



VGW NEWS

The newsletter of the Vanguard Way Association

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



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

If you would like more information about any of the items in this newsletter, or wish to comment, or have any suggestions for the next edition (April 2025, deadline 15 March) please email editor@vanguardway.org.uk. Feel free to pass this on to anyone who may be interested in joining the VWA (annual £10.00, life £160.00).

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



**A BELATED HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL FULL AND AFFILIATED MEMBERS!**

We wish you every success and happiness in 2025.

THE VGW PHOTO COMPETITION

We're delighted to announce that the winner of our members' photo competition for 2024 is Simon Dipple with this image (@ Simon Dipple) of the Cuckmere meanders from the top of the steps from Westdean – one of the best views in southern England. He wins a bottle of wine worth £10, which will be presented to him at a suitable event. Many thanks to all those who entered and commiserations if you didn't win. Another competition will take place this year, same prize, so get your camera or smartphone ready. The only rules are that (1) entrants must be VWA full members (so not affiliates); (2) the location must be on the VGW or its official links, and (3) it must have been taken between 1 January and 31 December 2025. Please tell us the date and location of the photo.



FORTHCOMING MEMBERS' WALKS

A programme of walks for early 2025 (provisionally starting Sunday 23 February) is being developed and details will be circulated to members shortly.

AGM 2025 – please try to attend

Advance warning! Our Annual General Meeting this year has provisionally been arranged for Saturday 7 June, provisionally starting 2.30 pm at the usual venue, St Matthew's in Croydon, together with a walk in the area and a social get-together at a pub in Croydon afterwards. Full details will be sent to members around the beginning of May.

RECENT MEMBERS' EVENTS

27 December 2024: Regent's Park and Christmas lights

Eight members took up our offer to burn off the Christmas calories with a 4.5 mile stroll, starting with a circuit of the Regent's Park lake, followed by a tour of some of London's magical West End Christmas lights in Marylebone Village, Oxford Street, St Christopher's, South Molton Street, Bond Street, Piccadilly and Regent Street. Pity poor Keith Rix, who after a delayed start followed in our footsteps, managed to miss us all but did get to an uncrowded pub at the end!

Photo © Linda Wright



24 January 2025: Social evening at the Cockpit

After a 3.5-mile stroll (for some) from Victoria to Blackfriars, six members crammed into the highly-rated (but cosy) Cockpit pub in St Andrew's Hill and enjoyed a convivial drink or two. We were pleased to see new member Peter Attewell, who had to leave before the photo was taken. Left to right: Colin Saunders, Dave Williams, John Jefkins, Gareth Davies, Fiona McNicol.

Photo: © Daniel Clout

LORD LLOYD OF BERWICK (1929-2025)

It is with much sadness that we report the passing on 8 December of Baron (Tony) Lloyd of Berwick. He played a small but significant role in the early development of the Vanguard Way in the 1980s by creating a permissive footpath beside his home, Ludlay, a little north of Berwick Station, which made the route more practical for walkers. He has since taken an interest in the VGW and in March 2023 at the age of 94 showed great faith in himself and us by joining the VWA as a life member! Lord Lloyd was a senior judge, being knighted in 1978, becoming a Lord Justice of Appeal, and raised to the House of Lords in 1993 as a 'Law Lord'. *Photo: WP:NFCC#*



WINTER DOWNS 200

The second Winter Downs 200 took place over 96 hours between 11 and 14 December. The 200 miles includes 46 along the Vanguard Way from Oxted Downs to Alfriston so provides substantial promotion for us. According to their website, 47 runners completed the course: the first man in 50 hours 20 minutes and 2 seconds, followed closely by the first woman in 50 hours 52 minutes. The third event is due to take place 10-13 December 2025 and the entry fee is £600! Considering the conditions at this time of year, anyone who completes the course is worthy of our full admiration!

PLEASE TAKE PART IN THIS SURVEY. East Sussex County Council is seeking responses to a survey for their Rights of Way Access Plan and is asking for the views of anyone interested. The VGW Route Manager, John Jefkins, is co-ordinating a formal response on behalf of the VWA, but anyone who regularly uses public rights of way in East Sussex is invited to participate. Responses must be received by 14 March, so you have plenty of time. Please [click here](#) for more information. One thing in particular to suggest is to do more to remedy stretches of path that are subject to flooding (see below).

OTHER TRAIL ASSOCIATIONS 5: THE SHROPSHIRE WAY ASSOCIATION

The 192-mile Shropshire Way consists of a figure-of-eight route around the county, centred on Shrewsbury. The northern loop of 71 miles goes through Wem, Ellesmere and Llanymynech, with an extension to Whitchurch. The hillier 121-mile southern loop follows the ridges of the Long Mynd and Stiperstones, climbs into the Shropshire Hills AONB, Clee Hills, Wenlock Edge and The Wrekin, and goes through Bishop's Castle, Clun, Craven Arms, Ludlow, Much Wenlock, Ironbridge and Wellington. The route has been designed to include many youth hostels in the county. The Association was established in 2016 and became a registered charity in June 2021. It does not have an individual membership system but relies on donations from individuals and local businesses, with support from Shropshire Council, Ramblers and the Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust. More information at shropshireway.org.uk.



