

# Friends of the Ridgeway

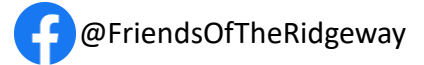
Winter  
2023





# Winter 2023 (January)

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



## Welcome

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



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

If you have an idea for an article on some aspect, including your own experience, of the Ridgeway or its environs, or on another section of the Great Chalk Way, do discuss it with the editor [davecavanagh1000@gmail.com](mailto:davecavanagh1000@gmail.com)

Got some great photos of the Ridgeway or nearby countryside, villages and events? Do share them with us.

Cover photo by Dave Cavanagh, on the Ridgeway, heading to Uffington Castle.

## SWIRE RIDGEWAY ARTS PRIZE AND EXHIBITION 2023

The call has gone out to artists to submit their works to the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. An exhibition of all the artwork will be held on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 April in Uffington.

The theme of the competition is 'Spirit of the Ridgeway', the aim of the competition being to bring the Ridgeway to life not only as a long-distance trail but as an artistic inspiration, and to show the Ridgeway, its history and environs, in all their aspects throughout all seasons. Artworks need not be confined to the Ridgeway National Trail. Rather, work inspired anywhere along the Great Chalk Way (GCW) may be submitted. The GCW, 360 miles in length, is a series of chalk ridges that link the Ridgeway southwards to the Dorset coast, at Lyme Regis, and northwards to the Norfolk coast at Holme-next-the-sea.

*Continued on next page*

## 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RIDGEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL

It was 50 years ago that the Ridgeway was recognised as a National Trail. The anniversary celebrations were launched on 6 January at the Sanctuary, Avebury, led by anniversary Patron Mary-Ann Ochota (pictured below, centre), broadcaster and anthropologist. The event was attended by representatives of the many organisations, including Friends of the Ridgeway, which contribute in so many ways to the Ridgeway. *More on page 11*



Photo Mary Tebje

# Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize and Exhibition 2023

**ARTISTS** have great leeway with regard to the way in which they express their feelings for the Ridgeway. There are separate classes for (a) wall art (including painting, drawing, etching, textile pictures and wall hangings, and mosaics), (b) sculpture (including ceramics), (c) photography (including digital art), and (d) writing (poetry or prose). There is an independent panel of judges from the art world. Each category winner receives a keeper prize plus £100. The overall winner receives a keeper prize plus £250 and a trophy.



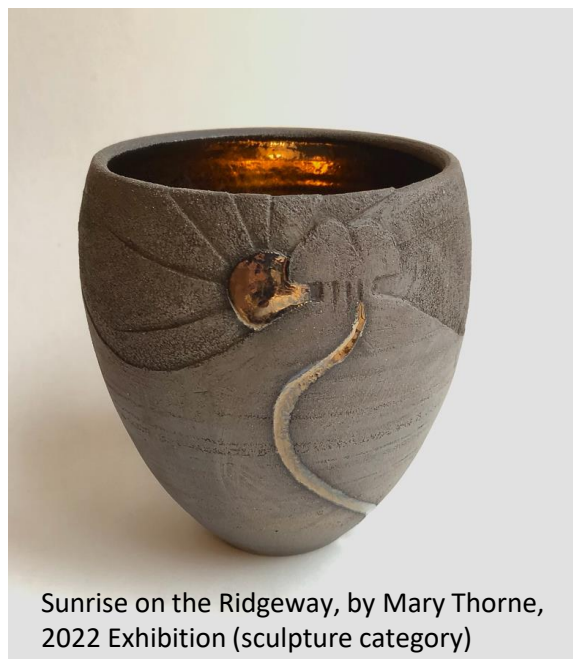
*C'mon daddy*, by David Gibbons, 2022 Exhibition  
(wall art category)

**THE SWIRE PRIZE** was initiated by Friends of the Ridgeway in 2017, after having received a generous donation from the Swire Charitable Trust. The venue for the exhibition, Uffington's village hall, is very apt as it looks out onto Whitehorse Hill, home of the Uffington White Horse, on the Lambourn Downs, with the Ridgeway on the skyline a little to the east.

Entrance to the Exhibition is free.



*Nightly grazing*, by Lin Kerr, 2022 Exhibition  
(wall art category)



*Sunrise on the Ridgeway*, by Mary Thorne,  
2022 Exhibition (sculpture category)



The exhibition, which will be in the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, at the top of High Street (SN7 7SE), will be open to the public – no charge - on Saturday 22 April and Sunday 23 April 2023 from 10:00am to 5:00pm. There is a large carpark. The Prize Giving will be at about 3.15 on the Sunday, after the short FoR AGM. Refreshments will be available throughout the weekend.

Those who cannot get to Uffington for the Exhibition will be able to view all the artworks on the Friends of the Ridgeway website by Saturday 22 April. One can also see last year's exhibits [online](#).



Patchwork View, by David Castle, 2022 Exhibition (photography category)



*Kite Fliers*, by Michele Green 2022 Exhibition (sculpture category)

## In the nick of Time

Wide track striped across high grass  
wedged between high ground and rolling  
plain  
edged and encrusted with time's memorials  
entrances to unremembered dead

Here the trees are vigilant  
slender pillars that stretch to the sky  
pulling down clouds, scratching at her blue  
with green leaves that whisper secrets

Murmurations swoop and glide over ancient  
earthworks  
crows dive-bomb a lonely buzzard  
yet more trees cluster dark on round barrows  
like spiky crowns or solemn guardians

They all glow in my mind, they call to me  
if space and time are truly multidimensional  
could we not walk another way round  
sidle through and back  
to meet our neighbours?

