

# THE VANGUARD WAY

'From the suburbs to the sea'

ROUTE DESCRIPTION  
and points of interest along the route

SECTION 5  
Forest Row to Poundgate



COLIN SAUNDERS

*Fifth Edition*

This fifth edition was first published in 2014.  
It is only available as an online resource.

It replaces previous printed editions published in  
1980, 1986 and 1997, also the online fourth edition published in 2009.

**Designed by Brian Bellwood**

Published by the Vanguards Rambling Club  
35 Gerrards Close, Oakwood, London, N14 4RH, England

© VANGUARDS RAMBLING CLUB 1980, 1986, 1997, 2009, 2014

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](mailto:colin@vanguardway.org.uk) or write to Colin Saunders, 35 Gerrards Close, Oakwood, London, N14 4RH, England.

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

### **SECTION 5: FOREST ROW TO POUNDGATE**

**11.3 km (7.0 miles)**

The Route Description is based on a completely new survey undertaken by club members in 2012 and 2013. 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](http://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 railway 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.

**Names that are not visible are shown in italics within brackets.**

**Underlined bold italic text** indicates that more details can be found in the Commentary, which follows the route description.

Distances 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. Altitudes are shown in metres – for an approximate conversion into feet multiply by 3 and add 10%.

#### **Abbreviations**

> = off route

Bw = bridleway

FB = footbridge

Fp = footpath

KG = kissing gate

Rd = road (NP = no pavement, see below)

Tk = track

VGW = Vanguard Way

KA = keep ahead

TL = turn left

TR = turn right

N = north

S = south

E = east

W = west

m = metres

km = kilometres

L = left

R = right

---

---

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

---

---

### Roads with no pavement

'NP' in the route description indicates a road with no pavement, and there are several of them in this section. Although they are mostly usually quiet, 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 bright, luminous or reflective on top.

### Public transport

Buses at Forest Row, Coleman's Hatch and Poundgate.

### Distances from Forest Row to:

>Coleman's Hatch (Hatch Inn)	5.6 km (3.5 miles) (diverting at Newbridge)
Gills Lap car park	7.2 km (4.5 miles)
Kings Standing car park	8.8 km (5.5 miles)
Poundgate (bus)	11.3 km (7.0 miles)

### Distances from East Grinstead via Forest Way to:

>Coleman's Hatch (Hatch Inn)	11.6 km (7.2 miles) (diverting at Newbridge)
Gills Lap car park	13.2 km (8.2 miles)
Kings Standing car park	14.8 km (9.2 miles)
Poundgate (bus)	17.3 km (10.7 miles)

### Overview

The Vanguard Way passes through some of its best and most isolated scenery with a route through the Ashdown Forest. It is actually mostly heathland, with abundant bracken and heather, and expansive views. From Forest Row the route climbs steadily, skirting the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course and passing near the delightful Hatch Inn, then drops into a valley at Newbridge, the heart of a pre-Roman and Roman iron industry. A stiff climb leads to Gills Lap, where you are in Winnie-the-Pooh country, then a level walk (where you pass the halfway point of the Vanguard Way) leads to Kings Standing and a descent across wild, open country to leave the Forest at Poundgate. You also cross a watershed: all the streams you have been crossing until this high point flow generally northwards into the Thames basin, while those in later sections flow generally southwards into the English Channel.

**Lowest and highest points.** Forest Row (59m); south of Gills Lap (217m).

---

### **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](http://www.vanguardway.org.uk). It contains important information that will be helpful when reading this route description.

And don't forget to look at the **Latest News** page on our website for any developments affecting this and any other part of the route.

---

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

---

---

**IF YOU ENCOUNTER ANY PROBLEMS** affecting the rights of way, such as obstructions, closures or diversions, your first course of action should be to contact the relevant highway authority, which on this section is:

**East Sussex County Council.**

Please also let us know about it by email to [graham@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:graham@vanguardway.org.uk).

---

© Colin Saunders, 2014

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

### Section 5 of the Vanguard Way starts beside the Foresters Arms pub in Forest Row [TQ 426 350]

This is in Wealden District in East Sussex.

