



News for everyone who enjoys and cares for The Ridgeway

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Better connected Bishopstone



Welcoming visitors to Bishopstone

Front right to left: Robert Buckland MP for South Swindon, Sarah Wright from National Trails, Rosemary Boot of Cheney Thatch B&B, Andy Greenhalgh for Bishopstone Parish Council & John Cuthbertson for Disabled Ramblers.

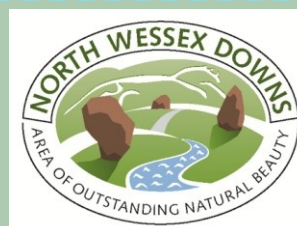
New signs now help to connect the pretty thatched village of Bishopstone, near Swindon, to The Ridgeway. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders on the Trail can follow easy-to-read signs all the way into the village centre and vice versa.

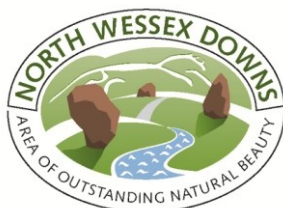
A specially designed, discrete plaque on the Trail displays information about what is on offer in Bishopstone, including places to eat, drink and sleep and also a bus stop. A map of the link route and details about the local pub and more can be found on The Ridgeway's website at :

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/bishopstone

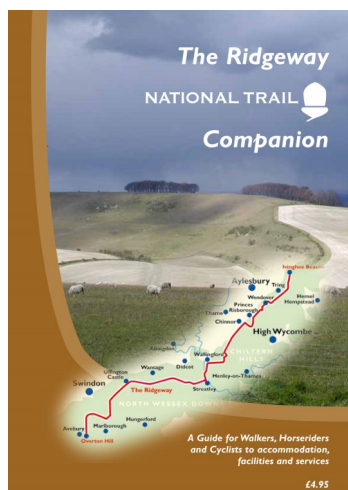
At a gathering to celebrate the first of many 'strategic links' planned for settlements along The Ridgeway, Ian Ritchie, Chair of The Ridgeway Partnership, said "Every year, thousands of people enjoy using The Ridgeway and don't realise what is on offer just off the Trail. The new signs give people confidence to explore the area and draw them to local pubs, shops and visitor attractions."

This project was made possible by a grant from the North Wessex Downs AONB. Signs are planned in early 2018 at Compton (West Berkshire), Ogbourne St George (Wiltshire) and Wantage (Oxfordshire).



[illegible]

The Chilterns
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



Plan your day visit or holiday to The Ridgeway using our interactive online map: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway> Our website also lists events along the Trail and there are circular walks and rides leaflets to download for free.

The Ridgeway Companion guide lists details of campsites, B&Bs, hotels, self-catering cottages and inns around the area. Other useful contacts, such as taxis, hospitals, vets, are provided as well as car park locations. It costs £4.95 and is available from our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

New style certificate for The Ridgeway!

Cyclists and horse riders

Have you ridden all the miles of The Ridgeway between Streatley-on-Thames and Overton Hill/Avebury?

Claim a certificate via our website!



Walkers

Have you walked all the miles of The Ridgeway between Ivinghoe Beacon and Overton Hill/Avebury?

Claim a certificate via our website!

Living Ridgeway

Claim a free Ridgeway completion certificate from the National Trails website or order a new style glossy certificate which is posted to you for £5 plus delivery:

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/completion-certificate

To claim an award from the Long Distance Walking Association for completing 5 National Trails or more (walkers only), see the charity's website for details and to obtain a 'NT Claim Form' which needs to be completed and sent to the Association:

www.ldwa.org.uk/nationaltrails/nationaltrails.php

Get yourself into the record books!

Reaching the end of a long walk or ride brings relief, satisfaction, exhaustion, euphoria...! After all the hard work, some people like to record their achievement.

