

## Report of the Ridgeway Walk, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009 by Alan Smith



*Angela Bellwood prepares drinks at checkpoint 2*

*(photo: Ian Davis)*

**Conditions:** For the second year running, the sun smiled on the Ridgeway Walk and there was no rain! (Note: On Friday of the following week, torrential overnight rain flooded the A329 between Pangbourne and Streatley!)

Conditions were better this year for walkers as a South-westerly breeze kept the temperature down and helped walkers along but at some exposed checkpoints marshals found it at times a bit chilly. Apart from the tracks on Whitefield Hill, it was dry underfoot. Indeed, when the marshals took down their gazebo at checkpoint (CP) 4 the material was completely dry.

**Statistics:** 193 walkers started the 40 mile walk; 166 finished. Fastest walker was Ken Fancett in 6 hours 2 minutes; last walker, Gerald Bateman in 14 hours 38 minutes. Camilla Chilvers aged 17 was the youngest walker and she completed the walk in 13 hours 27 minutes.

In the 20 mile walk (Ridgeway 20) 101 started and 99 finished. Fastest walker was Mike Leonard in 4 hours 33 minutes and the last walker was Cecile Giaon in 8 hours 13 minutes.

**Change of route:** Apart from two years when the Ridgeway Walk was diverted because of the conditions of Gypsy Lane, the route has remain unchanged since 1967. This year, we changed the route slightly to take walkers over Barbury Castle rather than below it; this enabled them to make use of the toilets in Barbury Castle car park if they wished. The revised route also took them past the Barbury Castle cafe where they could get more water and a chocolate bar if they wished. This change was suggested last year by walker Alan Iwi, though Brian Bellwood, marshal at CP2, had mentioned it a few years previously.

**The Shepherds Rest:** Sadly, this pub closed at the end of 2008. The pub is owned by Enterprise Inns which, like some other pub chains, has a big deficit. Presumably, Enterprise Inns regards the Shepherds Rest as an asset delivering a poor return and a candidate for sale to raise much needed cash. At the beginning of the year, I had been led to believe that the pub was going to reopen as a restaurant: but a visit a few weeks before the Ridgeway Walk showed it boarded up and still for sale. With the permission of the agents handling the sale, we were allowed to have our CP in the car park as usual and to have a toilet unit at this location. We hope the Shepherds Rest will reopen under new owners and management; it is useful not only to walkers in the Ridgeway Walk but to all who use the Ridgeway.

**Toilets:** In addition to hiring a toilet for CP3, we also hired one for CP7 (Bury Down) which is a very exposed place with few bushes and lots of people! These facilities were welcomed not just by the walkers but by several of the volunteers and we may repeat this exercise next year.

**Mugs:** We tried to be environmentally friendly this year by asking walkers to bring mugs which can be used along the route instead of our providing plastic cups which are used once and then thrown away. For those who didn't have a mug, we provided one for a small charge. We succeeded in getting most of the 40 mile walkers equipped with a mug or drinking bottle. But the effect of this change of policy on checkpoints has yet to be fully assessed. We anticipated that having to wait for walkers to present their mugs to be filled might slow up walkers through CPs and it isn't clear yet to what extent this was a problem.

**Linda Wright**, marshal at CP6 celebrated a significant birthday on 6 May. She is now old enough to push to the front of bus queues! I make no bones about indicating her age – by now the whole of Oxfordshire must know, including the Thames Valley Police who visited the CP. With all the bunting, balloons, and the fancy dress sported by Linda, the police may have thought an illegal gathering was in progress.

**The organisers:** Anne Goulding handled the registration of entries for the second year, while Helen and Stuart Walker organised the marshalling and liaised with Raynet. Anne, Helen and Stuart have put their hearts and souls into their jobs and I am very grateful for their taking so much work off my shoulders. I am still involved with other aspects of the organisation and am benefiting from new ideas and advice from Anne, Helen and Stuart.

**Organisation on the day:** Every walker I have spoken to says that the organisation was wonderful and the letters page also testifies to this. Not wishing to be modest, I must agree: though, looking at it from the organisers' point of view some things could have gone much better. Some of our problems were of our making but others were caused by walkers themselves. In particular, unauthorised substitutions by people standing in for their friends and one walker who went off the course between CPs and didn't contact our emergency number to let us know what he was doing.

**Thanks** are due from all walkers to Nick Crivich, manager of Streatley YHA Centre and his assistant, Dean, for the flexible way in which they organised the hostel to meet the needs of the walk, to the volunteers of St John Ambulance and Raynet and to the numerous volunteers named in the list of marshals.

