

Summer Newsletter, July 2020



Contents

Letter from Chairman	1
Treasurer's Update	4
Dave Cavanagh	4
Duncan Strutt	4
Great Chalk Way	5
The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2020	5
Ridgeway Partnership	12
Carriage Driving	12
Riding routes	13
Facebook conversation	15



From the Chairman

Dear Friends

It was February, just some 4 months ago, when I last sat down to write a Chairman's Letter, in that case, to be included in the Annual Review. At that time there were good things to look forward to, most notably the Ridgeway Friends Day planned for April and the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. And hopefully a summer of enjoying the trail.

But how things change.

In recent months coronavirus has dominated our lives. Some of us found ourselves locked in at home; from mid-March for some 3 months I never went beyond the garden gate, due to inclusion in the vulnerable list. The last time before lock down that I visited the Ridgeway was a glorious sunny Sunday with others out to enjoy the trail. The photograph above was the last I took before being restricted to the garden.

Covid-19 brought dramatic changes to how we can use the Ridgeway and how the trail has been managed by the Ridgeway Partnership. Government advice encouraged one exercise period a day and for those living near to the Ridgeway this can be a walk along the trail. For many of us, however, it has not been possible to get out to the Trail until recently. Out on the Trail, the Ridgeway Partnership ask that you pay more attention to your safety; less maintenance work and inspections have been carried out because staff, volunteers and contractors have been staying at home as much as possible. Car parks along the Trail have been closed. And events along The Ridgeway have been cancelled and/or postponed. Unfortunately, there is a greater chance this year that you will find nettles and brambles across your way and long grass catching your bike pedals because



the usual maintenance work has not been possible. But if you see a problem whilst visiting The Ridgeway, please report it – your help is needed to keep an eye on what is going on whilst many of us are stuck indoors.

As the Ridgeway Partnership suggests, *'The onset of the restrictions coincided with spring, bringing nature into focus with blossom, spring flowers and birdsong along the Trail. The quietness of a society stuck indoors will enhance tranquillity too, perhaps making it easier to see and hear wildlife and worry less about traffic on the road crossings. This situation also makes us appreciate how we are one large community and understand the positive difference a friendly greeting on the Trail can make to someone feeling low. All this enhances our connection with nature and each other, and creates memories on the Trail. It makes us all realise we need to look after our environment and The Ridgeway specifically because it looks after us'*.



We do not have any information on the number of people using the Trail during the past months in lock down, but suspect that it must be less than normal. But there have been reports of an increase in fly tipping and dumping along the Ridgeway. It was devastating on my first expedition after lock down to see a pile of refuse – the remains of a barbeque party – on the side of the Trail; who do these people think will clear up the mess from their selfish behaviour?



Reports of illegal parking and/or encampments on the Trail continue to come in. Recent incidents include a converted horsebox being used as domestic accommodation just up the Trail from Overton Hill. The issue of a seemingly permanent traveller on the Ridgeway just south of Idstone continues; once the present coronavirus issues subside, we will press the matter with the County Council responsible for that section of the trail. Also we had a report from the local Parish Council about cars parked on the Ridgeway at the Chinnor Crossing. Increased usage caused by visitors to the lakes using the trail to park.



Cyclists and horse riders will be pleased to hear a new 3 year project that will improve off-road cycling and horse riding opportunities on the Ridgeway. The Ridgeway Riding Route project will create a good quality off-road route that riders can follow confidently from Pulpit Hill near Princes Risborough to Wendover, and then on to Wendover Woods

and further north to Chivery, near Tring. This will offer more off-road riding miles, better quality surfaces and clear signage for riders. This project will take us nearer to the goal of a trail for use by walkers, riders and cyclists.

The Trail is maintained and improved with the help of volunteers carrying out practical work and checking the Trail for problems. In June 2019 the volunteers were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - this is the MBE for volunteer groups. It is wonderful that current and past volunteers have been recognised for their efforts. In response to a request from the Ridgeway Partnership, the Friends of the Ridgeway have recently agreed to make a grant of £3,500 for the volunteer scheme costs in 2020-2021.



