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### From the Chairman

Dear Friends

Summer is coming to a close, the nights are drawing in, the season of mellow fruitfulness will be upon us soon. The view, shown above, from the Ridgeway Trail will no longer be a wonderful display of green and change into winter colours. As A E Housman wrote:

*When summer's end is nighing  
And skies at evening cloud,  
I muse on change and fortune  
And all the feats I vowed  
When I was young and proud.*

Musing on change with regard to our beloved Ridgeway leads to not entirely happy thoughts amongst the exciting possibilities.

The same concerns continue affecting the trail albeit in slightly different form; the Friends of the Ridgeway were originally established to campaign against motor vehicles on the trail, but at that time moving vehicles were perceived as the problem. Recently we have had matters raised that are stationary vehicles.

Our attention has been drawn, via the web site, to a seemingly permanent traveller on The Ridgeway National Trail just south of Idstone, some 200 yards west of where the Ridgeway crosses Idstone Hill. He has a large converted lorry, a pick-up van and a small car which he parks on the opposite side of the track. He has a large loo tent positioned to the side of his lorry which immediately abuts the metalled surface of the path; we believe he may dispose of his waste in a pile of shavings nearby. Around the lorry, he has amassed much detritus and junk over the months he has been there. He was previously camped on The Ridgeway above Bishopstone until, we believe, Swindon Borough Council moved him on with the assistance of the Bishopstone Parish Council.



His encampment is an eyesore on the Ridgeway and intimidating to walk past. The matter has been raised with the relevant authorities with the request to take action to remove this encampment from The Ridgeway.

A not dissimilar issue has been reported concerning the Overton Hill Car Park at the beginning of the Ridgeway National Trail. A number of people have noted the increasing occupation by lorries, caravans and cars creating limited parking space for walkers and others who wish to enjoy the landscape; there is concern that these vehicles might become a more permanent feature, although they seem canny around planning law and move on for a few days so as not to contravene any regulations. I visited the car park and the adjacent photograph shows it at that time; the weather was not conducive to enjoying the Ridgeway – overcast and heavy rain – and hence maybe this image is very untypical. At the time there were 4 vans parked (There is a red van hidden behind the silver one) and with the exception of the horse box, all seemed to be ‘occupied’. There was someone inside the light blue van and a couple of young men with a gas stove cooking something between the silver and red vans but neither seemed to be set up for living in.



Neither of these issues is resolved at the time of writing but we will continue to pursue them. The trail must not become an unofficial home for travellers.

Other different issues were reported over the summer. These included:

(a) A planning application has been lodged to Swindon Borough Council for a change of use from agricultural to residential use of Hilltop Barn, Foxhill on the Ridgeway, with access to the house along the Ridgeway. This would have significant impact on The Ridgeway visually, environmentally and is not in accordance with planning law.

(b) A member reported destruction of rich wildlife habitat which has taken place recently near to his home. He suggested that a local farmer had mowed the verges of the trail excessively, destroying the fauna. Curiously he asked if the preservation of the rich diversity of vegetation falls within the remit of the society and was relieved when reassured that it did.



Within these issues, there is good news for our much-loved Ridgeway.

The underlying administration of the Friends of the Ridgeway is being updated albeit more slowly than we would like. You may have noticed some changes to the web site, more are planned but it takes time.



Certainly there are many more comments being left on the web site – if you have an opinion on a current Ridgeway issue, please feel free to contact us via the web site. One message that sticks in my mind is a message from a correspondent who

was planning to walk the Ridgeway but was put off and told she should walk the Oxfordshire Way; her message was to complain about the quality of signposting on the Oxfordshire Way. Another message that might be of more general interest noted that the Department of Continuing Education, Oxford University, is offering a day school on Saturday 15 February 2020 on the Uffington White Horse. Details at <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/the-land-of-the-white-horse?code=O19P168AHJ> Also activity on the Facebook page is increasing – why not take a look?

Other updating projects in hand are a new Membership Leaflet and updated logo for the friends of the Ridgeway, along with logos for the Great Chalk Way and Cranbourne link.

As reported previously, we are working with other Associations and well-wishers to create a coast-to-coast recreational walking/riding route, including disabled access, along the line of the ancient Ridgeway braided tracks between Norfolk and Dorset. This is The Great Chalk Way. One correspondent on the web site wished to walk the



entire length of the ancient ridgeway from Lyme Regis to Holme Next the Sea; he sought help and advice and we were able to suggest our chosen route. We very much hope that the route can be publicised before next summer.

