

Friends of the Ridgeway



Summer 2023



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www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk



Welcome

Editor Dave Cavanagh
davecavanagh1000@gmail.com

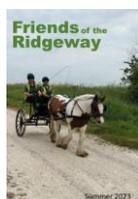


Articles were written by the editor, Dave Cavanagh, unless credited otherwise.

If you have an idea for an article on some aspect, including your own experience, of the Ridgeway or its environs, or on another section of the Great Chalk Way, do discuss it with the editor davecavanagh1000@gmail.com

Got some great photos of the Ridgeway or nearby countryside, villages and events? Do share them with us.

Cover photo: a skewbald pulling a trap, from the article *Driving the Ridgeway*, inside.



AS SOON AS I FINISHED the spring issue of this newsletter I wondered what on earth I was going to put in this summer one.

Fortunately, the Ridgeway is the gift that keeps on giving. The Ridgeway Partnership's Sarah Wright, Lucy Duerdoth and Mary Tebje get through a heap of work every month, as you can see in this issue, as does Mary-Ann Ochota, Patron of the Ridgeway National Trail's 50th anniversary. Add to that articles written by enthusiasts amongst you, wonderful works of art submitted for our Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, and lots more, there is never a shortage of material.

Famous last words?

The Ridgeway graced the cover of the summer issue of Ramblers walk magazine



DRIVING THE RIDGEWAY

Janice Bridger, Shaun Gibson & Colin Pawson

of the Berkshire branch of the British Driving Society

TO MOST PEOPLE these days, driving means travelling in a vehicle powered by fossil fuels not travelling by real horse power. With horse drawn carriages being mainly seen in TV period dramas and on ceremonial processions, and rarely being seen on today's roads because of safety fears, it comes as a surprise to many that horse drawn carriage driving is a popular activity enjoyed by a wide range of people from many walks of life.

THE BERKSHIRE DOWNS, with the Ridgeway National Trail and the adjoining tracks, is one of the few public areas in the south of England which offers miles of off-road byways suitable for horse drawn carriage driving on public rights of way rather than on private land where much horse drawn carriage driving takes place these days. This led the Berkshire branch of the British Driving Society to organise a carriage drive on a warm June day starting from Bower Farm at Aldworth by kind permission of the Walters family.



Above, a Flaxen mane pony leaving Bower Farm.



Above, four chestnuts; below, a single bay horse.



CARRIAGE DRIVERS followed a mapped route leaving Bower Farm on the public byway from the farm. After joining the Ridgeway, they followed the Ridgeway to Churn Rd above Compton, admiring the wide expanse of open downland which is crisscrossed by the historic tracks linking Berkshire to Oxfordshire and created by previous travellers on foot, on horseback or by horse drawn cart and carriage.

The route continued down Churn Rd into Compton where a local resident remarked that it was “Very uplifting to see carriages coming down Churn Road, Compton, today as part of the pleasure drive. A great sight”.



Two donkey pairs on the Ridgeway



A pair of fine ponies.



Tandem black cobs

AFTER PASSING THROUGH Compton, the route took drivers back up onto the downs to meet the Ridgeway once again and return to Bower Farm, in all about 8 miles: a great sense of achievement for all.



TURNOUTS CAME from far and wide, from Wilts, Bucks and London, and in all shapes and sizes. Carriages were pulled by a single horse or pony, a pair of horses or ponies, either side by side or one in front of the other (a tandem), and one carriage was pulled by four matching chestnut ponies (a team or four-in-hand). Plus there were two pairs of donkeys who did a shorter course.

Left and below: on Churn Road

THE CARRIAGES themselves ranged from light weight carriages carrying 2 people to a substantial carriage carrying 4, which is used for weddings and other occasions. As a horse rider knowing very little about carriage driving, the obvious soon became apparent to me: use of a carriage is a step up from riding a horse in its ability to transport a greater number of people for the same horse power!



Discover The Ridgeway's history with Mary-Ann Ochota

You can listen to Mary-Ann Ochota, the Ridgeway's 50th anniversary patron, in her two new podcasts about The Ridgeway with [English Heritage](#) and [Countryfile](#). You can also see Mary-Ann in person on Friday 22nd September for an evening talk during the popular Chiltern Society Heritage and Culture Festival. You can [Book your tickets here.](#)

"Did you know, if you get pregnant in the Amazon, it's next-day delivery"

- Mark Simmons, Edinburgh Fringe 2022

News from the Ridgeway Partnership

RIDGEWAY OFFICER Sarah Wright, supported by Lucy Duerdoth and Mary Tebje, does a phenomenal amount of work each month to protect, improve and promote The Ridgeway.

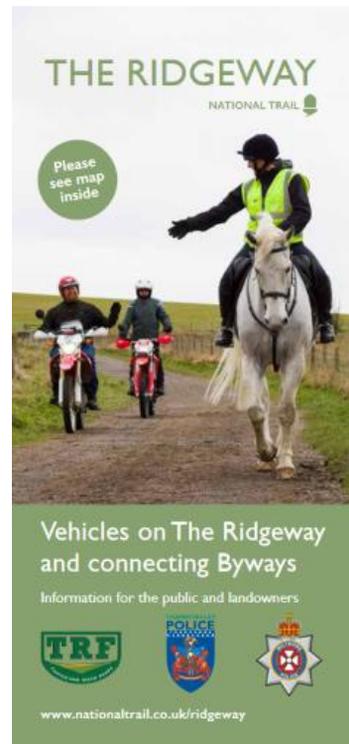
EVEN IN BULLET FORM it takes Sarah several A4 pages to report to the quarterly meetings of the [Ridgeway Partnership](#). So here are just a few snippets from Sarah's latest report to the Board, which she also presents to The Friends of the Ridgeway at our quarterly meetings. You won't be surprised to learn that much of her effort goes into raising money. Her reports include the work led by Lucy Duerdoth who manages the Volunteers who work on both the Ridgeway and the Thames Path National Trails.

