

Onto the Downs by Julian Brower

Friends **of the** Ridgeway

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

Theme: 'Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway'

18th and 19th April 2026

Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, SN7 7SE

Painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, ceramics, glass,
prose and poetry

Entry details available by email: swireartsprize@gmail.com

Closing date for submissions: **Friday 20th March 2026**



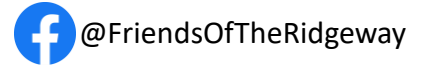
THE FRIENDS OF THE
RIDGEWAY

November 2025



Autumn 2025

www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk



Welcome

Editor Dave Cavanagh
davecavanagh1000@gmail.com



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

Back copies of our newsletter can be found [here](#) on our website

Cover photo. The 2026 Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. Image by Julian Brower,



When people walk along the Ridgeway, making good progress, they probably don't think about how it comes to be in such fine fettle. The reason for this is the effort put in by volunteers and the staff who organise the work parties. For the most part the volunteers are members of the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trail maintenance team. In the last couple of years or so these have been augmented by myriad volunteers who have been uncovering - by removing overgrowth - some of the Ancient Monuments along the Wessex section as part of the Historic Ridgeway Project. In this issue we pay homage to all of these volunteers.

There is much more in this packed issue: a debate in Westminster Hall about the Ridgeway and Thames Path; John Tippetts describes his walk along the whole length of the Great Chalk Way (GCW), not far short of 400 miles; new FoR trustee Joe Flatman tells us of his walk along the Wessex Ridgeway, part of the GCW; Janice Bridger describes how almost 100 horse riders took part in an Endurance event along the Ridgeway and adjacent Downs; and we look at the winning junior photographers of the Ridgeway Photo 50 activity. As you can tell from the cover photo, there is further opportunity for creativity when the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize competition and exhibition - the 10th - returns in April next year. Plus, lots more. Enjoy.



Walking the length of the Great Chalk Way

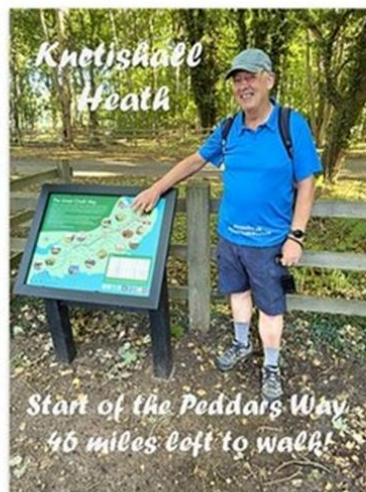
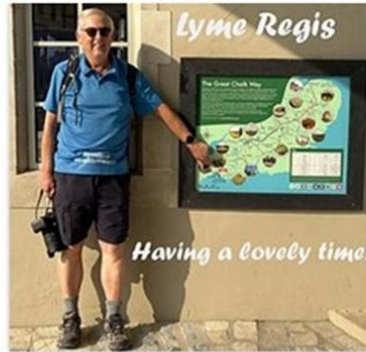
Dave Cavanagh

Fancy a 400-mile walk? No? Well, John Tippetts did. His walk was the Great Chalk Way, the trail between Lyme Regis in Dorset and Holme-next-the-Sea on the north Norfolk coast. John started at the southern end at the end of April, and arrived at the northern one in early September, having hiked the route in 27 stages.

"What a brilliant time I had walking across 11 counties; definitely the best trail I've ever walked."

John has created an attractive, wonderfully illustrated [website](#) on the GCW in which he first gives an overview of the trail, and how it came about. After that, still within his website, he presents his blogs that record his experience on the GCG.

John celebrating his arrival at various points along the GCW



On [John's](#) website click on one or other of the images that are shown below. There you'll find an introduction to each section of the GCW and some general remarks on his experience of walking them. Beneath them are links to his blogs – more detailed accounts of his journey. These not only contain his personal experiences, including advice on route-finding, but are also are full of useful information, including where he parked his car and what buses he used to get back to it.

The Trails

Wessex Ridgeway
Lyme Regis to Win Green
Tap or Click Image
63 miles

Cranborne Doves Way
Win Green to Salisbury
Tap or Click Image
16.5 miles

Sarsen Way
Salisbury to Overton Hill
Tap or Click Image
34.5 miles

Ridgeway National Trail
Overton Hill to Icknield Beacon
Tap or Click Image
87 miles

Icknield Way
Icknield Beacon to Knettishall Heath
COMING SOON
110 miles

Peddars Way
Knettishall Heath to Holme-next-the-Sea
COMING SOON
49 miles

Examples of links to John's blogs

[Great Chalk Way](#)
Stage 1 - Wessex Ridgeway - Lyme Regis to Thorncombe - April 28th 2025
[The adventure begins! Hills. Views. Bluebells. Marvellous](#)

156 views

[Great Chalk Way](#)
Stage 2 - Wessex Ridgeway - Thorncombe to Beaminster - April 29th 2025
[Don't forget drone. Try to stay on track. Iron age hillforts. Inquisitive cows](#)

There are options for the journey to Overton Hill, the western end of the Ridgeway, from Win Green. John took the Cranborne Doves Way and Sarsen Way through Salisbury. The alternative route is to stay on the Wessex Ridgeway. John is aiming to return to walk the rest of the Wessex Ridgeway in due course.



The Great Chalk Way. Map by Tom Chevalier, Icknield Way Association

Tim Lewis has published downloadable walk directions for the route from Lyme Regis to Overton Hill on the websites of the [Great Chalk Way](#) and the [Long Distance Walkers Association](#).