The Great Chalk Way route traverses the Cranbourne Chase ANOB. They have just announced that the Cranbourne Chase has been designated as an International Dark-Sky Reserve and becomes the 14<sup>th</sup> Reserve across the globe. Hence there is another attraction to the Great Chalk Way – being able to see the stars, Milky Way and Andromeda galaxy, if the clouds allow!

For many of us, the Ridgeway is a lot more than a walking trail – it is a historic monument, an archaeological treasure and, certainly for me, it is an artistic inspiration. This perception has led to us establishing the Swire Ridgeway Art Prize. It is now recognised as an annual competition and exhibition and will again be held in 2020. Details are elsewhere in this Newsletter.

However our ability to continue is dependent on recruiting some volunteers to help run and administer the organisation. Volunteers to join the Committee would be most welcome. In addition, we would welcome volunteers to contribute to particular activities, most especially the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. If you value the Ridgeway, please volunteer to make a small contribution of time to help so that we can fulfil our objectives. Please don't hesitate, just email, telephone or write to me and I'll be delighted to hear from you.

Summer is over and we are into the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness. And then, of course, the festive season so let me wish you a happy Christmas and the peaceful New Year.

With all best wishes  
*Anthony Burdall*



## The Secretary's Minute Book

The trustees continue to meet quarterly. Most of the issues are covered elsewhere but below are some other items covered at our meetings.

We are in the process of updating some of our output. The website continues to be modernised and you should now notice some improvements in it. We are also producing a new membership leaflet which will help promote the activities of the Friends of the Ridgeway and be a useful way of attracting new members.

We accept internet banking for our membership fees but with the increasing trend to cashless transactions, we are now investigating 'pay on the day' technology for use particularly at events such the Friends day or artwork purchased at the Swire Arts prize exhibition.

We continue to meet regularly with the Ridgeway Partnership and, where appropriate, to support them and projects presented to us. The Ridgeway partnership held its Annual Forum in June with the theme of 'Join us then get Creative along the Ridgeway'. The event was well received and, although we were not actively involved, helped generally to raise the profile of the Ridgeway. Recent projects agreed for funding included an electronic 'counter' at the World Heritage site to gather statistics for the area in support of the works being carried out to protect the underlying archaeology as well as general user statistics.

*Alan Chater*  
Secretary

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## Treasurer's Update

Following on from the summary of accounts and explanation in the Annual Report for 2018, the total funds at our disposal have now increased to £59,707 from £51,241. The increase is largely due to the generous further donation from the Swire Charitable Trust for the purposes of arranging the Swire Arts Exhibition and Prize giving for future years. The above figure includes £10,000 invested with CAF Bank on a one year Bond, earning 1.4% tax free and maturing in September 2020.

Income of £12,885 comprised mainly of the Swire arts donation, subscriptions of £1,617 and Gift Aid reclaimed in the sum of £367.

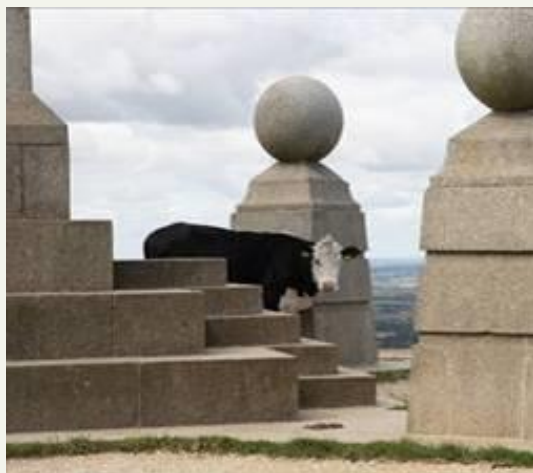
Expenditure of £4,053 comprised principally of the net cost of the Swire Arts Exhibition and prize giving £1,867, the annual Report £690, insurance and IT/website support of £614. Net inflow of funds was £8,832.

The total funds are comprised of the following elements:

Restricted – Great Stones Way	£4,194.00
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	£23,516.00
Restricted – Swire Arts	£14,977.00
Unrestricted – General Fund	£17,020.00

The number of paid up and life/complimentary members remains steady at 477.

*John Edgerton*  
Treasurer



## The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2020

The Friends of the Ridgeway are delighted to announce that the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize will again be held in April 2020.

