



# VGW NEWS DRAFT

## The newsletter of the Vanguard Way Association Number 4: June 2023

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 visit [vanguardway.org.uk](http://vanguardway.org.uk). For details of membership email [membership@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:membership@vanguardway.org.uk).

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If you would like more information about any of the items in this edition please email [editor@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:editor@vanguardway.org.uk).

Abbreviations: VWA = Vanguard Way Association. VGW = Vanguard Way. VRC = Vanguard Rambling Club.

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**FROM THE EDITOR.** A little late, we were aiming for early June, but an AGM intervened! Despite which, I hope you will find this edition interesting. You're welcome to send comments and suggestions for future editions to [editor@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:editor@vanguardway.org.uk). Feel free to pass this on to anyone who may be interested in joining the VWA (annual £7.00, life £120.0).

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### LITTERPICKING EVENT, SUNDAY 2 JULY

A reminder that our first litter-picking event is due to take place on Sunday 2nd July and will take the form of an 11 km (6.8 mile) walk along Section 1 of the VGW from East Croydon Station (10 a.m) or Lloyd Park (10.30) to Chelsham Common, picking litter as we go, and finishing with a drink or two at the Bull Inn. Full details were emailed to members on 19 May, but if you didn't see them and would like to join in the fun, please contact organiser Gareth Davies, [gazdj1@gmail.com](mailto:gazdj1@gmail.com).



**OUR FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** took place on Saturday 10 June at St Matthew's Church Hall in Croydon, attended by 18 people and preceded by a short walk from Lloyd Park, led by our Vice Chair, John Jefkins (third from left in the photo). If you wish to see the draft minutes please contact the editor. Our inaugural Treasurer, Alan Smith, stood down as expected and has been replaced by Lesley Secker, who is also our Registrar.

*Photos © David Lewis.*

We were pleased to welcome Dan Hawksworth to the committee (second from right in the photo); he has volunteered to be our Rangers Co-ordinator – see below. All other committee members were re-elected. The draft Constitution was approved, but it was felt that some adjustments are still required and will be presented to next year's AGM. After the meeting, committee member Gareth Davies gave a presentation about the Vanguard Way Marathon.



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### VANGUARD WAY RANGERS

We were delighted to receive an offer at the AGM from member Dan Hawksworth to be our Rangers Co-ordinator. Dan is currently 'getting his feet under the table' and will be recruiting a team of members who may be interested in helping. The job involves walking a section of the VGW from time to time, perhaps three or four times a year, to check that our waymark discs are still in place, to carry out light

clearance of vegetation that is obscuring the discs, or blocking stiles or gates, and to report to Dan any other issues that may affect the route – planning notices attached to posts can be an important source of information in this respect. Rangers will be provided with a small kit consisting of spare discs, screws etc.

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**OUR FIRST MEMBERS' WALK** took place on Sunday 16 April, when a party of 15 gathered at Oxted Station for a 10 km (6-mile) circular walk that included part of the VGW on Oxted Downs, with a diversion to view a distant Titsey Place, then diverted to visit the Bull Inn at Limpsfield for light refreshment. Most of the group piled into Wetherspoons' Oxted Inn afterwards for more substantial sustenance. The photo shows the group gathered around our Meridian Plaque on Oxted Downs, which marks the point where the VGW, North Downs Way and Pilgrims Way cross the Greenwich Meridian.



*Photo © Richard Mascal.*

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#### **CROSSING ROUTES 4: THE WOLDINGHAM PARISH BOUNDARY PATH**

The latest addition to the 'family' of trails linked by the VGW, launched in 2022, was the idea of 1st Woldingham Scouts to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and was created in consultation with and support from Surrey County Council's Countryside Access team and Woldingham Parish Council. The route is 16 km (10 miles) long and encircles the village of Woldingham, passing through wonderful countryside. About 3 km (2 miles) is shared with the VGW between Upland Road in Warren Barn Farm and Whistlers Steep on Oxted Downs. Possibly the best place to start and finish for those travelling by car is the Gangers Hill Car Park (TQ 373 541), adjacent to the route. The Monday to Friday bus 540 crosses the route at Stuart Road, and a pleasant 1.2 km (0.8 mile) walk along the lane of Woldingham School (a public bridleway) links the trail to Woldingham Station. A map and route guide is available [here](#).

