

# THE VANGUARD WAY

(NORTH TO SOUTH)

From the suburbs to the sea!

## SECTION 1 Croydon to Chelsham Common (6<sup>th</sup> edition 2019)



# THE VANGUARD WAY

## ROUTE DESCRIPTION and points of interest along the route

### SECTION 1 Croydon to Chelsham Common

**COLIN SAUNDERS**

In memory of Graham Butler 1949-2018

This 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the north-south route description was first published in 2019 and replaces previous printed editions, published in 1980, 1986 and 1997; also the online 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> editions published in 2009 and 2014. It is now only available as an online resource.

*Sixth Edition (North-South)*

**Designed by Brian Bellwood**

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Cover photo: St Mary's Church, Farleigh, Surrey – cc-by-sa/2.0. © Marathon.

# Vanguard Way Route Description: Section 1

## **SECTION 1: CROYDON TO CHELSHAM COMMON**

11.0 km (6.8 miles)

### **Route overview**

This version of the north-south Route Description is based on a completely new survey undertaken by club members in 2018.

The route sets off through the residential outskirts of Croydon (where Park Hill Recreation Ground is worth a detour), but you soon reach open space in Lloyd Park. After that it is nearly all in woodland, with a few short stretches through residential areas. The section starts and finishes on generally level terrain, but it is quite hilly in between and there are some steep slopes - remember that you are in the foothills of the North Downs – and the occasional bare patches of chalk that you cross are a reminder that you are approaching them. The route leaves central Croydon by following the historic Fairfield Path to Lloyd Park, and in Littleheath Woods joins the London Loop for 3 km, including Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve. Along the way you pass the pretty gardens of Coombe Wood and a delightful Norman church at Farleigh.

Lowest and highest points: East Croydon Station (61m); Chelsham Common (180m).

### **How to use this route description**

Paragraphs are numbered for ease of reference. The route is marked on Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps, though you should note that in some places it is incorrectly marked on some older maps - we draw your attention to specific instances where relevant. Downloadable maps in pdf format showing the correct route are available on our website. Grid references are given at each numbered point to help identify the route. The country is divided into 100 km squares identified by a two letter code, and following standard OS practice we include these letters in our grid references. In this section they are in square TQ.

The actual route description is shown in black Roman (upright) text.

Links with stations and other key places off route are shown in boxes with a green background.

*Italic text is used for items that are not part of the main route description, including:*

- Key information about facilities (see Vanguard Way Companion for more details)
- Road and street names\*
- Advice and asides.

\* The mention of a road or street name does not necessarily mean that you will see this name on the spot, but it may be helpful if you need to be picked up or set down, or to find your position on a street map.

**Underlined bold italic text** indicates that more details can be found in the Commentary, which follows the route description.

### **⊗ - Busy roads**

You often need to cross busy roads. Rather than tediously advising you to take care, which is common sense, we remind you with the symbol ⊗ – it means ‘Cross with care!’

### **Roads with no pavement**

‘NP’ in the route description indicates that the road you must follow has no pavement. You should take great care when walking along them, as traffic may approach at speed. Generally, you should walk in single file along the right-hand side, but this may be dangerous at a right-hand bend, where you cannot see approaching traffic, and the driver, not seeing you, may keep too close to the bend. You should therefore follow the advice given in the Highway Code for such situations, which is: ‘It may be safer to cross the road well before a right-hand bend so that oncoming traffic has a better chance of seeing you. Cross back after the bend.’ If walking in poor light conditions or in the dark, always wear something bright, luminous or reflective on top.

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## Public transport

On route: Trains, trams and buses at East Croydon station. Buses at Selsdon Park Road, Selsdon Vale, Court Wood Lane and Chelsham Common. Links with Lloyd Park tram stop and Warlingham Sainsbury's. Brief indications (subject to change) are shown at the relevant locations in the route description - for more information please see the Vanguard Way Companion on our website (click Directions & Maps).

## Abbreviations

Bw	= bridleway	KA	= keep ahead	N	= north
CB	= compass bearing	TL	= turn left	S	= south
FB	= footbridge	TR	= turn right	E	= east
Fp	= footpath	L	= left	W	= west
KG	= kissing gate	R	= right		
NP	= no pavement (see below)				
Rd	= road	m	= metres		
Tk	= track	km	= kilometres		
VGW	= Vanguard Way	>	= off route		

## Key to symbols

 = Bus	 = *Cafés etc	 = Toilets	 = Tram
 = Train	 = *Pubs	 = Phone box	 = Cross with care
 = Taxi	 = *Accommodation	 = *Equipment shop	

\* For the contact details of these facilities, please refer to the VGW Companion.

 Please note that, with improvements in mobile connectivity, phone boxes (or the equipment inside) are being removed.