[Transport 🚌] Buses from East Grinstead, London, Crawley, Three Bridges, Coleman's Hatch, Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne. Also (not Sundays) from Wytch Cross, Uckfield.

[Refreshments 🍷] The Foresters Arms is adjacent to VGW at end of Station Road. There are more pubs and cafés in the town centre - TR for 150m at the Foresters Arms. In Lower Road at the back of the car park is Seasons Organic Fruit and Vegetables.

[Toilets 🚻] The public toilets in the car park have closed, to be replaced by a Community Toilet Scheme, in which the public are able to use the facilities in the following places: Forest Row Community Centre (which the VGW passes soon after the start of Section 5), Lenny's Sandwich Bar (almost opposite the Foresters Arms), and both the Chequers Inn and Brambletye Hotel in The Square.

#### 5.1 [TQ 426 350]

a) At Foresters Arms in Forest Row TL along Rd (B2110 Hartfield Road) for 70m then go over zebra crossing and TL on far side, passing Community Centre.

[Phone box 📞]

[🚻] In Community Centre.

For the next 500m or so (also later at 5.5) the VGW shares its route with **An Ashdown Forest Perambulation**.

b) At School Lane bear R on tarmac Fp diagonally across green.

c) Cross private Rd (Ashdown Road) then continue along narrow Fp as it twists between garden fences.

d) TR at next Rd (Chapel Lane).

e) In 300m near top of hill, before Rd bears R, bear half L on Fp opposite Garden House (postbox in wall), then KA on main Fp, almost (but not quite) to tarmac drive. Note the carved, rustic Vanguard Way sign by the drive, provided by the **RiverOcean Foundation**.

**You have now entered the Ashdown Forest.** With certain exceptions, walkers may go where they wish but please observe the Countryside Code (see 'Introduction to the Route') and respect the Ashdown Forest bye-laws. They are explained in more detail on the website [www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org) under 'Forest Governance', but note especially:

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

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

The VGW route here was prepared with the kind help of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. At the time of writing, waymarking of the VGW through the Ashdown Forest was under discussion but had not been implemented.

**Continued on next page**

### *Continued from previous page*

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

*This section passes through the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course. Take great care when passing near tees and greens and crossing fairways, and always allow golfers to finish their stroke before continuing.*

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

***Note that the VGW route through the Ashdown Forest has changed in several places since the route was launched, and may be different from the one shown on some OS maps, although it is correctly shown on the maps on our website. We have not been permitted to waymark the route through the Forest to our satisfaction, so you should concentrate on the route description!***

### **5.2 [TQ 429 343]**

- a) Just before tarmac drive, TL along narrow Fp through bracken, leading through woodland.
- b) Keep L at path junction, shortly coming beside a shallow ditch and fence.
- c) KA at metalled drive, with gates of Woodfield House to your L.
- d) KA on Fp through holly for 90m to cross another metalled drive between gate and golf tee.
- e) KA on descending Fp, ignoring paths to L, for 45m and join end of tarmac drive, passing house (Fernroyd).

### **5.3 [TQ 432 344]**

- a) KA on linking Tk to tarmac *Primrose Lane* **NP** and follow it past cottages.
- b) At junction (Little Shalesbrook) TR on lane **NP** (*Post Horn Lane*), crossing stream.
- c) In 80m, by fingerpost, TL past bench seat to green gates.
- d) TR by gates and follow ascending Fp through holly bushes and woodland, parallel with fence, and keeping L at fork.
- e) Continue along Fp where it comes close to golf fairway, crossing two other Fps, to pond.  
*Here you rejoin the original route.*

