

Friends of the Ridgeway

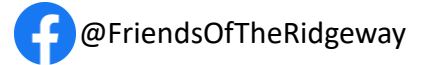


Summer 2024



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www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk



Welcome

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

IAN BLACK succeeded former Ridgeway Officer Sarah Wright in May. The chair of the Ridgeway Partnership, Simon Kearey, wrote to members of the Partnership about Ian, and his text, below, was subsequently posted on the Ridgeway National Trail Facebook page.

I caught up with Ian along the Trail at Goring, almost mid-point between Avebury and Ivinghoe Beacon. “I can’t wait to meet everyone and get started” he says, “but I know there is a lot to become familiar with.”

Ian lives locally in Newbury and is familiar with our Trail as a keen cyclist who has enjoyed cycling many miles through the Berkshire Downs. “I want to learn about what's been happening, and honour the projects that my predecessor Sarah had been running, to completion. Then I will turn to opportunities for promotion, enhancement and continuity of trail management. The Ridgeway is 5,000 years old and even if I stay in post for 25 years, it's a relative blink of an eye!”

Ian has had a strong career in Countryside Management which he studied at Berkshire College and then Countryside Recreation and Tourism at Aberystwyth University. His passion is for outdoor recreation for all, whether that's for a



cycle ride in the countryside, wildlife spotting or to enjoy ambling around an historical site. He also volunteered as a warden at an ancient royal hunting forest, now a Site of Special Scientific Interest at Hatfield Forest in Essex.

But it's not all work with Ian, he spent 11 months on the road, literally, cycling from Newbury to New Zealand. What an epic trip!

Cover photo. Walkers on the Ridgeway near Overton Hill, Wiltshire.
Photo Dave Cavanagh

Ian cycled through Europe, along the Danube to the Black Sea, through Turkey, Mongolia and the Gobi Desert, China, Laos and Vietnam. He then had a much-needed rest in Bali before cycling through Cambodia, and Thailand with a flight to connect him to the South Island of New Zealand which he explored from top to bottom. What a person could learn along the way!

Ian has reflected on the current state of the countryside, where there is so much happening, not just here, but across the world including: climate change, the fragile state of the UK economy, the financial pressures of reduced budgets at all levels, the cost of living crisis, a possible change of government this year, new grant funding replacing the farm payment systems since leaving Europe, improved communication allowing people to live further from where they work fuelling migration from towns and cities to the countryside, increased leisure time and an aging population. "I could go on" he says, "but I feel this highlights my point, steering me to try and take the longer view, looking for opportunities and ways of securing funding and protecting the Ridgeway for the future."



The Ridgeway in Buckinghamshire. Photo Sandra Newton

Ian is excited about the opportunities and is looking forward to working with you all on improving access and links to the Ridgeway, broadening diversity and recognising the many health benefits that being in the outdoors brings and encouraging further partnerships with the local business community that want to invest in the visitor economy. Without flourishing biodiversity and nature connectivity, none of this will be possible.

*Simon Kearey
Chair of the Ridgeway Partnership*

Next year's Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

ONE WAY in which The Friends of the Ridgeway promotes interest in and appreciation of the Ridgeway National Trail is through its annual [Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize](#) and associated Exhibition.

The 9th Exhibition will be on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 April 2025.

As usual it will be held in Uffington village hall (the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall), open to the public from 10 am until 5 pm on both days. There is plenty of parking space adjacent to the hall.

The theme for 2025 is

Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway

There were 113 artworks in the 2024 Exhibition, in four categories: wall art, photography, writing and sculpture. You can read about this year's event, and see the winning artworks, in the Friends' [April newsletter](#).



Emma J Williams, winner of the 2024 Wall Art prize and of the overall competition. Photo Wendy Tobitt

Details for those intending to submit exhibits to the 2025 Prize will appear on the [Arts Prize](#) page of the Friends' website in due course.

An inspirational account of taking a mobility scooter onto the Ridgeway

JOSIE HILL from Didcot tells The Friends of the Ridgeway what it means to her to be able to get out on the Ridgeway in her mobility scooter since her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS). Janice Bridger posed the questions.