Where branches above them speak the wind  
flayed by rain, they lament  
a trunk uprooted, upended in disarray  
they must fetch new stones  
to appease the screeching air in the night

As they prepare to shape the sarsen  
murmurations swoop and glide  
crows dive-bomb a lonely eagle  
a hare watches, huge ears erect  
they respect and salute him

He stays to see us go

*Kim Whysall-Hammond*

2022 Exhibition (writing category)

Those wishing to submit artworks will find information on the Prize, competition rules and an entry form on our website [www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2023/](http://www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2023/)



The Ridgeway – the oldest road in Britain – historically, a trackway providing a reliable trading route from the Dorset coast along the chalk Downs to the Wash in Norfolk. Today it is not only the oldest road but is also a wonderful resource for all the communities that live along its route, where all can enjoy walking, riding or just being there.

The Friends of The Ridgeway established an annual arts competition and prize – the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize. An exhibition of all 4 categories will be held in **Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington** on Saturday and Sunday **22 – 23 April 2023** with an associated online exhibition. The aim of the competition is to bring The Ridgeway to life not only as a long-distance trail but also as an artistic inspiration, and to show The Ridgeway, its history and environs, in all their aspects throughout all seasons. The theme of the competition is *'Spirit of the Ridgeway'*.

The main points of the prize competition are:

- There will be separate classes for **painting, sculpture** (including ceramics and textiles), **photography and writing** (poetry or prose)
- Competition is open to all artists, amateur and professional, of any age
- Art work submitted must be produced in the 24 months prior to closing date;
- The results of the competition will be announced and prizes awarded at the Ridgeway Friends Day planned for **23 April 2023**;
- The closing date for entries will be one month prior to the competition, **23 March 2023**
- The full rules of the competition are given in a separate document.

All entrants will receive one year's membership of The Friends of The Ridgeway. Each category winner will receive a keeper prize plus £100. The overall winner will receive a keeper prize plus £250 and a trophy.

To enter applicants should contact The Friends of The Ridgeway. Entrants need to complete the Entry Form and submit it with their art work.

*Why not seek artistic inspiration from the Ridgeway and then, through the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize, share it with all those that love and value the Ridgeway?*

Further information can be obtained from either Jane Imbush 07739 644064 or Nathan Boyd 07568 707469, joint administrators Email: [swireartsprize@gmail.com](mailto:swireartsprize@gmail.com)



*Preserving the spirit of the Ridgeway*

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [The Ridgeway and Great Chalk Way](#) [Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize](#) [Contact Us](#) [Gallery](#)



- Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2023
- Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2022
- Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2021
- Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize 2020



I taught my dog to play the trumpet on the Tube. It only took an hour to get from Barking to Tooting.



# Secretary for the Friends of the Ridgeway

Dave Cavanagh, the Friends of the Ridgeway Secretary, is standing down at the 2023 AGM. He will assume the role of Publicity Officer, continuing to produce the newsletter, sending out press releases and maintaining our social media posts. Consequently the Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) need to recruit a volunteer to be Secretary.

## DESCRIPTION

The Secretary provides help and support to the Chair and the Trustees and is a key role and an office-holder among the FoR charity trustees. The Secretary is responsible for ensuring the smooth administration of the FoR and Charity Commission compliance. The Secretary should ensure that Trustee meeting procedures are both followed and regularly reviewed. The Chair and Trustees will look to the Secretary for guidance on what their responsibilities are under the constitution and their individual responsibilities to which they are subject and on how these responsibilities should be discharged.

## EXPERIENCE

- Previous secretarial or general administration
- An eye for detail
- Good planning skills
- Good communication skills



## COMMITMENT

We have 4 board meetings a year plus an AGM. Board meetings are normally held at the Court Hill Centre, close to the Ridgeway above Wantage, and last around 2 hours.

## Interested or need further Information?

Please contact the Secretary Dave Cavanagh at

[davecavanagh1000@gmail.com](mailto:davecavanagh1000@gmail.com)

or the Chair Michael Lewington at

[michallemwington@hotmail.com](mailto:michallemwington@hotmail.com)

A man went into a doctor's and said "I think I'm a moth."  
The doctor replied "I'm a GP, the psychiatrist is in the room next door."  
Man says "Yes I know. But your light was on."

# Continuing towards a Ridgeway free of unnecessary vehicles

Dave Cavanagh

**WE'VE COME A LONG WAY** since the bad old days when the surface of the Ridgeway was transformed into a quagmire by cars and motor cycles. There is still more to do. The recently formed National Trails UK may be the vehicle to take us to the end of the road: a complete ban on unnecessary motor vehicles, year-round, along the whole length of the Ridgeway.

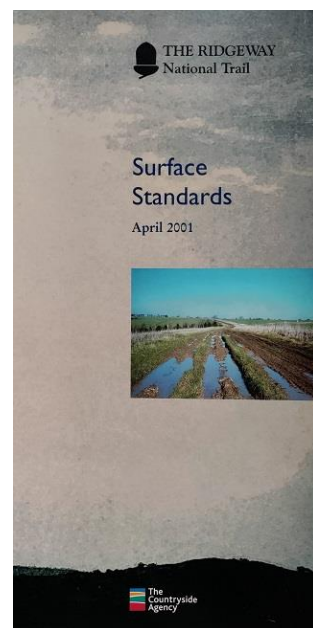
**AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT** in 2006<sup>a</sup> resulted in unnecessary - recreational - vehicles (principally 4 x 4s and motor cycles) being banned year-round from the Ridgeway in Oxfordshire. At that time, unlike the Trail in Oxfordshire, parts of the Ridgeway in Wiltshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire had the status 'byway open to all traffic (BOAT)', with the consequence that they were immune from the Act and remain BOATs to this day. There continues to be opposition from organisations representing recreational motor vehicle users, which has prevented year-round bans. But, credit where credit's due: after campaigning by Friends of the Ridgeway (FoR) and others, the respective Council and Borough authorities closed these BOATs to unnecessary motor vehicles for half the year (1 October to 30 April in most cases) when damage to the surface was greatest.

