

Wessex Ridgeway in Wiltshire, in 8 stages

Route directions north to south

Stage 1 - Marlborough to Avebury

Maps: OS Explorer 157, Landranger 173

Distance: 6.5 miles (10.4 km)

The route starts from the south-west end of Marlborough's High Street near the public library, by going north-west up Hyde Lane. Just before a car park on the right, cross over the road and continue in the same direction, with Marlborough College's astroturf pitches to left and Hyde Lane to right. Pass steps down to Hyde Lane to right, marked by an ancient milestone, opposite a metal gate into the college's sports pitches, and a bit further on another set of steps down to Hyde Lane, with a metal kissing gate into the college's sports pitches a few metres further on to the left. Continue until the path comes out onto Hyde Lane, then immediately bear left up a track off Hyde Lane. At the end, turn right between cemeteries, with iron railings to left and a hedge to right. The Old or Victorian Cemetery is on the right, and the newer one, which was opened in 1924, is on the left.

Emerge onto Marlborough Common (which is also used here as a sports training area) near the entrance to the newer cemetery. Cross the road opposite the entrance and turn left, keeping on a wide grass verge close to the road, with the Marlborough Golf Club golf course to the right. At the 15th hole, go through a short stretch of woodland to come out on the roadside. After a few metres, turn right through a gap in the hedge into a field. Turn left along the edge of the field, parallel with the road. When the road swings to the right, cross over towards the entrance to the Manton Estate. Go through a small wooden gate to the right of the brick wall framing the entrance, then almost immediately through another one.

Follow the good, broad estate track between the gallops, ignoring all paths and tracks to right and left, with some fine views of the Marlborough Downs on the way. After 1500 yards (1.4 km) a wood appears to the left. Approx. 2¼ miles

(3.6 km) after joining the track, pass the Totterdown Reservoir to the right, then soon arrive at a metal bridle gate into the Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve, in which there is an abundance of sarsen stones. You are now on Green Street, also known as the Herepath, an ancient military route dating from Saxon times.

Continue downhill on the track and pass through another metal bridle gate at the bottom. Follow the track as it snakes left, then right uphill past Delling Copse (to right). At the top, go through two gates on either side of a gallops, and continue in the same direction on an obvious path across a green, open area to arrive at the Ridgeway National Trail, with its distinctive acorn signs. Leave the Nature Reserve, cross the Ridgeway and go down the wide track opposite. Eventually go past Manor Farm dairy to the left, where the track is usually particularly muddy with some deep puddles, then pass between the earthworks and some of the standing stones of Avebury's stone circle to arrive at the junction with the A4361 some 1.5 miles (2.4 km) after leaving the Ridgeway. Pass to the left of the Red Lion pub on the A4361 and enter Avebury's High Street, with the community shop and Henge shop to the left, and the residents' car park to right.

Access to the National Trust car park can be gained by taking the tarmac footpath to the left some 30m past the Henge shop. Avebury is served by the number 49 bus from Swindon or Trowbridge/Devizes, which stops outside the Red Lion pub.

Stage 2 Avebury to Devizes

Maps: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

Distance: 11 miles (17.6 km)

[Amended on 12/7/20]

The number 49 bus services both Avebury and Devizes. Cars can be parked in the National Trust car park in Avebury, at a price. There is a tarmac path from the car park to Avebury's High Street, where this stage begins.

If coming from car park, turn left on arriving in High Street. If alighting from the bus outside Red Lion pub, go down past the small grass triangle into High Street. Go through gate on right into churchyard soon after the footpath to the

car park and go diagonally left across it to pass through kissing gate framework between house and wall. Follow the tarmac path beyond past electricity sub-station on left and across bridge over River Kennet. Veer left after this, thus parting company with the White Horse Trail.

Go through gate into meadow, keeping fence to left, and through two gates close together at the end, ignoring another to the left of the first one. Continue up degraded tarmac track to join the drive to Manor Farm coming in from the right just before reaching Avebury Trusloe's main street at a small grass triangle, with notice board opposite. Cross the road and take the tarmac path to the right of the notice board round the rear of the green/grassy area. Continue to a T junction, where you turn right along a narrow tarmac road. The houses of Avebury Trusloe are soon left behind, to be replaced by the two large sarsen stones in a field to the right, known as Adam & Eve, which is all that is left of what used to be the Beckhampton Avenue, a ceremonial line of stones dating back to Neolithic times. Go past these (unless you wish take advantage of the permissive access granted to inspect them) and continue ahead on a track with a large house to right (The Grange) to arrive at the A4.

Go right on the narrow tarmac path beside the A4 for half a mile (0.8 km) to draw level with a layby on the other side of the road. Cross the A4 with care, walk along the layby, and go through a gate at the end on the left. Turn immediately right and follow the path through a copse of beech trees. On emerging from this, veer briefly left then turn right onto a broad grassy track along the top of Cherhill Down. After approx. 200m kink right then left to join the White Horse Trail coming in from the right. You are now on the old Bath road. Walk along the bridleway parallel to the A4, passing through a bridle gate in the process, for one mile (1.6 km). There are fine views here on a good day of Yatesbury and its environs to the right, and, occasionally, of Cherhill Down stretching down to the A361 to the left. After passing a tumulus in the field to the left, turn left up a chalky track.

