

Wessex Ridgeway in Wiltshire, in 8 stages

Route Directions south to north

Stage 1 - Ashmore to Ludwell

[Amended on 29/7/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 118, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 6.7 miles (10.7 km)

Take the no through road in Ashmore which passes to the left of the pond past The Old School House. After the barn, turn left, signposted Tollard Royal 2. Go through two farm gates, one wooden and one metal, and along a green track between fences. At the end of this 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). Go through the metal kissing gate beside this, pass through the margin of trees, then step over low wires at a gap in the hedge into a field. Go half right and slightly uphill in the direction of an electricity pole, then continue past it to a road with metal gates on both sides. Continue on almost the same course across the next field to a metal gate just before a hedge at the B3081 road. Turn right along a permissive path at the edge of the field with the hedge and road on your left. After 450m, go through a kissing gate, turn left through a gap in the hedge, and carefully cross the B3081 to the track opposite. This is Bench's Lane. The track eventually narrows into a path and goes steadily downhill. It passes to the left of a thatched cottage and emerges onto a gravel track, which descends to rejoin the B3081 in the village of Tollard Royal just to the left of a converted chapel.

Turn left along the B3081 and after 100m, just before the pond, turn left on a track past the post box. On reaching the turn off to Corner Farm (to left), continue ahead on the left-hand fork on a brief stretch of path with woodland to right. Go through a farm gate and continue for approx. 1400 yards (1.3 km) on a pleasant path along a valley, with steep upwards slope to right and fence, then hedge, to left. Descend through a metal gate next to a farm gate, then after 20m go through a kissing gate in a fence on the right. Go right along a green swathe of grass which runs to the right of and parallel to a compacted farm track. Quite soon, when the track comes sweeping in from the left, you join and walk along it for almost the entire length of the tranquil valley called Ashcombe Bottom.

After passing through a gate next to a farm gate and cattle grid, pass a stone house with a tiled roof to left. At this point, the valley starts to close in somewhat. Stay on the track,

ignoring all other tracks coming in from right and left, at each of which there is a green metal sign which clearly indicates the correct route. Eventually, approx. 1 mile (1.6 km) after joining the track, arrive at the last green sign, which points the way left off the main track and uphill through a wood.

Soon arrive at a tall metal gate in an equally tall wood and wire mesh fence, which marks the boundary of the Ashcombe Estate. Go through this, and the sturdy wooden kissing gate emblazoned with the National Trust logo just beyond it, into a field. Go steeply uphill, with fence close to left, and the Ashcombe Estate wood and wire mesh fence just to the left of it, to arrive at a National Trust stile into the field containing the summit of Win Hill. This is over to the right and is crowned by a clump of trees. Keep the fence to left and pass through a National Trust gate into the Win Hill car park. Continue along the broad track beyond for a short distance to a gate and stile on the right. Go onto the field and, with a wire fence to the right, swing left around the combe. Take the lower of two tracks between banks to arrive at a stile by a gate giving access to a road. Turn right along this, but BEWARE fast traffic coming downhill from the left. After 40m, turn left into a wood (no stile or gate). After the wood, bear right through a large field on an obvious path on the highest ground, passing a concrete manhole 50m from its end. Cross a stile into a field and proceed downhill, quite steeply at first, along the right hand edge of three fields to come out onto a tarmac lane.

Turn left onto this, and after 35m turn right onto an enclosed path which is narrow in places and can get very overgrown. Cross a stile at the end in the left-hand hedgerow, then bear right towards a clump of trees. Here turn right again to arrive at a stile by a gate to the right of a small building owned by Ludwell Sunsalads Ltd. Walk along the gravel track, passing to the right of the watercress beds, to arrive at the south side of the A30, with a white house to the left and the car park of the Grove Arms pub almost opposite.

Stage 2 - Ludwell to Hindon

Maps: OS Explorer 118 & 143, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 10.6 miles (17 km)

With your back to the Grove Arms pub, turn right for 30m and go through a kissing gate on the right by a farm gate, opposite the house called Rest Haven, into a field. The path twists uphill to the right to cross a stile into another field. Go half left to the brow of the hill, then aim for a stile in the middle of the hedge opposite. Turn right here onto a lane, pass a telecoms mast to left and go downhill on a sunken path past Mullins Mill, to right. At the T junction with a tarmac road, turn right over the river, then immediately left on a no through road. Ignore footpaths to left and right, and just before arriving at Lower Berrycourt Farm, turn right through a farm gate and follow the track round to the left. When the track forks, take the left-hand fork, with thatched farm buildings to left. This soon becomes enclosed, but

enters a field after another farm gate. Continue down the left-hand side of the field to another farm gate.

