

## **REPORT OF THE RIDGEWAY WALK ON SATURDAY 6 MAY 2006 by Alan Smith**

**STATISTICS: Ridgeway Walk** – I registered 205 entrants, the highest number since I took over the organisation of the walk in 1997/8 (though the highest ever was 229 entries in 1986). The number of starters was 173 and finishers 147.

Fastest man Ken Fancett (6 hours 5 minutes): fastest woman Sui Kuet (7 hours 47 minutes)

Last person to finish was Mr Philip Bedford in 14 hours 50 minutes.

For the 2nd year running, the youngest person to complete the walk was 15 year old Tizzy Mann in 12 hours 51 mins.

**Ridgeway 40** (running race) - Three entrants, the fastest being Mark Shepherd in 5 hours 45 minutes.

**Ridgeway 20** - 78 starters and finishers. Fastest person Michael Allingham in 4 hours 51 minutes. Last person to finish Penny Hutton in 8 hours 25 minutes.

**TIMINGS** - The three coaches arrived at the Overton Hill at 7.45, 7.55 and 8.00 respectively. I have adjusted start times for walker on these coaches to 7.50, 8.00 and 8.05 respectively, though, at our suggestion, many walkers inserted their own times on their check cards.

**ENTRANTS** - As well as many old friends returning to the Walk, this year's entry included many new to the event. C.O.P.S.E. have made a comeback with a team of eight, the largest team they have had for many years. Any complacency that the Vanguardians have that they have an unassailable position at the top of the team league table may have taken a knock. Harrow & Wembley Outdoor Group fielded their first team since 1978. Welcome back! I hope we won't have to wait 28 years before you field your next team!

**WEATHER** - Rain was forecast. The morning started bright and sunny but it clouded over mid to late morning. By mid-day, there were some showers which continued on and off until mid afternoon. The rain was not particularly heavy but resulted in conditions feeling generally damp. Unusually, there was little wind.

**CONDITIONS UNDERFOOT** - Generally excellent. Perhaps a bit slippery after the rain but, basically quite firm.

**GLITCHES** - My heart missed several beats when a marshal called me at mid-day to say the hostel annexe was locked so he couldn't get his supplies. Evidently, there had been some misunderstanding between myself and others over whose responsibility it was to open the annexe. In the circumstances, we had to contact the hostel and the manager's wife opened the annexe for us.

**CASUALTIES** - Someone commented on Sunday that the Ridgeway Walk was the means to convert 173 fit people into 173 cripples. That is grossly overstating the case, but I did have the impression that St John Ambulance had more work to do than usual. The only cases of injured entrants whom I know about occurred after the walk. Stephen Redmond phoned me to say he'd finished the walk and returned to his car in The Coombe. On pulling his tight left boot off he managed to pull the skin off the back of his heel.

Later, Neil Lawrence of the Hendon Hammers collapsed in the toilet of The Bull and banged his head on something hard. Both Stephen and Neil were attended by St John Ambulance personnel (yes, those medics running to The Bull that evening weren't going there for a pint!) and both are now well. (See Neil's letter on pages 6/7.)

The most serious injury was to Stuart Walker who twisted his right foot in, of all places, the car park of the Shepherds Rest. This occurred at 10 a.m., well before the pub opened and when he still had another 12 hours driving/marshalling before he could even have his first drink. At first, he thought he had just bruised the foot but, on returning home, he found out that he had a double fracture of the right 5<sup>th</sup> Metatarsal. He comments that he did not actually know what that was until Sven rang him to say that he, along with Michael Owen and Wayne Rooney, would not be fit enough to go to Germany, at least until the finals, as they all had the same injury. What a let-off, as he wasn't going to start training until after the "Ridgeway" weekend!

**BADGES AND AWARDS** - For the first time in its history, the Ridgeway Walk has a general cloth badge. Alan Murray did sterling work selling them at the finish. If you didn't get a badge, please buy one (send a £2 cheque and an SAE to me); we need all the money we can get!

A new cloth badge replaces the red pin badge awarded for five crossings and will be given to all current Ridgeway Walkers who qualify for one. The green and black badges are still being issued for two and ten crossings respectively. This year, 29 green badges, 4 red badges and 2 black badges were awarded. Plaques will also be

awarded to Neil Lawrence and John Rollinson for their 20<sup>th</sup> crossings and a clock to Colin Saunders for his 30<sup>th</sup> crossing. And a year after

he completed his 30<sup>th</sup> crossing, I presented Dave Young with a thermometer mounted on a wooden base containing a carving of the Ridgeway white horse and a dedication plate: Dave didn't want a clock as he equates that with 'retirement'. Both Dave and I are grateful to my old YHA friend Don Gordon who made the trophy.