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## Distances

### East Croydon Station to:

Lloyd Park (tram)	1.6 km	(1.0 mile)
Selsdon Park Road (bus)	5.8 km	(3.6 miles)
Court Wood Lane (bus)	7.5 km	(4.6 miles)
Chelsham Common (bus)	11.0 km	(6.8 miles)

In the route description, distances are only shown in kilometres (km) and metres (m); but if you are more familiar with miles and yards, remember that 1 km is about five eighths of a mile and that 100m is about the same as 110 yards.

Altitudes are shown in metres – for an approximate conversion into feet, multiply by 3 and add 10 per cent.

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## ALL INFORMATION SHOWN IS SUBJECT TO ALTERATION WITHOUT NOTICE

Inevitably changes to the route and facilities will occur, and we try to keep abreast of them. It is our intention to bring out an updated version of the Route Descriptions and Companion as necessary, but **please refer to the Latest News page on our website [www.vanguardway.org.uk](http://www.vanguardway.org.uk) for any changes that may have taken place meanwhile.**

If your trip relies on the provision of public transport, catering etc, you are strongly advised to check in advance that they will be available on the day of your visit. Further information about these facilities is provided in the Vanguard Way Companion available at [www.vanguardway.org.uk](http://www.vanguardway.org.uk) (click the 'Directions and Maps' button). If you carry a smartphone, there are apps that give up-to-date information on public transport. Search engines will provide information on refreshments, taxis and other services nearby. This can also be done on Google or Bing maps by typing e.g. 'Pubs near Selsdon' in the search box, then the map will highlight locations together with website links if available.

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We will always be pleased to hear about any changes you may find, in which case please email [colin@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:colin@vanguardway.org.uk).

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### **BEFORE SETTING OUT ALONG THE VANGUARD WAY**

Please read the [Introduction to the route](#), available from the 'Directions and maps' pages of our website [www.vanguardway.org.uk](http://www.vanguardway.org.uk). It contains important information that will be helpful when reading this route description.

And don't forget to look at the Latest News page on our website for any developments affecting this and any other part of the route.

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### **PROBLEMS WHILE WALKING THE ROUTE**

If you encounter an obstruction, closure or diversion on a public right of way, please tell us about it by emailing [colin@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:colin@vanguardway.org.uk).


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## Vanguard Way Route Description: Section 1


**Section 1 of the Vanguard Way starts at East Croydon Station [TQ 328 657]**  
in the London Borough of **Croydon**.

 *East Croydon Station is served by frequent trains from central London, eastern parts of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Also (not Sundays) Edenbridge, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells. There are plans to upgrade and enlarge the station, which may affect its layout.*


*West Croydon Station is served by local trains from north and central London, Sutton and Epsom, and any tram from there will take you to East Croydon Station.*


*London Tramlink serves East Croydon Station from Wimbledon and other parts of the London Borough of Croydon.*


*Buses serve East or West Croydon Stations daily from most parts of south London.*

 *J.D.Wetherspoon's George pub is 400 metres away for breakfast and morning coffee (from the station turn right along George Street, cross at the traffic lights then keep ahead), but note that it will close if a proposal to redevelop this area goes ahead. If you're walking this section in the afternoon, the Porter & Sorter is just around the corner from East Croydon Station (turn left then left again). There are many other pubs in the town centre.*

 *Plenty of facilities in or near East Croydon Station, including the adjacent Box Park (where you can buy food from various kiosks and eat it in a central courtyard) and in the town centre.*

 *On platforms in station - only accessible to passengers with tickets. Also in Box Park adjacent to station, and there are many facilities in the shopping centres.*




 *Plenty in Croydon and Addiscombe within easy walking distance of the start.*

 *There are several outdoor equipment shops in Croydon's main shopping area.*


### 1.1 [TQ 328 657]

*Note: Some older OS maps show the VGW route incorrectly between East Croydon Station and Lloyd Park; it lies a little to the north of that shown.*

*Also please note that there are two exits from East Croydon Station: for the VGW you should use the Town Centre exit, up the ramps at the south end of the platforms. The other exit at the north end provides a pedestrian link to Dingwall Road and leads more directly to the Whitgift Centre.*

- From **East Croydon Station** forecourt go L of London Tramlink platforms (across tram lines -  look both ways).
-  Cross **George Street** on 2-stage light-controlled crossing (with bus station on your L) then TL past the AIG building.
- Shortly TR along **Altyre Road** to its end, passing the First Church of Christ Scientist, Croydon Law Courts, the Croydon Park Hotel and the 'Altitude 25' apartment building.
- TR and  cross dual carriageway Rd (A232 **Barclay Road**) at 2-stage pedestrian crossing.
- TR and immediately TL along Fairfield Road (**Fairfield Path**) continuing along walled Fp at the end.

### 1.2 [TQ 329 653]

- At Stanhope Road/The Avenue KA along Fp between grass and Park Hill Infants School, continuing beside Rd (**Cotelands**) to junction with **Chichester Road** (note water tower to your R).
-  Cross Rd, TR then shortly TL along Rd (**St. Bernards/Fairfield Path**).

