THE VANGUARD WAY

(SOUTH TO NORTH)

A different experience in the other direction!

SECTION F
Poundgate to Forest Row

Third edition (2025)

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE GUIDE

SECTION F
Poundgate to Forest Row

COLIN SAUNDERS

Third Edition (South-North) 2025
Version 3.0

This third edition of the south-north route description was first published in 2025 and replaces the 1st edition published in 2011 and the 2nd edition published in 2017. It is only available as an online resource.

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To find out about any changes to the route, please visit www.vanguardway.org.uk and click on the 'latest news' button. Or visit our Facebook page (Vanguard Way Association)

Colin Saunders asserts his right to be identified as the author of this work. Whilst the information contained in this guide was believed to be correct at the time of writing, the author and publishers accept no responsibility for the consequences of any inaccuracies. However, we shall be pleased to receive your comments and information of alterations for consideration. Please email colin@vanguardway.org.uk or write to Colin Saunders, 35 Gerrards Close, Oakwood, London, N14 4RH, England.

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SECTION F: POUNDGATE TO FOREST ROW
11.3km (7.0 miles)

Distances from Poundgate to:

Kings Standing car park	2.5km	(1.5 miles)	
Gills Lap car park	4.0km	(2.5 miles)	
>Coleman's Hatch (Hatch Inn)	6.6km	(4.1 miles)	(diverting at Newbridge)
Forest Row (bus)	11.3km	(7.0 miles)	
East Grinstead (via Forest Way)	17.3km	(10.7 miles)	

Public transport

Buses at Poundgate, Coleman's Hatch and Forest Row. Link to trains at East Grinstead. The Flexibus service operated by East Sussex County Council may be able to help in places that are poorly served by public transport: for details search 'East Sussex Flexibus' or phone 01273 078203 (Monday to Saturday 06.30 to 19.30).

Abbreviations and symbols

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		

= Bus = Cafés etc = Toilets

= Train = Pubs = Phone box

= Taxi = Accommodation

= Take extra care – see below

Route overview

The VGW passes through some of its best and most isolated scenery with a route through the Ashdown Forest that involves several long ascents and descents. It is mostly heathland, with extensive views, abundant heather, and rather too much bracken as this was being severely cut back at the time of writing. From Poundgate the route drops into the valley of streams that feed the Medway in wild, open country then climbs to Kings Standing. A level walk takes you to Gills Lap, where you are in Winnie-the-Pooh country, to pass Pooh's 'enchanted place' and 'heffalump trap'. Then you descend again into a valley at the hamlet of Newbridge, the heart of a pre-Roman and Roman iron industry. Climbing again, you skirt the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course, crossing some of the fairways, then finally drop down into Forest Row.

Until 2024, VGW signage across the Ashdown Forest was very sparse as the Conservators refused to let us instal posts for our discs. In 2024 they had a change of heart and allowed us to instal more posts, so the situation has considerably improved. However, there are still some gaps, so you need to concentrate on the route description and map.

Lowest point: Forest Row (59m). Highest point: south of Gills Lap (217m).

How to use this guide

Paragraphs are numbered for ease of reference. Please note that this South-North version uses the same numbering system for locations along the route as the original North-South version, so they appear to run in reverse order, i.e. in this section from F(6.1) to F(5.1). (The individual route description paragraphs in this

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South-North section are preceded by the letter F to distinguish them from the North-South versions.)

The route is marked on Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps, though you should note that in some places the route has changed and is incorrectly marked on some older maps - we draw your attention to specific instances where relevant. Maps showing the correct route are appended to this route guide. 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.

In this route guide:

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 blue 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.

Distances and altitudes are given 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. To roughly convert metres to feet, multiply by three and add 10 per cent.

⊗ **- Walking on roads and other potential hazards**
When walking, one should of course take care in all sorts of potentially hazardous situations, but especially when crossing or walking along roads. **Please read the 'Safety' chapter in our Introduction to the Route, which can be downloaded from our website vanguardway.org.uk.** We use this symbol ⊗ to draw your attention to situations that require extra care.

'**NP**' in the route description indicates that the road has no pavement or other provision for pedestrians. 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 light, luminous or reflective on top, and carry a torch.

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. It contains important information that will be helpful when reading this route description.

ALL INFORMATION SHOWN IS SUBJECT TO ALTERATION WITHOUT NOTICE

This third edition of the South-North version of the Route Description is based on a completely new survey undertaken by members of the Vanguard Way Association in 2023.

Inevitably changes to the route and facilities will occur, and we try to keep abreast of them. It is our

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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 vanguardway.org.uk for any changes that may have taken place meanwhile. You might also like to join our Facebook page, where news of developments affecting the Vanguard Way will be posted – just search Vanguard Way Association. Another way would be to join the Association, as members are kept up to date through the bi-monthly VGW News – details on our website.**

We will always be pleased to hear about any changes you may find, in which case please email route@vanguardway.org.uk.

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 (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 Forest Row' in the search box, then the map will highlight locations together with website links if available.

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 route@vanguardway.org.uk.

Section F of the Vanguard Way (South-North) starts at Poundgate *[TQ 492 289]*
50m west of the Crow & Gate pub on the A26 Uckfield Road. This is in Wealden District in East Sussex.