How the Great Chalk Way came about

Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) helped to get recreational motor vehicles prohibited all year round on the Oxfordshire stretch of the Ridgeway, via the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Shortly before that it had campaigned successfully for seasonal closures of the Trail in West Berkshire and Wiltshire. FoR, still under the chairmanship of Ian Ritchie, then turned its attention to promoting the notion of a trail that would comprise the several chalk ridges that stretched between the North Norfolk and Dorset coasts.

In 2009 the FoR re-wrote its constitution to say: “The Charity’s objects are the preservation ... of all the natural aspects and features of the ancient ridgeway trackways along the chalk downs of Southern England, including the Ridgeway National Trail and any extension thereof ...” The ‘extensions’ that the trustees had in mind can be seen in the map above. FoR trustee Tim Lewis recounts his interest in the GCW and how the trail developed in the January 2022 issue of our newsletter (available on our website). It has been Tim who has taken the lead for FoR and has worked tirelessly with the [Icknield Way Association](#) (IWA) to bring the dream to fruition; in 2024 the Great Chalk Way was officially opened (recorded in the November 2024 issue of our newsletter, with more on the history of the trail). Since then, information boards have been designed, made and installed. The original idea of the information boards was to have one at the beginning/end of each component trail but now there are also some in between, especially in Dorset, due to sponsorship by various organisations.



Observed by Tim Lewis
whilst on the Sarsen Way

There are illustrated articles on personal experiences of various sections of the GCW – from the perspective of both walkers and horse riders - in past issues of the FoR newsletter, which you can locate by ghosting over the ‘About us’ item on the menu near the top of [FoR website](#) and then clicking on ‘Newsletters’ in the dropdown menu.

2022 January. The Great Chalk Way, by Tim Lewis -his early interest and descriptions of the Trail.

2022 July. A personal account of riding the Wessex Ridgeway by Gina Hemmings.

2022 November. Christine James, editor of the Icknield Way Association News, had sent me some photographs taken by the late Professor Thurstan Shaw. He was the first chair of the IWA, and later President. He had taken the photos “when he undertook a solo walk along the Great Chalk Way (as we think of it now) in either 1979 or 1980,” said Christine.

2022 November. Tim Lewis’ account of walking the Dorset section of the Wessex Ridgeway.

2023 November. Alison Elmer, from Lincoln, also explored sections of the GCW on horseback. Alison used the Ridgeway as a spine to explore both the North Wessex Downs and the Chiltern Area of Outstanding National Beauty. Written by Janice Bridger of the British Horse Society.

2024 November. Launch of the Great Chalk Way. The Great Chalk Way Story, by Tim Lewis.

2025 February. Photos of Great Chalk Way information boards in Salisbury and at Overton Hill, and describing the Cicerone guide to the Sarsen Way.

2025 May. Progress on Great Chalk Way, including an information board near Wardour Castle, on the route of the Wessex Ridgeway.

National Trails in London

Dave Cavanagh



“You’re joking! Not another one!” said Brenda from Bristol on hearing of the snap election in 2017. And, no, not another National Trail. That said, there was a debate in Westminster Hall, Palace of Westminster, in September to discuss the existing National Trails.

The motion was, to mere mortals, rather strange: “That this House has considered the condition of national trails.” There was no vote, no imminent law change. I consider it to be a milestone along a path that one day might lead to a better financial deal and protection for National Trails and, just maybe, the banning of recreational vehicles from all National Trails, all year round.

The motion was moved, as they say, by Freddie van Mierlo MP (Liberal Democrat, Henley and Thame, and a Vice President of Friends of the Ridgeway), who secured this debate. He has two National Trails in his constituency, the Ridgeway and the Thames Path. Tim Fallon MP (Lib Dem Spokesperson for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Lords Spokesperson for Communities and

Local Government) went one better; he has three National Trails in his constituency of Westmorland and Lonsdale - the Pennine Way, the Pennine Bridleway and the Coast to Coast Path, the latest member of the [Trail family](#). Speaking from the other end of the Trail spectrum was Jim Shannon MP (DUP, Strangford) who said that Northern Ireland did not have a formal national trail system but did have the 636-mile Ulster Way. Sadly, this had issues “about signposting, overgrowth and access.”

The theme of the debate was that the National Trails, although contributing to health, well-being, pleasure, exercise and the local economy, were poorly resourced and protected. Van Mierlo extolled the virtues of National Trails, though they are the poor relation in comparison with National Parks and National Landscapes (Area of Outstanding National Beauty, as was). Moreover, although funding began a welcome rise in line with inflation in 2023, this did nothing to make up for the previous 10 years of flat funding, resulting in a 30% real terms cut. This had hit small Trails, such as the Ridgeway, particularly hard.

Van Mierlo touched on a subject close to the hearts of the Friends of the Ridgeway; recreational vehicles. He remarked on the chalk nature of the Trail, adding that “such chalk is vulnerable to damage and parts of the Ridgeway are classified as byway, meaning they are legally open to motorised traffic. The Ridgeway therefore suffers damage from recreational vehicles and off-road motorcycles” which are very costly to repair. He mentioned the Ridgeway Trail Officer, Ian Black, “fighting to prohibit recreational motorised vehicles from the trail.”



