

THE VANGUARD WAY

'From the suburbs to the sea'

ROUTE DESCRIPTION
and points of interest along the route

SECTION 10
Exceat Bridge to Newhaven Harbour



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Fifth Edition

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Designed by Brian Bellwood

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VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 10

SECTION 10: EXCEAT BRIDGE TO NEWHAVEN

9.7 km (6.0 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 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 mostly in square TQ, but the stretch between Exceat Bridge and Bishopstone is in square TV.

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	N	= north
FB	= footbridge	S	= south
Fp	= footpath	E	= east
KG	= kissing gate	W	= west
Rd	= road (NP = no pavement, see below)		
Tk	= track	m	= metres
VGW	= Vanguard Way	km	= kilometres
KA	= keep ahead		
TL	= turn left	L	= left
TR	= turn right	R	= right

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 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

On route: Buses at Exceat Bridge and Seaford. Trains at Newhaven Harbour.

Links with railway stations and bus stops at Seaford, Bishopstone and Newhaven Town.

Distances from Exceat Bridge to:

Cuckmere Haven	1.9 km (1.2 miles)
Splash Point	4.9 km (3.0 miles)
>Seaford Station	6.5 km (4.0 miles)
>Bishopstone Station	7.6 km (4.7 miles)
Tide Mills	8.4 km (5.2 miles)
Newhaven Harbour Station	9.7 km (6.0 miles)
>Newhaven Town Station (buses)	10.7 km (6.6 miles)

Overview

The end is nigh! This section starts by rejoining the Cuckmere River as it approaches the sea. At Cuckmere Haven you can dip your toes in the English Channel - but take care as the current can be very strong. If you want to swim, best wait till Seaford where there are more people around in case help is needed. A steady climb up to Seaford Head brings the reward of outstanding views, first back towards the spectacular sight of the Seven Sisters, then ahead along the Sussex Coast towards Brighton. A long stroll along Seaford's promenade follows, passing a fascinating Martello tower, then it's back to footpaths again, past the historic Tide Mills to journey's end at Newhaven Harbour. The section is level except for the ascent over Seaford Head.

Cuckmere Estuary - a warning for the future

A proposal by the Environment Agency as a response to rising sea levels seems likely in due course to have a drastic effect on the scenery around the Cuckmere Estuary. It may even lead to flooding of the Vanguard Way route at high tide, though this may not come about for many years. If this policy goes ahead, there will be positive and negative effects for walkers. To quote from the Seven Sisters Country Park's website:

'Currently the land on the west side of the valley is spring and autumn pasture. Flooding will change this into saltmarsh with creeks and some areas of intertidal mudflat. Saltmarsh is very beautiful, particularly in summer, and aids in absorbing the force of the tides. Mudflat is an incredibly rich habitat which supports a great diversity of wildlife. As more silt is deposited each time the land is inundated, ground levels 'warp up' so that saltmarsh vegetation can spread. The Cuckmere valley supports a range of habitats from shingle to grazing pasture. Allowing the sea to inundate one area will simply create another habitat and increase diversity.'

However, it is intended that the protective embankments on either side of the river will not be maintained, with the result that footpaths running on top of them are in danger of being lost, though pressure is being exerted on the authorities to maintain them. This should not affect the Vanguard Way initially, as the route between Exceat Bridge and Cuckmere Haven is above the level that will be regularly flooded at high tide. But eventually at so-called 'spring tides' (nothing to do with the season - they occur at every full and new

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 10

moon) parts of the route could be under water for short periods. In time, rising sea level could make this a more regular occurrence. The situation will be monitored and an alternative route will be sought if necessary.

An additional outcome of these proposals is the proposed 'reactivation' of the Cuckmere meanders – they are currently topped up via sluices from the straight cut – which would mean that the river would once again flow through the meanders.

Lowest and highest points. Tide Mills (1m); Seaford Head (86m).

BEFORE SETTING OUT ALONG THE VANGUARD WAY

Please read the **Introduction to the route**, available from the 'Directions and maps' pages of our website www.vanguardway.org.uk. It contains important information that will be helpful when reading this route description.

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.

WARNING TO SWIMMERS!

There have been reports of weever fish along the coast near Newhaven. They bury themselves in sand and have poisonous spines which can cause a very painful sting. Most of this stretch of coast has a shingle bottom so should be safe, but there is sand around the Tidemills area. If you intend to paddle or swim there, you are strongly advised to wear lightweight footwear when entering the water. However, anywhere along the coast you should also look out for jellyfish, some of which can also deliver a painful sting.

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.

