THE VANGUARD WAY

From the suburbs to the sea!

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ROUTE

COLIN SAUNDERS

Seventh Edition 2025

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Designed by Brian Bellwood

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CONTENTS

Route distance table 4

How to use the Vanguard Way Route Description 5

Practical advice:

- Walking the Vanguard Way 6
- Clothing 7
- Maps & other equipment 7
- Signs and waymarking 8
- Safety 9
- Countryside Code 9
- Travelling to and from the Vanguard Way 10

General description of the area and terrain 11

History of the area 11

Flora and fauna of the area 13

Completed the route? 13

The Vanguard Way badge 13

Facebook 13

Contact us 13

History and Management of the Vanguard Way 13

Acknowledgements 14

Books by the same author 16

Please note that, in this introduction and in the online route descriptions, the abbreviation VGW is used for Vanguard Way.

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VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DISTANCE TABLE

DISTANCES IN MILES

Croydon	6¾	11¾	13½	20½	24¾	28	31	35	42	47¾	53¾	56¾	58	60¼	64	66
11.0	Chelsham Common	5	6¾	13¾	18	21	24¼	28¼	35	41	47	50	51¼	53½	57¼	59¼
19.0	8.0	Titsey	1¾	8¾	13	16¼	19¼	23¼	30	36	42	45	46¼	48½	52¼	54¼
22.0	11.0	3.0	Moorhouse	5	11¼	14¼	17½	21½	28¼	35	40	43¼	44½	46½	50¼	52½
30.0	19.0	11.0	8.0	Crouch Hse. Grn	6¼	9¼	12½	16½	23¼	29	35¼	38¼	39½	41½	45½	47½
40.0	29.0	21.0	18.0	10.0	Hammer-wood	3	6¼	10¼	17	23	28¾	32	33¼	35½	39	41¼
45.0	34.0	26.0	23.0	15.0	5.0	Forest Row	3	7¼	14	19¾	25¾	28¾	30	32¼	36	38¼
50.0	39.0	31.0	28.0	20.0	10.0	5.0	Newbridge	4	10¾	16¾	22¾	25¾	27	29¼	33	35
56.5	45.5	37.5	34.5	26.5	16.5	11.5	6.5	Poundgate	6¾	12¾	18¾	21¾	23	25¼	28¾	31
67.5	56.5	48.5	45.5	37.5	27.5	22.0	17.5	11.0	Blackboys	6	11¾	15	16¼	18¼	21¾	24¼
77.0	66.0	58.0	55.0	47.0	37.0	32.0	27.0	20.5	9.5	Chiddingly	6	9	10¼	12½	16¼	18¼
86.5	75.5	67.5	64.5	56.5	46.5	41.5	36.5	30.0	19.0	9.5	Berwick Station	3	4¼	6½	10¼	12½
91.5	80.5	72.5	69.5	61.5	51.5	46.5	41.5	35.0	24.0	14.5	5.0	Alfriston	1¼	3½	7¼	9¼
93.5	82.5	74.5	71.5	63.5	53.5	48.5	43.5	37.0	26.0	16.5	7.0	2.0	Litlington	2¼	6	8
97.0	86.0	78.0	75.0	67.0	57.0	52.0	47.0	40.5	27.5	20.0	10.5	5.5	3.5	Exceat Bridge	3¾	6
103.0	92.0	84.0	81.0	73.0	63.0	58.0	53.0	46.5	35.5	26.0	16.5	11.5	9.5	6.0	Seaford	2¼
106.5	95.5	87.5	84.5	76.5	66.5	61.5	56.5	50.0	39.0	29.5	20.0	15.0	13.0	9.5	3.5	Newhaven

DISTANCES IN KILOMETRES

Based on the original drawing by Colin Hills

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HOW TO USE THE VANGUARD WAY ROUTE GUIDES

Free route guides to the Vanguard Way are available in 10 separate sections. A printed guide can be downloaded as a series of PDFs from our website www.vanguardway.org.uk. The Vanguard Way PhotoGuide app for smartphones is available from Google Play or the App Store (search Vanguard Way and look for the 'VGW' arrow).

The sections start and finish at places that are mostly convenient for public transport, and are as follows:

	From	*To*	*km*	*miles*	*Links with public transport at:*
1 (K)	East Croydon	Chelsham Common	11.0	6.8	Selsdon, Warlingham
2 (J)	Chelsham Common	Limpsfield Chart	12.7	7.9	Woldingham, Oxted
3 (H)	Limpsfield Chart	Edenbridge	6.3	4.0	Moorhouse
4 (G)	Edenbridge	Forest Row	15.5	9.7	Dormansland, East Grinstead
5 (F)	Forest Row	Poundgate	11.3	7.0	Colemans Hatch, Crowborough
6 (E)	Poundgate	Blackboys	11.0	6.8	Buxted
7 (D)	Blackboys	Golden Cross	12.2	7.6	East Hoathly
8 (C)	Golden Cross	Berwick Station	6.7	4.2	
9 (B)	Berwick Station	Exceat Bridge	10.5	6.5	Alfriston, Exceat
10 (A)	Exceat Bridge	Newhaven Town	10.5	6.5	Seaford, Bishopstone

The route guides are also available in the opposite direction, south to north, whose sections use letters instead of numbers, as shown above.

