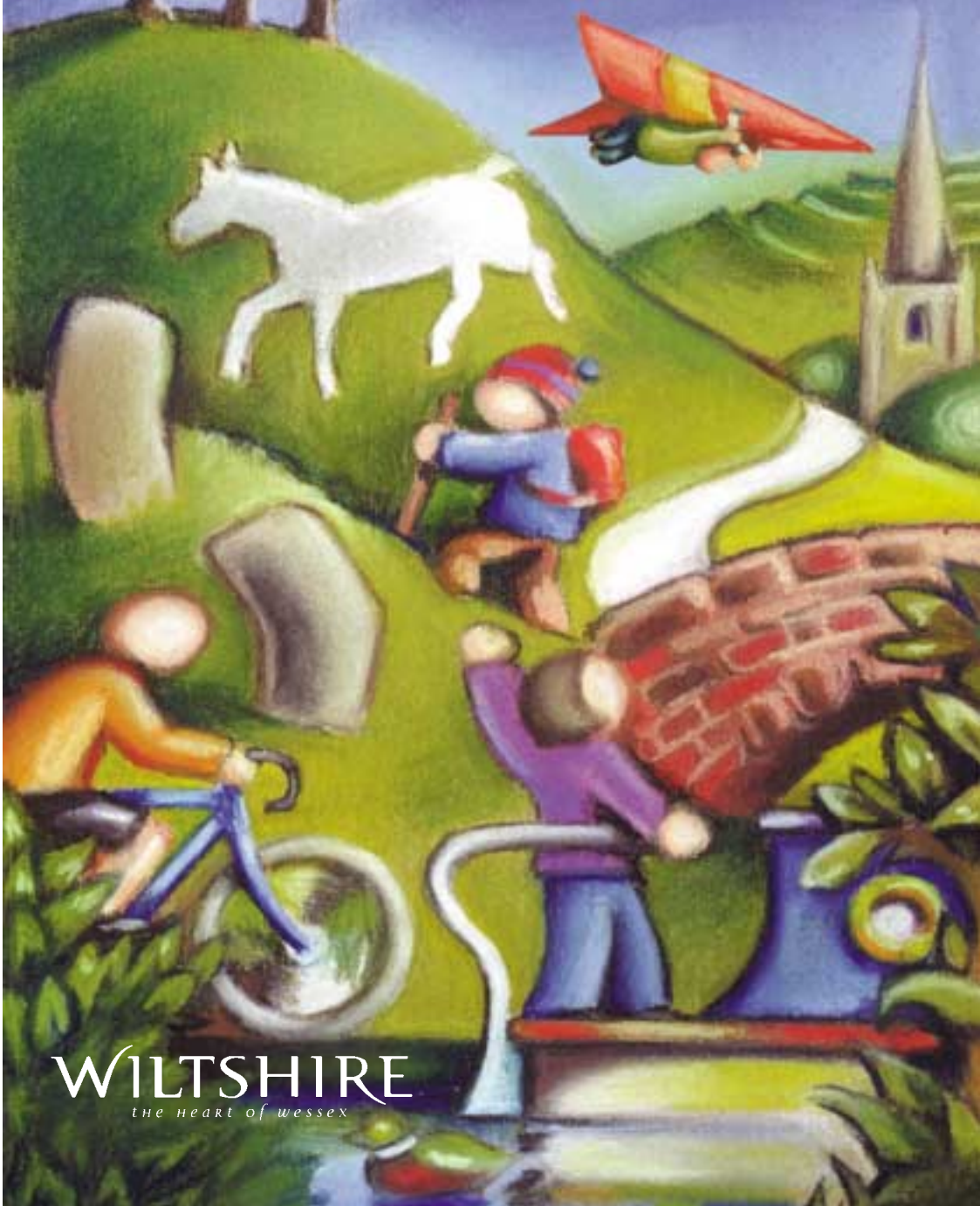


The Wiltshire Downs

All Year Round Guide to the Marlborough Downs & Vale of Pewsey



WILTSHIRE
the heart of wessex

Useful Addresses

Tourist Information Centres

Avebury

Tel: 01672 539425

Chippenham

The Citadel, Bath Road

Tel: 01249 706333

Devizes

Cromwell House, Market Place

Tel: 01380 729408

Marlborough

George Lane Car Park

Tel: 01672 513989

Swindon

37 Regent Street

Tel: 01793 530328

British Waterways

The Locks, Bath Road
Devizes, Wilts, SN10 1HB
Tel: 01380 722859

Countryside Agency

South West Region
Bridge House, Sion Place
Clifton
Bristol, BS8 4AS
Tel: 0117 9739966