On the Ridgeway in 2011. Photo Ian Ritchie

Van Mierlo made three recommendations, the first of which was that the Government should support a statutory purpose for national trails, bringing them into line with the national parks and national landscapes. This would bring certain protections for the Trails, one being that any proposed changes to National Trails should require the consent of the Secretary of State. Currently it is up to the planning departments of county councils to decide, where a section of a National Trail is just one of hundreds of public rights of way in their area. Speaking at the end of the debate, Mary Creagh MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Defra) gave short shrift to this suggestion: “Giving trails statutory purposes may not be the most effective way to support them to achieve their objectives.”

The Westminster Hall debate follows on from the questionnaire created by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature, to which Friends of the Ridgeway responded (covered in the July issue of this newsletter). And in December of last year the Ramblers organised a reception in the House of Lords pressing for an Access to Nature Bill. At that there were speeches from sponsors Baroness Barbara Young of Old Scone (previous roles include chair of English Nature and Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and Baroness Sue Hayman of Ullock (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whose responsibilities include access, including rights of way and coastal paths). MPs also attended the event, including Greg Smith, MP for the Mid Buckinghamshire constituency, through which the Ridgeway runs. So, a head of steam is building up for a bill on countryside access. It is understood that the Government is sympathetic, though whether a bill would be forthcoming during the lifetime of this Government is not clear. Friends of the Ridgeway will be keeping a watchful eye, in conjunction with the [Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement \(GLEAM\)](#).

Van Mierlo’s second proposal was that the Government should not only increase funding for Trails in line with inflation from the 2013 benchmark but also make funding settlements (with Natural England, an agency of Defra) on a three-year basis, rather than the current one-year one. Our Chair, Mike Lewington, and I (representing Ramblers) are on the board of the Ridgeway Partnership. We know only too well the debilitating effect of one-year settlements, made worse by them often being very late.

The third proposal was that “the Government should communicate with agencies, such as the EA [Environment Agency], that have responsibilities that interact with national trails to ensure that they produce assessments in a timely manner and are given the resources that they need to maintain assets.” Van Mierlo mentioned specifically the Marsh Lock horse bridge over the Thames Path. Those of us who walk along the Thames Path know only too well how it suffers from flooding, sometimes followed by severe damage to the Trail.

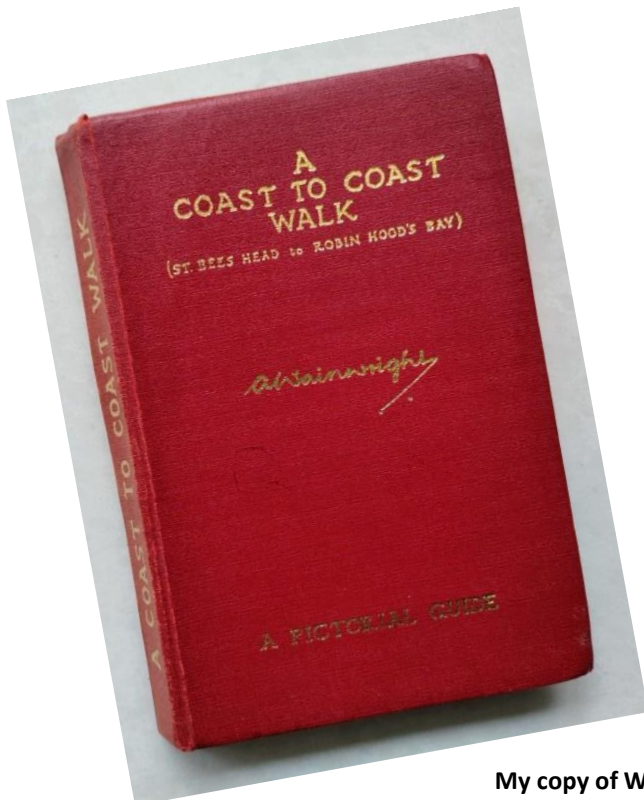


Van Mierlo added that the Disabled Ramblers undertook a condition report of the Ridgeway in 2023, finding that “nearly 80% of the 50 miles surveyed along the Ridgeway did not meet the established standards.”

In May 2022, two members of Disabled Ramblers attended a meeting of the Ridgeway Partnership, in part on Bury Down and at Scutchamer Knob. Seen here with FoR Patron, Mary-Ann Ochota.

Two other MPs contributed to the debate, namely Lib. Dems. Richard Foord (Honiton and Sidmouth), who has the South West Coast Path in his constituency, and Roz Savage (South Cotswolds).

You can read in full the contributions to the debate [here](#).



My copy of Wainwright's 1973 book (third impression)

It was agreed in 2022 that Alfred Wainwright's Coast to Coast route, from St. Bee's head in the west to Robin Hood's Bay in the east, would become an official National Trail. Work is ongoing to upgrade the route, including signposting, with an official opening expected in 2026 or 2027. In the debate, Mary Creagh said “The Coast to Coast Path will be one to walk from west to east, so that hikers always have the rain on their back—and I can promise that there will be rain.” I walked the Coast to Coast Path in 1973, the year that Alfred Wainwright published his iconic book of the trail. I can vouch for what Mary Creagh says, though for most of the time it was dry, despite walking it in October.



There are 16 [National Trails](#) in England and Wales, including the King Charles III England Coast Path, and the Coast to Coast Path. The equivalent in Scotland is [Scotland's Great Trails](#).

New Trustee – Joe Flatman

Joe Flatman has joined the Friends of the Ridgeway as a Trustee. Joe's background is in archaeology (including writing a regular column for the magazine *Current Archaeology*, for whom he wrote about the Ridgeway in [August 2024](#) , and he will be supporting the Friends on heritage-related issues. He currently works for the National Trust and has previously worked in local and central government and as an academic. He walked the Ridgeway in spring 2024; the Pewsey Vale Circular in spring 2025; and the Wessex Ridgeway in summer 2025, so he is an experienced long-distance walker. You can follow his travels on Instagram [@josephflatman](#).