**THANKS** are due to everyone who marshalled the walk. In particular, I should mention Ron Cutler who organised the team at the finish and Mike and Gloria Sandford who not only organised CP 4, including erecting their tent, but who also put up and took down our Road Traffic Signs on the A346. Thanks also to Nick Crivich and his staff, Jill and Robert, at Streatley Youth Hostel for putting themselves out to provide the special arrangements for the walk: to St John Ambulance for medical cover; and to Raynet who supplied radio communication along the route and did so much to help us not lose anybody. Also Gillian, the landlady of the Shepherds Rest, kindly let us use the pub car park for our checkpoint 3 and opened up the public bar toilets for Ridgeway Walkers before the pub's opening time.



Crack!  
Chief Marshal does a Rooney

I am also grateful to Linda Wright who saved me an enormous amount of time and effort by inserting the date and names of entrants on the 40 mile certificates. You did such a good job, Linda, that you probably have the job for life! (See also John Harrison's letter on page 6.) Thanks too to Dave Wright for the cartoons in this report.

I wish to record my special thanks to Stuart Walker for organising the marshalling. In a year which looked difficult at first with several stalwart marshals deciding to do the walk while others had family engagements on the day, he worked like a Trojan to make sure everything was covered. Bringing a fresh mind to the job, he has also found improvements to our organisation which had not occurred to me.

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### **And now for something a bit more challenging**

Bill Colson, veteran of 20 Ridgeway crossings, took part in Sony's 2006 race to the Magnetic North Pole. The course is 350 nautical miles and started from Polaris, 60 miles north of Resolute on 16<sup>th</sup> April.

14 teams, each of two or three people, arrived in Resolute on the 7<sup>th</sup> April and spent six days training before walking to the start line. Bill's team, Claverdon Lions, took 13 days 1 hour 3 minutes pulling all their equipment themselves to reach Magnetic North. They were the 5<sup>th</sup> team to arrive.

Bill has used his participation in the race to raise sponsorship money for the Wessex Children's Hospice Trust (Naomi House) which provides support for children and young people who are expected to die before, or shortly after, reaching adulthood. Anyone who wants to add to his sponsorship money should contact Bill at Manton Plovers, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 1RR.

Congratulations to Bill and his team mates. And we trust you are all fit and well.

## MARSHALS

Coach	Abigail and John Elrick, Ken Royce and Colin Saunders
Start at Overton Hill	Ken Brooks, Alan Smith, Helen and Stuart Walker
CP1 Burderop Down	Tim Ardill, Mike Acott, Ian Mitchell (initially): (later) Ken Brooks and Alan Smith
CP2 Whitefield Hill	Angela and Brian Bellwood
CP3 Shepherds Rest	Walter Cullis (initially), Mike Acott, Veronica Hope and Ian Mitchell
CP4 Uffington Castle	Malcolm Cox (initially), Mike and Gloria Sandford and, for part of the time, Douglas Chester, Walter Cullis and Andy Mansfield.
Ridgeway 20 start	Christine Cogger and Ron Cutler
CP5 Eastmanton Down	Malcolm Cox (part of time), Liz Brenke and Norman Willis
CP6 Yew Down	Dave Dare and Andy Mansfield (initially) Pam and Steve Deverill, and Linda Wright and, at close, Dave Dare and Phil Noel
CP7 Bury Down	Phil Noel (initially) Sheila and Dave Dowsett, Liz Brenke and Walter Cullis (all for part of time) and, at close, Dave Dare and Phil Noel.
CP8 Compton Down	Sue Arnold and Peter Dziwior
CP9 Starveall Turn	Frances Passey and Tom Stagles and Douglas Chester, Andy Mansfield (all for part of time)
Finish	Vanessa Brown, Christine Cogger, Malcolm Cox, Walter Cullis, Ron Cutler, Sarah Feneck, Alex Heap, Juliet, Andy Mansfield, Alan Murray and Norman Willis
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
Transport for retired walkers	During the day, when other duties did not occupy them, the following were available: Mike Acott, Brian Bellwood, Liz Brenke, Malcolm Cox, Walter Cullis, Dave Dare, Veronica Hope, Andy Mansfield, Phil Noel and Norman Willis. In addition, Ken Brooks took retirees back to Streatley at the end of his 'shift'.