Section 10 of the VGW starts outside the Cuckmere Inn (formerly Golden Galleon) pub at Exceat Bridge [TV 514 993]
in Lewes District in East Sussex.

[Transport 🚌] *Frequent buses hither from Eastbourne, Seaford, Newhaven and Brighton. The Cuckmere Community Bus calls here - see www.cartogold.co.uk/eastsussextransport/map.htm for details.*

[Refreshments 🍷] *At the Cuckmere Inn (formerly Golden Galleon) pub.*

10.1 [TV 513 992]

- a) Go through car park of Cuckmere Inn (formerly Golden Galleon) pub beside Cuckmere River and then through middle (smallest) gate on to Tk.
- b) After 250m at Tk junction, KA through gate and continue along Tk (known as Outbrook Bank), initially beside fields. You have now entered **Seaford Head Nature Reserve**.
- c) Follow this Tk for 1.5 km, passing Tk junction after 475m, then gate and stile after another 375m, with the fields of **Chyngton Farm** up to your R.
- d) Go through next gate (bearing inscription 'Walkers' Gate' – it was erected in memory of Peter and Madeleine Walker and their grandson Richard), with chalk face of first of the **Seven Sisters** now coming into view and with cottages ahead. *Just up the hill a short distance to your R is the **Canadian War Memorial**.*
- e) Bear L downhill, shortly go through KG beside scrub-covered brick pill box and continue on shingle down to beach at **Cuckmere Haven**.

You now have possibly the most outstanding view on the whole VGW - and even in the whole of Southern England - of the Seven Sisters. It improves as you proceed, but you will have to keep looking back.

10.2 [TV 515 977]

- a) At lifebuoy, TR to ascend Tk between fences with cottages on L.
- b) By last cottage pass KG and cattle grid then bear L to grassy path (along *Short Cliff*).

*These cliffs are eroded by a combination of natural forces (waves, storms, ice) and fall into the sea at an average half a metre each year. Sometimes large chunks suddenly fall away, so you should: **Keep well away from the cliff edge - this applies all the way into Seaford.***

10.3 [TV 514 976]

- a) The path shortly descends into Hope Bottom, a dry valley which leads from **Hope Gap** up to the South Hill Barn car park off Chyngton Lane.
- b) Climb again steadily, initially through facing valley, for 1.5 km to **Seaford Head**, with fields and later a golf course on your R. *On the way up you pass a stile on your R, which gives access to a path to **South Hill Barn**, then a steep and narrow cleft called **Buckle Church**. Just past that away to your R is a **DVOR** beacon.*

10.4 [TV 494 978]

- a) Take care as you descend into Seaford – the chalk paths are steep and can be slippery when wet.
- b) After passing prominent bare chalk cliff, locate wooden garden fence and follow narrow tarmac path down to viewing area with seats. *Note the cream coloured building behind fields ahead - this is **Corsica Hall**.*
- c) Go L of viewing area to follow winding gravel path to foot of slope by VGW signpost: this is **Splash Point** at the east end of Seaford's Esplanade.

10.5 [TV 487 982]

Go L to follow the concrete/tarmac Esplanade (beside beach and parallel to Rd) past colourful beach huts for 1.2 km through **Seaford**, keeping L round **Martello Tower Number 74**, surmounted by a cannon.

[☞☞] Kiosk just before the Martello Tower, also Frankie's Beach Café a little further on. Wellington and Old Boot pubs (100m off route along the Causeway, 340m past Martello Tower), signposted 'Town Centre'.

[Toilets ☺☺] Just before the Martello tower.

10.6 [TV 485 985]

Continue beside beach to end of Esplanade at junction with Dane Road. *The Beachcomber pub that used to occupy the corner site has been replaced by Eversley Court, a new retirement home.*

Dog owners should note that, from May 1st to September 30th, their pets are banned from a 700-metre section of the beach, from about 400 m past the Martello Tower (level with the junction of the Esplanade with West View), to about 100 m past the far end of Salts Recreation Ground (level with the junction of Marine Parade with Edinburgh Road (10.8a below). Notices posted along the seafront show where the ban operates.

[☞☞] Café in Salts Recreation Ground just past Eversley Court.

[☺☺] In Salts Recreation Ground just past Eversley Court.

Link with Seaford town centre and station [460m, TQ 482 991]

a) At Eversley Court TR along Dane Road.

b) At junction of five Rds in town centre, just past Morrison's supermarket, bear L round corner along Claremont Road to Seaford Station.