English Nature

Prince Maurice Court
Hambleton Avenue
Devizes, Wilts SN10 2RT
Tel: 01380 726344

Forestry Commission

Postern Hill Lodge
Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 4ND
Tel: 01672 512520

The National Trust

Wessex Regional Office
Eastleigh Court
Bishopstrow, Warminster
Wilts. BA12 9HW
Tel: 01985 843600

Ramblers Association

2nd Floor, Camelford House
87-90 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TW

Ridgeway Officer

Countryside Service
Dept of Leisure and Arts
Holton
Oxford, OX33 1QQ
Tel: 01865 810224

Wiltshire County Council

Department of Planning &
Highways
County Hall, Trowbridge
Wilts, BA14 8JD
Tel: 01225 713345

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Elmtree Court
19 High Street
Devizes, Wilts. SN10 1AT
Tel: 01380 725670

British Horse Society

B.E.C.
Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth
Warks. CV8 2LR
Tel: 01203 696697

for further information contact:-

The Tourism Officer
Kennet District Council
Browfort, Bath Road
Devizes, Wiltshire.
SN10 2AT
Tel: 01380 724911



**COUNTRYSIDE
COMMISSION**



Gateways to the Downs

There are many ways of exploring the beautiful and ancient landscape of the Wiltshire Downs. The places listed below are useful arrival points for your visit to the Downs and can provide for most of your holiday needs. Consider leaving your car in one of these 'gateways' and continue into the Downs by cycling, horse riding, walking, bus or even traditional narrow boat! Whether you're looking for accommodation, things to do, or details of alternative means of transport, contact one of the Tourist Information Centres listed on the back cover.

Calne

A town made famous by the former Harris Bacon Factory which was the first to use the principle of bacon curing, taking out a patent for the process in 1864. Before the bacon industry Calne was an important weaving town with twenty mills. Situated on the Bath road it was an important rest place for coaches, travellers and traders with their flocks and herds. Today Calne is an ideal base for exploring the Downs with many footpaths and bridleways leading from the town.

Buses: To Avebury (Service 43/X43), with connections to Marlborough (Service 49).

An attractive busy market town with a large number of listed



Devizes

buildings of various architectural styles. General markets are held in the market place on Thursdays and Saturdays, with an antiques market in The Shambles on Tuesdays. Places to visit include the Kennet and Avon Canal Centre at the Wharf, Caen Hill lock flight and the Norman churches of St John's and St Mary's. Devizes has a farmers' market, an excellent choice of pubs, restaurants, hotels, bed and breakfasts.

For information contact Devizes Tourist Information Centre.

Buses: From Devizes to Swindon, via



Avebury (Service 49).
To Salisbury (Service 2)

Canal: See boat hire/trips for canal trips into the Downs.

Famous for its wide high street and public school, Marlborough has



been a popular stopping point for travellers since the days of the stage coach, being

Marlborough

situated on the Bath to London road. Today the town still boasts excellent pubs, wine bars and tea shops. Markets are held in the High Street on Wednesdays and Saturdays. It is also the perfect base for riding, cycling and walking to explore the surrounding ancient sites, and attractive villages. Visit the Marlborough Tourist Information Centre for further details.

Buses: To Avebury (Service 49), Pewsey (Services 5,6), Swindon (Services 5/6, 15,70), Bedwyn Station (Services 20,21,x20)



Pewsey



This is a large village situated in the Vale of Pewsey. A statue of King Alfred once owner of the village stands at the crossroads.