*At this point you could consider making a short diversion of 200m to **Park Hill Recreation Ground** for a close-up view of the water tower, or for toilets and refreshments. Instead of turning left, KA along R side of Chichester Road, cross Stanhope Road and KA past bollards along Fp to water tower, where you can*

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continue into the park if required: cross grass and TR for the refreshment kiosk (April-October only), or TL for toilets.

### 1.3 [TQ 333 650]


- At end of St. Bernards KA on Fairfield Path descending to Rd (*Park Hill Road*) at zebra crossing.
- Cross *Park Hill Road*, TR and after 15m bear L up Fp by concrete bollard.
- At top join Rd (*Reynolds Way*) and bear R.
- After 80m (where Rd bears L) TR down shrub-lined Fp (by house No.1) to Rd (*Brownlow Road*).
- Cross and take Fp opposite, leading under Tramlink bridge and past *Larcombe Close* to Rd (*Lloyd Park Avenue*).


### 1.4 [TQ 336 646]


- Bear L across Rd on to grass and follow fence to corner of bowling-green (behind hedge) in **Lloyd Park**.
- TR beside bowling green to end of fence.

#### **Link with Lloyd Park tram stop [210m, TQ 337 645]**

- Turn  $\frac{1}{2}$ R at end of bowling green fence towards pavilion.

 Trams to/from West and East Croydon Stations. Lloyd Park tram stop is 100m over to your right past the tennis courts just past the pavilion and tennis courts.


 Café Lloyd Park in pavilion.

 On far side of pavilion.

#### **If starting from Lloyd Park tram stop:**

- TL beyond platforms and go between car park and Café Lloyd Park onto grass. Bear half R towards trees in dip then TR to join VGW.


### 1.5 [TQ 337 646]


- Head slightly L across large field heading to end of copse, to L of children's playground in former chalk-pit.
- Continue beside fenced copse then 15m after end of fence bear half R on worn central path (CB 145°) through wildflower meadow.  
*The strange gadgets in this area consisting of a metal basket on a pole with ring of chains and yellow band are for **disc golf**.*
- Continue in same direction between bushes then bear R past VGW waymark post towards park perimeter and blue Tramlink signs.
- Cross tram lines  with care (look both ways) to Rd (*A212 Coombe Road*) then TL on tarmac Fp between tramway and Rd up to the area called **Coombe**, reaching the driveway into The Cedars School and **Coombe House**, with the Premier Inn (**Coombe Lodge**) on your R.

 Coombe Lodge, The Chateau.

 Premier Inn.

### 1.6 [TQ 342 643]

- 40m after driveway,  cross Coombe Road at pedestrian refuge then continue along far side.
- In 40m TR along *Conduit Lane* **NP** with Coombe Wood on your L.

 Coach House Café.

 Coombe Wood.

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### 1.7 [TQ 345 644]

- KA to end of lane, past Central Nursery of Croydon Council's Parks Department.
- Pass barrier then in 40m bear R on Tk (*still Conduit Lane*) between fences for 600m, with school and playing field on your R and woodland on your L, which is in grounds of **Royal Russell School**.
- Tk descends to junction with lamppost and fingerpost.

### 1.8 [TQ 339 639]

- TL by garage along gravel Tk (*Ballards Farm Road*) signposted 'Ballards Way/Addington'.
- Follow Tk beside school grounds for 900m to end where it joins Rd (*Ballards Way*).

### 1.9 [TQ 348 636]

- TR then in 50m TL to cross with care into *Crest Road*.
- At junction with *Croham Valley Road* cross over to take fenced tarmac Fp opposite.
- In 75m TL (by second lamppost) along narrow Fp into **Littleheath Woods**, with overhead power line to your L.


### 1.10 [TQ 346 631]

- When Fp broadens out at junction, KA for 90m to take R fork where fences diverge. (*Note that the VGW signs may still indicate the L/R dog-leg here, due to occasional need to avoid badger activity.*)
- Watching out for exposed roots, continue steeply uphill passing bench seat, then descend to Tk junction, with playing field on your L.
- KA steeply uphill to next junction where the **London Loop** comes in from your L.


### 1.11 [TQ 352 629]

- Continue uphill to five-ways junction at top.
- Bear L on broad Tk, passing water tower away to your L (*it may be almost completely obscured by foliage in summer*).
- At triangular junction around a tree, TR to descend on Bw, passing playground on your L and keeping L at first fork (ignore side turnings).
- Follow Bw inside wood, keeping R at second fork, down to pylon then KA to Rd.