[Transport 🚂 🚌] Trains to Newhaven, Lewes, Brighton. Change at Lewes or Brighton for Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and central London. Daily buses to Eastbourne, Newhaven and Brighton; also 'Ramblerbus' on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays to Berwick Station.

[☞☞] Pubs, cafés and tearooms near Seaford Station.

[Phone box 📞] Near Seaford Station.

[Accommodation 🏠] Good choice in town centre.

If starting from Seaford Station:

From station exit TR then immediately TR again along Dane Rd past Morrison's supermarket for 375m to sea-front, where TR to join VGW.

The VGW now coincides with the **Sussex Ouse Valley Way** for the remainder of the route to Newhaven.

10.7 [TV 478 989]

- a) KA along sea-front promenade (beside Marine Parade) for 1 km to where Rd rises behind high wall.
- b) Keep to sea side of wall along Bönningstedt Promenade (*named after Seaford's twin town near Hamburg in Germany*). Towards its end pass house with gazebo on top, which is **The Buckle** at **Bishopstone**.

A notice here warns walkers to beware of unexpected large waves, which can be generated by passing vessels using Newhaven Harbour. It says the waves travel quickly and may not be noticed until they reach the shore after the vessel has passed.

[] *The Seaford town circular bus route serves Marine Parade here.*

[] *In the Buckle Car Park.*

The links with Bishopstone Station and bus stops start here.

Link with Bishopstone Station [330m, TV 469 998]

- a) Leave Promenade opposite The Buckle, cross Marine Parade with care and TL along righthand pavement.
- b) Just before bridge TR up steps and ramp to station platform.

[ ] *Trains to Newhaven, Lewes, Brighton. Change at Lewes or Brighton for Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and central London. Buses to Eastbourne, Newhaven and Brighton).*

If starting from Bishopstone Station:

- a) Exit via ramp at west (Newhaven) end of platform.
- b) At Rd, TL towards sea-front, ignoring rising Tk on L
- c) In 200m cross Rd and through gateway to Promenade, and TR along it to join VGW.

Link with Bishopstone bus stops [520m, TV 470 002]

- a) Leave Promenade opposite The Buckle on to Marine Parade and immediately TL along lefthand pavement.
- b) Go under bridge and KA to main Rd.
- c) TR for bus stops (*this side for Newhaven and Brighton; far side for Seaford, Exceat and Eastbourne*).

[] *Buses to Newhaven, Brighton and Eastbourne).*

[] *250m to L along main Rd.*

If starting from Bishopstone bus stops:

- a) Go down to nearby Rd junction and TL along Marine Parade, following signs for Bishopstone Station.
- b) Using righthand pavement, KA under bridge and continue for 200m.
- c) Shortly after entrance to Buckle Holiday Park, TR through gateway and TR again along Promenade to join VGW.

10.8 [TV 468 996]

a) KA on concrete Tk (used to transport ballast during construction of the harbour breakwater, and later for the silica boulder trade past Newhaven & Seaford Sailing Club.

 *Shore Break Café in sailing clubhouse.*

b) 50m after sailing club building, fork R initially over shingle and follow Fp on embankment, forking L after 50m (the higher Fp). The land to your R is the old channel of the River Ouse.

c) Continue for 675m to ruined **Tide Mills** buildings and concrete Tk.

Note: For some years there have been proposals to develop the land between Tide Mills and Newhaven to include a new ferry terminal as well as commercial and residential properties. Should this proceed, building work may affect the final section of the VGW - keep an eye on the Latest News page on our website www.vanguardway.org.uk.

10.9 [TQ 459 002]

a) KA on Fp leading past mill ruins to squeeze stile and on to embankment, with former channel of River Ouse now on your left (here called Mill Creek).

b) In 525m come alongside railway line, and in a further 350m cross stepped FB over railway.

The old River Ouse now disappears over a weir and flows into the 'new' channel.

c) KA on fenced Fp, with railway on L and industrial estate on R, to Rd (Beach Road).

d) KA for 150m, then TL into NPP (Newhaven Port & Properties) South Gate Entrance.

e) In 40m bear L over level crossing then TR to Newhaven Harbour station platform for trains towards Lewes, Brighton and London.

10.10 [TQ 449 009]

Newhaven Harbour Station, which is the southern end of the Vanguard Way.

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING THE VANGUARD WAY!

Now that the old foot passenger terminal for the ferry here has closed (see link below), there seems little reason for the VGW to finish here. However, the walk into the town centre is not particularly attractive so we feel that most VGWayfarers will prefer to catch a train at the Harbour Station. A major development is planned for this area, so we hope that in due course this will result in a more attractive route into the town centre and Newhaven Town Station.

