



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



Newsletter

SPRING 2018

News for
everyone
who enjoys
and cares
for The
Ridgeway

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Artistic journey of exploration



This July, visitors to Basildon Park near Streatley will discover a unique artwork inspired by the landscape and ancient routes of the Icknield Way, closely associated with The Ridgeway. *Wayfaring*, a free outdoor installation and performance work, will be created by And Now: artists Mandy Dike and Ben Rigby and also visitors to the park including local school children.

Usually visitors pay to enter the National Trust's Basildon Park but, on 18, 19 and 20 July between 10am to 5pm entry is free. On Saturday 21 July from 7pm, fire, pyrotechnics, live music and performance will transform the installation into a rousing celebration. The audience will play an active part - walking, looking, listening, maybe even singing. For more details, see our events webpage and Twitter @TheRidgeway1972.

One of the project partners is the North Wessex Downs AONB, and Director Henry Oliver said, "Through *Wayfaring* we hope to inspire everyone, but particularly children, to think about and discover how this beautiful landscape has shaped our evolution over thousands of years."

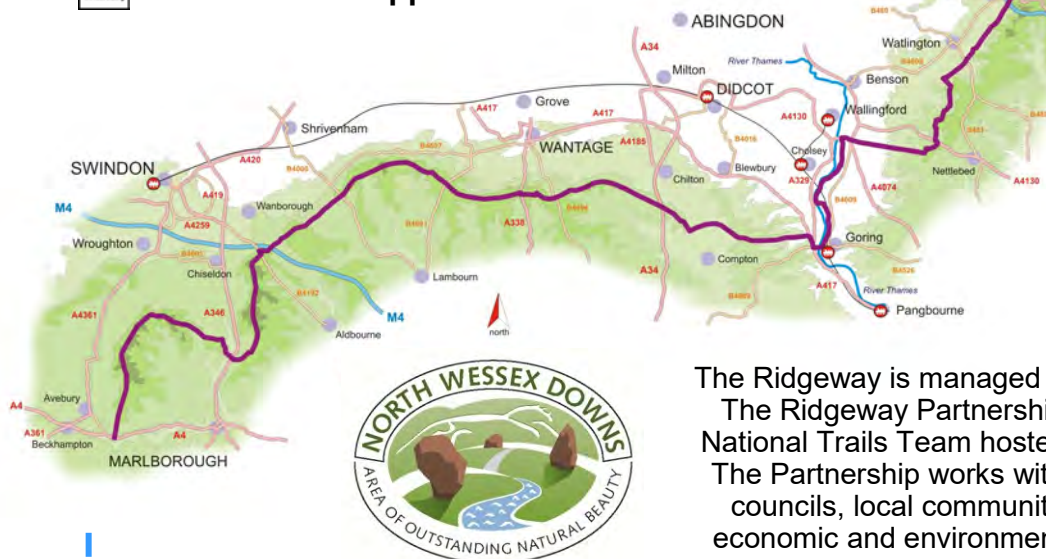
The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL

The Ridgeway is an 87 mile (139km) signed trail open to the public to enjoy walking, cycling, horseriding and events in attractive countryside. The route lies to the west of London, passing over the chalk hills of the Chilterns AONB and North Wessex Downs AONB, taking in rural villages and market towns. Visitors come from near and far, including tourists from the United States and Europe, and are served by numerous local accommodation providers, shops, eating places and visitor attractions.

The Ridgeway is popularly known as Britain's oldest road - parts of the Trail follow tracks used by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers over the centuries. The landscape is dotted with historic features and chalk grassland flowers, butterflies and farmland wildlife are a highlight too.



The Ridgeway is one of 15 National Trails in England and Wales. It is also part of an international network of trails called the International Appalachian Trail.



The Ridgeway is managed by a group of organisations called The Ridgeway Partnership. Day-to-day work is led by the National Trails Team hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. The Partnership works with user groups, landowners, local councils, local communities and others to realise social, economic and environmental benefits from The Ridgeway.

Plan your Visit!

Find out about events, car parks, pubs, places to stay overnight and more using our online interactive map: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

Guidebooks and maps are available from our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

Download free leaflets from our website to take out on the Trail.



Follow the acorn along the Trail!

Celebrate your Visit!

Souvenirs are available on our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

Certificates await those people who take on the challenge of walking or running every mile of the Trail from Overton to Ivinghoe or riding all the miles open to cyclists and horse riders from Overton to Streatley: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/completion-certificate

Share your great experiences on TripAdvisor 'The Ridgeway National Trail' and Twitter @TheRidgeway1972. Guidebooks are available from our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

Talk about the weather!