**THAT SAID** FoR's ambition for a Ridgeway free of unnecessary motor vehicles is not solely related to the state of the surface, important though that is. Part of our mission for the Ridgeway is "to enable quiet enjoyment of its many special features", with one of our objectives being "for the Ridgeway to be a peaceful, beautiful, safe amenity for the public along its whole length." Unnecessary vehicles on the Ridgeway are not compatible with this.



Gore Hill, where the Ridgeway goes under the A34, 2004. Photo Ian Ritchie

**AND LET'S NOT FORGET** that the Ridgeway is a National Trail. As The Countryside Agency (a forerunner of today's Natural England) wrote in 2001<sup>b</sup> "Standards for National Trails are expected to be higher than for other Rights of Way, because of their higher national profile and visitor use. Above all, National Trails should offer the highest quality in terms of the scenery through which the Trails pass and in the standard of their management, maintenance and marketing."



*Continued ...*

**REFLECTING THIS**, Natural England published its vision for the National Trails in 2013<sup>c</sup>. One of the factors, it said, that set these routes apart from other long distance promoted trails is that “they have national quality standards.” These quality standards are to “enable as many people as possible to enjoy a wide variety of *walking and riding experiences* [my emphasis] along National Trails and through the English landscape.” Furthermore they add “Ensuring user enjoyment of the Trails is our main focus: all of the National Trails can be completed *on foot and several can also be used by horse riders and cyclists.* [my emphasis]”

## National Trails UK to the rescue?

**NATURAL ENGLAND** does have statutory powers to “amend existing ones [Trails]”. So, how can we persuade Natural England to amend the Ridgeway – by banning unnecessary vehicles – using its statutory powers? It seems unlikely that overtures from the Ridgeway Partnership alone (the body recognised by Natural England for managing the Ridgeway, and of which the Friends of the Ridgeway are represented on the board and committees) would be sufficient. Recently the Partnerships of all the National Trails in the UK got together to form the charity National Trails UK (NTUK). The Ridgeway Partnership’s Chair, Simon Kearey, is a trustee of NTUK. It is hoped that this umbrella organisation will have more clout than any of the Trail Partnerships on their own. It will deliver its charitable objects “through advocacy, liaising with government and working with relevant departments on long-term policy and strategy for the National Trails.”

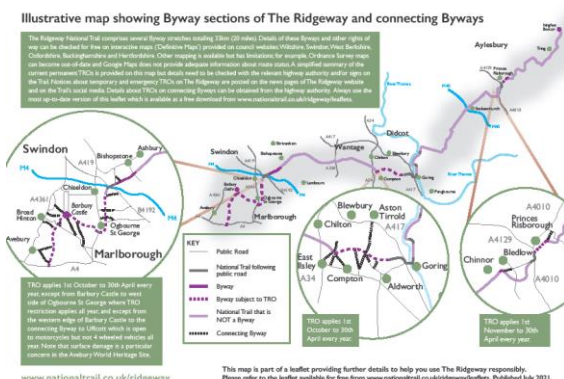
	Easily accessible routes. Routes matched to terrain and landscape.	A high quality of path infrastructure including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures are always safe, comfortable, easy and convenient to use.</li> <li>Consistent high quality design, style and use of materials to suit the character of the local landscape with historical features maintained where possible.</li> </ul>	
Standards and Indices	<b>KI: visitor satisfaction</b>  Connection of the trail with the landscape, nature and history.  Friendly website with accurate and up to date information providing feedback.	<b>**KPI: informative website**</b>  Good range of accommodation in type and price.  Route design and	unobtrusive way marking and destination signage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surfaces in good condition and appropriate to the geology and soils over which the trail passes.</li> <li>Readily passable routes free from undergrowth and overhanging vegetation.</li> </ul>
			Sense of and own achieved local connectivity  Trail participation
Quality Standards	route design and development of associated routes is responsive to changes in use and to new uses.  <b>KI: level and type use of the trail</b>  <b>KI: awareness of</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe road and rail crossings.</li> </ul> <b>**KPI: trail condition**</b>  Presumption of routes being traffic free.  Supporting local services (e.g. ferry crossings, transport links, taps) are	

**IN MEETINGS** of the Ridgeway Partnership Board we in FoR have argued in favour of escalating the Ridgeway’s motor traffic problem up to NTUK, with a view to it lobbying government. As a first step, the Ridgeway Partnership’s Trail Officer will contact her counterparts to find out which other Trails have sections of ‘byways open to all traffic’, and then seek to work in concert with them.

<sup>a</sup>Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

<sup>b</sup>The Ridgeway National Trail. Surface Standards (April 2001). Published by The Countryside Agency.

<sup>c</sup>The New deal. Management of National Trails in England from April 2013.. Published by Natural England



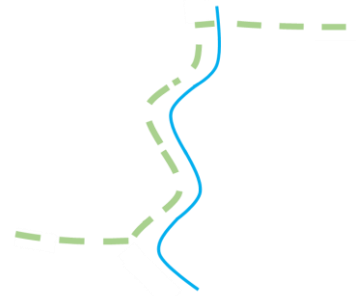
The Ridgeway Partnership has produced a leaflet that shows which sections of the Ridgeway are byways.

[https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/](https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/)





ONLY STAR WARS FANS...SEE IT.



# Mind the Gap

Films you might think you watched whilst dozing after eating too much over Christmas

- The Malteser Falcon
- Out of Paprika
- Donald Bombay Duck
- Supercalifragilisticexpialidonus
- Lord of the Onion Rings



Likewise muppets fans

A policeman stops a naked man carrying a naked woman on his back.

“What’s all this, then?”

“I’m going to a fancy dress party, as a snail.”