Surrounded by meadows and pastures, the landscape here provides a contrasting scenery to that of the chalk downs. Pewsey has many attractions for the visitor including the Heritage Centre, canal wharf, Village Craft and Tea Rooms; Pewsey White Horse; Jones's Mill Nature Reserve and Scotchel Nature Reserve. The village has produced a booklet of 8 circular walks in the area available from Tourist Information Centres and the Village Craft and Tea Rooms.

Trains: Pewsey is situated on the London Paddington to West Country main line. **Buses:** To Marlborough (Services 5, 6, 70, x19) and to Swindon via Marlborough (Services 5, 6, x19).

Canal: See boat hire/trips for canal trips into the Downs.

Wroughton

Wroughton lies on the northern edge of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within the Great Western Community Forest area and has a number of pubs, bed and breakfasts and a hotel. A local walking, cycling and horse riding leaflet is available from Wroughton library. Wroughton Science Museum (limited opening times) and Barbury Castle Country Park are two local attractions. **Buses:** To Avebury (Services 5/6, 49), Devizes (Services 49), Swindon (Services 71, W).



Explore the Countryside

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES

English Nature

Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve
OS173: 136709 Best assemblage of sarsen stones in Britain supporting nationally important lichens.

Pewsey Downs National Nature Reserve
OS173: 104637 Chalk downland, noted for its many different kinds of wild flowers and butterflies.

WILTSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST RESERVES

Leaflets are available for these sites:

Clouts Wood, Nr Wroughton
OS173: 136795 Mixed woodland on steep slope, a short walk from Wroughton.

Jones's Mill, Nr Pewsey
OS173: 105636 A diverse fen grassland and wet willow woodland on disused water meadows. Walk from tow-path or village.

Morgans Hill, Nr Calne
OS173: 028673 Chalk downland with various orchids. The Wansdyke and a Roman road border the site. Park at Smallgrain Picnic Site.

OTHER NATURE RESERVES

Roundway Hill Covert, Nr Devizes
OS173: 003648 Originally scrub and grass downland the wood was planted in 1950's as a covert - a thicket or small wood providing shelter for game. Leaflet available from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

Scotchel Reserve & Nature Trail, Pewsey
OS173: 164603 Mixed woodland glade on disused water meadow owned by Pewsey Parish Council. Leaflet available from Marlborough Tourist Information Centre.

NATIONAL TRUST COUNTRYSIDE SITES

Cherhill Down OS173: 046694 and **Calstone Downs** OS173: 045685 One of the largest areas of unrestricted public access in Wiltshire. Important for its rich chalk grassland. The area surrounds the Cherhill White Horse and includes the Lansdowne Monument and Oldbury Castle. Footpaths from A4, Avebury and Smallgrain Picnic Site.

Lockeridge Dene OS173: 142672 Two small sites of sarsen stones. Footpaths from West Woods and Lockeridge.

Piggledene, Nr Fyfield OS173: 142686 Site of sarsens stone workings. Access is on foot only from the Ridgeway and Fyfield Down.

WOODS

Savernake Forest, Nr Marlborough
OS173: 199682 Ancient hunting forest mentioned in the Domesday Book. Magnificent Grand Avenue mainly flanked by beech trees.

West Woods OS173: 150660 Noted for the bluebells in May. Car park, picnic site, easy access & cycle routes.

COUNTRY PARKS & PICNIC AREAS

Wiltshire County Council

Barbury Castle Country Park
OS173: 157761 Dramatic downland scenery, hillfort burial mounds and field systems. Picnic area, toilets, car park and light refreshments. Sarsen stone memorial to the Swindon writers Richard Jefferies & Alfred Williams. Access to the Ridgeway.

Smallgrain Picnic Area
OS173: 019672 Situated at the western end of the Wansdyke, Smallgrain offers splendid views over the Downs. Walks to Cherhill, Calstone Downs (N.T.), along the Wansdyke & Morgans Hill Nature Reserve. Nearest toilet facilities at Calne, Devizes or Avebury.

WALKS

There are many walks leaflets available for the Wiltshire Downs area. Most of them are available from Tourist Information Centres. The list below provides a selection of walks that cover different areas and are of varying lengths.

Circular Walks in the Wiltshire Downs
(Wiltshire County Council)

Circular Walks from Smallgrain Picnic Site
(Wiltshire County Council & T. I. C.)

