

REPORT of THE RIDGEWAY WALK on SATURDAY 10 MAY 2008 by Alan Smith



*Linda Wright gives Anne Dowsett a freshen up: in previous years, the weather has done this for us!
(Photo: Dave Dare)*

STATISTICS: Ridgeway Walk – entrants 213; starters 187; finishers 157.

Fastest man - Ken Fancett (6 hours 17 minutes): fastest woman - Marie Doke (6 hours 57 minutes).

Last person to finish was Ian Smith in 15 hours 4 minutes.

Youngest person to complete the walk was 15 year old Felicity Syfret in 10 hours 54 minutes.

Ridgeway 40 (run) – Entrants 1; starter 1; finisher 1.

Ridgeway 20 – Entrants 125; starters 91; finishers 85. Fastest were Barbara Taylor and Kevin Wills both in 3 hours 23 minutes; last to finish was Karen Burrows in 8 hours 12 minutes.

TIMINGS - The three coaches arrived at the Overton Hill at 07.50, 08.00 and 08.07 respectively. I have adjusted start times for walkers on these coaches to 7.55, 8.05 and 8.12 respectively. As in 2007, 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.

WEATHER – Sunny, hot (mid 70s), little wind though there was a breeze in the evening. This was the first Ridgeway Walk since 1998 when the sun shone all day.

WALKERS – 95 of the starters had not entered the 40 mile walk before. 57 of the starters were women and of these, 30 were doing the walk for the first time. 30 walkers retired. The proportion of retirees to the number of starters is 16%. This is quite low. (For instance, in 1976, that notoriously hot and dry year, 30 walkers retired out of a total field of 140, representing 21.4%.) Some walkers had to retire because of the effects of the sun, some so bad that the ambulance had to attend. In the late afternoon, the ambulance was summoned to a 20 mile walker at Churn Bridge (between checkpoints 8 and 9) suffering from the heat and, within less than an hour, they were summoned back to the A338 to treat two 40 mile walkers suffering from similar complaints.

Gerald Bateman, attempting his 11th Ridgeway Walk, fell down before checkpoint (CP) 2 and cut himself badly. Patched up by Angela Bellwood at CP 2 (walker Lesley Secker who was there at the time helped to distribute water and squash while Angela attended to Gerald), his wounds were dressed by St John at CP 3. Bloodied but unbowed, Gerald continued, only to

miss his footing on the last section from CP 9, cutting his thumb open. In spite of Gerald's request for permission to continue walking, St John took him to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading where his thumb was stitched up. That evening, Jessica (JJ), an assistant warden, gave me the key to the hostel door in case there were still walkers to come in at the time they usually lock up. I had not realised then that I would have to wait up until 2.40 a.m. to let Gerald back in. Gerald must have spent 3 to 4 hours at the hospital before they were able to release him and, as a good will gesture, the hospital paid for a taxi to take him back to Streatley.

Felicity Syfret the youngest walker in the 40 mile walk used the walk to obtain sponsorship for the Aman Kapila Memorial Fund, which is raising funds for a ventilator for the intensive care unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Felicity expects to raise about £400.

John Beardsley is another Ridgeway Walker who raised sponsorship money for charity. (see **Letters**)

Rajeev Hegde drove with his friend Simon Graham to Streatley, arriving in time for Simon to catch the third coach. Unfortunately, by the time Rajeev had found a place to park his car, the coach had gone. Later, Ian Mitchell, one of our marshals, was going to CP 3 and took Rajeev with him. Rajeev waited for Simon and walked with him for the rest of the walk. Rajeev gets a special mention in the results sheet but unfortunately does not qualify for a certificate.

Andrew McMinn entered the walk but, after flu and a chest infection, was advised by his doctor not to take part. However, he was still keen to do the walk and told me he would do it within a few weeks of the official date. I said that if he did so and let me know his times I would award him a certificate. See **Letters** for details of his successful crossing.

MARSHALS – With high temperatures forecast for the day, we knew that there would be a big demand for water. Several drivers were dedicated for part of the day to delivering water to CPs. Amongst these were Roger and Barbara Chambers who reckoned that they delivered 298 litres of water to various locations. Roger and Barbara seemed good at divining water as well: they found a supply at a temporary campsite near CP 6 and additionally obtained water from The Harrow pub in West Ilsley. They were also on hand to take advantage of a very helpful offer of water from Penny Parker and her husband. Penny was taking part in the 20 mile walk and offered the use of water from her house near CP 8.