Mowing and raking the experimental wildflower plots alongside the Ridgeway National Trail between Bury Down and Scutchamer Knob in September. Photo Wendy Tobitt

As autumn draws to a close, the Volunteers will switch from soft vegetation clearance e.g. mowing the verges, along the Ridgeway to hard vegetation clearance e.g. brambles and protruding tree branches.

The Ridgeway and Thames Path Volunteers

Wendy Tobitt

The Oxford University project led by plant scientist Prof Lindsay Turnbull from the Dept of Biology continues. Its purpose is to assess the effectiveness of different management of plots which have been sown with chalk grassland species. Some plots are mown and raked, others just mown, and others left with no management.

The Ridgeway is a natural [#naturerecovery](#) corridor linking woodlands, hedgerows and flower-rich chalk grassland areas that provide valuable nectar and breeding habitats for pollinators.

Martin Beecher is the mower. In the lower photo is Professor Lindsay Turnbull who runs the project. She's pointing to the corner of the plot so that Martin knows where to stop. Photo Wendy Tobitt



Teenagers, council officers, an MoD team and cyclists are among the keen volunteers who have taken part in the Historic Ridgeway Project.

Volunteers sprucing up our Ancient Monuments

Wendy Tobitt

This autumn the approach from the Ridgeway to the ancient long barrow at Wayland's Smithy is being transformed from an overgrown path to a clear track, thanks to the hard work of people led by Hayley Gray, the Historic Ridgeway Project volunteer coordinator. Teenagers from Oxfordshire Young Farmers' Clubs got stuck in to the dead-hedging over two days, and may come back again! The Friends of the Ridgeway awarded the 'Best Dead-Hedge' trophy to the girls' team of Skye, Grace, Tara, Ivy, Annie and Eloise from Faringdon Junior Young Farmers' Club.

Earlier in the year groups from Ridgeway Cycles and tfd Health & Fitness in Wantage made excellent impact on the shrubs growing around the Lord Wantage Monument. This vegetation had been planted on a Bronze Age Barrow.

A group from the sustainability team at Grundon, the waste management company, spent their volunteering day with Hayley on Grim's Ditch near Mongewell carefully clearing selected sections of vegetation from the Scheduled Monument which is on the Heritage at Risk register.

A group of Ministry of Defence staff from Shrivenham spent their annual volunteering day making an impressively neat and tidy dead-hedge at Wayland's Smithy. ►



Skye, Grace, Tara, Ivy, and Annie from Faringdon Junior Young Farmers' Club. Photo Hayley Gray



Some of the Grundon team led by Toni Robinson working on Grim's Ditch. Photo Wendy Tobitt



Ministry of Defence staff at Wayland's Smithy. Photo Hayley Gray

The environmental health team from Vale and South Oxfordshire district councils donned red gauntlets for their work on the dead-hedging. Photo Hayley Gray



Thames Valley Police patrol the Ridgeway

Following reports of anti-social behaviour and illegal use of motorbikes and quad bikes on the Ridgeway, Thames Valley Police recently patrolled sections in West Berkshire and Oxfordshire using special off-road motorbikes. The Wantage team regularly patrols their section between Sparsholt and Blewbury.



From Thames Valley Police on Facebook

Sections of the Trail in Wiltshire, West Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire are closed to recreational and off-road vehicles during winter months. This is to help prevent damage to the surface, and keep the Trail open and safe for walkers, runners, cyclists and equestrians. Download [information](#) about access to the Ridgeway from October to April.

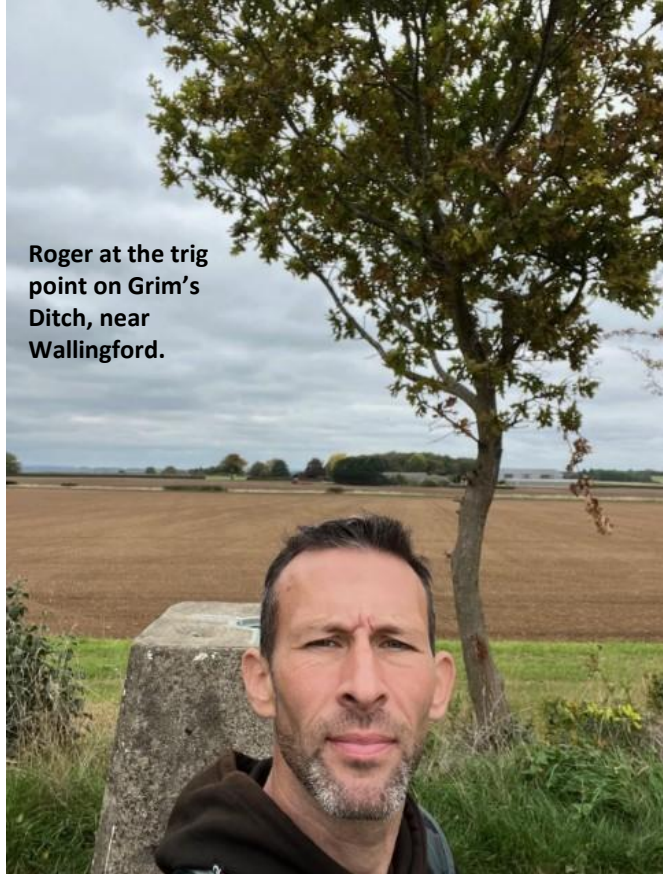
Please continue to report any anti-social behaviour, criminality or intelligence through 101 or online via the TVP website. Always dial 999 in an emergency.

