



Bosham Harbour and the Chichester Channel

Distance: 17½ km=11 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 27-may-2015

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Last update: 2-jul-2022

Refreshments: every village and more!

Map: Explorer 120 (Chichester) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Villages, inland sea coast, water, boats, marinas, nature reserves, pubs

In Brief

It is hard to imagine a more pleasant walk than this one around the Chichester Channel, with sight and smell of the briny sea a constant companion. You will constantly meet cheerful folk and their colourful yachts. Yet this walk has its moments of solitude with no main roads and distant views across the water. Bosham at the start and finish of the walk is a charming quiet little village in a corner of the harbour which you will remember for a long time.

This walk requires one very short ferry trip across the water to West Itchenor (cost £3 in 2022). The ferry runs on demand daily from 9 am to 6 pm from early May to the end of September and weekends only during April and October. You can double-check at www.itchenorferry.co.uk. It is also best not to start this walk at the time of an unusually high tide because the paths around Bosham Harbour may be flooded and you would need to use the road instead. Check at www.tidetimes.org.uk where you can “zoom in” to the Chichester area (an empty circle means “not for 7 hours or more”).



There are several good places for food and drink along the way. For the *Crown and Anchor*, booking may be necessary: ring 01243-781-712. You could include an overnight stay at, for example, the Millstream Hotel.



Thanks go to the *Adventurous Walks* books as the inspiration for this walk.



Any kind of sensible footwear is fine. There are no gradients and *no steps* on this walk. There are a few nettle patches, which might cause discomfort to bare legs. Your dog will love this walk too if he is not too big to go on the small ferryboat.

