

Friends of the Ridgeway

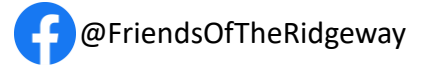


Spring 2024



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www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk



Welcome

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

You can see all the artworks [here](#)

Cover photo. Visitors to the 8th Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition, Uffington, on 27 & 28 April. Photo Wendy Tobitt.



A GREY LATE APRIL SATURDAY was lit up by the first day of the 8th annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition in Uffington village hall, organised by The Friends of the Ridgeway. The theme this year was 'Signs and Symbols Along the Ridgeway'. As usual the artworks were in four categories: wall art, photography, written and sculpture.

The overall winner of the competition, and winner of the wall art category, was Emma J Williams for her mixed-media picture 'Passing White Horse Hill'. In presenting the overall award, Judge Sylvia Vetta spoke of the harmonious colour palette and sense of space and adventure created by a contour map, photos, drawing, painting, including signs, symbols and features of the Ridgeway that captured the theme of the competition.



Photo Wendy Tobitt

Jennie Blakehill took the prize for written work with 'The Path to Barbury', comprising poetry, prose and etchings in a hand-made book. The sculpture category was won by Sharon Rich for 'Woodland Doe', whilst photography was topped by Tim Lamb's 'Signs that Guide the Way'.

Most of the preparation for the exhibition was done by FoR trustees Jane Imbush and Nathan Boyd, with celebrated downs artist Anna Dillon curating the record 113 exhibits. The artworks were put on display on the Thursday and the independent team of judges made their assessments on the Friday afternoon before the two-day exhibition on 27 and 28 April. Catering was provided by Clare Call of Baking Bee. Wendy Tobitt took the photos and publicised the event on Facebook.

Off-Road Vehicles (Registration) Bill

Volume 748: debated on Friday 19 April 2024



Small steps towards the prohibition of non-essential motor vehicles from the Ridgeway and other byways

Dave Cavanagh



byways from non-essential motor vehicles, all the year round. FoR sent this to our eight Vice-Presidents, the MPs through whose constituency the Ridgeway runs. To date we have had a response from Laura Farris (Newbury) in addition to Danny Kruger. Farris is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice who is currently taking the Criminal Justice Bill through the House of Commons. “This Bill,” wrote Farris, “sets out provisions to extend and strengthen police powers to tackle anti-social behaviour, including by off-road bikers, and I have discussed the points made in the GLEAM document with my colleagues in the Ministry of Justice.”

DANNY KRUGER MP (Devizes, Wiltshire) [spoke](#) in the House of Commons on 19 April in favour of amending the law so as to get more public rights of way protected from “4x4s, quad bikes and off-road vehicles, which are causing huge damage.”

HE WAS speaking during the Second Reading of a Private Members’ Bill ‘[Off-Road Vehicles \(Registration\) Bill](#)’. The Bill was being promoted by Anne McLaughlin MP (Glasgow North East).

WHILST THE BILL was introduced in response to antisocial behaviour on off-road bikes in urban environments, it is relevant to the issue of non-essential off-road vehicles on public rights of way in the countryside. The Bill provided an opportunity to raise an issue that is dear to the heart of members of The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR). Indeed, this issue was the driving force (excuse the pun) behind the creation of the FoR in 1982.

EARLIER in the year Ian Ritchie, a former Chair of FoR who had done so much to get non-essential motor vehicles prohibited on the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire and partially so in Wiltshire and West Berkshire, had discussed this issue with Danny, his MP, on a walk around Barbury Castle, near the western end of the Trail. It was this discussion that stimulated him to talk to the subject in Parliament. In event the Bill ran out of time but the point had been well made.

AS REPORTED in the recent [winter issue](#) of this newsletter, the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) have produced a very clear, well-argued case for protecting all

Why are non-essential vehicles prohibited from some byways but not all? Briefly, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 protected, in one fell swoop, those byways that had previously been referred to 'as roads used as public paths'. These included the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire. The protection given to these byways was the culmination of years of campaigning by FoR, GLEAM and others.

