

Pagham Church - Beating the Bounds 2-6th May with Alison Blenkinsop

Day 4 – North wall of Pagham harbour to the south-eastern corner (undertaken on 4th & 5th)



The usual walk takes us from Lagness through fields and on to the north wall of the harbour, but this was too long for me to do in the time allowed in lockdown. So we start at the north wall, where it leads from sluice gates by the bridge over Pagham Rife. This waterway is the drainage channel from Chichester to the harbour; the gates stop the rising tide's inland progress. A drone video shows the Rife entering the harbour:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGOdq1Djf88>

We pass the Salthouse, a Grade II listed building from 18th C with a thatched roof. It was used for storing salt when the harbour was navigable. Now it's a tourist information centre, and occasionally open on Sundays in the summer (though not this year!). It contains many interesting photographs of the changes seen over the years in the harbour and on the beach, wrought by both natural and mechanical means.



A public footpath leads over the north wall, an easy but longish walk around the western side of the harbour. This huge area of 1.550 acres is managed by the RSPB, whose main tourist centre is on the opposite side, south of Sidlesham. <https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=3203>

The harbour has a fascinating history; in 13th C, it was a large port with navigable channels. In later years the harbour entrance silted up, and the land was reclaimed for agriculture. This site gives lots of information about the harbour and other areas of Pagham, including our church:

<https://paghamparishcouncil.gov.uk/your-village/history-of-pagham/>



We walk past the house of Little Welbourne (at the end of Church Lane). It has an outbuilding (left) made from a boat, reputed to have belonged to smugglers. The house incorporates the ruins of the original St Andrew's Chapel (ahead). The house next door is Pagham Church's former vicarage. It dates back at least 400 years, and has a view of the harbour. In 1910, a storm broke through the old sea defences and inundated the land that had been reclaimed. The vicar watched in horror from the safety of his window.

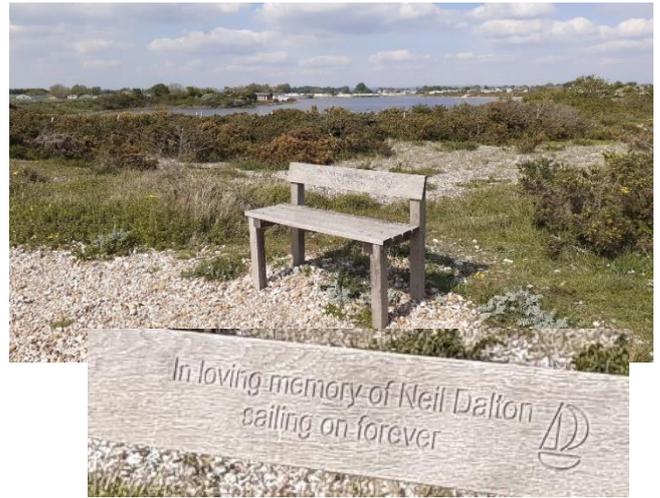
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/pagham-harbour-local-nature-reserve/>

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Our path skirts Church Farm Holiday Park, and passes the large lagoon which provides a wonderful view for many of the chalets and static caravans. The core staff caring for the park during lockdown kindly volunteered to help with church cleaning and churchyard maintenance. We pray for staff and guests in our Intentions on 12th day of each month. <https://www.haven.com/parks/sussex/church-farm/>

We continue southwards beyond the lagoon, across a reinforced embankment installed some years ago, and pass the bench commemorating Neil Dalton, a much loved member of our Church family.



The harbour contains vast areas of shingle, stones of different shapes, colours and sizes, and beautiful shells. It's good to remember that just as God made and knows each one of them, he knows each one of us, and loves us all, unconditionally. (Note: the normal route for the annual Beating the Bounds does not go this far.)



We pass an old and shallow lagoon, with a view to Bognor Regis in the distance.



A detour takes us to the edge of the channel through which the sea enters and leaves the harbour twice a day. On clear days, the South Downs and Goodwood can be clearly seen to the north, and the Isle of Wight to the south-west.

This sunken wall of metal (right) marks the furthest corner of the Pagham side of the harbour. Next week, the final part of our walk explores the harbour mouth and the western part of the beach. We head towards the Yacht Club, where we started our journey, and finish the walk at our home church of St Thomas à Becket.