The marshals at Checkpoint 6 are particularly grateful to Raynet operator Stewart Marlow who helped set up when the team which should have done this job was delayed. Stewart also helped to close down the checkpoint. Two volunteers on the list unexpectedly roped themselves in to help set up CP6. Ken Fuller (aged 86) drove with his friend, George Juggins (aged 90), from Gloucester to CP6 hoping to meet his old friend Ken Royce. As Ken Royce was part of the team which was delayed, they missed each other. However, as CP6 needed help, Ken Fuller and George lent a hand. Ken said it was only token assistance such as tying balloons to tents but, as the suffragette, Mrs Pethick-Lawrence, said, "There is no service that can be considered small or trivial".

I thank Chris Eley of Reading Outdoor Group for distributing publicity notices in Goring and Streatley a few months before the walk. I also thank Goring walker Bradley Bright who is storing two of our gazebos which will mean that next year, we will not have to transport them all the way from Essex!

On Sunday morning, I received a token of thanks myself from Dave Young in the form of a badge showing the White Horse of Uffington. The badge had been spotted and bought by Dave's wife, Sue. When giving this to me, Dave recounted the following anecdote:

**Sue Glover made it all too easy:** Sue Glover completed the Ridgeway Walk three times from 1969-71, always finishing in times between 11 and 12 hours. She was first girl home for the first two years and came second in '71 having just recovered from scarlet fever caught from a pupil at the school where she taught. Later that year, she became Mrs. Young when she married Dave, who still walks the Ridgeway.

Sue is remembered by old Ridgeway hands for her ability to disappear into the hostel wash room after climbing the final slope, then reappear looking bandbox fresh and dressed as if she had done nothing more strenuous than indulge in a little retail therapy on the High Street. This was not always appreciated by male walkers as she made their hard-won achievements seem all too easy!

**NEXT YEAR'S WALK** will be on **SATURDAY, 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2010**. Entry forms will be available early in 2010 and copies will be sent (electronically where possible) to this year's entrants. Entry forms for the 40 mile walk will be available for downloading from the website at [ridgeway40.org.uk](http://ridgeway40.org.uk). In 2010, 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. Requests for entry forms, information for the 40 mile walk and any queries should be addressed to either Anne at [ridgewaywalkinformation@googlemail.com](mailto:ridgewaywalkinformation@googlemail.com) or Alan at [jungledrums@waitrose.com](mailto:jungledrums@waitrose.com) or phone Anne Goulding on 0781 3546 356

**For Ridgeway 20**, contact Ron Cutler at [Ron@etape.plus.com](mailto:Ron@etape.plus.com)

## 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	<b>Ken Fancett, Colin Saunders, David Young</b>
Start at Overton Hill	<b>Mike Acott, Ken Brooks, Alan Smith</b>
CP1 Barbury Castle	<b>Tim and Anne Ardill, Mike Acott, Ian Mitchell, Heather Owen, Ken Royce, Derek Smith, Stuart &amp; Helen Walker</b>
CP2 Whitefield Hill	<b>Angela and Brian Bellwood</b>
CP3 Shepherds Rest	Mike Acott, Angela and Brian Bellwood, Walter Cullis, Anne & Arthur Goulding, <b>Veronica Hope, Heather Owen</b>
CP4 Uffington Castle	<b>Malcolm Cox, David Secker, Lesley Secker</b>
Ridgeway 20 hostel	<b>Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler</b>
Ridgeway 20 start	<b>Christine Cogger, Ron Cutler</b>
CP5 Eastmanton Down	Roger & Barbara Chambers, Walter Cullis, Dave Dare, <b>Jackie Ford, Chris Hayward, Phil Noel</b>
CP6 Yew Down	Dave Dare, <b>Pam and Steve Deverill, Ken Fuller, Anne &amp; Arthur Goulding, George Juggins, Andy Mansfield, Phil Noel, Linda Wright</b>
CP7 Bury Down	Mike Acott, Dave Dare, Dave & Sheila Dowsett, Anne & Arthur Goulding, Heather Owen, Andy Mansfield
CP8 Compton Down	<b>Peter Dziwior, Sue Arnold</b>
CP9 Starveall Turn	<b>Ian Mitchell, Ken Royce, Derek Smith</b>
Finish	Liz Clarke, <b>Christine Cogger, Walter Cullis, Ron Cutler, Mike Fleet, John Flynn, Anelise Hill, Andy Mansfield, Derek Richardson</b>
Certificates	<b>Christine Cogger (20 mile) and Linda Wright (40 mile)</b>
Fold up marshals	<b>Alan Smith, Ken Brooks (to 18.00), and Helen and Stuart Walker (from 18.00)</b>
Support for checkpoints	<b>Helen and Stuart Walker</b>

