



## Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2021 Written entries 2021

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### **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 Ivinghoe.

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 Ivinghoe.

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*Jill Smith*