Very near the end of the 2022-23 financial year several National Trails Officers in England learned at late notice that Natural England had reduced their grant. Thankfully the Highway Authorities and AONBs through which the Ridgeway National Trail runs increased their contributions to the Trail to help cover the shortfall but the year ended in deficit.

TO BENEFIT FROM somewhat over £11,000 from Natural England's fund aimed at accessibility capital projects the Ridgeway Officer negotiated 25% match-funding from elsewhere, which she did, from The Friends of the Ridgeway, West Berkshire Council and Beacons of the Past. Funds were used to purchase a kissing gate, water fountain, improved signage and a visitor counter.

Mike Lewington and I (Dave Cavanagh) represent The Friends of the Ridgeway and Ramblers, respectively, on the Board of the Ridgeway Partnership.

SARAH SECURED a contribution from Thames Valley Police and three Highway Authorities for vehicle management work: printing 1000 [driving leaflets](#) and new signage to help the public report illegal vehicle activity on Ridgeway. Copies were distributed to Thames Valley Police, West Berkshire Council, Swindon and District Motorcycle Club and Friends of the Ridgeway. Copies are due to be sent to local moto-cross tracks.



WORKING WITH organisers of events using The Ridgeway in 2022 and 2023, Sarah collected donations to fund the design of a new illustrated [map and visitor leaflet](#). Natural England funded the printing of 5,000 leaflets, of which 2,600 have been posted to Tourist Information Centres, local museums, event organisers such as PACE, farm shops, Buckinghamshire Scouts etc. The remainder are destined for schools along The Ridgeway. The leaflet is also now available as a free download on the Ridgeway website.



The new water fountain for the Ridgeway at Sparsholt Firs, bought with Natural England's capital projects accessibility funding and match funding, including from The Friends of the Ridgeway, described on page 6.

Ignore the turtle in this manufacturer's picture; the Downs have not returned to the Cretaceous Period.

Bringing partners together to share expertise, information and materials can be as important as raising cash funds. For example, Sarah is developing solutions to address the problem of vehicle-related crime along the Trail by pooling resources with local farmers, Thames Valley Police and West Berkshire Council. As a trial, concrete blocks have been placed on The Ridgeway where it passes under the A34. Blocks are a relatively cheap means of obstructing four wheeled motor vehicles, although the trial is revealing that the more expensive option of gates may be a more effective solution in some locations.



AFTER THREE SUCCESSIVE DAYS of rain I ventured up Whitehorse Hill in late July. Hardier souls had braved the soaking conditions to scour – remove weeds – from the Uffington White Horse. I had gone there to watch archaeologists peel back time, specifically to remove some of the turf adjacent to the chalk Horse. Recent surveys of the Horse, including by Hedley Thorne using a drone, had shown, when compared with earlier ones, that over as few as 30-40 years there had been a reduction in the size of the horse. I saw for myself that a shallow trench dug across the upper part of the neck had revealed that what we normally see is only about a quarter of the width of the original neck.



WHEN, SOME THREE MILLENNIA AGO, the Ancient Britons made the White Horse they didn't do it simply by removing the turf from the chalk rock. Rather they created trenches, a metre or so deep, by removing the chalk there, and then back-filling the trenches with selected chalk. In the intervening period various bands of our forebears had, from time to time, removed weeds and encroaching turf (scouring) and had pounded-in fresh chalk (chalking). Under the stewardship of the National Trust chalking has been undertaken annually by members of the public. However, only the visible parts of the Horse were chaked, and these were slowly being covered by advancing turf. The object of the archaeologists' work in July was to establish where the original borders of the chalk

The shrinking White Horse of Uffington

Dave Cavanagh



A shallow trench across the upper part of the neck of the Horse by an archaeologist from the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Just below her right hand is the boundary of the chalk that has been added by people over the millennia (to the left) and fragmented bedrock chalk (to the right).

trenches were, by removing adjacent turf and carefully teasing away earth with a small trowel. This work will continue until the whole body of the Horse has been assessed.



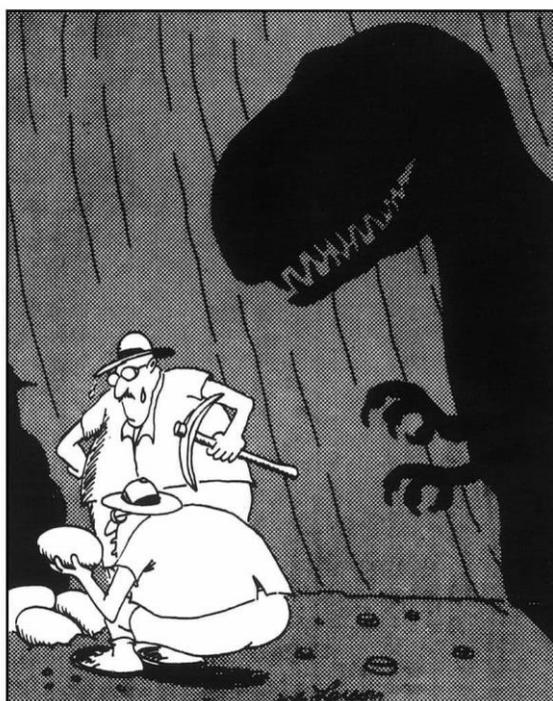
Assessing the situation were (left to right) Win Scutt (English Heritage regional curator), David Wilkinson (Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments), David Miles (retired Head of Archaeology, English Heritage, and former Director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit), and Simon Palmer (retired member of Oxford Archaeological Unit).



Shallow trenches across parts of the head of the Horse, with the removed turves to the rear.



Trenching tools. Note that the central portion of the trench is higher than the previously hidden flanking regions, a consequence of chalking the visible part over the years.



"Millions of years old and they look as if they were laid yesterday!"