You can of course combine sections to make a longer day's walk, or indeed break them up as you see fit, using the other transport links shown above. With the help of a taxi or car you can be set down or picked up at any convenient point within each section. Distances to intermediate points are given in the route description for each section.

Before starting out on a section:

- You may find it helpful to read the **Overview**, which gives a general description of the area you will be walking through.
- Refer to the **Latest News** section on our website, or our Facebook page (search Vanguard Way Association) which provide updates about the route and any diversions that may be necessary.

Details of accommodation, refreshments, public transport (including taxis) and other useful information are contained in the separate **Vanguard Way Companion**, also available free on the Vanguard Way website www.vanguardway.org.uk.

Each section is laid out as follows:

- Distances between key locations
- Public transport links
- Abbreviations and symbols used in the text
- An overview of the section
- How to use the route guide
- Other useful information
- The route description
- Commentary on points of interest

The route descriptions indicate points where public transport, accommodation, refreshments, toilets and phone boxes* are located on or near the route.

* Although most people have a mobile phone, in some rural areas reception is poor (or your battery may run out), so in the route description) shows where in rural areas you can find public telephone boxes, most of which are clearly marked on OS Explorer maps, though they are gradually being removed. Most pubs also have a public payphone.

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The route description itself is shown in black Roman (upright) type. Any variations from the usual route, or advice or information, are shown in *italics*. Also ***links with public transport off route*** *are shown in italics within a shaded box.*

Points of interest along the route are shown in ***underlined bold italics*** - this indicates that more information about it appears in the Commentary, which follows the route description.

With two or more people walking together, we suggest that you separate the commentary pages, then one person can follow the route description while another reads out the commentary.

The route description tells you which **local authority** covers the area you are in. This is partly for interest but also so that you can if necessary report any urgent problems along the route, such as obstructions or broken stiles (see below).

You are strongly advised to take the relevant **maps** with you (see below).

Please follow the **Countryside Code** at all times (see page 8).

PRACTICAL ADVICE

WALKING THE VANGUARD WAY

Most of the route is easy walking. Lying in the lowlands of southeast England, there are no really strenuous climbs to tackle - at least not for long! But be prepared for some short, very steep ascents and descents. Nearly all of the route is on public rights of way, public highways or areas with open public access, but there is one short stretch on a permissive path, which can in theory be closed with no notice - an alternative route is provided in the unlikely event that this should happen.

Much of the route is on an uneven surface, so you will need stout shoes, trainers or boots. There are some very muddy stretches, especially after periods of heavy rain, and sometimes crops can make progress difficult. Some stiles may be in need of repair, though they are gradually being replaced by gates. Local authorities and landowners should keep all public rights of way in good repair, so if you come across any difficulties or obstacles, please report it to the relevant authority (mentioned in the route description) and let us know about it too (see *Contacts* below).

Refreshments, accommodation and toilets

If you relish the idea of a pub for your lunch stop, or a café for morning coffee or afternoon tea, we draw your attention in the route descriptions to those that are either on the route or within easy reach - in the case of the latter we describe the best way of reaching them. The Vanguard Way Companion (available from our website vanguardway.org.uk, click Directions & Maps) provides further details.

Bicycles, trampers and buggies

Unfortunately, the Vanguard Way as a whole is unsuitable for these vehicles. Nearly half the route is on public footpaths, which cannot be used by cyclists and horse-riders. About a quarter is on bridleways or byways, which can be followed on bikes or horses, but they are in separate stretches. At the last count, the route included 70 stiles and 101 gates of various kinds (though these numbers are subject to change as stiles are gradually being replaced by gates, or removed to leave gaps) plus two very long flights of steps. Three-quarters is on uneven ground and includes some very steep terrain. In winter and after heavy rain, there may be deep mud in places. Fields are sometimes ploughed up without notice, leaving very deep furrows – though the farmer is normally obliged to reinstate the path within 14 days.

If you wish to discuss these aspects of the route in more detail, please email colin@vanguardway.org.uk.