Fork right by a decaying barn and go through a field gate by a stile, then another by a National Trust sign. Follow the chalky track, which twists uphill and turns sharp right on levelling out and goes through a gap in the earthwork. If it is desired to visit the Cherhill White Horse, the Lansdowne Monument and the hill fort itself, take the track to the right through the earthwork.

Otherwise, continue in the same direction, pass through a gate some 150m beyond the Oldbury Castle hill fort turn off, and begin descending. Pass through another gate by a National Trust sign, then along a track beside a wide field, and

go through a gap by a redundant bridle gate to reach a junction of bridleways by a line of trees. Turn right onto a wide track (NOT the farm track on the north side of the fence), which is an ancient Roman road. Walk along this for 1.2 miles (1.9 km); the track gradually goes uphill after a while and levels out. It then descends, at which point look for a gate on the left, with the tops of the twin communications masts of Morgan's Hill, which is a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserve, peeping over the hill above.

Do not go through this gate, continue on the Roman road and take the third gate on your left onto a path which curves uphill and passes through a gap in the Wansdyke (an ancient fortification which stretches for 50 miles through Wiltshire) to arrive at a gate into the North Wilts Golf Club next to a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust notice board. Turn sharp left onto a footpath (which is also a bridleway) once on the golf course and follow the clear cut (literally!) path downhill with fence to left and clumps of trees and the golf course to right. Fork right through a small copse. On arriving at open ground, continue slightly right, in the direction of the club house, past two waymarked wooden posts, keeping a wary eye out for flying golf balls, to arrive at a metalled road.

Cross this, and go down the byway directly opposite. Turn right at the crossroad of tracks after approx. ½ mile (0.8 km). The track widens into a metalled road on reaching a large barn to left and the surface improves marginally. Continue past more farm buildings and a house (Hill Cottage) to left, taking the left-hand fork just beyond the latter. When the road bends to left at a small turning/parking area, go right up a track to right of a metal farm gate. After 500m take the bridleway to left with fences on both sides. Go through the second small metal gate to right into a field corner. (As this bridleway can get extremely muddy, there is an option to go through the first small metal gate to right and continue in the same direction but inside the field to its corner). At the corner turn right with fence left and go through the metal kissing gate into the next field. This is the site of Oliver's Castle hill-fort, which is on Roundway Down.

After passing an English Nature information board about the Down, and a pointed wooden post with "R5" carved into it, follow the ramparts of the fort in a wide semi-circle to the left, with wide-ranging views on offer, to arrive at an information board on the Battle of Roundway, which was fought on this spot. Go past the board, with fence left, and either take the metal kissing gate to left soon after and continue in the same direction with fences on both sides, or continue past it with fence left and (soon) a copse to right. Both paths are parallel and come out in a parking area next to the copse, but it is debatable

which one is muddier in wet weather. Turn left out of the parking area (i.e. away from the copse) and immediately right down a stony track. The track becomes a metalled road after a while and starts to go downhill, soon reaching a metal farm gate to right with a gap next to it.

Go through the gap and down the right side of the field beyond, passing to left of a pylon. Go through the kissing gate at the bottom, and another soon after to arrive at a metalled road. Turn left along this, and at the sharp bend to right immediately after, look to your left to get a good view of the Devizes Millennium White Horse. A few metres after the bend, go up crude steps to right into a field, and walk along its left hand side, then across it. On reaching a gap between hedges, with a line of houses to left, turn right along a track. On arriving at a metalled road, with the entrance to Roundway House to right, continue in the same direction to enter Quakers Walk, a pleasant tree-lined avenue popular with dog walkers. Pass through the gap beside the large iron gates at its end and cross the bridge over the Kennet & Avon canal in front of you.

Devizes has all the facilities you would expect from a small town, and the Canal Wharf museum with its paying car park is one bridge to the right along the canal.

Stage 3 - Devizes to West Lavington

[Amended on 5/10/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 157 & 130 (north sheet), OS Landranger 173 & 184

Distance: 10.9 miles (to A360) (17.4 km)

For those not continuing from the last stage, this stage begins at the southern end of the bridge across the Kennet & Avon canal on New Park Road, which is one bridge to the east along the canal from the Canal Wharf museum with its paying car park.

Facing the bridge and canal, turn right (east) along the canal tow path. Go under bridge 138 and keep on the tow path as it bends left. On arriving at bridge 136 (Coate bridge), go under it but immediately turn sharp right off the tow path and

up steps to arrive at the tarmac road you have just gone under (Windsor Drive). Turn left, then at once left again, onto a road signposted to Coate. After 70m, turn right up an initially wide byway. Soon go gently uphill, then turn left along a footpath enclosed on both sides by bushes and trees, which can get somewhat overgrown in places. When this arrives at a T junction, with a light brown farm building to right and the road to Coate visible off to the left, turn right up another byway.

This climbs gently, crosses another byway, then 1 km after this it ascends again a bit more vigorously to hug the flank of Etchilhampton Hill (to left). Soon after coming down from the high point, cross a road. At this point the byway becomes a bridleway, and soon after deteriorates into a sunken path between bushes and trees and, in summer, nettles. On arriving at the A342, cross it and take the road opposite into the village of Stert. Take the first turning to the left, opposite the notice board, signposted Fullaway Farm.