“Who’s that on your back?”

“That’s Michelle”

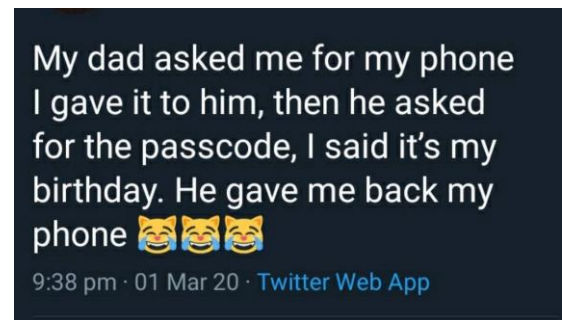


Took all day yesterday but finally it’s finished. A pallet I made from an old coffee table...



8:13 am · 12 Jun 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

784 Retweets 80 Quote Tweets 11.9K Likes



My dad asked me for my phone I gave it to him, then he asked for the passcode, I said it’s my birthday. He gave me back my phone 🐱🐱🐱

9:38 pm · 01 Mar 20 · Twitter Web App



FLIP INSIDE OUT  
AND HAND WASH  
COLD WATER  
SO YOU DON'T  
RUIN IT LIKE  
EVERYTHING ELSE  
IN YOUR LIFE  
RN# 148916

# Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Friends of the Ridgeway 2023

The AGM will be held at 15:00 on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 in Uffington village hall (the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall). This is the same weekend as the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize Exhibition.

## AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence and Proxies
- 2 Minutes of the 2022 AGM held in Uffington on Sunday 3 April 2022
- 3 Annual Report
- 4 Treasurer's Report & Accounts
- 5 Election of President & Vice-Presidents
- 6 Election of Executive Committee, Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.
- 7 Appointment of Independent Examiner

Anyone wishing to stand for election to the Executive Committee should inform the Secretary ([davecavanagh1000@gmail.com](mailto:davecavanagh1000@gmail.com)) no later than 14 days before the date of the AGM i.e. by 8 April.

The prize-giving of the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize will follow the AGM.



# See the Ridgeway through new eyes

## #RidgewaySpotter

Dave Cavanagh

THE WAY IN WHICH each of us perceives the Ridgeway, or any other trail for that matter, when we are on it depends on context: are we solo or with a group; are we preoccupied or light-hearted; is it hot, cold or just right; is it dry, foggy, raining, sleeting or snowing; is the sky blue or grey; are we in a hurry or ambling? Proximity counts, too; I suspect that many of us are very familiar with a particular section of the Ridgeway, and the remainder of the Ridgeway hardly at all. My 'beat' lies between Bishopstone, on the eastern edge of Wiltshire, and the A34 in Oxfordshire. There is a danger that familiarity makes us less observant. With that in mind, you might want to embrace our #Ridgeway Spotter activity.

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### What exactly is #RidgewaySpotter?

THE ESSENCE of #RidgewaySpotter is that each month we shall encourage people via social media to look for a particular feature of the Ridgeway and to post their photographs on social media with the hashtag #RidgewaySpotter. We have a guide that you can [download](#). This has examples of what you might look out for, with links to additional information. We shall be urging people to photograph what they find and to use their favourite social media app – with the hashtag #RidgewaySpotter - to show their photos to friends, family and others. We shall be on the lookout for posts with #RidgewaySpotter in them so that we can respond to them and share them to the Friends Facebook page and elsewhere.

THE ACTIVITY was conceived by Mike Lewington, Chair, Friends of the Ridgeway, as one of our contributions to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the official opening of the Ridgeway National Trail on Coombe Hill, Buckinghamshire in 1973. We produced 12 activities and then passed them to Sarah Wright and Mary Tebje of the Trail Partnership. Together they developed our basic list of activities into something much more substantial and, with funding from FoR, arranged for a guide to be designed professionally, which you can download [online](#).



Cover of the [Ridgeway Spotter guide](#), showing Mary-Ann Ochota, Patron of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ridgeway National Trail

**YOU CAN** also get the #RidgewaySpotter guide from the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary page on the Ridgeway National Trail's website

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/ridgeway\\_anniversary2023/](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/ridgeway_anniversary2023/)



Join Chewbacca, Churchill, Mary-Ann Ochota, King Alfred and Merlin in celebrations on the Trail

2023 is the year to discover The Ridgeway's famous people and places and influence its future

#### Further information

**Anniversary events and materials**

Anniversary events and materials

Everyone is invited to celebrate The Ridgeway's anniversary and a range of events and new free materials will be launched in 2023. The weekly Ridgeway Top 50 and monthly #RidgewaySpotter challenge will be free and easy ways for the public to discover what is special about the Trail.

What events are taking place, e.g. #RidgewaySpotter monthly challenge?

There will be special events around the Trail and on social media throughout the year from January to December, as well as the usual annual sporting and fundraising events. So that everyone can get involved, some events can be done in your own time and are self-led - this includes a free monthly challenge designed by Friends of the Ridgeway called #RidgewaySpotter.

**MIKE LEWINGTON** initially had in mind that the Ridgeway Spotter activity would be for families with young children, schools, scouts and the like. In fact, the activity is a bit like pantomime: good for everyone. We encourage everyone to focus on a given month's activity, to look a bit more keenly at what is around you. And to photograph what you see, and post your best shots on social media with the hashtag #RidgewaySpotter.

**WE ARE VERY FORTUNATE** to have Wendy Tobitt, a Life Member of FoR, to promote #RidgewaySpotter to a wide audience. Wendy is experienced in PR and Communications and puts this to good use as a volunteer with the Thames Path National Trail. She has very kindly offered to drive our social media forward for the 50th Anniversary.