Many other byways are 'byways open to all traffic (BOAT)', which include the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and West Berkshire. Sadly, these remain open to recreational vehicles. Campaigning by Ian Ritchie and other members of FoR also contributed, in the early noughties, to the prohibition of motor vehicles from the Wiltshire and West Berks BOAT sections of the Ridgeway, though, for the most part, only in the winter months. FoR would like the protection to be all-year-round, and for all byways to be so protected.

The four [2022 issues](#) of our newsletter tell the story of FoR's long campaign since 1982, in the form of press cuttings.



Photo Wendy Tobitt

Sometimes the aims of FoR, GLEAM and other countryside access groups, are misrepresented. For the benefit of doubt, we are not campaigning for the prohibition of all motor vehicles from byways. Rather, we are campaigning against non-essential motor vehicles on our byways e.g. 4x4s, motor cycles and quad bikes used for recreational purposes. So, who would *not* be excluded from using motor vehicles on byways? These include landowners, farmers, people whose homes and businesses require access over a byway, drivers of delivery vehicles to the same, and members of the health and emergency services.



Livi Rees submitted her wall art piece *Restricted Access* to the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. Livi was a first-time entrant. Indeed, she had never exhibited her work before.

Livi's work was Highly Commended.

Harriet Eagle, the Wall Art judge, praised Livi's work for its energy.

You can see all the works of art submitted to the Swire Prize at <https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2024/>

PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS

describe how the Ridgeway is a great place for horse riding and horse drawn carriage driving by providing a peaceful and quiet trackway with some good grassy surfaces and, in parts, is free of motor traffic. As such, it is a great place to train for the sport of long distance riding, or endurance riding as it is known.

ENDURANCE RIDING is a test of horse and rider fitness over a range of distances from short 'pleasure' rides of just 8 km up to a gruelling 160 km over two or three days, and various distances in between. The welfare of the horse is paramount with crewing points and vet checks along the ride and at the end of the ride. Horse and rider are graded on their performance and the condition of their horse during and after the ride with Gold, Silver and Bronze grades awarded. The sections of the Ridgeway with a good surface, as expected of a National Trail, allow a steady trot to be achieved during training thus building up fitness of both horse and rider.

SARAH EDMONDS, a local rider based in Lambourn, uses the Ridgeway to get herself and her horses fit enough to tackle the distances for endurance riding. Sarah and her mount Paulownia did particularly well last year getting good grades at the Three Rivers, the New Forest, the Avon Valley and Cirencester rides. A taste of what Endurance riding is all about can be found on Sarah's Facebook page covering the rides themselves, the vet checks and crewing points.

IN SARAH'S WORDS "The reason why the Ridgeway is so excellent for us riders, especially endurance riders, is because, on the whole, it is well-maintained, offering a reasonably reliable surface and good access, when this is not always the case with other rights of way. "

Continued ...

Endurance Riding and the Ridgeway

Janice Bridger



Sarah Edmonds heading up to the Ridgeway near Ashbury from Upper Lambourn during a training ride on Paulownia.

“The route is well-marked and offers good parking options for those who have to travel to ride there. It provides access to miles of safe, off-road riding, linking different parts of the area that would otherwise be inaccessible.”

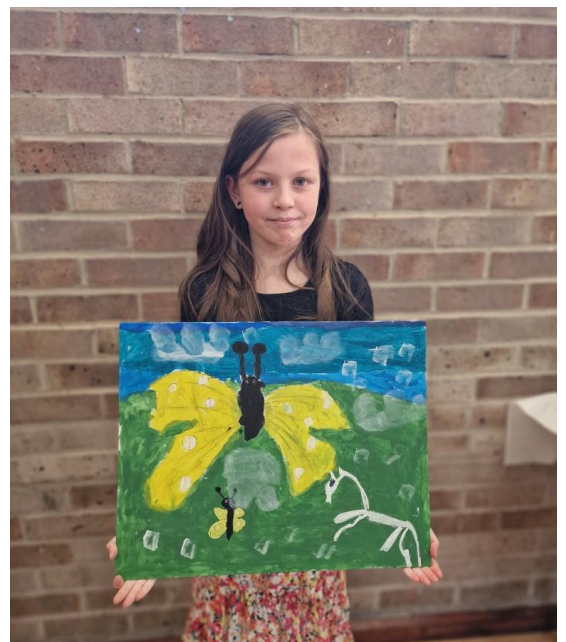
“With the roads becoming ever busier and more dangerous for horses, routes like the Ridgeway are invaluable for riders to ensure we are safe and able to enjoy the beautiful countryside. It’s also just an absolutely beautiful place to ride with unrivalled views. It’s one of my favourite places to be in the local area. It really is a wonderful resource, and I feel very lucky to have it almost on my doorstep!”