🚌 *Bus services operate along this road between Tunbridge Wells, Eridge Station, Crowborough, Uckfield, Lewes and Brighton. They stop by (or opposite) the phone box just 50m west of the Crow & Gate pub.*

☎ *By bus stop layby.*

🍺 *The Crow & Gate Inn.*

F(6.1) [TQ 492 289]

a) Continuing from Section E, cross ⊗ very busy A26 Rd and TL for 150m, passing Old Toll Cottage. (From Crow & gate car park, TR for 200m.). The pavement is narrow, so you should walk single file.
b) TR just before Old Bell House on wide Tk among trees, passing low wooden barrier.
c) At Tk junction bear half L on Tk going downhill, with more trees and Tk junction on your L, for 550m to foot of hill. *The town of Crowborough lies on high ground away to your R, with* ***Crowborough Beacon*** *at the highest point. Prominent on your R ahead is Crabtree Farm.*

***You have now entered the Ashdown Forest**. With certain exceptions, walkers may go where they wish but please observe the Countryside Code (see 'Introduction to the Route') and respect the Ashdown Forest bye-laws, especially:*

- *No person shall camp in cars, caravans, tents or sleeping-bags.*
- *No vehicles are allowed in the Forest away from public highways except in the car parks provided.*
- *No person shall wilfully obstruct or interfere with persons lawfully playing golf, cricket or bowls in the areas set aside for such sports.*

There is always a risk of fire, especially in summer when dead wood and bracken lies like a carpet in many areas. You must take great care not to drop smouldering cigarette ends or still burning matches.

The VGW route here was prepared with the kind help of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, but waymarking is still incomplete at time of writing.

►►

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As parts of the route through the Ashdown Forest are inaccurately shown on some OS maps, you should stick closely to our route description.

The paths followed through the Ashdown Forest can be very wet and muddy after prolonged rain.

F(5.14) [TQ 485 293]

a) Cross streams (feeding the River Medway) then KA on broad Tk uphill. As you ascend, several prominent structures should become visible on the surrounding hillsides, though some may be obscured by summer foliage. The building on your R near the streams is New Pond Cottage. The prominent white house in the distance to your R is believed to be Buckhurst House, near Withyham, home of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset. On the hillside ahead, the building with a brown-tiled roof is ***Greenwood Gate***. The radio mast away to your L stands on the site of Crowborough Radio Station.

b) Just past the brow of the hill is a junction of several tracks grouped around two grassy triangles. Ignore the first triangle, then at the second bear half L, ignore first Tk on L then take the second one as it too swings L through trees.

F(5.13) *[TQ 480 299]*

a) Follow Tk along spur for 400m, passing ***Kings Standing Clump*** on your R, to reach a low stone plinth with information panel at Kings Standing Car Park.

b) Go half R through car park to Rd junction *(B2026 High Road and B2188 Black Hill).*

There is sometimes an ice-cream van here, with seats nearby.

F(5.12) *[TQ 473 301]*

a) TR to cross B2188 ⊗, then KA along B2026 (in direction of Hartfield), using grass verge on the R.

b) In 175m, at Pines car park, bear slightly R past barrier then bear L to follow broad ride parallel with Rd.

c) In 200m KA at crossing Tk.

*The crossing Tk is on the line of a **Roman road**, and also carries the Wealdway – the final encounter between the two routes.*

F(5.11) *[TQ 471 305]*

a) KA for another 800m, still parallel with Rd.

b) At end of ride descend to TL along Tk, forking R, then immediately before Rd fork R again to rejoin B2026 *(now called Chuck Hatch Road)* a little north of its junction with Kidds Hill.

c) Cross Rd diagonally R ⊗ then KA along Tk (signed 'horse route') between low concrete blocks. *(Gills Lap car park and an information panel on a stone plinth are to your L.)*

There may be an ice-cream van in the car park, with seats nearby.

F(5.10) *[TQ 467 315]*

a) At log barrier bear R along broad ride to pass seat *at Tk junction (this is where the VGW was formally launched on 3rd May 1981).*

b) In 250m reach ***Gills Lap Clump*** *(the 'enchanted place' in Chapter 10 of 'Winnie the Pooh'. Note red sandstone **trig point** up to your R, with seat nearby.*

F(5.9) *[TQ 468 319]*

a) KA along broad ride for 210m to junction of broad rides. *(On your L is a glade with **Winnie the Pooh Memorial**, an excellent picnic spot with seating and a grand view.)*

b) Turn sharp L along broad ride curving L for 350m to another junction of rides. *(If you wish to visit Pooh's **Heffalump Trap** TL up slope for 40m.)*

c) TR downhill for 350m, ignoring cross Tk halfway down.