What is your connection with the Ridgeway? My family came from a village that was not many miles from the Ridgeway. My father was a small farmer so I was very familiar with all the country tracks and the local part of the Ridgeway. Later on in life I had a cob to ride. Then, after my cob died, a dog came my way owned by the public house next to the field where my cob lived. I started walking the dog up on the familiar tracks and the Ridgeway. After I fell over several times and couldn't walk more than 4 miles, I was diagnosed with primary progressive MS at 56 years-old. My ability to walk the dog got worse. The village publican who owned the dog raised money for me to get a second-hand mobility buggy so I could continue to get out and about with the dog. He then moved to The Swan public house in Compton. Then a very kind lady gave me her off-road mobility scooter and last year I got a new battery and tyres for it. So now I can continue getting out on my familiar tracks and the Ridgeway.



Josie and George

What does it mean to you to be able to get up onto the downs and the Ridgeway since you have had your MS diagnosis? Everything! I was determined to get on the downs again after my diagnosis.

How do you get your mobility scooter to the Ridgeway? My buggy is left at The Swan public house in Compton. I now walk the pub dog. Last September when the ground was dry, I drove my buggy over the downs from Didcot, where I live, to Compton along the Sustrans path out of Didcot to Upton, then up Alden Road to Churn, then up to the Ridgeway and along Churn Road to Compton. It took two and a half hours. So now I can drive my car to the Swan to take the dog for walks from Compton using my mobility buggy. I can no longer walk due to my MS. I have freedom with a sense of adventure and achievement again, similar to when I could walk and ride!

Why do you feel that you need to get out on your buggy? Couldn't you just drive your car and park, say at Bury Down car park, and admire the view from there? Being inside a car is just not the same as getting the wind in your hair. The buggy is the nearest thing to the happy times of riding and walking a dog before my MS diagnosis.

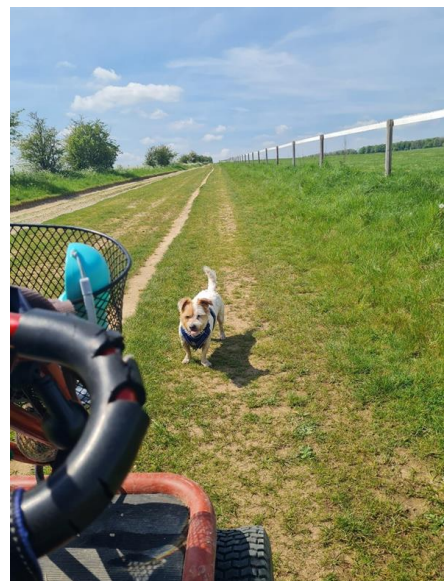
What is important to be able to take a mobility buggy up to and along the Ridgeway? The most important issue is that the surface is suitable. Deep ridges and ruts are scary but I haven't got completely stuck yet! Obviously, it is important to know that tracks are in a good state of repair before you set out, that there is not too much mud and to avoid the byways which have ruts and ridges caused by motor vehicles. There is a tricky bit near Roden Down but, like riding a horse, you learn what is a suitable surface or not to go along.

Aren't you worried you might get stuck? Being on the downs in a scooter is similar to being there on foot or on horseback. Things can go wrong but things can go wrong when walking and riding. I have friends I can call if I get stuck! Obviously it is important not to go when the weather and conditions are not good. But that is the same if walking or riding.



The good flat unrutted surface on this section of the Ridgeway National Trail is suitable for mobility scooters in May 2024 even after a very wet winter. Photo Josie Hill

I count myself to have been very lucky with the gifts of mobility buggies and a place to leave it. A trip to the downs boosts my spirits and helps me cope with the MS. Just wonderful!



On the byway from the old railway line up to Churn Rd which links the Ridgeway with Compton. Photo Josie Hill

A tribute to Smeathe's Ridge

Janice Bridger

THIS ARTICLE began as another piece telling how horse riders from far and wide continue to enjoy the Ridgeway and the North Wessex Downs. But it's turned out to be more than that. It is a tribute to Smeathe's Ridge and to all those who worked hard to make it what it is today: the perfect downland 'green lane' for those who travel on foot, cycle or horse.

