

THE VANGUARD WAY

‘From the suburbs to the sea’

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

and points of interest along the route

SECTION 5

Forest Row to Poundgate

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Fourth Edition
Version 4.1

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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 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

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

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 VW 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 leads to Kings Standing and a descent across wild, open country to leave the Forest at Poundgate.

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

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, Haywards Heath, Crawley, Three Bridges, Uckfield, Coleman's Hatch, Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne. Also (not Sundays) from 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.

[Toilets] At back of car park behind Foresters Arms.

5.1 [TQ 426 350]

a) At Foresters Arms in Forest Row TL along Rd (B2110 Hartfield Road) for 250m to children's playground.

[Phone box]

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

b) Cross Rd at zebra crossing to School Lane and take tarmac Fp diagonally across green.

c) Cross private Rd (Ashdown Road) then continue along 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 immediately fork R, almost (but not quite) to tarmac drive. Note the carved, rustic Vanguard Way sign by the drive, provided under the auspices of 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 by-laws, especially:

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

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

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

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.

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

Note that the two following sections use a new route, changed from previous editions, avoiding the golf club drive and fairways.

5.2 [TQ 429 343]

- a) Just before tarmac drive, TL along narrow Fp through bracken, leading along edge of woodland beside shallow ditch and fence.
- b) Keep L at path junction.
- c) KA to metalled drive, with Woodfield House to your L.
- d) KA on Fp for 90m to cross another metalled drive beside 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* and follow it past cottages.
- b) At junction (Little Shalesbrook) TR on lane, crossing stream.
- c) In 80m, by fingerpost, TL past bench seat to green gates.
- d) TR by gates and follow ascending Fp through woodland, parallel with fence, and keeping L at fork.
- e) Continue along Fp where it comes close to golf fairway.
- f) At Tk KA on Fp to pond. *Here you rejoin the original route.*

5.4 [TQ 435 342]

- a) Immediately after pond TL on sand-coloured 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 gravel Fp in fairway.
- c) Keep to main Tk, pass between trees then cross another fairway with gravel Fp (*beware tee on L*).
- d) Continue along Tk through woods with boundary fence on your L.
- e) Presently cross metalled Tk and continue across ford (*watch out first to your right for golfers playing towards the green, then to your left as you cross the ford for golfers teeing off*).
- f) As main Tk bears R, KA uphill on rough 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. After 120m KA (ignoring Tk down to L). *Just past here you may be able to see the tip of the spire of **Coleman's Hatch** church above the trees on your left.*

5.5 [TQ 441 341]

- a) Continue on Tk as it bears R between woods and fairway.
- b) At next green and tee VW leaves golf course. Cross small stream in dip then TR 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*).
- d) In 150m TR at crosstracks to **Coleman's Hatch Road**.

[Refreshments] *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'.*

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

[Accommodation] *Ashdown Park Hotel is close to the Ashdown Forest Centre - TR for 1.5 km along Coleman's Hatch Road (no pavement- see Road Safety in 'Introduction to the Route'). Wych Cross is 1.5 km further along the road past the Ashdown Forest Centre.*

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 5

5.6 [TQ 447 330]

- a) Cross Rd and follow main Tk, which bears R and passes round two sides of bowling-green.
- b) Cross metalled Tk and take grassy Tk L of cricket pavilion and past high hedge.
- c) Ignoring footpaths to hedge on 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) At next junction TL then after 70m KA on metalled Tk to Rd (*Kidds Hill*) by Portobello Farm at **Newbridge**.

[Refreshments] *For the Hatch Inn TL here for 600m along the road with care. The road has no pavement - see Road Safety in 'Introduction to the Route'.*

[Transport] *See above.*

5.7 [TQ 455 329]

- a) TR along Rd then in 300m TL across footbridge by ford (**The Splash**) along *Chuck Hatch Lane*.
- b) After 50m bear half R on rough Tk which soon goes uphill between hedge and woods.
- c) At end of hedge, by horse training paddock, KA on broad rutted ride.
- d) After 330m TL at Tk junction.
- e) At next Tk junction in 80m KA for a further 150m to junction of rides.

5.8 [TQ 462 322]

- a) KA uphill towards summit, ignoring side turnings.
- b) At broad crossing ride, KA (starts slightly to your L) through gorse up narrow, steep path which flattens out at lone tree then bears R.
- c) At crossing Tk KA to trig point (unusually of red sandstone) and seat at **Gills Lap Clump**.

5.9 [TQ 468 319]

From 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 VW, TL (south) for 350m to car park (beyond clump of trees).*

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

5.10 [TQ 467 315]

- a) At start of car park TL to entrance and cross Rd (*B2026 Chuck Hatch Road*) with care.
- b) On far side TR along Tk which bears L away from Rd.
- c) In 100m KA where another Tk joins from R.
- d) In a further 50m TR along Tk which runs parallel to Rd for 1 km, keeping R at fork.
- e) 200m before car park, VW 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*.