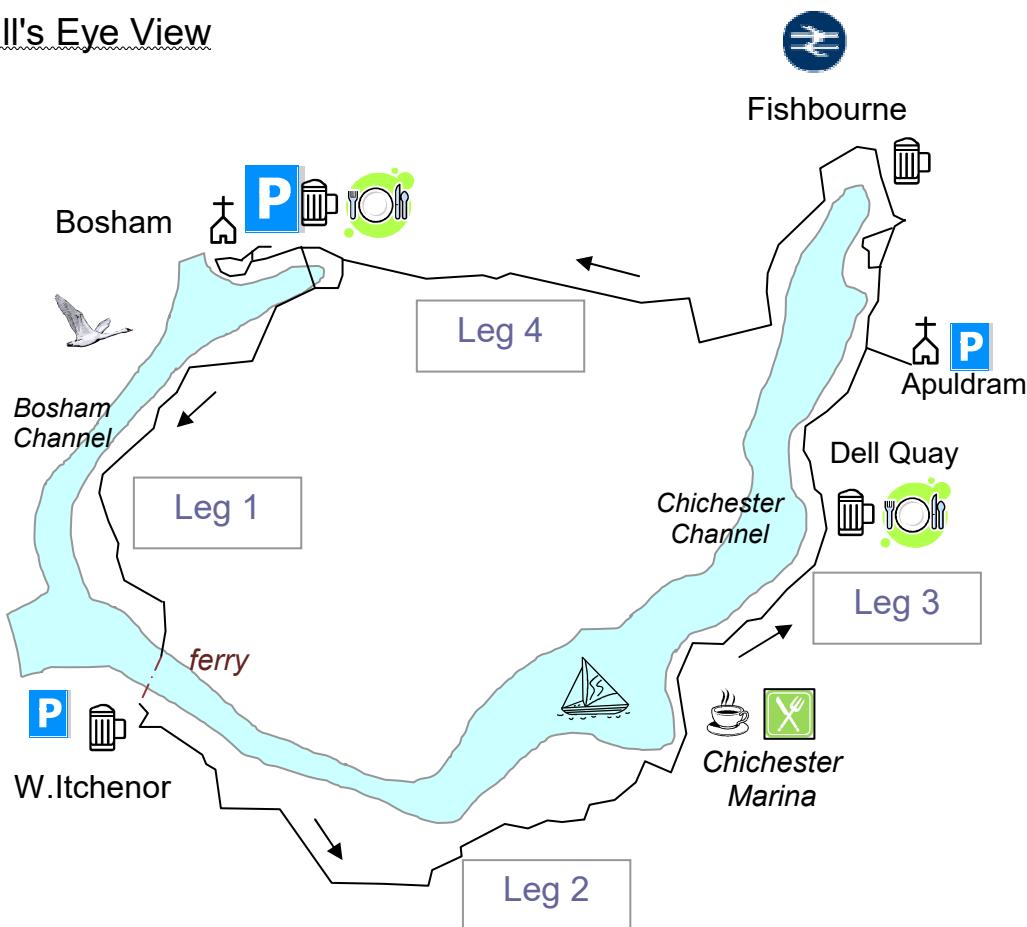


The walk begins at the car park in **Bosham, West Sussex**, postcode **PO18 8HX**, www.w3w.co/golden.modem.aware. There is a £4 all-day charge (2015-19). Of course, there is also roadside parking and you can park in West Itchenor, postcode **PO10 7AH**, or Apuldrum Church, postcode **PO20 7EG**. You can also come by **rail** to Fishbourne, where the station is only ½ km or so from the walk. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Seagull's Eye View



Leg 1: Bosham to West Itchenor 4 km=2½ miles

Bosham (pronounced locally rather like "bosom") is as old in history as any place you'll find on these pages, being mentioned by Bede in the 600s. But the further back you go the more fantastic the tales. It may be here that King Canute (that's "Knut" if you're Danish) showed his grovelling courtiers that he could not command the tide. The Danes were a nuisance. In the year 1000 it's said they made off with the church bell only to drop it down a hole where locals say they can hear it ringing on stormy nights. The last English king, Harold Godwinson, lived here before the Battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings. The Bayeux Tapestry has the village name in the line (test your Latin) "... Harold Dux Anglorum et sui milites equitant ad Bosham ecclesia" (the seamstresses forgot their grammar and missed the final "m" of that last word for "church") and there on the thousand-year-old cloth is a picture of the church! Bosham people were generous: during the Plague year of 1664, they took food to the beleaguered folk of Chichester and in gratitude were allowed to trade in the market without a licence. Now, as always, Bosham commands the Chichester Channel one of the most important waterways of the South.

WC

The large car park in the centre of Bosham is pay-and-display (cards accepted), well worth the trivial cost. It also has loos. You can't fail to notice that this is also a yacht park, a foretaste of your day's nautical adventure.

-  1 Leave the Bosham car park by a tarmac path signed *Harbour and Village* and turn **left** on the road to the *Bosham Walk* arts centre which is also a café. (You can of course march down to the shore, past the pub, and turn left to start the walk. But it would be a pity not to take a quick detour to see more of this charming village, as follows.) Turn **right** through small metal gates on a path to the church.

Bosham church dates from before the Conquest and is worth a visit. Note the wide nave and the little carved human heads. A little village tour brochure is on sale here.