**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 cases, drivers also helped out running CPs. And some drivers took on these duties after finishing at their own CPs – Mike Acott, Brian Bellwood, Roger & Barbara Chambers, Malcolm Cox, Anne & Arthur Goulding, Chris Hayward, Veronica Hope, Andy Mansfield, Phil Noel, Keith Rix.

**Tents** were supplied by Pam & Steve Deverill (CP 6), Peter Dziwior & Sue Arnold (CP 8): **gazebos** at CPs 4, 5 and 7 were supplied by the Ridgeway Walk. Raynet also put gazebos up at several CPs.

**Before and after the walk**, Angela and Brian Bellwood put the waymarks up at Barbury Castle and Whitefield Hill and subsequently removed them. Ian Mitchell and Stuart Walker supplemented these waymarks on the day of the walk.

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**ST JOHN AMBULANCE - Ambulance Crews:** Rob Croton, Ian Faulkner, Sarah Holling, Martin Wood, David Vowell, Stuart Morgan **At the Finish:** James Wickham, Paul Robertson, Stephen Pithers, Peter Brierley, Kevin Sturge

## RAYNET

Denis Pibworth G4KWT	George Bichard M0GXB	Stewart Marlow G7ITU
Wally Sawyer G7FHN	Sarah Loyd G7TXR	Ian Mayo M0ICM
Jonathan Sawyer M3VJO	Nigel McFetridge G8FIE	Kathy Mayo M0KMM
Graham Maynard G3XZJ	Martin Maynard G8CIX	Pete Milton G8FRC
Colin Blount M0IET	Phill Bristow M1DMC	Andy Johnson 2E1IHY
Simon French G6ZTZ	Richard Fenton G1CTF	Andy Cunningham M0HAK

## LETTERS

**To Anne and the rest of the organisers:** A particularly well-organised Ridgeway 40 this year and special thanks go as ever to the providers of the cakes and tea at Checkpoint 6, which came in the nick of time during a bad patch on the walk and got me back up to speed for the rest of the route.

It's a great pity about the closure of the Shepherd's Rest (permanently, I assume?), an island of hospitality in an otherwise bleak part of the route for all walkers of the Ridgeway, not just ourselves with the luxury of our checkpoints. The Portaloo was very welcome though it did not have quite the same ambience or range of facilities.

**And in another email to Alan:** ..... I was more interested in getting my red badge and the time was a bonus although I have to say that getting under 11 hours did become a target as the walk progressed. It hardly seems any time since my first Ridgeway in 2005 when I wrote to you asking if I could start early as I was not sure I could finish the whole distance within the allowed time.

**Helen Abbott**

Just wanted to say a huge thank-you for yet again organizing such a wonderful day. All of us had such a fantastic time everything is so brilliantly organized, everyone so friendly and thoughtful about the walkers/runners needs, it is an uplifting experience to be part of. (Particularly with all the talk of recession and doom and gloom).

**Kate Barklie, Rachel Brown, Jane Channon, Debbie Cowie and Stuart Wilson**

Once again special thanks to Anne and Alan for such well organised day; it just seems to go from strength to strength. Certainly not forgetting all the marshals and helpers and St Johns Ambulance Crews for there help throughout the day. I think the weather was very kind to us this year with temperature ideal. This year I did a sponsorship for The Stroke Awareness Association and managed to raise £ 250.

**John Beardsley**

There were quite a few nice feedbacks from the walk Saturday, so that I would like to thank you and express gratitude and respect to all the ones who contributed to make it such a great experience.

**Axel Bonet** (on behalf of the ECMWF group)

The walk went well thanks; one tends to forget how difficult it is. **Bradley Bright**

Many thanks for organising such a wonderful event! I certainly enjoyed it very much even though I was using the Nurofen gel instead of a body moisturiser for several days afterwards.

**Veronika Brázdová**

Thanks (*Anne*) for reminding me to enter. It was a terrific event and I knocked quite a bit off last year's time. The conditions were definitely better but this was only the second time I have done anything like this distance. I wanted to get under 8 hours and I did it comfortably (not bad for a 61 year old). It was great to get jam with the rice pudding. I was really looking forward to that checkpoint. A shame nobody at the pub seemed to have heard of the free pint for over 60s though. Anyway thanks to everybody involved in this event. It was so good I will definitely be back next year injuries permitting.