May away day

IN LATE SPRING the Ridgeway Partnership had a special meeting, starting in the morning outdoors on the Ridgeway Trail at Bury Down and Scutcher Knob round barrow, just west of the A34. Staff of the Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre, and the University of Oxford, identified the plants growing on the verges of the Trail, and described the outcome of the University's experiment to identify the best way to reintroduce native chalk downland flowers. Flowers are thriving in the experimental plots where seeds were sown and then competition from grasses is reduced by annual mowing and removal of the cuttings.



At Scutcher Knob two members of Disabled Ramblers demonstrated their difficulty negotiating access to this Scheduled Monument.

Mary-Ann Ochota at Scutcher

GUESTS OF HONOUR were Mary-Ann Ochota, 50th Anniversary Patron, and Polly Martin, CEO of National Trails UK, the recently created charity that champions all the National Trails, especially in the corridors of power in Westminster. The purpose of this away day was for the Partnership to reflect on the current condition and achievements along the Trail and develop a Future 50 vision.

AFTER A PICNIC LUNCH in West Ilsley village hall, the focus switched to a session for sharing ideas on how to improve the public's experience of the Ridgeway during the next 50 years.

In West Ilsley village hall. Discussions explored ways to improve accessibility, biodiversity, artistic involvement, youth participation and more



Masai Graham was voted the winner of the funniest joke of the Edinburgh Fringe 2022 with his gag: "I tried to steal spaghetti from the shop, but the female guard saw me and I couldn't get pasta."

Book review: The Bridleway, How Horses Shaped the British Landscape

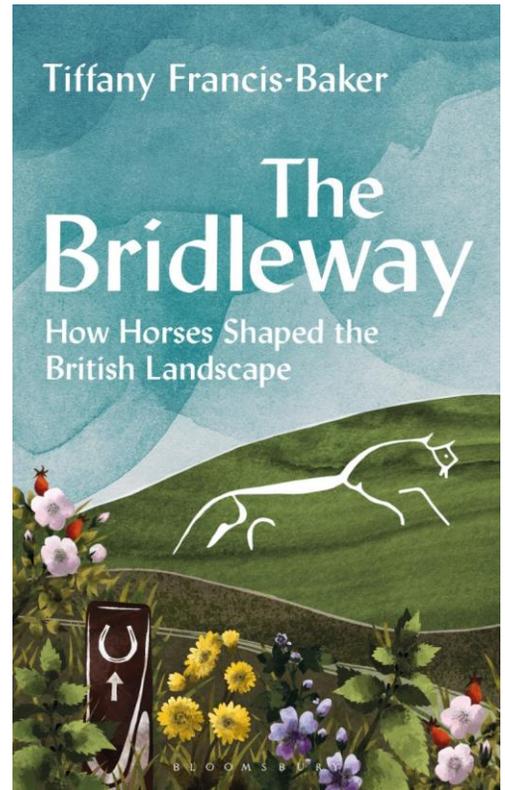
Jane Imbush

I'VE NEVER written a book review before, but as a keen equestrian I was asked if I would like to read *The Bridleway, How Horses Shaped the British Landscape* and give my observations and I have really enjoyed it. I wasn't disappointed by this book at all. It is beautifully written, and Tiffany Francis-Baker has a gift for drawing the reader in to each of her chapters which cover the cultural, environmental and social history of the horse. I have learned many new facts as I have read this book. I never knew where the expression 'peeping Tom' came from until now and the analysis into traveller life, the Dartmoor ponies and the narrative of landscape and experience is very well observed.

EACH CHAPTER is completely different from the one before. This could make the book disjointed but as each covers a different topic, from racing to the war horse, from how the horse has influenced our landscape, language and agricultural development, this is an easy book to read leaving the reader to pick and choose which chapter to read next. The words paint in some cases very vivid pictures, and I could believe I was on Dartmoor or at the Downland Museum when reading those chapters. I also see so many parallels with my own experience of horses.

THE HORSE is celebrated and revered (in my opinion rightly so) in this book. It isn't just for the equestrian and the writer is clearly knowledgeable. With the historical analysis of the horse coupled with the commentary and more personal anecdotal style in some of the chapters, there really is something for everyone in this book. I doubt any keen horseman wouldn't enjoy this book.

To neigh or not to neigh. That is equestrian.



The Bridleway - How Horses Shaped the British Landscape by [Tiffany Francis-Baker](#)

Published 08 Jun 2023 as an Ebook (PDF) by Bloomsbury Publishing (Bloomsbury Wildlife imprint).

272 pages. ISBN 9781399403191



The Ridgeway Officer, Sarah Wright, and Mary Tebje worked with the Chiltern Society to produce a special 'pull-out' for their February magazine to promote the Ridgeway anniversary. This included the new illustrated [map](#). This magazine has a print run of appx 6,000, with around 5,500 delivered direct to members' homes (Wycombe, Amersham and Chesham). 50% don't use social media at all and 93% say walking is a regular pastime.

MARY-ANN OCHOTA (pictured, right), 50th Anniversary Patron of the Ridgeway National Trail, wrote an [article](#) for The Guardian which got over 4,000 pageviews.

SHE HAS ALSO agreed to make podcasts on the Ridgeway for BBC *Countryfile* and English Heritage, and has agreed articles with several other outlets.

50th Anniversary commemorative event

SARAH AND MARY are organising a commemorative event on Coombe Hill, Buckinghamshire, for 29 September. It was in the same place, same month in 1973 that the Ridgeway National Trail was officially opened.

RIDGEWAY ANNIVERSARY

50

1973-2023

THE RIDGEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL

KEEPING THE RIDGEWAY SPECIAL

This year, discover The Ridgeway's famous people and places, and influence its future.

Since The Ridgeway was officially opened on Coombe Hill in 1973 as a National Trail by Lord Nugent it's welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors and shared many stories.

Meet the anniversary patron, Mary-Ann Ochota

Former *Time* Team presenter Mary-Ann makes a great patron as a broadcasting professional with a Masters in Archaeology and Anthropology from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. She joins the many famous names associated with The Ridgeway through the years, including Winston Churchill, King Alfred, Merlin and Chaucer! This is the year to get involved and make yourself, your family and friends part of The Ridgeway's history and future.