Continue past the farm, which is to the left, ignoring all other footpath signs. As the road kinks right and left the tarmac becomes gravel. Soon after this, arrive at a cattle grid between two gates, one of which bears a sign on it reading 'Crookwood Watermill & Farm only'. Keep on the gravel drive for 150m until reaching a lonely wooden post to right. Turn 90 degrees left here and go through the gap in the hedge. Veer half left across the next field, go through a thin strip of woodland on the other side, and keep going in the same direction across the following field to arrive at a metal kissing gate at the foot of a railway embankment. Climb up the steps to the railway (which is the London to Penzance line), cross with great care, and go down the steps on the other side.

Cross the stile at the bottom and go up and over the field beyond, keeping parallel to the fence to the left. Cross the stile on the other side and maintain direction along the contour of the slope, keeping a small wood to your left. Go through the large metal gate (usually left open) at the end of the field and pass a collection of rusting farm machinery. Go through the (open) gate beyond and turn left to cross a stile in the field corner. Walk up the field, aiming for the house at the top of the hill, which is Knight's Leaze Farm. Go through two metal gates on either side of the farm drive and cross the field beyond, soon passing a house to right with a large, hedged-in wooded garden.

Go through the gate in the corner onto the road and turn right. After a few metres, turn left and soon pass to the left of a grass triangle, signposted The Lamb Inn, Post Office and Shop (although the signpost does not actually point down the road!). Continue past The Orchard to left, and follow the road round

to the right opposite a road bearing the sign Peppercombe Lane and Village Hall. Pass to the right of the duck pond, and at the junction a bit further on, turn right (signposted Lavington & Easterton). After 150m, cross the road to a layby opposite used as a parking area and go down the bridleway leading off it.

This is enclosed on both sides by hedges and trees, and climbs steadily up towards Salisbury Plain. Immediately after going under power cables, emerge into the open at a field corner. Go ahead up its right-hand side. A fence soon appears to the left. Veer left uphill, with the route again enclosed by trees and bushes. On emerging into the open for a second time, bear right with fence to right and join a stony track coming in from the left. We join the White Horse Trail (WHT) at this point. Walk along this towards the Urchfont New Plantation (known locally as the Urchfont Clump). As you reach the Clump, you can either fork left through the south of the Clump (the official route) or follow the track as it bends right, then left, round the Clump (i.e. to the north), which is the WHT route. Join the much wider perimeter road round Salisbury Plain on the other side, with flag pole to left. This is also the route of the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP), with the escarpment on the right.

After almost a mile (1.6 km), pass a memorial on the left to a German soldier, Jager Dirk Knöffel, who “passed away by accident on 5th September 1993”. Pass several bridleways and footpaths coming up on the right from the villages of Easterton and Market Lavington, of which there are fine views on a clear day. 1.8 miles (2.9 km) after leaving the Urchfont Clump, arrive at MoD vedette post 11, Lavington (where there is a road down to the village of Market Lavington), and transition onto smooth tarmac. Soon pass a trig point in the field to left, followed by a large square water tank. This road, being a byway, is often used by local people as a short cut between the main A360 and the B3098 which passes through Market Lavington, so beware!

Arrive at a crossroads of tracks at the second flag post after the vedette post, which may well be flying a red flag, and turn right down a grassy track to West Lavington, leaving the WHT and IRPP in the process. After 400m or so, the track enters woodland. After the signed junction with another bridleway coming in from the left, continue for 60m, then fork right onto another bridleway. This quickly drops downhill into a sunken section between high banks. After 300m, at the next (unsigned) junction of tracks, turn left and soon arrive at a tarmac road. Go right and immediately left down Rutts Lane, which terminates, as does this stage, at the A360.

Stage 4 West Lavington to Westbury White Horse

[Amended on 26/5/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 130 & 143, OS Landranger

Distance: 9.7 miles (15.5 km)

This stage starts at the A360, at the southern end of West Lavington. Go west up Rickbarton, immediately crossing a bridge over a stream. The road goes gently uphill to arrive at a junction with White Street. Turn right along this, soon passing Strawberry Hill on the left and a road leading to the church on the right. At the next bend to the right, as the main road comes into view, take the second path to the left. In about 90m, fork right onto a narrow path by a derelict kissing gate attached to a wooden post (do not go into the field). After approx. 150m, at a junction by the rusty remains of another kissing gate, turn left onto another path, with the playing fields of Dauntsey's School on your right. Pass a third, redundant steel kissing gate to left, and a path which goes through the playing fields to right. When the playing fields come to an end, continue straight ahead on the path which goes between two fields, then rises into woodland. Turn right at a T junction of paths onto a rutted track. This soon brings you out onto a broad track, with the gate into the Strawberry Hill Reservoir on your left.

