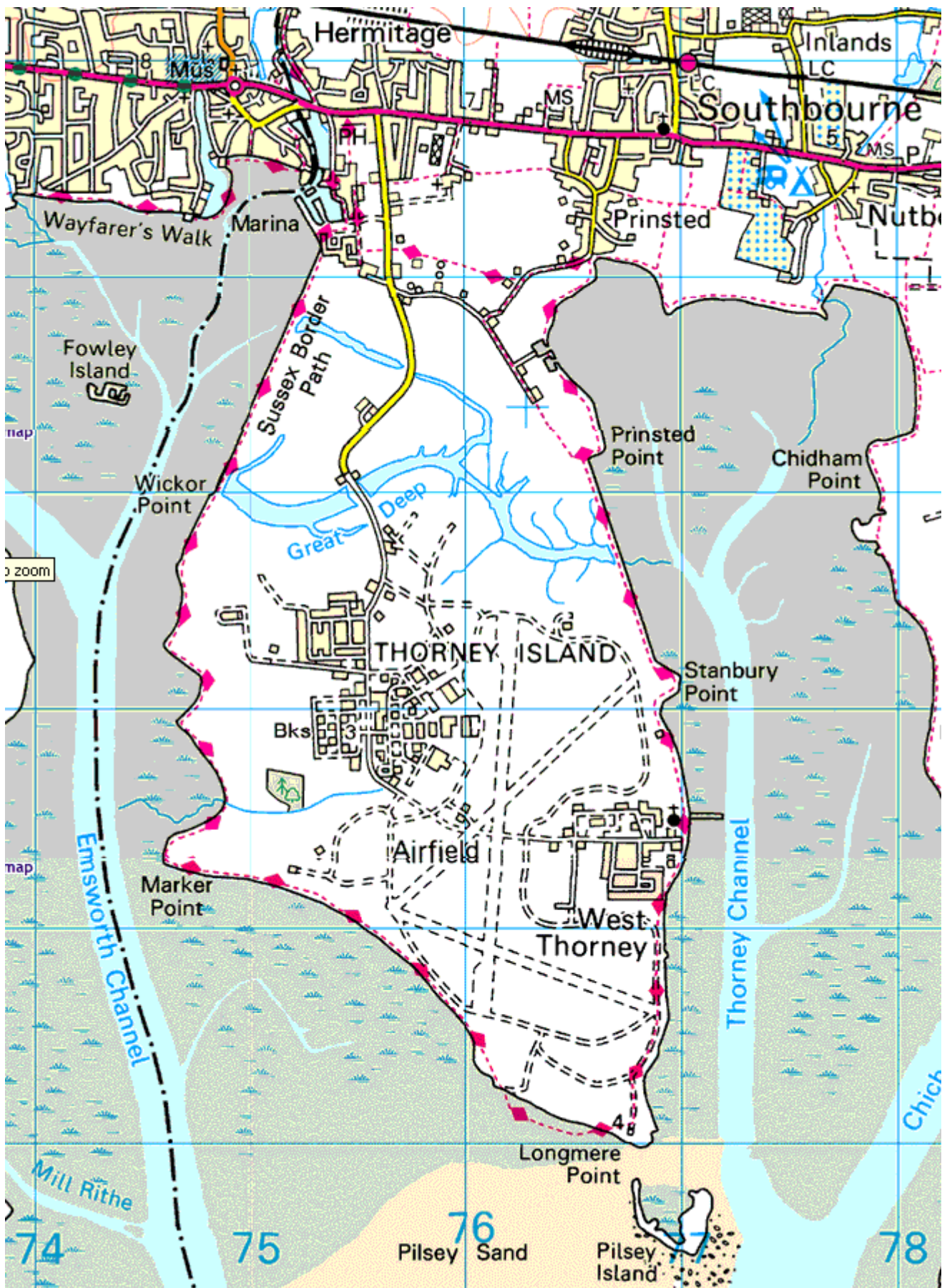


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PRE WALK INFORMATION

Tide times - must be consulted, as the route may be flooded in one or two places at very high spring tides. Phone the Harbour Office (01243 512301) for tide information or visit <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/easytide/easytide/index.aspx>

Special note - because a large part of the walk is on Ministry of

Defence land you cannot take any short-cut across Thorney Island.

You must keep to the shoreline path.

Walk instructions - the green text is the detailed walk route, black text gives you some background information on the area in which you are walking.

START Turn left on to the footpath at the end of Gordon Road and follow the footpath to the village of Prinsted. The path comes out onto a bend in a road. Do not turn left but bear right and straight down the road. It will then bear right and meet another road coming in from the left. Turn right and follow the road to meet the shoreline.

This is the location of the small car parking area mentioned in the pre-walk notes. Look out for the Sea Scouts Hut - sea scouts may be serving welcome refreshments!

