

# BHS Paralympic Legacy Access Project

Route 14 – The Ridgeway – Marlborough Downs Ride



## PLAP Route 14 – The Ridgeway – Marlborough Downs Ride

**Distance:** approximately 6 miles (can be increased to 12 miles)

**Map:** Ordnance Survey Explorer Map Number OL26 (Map 1:25000)

**Important notes:** Although the identified routes were driven for inclusion in the Project in August 2013 this doesn't allow for changed path surfaces following illegal use of motorised vehicles or variations in rainfall. It's essential that a horse is physically fit enough to complete the route intended as the routes are designed in a circular format instead of being one straight route running solely along the National Trail. They therefore involve some steep hill work going and down from the Ridgeway Trail. Accessing someone in need of assistance is not easy once they join the National Trail.

The Ridgeway National Trail was created using some of the pathways that originally formed a prehistoric trading route from the Dorset Coast to the North Norfolk coast. Starting at Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire, it passes over The North Wessex Downs and Chiltern Hills to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire, with two distinct types of scenery – semi-isolated downland grassland in the west and the less open wooded scenery of the Chilterns. Wherever you go, the scenery is spectacular and relevant historic details are shown on information boards with stunning views all around on clear days.

This route offers a large amount of off-road carriage driving/riding, some breath-taking views, and several points of historic interest. It can be considerably extended along Smeath's Ridge towards Ogbourne St. George, and then southwards to Ogbourne St Andrew and Ogbourne Maizey. To do this, a short distance needs to be driven/ridden on a fast main road, hence the designated route has been shortened; but both routes have been identified.

While the Ridgeway National Trail amounts to approximately 87 miles, it is not all accessible to carriage drivers.

Two drives/rides have been specifically identified in order to offer the opportunity to drive/ride in relatively remote and beautiful countryside while also having enough variety to enable driver/riders with differing physical abilities to choose shorter routes if they want to. Although both routes are less than the specified PLAP project distance of 12 miles, both can be considerably extended using some of the many other Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic available, but carriage drivers should be aware that not all these paths can be driven safely.

*Researched, suggested and driven by Margaret Pawson, BDS National Access and Rights of Way Co-ordinator. Assistance also received from Peter Kyle, BDS Area Commissioner.*

# BHS Paralympic Legacy Access Project

Route 14 – The Ridgeway – Marlborough Downs Ride



## Route Description

From Hackpen Hill car park, follow the Ridgeway Trail along a chalk and flint track in a north easterly direction passing the point-to-point course on your right. The surface is flat and varies in width, making it possible to lead a pony and carriage. The starting point for this route is marked here – rather than at point 3 on the map – because here there is a very short circuit (approximately half a mile) around which a pony can easily be led.

On reaching the next car park (too small for any vehicle over 3.5T), follow the sign directing you onto the old Ridgeway route round the northern side of the hill fort of Barbury Castle). Please note that this involves a steep uphill but short section of slippery tarmac road in order to return to the ridge.

Continue along the Ridgeway to Barbury Castle Country Park, which is large and offers a special area for horseboxes. Toilets (including a disabled facility needing a RADAR key to unlock it) and picnic spot facilities are also available. This could be used as a starting point to the route but needs to be approached from a northerly direction via the B4005, which is steep in places.

At this point, there are three options are available:

- (a) For riders – the most northerly route (accessed from the steep incline previously mentioned) leads to a very fast straight section of the A346 towards Ogbourne St George, which needs to be ridden before making a left turn onto a further series of Restricted Byways.
- (b) A path leading from down the side of Smeaths Ridge again towards Ogbourne St George. Before entering the village turn right and after a short distance then continue on the path straight down to Ogbourne St Andrew. Be aware that you will still need to drive along the main road to reach Ogbourne Maizey.
- (c) A route that involves following option (b) towards Smeaths Ridge for a short distance before bearing right just after Upper Herdswick Farm (on your left).

Continue past Four Mile Clump (trees) on your left and continue along, keeping the gallops on your right. Some of this track is in a reasonable driving condition but do note that some is very rutted and needs to be taken with extreme care.

At the next three-way division of paths (one bridleway and two byways), keep to the right and follow through to a junction with a minor road where you turn right and right again at the next junction. It is possible to follow the alternative Restricted Byway at this point, which takes you to Ogbourne Maizey where you turn right to re-join the carriage route being identified at Old Eagle.

After a short distance a road is signed off to your left to Rockley. This leads to a dead end, but The Manor and surrounding buildings are worth a glance for people with an interest in history. Do not be tempted to follow the Restricted Byway from Rockley with a carriage as this has some very deep ruts, and assistance cannot be given anywhere along it.

To return to 1 (the starting point), drive along the tarmac road, which is wide with good visibility and a gradual incline.

# BHS Paralympic Legacy Access Project

Route 14 – The Ridgeway – Marlborough Downs Ride



There is another Byway which takes you towards the Barbury Castle Country Park car park but to access this means crossing a private track near Barbury Castle Farm before reaching the public road leading back to Barbury Castle.

## General Information

**Parking:** Hackpen Hill – best accessed from the north west via the A4361, from which a minor road leading from Broad Hinton enables access to point A on the map, located at the top of Hackpen Hill where The Ridgeway and White Horse Trails intersect. Grid reference SU129747. This is very small and often congested and therefore is not recommended for carriage drivers or lorries over 3.5T.

Barbury Castle Country Park – approached from north of the Ridgeway (south of Swindon) signed from Wroughton and Chiseldon. B4005, grid reference SU157760. This is a large flat area with a designated place for horseboxes (see point 3 in the directions above).

**Insurance:** The BHS recommends that before undertaking any part of this route, both horse and rider should be adequately insured against public liability. The British Horse Society can provide public liability and personal accident insurance cover as well as many benefits if you join as a member (terms and conditions and territorial limits apply). For more information or to join, visit [www.bhs.org.uk/membership](http://www.bhs.org.uk/membership).

**Feedback:** These routes are kept to the standard that the local authority can afford. They were all accessible at the time of launch and are on definitive public rights of way. If you experience any problems with the routes or wish to raise any concerns, please contact the local authority, your local BHS Access Officer or the Access Team at BHS HQ via [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk).

## About the Paralympic Legacy Access Project

In 2013, the BHS launched the Paralympic Legacy Access Project (PLAP), dedicated to identifying and promoting 20 off-road routes across Britain. The 12-mile circular routes were recognised to suit the needs of carriage drivers with physical limitations.

The project was inspired by an anonymous donation to commemorate the achievements of the Paralympics and Para World Carriage Driving Championship in 2012. Launched by BHS President, Martin Clunes, the 20 routes were all tested prior to launch.

A huge thank you to those who volunteered their time, knowledge and input to create the routes of the Paralympic Legacy Access Project.

Discover more at [www.bhs.org.uk/carriagedriving](http://www.bhs.org.uk/carriagedriving)

# BHS Paralympic Legacy Access Project

Route 14 – The Ridgeway – Marlborough Downs Ride



## Contact Us

### Write to us

The British Horse Society  
Access & Rights of Way Department  
Abbey Park, Stareton  
Kenilworth, Warwickshire  
CV8 2XZ

### Email

[access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)

### Telephone

02476 840 515

### Find out more

[www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice](http://www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice)