

THE VANGUARD WAY

‘From the suburbs to the sea’

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

and points of interest along the route

SECTION 4

Haxted Mill to Forest Row

COLIN SAUNDERS

Fourth Edition

Version 4.1

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Designed by Brian Bellwood

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VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 4

SECTION 4: HAXTED MILL TO FOREST ROW

13.4 km (8.3 miles)

The Route Description is based on a completely new survey undertaken by club members in 2006 and 2007. 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 you can refer to the Latest News page on our website www.vanguardway.org.uk for any changes that may have taken place meanwhile.

Paragraphs are numbered for ease of reference. The route is marked on Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps, though you should note that in some places it is incorrectly marked on some older maps - we draw your attention to specific instances where relevant. 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 description:

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 grey 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 metres (m) or kilometres (km); but if you are more familiar with yards and miles, remember that 100m is about the same as 110 yards, and that 1 km is about five eighths of a mile.

Abbreviations

> = off route

Bw = bridleway

Fp = footpath

Rd = road

Tk = track

VW = Vanguard Way

KA = keep ahead

TL = turn left

TR = turn right

L = left

R = right

N = north

S = south

E = east

W = west

m = metres

km = kilometres

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Public transport

On route: Buses at Starborough (Moor Lane) and Forest Row.

Links with Edenbridge Town, Lingfield and East Grinstead stations, and bus stops at Edenbridge, Ashurstwood and East Grinstead.

Although Haxted Mill has no public transport, it is an easy place for local taxis to find (taxi operators are listed in the Public Transport section of the Vanguard Way Companion) and is well signed in the area.

Distances from Haxted Mill to:

>Edenbridge Town Station	5.4 km	(3.4 miles)	(via Eden Valley Walk)
>Lingfield Station	5.5 km	(3.4 miles)	
>Marsh Green (pub/bus)	3.8 km	(2.4 miles)	
Moor Cottages (B2028, bus)	2.9 km	(1.8 miles)	
Dry Hill Camp	5.3 km	(3.3 miles)	
Hammerwood (A264)	8.2 km	(5.1 miles)	
>Ashurstwood (pub/bus)	12.5 km	(7.8 miles)	
Forest Row (bus)	13.4 km	(8.3 miles)	
>East Grinstead Station	18.8 km	(11.7 miles)	(via Forest Way)

Distances from Edenbridge Town Station (via Eden Valley Walk) to:

>Marsh Green (pub/bus)	6.0 km	(3.7 miles)	
Lingfield station	7.8 km	(4.8 miles)	
Dry Hill Camp	7.5 km	(4.2 miles)	
Hammerwood (A264)	10.4 km	(6.5 miles)	
>Ashurstwood (pub/bus)	14.7 km	(9.1 miles)	
Forest Row (bus)	15.6 km	(9.7 miles)	
>East Grinstead Station	21.0 km	(13.0 miles)	(via Forest Way)

Distances from Lingfield Station

>Marsh Green (pub/bus)	5.7 km	(3.5 miles)	
Dry Hill Camp	7.2 km	(4.5 miles)	
Hammerwood (A264)	10.1 km	(6.3 miles)	
>Ashurstwood (pub/bus)	14.4 km	(8.9 miles)	
Forest Row (bus)	15.3 km	(9.5 miles)	
>East Grinstead Station	20.7 km	(12.8 miles)	(via Forest Way)

Overview

After a gentle start through farmland, the VW very soon enters the rolling hills of the Weald, climbing steadily to the Iron Age site at Dry Hill Camp. The area is well wooded, and you frequently pass from fields to trees and back to open fields. A long, level ridge walk towards the end of this section follows an ancient quiet lane past the small but imposing mansion of Thornhill, before descending into Forest Row.

Lowest and highest points. River Eden (43m); Dry Hill Camp (172m).

Section 4 of the Vanguard Way starts at Haxted Mill [TQ 418 455]

This is in Tandridge District in Surrey.

[Transport] Taxi (see *VW Transport Guide*) from:

Edenbridge station for trains from Tonbridge, Redhill and Gatwick Airport; also (not Sundays) East Croydon, central London, Crawley, Horsham, Tunbridge Wells.

Edenbridge Town Station for trains from Oxted, East Croydon, central London, Buxted, Uckfield; also buses (not Sundays) from East Grinstead, Westerham, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks.