Turn left, uphill. Do not be deterred by the army notice a few metres along this track, the rights of way remain open. At the top of the hill, by a barn in a hollow, follow the grassy track into the field with a hedge to right. (The official right of way is to the right of the hedge, but is now overgrown and impassible). After approx. 1 km, where another track comes in from the right, continue in the same direction downhill. On arriving at a clump of trees which once surrounded Rooktree Farm, go left and right through a gap in the hedge and continue downhill with the hedge to your right. Very soon join a farm track, likely to be muddy, which drops down into the clump of trees and sweeps to the right. About 90m past the end of the trees, ignore the good track which goes uphill to the right to Hill Bottom Farm and keep straight on up the valley on a track in a wide grassy area, with hedge, then plantations, to right, and a long linear mound to left.

Follow the line of the tree plantations, keeping them on your right. The track then goes steeply uphill beyond the furthest one, and bends left at the top, where

another track joins it from the right. Turn left and walk parallel to the telegraph poles towards the buildings of the New Zealand army camp, which can be seen some 200 metres away after cresting the brow of the hill. Just before reaching them, turn right onto the broad and sometimes potholed Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP). With a few minor exceptions, the Wessex Ridgeway and the IRPP follow the same route for the next 17 miles (27 km) as far as Heytesbury. This is also the route of the White Horse Trail (WHT) for several miles, with the occasional deviation. As this is a byway, expect to see cars and army vehicles using it from time to time.

Just before the entrance to Stokehill Farm, 1.3 miles (2.1 km) after joining the IRPP, pass an old, indecipherable milestone on the left, which apparently marks the halfway point between Salisbury and Bath. Soon after this, pass a large water tank to right, then a trig point to left. The road becomes a tarmac one at the turn off to Stokehill Farm, but where it turns sharp right and goes down the hill to Coulston, continue along a stony track. Ignore the turning to the left some 400m further on (which the WHT follows) and continue in the same direction, following the 'Byway to Edington' sign, soon going slightly downhill. Pass another milestone to left on which 'XIX Sarum' is just discernible.

Just before the downwards slope increases in steepness, fork left by the 'no entry to military vehicles' sign onto another track and go through a kissing gate beyond a metal field gate some 50m later on the right, which is initially hidden by trees and bushes. Walk along the right-hand side of the very long field beyond, eventually bearing right and going downhill to a stile in the corner. Drop down onto a road on a bend and turn right. Almost immediately bear left up a tarmac farm track. Just beyond a barn, turn left onto a green path between two fields. Walk to MoD vedette post 6 and turn sharp right onto a tarmac road. At the turn off for Reeves Farm some 200m ahead, turn left uphill, still on tarmac. This is replaced by a stone track after almost a mile, where a bridleway comes in from the right. The next clump of trees on your right hides the large buildings of White Horse Farm, a large water tank and three barns, together with a skinny radio mast.

Turn sharp right here, just beyond the farm, onto a broad track, leaving the IRPP. Where this joins a tarmac road, do not go left towards the White Horse parking area, but continue straight ahead. After 50m, cross a stile on the left and walk along the top of the rampart on your left. This is Bratton Camp/Castle, an iron-age hill fort. At the end of the rampart, turn left down into the hollow between ramparts, then turn right to arrive at the escarpment above the

Westbury White Horse. There are fine views here over the vale below, which are only partially spoiled by the disused cement factory.

If you are finishing here, turn left and go through a gate after approx. 10m into the open area in front of the car park containing two benches, with the White Horse clearly visible to your right. If you are continuing, turn right.

The Westbury White Horse car park can be reached either via a street named Newtown in Westbury, which also carries a brown sign pointing the way to Bratton Camp and the White Horse (turn left at the crossroads at the top of the hill), or via Castle Road in Bratton, both off the B3098.

About the Westbury White Horse

This is the oldest White Horse in Wiltshire, dating back to 1778. The present figure was preceded by a much older version at the same site, the date and origin of which are unknown. Legend has it that it was cut as a memorial to one of King Alfred's victories over the Danes at the battle of Ethandun in 878 AD.

Stage 5 Westbury White Horse to Heytesbury

(Amended on 18/10/20)

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184 & 183

Distance: 10.5 miles (16.8 km)

The car park above the Westbury White Horse can be reached either via a street named Newtown in Westbury, which also carries a brown sign pointing the way to Bratton Camp and White Horse (turn left at the T junction at the top of the hill), or via Castle Road in Bratton, both off the B3098.

Go through the gate by the two information boards, with the car park behind you. Go straight ahead to the top of the escarpment in the area which contains several benches, with the White Horse clearly visible to your right. There are fine views here over the vale below. Facing the view, turn left and walk along the path at the top of the escarpment. Pass the benches, an information board, and a plinth giving information on what can be seen. Drop down to a metal kissing gate hiding in the bushes. Enter the field and follow the fence to right to

a rusty metal tank next to an abandoned Jack Dean Oils tanker. (To descend to Westbury, continue in the same direction to a tarmac road, then turn right downhill). Go left uphill to another metal kissing gate onto a tarmac road. Turn left uphill. At the T junction at the top, by the entrance to a disused quarry, turn right onto a wide track. This is the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP).

Where the quarry to left ends, turn right by a communications mast, leaving the IRPP, onto a bridleway. (Some might say that this is a needless deviation from the IRPP but it is worth it for the views). When this starts to go steeply downhill, fork left onto a path along the top of the escarpment, with fine views to right. This eventually passes through a wood, initially under a lovely canopy of beech tree branches.