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, an artistic inspiration. This perception led to us establishing the Swire Ridgeway Art Prize. One unfortunate consequence of the Covid-19 lock down was the cancellation of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2021 and associated Ridgeway Friends Day, including the AGM. To transact necessary business, an online AGM via email was arranged; notification of the meeting was sent to all members for whom we have an email address and there was a significant response. The Arts Prize also had to be cancelled but regrettably we were unable to find an alternative procedure for judging and displaying the entries (and also for receiving all the entries as at the time not all had been submitted). However, in this Newsletter there is a report on the prize and more importantly photographs of some of the entries.

Founded in 2004, the Friends of the Ridgeway Vale of the White Horse Local Group have arranged a series of activities including evening talks, guided walks and the like. Unfortunately the Committee felt unable to continue and no volunteers came forward to take on the group. Hence, the group has closed. This is a real pity and we would be delighted to see the group re-formed and other groups arise.



Our new logo has been finalised and formally adopted by the Committee at their online meeting in June. We are very grateful to Anna Dillon for producing these logos and her patience in responding to what seemed like endless queries. She is at present finalising waymark designs for the Cranborne Doves Way.



At the AGM both Alan Chater and John Edgerton have stepped down as Trustees and Committee Members and Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Alan had been the Secretary for two years. John had given many years of commitment to the Friends of the Ridgeway as both Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Dave Cavanagh has taken up the role of Secretary and Tim Lewis as Treasurer and Membership Secretary. We are delighted to welcome Duncan Strutt as a Trustee and Committee Member.

It was with considerable sadness that we learnt that Andy Greenhalgh had lost his battle against cancer and has passed away. He became a Trustee of

Friends of the Ridgeway at the AGM on Sunday 23 April 2017 and has been active in our affairs ever since even when fighting his illness. He was the originator of the Great Chalk Way project which is now approaching inauguration – a testament to his commitment to walking. His energy, enthusiasm and council will be very much missed.

If you do feel able to volunteer to help run and administer the organisation we would be delighted to hear from you. Please don't hesitate, just email, telephone or write to me and I'll be delighted to hear from you. I hope that you are all keeping safe, keeping well and keeping sane no doubt by visiting the Ridgeway.

With all best wishes
Anthony Burdall



Treasurer's Update

This is the first update as Treasurer of Friends of the Ridgeway, and I am happy to report that I have inherited a healthy financial situation from my predecessor John Edgerton. Total funds available to us were £62,030 at 31 December 2019, the end of the previous financial year. Since then we have received membership subscriptions totalling £1,447, donations of £645 and Gift Aid of £485. Expenses of £1,594 have been incurred, mainly on the annual report, IT support and insurance. Our activities have been very limited with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Tim Lewis

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Dave Cavanagh



My love of walking in the countryside started at the tender age of 10 with a primary school week away in Swaledale, North Yorkshire, staying in Youth Hostels. Since then I've hiked and hostelled all over the country. At some stage, I became aware of the Ramblers. We joined simply to financially support their objectives. Then, as retirement approached, I took a greater interest in Ramblers locally, leading walks and quickly joining the committees (as you do) of Oxfordshire Ramblers and my local group, Vale of White Horse Ramblers. Shortly after that we formed the Vale Path Volunteers to do path maintenance throughout the Vale. Up until the lockdown we were doing tasks once a fortnight. I had also worked on The Ridgeway as a National Trails volunteer. My first taste of The Ridgeway was the section above Wantage, where we lived for 20 years. Then we moved out west, to Uffington. Now The Ridgeway is just a half-hour's walk away, on White Horse Hill.

Once on The Ridgeway, certainly in the Wessex section, you are in a different world, the Downs to the south being so different from the Vale to the north. Whilst I do enjoy being on The Ridgeway itself I incorporate it in lots of circular walks, including heading into the Lambourn Downs. Following Friends of the Ridgeway pre-eminent work in contributing to the formation of The Ridgeway Partnership in 2014 I joined the Partnership as Ramblers Association representative. It was in the Partnership's early days that I met the Friends of the Ridgeway's Ian Richie, Jeff Goddard and Anthony Burdall and learned of the important role played by the Friends, then as now, in the maintenance and promotion of The Ridgeway and other chalk ways. Once hooked, Anthony reeled me in to the committee.