Walk up the embankment onto the shoreline. The shoreline path goes to the left and to the right - take the route to the right, through a gate and along the shoreline. You will then reach two boatyards, Paynes and Thornham Marina. The path passes through both of these - take care on the stiles. Boaters Cafe is situated at the back of Thornham Marina should you wish to stop for a rest. The route continues alongside the shoreline and comes out onto a raised embankment at Thornham Point on Thorney Island. To call Thorney Island an island is now rather an anachronism for it has been joined to the mainland for more than 100 years. During the autumn and winter months it makes an excellent viewpoint to watch the many thousands of birds such as waders and wildfowl that come to the Harbour for the winter, feeding on the rich food source of the intertidal mudland.

Continue to follow the path along the shoreline You will walk over an oak bridge which crosses the gap to allow tidal flooding of the salt marsh to your right. The route bears round to the right and then you will meet a junction of two paths. Do not turn right but go left over the stile and along the straight path. Do not be put off by the tall gate ahead of you¹ You are approaching MOD land and will now need **to stay on the path at all times.**

The wetland area to your right is the remainder of the channel around the island of Thorney which was successfully joined to the mainland in 1870 by the reclamation of 178 acres. Called The Deeps, it now forms an important roost and gathering area for harbour birds and this raised embankment makes a good bird watching point. Once you reach the gate, press the intercom buzzer. You will be answered by a guard manning the security gate from the gatehouse across the wetlands on the Thorney road. You will need to give your name and address now and again later, on the other side when you emerge from MOD land. You will be

reminded to keep to the shoreline path and then the guard will release the gate and you will be able to push the gate open and pass through.

Thorney was adopted by the Royal Air Force in 1935. The airfield went on to play an important role during World War 2 as a fighter station and a base for Coastal Command. The role of the airfield continued until 1976 when, after a brief period as a temporary home for Vietnamese refugees, it was taken over by the Army and is now the base of an Artillery Regiment.

Carry on the shoreline path. On this stretch it is much worn, take great care. After about 1 mile you will reach a dinghy park on your right. Just beyond this you will find the path climbs up the bank with a few steps to go alongside the church.

This is the point that may be flooded at very high spring tides - either wait or paddle!

The church, dedicated to St Nicholas, is one of the most attractive and peaceful in the area, said to have been built in the 1100s. The seats along the boundary wall it make a pleasant resting point. In the grounds there is a small war cemetery.

Walkers are very welcome to visit the church which is open daily.

If you would like to see them, there is an opportunity to view the church and cemetery on the Conservancy's 3-day guided walk of the harbour in late spring and early autumn, contact Harbour Office for details.

Once past the church the footpath meets the road and you will see a sailing club straight ahead. If the tide allows you may bear left and follow the shoreline past the club and another club next to it

The first club belongs to the Royal Air Force and the second is the clubhouse to the Army Regiment's water sports activities.

If the tide is high you must turn right and then left into the car park* keeping to the left, and onto the path at the other end of the car park. The path turns left and returns to the shoreline. Turn right: Whichever route you take, both meet up here. Carry on along re path following the shoreline. After about 1/2 mile the path become" edged by hedging on both sides.. From time to time in the summer when the nettles have grown high over the path, you may need to bear right and out onto an unmade road, turning left to continue southwards. This is not a permitted route and should only be used if the footpath is truly overgrown. You will meet up with the route again by Pilsey sands.

The path will eventually turn right. At this point you will have reached; the southernmost tip of the island. You will see the sandy beach and dunes of Pilsey Island

Ahead in the distance you will see the entrance to Chichester Harbour. Pilsey Island is leased by the RSPB. A warden can be found in attendance during the summer months especially at nesting time. The Island provides an important high water roost for harbour birds. Access for walkers to the sands is not allowed. However, Army families are allowed to use the tidal sands for beach activities.

The path now travels in a north-westerly direction, still following the shoreline, for nearly two miles. You will reach a point where the path and sea wall turns sharp right. This is Marker Point. This is a good spot for taking a break.

The channel you see is the Emsworth Channel. Across the water is Hayling Island.

Now continue on the path which takes a rather loop-the-loop course following the shoreline. You will eventually reach the other security gate. Press the buzzer and give your name again over the intercom. The guard will release the gate for you to pass through. Ahead lies one mile of dead straight walking along the line of the old land-reclamation embankment. This is another good place from which to watch birds. You will then reach some distinctive black and white chalet houses on stilts. The path follows in front of them. When you pass through a small gate, turn right, following the track which forms part of Emsworth Yacht Harbour. You will see the basin of the marina on your left.

Turn right through the Marina and right again down Thorney Road to pick up the footpath on the left back to Gordon road.

Walk with adaptations from [Chichester Harbour Conservancy](#) Walk No.8