



THE FRIENDS OF THE  
**RIDGEWAY**

## **Annual Report 2021**

*Preserving the Spirit of the Ridgeway*



Website [www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/](http://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/)  
Facebook @FriendsOfTheRidgeway

## About us

The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) is an independent charity (registered charity no. 1107926) run by volunteers to preserve the spirit of the Ridgeway and its surroundings for maximum enjoyment by the public and protection of the adjacent natural and historic environment. Our focus is on the Ridgeway National Trail and the chalk ridges that link it to the Dorset and Norfolk coasts; together these form the Great Chalk Way.

## 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 Objectives

- We aim for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length.
- Our ambition is for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic
- We promote an appreciation of the Ridgeway – for outdoor pursuits and the creative arts - and its natural and historic environment
- FoR is concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public.
- We promote the Great Chalk Way, a 360-mile series of trails along chalk ridges from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts, of which the Ridgeway National Trail is one.

## Achieving our objectives

1. We aim for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length.

- We have a seat on the board of the Ridgeway Partnership, influencing policy and actions.
- We communicate with our members, other related bodies and the general public.
- We elicit feedback, in various ways including our website, social media, newsletter and press releases, and interact with other like-minded bodies.
- We collect donations from event organisers and other donors to improve and maintain the Ridgeway.

## 2. Our ambition is for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic.

- We lobby highway authorities to extend current seasonal prohibitions of motor vehicles.
- We encourage our members and the general public to report traffic issues on the Ridgeway to us, after which we inform the police, highway authorities and Ridgeway Partnership.



3. We promote an appreciation of the Ridgeway and its natural and historic environment.
  - We achieve this in various ways including the annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, our website, social media, newsletter and press releases.
4. FoR is also concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public.
  - We consider planning applications in the vicinity of the Ridgeway when these are brought to our attention, and submit comments to the respective district council, as appropriate.
  - We selectively support other organisations and pressure groups that campaign against inappropriate developments in the vicinity of the Ridgeway.
5. We promote the Great Chalk Way, a 360-mile series of trails along chalk ridges from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts, of which the Ridgeway National Trail is one.
  - We are a member of the Great Chalk Way (GCW) group, which comprises representatives of the constituent trails, which works to promote the GCW as a whole.
  - We are particularly active in respect of the Ridgeway, Cranbourne Drovers Way and the Sarsen Way, including route descriptions and waymarking.
  - We communicate with our members and the general public through our website, social media and newsletter.

## Chair's report



Dear Friends

This last year appears to have flown by and this is my first report as Chair. This year as part of our Governance and Management we have revised our Vision for the Ridgeway and have developed role

profiles for the Officers of the Friends and an overarching responsibilities matrix for all trustees. Our objectives and how we intend to achieve them are explained at pages 2 to 4 of this report. With our limited resources the aim is to ensure we focus on the key goals to ensure everyone can enjoy the Ridgeway. After each year end, the trustees will meet to review the objectives. This review will consider the success of each and where we can make improvements in the next year.

In 2023, it is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ridgeway National Trail and with the Ridgeway Partnership we are planning a number of events. The Friends have agreed to devise a series of 12 monthly challenges for people to undertake on the trail. Each month we would launch a new challenge on the website and by email aimed at various demographics and do our utmost to ensure people with a disability can participate. Once launched these would be self-organised and we aim to design a completion certificate they could download and/or post their success on Facebook etc. The monthly challenges would be for individuals, families, groups and schools to participate. The challenges would be quite modest, such as visit a fort, a white horse, an archaeological site or how many bird species or butterflies can you identify and record in a walk.

Initial planning led by the Ridgeway Partnership has commenced for an event in September at Combe Hill, the site of the 1973 Opening. The aim is to raise the profile of the Ridgeway, to attract national attention hopefully resulting in greater use of the trail and ultimately increase membership.

Unfortunately, we are continually involved in issues in relation to the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) concerns not only for the Ridgeway itself but also its environs that threaten everyone's enjoyment of the trail. This year has been no exception and we became a partner of the Britchcombe

Farm Working Group. Britchcombe Farm is on the lower slopes of



Whitehorse Hill, Uffington, and much of it is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Working Group is campaigning against the proposed development of a campsite that would potentially involve engineering operations, such as permanent bases for caravans, roads,

permanent services and potentially other permanent structures that would require planning permission. You can read more on this in the autumn 2021 issue of our newsletter (link under About Us on our homepage).

The long standing issues of the permanent traveller site above Bishopstone and at the Overton Hill Car Park continue. Whilst we continue to pursue these issues we have made little headway in their resolution.