Go down the road on the other side, cross the road in front of Spring Cottage in the hamlet of Milkwell, and take the narrow path which climbs steeply up to its right. At the top, go right, then immediately left up a track by a phone box. This climbs gently, flattens out, crosses another track and goes through another farm gate. The track is now concreted and goes downhill and to the left. Just before reaching Dengrove Farm, turn right over a stream and follow the (now tarmac) road uphill to a T junction. Turn left here and after 400m turn right up an incline at a crossroads. The tarmac soon turns to gravel, with houses on both sides, and enters Wardour (Wood), as announced by a Forestry Commission sign after a green metal barrier. The track is level for a while, then goes gently downhill. Where it bends right, branch left off it to pass through a gate, after 15m, into a field. Go downhill through the field to pass through another farm gate and through a strip of woodland, with a large pond to right (Pale Park Pond).

Go through a gap where a gate used to be, with redundant kissing gate to left, and walk up the left-hand side of a field, with a wire fence on your left. At the top, continue in the same direction on an enclosed track, with woods to right, and fields and good views to left. Ignore a track coming in from the left and go gradually downhill towards a castellated building in the outer wall of Old Wardour castle. Here turn left on a narrow tarmac road, with castle to right and lake to left.

Just beyond the car park to right, turn left on a tarmac road signposted 'Ark Farm'. Walk straight through the farmyard and down the track on the other side. Where the track turns sharp left, go over a stile by a farm gate to right and along a grassy track, with a fence initially to the right, to arrive at another stile by a farm gate which gives access to New Wardour Castle. This is in fact a Palladian mansion, now converted into apartments. The route described here away from the house is a permissive path allowed for public use by the landowner. Go ahead towards the house, but immediately turn sharp right onto a gravel path. Before this reaches a gate with housing beyond, turn left (opposite a waymarked path) on a mown path over the lawn with bushes/woodland to right. Follow these round to the right, then fork left to join the access drive to 1-4 Garden Cottages. On arriving at the main drive to the house, turn right to arrive at the main entrance gate. Press the button in the low wooden post to the left to open the gate. Proceed to the tarmac road then immediately turn left down the track.

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). Take the enclosed footpath a metre or so along the track to the right, which goes downhill, then past the front of a house, through two gates on either side of a drive, and along the left-hand side of a small field. Go through another gate to pass down a strip of grass beside the buildings and playground of the Roman Catholic Primary School, then through another wooden gate. On reaching the playground corner, bear half left across the

grass of its playing fields, aiming for a small wooden gate in the fence one third of the way down its drive. Go right after passing through the gate and cross the road at the end of the drive.

Take the path across a field on the other side. After crossing the River Sem via a footbridge and the field beyond, go through a gate onto a road. Turn right along this and go over the London to Exeter railway line. Take the first gate and path to the right after this, going up the left-hand edge of a field to a gate onto another road. Cross this and walk up the track beyond, which leads to a skilfully converted barn (New Barn). Pass to the right of the house and follow the obvious farm track across the field beyond. This gradually converges with a wood to the right (Bottom Copse). (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). Where the track reaches the edge of the wood at a cross fence, go through the large gap where a gate used to be and continue along the edge of the wood. Pass under a power line and, just before the wood comes to an end, go through a large farm gate on the right onto a track, then go immediately left through a small gate into a field. Follow the contour along the top of the field to go through a gate into another wood. Ascend a flight of wooden steps (slippery when wet) and follow the clear path through the wood, soon going along the top of a steep slope to right. Pass through a gate out of the wood and across a small field onto a road. This is the hamlet of Newtown.

Turn right and go past the converted chapel to left. Turn sharp left just beyond this on another tarmac road. Go past several houses. The road bends left and, just as it bends right again, go through a small gate in the hedge to left across a field, passing to the left of two oak trees in the field. Go through a large farm gate and pass to the left of a farmyard on a concrete track which leads to a road. Cross this, go through a gate and walk along the left-hand edge of two fields, with a wood to left. The second field descends to go through a gate into the wood that has been on your right. After a short distance, emerge into another field through a gate, and walk downhill along its right-hand side, passing Abbot's Pond, with bushes all around it, to the left on the way down. Go through a large farm gate at the bottom onto a road. Turn left along this, and just after passing Cools House to right, go through a large metal gate to right, and a new metal gate on the left immediately after this.

Continue downhill towards a small copse beside a small metal gate, and cross the sturdy footbridge over the stream just beyond this. After a few metres, turn left across the stream again, go through a large metal farm gate, then immediately right along the right hand side of a field. Pass through two gates close together, then through two more fields and their gates onto a strip of grass through a copse, with a stream to right. Go through the gate at the end and turn right on a culvert over the ditch. Walk up the narrow bridleway with the wood and hedge on the right and a wire fence on the left, then continue up the right-hand side of the open field beyond. Go through a gap in the bushes in its top right-hand corner onto a path enclosed with fences. After a gradual ascent the path enters a wood. (Turn left here along the edge of the wood if you wish to go to the village of East Knoyle).