Dave Cavanagh

Duncan Strutt



Educated at Hampton Grammar School and at The Royal Military Academy, I was commissioned into the Queens Regiment in 1980. I served in several posts at Regimental Duty in UK, and on operations in various places around the world. I commanded the Infantry Recruit Training Centre and subsequently the Army Selection Centres. Overseas postings included Cyprus, Germany, Kenya and Jordan. I left the Army in 2012 taking voluntary redundancy after 31 years. Since leaving I've worked in security, training and HR consultancy roles in East Africa, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Bangladesh and UAE.

I'm married to the ever-patient Libby and we have a son, James aged 25 and a granddaughter Evamae. Now I'm semi-retired I've more time for hobbies, including mountaineering/climbing/walking, cycling and photography. In addition to being a Friends of the Ridgeway Trustee I volunteer for Sustrans and on occasion for the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. I'm quite new to the Ridgeway, although I walked it back in January before becoming a Trustee, and will do it again in the autumn to become better acquainted. I look forward to supporting the 'Friends'.

Duncan Strutt

Great Chalk Way



One of our objectives is to create a coast-to-coast path from Lyme Regis in Dorset to Hunstanton in north Norfolk as a southern alternative to Wainwright's Coast-to-Coast Walk from the Lake District to Yorkshire. We have called this path the Great Chalk Way, as it faithfully follows the chalk ridge that spans the entire width of southern England. It is also thought to be England's oldest path, having been used as a link between places of historic occupation for thousands of years – sometimes referred to as The Ancient Ridgeway. It links many sites of archaeological interest across the south east of England.

The route is based on the Ridgeway National Trail, and makes use of a number of other long-distance paths, including the Icknield Way, Peddars Way and the Wessex Ridgeway. Towards the end of last year, the section of the route from Barbury Castle on the Ridgeway to Salisbury was changed so that it follows the routes of two existing long-distance paths, the White Horse Trail and the Pewsey Avon Trail. We have also changed the name of the route from Salisbury to Win Green, where it links up with the Wessex Ridgeway, to the Cranborne Doves Way, given that it makes use of two of the ancient doves in the Cranborne Chase AONB for much of its route, the Old Shaftesbury Drove and the Ox Drove. This route has been approved by Wiltshire Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Department.

Although we had hoped that we would be in a position to finalise the whole route by the summer of this year, this has proved to be impossible in the face of the lockdown and general paralysis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However a design for a waymark for the Cranborne Doves Way is under way, and good progress has been made in refreshing the way marking and updating the directions both for the Pewsey Avon Trail, and for the relevant section of the White Horse Trail. Given the uncertainties surrounding any return to "normality", it is not possible to say when the route might be finalised, but we are working to be in a situation where this can be achieved as soon as is practicable.

Tim Lewis

The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2020

The plan was to hold the annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize and associated exhibition again in April 2020. Just as the closing date for entries arrived so did Covid-19 with the associated lock down and the prize had to be cancelled. It was dispiriting in the early days of the lock down to spend time cancelling, deleting, destroying things into which one had put so much effort – and the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize was perhaps the most dispiriting. But the competition will be held again in 2021 following the pattern of the 2020 event. Details will be circulated in autumn 2020.

The aim of the competition remains 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'.

At the cancellation, a total of 49 entries had been made across the four categories. Various ideas were considered to in some way have a competition and/or exhibition but all manner of practical difficulties made it unrealistic. However, within the Newsletter some entries are shown to give a taste of the art work. But unfortunately we cannot include all entries.

Uffing and Puffing

It's not exactly that I'm jealous,
but,
put Uffington Castle into 'Google'
and it is your picture that comes up first.
You,
a mere horse.
Me,
a castle!

.....Could it be that I require
more imagination to evoke
an image of what was there
before my structure broke?

It's like I sit in your shadow.
Why,
when it's you that lies below?
Your lovely manicured completeness
gives you that whiter than white glow,
whereas,
sheep pass the time of day on me
(and more besides).
I carpet all who come
whilst you give children rides.

