

# Friends of the Ridgeway




Autumn 2024





# Autumn 2024

[www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk](http://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk)

 @FriendsOfTheRidgeway

## Welcome

Editor Dave Cavanagh  
[davecavanagh1000@gmail.com](mailto:davecavanagh1000@gmail.com)



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

## Launch of the Great Chalk Way

On 10 October the Great Chalk Way (GCW) was officially launched. The approximately 400-mile GCW is the sum total of six established long-distance paths that stretch along chalk hills between the English Channel at Lyme Regis, Dorset and the North Sea at Holme-next-the-Sea in Norfolk. Friends of the Ridgeway trustee and stalwart of the GCW Tim Lewis tells how it all came about.

**THE FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY** (FoR) and the Icknield Way Association (IWA) have been at the forefront of the GCW. Accompanying Tim at the launch were Mike Lewington (Chair FoR) and Doug Landman (IWA) with Mary-Ann Ochota (Patron of the Ridgeway National

Trail). Speaking at the ceremony, held at the Dunstable Downs Visitor Centre, Mary-Ann spoke of the Way as a connection of beautiful, nature-rich and ever-changing geological, natural and farmed landscapes. ►



Cover photo Hambleton Hill, Dorset. Copyright Shutterstock.



MARY-ANNE SAID “Old paths really matter because they connect us to where we’re going from where we’ve been. They tell the stories that connect communities with local history, cultures and nature. People on these paths connect with each other and the landscapes around them. In each section of the Great Chalk Way, you’re walking through living landscapes – from the wind-stripped Norfolk fens to the lofty beech woodlands of the Chilterns, to the wide downs of Wessex and through Dorset to the Jurassic Coast. I hope the Great Chalk Way becomes one of the best-loved and celebrated long distance routes in the country.”

Eight information boards will be placed along the route between Lyme Regis and Holme-next-the-Sea.

With thanks to Wendy Tobitt for her reporting on the event.

Visit:

<http://greatchalkway.org.uk/>

Watch a wonderful video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I02eEGARfms> where Paul Whitewick reveals the history of the Great Chalk Way landscapes, with clips from the launch event.



Left to right: Doug Landman, Mike Lewington and Mary Ann Ochota. Photo Mary Tebje.

## The Great Chalk Way story

Tim Lewis

IT WAS A RARE sunny day in April 2004, and I was meeting up with my friend Ken, who I used to share a house with back in the 70's. But rather than sitting around in the kitchen, then the pub, reminiscing about the good old days, I hit on the idea of going for a walk. But where? As I lived only about a mile away from the start of the Ridgeway National Trail (RNT), at Overton Hill off the A4, the answer was obvious. We ended up walking all 87 miles of it, two days at a time over several months. This was my first experience of walking a long-distance trail, and I was hooked.



Tim Lewis, right, and Mike Lewington with one of the Great Chalk Way information boards at the launch. Photo Wendy Tobitt.

FAST FORWARD to 2016. By then I had been the Area Footpath Secretary for the Wiltshire Ramblers for three years. This brought me into contact with the Wiltshire Council Rights of Way department, which was then headed by Richard Broadhead. I was about to walk the Wessex Ridgeway (WR) in Wiltshire, putting up waymarks along the way, as agreed with Richard, and this somehow brought me into contact with Jeff Goddard, then the Secretary of the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR). It was Jeff who first told me about the FoR's aspiration to create a coast-to-coast trail from Lyme Regis in Dorset to ►







already walked the entire route, continuing from my start on the RNT to walk the WR (2007/8), the Icknield Way (2011/12) and the Peddars Way National Trail (March 2012) using the Quinlan guide book (which was published by Cicerone).



Bulbarrow Hill, Wessex Ridgeway, Dorset. Photo Tim Lewis

**SO CONVINCED** were the trustees of the FoR by the 2007 paper that they amended the objects of its constitution in March 2009 to state that these were now “...the preservation, for the benefit of the public and in the interests of social welfare, of all the natural aspects and features of the ancient Ridgeway track-ways along the chalk downs of Southern England, including the Ridgeway National Trail any extension thereof, and of their associated features, monuments and access paths; and the provision of recreational and educational facilities and events relating thereto.”