**Barry Burlingham**

*(Not quite sure why you missed out on the free pint, Barry; others managed to get it. Alan)*

**In reply to Pam Deverill concerning the ginger cake at CP6** - Many thanks for sending me the recipe. I'm looking forward to trying it and will scale it down to for the 20cm x 20cm baking tin I have. Checkpoint 6 and the great welcome with tea and wonderful things to eat is now a firm part of Ridgeway folklore for the Hendon Hammers and Blewbury Rambler(s), and I'm sure for a lot of other walkers too. I'll ask the others (especially Bob three-pieces of-ginger-cake McGavin) to give their judgement on my version, but I fear it won't come anywhere yours. Thanks again and Best Regards,

**Chris Cambray**

*(Note: If anyone else wants a recipe for the CP6 cakes, contact me and I will refer you to the relevant marshal. Alan)*

On the day she (*Camilla Chilvers*) was a complete superstar, tireless and enthusiastic throughout, despite huge blisters, (we need to get her footwear better organized for next year . . . . did I really say that!!!). No, really we had a great day. The organization of the event was brilliant and made it possible. Thanks to everyone.

**Sarah Chilvers**

Thanks for a great event on Saturday with faultless organisation. I completed in a decent time with no ill-effects, other than being a bit footsore towards the end. No blisters, but my feet were a bit tender from the unremitting hard ground. Perhaps I need to replace my somewhat battered trainers.

**Ian Davis**

Thank you for all your hard work yet again in organising such a really wonderful day. . . . . I think the time flatters me since we started at 7.50am with the early arrival of the coach. I did point this out at the finish line – but no matter, as you say the time is unimportant. Many thanks indeed.

**Simon Enright**

Just a quick note to thank you and all your helpers for a marvellous event. We all had a great day, and were delighted with the organisation and the friendliness of everyone concerned. The refreshments were so good and generous - what value for money! And Rob & I took advantage of the free pint at the Catherine Wheel - it went down so well.

A tough run and we've had a job getting out of the car back at Chepstow. So no running for a few days! Please pass on our thanks to all at Reading OG.

**Dick Finch**

I would like to thank everyone concerned for a most enjoyable event today (my first time). I forgot to ask why the route was changed this year from Smeathe's Ridge to the new path to the North of the Ridgeway, but it seemed a very pleasant alternative, probably with less wind and a very nice view, and also the path was good underfoot compared with the official Ridgeway route. Thanks to all the members of your group who gave up their Saturday (and their chance to take part in the event!) to man the checkpoints. The provisions were excellent and must have lifted the spirits of a good many people besides myself!

**Lucy Gettins**

*(Lucy: The Ridgeway Walk never did follow Smeathe's Ridge. The original 40 mile route, which predated the inauguration of the National Trail, took paths to the south of Barbury Castle. The slight change in route enabled participants to make use of the toilets in Barbury Castle car park and also took them by the cafe on the road. Alan)*

Thank you for wonderful day yesterday. And thanks to all volunteers at checkpoints; they had clearly worked very hard to make the day a success. **John Hall**

Thank you for the well organised day and that included the weather. The drinks and eats on the way round make a difference. One observation, there are an increasing number of people walking with nothing, no fleecy round their waist just shorts/trouser and a thin top. I know you stress in the info that they should carry a couple of things; you might want to make a couple of layers compulsory. **John Harding & Alastair Lawry**

*(We do advise entrants to take adequate clothing and that the Ridgeway can be very unfriendly in bad weather. Alan)*

Just to say how much our team enjoyed the day. The marshals presented cheerful faces and the tea at the end was most welcome. The boys doing the slightly longer version (but less challenging !!) were more interested in a beer  
Thank you. **Elsbeth Harding, Trish & Sophie Hammett, Denise Lawry and 'token' male Bob Hammett**

We walked in a group of six, but eventually split up over the last couple of miles. Two of us were walking for the first time on the Ridgeway Walk. Our aim was to enjoy the day rather than hurrying to the finish and it was perfect weather to do this. The walk was superbly organised from the coach to Overton to the refreshments at checkpoints which were really appreciated and helped to get us home. Although exhausted, we were still fit enough to have a celebration drink after the walk which probably tasted as good as it ever has. *(see also letter from Sarah Simmonds)* **Alun Hickman**