### **5.4 [TQ 435 342]**

- a) Immediately after pond TL on sand/gravel Fp, then almost immediately fork R along faint grass Tk, which goes between fairway on your L and small copse on your R.
- b) Cross another sand/gravel Fp in fairway.
- c) Keep to main Tk, pass between trees then cross another fairway with gravel Fp (*beware tee on L*).
- d) KA beside ditch and along Tk bearing L among trees with boundary fence on your L.
- e) Presently cross metalled Tk (white and yellow post) and continue across or beside ford. *Watch out first to your right (before ford) for golfers playing towards the green, then to your left after crossing ford for golfers teeing off.*
- f) As main Tk bears R, KA uprough Tk, later passing between woods and fairway, then KA.
- g) At top of incline KA (ignoring Fp to L) on Tk past house with garage.
- h) After 120m KA (ignoring Tk down to L). *Just past here you may be able to see very briefly the tip of the spire of **Coleman's Hatch** church above the trees on your left.*

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

### 5.5 [TQ 441 341]

- a) Continue on Tk as it bears R between woods and fairway.
- b) At next green and tee VGW leaves golf course. Bear L across small stream in dip then swing R up broad ride.
- c) At top of hill, TL at junction along another broad ride. *This may be the line of a minor Roman road serving mineworkings nearby. Here the VGW is rejoined for the next 2 km or so by 'An Ashdown Forest Perambulation' (see 5.1).*

[Accommodation ↗] *Ashdown Park Hotel is close to the Ashdown Forest Centre - TR for 1.5 km along Tk running roughly parallel to Rd. Wych Cross is 1.5 km further along the road past the Ashdown Forest Centre.*

- d) In 150m TR at crosstracks to Rd (**Coleman's Hatch Road**).

[Fork] *You can if you wish TL here along the road for 700m to the Hatch Inn, though it is closer to point 5.6e below. If returning to this point, ensure that you make a mental note of where you should rejoin the route, as it is not easily identifiable. Take care as this road has no pavement - see Road Safety in 'Introduction to the Route'.*

[Bus] *Buses stop on the B2110 en route between Crawley, East Grinstead, Forest Row and Tunbridge Wells. For this continue past the Hatch Inn, fork left at the green, then fork left again downhill for 300m to the church.*

### 5.6 [TQ 447 330]

- a) Cross Rd with care and follow main Tk, which bears R and passes round two sides of bowling-green.
- b) Go half L across tarmac drive (*Sandy Lane*) then bear R to take grassy Tk between cricket pavilion and high hedge.
- c) Ignoring footpaths to L, at corner of pitch bear R on narrow Fp through mixed bracken, gorse and trees.
- d) In 60m bear L on to broad ride.
- e) In 230m At T-junction TL then after 70m KA on metalled Tk bearing R.

***Note that the route has changed at this point since the previous edition, to cut out a short stretch of road walking.***

- f) In 40m, just past wooden gates on your R, TR down winding Tk, quite steep in places, passing garden and house to reach Rd (*Kidds Hill*) by Millhouse Bridge at **Newbridge**.

[Fork] *For the Hatch Inn TL here for 800m along the road **NP** with care.*

[Bus] *See above.*

### 5.7 [TQ 455 325]

- a) TR across bridge and along Rd **NP** then in 300m (by cream milk churns outside gate of Moss Cottage B&B) TL across FB by ford (**The Splash**) along *Chuck Hatch Lane* **NP**.
- b) After 50m bear half R past wooden barrier on rough Tk which soon goes uphill between hedge and woods.
- c) At end of hedge, by horse training paddock, continue up broad rutted ride.
- d) After 330m TL at Tk junction.
- e) KA at next Tk junction in 80m.
- f) In 150m, as Tk starts to swing R, ignore lesser Tk to L and and KA uphill (125°), ignoring side turnings.

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

### 5.8 [TQ 462 322]

a) At broad crossing ride at top of hill, go half L to take narrow, steep Fp through gorse, flattening out by lone tree at top. It has grown in the depression that Winnie the Pooh called 'the heffalump trap'.

b) Follow the path as it bears R, leading in 130m to crossing Tk.

c) KA to trig point (unusually of red sandstone, see Section 4 Commentary paragraph 4.8 for explanation) and seat beside stand of Scots pine at Gills Lap Clump. There is a fine view from here across the Ashdown Forest towards East Grinstead and the tower of its parish church.