Living Ridgeway

The past winter brought very severe cold, with snow across The Ridgeway area in February and March. Up on the hills, the Trail can be very exposed to the elements. Our tap near Sparsholt Firs burst in the freezing temperatures and the spouting water created an ice sculpture!

The Met Office reports that 8 of the 10 warmest years in the UK have occurred since 2002. The UK's summer rainfall is decreasing on average, while winter rainfall is increasing. Climate change is bringing less predictable weather patterns and more extreme weather events.

Such weather conditions present us with difficulties. For example, the RAC has warned that the 'Beast from the East' has left a legacy of potholes on the UK's roads. Potholes and other erosion features such as exposed chalk bedrock and channels scoured by rainfall run-off will become more common along The Ridgeway. Storm winds will bring trees down and heavy rainfall will cause puddles, mud and also flooding along the Thames stretch. Years when farmers are reporting high crop yields will likely mean the grass and hedges along the Trail have been growing well too and we will have to work harder to stop the Trail getting overgrown. Trail signage will also wear more quickly, with lettering fading in the sun and wood deteriorating more quickly.

Visitors need to be prepared. High temperatures bring the risk of sunstroke and dehydration and the woods that the Chilterns are famed for will provide welcome shade! Shelter will also be sought during storms and high winds, with some people choosing not to venture out to the most exposed trackways in the North Wessex Downs. Changing patterns of visitor use will require the local tourism and recreation industry to adapt.

We all need to adapt. The Trail Team tries to be responsive and repair the Trail as soon as possible, but it takes time and money. It is very helpful when the public report problems to us, use the Trail safely and take care not to add to erosion by skidding bicycle wheels, for example. People allowed to drive vehicles on The Ridgeway play a very significant role in protecting the surface from damage by avoiding driving on the Trail when the ground is wet/soft.

CLOSED TO VEHICLES

The Ridgeway did not re-open to vehicles as usual on 1st May near Avebury. Wiltshire Council needed to prohibit vehicles because recent weather had left the surface vulnerable to damage. Please check notices on the Trail and check our News webpage for updates.

Beacons of the Past

Numerous hillforts are found at high points along the length of The Ridgeway and, if you have been to the Ivinghoe Beacon end of the Trail, you would have stood in one!



The rounded banks of Barbury Castle hillfort, near Swindon, can be seen in the distance from The Ridgeway.

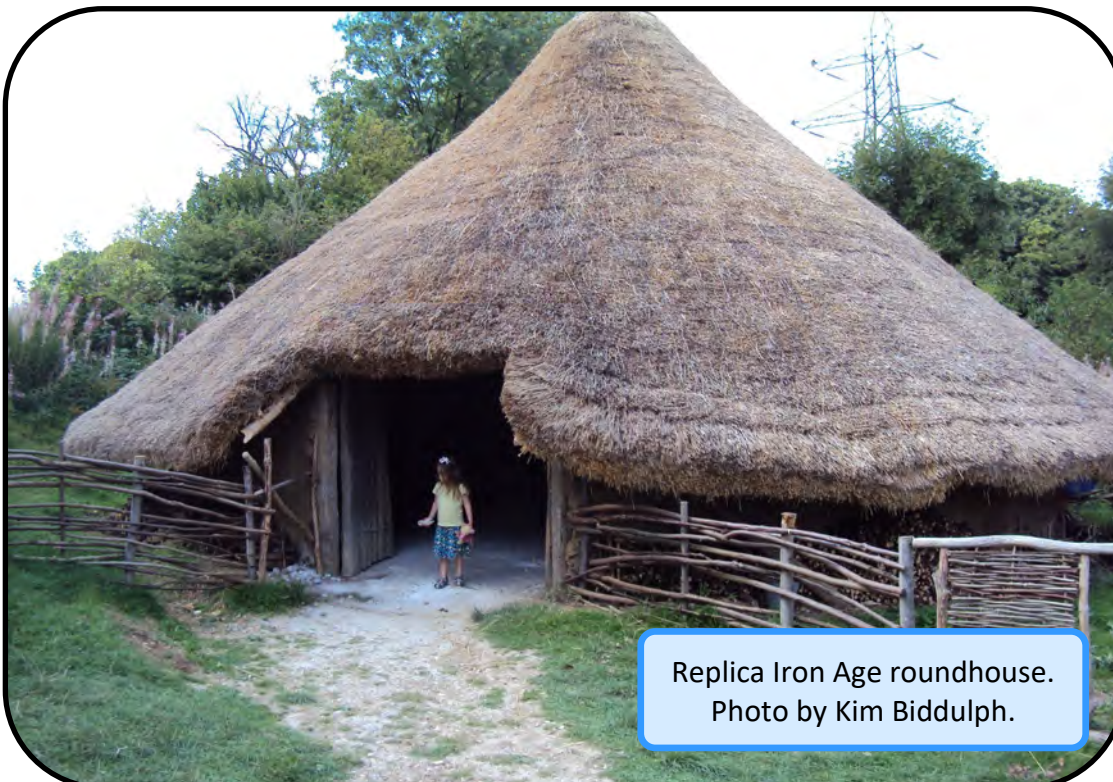
Hillforts are intriguing to visit, with substantial banks and ditches and far-reaching views across the vales below. Some hillforts, like the one at Barbury, can be spotted from a distance - the earthworks look like ripples on top of the hill. However, many hillforts in the Chilterns are hidden amongst trees, such as Pulpit Hill along The Ridgeway near Princes Risborough.