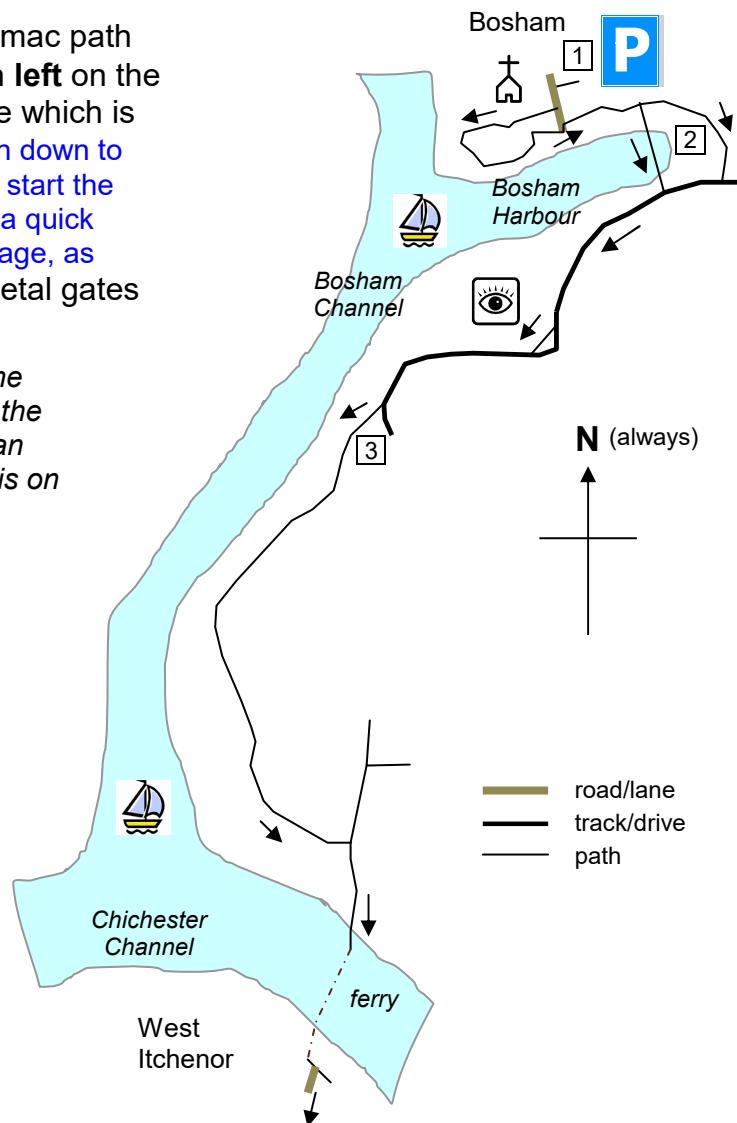
Go past the church to one of the best views of the Harbour. After a pause to admire, turn **left** along the sea wall, passing the boathouse, the quaymaster, the mill with its swans and the millstream where Canute's daughter is said to have drowned. *Notice the seaweed in the trees, evidence that the weather here is not always as clement as today's.* Turn **left** just before the *Anchor Bleu* pub and **right** on the High Street, a narrow lane with several cottages and a café. Return to the waterfront and continue along the road or the high path.



The coast here is tidal. The road may occasionally be flooded so that you need the high path. You may need to take the road to the ferry, rather than the coastal path.

- 2** After 200m, if the tide is low, you can turn **right** at a concrete post on a path across the harbour and turn **right** on a road at the other side. *Do not attempt this if any part of the path is under water!* If the tide is high, keep going round the harbour and **right** at a T-junction to reach the same point. Continue on the road, or the high path, ignoring a footpath signpost on your left, passing various houses. You soon have a good vantage point for a photo of the village and its church across the water. After the last house, fork **right** on a path which cuts the corner, re-joining the road. (*There is a footpath running parallel in the field on your left, hardly worth using since the road is so quiet and the view so good.*) You pass several benches for a last view. After you pass *The Salttings*, at a fingerpost, fork **right** on a path that runs along the foreshore. (*As the notice says, the path may very occasionally be flooded, in which case you need to stay on the road for just over 1 km and, where the road turns left by houses, at the junction of Lower Hone and Smugglers Way, keep straight on along a track to the ferry.*)

- 3** Follow this sandy and pebbly shore path under oak trees. As you round a curve, you see a T-junction ahead, but this is not a T-junction of paths but of water channels. You were following the Bosham Channel and ahead of you is the Chichester Channel which you will be following on the other side. *The Isle of Wight is also visible.* Finally, you reach a bank with benches and