[Refreshments] *Riverside Brasserie and Restaurant.*

4.1 [TQ 418 455]

- a) Before Rd crosses stream (Mill Brook), cross stile opposite Haxted Mill and KA through field with hedge on L and Mill Brook on R.
- b) In 450m cross footbridge and concrete culvert over River Eden (see Section 2) and go half L towards road bridge.
- c) Cross either of two stiles to R of bridge, TL on Rd (Water Lane) and cross bridge over Eden Brook (tributary of River Eden).

This stretch of road has no pavement - see Road Safety in 'An Introduction to the Route'.

4.2 [TQ 417 446]

- a) At fork go L (Starborough Lane) and after 400m, as Rd turns sharp R, KA over stile.
- b) Bear L past trees then immediately TR to follow righthand side of field.
- c) At end of field bear slightly L to locate and cross stile and plank bridge.
- d) In next field continue with hedge on R for 30m then KA across field, aiming to R of electricity post near pond.
- e) Pass wooden fingerpost to cross stile by pond near Cernes Farm. The ***Eden Valley Walk*** starts here, and you rejoin the Tandridge Border Path (see location 1.15) for the next 750m.

See next page for Southern Link with Edenbridge and Edenbridge Town Station.

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 4

Southern Link with Edenbridge and Edenbridge Town Station [3.7 km / 2.3 miles, TQ 445 466]

This link follows the Eden Valley Walk.

- a) *After crossing stile, KA on faint Fp along lefthand side of field beside scrub.*
 - b) *In 75m in field corner cross stile and follow Fp bearing half L across three fields for 700m. Note that there is a grass airstrip here, which you have to cross at one point; it is normally only used for weekend flying by light aircraft.*
 - c) *Cross bridge and TR to follow Fp beside or close to River Eden for 1.3 km. You pass through a copse which is the site of Devil's Den, a medieval moated manor, built about 1300, and now a scheduled ancient monument.*
 - d) *KA on Fp as it bears L beside river and follow for 350m into recreation ground.*
 - e) *KA along R side of playing field, then TL beside raised grass embankment.*
 - f) *TR past car park and pavilion on to Rd (Coomb Field) then KA past Lucilina Drive.*
 - g) *TR along Lingfield Road past triangular green to main Rd (B2026 Mont St. Aignan Way).*
 - h) *KA (using controlled crossing to R) along lane to High Street. Leave Eden Valley Walk here.*
 - i) *TL along High Street past White Horse Inn for 300m.*
 - j) *TR along Station Approach to Edenbridge Town Station.*
- Edenbridge Station is 1 km (half a mile) further along the main Rd.*

[Transport] *Trains to Oxted, East Croydon, central London, Buxted, Uckfield. Also buses (not Sundays) to East Grinstead, Westerham, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks.*

[Refreshments] *In Edenbridge.*

[Accommodation] *In Edenbridge.*

If starting from Edenbridge Town Station:

- a) *From station forecourt KA along Station Approach to main Rd (Station Road).*
- b) *TL along Station Road, which soon becomes High Street.*
- c) *In 300m. just past White Horse Inn and opposite NatWest Bank, TR along lane (actually Lingfield Road but unmarked), joining Eden Valley Walk.*
- d) *At bypass Rd (B2026 Mont St. Aignan Way) KA, using controlled crossing to L.*
- e) *KA at triangular green and pass Tanners Mead.*
- f) *Shortly TL along Coomb Field and enter recreation ground.*
- g) *At car park TL beside raised grass embankment then TR along edge of playing field and cross metal footbridge.*
- h) *KA beside or near River Eden, crossing wooden footbridge by concrete pillbox.*
- i) *KA with river, soon bearing R, then KA into copse (Devil's Den).*
- j) *Follow Fp along L side of next two fields.*
- k) *Bear L across plank bridge then KA across grass airstrip close to another concrete pillbox (the airstrip is normally only used for weekend flying by light aircraft).*
- l) *Follow winding Fp along L side of large field until it comes close to bushes.*
- m) *TL across concrete footbridge and KA across field.*
- n) *Go through gate then KA on Tk, which broadens out between fences.*
- o) *Cross stile and follow faint Tk towards farm buildings.*
- p) *Cross another stile and keep to R side of field beside scrub to Tk by Cernes Farm, where TL to rejoin VW.*

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4.3 [TQ 425 445]

- a) TR on Tk for 250m and bear R at end through metal gate.
- b) Pass **Coach House** and KA along lane with railings to your L for 40m.