SMEATHE'S RIDGE runs in a south east direction from Barbury Castle, south of Swindon, to Ogbourne St George. It became part of the route of the Ridgeway National Trail in 1972 when the Ridgeway was re-routed to avoid the National Trail running unnecessarily along tarmacaded road sections. Smeathe's Ridge is classified at a BOAT (byway open to all traffic) thus legally allowing public motor vehicles (4x4s and motor bikes) along the route. Its surface became severely damaged, making the route unpleasant and dangerous to use on foot, cycle and horse. However, hard work by the Friends of the Ridgeway, supported by the tenant farmer and local Counsellor, got a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) placed on the route in 2003, the first success the Friends of The Ridgeway had in the campaign to rid the Ridgeway of non-essential motor vehicles. Now Smeathe's Ridge has returned to a smooth, grassy route, probably one of the best 'green lanes' in the North Wessex Downs, or even in the country.



THE FIRST HORSE Trec event of 2024 to make use of the excellent going of Smeathe's Ridge was a training ride held by Wessex Trec on 12th May starting from an unusual setting for a horse event of Draycott Foliat aerodrome where there were many light planes parked, and on what must have been the hottest day of 2024 to date.



Horse and rider a few minutes west of Smeathe's Ridge.
Photo Dave Cavanagh

TREC (from the French Techniques de Randonnee Equestre de Competition, because the competition originates from France) tests the ability of horse riders to navigate their way over open country using a map and a compass (no technology allowed in Trec, except in emergencies) plus the ability to cope with obstacles, such as steep slopes, water crossings, narrow pathways, tight corners, and gates that come their way. Twenty four riders started on their 15 or 20km ride at 5-minute intervals plus, for those who wanted to test their skills further, a bearings test where riders have to find their way using compass bearings. Both routes included parts of the old Chiseldon and Marlborough railway line (Sustrans NCN route 482) without which a circular route would not have been possible because the parallel A346 road is far too dangerous to ride.

Continued...

Smeathe's Ridge viewed from the south with higher ground to the north in the background. [Photo Brian Robert Marshall](#), from www.geograph.org.uk/photo/960261

A FEW WEEKS LATER, the Moonrakers and South Trec group also made use of the excellent Smeathe's Ridge byway in a competition where the winners qualified for the national Trec Championships. Fifty riders navigated their way individually or in pairs around the byways and bridleways north of Rockley near Marlborough, using Smeathe's Ridge in the opposite direction to the May ride, from Barbury Castle down to a checkpoint at Ogbourne St George. Riders came from all over southern England and Wales and there were many comments of surprise about the wonderful countryside in this part of southern England.

NEXT DAY Smeathe's Ridge was also part of the Castle's Bike ride plus, on the day it was used for the May event,

it was also being used by a number of Duke of Edinburgh Award groups and cycling groups plus individual walkers, cyclists and horse riders enjoying the countryside. The cows grazing the field through which Smeathe's Ridge runs were not going to move for anyone, no doubt having got well and truly used to the various ways in which humans use the path.

FEW OF THESE USERS would know that the Smeathe's Ridge byway has not always been in such good condition but, if they did, they would have certainly been most thankful to those who worked to make it what it is today. Smeathe's Ridge has it all: a wonderful grassy natural surface and amazing views, the perfect downland 'green lane'.



Walking along Smeathe's Ridge. Photo Dave Cavanagh

Runners-up and Highly Commended in this year's Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

All the artworks submitted to the 2024 Prize can be viewed on the [Arts Prize page](#) of The Friends of the Ridgeway website

The Winners were shown in the [spring issue](#) of the FoR newsletter

Sculpture category



Runner-up

'Overview'

by Michele Green

Highly Commended

'The White Horse on the Hill'

by Fiona Cooper



Photography category



Runner-up

The Future 50

by Mary Tebje

Highly
Commended

'Sign from the
Times'

by Tim Lamb



Written category

RUNNER-UP in the Written Category was Carole Barfoot who took the acorn symbol of the National Trail and imagined a Mother Oak of the Chilterns.

'The Oak grew ever larger and became more and more a feature in the landscape, a beacon for travellers and drovers tramping along the Ridgeway on their way from North to South or South to North. A symbol of homecoming for some and a long journey for others. A symbol of longevity and life.'

HIGHLY COMMENDED was 'Cloaked Sonnet' by Lucy Ingrams who used stunning imagery to describe an autumn day 'way-auguring' from 'cloaks of woods' on the Ridgeway.

