THE VANGUARD WAY

(SOUTH TO NORTH)

A different experience in the other direction!

SECTION K
Chelsham Common to Croydon

Third edition (2025)

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE GUIDE

SECTION K

Chelsham Common to Croydon

COLIN SAUNDERS

Third Edition (South-North) 2025
Version 3.0

This 3rd 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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Published by the Vanguard Way Association
35 Gerrards Close, Oakwood, London, N14 4RH, England

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To find out about any late 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.

Cover photo: The Vanguard Way approaching Farleigh church – cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Marathon – geograph.org.uk/p/5453500

SECTION K: CHELSHAM COMMON TO CROYDON
11.0km (6.8 miles)

Distances from Chelsham Common to:

Court Wood Lane (bus)	3.5km	(2.2 miles)
Selsdon Park Road (bus)	5.2km	(3.3 miles)
Lloyd Park (tram)	9.4km	(5.9 miles)
East Croydon Station	11.0km	(6.8 miles)

Public transport

On route: Buses at Chelsham Common, Court Wood Lane, Selsdon Vale and Selsdon Park Road. Trains, trams and buses at East Croydon station. Link with Lloyd Park tram stop.

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

This final section starts and finishes on generally level terrain, but it is quite hilly in between and there are some steep slopes - remember you are in the foothills of the North Downs. It is nearly all in woodland and open space, and it is not until the last mile that urban surroundings become dominant, but roads are mostly avoided as you approach central Croydon along the historic Fairfield Path. There is a stunning view towards Central London as you approach the finish through the leafy residential outskirts of Croydon. Between Farleigh and Littleheath Wood the Vanguard Way is joined by the London Loop for 3km and includes Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve. Along the way you pass a delightful Saxon church at Farleigh and the pretty gardens of Coombe Wood, and Park Hill Recreation Ground is worth a detour.

Lowest point: East Croydon Station (61m). Highest point: Chelsham Common (180m).

How to use this guide

Paragraphs are numbered for ease of reference. However, 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 K(1.19) to K(1.1). (The individual route description paragraphs in this South-North section are preceded by the letter K 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 it 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 100km 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.

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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 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.**

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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 K of the Vanguard Way (South-North) starts at K(2.1) *[TQ 371 592]* Chelsham Common. This is in Tandridge District in Surrey.

Mondays to Fridays only from Selsdon Caterham and Reigate (see below for better service from Warlingham Sainsbury's).

The Bull Inn is just 50m back along Section J.

Link from bus stop at Warlingham Sainsbury's (1.2km)

In Sainsbury's.

a) Alighting at bus stop outside Sainsbury's, TR along Limpsfield Road to roundabout. You could TL here to follow the footpath beside Chelsham Road for 1.1km to Chelsham Common, but you may prefer to take the slightly longer but much more pleasant bridleway route below:
b) KA along Limpsfield Road via pedestrian refuge ⊗ to pass Spaghetti Tree restaurant.
c) In 100m TL along Bw (Rogers Lane, National Cycle Route 21). (Knight's Garden Centre with café/toilets) is 120m further ahead.)
d) Follow Bw for 720m through cemetery and Mill Common, then ascend through wood (KA at junction) to rejoin Chelsham Road.
e) Cross Rd ⊗ and TR along roadside footpath for 200m to junction with Chelsham Common Road.
f) If you wish to visit the Bull pub, KA across common (then TL), otherwise bear L with Rd past junction with Harrow Road/Ledger Road to rejoin VGW at K(2.1).

K(2.1) *[TQ 371 592]*
a) From bus stop TR along Chelsham Road towards chicane (20 zone sign) (at entrance to ***Great Park*** estate and opposite Warlingham Park School), where TL along Fp beside fence, with Great Park's bowling green to your R.
b) Pass under bridge (35m before which look R for brief glimpse of Great Park's clock tower) then in 140m pass through barrier to reach junction with Bw (TL here for Harrow Inn).
c) TR (ignoring gate ahead and Fp on R) then bear L to continue along muddy Bw in Great Park Wood, with field on your L.
d) In 400m (ignore KG on L) reach car park outside ***Church of St. Mary the Virgin*** in ***Farleigh***.