*You are standing at the boundary between the wards of Addington and Selsdon, so the road has different names: Selsdon Park Road to the left, Addington Road to the right.*


 *Buses go left along Selsdon Park Road to Addington Village Interchange (with trams to central Croydon), and right along Addington Road direct to central Croydon.*

 *Selsdon or Forestdale (both 1 km off route).*

 *Selsdon (1 km off route).*

### 1.12 [TQ 357 627]

-  Cross Rd. *It is usually very busy, and you are strongly advised to go L for 100m to use the light-controlled crossing, then come back 70m along the far side, to TL along Ashen Vale. You pass the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).*
- Follow earth Bw by brick wall behind trees L of Ashen Vale. *This is the official right of way rather than pavement beside Rd.*
- KA on Bw between fences for 50m and cross Rd (*Swallowdale*). The route now keeps ahead for the next 550m on this Bw beside Ladygrove and **Selsdon Vale** housing estates.
- A little further on cross another Rd (*Peacock Gardens/Sorrel Bank*).

 *Bus at Peacock Gardens to Selsdon, Forestdale, Addington Tram Interchange, West and East Croydon.*



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### 1.13 [TQ 361 624]

- a) Continuing down Bw, pass gap into Sorrel Bank and fenced off end of Goldfinch Road.
- b) At end of Bw KA through gap into **Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve**.

### 1.14 [TQ 363 623]

- a) At fence corner TR then immediately fork L steeply uphill (bench seat at top).
- b) Follow Tk (*Addington Border*) through nature reserve, passing Broad Walk, Avis Grove and Court Wood Grove, then descending gently to gate via L fork.
- c) Leave reserve through gate.

*Here you leave the London Borough of Croydon in Greater London and enter Tandridge District in the County of Surrey.*

-  *Just a few metres to your left is Court Wood Lane, where a bus service runs to and from Addington Village Interchange (for trams to central Croydon).*


### 1.15 [TQ 367 617]

- a) TR up Bw (**Baker Boy Lane**) joining the **Tandridge Border Path**, with Selsdon Wood on your R and, at first, Farleigh Court Golf Course (see later) on your L followed by Puplet Wood. Climb steadily for 1 km to golf course access Rd off Old Farleigh Road.

*The terrain is now fairly gentle for the next 4 km (2½ miles) all the way to the end of Section 1 and beyond to Nore Hill.*

### 1.16 [TQ 363 607]

- a) Cross access Rd past main entrance of **Farleigh Golf Club**.
- b) VGW now diverges from London Loop and Tandridge Border Path, which continue ahead (you will encounter the TBP again later).
- c) Immediately after white painted gateway TL on Fp, parallel with golf club drive, and follow it into and through a wood (*Hedge Grove*). (*Horse riders are instructed to follow the golf club drive here, so they should not be using the footpath.*)
- d) In 750m you eventually reach Fp/Tk junction parallel with horse ride between two metal farm gates.


-  *Farleigh Golf Club (500m off route). Walkers are welcome to visit the clubhouse for refreshments (carvery on Sundays). You can TL through the gate here across the drive and KA along a Tk north for 500m to the clubhouse.*

### 1.17 [TQ 369 605]

- a) TR on Tk between fences towards barn and Rd (*Farleigh Court Road*) at **Farleigh**.

### 1.18 [TQ 370 602]

- a) TL along Rd **NP**. In 100m at junction TR (*Church Road*), passing Farleigh Court Riding Centre, to the **Church of St. Mary the Virgin**.



-  *Afternoon teas in the church hall (behind the church) on summer Sundays.*

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### 1.19 [TQ 372 600]

- KA on Bw between fences, with horse paddock on L.
- In 100m, at junction with Fp, ignore KG and KA on Bw between wood and field.
- In 350m, at junction of several paths and tracks, take second Fp on L between wooden barriers beside fingerpost.


 For the Harrow Inn, 500m away, TR here and follow Bw. In 150m at junction with coal tax post KA and continue to Rd where Harrow Inn lies opposite .

- Follow Fp beside **Great Park**, passing under bridge, to Rd (*Chelsham Road*) by Warlingham Park School at Chelsham Common, where Section 1 ends at:



### 2.1 [TQ 371 592] Chelsham Common.

 Buses operate from here Mondays to Fridays only either to Selsdon (change for buses to Croydon) or to stations at Upper Warlingham and Caterham – the bus stop here serves both directions. A frequent daily service operates from Warlingham Sainsbury's to Fairfield Halls (for East Croydon Station) and West Croydon Station – see link below.

 The Bull pub is just 50m along Section 2.

 TR along Chelsham Road and KA at crossroads for 150m.

#### **Link to bus stop at Sainsbury's Warlingham (1.2 km)**

- TR along R-hand side of Chelsham Road, using narrow footpath.
- Cross Harrow Road and KA past coal tax post with common opposite.
- In 230m at junction with Ledgers Road, KA for 200m then  cross Rd to take Bw opposite.
- Descend Bw for 720m through wood (KA at junction) and beside cemetery to reach B269 Limpsfield Road.
- TR 100m to roundabout (by Amano Caffè) and  cross L via pedestrian refuge to far side.
- TR (opposite Sainsbury's and its car park) for 175m to bus stop for central Croydon.