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#### **MEET THE COMMITTEE 4: GAVIN FULLER**

Gavin is the VWA's Secretary. Born in Portsmouth, Gavin grew up just outside the city in the village of Portchester, whose castle inspired in him an abiding love of history, even to the extent of taking a degree in it at Exeter University. Whilst there he joined the Out of Doors Society, the university's walking society, and gained his first experience of committee work there as First Year Representative, Secretary and Vice-President, as well as discovering the delights of various National Parks. Gavin moved to London in 1994 and was employed in the library of the Telegraph Media Group, rising to his current position as the company's librarian.



*At the summit of Kilimanjaro in 2022.*

Approaching 40, Gavin realised that, if he wanted to do all the walking he'd like to do, he ought to start while he still could, rather than leaving it then finding he couldn't. First off was the Hadrian's Wall Path, followed by the Pennine Way, South Downs Way, Coast to Coast, Dales High Way and naturally the Vanguard Way; twice in the case of the latter: first over a series of walks by himself, and second over the Summer Bank Holiday weekend of 2021 with the Surrey Walking Club.

Meanwhile he's working his way through the Wainwrights (166 of 214 so far) and in 2022 ascended Kilimanjaro. He was introduced to the Long Distance Walkers Association in 2016 and has since led numerous walks for its London Group, as well as serving on the group's committee as webmaster from 2019 to 2022, then as Chair. In

2023 he successfully completed the LDWA's flagship 100-mile (160 km) challenge walk for the first time, in 39 hours and 23 minutes, and took over as its AGM weekend organiser.

Despite all this walking, Gavin will probably be best remembered as, at 24 in 1993, the youngest person to win television's *Mastermind* programme, with *Doctor Who*, The Medieval Castle in Britain and Ireland 1050-1500, and the Crusades 1095-1154, as his specialist subjects. Then in 2010 he came joint third in the final of a Champion of Champions contest, with The Life and Music of Mike Oldfield and the Victorian ironclad HMS Warrior as his specialist subjects. Having joined a club for people who have been on *Mastermind*, he became its Secretary in 1999, then President in 2018. However, in 2021 he lost the youngest person title to somebody 90 days younger.

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**THE LANGHAM HOTEL WEALD CHALLENGE RACES** took place on a searing hot Sunday 11 June. The event consists of a half marathon and a 50 km 'Ultra', both following in approximately equal measure the Vanguard Way and Wealdway. The exhausted runners were welcomed into the finish by Race Director Stuart Mills and presented with a variety of trophies and branded mugs. Hotfoot from our AGM the previous day, Chair Colin Saunders and Vice Chair John Jefkins represented the VWA and handed out copies of our new leaflet, though it has to be said that, understandably, most runners were too exhausted to take much interest at the time! The race organisers have kindly donated £100 to VWA funds out of entry fees.



*50km Ultra winner Alics Robinson receives her trophy from Race Director Stuart Mills.*

The **Vanguard Way Marathon** will take place on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August starting 9.30 am from Lloyd Park, Croydon (see VGW News #3).

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## VGW LEAFLETS

The leaflet pictured in the April newsletter has been flying off the shelves of pubs, cafés, libraries, stations and information centres along the route, and our Vice Chair and Publicity Officer John Jefkins and committee member Bob Brown have been busy keeping them stocked. If any member is visiting these places and finds the stock running low, or can suggest other outlets, please contact John at [vicechair@vanguardway.org.uk](mailto:vicechair@vanguardway.org.uk). He can also provide a list of existing outlets. If you find they've been covered up by other leaflets, please restore them to their rightful place on top!

