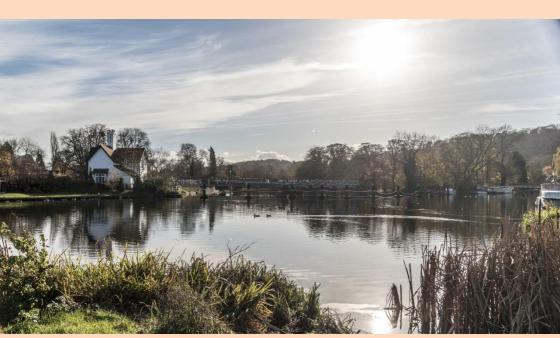


The Friends of The Ridgeway Preserving the Spirit of The Ridgeway



Annual Report 2017

About Us:

Our Mission:

- To preserve The Ridgeway as a unique environment;
- To enable quiet enjoyment of its many special features;
- To **promote** greater awareness of its value to the whole community.

Our Aims: The preservation of The Ridgeway, securing quiet enjoyment of its essential atmosphere and environment, and its many special features. Our aspiration is for the whole of the ancient Ridgeway, from coast to coast, to be recognised, valued, protected and promoted as a pre-eminent facility for walkers and other users.

Our Vision for The Ridgeway:

- A special environment whose landscape, history and wildlife are fully appreciated by the local and wider communities;
- A place where people can exercise, enjoy their special interests and a memorable day out, respecting the Countryside Code;
- Properly maintained, with excellent access, signage, facilities and information, not over-used or abused, benefiting everyone.

Our Role: To campaign for the protection of the whole length of the ancient Ridgeway, and to promote its value to the whole community as an essential part of everyone's life and heritage.

We work with the Ridgeway Partnership and others to ensure that The Ridgeway National Trail is properly maintained and protected as an essential facility and a vital element in the national network of recreational trails. We also seek to engage people living near to and using The Ridgeway in activities that spread knowledge and appreciation of its historic, artistic and environmental features.

From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Inevitably in writing a Chairman's letter for the Annual Review, I am drawn to think about the past year and issues facing what Ian Ritchie have recently referred to as "our beloved Ridgeway". Last year I wrote " as the seasons came and went, issues relating to the Ridgeway have come and gone, some threatening the trail, some offering hope in new activities". A similar sentence could be written again this year; the same issues keep reappearing.

The Friends of the Ridgeway was founded to 'preserve the ancient Ridgeway paths along the chalk downs of Southern England'; the major issue was damage due to use of motor vehicles the Ridgeway and other green lanes. However, the preservation of the Ridgeway paths is not just a single issue. The Ridgeway Partnership still lacks financial stability, about its long arousing concern term commitments. And maintenance development schemes that impact upon the Ridgeway continue to be promoted, including some that will lead to the trail be moved. But our original concern, damage due to motor vehicles, has not gone away and remains a major concern.





Protection against damage by cross-country vehicles to much of The Ridgeway and other green paths was achieved with the passing of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, and the application of Restricted Byway status to most of The Ridgeway National Trail south of the Thames. However, the remaining sections in Wiltshire (which include important ancient pavements in the sections approaching Avebury) are not so protected at present and we continue to campaign to get them protected.

Nationally we continue involvement with the Motoring Stakeholder Working Group, established by Natural England. On 21 November 2017 the NERC Select Committee of the House of Lords met to consider oral evidence about green lanes. Our President, Lord Bradshaw, attended on behalf of Friends of the Ridgeway. Subsequently Green Lanes Protection Group (GLGP) and the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) submit written evidence. Despite this activity, progress is very limited and realistically unlikely to lead to any further legislation or restrictions on motor vehicle use on green lanes. Recent correspondence and reports have been addressing signage on green lanes. But we will continue to support the Working Group.