Left, Sarah Edmonds and Paulownia on their way to winning an 80 km endurance ride in the New Forest in September 2023. Right, Amanda Cottingham on the Bury Down Ridgeway training ride in February. Photos by Sarah Edmonds and Amanda Cottingham.

GETTING FIT for the 2024 Endurance season started from the Ridgeway at Bury Down in February this year for members of the Cotswold Endurance group. Fortunately, most of the dozen or so riders missed the heavy showers on the day, enjoying a 14 or 22 km ride using the Ridgeway, Old Street and adjoining tracks with the longer ride passing through West Lockinge. Good luck to those who are using the Ridgeway to train for the 2024 Endurance season!

When my sister-in-law was a waitress in Canada, she took drink orders from a group of Americans. They each ordered a glass of red wine. She suggested they choose a litre instead. They discussed it among themselves, then one put his hand up and said “I’ll be the leader.”



The youngest exhibitor at this year’s Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition was eight-year-old Sydney Rose Denton, here holding her painting *Butterflies on the Ridgeway*.



Passing White Horse Hill by Emma Williams,
winner of the Wall Art prize



Matt Writtle

Ridgeway 50 Photos

IN THE 2023 AUTUMN ISSUE of the FoR newsletter we described the Ridgeway 50 Photo project. To encourage everyone to look closely and photograph what they see on the Ridgeway, professional photographer Matt Writtle will be sharing vlogs about his work on the Ridgeway and exhibiting a collection of photographs along it and on social media. There will also be free outdoor photography workshops provided by Sharpshots to specifically encourage youngsters.

New display boards are required for exhibiting Matt's photos so Friends of the Ridgeway have offered a grant of £3,415 towards the cost.

You can read more about the Ridgeway 50 Photos on the Trail's website

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/50Photos

Watch [Matt's latest vlog](#).



Left to right: Anna Dillon, curator of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition 2024 and four of the judges, Lucy Stopford (chair of the judges), Hedley Thorne (photography), Sylvia Vetta (written work) and Harriet Eagle (wall art). Keith Appleby judged sculpture. Photo Wendy Tobitt.

You can see all the works of art submitted to the Swire Prize at <https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2024/>