We think that those who have walked the Vanguard Way from north to south will enjoy walking it from south to north as it is a totally different experience in the other direction! A free south-north route description is now available on our website www.vanguardway.org.uk – click 'Directions and maps' then scroll down to the blue South-North buttons.

 *Newhaven Harbour Station: trains to Newhaven, Lewes, Brighton. Change at Lewes or Brighton for Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and central London.*

In 2007 the old ferry terminal for foot passengers closed and they must now check in at the vehicle terminal near Newhaven Town Station. As far as we know, this will not affect Newhaven Harbour Station, but keep an eye on the Latest News page on our website www.vanguardway.org.uk for news of any developments.

 *The Engineer pub is just a little way along the VGW link to Newhaven Town Station and there are more facilities in the town centre.*

Link to Newhaven Town Station and Ferry Terminal [0.9 km / 0.6 miles, TQ 449 015]

a) KA along Rd (Beach Road, becoming B2109 Clifton Road then Railway Road).

b) At main Rd (A259 The Drove) TL with Newhaven Town Station on your L and bus stops to L and R.

For car ferry terminal, KA over level crossing at Newhaven Town Station to the ferry approach Rd, where TL again for 150m to the terminal building, looking both ways as you cross with care to the far side of the approach Rd.

 Trains to Newhaven, Lewes, Brighton. Change at Lewes or Brighton for Gatwick Airport, East Croydon and central London. Buses to Eastbourne, Lewes and Brighton).

 The car ferry terminal has a café, open most of the day (but closed in the early afternoon on Saturdays and Sundays). There are more cafés nearby (including one in Sainsbury's). For more facilities in the town centre, KA across the swing bridge, bear R along Northway then L into Bridge Street.

 In car ferry terminal, available all day.

 In Newhaven town centre.

COMMENTARY

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

10.1

Seaford Head Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, consists of 123 hectares of chalk down and river valley, most of which is owned by Seaford Town Council. It lies between Cuckmere River and Seaford Head Golf Course, and extends inland to Exceat Bridge. There are many species of plant and animal life, including some uncommon ones, that thrive on chalk grassland. Look out for skylarks, Adonis and chalkhill blue butterflies and the bloody-nosed beetle. A feature of the flora is its unusually small growth due to the exposed conditions. The slope to your right is known as Badgers Bank, due to the high incidence hereabouts of these shy and nocturnal creatures, as well as rabbits. It was the site of Poynings Town, a village established in the 14th century to house refugees from Seaford during the Black Death and the worst raids by French pirates; but it too became the target of pirates and was eventually abandoned. The reserve was established in 1969 by Lewes District Council and local farmers D. L. Paul & Sons Ltd. It shares offices with the Seven Sisters Country Park at Exceat. Further information at: www.seaford-sussex.co.uk/sfh/index.html.

The fields of **Chyngton Farm** were ploughed up for food production during World War II. The farm was acquired by the National Trust in 1993 and has been returned to grass to recreate typical downland scenery.

A plaque on the **Canadian War Memorial** reads:

This plaque commemorates the soldiers who died in this area, and specifically in this field, during World War II. Their numbers are unknown but their memory lives on. The following is a personal testimony from Corporal Leslie Edwards (1920-2004), a local man who served in the area and laid poppies on this spot every Remembrance Day until his death:

"I will never forget the day in 1940 when a Canadian company came to Cuckmere and pitched their tents in this field. I was stationed here and knew that bombers regularly used this valley for navigation purposes. I tried to tell the commanding officer but he was not interested in what I had to say. Two mornings later the Messerschmidts arrived. Just as the sun was rising they came skimming over the water and up the valley. Around Alfriston they banked hard and came back. Bearing down on the tents they opened fire. Steam, soil and grass rose in front of them as bullets and bombs covered the ground. All the young men in the marquees and bell tents were killed. The commanding officer, who was shaving at the time in the middle coastguard cottage, died instantly when a shell came through the wall that held his mirror."

At **Cuckmere Haven** you have possibly the most outstanding view on the whole VGW, and even in the whole of Southern England: the **Seven Sisters**. Together with Seaford Head, they form the Sussex Heritage Coast. The view improves as you continue, but you will have to keep looking back. Actually they are in the process of becoming Eight Sisters, as an extra one is being formed by erosion. There seems to be some confusion about whether they are 'brows', 'hills' or 'points' and you may see all these names used; it seems likely that the hills leading to the cliffs are the brows, and the points where they drop to the sea are ... the points!

