

# Friends of the Ridgeway

E-NEWSLETTER

Winter 2013, Issue 98

*Welcome to our  
Christmas Newsletter, 2013*

*That sounds much better than a  
Winter Issue, doesn't it?*

*We wish all our members and  
colleagues a very happy festive  
season, and some bracing walks  
along The Ridgeway!*



## E-Newsletters

This Christmas issue is made possible by our decision this year to go over to e-mail Newsletters, which will reduce the time your Committee spends before each meeting stuffing envelopes for circulation, and will give us more flexibility over the publication date. Moreover, it will save not only significant sums in postage and printing costs, but also a large pile of paper, so reducing our impact on the planet's resources! We shall of course continue to send photocopies of the Newsletters to those members who have requested them.

## A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

### *The Ridgeway Day: Sat 10th May, 2014*

We have started planning for our Annual Meeting next year, which we propose will once again be combined with an Open Day. This will provide an enjoyable and informative experience for all ages, whilst showcasing The Ridgeway and all those involved with looking after it. We do hope that as many of our members as are able to do so will come along to Court Hill, Wantage, to enjoy the day and to help us welcome our guests.

### The Ridgeway Trail Partnership

As noted in our last issue, Natural England has announced that it would like to move to a more devolved organisation for the National Trails, with greater involvement of users and local communities. It seems likely that the current joint management structure for The Ridgeway and the Thames Path will be separated and new bodies set up for each Trail.

We have discussed a new partnership structure with the present National Trails Office (NTO) team and management group, with a view to setting up a new Ridgeway Trail Partnership. This would include the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs and other stakeholder bodies, of which we are likely to be one. Our proposal is that this should take the form of a new charitable trust, managed by a committee of Trustees representing the many interested stakeholders. However, talks have moved frustratingly slowly, and the new structures remain to be agreed. We hope that an announcement can be made soon.





## The Great Stones Way

There have been no major developments in resolving the current impasse over the route across the Vale of Pewsey. This remains an emotive issue for some local residents, but neither the local Councillors nor the officials at Wiltshire Council have been able to help resolve it. We have proposed some amendments to our preferred route and hope that these will prove more acceptable. In the meantime, we understand that a national guidebook publisher is pressing ahead with working up a guidebook to the route, on its own initiative, and we are liaising with the author. With work now nearly complete, we await a publication date, when we hope to support the launch with a guided walk event.



## Historic Pathways

The Thames Valley U3A Network has adopted "Historic Pathways" as their current project, in conjunction with Berkshire Record Office. The plan is for U3A groups and members to research the historic pathways and routes in their local areas, at first through local records and documents and later on foot. We are naturally keen to explore with them the links between the local historic



pathways and The Ridgeway and Icknield Ways, the forerunners of them all.







## Vale of White Horse Local Group

The VWHLG Christmas meeting, with stollen and mulled wine, and a fascinating talk by Prof Gary Lock of Oxford Univ, took place in the Pump Rooms in Faringdon on Thursday, 12th December, and their Winter series of interesting talks and visits continues. For details phone Joyce Gardner on 01367 710743 or e-mail [joycegardner@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:joycegardner@hotmail.co.uk).

### The Deregulation Bill, 2013

The coalition Government is working up a Deregulation Bill, aimed at reducing bureaucracy, and some sections have been included relating to rights of way, etc, which may provide an opportunity to secure new legislation on the subject. At the initiative of our President, Lord Bradshaw, proposals which we supported have been put to the Joint Parliamentary Committee, for specific additions to the Bill which would make off-roading illegal at least in the National Parks and AONBs, and within World Heritage Sites. We wait to hear whether these amendments have been accepted.

### Better Communications

Your Committee continues to focus on improving our engagement with you, our members, with the local communities and with the public at large, particularly families and younger age-groups. We are aware that in order to do this we need to make better use of social media, and to keep our web-site up-to-date and informative, as well as continuing with our programme of Newsletters, talks and events. If you think you would like to give us a hand with this task, or know someone well equipped to do so and willing to volunteer, do please get in touch.



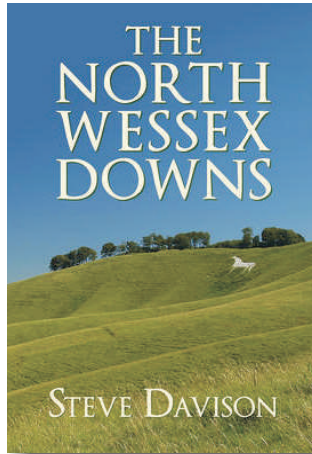
## Trustees

We are hoping to have recruited a new Treasurer, to fill the Trustee vacancy left by Sally's retirement. We still have a vacancy for an Access and Communities Secretary/Trustee, and would like to hear from anyone interested in volunteering for this important task.

## New Publication

If you are looking for Christmas present ideas then why not try this new book by Steve Davison. It is an in depth exploration of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The book explores the geology and landscape, 5000 years of human history including Avebury, the Uffington White Horse and Wayland's Smithy, wildlife and nature reserves, historic churches,



picturesque villages, transport and local industries.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2014 are due on 1st January, at the rate of £8 for individual members, £15 per family, and £15 for associations. Life memberships can be purchased for £80, or £120 for a joint membership. Please send payments to Mike McQueen, Membership Secretary, 21 Springfield Road, Old Town, Swindon, SN1 4ER.