 Amano Caffè & Deli.

 In Sainsbury's.

### **COMMENTARY**

*on places shown in bold italics and underlined in the route description*

#### **CROYDON**

**Croydon** is one of the most dynamic places in southern England, a thriving business and shopping centre, the largest in southern England outside central London, and a major transport hub with its own tram system. With a population of 363,400 (2011 census) it feels like a city in its own right, and regularly applies for city status when the opportunity arises - so far without success, but its time will surely come. Disparaging remarks about Croydon are often made, due to the bland, functional and unsightly concrete office blocks that were built in the 1960s. Many new buildings have since been erected, and some of them are not much better – you can hardly miss the ‘rainbow-effect’ 43-storey Saffron Square tower as you approach from London by train. Despite this, Croydon has many interesting old (and some new) buildings, several of them Grade I listed, as described below, and is well worth exploring.

The town developed in a strategic location at the head of the River Wandle and on the north side of a gap in the North Downs. There was some activity during Roman times, when the road from London to the Brighton area ran a little to the west along what is now the Purley Way. The first written record of a Saxon settlement was in 809 as *Crogedene* (= saffron valley), when it was in the *Suthrige* (= southern region, or Surrey as it later became), then part of the kingdom of the Middle Saxons (Middlesex). In the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Archbishops of Canterbury established a country residence beside the river, later expanding it into a grander palace, much of which still survives as part of the Old Palace School (see below). Some of the early archbishops are buried in the parish church. Around it grew an important trading and industrial centre noted especially for its iron industry with many smiths and charcoal-burners. Surrey Street has been the scene of daily markets since 1276. The Wandle later became polluted and the town’s hub moved a little eastwards up to the plateau that forms the watershed between the valleys of the Wandle and the Ravensbourne, and where East Croydon Station is situated.

Many of Croydon’s buildings and features bear the name of, or are connected with, John Whitgift, born around 1530, who was Archbishop to Queen Elizabeth I from 1583 until her death in 1603. He died the following year. He was very fond of Croydon and provided funds and legacies for many local institutions.

Croydon was an important staging-post on the London to Brighton road during the golden era of coaching - the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1803 the Surrey Iron Railway opened from Wandsworth to Croydon and in 1805 was extended to Merstham: horse-drawn trucks brought coal south to Croydon, while fullers’ earth and ironstone were brought from Merstham. In 1839 the London & Croydon Railway opened, followed in 1841 by the London & Brighton Railway. Unable to compete, the Surrey Iron Railway closed in 1846.

The railways turned Croydon into a dormitory suburb for London workers, though nowadays just as many people travel to work in Croydon. In 1915, Croydon Airport opened and was one of the world’s busiest until its closure in 1959. In 1974, a local government reorganisation brought Croydon into Greater London.

The town has two large indoor shopping centres, Whitgift and Centrale, and many important buildings, especially:

The Grade I listed **Old Palace** (also known as Archbishop’s Palace, 1 km W) was one of a series of palaces, originally built in Saxon times, on the route between Canterbury and the Archbishops’ London base at Lambeth. It was rebuilt several times and continued to be held by Canterbury until 1780. It became the administrative centre for the Archbishops’ extensive properties in Surrey, Middlesex and Hertfordshire. And for one Archbishop in particular, John Whitgift (1530 - 1604), this was his favourite residence and he spent much of his time here. Its Great Hall, chapel and guardroom (now a library) date from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Now a highly regarded school for girls, founded in 1889, its interesting buildings may be visited during school holidays.

The **Parish Church of St. John the Baptist** (1 km W, also Grade I listed). Beside the Old Palace with its own quiet little park (the former graveyard), Croydon’s parish church is the seat of a suffragan bishop who

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is subordinate to the Bishop of Southwark. It was rebuilt in 1870 after a fire destroyed an earlier building three years before, but some parts of the previous building remain. John Whitgift and five other archbishops are buried here.

**Whitgift Hospital** (500m W). Now an almshouse, Grade I listed, the hospital was built in 1599 for Archbishop Whitgift and can be visited by advance arrangement. It is situated next to the Whitgift Shopping Centre on pedestrianised North End.

**Fairfield** (500m SW). One of the largest conference and entertainment complexes in South London, opened in 1962. It contains a concert hall and the Ashcroft Theatre, a memorial to Dame Peggy Ashcroft. There are plans to redevelop the area, including College Green between Fairfield and East Croydon Station, around the existing concert hall, which is famed for its excellent acoustics. The halls stand on the western part of the field where Croydon's fairs were held - the VGW follows the Fairfield Path through the eastern part of the same field.

**Croydon Clocktower** (600m SW, Grade II listed). A major cultural centre, opened in 1994, built around the old red brick Town Hall of 1895 with its prominent clock tower. It comprises the Dayid Lean Cinema, the Braithwaite Theatre, the Central Library, tourist information centre, museum and exhibition centre.