[Mike and Gloria Sandford erected warning signs to motorists on the A346 and took them down later; Angela and Brian Bellwood put the waymarks up between Burderop Down and Whitefield Hill and subsequently removed them. Marshals shown as attending checkpoints initially helped set up the checkpoints, including the erection of tents, and those shown as present at the close, or for part of the time helped clear up and take tents down.]

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**FIRE AT THE SWAN** – On the evening of Monday, 7 May, a serious fire broke out at The Swan, Streatley. Over 60 firefighters tackled the blaze, one being injured in the operation. 30 per cent of the hotel's roof was destroyed.

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## LETTERS

“I write this thank you note, with special mention of the cakes and cheerful hospitality at Checkpoint 6. That is not to omit mention of the general organisation and the many people who gave up their time.  
.....I didn't know there were any other local walkers this year, but the (*finishing*) time was certainly a pleasant surprise (in fact so was finishing at all) given the footwear saga which preceded the walk and led to my walking the entire distance in open sandals. A few people obviously wondered why, especially given the conditions. Basically, my walking boots suddenly wore out the week before; the manufacturer's current version didn't fit; the next best compromise was clearly going to take too long to wear in, and an existing lightweight pair did last a 20-mile practice walk but were not very comfortable on the hard stony ground. Either as a result of that, or general experimenting, I picked up a top of foot injury and the open sandals were the only thing which didn't aggravate it. But they were a surprisingly good choice, barring the odd bit of gravel.”  
**Helen Abbott**

“Just a big thank you once again and all the marshals for the organising of another great Ridgeway Walk. We could not do it with out your tremendous efforts.  
Once again a special thanks to Pam and Steve and I think Linda at CP 6 for the bread pudding and sweet tea and this year malt bread; what a great boost that gave me after 28 miles and I'm sure it must have helped many more walkers to do walk the last 12 miles. Many thanks also to St Johns Ambulance brigade for their superb effort throughout Saturday. Looking forward to next year without wishing time to pass to quickly. Best regards.”  
**John Beardsley**

“I would like to say a big thank you for such a brilliant day. As I arrived at the hostel, I swore I would never do it again! It would be my first and last Ridgeway Walk. 24 hours later, I felt fresh, like a million. 36 hours later, my three peanut size blisters have subsided and I was ready to go again!!! I cannot wait for..... next year’s (walk) ...It is such a unique experience!

I want to say a big thank you to all of you who took part in this mammoth operation, for the food & water you provided, for your care and kindness, and your smiles. Without any of you, the Ridgeway wouldn’t be so special!!! Take a well deserved rest guys and I’ll see you next year.”

**Edith Chansigaud**

*(Thank you very much, Edith, for the disc of your photos which you sent to me. These will be kept as part of the Walk’s records. Alan)*

“As always, another great day on the Ridgeway. It was good to see a number of younger faces coming along for the first time as well as the old timers. It just shows what can be done when somebody (you) is willing and able to ‘push’ an event. The arrangement with the hostel works well and I think this helps to attract people. Maybe one day soon we’ll be up to 4 coaches. Whatever, thank you to everybody and look forward to seeing you all again next year.”

**Sue Clements**

“Just a brief note to thank you again for the usual superb Ridgeway Walk 2006 arrangements –everything excellent as usual, including the congeniality on Sunday morning! It was good to see a few more C.O.P.S.E. members this year too.

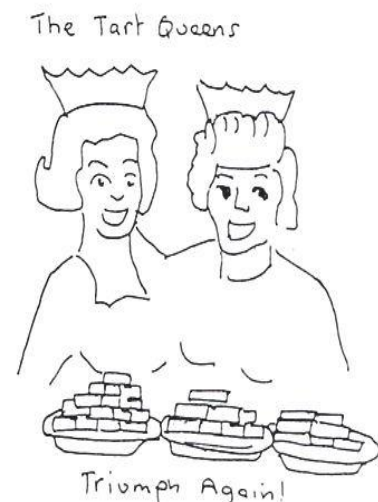
Maybe I should aim for forty consecutive 40 milers, then retire!!!

Anyway, thanks again for everything and see you again next year, if not before on another event.”

**Geoff Dumper**

“I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all concerned for the excellent organisation of the walk - particularly the hot drinks and cakes at (I think) the 28-mile checkpoint. For the previous few miles I’d been thinking about giving up - I was damp, my feet hurt, and Ed (*Batchelor*), being taller than me and longer-legged, kept disappearing into the distance without apparent effort - but after two cups of tea and some home made cake I was raring to go again. Very welcome and timely, as was the camaraderie of those at the back of the field, like me, who were still struggling on. Not sure I’ll be doing it again - the furthest I’d walked previously in one day was about 10 miles less, but I’ve never had my feet bleed before, as one did this time! Even so, I have a great sense of achievement & have been basking in the admiration of family, friends and colleagues (those who don’t think I’m insane, that is).”