Wendy will be putting #RidgewaySpotter posts on the FoR Facebook page each Wednesday

Things can be spotted and photographed not only on the Ridgeway itself (or in the sky above) but also when you are looking at the surrounding countryside from it and, indeed, when you are looking towards the Ridgeway from further afield. In other words, things can be spotted and photographed within the Ridgeway corridor. Essentially the corridor extends from the Ridgeway to nearby villages.

evening throughout 2023, to encourage people to get out there and look for things that they might previously have overlooked or taken for granted. We shall be using #RidgewaySpotter to follow people who embrace our activity. We can then share some of their posts to the FoR Facebook page and to this newsletter, so that we can all enjoy them.

How to post your photos for #RidgewaySpotter.

Simply post your photos using whichever social media app suits you. It is important to include #RidgewaySpotter in your posts. We can then search online for #RidgewaySpotter posts and share them to the Friends Facebook page, and in our newsletters. Don't forget to say where you were when you took the photos.





# JANUARY

## STONE STORIES

WINTER IS THE PERFECT TIME TO LOOK FOR STONES WHILST NATURE IS QUIET AND FADED.

Can you see different materials used in buildings and monuments along the Trail? What words are carved into memorial stones? Can you see patches of chalk shining white and can you imagine the sea creatures which gave rise to flints? Does anyone know the myths and legends linked to sarsen stones along The Ridgeway?

Find out about chalk, flints and sarsen stones in this leaflet about The Ridgeway's geology.

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

Watch this Historic England video to see how stones were used to create the special monuments around Avebury.

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

Discover a famous Ridgeway sarsen stone and its legends:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

Use this guide to look for different stones traditionally used in buildings around the North Wessex Downs area.

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

**THE RIDGEWAY**  
NATIONAL TRAIL

Share your photos on social media #RidgewaySpotter



# FEBRUARY

## SMALL SIGNS OF CHANGE

THIS IS THE MONTH WHEN NATURE STARTS TO STIR AND NATURE'S TIMINGS ARE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT WITH CLIMATE CHANGE.

Snowdrops, lesser celandines and hazel trees are the earliest to flower, followed by buds and leaves on hawthorn and elder - where and on what date can you find any of these? Now check the skies for change - any birds, planes or vapour trails? Are the clouds changing colour and shape and can you see fantastic beasts and faces?

Use this calendar to see what plants and wildlife to keep an eye on each month:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

This BBC Cloud Spotters Guide shows photos of 10 different types of clouds:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

Have fun with clouds with these inspiring examples from artist Martin Fejoo:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

Watch this video 'A year in the life of a hazel tree' by the Woodland Trust.

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)



Hackpen skies



**THE RIDGEWAY**  
NATIONAL TRAIL

Share your photos on social media #RidgewaySpotter

If you take some good shots on and near the Ridgeway of things other than those in a given month's Spotter activity, put them on social media anyway, with the hashtag #RidgewaySpotter, so that we can find them and share them.

- Here are the other monthly #RidgewaySpotter activities:
- April – SINGING RIDGEWAY
  - May – LOOK FOR WHITE
  - June – THAT'S OLD!
  - July – WINGED CREATURES
  - August – RAINBOW RIDGEWAY wild flowers
  - September – WILD HARVEST berries etc.
  - October – DOWN TO EARTH e.g. autumn leaves, fungi
  - November – SHAPE OF THE LAND e.g. trig points, reading maps, making maps, earthworks, human activity
  - December – WINTER SECRETS Bark, animal tracks, magical winter scenes, pubs, museums
- Enjoy!



# MARCH

## LOOK FOR YELLOW

IF YOU LOOK CAREFULLY, THERE ARE LOTS OF COLOURS ALONGSIDE THE RIDGEWAY AND SPRING IS A TIME FOR OPTIMISTIC YELLOW!

How many different yellow things can you see on the Trail and in the distance? What is the most surprising or unusual yellow thing you can find? Are there yellows in the sunrise and sunset? Don't look directly at the sun!



Lesser Celandines are a type of buttercup found in woods and hedgerows.

Here are some free monthly photo guides to help you identify flowers at different times of the year:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

The Natural History Museum lists a Top 10 for yellow in nature around the world, including birds and insects:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

If you find litter on your hunt for yellow and want to help us address the problem, contact the Ridgeway Officer and read this:

[FIND OUT MORE ->](#)

**THE RIDGEWAY**  
NATIONAL TRAIL

Share your photos on social media #RidgewaySpotter

Woodwork teacher: what are you making?  
 Pupil: it's a portable, sir  
 Teacher: a portable what?  
 Pupil: I don't know, I've only made the handles.



# Ridgeway riding

## Janice Bridger

**THE RIDGEWAY**, described as the oldest road in Britain, has been used by man and beast for millennia. This year sees the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ridgeway as a National Trail, designated as a trail for recreation rather than long distance travel. But man and beast still value this ancient highway today. Today's horse riders and horse drawn carriage drivers appreciate the Ridgeway's quiet atmosphere and the connections it gives to miles of other ancient trackways without having to use tarmac roads carrying motor traffic with the risks that entails.

**HORSE RIDERS** and horse drawn carriage drivers use the Ridgeway National Trail in a number of ways. Many use it to explore and enjoy the wonderful countryside of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), an area many believe is best appreciated from the back of a horse. There is something quite satisfying to be up on the downs above Compton and see the traffic hurtling along, or not as the case may be, on the A34 in the distance.