**HOWEVER**, it was clearly not easy to get this project off the ground, and it was not until September 2017 that the first meeting of the GCW Working Group took place. Present were Ian Ritchie, Chairman of the Ridgeway Partnership, Tom Chevalier, Chairman of the

Icknield Way Association (IWA), Anthony Burdall, Chairman of the FoR, Clive Beckett from the IWA, and Jeff Goddard and Andy Greenhalgh from the FoR. It was at this meeting that the name of the route, the GCW, was agreed.

**I WAS INVITED** to attend the second meeting of the group in January 2018, and at this and subsequent meetings routes for the SW and the CDL were discussed, revised and agreed. Waymarks were also designed for both routes by Anna Dillon,



Beamster from Gerard's Hill, Wessex Ridgeway, Dorset. Photo Tim Lewis

and I walked the routes, putting up waymarks and writing detailed directions for them (which are ▶

available on the website of the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA). The intention had been for cyclists and equestrians to be able to use both routes, but this has proved to be impossible due to the lack of suitable bridleways. Both the FoR and IWA are very keen ultimately to obtain National Trail status for the GCW, but recognise that this is a very long-term objective.



View from Cranborne Doves Way. Photo Tim Lewis

**THE ATMOSPHERE** at the seventh meeting of the group in September 2020 was sombre as those present were told that Andy Greenhalgh had succumbed to cancer. As a result, Tom Chevalier had taken up the challenge of recording the route using Open Street Maps. He also set up the GCW website. One problem which we wrestled with over the course of several meetings was the need to create a distinct identity for the GCW whilst at the same time retaining the individual identities of its component long distance paths.



Monument to Richard Jeffries and Alfred Williams on Burderoop Down, Sarsen Way. Photo Tim Lewis

**THE MANTRA** we came up with to do this was always to refer to the GCW as “a family of long-distance trails”. It was also agreed that as each component trail already had its own waymark, there was no need to create one for the route as a whole. How then could we promote the GCW as a whole, and advertise its existence to the walking public? The answer was to place information boards at the start and finish of each component trail, showing the route of the GCW and giving pictorial and factual information about it. This was a solution I put to the group at its meeting in September 2020, and which was readily accepted.

**THIS APPARENTLY** simple idea proved to be fraught with problems! First, we had to find a designer who was willing and able to accommodate the changing whims of group members. Abby George was recommended to us, and she proved to be more than equal to the task. Our only specification to start with was that the board should show the route on a map. What else should be shown (or not shown) on it was a matter of considerable debate amongst committee members. We also had to find out who were the landowners at each of the locations, and obtain their permission to erect the boards in a suitable place.

**FINALLY**, after 17 proofs, a final proof, and an amended final proof, the end product was seven boards to be placed at the start/finish of each trail, each with its own “You are here” arrow, and an extra board which was shown at the launch ceremony of the GCW at the Dunstable Downs Visitors Centre on 10 October 2025 – five years after the concept was first aired! These are being erected in the agreed locations, except for two for which locations have yet to be found. Watch this<sup>6</sup> space....!



**Hunstanton and  
Thornham. Photo  
Norfolk County  
Council.**



**The Icknield Way  
Path, view north  
from Beacon Hill.  
Photo Tom  
Chevalier**



**The Ridgeway  
above The  
Devil's  
Punchbowl.  
Photo Dave  
Cavanagh**



**Salisbury  
Cathedral,  
the Sarsen  
Way. Photo  
Anthony  
Burdall.**



**Stream in  
Stratford  
Stoney, the  
Cranborne  
Droves Way.  
Photo Tim  
Lewis.**



# The Great Chalk Way

**Lyme Regis Cobb,  
Wessex Ridgeway. Photo  
Richard Murgatroyd**



# Care ~~in~~ by the community

The ancient monuments through and around which the Ridgeway threads were constructed by local people. The Historic Ridgeway Project aims at continuing that tradition by recruiting people who live nearby to get involved in their rejuvenation and presentation to the public.