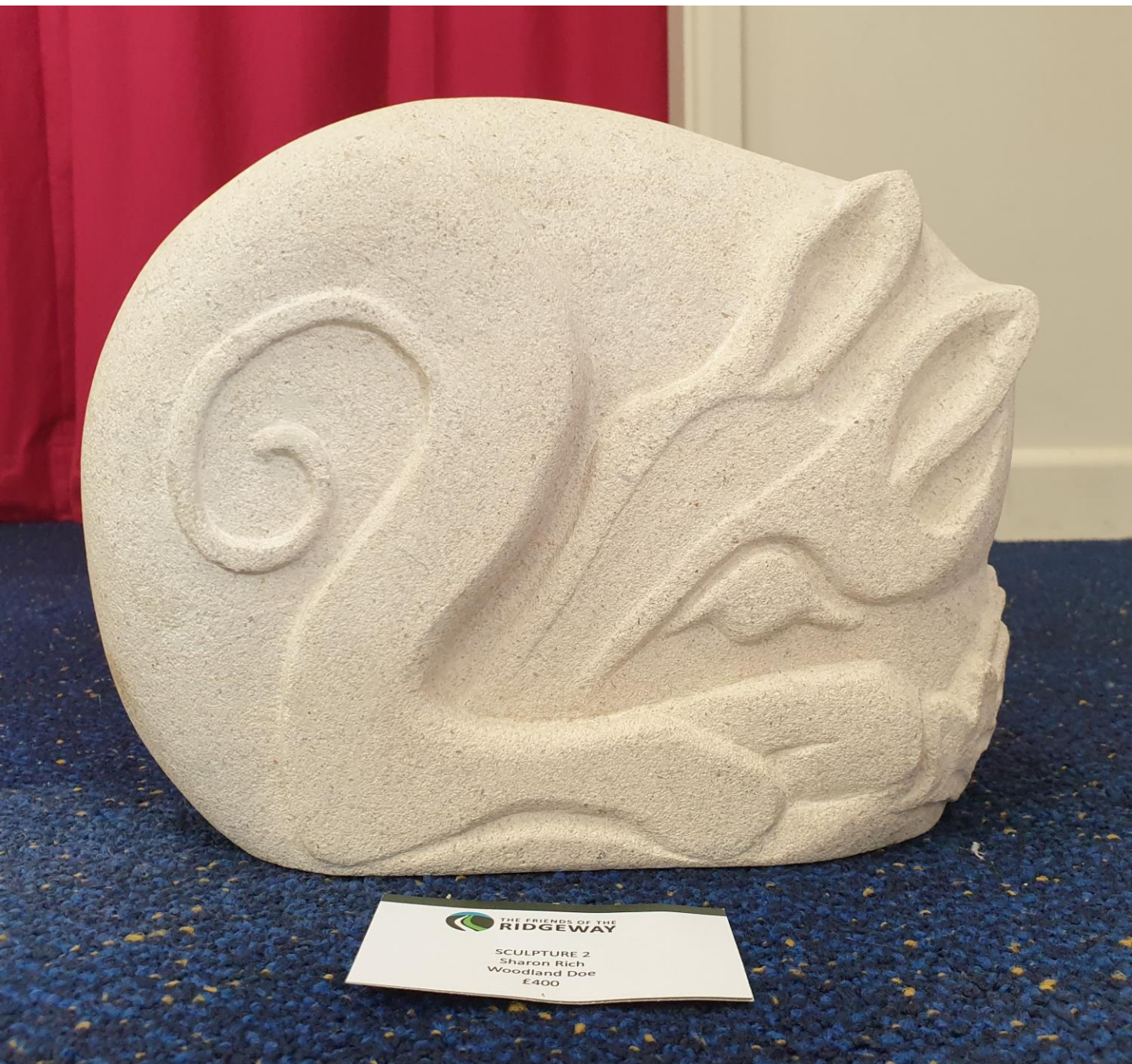


Judges Sylvia Vetta and Lucy Stopford. Photo Wendy Tobitt.



The Path to Barbury by Jennie Blakehill,
winner of the written work prize. Her piece
is being held by Jennie and Mike Lewington,
Chair of The Friends of the Ridgeway

Lucy Stopford, the head judge, and Sylvia Vetta, the written work judge,
admired Jennie's unique, handmade book of her poetry and prose.



Woodland Doe by Sharon Rich,
winner of the Sculpture prize.

Sharon holding *Woodland Doe* next to her other
exhibit *The Green Man* stained glass panel. Photos
Wendy Tobitt.





Signs that Guide the Way by Tim Lamb, winner of the Photography prize.

Judge Hedley Thorne chose Tim's dramatic view northwards of dawn breaking over the stones at Avebury. Both the stones¹¹ and The Plough constellation would have been a familiar and welcome sight to Ridgeway travellers for thousands of years.

WWII air collision near the Ridgeway

LITTLE MORE than a half-hour's walk downhill from the Uffington White Horse northwards takes one to the bijou [Uffington Museum](#). This year's special exhibition focusses on the crew of Wellington bomber DV595 which

crashed just south of the village after a mid-air collision with another Wellington over the nearby downs. The local Vale of White Horse Ramblers have organised a number of walks to commemorate the airmen, to which all are invited.