Drivers (including marshals who had finished at their CPs) were also busy ferrying retirees back to Streatley. In recent years, most retirees seemed to have friends or relatives who came to pick them up, resulting in our drivers having time on their hands. But this year, most retirees needed transport from us.

The wet conditions experienced in some years prompted more CPs to be put 'under canvas'. See under **MARSHALS** for details.

To cool walkers down, Pam Deverill introduced a water sprayer at CP 6; CP 6 also had salt for anyone who needed it.

AWARDS – Last year, I said that I was discontinuing the award for two crossings ('crossing' means a completion of a Ridgeway Walk). There was disappointment at that news so I decided to retain the award but, as with the 5 and 10 crossings, I have replaced the metal pin badges with a **blue** cloth badge.



I have also introduced a badge for 15 crossings.

21 blue badges and 8 red badges were awarded this year. No 15 crossings badges were awarded but any walker on the individual league table who has 15 crossings already will receive a badge. Congratulations to Chris Cambray on his 20th crossing; to mark this he will receive a plaque.



ORGANISATION – Anne Goulding of Reading Outdoor Group took over registration of entries this year. Is it a coincidence that with Anne's appearance on the scene we have had one of the biggest entries and a sunny day?

Anne took on a huge slice of the work I used to do and has done an excellent job. I am glad to say that she will continue with registrations next year and she is bringing new ideas to bear on our administration.

Stuart Walker again organised the marshalling which, again is a huge (and sometimes worrying) task. Stuart asked me once how I had coped with the Ridgeway Walk when I did all the work. The answer is that I did it all but it wasn't done as well or with such refinements as we have today.

THANKS are due to the marshals and drivers and to volunteers from St John Ambulance and Raynet who are mentioned below. Thanks also to the landlord of the Shepherds Rest for use of all of their facilities the pub at CP 3; to The Harrow at West Ilsley as well as to Mr and Mrs Parker for supplying water.

Finally, our thanks go to Nick Crivich and his assistants, JJ and Ben at Streatley YHA Centre for the special arrangements they made for the walk. These arrangements included opening the hostel at times when it is usually closed, buying in food for the walk, providing packed breakfasts on Saturday morning and serving evening meals throughout Saturday night.

APOLOGY - Marta Janiskova should have appeared in the Individual League Table in the 2007 report as she achieved her 5th crossing that year. Unfortunately, I overlooked this. Sorry! Also, unaccountably, the headings of the Individual and Team league tables said they were for 2006 instead of 2007. However apart from the omission of Marta's name, the lists were the updated figures for 2007.

NOT OBSCURE ENOUGH! - In the 2007 report, I said that the wording in the callout in the front cover cartoon (see aside) was a paraphrase of lines spoken several times by a character played by Peter Sellers in a 1957 Rank Organisation comedy. I offered to pay the entry fee and coach fare for the 2008 Ridgeway Walk for the first person to send me the correct film title. By return of post, David Young supplied the correct answer, 'The Naked Truth'.



The film is about a character who threatens to publish magazines revealing unsavoury truths about well known figures in public life unless they pay him extortionate amounts of money. The victims gang up to try to frustrate his plans. This involved the Peter Sellers character (Wee Sandy MacGregor) recording an interview with a director of an insurance company (Terry Thomas) so that anyone in the house hearing the recording thinks he's there when in fact he's off putting a part of the plan into action. As he's gone for a longer time than expected, the recording, which contains the line 'You mean to say I get all this with such a small premium' is played over and over again.

David commented that, in spite of its title, it was not as racy as you would think but, then it was produced in 1957 so I suppose one couldn't expect anything too near the knuckle!

NEXT YEAR'S WALK will be on **SATURDAY, 9th MAY 2009**. Entry forms will be available early in 2009 and copies will be sent (electronically where possible) to this year's entrants. Entry forms for the 40 mile run / walk will be available for downloading from the website at ridgeway40.org.uk. Next year, all those with email addresses will receive maps, confirmation and information electronically. Only the walker's check card will be posted. Those without access to the internet will continue to receive hard copies. We are looking towards the future and working at being able to book and maybe even pay on-line. That may not be in place by 2009 but the time is surely coming. Requests for entry forms, information for the 40 mile walk and any queries should be addressed to either Anne at smokesignals01@googlemail.com or Alan at jungledrums@waitrose.com or send a stamped addressed envelope (4" x 9") to

For the Ridgeway 40 Walk – Anne Goulding, 81 Wooshill Lane, Wokingham, Berks. RG41 2TR (0118 978 1339)

For the Ridgeway 40 Run - Mike Sandford, 22 Stevenson Drive, Abingdon, Oxon. OX14 1SN (01235 532 207)

For the Ridgeway 20 Walk – Contact Ron Cutler (01235 850 578)

RIDGWAY WALK TO GO GREEN – Over 2000 plastic cups plus 2 to 300 insulated cups were used this year: these are thrown away after being used once. This is not good for the environment as one walker commented. Therefore, in 2009, we will ask entrants to try to bring their own camping or LDWA plastic mug. A limited supply of plastic cups will be available at checkpoints for those who forget. A reminder about this will be included in the details of the 2009 walk.