SOME OF our ancient monuments have been colonised or otherwise obscured by vegetation of one type or another. Under the auspices of archaeologist Dan Bashford and Volunteer Coordinator Hayley Gray, members of the local community will cut back the overgrowth. Landowners and managers will be engaged with to develop management plans that will secure appropriate conservation work and, where possible, enhance public enjoyment. Dan will also be mindful of the ecology of the sites, with a view to improving habitats.



Hayley Gray and Dan Bashford

The project, which was launched in October of last year, covers the Ridgeway from Ashbury in the west to Wallingford in the east. It is largely funded by Historic England, with matched contributions from the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB), Oxfordshire County Council and The Friends of the Ridgeway.

You can read more about the Historic Ridgeway Project on the Ridgeway National Trail's [website](#).



In August the Historic Ridgeway Steering Group visited Segsbury Camp, an Iron Age construction above Wantage and the Letcombes. Pictured are (left to right): David Barber (estate manager), Mike Lewington (Chair, The Friends of the Ridgeway), Henry Oliver (Director, North Wessex Downs National Landscape), Alison McQuaid (Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Historic England), Hayley Gray (Historic Ridgeway Volunteer Coordinator), Dan Bashford (Historic Ridgeway Project Manager), and Ian Black (Ridgeway National Trail officer).



AT THE BEGINNING of October volunteers from [Wallingford Green Gym](#) cleared vegetation from around the trig point along a section of Grims' Ditch near Mongewell in south Oxfordshire; the views across the Berkshire Downs and the Chiltern Hills had become obscured. Historic England had previously put this stretch of Grim's Ditch on their Heritage At Risk Register. A 2021 survey revealed that it was suffering from damage caused by badger tunnelling, fallen trees and erosion.

TO LEARN MORE about why this and other linear earthworks are called 'Grim', go to the Ridgeway National Trail's [website](#).

# Wallingford Green Gym

A TCV COMMUNITY GROUP WEBSITE

Wallingford Green Gym describe themselves as a small community group in South Oxfordshire who have done countryside-conservation work since 2023, using hand tools – good exercise producing a public good. I like their motto: You can tell where we've been!

Photos Wendy Tobitt and Hayley Grey







**Grim's Ditch is the ribbon of green descending towards Wallingford.  
Photo Mary Tebje.**

LATER IN OCTOBER volunteers from another type of gym, this time the tfd gym in Grove, cut back dogwood at the Lord Wantage Monument on the Ridgeway. I hadn't realised that the monument had been built on the site of a Bronze Age Barrow.

THE MONUMENT was erected in memory of Robert Loyd-Lindsay, 1st Baron Wantage, who was a soldier, politician and philanthropist. He co-founded the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War, which later became the British Red Cross.



**Photos Wendy Tobitt**



# 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 9<sup>th</sup> Exhibition will be held on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 April 2025 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 Annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Competition

April 26th -27th 2025. Theme: 'Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway'.

At the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, SN7 7RA

Entrants need to complete the Entry Form by **March 28th 2025**.

Entrance fee: £5.00 per entry/exhibit.

Contact us: [swireartsprize@gmail.com](mailto:swireartsprize@gmail.com)

Further information can be obtained from our website.



THE FRIENDS OF THE  
**RIDGWAY**

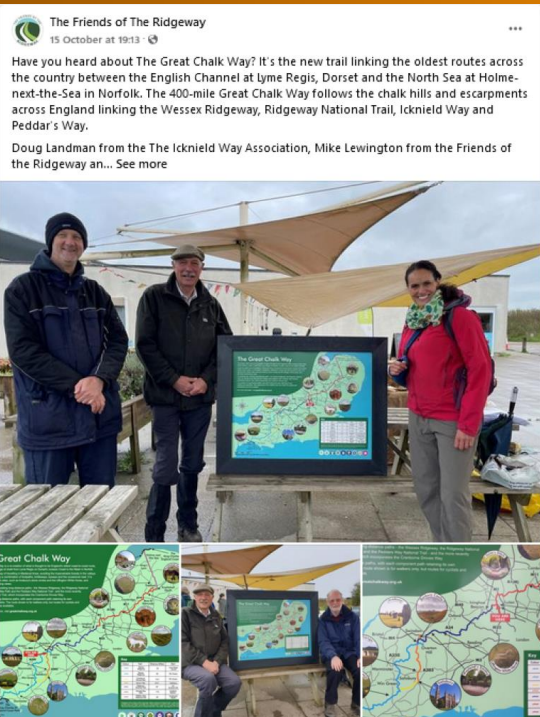
[ridgewayfriends.org.uk](http://ridgewayfriends.org.uk)



Image by Emma J Williams, highly commended in the 2024 Wall Art prize.