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 to grass and KA into much larger car park at **Kings Standing Clump**.

[Refreshments] *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 VW to Poundgate for buses or 10 km to Buxted for trains.

5.12 [TQ 473 301]

- Proceed through car park passing to R of Kings Standing Clump.
- At end of clump KA (lefthand of two Tks).
- In 55m cross Tk. Our Tk then bears L and R, with radio mast appearing ahead.
- Follow spur for 400m.

*You should now have good views on either side, especially of **Crowborough Beacon** (ahead) and **Greenwood Gate** (the large white building among trees to your left).*

5.13 [TQ 480 299]

- At end of spur, with yellow-brick Crabtree Farm in valley below, TR on rough Tk (ignoring Tk immediately on R towards radio mast).
- Follow Tk as it contours hillside, then KA downhill. for 350m.
- At foot of hill cross two streams - both feed the River Medway.

5.14 [TQ 485 293]

- KA uphill for 550m passing copse on your R at top.
- KA past gardens and Old Bell House on your R to reach main Rd (A26 Uckfield Road) at **Poundgate** where VW leaves the Ashdown Forest.
- 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]

[Phone box] *Opposite.*

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

[Accommodation] *In Crowborough.*

[Transport] *Bus services operate along this road between Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Uckfield, Lewes and Brighton. They stop by (or opposite) the phone box just before the Crow & Gate pub. This side they go left to Crowborough, Eridge and Tunbridge Wells; far side they go right 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 VW 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 VW 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) 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) 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 VW 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 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 VW passes by or near Coleman's Hatch, Pound Gate and Barns Gate. Hunting lodges were provided throughout the area, and in the early 14th century King Edward II built a palace, now completely disappeared, somewhere near Nutley on the western boundary. In 1372 the Forest was acquired by John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, and became known as Lancaster Great Park; at that time it covered some 5,700 hectares, more than twice its present size. In 1561 the forest came under the control of the Earls (later Dukes) of Dorset.

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

There are several large copses in the forest, known as clumps, predominantly of Scots pine (e.g. Gills Lap Clump, Kings Standing Clump - both on the VW), which were planted as landscape features in the early 19th century, often on the site of hunting lodges. You may catch fleeting glimpses of deer: roe deer are natives, but fallow deer (introduced by the Romans and Normans) are now more common. You may also 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), whom we encountered in Section 1 in connection with the Tandridge Border Path, and 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 55p 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 14th century tracery. Nearby is the strangely named hamlet of Quabrook, first recorded in 1285 as Quabbalke. It is assumed that this refers to a balk of timber laid across a 'quab' - Sussex dialect for a bog - the muddy sort!

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 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. Take care as you walk along the road - see Road Safety in 'Introduction to the Route'.

Here the VW is rejoined for the next 2 km or so by 'An Ashdown Forest Perambulation' (see 5.1).

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 15th century there was also a corn mill, with two waterwheels under one roof. These works had been abandoned by the mid 17th century, but another water-powered corn mill was recorded in the late 18th century. The building still contains a 3m 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

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Newbridge Mill on the river just to the left of the road. It was here in 1496 when the mill was built that the English iron industry was revolutionised by the then cutting edge of technology with the introduction of the blast furnace. The mill was set up by one Henry Fyner, goldsmith of Southwark, to produce iron for the king's (Henry VII) Scottish campaign. Much of this would have been for cannon balls that were taking over from gunstones: literally stones that were used for ammunition.'

5.8

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 and the Greensand Ridge to your right. This is almost exactly halfway along the Vanguard Way. On 3rd May 1981, Alan Mattingly, National Secretary of the Ramblers' Association, formally opened the VW here, so if you happen to be here on an anniversary of that auspicious occasion, you may buy a celebratory ice cream at the car park, or a pint at the Crow and Gate (see 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.

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 VW 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 VW 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 VW in three places: here in the Ashdown Forest, just before Blackboys, and at Chiddingly. Further information at: www.ramblers.org.uk/info/paths/wealdway.html.

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 16th century royal hunting lodge. There are signs of occupation in prehistoric, iron age and medieval periods. Here the predominant vegetation of the Forest changes: the bracken in the wetter western part gives way to heather in the more acid soils in the drier eastern part.

Crowborough (3.5 km NE, 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 white 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), 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 23rd Army Brigade was stationed there before going to North Africa with General Montgomery in 1942. The pub sign was 'borrowed' by the 40th 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 18th and early 19th centuries. They were also notorious for illicit stills, producing 'moonshine' spirit.