How to get involved

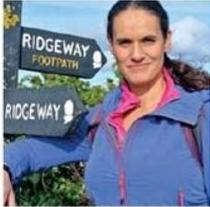
On The Ridgeway's website and social media, there'll be a **Ridgeway Top 50** post, highlighting special and sometimes surprising aspects about the Trail, every Sunday until 31 December. This year-long treasure hunt to enjoy at home includes stories about Churchill and the others mentioned above, but also suggests places to visit along the Trail to experience the Top 50 first-hand.

Also launched this year is a free monthly challenge called **#RidgewaySpotter** which can be enjoyed at any time of year and at any location along the Trail. The Friends of The Ridgeway designed it to appeal to families, walking/cycling/phone-ringing groups, youth groups and others.

There'll be **special events** on and around the Trail. These will include the usual sporting and fundraising activities but also other events, including a talk by Mary-Ann at the Chiltern Heritage Festival.

While enjoying the celebrations, we hope many people will share their thoughts on what they would like to see along The Ridgeway in the next 50 years. We also welcome hearing from you by email: ridgeway@chilternheritage.co.uk.

FOUR PAGE PULL-OUT



Mary-Ann Ochota (photo: Mary Tebje)

Further details

Details and updates can be found on the anniversary webpage: https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/ridgeway_anniversary2023/. A new visitor leaflet complete with a new illustrated map is now available to download from the anniversary webpage.

Free monthly spotter challenges

Guided runs Art workshops

Bioblitz Mary-Ann Ochota talk

'Top 50' Sunday 7pm short stories

Oxford University day course



© Ben Craddock



Lord Nugent of Guildford officially opens the Ridgeway National Trail on Coombe Hill on 29 September. From The Bucks Herald, 4 October 1973

Page overview

Followers: 994

Last 28 days

Post reach

6,080

Post engagement

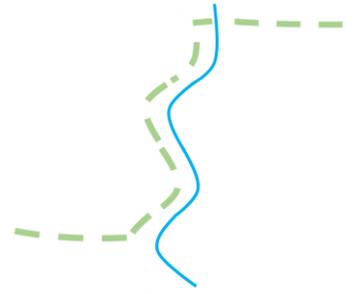
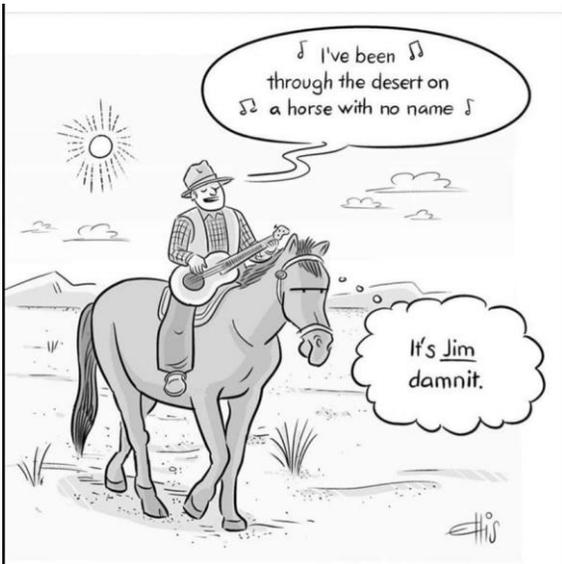
1,032

New Page likes

3

[See more insights](#)

If you follow The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) on Facebook then you may have noticed the name of Wendy Tobitt many times, near the top of the posts. Wendy, who was already promoting the Thames Path National Trail through social media, volunteered to lead on our Facebook posts in this the 50th anniversary year of the Ridgeway National Trail. Wendy is doing a superlative job. Before she started we had about 100 followers; as I write, we have 994. Post reach in the last 28 days is over six thousand. Her posts are always well researched and written, with great photos. Thank you, Wendy.

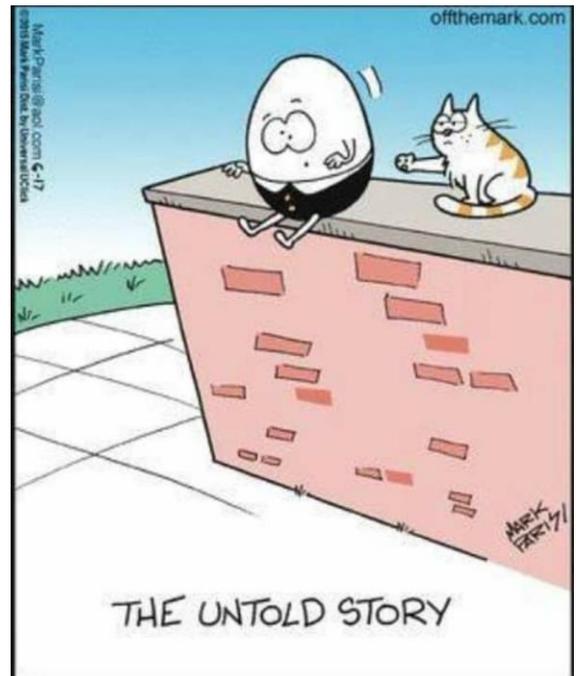
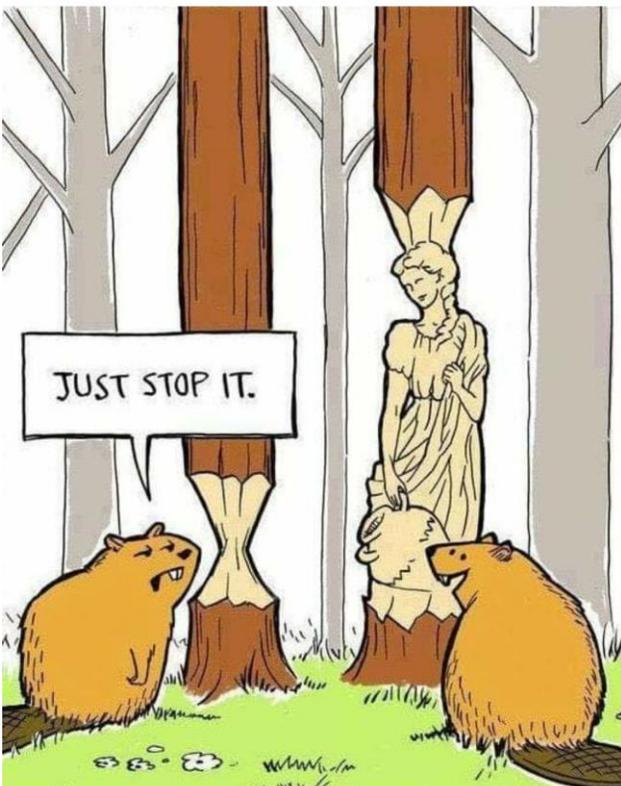