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

## The theme for 2025 is *Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway*



**WENDY TOBITT** has transformed our Facebook impact. Her post about the official opening of the Great Chalk Way (left) had a reach (the number of people who viewed it in their news feed) of over 20,600 people, of which 1,037 engaged (interacted e.g. clicked on images or shared the post) with it. Within 24 hours of her first post on the 2025 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize (right) it had a reach of 5,125 and an engagement of 139.





# Not yet a member of The Friends of the Ridgeway?



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 [online](#).

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 non-essential (recreational) 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.

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



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

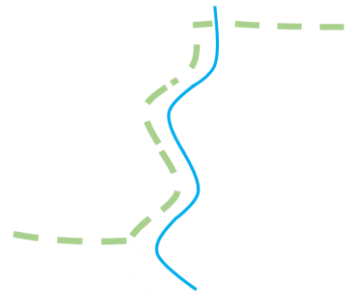
I sailed through my driving test. That's why I failed it. Arthur Smith at the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe.



People are typically shocked  
when they find out I'm a  
terrible electrician.

What's blue and isn't heavy?  
Light blue.

"I love Jane Austen because I  
never read her but I'm glad she  
exists." Italo Calvino, writer.



# Mind the Gap



Ouch! Mind how you go. Photo Dave Cavanagh

I accidentally swallowed some invisible  
ink. Now I'm at the hospital waiting to  
be seen.

Husband: Is there anything you'd like for  
Christmas?

Wife: Yes, a divorce.

Husband: Ah, I hadn't thought of spending  
that much.



Photo Dave Cavanagh



# What might come next in this sequence?

**The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949)**, which gave us National Parks, protected landscapes (initially Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now called National Landscapes) and National Trails, amongst other things.

**The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)**, which is relevant to the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire and many other byways that were previously referred to as Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPS); the Act made them into Restricted Byways i.e. closed to non-essential (recreational) vehicles e.g. 4x4s and motor cycles.

**The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000; CROW)**, which gave us Open Access land – “the right to roam”, especially in the uplands.

**Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009)**, which gave us the England Coast Path.

**An Access to Nature Act (2027)?**

**MAYBE.** A year ago, Steve Reed MP, then the Shadow Secretary of State (SoS) for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs department, who now is the SoS for said Government department, said that a Labour government would produce a white paper on access to nature. This would be to “Increase access to nature for families to enjoy, improving mental health and leaving a legacy for generations to come”. Banning recreational motor vehicles (including 4x4s and motor cycles) from all the National Trails and from all byways around the countryside of England and Wales could be part of such an Act.



Photo Wayne Smith



Photo Ridgeway National Trail

Photo John Gordon



Photo from Janice Bridger

Photo Dave Cavanagh



**IN ANTICIPATION** of this, Ian Ritchie, one-time Chair of The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) and the first Chair of the Ridgeway Partnership, has teamed up with Patricia Stubbs of the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM, of which FoR is a member) to work towards forming a coalition of organisations which are supportive of protecting our byways and their users from the depredations of recreational motor vehicles. (An Act would *not* ban essential motor vehicles e.g. those belonging to landowners and farmers, emergency services and trades people driving to properties on a byway.) In relation to the Ridgeway National Trail, inclusion of this in an Act would, at a stroke, give protection from recreational motor vehicles to the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and West Berkshire all year round, which in Oxfordshire it already enjoys (through a quirk of fate). This would be transformational for those who go along the Ridgeway under their own steam (or their horse's) and on mobility scooters.

Ramblers has proposed an [Access to Nature Bill](#) as part of its Outdoors Unlocked campaign.