From left to right the usual names are Haven Brow, Short Brow, Rough Brow, Brass Point, Flagstaff Point, Flat Hill (the one in process of formation, sometimes known as 'Shy Sister' as she is so difficult to spot), Baily's Hill and Went Hill.

Beyond the Seven Sisters lies Birling Gap, a favourite refreshment stop for walkers, and on the next cliff Belle Tout stands tall. A former lighthouse, it is now in private ownership as a bed and breakfast establishment, but in constant danger of falling into the sea. In 1999 it was moved in one piece 17 metres inland on rails, but it will soon have to be moved again to survive. Around the corner and out of sight past Belle Tout lie Beachy Head and Eastbourne.

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 10

The chalk that makes up the cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Seaford Head was formed under the sea some 85 million years ago from the skeletons of minute sea creatures that floated down as they died and became compressed. The stratum that you see here continued south to join what is now mainland Europe, until Britain was severed after the last great Ice Age 10,000 years ago. The brown coloured material that appears amongst the chalk is loess (pronounced 'lerce'), rock from Arctic regions that during the Ice Age was ground down to a fine powder and blown here, filling gaps in the chalk. The short, springy grassland behind the cliffs is typical of chalk landscapes.

The lake on the far side of the river was artificially created in 1975 for the benefit of seabirds.

King Alfred the Great is said to have established here a shipyard, where part of the fleet was built that helped to defeat the Danes in 878. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries this was the scene of many a run-in between coastguards and smugglers as the latter attempted to land. Its importance as a safe anchorage is demonstrated by an offer in 1787 of £1 million by the Dutch government to build a harbour here, but the threat of war with the French put paid to that.

Small cargo vessels and barges were able to reach Alfriston until the mid 20th century, but the shingle bank that has built up across the mouth contributed to the demise of navigation. This is the result of erosion of the chalk cliffs, which also brings down the embedded flint. The soft chalk is then eroded by the sea to leave vast quantities of hard flint pebbles that form the shingle.

During the Second World War, Cuckmere Haven was heavily defended as it was expected to be a major landing point for the German invasion - which never came.

10.2

The cottages at **Cuckmere Haven** were built in the 1830s for the coastguards but are now private residences or holiday homes. Number 5 is the venue for arts workshops, including painting, writing and acting. Although the buildings receive some protection from a concrete retaining wall, the cliffs are receding ever closer.

The views of the cottages and the Seven Sisters provide a much favoured setting for the entertainment industry: scenes have been shot here for the films *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Atonement*, the TV dramas *Foyle's War* and *The 7.39*, and the Cheryl Cole music video *The Flood*.

Hope Gap is the southernmost point of the VGW, and an example of the geological formation known as a hanging valley. There is an interpretation panel at the top of the steps but unfortunately it is very worn and barely legible in places. Briefly, it explains the origin of this landscape, resulting from the ice-cap that covered Britain during an earlier Ice Age 14,000 years ago. As the ice melted, rivers flowing to the sea cut valleys in the chalk, such as the one (now dry) that rises from Hope Gap, which probably flowed into the Cuckmere further south when Britain was joined to Europe. Then the rising sea cut back into the land, forming the cliffs, and this valley was left hanging, high above sea level. This probably also applied to the valleys that separate the Seven Sisters. The cliffs are gradually being eroded, and the rocky platform just above sea level shows their former extent. A scene from the *Dad's Army* film was shot in the valley in 1971.

You can descend the 66 concrete steps to explore the rock pools and shingle beach, but bathing is not recommended due to submerged rocks and strong currents.

10.3

The flint barn away to your right is **South Hill Barn**, which is currently under consideration for use as a visitor centre for the nature reserve. There is a car park behind it.

There has never been a church at **Buckle Church** but, according to the information panel here, it may have been called thus after a hermitage that existed here in 1372 and was thought by later visitors to have been a

church. Buckle probably derives from the Pelham family coat of arms, which includes a buckle (see 10.7 below). An alternative theory is that the name derives from an old landslip to the west known as Puck Church Parlour. The turf around here is grazed by rabbits: this creates a habitat for plants such as thrift, ground ivy and kidney vetch, which are the food source for the mining bee.

The space-age structure behind the first golf course green is a **DVOR** (Doppler VHF Omnidirectional Range) beacon, used in air traffic control.