There is still criminal activity on the Ridgeway: hare coursing; fly tipping; illegal motors e.g. motorcycles and vehicles when a traffic Temporary Restriction Order (TRO) is in force. Should you witness illegal activity on the Ridgeway we would encourage you to report it to the relevant authority generally the County Council or in the event of blatant criminal activity direct to the police. The more reporting and evidence you can gather will assist everyone to build a case for more restrictions on motorised vehicles.

Once again Anthony Burdell has organised the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize for the sixth year in succession. Thankfully with the demise of COVID restrictions the artworks can be viewed at Uffington Village Hall on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April. This year has resulted in another good year for entries and I do hope you can come along to the exhibition. Anthony is stepping down and we are currently looking for his successor. If you are interested in this post, or know someone who might be, then either visit and discuss the role with Anthony or myself or drop me line at [michaellewington@hotmail.com](mailto:michaellewington@hotmail.com).

Membership stood at 355 subscribing members at the end of the year. We continue to derive our income from membership subscriptions and donations. We produced a new information leaflet on the Ridgeway, laminated copies of which will be displayed and distributed at strategic points along the Trail, and which is also available via a link on our homepage.

Tim Lewis has continued liaising with the Great Chalk Way (GCG) committee, comprising representatives of the several component trails. He has taken the lead in designing information boards, with artistic input from Abby George, and liaising with various authorities as to where they will be placed.

Anthony has handed to Dave Cavanagh, Secretary, the FoR archive. This comprises meeting, policy and progress papers, sundry publications, volunteer newsletters from the days when newsletters were delivered by post, and several albums containing press cuttings and members' photographs of the Ridgeway. These are a mine of information, illustrating the problems caused by non-essential motor vehicles, including motor cycles, and the long campaign to get them prohibited from the Ridgeway. Dave has captured many of the press releases with his mobile phone, and is using them to tell the story of FoR's endeavours in our newsletters throughout 2022 – forty years since the FoR was formed from the Ridgeway Conservation Conference.



Since 2015 the Ridgeway has been managed and promoted by the Ridgeway Partnership, described elsewhere in this report. As Chair I represent FoR on the Board of the Partnership, and am a member of its Development Group. I am liaising Sarah Wright, the Partnership's Ridgeway Officer, on the 50th anniversary celebrations in 2023 of the Ridgeway National Trail's official opening in 1973.

This year the FoR is a Participating Charity in the 2022 Race to the Stones. This is a 100 km race – walking, jogging or running – along the Ridgeway from Lewknor to Avebury. We are calling on participants to choose FoR as their charity. All funds raised will be used to preserve the spirit of the Ridgeway and maintain the trail within the World Heritage Site at Avebury. You can read more about this in the Autumn 2021 issue of the FoR newsletter.



Following the rebuilding of our website in 2020, making it simpler to use and more robust, much of the content has been rewritten by the trustees and uploaded by Ricky Cunningham.

## **Risk Policy**

We have continued to develop our risk register ensuring that all risk assessments have been considered to assist us with our resilience.

## **Public Benefit**

The Trustees confirm they have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the Friends of the Ridgeway. The trustees are satisfied and confident that the charity's activities directly further its charitable purposes and provide clear benefits to its beneficiaries.

The Friends membership is open to all members of the public and enables us to ensure everyone can enjoy the experience and freedom of the trail and the countryside. Friends are also kept up to date on news of the trail through the quarterly magazine and emails which are kept to a minimum and sent directly to each Friend.

## **Notice of the 2022 Annual General Meeting**

To be held at the village hall (Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall)

Uffington

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022 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 ([davecavanagh1000@gmail.com](mailto:davecavanagh1000@gmail.com)) by 14 full days before the AGM i.e. by 20<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Talk before the AGM – Ritchie's Ramblings - a personal Ridgeway journey**

2.00 pm

Ian Ritchie was chair of Friends of the Ridgeway from 2000 until 2015. Ian will describe the ups and downs that culminated in significant protections for the Ridgeway in the early years of this century. He will explain how the Friends was instrumental in forming the Ridgeway Partnership that manages the Ridgeway, and will muse on what the future might hold.

### **Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize awards**

The winners of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prizes will be announced and the prizes awarded at the prize giving after the AGM on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Entries to the competition will be on display in the hall from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Refreshments, including drinks, sandwiches and cakes will be available on both days, and a complementary cream tea after the AGM and prize giving.

The artworks will also be on display at the Friends of the Ridgeway website for at least several weeks after the prize giving.