Wall Art category

Highly Commended

The Winter Oats,
Lambourn Valley Way

Katherine Foxhall



Highly Commended

Mysteries of an Ancient Landscape

By Andi Gallagher





Highly Commended

Restricted Access

By Livi Rees

Highly Commended

Autumn Bonfire
Wantage from
Chain Hill

by Fred Rose

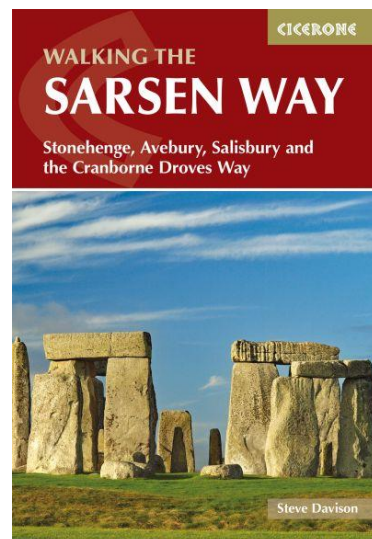


A new guide to the Sarsen Way

The Sarsen Way is a 50-mile (79-km) trail from Swindon to Salisbury.

The guidebook experts at Cicerone have released a new guidebook to it that offers optional loops that take in two of England's greatest prehistoric sites: Stonehenge and Avebury. Perfect for a long weekend, the route is suitable for walkers of all abilities and can be enjoyed all year round.

Friends of the Ridgeway can get 15% off guidebooks and eBooks at www.cicerone.co.uk with the code RIDGEWAY15. The discount code cannot be applied to anything already on offer or alongside other discount codes.



National Trail mugs are now available from The Trails Shop at

<https://thetrailshop.co.uk/collections/mugs/products/national-trail-mug>



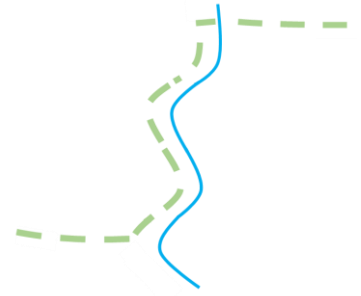
Ridgeway National Trail added a new photo to the album Ridgeway Hall of Fame. ...

★ Favourites · 6 hours ago · 🌐

A warm Ridgeway welcome to Beth, Sarah and Jon who completed the Trail over five days in 2012. We are delighted they responded to an invitation to join the Hall of Fame after their challenging yet enjoyable and rewarding experience. "It has left us all with such great memories" they said. "Ivinghoe to Avebury is the way to go!"



The pressure was on the English and Swiss players when their semi-final game in Euro 2024 went to penalties. After the shootout, in which the English players kept their heads, winning the match, one BBC pundit commented: "Pressure, what pressure? Pressure is for tyres."



Mind the Gap

Kenneth Williams "I can't stand innuendo. If I see one in a script I whip it out immediately."

On a notice: The inventor of autocorrect has died. The funnel will be held tomato.

Who's the coolest person in the hospital? The ultra sound guy.

Who replaces him when he's away? The hip replacement guy.

What did the cheese say to himself in the mirror?

Halloumi

What two-word answer can you deduce from this?

Answer on the last page

issue issue

issue issue

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Pathway through time - a photographic journey along Britain's oldest road



PHOTOGRAPHER MATT WRITTLE was commissioned by the Ridgeway Partnership, supported financially by the Arts Council of England, to collaborate on a photographic project to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ridgeway National Trail last year. In his [Summer 2024](#) Newsletter he explains more about it. Below are extracts from it.



Matt Writtle. Photo Matt Writtle

Following the success of my Arts Council England funded project 'The River Meadow at the Pile of Stones', I was approached by The Ridgeway National Trail Officer, Sarah Wright, to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a photographic project to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the trail. As 2023 was also when I was celebrating my 50th year, I was excited to find out more.

The project is a collaboration between me, The Ridgeway National Trail, [Sharp Shots](#) Photo Club and [Queens Park](#) Arts Centre, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, and comprises two phases.

PHASE ONE saw me respond artistically to 25 locations that encapsulate the past, present and future legacy of the Ridgeway National Trail - Britain's oldest trading route - these will be installed as an outdoor exhibition along the 87-mile route of The Ridgeway National Trail in summer 2024.

PHASE TWO involves Sharp Shots Photo Club conducting a series of photography workshops with children aged 6-19 years from September 2024 - May 2025. Twenty-five images from these will be selected for an exhibition alongside mine to create a portfolio of 50 images at Queens Park Arts Centre, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, in October 2025.