Walking with dogs

Note that, while many stiles have provision for dogs to get through, it may sometimes be necessary to lift your dog over. The Ramblers recommend that ‘dogs should be kept under close control at all times, and kept on a lead on roads, near livestock or sensitive wildlife, where the terrain requires careful footwork and

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wherever the law or other official regulations require it. Owners must ensure their dog does not alarm other people, and they must clean up after their dog'. Bear in mind that a farmer is legally permitted to shoot any dog that is attacking or chasing livestock, without being liable for compensation.

CLOTHING

You should of course dress appropriately for the weather and time of year. **Walking boots** or stout walking shoes are suitable in most conditions, and in summer good quality trainer-type shoes with a good grip will usually suffice, but bear in mind that after heavy rain the ground can get very muddy, and some low-lying places near rivers or streams may be flooded. The overview at the start of each sectional route description indicates where this can happen.

Keep an eye on the weather forecast (suggested sources are shown in the Vanguard Way Companion) and carry **waterproof gear** (jacket and overtrousers), **headgear** that will keep rain and sunshine out of your eyes, and a **spare warm layer** such as a pullover. **Gaiters** or anklets can be very useful as they help to keep rain and water from wet grass etc. out of your boots; they keep mud, grass seeds and burrs off your socks; and they make it practical to walk straight through, rather than awkwardly round, mud and puddles. **Overboots** or plastic bags can be useful to cover muddy boots when entering pubs or tea-rooms – if you don't do this, please remove muddy footwear before entering. You may need **sunglasses**, and don't forget to apply **sunburn protection**.

MAPS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

Maps

Relevant sections of the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps are included in the route guides. There are also links for downloadable GPX files on our website.

Most smartphones and GPS devices come preloaded with maps of some sort, and you can purchase apps that provide all or part of the Ordnance Survey. However, you should bear in mind that satellite reception may not work in some areas, or your battery may run out, so you may wish to buy or borrow the relevant paper versions of the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps as they are better for planning purposes (paper versions are currently £12.99 per sheet) to be used in conjunction with this guide. They give a good impression of the area you are passing through, and can be invaluable if you go off-route - accidentally or on purpose! New OS paper maps come with a digital copy to download for offline use on your smartphone or GPS. Although Landrangers (currently £12.99 per sheet) give a better overview of the area, they are not as good for route finding, while the Explorers are ideal for this purpose.

It happens that you need five of each of the standard sheets whether you choose Explorer or Landranger. However, if you decide to buy Landrangers, you can if you wish save about £17 and some weight by obtaining two special **OS Custom Made** sheets (currently £21.99 per sheet) covering the whole route, instead of the five standard sheets listed below. When ordering, you will need to insert a 'map centre' grid reference for each sheet. They are TQ 440 515 for the northern half and TQ 440 170 for the southern half. For the main titles and sub-titles, we suggest you use 'Vanguard Way Nth' with 'From Croydon to Forest Row', and 'Vanguard Way Sth' with 'From Ashdown Forest to Newhaven'.

Although OS Custom Made maps can also be obtained at 1:25,000 scale, it is probably not worth the trouble as you would need three at £19.99 plus standard sheet 123 at £12.99, instead of the five standard Explorers at £12.99 each, so costing £8 less but only saving on one map to carry. But look out for special offers on the OS website.

You should be aware that older OS maps may show the VGW route incorrectly in places, and in the text we draw attention to these lapses or changes. If in doubt you should follow the route description rather than the map, but a map will be essential for finding places off route and for finding your way back to the route if you come off it accidentally, or have to make a diversion.

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Maps needed for each section of the Vanguard Way

		1:50,000 (Landranger)	1:25,000 (Explorer)
1	East Croydon to Chelsham	177, 187	146 161
2	Chelsham to Limpsfield Chart	187	146, 147
3	Limpsfield Chart to Haxted Mill	187	147
4	Haxted Mill to Forest Row	187	135, 147
5	Forest Row to Poundgate	187, 188	135
6	Poundgate to Blackboys	188, 199	123, 135
7	Blackboys to Golden Cross	199	123
8	Golden Cross to Berwick Station	199	123
9	Berwick Station to Exceat Bridge	199	123
10	Exceat Bridge to Newhaven	198, 199	123

See our website vanguardway.org.uk for a Map Key Diagram.

Other equipment

You are strongly advised to take a **compass**, and learn how to use it. It will be helpful in places where the exact line of the path may be unclear on the ground, especially in very large fields, where the spot you are heading for is not visible – this may also happen in misty conditions. In such places the route description includes a compass bearing to follow. There have also been instances of farmers planting tall crops across a public right of way, without reinstating its line, so that you may not be able to see whether you are heading in the right direction without a compass.