Since 2009, the Long Distance Walking Association has offered awards to people who have completed five or more National Trails in the UK. There are four types of award, including Bronze for completing 5 trails and the ultimate Diamond award for completing 19 National Trails! The National Trails Register records the people who have claimed these awards. The awards are available to anyone, not just members of the charity. The Association hopes these awards and the register will motivate people to take up and enjoy long distance walking, and to support their charity. The register also shows how much our National Trails are used and valued, justifying the need to keep them in good condition.

The greatest achievement – completing all the UK's trails – has been awarded to 38 people so far. The Ridgeway is the third most popular National Trail on the register, with 256 people registered as completing between 2009 and 2016. The South Downs Way is in first place with 262 completers and second place is held by the West Highland Way at 259. Close behind The Ridgeway is the Cleveland Way and Cotswold Way, both with 251. At the bottom of the ranking is the Pennine Bridleway with 42, but this Trail was the latest National Trail to be opened in 2012. Perhaps some riders who have enjoyed The Ridgeway could venture up North to ride The Pennine Bridleway?!

With the start of 2018, will you be setting yourself the challenge of completing a National Trail?

Produced by the National Trails Team on behalf of The Ridgeway Partnership.

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

Red Spot at Dragon Hill



On a misty afternoon in October, a giant 'red spot' was pulled out over Dragon Hill, off The Ridgeway near Uffington, as part of the annual forum held by The Ridgeway Partnership and North Wessex Downs AONB. The participants in this outdoor art-work were inspired to think about what was happening now and what happened at this location in the past. Most famously, Dragon Hill is steeped in legend as the place where Saint George slayed the dragon! The red spot symbolised the blood spilt.

Dragon Hill is one of many places with lots of stories to tell along the ancient route of the Icknield Way which is the focus of the 'Wayfaring' art project. The Ridgeway forms part of the Icknield Way corridor between the Dorset coast and The Wash, its routeways traversed by people since prehistory. 'Wayfaring' by artists And Now: is a series of artworks inviting audiences to think about movement and migration; how we arrive at, understand, inhabit and leave a space.

The installation planned for The Ridgeway area will be created at the National Trust's Basildon Park, near Streatley in Berkshire. From 14 to 22 July 2018, audiences will be able to move through, investigate and contribute to the artwork. On the final evening, fire, music and performance will transform the installation in a rousing celebration of everybody there coming together, of paths crossing.

The Wayfaring website, a digital artwork complimenting the live work, will go live from 28th March 2018 but you can sign up in advance for information and updates: <https://wayfaring.org.uk/>. The project develops partnerships between the creative sector and AONBs. It is produced by Activate Performing Arts, largely funded by Arts Council England and supported at Basildon Park by Corn Exchange Newbury & 101 Outdoor Arts and the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Experiments at Bury Down



Following the drone imaging of The Ridgeway last summer, the focus of Oxford University's PhD project for the next year has moved on to establishing an experimental study along the Trail near Bury Down in West Berkshire. PhD student Chris Woodham will be leading a study to test a few simple management approaches which could be used to restore verges of chalk grassland along The Ridgeway.

Chalk grassland hosts an incredibly diverse range of flowering plants – up to 40 species in one square metre! As such, it is sometimes referred to as Europe's equivalent to tropical rainforest. As well as colour, fragrant herbs such as thyme, marjoram and wild basil offer pleasant smells. Such an attractive habitat is home to various insects, birds and animals, including rare butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy (see photo below).

Walkers and riders using The Ridgeway last summer may have noticed chalk grassland plants such as small scabious and greater knapweed, and the more observant may have spotted a few orchids (see photo above). These plants refer to the chalk geology beneath but also to the Trail's history. In the 16th century, the wool trade was at its peak and flower-rich chalk grassland stretched across the chalk hills, with tracks including The Ridgeway functioning as drove routes for sheep that grazed the downlands.

Only fragments of this historic grassland remain today, with the greatest losses being linked to the Common Agricultural Policy which drove farmers to intensify production through conversion to arable and 'improvement' of pasture with chemicals and sown leys. It is reported that there was a 32% decline in the area of chalk grassland in the North Wessex Downs AONB between 1968 and 1998.