F(5.8) *[TQ 462 322]*

a) On reaching trees bear L on Tk for 250m.

b) 60m after Tk bears L, TR down ride among trees and follow it downhill for 600m, passing horse training paddock, then between hedge and woods, to Rd *(Chuck Hatch Lane).* ► ►

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c) TL to cross FB beside ford ***(The Splash)*** to Rd junction *(Kidds Hill)* at ***Newbridge***.
d) TR on Rd **NP** for 100m *(passing Grade II listed Moss Cottage on your L and Grade II listed Newbridge Mill down to your R. to cross bridge and stream.*

*For the Grade II listed Hatch Inn KA here for 800m along the road (**NP**) with care.*

Buses serve the Hatch Inn (except Sundays) en route between East Grinstead, Forest Row, Wych Cross, Uckfield, East Hoathly, Golden Cross and Hailsham. Another daily route stops on the B2110 en route between Crawley, East Grinstead, Forest Row and Tunbridge Wells. For this, continue past the Hatch Inn, fork left at the green, then fork left again downhill for 300m to the church.

F(5.7) *[TQ 455 327]*
Note that the VGW route has changed here to take advantage of a new track.
a) Immediately after the bridge, TL between fences.
b) Ascend winding Tk between gardens (very steep in places, may be muddy).
c) At top (by gate of house) TL on grit drive for 50m (rejoining the original route) then, when drive bears L, KA on rising grass/dirt Tk, which soon also bears L.
d) In 70m at junction TR up broad ride.
e) In 300m at top, as ride bears L, bear R on narrow Fp through trees.
f) Path soon continues along R side of cricket pitch.
g) At pavilion TL along tarmac lane then immediately TR.
h) KA past car park of bowling club, ignoring Tk to L, and KA among bushes to follow rising Tk which bends sharp R around two sides of bowling green, then swings L to reach ***Coleman's Hatch Road*** *(aka The Ridge Road).*

F(5.6) *[TQ 447 330]*
a) Cross Rd ⊗ and KA on Tk.
b) In 40m TL on broad ride parallel with Rd *(this may be the line of a Roman road serving mine-workings nearby).*
c) In 200m reach junction.

*A diversion can be made here by following the ride ahead, roughly parallel with the Rd, for 1.5km to the **Ashdown Forest Centre**.*

At the Ashdown Forest Centre.

Ashdown Park Hotel (www.ashdownpark.com) is close to the Ashdown Forest Centre, and there is more accommodation at Wych Cross, 1.5km further along Coleman's Hatch Road – see VGW Companion.

d) To continue on VGW, TR down broad ride for just over 1km.
e) At foot of hill bear L to cross small stream in dip.

*The next stretch passes through the **Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course**, where you will encounter several golf tees, greens and fairways. You should always take great care, watch out for approaching golf balls and allow golfers to finish their stroke before continuing.*

F(5.5) *[TQ 441 341]*
a) Approaching golf green bear R along Fp (becoming Tk) into trees then beside fairway and more trees.
b) KA at crossing Tk, then pass house with garage, and continue to descend Tk among trees beside fairway.
c) On reaching fairways KA on Tk across ford (use FB if necessary) then rise to cross tarmac drive.
⊗ ***Watch out****: first to your R for golfers teeing off, then to your L for golfers playing towards the green.*
d) Continue along stony Tk veering L then R, crossing drive, with trees and boundary fence to your R.
e) On emerging from trees, cross sandy/stony Tk in fairway *(⊗ **beware** tee on R)* and KA to pass between trees. ► ►

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f) Cross another sandy/stony Tk in another fairway *(⊗ **beware** tee on L)* then follow grassy Tk to R of trees.
g) Briefly join gravel Tk beside pond.

F(5.4) *[TQ 435 342]*
a) On far side of pond immediately TR and TL to follow narrow, twisting Fp into trees, parallel with fairway, and ignoring gaps and side turnings.
b) At junction KA then shortly take R fork and descend to lane *(Post Horn Lane)* by bench seat.
c) TR on lane for 80m to cross stream to junction (Little Shalesbrook).
d) TL *(Primrose Lane)* and ascend past cottages.
e) At top KA up gravel Tk leading to house called ***Fernroyd***.

F(5.3) *[TQ 432 344]*
a) KA across tarmac parking area to ascend rough Fp for 45m.
b) At top cross tarmac drive then KA on grass between golf tee and hedge of ***Warren Heights*** *(note wooden VGW sign low on fence)* into trees.
c) In 90m KA at another drive.
d) Follow narrow Fp along edge of woodland beside shallow ditch and fence, past gate of Woodfield House then keeping L at fork.
e) On reaching tarmac drive, by bench below tall tree, TR on Fp *(note second wooden VGW sign low on L)*

F(5.2) *[TQ 429 343]*.
a) Descend to top of Rd *(Chapel Lane)* and KA downhill, using L-hand pavement.
b) Pass *Park Road*, then in 170m (where L-hand pavement ends) TL to follow narrow Fp, which angles between fences.
c) Cross private Rd *(Ashdown Road)* and KA along Fp diagonally across green.
d) Just before reaching School Lane bear R across grass to use zebra crossing over B2110 Hartfield Road.