Mind the Gap

THE OTHER DAY I SPOTTED AN ALBINO DALMATIAN. IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR HIM.

1st man. Met an old friend of mine the other day. His nickname is Dingdong. Do you know him?

2nd man. Not sure, though it rings a bell.



A man walks into a tailor's shop in Athens and hands the tailor a pair of torn trousers.

The tailor asks, "Euripides?"

The man answers: "Eumenides?"

New entrants to the Hall of Fame

FAMILY AFFAIR

Kirsty and her family entered the Ridgeway Hall of Fame after completing the Ridgeway on horseback from Goring to Overton Hill over three days in 2019. Until the Chilterns Riding Route project is completed, only the stretch from Overton Hill to Goring is promoted to cyclists and horse riders.

“My dad Ian was on his bike and my children James & Eleanor rode Charmer & Bruno. I rode Dougal. We were riding to make ‘memories of Gramps’ for the children and have an adventure with my dad, who was terminally ill. We raised over £300 for Cancer Research UK. We were able to enjoy the landscape, the ancient sites, the company of our horses and each other..”



... AND FROM GERMANY

Congratulations to Anthony who is the first #Ridgeway50 Hall of Fame entrant (i.e. in this 50th anniversary year) completing the Trail over six consecutive days whilst also celebrating his own 50th birthday. The achievement is all the more impressive considering he travelled by public transport from his home in Germany and he walked through snow. "Having my 50th birthday in the Ridgeway's 50th anniversary year made the decision to walk The Ridgeway easy. Raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support along the way kept me going. It is an honour to be included in your newsletter and a nice surprise to find I am the first official completer this anniversary year."



ANTHONY WAS ASKED what motivated him to choose The Ridgeway. “I remember a childhood friend boasted about walking it! After COVID travel restrictions eased, I thought about visiting my family who live close to Ivinghoe Beacon. It was only then that I found out 2023 was the 50th anniversary of the establishment of The Ridgeway as a National Trail, and once I connected that to the fact that I was turning 50 in the same year, I couldn't see a reason not to combine the trip with this walk.”

Ridgeway Officer Sarah Wright wins bid to Historic England to support a Historic Ridgeway Project.

Historic Ridgeway Project

IN THE FIRST INSTANCE this pays for a Project Manager (PM) who was recently appointed to the part-time, three-year role. The PM will realise a long-held ambition of The Ridgeway Partnership to improve conservation and public enjoyment of The Ridgeway's heritage. Carrying out surveys and meetings with landowners on-site, the PM will identify appropriate conservation action and visitor interpretation for round barrows, long barrows, hillforts and more. Using well-known landmarks such as Wayland's Smithy and Grim's Ditch, the PM will develop great stories to inspire local communities to explore the countryside and volunteer.

THE PM WILL FACILITATE work such as scrub clearance, mesh-netting and interpretation signage through liaison with landowners, contractors and a Volunteer Co-ordinator employed every autumn-winter.

THERE ARE 35 Scheduled Monuments within 1 km of The Ridgeway between Wallingford and Ashbury. Seven are 'at risk' and 10 are 'vulnerable'. In addition, there are 30 Historic Environmental Records (HER) features which could possibly benefit from conservation work and 73 HER features which could be incorporated into visitor interpretation work.



Waylands Smithy, photo Dave Cavanagh



Grim's Ditch, photo Mark Craske

A KEY MEASURE of success will be improved condition of Scheduled Monuments and Historic Environment Record assets. Another key objective is around public engagement, with ambitions to engage new audiences not often involved in exploring local heritage, outdoor volunteering and/or outdoor recreation. As such, the role will involve relationship-building with a diversity of local community groups. This will engage a greater number and diversity of people in practical conservation of historic features along The Ridgeway National Trail between Ashbury and Wallingford, leading to benefits for Scheduled Monuments (improved condition, management plans) and for local communities (skills, wellbeing, visitor interpretation).

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR the main task of the Volunteers on the Ridgeway is 'soft vegetation clearance', which is largely done by mowing. That said, they have also installed fingerposts, and in August they'll be installing another one near Princes Risborough.



A replacement fingerpost installed at Granglands, Bucks, by volunteers Martin Beecher and Mike Fenton



Volunteer Paul Dunmore mowing with a flail mower at Snap, between Ogbourne St George and Liddington Hill

Photos Lucy Duerdoth



Volunteer Ian Barry alongside a replacement fingerpost at Wantage monument

LUCY DUERDOTH led the volunteers in carrying out critical improvement works to the Trail to prepare for increased/new visitors during the anniversary, with the deadline being the Easter holidays. Highlights include new signage installed at Barbury Castle Country Park which incorporates information about National Cycle Network route 45, and a new RADAR key kissing gate installed at Grim's Ditch.

