

Friends of the Ridgeway



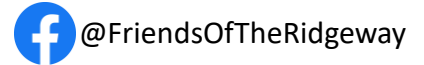
May 2025





May 2025

www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk



Welcome

Editor Dave Cavanagh
davecavanagh1000@gmail.com



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

Cover photo. At the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition, Uffington, 2025. Photo Dave Cavanagh

On the last weekend of April, Uffington was once again the centre of a joyous celebration of the Ridgeway and its adjacent countryside in the form of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. Produced by the Friends of the Ridgeway, this was the ninth annual exhibition, with the theme 'Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway'. The number of exhibits topped last year's record, this time being 133, of which some 20% were sold. Works came from all over the county.

As in previous years, exhibits were assigned to one of four categories: wall art, photography, written and sculpture. New this year was an exhibition of photographs by young photographers as part of the Ridgeway Photo 50 activity. This, the idea of former Ridgeway Officer Sarah Wright, was part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary, in 2023, of the official opening of the Ridgeway National Trail.

You can see the winners in Wendy Tobitt's article that follows, and all of the exhibits on the Friends of the Ridgeway [website](http://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk).



The event was organised by FoR trustees Jane Imbush and Nathan Boyd. A successful exhibition requires good publicity. Jane wrote to many arts societies whose area was near the Ridgeway and adjacent downland, whilst Wendy Tobitt put many posts on Facebook and issued a press release. The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize was established by a previous chair of the Friends, Anthony Burdall. It was made possible by a grant from Sir Adrian Swire.

An art exhibition owes its success in part to the curator, who exhibits each work to best advantage. Once again, we were very fortunate to have artist Anna Dillon as our curator. Anna is a strong supporter of the Friends of the Ridgeway and she captures the beauty of the Ridgeway and Downs in her stylish paintings. You can see these on her [website](#).



Photo Dave Cavanagh

We are indebted to our independent panel of judges, headed by [Lucy Stopford](#), who do a great job for us:

[Sylvia Vetta](#) – written work

[Martin Smith](#) – sculpture

[Hedley Thorne](#) – photography

[Robin Danely](#) – wall art

Left to right: Dave Cavanagh (FoR), wall art judge Robin Danely, written work judge Sylvia Vetta, and Jane Imbush (FoR)

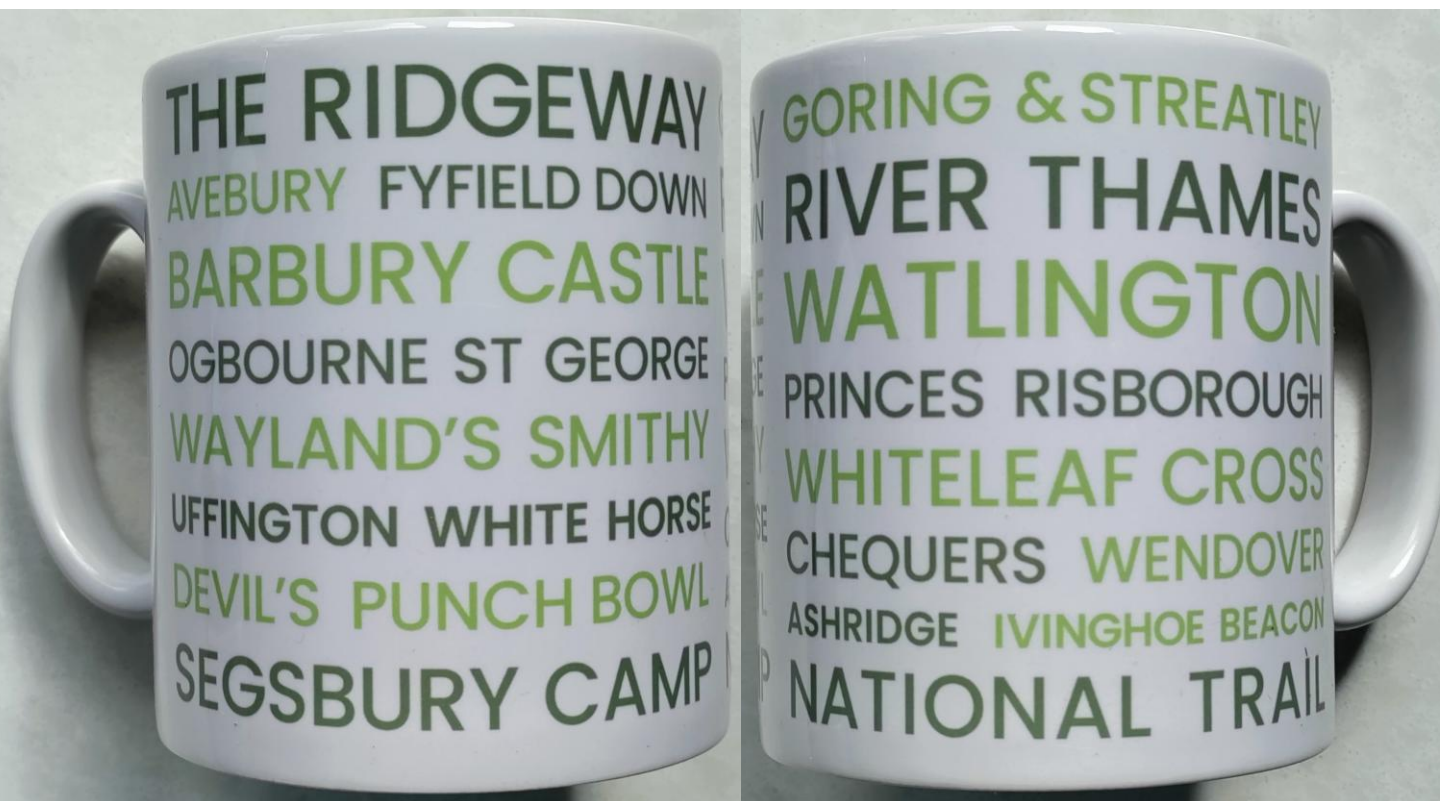


Photo Wendy Tobitt

The exhibition was not only an opportunity to see all the artworks up close, appreciating textures and techniques, it was also a place to discuss the works with friends – and strangers – and to have a drink and cake afterwards. Chris and Sam of Uffington Café provided refreshments throughout both days of the event. If you are interested in hiring them for an event of yours, phone Chris on 07590 977489.