Just thought I'd send you and all your team a short email to say how much I enjoyed the walk on Saturday. I thought the checkpoints were well spaced and always a welcome sight. Please pass on a special thank you to all those who gave up their time and offered encouragement and very welcome refreshments. **Joanna Holland**

Hello, thanks again for all the organisation, and good to meet you (*Anne*) at whichever checkpoint it was. I completed the walk over an hour slower than last year, but I'd already told myself in advance that quite the opposite of trying to better my time I'd be quite happy to take some more time over it. **Alan Iwi**

A delighted 20 miles walker on Saturday I wanted to Thank You and the Reading Outdoor Group ever so much for the care, drive, energy and fun you're putting in organising this walk and the 40 mile one. You truly make this an exceptional experience for each and every one of us – I was walking in Axel's group and with Axel until I selfishly abandoned him to run my way under 6 hours! We all had an amazing time and realised it wouldn't be quite the same were it not for the friendly, supportive and delicious breaks we could enjoy thanks to your generosity. There's no competition during the walk but genuine emulation and support and a sense of community and it makes it ever so special! So, for all of this, thank you! **Florence Labedays**

Yes, we did enjoy the day very much: we walked as a team (Phil & Sarah Simmonds, Alun & Breeda Hickman, Deanne Macbeth and Sarah Redding), only parting company in the last few miles when our feet were really sore! Alun and Phil finished together as the last two in the group. Attached is a photo of our group taken at the wonderful checkpoint six (where they give you cups of tea and a huge selection of home-made cakes). **Sarah Simmonds**



*(photo: Phil Noel)*

Thank you for a great event - huge organisational input and really appreciated, not only at the time but in fond retrospect... a privilege also to experience and enjoy the Ridgeway; to realise that there can be a tract of countryside with so little habitation still.

**Rob Brown**

Just a note to say, on behalf of our team, many thanks for what was a great event on Saturday. The organisation was superb and a special thank you to all those who gave up their time to make the event so good.

**Jill Priday**

Thanks again for organising another perfect (from my point of view anyway) Ridgeway: checkpoints, refreshments and weather all just what was needed. A little hard underfoot, perhaps, but as I came away with just one small blister I'll settle for that. I thought the diversion via Barbury Castle was an improvement and added interest, though a rather steep and rutted descent shortly afterwards might be tricky if wet.

Shortly before the event I thought I would create for my own interest a checklist of familiar landmarks along the route - anything to make the time and distance pass more quickly. It is attached in case of interest to you.\* My distances appear to be slightly out - measured on Landrangers with a 2cm piece of string representing 1km - but close enough for this purpose. It did seem to help.

**Colin Saunders**

*\*(Note: anyone interested in seeing Colin's list can obtain a copy from me. Alan)*

Very well organised - many thanks. Cakes etc at 28 great - can we get them at every stop?!!

**Iain Thomson**

Brilliant day yesterday - support at the checkpoints was superb. A big thank you to all the volunteers and your hard work to make it possible. Looking forward to next year!

**Nicola Tilbury**

Just a quick email to say thank you for organising a wonderful day on Saturday and a big thank you to all the checkpoint helpers and everyone else involved in making the day a success. When will you be accepting entries for next year as I'm looking forward to my 3rd crossing and my wife is looking forward to her 2<sup>nd</sup> crossing as she was unable to walk last week due to a previous injury.

**Steve Turner**

Great to meet you (*Anne*) yesterday and thank you again for arranging the last minute admin so that I could take part. It was a fantastic day, lovely weather and Rebecca and I had a wonderful time 'storming' along the Ridgeway. We were a good team made up of a jogger and a power walker. We did a respectable 8h52m and gave some of the guys something to worry about as we went past them as they were running...and I was walking the whole way! Count me in for next year as it is a good, fast route and by not having to worry about navigation etc, you can really concentrate on speed. If I am going to be 007 on the day then I really should register as Miss Money Penny! Thanks again for all the organisation which resulted in a fantastic day (and made up for the hideously early start for me - 0400h). May we have the same weather conditions for next year as well please.

**Tara Williams**

Many thanks to all the organisers, marshals and other helpers for an enjoyable, if tiring, day. I would think the weather was perfect!! The checkpoint refreshments (tea at two places!!) and the coffee at the end went down very well.

**Roger Wilson**



Linda Wright passes the birthday hat to Geoffrey Dumper at CP6 – both had birthdays near to the Ridgeway Walk

*(photo: Pam Deverill)*