



Friends of the Ridgeway

July 2025



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www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk

[f @FriendsOfTheRidgeway](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheRidgeway)

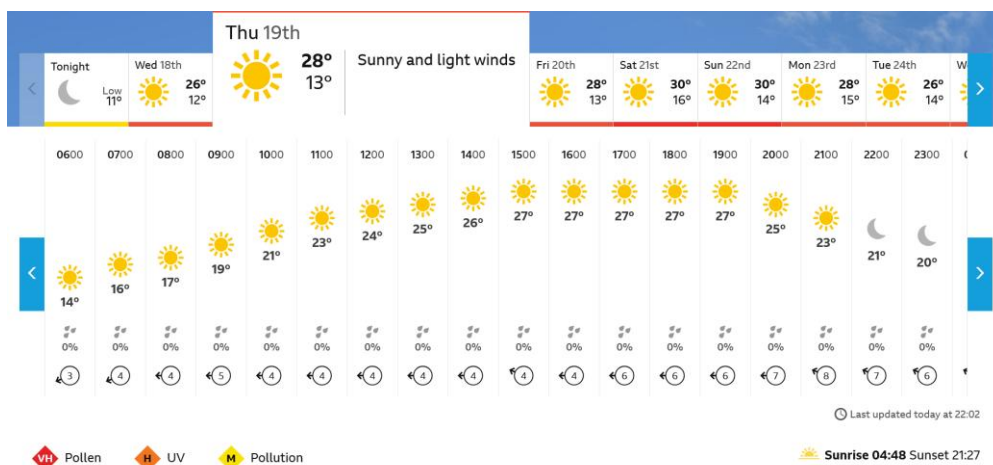
Welcome

Editor Dave Cavanagh
davecavanagh1000@gmail.com



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

I can't let this spring and summer's glorious sunshine go unremarked. So, here are a couple of reminders. That's it, my shortest editorial. Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.



BBC weather forecast on 17 June. The heatwave was followed by another in July.
Mid-May view over the Vale of White Horse from near the Ridgeway.
Photo Wendy Spicer

How do you move a piece of furniture at the weather station? With four casters.

Cover photo. Flowers near the Ridgeway at the end of May. Photo Sandra Newton, on a Vale of White Horse Ramblers weekend walk.



Become a Trustee for the Friends of the Ridgeway

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL YOU MAKE?

The Ridgeway National Trail (NT) is 87 miles long between Overton Hill near Avebury and Ivinghoe Beacon. It is one of the most popular National Trails in England, well-used by cyclists, equestrians, and runners as well as thousands of walkers every year. More than this it is an historic monument, an artistic inspiration, and an important natural environment through two National Landscapes: the North Wessex Downs and the Chilterns. The Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) seeks to engage people living near to and using the Ridgeway in activities that spread knowledge and appreciation of its wealth of historic, artistic and environmental features.

The FoR collaborates with other organisations, such as the Wiltshire and Oxfordshire Councils' departments that deal with rights of way, the police, the Ramblers and the British Horse Society to maintain the Ridgeway NT as a safe place for us all to enjoy. We work with the Ridgeway NT Partnership and others to promote its value to the whole community as an essential part of everyone's life and heritage. We represent any concerns about the Ridgeway to those responsible for its maintenance. We also raise funds for maintenance and enhancement of the National Trail by the Ridgeway NT Officer.

Jane Imbush, a FoR Trustee, stood down at the 2025 AGM. Consequently, the FoR wishes to recruit another Trustee volunteer.

DESCRIPTION

Trustees are volunteers who lead charities and decide how they are run. Being a Trustee of the FoR is a great way to help us maintain and improve the visitor experience on the Ridgeway. As a Trustee you will contribute to the development, improvement and maintenance of the National Trail.

EXPERIENCE

- A passion for nature and the countryside.
- An affinity for the Ridgeway National trail
- Able to contribute and be part of a small team.
- Able to contribute to discussions and decisions.
- Able to communicate your views to the Trustees.