Afternoon teas in the church hall (behind the church) on summer Sundays. Seats in churchyard.

K(1.19) *[TQ 372 600]*
a) KA past metal gate along lane *(Church Road,* **NP***)* past Farleigh Court Equestrian Centre to Rd junction.
b) TL along Rd *(Farleigh Court Road,* **NP***)* for 125m to kink in Rd.

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K(1.18) *[TQ 370 602]*

a) TR along fenced Fp (permissive horse ride), past large barn and Farleigh golf course, to junction beside metal gate. *Note fine view ahead of The Shard and skyscrapers in the City of London. On the hills to your R, partly hidden by trees, is the community of New Addington, part of the London Borough of Croydon.*

Farleigh Golf Club *(visible ahead, 500m off route). Walkers are welcome to visit the clubhouse for meals and refreshments (carvery on Sundays). You can pass through the gate on your right here and follow the track north to the clubhouse.*

K(1.17) *[TQ 369 605]*

a) TL past post then bear L along narrow Fp, which leads into woodland and may be overgrown. Ignore permissive horse ride, which goes outside wood. ⊗ Beware exposed roots.
b) KA on Fp through wood (Hodge Grove) for 500m.
c) Cross stile and KA on fenced Fp to Rd, with drive of Farleigh Golf Club on your R. *The permissive Bw rejoins from the R here.*

K(1.16) *[TQ 363 607]*

a) At Rd (*Old Farleigh Road*) TR past golf club gateway. The ***London Loop*** comes in from the left here, to join the VGW for the next 3km, bringing with it for the fifth and final time the Tandridge Border Path (see paragraph G(4.12)).
b) KA past barrier on tree-lined Bw between fields. This is ***Baker Boy Lane***.
c) In 300m at junction bear L with London Loop, with Puplet Wood on your R then Selsdon Wood on your L. *The ditch on your L marks the boundary between Surrey and Greater London.*
d) In another 750m you reach a junction beside a gate into Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve.

Here you leave Tandridge District and the County of Surrey to enter the London Borough of Croydon in Greater London. The Tandridge Border Path goes off to your right here, along the valley beside another fairway of Farleigh golf course.

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

K(1.15) *[TQ 367 617]*

a) Still with London Loop, TL through KG and up Tk (signed Addington Border) into ***Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve.*** Then in 70m take R fork.
b) KA on this line as it rises then falls for 600m, crossing Tks called Court Wood Grove, Avis Grove and Broad Walk (with bench), to far side of wood, where bear R beside fence to information board.

K(1.14) *[TQ 363 623]*

a) Still with London Loop, TL through KG to leave Selsdon Wood, then KA along enclosed Bw 516, passing gap into Goldfinch Road, and continue to cross Rd ⊗ *(Peacock Gardens to L, Sorrel Bank to R).*

At Peacock Gardens to Selsdon, Forestdale, Addington Tram Interchange, West and East Croydon Stations.

K(1.13) *[TQ 361 624]*

a) Still with London Loop, KA past Guides hut and along enclosed Bw for 300m, between the ***Selsdon Vale*** and Forestdale (Ladygrove) housing estates.
b) Cross Rd *(Swallowdale)* and KA on Bw between fences for 50m to reach Rd *(Ashen Vale).*
c) KA on Bw beside brick wall *(this is the official right of way rather than pavement beside Rd)* to reach main Rd beside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

This is the A2022, and as you are standing on the boundary between the wards of Addington and Selsdon the road has different names: Selsdon Park Road to the right, Addington Road to the left.

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From the stop on this side left up Addington Road to Selsdon and Central Croydon, and from the stop on the far side down Selsdon Park Road to Addington Village Interchange (for trams to central Croydon).

Pubs and cafés in Selsdon (to L) or Forestdale (to R) both 1 km off route.

Selsdon (1km off route) – see Vanguard Way Companion.