It's not exactly that I'm jealous,
but
it would feel good if
just one of those who walked on me
said that it was I
that they had mainly come to see!

Alright, I admit that I do sit in your shadow,
so to speak...
but, I was once majestic in my peak,
and now you see me no longer in my prime
a grazing mound that can't survive
the ravages of time.

It's not exactly that I'm jealous
well,
maybe that's not true,
but, basically my jealousy
won't change my point of view
because,
we have been close companions
for many years you and I,

and,
I do have greater grandeur
when I'm looked at from the sky.

Peter Wild



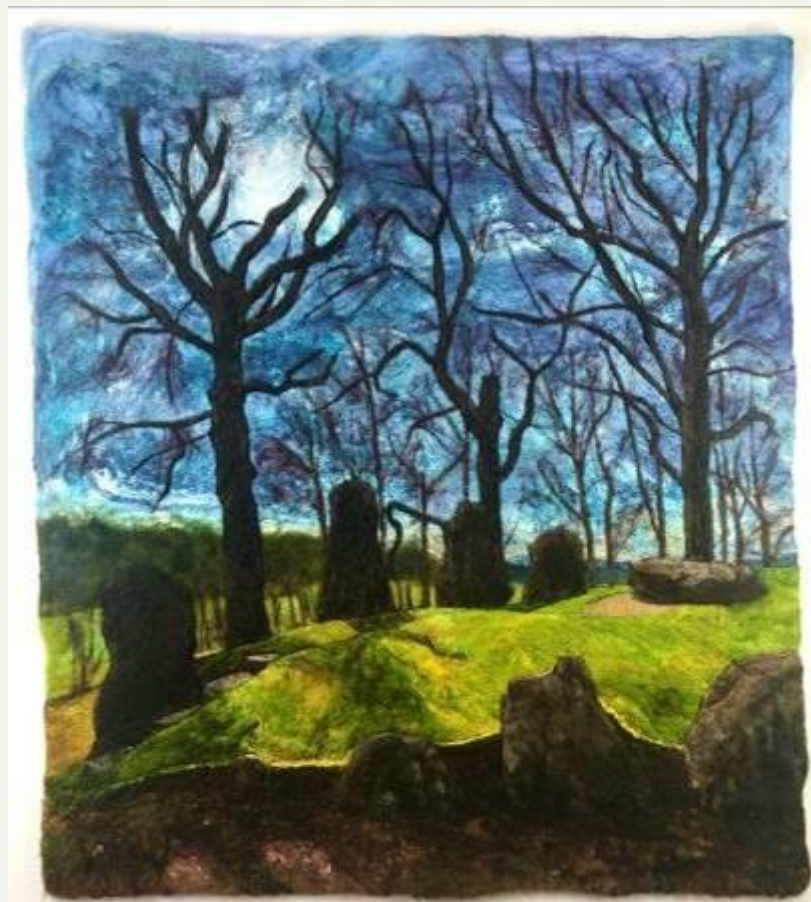
Emma Williams 'Beech Leaves over Risborough'



Sharon Rich 'Hedgehog'



Nick Barlow 'Grey Wethers'



Ushma Sargent 'Waylands Smithy'



Sharon Rich 'The Waymarker'



Robert Marchant 'Wayland 1'



Luca Guerzoni 'Towards the Ridge'



Peter Leggott 'Onward to Ivanhoe'



Ushma Sargent 'Patchwork Downs'

From Henge to Beacon

From henge to beacon folds the oldest road along the undulating contours of the land.
 Pale ribbon skyward-faced threads dips and swells of vale and hill to rise, then crest, the ridge of chalk.
 Along its beaten track have countless feet traversed the path in aeons past to present day,
 Safe passage high o'er threats below,
 Defiant 'gainst scourge of time and wind and rain, a winding trace on history's hand.
 From Avebury through to Ivanhoe.