IT WAS AT 0105 hours on 25 August 1942 that Wellington bomber DV595, on a night bombing practice flight out of RAF Harwell over Odstone Down (SSW of Uffington), collided with Wellington N2755 from RAF Hampstead Norris. N2755 survived but DV595 crashed, killing all the crew. A small memorial plaque was later put in place alongside footpath 19, where DV595 crashed to earth.

Uffington Heritage Trail

Walk with us and discover Flight DV595 Memorial Stone

Spring and Summer Walks 2024



There is likely to be cattle on the route so we ask Registered Assistance Dogs only.

Finish times of the walks are approximate.

Short Walks

Village Trail and Wellington Memorial

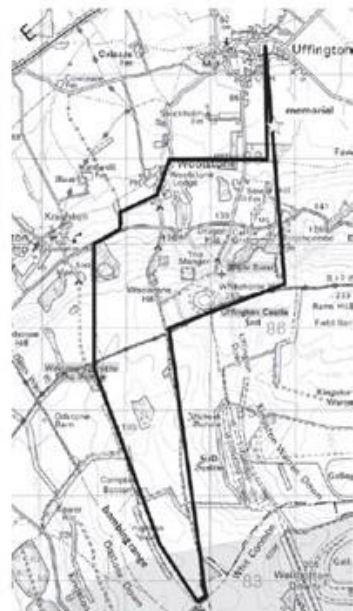
Dates: 1 June 2024
2 June 2024
18 August 2024
24 August 2024

Start: 2.00pm
Uffington Village Shop

Finish: 3.30pm
Uffington Museum

Distance: 1.8 miles / 3.0km

Difficulty: Easy



Long Walk

Wellington Memorial and Odstone Down

Date: 25 May 2024

Start: 10.30pm
Uffington Village Shop

Finish: 3.30pm
Uffington Museum

Distance: 10.6 miles / 17.0km

Difficulty: Strenuous

For the long walk on 25 May 2024, please check details online nearer the time:
www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/patrick/walks-programme

All walks start outside the village shop in the village hall car park

Four of the walks are very short, and include part of the Uffington Heritage Trail along to the plaque.

The longer walk includes Odstone Down over which the two bombers collided.

There is likely to be cattle on the route so we ask Registered Assistance Dogs only on the short walks.

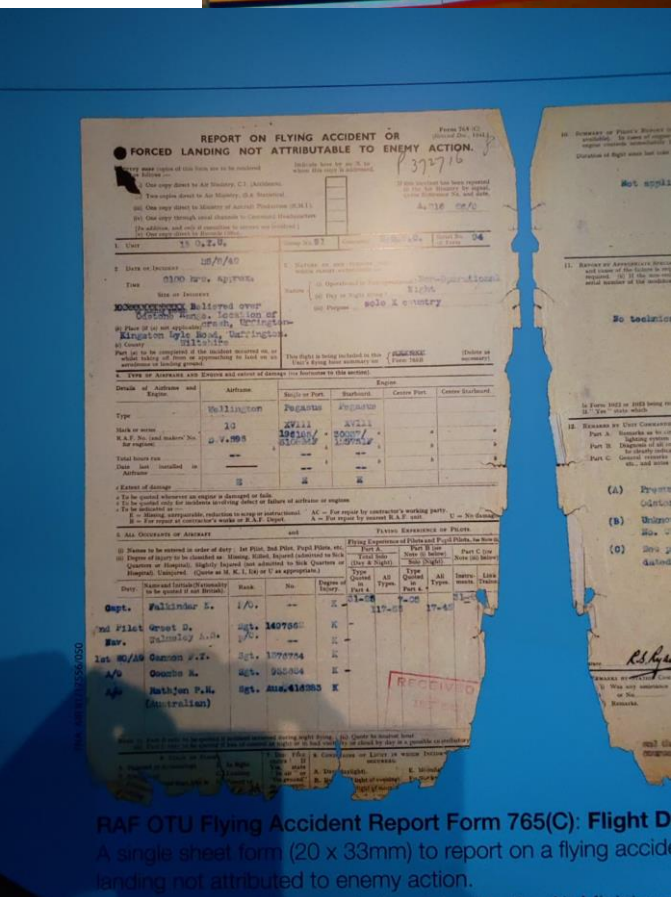
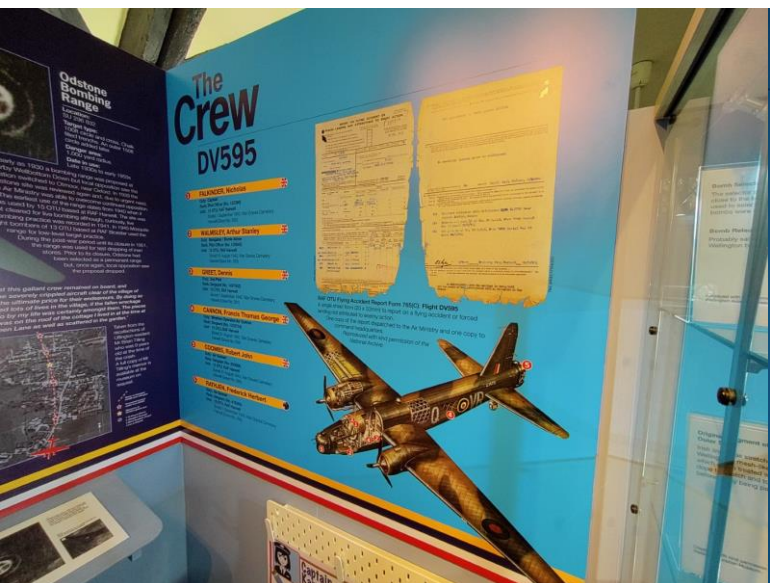
Shortly before each walk please check details online nearer the time:
www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/patrick/walks-programme