K(1.12) *[TQ 357 627]*

a) ⊗ **Do not attempt to cross the road here, as it is very busy and traffic comes fast and blind around the bend to your left.** Instead, TR to the light-controlled crossing then come back on the far side to the Ashen Vale bus stop.
b) TR past pylon on tarmac path into ***Littleheath Woods***.
c) In 20m, at bend in tarmac, KA on rough Bw and follow it uphill to the top, ignoring side turnings and with playground over to your R.
c) At triangular path intersection around tree TL to pass water tower and mobile phone aerial on your R (may be obscured by trees).
d) In 75m at second waymark post bear R.
e) Following waymark posts, in 75m fork right then KA descending to junction beside tall VGW/London Loop fingerpost, with playing field on your R. *The London Loop diverges to the right here.*

K(1.11) *[TQ 352 629]*

a) KA to crossing Tk then KA uphill at first then downhill to join another, lower Fp.
b) Follow broad Bw between fences for a short distance to bend by information board and pylon, where KA on narrow Fp between fences to T-junction. *Note 1928 iron Croydon Borough boundary marker.*

K(1.10) *[TQ 346 631]*

a) TR to Rd *(Croham Valley Road)* and ⊗ cross with care to KA along *Crest Road*. *Among the trees on the hillside ahead you may be able to see the buildings and chapel spire of the* ***Royal Russell School***.
b) At end TR to cross *Ballards Way* with care then ascend to bend.

K(1.9) *[TQ 348 636]*

a) Turn sharp L along Rd/Bw *(Ballards Farm Road)* and follow it for 700m, at first past houses, then with garden fences on your L and woodland on your R, which is in the grounds of the Royal Russell School.
b) When Ballards Farm Road bears L downhill, KA (signed Conduit Lane) for 200m to junction.

K(1.8) *[TQ 339 639]*

a) TR up rough Tk/Bw *(Conduit Lane)* and follow it for 600m with, on your L, a playing field (another view of The Shard and City of London skyscrapers) then Central Nursery of Croydon Council's Parks Department, and grounds of Royal Russell School still on your R.
b) At end of rough Tk KA along Rd (still *Conduit Lane*) to main Rd *(A212 Coombe Road)* with the gardens of ***Coombe Wood*** on your R. *(A little way up to your R is* ***Coombe Wood House****, now The Chateau restaurant.)*

Coach House Café, and The Chateau

In Coombe Wood.

K(1.7) *[TQ 345 644]*

a) TL down pavement of main Rd. ⊗ Cross with care at pedestrian refuge then continue down the far side. *(You pass* ***Coombe Lodge*** *on your left and the former* ***Coombe House****, now The Cedars and Oakwood Schools, on your right.)*
b) In 320m, opposite Coombe Wood School, come alongside tram lines and continue a further 100m to metal railings at tramline crossing point.

Coombe Lodge

Premier Inn London Croydon South (A212, at Coombe Lodge)

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K(1.6) *[TQ 342 643]*

a) TR through railings to ⊗ cross tram lines with care (look both ways) and go between bushes into ***Lloyd Park***.
b) Follow worn path quarter L through field/wildflower meadow between trees. *(The strange gadgets consisting of a metal basket on a pole with ring of chains and yellow band are for **disc golf**.)*
c) On reaching large open field/rugby pitch with green fence to your L, TL beside fence (above former chalk pit with children's playground). *(The crenelated tower with turret ahead is the water tower in Park Hill, of which more later. Note bench seat provided by Croydon Ramblers.)*
d) At bend in fence KA to go to R of group of trees by pit.

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

At trees by pit turn half L aiming for R-hand end of pavilion, then TL past tennis courts and TR to tram stop.

Trams to/from West and East Croydon Stations. Lloyd Park tram stop is just 150m over to your left past the tennis courts.

Café in pavilion.

On far side of pavilion.

If starting from Lloyd Park tram stop:
TL beyond platforms into park, past car park and tennis courts, then bear half L to far corner of hedge/fence surrounding bowling green, where TL to rejoin VGW.