**BUT** the Ridgeway National Trail offers more challenges to those who want to test the

The Ridgeway, as seen from the back of a horse.  
By permission of Ros Jones.



partnership with their horse. Between Avebury and Streatley, the Trail provides a good starter ride for anyone who wants to test their ability to cover longer distances. The Trail is well signed so little map reading is required to find the correct route. It has only a few gates and is away from tarmac roads for most of its length. The surfaces are reasonable although sections are stoney or chalky and there is some vehicle rutting which does need careful riding. It is not totally traffic-free, as National Trails were supposed to be, as a fair bit of it is classified as byway open to all traffic (BOAT). In 2019, Kirsty Adams, Eleanor and James (then aged 11 and 8 years) with their grandfather on his bike rode 43.5 miles over 3 days raising £300 for Cancer Research UK as can be seen on their video 'Ridgeway Ride 2019' on YouTube: a great sense of achievement but especially when you are aged 11 and 8!

Kirsty Adams, Eleanor, James and grandad on their Ridgeway adventure in 2019: Eleanor's and James's first multi-day ride. By permission of Kirsty Adams.





**FOR THOSE WHO ENJOY** riding longer distances, Endurance rides organized by Endurance GB and its subgroups give the opportunity to test the fitness of horse and rider a bit more while enjoying the views. As in previous years, this year, the Cotswold Endurance group held two rides starting on the Ridgeway National Trail and using the connecting byways and bridleways. The first, the Halloween ride, saw riders, several dressed in costumes suitable for Halloween, ride a route of over 20 kilometres using the tracks starting from the Ridgeway at Bury Down car park near West Ilsley. The second, the Mince Pie ride before Christmas, started from the car park at Barbury Castle and once again saw riders in appropriate dress for the season exploring and enjoying what the Ridgeway and the North Wessex Downs AONB has to offer.



Ros Jones and her horse Monkey on the Endurance Halloween ride suitably dressed as a mounted archer. Ros competes in mounted archery competitions – but not on the Ridgeway! By permission of Ros Jones.

**A QUICK LOOK** at the Ordnance survey map shows that the Ridgeway is a spine running west to east with many other ancient trackways connecting to it, forming an intricate network of public trackways. These paths offer another challenge for horse riders and are made use of in the equestrian sport of Trec which originated in France. Whereas for Endurance rides, riders follow a marked route and little map reading is required, in Trec accurate map reading is the key skill required. At an event held in May from Old Eagle, Rockley, north of Marlborough and run by the Moonrakers and

South Trec club, over 60 riders came from far and wide to pit their skills against the traceur who designs routes of various lengths and complexity. Following a route carefully copied from a master map, competitors navigated their way for this orienteering phase to the Herepath towards Avebury following various twists and turns, with some horses regarding the Grey Wethers or Sarsen Stones with great suspicion, picking up the Ridgeway National Trail at Monkton Down, where the Ridgeway was more rutted than ideal for horses, and returning down the steep and stoney bridleway to Temple Bottom and back to Rockley.



Janet Gordon and Janice Bridger approaching the first check point on the Trec ride from Old Eagle in May. They achieved a score for the orienteering phase of 208. Sarah Jane Bullock Photography.

*continued ...*

**RIDERS START** with 240 points and points are deducted if they miss a checkpoint or take the wrong route into it, miss a ticket or go faster or slower than the speeds set by the traceur. Very rarely, riders may finish a ride with the 240 points but it is not unknown for riders to finish with negative points having missed checkpoints and lost their way! These events are often two-day events and riders enjoy discussing the route and the mistakes they may have made over a meal and a glass of wine on the Saturday evening before the second day when their horses' obedience and handiness is further tested over 16 varied obstacles.

**SO, THE RIDGEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL**, the surrounding countryside and the ancient trackways connecting to it continue to serve man and beast well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century although not for its original purpose of providing safe passage for man and beast. A picture that stays in my mind is of a ride on the Ridgeway at Several Down above East Ilsley. Looking to the south, my companion asked 'What's that over there?' 'Stationary traffic on the A34', I replied. We were only a mile or so away but we were in a different world - on the Ridgeway National Trail.

A reminder that in our [summer 2022 issue](#), Gina Hemmings described her journey on horseback on the Wessex Ridgeway.

Gina started off with Anthony Burton's guide 'The Wessex Ridgeway', published in 1999 by Aurum Press, copies of which can be purchased second-hand online. Life Member Wayne Smith reckons that to be the best book on the Wessex Ridgeway. Wayne tells me that he "walked with Tony in 2005 for his Arum Press Ridgeway National Trail Guide, and he was invited to speak at the Friends of the Ridgeway AGM in 2008."

In the [autumn 2022 issue](#) of our newsletter Tim Lewis comments on the guides that he used when he walked the Wessex Ridgeway last year.

Police are looking for man who refuses to update his pdf reader. He is described as mid-30s with dark hair and has no fixed adobe.



Someone's missed the point

 **Matthew Perret**  
@MattPerret

It's happened again



7:37 am · 5 Jul 2022 · Twitter Web App

455 Retweets 19 Quote Tweets 4,446 Likes



# Volunteer activity in the first quarter

THE THAMES PATH AND RIDGEWAY VOLUNTEERS will be out in most weeks of January, February and March. Regarding the Ridgeway (RW), most of the tasks involve hardware – installing waymarker and finger posts, display boards, removing and installing kissing gates, even installing a people counter. In addition there will be some Hard Vegetation Clearance (HVC) e.g. scrub and brambles. In addition the volunteers will be in the workshop twice a month, e.g. servicing machines and tools and preparing marker posts.

