



The Friends of The Ridgeway
Preserving the Spirit of The Ridgeway

Annual Report 2019



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, benefitting 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



Once again I must pick up my pen – or grapple with the keyboard - to reflect on the past year and the issues facing our valued ancient trail. Regrettably the same issues keep reappearing, albeit in different form or detail, along with some good news. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just enjoy our trail without having to continually be on guard to protect it.

Over the past year a variety of issues have been noted. These have been reported in Newsletters over the year. Some have been resolved, some seem impossible to resolve and some continue towards resolution.

Unfortunately reports of damage to the trail from improper use of motor vehicles continue to be received. For example, damage was noted at Gramps Hill, Letcombe Bassett and the Wantage/Hungerford road where treated sewage has been delivered using The Ridgeway as the access road for large lorries. The delivery damaged the surface of the ridgeway and left it a deep muddy track. Whilst it is probable that little can be done to repair the damage until spring, the hope must be that the landowner will reinstate the trail.

Our attention continues to be drawn to a seemingly permanent traveller on the trail in Oxfordshire. He has a large converted lorry, a pick-up van and a small car. The matter was pursued with various relevant authorities; some seemed disinclined to take action, some investigated and declared there is nothing that can be done, some continue to investigate. Hence, so far the matter is not resolved but will be pursued. His encampment is an eyesore on the Ridgeway and intimidating to walk past.

A not dissimilar issue concerns the Overton Hill Car Park at the beginning of the Ridgeway National Trail. There is increasing occupation of the car park by lorries, caravans and other vehicles creating limited parking space for walkers and others who wish to enjoy the landscape; there is concern that these vehicles are being used as accommodation and might become a more permanent feature. We believe this has been a problem for years. The situation is being monitored.



Illegal fly-tipping has been continuing; the wood at the top of the hill above East Hundred has had some campers/parties in the wood by the car park leaving lots of rubbish including two plastic chairs and some cooking pans. Additionally associated issues relating to quad bikers in the area were reported but without evidence there is little we can do.

A member reported destruction of rich wildlife habitat which has taken place recently near to his home on the trail. He suggested that the verges of the trail had been excessively mowed, 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.

Various development schemes that impact upon the Ridgeway continue to be promoted. Two recent applications were for change of use, no doubt as a prelude for residential development. The first concerned Hilltop Barn, Foxhill on The Ridgeway, with access to the house along the trail and has been withdrawn. The second is to remove the existing covenant on land and property to the east of the village of Letcombe Regis; it is alleged to be very visible from the Ridgeway and surrounding area.

These issues are typical of the matters brought to our attention – sometimes

directly but increasingly often via our web site contact page at <https://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/contact-us/> or via our Facebook page. If you note any issues along the trail please do bring them to our attention, preferably with a full description of the issue and photographs. We will continue to pursue the issues to protect the trail.

But also there is good news being noted.

We are delighted to receive reports of walks or adventures on the Ridgeway or other matters relevant to an interest in the trail. Several members have given us stories of their travels along the Ridgeway which will, in due course, be published in our Newsletters.

In September 2019 the Glover Report was published. This review considered how better to manage the landscape within the context of the government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment. A summary and the full report can be seen at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review> It considered not what do national landscapes need but what does the nation need from them today? A total of 27 proposals were made by the review, including some that have a direct impact on National Trails, including The Ridgeway. The central proposal is to bring National Parks and AONBs together as part of one family of national landscapes, served by a shared National Landscapes Service (NLS). Additionally it wished to see encouragement of a wider range of non-designated systems of landscape protection, which should be members of the national landscapes family and served by the NLS (e.g. forests, urban National Parks, marine parks).



The review recommended that National Trails be brought into the national landscapes family, and that further open access rights in our national

landscapes be considered. In responding to the review, the National Trails Alliance welcomed this proposal to strengthen links with other designations, bringing National Trails into the new National Landscapes family and the acknowledgement the critical place the National Trails have in the enjoyment and engagement with the countryside both in the past, currently and for future generations. To gain greatest benefits from the Glover Review, the family of National Trails are looking to government to support our ambition of forming a National Trails Alliance.



Wiltshire Council closed the length of The Ridgeway within the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site to mechanically propelled vehicles for the summer of 2019 to enable surface repairs to be carried out in four locations. The repairs will protect the underlying archaeology. The good news that this is, at last, now to be protected. And we hope that the present temporary order will be made permanent.