Sam and Chris look at the artworks before the exhibition starts. Photo Dave Cavanagh



The artists whose works were Highly Commended received a Ridgeway National Trail mug. If you would like one of these then either (a) submit an artwork to next year's Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition and keep your fingers crossed that your entry is Highly Commended or (b) get one from [The Trails Shop](#). There is a mug for all the National Trails, including the Thames Path. Photos Dave Cavanagh

Barbara Oster's figure of 'The Traveller with Quarterstaff' was the winner of the sculpture prize. It is carved from Rajasthan stone. Barbara loves walking the Ridgeway and feels there is a special connection and dynamic experience with the people who have walked it for centuries. This sculpture resonated for Sarah Mills, author of the winning poem in the written work category, who said it was one of her favourite works of art.

Travelling the Ridgeway is one theme of Sarah's enigmatic poem 'Auras of the Ridgeway' (you can read it on the next page), which was judge Sylvia Vetta's selection as winner of the written work category this year. Sylvia admired the ways that Sarah wove colours through her story so vividly.

Before writing her poem Sarah researched the history of the Uffington White Horse and its location. 'I looked at a series of beautiful photographs of it taken at different times of the day. I have walked near the Ridgeway at Avebury and it is on my bucket list to see more of the hill forts and monuments along this much-loved and well-trodden route.'

This year's winners of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

Wendy Tobitt

Photos Wendy Tobitt



The final verse of 'Auras of the Ridgeway'.

'Will my coin ever melt over the rippled grassland

Igniting brome and fescue in rose madder and gold

Or will I be forgotten as so many of us are

Though we travel together down this ancient road.'

Travellers along the Ridgeway National Trail will always be remembered through the many works of art in the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. View our online galleries of previous exhibitions in the drop-down menu on the navigation bar.

<https://ridgewayfriends.org.uk/>

Auras of the Ridgeway

The sunrise – a Dobunnian coin melts over the rippled grassland,
Brome and fescue ignite in the burgeoning flame,
Hues of rose madder and gold.
In the distance, a misty horizon of indigo and woad.

I watch the sinuous horse as yet untouched by this fire,
Motionless, still
Though it woke beneath the starred caparison of night
To graze in the Manger under skies of orchil.

Its shadowy limbs soon fill with daylight,
The sward is a vivid to callaïs green
And in that moment I am prehistoric,
Unseeing all that I have seen.

Stripped bare I no longer herd my fears
Down the flood-prone path ahead
But walk along the ridge of truth,
Silent as the barrowed-dead.

Now I am scoured by tribal hands,
Revealing a figure I had long held lost.
And leave the hillside in my chalk-white aura,
Retreating like the permafrost.

I wonder who might think of me
When the wind has carried away all remains,
What kind of human will venture here,
The same burnet blood running through their veins.

Will my coin ever melt over the rippled grassland
Igniting brome and fescue in rose madder and gold
Or will I be forgotten as so many of us are
Though we travel together down this ancient road?

Auras of the Ridgeway,
by Sarah Mills



Photo Dave Cavanagh

'After the Storm' is the beautiful photograph taken by Jessica Loeb, which won the photography category.

Jessica often walks the Ridgeway with her camera, taking photos as the light changes. She waited patiently for the right moment when this sheep started grazing on the Uffington White Horse chalk figure. The photograph was taken late in the afternoon on the eve of the Autumn Equinox last year, after a torrential downpour had passed through the vale. It captures perfectly the competition's theme of 'Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway'.



After the Storm, by Jessica Loeb

Hedley Thorne, who judged the photography category, commented: 'There is so much to please the eye in this photograph. The subtle gradient of the blue sky offsets the golden sunset colour of the hillside, itself contrasted against the fresh minty greens of the fields. Add in the contrast between the powerful storm clouds and the peaceful environment, and the main subject being a sheep that is unaware of the deep influential history of the iconic White Horse that it is innocently feeding on.'

Photos Wendy Tobitt

After each judge had chosen the winner of their category, they put their heads together, along with head of the judging panel Lucy Stopford, to choose an overall winner. Jessica was awarded this additional prize, seen here with FoR Chair Mike Lewington.





Caroline Vivian won the wall art category with her painting 'Late Spring From the Top of the Ridgeway' during a cycle ride with her husband Andy to celebrate their wedding anniversary.

Robin Danely OAS who judged this category commented: 'I chose Caroline Vivian's painting, "Late Spring From the Top of the Ridgeway" as the winner in the Wall Art category for its sensitive and harmonious colour palette, its elegant composition, and its evocative sense of space. Vivian's handling of the paint is confident and fresh, conveying with energy and economy the undulating hills and distant views of this landscape, as well as enlivening the surface of the painting. A superb piece!'

Photos Wendy Tobitt



Photos Dave Cavanagh



New at this year's exhibition were some of the Ridgeway Photo 50 photographs by young photographers from schools in Reading and High Wycombe. They were under the guidance of [Sharp Shots Photo Club](#), funded by Arts Council England.