COMMITMENT

We have 4 board meetings a year plus an AGM (held online). Board meetings are normally held at the Court Hill Centre, close to the Ridgeway above Wantage, and last around 2 hours. Trustees are involved in the administration of our annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition.

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

Interested or need further Information?

Please contact the Chair Michael Lewington at
michaellewington@hotmail.com

The 2026 Swire Ridgeway Arts Competition

Saturday April 18th and
Sunday April 19th 2026.

At the Thomas Hughes
Memorial Hall Uffington
SN7 7RA

Theme: Shapes and Shadows
of the Ridgeway

There will be separate classes for:

- **wall art**, including painting, drawing, etching, textile pictures and wall hangings, and mosaics IN ANY MEDIUM. All wall art, including paintings and drawings, must be submitted framed and ready to hang with secure wire or cord attached at the back

- **sculpture**, including ceramics and glass of any size up to a maximum of 2.0 metres in any dimension and not more than 100kg in weight

- **photography** 10"x8" (254mm x 204mm) and 20"x16" (508mm x 408mm), mounted and ready to be framed, and can be framed

- **writing**, either poetry, or prose a minimum of 200 words and maximum of 5,000 words, in English

The entry forms for the 2026 competition will appear on our website in due course. **The rules of the event** will be the same as in 2025 and can be found [here](#):



Jessica Loeb, overall winner of the 2025
Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, with FoR Chair
Mike Lewington. Photo Wendy Tobitt

Event Coordinator/Administrator sought for the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

As many of you know, the FoR organises and runs the annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. The 2026 exhibition will be the 10th Anniversary with the theme of “Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway” and will be held at the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall in Uffington from the 16th to 19th April 2026. The organisation and management of the exhibition is primarily run by trustees. However, we are seeking a volunteer coordinator who can assist our principal trustee manager of the event, Nathan Boyd, with a number of aspects.



Each year through our network of previous entrants, artists, contacts, Facebook and website, the competition is launched in early November. The exhibition is held the following April with an associated online exhibition. The administration team receives the entry forms, liaises with the artists, physically receives the art work and arranges the scrutinising of the submissions with the group of established judges including a Chair. They are responsible for the exhibition, which is held in a suitable location near the Ridgeway. In addition, FoR Trustees undertake a number of administration tasks and assist in the setup/breakdown and running of the exhibition.



To express an interest or for more information, contact the Chair of FoR, Mike Lewington at michaellowington@hotmail.com or Nathan Boyd at boyd.nathan@gmail.com.

Friends of the Ridgeway's response to a call from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature

This APPG wrote 'The Government's manifesto included a commitment to improve access to nature, with more details expected later in 2025. To help inform the direction the Government takes, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature has launched a call for evidence to examine ideas for changes in policy and legislation that would enable more people to access green and blue spaces.'

The APPG asked for ideas for new legislation and/or policy proposals which would address seven aspects of the subject. The FoR addressed the first of these '[To] enable more people to make use of existing access opportunities (including open access and public rights of way). Here is our response.

We, the Friends of the Ridgeway (National Trail; FoR), seek a change in legislation such that non-essential motor vehicles e.g. motor bikes, including electric ones, 4x4s, and quad bikes used for recreational purposes, should be prohibited on all sections of all National Trails.

The Ridgeway is an 87-mile National Trail between Overton Hill in Wiltshire (close to the World Heritage Site of Avebury) through Oxfordshire, West Berkshire, Hertfordshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire, passing through the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns National Landscapes.

When National Trails were conceived it was integral to their design that they be used by people who were not in/on non-essential (recreational) motor vehicles. This is reiterated



On the Ridgeway in West Berkshire, July 2023, when recreational vehicles are permitted. There is a Traffic Regulation Order that prohibits them from 1 October to 30 April. Photo Dave Cavanagh

in Natural England's 'The New Deal: Management of National Trails in England from April 2013 (NE426)' on page 8: "a key performance indicator (KPI) is a "Presumption of routes being traffic free."
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6238141>

On the same page, Natural England states "Experience: The trails should be managed in a way which allows as many people as possible to enjoy a wide variety of walking and riding experiences along National Trails and through the English landscape." Riding refers to bicycles, horses, horse-drawn carriages and mobility scooters, not to motor vehicles (Natural England KPI above).