A Friends of the Ridgeway member has reported an issue on part of the Ridgeway. From the top of Gramps Hill to the Wantage - Hungerford road, the Ridgeway is as good as a country road and becoming a problem for walkers and riders with cars, delivery vans, the local shoot vehicles and farm traffic. Even the refuse collectors use it weekly as a short cut. It is alleged that there is virtually no grass left to walk on over this section. The problem is caused by it being a short cut and the track is very well made up by the farmers for their vehicles. We are investigating the issue and will endeavour to ensure that the TRO in place is properly enforced.

Oxfordshire County Council has mailed out the consultation for 32 requests, predominantly related to The Ridgeway, to change Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO) cases affected by NERC to turn Restricted Byways into Byway Open to All Traffic (BOATS). Whilst there is an existing Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on all Restricted Byway sections of the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire, even if these claims were successful use of public motor vehicle would not be permitted on the Ridgeway but the existing order might be reviewed and amended. Although not invited directly to respond to the consultation, we will put forward our views and monitor the situation.

It is apparent that we need to continue to pursue the aim of removing all motorised traffic on the Ridgeway and be watchful about possible relaxation of the traffic free status of the trail.

Moving to the affairs of the Friends of the Ridgeway, on 25 May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force. This new law replaces the current Data Protection Act and inevitably changes the way we must organise our affairs. Organisations need to make sure that all processing of personal data of supporters is done fairly and lawfully, respecting the privacy rights and choices of individuals. Members consent to

the use of their data is vital and MUST be obtained. In this context, please read the letter issued with this Annual Review and complete the consent form so that we may continue to keep you informed about our activities.

To increase the voice of the Friends of the Ridgeway and allow our work to continue, we would like to recruit more members. Membership has increased modestly and now stands at just under 500. Thank you all who have spread the message about the Ridgway to friends and acquaintances – please do continue to spread the message. We need to engage with both the long-term and new residents near the Ridgeway, and to make them aware both of the attractions of the Ridgeway and its environment and of the need to protect it.

Furthermore we are delighted acknowledge the various donations received for the Ridgeway National Trail, including two most generous significant donations. These amounts are included in our accounts as restricted funds for the Ridgeway National Trail and will be expended on works to maintain and improve the trail.

The AGM will be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington on Sunday 22 April 2018, as part of the Ridgeway Friends Day including the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. Definitely a date for your diary – please do come along.

In the last year, Sally Barnes resigned from the committee but continues to be very active with the Vale of the White Horse Local Group; many thanks are due to Sally for her contribution to the association over the years. At the last AGM in 2017, we were delighted to welcome Andy Greenhalgh and Dr Nicola Swan as Committee Members and Trustees and subsequently Diane Godfrey and Alan Chater have been co-opted onto the committee. Further committee members and trustees would be welcome.

As seasons come and go, so individuals move on. Ian Ritchie, who until 2015 was your Chairman and went on to become Chairman of the Ridgeway Partnership has now resigned from that post. He will be succeeded by Simon Kearey who is passionate about the area and National Trails. Ian Ritchie is to become Chairman of the embryonic Association of National Trails. We wish him well.

Jeff Goddard will be stepping down at the AGM as our Secretary, having served for 10 years or more. He also has stepped down as Secretary to the Ridgeway Partnership. As far as I am concerned, he has been the backbone of

the Friends of the Ridgeway – enormously knowledgeable about the ancient road as well as the affairs of the Friends of the Ridgeway. He will be much missed, maybe even genuinely irreplaceable; many on the committee would welcome his agreement to remain a committee member so that we may benefit from his wise advice, experience and council. But whatever transpires, we wish him well with his activities in the future and will hopefully see him along the Ridgeway enjoying the trail he has done so much to preserve.

Anthony Burdall



NOTICE OF THE 2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, on Sunday, 22nd April, 2018, at 3.00 pm.

Nominations for the election of Officers and Trustees and items for Any Other Business should be sent in writing or by e-mail to the Secretary by 14 full days before the Meeting, i.e. by 7th April, 2018. Members are urged to volunteer to ensure that the Association's work can continue uninterrupted.

Tea will be served following the conclusion of the Meeting.

The winners of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prizes will be announced and the Prizes awarded at 3:30 pm. Entries to the competition will be on display in the Hall, and light lunches may be purchased from 12.00 pm.