We continue to work with others to create a coast-to-coast recreational route for walkers, riders and cyclists, including disabled access, along the line of the ancient Ridgeway braided tracks between

Norfolk and Dorset. This is The Great Chalk Way.

The Local Group of members in the Vale of White Horse, established in 2009, chaired by Dr Roger Griffin with the able assistance of a small committee, continues to cater to the interests of members resident in the Vale, with an active programme of talks and visits. Members are encouraged to join or form local groups to ensure their continued operation. The Committee would like to see new Local Groups launched for Wiltshire and for the Thames and Chilterns.

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 has led to us establishing the Swire Ridgeway Art

Prize; this is now recognised as an annual competition and exhibition and will again be held again in 2020.

The AGM will be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington on Sunday 19 April 2020, as part of the Ridgeway Friends Day including the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. Definitely a date for your diary – please do come along.

We are delighted to acknowledge the various donations received, including most generous donations from The Adrian Swire Charitable Trust.

The Vice Presidents of the Friends of the Ridgeway are the Members of parliament though whose constituency The Ridgeway National Trail runs. At the recent election, five of these Vice Presidents either retired or lost their seat but two were re-elected, Robert Buckland (South Swindon) and John Howell (Henley). We will be writing to their successors inviting them to become Vice Presidents of the Friends of the Ridgeway.

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 and, additionally, 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.

With all best wishes

Anthony Burdall



Secretary's report

The Friends of the Ridgeway is a voluntary association and a registered charity. In order to fulfil its charitable objectives, the Trustees of the Ridgeway are elected annually sitting as a committee which normally meets quarterly.

The Committee: Anthony Burdall continued to serve during the year as the Chairman, John Edgerton continued as Treasurer as did I as Secretary. Jim Gunter, Andy Greenhalgh, Dianne Godfrey, Tim Lewis and Carole Ruse also served as members of the Committee throughout the year. The Committee can comprise of up to 8 members and we are actively seeking new members as several members are resigning this year.

A substantial and increasing membership is important if we are to demonstrate public support for the preservation of The Ridgeway. We have been pleased to see this year a continuing net increase in membership, and we extend a warm welcome to the Association for all our new members.

Communications: We continue to publish an Annual Report and quarterly Newsletters. However, inevitably our website and social media are becoming more important.

Reserves and Investments Policy: To ensure financial stability the Committee seeks to maintain a minimum general reserve equal to eight calendar months' expenditure.

Updating of the underlying administration: Updating continues but, most definitely, more slowly than we would like. The web site and Facebook page are getting more activity. 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 Drovers Way.

We are subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If you have not already done so, please complete the consent form, available on-line, so that we may continue to keep you informed about our activities.

And if you have changed your email address please let us know the new address.

Alan Chater, Secretary

NOTICE OF THE 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
To be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington,
on Sunday 19 April 2020 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 5 April 2020). 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 the prize giving after the AGM. Entries to the competition will be on display in the Hall, and light lunches may be purchased from 12.00 pm.

Treasurer's Report for the year to 31 December 2019

The year 2019 was largely successful from a financial standpoint but the emphasis for the Trustees on the Committee is on consolidating the number of members rather than seeking to improve the financial position.

Further generous donations were received during the year. The sum of £10,000 was received from the Swire Charitable Trust, to be held as restricted funds for the continuing development of the Swire Arts Exhibition and Prize giving for 2019 and subsequent years. Also, a bequest of £5,000 to be held within unrestricted funds, was received from a member's estate.

Subscription income showed a modest 18% increase on the previous year. Although the financial position of the Charity remains strong, the Friends are keen to maintain and increase membership levels, in order that we can show a strong and united front when lobbying Government for change, such as banning 4x4 vehicles and other possibly inconsiderate parties in order to maintain the Ridgeway in a condition fit for other users.

The total of funds available is now £62,030 (up from £51,241), of which £38,859 is restricted (for the purposes of the Great Stones Way, the Ridgeway National Trail and the Swire Arts Exhibitions). A sum of £23,171 is available for purposes approved by the Friends' Committee in relation to the protection, upkeep and promotion of the Ridgeway.

A Gift Aid claim of £486 was made to the HMRC in respect of qualifying membership fees and donations received in 2019, which has since been received.

A very successful second Arts Prize Exhibition and Prize giving was held as a prelude to the 2018 AGM, held in April 2019 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.