Aleksander Jamrozy was the winner of this young photographer category, seen here with, left to right, Simon Kearey, chair of the Ridgeway National Trail Partnership, Ridgeway 50 photographer Matt Writtle, and Mrs Jamrozy.

The pupils were inspired by the [#ridgeway50photos](#) of [Matt Writtle](#), which were also on display.



Aleksander's winning entry, displayed in the orientation that he chose.



Lillian Spibey of Sharp Shots Photo Club with Ridgeway Officer Ian Black, left, and Mike Lewington, Chair, Friends of the Ridgeway. Photos above Wendy Tobitt



Photo Dave Cavanagh

Archaeologist Dan Bashford put up a display about the Historic Ridgeway Project, which he described in the February issue of the FoR newsletter, and which you can read about on the [Ridgeway National Trail](#) website.

How many surrealist painters does it take to change a lightbulb?

A fish!

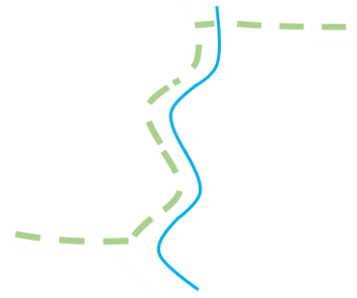
How many sculptors does it take to change a light bulb?

Ten. One to change it, and nine to reassure him about how good it looks.

How many photographers does it take to change a light bulb?

None. When it gets dark, we just use a higher ISO.

Mind the Gap



Putting things away in Uffington village hall after the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition. Photos Dave Cavanagh



That seems rather harsh

What has three legs and four arms?

My son's terrible drawing of a snake.

If you saw a drowning person and you were to choose between saving them or capturing the moment, what aperture would you use?

How many mystery writers does it take to change a light bulb? Two. One to change the bulb, and the other to give it an unexpected twist at the end.

The artist told the dentist, "Matisse hurt!"

When you're colourblind in an art gallery, everything is a pigment of imagination.

I once asked a literary agent what writing paid the best, and she said "ransom notes".

I took a picture of my girlfriend but I accidentally cut off her entire left side.

She's all right now.

Caught my girlfriend kissing an abstract artist.

They said, "It's not what it looks like."

Mary Ann Ochota, Patron of the Ridgeway Partnership

The Ridgeway Partnership, the body that manages and promotes the Ridgeway National Trail, was very fortunate to have Mary-Ann Ochota as Patron of the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Ridgeway National Trail in 2023. Mary-Ann has now become the Patron of the Ridgeway Partnership itself.

A broadcaster and anthropologist, she is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, President of CPRE, the Countryside Charity and a member of Natural England’s Landscape Advisory Panel. Last year Mary-Ann was on BBC’s Countryfile, speaking from Barbury Castle on the Ridgeway in Wiltshire. Her enthusiasm for telling the story of peoples past who shaped our present, and for encouraging more people to get into the countryside, is perfect for helping the Ridgeway Partnership achieve its objectives.



If you use Facebook and don’t already follow ‘The Friends of the Ridgeway’, why not give it a try? It’s a great way to keep up in real time with things that are happening on the Ridgeway, as reported by our publicity officer, Wendy Tobitt.



For even more news follow the ‘Ridgeway National Trail’ Facebook page, with material posted by Mary Tebje on behalf of the Ridgeway Partnership, the body that manages, develops and promotes the Ridgeway.



More progress with the Great Chalk Way

Another Great Chalk Way (GCW) information board was installed on 28 March, near Wardour Castle in southern Wiltshire, on the route of the Wessex Ridgeway. Tim Lewis, a trustee of Friends of the Ridgeway, which champions the GCW, attended the installation of the information board, together with Fleur de Rhe Phillipe, Chair of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL) (and her terrier Poppy!), and Richard Broadhead, former manager of Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way department, who provided the transport to get to the site. Tim thanked Linda Nunn, Director of the CCNL, for providing the funding for the board

Left to right, Fleur de Rhe Phillipe, Tim Lewis and Richard Broadhead. Photos Tim Lewis



The Great Chalk Way

The Great Chalk Way is a re-creation of what is thought to be England's oldest coast-to-coast route, which follows a ridge of chalk from Lyme Regis on Dorset's Jurassic Coast to the Wash in Norfolk. It was the safest way of travelling in Medieval times, avoiding the impenetrable forests in the valleys below, and is today a combination of footpaths, bridleways, byways and the occasional road. It is packed with historic sites, such as Avebury's stone circles and the Uffington White Horse, and provides breathtaking views.

It comprises four existing long-distance paths - the Wessex Ridgeway, the Ridgeway National Trail, the Icknield Way Path and the Peddars Way National Trail - and the more recently established Sarsen Trail, which incorporates the Cranborne Doves Way.

It is a family of long-distance paths, with each component path retaining its own identity and waymarks. The route shown is for walkers only, but routes for cyclists and equestrians are also available.

For more information, visit greatchalkway.org.uk



Ridgeway Photo 50 shots start to appear along the Ridgeway



Matt Writtle. Photo Wendy Tobitt.

The first of the Ridgeway Photo 50 photographs was displayed at Lock Approach, Goring & Streatley, right next to the River Thames, on 6 March. It was taken by photographer Matt Writtle, who is funded by the Arts Council of England. Another 24 of Matt's Ridgeway photos will be displayed along the Ridgeway, as close to the particular subject matter as possible. The frames will be made and installed by the Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers.

The other 25 of the Ridgeway 50 photos will be produced by children, mostly during 2025. They will be doing this through Sharp Shots Photo Club, with guidance from Matt. These photos will also be displayed along the Ridgeway. The Friends of the Ridgeway are financially supporting this aspect of the project.



