

# REPORT of THE RIDGEWAY WALK on SATURDAY 12 MAY 2007

## by Alan Smith

**STATISTICS: Ridgeway Walk** – Entrants 209; starters 177; finishers 152.

Fastest man Ken Fancett (5 hours 52 minutes); fastest woman Marie Doke (7 hours 14minutes)

Last person to finish was Mr Philip Bedford in 14 hours 30minutes.

Youngest person to complete the walk was 15 year old Will Saunders in 11 hours 48mins.

**Ridgeway 40** (running race) – Entrants 8 starters 4, finishers 4 the fastest being Debbie de Beer in 7 hours 23 minutes.

**Ridgeway 20** – 128 Entrants; Starters 75; finishers 73. Fastest person Terry Marsh (5 hours 21 minutes); last to finish 10 year old Laura Swain, completing her fourth Ridgeway 20, and Alison Thorp (8 hours 53 minutes).

**TIMINGS** - The three coaches arrived at the Overton Hill at 07.50, 08.02 and 08.03 respectively. I have adjusted start times for walker on these coaches to 7.55, 8.07 and 8.08 respectively, though, at our suggestion, many walkers inserted their own times on their check cards.

At Mike Sandford's suggestion, we arranged for a coach to remain at the start until 08.25 so that runners could shelter on it until their starting time of 08.30. Unfortunately, I did not do the sensible thing and have the runners checked off by the coach marshal, choosing instead to have this done by the marshal at the start. In future, I will ask the coach marshal to initial the runners' check cards so that they can set off directly it is 08.30

**457 BATTERY** – The largest team to enter the walk was 457 Battery (Hampshire Yeomanry). A few members of the team had done the walk before but, for most of them, this was their first attempt. The team was raising money to buy some special needs beds for Winchester Hospital. The hospital had cared for C W A White's mother who died of cancer earlier this year. One of their vehicles broke down on the way to the start and only 9 of the 15 team members made it to the start. By the time a recovery vehicle had reached the broken down transport and a new support vehicle provided, it was near the closing time of checkpoint (CP) 1. So the remaining team members were set down on the minor road west of CP 2 and were issued with new cards with letters instead of numbers by that CP. Of these 6 walkers, 3 made it to the end but, as they only completed 31 miles, they did not qualify for certificates. I hope this did not adversely affect their fund-raising.

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?** – The members of the Sandanblistas team all have strange aliases. As far as the Ridgeway walk is concerned, certificates can be made out in whatever name a walker wants. Once, some of the Vanguard's requested strange names for their certificates such as Bungo Spongebag. Norman Griffin, the then organiser, said that this would mean the walkers concerned would have one less crossing to their credit under their real names. Strangely, 'Bungo Spongebag' does not appear in the Ridgeway Walk records and none of the Vanguard's concerned has a crossing missing from their record. To carry Norman's principal to its logical conclusion, anybody who changed their name (e.g. on marriage) would be unable to aggregate their crossings under both names. This seems unfair. After all, it's the person who counts not the name. The Sandanblistas team name itself is unusual. I am told that it is a take on the Sandanistas, not only Daniel Ortega's Nicaraguan Marxist movement but also the name of a seminal album by the Clash ("Sandanista"). The name was the inspiration of Private Rod.

**RETIREEES** – The 25 retirees were more than the number I announced at breakfast time on Sunday, 13 May. Obviously I was too tired to count them all! In spite of the wet weather, this number of retirements is below the average 25 per cent. At least one retirement, that of Carl Roe, was down to the wet weather. A few earlier retirements may have been due to walkers saving themselves for other walks later in the month and one walker, John Hobbs would have finished the walk if he hadn't taken a wrong turning just before the A34 and gone miles off course. The lateness of the hour precluded his catching up and he had to be collected by the fold up marshals.

**RETIREEES BOUNCE BACK** – Two of 457 Battery's team, R Hewitt and N Field, who started at Overton Hill, had an elderly black Labrador with them. Had things gone to plan, they might have 'retired' their dog to the support vehicle at CP 1 or CP 2. But they had to go on to CP 3. (14.5 miles). Here, they were able to put the Labrador into the care of their support team but, as they were so late at the CP, they were compulsorily retired on the basis that they would be too late to reach subsequent CPs before they closed. However, they continued to walk the route and were known to pass through CP 8 about 20.00. They arrived at Streatley at 21.47 and were awarded their certificates.