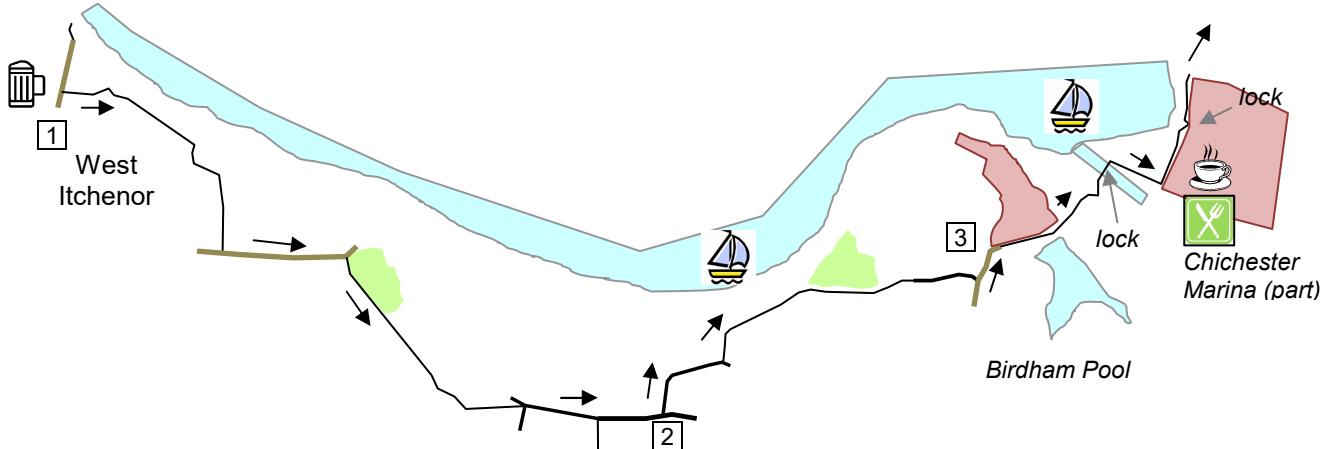


info tablets, and a fingerpost. Turn **right** here down to the water's edge to pick up the ferry.

The ferry will arrive on demand and is very quick and efficient. You can wave your arms but, chances are, they have seen you. The little ferry boat also acts as a taxi service for the yachts, so you may need to be patient.

- WC** After paying the ferryman (still £2.50 per adult as at Sep 2017), you disembark at the jetty in West Itchenor. There are also loos here.

Leg 2: West Itchenor to Chichester Marina 4 km=2½ miles



- 1** Walk up the road to the *Ship Inn*, a large very busy pub, a freehouse serving a wide menu. Opposite the pub, turn **left** on a signposted footpath. Follow the tarmac lane past houses to meet the shoreline and turn **right** on a narrow shingle path. Note that you are on part of the *New Lipchis Way*, a long-distance path running through Chichester to Liphook. This raised path winds around the shoreline, then between a wall and a garden to a residential road. Turn **left** on the road, passing rather swanky houses, some with nautical names. As the road becomes a private drive, fork **right** at a signpost through a small wooden gate, going past a small nature reserve on your left. Follow the dirt path, with a field on your right, then between fields. Where a footpath joins you from the right at a 3-way fingerpost, continue straight ahead. At the end, veer **left** and **right**, then through a gate, onto a concrete path, ignoring a swing-gate on your right. (That path on your right is part of the *Salterns Way*, a cycle and wheelchair route established by Chichester Harbour Conservancy.)
- 2** As the path becomes tarmac, ignore a junction on your right. After 50m on the tarmac, turn **left** at a fingerpost, signposted *Green Acre*, on a tarmac drive. The drive curves right, passing several houses. As it veers right again, keep straight on along a shingle path and turn **left** at a fingerpost on a footpath leading to the shore. You are on a pleasant path between low wire fences with good views of the Channel. On your right are some more houses, including a very fine nordic-style mansion with a large garden. Continue onwards past a slipway. Your path runs beside a field on your right, with a small wood on your left. Soon the path is a tarmac drive with a nicely mown grass verge which is pleasant to walk on. You come out to a

3-way junction. Turn **left** here on a lane which quickly leads you past, on your left, the Birdham Pool Marina building.

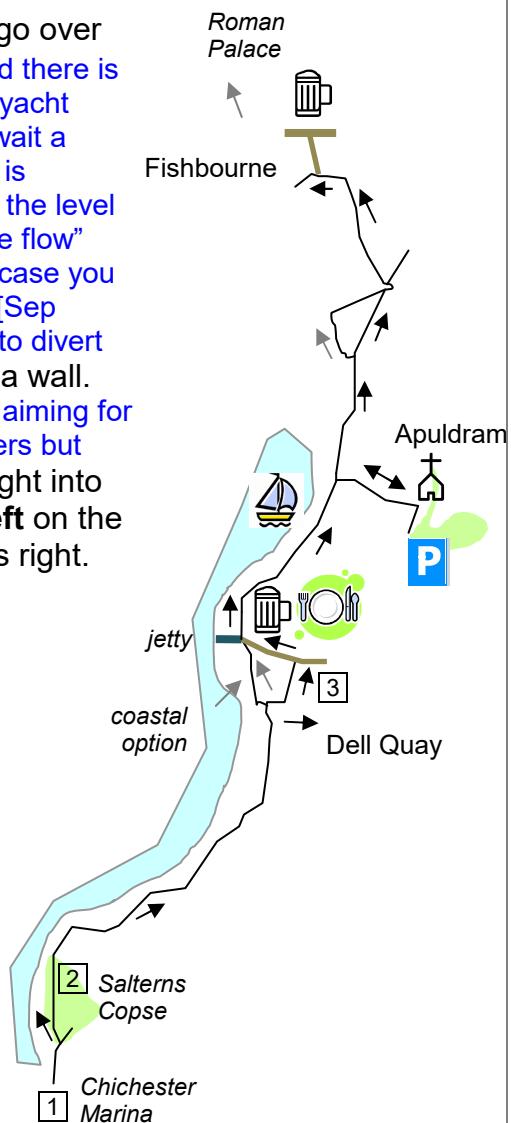
Birdham is the village across the fields and the Pool was for centuries a source of tidal power for two mills. The Marina has room for nearly 250 boats of varying size. The “for sale” noticeboard shows offers for as little as £10,000, up to £200,000. Of course, this outlay is only part of the cost of keeping a boat, bringing to mind the old simile of “standing in a cold shower tearing up £20 notes”.

