

Grid north and magnetic north to align at village in Dorset, to the delight of ramblers

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RAMBLERS in Langton Matravers will this week find it easier to read a map than any Briton ever has.

This is because, for the first time, magnetic north will align with true and grid north in Britain and the overlap will first occur over the Dorset village.

The usual tweaks to a walkers' compass readings will not be needed as the needle will point perfectly due north along true and grid north.

Magnetic north is the north pole as determined by Earth's magnetic field, whereas true north points to the geographical north pole, where all lines of longitude converge. Grid north is the northern axis of the Ordnance Survey

maps. They are constantly aligned, but magnetic north is due to cross over in Britain for the first time.

Ordnance Survey maps have a "central meridian", first created in 1936 and also known as a special or magic line that combines grid north and true north.

It is the only place in Britain where the OS grid overlaps the longitude lines

because of Earth's spherical shape. However, the "special line", which sits two degrees west of the Greenwich Meridian, has never before been transected by the axis of the ever-shifting magnetic north, until now.

Mark Greaves, earth measurement expert at Ordnance Survey, said: "Two of the three norths are already lined up, and always are.

"They don't change. It's the magnetic one that's changing and coming into alignment."

Magnetic north, he said, has been west of Britain for centuries but has been moving eastwards since 2014. Now, it will cross the Central Meridian

for the first time ever. "It's now about to meet this magic line up the middle where grid and true north meet so we've got this triple alignment.

"It's never happened before and it's probably never going to happen again," Mr Greaves said.

But magnetic north is tilted at a slight angle so, as the pole shifts west, the line will gradually intersect with the "magic line" further and further north.

Langton Matravers is the first place to properly experience the northern trifecta. Poole will be the epicentre around Christmas. "The difference that you would normally have to take into account between magnetic north and

grid north to correctly orient your map and to work out where you are and where you're going is pretty much zero," added Mr Greaves.

Triple alignment Where and when it will occur

Poole
Christmas 2022
Calne
May 2023
Birmingham
November 2023
Hebden
Bridge
August 2024

North Pennines
January 2025
Berwick-upon-Tweed
July 2025
Drums
March 2026
Fraserburgh
June 2026