Seaford Head, 86m above the sea, is the site of a formidable Iron Age hill-fort, whose ramparts were much higher and more extensive than the scant remains you see today, as most of it has fallen into the sea. It was built by the Celts then used by the Romans as a burial ground from the 2nd century AD (CE). The hill-fort was preceded by a Bronze Age 'bowl barrow' grave, probably of a local chieftain, which during 19th century excavations yielded a hoard of flint axes and other tools. In 1850, the army blew up part of the cliff to form some kind of protective defence in the sea, but this was in vain as the fallen chalk was quickly eroded by sea action. The event was accompanied by much publicity and witnessed by hordes of trippers from boats offshore and other vantage points. In spring and early summer, this area is the first landfall in Britain for many migratory species of birds and butterflies.

A little way out to sea, there are likely to be small fishing boats - they will probably be after mackerel.

On a fine day, as well as the view eastward of the Seven Sisters, you can look west along the Sussex coast towards Brighton and even, so they say, if clear enough, Selsey Bill and the Isle of Wight.

10.4

Corsica Hall was formerly a nursing home, then Seaford College of Education, but has now been converted into luxury apartments. It stands on the site of the original Corsica Hall, home of the Harben family whose descendants include the prime ministers Joseph and Neville Chamberlain. Its name is said to derive from the profits made on wine smuggled from Corsica, but this may be apocryphal.

At **Splash Point** are the remains of the Splash Point Hotel, built on the site of a fort that protected the entrance to Seaford Harbour. It was occupied by troops during the Second World War but demolished soon afterwards when the sea wall failed to prevent erosion. The cliffs here are a favourite nesting place for kittiwakes, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has set up a viewpoint with seats.

10.5

This **Martello Tower**, built in 1810, was the westernmost of a chain of 74 such defensive forts built during the Napoleonic Wars in the first decade of the 19th century by the Royal Engineers along the Kent and Sussex coasts between Folkestone and Seaford. A further 29 were built later along the Essex and Suffolk coasts. They were named after the Torre della Martella in Corsica, on which the design was based; it had walls nearly six feet thick and a swivel cannon on the roof – still in place on this tower. For added security, entrance to a Martello tower was at first floor level, reachable only with a ladder. This fort, completed in 1806, had a complement of one officer and 24 men, and a moat for further protection. Two more towers were planned for Seaford but never built, due to the cost and the peace treaty in 1815, and in the end not one shot was fired in anger. However, many of the Martello towers, including this one, were reoccupied during the Second World War as anti-aircraft batteries. Various uses have been made of it subsequently, even as a skating rink or hot baths for a while. The tower was substantially rebuilt in 1978 and is now the home of Seaford's Museum of Local History (www.seafordmuseum.co.uk). For such a small building, there is a great deal of interest inside, and local people call it 'The Tardis'.

Seaford (www.seaford.co.uk) was recently voted by users of the TripAdvisor website the fifth most peaceful place in the world – though this may be a polite way of saying nothing much happens here! Indeed there is a notable absence of hotels along Seaford's sea-front - there seems to be no demand. The row of modern houses behind a wall beyond the Martello Tower is the site of the Esplanade Hotel, opened in 1891 in anticipation of a boom in visitors, but soon closed when this did not materialise on the hoped-for scale. It

did, however, provide accommodation for a short stay by King Edward VII in 1905. The abandoned hotel was used as a set for the film *A Fragment of Fear* in 1970.

Seaford has a long history and was once a busy port, whose harbour lay in what is now a flat plain behind the Esplanade. It came into use as a result of the development of a shingle bar at the mouth of the River Ouse (called Medewynd or Midwyn in earlier times), which over centuries forced it eastwards to enter the sea here. Consequently it became a major port from pre-Roman times, and the Romans made good use of it. A Saxon prince called Ella landed here in 477 and established the kingdom of the South Saxons - Sussex. Previously known as Mecredesburn, the first record as 'Sæforda' was in 788.

The town prospered, but was regularly raided by French pirates. In the early 13th century it became a member of the Confederation of the **Cinque Ports**, not in its own right but as a 'limb' of Hastings. Although the origins of this distinguished ancient body are not clear, it is believed that it was established as an informal association of fishermen during the time of Edward the Confessor (1042 - 1066). Although the name comes from the French for five, it is pronounced 'sink', not 'sank'. The original five ports were Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich, but they were soon joined by Rye and Winchelsea, and at one time the confederation stretched from Seaford in Sussex to Brightlingsea in Essex. Today, the confederation consists of seven 'head ports' (those mentioned above, with New Romney replacing Romney) plus seven corporate members (Folkestone, Deal, Ramsgate, Margate, Faversham, Lydd and Tenterden).

