



VGW NEWS

The newsletter of the Vanguard Way Association

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The 66-mile Vanguard Way is a trail for walkers from Croydon to Newhaven through some of the finest scenery in south-east England. For more information and membership details [visit vanguardway.org.uk](http://visit.vanguardway.org.uk).

If you would like more information on any of the items in this newsletter, or wish to comment, or have any suggestions for the next edition (February 2025, deadline 15 January) please email editor@vanguardway.org.uk.

Feel free to pass this on to anyone who may be interested in joining the VWA (annual £7.00, life £120.00).

NB These rates will increase from 1 January 2025 – see page 3!

Abbreviations: VWA = Vanguard Way Association. VGW = Vanguard Way. VRC = Vanguard Rambling Club. Maps are © Ordnance Survey, licence number AC0000819882.



The Vanguard Way is on Facebook: please take a look at our page (Vanguard Way Association) and feel free to comment or add your experiences of the VGW.



FORTHCOMING MEMBERS' WALKS

Friday 27 December – Christmas lights in London. Instead of Richmond as advertised, Colin will lead a jolly afternoon and early evening stroll to include Regent's Park and the Christmas lights in the Oxford Street and Regent Street area. Details are still in the planning stage but it's likely to start around 2pm from Baker Street Station and finish at a hostelry in central London.

Details will be confirmed nearer the date. Our walks are organised jointly with the Vanguard Rambling Club.

A programme of walks is being planned for early 2025 and details will be sent to members when ready – but feel free to suggest a destination – see below!

YOUR VWA NEEDS YOU!

We now have over 120 members, but rarely if ever meet most of them. We would really love to meet everyone, so we invite all members to tell us how they might be willing to get more involved. Here are some ideas:

- Join our walks when you can, or tell us where you would like us to organise one.
- Even better, offer to lead a nice walk that you know well in your area. We'll do all the supporting stuff like travel details.
- Help our rangers with light footpath clearance work or litter-picking.
- Tell us what you would like us to organise as a social event in your area.
- Organise a talk in your local area, for example at your club's or society's AGM, about the VGW – we will provide the speaker and slide show.

Please contact our [Chair, John Jefkins](#), if you're interested and would like more information.

RECENT MAJOR ISSUES ALONG THE VGW

VWA Chair and Route Manager John Jefkins reports:

Before and after photos of how we've helped reduce the flooding risk on our route south of Chiddingly.



The pathway across this plank bridge south of Chiddingly is just one example of where climate change is producing more mud and flooding along our route. Long term, East Sussex council agree with us that a larger bridge or a board walk will be needed here. But to help in the short term, Ranger Stuart Mills and Chair John Jefkins covered deep puddles either side of the bridge with criss-crossed sticks and then covered them with about 20 buckets of mud.



Replacing fallen or vandalised signage – Dan Hawksworth & John Jefkins recently also replaced or added posts at various locations along our route where they needed firming fixing or to be re-erected – some using PostCrete.



MEMBERSHIP FEES

Just as a reminder, you may remember that, at the Annual General Meeting in June, it was agreed that, from 1 January 2025 the VWA should increase its annual individual membership fees from £7.00 to £10, and the life membership from £120.00 to £160.00. It was also agreed that new members should be warned that, depending on the time of year that they join, they may receive less than 12 months' membership. To offset this, anyone joining as a new member on or after 1 January will have their membership extended until 1 April of the following year.

RECENT MEMBERS' WALKS

Dormansland, Sunday 29 September

A select party of four members, led by John Jeffkins, followed a 9-mile circular route from the Plough Inn at Dormansland to the VGW, then over Dry Hill (inspecting the remains of the Stone Age fort) and on to Shepherds Grove Lane, where they investigated possibilities for diverting the VGW off of this busy lane into the adjoining woodland – the results will become clearer in due course. Then back via another route to the Plough for refreshment.

Photo © Gavin Fuller



Woldingham, Sunday 24 November

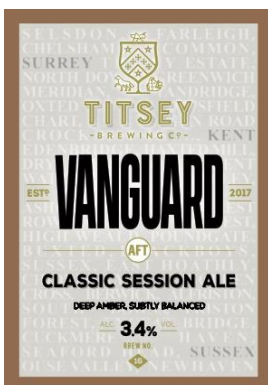
In the teeth of Storm Bert, John Jeffkins and Fiona McNicol led a party of seven on a 5-mile circular route from Woldingham Station up into the North Downs, finishing with afternoon tea at Knights Garden Centre. Unusually, the route didn't touch the VGW itself, but the walk started along the VGW's Woldingham link, where the photo was taken. Sadly, the members' walk planned for 26 October to Buxted had to be abandoned due to lack of interest.