At a clearing with a grass triangle and a junction of tracks, turn left through what used to be a gateway, with a redundant kissing gate on its left. Follow this back to a T junction with the IRPP by a flag pole. Turn right onto the IRPP, which is a stony track with army range notices on the left. In approx. 800m, after rounding a right-hand bend on Upton Cow Down, go through a kissing gate on your left next to another flag pole and go quite steeply downhill on the right hand edge of a field towards barns visible ahead. Do not be put off by the notice saying "Military Firing Range Keep out!" as the path is just outside the range. Rise up to the far right corner of the field, where a gate leads to a farm road (which is also the IRPP). Turn left along this towards the barns.

Soon follow the track round to the right and pass to the left of the barns. Stay on the track as it bends uphill and to the right, heading directly for a third flag pole by a group of large trees, with two communications masts over to the left. Swing right at the flag pole onto a wide green track. Pass by Field Barn on the left, continue straight on and soon see the West Wilts Golf Club course to right. Follow a track along the edge of the golf course, with a fence to left, as it swings round the head of a fine coomb named Kidnapper's Hole. After passing below the club house, bear left onto a narrow, sunken path leading down through trees to pass to the right of a red brick house in 450m. Immediately after this, turn left onto the private road leading up to the club house, then immediately left again onto another tarmac road.

Head north-east on this away from Warminster. After 400m, turn right into Elm Hill road towards the heart of the Warminster Training Centre. On reaching a T junction, with the ultra-modern St Giles' Garrison Church on your right, turn left onto Imber Road. Keep on this road for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (1.2 km) as it passes signs to shops, and various army establishments, and climbs up Sack Hill. Near the top,

take a narrow path on the right leading to steps up to a field, with an underground reservoir half-hidden over to the left. Go straight across the field to a kissing gate into the Battlesbury Hill iron-age fort. Take the obvious path towards the ramparts, then after passing one standing on its own to right, fork right to join a narrow path on the top of the outer and lower bank of the ramparts; do NOT join a the track which forks right and leads back downhill. (It is possible, if you wish, to take an alternative path on the inner and higher rampart but this is not a public right of way).

Continue around approx. 2/3 of the ramparts, passing through a short wooded section on the south side. On the eastern side, do not be tempted to fork right onto obvious paths leading away from the earthworks, but continue until the northern perimeter fence appears to your right, near a “star marker” (an indication of a site of antiquity). Take the track down to the fence and pass through a gate. Go right, then left, along the edge of a field. Pass through a gap into a second, long field, with two barns at its end to left and the striking strip lynchets of Middle Hill directly ahead.

Turn right onto a very wide concrete road, and after some 40m turn left through a wide gap onto the foot of Middle Hill. Ascend this going diagonally right to join a fence which is only seen as the crest of the hill is mounted. Continue ahead with fence to right and a tumulus dotted with trees at the top of the hill to left. At the end of a clump of trees, turn right downhill on a muddy path between bushes to arrive at a tarmac road. Go left along this for a few paces, then turn sharp right along a fence to arrive at a gate denoting the entrance to Scratchbury Hill. Turn left immediately after this rising diagonally up the hill to join a path along the outer and lower northern rampart of the hill. Follow this round approx half the circumference of the hill fort to a gate next to a wooden farm gate set at an angle by a “starmarker”.

Go through this and follow the well-defined path on a wide ridge, with the ground gradually falling away on both sides, to a fence, then turn right along this to go through a kissing gate. Maintain direction, with fence up to the left, passing to the left of a tumulus. If you are able to discern a fork in the path, bear left, to arrive at another fence containing both a kissing gate and an equestrian metal gate by another “star marker”. Go through either onto a wide, grassy track leading to the tumulus at the top of Cotley Hill. Proceed round the left hand side, or over the top, of the tumulus, and continue on the grassy track in roughly the same direction. This passes through Cotley Hill woods. On reaching the far side of the woods, turn sharp right to go down the side, then along the bottom, of the field, until arriving at an opening into the woods to right. Take the path

through the woods, then steps down to the edge of the busy A36. Cross this, then go up a few steps and over a stile on the other side. Go down a strip of grass onto tarmac by garages, then past an open gate bearing a sign 'Cotley Hill House' to a road. Turn right here, then almost at once left at a junction, to arrive soon after in Heytesbury High Street, almost opposite the Red Lion pub.

Stage 6 - Heytesbury to Hindon

[Amended on 4/6/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 8.3 miles (13.3 km)

With your back to the Red Lion pub, turn right and walk east down the High Street. Just beyond the Angel Inn, turn right down the narrow Mantles Lane. After approx. 100m, at the junction, turn left beside the river, passing Mantles Cottage to left. Follow the path by the river until crossing a sleeper bridge, then veer left to a gap in the fence and turn right onto a road.