Iron Age hillforts were constructed in the United Kingdom from around 1000 BC until the Romans arrived. Some think hillforts may have been built to mark boundaries between tribal areas. They might have been centres of ritual and ceremony. Some have evidence of roundhouses, which would point to their function as community dwellings and

livestock enclosures. But who were these people? What did they do, and how did they live?

Little is known about the Chiltern hillforts and many are suffering from poor preservation, so the Chilterns Conservation Board is launching a new project part-funded by the Heritage Lottery to conserve hillforts and connect people to the historic landscape around them.

Over four years, the project will focus on three 'beacons' – Discovery, to include survey and some excavation; Learning, with a programme of training for volunteers, educational activities and public events; and Protection, which will roll out new conservation strategies for some of our most at-risk monuments.



Replica Iron Age roundhouse.
Photo by Kim Biddulph.

Ancient Ridgeway

An exciting first step is a LiDAR survey of the Chilterns this winter – the first of its kind in this area. A light aircraft will be flown over the area, using a rapid-pulse laser to ‘see’ through the vegetation and produce a digital model of both the trees and what lies beneath them. When the trees are ‘erased’ from the digital model, the bumps and depressions of the ancient landscape will be seen for the first time. It is hoped that perhaps even unknown hillforts may be added to the map!

To find out more about ‘Beacons of the Past’ and to volunteer, visit www.chilternsaonb.org/about-chilterns/historic-environment/hillforts/beacons-of-the-past.html or email wmorrison@chilternsaonb.org.



Just like people today, Iron Age people valued the vantage point of Ivinghoe Beacon and constructed a hillfort here.

Other hillforts to enjoy along The Ridgeway include Segsbury Camp (Oxon), Liddington hillfort (Wilts), Barbury Castle (Swindon) and Pulpit hillfort (Bucks). Find details on our online interactive map at www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/plan

Events along The Ridgeway

Living Ridgeway

Enjoy events
on The
Ridgeway.
Visit our
website for
more details
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! Many event organisers work with us to keep local communities informed and our website is a good place to start to find information about events on the Trail.



Chilterns Walking Festival Sat 19 May - Sun 3 June 2018

Various locations

Join the exciting 16 day Spring celebration of walking! Accompanied by expert guides enjoy spectacular views, local stories and fun activities - Chilterns style.



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Sat 19th May Walk the Chalk—World Nordic Walking Day, Watlington, Oxon

Use your poles to climb effortlessly up the hills of The Ridgeway including Shirburn Hill and Watlington Hill to enjoy fantastic panoramic views.



Sat 5—Mon 28th May Oxfordshire Artweeks, various locations

Visit artist's studios and galleries around The Ridgeway in Oxfordshire, including Vale & Downland Museum, Wantage.

Wed 23rd May Pulpit Hill (National Trust), nr Princes Risborough, Bucks

Join knowledgeable guides to discover a well preserved hidden Iron Age hillfort, chalk grassland reserves and views of Chequers and the vales.

Fri 1st June Pitstone Hill archaeological walk, Ashridge nr Tring, Herts

Walk in the footsteps of ancient man to explore some of the pre-historic features visible along the Ridgeway.

Sun 3rd June, In Search of Orchids (Wildlife Trust),

Dancersend, nr Wendover, Bucks

Find various species of orchid with the knowledgeable reserve warden.