K(1.5) *[TQ 337 646]*

a) KA to corner of hedge/fence surrounding bowling green and continue to Rd *(Lloyd Park Avenue)*.
b) TL for 30m along pavement then TR across Rd.
c) KA along Fp between house numbers 18-20 – this is the start of the ***Fairfield Path***, which with some road interruptions takes you all the way into Central Croydon.

K(1.4) *[TQ 336 646]*

a) Pass *Larcombe Close* and go under Tramlink bridge to cross *Brownlow Road*.
b) KA up steep Fp to next Rd *(Reynolds Way)*.
c) TL for 80m then TL on Fp between house numbers 25-27 and follow down to main Rd *(B243 Park Hill Road)*.

K(1.3) *[TQ 333 650]*

a) TR to use zebra crossing then KA on Fp beside fence to Rd *(St Bernards)*.
b) KA to Rd junction.

*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. For this TL, cross Stanhope Road and KA past bollards along Fp to water tower, where you can continue into the park if required.*

c) TR diagonally across Rd *(Chichester Road)* then shortly TL along *Cotelands*.
d) As you pass Park Hill Infants School KA beside grass, cross *Stanhope Road/The Avenue* and continue down Fp to *Fairfield Road* and KA to main Rd *(A232 Barclay Road)*.

K(1.2) *[TQ 329 653]*

a) ⊗ Cross with care at controlled crossing, TR then immediately TL along ***Altyre Road***. *The two skyscraper buildings looming up ahead are Enclave and Ten Degrees.*
b) At the end bear L to use ⊗ controlled crossing (note that traffic approaches in both directions) past bus station to tram stop and ⊗ cross tram lines with care to ***East Croydon Station***, where you complete your south-north traverse of the Vanguard Way at:

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K(1.1) *[TQ 328 657]* East Croydon Station.

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING THE VANGUARD WAY!

Please let us know by emailing *vgway@vanguardway.org.uk*, together with the dates and start/finish points of each leg. We'll be happy to provide you with a certificate, and there's a badge for sale – details on our website *www.vanguardway.org.uk*.

East Croydon Station is served by daily frequent trains to central London, Oxted, Edenbridge, Tonbridge, Buxted, Gatwick Airport, eastern parts of Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Also Milton Keynes (not Sundays). West Croydon Station is served by daily frequent local trains to central London, Sutton, Epsom and Highbury & Islington.

Tramlink goes from East Croydon Station to West Croydon Station and other parts of the London Borough of Croydon, as well as Beckenham Junction and Wimbledon.

From East or West Croydon Stations daily to most parts of south London, Redhill, Caterham and Heathrow Airport.

The Porter and Sorter pub is just around the corner on the east side of the station. J.D. Wetherspoon's George is 400m west along George Street. Many more pubs in the town centre.

There's a Costa and several kiosks in East Croydon station, in the adjacent Boxpark and to the west along George Street. Sainsbury's Local next to the bus station.

On platforms in station - only accessible to passengers with tickets. There are many facilities in the shopping centres and at Croydon Clocktower.

ã *Plenty in Croydon and Addiscombe within easy walking distance of the finish – see Vanguard Way Companion.*

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

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

K(2.1)
The **Great Park** estate to your right 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 Grade II listed clock tower remains and can be seen from some points along the adjacent footpath, though it may be blocked by summer foliage.

The Grade I listed **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.

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 mounted fierce opposition to its proposed inclusion in Greater London and won. The name was first recorded in 880 as Fearnlege (bracken clearing in Anglo-Saxon), and is shown on old maps as Farley. From the 13th to 15th Centuries, the parish was an estate of Merton College, Oxford, which still owns much of the land in this area.

K(1.18)
Farleigh Golf Club opened in 1997 and was originally under Japanese management, then part of the Swallow Hotels group, and now one of the Foxhill group of courses. The land is leased from its owners, Oxford's Merton College.

K(1.16)
The Vanguard Way joins the **London Loop** for the next 3km. The second word is sometimes seen written in upper case as a nod to its original name, the London Outer Orbital Path. This 240km trail completely encircles Greater London, closely following its boundary. It was proposed in 1990 by the London Walking Forum and has been developed by its Orbitals Working Party in cooperation with the Ramblers and various boroughs, and with support from Transport for London. The official guidebook to the London Loop by Vanguard Way route guide author Colin Saunders is published by Aurum Press.

