

Wessex Ridgeway in Wiltshire

Route Directions south to north, in 8 stages

Stage 1	Ashmore to Ludwell
Stage 2	Ludwell to Hindon
Stage 3	Hindon to Heytesbury
Stage 4	Heytesbury to Westbury White Horse
Stage 5	Westbury White Horse to West Lavington
Stage 6	West Lavington to Devizes
Stage 7	Devizes to Avebury
Stage 8	Avebury to Marlborough

Stage 1 - Ashmore to Ludwell

[Updated in August 2024]

Maps: OS Explorer 118, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 6¾ miles (10.9 km)

Take the no through road in Ashmore which passes to the left of the pond past The Old School House. After the house called The Barn, turn left, signposted Tollard Royal 2. Go through a farm gate and along a green track between fences. Where this track meets trees and bushes there used to be a wooden signpost commemorating Priscilla Houstoun, who designed the route, and the official opening of the Dorset section of the Wessex Ridgeway on 16th August 1994, which indicated 'Lyme Regis 62 miles' (100 km), but this has sadly disappeared. Go through the metal kissing gate and some vegetation 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, beyond which is the B3081 road. Do not go through these, instead turn right along a permissive path at the edge of the field (the right of way is along the road) with the hedge and road on your left. After 450m, turn left through a gap in the hedge, and carefully cross the B3081 to the track opposite. This is Benches 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 join 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. 1.3 km on a pleasant path along a valley bottom, with a steep upwards slope to right and a fence/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, immediately followed by a tall metal gate in an equally tall wire mesh fence – you are now entering the Ashcombe Estate. Do not take the path beside the fence to the right, which goes steeply uphill, but go half right following a faint tractor track through a green swathe of grass, with a gravel farm track a few metres up to the left. Quite soon, when the track comes sweeping in from the left, you continue ahead 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 another green sign, which points the way left off the main track onto a grassy track uphill. Descend into a dip, then climb steeply out of it. Follow the track round to the left, still climbing steeply, to arrive at a tall metal gate in an equally tall 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 very steeply uphill, with fence close to left, and the Ashcombe Estate 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. It is worth making a detour to this clump of trees in clear weather as the views from it are absolutely magnificent! 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 into the field and keep close to the wire fence on the right to swing around the top of the combe. When you are still some way from the bottom of the fence, veer left on a faint track which takes you between embankments. Then veer right to arrive at a stile by a gate giving access to a road. Turn right along this, but BEWARE of fast traffic, especially from the left. After 40m, turn left into a wood (no stile or gate). Near the end of the wood, take the right-hand fork into a large field. Follow an obvious path across it, 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 two fields, a farm track and a third field, 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, with watercress beds to the left. Go over a stile by a field gate to the right of a small building owned by Ludwell Sunsalads Ltd. Walk along the gravel track, with the watercress beds still on your left, 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

[Updated in September 2024]

Maps: OS Explorer 118 & 143, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 11.3 miles (18.2 km)

With your back to the Grove Arms pub, turn right for 30m and go round a farm gate 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 grassy track, and past a telecoms mast to left. The lane narrows and can get very overgrown in the summer, but persevere as it opens out after a while and goes downhill past Mullins Mill on your 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 and follow the track round to the left. When the track forks, take the left-hand fork. This soon becomes enclosed, then enters a field after another farm gate. Continue down the left-hand side of the field to the far corner where there is 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 quickly left up a track by a phone box. This climbs gently, flattens out, crosses a green lane and goes through another farm gate. The track goes downhill and to the left, and becomes concreted. 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 a wood in Wardour (Park Copse), 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 (signposted to both Old and New Wardour Castles) to cross a stile into a field. Go downhill through the field to cross another stile and continue 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 an overgrown kissing gate to left, and walk up the left-hand side of a field, with a wire fence on your left. New Wardour Castle, which is actually a Palladian mansion, now converted into apartments, can now be seen over to the left. At the top, continue in the same direction on an enclosed track, with woods to right, and fields to left. Ignore a track coming in from the left (signposted New Wardour castle) and go gradually downhill towards the ruins of Old Wardour Castle. This is an English heritage property which is well worth a visit. Here turn left on a narrow tarmac road, with castle to right and lake to left.

Just beyond the car park on your right, turn left on a tarmac road signposted Old Wardour Forge. 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 into a field. Follow the fence on the right at

first, then strike out across the field to arrive at another stile by a farm gate which gives access to New Wardour Castle. The route shown on the OS map goes past the front of the house, but there is a permissive path, described here, which gives its residents a bit more privacy. Go ahead towards the house, but immediately turn sharp right onto a gravel path. Before this reaches a gate with what looks like an orangery beyond, turn left (opposite a waymarked path) on a mown path over the lawn with bushes/woodland to right. Follow this 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.