The path climbs more steeply on a sunken track to the top of Knoyle Ridge, then descends more gently through the wood to emerge on the other side in the form of another enclosed track, this time by trees and bushes, mainly to the left. After a while these disappear and the track becomes very exposed. Approx. 1.2 km after leaving the woods, arrive at a crossroads of tracks on top of a ridge. Go right here on another enclosed track to come out (eventually) onto a road. Turn left and walk down into the village of Hinton. On reaching the village hall (to right), turn left up a street with pollarded limes, in the direction of the church, to reach a crossroads in its centre.

Stage 3 – Hindon to Heytesbury

[Amended on 4/6/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 8.3 miles (13.3 km)

Start at the crossroads in Hindon. Head north-west towards the church, signposted No Through Road, with Angel Inn to left. Just after the houses Old Cottage and Top House to left, turn right up steps onto a narrow footpath between fences. Go through a gate, across a small, weed-filled field, through another gate and along another fenced section. Continue along the right hand side of a field, sometimes between hedges, then go down the path at its corner onto a tarmac road. Turn left and walk uphill for 400m, then fork right onto a narrow green lane, which can become overgrown in summer. When this ends, go diagonally downhill across a field, aiming at a fence which may be hidden by vegetation. Continue in the same direction, with fence to right, to join the ox drove (track) coming in from the left. After 450m, pass Gosney Cottage to left and arrive at the A303.

Cross this – a tricky and time-consuming process – then go through a gate onto a track going north up the left-hand edge of a field. Ignore another track which turns sharp right by a fence, and continue uphill in the same direction. About 20m after the track bends left, fork right onto a path between trees for 30m. Emerge into a large field and walk up its right-hand side, with woods close to right. In the top right-hand corner, take a path into the woods, which is soon joined by a track coming in from the left. Some 20m after this, arrive at a small clearing with a solitary tree in the middle, where five paths meet. Turn left, and after approx. 300m fork right onto a path which is often so muddy that you will need to walk on the bank rather than the path. After 50m or so, come out onto the Great Ridge.

Turn right onto the Great Ridge, and walk along it for almost exactly 1 km. Just before the track takes a sharp right turn, which appears to be a continuation of the Great Ridge, you

have the option of turning left onto a footpath which wends its way pleasantly through trees. However the official route stays on the Great Ridge for another 15m or so before turning left on a continuation of the track. After a few twists and turns, arrive at a clearing with another track coming in from the right and a notice containing a map of rights of way on the estate. At this point the path through the trees rejoins the main route. Continue on the same track, with the path still twisting and turning, and gently descend Rowdean Hill to arrive at a gate which signifies the exit to the Fonthill Estate.

Approx. 1 km beyond the gate, pass farm buildings to left, then a large, fenced off water tank to right, with a trig point nestling in its rear left corner. At this point, the correct route is between trees to the right of the stony farm track you have been following, but to use this instead of the track would be to miss out on some splendid views (on a good day) looking forward and to the left, which include Scratchbury, Middle and Battlesbury Hills, plus the top of Cley Hill peeping over the horizon. On arriving at a T junction with a tarmac road, with farm buildings (Corton Field Barn) on the other side of the road, turn left. Descend gently on this road for approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (1.2 km), with fine views of the Wylde Valley and Salisbury Plain beyond to the right. On arriving at a T junction, turn right for 20m, then fork left onto a chalk bridleway which goes steadily downhill to the very attractive village of Corton.

Cross a tarmac road (B3095) by Foley's Cottage and continue down a short, sunken path. This comes out at the end of a thatched wall which encloses the Dove Inn. Turn right here and follow the road around and through the village. Just after The Lodge to right, turn right and soon pass on the right "The Old Chapel" which has been converted into a dwelling. The tarmac transitions to a track and passes under the Bath to Salisbury railway line. Soon after this, ignore a track going off to the right and go ahead through a series of small metal gates on a path between hedges for some 450m. Cross a concrete bridge and pass through a wooden gate into water meadows. Follow the well-trodden path diagonally across the meadows to cross a second concrete bridge with metal gates at both ends, then a third one after another gate.