### 5.9 [TQ 468 319]

From seat and trig point return to crossing Tk. *If you wish to visit the Winnie the Pooh Memorial and Viewpoint, TR (north) for 200m.* Otherwise, to continue on VGW, TL (south) for 350m to car park (beyond log barrier and clump of trees, then follow horse diversion to L.

[🍷] *You may find an ice-cream van here.*

### 5.10 [TQ 467 315]

a) At start of car park (just past low stone plinth with information panel) TL to entrance and cross Rd (B2026 Chuck Hatch Road) with care.

b) On far side TR along Tk which shortly bears L away from Rd.

c) In 100m KA where another Tk joins from R.

d) In a further 50m TR up broad ride which runs parallel to Rd for 1 km, keeping R at fork.

e) 200m before car park (wooden post with 'WW') VGW once again crosses the Roman London to Lewes road (see location 3.2), this time bringing the Wealdway with it - *the first of three encounters*. This is the halfway point along the Vanguard Way – about 53 km (33 miles) from East Croydon Station.

### 5.11 [TQ 471 305]

a) Eventually Tk rejoins Rd (B2026 High Road) at Pines car park.

b) KA on grass verge to L of Rd.

c) At Rd junction (B2188 Black Hill) cross over with care to grass and KA into much larger car park at Kings Standing Clump.

[🍷] *There are picnic-tables and sometimes an ice-cream van here.*

*If you wish to walk into Crowborough town centre (6 km / 3.7 miles), a pleasant and straightforward route can be followed from Kings Standing by first walking north for 750m beside B2188 Black Hill (signed Tunbridge Wells), then TR to follow Tk for 3.5 km to Crowborough Warren, where TL for town centre. However, Crowborough Station is 2.5 km further through the town, so for transport you may find it more practical to continue 2.5 km along the VGW to Poundgate for buses or 10 km to Buxted for trains.*

### 5.12 [TQ 473 301]

a) Proceed through car park to low stone plinth with information panel.

b) Bear R to keep clump to your L, then at end of clump KA (lefthand of two Tks).

c) In 55m cross Tk. Our Tk then bears L and R, with radio mast appearing ahead.

d) Follow spur for 400m.

*You should now have good views on either side, especially of Crowborough Beacon (ahead) and Greenwood Gate (the large grey/brown building among trees to your left). We believe that the larger white house further ahead and to the left is Buckhurst Park, former home of the Dukes of Dorset and now of the Earl de la Warr (see Commentary at 5.1).*

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

---

### 5.13 [TQ 480 299]

- a) At end of spur, with yellow-brick Crabtree Farm in valley below, TR on rough main Tk (ignoring lesser Tk immediately on R towards radio mast).
- b) Follow Tk as it contours hillside, then KA quite steeply downhill for 350m.
- c) At foot of hill pass between numerous ponds and springs, the sources of two streams that feed the River Medway.

### 5.14 [TQ 485 293]

- a) KA uphill for 550m passing copse on your R at top.
- b) KA past gardens and Old Bell House on your R to reach main Rd (A26 Uckfield Road) at Poundgate where VGW leaves the Ashdown Forest.
- c) TL along Rd for 150m, passing Old Toll Cottage, to a point just before the Crow & Gate pub, where Section 5 ends at point:

### 6.1 [TQ 492 288]

[J] *Opposite.*

[🍴] *The Crow & Gate pub is just a short distance ahead.*

[↔] *In Crowborough.*

[🚌] *Buses from the stop on this (L) side opposite the phone box go to Crowborough, Eridge and Tunbridge Wells; those on the far side go to Uckfield, Lewes and Brighton.*

*Crowborough Station is at Jarvis Brook on the far (east) side of the town, 5.5 km (3.4 miles) from the VGW by road; buses from Poundgate do not go anywhere near it, and a footpath route would be even longer and very tortuous. For transport towards London you may find it more practical either to continue on the VGW to Buxted, or take a bus to Tunbridge Wells, where buses stop close to the Central Station, which has frequent services. The buses also go quite close to Eridge or Uckfield Stations, which have an hourly service at most times.*