New Coordinator of the Ridgeway and Thames Trail volunteers

Roger Baker is the recently appointed National Trails Volunteer and Projects Coordinator for the Ridgeway and Thames Path. Here he introduces himself.

“I have lived in Oxford for the last 18 years with my family, having previously lived in Caversham for three years and Wandsworth for the five before that, so I’m very familiar with large stretches of the Thames Path! As a keen hiker, runner and cyclist, I’ve also covered most of the Ridgeway at some point; I have fond memories of a three-day trip walking around Avebury as an eleven-year-old with my father, and more recently hiked the stretch from there to Goring with my son on my back when he was barely a year old.”

Roger at the trig point on Grim’s Ditch, near Wallingford.



“I join the National Trails team with a background in education and environmental management, having previously worked for the Environment Agency, Thames 21, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, private consultancy and the Wildlife Trusts among other organisations. I am a qualified secondary science teacher and taught for 12 years initially in schools and latterly at the Science Oxford Centre, where I had a split role combining teaching outdoor science with the management of a 15-acre reserve. In a number of these previous positions, I have been fortunate to work with some amazing volunteers helping to monitor the environment and carry out practical tasks to improve biodiversity and accessibility to the outdoors.”



Roger, centre, with some of the Ridgeway & Thames Path Volunteers.

‘What happens when you take 390 primary school children and some Girl Guides to an ancient trail, show them how to use a camera, and then let them loose to capture what they see? It turns out you get stunning photographs and you nurture seeds of creativity and adventure that can last a lifetime,’ writes Mary-Ann Ochota, patron of the Ridgeway National Trail, in a blog on the Alpkit website.

‘The images are dramatic, moving, funny, and technically very impressive. None of the images have been cropped or adjusted – these are the frames, straight out of the kids’ digital cameras.’

These superb photographs now feature in the Ridgeway 50 Photos exhibition, which launched in Aylesbury during October. It will tour libraries, museums and arts centres in Reading, High Wycombe, Swindon and Luton, the towns where the children live so their families can see them.

Lillie Spibey from Sharp Shots Photo Club ran the photography workshops, which aimed to bring children who don’t have easy access to the countryside out for a day on the Ridgeway National Trail.

‘I’d see the children engage more with their surroundings, worrying less about the mud or poo under their feet, lying down on the ground to get a better shot, running and looking for the best tree to capture and feeling more confident with their camera in hand,’ says Lillie.



The award winners with Lillie Spibey, professional photographer Matt Writtle and Mary-Ann Ochota. Photo Lillie Spibey.

Ridgeway 50 Photos

Wendy Tobitt

‘Watching their faces as they experienced their first big view of the world from the trail, and then showing them how to creatively record it on their camera, was phenomenal.’ ►



Former Ridgeway officer Sarah Wright and current officer Ian Black discussing the Ridgeway with the parents of Christie from Goddard Park community primary school in Swindon whose photograph is just behind her. Photo Wendy Tobitt

The Ridgeway 50 Photos
project was devised by professional photographer Matt Writtle with Sarah Wright, who was then the Ridgeway National Trail officer, as part of the Trail's 50th anniversary.

Matt took hundreds of photos of the landscape along the Ridgeway National Trail, many of them were used by the children in the workshops. He later published a photobook 'Pathways: A Photographic Journey Along The Ridgeway' and chose 25 photos to be displayed along the Ridgeway. Several have already been installed.



Calvin from Hamilton Academy, High Wycombe being photographed by his father in front of his photo of the sheep at Aston Rowant. Photo Wendy Tobitt



Children from Mountford Manor primary school in Swindon enjoying the freedom of the Ridgeway. Photo Lillie Spibey

See the children's Ridgeway photos on the [Alpkit blog](#)



Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, was at the Queens Park Arts Centre in Aylesbury on 6 November. She was there to view the Ridgeway 50 Photography Exhibition, to share some of the stories behind the photos and to thank the wonderful volunteers over coffee and cake.

Photo Mary Tebje

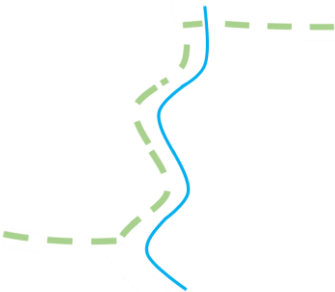
Jokes from this year’s Edinburgh Fringe

Olaf Falafel: We named our children War and Peace – it’s a long story.

Andrew Doherty: At my lowest, I was kicked out of the museum for being inappropriate with Michelangelo’s David. I’d hit rock bottom.

Bella Hull: I just got a personal trainer. She’s horrible to me but my body goal is a thicker skin.

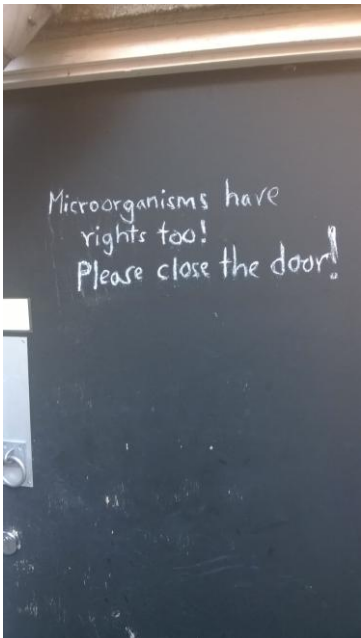
Rajiv Karia: I’m not nostalgic but I used to be. Those were the days.