A few metres beyond the bridge, turn left round a rusty gate and walk (upstream) along the river bank, with thatched cottages on the other side, for some 80m. Go through a triangular gap beside a metal field gate to left, and go diagonally across the field to another triangular gap in its corner. Continue along the left-hand side of the next field, with overgrown fence to left, to arrive at a metal kissing gate, with footbridge to left. Don't cross this but go right on a narrow path between trees. Ignore another track coming in from the left * and cross the millstream by a board walk. Continue ahead on a path through trees with fence to left, to arrive at a tarmac road. #

* In the event of the millstream being in flood, turn left onto the track coming in from the left, which quickly arrives at a tarmac road. Turn right to go past Mill Farm to left, soon arriving at the bridge across the river, just before which a path comes in from the right. #

Turn right onto this, immediately crossing the river, then turn left onto the riverside path to a gap in the fence. Go through this, then bear left so that the fence is close left, and immediately cross a sleeper bridge. Continue with river to left to arrive at a tarmac road with thatched cottage to right. Very soon after this, go right at the junction along Mantles Lane. This comes out onto Heytesbury's High Street just to the east of the Angel Inn – turn left to get there. This stage officially ends at the Red Lion pub, some 450m further along the High Street.

Stage 4 Heytesbury to Westbury White Horse

(Amended on 18/10/20)

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184 & 183

Distance: 10.5 miles (16.8 km)

Start in Heytesbury High Street outside the Red Lion pub. With your back to the pub go up Chapel Road opposite (slightly to the left), and turn right at a junction after 40m or so. Turn immediately left past an open gate bearing the sign 'Cotley Hill House'. Go past garages to left, then up a strip of grass, to cross a stile, then go down a few steps to the edge of the busy A36. Cross this, go up steps on the other side, then follow a path up through the wood to a field edge. Turn left along this, then right in its corner to climb, always with the wood to left, up to a cross track encountered a few metres after the ground levels out. (Do not be tempted to go through any gaps into the wood before this as they are false trails).

Turn left onto the cross track, which is the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP), and will be with us for several miles. Go through the wood, and continue on a wide, grassy track to the tumulus at the top of Cotley Hill. Proceed around the right-hand side, or over the top, of the tumulus, and continue on the grassy track in roughly the same direction, to arrive at a fence containing both a kissing gate and an equestrian metal gate by a "star marker". Go through either onto another grassy track along the contour of the hill, with fence up to right. Pass to the right of a tumulus, then arrive at another kissing gate. Follow the fence to right beyond this, but after 20m or so, strike out to the left on a well-defined path on a wide ridge, with the ground falling away on both sides, towards Scratchbury Hill. Enter this through a gate next to a wooden farm gate, set at an angle to the hill, next to another "star marker".

Turn right on a path along the outer and lower northern rampart of Scratchbury Hill for approx. half the circumference of the hill fort. When nearing the north-western section of the hill, bear left on the path passing a star marker on your left. After approx. 200m, pass another star marker on your left, then fork right on a path going diagonally downhill to a gate. Go

through this and continue to a tarmac road with fence to left. Go left along the road for a few paces then take a path off it to the right through a large gap. This goes uphill through a gap between bushes to the grassy dome of Middle Hill. Take the path to the left past a clump of trees (NOT the path to the top of the hill, where there is a tumulus dotted with trees), continuing alongside a fence to left along the contour of the hill. Continue in the same direction when the fence veers off to the left, then gradually descend the hill going diagonally left to arrive at a gap onto a very wide concrete road. Turn right onto this for 40m, then go left through another gap into a long field, with barns down to the right and a low hedge to left. Go through a gap into another field and slowly rise along its left-hand edge towards the ramparts of Battlesbury Hill, an iron-age hill fort.

Go through a gate and turn left on a narrow path along the top of the outer and lower bank of the ramparts. (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). Soon pass through a wood on its southern side. After negotiating almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of the ramparts, take an obvious path leading off to the left past a solitary rampart to left to reach a kissing gate. Take the left-hand fork after this across a field to arrive at steps down to a tarmac road, with an underground reservoir half-hidden over to the right. Turn left on this road, which is Imber Road, and descend Sack Hill into the heart of the Warminster Training Centre, passing various army establishments and shops on the way. After $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (1.2 km), turn right onto Elm Hill road, with the ultra-modern St Giles Garrison Church to left. On arriving at a T junction, turn left towards Warminster. After some 400m, take the turning to right opposite house no. 16 which leads to the private road to the West Wilts Golf Club. Bear right off this almost at once to take a narrow path by the garage to the left of a red brick house. This leads up through trees to emerge on the golf course after 450m.

Follow the path beside the golf course as it swings round the head of a fine coomb named Kidnapper's Hole. At the end of the golf course, keep going straight ahead along a wide green track. Pass Field Barn on the right and continue straight on until arriving at a flag pole, with two communications masts partially hidden behind it in the trees. Here bear left and downhill, with fence to right. Pass to the right of some barns and follow the track round to the left. After 100m, turn right through a gate. Descend the left hand side of the field, then climb steeply up the other side. On your right every few metres are signs warning you to keep out as this is a military firing range. Go through a kissing gate in the top left corner of the field, by another flag pole, and turn right along a stony track, which is the IRPP.