The aim of the competition is to bring The Ridgeway to life not only as a long distance trail but as an artistic inspiration, and to show The Ridgeway, its history and environs, in all their aspects throughout all seasons. The theme of the competition is 'Spirit of the Ridgeway'.

There will be an exhibition of works submitted for the competition as part of the Ridgeway Friends Day. It will be open to the public on Saturday 18 April and Sunday 19 April 2020 in the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington (Broad Street, Uffington, Oxfordshire, SN7 7RA), located in the centre of the beautiful and historic rural village of Uffington in the Vale of the White Horse. In addition, there will be a second exhibition in the Chilterns the following weekend. The Ridgeway Friends Day will be on Sunday 19 April 2020 which will include our AGM as well as the arts prize giving.

Definitely a date for the diary – Sunday 19 April 2020. Please do come along.

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### 2019 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize entries

The winning entries for the 2018 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize were included in our Summer 2019 Newsletter. The winner in the Written category, published in the Summer Newsletter, was 'The Spirit of the Ridgeway' by Peter Wild. But there were many other excellent written entries two of which are published below along with images of other entries.

#### The joy of the Red Kite.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre,  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer "The second coming" W.B.Yeats

The Red Kite holds its soaring flight, on wings by Nature's hand refined,  
to underscore its Raptors sight , that Avian joy be unconfined

On Ridgeway routes its circles scribe, with overlapping rings to scour  
The patterned fields, and Trees, and rows, and then await the favoured hour

So effortless in Eagle flight, on outspread wings and long forked tail,  
no need to hover" Kestrel like", with fluttering wings,-- designed for sail

Where bleakness marks the moorland scene , and scavenging o'ertips the scales  
Then primal instinct wakes and grows , competing with the Carrion Crows

As " Four by Fours" churn up the soil, and Chalk is burnished sleek and white  
there walkers share and gently strive, to beat the fading of the light .

But man in tune with Nature's song, can best develop and express,  
With echoes of an ancient strain, that work looks best in farming dress .

From threatened living, confined space; from conservation to success,  
Inherent nature breathes again, and deeper instincts find redress.

Where Red Kites once were sought in Wales , they now present across the South,  
And where mankind destroys and spoils , Nature's last word is always Life !

*David J Gibbons*





### A Warrior's Sleep (II)

The Ridge as bridge between the graves,  
 the mounds, the sounds, the wooden staves,  
 pre-dating stones and bones  
 too old to give up secrets, stories told,  
 or tell of dreams , or how it seems  
 to feel a pilgrim's welcome touch,  
 while photographs might miss so much  
 that's hidden in the fog and mist  
 as tourists tick off on their list  
 each place they've seen, their favourite view,  
 arrive at ten and gone by two.  
 The sunrise silver, sunset gold,  
 on stones serene or marching bold  
 as brass  
 on grass  
 that's trimmed by sheep:  
 no blades disturb a warrior's sleep.