Research along the Trail will investigate how management of the Trail's verges could encourage many more plants and associated insects, restoring the Trail's verges to a former colourful and buzzing glory. Nature conservation management along The Ridgeway would compliment the environmental work that many farmers are doing in the fields and woods adjacent to the Trail.

A larger, richer chalk grassland resource along The Ridgeway will boost biodiversity locally but also make a significant contribution to the national picture. A report by the North Wessex Downs AONB states that there is only 33-41,000ha of lowland calcareous grassland in the UK and over half of this is concentrated on Salisbury Plain and Porton Down. It is thought that the Trail has an important role to play in increasing or restoring the area of chalk grassland and also in linking fragments of chalk grassland along the escarpment.

Chris will be starting work at Bury Down in February 2018, with follow-up work in August. Project updates will be available through the Trail's website, newsletter, at Bury Down car park and on Twitter (#ConnectedRidgeway).



Thanks to the landowners around
Bury Down for their co-operation



Events along The Ridgeway

Enjoy
events on
The
Ridgeway.
Visit our
website

for more de-
tails and more
events. Many
events require
booking in
advance.

Join an
event or
seek
solitude

There's something for everyone along The Ridgeway. Check out what's on and plan to either join in or find a quiet spot! Our most comprehensive events listing is on our website but there are some events we are not aware of. Many event organisers work with us to keep local communities informed.

Various dates Dec 2017 to Jan 2018 *Illuminated woodland walk*

Basildon Park, nr Streatley, Berks (National Trust)

As the sun fades see the woodland walk lit up & enjoy the changing colours of the trees through the seasons from autumn to winter.

Until Sun 21st Jan 2018 *Wildlife Photographer of the Year Highlights*

Tring, Herts (Tring Natural History Museum)

Stunning annual exhibition of 16 awe-inspiring winners from the international photography competition.

Until 21st Feb 2018 *Welly Wednesdays*

Tring, Herts (Tring Natural History Museum)

Hands-on outdoor activities for toddlers.

Thurs 14th Dec 2017 *Winter warmer walks*

Avebury, Wilts (National Trust)

Join the Trust's archaeologist for a winter ramble & festive refreshments. Free parking & shop discount included. Tickets £15.

Wed 20th Dec 2017 *Organised walk—Watlington*

Watlington, Oxon (Chiltern Society)

Guided circular walk using The Ridgeway & Oxfordshire Way, taking in the hills of Shirburn & Pyrton.

Thurs 21st Dec 2017 *Winter Solstice*

Avebury, Wilts (National Trust)

Mark the shortest day of the year & the start of winter by taking part in celebrations. (Make sure you plan ahead. Parking is very restricted.)



Friends of The Ridgeway

Swire Ridgeway Art Prize 2018

Exhibition of entries Saturday 21 to Sunday 22 April
Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington, Oxon

The Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize will be awarded on the Sunday at the memorial hall. The theme of the competition is 'Spirit of the Ridgeway'. Classes are: painting, sculpture (including ceramics), photography and writing (poetry or prose). For details, visit

www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/swire-ridgeway-arts-prize-2018/

Last date for entries 22nd March 2018

Events along The Ridgeway

Living Ridgeway

Christmas along The Ridgeway

Fri 1 Dec—Sat 6 Jan *Joyeux Noel at Basildon Park*
Basildon Park, nr Streatley, Berks (National Trust)
 See Basildon Park dressed for Christmas in celebration of Lady Illiffe's French Mauritian roots.

2nd Dec —7th Jan 2018 *Rudolph Christmas Trail*
Tring, Herts (Tring Natural History Museum)
 Follow Rudolph around the world as he delivers gifts and meets new animals.

Until 6th Jan *Christmas Crafts and Gifts*
Wantage, Oxon (Vale and Downland Museum)
 Buy unique handmade gifts.

9 & 10, 16 & 17, 23 Dec *Santa Specials*
Wallingford, Oxon (Cholsey & Wallingford Railway)
 Father Christmas and Mother Christmas are onboard every train with gifts for children up to 8 years.