**WEATHER** – "It was never like this in the 70s," commented Dave Young after the walk. And, "when are we going to get Marshals' weather," queried Linda Wright. After the sunny weather of April and particularly in view of the problems faced by runners in the London Marathon, Ridgeway Walk headquarters was concerned with the problem of ensuring all CPs had adequate water supplies. We needn't have worried; the clerk of the weather managed to brew up a mixture of sun, cloud and rain. In view of the poor outlook, it was a surprise to have a sunny and pleasant start to the

day. Although it clouded over and there was some rain in the morning, Bob McGavin, and other walkers commented at CP 3 that the conditions were ideal. A few hours later, it was considerably less than ideal. There was rain in the early afternoon but about 4 o'clock, it started raining in earnest with bursts of rain, mixed in with hail following each other in quick succession. Fortunately, the wind was behind the walkers and it was relatively mild, though one walker at least commented that his hands got cold during the heavy downpours. The intensity of the rain eased after an hour and had ceased an hour later, bowing out with views of rainbow to the east. Conditions brightened and the sun came out.

**GLITCHES** – The only one seems to be failure to get supplies of oranges and bananas to CP 9.

**ACCIDENT NEAR CP 3** – On the road leading to CP 3 from the B4192, a car went off the road and up a bank, to be caught up in some trees. This happened about the time CP 3 was being set up (09.30). 'Our' St John Ambulance was in the vicinity and was able to assist. Ridgeway Walkers were not involved but the accident was a talking point amongst them. I did not see anything relating to the accident when I was driven down the road about 12.00.

**GETTING TO THE WALK BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT** – Colin Saunders of the Vanguard, expresses the view that challenge walks should give details of how to get to the walks by public transport. The Ridgeway Walk has not taken this up as there is small scope for using public transport to Streatley or the start as the walk starts so early. Walkers who stay at the Youth hostel or other nearby accommodation can, of course, get there by train or bus. Christine, who travelled down on Friday from Manchester informed me that she would not be at the hostel until 01.00 on Saturday morning. One of our marshals, Ian Mitchell volunteered to stay up to let her into the hostel.

Marie and Graham Doke's experience was quite different. They came down on an early train from London to Swindon and took a taxi to the start. Unfortunately, they thought the walk began at Avebury so that is where they asked to be set down. After vainly searching for the start, they saw a van with food on board. Thinking this was some kind of support vehicle for the walk, they asked the driver where the start was. The people in the vehicle were working for the National Trust but they knew where the start was and gave them a lift to Overton Hill. Marie and Graham's starting time was 08.17.

**AWARDS** – Congratulations to Bob McGavin who receives a **cup** to mark his 25<sup>th</sup> crossing and to Ken Fancett and Mike Kershaw who each receive a **plaque** to mark their 20<sup>th</sup> crossings. A **10 crossing cloth badge** in black, red and gold has now been produced to replace the black pin badge. Based on the same design as the 5 crossings badge produced last year, it has an iron facility and the adhesive has been taken to the edge of the badge so that, in theory, it should not peel. One black badge was awarded this year to Gerald Bateman but walkers who have already achieved 10 crossings have had or will receive one also. Five **Red badges** were awarded.

**Green badge** – I had decided to discontinue this award on the basis that two crossings were not enough to warrant a badge. However, two walkers have expressed disappointment about this so I may reconsider my decision. In the meantime, I will send out the green pin badge.

A **special award** of a hip flask has been awarded to David Wright of the Vanguard to mark his 40<sup>th</sup> crossing.

**Volunteers' badge** – As a small token of thanks for the help volunteers give, a cloth badge, based on the drawing on the front cover of this report has been produced. It is a one-off gift which is going to all volunteers this year. In future years, new volunteers will also receive the badge. The badge is not intended to be a 'badge of office' but if any volunteer wants to wear it the badge has an iron on facility like the 10 crossings badge.

**THANKS** are due to everyone who marshalled the walk. Thanks also to Nick Crivich and his staff, Claire and James, at Streatley Youth Hostel for providing the special arrangements for the walk: to St John Ambulance for medical cover; and to Raynet who supplied radio communication along the route and co-ordinated the collection of retirees. Also, Paul Windle, landlord of the Shepherds Rest, kindly let us use the pub car park for our CP 3, opened up the public bar toilets for Ridgeway Walkers before the pub's opening time and provided water for the CP.

Linda Wright joined the boys in the back room to print the date and names of entrants/teams on the 40 mile walk certificates, which saved me an inordinate amount of work. I also had help from Emma Jones and Juliet of Reading Outdoor Group with local publicity. Meanwhile, Stuart Walker went into overdrive (pun intended) in working out a most detailed plan for allocating jobs to our team of drivers. These jobs included not only being available to collect retirees but also delivering supplies and marshals without vehicles to CPs and helping out with the putting up and taking down CP tents. In addition, Stuart worked out the marshalling arrangement for CPs apart from the finish which was, again, ably organised by Ron Cutler.