[Accommodation] *At Starborough Manor.*

Link to Lingfield Station [3.7 km / 2.3 miles, TQ 394 438]

There are many fields to cross on this link, so to avoid confusion we have numbered them all.

- a) KA past stile along lane for 300m to Rd (Starborough Road).
- b) Cross with care and KA on Starborough Farm drive for 300m.
- c) At start of gravel drive on L, KA for 30m then TL over stile in high hedge to gravel drive.
- d) TR across gravel drive then follow grass leading to Fp on L of hedge of farmhouse garden.
- e) KA across Field 1 on Fp to far L corner by wood to cross sleeper bridge into Field 2.
- f) Follow L side of Fields 2/3, then cross stile ahead into small wood.
- g) Cross footbridge, KA along L side of Field 4 then take R-hand stile (yellow arrow).
- h) KA to end of Field 5, by double metal gate, and TR to stay in same field following L side.
- i) At end of Field 5 cross stile into Field 6 and KA to end, where bear R to cross concrete footbridge and stile into Field 7 (playing field).
- j) Follow R side of playing field to Rd (St. Piers Lane) and cross half L with care.
The buildings to your left for the next 800m are part of the National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE).
- k) Cross stile and KA across Fields 8 and 9 via footbridge to stile into wood.
- l) KA through wood, and at far end (before wooden shed) TR through metal gate.
- m) TL along L side of Field 10.
- n) Where field edge bears R, go slightly L at footpath junction then continue in same direction on descending fenced Tk.
- o) Go through kissing gate then bear R to cross Field 11 via two footbridges (second crosses River Eden).
- p) Go through kissing gate then cross railway lines with very great care - if a train is within sight or sound do not even think of crossing!
- q) TR along Fp beside platform to station entrance.

To continue to village centre, TL past car park to Station Road, cross with care and KA along Fp. The Star Inn is at its end, or TL along Church Road to the High Street.

[Transport] *Trains to East Grinstead, Oxted, East Croydon and central London.*

[Refreshments] [Accommodation] [Phone box] *In Lingfield.*

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If starting from Lingfield Station:

(Field numbers in reverse order)

- a) From exit TL along fenced Fp beside platform.*
- b) At end of platform TL through kissing gates to cross railway lines with very great care - if a train is within sight or sound do not even think of crossing!*
- c) KA along Fp across Field 11, crossing two footbridges.*
- d) After 2nd bridge bear R through kissing gate and ascend fenced Tk.*
- e) At Fp junction with waymark post go slightly L then immediately R to continue in same direction along R side of Field 10.*
- f) In 200m ignore Fp leading into wood and bear L along edge of same Field 10.*
- g) In 200m, TR into wood, go through gate then TL.*
- h) Shortly keep to R fork and KA to stile at edge of wood.*
- i) KA across Fields 9 and 8 via footbridge to Rd (St. Piers Lane) with NCYPE to your R.*
- j) Cross Rd half L (with care) then TR and follow L side of Field 7 (playing field, between grass and scrub).
Note: At time of writing this scrub was being cleared so the Fp may follow the field edge.*
- k) Cross stile and concrete footbridge then bear R to follow R side of Fields 6 and 5.*
- l) At end of Field 5, TL before double metal gate to stay in same Field 5 following R side.*
- m) Cross stile and follow R side of Field 4, then at end cross footbridge into small wood.*
- n) Cross stile and KA along R side of Fields 3 and 2.*
- o) At end of Field 2, by wood corner, cross sleeper bridge and bear half L along Fp across Field 1 heading for R-hand end of farmhouse.*
- p) In field corner, follow hedge of farmhouse garden on to gravel drive.*
- q) TR briefly on gravel drive then very soon TL through gap in high hedge to cross stile.*
- r) TR along farm drive to Rd (Starborough Road).*
- s) Cross with care and KA along drive for 300m, then at stile by railings TR to rejoin VW.*

4.4 [TQ 424 442]

- a) Cross stile on L and follow Fp close to railings and hedge.*
- b) On reaching drive, stay inside field for 100m then cross stile to L.*

Link to the Wheatsheaf pub at Marsh Green [1.7 km, 1.0 mile, TQ 437 441]

This is a more pleasant approach than walking along the B2028 road.