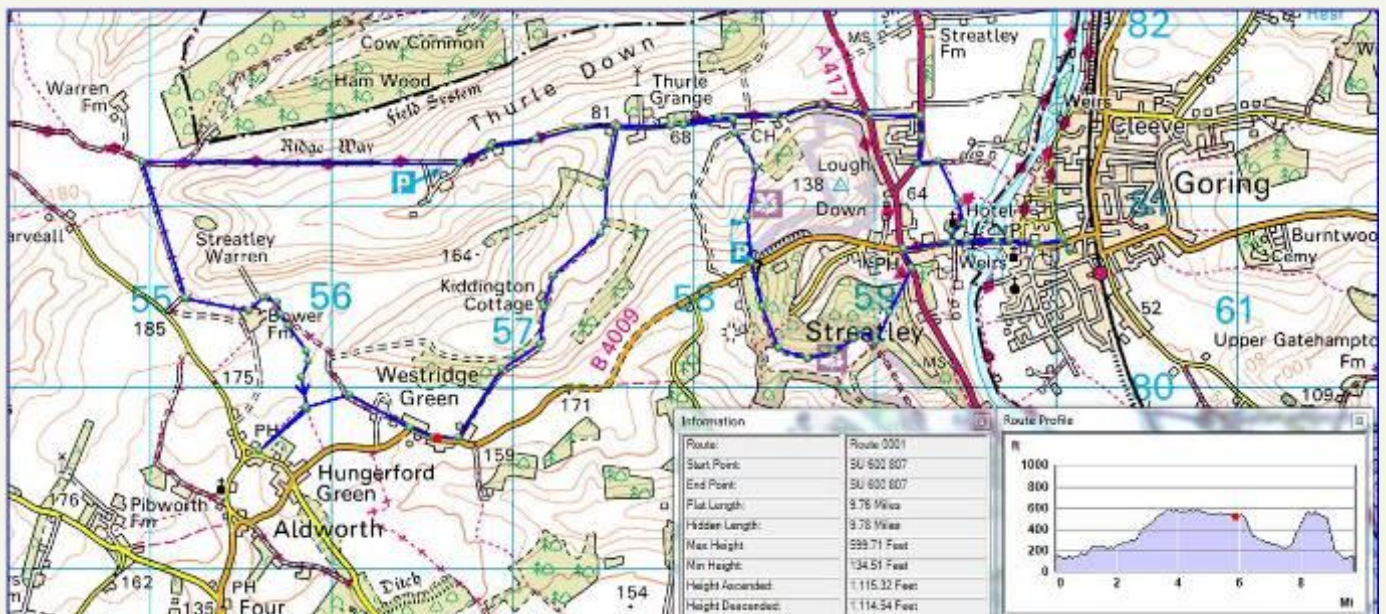
*Martine Hazell*

### Circular pub walks on the Ridgeway

Some years ago, a Friends of the Ridgeway member sent to the then Secretary some walks for publication in the Newsletter. At that time, two of the ten walks were published but the others for some reason were left unpublished. Recently they have been sent in again and the second of the unpublished walks is shown below.

### Goring to Aldworth – the Twin Peaks

This walk starts in Goring, crossing the River Thames to Streatley and then onto the Ridgeway, before crossing Streatley Warren and dropping down to Aldworth for lunch at the Bell.



Distances: 9.8 miles total including the golf course route – stiff climb .  
 9 miles total avoiding the golf course route – easier .  
 5 miles from the start to the pub .

Directions:

1 Park in the public car park in Goring. To find this , turn off the High Street into Manor Road opposite the 'Miller of Mansfield'; take the first left turn into Station Road , and turn left again just past 'The Catherine wheel' pub, down a very narrow lane leading to the pay and display public car park. (There are public toilets)

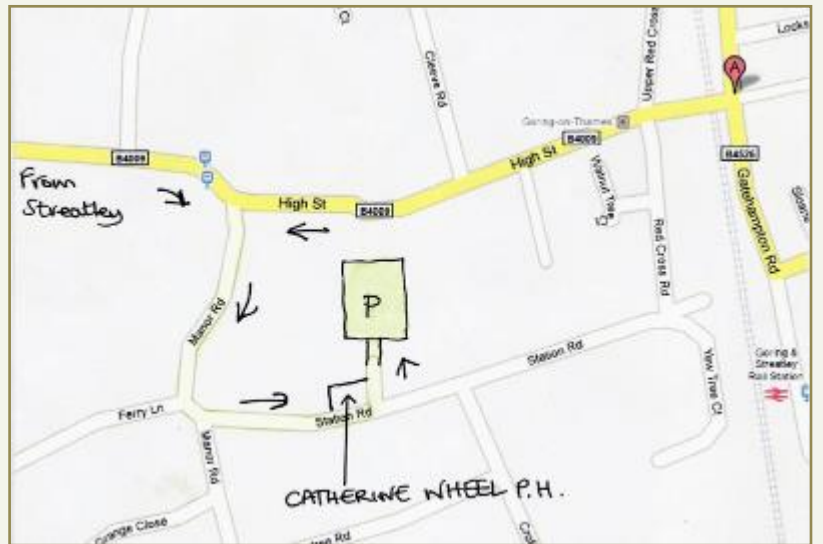


2 Leave the car park via the narrow path to the right of the public toilets walking towards the High Street. At the High Street, turn left and cross the two river bridges into Streatley. 50 yards after passing 'The Swan' turn right towards the church, waymarked Thames Path. Follow the

*Opposite " The Miller of Mansfield " in Goring High Street , turn into Manor Rd ( signed " parking " ) , then left into Station Rd . Left immediately after " The Catherine Wheel " leads to the car park . Pay & Display . Postcode for car park : RG8 9HB*

path as it skirts around the church and continue straight on with cottages on the left. Ignore a path marked 'To the river' opposite the last cottage and keep straight on past the recreation ground on the left.