**Ruskin Square** (formerly known as Croydon Gateway). A massive redevelopment currently under construction in the area immediately west of East Croydon Station.

### 1.1

**East Croydon Station** is both the northernmost and westernmost point of the VGW. When the VGW was launched in 1981, the old Victorian era station still stood here. But that was considered too restrictive for the huge expansion in passenger numbers and the present flamboyant and airy building was opened in 1992; however, this too is due to be rebuilt in the near future to cope with massively expanding traffic. The line was opened in 1841 for the London & Brighton Railway. Outside the main concourse is the East Croydon Tram Stop for London Tramlink, opened in 2000 as part of the first tram system to operate in southern England since 1952. A footbridge towards the south end of the platforms links with a pedestrian route into Central Croydon. Almost opposite the station's main entrance in George Street, a massive complex of shops, apartments, winter gardens and an art gallery is under construction, due for completion in 2020. At 44 and 38 storeys, they will be the world's tallest modular buildings, but seem to have been given the totally bland and confusing name 'George Street' – let's hope something more imaginative will have been thought out by the time of completion.

**Altyre Road** contains several buildings worth noting. Just before entering it, to your left is Number One Croydon, originally the NLA Tower when completed in 1970, but known locally as the Threepenny Bit Building (or the 50p Building to some) because of its shape. It now provides offices for a number of businesses, and depending on your point of view may be considered an icon (of the architecture of that time) or an eyesore. On your right you pass the First Church of Christ Scientist, then the concrete-lined Law Courts. On your left near the end is the plush red-brick Croydon Park Hotel (currently owned by Croydon Council), then Altitude 25, providing nearly 200 apartments on 25 floors.

Between East Croydon and Lloyd Park, the VGW generally follows the line of the **Fairfield Path**, which originally served as the footpath used by the inhabitants of Coombe village (see below) to reach Croydon. It led through what was once the field used by the town fair, for which a charter was obtained in 1276 and lasted for nearly six hundred years. Originally held in streets, it later used the Fair Field, which was recorded in a survey dated 1493 and shown on maps. For a while there were two fairs: a cherry fair in July and a walnut fair in October. The last fair was held in 1868, when the land was acquired for a short-lived branch line to Croydon Central Station. An attempt to revive the Cherry Fair in the 1990s was short-lived. Most of the path has been redeveloped as residential roads, but the name still survives in a couple of short, isolated stretches.

### 1.2

**Park Hill Recreation Ground** is a fairly small but interesting park in the centre of Croydon. In 1780 the land was acquired by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a new palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury. That plan was abandoned in favour of Addington, and the area became a deer park, farmland and, for a while, the site of a racecourse. In 1851 a reservoir was constructed, followed in 1867 by the very prominent, red-brick, Grade II-listed water tower. It is 23 metres (75 feet) in diameter and, though no longer used for water storage, could hold over four million litres (nearly a million gallons). For a time the public were admitted to its viewing platform, which proved most useful during the First World War for spotting approaching Zeppelins. In 1887 the land was bought by Croydon Corporation and turned into a public park.

Down the drive to the left of the park depot (past the toilets) is Coombe Cliff, built in 1853 for John Horniman, the tea merchant and public benefactor - a blue plaque marks the residence of John and his son Frederick John. John was a great traveller and collector, and his collection can still be seen at the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill. The house later became a convalescent home, then an adult education centre, and is now Cressey College, a special school for students with special needs. The walled garden of the house (turn right at the park depot, toilets nearby) can still be visited.

The ancient and very worn milestone opposite the entrance to the walled garden was rescued from its original location and moved here in modern times. Most of the text on the milestone has been obliterated, but from what can be seen on its north side the location was a T-junction 9 miles from Whitehall, which could put it in the West Croydon/Broad Green area, possibly on London Road. We are grateful to Colin Woodward of the Milestone Society for telling us that 'Ex.....10 miles' (on the east side) probably refers to the Royal Exchange, which was often used as a measuring point for the City of London. All that remains on the west side is '.....10 miles'. Opposite the milestone is a somewhat more recent Croydon Parish boundary marker of 1888.

### 1.4

Previously farmland, **Lloyd Park** was dedicated to the public in memory of Frank Lloyd, a local landowner and benefactor, by his daughter in 1927. Some of it was ploughed up during the Second World War for food crops. There are several old chalk pits, in one of which is a children's playground. You may see or hear noisy flocks of ring-necked parakeets - a green bird about the size of a starling plus a long tail - which originated in Asia but started to appear in the wild in this country in 1969, and is now quite widespread throughout southeast England. Even if you don't see them, you may hear their screeching 'kee-ak' call. A new pavilion opened in 2009 includes a smart café and toilets.