# The extraordinary costs of repairing green lanes damaged by off-roading

The Lake District National Park Authority got a grant from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative for repairs of, and tree-planting adjacent to, Breast High Road, another BOAT. The repairs, carried out in 2022-23, ten years after repairs in 2012 by Cumbria County Council, cost over £308,000, over £110,800 per kilometre. This is much more than the 2012 repairs, which cost over £26,000 per kilometre at 2021 prices, and than the estimated cost of repair in 1895, when South Westmorland Rural District Council was about to take over repair responsibility for part of Breast High Road, £228 per kilometre at 2021 prices. In 1895, Breast High Road was not used by off-roaders, only by farmers and their visitors such as cattle-dealers.

THE GREEN LANES ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP, more commonly known by its acronym GLEAM, produces a quarterly newsletter 'for those interested in protecting ancient ways from the ravages of recreational motor vehicles.' In this autumn's newsletter they illustrate just how ruinously expensive it is for councils to repair the damage caused by recreational off-road vehicles on byways open to all traffic (BOATs) and unsealed unclassified roads (UURs) – also known unofficially as green lanes. In many cases these repairs have to be repeated because the damage recurs.

Here are a couple of examples.

Some authorities have to find other sources of funding to repair green lanes because their highways and rights of way budgets are insufficient. Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council spent £15,000 on repairs to Ramsden Road, a BOAT, in 2020. But they are now having to spend 20 times as much, £300,000 (over £144,000 per kilometre) over the next three years to finish the work. This money is coming from their highways capital budget, one third of which is funded this year by borrowing, not by council tax or central government grant.

**THE MAKERS OF OUR BYWAYS** and unsealed unclassified roads made them with cartwheels and hooves in mind, not heavy, powerful recreational 4x4s and motor bikes, with the drivers of some of them revelling in the damage that they cause. The Friends of the Ridgeway supports the objective of GLEAM and others to have our green lanes protected in law.

[www.gleam-uk.org](http://www.gleam-uk.org)



On the Ridgeway National Trail Photo Anthony Burdall, a former chair of The Friends of the Ridgeway



Damage caused to the Wessex Ridgeway. Photo taken in early 2022, and supplied by Sarah Wright when she was the Ridgeway National Trail Officer.



# Sophie Aziz is the new Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteer Project Officer

“AS I AM AT MY HAPPIEST when I am outside (even more so when working on trails) this role felt like a perfect fit,” she said. “I have been an upland trail builder for ten years, having volunteered across the UK, Lebanon, and Iceland. I am very used to trials and tribulations of working in the hills, so the sodden flats of the Thames Path will be a brand-new challenge!”

IT’S AN ILL WIND that blows nobody any good: when the Thames Path is flooded the Volunteers tend to come up to work on the Ridgeway.

One of the Volunteers alongside a newly installed fingerpost



## Hugh Potter retires

At the end of October Hugh Potter retired from his post as Operations Manager, Countryside Access & Tree Service, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). Hugh was a great supporter of the Ridgeway Partnership, the body that manages and promotes the Ridgeway National Trail. Indeed, Hugh was the co-founder of it on the ‘official’ side in 2015, the other leading lights being Ian Ritchie and Jeff Goddard of The Friends of the Ridgeway. OCC hosts the Partnership, including being the employer of Partnership staff, providing office space and associated services, and workshop space for the Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers. We wish him well in his retirement and look forward to working with his successor.

Two Volunteers making a fingerpost at OCC’s workshop in Sutton, near Eynsham.





# Several men and a woman went to mow, though not a meadow

In October the Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers were back on Bury Down, continuing their assistance to scientists doing research adjacent to the Ridgeway.

**IT WAS IN 2018** that University of Oxford's Biology Department commenced a project to find out what conditions would favour the growth of wildflowers on chalk Downs. Their results will advise on what should be done to encourage wild flowers on a wider scale elsewhere on the Downs. The natural flora of the Downs favour soils that are nutrient poor. The wide verges of the Ridgeway on Bury Down benefit from not having fertiliser added directly.

**THE SITE CHOSEN** for their experiments is adjacent to the Ridgeway at Bury Down, just west of the A34. Twenty-eight plots were managed differently. The control plots, of course, remain untouched. Grasses make life difficult for wild flowers to thrive. Some plots had the top soil taken off, which reduced nutrient levels. Some were mown, the mowings being either left in situ or removed, resulting, in the latter case, in an even greater reduction in nutrients. It is on the scalped plots where mowings were removed that the greatest plant variety is being observed.