CROSSING ROUTES 15: THE WEALDWAY

The 82-mile Wealdway leads from the Thames at Gravesend to the Sussex coast at Eastbourne, and encounters the VGW no fewer than three times (in the Ashdown Forest, at Tickerage and at Chiddingly) so it would be feasible to switch from one to the other. The Wealdway and VGW may be considered as siblings and friendly rivals, because both routes were established in 1981 and are broadly similar, crossing the North Downs, the Weald, Ashdown Forest and South Downs. The Wealdway passes through or very near to Wrotham Heath, Tonbridge, Speldhurst, Withyham, Blackboys, East Hoathly and Hailsham. An excellent 80-page, fully-illustrated guidebook with maps, has been written by VWA member Robert Peel, who has kindly agreed to offer it for £7.00 (normally £7.50) including postage to VWA members until 28 February. It can be ordered from Kent Ramblers [here](#), mentioning Vanguard Way Association.



*Photo: Summerford Oasts near Withyham.
© Robert Peel*



BED & BREAKFAST ALONG THE VGW

2: The Berwick Inn

Ideally located for VGW walkers beside Berwick Station in East Sussex, the Berwick Inn offers comfortable accommodation as well as a welcome pint at the end of Section 8. And if you should happen to be there on a Thursday, you can join the Pie Society, where a free pint is included with your pie. As well as spacious bedrooms, bell tents in the garden provide 'glamping'. The Berwick Inn holds special memories for members of the Vanguard Rambling Club: back in the 1960s, in the heyday of the great ramblers' excursions, it was called the Fullers Arms, and when a ramble finished there, the landlord would have pints of their special and very strong Merrydown and Bob Luck ciders lined up for speedy consumption before the return train's departure. Many tales could be told of those return journeys – but must wait for another occasion!



CONGRATULATIONS to Michael Walker, who completed the Vanguard Way on 22 November, and a little late (!) to Lindsay Bennett, who recently claimed her badge for completing it in 2012 – year of the London Olympics!

FLOODING has become an increasing concern in recent years. Two stretches of the VGW in particular are proving very difficult after heavy rain: the River Eden between Haxted and Starborough (Surrey) and especially a stream near Place Farm, southwest of Chiddingly (East Sussex). The VWA is discussing with the highway authorities how the situation might be improved. However, any improvements will be very expensive, so may take some time. Meanwhile, in consultation with the highway authorities and landowners, we are investigating whether we can effect a temporary solution by dumping suitable material onto the affected areas. We've already made some improvements at Place Farm.



Photo: Flooding near Place Farm @John Jefkins

FALLEN TREES often block the VGW, especially during the increasingly frequent and violent storms of recent years, and we do our best to get them cleared as soon as possible, usually in association with the highway authorities. On 19 January a large tree fell onto the VGW next to Farleigh Golf Course, almost blocking it. In this case, the combined efforts of our Route Manager John Jefkins and the golf club's ground staff completely cleared the obstruction within a few days. (Thanks to VGW walker Simon Couteux for drawing our attention to this on the VWA Facebook page.)

Before.....



Photos @ John Jefkins

After.....



The 'before' photo shows John's wife Heather just about managing to negotiate the obstruction.

If you encounter fallen trees (or any other obstruction) along the VGW, please let us know (route@vanguardway.org.uk) and we'll do our best to get it cleared (please provide the date and exact location, together with photos if possible).

OTHER NEW ISSUES ALONG THE VGW

Fallen fingerpost north of Chelsham Common (Surrey). A fingerpost that was only erected last summer at a major junction has twice been knocked over by person or persons unknown. So recently John Jefkins (Route Manager) and Dan Hawksworth (pictured, Assistant Route Manager) re-erected and strengthened it using Postcrete, then finished the bag to fix a second post at the top of the hill in Littleheath Woods.



Photo @ John Jefkins

Dredging at Alfriston (East Sussex). The Environment Agency dredged a 1.5 mile stretch of the Cuckmere River near Alfriston in December. This is intended to remove the silt that has been causing severe flooding in and around the village in recent years. Flooding in this area is also caused by a build-up of shingle at the river's mouth, and the EA monitors this and clears it when necessary.

Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve (East Sussex). This is the name of a proposed 'super nature reserve' that would include the VGW between Cuckmere Haven and Splash Point (where the VGW drops down onto the Esplanade at Seaford). It would cover a huge area, including the existing Lullington Heath NNR, Eastbourne Downland and Seaford Head. At present, this does not seem to affect the VGW but we shall be keeping a close eye on the proposals.

Martello Tower, Seaford (East Sussex). The new café and toilets inside the old toilet block beside the tower are now fully open (see VGW News #3, April 2023), while the popular, existing adjacent refreshment hut beside the beach continues to trade.

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS

Apologies to our hard-working committee member (and ranger for Sections 8 and 9) Bob Brown, for calling him Bob Dunn (another friend of the Editor) in the December edition. Well, dun is a shade of brown!

And please note that the stretch of footpath referred to as Watts Brow in the December edition should be Walls Brow.

YOUR VWA NEEDS YOU!

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

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

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

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