Digitising graffiti

A MILE OR SO north of the Uffington White Horse and Castle is the village of Uffington itself. The Church of St Mary is well worth a visit, as is the bijou Tom Brown's School Museum which, despite its name, focusses on life in the village and surrounding Vale of White Horse over the centuries. Graffiti has been with us for as long as the more obvious things that we have inherited, including on old buildings. This is evident on the chalk walls of Uffington's museum, the curator of which, Garry Gibbons (who lives in Wiltshire), invited Wiltshire Archaeological Field Group to train him and a team of museum volunteers in the art of recording graffiti, to help illuminate the past. This they did in early June, photographing graffiti dating from the 17th century; the school was built in 1617. "We recorded a lot of graffiti inscriptions," said Garry. "Not only people's initials, but also many different symbols. Not to mention somebody's homage to Led Zeppelin!" No doubt the volunteers undertook their work with a whole lotta love.



The Wiltshire Digital Recording Project was set up in order to support various projects within the Wiltshire Archaeological Field Group with the provision to provide a database accessible by the group and others for the purposes of recording and research. An example of their research can be found [here](#). They use a variety of recording methods from a compact camera to DSLR, Near Infra Red (NIR) imaging and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI).



Uffington's Tom Brown's School Museum is open at weekends from Easter to the end of October, and on Bank Holiday Mondays, from 2pm to 5 pm. The best place to park is in the car park adjacent to the village hall (Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall) and village shop. The Fox and Hounds pub is just a few minutes' walk away.



BUTTERFLIES, BIRDS, sheep, pet dogs and botanical experiments were at the heart of Bioblitz, an event organised by Ridgeway Officer Sarah Wright. The Ridgeway on Bury Down, just west of the A34, was the venue on Saturday 4 July.

THE DAY STARTED very early for Sarah and Heather Taylor (who was there to talk about taking dogs into the countryside) who were interviewed by BBC Radio Oxford.

Bioblitz



ON THE TRAIL experts were on hand to talk about butterflies (Andy Spragg of Butterfly Conservation) and birds (Neil Bucknell, British Ornithologists' Union). Julie Kerans (Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre), volunteer Imogen Parker, and National Trails Volunteer Coordinator Lucy Duerdoth were at the Oxford University's [experimental plots](#) designed to find out the best way to reintroduce natural chalk flora to the Ridgeway.

SARAH WAS AT the welcome station all day, which included a food and drink display from local suppliers. Finally, Wendy Tobitt, John Newman (a Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails volunteer) and Dave Cavanagh did shifts in the car park.

Photos Sarah Wright, Wendy Tobitt, Dave Cavanagh



The Ridgeway on BBC South Today

Dave Cavanagh

ON 11TH JULY Sarah Wright, Ridgeway Officer of the Ridgeway Partnership, was interviewed whilst on the Ridgeway by BBC's Jon Cuthill, for BBC South Today. Jon was on stage two of his five-day cycle ride along the 220-mile King Alfred's Way. Sarah gave an enthusiastic account of the pleasures of being on the Ridgeway. She was interviewed near Waylands Smithy.



A COUPLE OF MILES further west, where the minor road from Bishopstone crosses the Ridgeway, is Helen Browning's Flying Pig, where you can get hotdogs, cakes and coffee – a rare oasis on the Wessex stretch of the Ridgeway. There Jon interviewed Tim Finney who also espoused the delights of the Ridgeway. Tim runs Helen Browning's Royal Oak pub in Bishopstone.

I took these photos at home, as you can see.

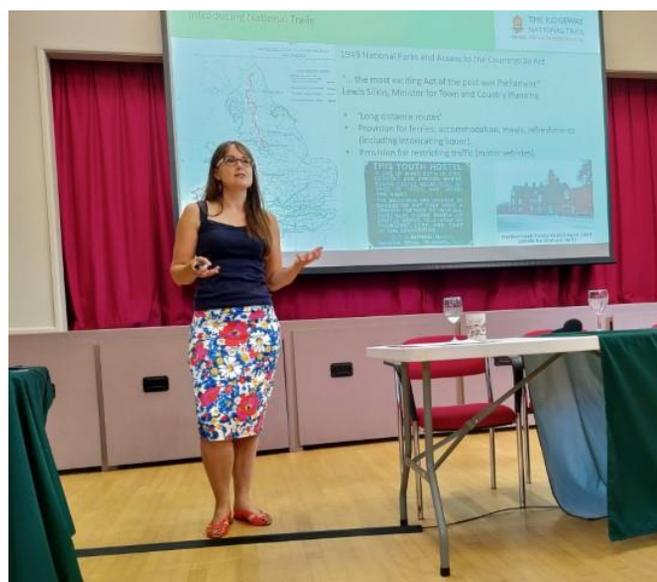
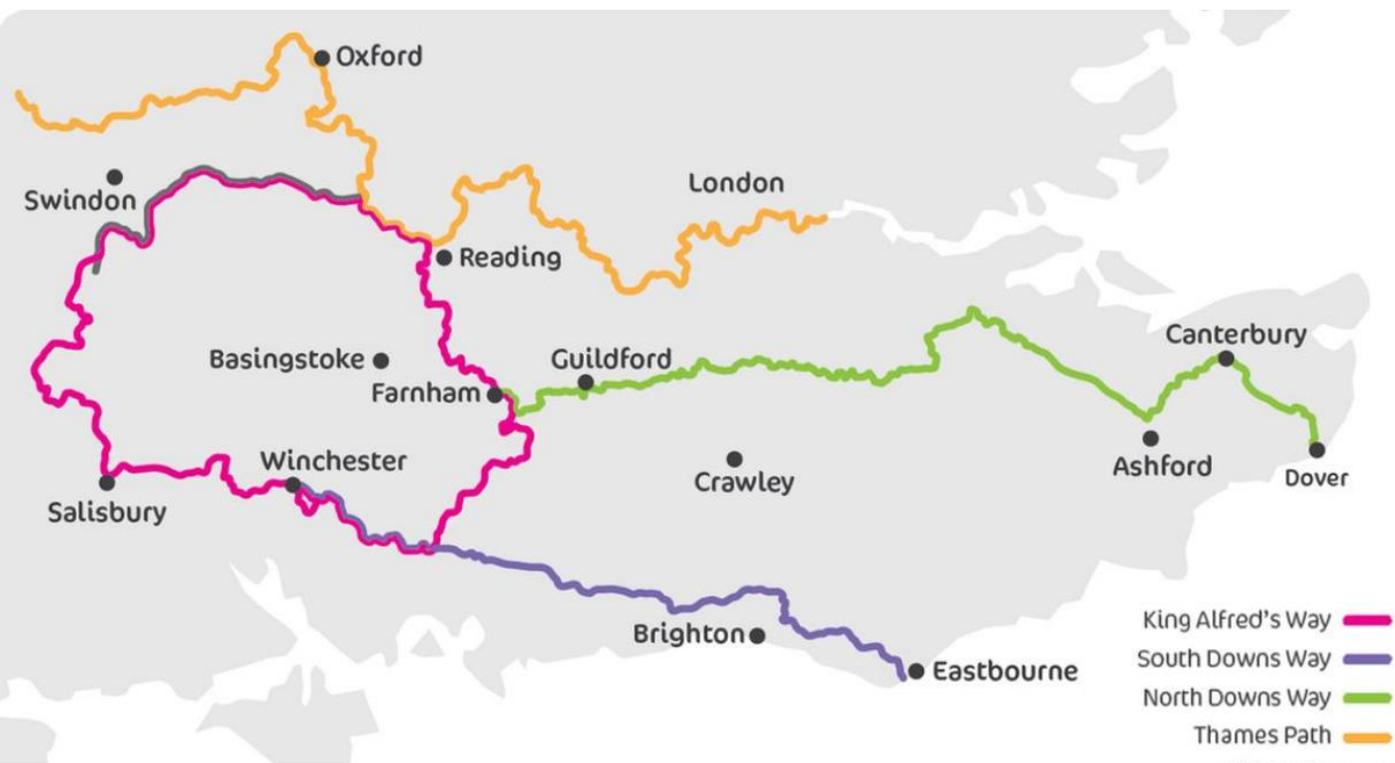
The Flying Pig is open on weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays from 10 am to 3 pm, more or less all year round unless the weather is absolutely dreadful.