J Edgerton *Treasurer*

The Friends of the Ridgeway			
INCOME	2019	Notes	2018
	£		£
Subscriptions	2,056		1,733
Donations	15,774	1	6,907
Bank Interest CAF/COIF Charity Funds	130	2	
Tax recovered by Gift Aid	485	2	367
Swire Arts Day sales	425		774
	18,870		9,783
EXPENDITURE			
Newsletters/Annual report	690		648
Office Costs & Leaflets	23		108
Affiliation Fees	36		86
AGM Expenses	0		43
Website/IT costs	260		78
Insurance	345		345
Local & Group Events	242		0
Meeting Expenses	138		190
Bank charges	60		60
Ridgeway Partnership Support	3,995	3	2,000
Swire Arts Prize setup/prizes	2,292		3,013
	8,081		6,571
Surplus for the year	10,789		3,212
Fund Balances brought forward	51,241		48,029
Fund Balances carried forward	62,030		51,241

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES FOR THE YEAR TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

CURRENT ASSETS	2019	2018
	£	£
Bank balances: Lloyds/TSB Current a/c	112	582
CAF Bank Current a/c	51,236	40,095
COIF Deposit a/c	197	197
CAF Bank Investment a/c	10,000	10,000
	61,545	50,874
Claim for Tax Recovery (Gift Aid)	485	367
	62,030	51,241
 REPRESENTED BY FUNDS		
Restricted – Great Stones Way	4,194	4,194
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	14,977	6,844
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	19,688	23,516
Unrestricted – General Fund	23,171	16,686
	62,030	51,241

Notes on the accounts:

- 1 Two further donations from a Charitable Trust received, totalling £15,000.
- 2 Gift aid recovery increased due to higher membership income and donations.
- 3 Support given to Ridgeway Partnership directional quad counter project from restricted fund.



The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize: Funded by a magnanimous donation, the Committee have implemented a long-standing ambition to launch an Arts Competition and Prize, celebrating the creative and artistic inspiration of the Ridgeway.

Following strong support over past years, the Competition is established as an annual event and is being held again this year. Separate classes are open to works of painting, photography, sculpture (including ceramics) and writing (poetry or prose). Competition is open to all, amateur and professional artists. The results of the competition will be announced and prizes awarded at the Ridgeway Friends Day planned for 19 April 2020. Prizes will be awarded for each category as well as an overall winner, each winner receiving a cash sum and a keeper prize.

There will be an exhibition of art works 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 18 to 19 April 2020. The Exhibition will be open to the public between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm each day, and the Prizes will be awarded after the AGM on Sunday 19 April 2020.

For the first time there will be a second exhibition of submitted works on Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 April at St Dunstan's Church Hall, Monks Risborough. Please come along and support this event.



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.

Representatives from The Friends of The Ridgeway and the Icknield Way Association are working to establish 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. Starting in Lyme Regis the route will follow the Wessex Ridgeway, into the Cranborne Drove Way, then established trails past Stonehenge, leading into the Ridgeway National Trail and Icknield Way along the chalk escarpment, then the Pedders Way finishing in Hunstanton. 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 Ivanhoe 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.

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.

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.



The Friends of The Ridgeway: The Facts

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

The President and Vice-Presidents: Our President is Lord Bradshaw. Our seven Vice-Presidents will, we hope, be the Members of Parliament whose constituencies include sections of The Ridgeway.

Committee: The Trustees of The Friends of The Ridgeway, elected annually to run the Association, comprise a Committee, which normally meets quarterly, and is supported by other volunteers. The Committee includes the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

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.

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 Facebook and Twitter.

How You Can Help:

Join Us: Become a member of The Friends of The Ridgeway. Just ask for a leaflet and application form, download a form from our website or e-mail 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.

The Friends of The Ridgeway

Patron: Sir Chris Bonington

President: Lord Bradshaw

Vice-Presidents: MPs though whose constituency The Ridgeway National Trail runs.

Trustees (to 19 April 2020):

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

Alan Chater (Secretary): (alan.chater@gmail.com)

John Edgerton (Treasurer): jedgerton1@virginmedia.com

Dianne Godfrey: diney1@hotmail.co.uk

Andy Greenhalgh: agreenha@gmail.com

James Gunter: jagunter@btopenworld.com

Tim Lewis : timwhlewis@gmail.com

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