### 1.5

**Croydon Disc Golf Club** was established in 2007. The sport has been played in Britain since the early 1990s and is becoming more popular. To quote the website of the British Disc Golf Association: 'Just like traditional golf, the object of the game is to complete each hole in as few shots as possible. With disc golf you throw a flying disc or Frisbee® rather than hit a ball, and to complete a hole you have to land the disc in an elevated metal basket. Wherever your disc lands, that's where you make your next throw or play your next shot'.

The district now known as **Coombe** (though not many Croydonians will recognise the term) was first recorded in 1221. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was known as Broadcombe, then Coombe Green. It had a triangular village green with a pond, which have been completely obliterated by the main road and construction of various big houses described below. The word coombe comes from the Saxon cumb, which was their rendering of the Celtic cwm - a natural hollow in a hillside. The area is dominated by three large houses, all including the word Coombe, so you should concentrate as we describe them below to avoid confusion! At one time or another this whole area, including the three houses and Coombe Farm to the north, were owned by one person or family: during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by James Bourdieu Senior and his son James Berney Bourdieu, and during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by Frank Lloyd (see location 1.4).

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The large houses are Coombe Lodge, Coombe House and Coombe Wood House. They have sometimes had the same owners, and there has been confusion about various details attributed to them. We believe we have got it right in our descriptions below, but if you have authority to contradict them please do let us know!

First you pass, on your right, **Coombe Lodge**, formerly called Coombe Green House. It was built around 1700, and in 1761 was acquired by James Bourdieu Senior (see Coombe House below). His son made this his main home in 1804, then during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the house passed through successive ownerships. In 1897 it was bought by Frank Lloyd (see location 1.4) but he continued to live in Coombe Wood House (see below). The story goes that, soon after the First World War, Earl Haig was a guest in Coombe Lodge and, while strolling in the grounds one day, conceived his idea of Poppy Day to help former servicemen – the first Poppy Day was held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1921.

Coombe Lodge is now a pub/restaurant (Beefeater) and hotel (Premier Inn), whose facilities you may wish to sample. It used to contain a 3-metre high grandfather clock, brought here from the Greyhound Inn in Croydon, though that now seems to have been replaced by a later and smaller one that stands in the reception area.

Next on your left is **Coombe House**, now luxury residences in what was previously called Geoffrey Harris House, a care home for elderly people. It stands on the site of an earlier building that was frequently visited by William Harvey, who discovered the circulation of blood in 1628 - he liked to meditate in the dark and had several caves built in the grounds. The present house was built around 1761 for James Bourdieu Senior, Sheriff of Surrey. Frank Lloyd (see location 1.4) acquired it in 1892. For a while during the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was used as St. Margaret's School for children with cerebral palsy, and part of it is still used for a similar purpose. Beneath the lawn of the present house lie the foundations of an even earlier building, which is believed to have been a grange, that is a residence associated with an abbey or priory, or in this case possibly even the Archbishop's Palace in Croydon. A well that may have been part of the grounds of this building is now located inside a house called Pilgrims' Well behind Coombe House - it was said to have been used by pilgrims on their way to join the Pilgrims' Way at Titsey.

### 1.6

Just a little further up the main road (from this point upwards it is called Coombe Lane), The Chateau restaurant (formerly Chateau Napoleon) now occupies what was **Coombe Wood House** (75m E). Built in 1898 as the home of Arthur Lloyd (brother of Frank Lloyd), it incorporated a church organ, whose keyboard was located in the entrance hall, with its pipes in the staircase panelling. In 1938 the house was acquired by Croydon Corporation and became a convalescent home.

The former grounds of Coombe Wood House, now called just **Coombe Wood**, constitute a small but delightful area of public gardens owned by Croydon Council, featuring especially roses and rhododendrons. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this was part of Broadcombe Common, then in 1801 (during the notorious Inclosure Acts) it was acquired by James Bourdieu Senior (see Coombe Lodge), who lived at Coombe House and had already bought Coombe Lodge. It then became part of the grounds of Coombe Lodge, and was opened to the public in 1952. The springs and wells here supplied water to all three big houses, from which Conduit Lane gets its name.

The red-brick buildings that now form the focus of the gardens were originally stables and outhouses of Coombe Wood House, built in a former gravel pit to preserve the view from the big house. They now house the Coach House Café and toilets. Until the late 1990s its stables were the base of Croydon's Parks Department Rangers, some of whom patrolled on horseback, while the café used to be run by a Chinese couple who totted up your bill on an abacus.

The predecessor of the pond in the Pulham Rockery by the entrance was said to have been haunted by a servant girl, but apparently she moved to another pond during construction of the new one in 1845.