☎ *In Community Centre – see below.*

e) TL on far side for 250m (passing Community Centre – the school building nearby is Grade II listed) to junction with *Station Road* where Section F of the VGW (South-North) ends beside Co-op store in ***Forest Row*** at point:

F(5.1) *[TQ 426 350]*

🚌 *For the main bus stops, KA along Hartfield Road past shops and restaurants, then just before the traffic lights TR down Hillside (side road) keeping right of the Village Hall, past more shops. This joins A22 London Road, where the bus stop opposite (outside the Brambletye Hotel) serves routes to East Grinstead, Three Bridges, Crawley and London, while the stop to your L outside the Chequers Inn* serves routes to Haywards Heath, Coleman's Hatch, Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne, also (not Sundays) to Uckfield, Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and Brighton. *Note that these buses also stop near point F(5.1) above.*

Ž *A taxi from Forest Row to Edenbridge was advertised as costing £6.80 in May 2016.*

🚆 *For the link to East Grinstead station continue along Section G of the VGW (South-North).*

🍺☕ *There are several pubs and cafés in the town centre ahead along Hartfield Road – see VGW Companion. The Riverview Café is 285m along Station Road in Section G.*

ã *In Forest Row and East Grinstead – see VGW Companion.*

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

F(6.1)

The **Ashdown Forest** is one of the wildest and most beautiful areas in southern England, a large tract of open heath and woods, now covering some 2,400 hectares (6,000 acres) but once much larger. However, William Cobbett, the celebrated author of 'Rural Rides', described it as 'a heath with here and there a few birch scrubs upon it, verily the most villainously ugly spot I ever saw in England' - how attitudes change!

The Forest is protected from development in several ways, as part of the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and as a Specially Protected Area. Now owned by East Sussex County Council, it is further protected and administered by the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, whose offices are at the Ashdown Forest Centre, Wych Cross, about 1½km off route - this also contains a small but interesting museum and an information centre. The Conservators include the Earl de la Warr (the previous owner), representatives of East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council and local commoners who may still exercise ancient rights such as grazing of animals.

There is evidence of occupation during the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, covering 50 millennia. This area was part of the Celtic kingdom of the Atrebates, who made inroads into the forest, especially in the valley that the VGW crosses at Newbridge, to mine iron and make charcoal. At the time of the Roman invasion (43 CE (AD)) Cogidubnus, King of the Atrebates, co-operated with the Romans, who expanded and accelerated the iron industry. They established an administrative centre in an existing Atrebatian hill fort, nowadays called Garden Hill, on Windy Ridge near Newbridge.

The name Ashdown is apparently Saxon, and the earliest record is 1234 as Ashendon, or later Ashdoune, which is usually translated as Ashen Hill, but may have come from Eska's Hill, possibly after a local chieftain. The word 'forestis' was Medieval Latin meaning unfenced woodland, but in past times was more often applied to areas used for hunting than woodland. This was once part of a great forest (in the modern sense) covering much of southeast England, which the Romans called Sylva Anderida and the Saxons adapted as Andredsweald. In 731 CE (AD) the great historian, Bede, described it as 'thick and inaccessible, a retreat for herds of deer and swine', and there is evidence too of wild cats, wolves and even bears. Nowadays much of the inland parts of Kent and Sussex are more generally known as just The Weald.

While the iron industry continued to prosper, in 1265 the forest was enclosed as a royal hunting ground, ringed by a great fence and ditch to keep the deer in, with gates whose names can still be located on a map, as either gate (large) or hatch (small): the VGW passes by or near Coleman's Hatch, Pound Gate and Barns Gate. Hunting lodges were provided throughout the area, and in the early 14th century King Edward II built a palace, now completely disappeared, somewhere near Nutley on the western boundary. In 1372 the Forest was acquired by John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, and became known as Lancaster Great Park; at that time it covered some 5,700 hectares, more than twice its present size. In 1561 the forest came under the control of the Earls (later Dukes) of Dorset.

During the late 18th century the iron industry here dwindled and died, partly due to lack of ironstone and timber (the Ashdown Forest had been denuded of most of its tree cover), partly as a result of new techniques developed elsewhere, such as the Midlands and Forest of Dean, where coal was plentiful. Because of its remoteness and depopulation, the area became a haunt of smugglers and highwaymen. In 1825 the estate passed into the hands of the De la Warr family, heirs to the Dukes of Dorset, and they retained control until 1988, when East Sussex County Council acquired it. In 1885 a Board of Conservators was established, and Earl de la Warr continues to represent the family as a Conservator.

There are several large copses in the forest, known as clumps, predominantly of Scots pine (e.g. Gills Lap Clump, Kings Standing Clump - both on the VGW), which were planted as landscape features in the early 19th century, often on the site of hunting lodges. You may catch fleeting glimpses of deer: roe deer are natives, but fallow deer (introduced by the Romans and Normans) are now more common. You may also

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see sika or the diminutive muntjac, both introduced from Asia. Never approach them, especially during the rutting season (July-August and October-November) when the males may become aggressive.

Crowborough Beacon is one of the highest points in Sussex, variously indicated as 240 or 242 metres (787 or 793 feet) above sea level. Unfortunately it has now been entirely built over by the expanding town of Crowborough and the actual summit is inaccessible to the public. However, it has the dubious distinction of being the only urban Marilyn in Britain. The waggish term 'Marilyns' was coined by the writer and climber Alan Dawson, who defines them as 'any hill that has a drop of at least 150 metres on all sides, regardless of distance, absolute height or topographical merit'. There are over 1,500 such hills in Britain. The name was inspired by the film star Marilyn Monroe (need we say more?) to distinguish such hills from the mountainous and more commonly 'bagged' Munros that were named after the Scottish mountaineer Sir Hugh Munro.