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.

K(1.15)
Selsdon Wood Nature Reserve comprises 81 hectares, predominantly oak and beech woodland but with several large 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, several 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

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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.

The Friends of Selsdon Wood are volunteers working with Croydon Council to ensure that Selsdon Wood is maintained for the benefit of the flora and fauna, as well as for the enjoyment of the public.

K(1.13)
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.

K(1.12)
Littleheath Wood is a collection 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. Maintenance of the woods is carried out by the Friends of Littleheath Woods.

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.

K(1.10)
The **Royal Russell School** is 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 2013, a group of 32 teachers and pupils from the school walked the Vanguard Way over one weekend to raise funds for the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

K(1.8)
The district now known as **Coombe** (though not many Croydonians will recognise the term) was first recorded in 1221. From the 16th 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 18th and early 19th centuries by James Bourdieu Senior and his son James Berney Bourdieu, and during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Frank Lloyd (see location K1.4).

The large houses (all Grade II listed) 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 let us know!

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 18th 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, including a tea-room, that now form the focus of the gardens were originally

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outhouses of Coombe Wood House, built in a former gravel pit to preserve the view from the big house. 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 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.

Just a little further up the main road (from this point upwards called Coombe Lane), is **Coombe Wood House** (75m E), which at the time of writing was unoccupied, the Napoleon (formerly Chateau Napoleon) restaurant having closed. 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.

K(1.7)

Coombe Lodge, formerly called Coombe Green House, 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 19th century the house passed through successive ownerships. In 1897 it was bought by Frank Lloyd (see location K1.4) but he continued to live in Coombe Wood House (see above). 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 11th November 1921.

Coombe Lodge is now a pub/restaurant and hotel, officially called the Premier Travel Inn London Croydon South (A212), 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.

Coombe House, beyond the tram tracks, is now The Cedars (Geoffrey Harris House) in its current use, shared between a care home and a Catholic boys' school. 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 K1.4) acquired it in 1892. For a while during the 20th 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.

K(1.6)

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 crops. There are several old chalk pits, in one of which is a children's playground. A new pavilion opened in 2009 includes a café, changing rooms and toilets.

From here on you may see or hear noisy flocks of **ring-necked parakeets** – a green bird about the size of a starling with a long tail. They originated in Asia but started to appear in the wild in this country during the 20th century as escapees and released birds from private collections and aviaries, and are now widespread throughout southern England, especially in urban parks and woodland. Even if you don't see them, you may hear their screeching 'kee-ak' call.

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

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an elevated metal basket. Wherever your disc lands, that's where you make your next throw or play your next shot'.

In 1960 a grand pageant took place in the park to mark Croydon's Millenary (the town was established in 960 AD/CE). It included (and what a sight this must have been) the installation of a short temporary railway, with rides hauled by a diesel locomotive disguised as a steam engine, but it disgraced itself by running off the end of the tracks!

K(1.5)

Between Lloyd Park and East Croydon, the VGW generally follows the line of the **Fairfield Path**, which originally served as the footpath used by the inhabitants of Coombe village (see above) to reach Croydon's parish church, but was severed by the construction of the Brighton Line railway in 1841. 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.

K(1.3)

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 and adult education centre. The walled garden of the house (turn right at the park depot) can still be visited.

The 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 west side) probably refers to Royal Exchange, which was often used as a measuring point for the City of London. All that remains on the east side is '? 10 miles'. Opposite the milestone is a somewhat more recent Croydon Parish boundary marker of 1888.

K(1.2)

Altyre Road is apparently named after the Altyre Estate in Morayshire, Scotland and contains several buildings of note. At the start on your right is Altitude 25, which provides nearly 200 apartments on 25 floors, then the plush, red-brick Croydon Park Hotel (closed at time of writing). On your left are the concrete-lined Croydon Law Courts, then the First Church of Christ Scientist. The two gigantic skyscrapers ahead, completed in 2023, are a mix of residential, offices and retail: the nearest is Enclave with 50 floors, while the furthest is Ten Degrees with 44 – its developer, Greystar, named it thus as a nod to the angle at which aircraft took off, though there is some contention about this idea. Croydon Airport was Britain's main airport (and sometimes known as London Airport) from 1920 until it closed in 1959.