The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize: Funded by a magnanimous donation, the Committee was able to implement in 2017 a long-standing ambition to launch an Arts Competition and Prize, celebrating the creative and artistic inspiration of the Ridgeway. Following strong support the Competition is being held again this year. Separate classes are open to works of painting, photography, sculpture (including ceramics) and writing (poetry or prose). Prizes will be awarded for each category as well as to an overall winner, each winner receiving a cash sum and a keeper prize.



There will be an exhibition of entries over the three days culminating in the Ridgeway Friends Day and Annual General Meeting. This year's event will be held in the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall in Uffington, from 20 to 22 April 2018. The Exhibition will be open to the public between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm each day, and the Prizes

will be awarded at 3:30 pm on Sunday 22 April.

The Ancient Ridgeway: An ancient trade route, perhaps our oldest road, dating back 4,000 years at least to the civilisation that built Avebury and Stonehenge, the ancient Ridgeway follows the edge of the chalk escarpment across the South of England, from The Wash to the coast of Dorset. Coupled with the Icknield Way lower down the slope, just above the spring line, the well-drained and lightly wooded track, above the marshes and thick woods of the Vales, linked Seahenge and Grimes Graves in Norfolk, to Avebury and Stonehenge. Burial mounds and hill-forts, and hill figures carved in the chalky turf, may be traced along the route, and armies have marched and fought along it. Its powerful atmosphere and its glorious countryside still today inspires and stimulates artistic creativity.

The Great Chalk Way: Representatives from The Friends of The Ridgeway and the Icknield Way Association met in September 2017, and agreed to co-operate in the identification and if possible the development and promotion of a multi-user recreational route along the line of the ancient paths between Dorset and Norfolk, under the name of The Great Chalk Way. The route, like the original braided tracks, would include alternatives, but will generally follow the Ridgeway/Icknield Way along the chalk escarpment, the

Great Stones Way past Stonehenge, and the Wessex Ridgeway. The route should be mapped and a concept established this year.

The Ridgeway National Trail: It was only natural that, when the National Trails were established after World War II, The Ridgeway should take its place amongst these premier routes. Only the central section of 87 miles between Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire and Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire was so designated. However, this section of The Ridgeway brings together the best of the Chilterns and the North Wessex Downs, joined by the picturesque Thames Valley. Virtually the whole route is within either the Chilterns or the North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The Ridgeway today provides a wonderful experience not only for walkers and local residents, but for visitors and families seeking the best of rural England. South of the river lies the classic, high, down-land track, with its massive views above the Vale of White Horse, and to the north the woods and vales of the Chiltern hills harbour pretty villages and welcoming pubs and restaurants.

The Ridgeway Partnership: The Ridgeway Partnership was established in 2015 to take responsibility to Natural England for the management, promotion and improvement of the Ridgeway National Trail. The partnership brings together the local authorities along the route, the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs, the Ramblers, Chiltern Society, and other stakeholder representatives. The Friends of The Ridgeway is a founding Partner, and played a significant role in setting up the Partnership. Oxfordshire County Council, as Lead Partner, holds funds and accounts, hosts a Ridgeway Officer, Sarah Wright, and other part-time staff, and supports the volunteers who, with Chiltern Society and Ramblers work teams, carry out the regular maintenance needed to ensure the high standards required of National Trails. Natural England provides a grant towards core costs, alongside lesser amounts from local authorities, and co-ordinates the National Trails network as a whole.

The Ridgeway Partnership seeks to raise awareness of the Ridgeway as an important recreational and leisure facility and of its unique heritage and environmental characteristics, and to work closely with landowners and local communities to increase economic benefits from tourism. It has identified five themes or aspects of The Ridgeway's unique appeal, namely the Natural,

Living, Ancient, Sporting and Creative Ridgeway, to highlight its wild-life and bio-diversity; the superb landscape and scenery; good food, country pubs and services; sporting events and family recreation; its wealth of heritage and pre-history; and inspiration for art and literature. To walk on The Ridgeway can improve physical and mental health, as well as enjoyment of peace and quiet.