F(5.14)
Until the late 1980s **Crowborough Radio Station** contained several huge aerials, some reaching over 120m high. Built by Canadian forces during the Second World War, at that time they formed the largest medium wave transmitter in the world. Initially operated by MI6, the installation was code-named Aspidistra (from the Gracie Fields song 'The Biggest Aspidistra in the World'). It was the base for 'Soldatensender Calais', a pseudo-German radio station established by the Special Operations Executive under the direction of Sefton Delmer, for the purpose of broadcasting malicious propaganda to German forces. The station was later used by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for official worldwide communications, and for the BBC World Service. It is now a training area for Sussex Police.

Greenwood Gate marks the site of yet another gate to the fenced Ashdown Forest. Formerly a private home built in the 1920s, the house is now the UK headquarters of the Rosicrucian Order (www.amorc.org.uk), a worldwide, non-profit-making organisation with cultural and fraternal objectives: 'to enable everyone to live in harmony with the creative, constructive and cosmic forces for the attainment of health, happiness and peace'.

F(5.13)
Kings Standing Clump is said to have been the place where King Edward II hid while hunting deer; a standing was a place from which to shoot game. It is also the site of New Lodge, a 16th century royal hunting lodge. There are signs of occupation in prehistoric, iron age and medieval periods. Here the predominant vegetation of the Forest changes: the bracken in the wetter western part gives way to heather and gorse in the more acid soils in the drier eastern part.

F(5.12)
This **Roman road** is known to historians, somewhat blandly, as the London to Lewes Way, as they don't know what the Romans called it. Nevertheless, as it effectively connected London with Newhaven, we could claim that the VGW is its modern equivalent! It will be encountered again on Section H of the VGW (South-North).

The road (Margary's number 14 – see Section B) branched off Watling Street (Dover to London and Wroxeter) at Deptford, then ran in a south-easterly direction through Edenbridge and the Ashdown Forest (where it encounters the VGW again) to a presumed fort in the neighbourhood of Lewes, where merchandise could have been transferred to ships navigating the River Ouse to the sea. Frustratingly, no evidence has yet been discovered for such a fort, though it has been suggested that it may have been called Mutuantonis or Mantuantonis. The road's main purpose was probably to serve the iron workings and farms of the Weald.

F(5.10)
Gills Lap (sometimes spelled Gill's Lap) is one of the highest points of the Ashdown Forest, at 204m (669 feet), and of the VGW, so stop and admire the view back. On a clear day you can see the South Downs to your left and the Greensand Ridge to your right. This is almost exactly halfway along the Vanguard Way. On 3rd May 1981, Alan Mattingly, National Secretary of the Ramblers' Association, formally opened the VGW here, so if you happen to be here on an anniversary of that auspicious occasion, you may buy a celebratory ice cream at the car park, or a pint at the Crow and Gate (see F(5.14)).

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Gills Lap was reputedly named after a local landowner (Gill) and Old English 'hlaep' (leap), a place where deer leaped. A 50,000-year-old stone hand axe was found near here, and there is evidence of occupation during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

You are now deep in 'Pooh country', inhabited by that bear of little brain, Winnie-the-Pooh, and his friends, whose adventures are described in the stories by A.A. Milne. The Ashdown Forest and its surroundings provided the inspiration for most of them, and towards the end of *The House at Pooh Corner* Gills Lap is immortalised as 'Galleons Leap', the 'enchanted place' where Christopher Robin knights 'Sir Pooh, the most faithful of all my knights'. Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) lived at Cotchford Farm (shown on Explorer maps at TQ 476 345) just 3km north of the VGW off the road to Hartfield, and published *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) for the amusement of his son, Christopher Robin Milne (1920-1996), who also features in the stories and in several children's songs of the period.

Trig point is the commonly used abbreviation for what is formally known in the UK as a triangulation pillar. Confusingly, 'trig' comes from trigonometry, but in effect both words mean calculating distances by means of triangles. Over 7,000 of them were erected by the Ordnance Survey (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) in the late 1930s throughout the UK, so that in clear weather at least two others could be seen from any one trig point, to assist with accurate measurement of distances. Most trig points are situated at high points (typically on the summits of hills or mountains) but some are just a few metres above sea level. Most are made of concrete (though unusually the one at Gills Lap is of red sandstone). A brass plate with three arms and hooks is fixed to the top to provide a secure mounting for a theodolite (an instrument for measuring angles). On the side are the letters OSBM (Ordnance Survey Bench Mark) followed by the reference number of the trig point. Accurate measurements are nowadays made by satellite and trig points have been made redundant, though many have been adopted by local societies and other bodies to preserve them for heritage. The trig point at Gills Lap is at altitude 204m (669 feet). Two more trig points are passed along the VGW: at Dry Hill on Section G and at Gaywood on Section H. We would be pleased to learn if any of them have been adopted.

F(5.9)
The memorial is for A.A. Milne (see above) and his illustrator E.H. Shepard. The **Heffalump Trap** features in Winnie-the-Pooh, where Pooh and Piglet attempt to capture a 'heffalump' (elephant), without success, though Pooh ends up getting trapped in it himself. The term is now used to describe a trap that catches the person who set it.