Recreational motor vehicles damage the surface of the Ridgeway and other Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs), sometimes causing very deep rutting. This makes the surface dangerous for all users, deterring many people from using a National Trail. The vehicles, particularly as many are driven at speed, ►



These concrete blocks had been placed, by West Berkshire Council, across the A34 underpass through which the Ridgeway runs, to prevent access by 4x4s. The blocks have been illegally dragged out of the way. July 2023. Photo Dave Cavanagh

themselves pose a danger to other users, as well as spoiling the experience of being in what would otherwise be tranquil places.

Much of the Ridgeway is eminently usable by people with a wide range of physical abilities, including those of limited mobility, because of the level and wide nature of the Trail in many sections. It is also within easy reach of urban conurbations, some large e.g. Swindon, Luton, Aylesbury. If the Ridgeway BOAT sections were to be redefined as Restricted Byways, then the sections that could be used safely would be significantly increased, attracting more users.

The immediate concern of FoR is with the remaining sections of the Ridgeway National Trail where recreational vehicles are still permitted in the drier six months of the year i.e. the sections in Wiltshire and West Berkshire, where the Ridgeway is still a BOAT. (Fortuitously, the National Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) changed byways that were previously designated as 'Roads used as Public Paths' (RUPPs), of which the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire was one, into Restricted Byways.)

Whilst progress towards Natural England's key performance indicator "Presumption of routes

being traffic free." for National Trails, has been made, it falls short on the Ridgeway in Wiltshire and West Berkshire, where recreational vehicles are currently permitted during the warmer months of the year. We would like to see this rectified by a change in the law, so that the Ridgeway National Trail would live up to the ambition that Natural England has for it and other National Trails.

It is not possible for local authorities throughout the country to repeatedly repair BOATs after they have been severely damaged by recreational motor vehicles; the cost is out of all proportion to their small budgets for maintaining the public rights of way network.

It is not realistic for local authorities to protect BOATs throughout the country from damage by making individual Traffic Regulation Orders; they do not have the funds to withstand challenges from extremely well-financed organisations representing off-road users of motor bikes and 4x4s. This situation applies to BOAT sections of the Ridgeway.

Also, local authorities have to address the needs of all users, including recreational vehicle users. If the law were to be changed to prohibit recreational motor vehicles on all National Trails, as is Natural England's intention, then local authorities would be freed from this contentious and costly situation.

The solution to the problem of off roaders and other recreational motor vehicle users on BOATs throughout the country, for the benefit of many thousands of walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and mobility scooter users, is a change in the law – BOATs to Restricted Byways – to prohibit the relatively small number of recreational motor vehicle users who cause so much damage and disturbance.

We emphasise that a ban on recreational vehicles would NOT prevent essential motor vehicles from driving along the Ridgeway. These would include, but are not limited to, the vehicles of: mobility scooter users; landowners, farmers, householders and business owners alongside the Ridgeway (and other BOATs), and their suppliers, partners and guests; emergency services; Royal Mail and other delivery companies.

‘All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal, cross-party groups formed by MPs and Members of the House of Lords who share a common interest in a particular policy area, region or country. APPGs have no official status within Parliament.’

<https://www.parliament.co.uk/APPG/door-recreation-and-access-to-nature>

Extract from the Rules

<https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg/rules-on-appgs/>

An All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) consists of Members of both Houses who join together to pursue a particular topic or interest. APPGs cover a diverse range of subjects and are established for a rich variety of purposes. They provide a valuable opportunity for parliamentarians to engage with individuals and organisations outside Parliament who share an interest in the subject matter of their group. They are not, however, official parliamentary bodies, nor do they carry the same authority as Select Committees or other Committees of either House. The direction, finances, policy, strategy, research and aims of the Group must at all times be the sole responsibility of the Parliamentary Members of the Group, not any external body or secretariat.