Sun 17 Dec *Jingle Ponies*
Ashridge, near Tring, Herts (National Trust)
 Horse's fancy dress parade celebrating Christmas!

Christmas Crafts & Gifts

Free Entry

THE PERFECT PLACE TO BUY UNIQUE HANDMADE GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

21 November - 6 January*

Vale & Downland Museum
 Church Street, Wantage OX12 8BL
 T 01235 771447
 E vale.downland@gmail.com
 Open Mon - Sat 9.30am - 4pm
 *Museum closed 24 Dec - 2 Jan

V&DM Vale & Downland Museum Wantage

Wed 3rd Jan 2018 *Organised walk—Lewknor*

Lewknor, Oxon (Chiltern Society)

Explore the villages below the Chilterns escarpment—Aston Rowant, Postcombe & Lewknor.

Sat 13 Jan *Ducks Galore at College Lake*

College Lake, near Tring, Herts (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Guided walk to boost ID skills & ecology knowledge for wildfowl wintering in the wetland habitats.

Mon 12th Feb *Hunter Games*

Tring, Herts (Tring Natural History Museum)

Family walk & fun game in Tring Park – can you match the predator to their prey?

Tues 13th— Wed 14th Feb *Explore Woodland Creatures*

Tring, Herts (Tring Natural History Museum)

Get hands-on with woodland animals & make an animal to take home.

Sun 25th Feb *Exploring the geology and archaeology of Ivinghoe*

Ivinghoe Beacon, nr Tring, Herts (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Walk exploring the geology, archaeology & history of Ivinghoe Beacon, Incombe hole & village.

Ramble along The R



Long distance walking will always be a challenge but one way to make it easier is to do it with a group. There are opportunities to explore The Ridgeway with groups led by experienced walkers linked to the Ramblers charity. As well as offering moral support, practical help and greater personal safety, these groups are also a great way to enjoy the outdoors with friends and make new friends.

Over the summer of 2017, the Vale of White Horse Ramblers Group set themselves the challenge of walking The Ridgeway. They split the 87 miles from Overton Hill (western end) to Ivinghoe Beacon (eastern end) into eight sections, breaking at Ogbourne St George (11 miles); Uffington (11 miles); East Hendred (11 miles); Streatley (9 miles); Nuffield (11 miles); Chinnor (11 miles); and Wendover (11 miles), with a



Find out more about the Ramblers charity and their local walking groups at: www.ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers Local Groups around The Ridgeway include: Vale of White Horse; Swindon and East Wiltshire; Didcot and Wallingford; West Berkshire; Thame and Wheatley; Henley and Goring; Oxfordshire Weekend Walkers; Oxfordshire 20s & 30s; Wycombe District; Chiltern Weekend Walkers; Chiltern Young Walkers; Aylesbury District; West Herts.

Ridgeway with friends

final day of 12 miles. These eight sections were scheduled in advance over eight weekends from July to September so that members of the group could plan which sections they wanted to do. The first two and the last two sections were walked over weekends, whilst the other four were completed on Saturdays.

John Gordon, who helped organize the walks, said a long-distance route proved to be a great incentive for the group to explore beyond their usual patch and discover something new:

"The Vale walkers are used to walking the wide chalk downland byways of the western Ridgeway, so the footpaths through the beech woodlands of the Chilterns were a new experience for some of us. The surprise of the views from high points like Whiteleaf Hill, Lodge Hill, Coombe Hill and of course the climax at Ivinghoe Beacon meant we were particularly impressed with the eastern end."

Planning the walks as a group also proved useful in relation to transport. Since The Ridgeway is a linear route, it is important to plan how to return to the start point and groups can help each other by shuttling cars between start and end points. Peter Skuse, the Vale's Walks Coordinator who did most of the planning, says that the transport logistics for their group, averaging ten people per weekend, needed thinking ahead:

"It was the group's first serious attempt at car sharing and, overall, it was successful. We made sure our start and end points were places where we could park. However, with limited parking space, we had to group people into as few cars as possible but make sure we had enough cars at the end point to ferry people back to their cars parked at the start."