F(5.8)
The ford is known locally as **The Splash**. The stream is called Steel Forge River, though we like to think of it as the Poohsticks Stream, as 2km downstream it passes under the famous Pooh Sticks Bridge of the A.A. Milne stories (see above). It rises from several springs in the forest to the south and west and flows down to the River Medway near Hartfield. We are grateful to the creators of the Ashdown Forest Perambulation (see F(5.7) below) for the following information:

'There is now no surface trace of the Steel Forge. It is thought to have been about a mile away to the right-hand side of the road. It operated in the 1500s but [was] probably abandoned by 1574. More important was Newbridge Mill on the river just to the left of the road. It was here in 1496 when the mill was built that the English iron industry was revolutionised by the then cutting edge of technology with the introduction of the blast furnace. The mill was set up by one Henry Fyner, goldsmith of Southwark, to produce iron for the king's (Henry VII) Scottish campaign. Much of this would have been for cannon balls that were taking over from gunstones: literally stones that were used for ammunition.'

The quiet hamlet of **Newbridge** must have been noisier and smellier in earlier times, as this was at the heart of a busy iron-producing area. Just off to the left as you walk along the road is Newbridge Mill. It has the remains of the dam and spillway of the oldest iron-furnace in Sussex, dating from at least 1497, when one Simon Ballarde was recorded as casting large quantities of iron shot. By the 15th century there was also a corn mill, with two waterwheels under one roof. These works had been abandoned by the mid-17th century, but another water-powered corn mill was recorded in the late 18th century. The building still contains a 3m

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diameter iron overshot wheel and some machinery, but no stones.

About 1km southwest are the remains of Pippingford Furnace, where excavations have revealed two separate furnaces and a gun-casting pit.

F(5.7)
The area around **Coleman's Hatch Road** must have been buzzing in Celtic and Roman times, because an iron age fort 1km south of here on Windy Ridge, shown on OS maps, was adapted by the Romans into an administrative centre for the local iron industry. It is nowadays referred to as Garden Hill. Coleman's Hatch Road roughly follows the line of a Roman road serving the fort, which branched off the London to Lewes Way at Gallypot Street near Hartfield.

The **Ashdown Forest Centre** (1.5km SW) is worth a diversion, following a ride parallel with Coleman's Hatch Road. It has a replica Mesolithic hut and an interesting display about life in the forest.

An Ashdown Forest Perambulation has been created by Per-Rambulations (www.per-rambulations.co.uk), whose Sussex Ouse Valley Way was encountered in Section A, and whose Tandridge Border Path we shall meet in Sections G and K. This 67km (42 miles) route describes a figure-of-eight in and around the forest, with its crossover point at Gills Lap, starting and finishing at the Ashdown Forest Centre. A guidebook can be obtained from Per-Rambulations (contact details on their website) for £3.95 plus £1.55 p+p.

F(5.6)
The **Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club** (www.royalashdown.co.uk) was founded in 1888. It has two 18-hole courses, known as the Old Course (which the VGW encounters) and the West Course.

F(5.5)
Coleman's Hatch (1km NE) was named after a local landowning family who erected a hatch (gate) to the Ashdown Forest here. The name is first recorded in 1495 as Colemanhacche. Holy Trinity Church was rebuilt in 1913 but incorporates 14th century tracery. Nearby is the strangely named hamlet of Quabrook, first recorded in 1285 as Quabbalke. It is assumed that this refers to a balk of timber laid across a 'quab' - Sussex dialect for a bog - the muddy sort!

F(5.4)
The shed behind **Fernroyd** bears a sign brought from her native Poland by the owner: "Uwaga! Nie pal ognia w lesie", which means "Attention! Do not light fires in the forest".

F(5.3)
At **Warren Heights**, low on its fence, is one of two wooden 'Vanguard Way' signs, made for us in 2003 by the RiverOcean social enterprise charity, whose mission is to increase the awareness and care of our rivers and seas.

F(5.2)
Forest Row (http://www.forestrowlocal.co.uk) is still sometimes described as a village, indeed on several occasions has won the title of Best Kept Village in the county, but in recent years it has expanded to the extent that it is really a bustling small town with, at the 2001 census, 4700 inhabitants. It originally developed around a row of royal hunting lodges in the forest, and expanded when John of Gaunt established a castle at Kidbrooke around 1372.

During the coaching era it became a staging-post on the London-Eastbourne road. In 1801 it was the scene of a notorious highway robbery by the Beatson brothers, who were hanged here the following year. Forest Row has become a popular place for retirement, and has a good shopping-centre, some accommodation and refreshment facilities.

Forest Row has three highly respected schools nearby. Ashdown House School (2km northeast, designed by Benjamin Latrobe, whom we shall encounter again in Section G) is preparatory, while two for older pupils follow the Steiner Waldorf philosophy, which encourages pupils to develop creativity, self-confidence and practical skills; they are Emerson College (1km northeast) and Michael Hall (see Kidbrooke Park below).

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Forest Row is twinned with Milly-la-Forêt, a community of similar size, 53km south of Paris in the Forest of Fontainebleau.