Leave Sanctuary, pass sentinel sarsen megaliths,
 Which ward the barrow tombs and earthworks of prehistoric man,
 Who used this causeway long ago, before we came our time to know.
 See ancient Windmill Hill and modern Hackpen Horse, whilst spanning time as well as space
 You journey through from Stone to Bronze then Iron Age, when hill forts rose as high defence
 'Gainst Celt or Roman; Viking; Saxon hordes.

Move onward, to leave coin and unshod horse by chambered tomb,
 As wreathed in myth and legend Wayland's Smithy stands, a Saxon cast on prehistoric grave.
 Banked track weaves forth to Uffington Castle fort; the Manger coombe with Dragon's Hill.
 On rising thermals high above soar kites, dark specks like freckles on the clouds.
 Aloft they circle o'er the horse below, fore'er engraved in gallop stance,
 The Vale's white emblem in eternal prance.

Along the Way strip lynchets score the land like giant claw marks in the earth, or rising staircase up the hill.
 At Blowingstone sounds Alfred's trumpet still, a call to battle if you will.
 Climb Sparsholt Down and view the Vale, the firs, and Punchbowl sink, a rolling dip beneath your feet.
 Alongside Segsbury Camp; wind on by monument, Grim's ditch, Scutchamer Knob,
 Then start descent to Streatley, Goring Gap and weir.
 Thames marks divide to Upper Icknield Way.

Now Chiltern hills take on the trail through wooded downs and park estates,
 Where beeches crown o'er bluebell groves.
 Another Grim's Ditch sides the path, trek on via Nuffield, Swyncombe and St Botolph's church.
 From Watlington to Wendover, atop - chalk grassland views of Aylesbury Vale.
 Grand Union Canal, hence on to Tring, climb Pitstone Hill then Ashridge far.
 From henge to beacon folds the oldest road from Avebury through to Ivanhoe.

Jill Smith



David Gibbons 'Checking the route'



Carl Firstbrook 'The spirit of Wayland lives on'



Ruth Gerring 'Sparsholt firs in snow.'



Astrid Clark 'Hanging over history'



Frank Stroud 'Woodland near Upper Upham'

The majority of works entered for the prize were for sale. If you wish to buy a piece of art work inspired by the Ridgeway please get in touch and we will put you in touch with the artist.

Anthony Burdall

Ridgeway Partnership News

On the National Trails web site, the Trail Officer, Sarah Wright, publishes news of the Ridgeway. These stories can be seen at <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/news>

Ridgeway closed to vehicles in World Heritage Site this spring and summer

1st May 2020

Continuing on from earlier work, the stretch of The Ridgeway in the World Heritage Site near Avebury in Wiltshire will be closed to motor vehicles over the spring and summer months to enable repair works to be completed.

Trial repairs were carried out in four test areas along the Trail in summer 2019 and exceptionally wet weather over the winter means further time is needed for the materials to bed in and grass to establish. In addition to the closure, the test areas have been cordoned off to ensure walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers skirt around the repair work. The public using the Trail must also ensure they are following the latest government guidance relating to Covid19.

The closure in force is a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) prohibiting motorised vehicles and applies from 1 May to 30 September 2020. It will be in place during the summer solstice celebrations should they take place, but the first stretch of The Ridgeway and byway Avebury 5 will be open for public access as usual.

Bridget Wayman, Wiltshire Council Cabinet member for highways, has said: "It's important we do all we can to protect this area with its archaeological heritage. We are pleased with the results of last year's repairs, but a few more months are needed to allow the grass to establish properly. Once we're satisfied the repairs have 'taken' properly we will then be able to test them properly to see how robust they are.

"We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but the repairs required are essential. The subsequent testing will help us and our partners decide how we best protect in the future this part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the National Trail and the internationally protected archaeological features that it contains."

Following the TTRO, the permanent seasonal TRO which protects the surface of the byway from motorised traffic during the winter will come into force as usual from 1st October.

More details about this TTRO and other closure orders along the Trail in the World Heritage Site can be obtained from Wiltshire Council. The council's press release is here: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/ridgeway-closure-extended

Carriage Driving Demonstration

In September 2019, Carole Ruse gave a demonstration of carriage driving to the Ridgeway Delivery Group.