What is an All Party Parliamentary Group?

Groups must be open to all Members of both Houses excluding Government ministers.

Groups may include non-parliamentarians as external members.

A Group must have four registered officers (and no more), including at least one from the government party (or parties) and at least one from the main opposition party. At least two officers must be from the Commons.

An APPG must have at least 20 members and must maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of those members (which must be made available as set out in the Guide to the Rules).

Parliament votes on a Picasso painting:

Eyes to the left: 2

Nose to the right: 1

An extract from Hansard, the “substantially verbatim” report of what is said in Parliament, in both Houses. The occasion (21 June 2017) was the day of the Queen’s Speech. It is the custom for the mover and seconder of the debate that follows to give a short speech, including some humour. Richard Benyon, then MP for Newbury, included some family history.

“I am not the first Richard Benyon to have been asked to move the Loyal Address. My great-great-grandfather was the MP for Berkshire between 1860 and 1876. Although he was a great man in many ways, there is no record of him ever troubling Hansard with any speech, even a maiden speech. He was asked by Disraeli to move the Loyal Address in 1869, but replied that, though mindful of the honour, as a matter of principle he never spoke in Parliament. As you know, Mr Speaker, my father was one of your predecessors as the Member for Buckingham. He told that story to Speaker Thomas, who clasped a hand to his head and said, “How I wish there were more like him in the House today.”



We found a walk-around. Photo Dave Cavanagh

A friend of mine did his pilot's exam just after a storm, and flew through a rainbow. He passed with flying colours.

If you make a lot of mistakes when texting in cold weather, you need to get warm. It's an early sign of typo-thermia.

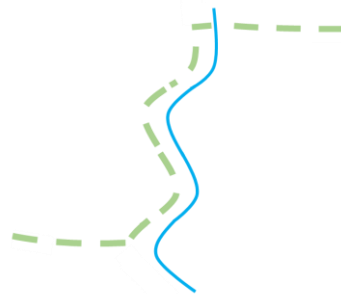
What's the difference between a kleptomaniac and a literalist?

The literalist takes things literally. The kleptomaniac takes things, literally.

3,025 years from now life will be either really good or really bad. It's 5050.



The Mortal Man pub in Troutbeck, Windermere. Photo Dave Cavanagh



Mind the Gap



Mind the step. Settle, N. Yorkshire. Photo Verity Cavanagh

A scammer called my grandma and said he had all her passwords.

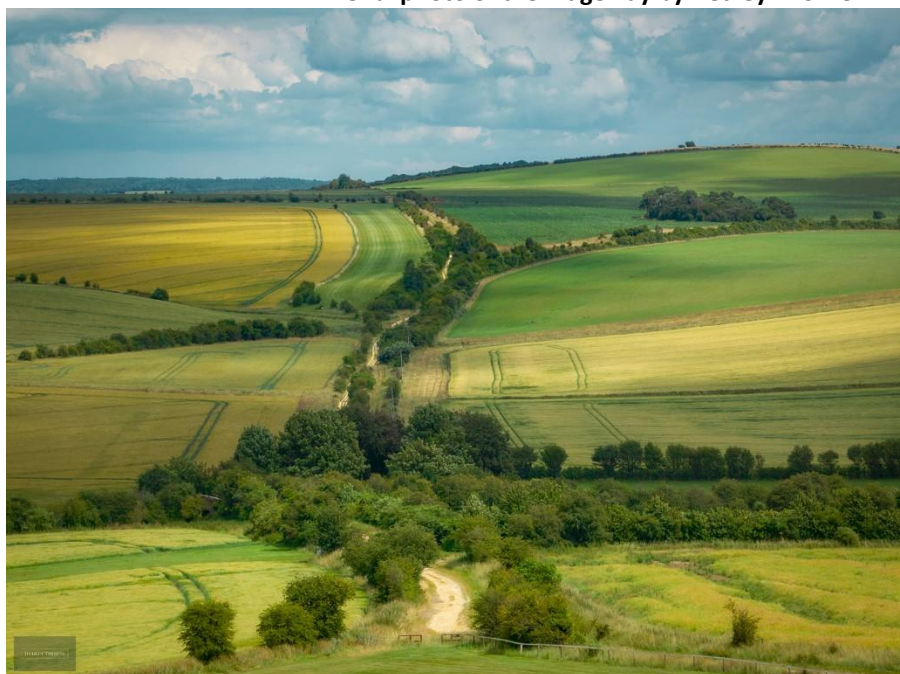
She got a pen and paper and said "Thank goodness for that, what are they?"