Dreus Pond Wood

Eight Circular Walks in and around Pewsey
(Pewsey Parish Council & T. I. C.)

Kennet & Avon Canal Discovery Trails
includes Crofton, Pewsey, Devizes Locks Trail (British Waterways)

Marlborough, a Guided Walk
(Kennet District Council)

Nine Downland Walks
(Wiltshire Ramblers Association)

Ridgeway National Trail Guide
(O.S. / Aurum Press)

Ridgeway Link Path
(Wiltshire County Council)

Roundway Hill Covert

12 Walks around Marlborough
(North-East Wiltshire Ramblers)

10 Walks around Devizes

Individual Walks leaflets:
Rowde; Bromham; Urchfont; Etchilhampton

Walking in the Wiltshire Downs

The Wansdyke Path

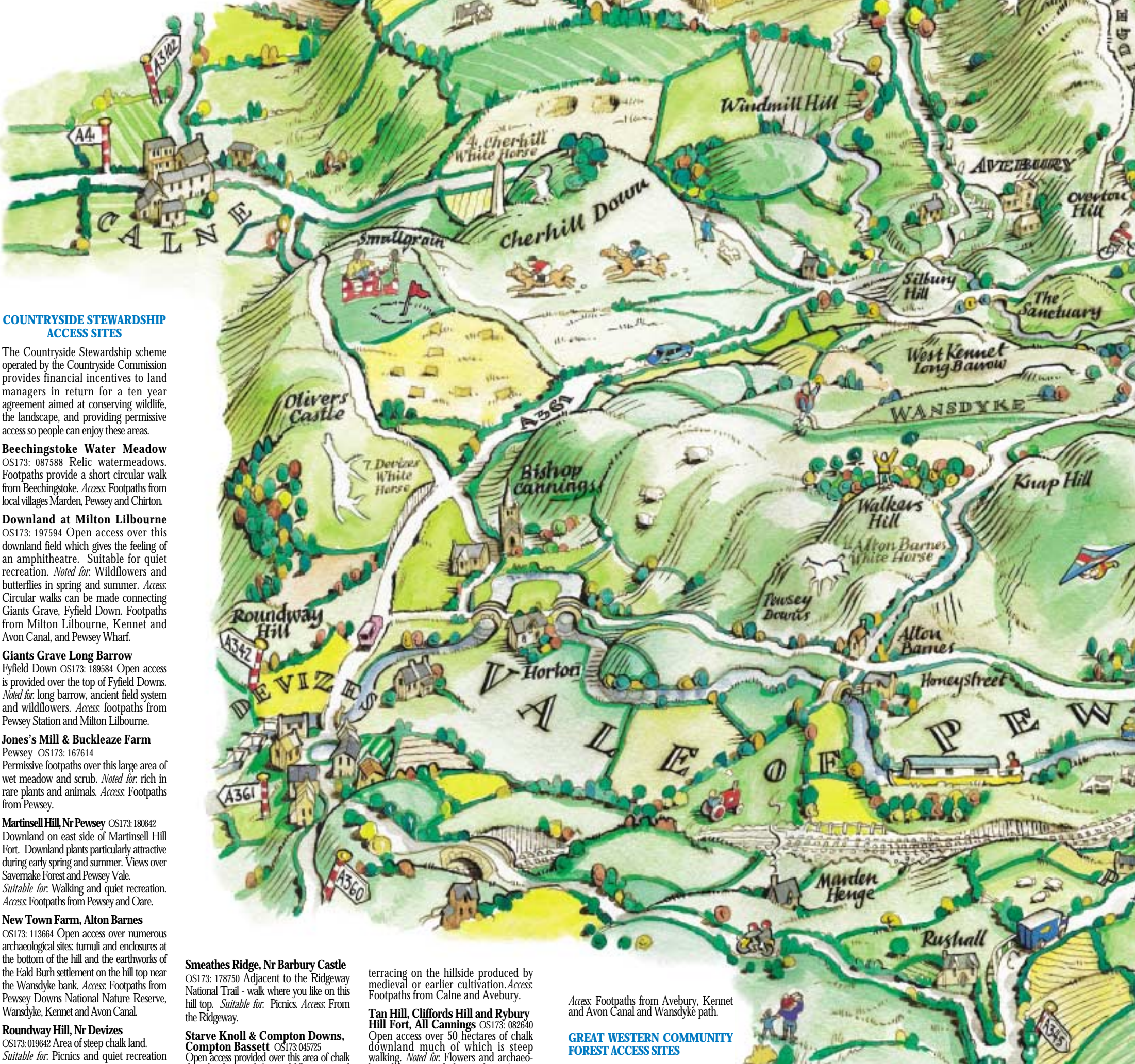
White Horse Trail

FURTHER READING

'The Marlborough Downs' by Kenneth Watts (Ex Libris Press 1993)

'The Vale of Pewsey' by John Chandler (Ex Libris Press 1991)

'Marlborough & the Kennet - A View of the Downs and Villages', photographs by Jonathan Gaunt (White Horse Books Ltd, 1994)



COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP ACCESS SITES

The Countryside Stewardship scheme operated by the Countryside Commission provides financial incentives to land managers in return for a ten year agreement aimed at conserving wildlife, the landscape, and providing permissive access so people can enjoy these areas.

Beechingstoke Water Meadow
OS173: 087588 Relic watermeadows. Footpaths provide a short circular walk from Beechingstoke. Access: Footpaths from local villages Marden, Pewsey and Chirton.

Downland at Milton Lilbourne
OS173: 197594 Open access over this downland field which gives the feeling of an amphitheatre. Suitable for quiet recreation. Noted for: Wildflowers and butterflies in spring and summer. Access: Circular walks can be made connecting Giants Grave, Fyfield Down. Footpaths from Milton Lilbourne, Kennet and Avon Canal, and Pewsey Wharf.

Giants Grave Long Barrow