- a) On reaching drive, KA across stile and follow Fp beside fence then along L side of field.*
- b) Cross stile in corner and KA uphill (slightly R, bearing 100°) across large field.*
- c) Locate and cross stile and plank bridge in hedgerow.*
- d) TR along enclosed Fp around side of field, crossing two more stiles (a moated island was being landscaped here as at September 2007).*
- e) TR along drive of **Lingfield Lodge Farm** then in 35m TL on Fp through Graham Nicholls Memorial Wood.*
- f) At Rd (Marsh Green Road) cross with care and KA into wood opposite.*
- g) At lane (Greybury Lane) TL by cottages for 250m to Rd, where KA for 150m to the Wheatsheaf.*

[Refreshments] *The Wheatsheaf at Marsh Green [TQ 438 441]. As there are few convenient refreshment opportunities in this area, this is a popular halt for many VWayfarers.*

[Transport] *Buses operate along this road Monday to Friday only between East Grinstead and Westerham via Lingfield, Dormansland and Edenbridge.*

Returning from the Wheatsheaf

- a) From the Wheatsheaf cross Rd with care and TR along pavement.
- b) In 150m bear L along Greybury Lane.
- c) In 250m by cottages TR over stile into wood.
- d) Cross Rd with care and KA along narrow fenced Fp, which leads on through Graham Nicholls Memorial Wood.
- e) At farm Tk TR for 35m then TL along side of field to cross stile.
- f) Follow enclosed Fp around side of field, crossing another stile.
- g) At end cross stile and KA (slightly R, bearing 280°) across large field.
- h) Cross plank bridge and stile then follow R side of next field.
- i) At Starborough Castle drive TL to rejoin VW.

4.5 [TQ 425 439]

- a) TR along drive of **Starborough Castle**.
- b) In 230m cross stile on R and go three-quarters L (bearing 220°) to far L corner of field.
- c) Cross stile on to Rd (B2028 Moor Lane) by **Starborough Nursery** and TR for 20m to junction with Starborough Lane.

[Transport] Buses operate along this road Monday to Friday only between East Grinstead and Westerham via Lingfield, Dormansland and Edenbridge.

4.6 [TQ 422 434]

- a) Cross with care to **Moor Cottages**.
- b) KA on Bw past cottages and through several fields, with Skitts Farm over to your L.
- c) In 500m reach path junction, then in 30m at second junction KA on Bw to L of copse.
Coming in from the left once again is the Tandridge Border Path (see Section 1), which we rejoin for the fifth and last time for the next 3.5 km (2 miles).
- d) At Bw junction go through gate, TR and in 50m TL through gate (Greathed Turn).

4.7 [TQ 424 425]

- a) In 20m bear L uphill along Bw (*fine view to L*) which after 300m goes through wood.
- b) Where wood ends follow Bw as it winds to L around L side of field and garden, with Reynolds Wood on your L.
- c) TR at Bw junction by house, where the VW briefly (for 100m) joins the **Sussex Border Path**.

4.8 [TQ 430 420]

- a) At next Bw junction in 100m (by Dry Hill Farm) TL uphill.
- b) Keep to main Tk which after 350m bears L through gap in overgrown embankment, which marks your entry into **Dry Hill Camp**.
- c) TR along Tk on edge of field (with trig point in field on left at altitude 172m or 564 feet) - *this is still within the area covered by the hill fort*.
- d) In 200m go between two gateways (where you leave the hill fort area) then descend a fenced Tk between fields.
- e) At foot of slope, bear R on Tk through trees for 20m.
- f) At Bw junction keep SA to concrete Dutch barn by Beeches Farm.

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4.9 [TQ 434 413]

- a) TL then shortly TR along concrete farm Tk, passing through farm gate.
- b) Follow Tk for 500m through another farm gate by Woodlands Farm.
- c) Continue along Tk for a further 500m to grass triangle with elderly fingerpost at junction of Tk and Rd in the **Kentwater valley**.

[Refreshments] TL along lane for 300m to Basings Farm (open to the public Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays), which sells a variety of refreshments (including goats milk ice cream) and has a farm shop.

[Accommodation] At the White Horse Inn, Holtye Common (3 km / 2 miles) east along Smithers Lane - a pleasant walk along a normally quiet lane, which passes a series of small artificial ponds (constructed to provide power to the iron foundries in this area), the much larger Furnace Pond, and crosses Holtye Golf Course on the common.

[Transport] Infrequent buses at Holtye Common.

The next kilometre of route to the A264 at Hammerwood, is not ideal, being along a fairly busy road with no pavement. We hope that a better route will become available eventually, using a more easterly route mostly on public rights of way. However, unfortunately and frustratingly, this is not yet available due to a very short gap in the right of way at this end. We have asked Kent County Council to investigate.