Interesting buildings include:

Village Hall (Grade II listed). Formerly the headquarters of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest, built 1892. The gable end on the south side has a spectacular fresco showing that it was erected by Henry Ray Freshfield of Kidbrooke Park in 1892. On the wall below is a plaque commemorating the visit of President John F. Kennedy in June 1963: while staying with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (who lived at Birch Grove, 4km southwest) he attended a service at Forest Row's catholic church, Our Lady of the Forest.

The Chequers Inn is a Grade II listed 17th century building

Holy Trinity Church (Grade II listed). Built 1834 in an unusual north-south alignment on the site of a former cockpit. Forest Row was originally in East Grinstead parish but separated from it in 1894.

Brambletye House (1.2km NW). Ruins of an Elizabethan-Jacobean moated manor-house built in 1631 for the local MP, Sir Henry Compton. It was later acquired by Sir James Richards, who was accused in 1683 of high treason. He fled to Spain and the house was allowed to deteriorate. This was the setting for Horatio Smith's novel, 'Brambletye House', written in 1826. A new house was built in 1919.

Kidbrooke Park (1.2km W). A mansion built in 1724 of local sandstone for the Earl of Abergavenny in a park designed by the landscape gardener Humphrey Repton on or near the site of a castle built by John of Gaunt in the late 14th century. Since 1945 it has been the home of the Michael Hall School (see above), named after the Archangel Michael, and is the largest in Britain of the Steiner Waldorf schools. Its grounds are not open to the public.

Also worth a look are the **Swan Inn,** and the **Post Office,** both Grade II listed buildings.