- 3** Continue straight on along a track through the boat park, passing the Pool on your right. Continue on tarmacked Lock Lane, avoiding a footpath on your right. At a crossing, go straight over on a shingle path. After a small housing precinct turn **left** at a fingerpost on an enclosed path. This path leads over a deep lock, apparently disused and permanently shut to hold the high water for various berths occupied by names like *Living The Dream*. *It must be pleasant to wake up to nothing but the parp! of coots and the plink-plink! of rigging against the masts.* Turn **right** on a tarmac path beside the channel leading into the huge Chichester Marina proper. Walk beside the car park and turn **left** just before the large dark-stained building which incorporates the Boat House Café, a worthy spot to take a pause, serving some serious nourishment.



Leg 3: Chichester Marina to Fishbourne 5 km=3 miles

- 1** Continue straight on, to the right of the control house, to go over the lock gates. *The lock is operated by rotary steel gates and there is a zigzagging path over the top. When the gates open to let a yacht pass, the foot passage is automatically shut and you need to wait a couple of minutes, which is all it takes since the filling process is extremely fast and efficient. BUT when the tidal level reaches the level in the marina, the gates are open for several hours during “free flow” (look for a flashing orange light or ask the lockkeeper): in this case you need to divert round the other three sides of the yacht basin. [Sep 2019: they are modernising the lock gates and you may need to divert for the next few months.]* After the lock, keep left by the sea wall. (However, you can divert on a small concrete path to the right aiming for the toilet house; this contains showers and loos for berth holders but there is also one public wc.) At a 3-way fingerpost, go straight into the wood, known as Salterns Copse. Immediately fork **left** on the walkers’ path, thus avoiding the Salterns Way which forks right.
- WC**
- 2** This specially built path is an unexpected delight and it will lead you along the coast all the way to Dell Quay. After winding through the wood, ignoring turnoffs, the path emerges into a field. Keep **left**, still hugging the shoreline, with Chichester Cathedral on view. Your path runs beside a field on your right, over a 2-plank bridge and continues similarly. At the corner of this field, the *Crown and Anchor* beckons and you have a choice. *If the tide is not too high, go down a bank, turn left beside a fence down to the shore, turn right and walk along the beach to the pub. Otherwise, go right round the corner of the field, left in the corner, in 150m through a swing-gate and left on the road to the pub.*

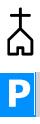


This hamlet of Dell Quay includes a large Yacht Yard and a jetty where you can take a short stroll. It is a huge pull for crowds who come to the *Crown and Anchor* for food and drink and an excellent view of the Channel.



The Crown and Anchor is a Youngs pub, so good drink is assured, but food dominates this hugely popular inn with its ideal location and its wide view of the Chichester Channel. Not surprisingly, sea food is a speciality.

- 3 After a possible break, facing the jetty, turn **right** on the concrete path close to the shore. Keep following the dirt path, past a boat repair yard, through a swing-gate, straight on and through another swing-gate.



The path on your right here will lead you along the right-hand side of a field for only 300m to the peaceful 12th-century Apuldram Church, a worth-while optional there-and-back excursion. The church's large car park is 100m away and can be used as a starting point for this walk.