4.10 [TQ 434 403]

TR on Rd (Smithers Lane), passing the chocolate-box cottage called Smithers, for 500m to Rd junction.

[Phone box] 275m to R along Shepherds Grove Lane.

4.11 [TQ 429 401]

a) TL on Rd (Shepherds Grove Lane).

Take great care on this road as it is quite busy and has several blind righthand bends with no pavement - see Road Safety in 'An Introduction to the Route'.

b) Follow Rd for 300m, crossing Kent Water and passing **Gotwick Manor** to junction with main Rd (A264 Holtye Road) at Hammerwood.

[Transport] Surprisingly, there is no bus service along this main road. The nearest is at Holtye Common (2.5 km east, not Sundays). You could walk into East Grinstead (5.3 km southwest) but you may as well walk on to Ashurstwood (4.8 km) or Forest Row (5.4 km further along VW), which both have bus services. It should be possible to get a taxi (see Taxi list in the VW Companion) to come from East Grinstead to collect you here (say you are on the A264 at the junction of Holtye Road and Shepherds Grove Lane).

4.12 [TQ 432 395]

a) Cross Rd with great care to drive opposite (signposted 'To Gotwick Brook and Brooklands').

*If you wish to visit **Hammerwood Park** (1.5 km off route) TL here and walk with great care along Rd for 500m, then TR past village hall and follow lane to far end of village.*

b) Follow drive for 500m.

Just past Brooklands Farm sign, look R to see a recent example of landscaping in the style of Capability Brown.

c) Where lane bends R, TL sharply on Fp (becoming Tk) to junction.

4.13 [TQ 435 389]

- a) TR along Bw beside line of trees, with fields to your L.
- b) At metal gate KA on Bw into Wet Wood.
- c) On leaving wood cross stream by brick footbridge and KA on Bw.
- d) Continue uphill for 400m between hedges, fences and bushes, eventually along edge of wood (*The Grove*) to Rd.

4.14 [TQ 435 380]

- a) At Dog Gate Lodge TR on lane, which is in effect **Hammerwood Road**, and follow it along a ridge between valleys for 1,500m, passing Owletts House, Songhurst (formerly Barton House) and imposing grey-stone Thornhill (*former farmhouse now residential*) all on your L.
- b) In 1,500m reach junction by Homefield Cottage.

[Transport] For **Ashurstwood** (1 km) TR at Homefield Cottage and continue along lane. Buses to East Grinstead, Forest Row, Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield stop by the Three Crowns pub.

[Refreshments] Pubs in Ashurstwood.

4.15 [TQ 430 368]

- a) At Homefield Cottage TL past post box along lane.
- b) In 70m TR along rough Tk for 200m to lane (**Cansiron Lane**).
- c) Bear L and follow lane past Grove Farm Cottages and Home Meadow.

4.16 [TQ 431 364]

- a) In 200m, where lane bears L, TR by wooden field gates (Melbank) and follow Fp through trees (joining one of the *Forest Way Circular Walks*).
- b) Cross stile to follow R edge of fields, eventually with fields on both sides.
- c) Continue on Fp downhill.
- d) Fp returns into woodland, with sunken, overgrown Tk on your R.
- e) Eventually, where Fp leaves trees, cross stile then follow R edge of fields with small reservoir on your L.
- f) Cross stile and follow R edge of next field to join Fp beside water treatment works.
- g) After 100m cross lane (**Forest Way**, **High Weald Landscape Trail** and potentially **Avenue Verte**) by Forest Lodge Veterinary Centre and go through bushes opposite into car park.

[Refreshments] 150m to your left is Tablehurst Farm which has an organic farm shop open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

See next page for link with East Grinstead Station.

Link to East Grinstead Station [5.6 km / 3.5 miles, TQ 388 382]

If you need to get to East Grinstead Station, the quickest way is probably to continue into Forest Row for a bus. But from this point there is an easily followed and pleasant walk of 5.7 km (3.5 miles) using this link, a former railway line, mostly along the Forest Way. But note that it is mostly uphill into East Grinstead, so you may prefer to take the bus there and return on foot.