Plans in 2018/19 will provide more strategic access routes between local communities and the Ridgeway, with clearer signage, better surfaces, easier accessibility and improved information, encouraging residents to make more use of the Ridgeway, and Trail users to benefit from local services and attractions. A co-operation with Oxford University Department of Plant Sciences will add to knowledge of rare chalk downland habitats.

The Ridgeway Partnership is working with other National Trails to ensure financial stability for core management and maintenance costs, and to mobilise additional funding for promotion and development.

My Stint as Secretary

When I joined the Committee as Secretary in May 2007, replacing the long-serving Peter Gould, the long campaign against the off-roaders, led by our then Chairman, Ian Ritchie, had quite recently achieved its immediate objectives, with the passing into law of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act, 2006 (NERCA), and Oxfordshire's decision to apply the Act's provision for Restricted Byways to much of the Ridgeway. Wiltshire did not follow suit, but the struggle continues!

lan was inclined to feel that his work was done and it was time to stand down, but my strategy proposals in August 2007, that setting the Ridgeway National Trail in context as the central section of the ancient, coast-to-coast ridgeway path, passing by Stonehenge, persuaded him that worth-while challenges remained! By November 2007, we had decided that an extension of the trail from Avebury to Stonehenge, that I called the Great Stones Way, should be our first objective. We amended our Objects clause at the 2009 AGM to ensure that this is within our powers.

The Committee was strengthened in 2008, by the addition of Jim Gunter and David Axford, and later Sally Barnes and Marion Young; but we were sorry to lose Anna Hanslip as Treasurer, Jane Ebbutt and later John Templeton. Janet Hierons remained a tower of strength as Membership Secretary. Geoff Dare

and Michael McQueen joined us for a while, and John Edgerton took the reins as Treasurer from early 2014.

An early priority was to improve our communications with members, by progressively beefing up the web-site and Newsletters. In April 2008, the formation of Local Groups was proposed, with the same objective, and the Vale of White Horse Group was soon formed led by Roger Griffin. We decided in May 2008 to celebrate our 25th Anniversary by producing a special brochure, "The Ridgeway Friend", in full colour, and I was pleased that this brought me into contact with our excellent first Secretary, Nigel Forward, now, alas, deceased.

Another early task was to attend the opening of the Ridgeway Link Path from the new Centre on Dunstable Downs to Ivinghoe Beacon, when I was pleased to get to know Annette Venters and others at the Chilterns Conservation Board.

In our pursuit of the Great Stones Way, after trying to get Wiltshire to take the lead, we were drawn into five years of planning, fund-raising and various feasibility studies. The route posed issues including the Ministry of Defence ranges on Salisbury Plain, and the A303 crossing at Stonehenge; and it was extended to run between Barbury Castle and Old Sarum. Members generously supported an appeal raising over £10,000 for the project to match the grants we had raised. In the event, however, although a number of improvements to the path were completed, a vocal minority of objectors eventually induced our funders in September 2012, to withdraw their support, leaving us unable to finish way-marking the route. However, a Cicerone Guide to the route was published in 2014, and this great route is available for walkers to enjoy.

Meanwhile, Natural England (NE), the agency that oversees the National Trails (NTs), had launched a management review aimed at "ensuring best value" for its public funding, on which we were consulted in 2011. We argued in favour of greater stakeholder involvement, provided that core public support continued. In mid-2013 NE's "New Deal" was published, by which time we had been invited to attend the Ridgeway and Thames Path Management Group. This led eventually to the formation of the Ridgeway Partnership that undertook responsibility for managing the Ridgeway NT. The Partnership Board held its first Meeting in March 2015, after Ian agreed to take the Chair, and I had drafted the required documents. I continued to

take the Minutes of the Partnership Board and its Development group until March, when Ian and I both retired.

Ian retired as our Chairman in 2015, handing over to Anthony Burdall, our current Chair. I agreed to continue as your Secretary until Anthony had settled into the post and recruited his own team. With that now achieved, and your Committee well-staffed and strongly led, I look forward to a quieter life!