It was a popular challenge, with a total of 18 walkers taking part and seven walkers completing all 87 miles – congratulations to them! The experience has inspired the group to attempt at least one other long-distance path in 2018 which is great news!

To find out more about [The Vale of White Horse Ramblers](#) or join a walk, contact John Gordon valeramblers@gmail.com. Note that this group also leads practical events to clear vegetation along the Trail in their walking patch.

It is estimated that around 400,000 people live within 5 miles of The Ridgeway.

Imagine if each person donated a £1 to the charity dedicated to its preservation....



Friends of The Ridgeway

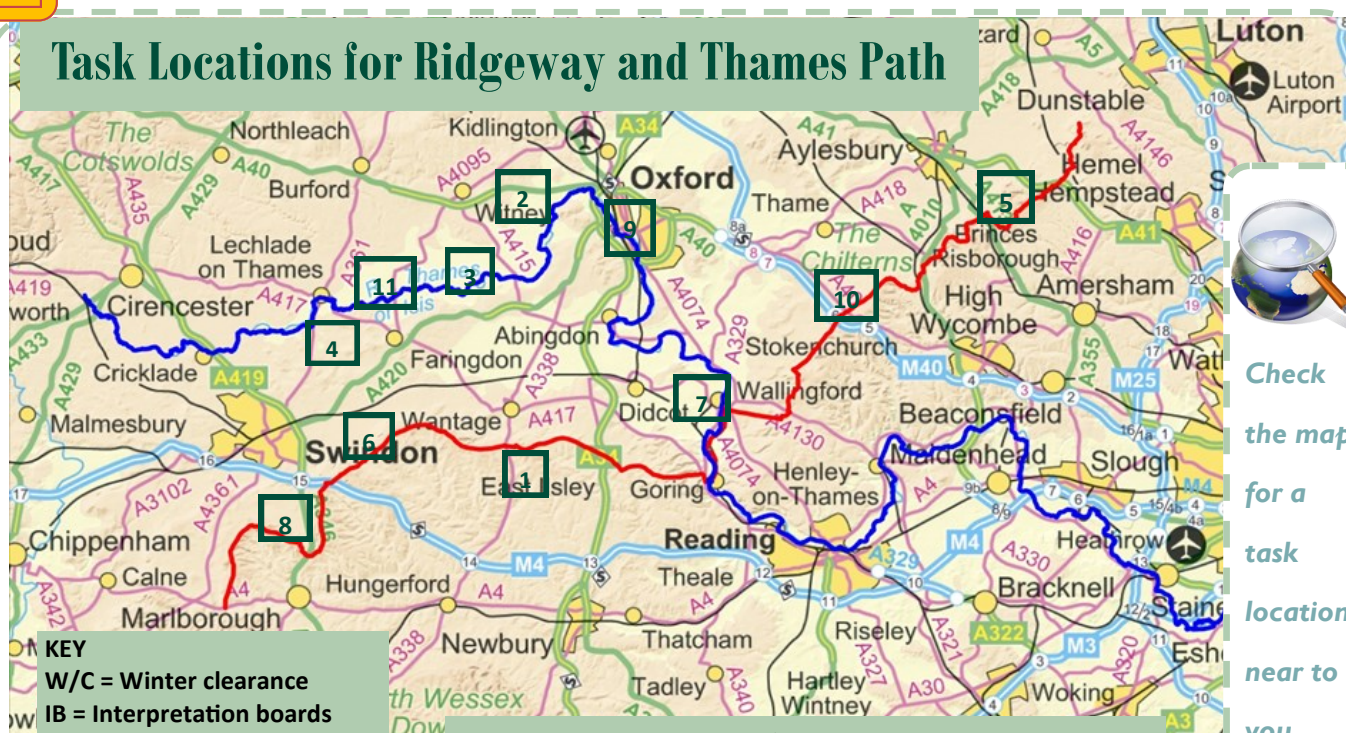
For as little as £8 per year for an individual, members know they are helping to preserve The Ridgeway year after year – go to www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/join-us

Practical work is carried out along The Ridgeway to ensure walkers, cyclists and horseriders enjoy using it. Work is carried out by the National Trail Team, local highway authorities, land-owners and contractors. The Chiltern Society do occasional work on The Ridgeway in the Chilterns. Volunteers are welcome to help maintain The Ridgeway and Thames Path by joining the task team led by the National Trail Team. The location and activities for the next 3 months are shown below. **Please book early** as the practical tasks are popular, locations for tasks may change at late notice and volunteer numbers can be limited due to type of task.