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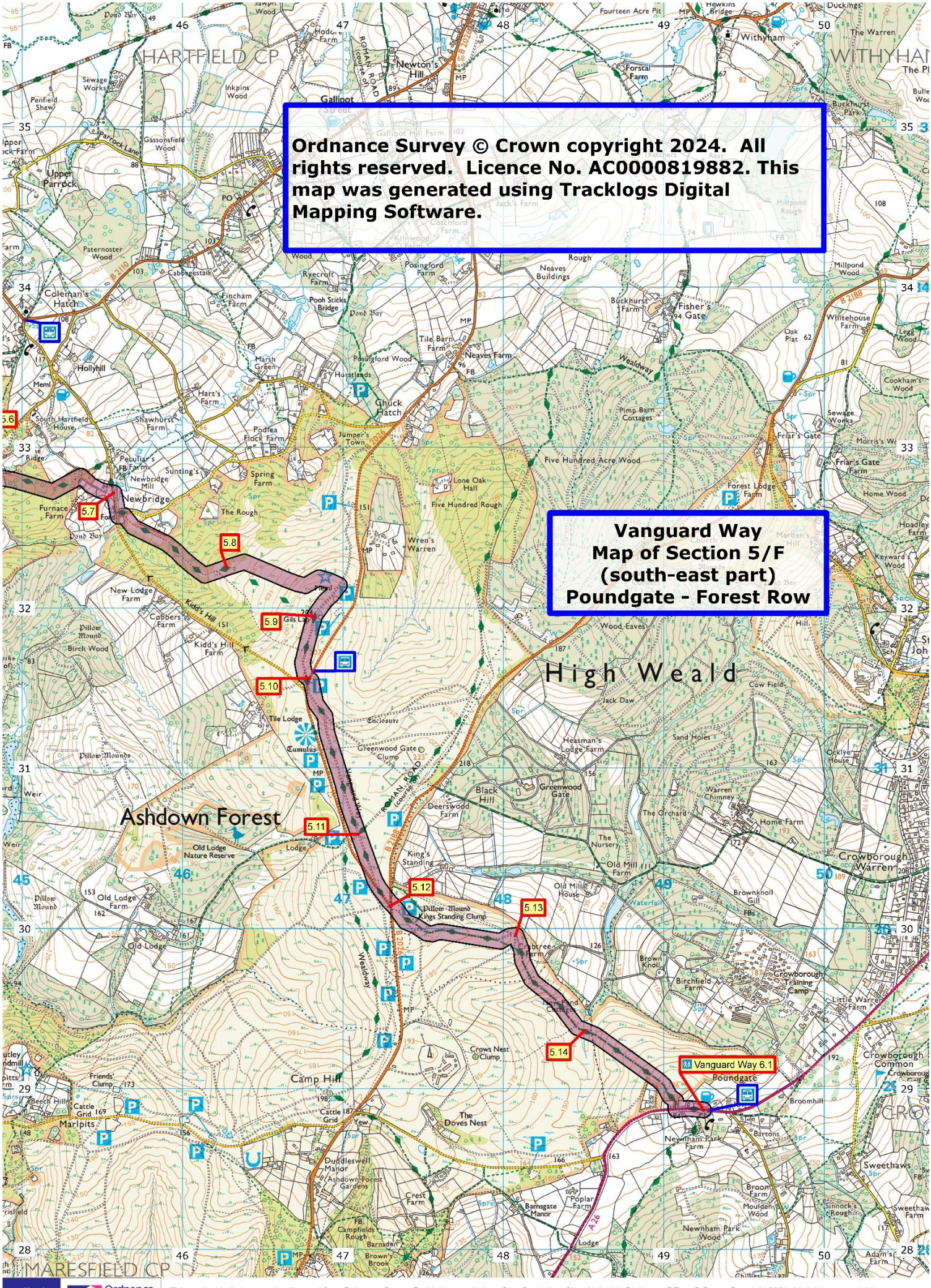
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Vanguard Way
Map of Section 5/F
(south-east part)
Poundgate - Forest Row
5.6
5.7
5.8
5.9
5.10
5.11
5.12
5.13
5.14
Vanguard Way 6.1
Poundgate
Newbridge
Ashdown Forest
High Weald
HARTFIELD CP
MAYFIELD CP
Withyham
Coleman's Hatch
Upper Parrock
Hollyhill
Chuck Hatch
Fisher's Gate
Five Hundred Acre Wood
Five Hundred Rough
Lone Oak Hall
Wren's Warren
Gills Lap
Tile Lodge
Tumulus
Greenwood Gate Clump
Pillow Mound
Kings Standing Clump
Crowborough Warren
Crowborough Common
Camp Hill
Crows Nest Clump
The Doves Nest
Friends' Clump
Marlpits
Duddleswell Manor
Ashdown Forest Gardens
Newnham Park Farm
Newnham Park Wood
Broomhill
Sweethaws
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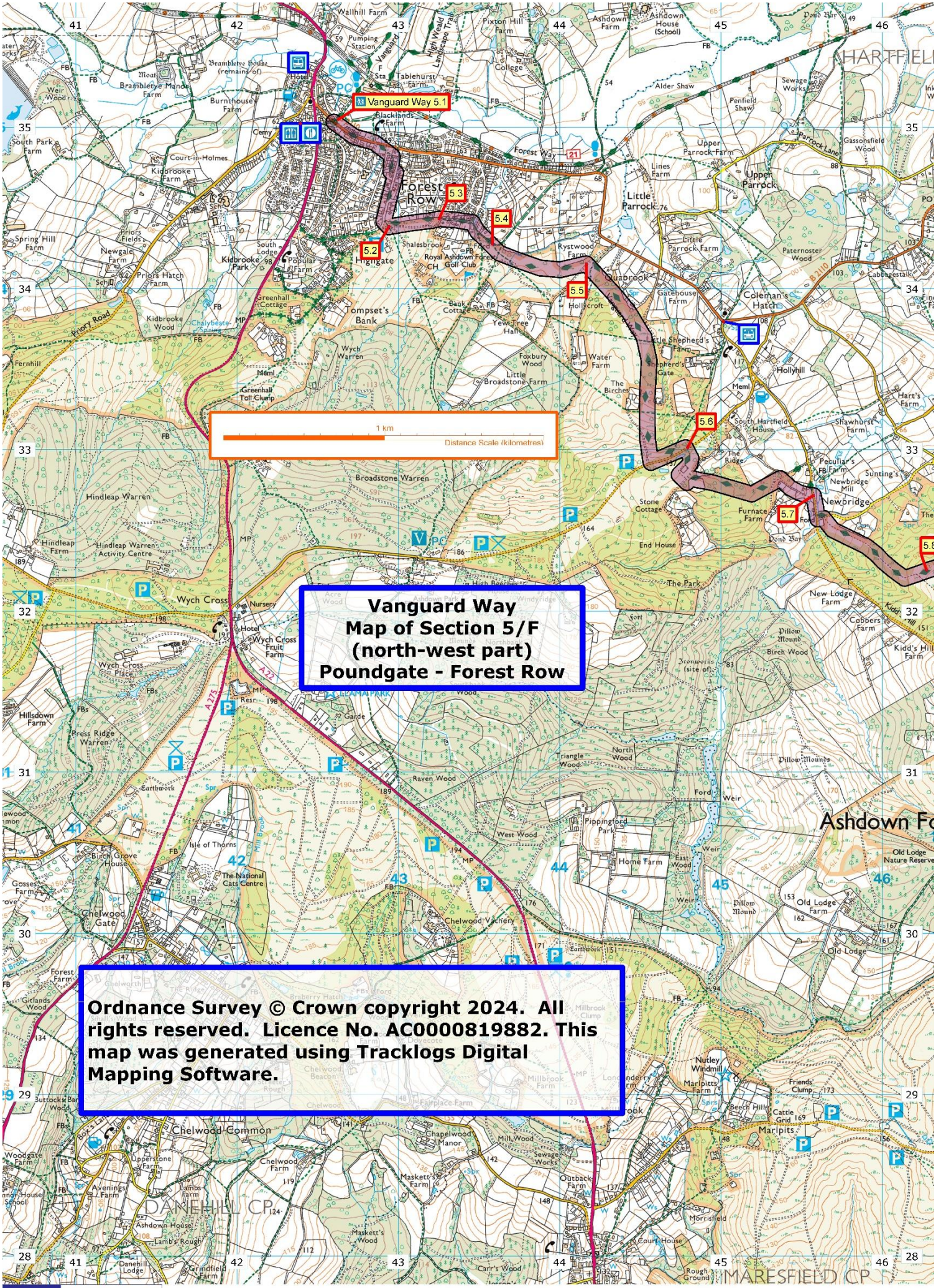

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