Rising up at the end of Altyre Road, with 24 floors, is One Croydon, originally the NLA Tower (for Noble Lowndes Annuities) when completed in 1970, but also known locally as the Threepenny Bit Building (or the

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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. The squat, green building on the right-hand corner (formerly Tolley House) houses a number of businesses, while the brown brick one on the left-hand side is the Croydon office of the huge insurance company AIG (American International Group).

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, so the present flamboyant and airy building was opened in 1992. Even so, the station becomes very congested, especially in peak hours, and a further redevelopment with more railway tracks is under consideration. The line was opened in 1841 for the London & Brighton Railway. Outside the main concourse onto George Street, at the south end of the station, is the East Croydon stop for Croydon Tramlink, opened in 2000 as part of the first tram system to operate in southern England since 1952. Immediately west of the main entrance is '@Boxpark Croydon', a collection of 80 former shipping containers, now mostly various kinds of eatery, around a covered courtyard. A second station entrance was added in 2012 at its north end. Opposite the station rise two skyscraper apartment blocks: the furthest (Enclave) has 50 storeys. The nearest (Ten Degrees) is taller but has fewer storeys (44); it was apparently (and possibly erroneously) given this name in recognition of the angle of take-off of aircraft departing from Croydon Airport, which closed in 1959 but for many years was Britain's leading passenger airport, called 'London Airport' until Heathrow took its place.

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 386,710 at the 2021 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. Despite disparaging remarks made about Croydon in some circles, it has much in its favour and many interesting old and listed buildings (see below), so 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), then part of the Saxon sub-kingdom of Suthrige (Surrey). In the 10th 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 eastward 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 18th and early 19th 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 was 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.

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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, 1km 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 14th and 15th centuries. Now a highly-regarded school for girls, founded in 1889, its interesting buildings may be visited during school holidays.

St. John the Baptist Church (1km W). Beside the Old Palace with its own quiet little park (the former graveyard), Croydon's Grade I listed parish church, re-dedicated in 2011 as a minster, with a suffragan bishop who 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, the Grade I listed 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, www.fairfield.co.uk). One of the largest conference and entertainment complexes in South London, opened in 1962. It reopened in 2019 after an extensive regeneration plan covering the halls, nearby Croydon College and College Green, which separates them. 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). A major cultural centre, opened in 1994, built around the old red brick Grade II listed Town Hall of 1895 with its prominent clock tower. It comprises the Central Library, David Lean Cinema, Braithwaite Hall, Museum of Croydon, café and toilets.

Ruskin Square (formerly known as Croydon Gateway). A massive and ongoing redevelopment of a former railway goods yard beside East Croydon Station, consisting or offices, residential and retail.