Many walkers like to carry a **walking stick** or one or two **walking poles**, as this gives stability on awkward ground, and can give an extra push on steep hills (there are many along the route) and long flights of steps (there are two in Section 9/B). Many walkers find them helpful when descending steep slopes. A stick or pole is also useful on overgrown paths to knock away nettles and brambles.

A **mapcase** or clear polythene bag can be helpful as it keeps your map open at the required section and keeps the rain off. With one that is transparent on both sides, you can also put in your route description so that this is visible on one side while the map can be seen on the other side.

The route descriptions can be downloaded as PDFs to a mobile device, but of course you will need a waterproof cover for it. If printing them out, we suggest you do so in booklet format to save paper and weight, though the maps would then have very small print.

In winter (or in summer if out late) you should always carry a **torch** in case you take longer than expected and finish in the dark.

You should carry a small but comprehensive **first aid kit** and some **water**. Other things to consider are: camera, packed lunch or snack and/or 'emergency rations', a whistle to attract attention in emergencies (six short blasts every minute).

SIGNS AND WAYMARKING

Waymarking of the Vanguard Way was mostly checked and maintained in 2023 but there are still some gaps, especially in the Ashdown Forest. Generally, it consists of discs attached to posts. Many of the discs are special Vanguard Way ones, which contain a coloured arrow with 'VANGUARD WAY' around the edge. Other discs are standard ones provided by the relevant highway authority, but all should have **VGW** at the centre. The colour of the arrow denotes the legal status of the path:

Public footpaths: yellow
Public bridleways: blue
Byways: red
Roads and open spaces with no right of way: white on black background

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In urban locations you may instead find metal fingers attached to posts, usually consisting of white text 'Vanguard Way' on a green background.

Images of the Vanguard Way signs are included on our website vanguardway.org.uk (click the 'Signs' button).

Note that there is no VGW waymarking on links with stations etc.

SAFETY

As with any walk in the countryside, there are potential hazards that you should be aware of, but it is largely a matter of using common sense.

Roads

We have tried to avoid road-walking as much as possible, but there are several sections where this is unavoidable. You should of course take great care when crossing roads.

In some places the route follows a **road with no pavement** (indicated '**NP**' in the route descriptions) and you should then take extra care. In general, the advice of the Highway Code for pedestrians is to follow the righthand side of the road as closely as possible and keep to single file.

However, at **righthand bends** this may not be advisable if you cannot see and be seen by approaching traffic, which may hug the bend. In these circumstances it is better, a little before the bend, to cross carefully to the left-hand side and stay there until you have passed the bend, then return to the right-hand side when safe to do so. Briefly, keep to the outside of bends on roads with no pavement.

If you have to walk in **poor visibility or darkness**, wear something light in colour - bright yellow or orange would be best - and use a torch, both to see in darkness and to advertise your existence to oncoming drivers.

For more information see gov.uk/highway-code under 'Rules for pedestrians'.

Other hazards

Barbed wire fences may be encountered beside rights of way and have the potential to cause injury or damage clothing – be especially careful if the path or track is slippery.

Stiles may be dilapidated or slippery, especially in wet weather – take care as you climb over.

Surfaces may be slippery in wet weather – take extra care when descending.

A walking stick or pole will help to keep your balance in all these circumstances.

Livestock may be encountered on farms; they should not cause any harm to humans, but always exercise caution, especially when cows are with calves and if you have a dog – put it on a lead and keep well away (see also 'Walking with dogs' above).

THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

The Countryside Code is available online here:
gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code.

It is promoted by Natural England for the benefit of users and landowners in rural areas, and we hope that all Vanguard Wayfarers will respect it. The main points are:

Respect everyone

- Be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking.
- Be nice, say hello, share the space.
- Follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available.

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Protect the natural environment

- Take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit.
- Don't light fires and only have BBQs where signs say you can.
- Always keep dogs under control and in sight.
- Dog poo – bag it and bin it in any public waste bin or take it home.
- Care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance.

Enjoy the outdoors

- Check your route and local conditions.
- Plan your adventure – know what to expect and what you can do.
- Enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory.

Also (not part of the Countryside Code but important advice nonetheless):

- Help to keep all water clean.
- Make no unnecessary noise.

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM THE VANGUARD WAY

The Vanguard Way is well served by public transport, and we hope you will try to use it to get to and from the route. In the route descriptions, points served by public transport are indicated by the symbols 🚌 and/or 🚆 followed by a summary of what is available. More detailed information is shown in the Vanguard Way Companion.

If you need transport to or from places that have no scheduled public transport, or where this is infrequent and times are inconvenient, you might consider hiring a local taxi - this need not be expensive if there are several people in your party. Information about taxis is included in the Vanguard Way Companion.