**THE RESEARCH** is led by Professor Lindsay Turnbull who returned to the plots in October, this time with research student Josh Jones, and some of the Volunteers.

Photos by  
Wendy Tobitt

From top, clockwise. Professor Lindsay and Josh Jones; Ian Black, Ridgeway Project Officer; Martin guiding a mower; Roger with a mower – Professor Lindsay is pointing to the edge of the plot.





# The Lost Paths – A History of How We Walk from Here to There

by Jack Cornish. Michael Joseph 2024.

Dave Cavanagh

**THIS BOOK** is about a love affair between the author, Jack Cornish (Head of Paths at Ramblers), and wherever his feet take him. It is not a 'how to' guide for saving our lost paths – those that are not officially recognised. The clue is in the subtitle. For Cornish, paths are threads that run through history, not just the present. Every path has a story to tell and Jack has unearthed many of them following meticulous research. The result is a book that kept me engrossed from start to finish.

**OUR RURAL FOOTPATHS** (which includes bridleways and byways) today are largely for our recreation, enjoyment, physical and mental well-being. This is a relatively recent reincarnation of ways (pedways) that were created for more prosaic reasons: getting to work, church, relatives, market and the like, on foot. Jack has selected various paths – and walked them - to illustrate why thousands of paths came to be and who created them. At its heart this book is about people and how paths formed an important part of their lives.

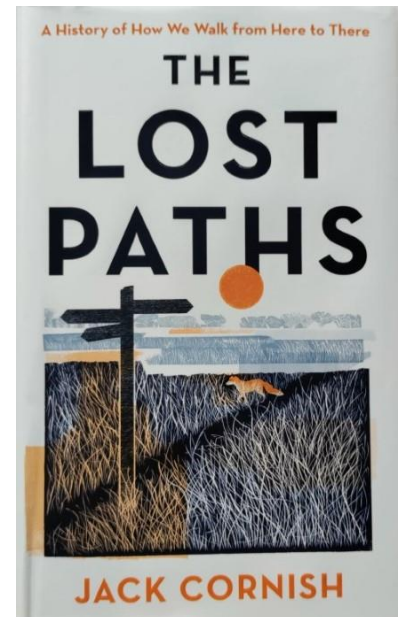


Photo Dave Cavanagh

**CORNISH RANGES** far and wide: from our prehistoric ancestors to us in our modern towns and cities; from drovers and turnpikes to the effect of railways on pedways; from tramps to church-goers; from warpaths to leisure trails; and more.

Nick Crane, in his seminal work *The Making of the British Landscape* uses the term 'desire paths' – paths created by people as a conscious choice. This process would have started some 10,000 years ago when people returned to Britain as the last Ice Age warmed to an end. If a walk led to somewhere worthwhile e.g. a source of berries or flints or a good lookout point, then others would follow in their footsteps: a path was trodden into existence. Cornish tells us of a smart move by an American university campus which did not put paths in place until students had trod their 'desire paths'; the designers went with the flow - of feet.



Photo Dave Cavanagh



**IT CAME** as a surprise to me that there was a Highways Act passed as far back as 1555, during the reign of the hapless Mary Tudor. This put the formalised burden of the maintenance and improvement of roads on parish councils. Even the Act referred to ‘this very noisome and tedious burden.’ Parish councillors are relieved to no longer have this responsibility. Instead, it falls to the county councils or their equivalents to maintain most of the roads in their areas. Incidentally, paths, bridleways and byways are officially part of the King’s Highway. In theory they have the same status as the M25.

**THE WORD TRAMPING**, Cornish tells us, was initially applied to skilled workers who walked along paths and other ways to move from one source of work to another. By the mid-nineteenth century it came to refer to the impoverished of no fixed abode. Workhouses were charged with giving such people a bed for the night or, rather, two nights. Then they had to move on to the next source of shelter, and so on. Exactly which paths were trodden by these miserable people is hard to say. On the day between their bed-nights the poor had to work. One job entailed unpicking old ropes to their constituent fibres, giving rise to the phrase ‘money for old rope’.