The Museum will be open after all the walks to enable you to see the exhibition, including an eye-witness account, from, at that time, a child.



IF YOU INTEND visiting the museum without going on the walk, park at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall (village hall), where there is a shop, and walk along Broad Street, past the school and the Church, to the Museum. There is a path from the churchyard direct to the door of the museum, or you can approach it along a raised path parallel to the road.



RAF OTU Flying Accident Report Form 765(C): Flight DV595. A single sheet form (20 x 33mm) to report on a flying accident landing not attributed to enemy action.

Uffington [Museum](#) is open, free, on Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 5 pm, Easter to the end of October.

Operator answering a 999 call: Do you require police, fire or ambulance?

Caller: An ambulance, a man just got hit by a car.

Operator: What's your location?

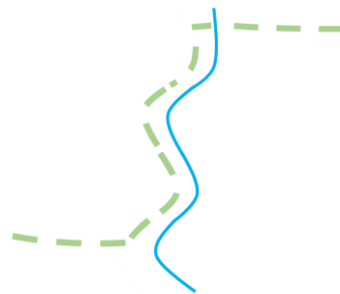
Caller: I'm on Eucalyptus Street.

Operator: Can you spell that for me?

Caller: Silence.

Operator: Sir, are you still there?

Caller: I'm going to drag him over to Park Street. Then I'll call you back.



Mind the Gap

Stencilled neatly on a wall:

NEVER FORGET, THE WORLD IS YOURS

*Terms and Conditions apply

On the side of a van in Scotland
Painter & Decorator
Interior & Exterior Finishes,
New York, Paris, Madrid
but Mostly Glasgow Area

Every ten years, the monks in the monastery are allowed to break their vow of silence to speak two words. Ten years go by and it's one monk's first chance. He thinks for a second before saying, "Food bad."

Ten years later, he says, "Bed hard."

It's the big day, a decade later. He gives the head monk a long stare and says, "I quit."

"I'm not surprised," the head monk says. "You've been complaining ever since you got here."

N. Woodley, a contributor to the Sunday Times' online 'letters page', added a tongue-in-cheek comment on a photo of the actors in *The Magnificent Seven* film. "Interesting," he said, "that Yul Brynner wasn't mentioned in the caption. Some time after the success of the film, all the actors were linked to an aftershave ad to be filmed at Liverpool's ground, Anfield. But only six turned up 'cos Yul never wore cologne." Geddit?