Photo © Colin Saunders.

OTHER TRAIL ASSOCIATIONS 4: THE COTSWOLD WAY ASSOCIATION

The 102-mile Cotswold Way National Trail runs from Bath to Chipping Campden, mostly in Gloucestershire. It generally follows the escarpment of the Cotswold Hills, with wonderful views across the Severn Valley towards the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons, but often dropping down to pass through or near picturesque villages such as Wotton-under-Edge, Painswick, Birdlip and Bourton-on-the-Water.

There are at least seven published guides to the trail. The Association was established in 2016 as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. More information at cotswoldwayassociation.org.uk.



NOW WE HAVE OUR OWN BEER!

The Titsey Brewing Company, located of course in Titsey, is just 1.5 miles from the VGW and almost next to the North Downs Way. It has produced an ale which they call Vanguard, after our trail, because it links the areas where it will be sold. It's a 'Classic Session Ale', which means that, at a low strength of 3.4% ABV, it can be consumed without getting too inebriated. The ale melds Bramling Cross and Golding hops, yielding a deep amber ale. To quote their website, "The subtle bitter and sweet notes achieve an all-occasion, full flavour lower ABV ale".

Their taproom opens Thursday to Sunday (various times), providing (depending on the day) brunch, lunch and evening drinking. [More information here.](#)



CROSSING ROUTES 14: THE FOREST WAY

One of our shortest crossing routes at 10 miles, the Forest Way is actually a linear country park with a wide, firm surface along a disused railway line from East Grinstead to Groombridge, crossing the VGW at Forest Row. The line was built in 1866 and lasted 100 years, closing in 1966 with the Beeching cuts, then reopening as a country park in 1974. Ironically, Dr Beeching lived near Forest Row

and regularly travelled on this line. Managed by East Sussex County Council, it can be used by cyclists and horse riders as well as walkers. Some 2.5 miles of the Forest Way carries the VGW link from Forest Row to East Grinstead, but since it's generally uphill in that direction, it may be preferable to get the bus there and walk back!

Photo: © N.Chadwick cc-by-sa/2.0:: Geograph Britain and Ireland.

BED AND BREAKFAST ALONG THE VGW

1. Hurst Farm Near Crockham Hill

This is the first of a new series featuring selected places along the VGW offering bed and breakfast, be they traditional B&Bs, hotels or other establishments. First off is Hurst Farm, beautifully located slap bang on the VGW near Crockham Hill, 16 miles from East Croydon. Built around a 15th century farmhouse are a modern building with four en suite guest bedrooms, an oasthouse, an outdoor swimming pool, a tennis court and a croquet lawn. There's also a kitchen where you



can prepare your own food. Hurst Farm is offering a 10% discount on stays for walkers until 1 April 2025. More information at www.hurst.farm or email victoria@hurst.farm. Suggestions welcome for other places offering B&B along or near the VGW.

Photo © Hurst Farm



CONGRATULATIONS to those who have completed the Vanguard Way recently: Dave Saunders and Donal Toner (11 October), Ashley Mills and Melissa Pote (11 October), Jackie Holmes plus three friends (18 November). Also some who were a little tardy in telling us: Amy Jacques and Daniel Lukes (8 May), Rebecca Richards and Ben Allen (28 May).

THE SALMONS BROOK TRAIL

Our Vice Chair Colin Saunders has just published his 12th book, though it's a little out of area for most of our members. It's a 74-page guide to the 11-mile Salmons Brook Trail, a companion to the existing Pymmes Brook Trail, both of which are on his doorstep in Enfield, north London. It costs £10.00, of which £5.00 goes to the Pymmes Brookers, an organisation that works to improve the quality of and remove litter from both brooks and their banks. This will help them buy protective equipment such as waders and gloves, also litter-pickers, strimmers and saws. [More information here.](#)

ELSEWHERE ALONG THE VGW.....

Our Chair and Route Manager John Jefkins, ably assisted by Assistant Route Manager Dan Hawksworth, other committee members and our rangers, have been busy sorting out all sort of issues along the trail. Apologies for the delayed reporting of some of them. All have taken opportunities to attach new discs where they had disappeared at many places.