Take the signposted enclosed footpath on your left. This goes downhill, then past the front of a house, across 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, continue ahead to a road, where you turn left.

Cross the road opposite the drive up to the school and take the path across a field. 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. At the second farm gate on your right, go through the pedestrian gate beside it and go up the left-hand edge of a field to a gate onto the same road. Cross this and walk up the track beyond, which leads to a 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).

Bear left on the track and follow it round the edge of the wood. Pass under a power line. Just before the wood comes to an end, go through a large gap 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 vegetation, then wood. Exit the wood and cross a small field onto a road, accessed by a pair of gates propped against each other. This is the hamlet of Newtown.

Turn right and go past the converted chapel to left. Turn sharp left just beyond this, with post and phone boxes on your right, on another tarmac road. Go past several houses. The road bends slightly left and, just as it bends right again, go through a small gate in the hedge on the left across a field, passing to the left of two oak trees. Go half right through a large farm gate and pass to the right of a large poultry barn on a concrete track which leads to a road. Cross this and walk along the left-hand edge of two fields, with a wood to left. The path descends in the second field, then goes through a gate into the wood. At a fork, bear left. After a short distance, emerge into another field through a gate, and walk downhill along its right-hand side, passing to the right of Abbot's Pond, which is completely hidden by trees and bushes.

Go through a farm gate at the bottom onto a road. Turn left along this, and just after passing Cools House to right, go through a farm gate to right, and a pedestrian gate on the left

immediately after this. Stay close to the fence on the right and go through another pedestrian gate in the bottom corner. Cross the sturdy footbridge over the stream just beyond this. After a few metres, turn left across the stream again, go through a farm gate, then immediately turn right along the 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. Go through the gate at the end and turn right on a culvert over a ditch. Walk up an enclosed bridleway beside two fields; the path next to the first field is narrow and regrettably often overgrown. Continue ascending gradually after the second field on thick grass to reach a gravel track. Continue ahead on this into a wood.

The path now climbs more steeply on a sunken track to the top of Knoyle Ridge, then descends more gently through the wood. At a fork, bear left. The path emerges on the other side of the wood in the form of another enclosed track, with trees and bushes mainly to the left. After a while these disappear and the track becomes very exposed. Cross a farm track. 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 Hindon. On reaching a crossroads, turn left past the children's play area, in the direction of the church. This stage comes to an end at the next crossroads, with The Lamb pub on your right.

Stage 3 – Hindon to Heytesbury

[Updated in September 2024]

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 8.4 miles (13.5 km)

Start at the crossroads in Hindon. Head north-west towards the church, signposted No Through Road, with Grosvenor Arms to left. Just after the houses Old Cottage and Top House to left, turn right up steps onto a narrow footpath between fences. Cross a small, weed-filled field, and walk 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. When the road bends left, continue ahead on a narrow green lane, which can become overgrown in summer. When this ends, go diagonally downhill across a field. On the other side 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 uphill on the left-hand edge of a field. Near the top you are joined by another track

which comes in from the right. 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 40m after this, arrive at a small clearing where five paths meet. Turn left, and after approx. 300m fork right onto a path which is often extremely muddy. After 80m or so, come out onto the Great Ridge.

Turn right onto the Great Ridge, and walk along it for almost exactly 1 km. Ignore a track which goes sharp right and continue ahead, following the track round to the left. After a few twists and turns, arrive at a clearing with another track coming in from the right and a sign board containing a map of the Great Ridge area. Continue on the same track, past three long log piles, with the path still twisting and turning. After a final sweep to the right and left, the track straightens up. Go through a gate, leaving the woods behind, into an open area with fine views on both sides.

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 official 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 more splendid views (on a good day): looking forward and to the left, Scratchbury, Middle and Battlesbury Hills should all be visible, as well as 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 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 through the village, passing another thatched wall to the right, Corton House to the left and Sundial House to the right. At a T junction, 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, then diagonally across the field to another triangular gap in its corner. Continue along the left-hand side of the next field, with a sturdy fence to left, to arrive at a metal kissing gate, with footbridge to left. Don't cross this but go right on a path

between trees. Ignore another track coming in from the left * and cross the millstream by a boardwalk. Continue ahead on a path through trees with fence to left, to arrive at a tarmac road. #

* If the millstream is 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 Mantle 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, a couple of hundred metres further along the High Street.