- a) TR along lane past veterinary centre, parallel with former railway track on embankment to L.*
- b) In 300m cross A22 London Road at controlled crossing then bear R up Fp behind fence.*
- c) Follow disused railway Tk (Forest Way) for 3.8 km (2.4 miles). This is also National Cycle Route 21, so watch out for fast-moving cyclists. Points to watch out for are Brambletye Crossing, a picnic table about halfway, a brick road bridge, and a fairly busy estate road towards the end.*
- d) At the end, bear L up to A22 Lewes Road in East Grinstead. The road opposite, Beeching Way (ironically along a former railway line), is named after Dr Richard Beeching (1913-1985), the architect of the infamous 'Beeching Axe' of massive railway line closures in the 1960s, who lived in East Grinstead.*
- e) TL for 300m, leading up to the High Street.*
- f) Just after the Rose & Crown pub, take the R fork, then at mini-roundabout TR down London Road, signed for Worth Way.*
- g) At foot of hill KA past traffic lights (Queens Road to left, King Street to right - toilets in car park) then at next lights by Broadway pub TL along Railway Approach for 350m.*
- h) At the roundabout for B2110 (Brooklands Way), the station lies ahead, but unfortunately local planners have made poor provision for pedestrians and you must follow a tortuous route, at first along the pavement to the left then come back on the far side and TL for the station - take care as you cross over as there is no protected pedestrian crossing.*

[Transport] *Trains to Oxted, East Croydon and central London; many bus services.*

[Accommodation] *and most other facilities in East Grinstead.*

If starting from East Grinstead Station:

- a) From forecourt KA to roundabout then KA along Rd (Railway Approach) - head for the Mid Sussex Timber warehouse. If traffic is heavy by the station use the zebra crossing to the right. At the roundabout use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to the right.*
- b) At end of Railway Approach TR along London Road for 350m to junction at top of hill.*
- c) TL for 300m along High Street which becomes Lewes Road.*
- d) KA to 2nd roundabout at junction with A22 ring road.*
- e) Descend ramp to R on to Forest Way Country Park and follow the Forest Way for 3.8 km (2.4 miles), eventually descending ramp to London Road at Forest Row.*
- f) Cross Rd at light-controlled crossing then KA along lane signposted Hartfield / Forest Way. (Or for facilities in village centre TR along London Road, turning L at B2110 to rejoin VW at 5.1a below.)*
- g) Follow lane for 300m (the former railway line is to your R here), then immediately after water treatment works and veterinary centre TR through gap in bushes (signed 'Forest Row village').*

4.17 [TQ 428 353]

- a) TL through car park then immediately TR before buildings (Forest Row Social Club).
- b) KA beside Rd (*Station Road*), through Forest Row's 'commercial quarter', which consists of a growing number of warehouses and business premises.
- c) In 100m you cross the infant **River Medway**.
Just past this (opposite timber yard) a Fp to R leads directly to Forest Row's bus stops and most of its facilities.
- d) Continue ahead for another 200m (passing Riverview Café) to main Rd (*B2110 Hartfield Road*) at **Forest Row**, where Section 4 of the VW ends beside the Foresters Arms pub at:

5.1 [TQ 426 350]

[Transport] Buses to East Grinstead, London, Haywards Heath, Crawley, Three Bridges, Uckfield, Coleman's Hatch, Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne. Also (not Sundays) to Hailsham, East Hoathly, Golden Cross and Westerham.

[Refreshments] The Foresters Arms is adjacent to VW at end of Station Road. There are more pubs and cafés in the town centre - TR for 150m at the Foresters Arms.

[Toilets] At back of car park.

[Accommodation] In Forest Row.

COMMENTARY

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

4.2

The **Eden Valley Walk** is 24 km (15 miles) long and links the Vanguard Way at Cernes with the Wealdway at Tonbridge, naturally following the River Eden as much as possible. Jointly promoted by Kent and Surrey County Councils, it passes through Edenbridge and close to three of southeast England's best-loved stately homes: Hever Castle, Chiddingstone Castle and Penshurst Place. For Vanguard Wayfarers it provides a pleasant link with Edenbridge. More information at:

www.edenbridgetown.com/maps/eden_valley_walk.shtml.

4.3

The **Coach House**, built in the late 18th century, was formerly the stables of Starborough Castle.