* Cross the river bridge and immediately turn left on a path through trees with fence to right. Cross the millstream by a board walk and, at a junction with a track from the right, continue ahead on a narrow footpath, again between trees. #

* In the event of the millstream being in flood, an alternative route is to follow the road round past Mill Farm and, where it turns right, turn left between a cottage, with the number 131 artistically depicted on its wall, and an overgrown fence. A short section of track leads to a T junction where you turn right to re-join the original route. #

Just before a bridge, turn left into a field. Follow the overgrown fence on right to pass through a triangular gap into the next field. Go diagonally across this field towards thatched cottages to pass through another triangular gap, then turn right (downstream) along the river bank. After some 80m, go round a rusty metal gate and turn right. Go over a concrete footbridge and through a kissing gate beyond it. Follow a well-trodden path across water meadows and cross a second concrete bridge with metal gates at both ends. Continue in the same direction to go through a wooden gate to cross a third concrete bridge. Go through a series of small metal gates on a path enclosed by hedges for some

450m. At a track junction on the left, continue ahead to pass under the Bath to Salisbury railway line.

Transition onto a tarmac road and pass on the left “The Old Chapel” which has been converted into a dwelling. At the T junction, turn left and follow the road around and through the very attractive village of Corton. On reaching the beginning of a thatched wall on your right, which encloses the Dove Inn, turn left up a short, uphill, sunken path. Cross the tarmac road (B3095) and continue uphill past Foley’s Cottage on a chalk bridleway. When this meets a tarmac road, go forward for 20m, then turn left to climb gently on another tarmac road for approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (1.2 km). There are good views to the left here over the Wylve Valley and Salisbury Plain beyond. By farm buildings on the left (Corton Field Barn), turn right onto a bridleway. The correct route is between trees to the left of the stony farm track, but to use this instead of the track would be to miss out on some splendid views (on a good day) back and to the right, which include Scratchbury, Middle and Battlesbury Hills, plus the top of Cley Hill peeping over the horizon. Ahead is the large wooded area that tops the Great Ridge.

Immediately after the tree-enclosed bridleway rejoins the track, pass a large, fenced off water tank to left, with a trig point nestling in its rear left corner. Pass more farm buildings to right and continue along the track which, about 1 km after the water tank and farm buildings, passes through a gate into the Fonthill Estate. Keep going on the same farm track, soon entering the woods, first on left, then on right too, and climb gently up Rowdean Hill, with the path twisting around somewhat. On reaching a clearing with another track coming in from the left and a notice containing a map of rights of way on the estate, there is an option to take the footpath on the right, which wends its way pleasantly through trees to arrive at the Great Ridge, where you turn right. The official route, however, continues on the track, and after a few more twists and wiggles, turns right onto the Great Ridge. The path through trees rejoins the main route a few metres further on.

Ignore the track stretching away to the left, which appears to be a continuation of the Great Ridge, and walk forward along the Ridge for almost exactly 1 km. An indication that your turn off point is approaching is a stony, as opposed to grassy, track going off to the right. You will probably see the waymarked post to right before spotting the one opposite it, to left, which indicates the path you should take. It is often so muddy along here that you need to walk on the bank rather than the path. Soon join another path coming in from the right. Approx. 350m after leaving the Great Ridge, arrive at a small clearing with a solitary tree

in the middle, where five paths meet. Turn right, and, in 20m or so, take the left fork, which leads to a large field.

Turn left down the side of the field, with woods close to left, to the bottom left hand corner. Here go through a gap between trees for approx. 30m, then turn left onto a track. This quickly swings right and downhill. Where the track turns sharp left, keep straight on another track down the edge of the field. Go through a gate to arrive at the A303. Cross this – a tricky and time-consuming process – and take the track to the left of Gosney Cottage. After 450m, fork left uphill with fence to left. When the fence disappears, continue in the same direction across the field, aiming for the largest tree on the skyline. In the corner of the field, go onto a narrow green lane, which can become overgrown in summer.

On reaching a tarmac road, turn left down it towards the village of Hindon. After 400m, take the footpath to right, which soon arrives in the corner of a field. Turn left along the field edge, sometimes passing between hedges. Continue along a section of path between fences, go through a gate, across a small, weed-filled field, through another gate, then along another fenced section. This leads directly onto a tarmac road above the church in Hindon. Turn left and walk downhill to the crossroads at the village centre.

Stage 7 - Hindon to Ludwell

Maps: OS Explorer 143 & 118, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 10.6 miles (17 km)

At the cross roads in Hindon, go south-east downhill (i.e. away from the church) along a street with pollarded limes. Turn right just before the village hall onto a tarmac road, forking left and uphill after 40m. Ignore a lane (The Down) to the right (which is a restricted byway) leading to some houses soon after this, as well as a footpath and stile a bit further on. At the top of the hill, take a broad, enclosed track on the right which, after bending right, goes straight as far as can be seen. At a crossroads of tracks, with round barrow on right, go left downhill on another track enclosed initially by fences, then by trees and bushes, mainly on the right. This begins to climb as it approaches woods, and gets steeper as it passes through them. Soon after reaching the highest point, which is Knoyle Ridge, the route drops down on a sunken track to leave the woods. (Turn right

here along the edge of the woods if you wish to go to the village of East Knoyle).