Another excellent place to get a hot meal and refreshments very near the Ridgeway is the [Court Hill Centre](#). This is located just off the A338, only 500 metres north of the Ridgeway above Wantage and the Letcombes. The tea rooms are open daily from 10:30 to 16:00. There is also accommodation (bunkhouse and camping) suitable for those doing the length of the Ridgeway.

[King Alfred's Way](#) is a 220-mile (350 km) circular off-road adventure route devised by Cycling UK.

Cycling UK spent three years working on the route, which connects four of England's National Trails: The Ridgeway, North Downs Way, South Downs Way, and Thames Path. According to Cycling UK the trail is ideal for gravel bikes.



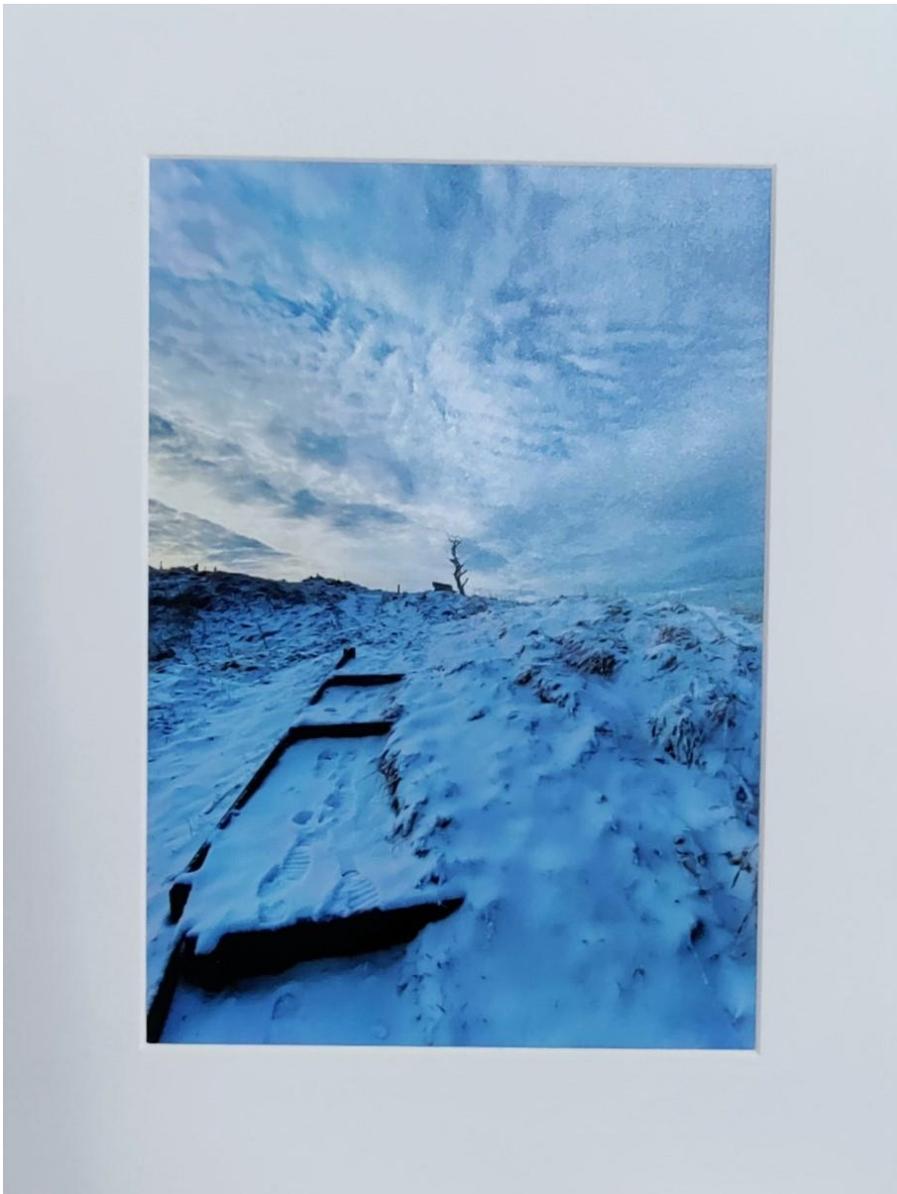
In June Ridgeway Officer Sarah Wright (above right) and 50th Anniversary Patron Mary-Ann Ochota were invited speakers at CPRE Oxfordshire's AGM in Uffington

"I spent the whole morning building a time machine, so that's four hours of my life that I'm definitely getting back" - Olaf Falafel, Edinburgh Fringe 2022

In the spring issue of this newsletter we saw the winners of the four categories of this year's Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize.