Not far away, and easily reached if you need their facilities, are the expanding towns of Oxted, Edenbridge, East Grinstead and Crowborough; while Brighton and Hove (given city status in 2001), Lewes (the county town of East Sussex) and the genteel seaside resort of Eastbourne lie just a short hop away by train from Berwick Station.

Visitors from other countries should note that the Vanguard Way can easily be reached as follows:

By train

Eurostar to St. Pancras International. The Thameslink train service goes from there direct to East Croydon (40 minutes), also Newhaven Town with a change of trains at Brighton (2 hours).

By air

London Gatwick is close to the route and has fast and frequent train connections to both East Croydon (22 minutes) and Newhaven Town (50 minutes, with a change of trains at Lewes or Brighton).
London Heathrow is linked with East Croydon station by the Superloop SL7 express bus service (1½ - 2 hours).
London Luton is linked with East Croydon station by the Thameslink train service (62 minutes).
London Stansted. You can **either**: (a) take the Stansted Express train to Tottenham Hale, then change to the London Underground (Victoria Line) to Victoria, then change there for a train to East Croydon - a journey of about 1½ - 2 hours, **or** (b) take a train from Stansted to Stratford, then London Underground (Jubilee Line) to London Bridge and train to East Croydon.
London City. Take the Docklands Light Railway to Canning Town, then London Underground (Jubilee Line) to London Bridge and train to East Croydon.

There are also many cheaper (but usually slower) coach services linking the airports with central London.

By sea

DFDS Seaways/LD Ferries from Dieppe to Newhaven. There is a frequent train service from Newhaven Town station, near the ferry terminal, to East Croydon (65 minutes, with a change of trains at Lewes or Brighton).

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A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AND TERRAIN

The Vanguard Way passes through some of the loveliest countryside in southern England, including a National Park, two National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) and a Heritage Coast. Most of the route lies in fields, woodland and heathland. Even though the VGW starts in the busy heart of Croydon, you quickly leave it behind and find yourself in the countryside. Soon you climb over the **North Downs**, part of the Surrey Hills National Landscape, with fine views and the highest point of the route at 262m (860 feet) above sea level.

Some gentle walking through farmland takes you across the M25 motorway, then more steady climbing leads into the wooded **Greensand Ridge** around Limpsfield Chart at 175m (574 feet) above sea level.

Next comes the undulating landscape of **The Weald**, which occupies most of the route. By turns it takes you through rich farmland and deciduous woodland, over low hills and across streams and small rivers that mostly feed the River Medway. It includes the Ashdown Forest, part of another National Landscape, the **High Weald -** one of the wildest areas of southern England, pervaded by a feeling of remoteness.

Towards the end, more great views beckon you onwards as you cross the **South Downs**, which became a national park in 2011. Finally, your efforts are richly rewarded on the last stretch, along the **Sussex Heritage Coast**, with invigorating sea air and three of the most spectacular views in Britain: of the meanders of the Cuckmere River, then of the pure white cliffs known as the Seven Sisters, towering high above the English Channel, and finally of Seaford and the Sussex coast from Seaford Head. **Note that the cliffs are slowly crumbling away – you should keep well away from the edge.**

The route has been designed to avoid major settlements as far as possible, but a few have been included for the sake of their facilities, and because they are interesting places to visit. You may be under the impression that Croydon is a good place to get away from as soon as possible, but it has some of the best transport connections in the southeast, offers excellent shopping and other facilities, and boasts a rich history with interesting buildings to match.

East Croydon is one of the busiest commuter stations in Britain, and the London Borough of Croydon is the largest in Greater London, with a population of 390,800 (2021 Census). But the Vanguard Way skilfully avoids towns thereafter, until it reaches the Sussex coast at Seaford, whose population of 22,585 makes it the second largest settlement along the route, followed by Newhaven with 12,854 in 2021. A little under halfway along, Forest Row, with 3,881 can perhaps claim to be a small town - or is it just a large village? Otherwise, the only settlements of any size that you will pass are Blackboys, Buxted and Alfriston - all with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. Though at least as many again may visit Alfriston during the course of a day in high season, as it is such a pretty and interesting place.

HISTORY OF THE AREA

Prehistory and early history

If you go back far enough, Britain was joined to the rest of Europe, and early humans easily found their way here, sometimes during periods of very warm climate. Fossilised hominid bones dating back 700,000 years have been found, as have those of woolly rhino, hippopotamus and mammoth.

After what is usually referred to as the last Ice Age (now more properly referred to as the Last Glacial Period, ending around 12,000 years ago), sea levels rose and a mega-tsunami finally severed the land bridge some eight to ten thousand years ago, then the newly-formed island of Britain started to develop its own culture. What is now southeast England was inhabited by successive waves of settlers of Celtic, Roman, Saxon and Norman origin. Although some historians maintain that Celtic genes are still strongly represented in the population of this area, it is the Saxons whose place names have left the deepest impression, such as Croydon, Selsdon, Farleigh, Chelsham, Woldingham, Haxted, Buxted, Chiddingly, Berwick and Alfriston.