**Volunteer to help with a task by contacting the National Trail Team.
Book in advance and as soon as possible.**

E: nt.volunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk **T:** 01865 810211

Task Locations for Ridgeway and Thames Path



Check the map for a task location near to you.

Task Dates

December 2018

4th RW Watlington **W/C 1**
S 6th TP Oxford **W/C 3**

January 2018

8th RW Workshop **2**
9th Volunteer social **TBC**
15th TP Workshop **2**
16th RW Tring **S 5**
17th RW Workshop **S 2**
18th RW Workshop **S 2**
22nd TP Workshop **S 2**
23rd RW Compton **S 6**

January cont...

24th RW Workshop **S 2**
25th RW Workshop **S 2**
29th TP Workshop/TBC Chivery **S 2**
30th RW Compton **S 6**
31st RW Workshop **S 2**

February 2018

1st RW Workshop **S 2**
5th TP Ashton Keynes/workshop **S 7**
6th RW TBC Chivery/Compton **S 6**
7th RW Workshop **S 2**
8th RW Workshop **S 2**
12th TP Ashton Keynes **S 7**
13th RW Wantage **S 6**

February cont...

15th RW Workshop **S 2**
20th TP Ashton Keynes **S 7**
22nd RW Workshop **S 2**
26th RW Wantage **S 6**
27th TP Ashton Keynes **S 7**
28th RW Workshop **2**

March 2018

5th TP Ashton Keynes **G 7**
6th RW Wantage **S 6**
12th RW Ogbourne **S 8**
13th TP Dorney reach **W/C 11**
19th RW Watlington **W/C 11**
20th RW Ogbourne **S 8**

Improving the Trail a step at a time

Our Trail volunteers are hard at work making physical improvements to The Ridgeway once or twice in the week. They do all sorts of work and passers-by often thank them for their efforts!

In October, our volunteers repaired a short flight of steps in a holloway near Wendover Woods.

A Forestry Commission ranger from Wendover Woods helped them out, carrying materials into the wood in a little off-road 'mule' (see below).



Work on the Trail is particularly worthwhile near popular places, such as Wendover Woods, because lots of people benefit. Wendover Woods is a large area of woodland open to the public, managed by the Forestry Commission. It attracts lots of visitors because it has a lot to offer— car parking, mountain bike and horse riding trails, Go Ape, café, toilets, play areas, BBQ sites and picnic benches. There is also an events programme.

For more information about Wendover Woods, visit www.forestry.gov.uk/wendoverwoods

Before



After



Living Ridgeway

If you like being outdoors, enjoy practical work and live near to The Ridgeway, you are welcome to enquire about volunteering with us!



Do you love The Ridgeway or know someone who does?
Buy a gift and support National Trails too!
Visit the National Trails online shop:
<https://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk/>

Thanks to Sara Piggott, our Volunteer Co-ordinator, who has led our practical volunteers for many years. Sara is leaving to a new job in Sussex. We wish her all the best!



Spring Edition

We'd love to hear your feedback and stories for the next newsletter!

Latest News



Follow us on Twitter

@TheRidgeway1972

For more detailed news, visit
www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/news

A BIG THANK YOU

for recent donations from:

- Centurion Running
- Extreme Energy
- Anonymous donor



The Ridgeway National Trail

Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford, OX1 1NE

General enquiries: 01844 810224

General email: ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Volunteer email: NTvolunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Social media: @TheRidgeway1972

Website: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/