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2023

HERE ARE the Highly Recommended and Runners-up in the Photography and Sculpture categories. Those for Wall Art will be in the Autumn issue.



Photography Highly Recommended: *Stairway to Heaven*, by Geoff Keane. [These steps, made by National Trust Volunteers, are on the footpath that leads from Dragon Hill to the Uffington White Horse.]

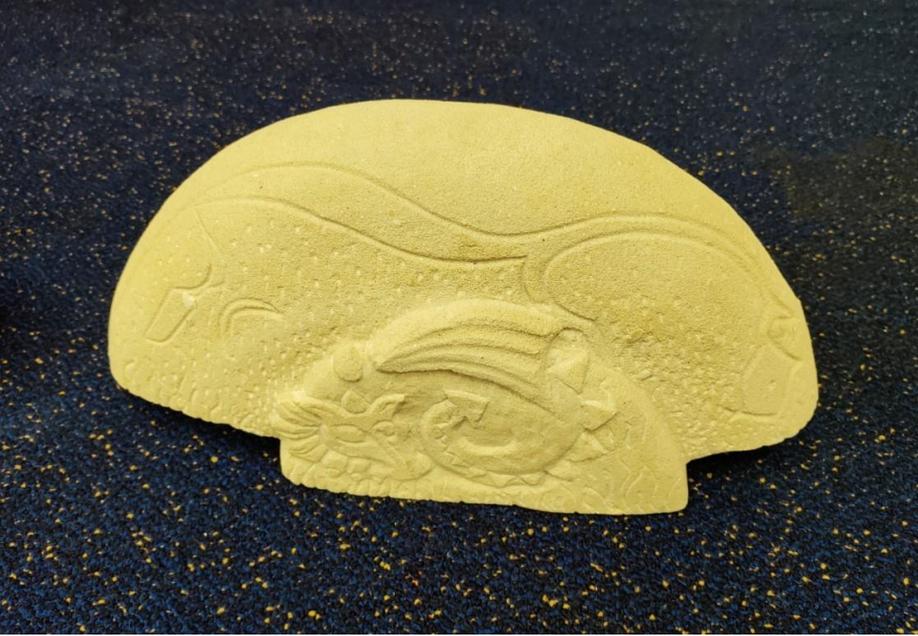


Photograph runner-up: Winter's Dusk – Lowbury, by Jennie Wood.

All of the 2023 exhibits can be viewed on [The Friends of the Ridgeway](#) website.

Teacher: What is a forum?

Pupil: two-um plus two-um.



Sculpture, Highly Commended:
Dragon Hill, by Karen Vogt.

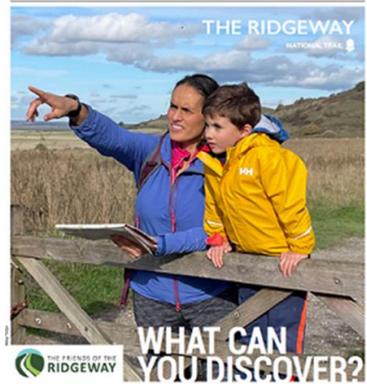


Sculpture, Runner-up:
*Two trees on the
Ridgeway*, by Mary
Thorne.

The theme for the 2024 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize is 'Signs and Symbols along the Ridgeway'. Details are on [The Friends of the Ridgeway website](#).

#RIDGEWAY SPOTTER

Free monthly spotter challenges to create a special calendar of your Ridgeway memories!



#RIDGEWAY SPOTTER



Ruth Nolan assembled this beautiful collage for May's [Ridgeway Spotter](#) subject – white.



AUGUST

RAINBOW RIDGEWAY

How many colours can you find amongst the flowers along The Ridgeway? Are there flowers growing in the fields beside The Ridgeway? Can you make a rainbow with your photos or drawings?



Watch this video by Bumblebee Conservation Trust to see numerous flowers that can be found along the Trail.

This free ID guide lists several flowers you can hope to see in The Ridgeway's verges.

Check out these tips from an expert wildflower photographer:



SEPTEMBER

WILD HARVEST

How many different shrubs and trees can you spot on your Ridgeway outing? What colours are the fruits and berries? Do you know any good recipes using the wild foods you find?

All the fruits shown in this video can be found along The Ridgeway.

Use this ID guide to name the trees and shrubs you spot.

Here's some interesting information about birds and berries.

Apple trees found in Ridgeway hedgerows could be native Crab Apples or cultivated Apples or a combination of the two.



OCTOBER

DOWN TO EARTH

How many different shapes of leaves can you spot and what artwork can you make with fallen leaves? How many different types of fungi (wild mushrooms) can you spot and are they growing on the ground or on tree trunks or branches? Can you imagine the stories linked to fungi called Lemon Disco, Destroying Angel and Snake-tongue Trufflefoot? Wash your hands if you touch fungi and don't eat them in case they are poisonous!

Marvel at Andy Oldsworthy's sculptures using leaves and other natural items he finds.

Use these free photo ID guides to identify what leaves come from which trees.

Use these free ID guides for fungi growing on trees.

Fungi growing on the ground.