**THE MATHEMATICIAN** Benoit Mandelbrot came up with the Coastline Paradox. As Cornish puts it, there isn’t a perfect ruler for this task. He might have added that the measured length is also dependent on the scale of map that one uses. The more detail you have, the longer the coastline becomes: “ultimately the coast is infinite”.

**FURTHERMORE**, whatever length is measured it will soon become out of date due to coastal erosion. The shifting nature of our coastline was taken into account by the designers and, indeed, law-makers, of the King Charles III England Coast Path. The Marine and Coast Access Act (2009) created a corridor of public access land through which the Path runs, with much of the corridor between the Path and the sea. This gives some future proofing of right of access when, for example, cliffs collapse.

**THE KING CHARLES III ENGLAND COAST PATH**, promoted from its inception by Ramblers, and not yet finished, possibly encouraged Cornish to write a chapter on our coastline. Attempts to measure the length of the British coastline, starting with maps, have resulted in very different estimates.



I’ve been taking salsa lessons for months, but I just don’t feel like I’m progressing. It’s just one step forward, two steps back. Alec Snook at the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe.



**THERE WAS**, you'll be glad to hear, happiness as well as misery on our footpaths. The writer and publisher William Hone describes, in 1827, the trysts of young lovers on secluded footpaths. Stiles, far from being considered an impediment, were opportunities for a young man to help his lady friend over them – to actually touch her in a way that was beyond reproach – initially at any rate: she might have fallen further into his grasp, of course; he might have had to hold her more closely and tightly ...

There were also 230 decoy airfields, complete with dummy aircraft, to lure German bombers away from the real airfields, and even a dummy city on the moors to confuse bombers seeking Sheffield.



Pill box alongside/in the River Windrush near Newbridge, West Oxfordshire.  
Photo Dave Cavanagh

**IN ANOTHER CHAPTER**, Cornish looks at the effect of war on our footpath network. From time to time many of us on our walks in the flatter parts of Oxfordshire come across the crumbling concrete of Second World War airfields, and pill boxes adjacent to the Thames and smaller rivers.

**THIS CHAPTER** is typical of others in that Cornish strays from the paths, in a manner of speaking, to engage us with what took place in the surrounding land over the centuries, which enriches the book. One gem is that Lincolnshire had the most airfields (48) of any county in the 1940s, this number being greater than the total number of airfields in the whole country ten years previously.

**THE ONLY CHAPTER** that I didn't like was the final one. Don't get me wrong: the only thing wrong with it was that it was the last one. Still, there are many more paths for Cornish to walk along, many more tales to tell. Hopefully, he will.

# Recent additions to the Ridgeway Hall of Fame – for those who have walked along the whole of the Ridgeway National Trail (either in one or several trips).



Ridgeway National Trail

★ Favourites · 1 October at 09:12 · 🌐

Welcome to our latest trailblazer and Ridgeway Hall of Fame member Liz who walked our Trail for a very special reason. "Having had treatment in 2023 for an acoustic neuroma, a rare type of brain tumour, this was a tough challenge for me. I thought that just getting to the end would be the highlight, but I enjoyed the beautiful woodlands, green "tunnels" between hedgerows and glorious high open grassland." Liz has raised over £1000 for the British Acoustic Neuroma Association. Congratulations!

Album Ridgeway Hall of Fame



Ridgeway National Trail

★ Favourites · 19 September · 🌐

Congratulations and welcome to The Ridgeway Hall of Fame Hannah and Matt. They have just walked our beautiful National Trail using the popular Cicerone Press guidebook, Reddit, National Trails website and Google maps, so a good mix of useful printed and online resources. Hannah told us: "we were glad for the opportunity to walk in the same footsteps as those 5000 years ago and wonder what life was like back then." Walking in the footsteps of the ancients!





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

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!"



Album Ridgeway Hall of Fame

Ridgeway National Trail ...

Congratulations and a warm Ridgeway Hall of Fame welcome to Peter, who has just completed our beautiful National Trail over seven stages, from west to east. Peter told us he is already planning his next National Trail adventure, and had this to say about the Ridgeway: "The signposting was excellent and made the walk less stressful without having to worry about navigation... this allowed for more enjoyment of the fantastic countryside." Hope to see you along the Trail again Peter!