There used to be a theory that Seaford's demise as a port was due to a terrible storm in 1579, which resulted in the River Ouse breaking through the shingle bank at what is now Newhaven. However, it now seems likely that human intervention some 40 years earlier was the cause. For many decades before that, the river upstream of Seaford had been silting up, making navigation increasingly difficult for vessels bringing goods from Lewes and beyond. So commercial and political interests insisted that a cut be made at the small fishing village of Meeching, further west, so that the river could flow directly into the sea there and avoid Seaford. This resulted in the 'New Haven'.

Seaford fell into decline, eventually losing its membership of the Cinque Ports. But during the 19th century the rise of sea-bathing as a healthy pastime, and especially the arrival of the railway in 1864, led to a revival in the town's fortunes. However, Pevsner (unaware of future linguistic trends) wrote, 'Seaford is the least gay of the chain of south coast seaside places. It has no pavilion, no amusement arcade, a short esplanade which, at the time of writing, appears far from thriving.'

Seaford no longer has its own Member of Parliament, but over the years has had connections with no fewer than six Prime Ministers. During the 18th century its MPs included William Pitt 'the Elder' and George Canning; and the Pelham family from nearby Bishopstone provided Henry Pelham and the Duke of Newcastle. More recently, the descendants of Thomas Harben of Corsica Hall included Joseph and Neville Chamberlain.

During the Second World War, Seaford became a restricted zone, with no access for people from outside the area. The town was occupied by troops, especially Canadians, and played a major part in the D-Day invasion of 1944.

The shingle beach is being constantly maintained by a 'herd' of massive bulldozers – this is because it has been found that it needs to be kept at a certain height, otherwise the sea will scour away the chalk bedrock underneath.

Seaford has few buildings of note, but St. Leonard's Church in Church Lane, near the town centre, has a Norman wall and massive 15th century tower.

10.6

The VGW now coincides with the **Sussex Ouse Valley Way** (www.sussexousevalleyway.co.uk) for the remainder of the route to Newhaven. This was the idea of Terry Owen and Peter Anderson, of the publishers Per-Rambulations, who also devised the Tandridge Border Path encountered in Section 1. It was

established with the collaboration of East and West Sussex County Councils and the Sussex Downs Conservation Board. The route runs for 67 km (42 miles) from Lower Beeding near Horsham to Seaford, passing close to Haywards Heath and through Lewes and Newhaven.

10.7

The Buckle, now a private residence but until fairly recently a pub, is named after the buckle that forms part of the coat of arms of the Pelham family. The circular addition to the building reflects the Martello Tower at Seaford. In 1545 this was the site of a great battle between French invaders and English troops led by Sir Nicholas Pelham, who were victorious - this led to the family motto, "Pelham did repel 'em".

In the early 20th century, **Bishopstone** was the target for development as a commuter town but fortunately this never came about, otherwise the beautiful valley and downs to the north would have been covered in houses. Even so, there are two substantial residential developments either side of the main road. The original (and very secluded) village lies in a fold of the Downs 1.5 km N of the VGW.

10.8

The atmospheric abandoned village of **Tide Mills** (<http://tidemills.webs.com>) is well worth exploring, with interpretation panels scattered around to tell you the full, fascinating story. It contains the ruins of a former tide-powered corn-mill and the thriving village that once surrounded it. The flint-built mill opened in 1761, with flour being taken by barge up Mill Creek and the River Ouse to Lewes or by sea elsewhere. It was operated by the flow of water pushed into the surrounding ponds by tidal action, and for a while the building was surmounted by a windmill for extra power. In 1795 this was the scene of a mutiny by locally based troops in protest at prices and living conditions.

The arrival of the railway to Seaford in 1864 heralded the end for the mill. Although a branch came into Tide Mills from Bishopstone, the development of the east quay at Newhaven for the railway closed Mill Creek. It then became cheaper to send corn away for milling, and the mill closed in 1883. Another branch of the railway came here from Newhaven, to carry ballast. Traces of the track beds can still be seen. The mill continued in use as a warehouse until 1900 and was demolished in 1901. The village housed about a hundred mill workers and remained occupied until 1940.

During the First World War a seaplane station operated from the beach to the west. In the 1920s and '30s a Chailey Heritage hospital was actually built on the beach for boys with physical disabilities, and a horse hospital occupied part of the village. During the Second World War, the buildings were demolished to prevent their use as cover for invading troops, and the remains were used for hand-to-hand fighting practice. In 2004 a number of organisations worked together to reveal more of the remains, and the site is under consideration by English Heritage as a Scheduled Monument.