<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize/>

## Treasurer's report for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

The Friends of the Ridgeway made a surplus this year of just over £4,000, thus clawing back the deficit we incurred last year. This was mainly due to an 80% increase in subscriptions, and no grants being made to the Ridgeway Partnership. In addition, donations were swollen by a £2,500 contribution from the Adrian Swire Foundation, which continues to be a major source of funding for the Friends.



Although it may appear that tax recovered through Gift Aid has almost disappeared, this is due to a change in the way it is accounted for, from a receivable to a cash basis. In other words, it is now being credited to the income and expenditure account in the year in which it is received rather than the year in which the income

which gave rise to it is received. This is considered to be simpler to administer and more appropriate for a small charity like the Friends of the Ridgeway.

We were pleased to be able to hold the Swire Arts Prize event this year, even though it was a virtual rather than physical exhibition; this received a record number of entries, which we believe was due to better publicity about its existence. Net expenditure on this was £752, which compares favourably with the £1,867 spent on it the last time it was held, in 2019. Website and IT costs decreased considerably following the “refreshing” of the website last year. The cost of producing the annual report and newsletters also decreased by 58% due to a dramatic reduction in the number of paper copies of the annual report being printed and sent to members, all but a tiny handful of members with email addresses having advised us that they were happy to receive electronic reports. A further £15,000 was invested in a one year bond with United Trust Bank in order to earn some interest, pitifully low as it is, on our surplus funds. The existing one year bond of £10,000 we had with the same bank was renewed for a further year, together with the £105 interest earned on it.

Tim Lewis *Treasurer*

## Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	2,875	1,599
Donations	3,333	957
Tax recovered through Gift Aid	14	362
Swire Arts Day sales	457	
Surplus on closure of Vale of White Horse group		230
Interest earned	105	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,784</b>	<b>3,288</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Ridgeway Partnership support		3,500
Swire Arts Prize set up & prizes	1,209	
Newsletters/Annual report	272	646
Insurance	345	345
Website/IT costs	312	1,596
Great Chalk Way information board design	280	
Cranborne Drovers Way waymarks		435
Meeting expenses	33	132
Bank charges	96	60
Zoom licence		144
Publicity	105	110
Affiliation fees	36	36
Other	15	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,703</b>	<b>7,033</b>
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	4,081	(3,745)
Fund balances brought forward	58,285	62,030
<b>Fund balances carried forward</b>	<b>62,366</b>	<b>58,285</b>



## Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

In 2017, following a generous donation from Sir Adrian Swire, the Friends of the Ridgeway created the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, an event held annually since then. The theme of the competition is 'Spirit of the Ridgeway'. It celebrates and draws attention to the artistic inspiration of the Ridgeway.

There are separate classes for

- wall art (including painting, drawing, etching, textile pictures and wall hangings, and mosaics)
- sculpture (including ceramics)
- photography (including digital art)
- writing (poetry or prose)

Each category winner receives a keeper prize plus £100. The overall winner receives a keeper prize plus £250 and a trophy.



This year the exhibition of the artworks is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of April in Uffington village hall (Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall) from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. Prizes will be awarded after the AGM which starts at 3.00 pm. Most of the artworks, which will also be exhibited on the Friends

website, are for sale.

<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2022/>

## New organiser of the Arts Prize needed

After six years of organising the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, Anthony Burdall is stepping down. So, we are seeking a new volunteer to organise the competition for 2023. If you are interested and would like more information, contact Mike Lewington [michaellewington@hotmail.com](mailto:michaellewington@hotmail.com)

## The Ridgeway National Trail

The Ridgeway National Trail, which is 87 miles long, was officially opened as a National Trail in September 1973. Starting at Overton Hill, near Avebury in Wiltshire, the Trail runs along the North Wessex Downs, drops down to the Thames at Streatley, then continues north-eastwards through the Chilterns, rising to finish at Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire. Walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and disabled people using mobility scooters are drawn to the Trail's viewpoints, prehistoric monuments, nature reserves, pubs and more.



The phenomenon of off-road driving by motor vehicles and motor-bikes for recreational purposes during the 1960s led to wide-spread damage to unsurfaced tracks across the country, including the Ridgeway trail south of the Thames (Wessex section) which was particularly badly affected. Campaigning by Friends of the Ridgeway and others resulted in an Act of Parliament (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) which resulted in protection for green lanes, including much of the Ridgeway, from non-essential motor traffic. All of the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire is banned from non-essential motor vehicles. The situation of the Ridgeway in Wiltshire is complex: a two-mile section above

Bishopstone, to the east side of the M4, is completely open to traffic. On the west side of the M4 one section of the Ridgeway is closed to four-wheeled vehicles but not motor bikes for 12 months of the year, and others are closed to all non-essential motor vehicles for six months ('winter'). There is also a section in Berkshire that is closed to motor vehicles for six months.