3 At the end, pass through a wooden gate and turn left onto a tarmac road to reach the A329 and turn right following the pavement. After 300 yards, just past a traffic-calming chicane, turn left into Townsend Road. Follow this road to the junction with the A417. Here turn left, then after 40 yards cross the road and turn sharp right into Rectory Road and continue straight on.



4 After almost 1.5 miles opposite a white brick and thatched cottage named 'Postbox Cottage' bear right at a sign for the Ridgeway, past a car park. After 1.7 miles turn left onto a bridleway skirting the top of Streatley Warren , with views down to the Goring Gap and the Chilterns beyond .



- 5 After half a mile, where the bridleway turns right, turn left towards Bower Farm on a grassy track. On reaching the farm, turn left through a metal gate, continuing straight on to a metal gate and waymark at the end of a right-hand fence. Now enter a tree-lined avenue, bearing right after 20 yards. After a right hand gate marked 'Private', turn right into an open field with hedging to your right. After 100 yards turn right again through a metal gate and cross a field half left towards a waymarked wooden gate half way along the opposite tree line.
- 6 Pass through the gate, bearing left along a footpath through woodland to reach an open field. Here turn right at a waymark and follow the right hand field edge as it bears to the left. Meeting a crossing path, turn right through a blue metal gate. Go straight across the next field to meet a path skirting the left hand side of 'The Bell' pub garden. Go through a right hand wooden gate into the pub garden for lunch.
- 7 After lunch go back through the wooden gate and turn left, crossing two fields to meet a double metal gate.
- 8 Now two options:
  - (a) Here turn right along a byway to meet the B4009 road. Turn left and continue for 300yards, turning left down a stony track opposite Manor Barn towards Kiddington Cottage.  
OR
  - (b) Here turn left for 300 yards, then turn right onto a new public footpath created in 2000. Follow this path for ¾ mile, bearing right then left, with Westridge Copse on your right. Then turn left onto the path past Kiddington Cottage.
- 9 Follow this track past Kiddington Cottage until you reach the Ridgeway again. Here turn right for 700 yards to meet a footpath going right , next to three new barn conversions.
- 10 Here there are two more options :
  - (a) Retrace your footsteps back to the start.  
OR
  - (b) Climb Streatley Golf Course & return to Streatley via National Trust The Holies woodland , with superb views.
    - Turn right on the footpath onto the Streatley Golf Course and follow the waymarks up the very steep hill across the links, remembering to ring the bells to warn of your approach .
    - At the top of the hill, cross the B4009 by a car park and enter the National Trust woods marked 'The Holies' up some wooden steps. Follow this clear track through woodland, bearing right then descending to a kissing gate. Climbing again, bearing left, you leave the woodland on your left and continue across open ground. In a clearing with woodland to your left, at SU 589 803, at a crossing of paths, take care to turn left on a track through a kissing gate back into woodland. Now descend steeply downhill. Detour on one of the paths to the right to see the amazing view down to the River Thames and Goring .
    - Then continue straight on, descending steeply via wooden steps to meet the A329. Turn left here to reach Streatley and retrace your steps back to the start .

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### Friends of the Ridgeway Vale of the White Horse Local Group

Throughout the year, the Friends of the Ridgeway Vale of the White Horse Local Group hold a series of meetings and activities. These include evening talks, guided walks and the like. In 2019, the Group has hosted five presentations in the Old Town Hall in Faringdon. Those events were held on:

- 21 February 2019 - Owen Green, Chair of Oxford Geology Trust. "Legacy and Life of William 'Strata' Smith.
- 21 March 2019 - Sarah Wright, Ridgeway National Trail Project Officer "Latest news from The Ridgeway's Trail





Officer”.

- 23 May 2019 - Bob Brewer, “The Archaeology of the Lambourn Downs”.
- 19 September 2019 - Nicola Cornick, “The Story of Ashbury: A Ridgeway village through 100 years of history.”
- 24 October 2019 - Andrew Foley, National Trust Area Ranger “The Work of the National Trust in West Oxfordshire”.

The Local Group Committee is currently considering its options for 2020 and would welcome expressions of interest from members wishing to join the Committee.

*Roger Griffin*  
LGFor Chair

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### Facebook conversation

A recent post on the Friends of the Ridgeway Facebook page noted that one of the joys of the Ridgeway is the number of attractions just off the trail. But which is your favourite? This question generated various responses. Below are a few of mine.

*Anthony Burdall*