Maintain direction on yet another enclosed track, which goes gradually downhill. Pass between bushes to enter a large field. Walk down its left hand edge with hedge to left. Continue down the narrow bridleway with hedge on the left and a new wire fence on your right, across a culvert over the ditch, then turn left through a small wooden gate. Continue through the copse beyond, with a stream on your left, then across two fields flanked by three gates. After the second field, go through another bridle gate into a third, which you cross in the same direction to leave by a large metal farm gate near its left hand corner. Cross over the stream, then at once turn right. Leave the stream behind after a few metres by taking a sturdy footbridge into another field. Go through a redundant metal gate and continue up the field in the same direction. At the top, pass through a new metal farm gate quickly followed by an old farm gate, to arrive at a road.

Turn left along this past Cools House and, at the second gate on the right, turn into a field on a bridleway. This follows the left hand hedge, then fence, of the field, passing Abbot's Pond, with bushes all around it, to the right as it climbs gently, then more steeply, uphill. Go through the gate in the top left hand corner of the field and follow the path which winds its way through the strip of woodland beyond to go through another gate into a field. Ascend the right hand side of the field, with woods on your right, towards the fence line at the top and pass through a gap where a gate used to be. Maintain direction through the next field to reach another gate onto a road. Cross this and go down the right hand side of a farmyard on a concrete track to enter a field. Go half left across this, aiming for a small gate between houses (to right) and two trees in the field (to left). Turn right on the road beyond and go down to a T junction, containing post and phone boxes, in the hamlet of Newtown.

Turn right past the converted chapel, then left soon after on a path which goes through metal gates propped against each other towards a wood. Go through a gate and swing right, then left, on a clear path through the wood. Soon after passing along the top of a steep slope to left, go down a flight of wooden steps (slippery after rain) to a gate into a field. Follow the contour along the top of the field to pass through a small gate onto a track in woodland, then a large farm gate immediately to its right, into a field. Turn left along the field edge, with wood (Bottom Copse) to left. Pass under a power line to arrive at a cross hedge with a large gap where a gate used to be. Go through this gap and take the farm track beyond, which veers to the right away from the wood towards a skilfully

converted barn (New Barn). (N.B. This is not the correct right of way as shown on the OS map but has clearly become the accepted route over the years). Go down the track to the left of the house to a road. Cross over this, go through a gate and down the right hand side of the field beyond. After another gate, turn left onto a road and cross over the London to Exeter railway line. Take the first path with gate to the left after this, which leads to a footbridge over the River Sem linking two fields. At the end of the second field, emerge onto the road which goes past the Roman Catholic Primary School in the village of Wardour, with a stone bus shelter on the other side of the road.

N.B. The route described in this paragraph differs from that marked on the OS maps; it was the intention of the creators of the Wessex Ridgeway to use this route, but the OS was never notified of this. Cross the road and go up the drive of the school. Go through a small wooden gate in the fence on the left about two thirds of the way up the drive, then half right across the grass of the playing fields aiming for the corner of the playground. Proceed up the strip of grass to the left of the playground to a gate. Go through this past the school building to a gate in the hedge. Go through this, up the right-hand side of a small field, through two gates on either side of a drive, past the front of a house, then up an enclosed slope to emerge at the end of a lane which joins the tarmac road on a bend a metre or so to the left.

In front of you but slightly to the left is the entrance to New Wardour Castle. This is in fact a Palladian mansion, now converted into apartments. Press the button in the wall to the right to open the gate. The route described here away from the house is a permissive path allowed for public use by the landowner. Go straight ahead down the drive, ignoring the right-hand fork. After 50m or so, branch off to the left, signposted 1-4 Garden Cottages, then join a mown path over the lawn to the right which passes close to bushes/woodland to the left. When you reach a gravel track, turn sharp right, and shortly afterwards, sharp left on another track to a gate with large timber posts and a stile. Go over this and along a grassy track. Old Wardour Castle can be seen straight ahead. A fence eventually appears to the left. Just beyond a stile by a farm gate, turn left on a track to Ark Farm. Walk through the farmyard, then continue in the same direction on a tarmac road to arrive at the car park for Old Wardour Castle (an English Heritage property). This is well worth a visit.

Take the narrow tarmac road down the side of the car park, with the castle to left and a lake to right. Just beyond a castellated building set into the wall of the castle (the Gothic Pavilion) go half right to climb gently on a good track, with

woods to left, and fields and good views of the New Castle and surrounding countryside to right. Ignore a track coming in from the right, and another soon after which forks to the left through an old gateway arch. When the woods end, maintain direction down a field with a wire fence on your right. Go through a gap at the bottom where a gate used to be, with redundant kissing gate to right, and pass through a strip of woodland with a large pond to left (Pale Park Pond). Go through another gate and bear half right up a field heading for higher ground and another wood. Proceed through a gate into the wood and after 15m go right on a track which climbs gently at first. Keep right at a fork. Exit from the wood past a Forestry Commission sign informing you that you have been walking in Wardour (Wood), and a green metal barrier beyond it. Continue down a gravel track, with houses to either side, which becomes tarmac and arrives at a crossroads.