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## MARSHALS

Coach  
Start at Overton Hill

Abigail and John Elrick, Carl Roe and Colin Saunders  
Ken Brooks, Alan Smith, Helen and Stuart Walker

CP1 Burderop Down	Tim and Anne Ardill, Helen Walker, Ken Brooks and Alan Smith
CP2 Whitefield Hill	Angela and Brian Bellwood
CP3 Shepherds Rest	Veronica Hope and Ian Mitchell, Derek Smith, Mike Acott, Angela & Brian Bellwood
CP4 Uffington Castle	Mike Sandford, David and Lesley Secker, John Templeton
Ridgeway 20 hostel	Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler, Anne Goulding, John Templeton, David & Lesley Secker
Ridgeway 20 start	Christine Cogger
CP5 Eastmanton Down	Jackie Ford and Chris Hayward, Mike Acott, Ian Mitchell, Derek Smith, John Templeton
CP6 Yew Down	Pam and Steve Deverill, Emma Haile and Linda Wright, Andy Mansfield, Mike Acott, Ian Mitchell, Derek Smith, Phil Noel
CP7 Bury Down	Sheila and Dave Dowsett, Peter Dziwior, Sue Arnold, Andy Mansfield, Phil Noel.
CP8 Compton Down	John Sansum and friend
CP9 Starveall Turn	Frances Passey and Tom Stagles, David & Lesley Secker, Andy Mansfield, Mike Acott, John Templeton
Finish	Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler, Anelise Hill, Andy Mansfield, Alan Murray, Ann Murrell, Margaret.
Certificates	Christine Cogger and Linda Wright
Fold up marshals	Ken Brooks (to 18.00), Alan Smith and (from 18.00) Helen and Stuart Walker
Support for checkpoints	Helen and Stuart Walker
Drivers	Mike Acott, Andy Mansfield, Phil Noel & John Templeton, where shown at CPs were delivering supplies or marshals without transport and helping to open or close CPs (including putting up and taking down tents). Otherwise, they and Brian Bellwood, Emma Haile, Chris Hayward and Veronica Hope (after their CP duties ceased) were available to transport retired walkers back to Streatley. Angela and Brian Bellwood put the waymarks up between Burderop Down and Whitefield Hill and subsequently removed them.

## LETTERS

“My thanks to CP 6 tea and cake providers, who even managed to make it stop raining as well, at least for the next couple of miles, then the deluge started again!! Some compensation was had towards the end of the walk when a glorious rainbow opened up directly above the route down into Goring Gap, followed by spectacular views of Thurle Down bathed in evening sunshine against a backdrop of purplish rain clouds, a reminder of the atrocious conditions a few miles earlier’.

**Helen Abbott**

“Many thanks to you and all your helpers for arranging yesterday’s walk. This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> and once again really enjoyed it. It’s good to meet up0 with familiar faces from previous years, both walkers and checkpoint teams. The flapjack and gingerbread at 28 miles were delicious.”

**Nicky Barras**

“Congratulations on another successfully organised Ridgeway 40 walk. I was particularly pleased with my black badge for 10 crossings. Maybe due to my digital hearing aid I heard more birdsong this year which increased the enjoyment. Even the strong wind was behind us and the weather was favourable until about 13.30 when waterproofs were donned. The Didcot power station was concealed in mist and the last part of the walk was not so good. The CPs provided a welcome and welcoming break especially CP 6 where home made malt loaf was relished. A hearty thank you to yourself and all those who worked to give us walkers such a satisfying day’s exercise.

**Gerald Bateman**

“Thanks once again for the splendid organisation from you and your team of marshals and helpers and, of course, the attendance of the St John Ambulance. The conditions this year were not so good being ‘water cooled’ for the last twenty miles, but the enthusiasm has not dampened and I am already looking forward to 2008. I am sure Linda’s bread pudding has a secret ingredient in it as it certainly gives me a great boost to complete the walk.”

**John Beardsley**

“Enjoyed the day (despite the rain!). Well organised – thanks for all your hard work.”

**Neil Derbyshire (20 miler)**

“Just a note to say thanks very much for the superb organisation, once again, for this year’s Ridgeway Walk. Pity about the afternoon’s weather (!)- we should be used to ‘bad weather’ Ridgeways by now – but, as usual, it was a very sociable occasion, even though wet!