Carole has been carriage driving for over 25 years, driving all different types of horses and ponies and different vehicles over that period. Carole is a member of the British Horse Society and is an advisor on their rights of way carriage driving group. Along with her husband David, who acts as back stepper and groom, Carole drives regularly throughout the summer on roads and local byways and takes part in events at Windsor Great Park.

The purpose of the demonstration was to illustrate that certain types of barrier on rights of way, can have a detrimental effect for legitimate users. Carole had been asked by Sarah Wright, the Ridgeway National Trail Project Officer, to show how difficult these barriers can be to negotiate, so that rights of way officers could understand the issue. Local authorities often use barriers to try and prevent anti-social behaviour and other illegal activities on rights of way. These barriers often consist of concrete blocks put across the trail or metal bollards put very close together to prevent motorised vehicle access. Unfortunately, use of these barriers means that people that have every right to legitimately use the rights of way are also excluded.

A set of plastic cones was set up in the White Horse Hill car park, courtesy of the National Trust, so that Carole could demonstrate, with her ponies Blueberry and Ben, just how tight the gap can be to negotiate when barriers are put on byways.



It can be seen from the photograph that getting through the gap safely is quite tight. If the barriers consist of concrete blocks or solid bollards, as some local authorities use, they are serious hazards for equestrians. Carole demonstrated using the type of cones used in competition, which are purposely designed to squash, or collapse on impact with the carriage or horse/pony for safety reasons. Obviously, solid barriers do not have such qualities.

The British Horse Society have published new guidance regarding the use and recommended type of barrier (January 2020). The advice states *“the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 must be taken into account, as barriers affect people with impaired mobility and impaired vision as well as riders who may have difficulty negotiating the structure safely and carriage drivers are commonly excluded completely”*. The new guidance advises that if, as a last resort, barriers are necessary there should be a 1.8m gap between the bollards. Neither

concrete blocks nor Kent Carriage Gaps are deemed suitable.

Carole demonstrated with her ponies both of whom are highly trained sports ponies and they are used to tackling obstacles as part of their sport. Given that rights of way are used by a variety of equestrians, the way needs to be safe and clear for all users. The use of specially adapted carriages for wheelchair users is becoming more common. Riding for the Disabled groups also have carriage drivers amongst their members and being able to access the countryside provides them with a means of open air access.

It is hoped that the new BHS guidance will be used by local authorities so that in the future if barriers cannot be avoided, they are at least safe and do not prevent legal use of our rights of way network. Given that only 5% of rights of way are open to carriage drivers in any case, it is even more important that access is not prevented.

Carole Ruse

Riding routes on the Ridgeway

What a wonderful place the Ridgeway is. Whether you are a walker, cyclist or equestrian, the Ridgeway offers up its trail of peace and tranquillity to the benefit of the mind and body. Having been a horse carriage driver, I no longer have my horses, my main enjoyment has been the stretch between Overton in the west to Streatley on the Thames. With a couple of small diversions it is possible to drive a horse and carriage this complete length of byways; alternatives can be found for the challenges around Barbury Castle and Liddington.

What is really exciting is the number of options the Ridgeway offers for all users. Circular routes, which include the Ridgeway for part of the way, are easily defined. Plus the number of other ‘ways’ that link to it, such as the Swan’s



Way, Lambourne Valley Way, South Bucks Way, amongst others, they all increase these options. These factors make the Ridgeway a national asset to be enjoyed by as wide a cross section of the community as possible. This enjoyment extends just as much to the many businesses and local people along its route, as to the visitors that flock to it, many from abroad.

Of course this is not without its challenges. Competing interests of users provide much of the energy and drive in the common endeavour of improving the Ridgeway for the benefit for all. Working together in partnership has to be the way forward, embracing these competing interests. In this way, ingenious and sometimes radical measures can be created to achieve the common goal.

Obviously, parts of the Ridgeway are never going to be possible for some users. An example is the footpaths alongside the Thames. It would be virtually impossible to open these up for horse carriage driving, but you never know. Unless the widest range of users is involved in any changes, then there is always the danger of taking the easy option and excluding some users when changes and improvement are being proposed.