**Douglas Evans**



“This is our (*Nick Hutton and Jeremy*)’s second time at walking the 40 mile route. We managed to take an hour off our previous time 2 years ago. You may remember it was like walking across the Somme year before last. – but still great fun.”

**Jeremy Gittins**

“Thank you for a great day and all the organising that goes with it. Little slower than last time out. The Reborns had a team of 3 Johnny Harrison, myself and Alistair Lawry. The Queens of cakes at the Monument deserve a special mention.”

**John Harding**

*(John also wrote a thank you letter to Ron Cutler as he had friends and relatives in the 20 mile walk.)*

“Thank you very much for all the work that you (and others) put into organising and running the Ridgeway Walk. As for writing the certificates, (*a job I offered to John in view of his excellent handwriting – Alan*) I thought that the printed version was very good and very efficient. Also, at 69, I think it is a choice between continuing to walk and reaching for the slippers and remote control!

The surface of the Ridgeway made it very much easier to walk than two or three years ago, but the cinder and other man made finishes were more like a minor unsurfaced road! Nothing is perfect.”

**John Harrison**

“Thanks for organising a great event. See you next year.”

**Nick Hutton**

I wanted to make clear my heartfelt thanks to the St. Johns Ambulance team for their assistance the evening of the walk, and the landlady and staff of The Bull pub in Streatley. Having completed the crossing for the 20<sup>th</sup> time I was feeling physically very good but still troubled by an upset stomach that had been bothering me since first thing. Unfortunately in The Bull I suffered a blackout and the St. Johns people were marvellous in their response and concern for my well being. The root cause of my trouble was later diagnosed as gastroenteritis, but it was never- the- less very alarming at the time.

The landlady was brilliant and very supportive, and in a later conversation I learnt that she is actively thinking about what evening meals and energy/recovery drinks she can offer walkers in the future.

The moral of the tale is listen to your body and not ignore warning signs.

As always, a big thank you to all the marshals and Alan for the excellent organization and support throughout a damp and cold day.

**Neil Lawrence**

“Thank you again for organising the walk and to all the wonderful marshals and suppliers of sustenance and encouragement.

Tizzy developed a blister at about 25 miles which slowed us up but she was so determined that nothing would stop her finishing, not even every step being agony for a while (very hard for me to watch as her mother trying to work out which would be better – to make her retire and know she would feel frustrated by ‘failure’ or encourage her to continue in pain). Yes we were disappointed the time was slower than last year, but at least we finished feeling elated, the blisters are healing and memories of pain rapidly fading.”

**Catherine Mann**

“Max (our family pet) is a 6 year old tri coloured border collie.

We live at the Warren Farm development at the very end of Rectory Road in Streatley, which is adjacent to the Ridgeway. Max's daily exercise routine takes a circular route to Aldworth via the Ridgeway. He easily doubles the 4 mile distance by darting there and back for sticks, and taking in the delicious doggy sniffs. Perhaps he could be called a canine Ridgeway regular.

Like myself he was a very late entrant when we decided to accompany David (my son) and Robert Gott.

As far as the distance was concerned, for Max it appeared to be doggy doddle; mind you 4 legs do indeed come in handy. With his regular forays to and fro along the way we reckon he probably did another 10 miles during the day. He enjoyed the attention from the helpers at the stages, especially at the one where the nice ladies insisted that they provided him with plentiful amounts of tasty flapjack and cake.

After the finish we had a rewarding pint in the Bull. Alison, the landlady, made sure that Max (a regular customer) had a fresh bowl of water and his usual doggy biscuit treat from behind the bar. Much appreciated.

Next day he was back up the Ridgeway for his daily walk and appeared a little perplexed that for some inexplicable reason I was walking more slowly than usual and wanted to keep it rather short!

Many thanks to you and your assistants, Alan.”

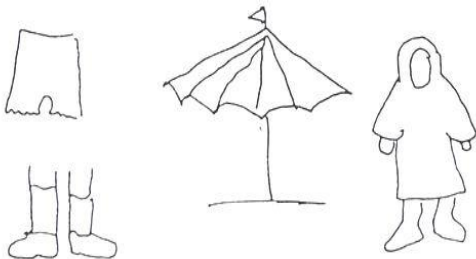
**Gordon Mitchell**

“Just a note to thank you and your colleagues for last Saturday.