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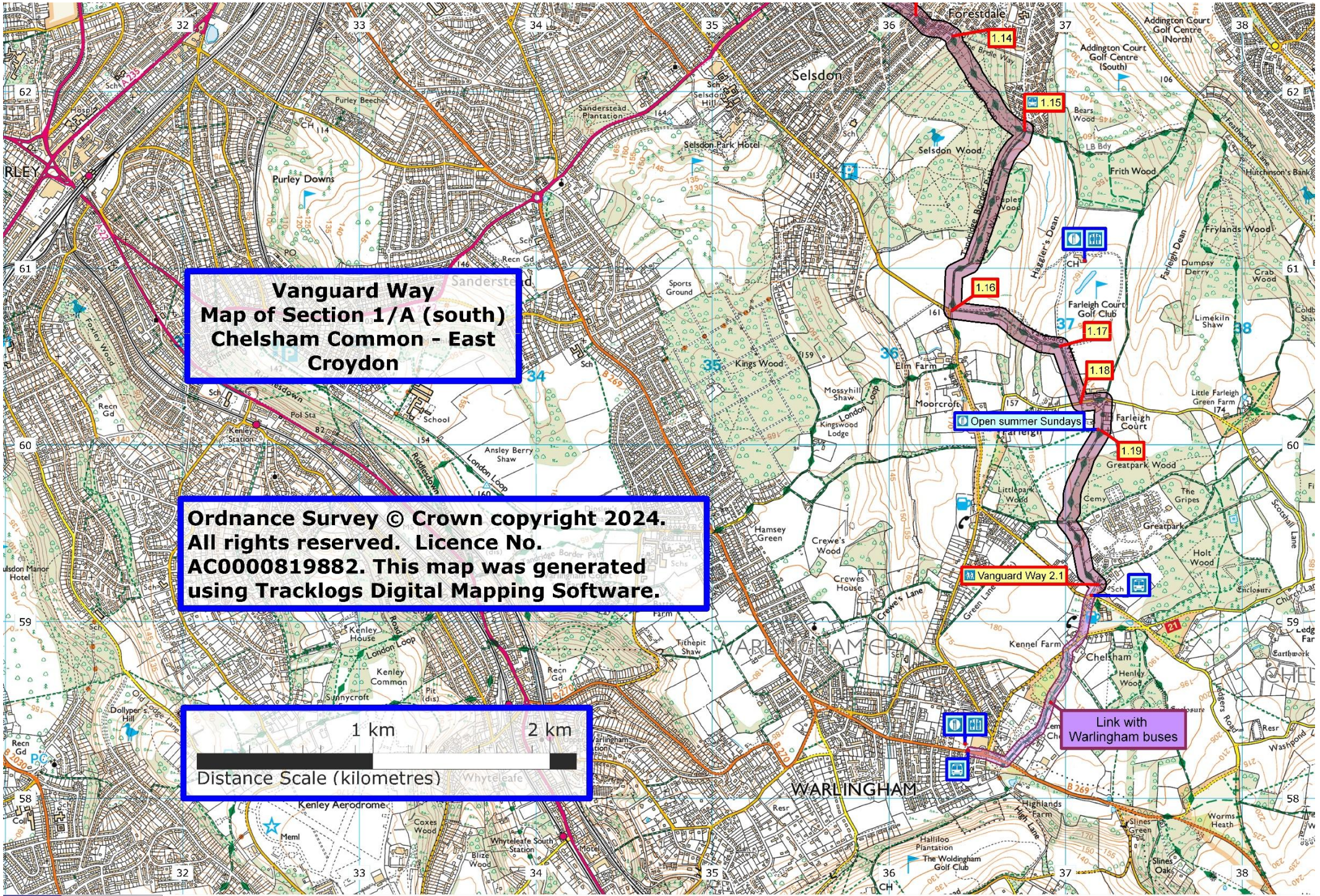
Vanguard Way
Map of Section 1/A (south)
Chelsham Common - East Croydon
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1 km
2 km
Distance Scale (kilometres)
1.14
1.15
1.16
1.17
1.18
1.19
Open summer Sundays
Vanguard Way 2.1
Link with Warlingham buses
Forestdale
Selsdon
Addington Court Golf Centre (North)
Addington Court Golf Centre (South)
Purley Downs
Purley Beeches
Sanderstead Plantation
Selsdon Park Hotel
Selsdon Wood
Frith Wood
Hutchinson's Bank
Frylands Wood
Dumpsy Derry
Crab Wood
Limekiln Shaw
Farleigh Court Golf Club
Farleigh Court
Little Farleigh Green Farm