EAST CROYDON STATION, Croydon. Many VGW walkers will be familiar with the adjacent area on the east side of the station, perhaps by visiting the nearest pub, the Porter & Sorter. There is now a proposal to build a new sports centre there for 'padel', a sport similar to tennis.

VANGUARD WAY MARATHON. John, together with our committee members Fiona McNicol and Gareth Davies (marathon organiser) cleared all the brambles at various places along the route.

LITTLEHEATH WOODS, Croydon. Some 22 of our blue discs were lost recently when 11 posts were replaced without giving us back our discs. The Friends of Littleheath Woods were unaware of this, but identified the appropriate officer at Croydon Council. John is trying to get a £25 donation from the Council – or the discs back). Meanwhile, John has attached new blue discs on the new posts and used Postcrete to fix a wobbly post.

TITSEY ESTATE DIVERSION. Our request for a diversion of public footpath 472 away from the M25 has been agreed to in principle by the Titsey Estate, but only if we pay the legal costs, likely to be in the region of £4,000-£5,000. Obviously this is beyond our means at present, but we will investigate raising the money through Crowdfunding or similar.

SLINES OAK ROAD, near Woldingham, Surrey. We continue to negotiate for an improvement to this 250-metre stretch of a busy lane.

KENT & SURREY GOLF COURSE, near Edenbridge, Kent. Construction of the retirement village awaits planning permission, and the course is currently lying dormant. Meanwhile VGW walkers can continue to use public footpath SR600 across it.

STARBOROUGH, Surrey. John is discussing the possibility of replacing stiles across the field of Starline Farm with Surrey County Council. They would be funded by money remaining from the Graham Butler Mile project set up by the Vanguard Rambling Club.

SHEPHERDS GROVE LANE, near Hammerwood, East Sussex. A recent inspection by a VWA team found that a path through woodland adjoining this busy lane was impractical. They agreed that a roadside verge may be more achievable, and this will be followed up through East Sussex County Council.

ASHDOWN FOREST, East Sussex. The new posts installed by John and Dan in March appear to have survived and are now solidly in place.

WHITESMITH, East Sussex. Maize crops have been causing problems for walkers following public footpaths on farmland near Whitesmith. This was reported to East Sussex County Council, however the issue persisted. Now it seems that someone has been taking clearance of the paths into their own hands (or maybe feet) because maize along the route has been trampled down.

HOLMES HILL, near Golden Cross, East Sussex. The saga of five months of chasing up hedge-cutting has been finally resolved, to increase sightlines to 80 metres around the bend, providing 60mph traffic with a safe stopping distance. We've now had two doses of hedge-cutting, which has also created a wider verge for walkers to go a little further north to cross at a point where they and drivers are more visible to each other. John has also reported a broken stile there.

'WATTLE' FOOTPATH, near Golden Cross, East Sussex. East Sussex CC has cleared this often very overgrown footpath (Chiddingly 59) of brambles, but poor drainage leads to flooding and needs to be improved. We have been hassling local residents to complain to East Sussex County Council, who have now investigated and agree that it could possibly be foul water. John is discussing a solution with them.

A27 NEAR BERWICK VILLAGE, East Sussex. On a recent visit, Dan found the stile on the south side broken and the gate locked. This has been reported to East Sussex County Council.

BERWICK VILLAGE, East Sussex. The fingerpost that used to be situated opposite the Cricketers Arms pub has disappeared. We have been using the church notice, but the vicar has objected, so we will ask East Sussex County Council to reinstate the fingerpost.

EXCEAT BRIDGE, East Sussex. Construction of the new wider road bridge with adjoining footways is still to begin, apparently because the South Downs National Park Authority wish to change the design. It seems that this will not now start until 2026.

WATTS BROW, Cuckmere Haven, East Sussex. We are pressing East Sussex County Council to make surface improvements to the footpath (Seaford 26a).

BISHOPSTONE, East Sussex. The notorious 'beast of a lawnmower' has once again been employed by East Sussex County Council to clear the eastern section of footpath 1b through to the shingle at Newhaven & Seaford Sailing Club.

TIDE MILLS, East Sussex. Our committee member Bob Dunn reports that the Tide Mills area is now in good shape, following regular litter clearances by the Friends of Tide Mills.