The organisation both prior to and during the event was excellent and the welcome (and refreshments) at the CP's certainly brightened up the day!”

**Alan Pearson**

Checkpoint 6's Tent is no more



Some ideas for re-cycling

“Thanks for another splendid Ridgeway. All the Planning beforehand and Stuart and Helen's merry band of helpers meant that the miles just slipped by with a minimum of pain and inconvenience. Long may your noble efforts continue! **Ken Royce (and Carl Roe)**

Thanks very much to you and your team for their hospitality on yesterday's Ridgeway walk. I was delighted to finish, having had to retire at an advanced stage a couple of years ago through injury.” **Stephen Stokes**

“Sorry I didn't manage to sign the visitor's book. I really enjoyed the event – my 1<sup>st</sup> effort at the distance & hopefully will return to it again next year. However, my attempt to beat the record no. of appearances could pose a problem! Anyway, many thanks for a

wonderful effort & please pass on to all your wonderful marshals & helpers my sincere thanks”

**Dave Williams** (LDWA London)

“I have e-mailed you to say 'thank you' for organising the Ridgeway Walk. I thought the organisation of it was excellent. It was really good having all the check points all offering their refreshments. I would like to pass on my thanks to all those people who helped, the refreshments were very welcome [especially the tea and cakes]! I decided to enter the Ridgeway walk since I have recently come back from a trek in Vietnam in aid of the Alzheimer's Society. I had to train before I went so I could walk for 8 hours a day, so thought I was probably more walking fit than I'm likely to be in the future!

When we went on the coach and we drove through Hungerford and then Marlborough and beyond, I had doubts whether I would be able to finish the walk, especially after meeting rather a lot of serious walkers at the start! We were very lucky with the weather and only had some light rain and it was a very comfortable temperature for walking. The morning went very well, only stopping at the pub 'the Shepherds Rest' for a cup of coffee and a sit for half an hour. Otherwise we just kept walking and walking!

After about 20 miles I started getting a couple of blisters. By 30 miles the soles of my feet were really aching. By the last checkpoint at 36.5 miles I really wondered whether I could make it and seriously considered giving up. However, having come so far I couldn't give in so slowly walked as it got dark. A couple of miles from the end, my husband and son came to meet me and walked back with me. It was such a relief when I reached Streatley YH but also with a great sense of achievement. I can honestly say it was the hardest days walking I have ever done! It took a couple of days for my feet to recover but I'm so glad I did it. A challenge I will always remember. So thank you for all the organising of the day.”

**Irene Wrigley**

**The following letters were received by Ron Cutler from walkers on the 20 mile route**

“Hi Ron - Thank you very much for another splendid event. We thorough enjoyed ourselves (again). The organisation was spot on (again). The checkpoints were brilliant, with excellent eats (again). However, this year, we didn't have blisters or lose our big toenails.”

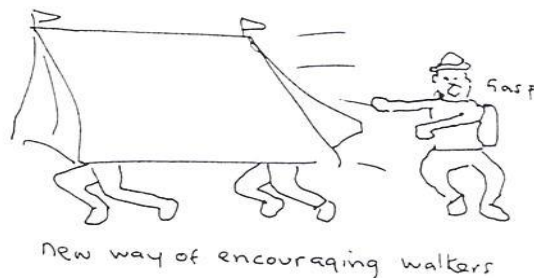
**Mike Box, Andrea Parker and Ali Thurbeck**

“Hi Ron - I just wanted to express my sincere thanks for the organisation of the walk last weekend—we had a great time. It's the first time I've done a walk anywhere near that length and certainly felt it a few days after the event! The cakes and tea tent was a real treat — especially with the rain hit. Looking forward to joining you next year, if not before.”

**Sam Cox**

“Thanks very very much to you and your team for organising this. I really feel that I achieved something by doing just the 20 miles. I don't think I've ever walked so far before. It was nice to be in pleasant company and to be part of such a well organised event. I feel like I've discovered real walking and will look to do some more. Most days (with some gaps) I will do anywhere from 1 to 5 miles with my dog but 15-20 is a new experience for me. Clearly there is a lot of work involved in organising the two events and everyone involved seemed happy and competent in their role. A good testament to the organisers!”

**Tom Povey**



**Thought for the day on Saturday 6 May 2006** - "Let no man boast himself that he has got through the perils of winter till at least the seventh of May"  
**Thorne** 1858

**Lionel Trilling, "Doctor**