Fyfield Down OS173: 189584 Open access is provided over the top of Fyfield Downs. Noted for: long barrow, ancient field system and wildflowers. Access: footpaths from Pewsey Station and Milton Lilbourne.

Jones's Mill & Buckleaze Farm
Pewsey OS173: 167614 Permissive footpaths over this large area of wet meadow and scrub. Noted for: rich in rare plants and animals. Access: Footpaths from Pewsey.

Martinsell Hill, Nr Pewsey OS173: 180642 Downland on east side of Martinsell Hill Fort. Downland plants particularly attractive during early spring and summer. Views over Savernake Forest and Pewsey Vale. Suitable for: Walking and quiet recreation. Access: Footpaths from Pewsey and Oare.

New Town Farm, Alton Barnes
OS173: 113664 Open access over numerous archaeological sites: tumuli and enclosures at the bottom of the hill and the earthworks of the Eald Burh settlement on the hill top near the Wansdyke bank. Access: Footpaths from Pewsey Downs National Nature Reserve, Wansdyke, Kennet and Avon Canal.

Roundway Hill, Nr Devizes
OS173: 019642 Area of steep chalk land. Suitable for: Picnics and quiet recreation. Access: Footpaths from Devizes.

Smeathes Ridge, Nr Barbury Castle
OS173: 178750 Adjacent to the Ridgeway National Trail - walk where you like on this hill top. Suitable for: Picnics. Access: From the Ridgeway.

Starve Knoll & Compton Downs, Compton Bassett OS173: 045725 Open access provided over this area of chalk downland. Noted for: Wildflowers and

terracing on the hillside produced by medieval or earlier cultivation. Access: Footpaths from Calne and Avebury.

Tan Hill, Cliffords Hill and Rybury Hill Fort, All Cannings OS173: 082640 Open access over 50 hectares of chalk downland much of which is steep walking. Noted for: Flowers and archaeological features including Rybury Camp.

Access: Footpaths from Avebury, Kennet and Avon Canal and Wansdyke path.

GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST ACCESS SITES

For details telephone 01793 493553

Welcome to the ancient landscape of the Wiltshire Downs

The Marlborough Downs and Vale of Pewsey have supported communities from the earliest times. Follow in the footsteps of ancient civilisations and explore the rural landscape which reveals much of its past

Neolithic c.4000 BC This was a period of woodland clearance and the first farms (herds and cultivation of fields) began to replace woodland and settlements began to specialise in different skills creating new trading links with other settlements (eg the Windmill Hill Culture near Avebury grew wheat and barley, made simple pots and used flint implements). The **Avebury World Heritage Site** (designated by The United Nations) is the most impressive Neolithic landscape in the country. The convergence of several ancient routeways (eg The Ridgeway) and variety of monuments is evidence of

Avebury's importance in this period.

Causewayed camps (eg Windmill Hill and Knap Hill), were meeting points for trade and ceremony. These circular or oval enclosures are surrounded by banks and ditches with undug sections for access.

Henges (eg Avebury and Marden) date from later Neolithic cultures. Little is known of their true purpose but they are thought to have been sacred places.

There are also a large number of **Neolithic burial monuments**, **Long Barrows** were built near to or on top

of mortuary enclosures in which bodies were stored until they disintegrated. Eventually the area was closed and the bones were placed in a hut, which in turn was covered with earth to form the mound seen today.

Megalithic Tombs differ in that they had vaulted chambers to allow burials over a longer period of time; the West Kennet Chambered Long Barrow constructed from sarsens, provides one of the best examples.

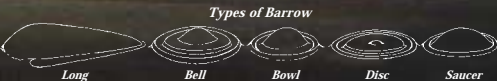
Bronze Age c.2000 BC This period saw the introduction of metal tools. Trade provided wealth and lessened the

dependence on farming, evidence of this is the jewellery and other ornaments found at burial sites.

Many of the most impressive Bronze Age landscape features are associated with the rich and powerful Wessex Culture which flourished on the chalklands of Central Southern England. The thousands of round barrows (**tumuli**) constructed are much like the Neolithic unchambered long barrows in that the mounds represent the final covering of a sacred area and are not strictly tombs; however they usually contained only a single burial. Most are **bowl** barrows but there are also **bell** and **disc** types - Everleigh Barrows exhibit examples of all three.

Iron Age c.700 BC This was a period of **hillfort** construction and the **Celtic field system**. The iron axe was being mass produced encouraging further tree felling and heavy ploughs were being used to cultivate lowland soils. Extensive areas of Iron Age fields and **lynchets** (terraces formed by ploughing hillsides) survive at Fyfield Down and Overton Down near Marlborough.

Emerging social structures, growing populations and developing political relationships between tribes led to a growth in defended hillfort settlements. Not all hillforts were for defensive purposes, some provided temporary or permanent settlements, meeting places or tribal headquarters.



Examples of Iron Age hillforts in the area include: Oldbury Castle, Oliver's Castle, Barbury Castle and Martinsell Hill.

Roman AD47 The conquered landscape of the Roman period was one of scattered communities centred on hill forts and settlement enclosures farming adjacent land. The new military built a network of roads centred on their own bases; the

London - Bath Roman road passed through Mildenhall and Sandy Lane. As these roads were built, Roman landowners established villas. Romano-British settlements existed at West Overton and Mildenhall.

Dark Ages AD450 The first Saxons were in Wiltshire by the early sixth century defeating the Britons at Barbury Castle in AD 556. During AD 600 Wiltshire became the centre of the Kingdom of

Wessex, when the Wansdyke was probably built as part of its defence.

This is a brief introduction to the ancient landscape of the Wiltshire Downs. There is evidence of later periods of history in the landscape, i.e. medieval strip lynchets (above Bishops Cannings and Allington), watermeadows (Jones's Mill Nature Reserve) and of course the towns and villages.

Explore the countryside and visit the museums to find out more. Crossed by a network of footpaths, bridleways, ancient routeways and the Kennet and Avon Canal, the Downs today lend themselves to outdoor activity... the map overleaf shows things to do and places to visit.

Sarsen Stones

Sarsen Stones A feature of this area are the sarsen stones, sometimes called 'grey wethers' (on account of their resemblance to grazing sheep when seen from a distance) or 'druid stones' to be found on Overton Down, Fyfield Down (National Nature Reserve) and Piggledene. These hard siliceous sandstones derive from Tertiary deposits, later eroded and moved by glaciation. These stones are found elsewhere in Britain, but not on the scale seen in the Marlborough district. Sarsens are tabular, grey internally, and composed of sand in a siliceous cement, forming an extremely hard rock.