TO FACILITATE a greater understanding of the subject, I developed an artist framework entitled 'Pathways'; "Everything we do as humans is determined by a route, whether it's cerebral or physical. Paths - or ways - are the vehicle we as a species use to connect and survive."

I HAVE DECIDED to publish a photography book to create a tangible legacy of the work. To do this, I will be launching a Kickstarter crowd funding campaign throughout August, details to follow soon.

THIS THEME helped me understand the thread that connected all the locations, some being visible from ground-level, and some only visible from the air. To photograph the latter, I required an official qualification from the Civil Aviation Authority, so I sat the A2 Certificate of Competency examination and am now a fully qualified commercial drone pilot.

David Gardiner remembered

DAVID GARDINER, a founder member of the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement ([GLEAM](#)), died earlier this year. GLEAM, of which The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) is a member, is perhaps the foremost organisation that campaigns for the banning of non-essential motor vehicles from public rights of way, including the Ridgeway.

MICHAEL BARTHOLEMW, who succeeded David as chair of GLEAM, said “We owe him a great deal: without him, there would be no GLEAM.”

IAN RITCHIE, former chair of FoR and first chair of the Ridgeway Partnership that manages and promotes the Ridgeway National Trail, and an early member of GLEAM, said “I worked closely with David for many years and much appreciated his wise counsel and prodigious network of contacts. This was hugely important in establishing the Green Lanes Protection Group (GLPG) at the time of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERCA) 2006. David was the epitome of an English gentleman. Always well-groomed and well-mannered, polite, charming and personable - until you mentioned off-roading. There was then a Jekyll and Hyde transformation. David’s hatred of off-roading was visceral and at times I feared his blood pressure approached critical. He worked tirelessly for our cause and was a big support to me and FoR in our campaign to free the Ridgeway National Trail of recreational off-road vehicles.



Off-roaders at Gore Hill on the Ridgeway, near the A34, in 2002. This iconic photo was taken by David Gardiner.

FOR WEEKS he risked personal abuse and threats to record off-roaders at Bury Down on The Ridgeway, reporting offenders to the police and then harrying the hapless local officer until he wrote warning letters to them. David also took what for me was the most powerful photograph to illustrate our case, off-roaders on the Ridgeway at Gore Hill. We will all miss him.”



Burnt out car where the Ridgeway goes under the A34 at Gore Hill, January 1999. Photo from the FoR archive.

You can read more about David’s accomplishments in GLEAM’s Spring 2024 newsletter. Scroll down [this page](#).

Weight watching on the White Horse

This is what the Uffington White Horse looked like in 1965:



And this is what it looked like in 2021:



(Photo courtesy of Hedley Thorne)

Dave Cavanagh

LAST SUMMER I reported on a gathering of archaeologists on Whitehorse Hill. They were there to examine the Uffington White Horse, which has been losing weight. Their prognosis? Fatten it up.

PHOTOS taken recently from a drone by [Hedley Thorne](#), a lover and great photographer of the North Wessex Downs, had been compared with those taken several decades earlier. Careful analysis indicated that the Horse had shrunk. Young archaeologists i.e. those able to kneel down for hours at a time, had, last year, peeled back the turf at selected places on the head and neck of the Horse, which remained still throughout. This confirmed what aerial photography had suggested: the visible part of the Horse had shrunk by about 40% of its area in just the last 30 years or so. This had been caused by soil movement and

encroachment of the turf over the exposed chalk.

FOLLOWING last year's analysis on the ground it was agreed to make adjustments to the White Horse, essentially to take it back to its dimensions of the 1990s, when the last major survey of the Horse was done. Money was raised, including a generous donation from lovers of the White Horse who live in Australia, and the restoration work was scheduled for the week beginning 1 July.

I WENT UP to help out in a non-skilled way on the second day. It was chilly and very windy. My hearing is not good at the best of times but the wind made it worse. As far as I can make out there were representatives from Hysterical England, English Heretics and National Truss (the mind boggles with what they do with the rest of their time). The digging and recording were done mostly by Oxford Archaeopteryx. As I intimated, I may have misheard from time to time.



The restoration site, archaeologists at work. Photo Dave Cavanagh

Preservation or conservation?

FROM TALKING to the archaeologists present I learned that some leaned towards leaving the Horse as it is (preservation) – on the grounds that the Horse has been evolving for over 2,000 years and its current appearance is but the latest iteration, fashioned by people and nature, and that its form will no doubt change again. Others would like to see the Horse returned to something more like its appearance hundreds of years ago, which perhaps is conservation. That is tricky.

WIN SCUTT, of English Heritage, got down into a trench that had been dug the day previously adjacent to one of the beaks of the Horse (yes, the Horse was given a beak, not a muzzle, 2000-odd years ago). I saw just different shades of grey (though not 50). He pointed out that some of what I was seeing was indeed chalk, and that the archaeologists could discern several beaks at different heights in the trench. Some were separated by thick layers of silt, suggesting, perhaps, that the Horse had been neglected for some substantial periods of time and naturally covered in silt that had run down the slope. They had evidence that some of the earlier beaks were not in line with the ones that we see today. Indeed, some ancient reconstructions may have been well off the line of the current edges of the Horse and still buried from view.



Win Scutt, of English Heritage, pointing out layers of chalk that were beaks of bygone days, separated by layers of silt.

SO, WHICH VERSION

of the Horse should one aim to restore? In the event, there has been a compromise: the Horse is being uncovered – turf removed and the soil-contaminated chalk beneath it removed – to take it back to what the archaeologists observed and recorded some thirty years ago, then more good quality chalk added to even-up the surface.

Transplants

OVER TIME the slope of the Horse has lessened, one result of which has been to reduce its profile when seen from the Vale of White Horse, as well as to take it away from how the original Horse would have been seen. So, in addition to widening the head and neck by removal of turf, two strong members of Oxford Archaeology used spades to take off several centimetres of the belly of the Horse, thereby

steepening the main body. The removed chalk was not discarded. Instead, it was put into lots of buckets which were then moved by a chain gang of volunteers up to the top of the Horse, where it was used to thicken the head and neck where turf had been removed.



Top, shovelling off some chalk from the belly of the horse to steepen the slope, and, bottom, loading it into buckets to be taken up to the neck and head.



Passing buckets of chalk from the belly of the horse along a chain gang, then depositing it in the newly widened neck.

Leg surgery

A COMBINATION of comparison of recent with old photos and portrayals of the Horse with shallow exploratory trenches dug last year revealed that the legs had ‘shrunk’ in length in recent years. So, on Thursday 4 July, when I returned to the site, the archaeologists had extended the legs to the length that they were some 30 years ago. This was done by removing some of the turf and back-filling with chalk removed from the main body of the Horse.

AGE IS NOT JUST A NUMBER

IN THE 1990s the Oxford Archaeology Unit (now Oxford Archaeology) used optically stimulated luminescence dating to date soil layers below the Horse and dated it to between 1380 and 210 BC – later Bronze Age or Iron Age. Dating technology has improved since then so this year more samples of the chalk were taken from two deep trenches, adjacent to the head and to the belly – for analysis by the Research Laboratory for Archaeology & the History of Art, Oxford University, in the hope of obtaining a more accurate age for the Horse, the better to put it into the context of the people who created it.

More to come

This year’s restoration work is unlikely to be the end of the matter. The archaeologists collected lots of data in June that they will be studying over many months. This will advise them on what further restorative work they might undertake to further rejuvenate the Horse, and to increase its impact on the many thousands of people who look at it,



Top, Win Scutt explaining the rationale behind the extension of one of the legs. Below, tamping in chalk to the extension.



from near and far, every year.

You can follow Oxford Archaeologist’s work on their website for this [project](#) and get more [background information](#) .

The White Horse and the surrounding archaeological features on White Horse Hill are on land belonging to the National Trust. These are in the guardianship of English Heritage, who subcontract their care to the National Trust. Historic England is also involved in the decision-making, and the work is carried out by Oxford Archaeology, and scientific dating is by the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art.



Hedley Thorne

2 days ago · 🌐



The head, neck, ears, face, beak and front legs are looking far more defined and the overall horse looks bolder and healthier now I think. Once the site is tidied away and the grass regrowth has occurred it will look even more beautiful! Great job all.