Stage 4 Heytesbury to Westbury White Horse

(Updated in December 2024)

Maps: OS Explorer 143, OS Landranger 184 & 183

Distance: 12.3 miles (19.8 km)

Start in Heytesbury High Street outside the Red Lion pub. With your back to the pub go up Chapel Road opposite (but slightly to the left), and turn right at a junction on Newtown. Turn almost 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 round barrow and cairn at the top of Cotley Hill. Proceed round the side, or over the top, of the barrow past the cairn, and continue on the grassy track in roughly the same direction. Go through a bridle gate near a "star marker" (an indication of a site of antiquity) onto another grassy track along the contour of the hill, with a fence up to the right. Pass to the right of a tumulus, then arrive at another 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 you are directly above North Farm, 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 kissing 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 ahead, through a large gap. This goes uphill through another gap between bushes, into a field. Take the path to the left past a clump of trees, with a fence on the left, round the contour of the hill. Quite soon you pass close to the top of the hill (Middle Hill). This is marked by a grassy tumulus dotted with trees. 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 wide concrete road. Turn right onto this for 40m, then go up steps on your left into a long field, with a low hedge to right. Go through one of several gaps in the hedge into the field on the right and slowly rise along its left-hand edge towards the ramparts of Battlesbury Hill, an iron-age hill fort.

Go through a gate and keep ahead for a short distance. Turn left on a narrow path along the top of the outer and lower bank of the ramparts. Do not stray from the top of the rampart. (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 go past a wood on its southern side. After negotiating almost 2/3 of the ramparts, take an obvious path leading off to the left past a solitary rampart on the 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 the entrance to the Waterloo Lines on the way. After ¾ 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 combe named Kidnapper’s Hole. At the end of the golf course, keep going straight ahead along a wide but rutted track. Pass Field Barn on the right and continue straight on until arriving at a flag pole, with a telecoms mast partially hidden in the trees behind it. 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 kissing 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.

In approx. 800m, by the third flag pole, turn left on a path which gradually goes downhill. (Some might say that this is a needless deviation but it is worth it for the views and as an alternative to the IRPP). 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 telecoms mast.

Turn left onto it, with a 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. (To descend to Westbury, do not go through the kissing gate, continue downhill on the road). Turn right here along the escarpment, with trees to the left. Go into the next field, now with a fence on the left. Continue through the metal kissing gate on the far side. Keep ahead 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

[updated in November 2024]

Maps: OS Explorer 143 and 130, OS Landranger 184

Distance: 10.2 miles (16.4 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 – on your left, 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 with a windsock outside it, 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 Farm 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 through a gap in the hedge, then right onto a signposted bridleway enclosed by hedges. This is necessary because the official right of way goes uphill between two hedges, but is now overgrown and impassible.

Continue in the same direction on this grassy track for approx. 1 km to pass Bolter's 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

[Updated in November and December 2024]

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

Distance: 11.9 miles (17.2 km)

Cross the A360 and go down Rutts Lane opposite, with Milton 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. At a crossroads of tracks, turn right (unsigned) 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, leaving the woods. After 400m or so, arrive at another 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 second flag pole, a large water tank, and a trig point (some distance away 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 passing a radio mast, arrive at MoD vedette post 11, Lavington (where there is a road down to the village of Market Lavington). Continue ahead. The tarmac disappears at this point.

Pass several bridleways and footpaths coming up on the left from the villages of Market Lavington and Easterton, of which there are fine views on a clear day. After approximately two miles (3.2 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 on a stony track off the main byway, leaving the IRPP in the process, and either follow it 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. When this turns left downhill at a fence corner, follow it, leaving the the WHT. Bear left downhill on a bridleway, which is soon enclosed by bushes and trees on both sides. Pass through open country, then continue on the bridleway, which is again enclosed and passes close to a pylon. 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 a track. Walk down the field beyond to cross a sturdy stile in its far corner. Almost immediately fork right on a track through a large metal farm gate (which is usually open) and walk past a collection of rusting farm machinery/vehicles. Pass through another (open) gate and follow the dirt track beyond, with fence to right. When the track turns right, with small wood to right, veer slightly left uphill to reach another sturdy stile. Cross this and continue in the same direction to arrive at another stile in woodland at the foot of a railway embankment.

Ascend the four flights of steps to the railway (which is the Penzance to London line), cross it with great care, and descend the four flights of steps on the other side. Go through the metal kissing gate at the bottom, then half left across the field, aiming for a gap in the thin strip of woodland on the other side. Continue in the same direction through the next field.

Pass through a gap in the hedge. There are now two options: the right of way turns right on the other side along the hedge and goes through a bridle gate, then a farm gate, onto a track. Alternatively, the landowner has provided a crude stile a few metres ahead, which gives access to a gravel driveway to the Crookwood Watermill and Farm. Turn right onto this. After 150m emerge onto a track, where both routes come together. Continue on the gravel track, 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 gradually 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 within sight of the metalled road from Devizes to Coate, turn left along a footpath which passes to the right of a large barn. 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. The next bridge marks the end of this stage. To continue on the Wessex Ridgeway, turn right over the bridge.