Apuldram is a lost village. All that remains, apart from the church, are Rymans and the Manor, although you could include Dell Quay. It was sometimes spelt 'Appledram' but it seems the name has nothing to do with apples. The church dates from 1100, but most of it dates from 1250. The bright east window is much more recent of course.

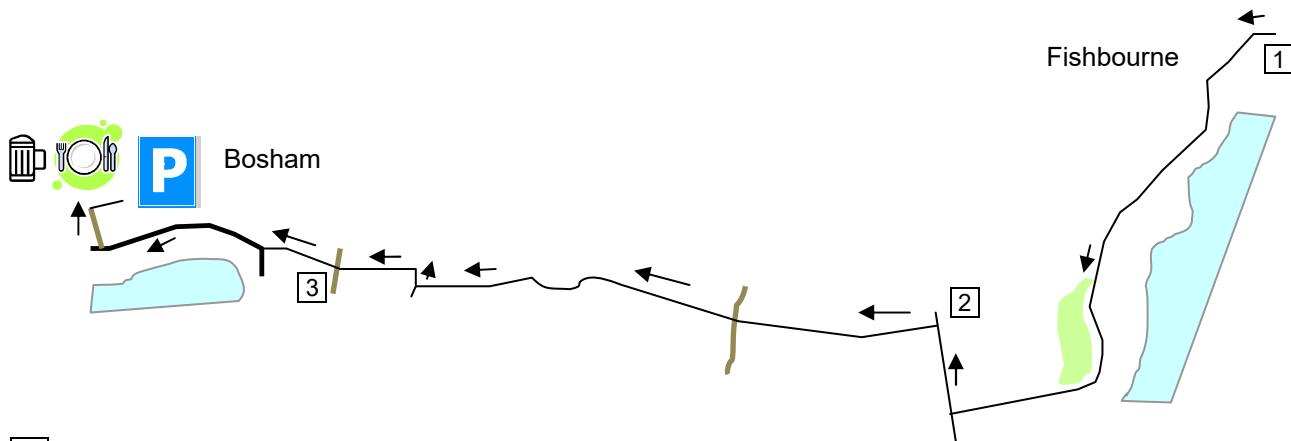
In the next corner, keep **left** through a swing-gate, staying next to the shore. *The hills to the north are part of the South Downs, especially Kingley Vale and the Mardens, covered by another walk in this series. The large white building is Goodwood Racecourse. (The next fingerpost used to give you a choice of staying with the seashore by keeping left along the sea wall, past the mud flats, round several corners, re-joining the other path after 400m. But in 2022 this path was too dangerous, and there are No Entry signs. So ...)* Keep straight on through a swing-gate on a grassy path, through another swing-gate at the end, and bear right. The path now runs over a stream to a fingerpost. Turn **left**, avoiding a path across the centre of a field. Two small bridges and a grassy path lead to a swing-gate, then over a bridge with rails and along a boardwalk. Bear **left** through an old-style metal kissing-gate beside a stream. The path takes through another kissing-gate and out to a lane in Fishbourne. Your route to Bosham is straight across on a gravel path but, by turning right, you can pay a visit to this village with its ducks by the millpond, and perhaps drop in to the *Bulls Head* or even visit the Roman Palace.



Fishbourne is best known for its Roman Palace. In fact the whole area round the Chichester Channel and centered here, was one of the most populated parts of Roman Britain from about the year 50 and was probably crowded with Roman life. The Palace, which is not far – left on the main road and right at the sign – is by far the largest known Roman residence north of the Alps and bigger in area than Buckingham Palace. (See also the Bignor walk in this series.)