Sarsen Industry The sarsens have been of great importance to man from prehistoric times onwards, from the Palaeolithic period (C. 500,000 BC) to the Bronze Age when hand axes and other tools were made from the sarsen stones. They were also used to construct chambered long barrows and stone circles. From the Saxon period to the middle of the 19th century, sarsens were used for building purposes. Homes and

villages of West Overton, Lockeridge, Fyfield and West Kennet are constructed of roughly broken blocks of sarsen fitted together in a jigsaw pattern. The stones were also used in garden walls and for road mending, paving stones and seats outside cottages.

In 1850 Edward Free, a young man working with sarsens in Buckinghamshire (where sarsens lay deep in clay), heard of the quantity of surface sarsens available in the Marlborough district and moved to Fyfield to set up in business as a stone mason. This was the start of the modern sarsen cutting industry which ceased only in the 1930's.

Just before the industry finished (demand for sarsen dwindled) in 1939, four wagon loads of sarsen blocks were used to repair the walls at Windsor Castle. In the late 19th century, demand for sarsen took a new form. Tramways were being developed and sarsen was found to be ideal for the setts needed for building these. Swindon was the main

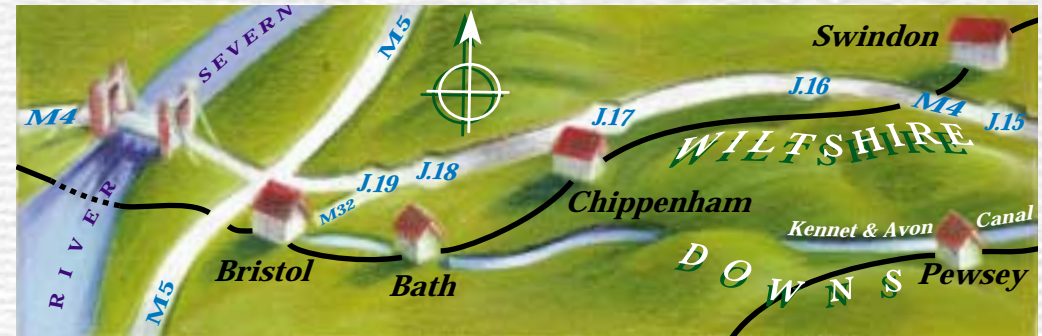
user, but setts were also sent to other parts of the country. Pavement kerbing was another ideal use for sarsen and again Swindon was a main user.

In 1907, The National Trust, Marlborough College Natural History Society, and the Wiltshire Archaeological Society launched an appeal to raise money for the purchase of some areas where surviving sarsens could be saved from this increasing demand. They raised £612, with which they purchased Piggledene and Lockeridge Dene in order to conserve the remaining sarsens.



Sarsen stones at Lockeridge Dene

Getting There



By Train Fast and regular Intercity services from Paddington serve Swindon (55 mins), Chippenham (70 mins), and Pewsey (60 mins).

Bedwyn (90 mins) is served by First Great Western trains. Note: Cycles on trains: Restrictions vary from route to route, therefore you are strongly advised to check all details in advance at your planned station of departure. There is a standard fee for taking cycles on trains.

By Coach There are regular long distance coach services from most parts of England to Chippenham, Marlborough, Swindon, Devizes

and other Wiltshire towns.

By Road Most easily accessible via the M4:- Junctions 15 and 16 bring you straight into the Downs

Public Transport in Wiltshire For all details of all bus and rail services throughout Wiltshire contact: Wiltshire County Council's Wiltshire Bus Line 08457 090899



Map references are provided for countryside sites. The Ordnance Survey Landranger 173 Swindon, Devizes & Surrounding area, covers the Wiltshire Downs area. O.S. Explore 157 includes rights

Please Follow the Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work*
- Fasten all gates*
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone*
- Take your litter home*
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees*
- Make no unnecessary noise*
- *Guard against all risk of fire*
- *Keep your dogs under close control*
- *Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls*
- *Help to keep all water clean*
- *Take special care on country roads*
- *Keep to public paths across farmland*