In approx. 800m, by a third flag pole, turn left on a path which gradually goes downhill. (Some might say that this is a needless deviation from the IRPP but it is worth it for the views). Immediately after going through what used to be a gate, with a redundant metal kissing gate on its right, arrive at a junction of tracks by a grassy triangle in a small clearing. Turn right through a wood, which ends after you pass under a lovely canopy of beech tree branches. Upon emerging at the other end, follow the path along the escarpment, with fine views to left. The path eventually merges with a bridleway which goes uphill and rejoins the IRPP by a communications mast.

Turn left onto it, with disused quarry to right. On reaching the minor road opposite the entrance to the quarry, turn left downhill onto the road (this is the road from Westbury to the Westbury White Horse called Newtown). After some 150m, go through a metal kissing gate on the right and go left downhill to a rusty metal tank next to an abandoned Jack Dean Oils tanker. Turn right here along the escarpment, with trees initially to left, then a fence. Go through a gap into the next field, and continue on and through the metal kissing gate at the far side. Continue up a slope to a bench with a plinth giving information on what can be seen just beyond it, which includes the White Horse. A bit further on, pass a White Horse information board, then more benches. The White Horse car park is up to your right. There are more superb views from here on a good day.

The car park above the Westbury White Horse can be reached from the B3098 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 T junction at the top of the hill), or via Castle Road in Bratton, both off the B3098.

Stage 5 - Westbury White Horse to West Lavington

[amended on 26/5/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 143 and 130, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 9.7 miles (15.5 km)

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.

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.

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 two benches, with the White Horse clearly visible to your right. There are fine views here over the vale below.

Go through the gate to the right and after approx. 10m, before you have reached the White Horse, turn right over a low bank between two tall ramparts. Climb up onto the left hand one and walk along it, parallel to the car park. This is the Iron Age hill fort of Bratton Camp/Castle. Turn left off it at the end and go over the stile or through the gate to your right, both of which give access to the tarmac road. Turn right onto this. Do not follow the tarmac road round to the right after 50m, where it gives access to the White Horse car park, but continue ahead on a broad track.

At the T junction, with the buildings of White Horse Farm – three barns, a large water tank and a skinny radio mast – turn left onto the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP), which shares its route with the White Horse Trail (WHT) for several miles, with the occasional deviation. Walk for 1.8 miles (2.9 km) to a T junction with the turn off to Reeves Farm (to left, signposted Bratton) at the bottom of a slope, ignoring two paths/bridleways to left on the way. Turn right to MoD vedette post 6, then sharp left onto a green path between two fields which may be quite overgrown. (The WHT continues uphill along the main, stony byway at vedette post 6, but do not take this route). The green path starts just to the left of the main byway, then diverges from it as it goes uphill. Where the path forks, bear right.

On arriving at a barn, turn right downhill to reach a tarmac road. Turn right onto this, and almost immediately left after the bend, ascending three wooden steps to a stile in the corner of a field. Cross this, then proceed up the left-hand side of the field. Follow the field edge round to the left at the top to arrive eventually at a kissing gate in its top left corner. Go through this, turn left and after 50m or so turn right onto a broad, stony track. After 300m the WHT rejoins us from the right. After a further 400m, join the tarmac road coming up on the left from Coulston, and bear slightly right. Pass a triangulation point to the right, then a large water tank on the left just before the entrance to Stokehill Farm. Here the tarmac road disappears off to the right, but we continue along the IRPP/WHT, now a stony track. This is still a byway, so expect to see cars and army vehicles using it from time to time.

Pass an old, indecipherable milestone on the right very soon after the Stokehill Farm turn off, which apparently marks the halfway point between Salisbury and Bath. Continue a further 1.3 miles (2.1 km) to reach the buildings of the New Zealand army camp on your right. At this point, the Wessex Ridgeway makes a 90 degree left turn parallel to the line of telegraph poles, whereas the WHT forks half left along the IRPP. After 200m or so, sweep right steeply downhill towards plantations of trees. Walk to the right of these, following the valley round to the left, then continue past a field to left. Ignore the good track coming in from the left from Hill Bottom Farm and continue in the same direction through a small wood. Veer left and uphill to emerge from the wood, but still with a clump of trees to left which once surrounded Rooktree Farm. Very soon turn left then right through a gap in the hedge. The official right of way goes uphill between two hedges, but is now overgrown and impassible, so take the track on its right, between a hedge and grazing land.