The Romans were very active in this area, expanding the existing Iron Age mine workings in the Weald. The local Celtic tribe, the Regni, largely welcomed Roman culture with enthusiasm. The VGW encounters

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Roman roads three times, near Crockham Hill, in the Ashdown Forest and especially near Berwick Station where the route actually follows the line of a minor Roman road for 850 metres. Also, near Ripe, the VGW passes through a Roman farming settlement marked by a grid of straight boundaries corresponding to multiples of the Roman actus.

In Saxon times, Surrey was part of the kingdom of Middlesex (Middle Saxons). Its name was recorded in the 7th Century as either Sudergeona or Suthrige, depending on your source of information. Both mean 'South Region' (of Middlesex). Sussex literally means South Saxons, which was a separate kingdom, traditionally established by King Ælla in 477 AD (CE). Eventually Wessex (West Saxons) became the dominant kingdom, and this whole area became part of it in 825 AD (CE), ruled by Alfred the Great during its 'Golden Age' of the late 9th century. Presumably, there were no 'North Saxons', or we would have had a Nossex!

In 1066 the Norman Conquest brought a new administrative system, re-establishing Surrey and Sussex as administrative territories, called shires or counties, but ironically applying the Saxon term 'earl' to the nobleman in charge, and later 'sheriff' (shire-reeve). King William I ('the Conqueror') set about recording all the property of his new realm in the Domesday Book, which was completed in 1086, and settlements along the Vanguard Way with Saxon names can be found there.

During the Middle Ages, sheep farming became the most important economic activity throughout the region, but existing small industrial activities subsequently grew in importance.

The industrial period

Based on the contribution by Ian Mitchell to the first edition of the guidebook.

In clay areas of the central Weald, small depressions seen in woods may be the remains of ironstone diggings. Larger holes with ponds could be sites where marl and ironstone have been dug together. The iron industry began before the Roman occupation and flourished particularly from c.1500 AD (CE) until it ended c.1800 AD (CE).

Mining and the associated charcoal production was scattered, but smelting and forging had to be concentrated in stream valleys where dams provided water-power for bellows and hammers. Empty dams, large ponds and marshy ponds are common in the central Weald: a fine example is passed on the Vanguard Way at Tickerage (Section 6, TQ 515 211), and further examples exist close by at Scarletts (Section 4, TQ 442 400 and TQ 454 399) and Newbridge (Section 5, TQ 456 328). The output of the industry was mainly small items, although larger products such as cannon (the first Weald-produced cannon was made near Buxted in 1543), the railings of St. Paul's Cathedral and firebacks (an example of which can be seen at the Six Bells pub in Chiddingly) were also manufactured during the last century of the industry's existence in this area.

Recent history

Farming, forestry and tourism have become the dominant economic activities in this area, and much of the land traversed by the Vanguard Way consists of open fields. However, in 1839 the first passenger railway in this area was opened, and the subsequent expansion of the railway system had the greatest effect on culture and lifestyle. Much of southeast England became a dormitory for London, which is at most an hour or so away by train. Trains also made it possible for Londoners to visit these areas in their thousands. Most went to the seaside, including Seaford, Eastbourne and especially Brighton, or visited the charming villages, castles and stately homes. And the massive expansion of Gatwick Airport since 1958 has made this area easily accessible to visitors from abroad. But the 20th century saw an ever-increasing number of ramblers exploring the dense network of footpaths and bridleways that pervade these counties, and providing a steady income for transport, pubs, tea-rooms and food shops.

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FLORA, FAUNA AND GEOLOGY

We have published a separate document describing these interesting aspects of the Vanguard Way. It can be downloaded free from our website: click 'Directions & Maps' then scroll down to Section 10, under which you will find the link.

COMPLETED THE ROUTE?

We would very much like to hear from people who have completed the Vanguard Way, or if you have comments about any aspect of the route, our website or the free route guides.

When you complete the route (or even if you have done so in the past) you can get one or more certificates, for £2 to cover postage, by providing details of your itinerary (dates and start/finish points). (An image of the certificate can be seen on our website vanguardway.org.uk, click 'Completed Route?')

Please let us know by emailing vgway@vanguardway.org.uk indicating the dates and starting/finishing points for each leg of your walk.

THE VANGUARD WAY BADGE

You can commemorate your walk with the colourful Vanguard Way badge, designed by Barry Saunders, for just £5.00 each plus £1.00 postage. Details of how to obtain it can be found on our website vanguardway.org.uk, click 'Completed Route?).