Sat 9th June Walk the Chalk (National Trust),

Ashridge nr Tring, Herts

Discover the beauty and rich natural environment of the chalk hills at Ivinghoe Beacon.

**A spot of
afternoon tea?**

Visit [Nuffield Place](#) (National Trust) just off The Ridgeway and enjoy tea and the beautiful garden.



Sat 9th—Sun 24th June

Buckinghamshire Open Studios, various locations

Meet artists and buy artwork from venues around The Ridgeway in Bucks.

Sun 10th June Open Farm Sunday at Temple Farm,

nr Marlborough, Wilts

Tractor and trailer rides, animals to feed, places to play and local food to eat. 'Proudly supported by many local farmers and companies'.



Sat 16th June Orchid Count at Aston Clinton Ragpits (Wildlife Trust),

nr Wendover, Bucks

'One of the most arresting and colourful wildlife events of the year'.

FOR MAJOR EVENTS SEE PAGE 8

Sun 17th Jun Fun Ride for Horse Owners (National Trust), Ashridge nr Tring, Herts

Enjoy a two to three hour way-marked ride for horse-owners through some of most beautiful landscapes.

Sun 17th June Guided walk around Avebury (National Trust), nr Marlborough, Wilts

Learn about the archaeology of the Avebury stone circle, prehistoric round barrows and West Kennet Avenue on a 2 mile walk.

Thurs 21st June Summer solstice at Avebury, nr Marlborough, Wilts

A unique spiritual occasion around the stone circle. Plan ahead.

Sat 23rd June Wildflower hunt at Coombe Hill & Bacombe (Wildlife Trust),

nr Wendover Bucks

Discover the chalk grassland and hear about the restoration scheme from the reserve warden.

**Sun 24th June Wildflowers & orchids at Grangelands and Rifle Range (Wildlife Trust),**

nr Monks Risborough, Bucks

Discover the rich array of flowers across these large reserves along the Ridgeway.

Mon 2nd Jul Gentle stroll - chalkland flowers (National Trust), Ashridge nr Tring, Herts

Join our knowledgeable volunteers for a gentle stroll across Ashridge's chalk grassland to see the flowers that thrive there.

July weekends, Marlborough Open Studios, various locations, Wilts

Find artists working in the countryside around Marlborough.

Want to get into Trail running?

Get motivated and join the free Trust10 run around Avebury on the fourth Sunday of every month April—Oct. It is a 10k run starting in the Coach House courtyard.

Thurs 5th July (National Trust), Avebury nr Marlborough, Wilts

Join the Trust's archaeologist to explore a Neolithic tomb, encounter Europe's largest prehistoric mound and learn how the latest discoveries are transforming ideas of ancient Avebury.

Thurs 5th—Sun 8th July Barbury Horse Trials, nr Swindon, Wilts

The world's best riders and horses compete in the sport of eventing in the stunning setting of the Marlborough Downs.

Sat 7 Jul, 8 Jul, 26 & 27Aug, White Horse Chalking (National Trust),

Uffington, Oxon

Get hands on and help keep this wonderful historic Horse white for future generations.

**Wed 18th—Sat 21st July Wayfaring, Basildon Park (National Trust) nr Streatley, Berkshire**

Unique artistic experience inspired by the Icknield Way.

Sat 21 Jul Big Camp at Ashridge Estate (National Trust), nr Tring, Herts

A chance to camp for one night at Ashridge and take part in a number of different family activities.