An illustrative map showing the status of the various sections of the Ridgeway with respect to non-essential motorised traffic is within two leaflets available on the Ridgeway National Trail's website

[https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/)

The public currently has an opportunity to advise the government on the future of green lanes, such as in the Wessex section of the Ridgeway. The consultation closes on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022. <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/future-landscapes-strategy/government-response-to-the-landscapes-review/>

## **The Ridgeway Partnership**

The Ridgeway Partnership has managed and promoted the Ridgeway National Trail since its inception in 2015. The Partners include all the local authorities along the route, the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR), The North Wessex Downs AONB and the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Chiltern Society, the Ramblers, the British Horse Society, the Disabled Ramblers, the Country Landowners Association, and more.

<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/about-us/the-ridgeway-partnership/>



The FoR is a founding Partner and played a major role in establishing the Partnership. Indeed Ian Ritchie and Jeff Goddard, Chair and Secretary, respectively, of FoR at the time were the first to occupy those roles for the Ridgeway Partnership. The current chair is Simon Kearey.

Sarah Wright, the Ridgeway Officer, energetically drives forward the Partnership's objectives, and Lucy Duerdoth manages the volunteers who do much of the maintenance work on the Ridgeway and on the Thames Path National Trail.

Natural England provides a grant towards core costs of the Partnership, alongside lesser amounts from local authorities. Donations from event organisers along the Ridgeway and others augment those funds. From time to time the Friends of the Ridgeway donates money to support specific activities.

## Great Chalk Way

The Ridgeway is part of a much longer series of connected trails (360 miles in length) which stretch from the Dorset coast at Lyme Regis along chalk ridges to the Norfolk coast at Holme next the Sea: the Great Chalk Way (GCW).



The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) played a prominent role in the formation of the GCW. In recent years our treasurer, Tim Lewis, has taken the project forward on behalf of FoR, including waymarking sections of it (the Cranbourne Drovers Way and the Sarsen Way). Tim has worked with Abby

George to design information boards for the termini of each of the several trails that form the GCW. Tim is in the process of commissioning the production of the information boards and discussing with the relevant landowners where they can be erected.

Tim has written an introductory article on the GCW in the Winter (January) 2022 issue of our newsletter, which you can download from our website <https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/about-us/newsletters/> and has



recently updated the description of the GCW on our website  
<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/the-trail/> .

The GCW has its own dedicated website <http://greatchalkway.org.uk/> from which the map above is taken.



## How you can help

JOIN US, if you are not already a member. There is a 'join us' link on the homepage of our website <https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/>

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 other users and is an offence.



All of the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire is restricted byway, so no non-essential motor vehicles are banned. The situation of the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and in parts of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire is complex (as described the earlier Ridgeway

National Trail section of this report). The best and simplest way to see the status of each section of the Ridgeway is look at the excellent annotated map in one or other of two leaflets available on the Ridgeway National Trail's website [https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/)

If you witness prohibited vehicles on the Ridgeway you can report it to the police. Alternatively you could report the incident to Friends of the Ridgeway using the Contacts Page on our website or post on our Facebook page, and we'll pass your observations along. If you have photographs, so much the better. <https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/>

FLY-TIPPING is anti-social and spoils the environment. Report it to your local Council, or let us know about it, and we'll pass the message on.

## Who's who in Friends of the Ridgeway

Patron	Sir Chris Bonington
President	Lord (Bill) William Peter Bradshaw
Vice-presidents	MPs through whose constituency the Ridgeway runs: Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon) Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury) Laura Farris MP (Newbury) John Howell MP (Henley) David Johnston MP (Didcot and Wantage) Danny Kruger MP (Devizes) Gagan Mohindra MP (South West Hertfordshire) Greg Smith MP (Buckingham)

### Trustees (to 3rd April 2022)

Mike Lewington	Chair
Dave Cavanagh	Secretary and Newsletter Editor
Tim Lewis	Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Nathan Boyd	Trustee
Jim Gunter	Trustee
Jane Imbush	Trustee
Edward Peveler	Trustee
Duncan Strutt	Trustee
Webmaster	Ricky Cunningham

To contact Friends of the Ridgeway use the Contact Us page on our website  
[www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk](http://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk)



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