The history of the people who lived, farmed, feasted and traded along the Ridgeway from pre-history to the 20th century is being revealed through the Historic Ridgeway Project, led by landscape archaeologist Dan Bashford.

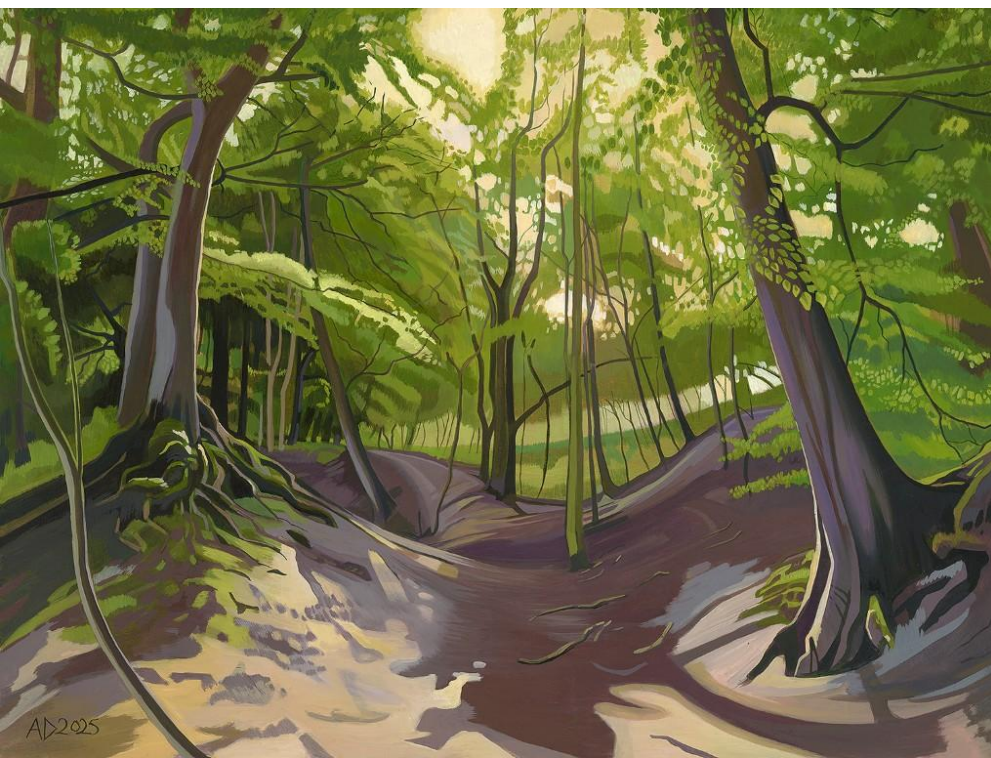
Historic Ridgeway update

Wendy Tobitt

Aerial photo of the Ridgeway by Hedley Thorne



This year a series of free online lectures began in January with Dr Wendy Morrison's 'Living on the Edge: a potted history of 1200 years of living in the Ridgeway landscape', and will continue through the winter. Each talk is published on the Ridgeway National Trail's YouTube channel (link at the end of this article).