Then there is the perceived conflict between horses and other users. Two Research Papers from Country Research could find no proven evidence of this conflict. After all, horses and walkers have been sharing these routes for decades.



Surfaces are another obvious example. There is a growing perception that paths should be smooth and covered in tarmac, or some other impervious material. I wonder how many users are asked what they prefer? In my experience, given a path that is 50% tarmac and 50% grass, walkers and equestrians will prefer the grass. In addition, cyclists tend to prefer rougher terrain to the billiard smooth surface. However the users with a disability must not be forgotten either. By working together these differing requirements can be solved. What is refreshing about the Ridgeway, is the variety of different surfaces – muddy at Four Mile Clump (not strictly the Ridgeway), limestone gravel at Uffington, even concrete in the A34 underpass, and of course chalk and grass. Brilliant.

Returning to the concept of circular routes, on behalf of the British Driving Society (BDS), I am in the process of defining a number of such routes, including options within them, for horse carriage drivers. There is already two Paralympic Access Legacy Project (PALP 13 and 14) circular routes. Any route for horse carriage drivers will by their nature cater for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Brian Worrell

BHS Access Officer Herts and BDS Rights of Way Officer Beds, Bucks & Herts

A Friends of the Ridgeway member, Gary Stocker, attended the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education one day course on the Uffington White Horse. This is his short report on the course.

Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford 'The Land of the White Horse'.

The first lecture (by David Miles) was about how peoples' ideas of who constructed the horse and why has altered over time. It was first mentioned in a twelfth century manuscript and described as a wonder, possibly divinely made. Later John Aubrey speculated that it may have commemorated the Saxon brothers, Hengist and Horsa arriving in Britain. Whereas Anna Stukeley remarked that it looked similar to horses on Iron Age coins. In the nineteenth century, a Francis Wise said that it was to commemorate Prince Alfred defeating the Danes.

The second lecture (Jean-Luc Schwenninger) dealt with dating the horse using optically stimulated luminescence, which pushed it's date back into prehistoric times.

The third lecture (Josh Pollard) was about white horses in prehistoric Europe. Numerous depictions show the sun being towed by a horse across the sky. On Mid Winter's day, from Dragon Hill, the way that the sun rises behind the white horse, makes it look as though the sun is being pulled by the horse.

This was followed by Patrick Dillon, speaking about the cultural ecological perspective of the land. Wild horses did live in Britain during the Palaeolithic, but were extinct by the Neolithic. They were reintroduced by Bronze Age people. Although they were 'domesticated', they were semi feral. They would probably have been similar to the horses herded in present day Mongolia. Those horses, when resting for the night, like to corral their mares and foals in a box canyon and stand sentinel at the entrance. The Manger, below the White Horse, resembles a box canyon!

David Miles then spoke about how and why the horses survived. Obviously because people cared for it! Why though? It is a special area. Neolithic burials were found in its proximity, although it seems to have been built before Uffington hill fort. The Ridgeway would seem to have gone through the fort at one time. Although this opening seems to have been closed off in Iron Age times. In later times different openings were formed. Just outside the present village of Uffington, a late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement was uncovered. There is a good view of the horse from there. Maybe they built it. People who came after them also revered horses. The Romans through to George III's time. He is often depicted on a white horse. Georgian white horses were put onto hillsides in his honour. So it is arguable that the Uffington white horse spawned those others! In the 1920's it finally attained legal protection (phew!).

Anna Dillon and Jean Moorcraft Wilson finished it off with speaking about the artistic and literary effect it had. A visitor from Mexico was so enamoured that he reproduced it on a hill in Mexico when he returned home!

So it seems that the horse has survived by pleasing all of the people all of the time. Long may he/she continue to do so!

Gary Stocker

Facebook conversation



The number of people reached via our Facebook page continues to increase. The most

The most reached post in the last few weeks was a post concerning someone who had lost an earring on the Trail. So far nobody has reported finding it.

Comments keep being received (and are very much welcomed) on our web site at <https://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/contact-us/> Join the conversation. Please do let us have your comments. In particular, please report any issues relating to the trail where there is damage.
