

## The South Dorset Ridgeway Heritage Project

The South Dorset Ridgeway stretches parallel to the coast from Abbotsbury in the west to the villages of Osmington and Poxwell in the east. This broad ridge of chalky downland has a steep escarpment on the south side and a gentle sloping landscape to the north. Within this area at least 500 earthworks have so far been identified. This figure is rising with new research and the identification of sites through the study of aerial photographs.

The significance of the South Dorset Ridgeway is being celebrated with a successful Heritage Project set up by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership. The project supports archaeological and local history research, provides walks and audio trails, events and workshops and resources for schools. The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a collection of some of the most varied and distinctive landscapes in the country shaped over time by nature and people. The South Dorset Ridgeway also forms part of the South West Coast Path National Trail.

For lots more information about the South Dorset Ridgeway and the work of the Heritage Project

[www.southdorsetridgeway.org.uk](http://www.southdorsetridgeway.org.uk)

Tel: 01305 228239



### Chalbury Hillfort (SY 694838)

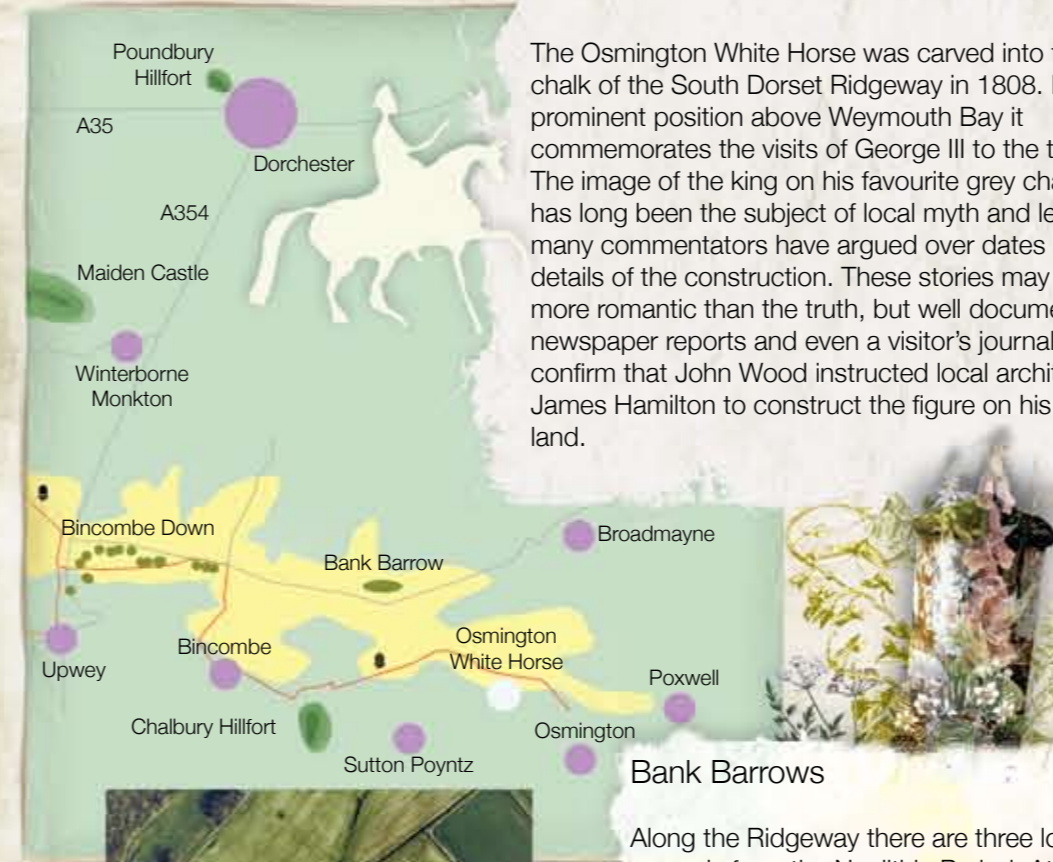
One of the earliest examples of an Iron Age hillfort in the country, Chalbury was also a site of occupation during Bronze Age and later during Roman times.

Close by is the Rimbury Urnfield. The pottery found here in a Bronze Age cremation cemetery gives its name to Deveril-Rimbury ware, a type of pottery associated with burials in the middle to late Bronze Age.



### Hillforts

In the later Bronze Age, new settlements and new ideas emerged. The tradition of barrow burial had ceased by the beginning of the Iron Age (circa 800BC) and it is at this time that the construction of hillforts began. Early hillforts were small but many, such as the one at Maiden Castle were later enlarged. Maiden Castle (SY 669885) is regarded as one of the largest and most complex in Europe. Built on earlier henge and bank barrow sites the hillfort became a large centre for the Durotriges tribe, whose territory stretched from the modern day Devon/Dorset border to Hengistbury Head near modern Christchurch.



### The Osmington White Horse (SY 715843)

The Osmington White Horse was carved into the chalk of the South Dorset Ridgeway in 1808. In a prominent position above Weymouth Bay it commemorates the visits of George III to the town. The image of the king on his favourite grey charger has long been the subject of local myth and legend, many commentators have argued over dates and details of the construction. These stories may be more romantic than the truth, but well documented newspaper reports and even a visitor's journal can confirm that John Wood instructed local architect James Hamilton to construct the figure on his land.



Broadmayne Bank Barrow (SY 703853) © UKPerspectives

### Bank Barrows

Along the Ridgeway there are three long mounds from the Neolithic Period. At the eastern end is the 180 metre long Broadmayne Bank Barrow. The others are at the western end at Martin's Down near the A35 and Maiden Castle. Their use is uncertain as they do not appear to have been used for burials but may have been associated with ceremonial use or land ownership.

## Timeline

Experts talk about the Neolithic, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, but people and cultures changed only gradually as the centuries passed and so these periods should not be thought of as rigid partitions.



The South Dorset Ridgeway can be discovered through a network of footpaths and bridleways which link nearby villages to the South West Coast Path National Trail (See OS Explorer map OL15). Information about local bus services is available from Traveline

Tel: 0871 200 2233  
[www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com)

# Riddles of the Ridgeway

Discover a South Dorset landscape with 5000 years of history ... still there to explore today