On Monday 28 July the renowned artist Anna Dillon and photographer Hedley Thorne will discuss how the Ridgeway's landscape inspires their beautiful work. The talk is free, but register via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/zz7hmc46>

Grim's Ditch by Anna Dillon

As well as the online talks, Dan is leading walks focusing on specific sites along the Ridgeway. In June he led a group (pictured, right) starting at Scutchamer Knob the partially excavated Iron Age barrow and historic meeting place on Cuckhamsley Hill, and finishing with the Harwell Science and Innovation Centre below Bury Down.

During World War Two this was RAF Harwell a bomber training airfield. On the night before D-Day, Horsa gliders flew from here as part of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France on 6 June 1944, and were involved in the capture of Pegasus Bridge.

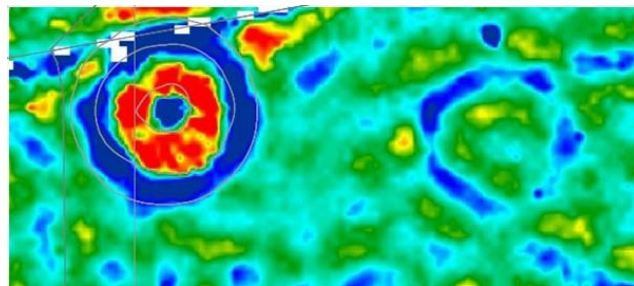


Earlier this summer members of Wallingford Green Gym were there cutting back vegetation (above) and carrying out a condition survey of the monument (right). This is part of a new Grim's Ditch Management Plan that Dan commissioned with the aim of removing it from the Heritage at Risk register.

Volunteers led by Hayley Gray continue to manage the sites that the Historic Ridgeway projects is focusing on, including Grim's Ditch between Mongewell and Nuffield.



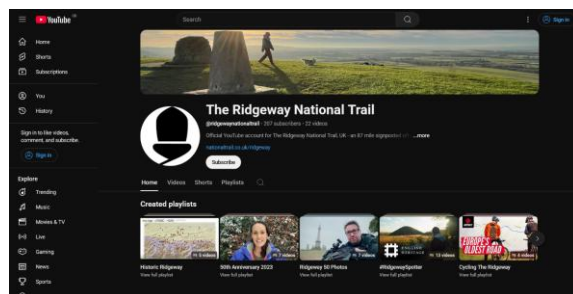
The **Historic** Ridgeway Project includes detailed mapping of field boundaries near the Ridgeway using LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) maps. More than 50 volunteers were trained to do this work on their computers. Along with other volunteers already experienced in this work they mapped 8,918 potential boundaries,



including 2,796 features mapped within the Ridgeway project area. 80% of these features were peer reviewed, and the data will now be reviewed and discussed with Historic Environment Record officers for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

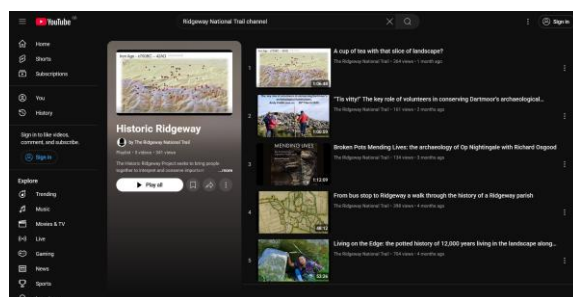
An **educational** resource pack for Segsbury Camp has been completed through the project. This pack combines learning about the archaeology and biodiversity of the site and is linked to Key Stage 2 themes. It can be used on site at Segsbury Camp and in classrooms.

A **series** of interpretation boards with illustrations of historic settlements, photographs and text describing eleven sites on the Ridgeway between Wayland's Smithy and Streatley Warren will be installed later this year. They are linked by a storymap accessed via QR codes on each of the boards so that people can access all the information from each location.