From front centre then clockwise: Matt Writtle, Volunteer Roger Pope, Ian Black (Ridgeway Officer), Simon Kearey (Chair, Ridgeway Partnership), and Sophie Aziz (Coordinator of the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails Volunteers). Photo Wendy Tobitt.

For more information visit The Ridgeway National Trail [website](#)

Chilterns Heritage & Culture Festival

Our 8th Chilterns Heritage & Culture Festival

Our spring Heritage & Culture Festival programme is now available to book.

We have something for everyone – walks, talks and exclusive tours showcasing the rich and diverse heritage and culture which has shaped and continues to shape this ever-changing region. Explore new places or discover a new side of old favourites. The full programme of events is listed below.

Heritage is not just the past, it's a living, breathing part of everyday life that's just waiting to be discovered!

We hope you enjoy our range of events, as well as supporting heritage in the Chilterns, by attending you are also helping us to protect this special place now and in the future.



Find out lots more at the Chilterns Heritage and Culture Festival [webpage](#).



[Visit](#) | [Our landscape](#) | [What we do](#) | [Flagship projects](#) | [News](#) | [What's on](#) | [About us](#)

[Explore our map](#)



To find out all that's going on in the Chilterns National Landscape, visit its [website](#).

To receive seasonal newsletters about what's being organised by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, go to their [homepage](#) then scroll down to where you can request them.



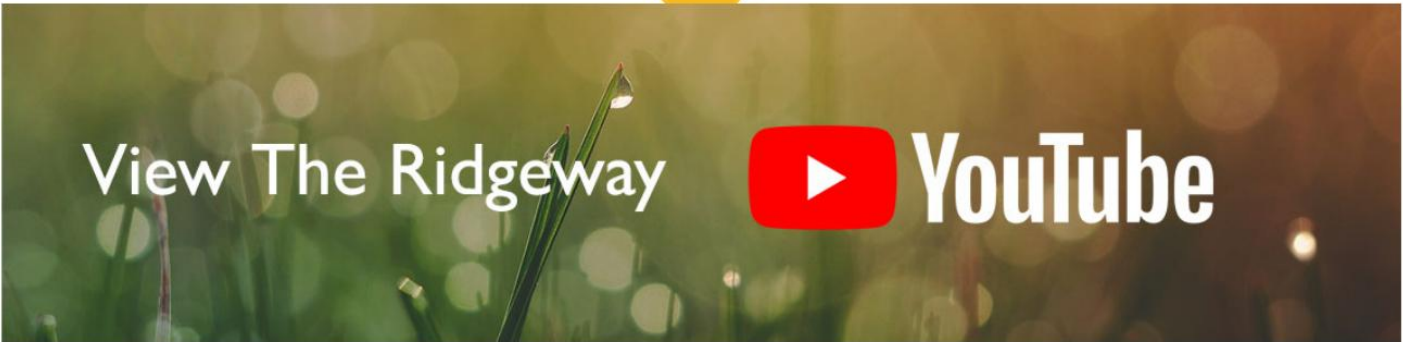
North Wessex Downs National Landscape

View talks on the Ridgeway National Trail's website

As part of the Historic Ridgeway Project, archaeologist Dan Bashford, the project manager, organises a series of talks by archaeologists, sponsored by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

Titles in the series so far include 'From Bus Stop to Ridgeway - a walk through the history of a Ridgeway parish; Broken Pots, Mending Lives – the archaeology of Operation Nightingale; and Living on the Edge – the potted history of 12,000 years of living in the landscape along the Ridgeway.

To access them, go the Ridgeway National Trail's [website](#) . Scroll down the homepage until you see this link to the Trail's YouTube page



View Ridgeway videos on [YouTube](#).

Clicking on the red and white link takes you to the Trail's YouTube page



The Ridgeway National Trail

@ridgewaynationaltrail · 146 subscribers · 20 videos

Official YouTube account for The Ridgeway National Trail, UK - an 87 mile signposted off- ...more

[nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway](#)

Subscribed

Scroll down to see these talks and others



53:26

Living on the Edge: the potted history of 12,000 years living in the landscape along the Ridgeway.

569 views · 2 weeks ago



1:12:09

Broken Pots Mending Lives: the archaeology of Op Nightingale with Richard Osgood

41 views · 6 days ago



48:12

From bus stop to Ridgeway a walk through the history of a Ridgeway parish

173 views · 2 weeks ago

Restoring Scutchamer Knob

Dave Cavanagh

In the February issue, archaeologist Dan Bashford, leader of the Historic Ridgeway Project, described the long and varied history of Scutchamer Knob, initially an Iron Age round barrow for burials.

Various groups of volunteers, coordinated by Hayley Gray, have been toiling over several months to remove many years-worth of scrub that has all but concealed this Scheduled Ancient Monument that is adjacent to the Ridgeway in the parish of East Hendred, North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The bulk of the clearance work has been carried out by the Vale Path Volunteers, the path maintenance team of the Vale of White Horse Ramblers.

Below is the team at the end of the VPV's fifth shift in early April, with Haley second from the left, and team leader, Pat Rosum, on the right. On the following two pages are shots of the VPV on their fourth go at it in March.

Going forward, the VPV will maintain the Knob by soft vegetation clearance in early summer (as nettles are already growing with a vengeance, having been freed of the dense covering of brambles and briar) and hard vegetation clearance in autumn and winter.