These three photos taken by Hedley Thorne



👍👍 You and 62 others

14 comments 10 shares



White Horse Hill & Ashdown House NT

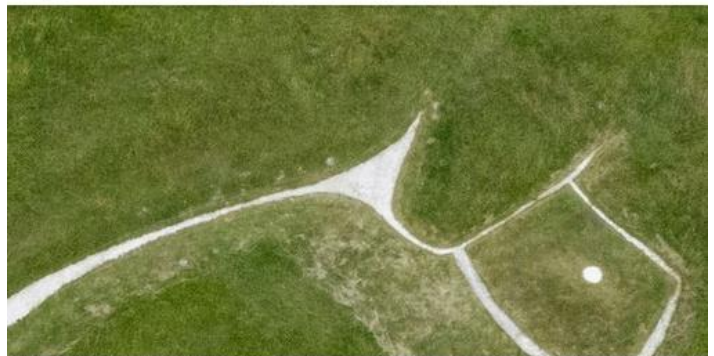
4 days ago · 🌐



A side by side comparison before and after the recent work to widen the White Horse, this angle gives you an idea of just how narrow it had got in places!

For more information on the widening project, and why we aren't re-chalking or scouring see our website 🌟

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/.../our-work-at-white...>



As a consequence of the renovation of the White Horse this year, the annual scouring and re-chalking of the Horse in August, under the auspices of the National Trust, will not take place this year.

We know that people from all over the world travel along the Ridgeway, from end to end. This article on BBC Global News might enthuse even more to do so.

The Ridgeway, going global

Dave Cavanagh

IN APRIL, Brendan Sainsbury, travel writer extraordinaire, contacted The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) to ask some questions ahead of him walking the Ridgeway the following month, and writing about it for BBC Global News. I responded on behalf of FoR, then forgot about it until I received a WhatsApp in late July from an expat friend in Spain. He had spotted [Sainsbury's article](#) 'The Ridgeway: Hike the 5,000-year-old pathway that's Britain's oldest road.' Knowing that I had an interest in the Ridgeway, he sent me a link to the piece and screenshots of my quotes.

SAINSBURY MENTIONS the recent 10-fold

increase in followers on the FoR Facebook page, for which our social media editor Wendy Tobitt must take the credit. Mary Tebje, communications support for the Ridgeway National Trail, is also quoted. "Whilst it is an ancient trail, its 50th year as a designated National Trail gave us an excellent reason to remind people why these countryside spaces are so important," she told me. "These include: a place to exercise, spend time with family and friends, to learn about and subsequently care for our countryside, its biodiversity, history, heritage and even climate change as the new weather patterns impact when and how we can access the trail."

"The Ridgeway forms an interface between the lowland and the chalk downs," explained Dave Cavanagh, a trustee of the [Friends of the Ridgeway](#) who lives close to the trail in the village of Uffington and has walked sections of the route many times. "From the Ridgeway you can look north for many miles over the Vale of White Horse to the Cotswolds and Chilterns, or west over the Vale of Aylesbury and beyond. Then you turn 180 degrees for a totally different view, over the downs. Lots of habitations in one direction, hardly any in the other. It's a different world up there, with a great getting-away-from-it feeling."

*From the Ridgeway you can look north for many miles over the Vale of White Horse to the Cotswolds and Chilterns, or west over the Vale of Aylesbury and beyond -
Dave Cavanagh*

SAINSBURY'S ARTICLE is not only engaging and positive about the Ridgeway, it also contains links in the text to many of the features along the way, making it particularly useful for those thinking about walking, running, cycling or horse riding along our National Trail, whether from the UK or overseas.

[Brendan Sainsbury](#) has written 60 Lonely Planet guidebooks. He writes "I'm an expat Brit now living in BC, Canada. My greatest travel achievement was directing Shakespeare's 'Comedy of Errors' in Portuguese in Angola during a civil war."

Not yet a member of The Friends of the Ridgeway?

IF SO, perhaps you would consider joining? Membership is only £8 a year for individuals. You can see other rates [here](#). You can join quickly and conveniently [on line](#).

THE FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY (FOR) exists to promote the joys of being on the Ridgeway and to improve one's experience of it. Our Chair is on the board of the Ridgeway Partnership, which manages and promotes the [Ridgeway National Trail](#), and in that way we help to formulate policy. We promote the inspirational aspect of the Ridgeway through our annual [Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize](#) and our Facebook page. We keep members informed of what is happening on the Ridgeway through our quarterly [newsletter](#).