Ridgeway National Trail YouTube channel:

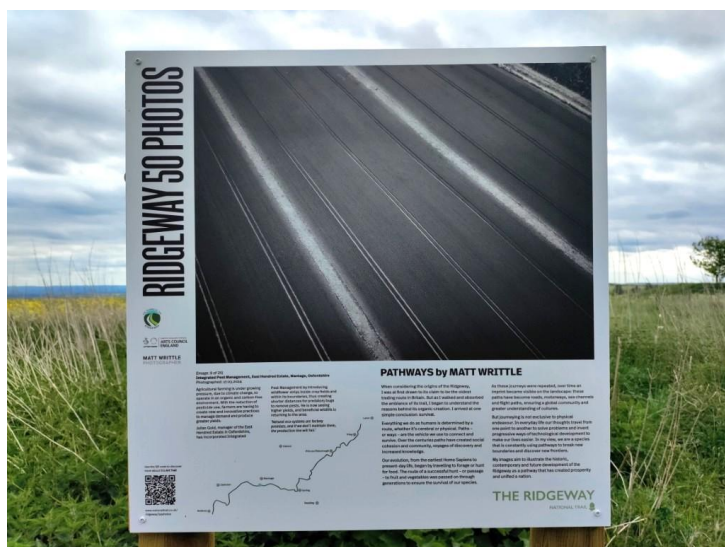
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9MUTxI2Zjn5_LmNDRqo9cw



YouTube page for the Historic Ridgeway lectures:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyqXnZNAVgKhTtLSwu9YWqAvuIX7RvRU>

The Historic Ridgeway Project is funded by Historic England, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, and the Friends of the Ridgeway.



One of Matt Writtle's [Ridgeway Photo 50](#) photos. This one is located at the parking area where the Ridgeway crosses the road that leads to East Hendred. It is also just 100 metres or so from Scutcher Knob, the Iron Age National Monument that has recently been cleared of scrub to improve the visitor experience.

Highly commended artworks at the 2025 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

You can see the winners of the four categories of artworks in the [May issue](#) of the FoR newsletter.

Here are the Highly Commended exhibits in the sculpture category. Photography and written works are on the next page.



The Stag in the Copse, by Sharon Rich



You can see all the exhibits in the 2025 and earlier exhibitions [here](#)

Gentle Hues of the Ridgeway, by Janet Manning

Colours and Hues of the Ridgeway, by John Paul Roacgh

One of the hues is bright blue.
On the darkest and dreariest of winter days the Ridgeway lets you climb up above it all.
Then you can turn back towards the Vale.
Even though the landscape is tired and worn, with lack of new growth.
The sky is bright and clear, and beautifully, piercingly blue.
I know in my head that it is grey and cloudy a lot of the time,
but in my heart I know that if I climb up by Uffington Castle the sky will be bright and blue
and will clear away what ails me.

One of the hues is the darkening red of the berries on all the hawthorn that clings on at the top of the Ridgeway.
The beeches seem to be content up at the Smithy and around,
but most trees don't seem tough enough to live happily up there with the wind and the chalk.
The hawthorn are the trees I think of most as part of the Ridgeway near home.
Tenacious and ignored most of the time.
Clinging on in the unnoticed spaces by the edges of the paths.
Unobserved by the herds of walkers, but observing the passers-by for as long as people have had a path up there.
Feeding the birds with their berries.
Hanging on.
Watching everyone pass.

One of the hues is chalky white.
Scratch the surface and there it is.
Soft crumbly rock.
Lightening the fields as you head south across the downs to Lambourn.
Ploughed up, planting by planting.
Three or four hundred years ago some of the white crumbly stone was hauled down off the Ridgeway to make my house.
Now my children have grown up within a bit a of the Ridgeway transplanted down into the Village.
The chalky white stone feels like home when I see it now.



Moonset



Cold Winter's Morning

Both by Karen Sampford

Seasonal walks

Our Summer Walks collection

The routes on this page have been specially selected from Chiltern Society walks published on our own leaflets, on OS Maps, and on Visorando. They'll take you to some of the Chilterns' most loved and iconic seasonal highlights.

The **Chiltern Society Walks Leaflets** shown below are from our collection of more than 80, which are FREE for personal use and can be found [here](#).