Emma Haile serves tea at CP 6 (note the cups) (Photo: Dave Dare)



MARSHALS

[**Bold type** = marshals who were at their CPs during the whole opening time of the CP.

Regular type = marshals who were at CPs for part of the time the CPs were open.]

Coach	David Young, Abigail and John Elrick and Colin Saunders
Start at Overton Hill	Ken Brooks, Carl Roe, Ken Royce and Alan Smith
CP 1 Burderop Down	Tim and Anne Ardill , Ken Brooks, Carl Roe, Ken Royce and Alan Smith
CP 2 Whitefield Hill	Angela and Brian Bellwood
CP 3 Shepherds Rest	Veronica Hope and Ian Mitchell, Ken Royce, Derek Smith , Angela & Brian Bellwood and Walter Cullis
CP 4 Uffington Castle	Mike Sandford, Alan Smith , Ken Brooks, Anne Goulding, Mike Fleet and Carl Roe
Ridgeway 20 hostel	Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler and Anne Goulding ,
Ridgeway 20 start	Christine Cogger and Ron Cutler
CP 5 Eastmanton Down	Jackie Ford and Chris Hayward , Walter Cullis, Dave Dare and Andy Mansfield
CP 6 Yew Down	Pam and Steve Deverill, Linda Wright , Emma Haile, Dave Dare, Andy Mansfield and Phil Noel
CP 7 Bury Down	Sheila and Dave Dowsett, Roger and Barbara Chambers, Dave Dare, Emma Haile, Phil Noel, Helen and Stuart Walker
CP 8 Compton Down	Peter Dziwior, Sue Arnold, Adrian and Rosie Small
CP 9 Starveall Turn	Ian Mitchell, Ken Royce, Derek Smith and Andy Mansfield,
Finish	Liz Brenke, Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler , Walter Cullis, Mike Fleet, Anne Goulding, Annelise Hill, Isobel and Steve Hoskins, Christine Lord, Andy Mansfield and Peter Smith.
Preparation of certificates	Ron Cutler (20 mile) and Linda Wright (40 mile)
Fold up marshals	Alan Smith , Ken Brooks (to 19.00), and Helen and Stuart Walker(from 19.00)
Support for checkpoints	Helen and Stuart Walker

Drivers (responsible for delivering water and in some cases marshals and tents to CPs, helping to put up and take down tents and transporting retirees off the Ridgeway). In some case, drivers also helped out running CPs. And some drivers took on these duties after finishing at their own CPs - Brian Bellwood, Roger and Barbara Chambers, Walter Cullis, Dave Dare, Emma Haile, Chris Hayward, Veronica Hope, Andy Mansfield, Ian Mitchell and Phil Noel.

Tents/gazebos were supplied by Mike Sandford (CP 4), Helen and Stuart Walker (CPs 5 and 7), Pam and Steve Deverill (CP 6), Peter Dziwior and Sue Arnold (CP 8) and a Beach Buddy purchased on behalf of the Ridgeway Walk by Ian Mitchell (CP 9 – but unused in view of the fine conditions). Raynet also put a gazebo up at CP 5 and a tent at CP 9.

Before and after the walk, Brian and Angela Bellwood put the waymarks up at Burderop Down and Whitefield Hill and subsequently removed them except where they had been removed by unauthorised individuals!

ST JOHN AMBULANCE - James Wickham, Ian Faulkner, Rob Croton, Graeme Wilding, Eddie Chan, Heather Smith, Stuart Morgan, David Vowell and two others.