4.4

Starborough Castle is the name of the farmhouse on your left, built circa 1880, though it now seems to be offering bed and breakfast under the name Starborough Manor. But the remains of a Norman castle, and of a later one built in 1342 by the first Lord Cobham, are situated on a moated island on the far (east) side. The original name was Sterburgh, meaning Sterr's Castle (after a local squire, Richard Sterr), so the addition of Castle is tautological! Lord Cobham's castle had four turrets and a main gate. In 1642, during the Civil War, it was garrisoned by the Parliamentarians and dismantled in 1649; only the moat and some traces of the building survive. A battlemented Gothic-style summerhouse was built in 1754. The moat and ruins are inaccessible to the public, but can be seen by making a short diversion along the footpath opposite (on the link with Marsh Green) as you join the drive. Note too the narrow-boat moored incongruously in the moat beside the island.

4.5

Lingfield Lodge Farm on the link to Marsh Green is now a highly respected veterinary clinic (www.lingfieldlodge.co.uk). Among its clientele are the racing greyhounds based at Crayford Stadium.

Starborough Nursery is well known for growing a wide variety of rare and unusual trees and shrubs including acers, camellias and rhododendrons. More information at:

www.gardenvisit.com/nursery/starborough_nursery.

4.6

Whether or not you speak German, a very short detour westwards (ahead) along the road past **Moor Cottages** will both entertain and educate. At the far end of Moor Cottages look back and up to see the following inscription on the side wall: 'Der wein ist geldeswert; er lindert alle Schmerzen, er macht die Zunge oft leichter, and bessert von Herzens'. By our loose translation and imperfect German, this means 'wine is worth every penny; it soothes every pain, it often makes the tongue lighter, and improves the heart'. This is the result of a visit by the owners in the 1980s to a wine festival beside the River Rhine in Germany, where they were captivated by this inscription on the wall of an inn.

4.7

Coming in from the left now is the **Sussex Border Path**. This is a 240 km long-distance walking route from Emsworth to Rye along the county border, with a branch from East Grinstead to Southwick along the border that divides East and West Sussex. The route was the creation of Aeneas Mackintosh and Ben Perkins. It diverges from the VW by keeping ahead at the next junction. More information at:

www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?menu_type=S&path_id=442.

Dry Hill Farm used to include fruit production, with huts and toilets alongside the VW for the seasonal pickers. Then for a while it was Pick-Your-Own, with a refreshment kiosk that is sadly no longer available.

4.8

Dry Hill Camp (also called Dry Hill Fort) was an Iron Age hill fort dating from about 500 BC, and would probably have been permanently occupied by Celtic tribes. Roughly rectangular in shape, it covers 10 hectares and has a circumference of 1.5 km. The VW follows its southwestern side for about 250m, but the body of the camp extends some 350m to your left, with its main entrance at the far end. The fort is described as ‘multivallate’, which means it had several walls or earth embankments - in this case three embankments separated by two ditches, which survive for about half of the total length. The last archaeological excavation took place in 1932, when flint artefacts and evidence of pre-Roman iron-working were found. The site is privately owned but is registered as both a Scheduled Monument by English Heritage and a Site of Special Scientific Interest by Natural England. Its integrity has been rather compromised by the covered reservoir, on your left as you enter the site, built in 1910 and now owned by Sutton and East Surrey Water. There is in fact a second, smaller reservoir within the southwestern ramparts.

4.9

There is a pleasant and interesting diversion to your left (SE) along Smithers Lane in the **Kentwater valley**. It is normally quiet but can get busy in rush hours. Refreshments are sometimes available at Basings Farm Shop (350m), and 600m beyond that is Scarletts, a scattering of picturesque buildings, including a furnace that was in use from the 16th to 18th centuries, which has been excavated by its owner. As well as the furnace itself, there is a wheelpit for the furnace bellows and a gun casting pit. Further along, the lane passes a series of small artificial ponds, fed by Kent Water, and constructed to provide power to the iron foundries in this area. Beyond these is the much larger Furnace Pond (2 km). There is a golf course on Holtye Common, and on its far side is the White Horse Inn (3 km), which offers a wide choice of meals and accommodation.

4.10

Gotwick Manor was the home of Elaine Marks, daughter of Michael Marks, the co-founder of Marks & Spencer. Its garden had a stream that could be turned on and off from inside the house. Just before Gotwick Manor you cross from Tandridge District in Surrey into Wealden District in East Sussex.