Album Ridgeway Hall of Fame

Ridgeway National Trail ...

We are welcoming the close of summer season walkers to the Ridgeway Hall of Fame. Today we give a big welcome to Cathy, who completed our National Trail over several visits, finding time on weekends to finish in September this year. Congratulations! Cathy told us she walked with companions and on her own, "Smeathe's Ridge and discovering Ashbury - which we've been back to several times, was a real treat." You and so many others now have happy memories from discovering this b... See more



Album Ridgeway Hall of Fame

Ridgeway National Trail ...

A warm and wet Hall of Fame welcome to Cheryl and Mike who completed our Trail over seven days in August. They had the worst of the rain, but kept going in time to celebrate Mike's birthday at Trail's end on the Beacon. Happy birthday Mike! Mike had already completed the Trail when he was a boy, on his bicycle. Now he has even more memories to treasure. "Thanks to your social media updates and great Trail signage, we even managed to navigate the HS2 hiccup at Wendover."



To find the Ridgeway Hall of Fame, go to the next page



## Ridgeway National Trail

2.5K likes • 4.4K followers



Posts About Mentions Reviews Reels **Photos** More ▾

### Photos

Ridgeway National Trail's Photos

**Albums**



Cover photos  
12 items



Profile pictures  
5 items



Ridgeway Hall of Fame  
48 items

To go to the Ridgeway Hall of Fame on the Ridgeway National Trail's Facebook page, click on 'Photos' then on 'Albums' and finally on Bill Bailey's photo.



Matt Writtle



## The Friends of The Ridgeway

6h · 🌐

'Pathways - A Photographic Journey Along the Ridgeway' is an exhibition of a limited selection of Matt Writtle's wonderful atmosphere-filled photographs taken during his Ridgeway 50 Photos project.

The exhibition at The Elgiva Theatre, St Mary's Way, Chesham to 24 November coincides with the publication of Matt's new photobook 'Pathways - A Photographic Journey Along The Ridgeway'. The open view and book signing is on Saturday 9 November from 11am to 1pm. With a limited print run of 250, and only 150 left following pre-orders, make sure you get your copy of Matt's book at the event or via the link:

<https://mattwrittle.com/.../pathways-a-photographic.../>

Matt's Ridgeway 50 Photos project is funded by Arts Council England and [The Friends of The Ridgeway](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/.../the-ridgeway/50photos/) More information: <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/.../the-ridgeway/50photos/>



# Look at things differently ...

# The Bathtubs in Fields Appreciation Group Facebook page

**Helen McNeill**  
Top contributor · 15 December 2023 · 🌐

The scientists amongst you might want to consider if the bath and the blue crate have a symbiotic or parasitic relationship? And the psychologists might consider how the blue tub feels about being outside the inner circle? 🤔 As for the wheelbarrow I think it's thrown its wheels in the air saying I haven't got a scooby!



**Colleen Finn**  
Top contributor · 17 December 2023 · 🌐

Here we see a group of completely unaware and ignorant humans interrupting the mating dance of the lesser spotted avocado tub going a-bath and beyond with a very rare, and flighty turquoise beauty. Stupid, stupid humans.



👍🏻 You and 801 others · 49 comments · 12 shares

Like · Comment · Share

View more comments

**Marg Joiner**  
This just further highlights the need for groups such as this to educate the wider public. It is only through education that we can help people understand that beautiful wild tubs need to be left undisturbed to live their lives in peace. Not to mention the dangers faced by humans when some species are known to be dangerous when approached. Very disturbing photo.

4w · Like · Reply · Share · 122

**BATHTUBS IN FIELDS APPRECIATION GROUP**  
David Fletcher · 8h · 🌐

Help im stranded- near Malham tarn



**BATHTUBS IN FIELDS APPRECIATION GROUP**  
James Done · 5d · 🌐

Managed to corner this cast iron specimen using a selection of specially trained dogs. Above New Mills, Derbyshire.



👍🏻 758 · 28 comments · 8 shares