Mind the Gap

Favourite outdoor activities associated with various professions

Jeweller	mountaineering
Tattoo artist	skin dyeing
Mathematician	psicling
Commander-in-Chief	warking
Fortune teller	runeing
Welcomer	hi!jump



On a pub’s loo door, not far from the Ridgeway. Photo Dave Cavanagh



Chandlers Close



Chandlers Closer. Photos Dave Cavanagh

Across the summer of 2025 my partner and I walked the Wessex Ridgeway from north to south, having previously completed the Ridgeway in the spring of 2024. To make life easy for ourselves, we broke it into fourteen easy sections, usually covering between 14-20km/day with one longer section of about 26km, and we walked the route across a series of weekends and days-off rather than back-to-back.

- Marlborough to Avebury (ca 11km)
- Avebury to Devizes (ca 20km)
- Devizes to West Lavington (ca 20km)
- West Lavington to Westbury / Bratton (ca 14km)
- Westbury / Bratton to Heytesbury (ca 20km)
- Heytesbury to Hindon (ca 14km)
- Hindon to Win Green / Ludwell (ca 20km)
- Win Green to Shillingstone (ca 26km)
- Shillingstone to Alton Pancras (ca 20km)
- Alton Pancras to Up Cerne (ca 14km)
- Up Cerne to Kingcombe (ca 20km)
- Kingcombe to Beaminster (ca 14km)
- Beaminster to Lamberts Castle (ca 20km)
- Lamberts Castle to Lyme Regis (ca 15km)

Given the long, dry summer the going was consistently good underfoot; the biggest concern was carrying sufficient water in the heat and in dealing with herds of overly curious cows. Crossing the A303 and the A35 also took patience and bursts of speed to dash across in the gaps between vehicles. The route is consistently well-signed and (for the most part) is in good condition – we experienced pleasingly few wired gates or broken stiles.

We primarily used paper maps alongside Anthony Burton's original published guide to the route: although dating to 1999 this book remains invaluable and is in large part still accurate – it was interesting to note how little has changed since this time, as we were expecting a lot of edge-of-town development and many diversions from the original route but experienced few of either.

Walking the Wessex Ridgeway

Joe Flatman



Detail from the Great Chalk Way map by Tom Chevalier



This speaks to the rural nature of most of the Wessex Ridgeway, which makes it such a pleasure to walk, with many stunning views (and the climbs necessary to reach these), and some wonderful sections of grassland and woodland alive with nature. The archaeologist in me also appreciated the many hillforts along the route: Pilsdon Pen was the highlight of these, a site that I had never visited before, and which is worthy of a trip all on its own.

The final walk down into Lyme Regis allowed us to reflect on a slow journey well made, a reconnection to the landscape and its places both ancient and modern, human and natural. For anyone who has walked the Ridgeway and wants a new, longer challenge, I highly recommend it.



Endurance riders enjoy the Ridgeway

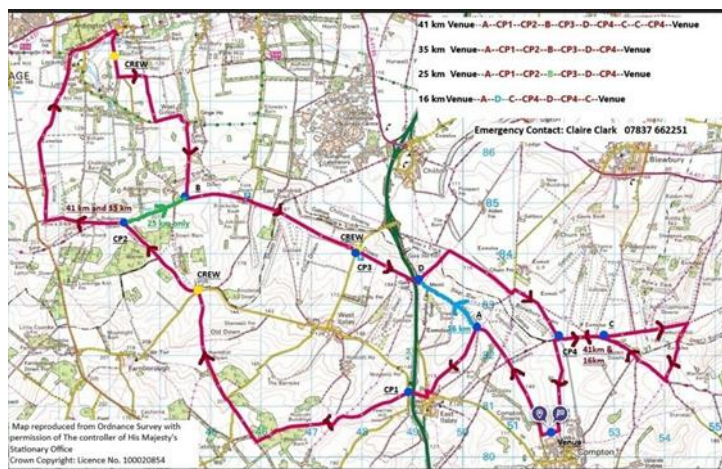
Janice Bridger

Sunday 3rd August saw just under 100 riders enjoy the Ridgeway and the North Wessex Downs between Compton and Lockinge following carefully planned routes organised by the Cotswold Endurance group under the auspices of the national organization of Endurance GB. ▶



Nikki Malcolm and her horse Spiral enjoying the good going.
Photo Debbie Burt

Starting from Hamilton Stables at Compton, by kind permission of Geoffrey Deacon, the ride went west to Lockinge via West Ilsley, Wolvers Road, Old Street and Lands End before turning back via Ardington, Ginge, Bury Down and Churn, the Ridgeway National Trail being the spine connecting all these ancient routes together. Three loops of different lengths had been designed by choosing well maintained tracks with the best surfaces which could be ridden in different combinations to cleverly produce rides of 16 to 81 km in length.



The route

A similar ride used to run from a venue at Lattin Down above Wantage but had not taken place for many years. Riders were pleased to have a similar ride re-instated. They came from far and wide within the UK and a large contingent came from the United Arab Emirates who were bringing on horses for international competition.

The extremely dry weather for many months made the going hard – certainly not ideal for horses. However, several landowners allowed the use of their grassy gallops where riders could have a long canter.