## January

RW - HVC & install people counter (Bucks) Aldbury Nowers near Tring

RW - HVC & Waymarker posts (Bucks) Ivinghoe Beacon

RW – Install Fingerpost, waymarkers & map board (Bucks) Ivinghoe Beacon

RW – remove old metal kissing gate (Bucks) Bledlow cum Saunderton

RW – install wooden kissing gate (Bucks) Bledlow cum Saunderton

RW – HVC (Oxon) Old Kiln Lakes, near Chinnor

## February

RW – HVC & install fingerpost (Bucks) Lee Road near Princes Risborough

RW – install fingerposts (Wilts) Barbury Castle

RW - removing old kissing gate (Oxon) Little Stoke



For Chair Mike Lewington looking at some of the power tools used for hard vegetation clearance. Photo Dave Cavanagh

RW – install metal kissing gate (Oxon) Grim's Ditch

## March

RW – move map/info board (Bucks) Kingston Hill

RW – install fingerpost & waymarkers (Oxon) Wantage Monument and Scutchamer

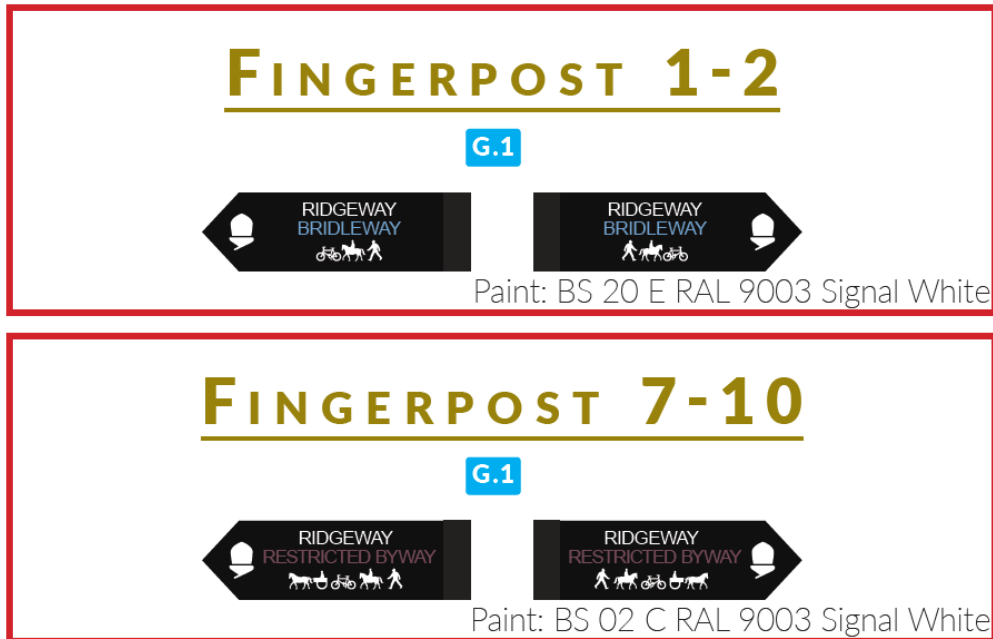
RW – Move fingerpost, install waymarker & repair fingerposts (Berks) Churn Road near Compton



The Volunteers at Waylands Smithy, January 2022. Photo Lucy Duerdoth.

# Fundraising by the Ridgeway Partnership

SO MUCH could be done to improve the experience of being on the Ridgeway but the Ridgeway Partnership's income from Natural England only goes so far. It is down to Ridgeway Officer (RO) Sarah Wright to raise additional funds from elsewhere. Here's where some of the money came from in 2022.



**THREE RIDGEWAY** event organisers had donated £2,303 up to October: Uptonogood cycling event £100; Autumn 100 run £203; Race to the Stones ultra-marathon £2000. This money was used to pay for the design of the new Ridgeway visitor information [leaflet](#).

**THE RO SECURED** a grant from Natural England to progress the conservation work at Bury Down. This involves cut-and-collect trials; investigation of sustainable disposal of cuttings (Ecotricity gas-from-grass facility near Reading and Laverstoke Park Farm composting site in Hampshire), and sowing yellow rattle to reduce vigour of grasses.

**THE RO HAS SECURED** match funding for a mounting block on the Ridgeway Riding Route near Chequers in Buckinghamshire from the British Horse Society.

## Financial support from Friends of the Ridgeway

**FOR IS PART-FUNDING**, with Natural England, the people counter at Aldbury Nowers near the northern terminus of the Ridgeway.

**NATURAL ENGLAND** are providing up to just under £12,000 per year for three years to the Ridgeway Partnership to deliver improved accessibility projects. This is on a match funding basis, which means that approximately £4K has to be raised elsewhere in order to leverage the £12K. On this basis FoR has contributed to the cost of recycled plastic finger arms that the volunteers will be attaching to fingerposts on the Ridgeway. As you can see from the illustration, the new finger posts make it clear who can use a given stretch of the Ridgeway.

**HISTORIC ENGLAND** continues to invite an application to fund 80% of the cost of the Historic Ridgeway project, which includes two project staff. FoR and North Wessex Downs have confirmed their contributions to the project but match funding is outstanding for years 2 and 3.

**FOR HAS** also paid for the cost of the design of the #RidgewaySpotter guide for the 50th anniversary year of the Ridgeway National Trail.



# The Ridgeway Top 50

The Ridgeway Top 50 reveals the oldest monument, the rarest flower, the famous writers, the mysterious druids and more.



Fifty stories of fact and fiction to inspire visits along The Ridgeway

**CREATED BY** Sarah Wright and Mary Tebje of the Ridgeway Partnership, and launched by Mary-Ann Ochota on social media on New Year's Day 2023, the Ridgeway Top 50 is a year-long treasure hunt revealing the rich history, wildlife, art, farming, sport and landmarks of The Ridgeway. It is designed to offer something new and free for everyone to enjoy online and to inspire ideas for days out and longer trips to the Trail during 2023 and beyond.