FOR MAJOR EVENTS SEE PAGE 8

2018 Major events calendar

Date		Event	Activity	See website for details
May	Sun 13 th	21 st Flexicare Community walk	Walking	www.flexicare.org
	Fri 18 th	Ride/Drive Out Month event	Horse-drawn carriage	Bury Down (no event website)
	Sun 27 th	MTB Marathon Wantage	Cycling	https://www.mtb-marathon.co.uk/events/27th-may-2018-wantage-oxfordshire.html
June	Sun 3 rd	22nd Castles Bike Ride	Cycling	www.castlesbikeride.co.uk
	Sat 9 th / Sun 10 th	SENSE Ridgewalk 2018	Walking	www.sense.org.uk/content/ridgewalk
	Sun 10 th	Ridgeway Rhino	Cycling	Uffington to Compton (no event website)
	Sat 16 th	Ridgeway Revenge	Running	www.ridgewayrevenge.co.uk
	Sun 17 th	Ridgeway Relay (Marlborough Running Club)	Running	www.marlboroughrunningclub.org.uk/races/ridgeway-relay
	Sun 17 th	Rush the Ridge (NEW)	Cycling	www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk/events/rush-the-ridge-adventure-cross
July	Sat 7 th	Cancer Research UK Ridgeway Hike 2018 (NEW)	Walking	https://raceforlife.cancerresearchuk.org/find-an-event/rutland-farm-hiking-2018-07-07-0000
	Sat 14 th / Sun 15 th	Dixons Carphone Race to the Stones	Running	www.racetothestones.com
	Sat 21 st	Style Acre Ridgeway Walk 2018 (NEW)	Walking	https://styleacre.org.uk/events/ridgeway-walk-saturday-21st-july/
	Sun 22 nd	Wilier White Road Classic Sportive	Cycling	www.cycleclassics.co.uk/white-roads-classic-sportive/
Aug	Sat 4 th	Ridgeway 100 MTB	Cycling	Event organiser (Trailbreak) not liaising with Ridgeway Officer
	Sat 11 th / Sun 12 th	Barbury Castle Endurance GB Ride	Horse riding	www.endurancegb.co.uk/main/Barbury
	Sat 25 th / Sun 26 th	TRA Ridgeway Challenge 86 Miles	Running	www.ridgewaychallenge.com
Sept	Sun 9 th	Chilterns 3 Peaks Challenge	Walking	www.renniegrove.org/support/our-events/chilterns-3-peaks-challenge
	Sat 15 th	Chiltern Wonderland 50	Running	http://centurionrunning.com/races/chiltern-wonderland-50-2018
	Sat 22 nd	Ridgeway Run	Running	https://theridgewayrun.com/
	Sun 23 rd	White Horse Ridge CX	Cycling	Event organiser (Trailbreak) not liaising with Ridgeway Officer
Oct	Sat 13 th / Sun 14 th	Autumn 100	Running	http://centurionrunning.com/races/autumn-100-2018
	Sun 14 th	Ridgeway Run	Running	Event organiser (Tring Running Club) not provided details to Ridgeway Officer
Nov	Fri 9 th / Sun 11 th	Druid's Challenge	Running Walking	www.xnrg.co.uk/events/details/2018-the-druids-challenge.aspx

Outdoor laboratory

Next time you are on The Ridgeway near Bury Down in West Berkshire, you may spot some curious new features – rectangular plots in the verges.



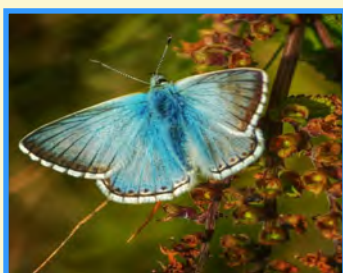
Chris Woodham, a PhD student with Oxford University, worked with volunteers during February to establish 28 'experimental plots'. These plots will be treated in different ways to test how the plants and associated wildlife respond over the next 3 years. Chris' study aims to identify how best we can conserve and restore chalk grassland along The Ridgeway's verges.

Chalk grassland is one of Europe's most biodiverse habitats and the diminished areas we have left in this country need care and protection.

The management techniques being trialled in the plots include: cutting the vegetation; removing cut vegetation; removing thin strips of topsoil; and sowing a native chalk grassland wildflower seed mix.

Now that the plots are set up, it is a matter of 'watch this space'. The next step at Bury Down starts this summer, when Chris and others will be back to record the plant and insect species present in the plots. The plots will be regularly managed and monitored over the coming years.

Chris would like to thank the many volunteers, such as the Vale of White Horse Ramblers group and National Trail volunteers, who helped him establish the plots, come sunshine or snow! Without their help, setting up an experiment on this scale would not have been possible.



Project updates will be available on The Ridgeway's website, newsletter and also on Twitter (#ConnectedRidgeway, @TheRidgeway1972 and @Chris_R_Woodham).

Swire Ridgeway Art Prize 2018



Ridgeway Aspects, painting by Jill Smith

Famous people including John Betjeman (poet), Richard Jefferies (writer) and Paul Nash (artist) were inspired by The Ridgeway. Their creative work adds another dimension to The Ridgeway and represents a record of the place at that time.

Drawing on this artistic heritage, the Friends of The Ridgeway charity launched the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize to celebrate The Ridgeway and the creative work of artists and writers of today. The 2018 competition encouraged both amateurs and professionals to submit work under the theme of '*Spirit of the Ridgeway*'. A distinguished panel of volunteer judges determined which works were awarded prizes. Dorothy Burrows, well known locally as Director of the Betjeman Festival, chaired the panel.