From the starting venue, riders used the bridleway created when the public footpath through the former Institute site was diverted. Local rider Jane Ashbridge campaigned for a bridleway so that riders can avoid riding through Compton village. It was certainly put to good use for this ride, giving a direct link to Churn Road and the route to the west.

Endurance rides are tests of horse fitness and stamina. To ensure high standards of welfare, horses are vetted before the ride, during the longer rides and at the end of all the rides after a 20-minute rest period to allow heart rates to recover. Grades are awarded based on the horse's heart rate, hydration and a trot up to ensure sound legs. It's a fine line, with a Grade 1 being the aim.

Riders returned home with lifetime memories of the Ridgeway and North Wessex Downs - and hoping the ride is scheduled again next year. Quotes from riders included:

'Perfect venue, fabulous route, excellent marking, glorious views, friendly people. This is definitely one of my very favourite rides. Well worth the trip up from Cornwall.' Angela Cron



Eva Reichardt and her horse Nemo enjoying the open country and views. Photo IJ Equine Photography.

'Thank you for a lovely ride, lots of memories came up today, was lovely to be back on that course.' Charlotte Robinson

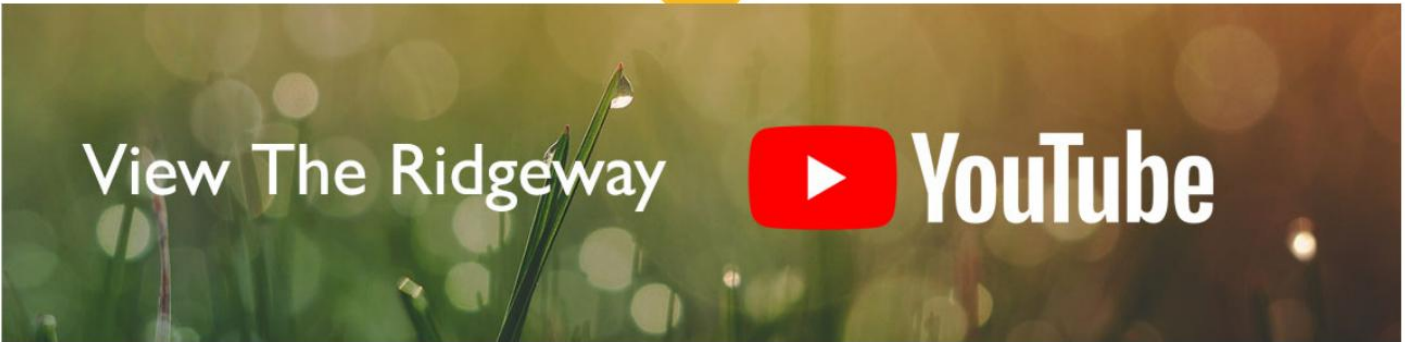
'Thank you for a great ride. Well marked route and beautiful countryside.' Caroline Ingham

The organisers donated a sum of money to the Ridgeway Partnership.

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.

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

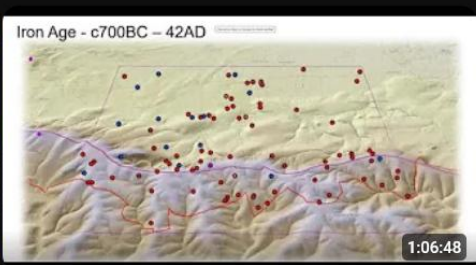
Subscribed

Scroll down to see these and other talks



Ridgeway Airscapes and other Landscapes

500 views · 3 months ago



A cup of tea with that slice of landscape?

344 views · 5 months ago



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

775 views · 7 months ago



It's behind you! Hedley Thorne's DJI Mavic 3 drone. Photos by Hedley

One of the videos in the Historic Ridgeway Series (see previous page) features landscape photographer [Hedley Thorne](#) and artist [Anna Dillon](#), who collaborate.



Whilst on his walk along the Great Chalk Way, John Tippetts saw this “unique and striking fingerpost at Barbury Castle, pointing towards Ogbourne St George.” He wonders who installed it. If you know, drop me a line at davecavanagh1000@gmail.com.



Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize

Theme: 'Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway'

18th and 19th April 2026

Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, SN7 7SE

Painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, ceramics, glass,
prose and poetry

Entry details on QR code and
ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2026

Closing date for submissions: **Friday 20th March 2026**



THE FRIENDS OF THE
RIDGEWAY



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 rules for the 2026 competition are on the following pages. [The entry form for the event](#) can be found [here](#). (If you have any trouble seeing the rules on our website, send an email to swireartsprize@gmail.com to request them.)

Artist Anna Dillon, pictured below, curates the exhibition, and the artworks are assessed by an independent panel of judges.



Anna Dillon at the 2025 Exhibition.
Photo Dave Cavanagh

Competition Requirements

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 dimensions and not more than 100kg in weight.
- photography 10"x8" (254mm x 204mm) and 20"x16" (508mm x 408mm) and mounted and can be framed
- writing, either poetry or prose a minimum 200 words and maximum of 5,000 words in English.

With the exception of prose, art works must be accompanied by a high resolution digital image no more than 15mgb for marketing and gallery purposes. All works submitted must be clearly labelled with the artist's name and contact details (telephone and email) on the back or base of the artwork or accompanying email submission. Art work submitted must be produced in the 24 months prior to closing date.