**EACH WEEK** of 2023 will reveal a new entry to build a complete set of 50 stories of fact

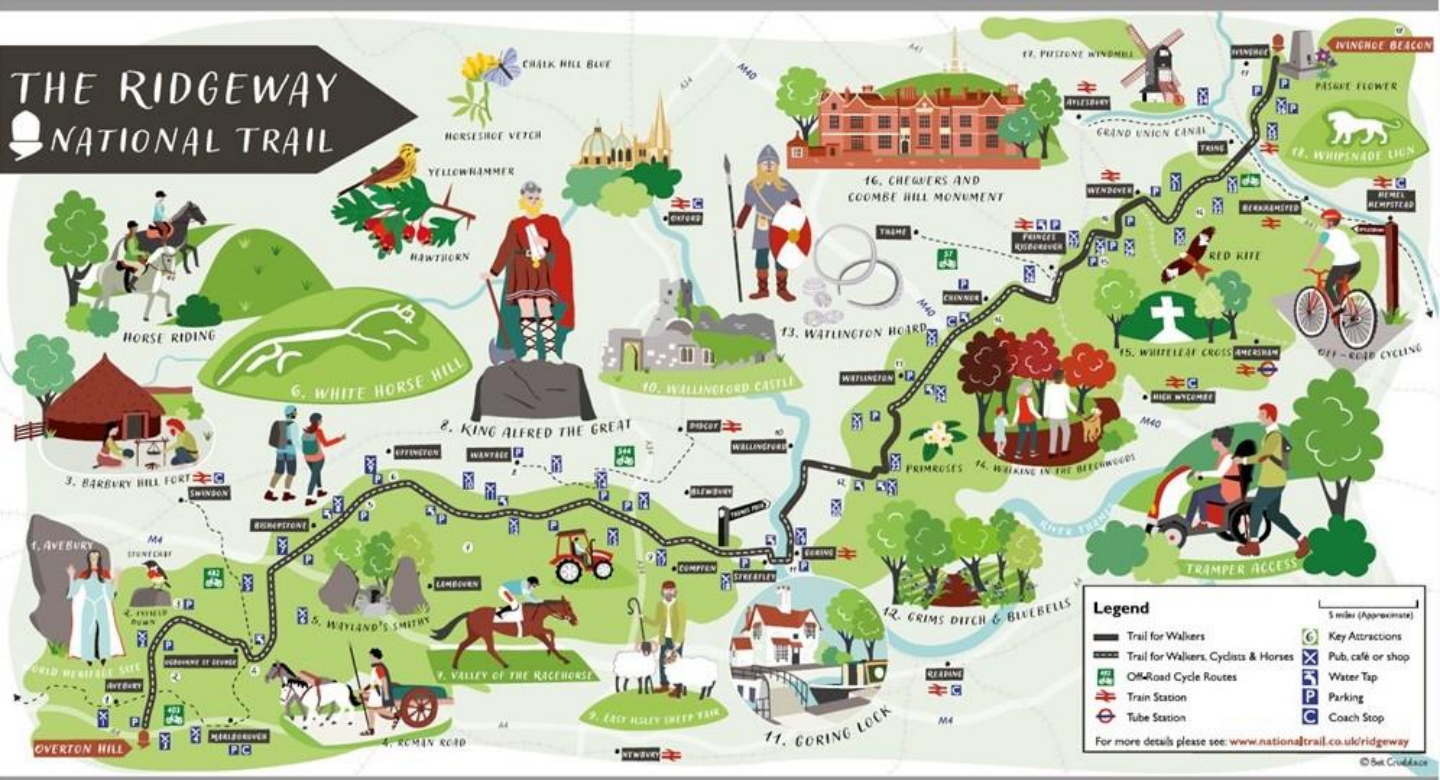
and fiction linked to places to visit, to experience the Top 50 first-hand. Each entry is published in conjunction with a social media post every Sunday at 7pm from 8th January to 31st December 2023 on The Ridgeway National Trail's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. You are invited to follow the Ridgeway Top 50 using the hashtag #Ridgeway50. Please share your thoughts and experiences of the Top 50 using the hashtag #Ridgeway50 to create a Ridgeway community Top 50 as a memento of the 50th anniversary.

The Top 50 may also stimulate ideas about what is important for The Ridgeway's future. Bearing in mind topics such as the climate crisis, wellbeing, development and inclusion, everyone is invited to share their thoughts under the hashtag #Ridgeway50 on social media or by email to shape the Ridgeway Future 50 vision.

My wife asked 'What are you doing today?' I said "Nothing." to which she replied "You did that yesterday." I said "I wasn't finished."



# THE RIDGEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL



## Ridgeway National Trail visitor information leaflet

The official leaflet and map for the Ridgeway National Trail was published in January 2023. It is full of information, including an outline of history along the Ridgeway, and places to eat, drink and sleep near the Trail.

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en\\_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/leaflets/)

I used to live hand to mouth. Do you know what has changed my life? Cutlery. Tim Vine at the Edinburgh Festival 2022.

### THE RIDGEWAY NATIONAL TRAIL

Adventures for all ages, not just King Alfred

Before Homo sapiens

**Neolithic**

**Bronze Age**

**Iron Age**

**Roman**

**Anglo-Saxon**

**Norman**

**Medieval**

**Stuart**

**Georgian**

**Victorian**

**World War II**

**Post WWII**

**Inter-war years**

Follow the acorn with confidence

Be a caring, friendly visitor

Take it easy or take on a challenge!

Getting to The Ridgeway

Free to visit and always open, The Ridgeway National Trail is an 87 mile signposted, off-road trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to explore scenic countryside and enjoy outdoor exercise.

**The Ridgeway National Trail**

Places to visit as you travel along the Ridgeway

**The Ridgeway Timeline**

**Adventure to suit you, friends and family**

**Eat, drink, sleep**

**Year-round, all-weather**

1. Avebury

2. White Horse Hill

3. King Alfred the Great

4. Willingford Castle

5. Watlington Hoard

6. Whiteloft Cross

7. Grim's Ditch & Bivelbells

8. Goring Lock

9. Chequers and Combe Hill Monument

10. Stonehenge