RAYNET

CP 3 Jeremy Hall (M3KYK)

CP 4 Wally and Jonathan Sawyer (G7FHN/M3KYK)

CP 5 Pete Milton (G8FRC) and Ian Mayo (M0ICM)

CP 6 Stuart Marlow (G7ITU) and Richard Fenton (G1CTF)

CP 7 Tony Jones (G7ETW) and Rob McLachlan (G7GHA)

CP 8 Nigel McFetridge (G8FIE) and David King (2E0FUZ)

CP 9 Martin Maynard (G8CIX), Simon French (G6ZTZ)

and Phill Bristow (M1DMC)

Finish Denis Pibworth G4KWT

*Near the start of the walk
(Photo: Ian Davis)*



LETTERS (variously addressed to Ron Cutler, Anne Goulding and Alan Smith)

Many thanks to you and all the other helpers on the day. **Helen Abbott**

Thank you once again for organising a great event. The weather conditions this year were certainly different from last year. I was certainly glad of a bit of cloud cover!

I did a sponsorship this time for the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance which raised just over £300.

Once again I would like to thank all the marshals and the St John Ambulance - especially those in attendance at the Youth Hostel who treated my blisters at the end. **John Beardsley**

Please pass on my thanks to everyone involved with the Ridgeway 40 event. As usual the event was very well run, and a joy to participate in. I'm sure that once the blisters heal, I will look forward to next year's event. Special mention to the hospitality at CP 6, they couldn't do enough for us, and it was most appreciated. The cakes were delicious. **Jason Burke**

I just wanted to thank you for a lovely day, Saturday. The event was very well organised, and everybody was so friendly and supportive. The route was easy to follow and very scenic with outstanding views.

The coffee and cakes at mile 28 were particularly welcome, as were the delicious cakes at the end, and it was lovely to meet you.

I will definitely be back to do this event again in the future and will recommend it to everybody. Thanks again to you and all the other volunteers for your hard work, it is very much appreciated. **Stephanie Cooke**

Just a short note to thank all of those who were involved in the Ridgeway40 the other week. As always with this sort of Challenge walk the easy part is turning up and enjoying the day out. I always try to make the effort to thank those that have given up their time to ensure that I am fed and watered, I am looked after and ensured I am safe and as well as can be expected, and equally important I have a splendid day's walk laid out in front of me. The Ridgeway40 exceeded all expectations in the sheer amount of organisation required. From the professional way the pre day information was issued (I always like to know the route beforehand as I can ensure I have the right maps and I can programme the GPS – other Challenge Walk Organisers please take note – why do they have to keep it all a secret until you turn up??) to the arranging of all those coaches to ship us all up to Overton, to the length of the route that had to be marshalled (including all those marvellous volunteers who manned the Checkpoints (the group at CP 5 who were getting all the walkers to help them with their Crosswords and Sudokus – superb!).

In my case special mention must go to the "Mopper Uppers". My Ridgeway28 came to an end at CP 6 (where this wonderful lady was making everybody feel a bit better by spraying them with water from a plant spray bottle!) I must admit we were dropping like flies at that point and I spoke to various people who didn't know whether to push on or pull out. For me my Knight in shining armour was this wonderful lady in one of the Delta cars who ferried three of us back to the Bull in Streatley where we all hobbled slowly back to our cars. One common theme amongst the walkers both in the coach and on the route itself was one name that kept cropping up. It seems that Anne Goulding had personally spoken to everybody taking part (and in most cases made them promise to speak to her at the YHA at the end of the walk!) I tend to talk to most walk organisers and have always found it to be a worthwhile effort. Anne confirmed my opinion of this band of heroes and she went that extra mile to ensure all my questions were answered and worries were calmed (this appeared to be a general opinion amongst the other walkers too). So finally many thanks once again. Here's to next year (maybe the 20 mile to see the bit I didn't see) **Gary Culverhouse (walker 146)**

I thank you for another excellent Ridgeway. It seems odd, sitting here watching the wind-driven rain stream down the window, that 2 weeks ago we were striding out in the sunshine complaining about the heat. **Ian Davis**

Just had to say a big thank you to you and everyone involved in organising the walk on Saturday.

It was the first time we had participated so didn't know what to expect, but it went way beyond our expectations. The marshals were so friendly and helpful and the refreshments were so good that the birds benefited from our sandwiches when we got home! Even the weather was kind (bit too kind some might say!)

The only down side is that the friend I went with wants to do the 40 mile walk next year!

Jane Dawson (20 miler)

I found it hard this year with pain in my eyes. I'm not sure if it was caused by sweat running into them, or by the glare of the sun being reflected off the white chalk. The last hill up from Compton Cross roads really broke me. Anyway, another very well organised event that went off without a hitch. **Ken Fancett**

I'd like to thank you for helping to organise such a fantastic Ridgeway 40 event last weekend. Having never attempted any kind of long distance walk before, I'm quite proud to say that I finished the Ridgeway dead last! I'm sorry to have kept everyone up so late at the finish. It must have been after 11:00 pm when we finally reached the hostel.