WE WERE FOUNDED in 1983 to campaign for the banning of nonessential motor vehicles on the Ridgeway National Trail. Working with others we were successful in the noughties to the extent that non-essential motor vehicles were banned from the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire all year round, and in the winter months on the Trail in West Berkshire and Wiltshire. We continue to work towards the Ridgeway being free of nonessential motor vehicles along its whole length, all year round.



Overton Hill, the western end of the Ridgeway

WE ALSO DONATE MONEY to the Partnership to pay for specific items and events. For example, recently we have donated: £5,000 for information boards for an [Historic England project](#) along the Trail; £3,500 for the [Ridgeway Photo 50](#) project; and £2,000 for the official opening of the [Great Chalk Way](#), of which the Ridgeway is an integral part and we have long been a champion of; £700 towards a drinking water fountain on the Ridgeway above Sparshalt on the North Wessex Downs section of the Ridgeway. Our previous donations include one to cover the expenses of the Ridgeway and National Trail Volunteers for a year.

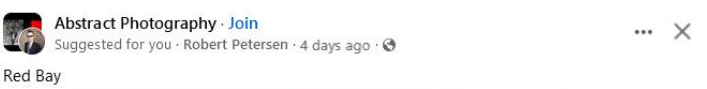
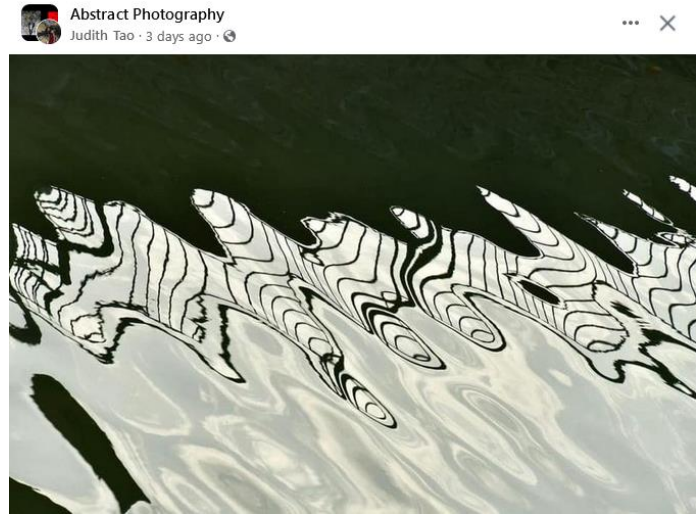
The more members that we have, the stronger our voice and, of course, the more money we have to invest in the Ridgeway.



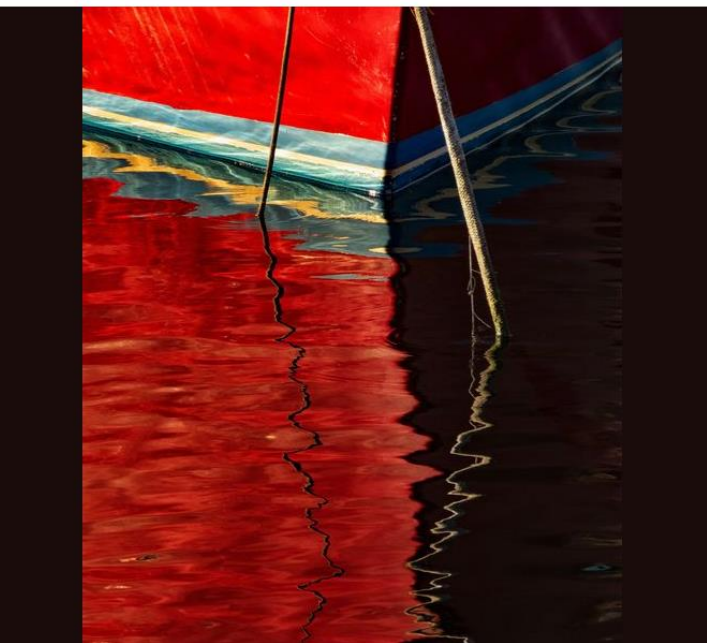
Vale of White Horse Ramblers at Ivinghoe Beacon, the eastern end of the Ridgeway, having walked the entire trail over eight days from Overton Hill.



Look at things differently ...



The *Abstract Photography* Facebook page



Mind the Gap question:

What two-word answer can you deduce from this?

Answer: tennis shoes