Soon reach a large gap in the hedge where another track comes in from the left. Continue in the same direction on the grassy track for approx. 1 km to reach a barn in a hollow on the left. Continue downhill until you arrive at a metal gate on the right which is the entrance to the Strawberry Hill Reservoir. Turn right immediately after this along a rutted track into woodland. After approx. 350m, turn left off this onto a path which emerges from the woodland to pass between two fields, and then has the playing fields of Dauntsey's School to the left. Carry on past a path to the left that goes through the playing fields, then past a redundant steel kissing gate on the right. At a T junction at the end of the playing fields, turn right past the rusty remains of another kissing gate onto a narrow path. Follow this path for approx. 150m to reach yet another defunct kissing gate attached to a wooden post. Veer to the left past this to reach a tarmac road. Turn right - this is White Street. Soon pass a road to West Lavington's church to left, then Strawberry Hill to right. At the end of White Street, turn left downhill on Rickbarton to arrive at the A360, at the southern end of West Lavington, where this stage terminates.

Stage 6 - West Lavington to Devizes

[Amended on 5/10/20]

Maps: OS Explorer 130 (North Sheet) & 157, OS Landranger 184 & 173

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

Cross the A360 and go down Rutts Lane opposite, with Dial House to left. At a T junction with another tarmac road (Stibb Hill), go right and immediately left uphill on a wide bridleway into woodland. After 100m, take the first (unsigned) right along another bridleway, which sinks between high banks as it goes uphill. 60m after joining another track coming in from the right, take the left fork uphill at a signed junction and out of the woods. After 400m or so, arrive at a crossroads of tracks.

Here turn left opposite a flag pole, which might well be flying a red flag, onto a wide tarmac byway which skirts the edge of Salisbury Plain. At this point, we join both the White Horse Trail (WHT) and the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP). Pass a water tank, a second flag pole and a trig point (in the field), all to right. This road is often used by local people as a short cut between the main A360 and the B3098 which passes through Market Lavington, so beware! Soon after a radio mast, arrive at MoD vedette post 11, Lavington (where there is a road down to the village of Market Lavington). The tarmac becomes gravel from now on.

Pass several bridleways and footpaths coming up on the left from the villages of Easterton and Market Lavington, of which there are fine views on a clear day. After almost a mile (1.6

km), pass a memorial on the right to a German soldier, Jager Dirk Knöffel, who “passed away by accident on 5th September 1993”. Eventually arrive at the edge of the Urchfont New Plantation (known locally as the Urchfont Clump) with another flag pole to right. Take the left-hand fork off the main byway, and either follow this round the northern side of the Clump, or veer right off it to pass through the south of the Clump, rejoining the track on the other side – both routes are equally permissible. Continue along the track for 150m, then follow the fence that appears from the left, leaving the track to do so. Either way, we leave the WHT and IRPP at the Clump.

Bear left downhill on a bridleway, which is soon enclosed by bushes and trees on both sides. On emerging into open country, veer right down the left-hand edge of a field, soon leaving the fence to your right behind. On arriving at its corner, veer left under power cables on the same bridleway, which is soon again enclosed by trees and bushes. This goes steadily downhill, and emerges into a layby on the B3098. Turn right along this. Fork left at the first junction, signposted Potterne and Wick, then pass to the left of the duck pond. Continue past a road to right bearing the sign Peppercombe Lane and Village Hall, then past The Orchard, also to the right, soon followed by the village shop and Lamb Inn to left. Keep to the right of the triangle of grass beyond, and after 80m, turn right (signposted Knights Leaze Farm). After 20m, turn left through a wooden gate into a field.

Walk towards the house at the other end of the field, which is Knight’s Leaze Farm, and pass through two metal gates to its left on either side of its drive (there is a magnificent sculpture of a stag in its front garden). Walk down the field beyond to cross a stile in its bottom right-hand corner. After 20m or so, turn right through a large metal farm gate (which is usually open) and walk through a collection of rusting farm machinery. Pass through another (open) gate and follow the dirt track beyond, with fence to right. When this peters out, with small wood to right, continue along the contour of the slope to reach a wooden stile. Cross this and continue in the same direction to arrive at another wooden stile in woodland at the foot of a railway embankment.

Ascend the steps to the railway (which is the Penzance to London line), cross it with great care, and descend the steps on the other side. Go through the metal kissing gate at the bottom and go half left across the field, aiming for a gap in the thin strip of woodland on the other side, and continue in the same direction through the next field. Pass through a gap in the hedge to reach a gravel driveway. Turn right onto this by a lonely wooden post. After 150m tip toe across a cattle grid between two gates, one of which bears a sign reading ‘Crookwood Watermill & Farm only’. Continue on the gravel drive, which becomes tarmac as the road kinks right and left. Pass to the left of Fullaway Farm, and, ignoring all footpath signs to right and left, arrive at a T junction opposite a notice board in the village of Sturt. Turn right to arrive at the A342.