How to find all Chiltern Society-designed walks on

OS MAPS

GO

How to find all Chiltern Society-designed walks on

Visorando

GO

The Chiltern Society has produced free guides to over 80 routes through the Chilterns.

[Download them](#) in the format that suits you.

Visorando / ... / Hertfordshire / Preston / Preston and Breachwood Green

Preston and Breachwood Green

A walk through delightful North Hertfordshire countryside featuring well cared-for historic villages and hamlets, linked by fields and woods. There are interesting buildings including a restored windmill.

Technical sheet

n°75236189

Creation	Last update	Last review
14 May 2025	18 May 2025	—

- Activity: Walking

Distance: 11.71 km

Average duration: 3h 40

Difficulty: Moderate
- Return to departure point: Yes

Vertical gain: + 126 m

Vertical drop: - 131 m
- Highest point: 157 m

Lowest point: 103 m

Country: United Kingdom

District: Preston

Start/End: N 51.908745° / W 0.285357°

Hour-by-hour weather

Discover Visorando Premium

AUTHOR

Chiltern Society

83 walks

Association or club

PRO

The Chiltern Society organises walks, cycle rides and events throughout the year to encourage people to get out and enjoy the Chilterns. Now we have published some of our favourite walks on Visorando for you guide yourself and enjoy the best of the Chilterns.

The Chiltern Society has been active for almost 60 years helping people improve their part of the Chilterns. We are tackling some of the most serious threats to the countryside: climate change, overbearing development and disappearing green spaces and wildlife.

Country paths are a major focus of our volunteer work – we monitor the 2,200 miles of paths and bridleways that criss-cross the Chilterns and work with the local authorities to maintain and restore them.

White Hill Centre, White Hill, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 1AG
Email: office@chilternsociety.org.uk
Phone: 01494 771250
Website: <https://chilternsociety.org.uk>

Walk map

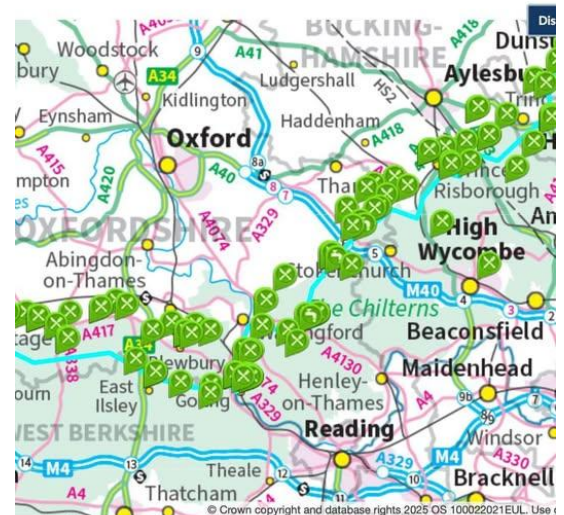
Chris and Damian joined the Ridgeway Hall of Fame after walking the length of the Ridgeway over a six-month period. They finished in July which, although it had heat waves, also had a wet day, as you can see. Damian said “We wanted to be more active whilst exploring the prehistoric sites including the Sanctuary, the long barrows, Grim’s Ditch and the hill forts. Plus the friendly pubs with a cold beer and a hot meal at the end of each day's walking.



Jamie completed the Ridgeway National Trail on some of the hottest days of early summer. "Walking the Ridgeway has been on my arthritis bucket list for many years, and my dad joining me on the middle day was a massive help. To complete the Ridgeway at Avebury, in time for the sunrise on the solstice is a wonderful experience I'll never forget."

The Ridgeway National Trail has updated its [accommodation listing](#), which includes canal barges, shepherds' huts, yurts, campsites, traditional B&Bs, pub rooms and hotels.

They include Use the Map filter and FAQ's to see where to stay plus other essential information you may need including; wild camping, public transport, drinking water, food, stabling and secure bike parking.



A section of the online interactive map