Greatpark Wood
Littlepark Wood
The Gripes
Greatpark
Holt Wood
Kings Wood
Elm Farm
Moorcroft
Mossyhill Shaw
Kingswood Lodge
Ansley Berry Shaw
Kenley Station
Kenley Common
Kenley House
Sunnycroft
Dollyper's Hill
Hamsey Green
Crewe's Wood
Crewes House
Tithepit Shaw
Kennel Farm
Chelsham
Henley Wood
WARLINGHAM
Kenley Aerodrome
Coxes Wood
Blize Wood
Whyteleafe South Station
Highlands Farm
Halliloo Plantation
The Woldingham Golf Club
Slines Green
Slines Oak
Worms Heath
Sports Ground
Recn Gd
Pol Sta
School
Motel
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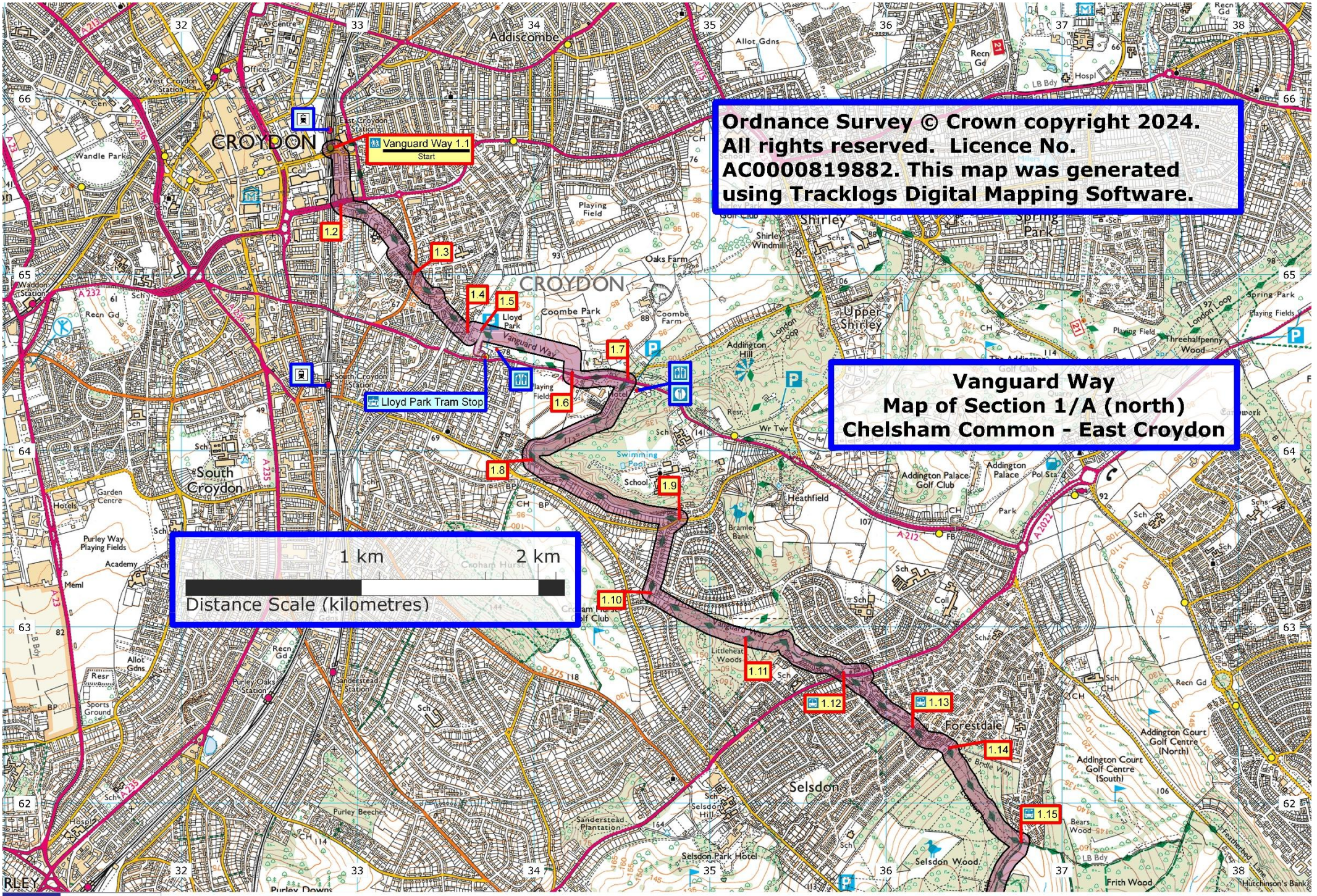

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