Jeff Goddard

The Friends of The Ridgeway: The Facts

The Friends of The Ridgeway is a voluntary association, founded in 1983, and now a registered charity, no 1107926.

The President and Vice-Presidents: Our current President is Lord Bradshaw. Our seven Vice-Presidents are all Members of Parliament whose constituencies include sections of The Ridgeway.

Volunteer Committee: The Trustees of The Friends of The Ridgeway, elected annually to run the Association, comprise an Executive Committee, which normally meets quarterly, and is supported by other volunteers, including our valued Planning Adviser. The Committee, listed on the back cover, includes the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. We are currently seeking to recruit a new Secretary and new Trustees with special responsibility for Communications and Engagement with the local community and other organisations. Trustees also represent their local areas. Anyone able to help is encouraged to apply to the Secretary.

Meetings: The Association meets in Annual General Meetings of members, at which Officers and Trustees are elected, and the Annual Accounts and Trustees' Report are considered and approved. The Accounts, prepared by the Treasurer, are scrutinised by an Independent Examiner and reported to the Charities Commission.

Activities: Our initial task was to challenge the damage being done by cross-country vehicles to The Ridgeway and other green paths, and to campaign for control of the abuse by restricting access. This was largely achieved by the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERCA), and the application of Restricted Byway status to most of The Ridgeway National Trail south of the Thames. We continue to press for the remaining sections in Wiltshire to be so classified.

The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize: We have launched again this year a competition celebrating the Ridgeway as a creative inspiration for artists. An Exhibition of entries and the Prize awards will be held during the course of the Ridgeway Friends Day in April 2018.

The Ridgeway National Trail: The National Trail network is overseen for Government by Natural England, which provides grants for maintenance, and for a National Trails web-site and other promotion. Following a Review, a new Ridgeway Partnership was formed from March 2015, with Oxfordshire County Council as the Lead Partner, to

take responsibility for its operations. A dedicated Ridgeway Officer has been appointed. We have as a founder member engaged fully with this new Partnership, and will continue to work closely with it.

The Great Stones Way: In pursuance of our aspiration to re-create the ancient Ridgeway from coast to coast, the Association proposed The Great Stones Way, as an extension of The Ridgeway southwards to Old Sarum, over existing rights of way linking Avebury and Stonehenge. We have been unable to complete way-marking through the Vale of Pewsey due to local opposition. However, a Guide-book has been published by Cicerone.

Local Groups: We encourage the formation of local groups of our members within communities, undertaking activities and events of interest to residents, and relevant to The Ridgeway and its environment. The first such group in The Vale of White Horse has blazed a trail and we hope that it will be followed by others all along the line of The Ridgeway.

Communications: We operate an informative web-site, www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk, which is available to promote our own activities and those of our many associate organisations. We publish a quarterly Newsletter, now, in the face of escalating postal costs, in an electronic format. We are also making efforts to develop our presence in social media; follow us on Twitter.

How You Can Help:

Join Us: Become a member of The Friends of The Ridgeway. Just ask one of

us for a leaflet and application form, download a form from our website or email one of the Committee.

Volunteer: We're always looking for helpers. Right now we're seeking new Trustees, and the Ridgeway Partnership needs volunteers to help with maintenance and development works.

Report Abuse: Driving a 4x4 vehicle or trail-bike on the Restricted Byway sections of The Ridgeway causes damage to the surface, can harm and annoy walkers and is an offence. Please report it to the police! Fly-tipping or just leaving litter is anti-social and spoils the environment. Report it to your local Council, or let us know about it, and we'll get it collected.





Treasurer's Report for the year to 31 December 2017

The year was a financial success for several reasons, compared to 2016:

- Further generous donations of £10,000 each from two Charitable Trusts, to be held as restricted funds for the purposes of the Ridgeway National Trail;
- 2. Other donations totalling over £5,000, to be available as part of the Friends' General Fund;
- 3. An increase in membership subscriptions, including from a number of new Life members.