Ramblers Vale Path Volunteers on their fourth day at Scutchamer Knob



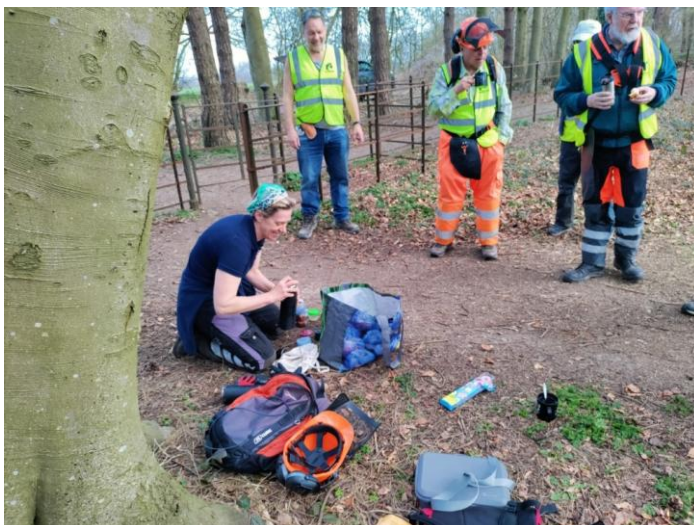
Hayley Gray, right, the Historic Ridgeway Project volunteer coordinator, leads the initial briefing.



Hayley briefs on the specifics of clearing dense brush from the south slope of the Knob.



Getting to grips with the small trees.



There's always time for a cup of tea and a biscuit (well, several in my case).



We used two brush cutters to clear this scrub.



Then all the cut scrub had to be raked ...



... bagged ...



... and dragged.



The cleared southern slope.

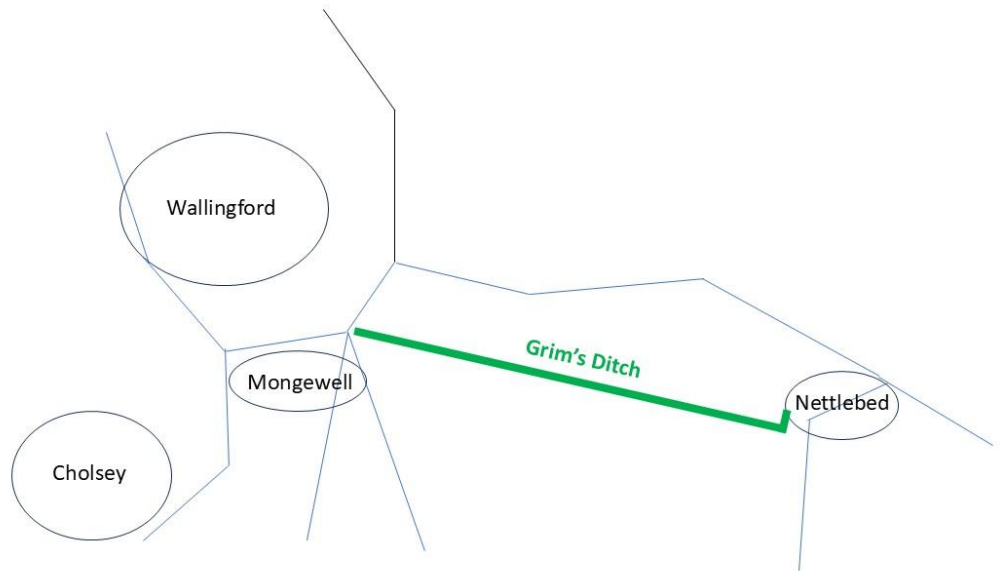
Towards a management plan for Mongewell Grim's Ditch

To the east of Scutchamer Knob is a very different Ancient Monument that is a focus of attention within the Historic Ridgeway Project (HRP): the Mongewell Grim's Ditch, near Wallingford.



All photos by Wendy Tobitt

There are a number of 'Grim's' ditches around the country, with variants including Grim's Dyke and Grim's Bank. There is a Grim's Ditch 100 metres to the north of the Wantage Monument, itself sited upon a round barrow, recently cleared of vegetation by volunteers, as shown in the October 2024 issue of the FoR newsletter.

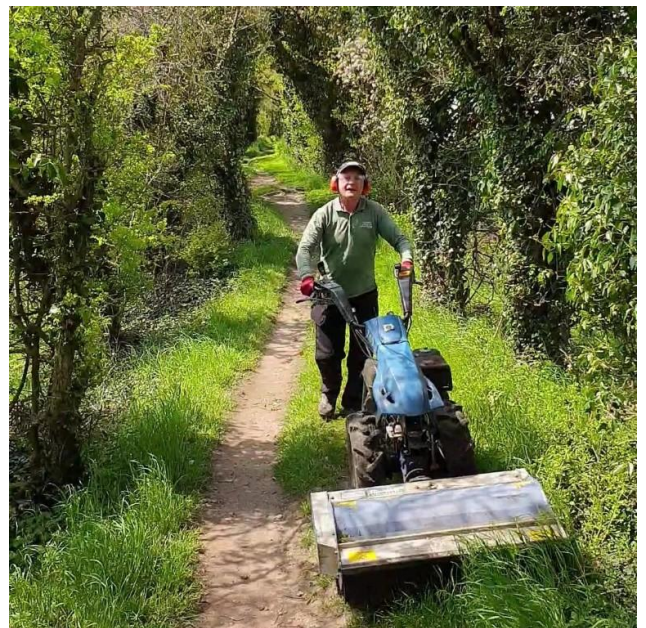


Map Dave Cavanagh

The Mongewell Grim's Ditch

is believed to date from around 100 BCE, late Iron Age. It was originally deeper and the bank higher than we experience it today. Originally, it would have been clear of trees and scrub and so it would have been visible from miles around, especially with the freshly dug white chalk reflecting the sunlight and moonlight. Not so today; it is much overgrown and a survey by Historic England in 2021 found it was suffering damage from badger tunnelling, wind-blown trees and gradual erosion where people are concentrated onto a narrow path. ►

One of the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trail Volunteers mowing along the Mongewell Grim's Ditch



It is believed that the Anglo-Saxons used the word 'Grim', which is derived from 'Grimr', for features that existed before they arrived in Britain and for which they didn't have an explanation. Grim is a nickname of Odin/Wodin/Woden, the god of war and magic.