FACEBOOK

Feel free to contribute to our Facebook page: Search 'Vanguard Way Association'.

CONTACT US

For certificates and badges: vgway@vanguardway.org.uk.
For all other matters: chair@vanguardway.org.uk.
Or you can write to: Colin Saunders, 35 Gerrards Close, Oakwood, London, N14 4RH.

HISTORY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE VANGUARD WAY

In the late 1960s, national trails started to appear in England, and the Vanguard Rambling Club's David Wright suggested that we should have our own trail, but what has become the Vanguard Way was formally proposed by Alan Smith in 1979. Negotiations with local authorities and landowners to establish the route and provide signage were coordinated by Graham Butler, who was subsequently appointed Route Manager. When he died in 2018, this role was taken on by Colin Saunders and, since 2023, John Jefkins MBE has taken on this role.

A 48-page printed guidebook to the trail, compiled by Graham Butler, was published in 1980, with help from Angela Bellwood, Janet Butler, Les Douglas, Colin Saunders, Alan Smith and others; covers were designed by David Wright, and maps and diagrams created by Colin Hills. Updated printed editions were published in 1986 and 1997. In 2009 the Vanguard Way website was created, and the printed book was replaced by a free online edition in PDF format, in ten sections, as well as a separate Introduction to the Route and a comprehensive Companion, with details of accommodation, refreshment and other facilities along the route. In 2011 a separate south to north version of the route guide was published. All were written by Colin Saunders and designed by Brian Bellwood. In 2014 a Flora, Fauna and Geology supplement was written by Ian Mitchell, Gill Reader and Alan Smith. In total, all these guides run to 346 pages!

All this time, administration of the route was undertaken informally by the Vanguard Way Working Party, formed of members of the Vanguard Rambling Club. But on 28th May 2022 the Vanguard Way Association

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was established to take over management from the Club, with Colin Saunders as Chair. Its Vice Chair, John Jefkins, is now also the Route Manager.

Membership of the Vanguard Way Association is open to all who have walked or wish to support the trail on payment of a fee – details are provided on our website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are most grateful to the following people, organisations, publications and websites for their help in creating and maintaining the route and in compiling the guides to the Vanguard Way.

All those mentioned above and others have contributed with research, route checking and other work over the years, including: Catherine Ames, Frank Barker, Fiona Barltrop, Mike Biggs, Robert Brown, Alex Burrow, Catherine Butler, Sarah Butler, Ian Campbell, Peter Clegg, David Cockle, Sue Cockle, Graham Collett, Hazel Collett, Gareth Davies, Pam Deverill, Steve Deverill, 'Diamond Geezer', David Dowsett, Sheila Dowsett, Pat Edwards, Diana Gerard, Jenice Hartley, Michael Hartley, Alan Harwood, Mike Herniman, Tania Herniman, Neil Higham, John Hobbs, Pat Hobbs, Bob Hope, Veronica Hope, John Jefkins, John Jenkins, Nancy Johns, Tessa Kennedy, Michael Kohn, Stuart Mills, Anthony Mitchell, Henry Page, William Ramsey, Brian Reader, Keith Rix, Ken Royce, David Secker, Lesley Secker, Chris Smith, Geoffrey Stevenson, Helen Walker, Stuart Walker, Andrew Ward, Penny Wiles and Linda Wright.

We very much appreciate the time taken by Kate Ashbrook and Alan Mattingly to launch and relaunch the route on various occasions, and the publicity given to the Vanguard Way by many publications and websites.

The Vanguards Rambling Club especially wishes to thank officers of the London Borough of Croydon, Surrey County Council, Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, South Downs National Park Authority, Kent & Surrey Golf & Country Club, and the multitude of landowners, all of whom have helped to arrange waymarking of the route and sort out the little niggles that can occur when setting up and maintaining a route of this kind.

We greatly appreciate the help with the route from members of the Ramblers, the Long Distance Walkers Association and the Open Spaces Society.

In recent years, sections of the Vanguard Way have been used for foot racing, and while the passage of hundreds of fast feet can cause damage to the surface, the organisers have recognised this by making donations to the Vanguards Rambling Club to help with its work on the route, and in other ways.

We are also grateful to the following people and organisations for their help and interest:

Croydon Archives, Downlands Project, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Alfriston & Cuckmere Valley Historical Society, English Heritage, Forest Row Parish Council, Friends of the Cuckmere, Friends of Littleheath Wood, Friends of Selsdon Wood, Friends of Tidemills, Holiday Fellowship, Newhaven's Museum, Per-Rambulations, RH7 History Group, RiverOcean, Seaford Museum and Heritage Society, Surrey Museums and many walking clubs.