Devizes has all the facilities you would expect from a small town, and the Canal Wharf museum with its café and 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: 11.8 miles (19 km)

[Updated in November 2024]

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 café and 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 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. At a house, go left through a gap between hedges, with the house now on your right. Cross the field to reach a metalled road. Go down crude steps onto the road and turn left, then sharp left, to reach a kissing gate on the right very soon after the bend. Just before the kissing gate there is a good view of the Devizes Millennium White Horse to the right. Go through the kissing gate, an area of scrub and young trees, and another kissing gate, then proceed uphill along the left-hand side of a large field, passing to the right of a pylon as you do so. [At the time of writing, August 2024, the National Grid was engaged on a project to bury the power line connecting thirteen pylons in this part of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, one of which was the pylon you pass, but it had installed kissing gates on both sides of the temporary track it had created to enable walkers to continue up the hill without having to take a detour]. 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 the 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 used to be an information board about the Battle of Roundway, which was fought on this spot, but it has sadly been removed.

The route turns right at this corner and hugs the fence to the other side of the hill fort, but as you are now on the edge of access land, it would be a great pity to ignore the fabulous views from the outer edge of the hill fort. So follow the ramparts of the fort in a wide semi-circle to the right, passing a pointed wooden post with "R5" carved into it and an English Nature information board about Roundway Down. Go through a metal kissing gate as you leave the fort behind, then follow the fence on the 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, bear 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. At this point the two telecoms masts on Morgans Hill fort, which you will pass close to later, become visible. 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 its club house to left.

Cross over the metalled road and venture cautiously onto the golf course. Veer slightly to the right, aiming for a wooden signpost on the edge of a copse beyond the fairway. Continue to another small wooden post on the edge of what looks like another copse, but turns out to be a tree with expansive branches, then bear half left to a signpost indicating the existence of a bridleway and footpath. Here 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. 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 earthworks to the left. These are the ramparts of the Iron Age Oldbury Castle hill fort. The track takes you 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 cross two stiles next to gates, 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. 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. Where this forks after 100m or so, bear right. Stay on this bridleway for exactly a mile, until a path from Cook's Plantation comes in from the left at right angles. The right of way continues ahead but is now virtually impassible due to stunted trees and large tussocks of grass blocking the way. Instead kink right and left onto a clear grassy path provided by the owners of the Beckhampton Stables. Approx. 200m after the kink, the official route veers left and down into a small wood of beech trees, but can get very overgrown beyond the wood. Alternatively, stay on the permissive path. Both routes ultimately arrive at a car park in 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 tarmac road to the left off the A4 and pass the gates to the Grange. Very soon fork left off the drive to another house on a grassy path, which later crosses the drive. Continue in the same direction when a track comes in from the left to arrive at a Wiltshire Council information board. This tells you that there is permissive access to the two large sarsen stones in the field on the left. These are known as Adam and Eve, and are all that remains of Longstones Cove and the Beckhampton Avenue, a ceremonial avenue of stones dating back to Neolithic times which once led to the Avebury stones. Continue past 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 (or you could walk across it!), then cross over Avebury Trusloe's main street. Continue past a small grass triangle on the other side towards the drive to Manor Farm. Do not go down it but instead fork right down a degraded tarmac track, with Manor Farm on your left. Go through a gate, then the left hand one of two more gates immediately afterwards, into a meadow. Walk through this and a second meadow, with fence to right and go through the 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 carries 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 a kissing gate framework into Avebury churchyard. Go diagonally right across this to exit through a gate onto Avebury High Street.

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

Stage 8 - Avebury to Marlborough

Maps: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

Distance: 6.5 miles (10.4 km)

[Updated in August 2024]

Avebury is served by the number 49 bus from Swindon or Trowbridge via Devizes. Cars can be parked in the National Trust car park in Avebury, at a price (unless you are a member). 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 chapel 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 often 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 a wide, clear-cut 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 beside a field 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 by a field 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.

Bear slightly left through a gap, then a gate, in quick succession to access the road. Cross it, and turn right along the field edge, parallel to the road. In the field corner, go through a gap to right. Do not go onto the road, but turn left to pass through a short stretch of woodland, after which you 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 you have the first rugby goal post on your left. Cross the road and take the enclosed path ahead between two cemeteries. These are Marlborough's Old or Victorian cemetery, protected by a hedge, to the left, and the newer one, which was opened in 1924, behind railings to the right.

Turn left at the end of the new cemetery, past the rear of the Victorian one, and walk down to the path's junction with Hyde Lane. Do not go onto the road, but take the gravel path which forks right, parallel to Hyde Lane, with Marlborough College's sports pitches to right. 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.