**Geoffrey Dumper**

“Once again, many thanks for letting me participate in this year’s Ridgeway Walk.....It was great to see everyone again both socially and walk-wise and I know I echo all participants with my own many, many thanks for the many hours of hard work that you put in and for the unselfish, pleasantness of your team (CPs, back-up etc). Please pass on my thanks to Raynet and St John for their help where necessary; also Nick and the others at the Youth Hostel who work so hard in ensuring and pampering to our many needs. You all deserve a medal!

**John Leather**

“Very enjoyable, well organised – and excellent value for money!”

**Terry Marsh (20 miler)**

“Georgie and I had a wonderful (if challenging ) day on Saturday. Thank you so much for all the hard work that clearly went in to organising the day. We will most certainly be walking again next year if we get the chance. **Warren Pearce**

“Many thanks for a great day, well organised and sociable.”

**John Salisbury (20 miler)**

“An absolutely outstanding event once again. Sincere thanks and in deep appreciation and admiration.” **Tim Smeed**

“Congratulations on a very well organised and run event. It was my first crossing and hopefully not my last. Everybody was so helpful and generous at the checkpoints. The rain failed to dampen the spirits – just served to focus on reaching the finish.” **Mark Tarlton**

“An enjoyable day (if a little wet) was enjoyed by all – a few aching limbs and nasty blisters to show for it – and a certificate, of course! I write to say a big thank you to the organisers and volunteers who provided CPs and fabulous cakes along the way. Until next year.. **Judy Tollet et al (20 milers)**

“Thanks for your assistance in getting most of our team on the walk after our enforced delay. Only a couple of drop outs on the way (minor injuries). The couple delayed due to the slow dog eventually made up the lost time and finished well before 10.00 pm. Apart from the heavy rain, it was a good day and well organised. The team expects to raise a few thousand pounds for the chosen charity – beds for Winchester hospital.” **Jeff Ware**

*Many Ridgeway Walkers have benefited over the years from the ministrations of St John Ambulance so you will be interested to read in the article below about the efforts by Reading Outdoor Group member, Anne Goulding to provide St John with a new ambulance.*

## **MISSION for an AMBULANCE**

I work part-time for St John Ambulance Berkshire and, for the past year, over and above my normal working times I have been organising and taking part in events to help raise money for a new mobile treatment unit.

The main event, was a 10 day trek in South Africa, in March, for which I sought sponsorship from individuals and companies. The costs of the trip were raised by a barn dance (which was attended by many members of Reading Outdoor Group) so that any sponsorship went straight to St John Ambulance.

I walked some 150 miles in the five weeks before departing for S Africa but nothing prepared me, or any of the others, for what we had to face. If the training programme had specified hill scrambling, rock climbing with a little mountaineering thrown in, we might have been better prepared. BUT..... we did it.

Every day we were up at 0600, to prepare our back packs, with water (4 litres) fleece, hat gloves (in case we had to spend the night in the hills) sunscreen, hand sanitiser, first aid kit, etc. have our other kit and our tents dismantled and be ready for breakfast by 0700. We tried to get the hardest climbs over before the hottest part of the day. It was extremely hot. We were expecting 28 C but it was actually 39 C.

It is a very barren but beautiful landscape, famous for fantastic sandstone rock formations, with lush pockets in the river valleys. There were, with us, a couple of extremely fit people but even they found it tough. But the comradeship was fantastic, all helping each other and as the week progressed, each person had to cope with their personal battles.

Take a look at the picture on this link [http://www.ehaile.f2s.com/yha/members/2007/anne\\_g\\_trek.jpg](http://www.ehaile.f2s.com/yha/members/2007/anne_g_trek.jpg) that person under the arch, that's me up there, where my feet are higher than the top of Ben Nevis. I climbed that!!!!!!!

We were due to climb Table Mountain on the Saturday but it was shrouded in fog and no one was allowed up, but we crammed it in, (just a hop, skip and a jump up one of the ravines) before we left for the airport on Sunday. I managed a quick trip down to the Cape of Good Hope on the Saturday when Table Mountain was cancelled.

I have never done anything so hard in all my life, but for anyone who fancies this sort of thing, St John is going to the Great Wall of China in May next year. Contact me on [anne.goulding@berks.sja.org.uk](mailto:anne.goulding@berks.sja.org.uk) if you want further details.

I have now raised approximately £4000 and still going.

We are holding another barn dance on 13<sup>th</sup> October this year.

Anne

Goulding

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