Leg 4: Fishbourne to Bosham 4½ km=3 miles



- 1** Having gone straight over the lane in Fishbourne, retracing your steps if necessary, follow the path beside the Millpond on your right. Your path goes through an area of tall reeds*, over one bridge then over a longer bridge. (* At high spring tide, there may be a few inches of water. If you cannot wade, a half-hour wait should resolve the issue.) After a third small bridge and a few steps up, your path turns left and you are next to the Chichester Channel with views across the water on your left. On your right are fresh hay fields, whilst behind you are some of the best views on this walk of Chichester Cathedral. Your path goes through bushes, down to the shore line and then beneath oak trees. The path now turns away from the shore and goes over a small bridge, giving you a glimpse of the steeple of Bosham Church. You now go on a grassy fringe beside a crop field on your right before reaching a T-junction by a fingerpost. Turn **right** on a path between fields.
- 2** In 250m, turn **left** on a path which runs along a line of poplars. The path runs as a green strip along the left-hand side of a field. *Stonewall Farm, visible over on your right, is an important archaeological site, the supposed location of Vespasian's Palace, although this idea is now discredited.* At the end of the field, cross over a lane and go straight ahead through a metal barrier on a narrow path beside a field on your left. The path goes round a pair of houses and joins a drive on the other side. Where, in 300m, the drive bends left, keep straight ahead on a narrow path, turning **right** over a small bridge and **left** over a concrete bridge, then straight on across the centre of the field on a good path. You finally descend a few steps to a road in Bosham.
- 3** Cross straight over to a driveway beside a house and continue on a narrow path between fences. In 200m or so, your path suddenly emerges to the wonderful sight of Bosham Harbour possibly glowing in the evening sun. Go straight over the road, across the grass and **right** along the raised walkway. *This high path was reputedly built of stones from all over England and Europe that came into Bosham in ships' ballast.* Follow it back to the centre of the village where the walk began.

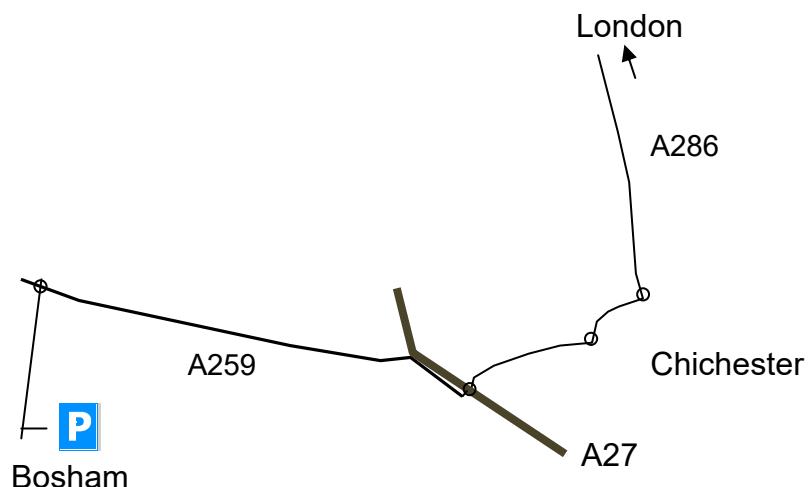
For final refreshments, the **Anchor Bleu** is the iconic harbourside inn of the village. Low beams, flagstone floors and a log fire in winter imbue it with a jolly atmosphere. There is an upstairs dining room with even better views and two terraces. Real ales include Ringwood Fortyniner. Many dishes are locally sourced: try the Blackdown venison steak (see the Blackdown walk in this series!) or the salt and pepper squid. No one can tell why the name is half French. The **Berkeley Arms**, a little way up the lane, is also good.



Getting there

By car: Bosham is signed from the A27 near Chichester. Turn off just west of the city at a roundabout, on the **A259**, signposted *Bosham, Fishbourne*. About 1½ miles after going through Fishbourne, turn **left** at a roundabout signed *Bosham Church Quay*. At a T-junction by the *Berkeley Arms*, turn **right** and follow the road as far as you can go and turn **left** into the car park.

If coming from the London area, take the A286 through Haslemere and Midhurst. At the Chichester ring road, follow signs for *Portsmouth (A27)* or *Fishbourne* until, after many junctions, you reach a large roundabout with the A27 running across it. You will now see a sign for Bosham which is half-right. Now continue as in the previous paragraph.



By train: start the walk at **Fishbourne railway station** (*not* Bosham station which is not near the walk). Turn **right** out of the station on Salthill Road, turn **left** on the main road and **right** on a lane just after the *Bulls Head* pub. Turn **right** at the end on a path to start the walk at Leg 4. Trains run regularly from **London Victoria** and from other major towns along that line, including Sundays.

By bus: bus 56 runs from Chichester to Bosham. Check the timetables.

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