Sign outside *Bert's Books*, an independent bookshop in Swindon

Books rewritten on the cheap:

Alice in Poundland

Charlie and the Chocolate Biscuit

Around the Garden in 80 Days

The Devil wears Primark

A Tale of One City

Le Misérable

As seen on *Bert's Books* Facebook page

Seen on the back of the cab of a pantechnicon:
Education is important
Trucking is importanter!

Uptonogood? Mountain Bike Festival – 15th June 2024

A celebration of mountain biking for all ages and abilities.

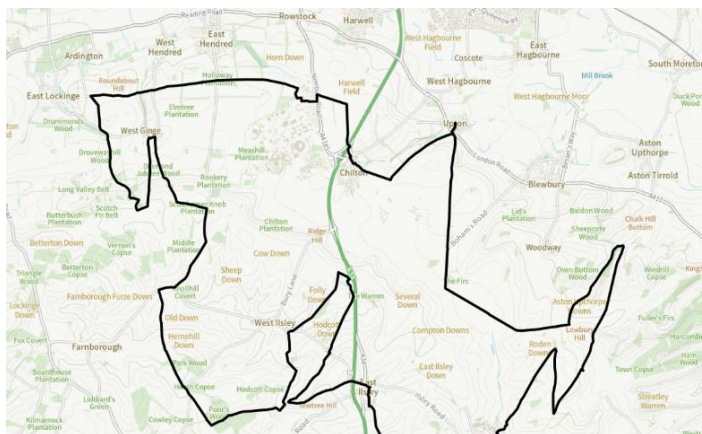
Uptonogood? is a mountain bike event for experienced riders and novice families alike. Run by volunteers from the village of Upton and the local mountain bike fraternity, it is a fundraising event for local projects and causes, offering exhilarating rides, fine food and drink, and great music.

Almost entirely off-road, the cycle routes wind their way through the beautiful North Wessex Downs National Landscape encompassing the Ridgeway and surrounding bridleways.

Uptonogood? offers five routes, ranging from 6 to 35 miles, devised to cater for all ages and abilities.

HORSE RIDERS

The organisers have put up notices on the trail alerting horse riders that there will be a lot of bikes on 15 June and advising horse riders to consider their riding route.



Details at

www.uptonogood.org.uk/



Chilterns Walking Festival

Walking festivals in our two National Landscapes

THE CHILTERN'S WALKING FESTIVAL

kicks off first (18 May to 2 June). Bookings are now live. Knowledgeable guides will be leading over 50 walks that include health and wellbeing walks, wildlife watching, and film location tours to farm walks and more. Find out more at

www.chilterns.org.uk/whats-on/walkingfest/

THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS Walking Festival is from 31 May to 9 June with 29 events on offer encompassing wildlife, history, culture and farm walks, led by knowledgeable guides. Most of the walks are free. Details at

www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/walking/walking-festival/



Walking Festival

Farewell, Lucy

LUCY DUERDOTH'S last day as Volunteer Project Officer for the Ridgeway and the Thames Path National Trails was at the end of April, after which she was off to do some serious travelling.

THE ROLE includes identifying what needs to be done to keep the Trails free of encroaching vegetation, assessing what tools and machines are required, taking them and the volunteers to work sites, and supervising days in the workshop where tools are maintained and fingerposts made.

THE VOLUNTEERS are absolutely vital for ensuring a good experience for the thousands who use these two Trails.



Volunteers saying farewell to Lucy (holding a card). The finger post was not one of Lucy's leaving presents. Photo Wendy Tobitt.

Ridgeway National Trail
★ Favourites · 15 h · 📷

Thank you to our team of volunteers who made and installed these new signs. They help our community easily navigate the Trail - in fact they tell us that Trail signage is very good!



Left, new recycled plastic fingerposts on the Ridgeway.

Right, a new wooden fingerpost on the Thames path. Lucy is second from left.