Take the bridleway opposite, which soon deteriorates into a sunken path between bushes and trees and, in summer, nettles. Eventually emerge onto a broad track, which quickly arrives at

a road. Cross this – the bridleway becomes a byway at this point - and walk uphill onto the flank of Etchilhampton Hill (to right). Descend to cross another byway 1 km from the high point. After another gentle ascent and descent, and only 100m or so from the metalled road to Coate, turn left along a footpath which passes to the right of a light brown farm building. This path is enclosed on both sides by bushes and trees, and can get somewhat overgrown in places. At a T junction of paths, turn right, gently downhill, to arrive at the Coate road. Turn left along this to reach Windsor Drive.

Turn right and immediately go down steps onto the towpath of the Kennet & Avon canal. Once on the towpath, turn sharp left, with the canal to the right, to pass under bridge 136 and Windsor Drive. Continue ahead under bridge 137, then, shortly after the canal bends to the right, pass under bridge 138. At the next bridge, veer left to leave the canal.

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 further (to the west) along the canal.

Stage 7 - Devizes to Avebury

Maps: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

Distance: 11 miles (17.6 km)

[Amended on 12/7 and 13/7/20]

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. The number 49 bus services both Devizes and Avebury.

Take the bridge over the canal and go through the gap next to the large iron gates in front of you into Quakers Walk, a pleasant tree-lined avenue popular with dog walkers. When this reaches a metalled road, with the entrance to Roundway House to your left, cross it and continue. When the track arrives at a house, go left through a gap between hedges, with the house on right. Cross the field to reach a house fence to right, then a road. Go down crude steps onto a metalled road and turn left, then sharp left, on it, to reach a kissing gate on the right very soon after the bend. There is a good view from here of the Devizes Millennium White Horse to the right. Go over this and another kissing gate soon after, then uphill along the left-hand side of a large field, passing to right of a pylon as you do so. On reaching the gap by the gate at the top, turn left along the metalled road. This soon peters out and becomes a stony track. Where this goes sharp right, there is a parking area to left.

Here you can go either through the metal kissing gate at the top of the copse next to the parking area and along a path beside the copse, or through the gap to left of a metal farm gate beyond the kissing gate and left down a path enclosed by fences. These paths are parallel and indeed the second one joins the first one after only about 40m, but it is debatable which one is muddier in wet weather. Both lead to Oliver's Castle hill fort. Where the fence to right forms a corner with another fence, there is an information board about the Battle of Roundway, which was fought on this spot.

Follow the ramparts of the fort in a wide semi-circle to the right, with wide-ranging views on offer, passing a pointed wooden post with "R5" carved into it and an English Nature information board on Roundway Down in the process. Go through a metal kissing gate as you leave the fort behind, then follow the fence on right in the next field. On arriving at the corner it is possible to go through the small metal gate next to a farm gate onto the track beyond and turn left along it. However this can get very muddy and churned up, so there is the option of turning left along the inside of the fence at the corner until reaching a metal gate to right. Go through this onto the track and turn left. Branch right on arriving at a T junction.

After 500 metres, turn left at a small turning/parking area along a metalled (but rough) road. This soon passes a house (Hill Cottage) and some farm buildings on the right. After the next large barn on right, the road narrows and becomes a rutted farm track. Just over a mile (1.6 km) after joining the metalled road, arrive at a crossroads of tracks. Turn left here to arrive at the North Wilts Golf Club, with club house to left, approx. ½ mile (0.8 km) later.

Cross over the metalled road and venture cautiously onto the golf course. Veer slightly to the right, aiming for a wooden signpost in a copse beyond the fairway, passing two more small wooden waymarked posts by clumps of trees on the way. Head in the general direction of the two radio masts on Morgan's Hill which have been visible for some distance already, and are a constant landmark on this part of the Wessex Ridgeway. Go through the copse beyond the sign post to join a clear cut (literally!) path up the side of the golf course, with more clumps of trees and the golf course to left and a fence to right. Follow this uphill, with clumps of trees and the golf course to left and a fence to right. The grass is eventually replaced with gravel, and the path bends round to the left to arrive at a gate on the right.

On entering the field beyond, where there is a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust notice board, take the path through the earthworks and then continue ahead and downhill to arrive at a wide gravel byway. (The earthworks are the Wansdyke, an ancient fortification which stretches for 50 miles through Wiltshire).

Turn right here and walk for 1.6 miles (2.6 km). This used to be a Roman road, which explains why it is so straight. At a junction of bridleways by a line of trees to the right, turn left through a gap next to a redundant bridle gate onto a track beside a wide field, towards the hill on which the Lansdowne Monument stands. At a fork at the end of the field, bear right uphill and go through a gate by a National Trust sign. Continue uphill on a wide, grassy track and go through another gate at the top. Go straight ahead on an obvious path until you reach a stony track which goes through the earthwork to the left, which is the ramparts of the Iron Age Oldbury Castle hill fort, towards the monument.