Turn left and after 400m, by Crofters Lodge, go right downhill on a (tarmac) lane. After crossing a stream by Dengrove Farm, turn left, away from the farm, on a concrete track. Stay on this track as it swings right and climbs uphill out of the valley. Where the ground levels out, go through a farm gate and continue on the track as it crosses another track and drops downhill onto a tarmac road through the hamlet of Milkwell by a phone box. Turn right, then almost immediately left onto a narrow path going steeply downhill. At the bottom, by Spring Cottage, continue in the same direction across another road to the end of a farm road. Pass through a farm gate into a field and turn right on a 'green road' with fence/hedge to right. Negotiate another gate and stay on the track as another track joins it from the left to pass thatched farm buildings to right. Turn left on a tarmac road after going through another farm gate, walking away from Lower Berrycourt Farm. Ignore footpaths to left and right to arrive at a T junction at Mullins Bridge.

Turn right on the road over the river, then immediately left on a byway to pass Mullins Mill to left. Go uphill on a sunken track passing a telecoms mast on the right. At this point, the track narrows and can become overgrown in the summer. The track swerves left and right by the remains of a barn, with houses in sight ahead. Approx. 130m after this, take the stile to left and aim for the bottom right hand corner of the field. Go over another stile here and swing down to the left to a kissing gate by a farm gate onto the A30 through the village of Ludwell. The Grove Arms pub is 30m to the left.

Stage 8 - Ludwell to Ashmore

[Amended on 29/7/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 118, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 6.7 miles (10.7 km)

Take the (unnamed) lane almost opposite the entrance to the car park of the Groves Arms pub, on the south side of the A30, with a white house on its right. Pass to the left of the watercress beds and, at a small building owned by Ludwell Sunsalads Ltd, go over a stile by a gate on the left. Continue up and along a field and, where some trees are reached on the right, bear left up to a stile in the hedgerow. Cross another stile and bear right on an enclosed path which is narrow in places and can get overgrown. On arriving at a tarmac lane, turn left and after 35m, having passed the house called Downs View, turn right and climb over a stile between a farm building to left and bungalow to right. Follow the left hand edge of three fields, negotiating stiles as you go, climbing gradually, but more steeply in the third field. Cross the large field beyond on an obvious path along the highest ground, passing a concrete manhole after 50m, and heading for a distant wood. Continue through this to reach a road.

Turn right uphill on this, but BEWARE fast traffic coming downhill from the right. After some 40m, go over the stile by a gate on the left. Swing uphill to the right and soon veer left to take the lower of two green tracks between banks. This later follows a wire fence on the left up the side of, then around, a combe. Head for the gate and stile in the top left hand corner of the field above the combe, which give access to a broad track. Turn left along this and walk through the Win Hill National Trust car park to its furthest (eastern) end. Go through the sturdy wooden gate emblazoned with the National Trust logo into a field, with the summit of Win Hill crowned by a copse of trees over to the left. Cross the field, with a fence to right, to cross a stile which is also emblazoned with the National Trust logo. Continue in the same direction, ignoring the kissing gate to the right, keeping the fence close to the right, and go gently, then steeply, downhill. Pass through another National Trust gate near the bottom into a wood. Just beyond this gate is a tall metal gate in an equally tall wood and wire mesh fence, which has accompanied you downhill, and which marks the boundary of the Ashcombe Estate. Follow the track to a T junction with another track, where there is the first of several green metal posts clearly indicating the route of the footpath through the long, tranquil valley you have arrived in, called Ashcombe Bottom.

Turn right along this track and follow it for approx. 1 mile (1.6 km), ignoring all other tracks coming in from right and left, at each of which there is a green metal sign. The initially muddy track soon improves to become a compacted stone track with the occasional pothole. After a while, pass a stone house with a tiled roof to the right, then go through a gate next to a cattle grid and farm gate, which leads to a more open area. Not long after this, where the track twists to the right and left, continue ahead on a green swathe of grass which runs to the left of and parallel to the track. Eventually arrive at and pass through a gate in a fence on the left. Turn half left and after 20m go through a gap where a gate used to be. Follow the path uphill then round to the right. Continue ahead, with a hedge then fence on the right and a steep upwards slope to the left, for approx. 1400 yards (1.3 km). Go through a farm gate onto a short stretch of path with woodland to the left. Emerge onto a gravel drive, with Corner Farm to right, which leads to the B3081 through Tollard Royal.

Turn right uphill along the B3081 by the village pond and, after 100m, just before the converted chapel, turn right again up Bench's Lane. This climbs gently uphill to a thatched cottage. Walk to the right of this cottage and continue to ascend. Where the ground levels out, the path transforms into a wide track. A little over a mile (1.6 km) after leaving the B3081, you rejoin it. Carefully cross it and pass through a hedge, then turn right through a metal gate onto a permissive footpath alongside the field edge. Continue with the hedge and road on the right, gradually veering left, for 450m, to where the path reaches a metal gate next to a gap in the hedge.

Bear left at a narrow angle across what is normally an arable field to a road with gates on both sides. Continue in the next field in almost the same direction, heading slightly to the right of the highest ground in Ashmore – an electricity pole in the middle of the field gives a good line of direction. Step over low wires at a gap in the hedge, then go through the margin of trees to pass through a metal kissing gate into Dorset. On the right is a wooden signpost commemorating the official opening of the Dorset section of the Wessex Ridgeway on 16th August 1994, which indicates 'Lyme Regis 62 miles' (100 km). Walk up the green track between fences, go through two farm gates, one metal and one wooden, and emerge onto a road. Turn right to reach the pond in Ashmore (which regrettably has no pub).