Copyright of any art work entered into the competition will remain with the originator. By entering competitors agree that any work submitted may be used by The Friends of The Ridgeway at their discretion for marketing and promotion of The Ridgeway but for no other purpose. Whenever submitted work is published by The Friends of The Ridgeway the originator will be credited. Failure to publish a credit due to error or oversight shall not be deemed a breach of this condition.

Who Can Take Part

Competition is open to all artists, both professional and amateur, of any age.

Entry Fee

A nominal entry fee **of £5.00 per entry/exhibit** will be payable to help cover the costs of the exhibition. Entry fees should be paid by Bank Transfer to Lloyds Bank: account name: The Friends of the Ridgeway, sort code: 30-99-50, account number: 76483660 **with SWIRE 26 and your surname as the reference.**

How to Enter

To enter, applicants should contact the Friends of the Ridgeway for an Entry Form by emailing swireartsprize@gmail.com, with entries returned to the same address by **March 28 2026**. Entrants may submit more than one work and in more than one category. Each work entered must be accompanied by a separate Entry Form. Entrants must complete the Entry Form and submit it with their artwork. ►

Submission, Exhibition, Judging and Collection

Art works are to be submitted to The Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, SN7 7RE **between 13:00 and 17:00 on April 16th or between 08:30 and 12 noon on April 17th** in order for exhibits to be curated. Judging will take place on April 17 2026 with winners announced at 3pm April 19th 2026

By submitting works, artists agree to the works being exhibited at the Uffington exhibition and online.

Artists are responsible for care and transport of the artworks. The Friends of the Ridgeway will take all reasonable care of art works entered but will not accept any liability for damage. Entrants are advised that all artwork submitted be insured by the artist.

Judging of entries will be carried out by a panel established by The Friends of The Ridgeway against the theme of ***'Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway'***

Each category will be judged separately. Winners and runners up and highly commended in each category will then be judged to determine the overall winner of The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize.

The judging criteria will be:

- How well does the piece respond to the ***'Shapes and Shadows of the Ridgeway'***
- The Technical Merit of the piece and associated artist technical ability.
- The originality of the piece.

The judging panel decisions shall be final and at their sole discretion, and their awards shall not be open to challenge.

Exhibited works will be available for collection at the close of the exhibition on Sunday **19 April after 16:00** and on **April 20th 08:30 to 12 midday**. Any works not collected from the exhibition will be returned to **Nathan Boyd, 16 Anson Drive, Watchfield, SN6 8DH** where they will be kept available for collection for two weeks after the close of the exhibition, *by appointment only*.

Selling Works

Please indicate if your works of art are for sale. Any works that are not for sale will be so marked in the catalogue. The arrangements for selling works will be:

- The Friends of the Ridgeway will act as agents for the artist
- The commission taken by the Friends of the Ridgeway will be 20% of the sale price
- If a buyer is unable to pay the full sale price at the exhibition, a deposit (of 20% of the sale price) will be accepted to reserve the work until payment can be made and then collection arranged
- Sold works will not be released until payment has been received
- Artists will be paid post sale by cash, BACS or Card payment.

Prizes

Each category winner will receive a keeper prize plus £100. The overall winner will receive a keeper prize plus £250 and a trophy.

Further information can be obtained from:

Nathan Boyd Prize Administrator on swireartsprize@gmail.com

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.

Below and on the next three pages are the Highly Commended exhibits in the Wall Art category.



February's Light by Ben Wilkinson



Drifer by Jeremy Morgan



Is that the End? by June Dent



High Summer on the Ridgeway by Christine Purdy

Just some of this summer's [Ridgeway Hall of Fame](#) members – who have walked the length of Trail, either in one or several trips. Our Trail brings a lot of joy. Text adapted from that of Mary Tebje on Facebook.



Brendon completed the Trail in 2021. This year, he has brought his son to walk the entire route. "An incredible 7 days spent up on the chalk with my 8-year-old son who I couldn't be more proud of" explained Brendon. "We are preparing for our Tour Du Mont Blanc trek later this month raising money for Daisy's Dream, Reverse Rett and Thames Valley Air Ambulance"

Linda and Adam, below, completed the Trail during an especially hot July. "We had a fantastic walk on the Ridgeway in the week it was blisteringly hot, and we loved the quiet and butterflies on the Marlborough Downs."



Digby and Leonie, above, thoroughly enjoyed long days of freedom with no phones or people. They walked from Ivinghoe Beacon to Overton Hill over 9 days in July and even managed to include the Grove Fields park run.

More of this year's joiners in the Ridgeway Hall of Fame

Deborah, Diana, Juliet and Kath walked the Trail over 10 days finishing on Ivinghoe Beacon. They found the route well signed with great accommodation. "We so enjoyed the views and historic sites, especially Wayland's Smithy on the Downs." We didn't put a foot wrong!



"The historic Iron Age and Neolithic sites, the views and mostly just spending 8 days walking with my son," were the highlight of this summer's adventure, said Shaun, who walked the Trail with his son, James. They had a fabulous time: "with varied scenery, from chalk paths and wide grassy tracks to fantastic beech woodland, we spotted skylarks, deer, rabbits, hares, and lots of red kites."



Steve and Lisa completed all 87 miles of our beautiful National Trail. Steve said they enjoyed the variety and the views. He says: "It was good to get away from it all, spending quality time together, and treading in the footsteps of many who have walked the Ridgeway before us."



Colin and Teddi completed the entire Ridgeway National Trail. "We walked the Ridgeway in 8 days from Ivinghoe Beacon to the sanctuary at Avebury...it was an amazing experience and would highly recommend this walk ... we loved it."