Usually where you have a ditch, which today refers to a trench, you also have a dyke, the raised bank created with the spoil from digging the ditch. The origin of these words is associated with a North-South divide. In the north of England the Anglo-Saxons pronounced 'dic' as 'deek', whereas in the south it was pronounced 'deetch'. 'Dic' could be used to refer to either the bank or the trench and eventually morphed into 'ditch' and 'dyke' as we use them today.



To protect and conserve Grim's Ditch, the Ridgeway National Trail team are working with landowners, Historic England, archaeologists, volunteers and others in the Historic Ridgeway Project, launched in 2023. Last year Cotswold Archaeology distributed a Mongewell Grim's Ditch Questionnaire, seeking input from those who walked the public right of way along the dyke. Responses would inform their production of a management plan 'to help the Historic Ridgeway Project understand who is using the public right of way which runs along the scheduled Grim's Ditch Monument, and to discover any issues with using the monument.'



In October of last year, members of Wallingford Green Gym cleared away vegetation near the trig point that is on the dyke. All photos Wendy Tobitt.



2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held as a Zoom virtual online meeting at 18.30 on 10 June 2025

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/85225790956?pwd=batfnlWxWbOlbbm51boqFPuJNl2r0k.1>

Meeting ID: 852 2579 0956

Passcode: 2WtEaP

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Proxies
2. Minutes of the 2024 AGM held on Zoom on 1 May 2024
3. Annual Report
4. Treasurer's Report & Accounts
5. Election of President
No nomination
6. Election of Vice-Presidents

- Danny Kruger MP (East Wiltshire)
- Heidi Alexander MP (South Swindon)
- Charlie Maynard MP (Witney)
- Olly Glover MP (Didcot and Wantage)
- Olivia Bailey MP (Reading West & Mid Berkshire)
- Freddie Van Mierlo MP (Henley and Thame)
- Greg Smith MP (Mid Buckinghamshire)
- Victoria Collins MP (Harpenden and Berkhamsted)
- Laura Kyrke-Smith MP (Aylesbury)

7. Election of Executive Committee Members/Trustees

Chairman: Michael Lewington

Secretary: Carl Moffat

Treasurer: Tim Lewis

Committee Members (up to 5)

Nathan Boyd

Dave Cavanagh

Jane Imbush

Duncan Strutt

Vacancy

1. Appointment of independent examiner

Continued ...

INFORMATION

Report and Accounts: The Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024, have been audited and were approved by the Trustees, with their Report for the year, at their meeting on 20 January 2025. The Trustees once again decided not to circulate their formal Report and Accounts for 2024, but the Annual Report with accounts will be distributed to all members with due notice of this Meeting. Copies of the formal papers, with the Minutes of the 2024 AGM, will be sent by email to those members who have a registered email address. If you have not given us an email address and would like copies of the papers, please contact the Chair, at the address below:

Post: 12 The Willows, Wootton, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5LD.

Email: michaellewington@hotmail.com

Nomination of Trustees: The Constitution requires nomination of Trustees to the Executive Committee by Members of the Association in writing to the Secretary by 14 days before the Meeting. Nominations must be submitted by Tuesday 20th May 2025.



Michael Lewington

Chair

Friends of the Ridgeway

Email: enquiries@ridgewayfriends

Photo Wayne Smith



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held on Zoom at 7pm on

Wednesday 1 May 2024



1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from eight members
2. **Minutes:**
 - 2.1 The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall Uffington on 23 April 2023 had been circulated to members.
 - 2.2 To approve the Minutes of the last AGM. There were no comments on the Minutes which were **APPROVED** by all.
 - 2.3 **Matters Arising:** No matters arising were raised.
3. **Treasurers Report and Annual Accounts:**
 - 3.1 The accounts had been circulated to all members as part of the Annual Review by post and by email attached to the notification of the AGM.
 - 3.2 To approve the accounts set out in the Annual Review. **APPROVED** by all.
 - 3.3 To approve reappointment of Steve Sherman as independent examiner. **APPROVED** by all.
- 4.0 **Election of President and Vice-Presidents**
 - 4.1 The position of Our President is vacant and the Vice Presidents are MPs through whose constituency The Ridgeway National Trail runs. These are Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon), Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury), Laura Farris MP (Newbury), John Howell MP (Henley), David Johnston MP (Didcot and Wantage), Danny Kruger MP (Devizes), Gagan Mohindra MP (South West Hertfordshire) and Greg Smith (Buckingham).
 - 4.2 To approve election of the President and Vice Presidents. **APPROVED** by all

Continued ...

Continued

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Zoom at 7pm on Wednesday 1 May 2024

5 Election of Officers and Committee Members/Trustees

5.1 The following were standing for election as Executive Committee Members/Trustees. As the number of candidates was equal to the maximum number of trustees allowed they were proposed as a single slate of candidates to be voted in. The candidates were (in alphabetical order): Nathan Boyd, Dave Cavanagh, Jane Imbush, Tim Lewis (Treasurer), Mike Lewington (Chair), Carl Moffatt (Secretary) and Duncan Strutt.