4.11

The secluded village of **Hammerwood** is part of the tied estate of Hammerwood Park. It lies just 300m from the VW as the crow flies but can only be reached from it on an 800m diversion. It contains several buildings described by Pevsner. The mansion called **Hammerwood Park** (500m further SE, www.hammerwood.mistral.co.uk) has an interesting history. It was built in 1792 for one John Sperling, and designed by the Yorkshireman, Benjamin Latrobe, who emigrated to the United States in 1795 and became one of that country’s leading architects, including in his portfolio the White House and the Capitol in Washington DC, and Baltimore Cathedral. His only other remaining design in England is Ashdown House (see Forest Row). In the 1960s Hammerwood Park was turned into flats, then in the 1970s was acquired by the rock band Led Zeppelin. It is now one of the most exclusive bed and breakfast establishments in the country, and claims the largest and grandest rooms in any B&B. It is open to the public on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons from Easter to September and the tour includes afternoon tea. Nearby Bower Farmhouse dates from the 15th century, and St. Stephen’s Church on the main road is 19th century.

4.14

Hammerwood Road links Ashurstwood with Hammerwood Park, though the northern section through to the big house is not a right of way. It follows a ridge at an altitude of about 100m between tributary streams of the Medway, and is thought to lie on the line of an important pre-Roman track that was used by iron-smelters - the names Hammerwood and Cansiron (see below) betray associations with the iron industry. You pass grey, lonely Thornhill, now luxury apartments; so far we have been unable to discover anything about this imposing building, but we are working on it!

4.15

Ashurstwood (1 km W) was originally called Aesehyrstwilde - wilde being the Saxon for waste land - and was first recorded in 1164. In recent years it has expanded from a small, sleepy village to a well-heeled commuter centre, with a population of nearly 2,000. As well as two pubs (Maypole and Three Crowns) it has the 19th century Christ Church, which contains an early 16th century Flemish carved altarpiece. The mansion called Dutton Homestall (500 m N of the church on Homestall Road) was created from the original building, Homestall, to which in 1933 was added the ornamental timber-framed Dutton Hall, transferred lock stock and barrel from Cheshire.

On 1st January 2000, the village came to national prominence when it declared independence as the 'People's Republic of Ashurst Wood Nation State' (PRAWNS), announcing to a bemused media that its residents were 'no longer prawns of the government of the Disunited Kingdom, we are now Prawns in our own right'. A ruling in the 10th century by King Ethelred, exempting the village from taxation, was cited as justification for this action. Under a retired colonel who called himself Chief Prawn, ministers were appointed, a constitution was written, passports were issued, a national anthem composed and checkpoints established on the road from East Grinstead. We assume that this good-natured, tongue-in-cheek revolution has now come to an end, though we have yet to find a definitive statement to this effect.

Cansiron Lane is an ancient track that links Ashurstwood with Holtye.

4.16

The **Forest Way** is a linear country park, used as a shared walking and cycling route, which between East Grinstead and Groombridge (15.5 km / 9.6 miles) follows part of the former railway line from Three Bridges to Tunbridge Wells West. More information at:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/walks/forestway.

The former Forest Row station occupied the area to your left - only part of a platform remains. The line was opened in 1866 for the London Brighton & South Coast Railway as a rival to the earlier (1845) route to Tunbridge Wells Central of the South Eastern Railway. The two lines were linked in the 1870s, in 1922 became part of the Southern Railway, and in 1946 were nationalised as part of British Railways. This line was closed in 1967, though the section from Tunbridge Wells West to Groombridge still operates as the steam-hauled Spa Valley Railway (www.spavalleyrailway.co.uk).

The track is also used by the **High Weald Landscape Trail**, which is 145 km (90 miles) long from Horsham in West Sussex to Rye in East Sussex, via Haywards Heath, East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells. More information at: www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=29.

There is a proposal for a new route called **Avenue Verte** (Green Way), linking London with Paris, which would pass along the former railway track. It is aimed primarily at cyclists, and would be surfaced accordingly - so walkers wishing to go from London to Paris or vice versa would probably prefer to follow the more amenable Vanguard Way! More information at:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/cycling/cyclinginfrance/default.htm.

4.17

The **River Medway** rises from several streams close to the west of this point (around Turners Hill) and flows for 112 km (70 miles) to reach the Thames Estuary west of the Isle of Sheppey.

Forest Row (www.forestrow.org) 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, 4,700 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

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 4

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 (2 km northeast, designed by Benjamin Latrobe, see above) 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 (1 km northeast) and Michael Hall (see Kidbrooke Park below).

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

Interesting buildings include:

Village Hall. 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, 4 km southwest) he attended a service at Forest Row's catholic church, Our Lady of the Forest.

Holy Trinity Church. 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 (1.2 km 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 (1.2 km 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 no longer open to the public.