The financial position of the Charity is now the strongest it has been for many years. Membership is slowly increasing but this is necessary to counter the drop off from members who have not renewed or may have, sadly, passed away.

The total of funds available is now £48,029, of which £34,391 is restricted (for the purpose of the Great Stones Way, and the Ridgeway National Trail). A sum of £13,638 (down from £15,259 last year) is available for purposes approved by the Friends' Committee in relation to the protection, upkeep and promotion of the Ridgeway. Any utilisation of the restricted funds must be for a purpose that is deemed by the Friends' Committee to also be for the benefit of the Ridgeway.

A Gift Aid claim of £683 was made to the HMRC in respect of qualifying membership fees and donations received in 2017 which has since been paid. A very successful inaugural Swire Arts Prize Exhibition and Prize giving was held as a prelude to the 2016 AGM, held in April 2017 at the Uffington Village Hall. The Friends were able to benefit from a modest sum paid by way of commission on works of art sold by their creators at the Exhibition. This has led the Committee to repeat the event this year and we hope it will prove to be equally, if not more so, successful.

The Friends of The Ridgeway

Income & Expenditure Account for the Year to 31 December 2017

INCOME	2017 £	Notes	2016 £
Subscriptions	2,877		2,453
Donations	25,208	1	4,159
Interest - COIF Funds	21	2	43
Gift Aid tax recovered	683	3	587
Miscellaneous	62		36
Swire Arts Prize day sales -	651		0
commission			
	29,502		7,278
EXPENDITURE			
Newsletters/Annual Report	695		2,630
Meetings expenses	414		477
Insurance	325		323
Website admin	0		189
Office costs/leaflets	112		133
Local & group events	577		110
Affiliation fees	51		87
Greeting cards at cost	0		58
AGM expenses	337		33
Sundries	20		10
Bank charges	60	4	0
Ridgeway National Trail support	3,247	5	0
Swire Arts Prize setup/prizes	2,088	6	0
	7,926		4,050
Surplus for year	21,576		3,228
Fund Balance b/f	26,453		23,225
Fund Balance c/f	48,029		26,453

Statement of Assets & Liabilities for the Year to 31 December 2017

CURRENT ASSETS	2017	2016
	£	£
Bank balances: Lloyds	347	21
CAF Bank Current a/c	37,306	16,173
COIF Deposit a/c	9,693	9,672
	47,346	25,866
Gift aid Recovery	683	587
Stock of cards	0	0
	48,029	26,453
REPRESENTED BY FUNDS:		
Restricted - Great Stones Way	4,194	4,194
Restricted - Ridgeway National Trail	27,391	7,000
Unrestricted - General Fund	13,638	15,259
	48,029	26,453

Notes

- 1 Two x £10,000 Charitable Donations received for purposes of Ridgeway National Trail
- 2 COIF interest halved
- 3 Gift Aid Claim submitted to and paid by HMRC for year 2017
- 4 Monthly management charge introduced by CAF Bank
- 5 Schemes supported for Ridgeway Partnership
- 6 Costs incurred for set up of inaugural Swire Arts Prize Exhibition and Prize giving

The Friends of The Ridgeway

Patron: Sir Chris Bonington
President: Lord Bradshaw

Vice-Presidents: Richard Benyon MP

Robert Buckland MP

David Gauke M
John Howell MP
David Lidington MP
Claire Perry MP
Ed Vaizey MP

Trustees (to 22 April, 2018):

Anthony Burdall: (Chairman): anthony.burdall@burdall.net

Jeffrey Goddard: (Secretary, and Thames Valley): jeffgod69@gmail.com
John Edgerton (Treasurer, and Swindon): jedgerton1@virginmedia.com

Dianne Godfrey: diney1@hotmail.co.uk Andy Greenhalgh: agreenha@gmail.com

James Gunter (North Wilts): jagunter@btopenworld.com

Nikki Swan: Nicola.Swan@btinternet.com

Web-site: www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk;
Contact: Ridgewayfriends@googlemail.com

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Registered Charity No. 1107926