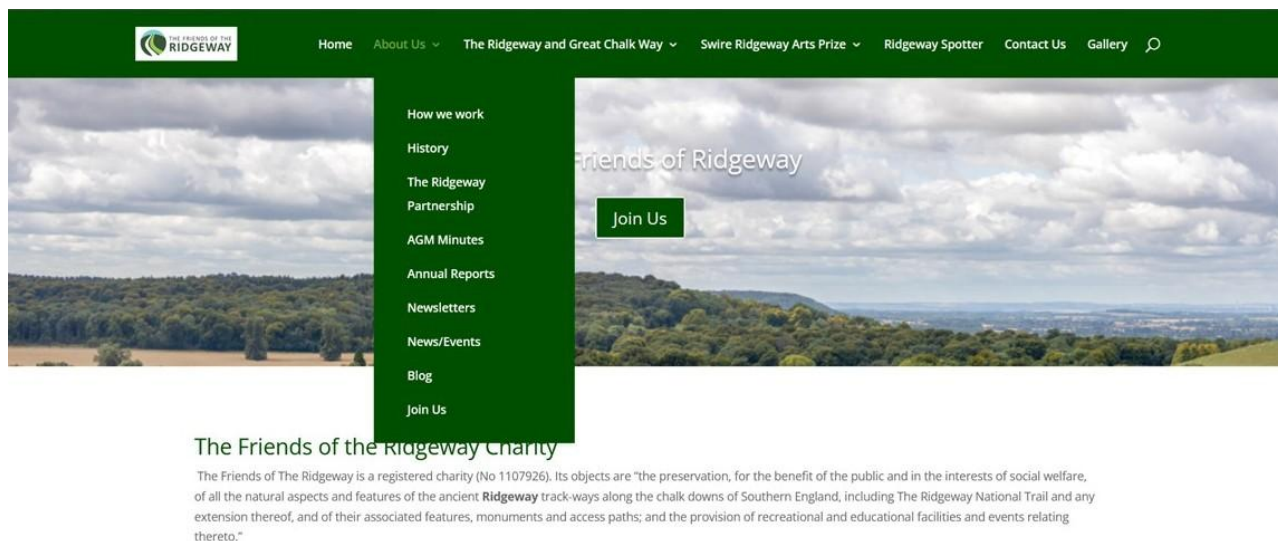
5.2 To Approve those standing for election. **APPROVED** by all.

6 Other Business

6.1 There being no other business, the AGM was declared closed and the Chair thanked everyone for their participation.

7 The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

The Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2024 follows this page. You can also see it on our website www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk by clicking first on 'About us' and then on 'Annual Reports'.





Annual Report and Financial Statements

Year Ending 31st December 2024

Charity no: 1107926

Legal and administrative information

Registered Charity Number – 1107925

Trustees

Chair – Michael Lewington

Treasurer – Tim Lewis

Secretary – Carl Moffat

Trustee – Jane Imbush

Trustee - Nathan Boyd

Trustee – Duncan Strutt

Trustee – Dave Cavanagh

Trustee – Vacancy

President – Vacancy

Examiners / Auditors

Mr Stephen Sherman

9 Ebner Street

London

SW18 1BT

Bankers

Lloyds Bank

33 Old Broad Street

Avenue

London

EC2N 3AH

CAF Bank

25 Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent

ME19 4JQ

Mission Statement

The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) is an independent charity run by volunteers to preserve the spirit of the Ridgeway and its surroundings for maximum enjoyment by the public and protection of the adjacent natural and historic environment. Our focus is on the Ridgeway National Trail and the chalk ridges that link it to the Dorset and Norfolk coasts; together these form the Great Chalk Way.

Objectives

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

Constituent trails of the Great Chalk Way from the Dorset to Norfolk coasts: Wessex Ridgeway (66 miles), Sarsen Way via Salisbury (35 miles), Cranborne Doves Way (51 miles), the Ridgeway National Trail (87 miles), Icknield Way (110 miles), and Peddars Way National Trail (49 miles).

Achieving our objectives

1. We aim for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length.
 - We have a seat on the board of the Ridgeway Partnership, influencing policy and actions.
 - We communicate with our members, other related bodies and the general public.
 - We elicit feedback, in various ways including our website, social media, newsletter and press releases, and interact with other like-minded bodies.
 - We collect donations from event organisers and other donors to improve and maintain the Ridgeway.
2. Our ambition is for the whole of the Ridgeway to be free of non-essential motorised traffic.
 - We lobby highway authorities to extend current seasonal prohibitions of motor vehicles.
 - We encourage our members and the general public to report traffic issues on the Ridgeway to us, after which we inform the police, highway authorities and Ridgeway Partnership.
3. We promote an appreciation of the Ridgeway and its natural and historic environment.
 - We achieve this in various ways including the annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, our website, social media, newsletter and press releases.

Continued ...

4. The FoR is also concerned that developments in the vicinity of the Trail should be compatible with these features and their maximum appreciation by the public.
- We consider planning applications in the vicinity of the Ridgeway when these are brought to our attention, and submit comments to the respective district council, as appropriate.
 - We selectively support other organisations and pressure groups that campaign against inappropriate developments in the vicinity of the Ridgeway.
5. We promote the Great Chalk Way.
- We are a member of the Great Chalk Way (GCW) group, which comprises representatives of the constituent trails, which works to promote the GCW as a whole.
 - We are particularly active in respect of the Ridgeway, Cranbourne Doves Way and the Sarsen Way, including route descriptions and way marking.
 - We communicate with our members and the general public through our website, social media and newsletter.

Chair’s Report

Dear Friends,

In 2024 Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) continued to work with the Ridgeway Partnership, including providing financial support. We welcomed the new Ridgeway National Trail officer Ian Black who succeeded Sarah Wright.

In October, in partnership with the Icknield Way Association, the Great Chalk Way (GCW) was officially launched. This was the culmination of a concept started in 2007 and 10 years later the first meeting of the GCW Working Group took place. The 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. Ten information boards, example below, will be placed along the route between Lyme Regis and Holme-next-the-Sea.