10.10

At **Newhaven Harbour**, a substantial harbourside development by Newhaven Port & Properties (www.newhavenportauthority.co.uk) is proposed, which if it comes about should brighten up the area as it includes waterfront renovation and retail activities in an attractive environment. As far as we are aware, this proposal should not significantly affect the VGW route, though it is likely to include a new ferry terminal further to seaward.

The platform away to your left as you approach the Harbour station is part of an old station, now closed, called Newhaven Marine, where boat trains from London used to pull in to serve the ferry. It is occasionally used as a siding for passenger trains.

The small port of **Newhaven** (www.newhaventown.co.uk) developed at the expense of Seaford after the 16th century when the River Ouse was diverted directly into the sea here.

The town is nowadays best known for its ferry to Dieppe, which started in 1847 when the railway was extended from Lewes by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. The LBSCR also provided the

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 10

three original paddle steamers, called *Newhaven*, *Brighton* and *Dieppe*. The service became very popular as it was the most direct and cheapest train/sea route between London and Paris, but fell into the doldrums after the inexorable rise of Dover as the main Cross-Channel car ferry port and the opening of the Channel Tunnel. After a period during the 1990s when the future of the service was in doubt, it was reinvigorated by the provision of modern vessels, largely through the intercession of the Seine Maritime departmental council, as the economy of Dieppe relies heavily on the continuance of this service. However, its future is again in doubt at the time of writing, as the council is saying that it will not continue with this subsidy.

The ferry service boasts two, slightly tenuous, claims to fame: the North Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh, is thought to have served on board as a pastry chef after World War 1; and Lord Lucan is assumed to have used the service for a getaway when his car was found abandoned here after his disappearance following the murder in 1974 of his children's nanny, Sandra Rivett.

The former ferry terminal near Newhaven Harbour Station replaced the old London and Paris Hotel. This was the venue for some riotous parties thrown during the 1890s by a Mr Charles Wells, 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo', as described in the famous song.

The original settlement, called Meeching, was founded by Saxons in the 5th century. It lay on the far side of the harbour in the area around the present marina, below an Iron Age hill fort dating from around 400 BC (BCE), now called Castle Hill. The Lords of the Manor of Meeching were the Gibbon family, one of whose members was Edward Gibbon, who is believed to have written some of his 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' here between 1776 and 1788.

Part of Castle Hill is now occupied by Newhaven Fort (also called Fort Newhaven, www.newhavenfort.org.uk), which was completed in 1871 close to the site of an earlier Napoleonic one. Now a military museum, its massive walls, ramparts, tunnels and gun emplacements help you experience what life was like in a 19th century Victorian Fortress. There are also displays about the First and Second World Wars. To reach the fort you have to continue into Newhaven town, cross the river, then turn left along South Road and Fort Road for 1.5 km.

The bridge over the River Ouse features constantly in the day-to-day life of Newhaven, as it is frequently opened to allow vessels through. The present electrically operated swing bridge was built in 1974, replacing an earlier manually operated one of 1866. That had replaced a wooden drawbridge, which in 1784 replaced a ferry.

The Bridge Inn was built in the 17th century and is now a listed building. It featured in the first 'reverse crossing' of the Vanguard Way, as it were, in February 1848, when King Louis Philippe and Queen Marie Amélie, in flight from the French Second Republic (and amongst the earliest passengers of the Dieppe ferry), stayed overnight there and left for Croydon the following day.

The town centre (1 km NW), up the hill on the far side of the river, is a pleasant place to explore, with its intricate street pattern. St. Michael's Church dates from Norman times. Its graveyard contains a monument to the crew of HMS Brazen and its captain, James Hanson, all of whom (except one single survivor) lost their lives when the ship was wrecked off Newhaven in a terrible storm in 1800, at the end of a four-year voyage of exploration. As a result of this tragedy, Newhaven's lifeboat began service in 1803, well before the establishment of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1824.

Also in the churchyard is the grave, dated 1785, of Thomas Tipper, a brewer, who was renowned for his Tipper Ale - some modern ales are still called Tipper in his memory. An inscription on the headstone

VANGUARD WAY ROUTE DESCRIPTION: SECTION 10

provides a suitable epitaph for him and an epilogue for your completion of the Vanguard Way:

*Reader, with kind regard this grave survey,
Nor heedless pass where Tipper's ashes lay,
Honest he was, ingenious blunt and kind,
And dared do, what few dare do, speak his mind.
Philosophy and history well he knew,
Was versed in physick and in surgery too;
The best old stingo he both brewed and sold,
Nor did one knavish act to get his gold.
He played through life a varied part,
And knew immortal Hudibras by heart.
Reader, in real truth such was the Man,
Be better, wiser, laugh more if you can.*

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