The 2018 winners are listed below and we will present these works in our Summer newsletter!

Overall winner and written work: Alison Green for 'Time Travelling'

Sculpture: Sharon Rich 'Moonlight Owl'

Photography: David Castle 'Free spirit along the Ridgeway'

Painting: Maia Sissons 'Fingers of God over Sparsholt Firs'

Entries from the 2017 Swire Ridgeway Art Prize

THE OLDEST ROAD

Put your ear to the ground and listen for the beat
of ghostly feet — horn-hard, rag-clad,
skin-wrapped, leather-shod, Vibramed heels
and toes have stirred up this pale dust.

While the Thames still flowed into the Rhine
and aurochs were flayed with stoneflake knives,
their hunters trod this upland grass to white.
Then ice arrived and cleared the Downs of man.

When Babylon was still a mighty city, voyagers
from the east arrived, settled in wooded combes.
They felled the forest to make space for maize
and emmer wheat, to graze cattle, sheep.

Attuned to what we can no longer hear,
they found sacred places, built homes from hazel
and chalky daub, raised sarsen chambers
for the burial of powerful dynasties.

Others came after: migrants, invaders, skilled
in pottery, metalwork. Remnants of their forts still
circle vantage points; their language echoes
in names: Barbary, Wayland, Hackpen, Uffington.

Nomads, drovers, peddlers, farmers have, for millennia,
found safety in its height. Now ramblers step out,
unafraid, wind-buffed, rain-drenched, sun-warmed
along this track through time.

Gill Learner



Creative Ridgeway

***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**

Volunteer Task Diary

Living Ridgeway

Practical work is carried out along The Thames Path and The Ridgeway to ensure walkers enjoy using it. Work is carried out by the National Trail Team, volunteers, local highway authorities, landowners and contractors. Volunteers are welcome to help maintain the 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 ensure that you book early as the practical tasks are popular. **Locations for tasks may change 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



New Faces on The Ridgeway

The past few months have been a bit hectic, with new people starting in key roles this March. So here's introducing.....

Living Ridgeway

Simon Kearey, new Chairman of Ridgeway Partnership (voluntary position)

Simon joins us as the Partnership's second Chair, following Ian Ritchie's retirement. Simon was appointed to boost the work of the Partnership in the particular areas relating to his skills and contacts – financial management, governance and collaboration with the health and cultural heritage sectors. Simon lives in the Chilterns and enjoys walking.



Simon Kearey

Jenny Lee, Secretary (voluntary position)

We are lucky to have attracted a very organised and meticulous volunteer to act as secretary for our Partnership meetings. Jenny loves the countryside, grew up on a farm and enjoys walking and cycling. She has inherited the good work of Jeff Goddard who shaped the role from the beginning of the Partnership.

Andy Mawer, Volunteer co-ordinator (National Trails Team)

Andy worked as assistant to our previous Volunteer Co-ordinator, Sara Piggott, so he is not such a new face and knows the Trail already. His first task has been planning a busy and varied schedule to keep our volunteers engaged! Andy studied archaeology at university so we hope he will have opportunity to apply his interests to The Ridgeway's historic features.



Andy Mawer

We would like to say thank you to our volunteers and partners for bearing with us through these changes. We have needed time to settle in and catch up but we should be back in full swing now!



BEHIND THE SCENES

Our Trail volunteers have been busy in the workshop making new signs for The Ridgeway. They are trained to use specialist equipment and we are lucky to have volunteers who also develop designs for us too.

Look out for the new signs appearing along The Ridgeway!



IMPORTANT

YOU NEED TO TELL US YOU WANT TO RECEIVE FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

We want to stay in touch but due to changes to data protection regulations, we need your confirmation.

Email to subscribe:
ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please be aware, we have to take you off our circulation list if you do not email us. **You can unsubscribe at any time.**

THANK YOU

Nine event organisers donated nearly £4000 in 2017 towards Trail repairs. Fifteen event organisers plan to donate in 2018.

Summer edition

We'd love to hear from you !

Please send us feedback, images and articles.

Latest News

Follow us on Twitter

@TheRidgeway1972

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/news



Murmuration above Barbury, painting by David Gibbons

The Ridgeway National Trail

ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Volunteer email: NTvolunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk

@TheRidgeway1972

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/



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

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