---

### COMMENTARY

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

#### 5.1

The **RiverOcean Foundation** ([www.riverocean.org.uk](http://www.riverocean.org.uk)) is a charity dedicated to increasing awareness and encouraging care for water environments. Its activities are focused in the fields of environmental education and research. It is a keen supporter of the Vanguard Way, and many of its activities feature the trail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are several large copses in the forest, known as clumps, predominantly of Scots pine (e.g. Gills Lap Clump, Kings Standing Clump - both on the Vanguard Way), which were planted as landscape features in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, often on the site of hunting lodges. You may catch fleeting glimpses of deer: roe deer are natives, but fallow deer (introduced by the Romans and Normans) are now more common. You may also see sika or the diminutive muntjac, both introduced from Asia. Never approach them, especially during the rutting season (July-August and October-November) when the males may become aggressive.

**An Ashdown Forest Perambulation** has been created by Per-Rambulations ([www.per-rambulations.co.uk](http://www.per-rambulations.co.uk)), whom we encountered in Section 1 in connection with the Tandridge Border Path, and will do so again in Section 10 with the Sussex Ouse Valley Way. This 67 km (42 miles) route describes a figure-of-eight in and around the forest, with its crossover point at Gills Lap, starting and finishing at the Ashdown Forest Centre. A guidebook can be obtained from Per-Rambulations (contact details on their website) for £2.95 plus £1 p+p.

### 5.4

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

### 5.5

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

You can turn right along the track that runs roughly parallel with the road if you wish to visit the **Ashdown Forest Centre** (1.8 km SW), which has an interesting display and information about life in the forest.

### 5.6

The quiet hamlet of **Newbridge** must have been noisier and smellier in earlier times, as this was at the heart of a busy iron-producing area. Just off to the left as you walk along the road is Newbridge Mill. It has the remains of the dam and spillway of the oldest iron-furnace in Sussex, dating from at least 1497, when one Simon Ballarde was recorded as casting large quantities of iron shot. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was also a corn mill, with two waterwheels under one roof. These works had been abandoned by the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, but another water-powered corn mill was recorded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The building still contains a 3m diameter iron overshot wheel and some machinery, but no stones.

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

### 5.7

The ford is known locally as **The Splash**. The stream is called Steel Forge River, though we like to think of it as the Poohsticks Stream, as 2 km downstream it passes under the famous Pooh Sticks Bridge of the A.A.Milne stories (see location 5.8). It rises from several springs in the forest to the south and west and flows down to the River Medway near Hartfield. We are grateful to the creators of the Ashdown Forest Perambulation (see 5.1 above) for the following information:

'There is now no surface trace of the Steel Forge. It is thought to have been about a mile away to the right-hand side of the road. It operated in the 1500s but [was] probably abandoned by 1574. More important was Newbridge Mill on the river just to the left of the road. It was here in 1496 when the mill was built that the English iron industry was revolutionised by the then cutting edge of technology with the introduction of the

## VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

---

blast furnace. The mill was set up by one Henry Fyner, goldsmith of Southwark, to produce iron for the king's (Henry VII) Scottish campaign. Much of this would have been for cannon balls that were taking over from gunstones: literally stones that were used for ammunition.'

### 5.8

The **heffalump trap** featured in a chapter of Winnie-the-Pooh (see below), the heffalump being an animal very similar to an elephant that featured in piglet's dreams. However, they never caught (or even saw) a heffalump! The term is now sometimes used in politics to describe a trap that catches the person who set it.

**Gills Lap** is one of the highest points of the Ashdown Forest, at 204m (669 feet), so stop and admire the view back. On a clear day you can see the South Downs to your left, while the tower of East Grinstead parish church can be seen off to the right and the Greensand Ridge further to the right. Being almost halfway along the route, this spot was chosen for the formal launch of the Vanguard Way on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1981, by Alan Mattingly, National Secretary of the Ramblers' Association, so if you happen to be here on an anniversary of that auspicious occasion, you may buy a celebratory ice cream at the car park, or a pint at the Crow and Gate (see 5.14).