Last but not least, we are grateful to the many people who have sent us comments and suggestions after walking the route.

Sources of reference for various items of interest mentioned in the Commentary sections of the route guides include:

Alfriston (Ronald M. Boyd, Picture-Craft, 1970);
Around Haunted Croydon (Frances D. Stewart, AMCD, 1989);
Ashdown Forest leaflet (Friends of Ashdown Forest, undated);
Ashdown Forest Perambulation (Terry Owen and Peter Anderson, Per-Rambulations, 2006);
Aspects of Alfriston (Patricia Berry and Peter Longstaff-Tyrrell, 2006);
British Birds (Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves, A & C Black, 2002);
**Buildings of England, The: South London* (Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, Penguin, 1983);

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*_Buildings of England, The: Surrey_ (Ian Nairn, Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, Penguin, 1971);
*_Buildings of England, The: West Kent and the Weald_ (John Newman, after Nikolaus Pevsner, Penguin, 1976);
*_Buildings of England, The: Sussex_ (Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, Penguin, 1965);
Chiddingly Village Walk (Chiddingly Women's Institute, 1977);
Chyngton Farm Walk (Chyngton Women's Institute, undated);
Coombe, Shirley and Addington Living History Guide and Trail (editor Brian J. Salter, Living History Publications, 1974);
Croydon - a Pictorial History (John B. Gent, Phillimore, 1991);
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Fortifications of East Sussex, The (Anne Yarrow, East Sussex County Council, 1979);
Historic Newhaven (Newhaven Town Council website);
History of the Newhaven Bridge, A (The Bridge Press, 1974);
History Trail of the Town and Cinque Port of Seaford (Edna and Mac McCarthy, Lindel, undated);
Introduction to the History of Seaford, An (Seaford Museum of Local History, undated);
Newhaven and Seaford Coastal Fortifications (R.J. Goulden and A. Kemp, 1974);
Notable Sussex Women (Helena Wojtczak, Hastings Press, 2008);
Place Names of Kent, The (Judith Glover, B.T. Batsford, 1976);
Place Names of Sussex, The (Judith Glover, B.T. Batsford, 1975);
Roman Roads of Surrey (Alex Vincent, Middleton Press, 2001);
Roman Roads of Sussex (Alex Vincent, Middleton Press, 2000);
Seaford Official Guide;
Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve (Jack Penry-Jones, Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, 1978);
Westerham and Crockham Hill Guide (Westerham Parish Council, 1980);
Wikipedia.

* The **Buildings of England** series is recognised as the definitive guide to the nation's architectural heritage. Colloquially referred to as 'Pevsner', the relevant books for the counties traversed by the Vanguard Way have provided valuable information for our guide. Nikolaus Pevsner was born in 1902 in Leipzig, Germany and was an academic at various German universities. As a Jew, he was forced to leave the country in 1933 and settled in England, where he continued his academic career. He became a British citizen in 1946 and was knighted in 1969. He is best known for his monumental series on English architecture, originally published by Penguin Books, on which he started work in 1945. Most were written by Pevsner alone, but later volumes were joint efforts and a few were completely delegated to others. He died in 1983, but the series has continued to be updated, now by Yale University Press. For more details see yalebooks.co.uk/pevsner.asp. Pevsner was very forthright when he considered some buildings, or parts of them, to be of poor architectural merit, and we have reproduced his acerbic comments where relevant.

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BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Colin Saunders is the author of the online route guides to the Vanguard Way. He has also written the following:

The Capital Ring (Aurum Press) - 78 mile 'inner ring' walk around London.

The London Loop (Aurum Press) – 150 mile 'outer ring' walk around London.

The North Downs Way (Aurum Press) – 153 mile national trail from Farnham to Dover.

The Pymmes Brook Trail (Footline Press) – a surprisingly green 13-mile route across north-east London.

Rambling Away From the Smoke (Footline Press) – the history of the ramblers' excursions from London.

The Strollerthon Story (Footline Press) – an event that raised £4 million for children's charities.

The Waymark Story – the history of Waymark Holidays (free download from author's website).

Walking in the High Tatras (Cicerone Press, with Renáta Nárožná) - a spectacular range of mountains straddling the border between Poland and Slovakia.

* *London - the definitive walking guide* (Cicerone Press) – directory of walking opportunities in London.

* *Navigation and Leadership - a manual for walkers* (Ramblers' Association).

* These publications are now out of print, but may be available online e.g Amazon or eBay.

In 2020, Colin published his first novel entitled 'Fifty Paces Forward!', a sort of romantic comedy based on the somewhat farcical antics of a group of walkers.

In preparation:

The Salmons Brook Trail

Enfields of the World United!

For further details please visit colinsaunders.org.uk.

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