Ordinarily, walking the last few miles in the dark would have been impossible because we would have become hopelessly lost. We would have been forced to retire. However, I happened to meet an extraordinary gentleman at around the 28 mile checkpoint. I know him only by his first name, Ian.

Seeing that I was really struggling, he offered to give me both of his walking poles. I had been suffering from leg cramps and pretty bad blisters, so was walking with quite a limp. It would have been impossible to walk the final 12 miles limping. The poles made an incredible difference, keeping me upright, allowing me to walk normally and finish the walk.

Ian was a pretty big guy himself and I could see that he was struggling too. He said he'd never walked more than 35 miles in a day before the Ridgeway. However, he wouldn't let me give the poles back. He then stayed with me all the way to the finish. He was a local and knew the track well, so he also acted as a guide once it became dark. What incredible kindness to show to a complete stranger. I shook his hand after we finished.

I will never forget the elderly gentleman who we passed as he was being taken into the ambulance just a few miles from the finish. What an inspiration.

All of the friendly, genuine people, walkers and organisers alike, were what really made the day memorable. People don't talk to each other living in the city, but on this walk I somehow found myself striking up conversations with many interesting people of all different backgrounds. What a fantastic day, and what an experience to share with such a fine group of people.

Simon Graham

Many thanks once again to you and the team for another great Ridgeway event. I found it hard going on account of the heat and humidity but we all made it without drama, including in the Bull afterwards which is something of an achievement based on recent form - we are now greeted at the Bull as minor celebrities (as well as being offered salt at the tea and cakes checkpoint!). I'm pleased that Hendon Hammers were again able to enter a team. Unfortunately Chris (Cambray) was again the sole entrant for Blewbury Local Ramblers and has hence been named the 'Blewbury Loner'. Chris celebrated his 20th crossing and we raised a glass of champagne in recognition. Chris follows in the footsteps of his dad Roger - I can remember how impressed we all were when Roger completed his 20th so many years ago. Thank you for arranging the usual Blewbury pick up - the second Saturday in May would not be the same without it. We are greatly indebted to you all for enabling us to continue the tradition.

Bob McGavin

I did indeed complete the walk yesterday (23rd May) and although almost two weeks late I set a new personal best time! Which just goes to show how much time I must spend chatting to the marshals at the checkpoints!

Overall time - 10 hours 39 minutes. Last year's time was 11h 10m.

The weather was ideal - dry underfoot, dry throughout the day, mainly cloudy with a light cooling breeze. The walk was pretty uneventful with only birdsong to keep me company. In the first 20 miles I met one man and his dog, one lady and her horse and two other walkers - still it was a workday!

A friend met me at CP 6 with tea and cakes to try and replicate the reviving properties of the 'ladies of the 28 mile mark'. He then walked the last 12 miles with me which was very welcome, especially to get me through the last few miles when I was suffering from blisters. The best news is that I have raised £1050 for the Alzheimer's Society.

Andrew McMinn

What a great day. A big thank-you to all those who organised it; checked walkers in, manned radios, provided sustenance and also the members of the St. John Ambulance crews who helped those in need. If I've forgotten anyone it is not intentional. I hope to do the walk again next year, hopefully it won't be so hot. There was an elderly gentleman who collapsed and needed treatment in the final stage of the walk as it turned dark. I had been chatting to him while going under the A34 and for a short while afterwards before seeing him again in less happy circumstances after his accident. The spirit of the walk is summed up by the chap being helped into the St. John Ambulance on a stretcher and still asking the crew for permission to be allowed to continue.

Ian Smith

I would like to say thank you to you and your colleagues for organising the Ridgeway 40 on Saturday. This is the first time I had taken part and the organisation was effective without being obtrusive. I dropped out, despite the difficulty this must have caused, the Marshalls were courteous and supportive. I intend to take part next year better prepared so I can finish the full course. Once again thank you to everyone involved in the organisation of the event.

Mike Stelling

Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the walk last week and can you bear me in mind for the next one please!

Was very well organised and great fun, thank you and your team for all your efforts.

Trish (20 miler)

I just wanted to say that Calum and I enjoyed yesterday's walk tremendously. Despite us both walking like Charlie Chaplin this morning, we will certainly be planning to do it again next year.

Well done to you and your organization.

Michael Vaughan