Gills Lap was reputedly named after a local landowner (Gill) and Old English 'hlaep' (leap), a place where deer leaped. A 50,000-year-old stone hand axe was found near here, and there is evidence of occupation during the Bronze and Iron Ages. A low earthwork enclosing the stand of Scots pine trees may be the remains of a ditch and palisade created for the hunting parties.

You are now deep in 'Pooh country', inhabited by that bear of little brain, Winnie-the-Pooh, and his friends, whose adventures are described in the stories by A.A.Milne. The Ashdown Forest and its surroundings provided the inspiration for most of them, and towards the end of *The House at Pooh Corner* Gills Lap is immortalised as 'Galleons Lap', the place where Christopher Robin knights 'Sir Pooh, the most faithful of all my knights'. Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) lived at Cotchford Farm (shown on Explorer maps at TQ 476 345) just 3 km north of the Vanguard Way off the road to Hartfield, and published the Pooh stories in 1926 for the amusement of his son, Christopher Robin (1920-1996), who also features in the stories and in several children's songs of the period. By walking north from here for 200m you can visit the viewpoint that Pooh called 'The Enchanted Place', where a memorial has been erected to Milne and his illustrator, E.H.Shepard.

### 5.10

The **Wealdway** is a long-distance path, established like the Vanguard Way in 1980, and devised by the Kent and Sussex Areas of the Ramblers' Association. It runs for 128 km (79.5 miles) from Gravesend to Eastbourne and encounters the Vanguard Way in three places: here in the Ashdown Forest, just before Blackboys, and at Chiddingly. Further information at:

[www.ramblers.org.uk/info/paths/name/w/wealdway.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/info/paths/name/w/wealdway.htm).

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

### 5.11

**Kings Standing Clump** is said to have been the place where King Edward II hid while hunting deer; a standing was a place from which to shoot game. It is also the site of New Lodge, a 16<sup>th</sup> century royal hunting lodge. There are signs of occupation in prehistoric, iron age and medieval periods. Here the

predominant vegetation of the Forest changes: the bracken in the wetter western part gives way to heather in the more acid soils in the drier eastern part. As at Gills Lap, a low earthwork around the clump may be the remains of a ditch and palisade.

**Crowborough** (3.5 km NE, [www.crowborough.info](http://www.crowborough.info)) is a functional commuter and market town with a good shopping centre, which has spread up the valleys to the east of, and eventually engulfing, Crowborough Beacon. It has outgrown Rotherfield, further east, which used to be the main settlement in this area. The town's main claim to fame is as the home for the last 23 years of his life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), creator of Sherlock Holmes. He lived at Windlesham Manor, now a nursing home, on the southwest side of the town.

### 5.12

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

The grey/brown mansion in a copse on the hillside to your left is **Greenwood Gate**, marking the site of yet another gate to the fenced Ashdown Forest. Formerly a private home built in the 1920s, this is now the UK headquarters of the Rosicrucian Order ([www.amorc.org.uk](http://www.amorc.org.uk)), a worldwide, non-profit-making organisation with cultural and fraternal objectives: 'to enable everyone to live in harmony with the creative, constructive and cosmic forces for the attainment of health, happiness and peace'.

### 5.14

At **Poundgate** was located one of the gates into the fenced Ashdown Forest, which was beside a pound (enclosure) for livestock. But the name of the pub, Crow and Gate, is thought by some to be a corruption of Crowborough Gate, so this may have been an alternative name for the same gate. Nearby is Warren Camp, an army training camp. During World War 2, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Brigade was stationed there before going to North Africa with General Montgomery in 1942. The pub sign was 'borrowed' by the 40<sup>th</sup> Tank Regiment, with the intention of carrying it into battle, but the irate landlord retrieved it before this could happen. However, in 1986 that original sign was presented to the regiment and is displayed at their annual reunions.

The nearby woodlands were used to conceal contraband during the heyday of smuggling in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were also notorious for illicit stills, producing 'moonshine' spirit.

---