Continue in the same direction, unless it is desired to visit the Cherhill White Horse, the Lansdowne Monument and the hill fort itself, in which case follow the track left through the ramparts of the Oldbury hill fort. Returning to the main route, descend the chalky track and pass through two gates next to stiles, the first with a National Trust sign by it. Pass a decaying barn to right.

Turn right after passing a tumulus in a field to right onto what used to be the old Bath road. Where this forks after 100m or so, go right. Stay on this bridleway for exactly a mile, kinking right and left towards the end. There are fine views here on a good day of Yatesbury and its environs to the left, and, occasionally, of Cherhill Down stretching down to the A361 to the right. Approx. 200m after the kink, veer left into a copse of beech trees. Soon after emerging from this, go through a gate to left into a layby.

Walk down the layby and cross the busy A4 with care. Turn right down the narrow tarmac path beside it for half a mile (0.8 km). Take the wide farm track which forks left off the A4 past the entrance to the Grange, ignoring the driveway to another house to the right. Continue in the same direction when a track comes in from the left to arrive at a notice board by a stile giving permissive access to two large sarsen stones in the field to left, which is all that remains of the Beckhampton Avenue, a ceremonial avenue of stones dating back to Neolithic times. Continue past this (unless you wish to visit the stones) on a tarmac path to arrive in the village of Avebury Trusloe.

Turn left after passing Stratton House, the third house on the left, on a tarmac path between houses, which comes out onto a green/grassy area. Stay on the tarmac path round the rear of the green, then cross over Avebury Trusloe's main street. Continue past a small grass triangle on the other side down the drive to Manor Farm. Almost at once fork right down a degraded tarmac track. Go through a wooden gate, then the left hand one of two more gates immediately afterwards into a meadow. Walk through this with fence to right and go through the wooden gate at the end. Proceed up the tarmac path and over the bridge across the River Kennet immediately after another tarmac path comes in from the left (this is the White Horse Trail). Pass an electricity sub-station to right and, when the road bends right, continue in the same direction between the side of a house and a wall. Pass through kissing gate framework onto Avebury churchyard. Go diagonally right across this to exit through gate onto Avebury High Street.

Go left up High Street to access the National Trust car park via a tarmac footpath to right soon after leaving churchyard, or to take the number 49 bus outside the Red Lion pub where the High Street joins the A4361.

Stage 8 - Avebury to Marlborough

Maps: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

Distance: 6.5 miles (10.4 km)

Avebury is served by the number 49 bus from Swindon or Trowbridge/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 the car park, turn right on arriving at the High Street. The 49 bus stops outside the Red Lion pub.

Take the road off the A4361 opposite Avebury High Street and the Red Lion, past the former United Reformed Church to the right. This is the Herepath or Green Street, an ancient military road dating from Saxon times. Walk up this for approx. 1.5 miles (2.4 km), past Manor Farm dairy to right (where the track is usually particularly muddy with some deep puddles), ascending gradually, to arrive at the Ridgeway National Trail, with its distinctive acorn signs

Cross over this and enter the Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve. Continue in the same direction along an obvious path across a green, open area. Cross a gallops with gates on both sides, and continue on the track downhill and to the right, with Delling Copse to left. Stay on the track at the bottom as it twists to left then right, and pass through a metal bridle gate. An abundance of sarsen stones can be seen in this area. Continue uphill, ignoring a track forking off to the right, with fence to left, to leave the Nature Reserve by means of another bridle gate. Pass the Totterdown Reservoir soon after, and continue on the broad, well-surfaced track, ignoring all paths and tracks to right and left, until it arrives at a junction with a road at the entrance to the Manton Estate some 2¼ miles (3.6 km) after passing the reservoir.

Pass through two gates in quick succession to access the road, cross it, and turn right along the field edge, parallel to the road. At the end of the field, go through a gap to right onto the road for a few metres, then pass through a short stretch of woodland to come out by the 15th hole of the Marlborough Golf Club. Walk along the edge of the golf course, with the road still to the right, until arriving at the entrance to a cemetery on the other side of the road (which is Free's Avenue). This is Marlborough's newer cemetery, which was opened in 1924. Cross the road and go half left across Marlborough Common (which is also used here as a sports training area) to enter a narrow path between Marlborough's Old or Victorian cemetery, protected by a hedge, to left, and the newer one behind railings, to right.

Follow the path sharp left at the end of the new cemetery, past the rear of the Victorian one, and walk down to its junction with Hyde Lane. Immediately take the path which forks right, parallel to Hyde Lane, with Marlborough College's sports pitches to right. Pass a metal kissing gate into these pitches, then a few metres later steps down to Hyde Lane to left. Pass another metal gate into the pitches opposite more steps down to Hyde Lane, marked by an ancient milestone. After passing the Astroturf pitches to right, cross Hyde Lane and continue in the same direction down to Marlborough's High Street, with its public library to left, where the Wessex Ridgeway comes to an end.