Ridgeway and Ancient Tracks of Britain and Ireland
Kim Clelland · 3 d · 📷

Great to see the new signs on the Ridgeway. A walk across to Sugar Hill and back via Liddington Castle. Weather was kind, the ground is drying out.



Left and right, the volunteers clearing scrub from around the monument at the Ridgeway above Wantage, contributing to the Historic Ridgeway project.



... and farewell Sarah

Two months prior to Lucy Duerdoth's departure for pastures new, the Ridgeway Partnership hosted a farewell occasion for outgoing Ridgeway Officer, Sarah Wright. Her replacement is Ian Black, who will take up the post on 14 May.



Above, Sarah holding the artwork painted by Anna Dillon, standing on Sarah's left. Left, Sarah reminiscing. Below, left to right, Wendy Tobitt (Chair, Thames Path and editor of the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) Facebook page), Sarah, Mike Lewington (Chair, FoR) and Lucy Duerdoth (Volunteer Project Officer for the Ridgeway and the Thames Path National Trails).





In March BBC *Countryfile* presented a long segment on the Uffington White Horse.

On a clearly cold day National Trust Ranger Andy Foley was interviewed by Charlotte Smith.



On Dragon Hill



Andy explained that the 3000-year-old Horse is visible today because periodically local people removed weeds from the chalk surface (scouring) and added fresh chalk to the surface. The National Trust invites the public to scour and chalk the Horse each August Bank Holiday. Over time the turf has encroached on the Horse, in effect shrinking it. Archaeologists have agreed to peel back some of the turf. All being well it will be done this year, subject to funds being available

On the same *Countryfile* show, anthropologist and archaeologist Mary-Ann Ochota visited Barbury Castle.



She explained why we think Iron Age Britons created hill forts, so many of which are on and near the Ridgeway.

Although they are referred to variously as castles or forts, few, if any, are likely to have been constructed for military purposes.



Studies by the Oxford Archaeology Group have revealed that the hill forts (not all of which are on hills) were used in different ways.

You can watch the whole programme at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001xgrh

A turtle is crossing the road when he's mugged by two snails. When the police show up, they ask him what happened. The shaken turtle replies, "I don't know. It all happened so fast."

North Wessex Downs grant from the Species Survival Fund

A **£1.5 MILLION grant** has been secured by the team at the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) [Partnership](#) from the Government’s Species Survival Fund. The Ridgeway National Trail passes through the NWDNL, formerly an Area of Outstanding National Beauty – AONB.

In 2023 the North Wessex Downs team published a Nature Recovery Plan which identifies priorities for restoring nature in this protected landscape. The funding will focus conservation effort on the programme’s seven sites and kickstart delivery against the Plan. You can download the Plan [here](#).

Ridgeway Challenge Race 2025

IN 2023 the Ridgeway 86, a British Ultra running event along the length of the Ridgeway, marked its twentieth anniversary, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Ridgeway National Trail. The event will be taking a break this year because of a drop in the number of participants. The organisers recognise that if the event is to survive then a commercial approach is required, to take into account the significant costs and logistical requirements. With that in mind Chris Bradley of the Trail Runners Association and Runaway Racing has stepped forward to reintroduce the event in 2025, under the banner of [Runaway Racing](#).

IN LAST YEAR’S Ridgeway 86 the winner of the women’s race was Zoe Salt who took just 15 hours 20 minutes, the fifth fastest women’s time on this course.

IN THE MEN’S RACE, the winner was David Green in a time of 12 hours 49 minutes.



Archaeologist Daniel Bashford, Project Manager of the Historic Ridgeway Project, giving a talk at the Vale and Downland Museum, Wantage, in February. Photo Dave Cavanagh

The project covers the National Trail between Wayland’s Smithy and Nuffield, east of Wallingford, funded by Historic England. The principal aim of the project is to improve the condition and management of archaeological sites along the route, both scheduled and unscheduled, and whilst doing so to improve inclusion, interpretation and active participation of local and wider communities in the understanding and care of these sites.



Dan Bashford and Anna Dillon at the 8th Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition, Uffington, at the end of April. Photo Wendy Tobitt.

Look at things differently ...

The Minimalist Photography Facebook page