We continue to support the Historic England project launched in October 2023 which covers the Ridgeway from Ashbury in the west to Wallingford. It is largely funded by Historic England, with match 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.

In 2024, 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.

The Thursday Night Crew from Ridgeway Cycles in Wantage cut back dogwood growing around the Lord Wantage Monument, which conceals a Bronze Age Barrow. This work, part of the Historic Ridgeway Project, aims to reveal hidden ancient monuments like the Bronze Age Barrow.

On the 75th anniversary of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949, a team of Ridgeway National Trail volunteers, with Hayley Gray from the Historic Ridgeway Project and Sophie Aziz the National Trail's project coordinator, repaired the Trail's surface at the entrance to Scutchamer Knob. The area is now visible to view from the trail rather than being hidden under significant low-level growth. In 2025, it is intended to improve disabled access to the site and erect an information board. Dan Bashford (Historic Ridgeway Project Manager) has given a number of lectures and presentations covering all aspects of the historic Ridgeway

The first phase of the Arts Council England Ridgeway Photo 50 project is complete. The production of the display boards should be completed in 2025 and FoR is contributing just under £3,500 to the display boards. The second phase is organised by the Sharp Shots Photo Club who offer teens and kids photography courses and workshops. Two Workshops were run at Ivinghoe Beacon where children photographed the landscape, sheep, frosted grasses and each other for the Ridgeway50 photo project, inspired by the [Matt Writtle](#) photos. In addition to the twenty-five photos by Matt, a further 25 taken by the children will be selected for the display boards.

The Friends of the Ridgeway was set up to protect the Ridgeway National Trail from being damaged by off-road vehicles. After 25 years of campaigning, the Friends of the Ridgeway's objective for the Ridgeway to be free of recreational vehicles (including motor cycles) was achieved for Oxfordshire in 2006. Local highway authorities closed most of the remaining byway sections in Wiltshire and West Berkshire to traffic in the winter, to protect them from the worst rutting and quagmires. We continue to campaign for the winter traffic restrictions to be extended all year.

The 2024 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize exhibition, attended by over 250 people, was an outstanding success with 49 artists and over 110 pieces of work. For 2025, the theme for the arts prize is 'Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway'



Membership

Membership stands at 323 life and annual members plus 17 organisations. We continue to derive our income from membership subscriptions and donations.

Risk Policy

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

Public Benefit

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

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

Continued ...

Photo Laureen Roberts



Friends of the Ridgeway
Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024
Income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Income	£	£
Subscriptions	1,540	2,417
Donations	5,241	2,929
Gift Aid received	522	522
Swire Arts Prize Day sales commission	326	740
Interest earned	1,338	890
Other income	20	-
Total	8,987	7,498
Expenditure		
Ridgeway Partnership support	-	2,186
Swire Arts Prize Day costs & prizes	2,526	2,803
50 th anniversary expenses	-	1,214
Great Chalk Way official opening (net)/expenses	1,596	-
GCW information boards/other expenses	2,949	752
Annual report	163	249
Insurance	151	151
Website/IT costs	29	-
Prizes for scout endurance event	-	98
Ridgeway mugs	210	-
Meeting expenses	118	138
Donations	-	130
Bank charges	60	78
Publicity	55	-
Affiliation fees	36	36
SumUp charges/purchase of machine	23	52
Other	43	11
Total	7,959	7,898
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	1,028	(400)
Fund balances brought forward	61,987	62,387
Fund balances carried forward	63,015	61,987

Friends of the Ridgeway

Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Current assets	£	£
Bank accounts		
Lloyds bank account	15,126	29,536
CAF bank account	329	6,226
Deposits with United Trust Bank	47,560	26,225
Net assets	63,015	61,987
Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted – General Fund	38,118	34,170
Restricted – Ridgeway National Trail	15,450	14,225
Restricted – Swire Arts Exhibitions	6,828	9,377
Restricted – Great Chalk Way	2,619	4,215
	63,015	61,987

Independent Examination

The balance sheet that the accounts were approved by the Independent Examiner Stephen Sherman 3 February 2025.

Treasurer's report for the year ended 31 December 2024

As can be seen, we made a surplus in 2024 of £1,028, compared with a deficit of £400 in 2023. This is due to a number of factors.

Subscriptions were down by £877, which is attributed to the unusually high number of new life members in 2023, and natural wastage/non-renewal of subscriptions. Donations were hugely inflated by the donation by Tim Lewis of £2,949 to cover the cost of three GCW information boards. Without this, donations would have been down by £637, explained by the fact that we did not receive a donation from the Swire Trust in 2024.

Swire Arts Prize Day commission was less than half the previous year's amount, which had been a record for the event. This was more than made up for by an increase in interest earned of £488, which was due to better interest rates and the addition of another £20,000 to the amount on deposit.

On the expense side, we made no donations to the Ridgeway Partnership this year (£2,186 in 2023), and did not have the expense of the 50th anniversary celebrations (£1,214 in 2023). The Friends shared the costs of the official opening of the Great Chalk Way in October with the

Continued ...

Icknield Way Association (£1,596 after the IWA had paid its half share of the costs) and the cost of constructing the information boards (£2,949), compared with GCW related costs last year (waymarks and info board expenses) of £752. The Swire Arts Prize Day costs decreased by £277. Other variances were negligible.

These variances have led to an increase in the General Fund of almost £4,000, and a decrease in the Swire Arts Prize Day restricted fund of approximately £2,500. The decrease in the GCW restricted fund of £1,600 was partially compensated for by an increase in the Ridgeway restricted fund of roughly half that amount.

The FoR has committed, £5,000 to the Historic England project for information boards and £3,500 for the Ridgeway Photo 50 project.



Photo Dave Cavanagh