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### 1.7

The woodland up to your left is part of the **Royal Russell School**, an independent school established in 1866, by clerks working in the City of London, at Russell Hill in nearby Purley. The name comes from the patronage of Lord John Russell, Duke of Bedford. After World War I, the need to educate war orphans led to the acquisition of this site, then known as the Ballards Estate, as additional premises. It was opened in 1924 by the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VIII. In 1961 the Russell Hill site was sold and the entire school is now located here. In June 2013, staff and pupils at the school undertook a sponsored walk along the Vanguard Way in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

### 1.9

**Littleheath Woods** were formed from an agglomeration of smaller woodlands once used for pheasant shooting. It straddles the former boundary between Croydon borough and Coulsdon & Purley urban district, which jointly purchased the wood for public use in 1932, thanks to the efforts of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society, now known as the Open Spaces Society. Much of the maintenance of the woods is carried out by the Friends of Littleheath Woods.

### 1.10

The Vanguard Way joins the **London Loop** for the next 3 km. The second word is sometimes seen written in upper case to indicate its original name, the London Outer Orbital Path. This 240 km trail completely encircles Greater London, closely following its boundary. It was proposed in 1990 by the London Walking Forum and was developed by its Orbitals Working Party in cooperation with the various boroughs and with support from Transport for London. The official guide to the London Loop, published by Aurum Press, was written by Colin Saunders, author of the Vanguard Way route descriptions, and can be purchased from his website [www.colinsaunders.org.uk](http://www.colinsaunders.org.uk).

### 1.12

**Selsdon Vale** was developed during the 1920s by the Surrey Garden Village Trust as 'homes fit for heroes' - soldiers returning from the First World War.

### 1.13

**Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve** comprises 81 hectares, predominantly oak and beech woodland but with several large grass playing fields. Over 175 species of plant, 60 of birds, 18 of mammals, 230 of butterflies and moths, 35 of snails and slugs and 25 of spiders have been recorded here. Once used for pheasant shooting, the threat of development in the 1920s stirred many concerned local people into action. They started an appeal, which was supported by local councils, a number of other bodies and over 10,000 private individuals. In 1936 they were able to present the area to the National Trust as a bird sanctuary. Although still owned by the NT, day-to-day management is in the hands of the Parks & Open Spaces Department of the London Borough of Croydon. Following severe depredation of trees during World War II, an intense programme of replanting has seen the wood returned to its former glory.

Several smaller woods were combined to form the reserve, and the main tracks or rides were given names. The VGW crosses the northern corner of the reserve, with Court Wood to the left and Selsdon Wood to the right, following the track called Addington Border, as that is what it used to be, between the former parishes (now wards) of Addington and Selsdon. Much of the maintenance of the wood is carried out by the Friends of Selsdon Wood.

### 1.15

This is the first of five encounters with the **Tandridge Border Path**, which here also follows Baker Boy Lane. It runs for 80km (50 miles), closely following the border of Tandridge District and was established in 2002. The eastern side of its route runs roughly parallel with the Vanguard Way. A guide to the route in the form of laminated cards is available.

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A ghost story! A baker's delivery boy was on his way from the bakery at Farleigh to deliver bread at Selsdon, and had reached the bend in the road where **Baker Boy Lane** joins Farleigh Road. A woodman leaped out from behind some trees and hacked him to death. Some year's later, some local residents were driving along Farleigh Road in thick fog, and when they reached this point a dark shape loomed up ahead. The headlights revealed a tall man wearing an old fashioned country suit and carrying an axe. The driver screeched to a halt and ran after the man, but he was nowhere to be seen. Another resident told how her dog panicked and ran whenever they passed the tree where the woodman's axe had been hidden after the crime. (With acknowledgement to 'Around Haunted Croydon' by Frances D. Stewart.)

### 1.16

**Farleigh Golf Club** opened in 1997, originally under Japanese management, then became part of the Swallow Hotels group, and is now part of the Foxhills Collection, privately owned by the Hayton family. The land is leased from its owners, Oxford's Merton College.

### 1.17

**Farleigh** is a delightfully sleepy hamlet (described by Pevsner as 'almost the most rural hamlet in Surrey') which has remained remarkably unchanged, considering its proximity to London. The residents successfully mounted fierce opposition to its proposed inclusion in Greater London in 1965. The name was first recorded in 880 as Fearnlege (bracken clearing in Anglo-Saxon), and is shown on old maps as Farley. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the parish was an estate of Merton College, Oxford, which still owns much of the land in this area.

### 1.18

**The Church of St. Mary the Virgin** was built c.1083 and is almost entirely Norman. It was badly damaged by fire in 1964 but has been restored. The church is open to visitors at times when afternoon tea is being served in the hall - the first Sunday in May to the last Sunday in September, from 2.30 to 5.00 pm.

### 1.19

The **Great Park** estate to your left used to be Warlingham Park Hospital, opened in 1902 or 1903 (depending on source) as Croydon Mental Hospital. It closed in 1999 and the buildings have been converted into an upmarket residential estate. The hospital's distinctive clock tower remains in place, and can just about be seen from some points along the adjacent footpath, though may be blocked by summer foliage.

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