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## WATER REFILL POINTS

Someone recently enquired whether there are any water taps along the VGW, and we had to confess that we didn't know of any, as such, though it's usually possible to refill bottles at pubs or cafés if you ask nicely, or buy something! And bottled water can be bought at many shops. However, Seaford Town Council has recently installed this smart unit just a few steps off the VGW, in the field behind the Martello Tower at Seaford. Similar contraptions have started to appear in London, and some old style fountains have been restored. If anyone knows of other facilities along the route, please let us know. For health and safety reasons, the water would need to be formally approved for human consumption!





## ALONG THE VGW.....

- *The Croydon Millenary Pageant* of 1960 in Lloyd Park has been recalled by committee member Bob Brown, who lived nearby as a child. He vividly remembers that a temporary railway was erected where the tram tracks are now, to portray the London and Croydon Railway, which opened in 1839 and became part of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway in 1846. A diesel locomotive disguised to resemble an old steam train was drafted into service, but disgraced itself on one occasion by running off the end of the tracks!

- *Hillwalking London* is the title of a new book by Caroline Buckland, published by Safe Haven Books, RRP £14.99. Ten lofty walks of between 4 and 8 miles are described, visiting some of London's most impressive viewpoints, and a further eight high points of interest that can be visited are described. One of the longer walks at 11 km (7 miles), entitled 'The Seven Hills of Croydon', goes from East Croydon Station to New Addington Tramlink Stop and includes parts of the VGW as well as Park Hill Gardens, the Addington Hills Viewpoint, Heathfield Gardens and Bramley Bank Nature Reserve. The book includes a list of London's 20 highest points, which include at number 4 Littleheath Woods on the VGW (160 metres/325 feet). Further information at [safehavenbooks.co.uk](http://safehavenbooks.co.uk).

- *The Nore Hill Chalk Pinnacle* is a well-known landmark along Section 2 of the VGW, though since the trail was launched in 1981 it has been weathered almost to nothing. A further point of interest there, which has recently been drawn to our attention, is the existence of a Bronze Age enclosure that occupied the summit from around 900 to 700 BCE between the pinnacle and Worms Heath Cottage. Most the remains of the enclosure were destroyed during quarrying, but some traces remain in the form of uneven ground that was untouched.



Photo © Colin Saunders

- *Limpsfield Chart in History*. A new 95-page book with this title by Beryl Withers has been published by Nick Withers and Christopher Pendred, costing £25.00 including supplements. It tells the story of Limpsfield Chart, at the end of the VGW's Section 2, with historic tithe, field use and Ordnance Survey maps. It also includes a tithe apportionment booklet and a leaflet for a three mile guided trail walk over Limpsfield Chart, with a colour map and points of interest. For further information email [chrispendred@me.com](mailto:chrispendred@me.com).

- *Buxted*. The Southeast Communities Rail Partnership, covering the lines to Uckfield and East Grinstead, and the line from Tonbridge to Redhill and Reigate, is preparing a photographic installation for the ticket hall at Buxted Station, with old and new images of the area around Buxted. If you would like to submit any of yours that may be suitable, email [sharon@southeastcrp.org](mailto:sharon@southeastcrp.org) for further information.

- *The England Coast Path*, which the VGW joins for most of its final seven miles from Exceat to Newhaven, has formally been renamed the Kings Charles III England Coast Path, though it seems likely that most people will continue to just call it the England Coast Path, or ECP for short. It also seems likely, that having recently spent a considerable amount on signage, the highway authorities will not be changing it any time soon. Maybe the regal appendage will strengthen the hand of those trying to encourage recalcitrant landowners to allow passage through their property?

- *Tidemills*. Bob Brown informs us that (a) the sea kale is looking healthy and is spreading towards the sea across where the lorries used to pound the beach while shingle-shifting twice a year; (b) there is very little marine debris these days, the horrible bright green shredded fishing nets seem to be a thing of the past; (c) the black plastic ducting pipe covering is still a problem, difficult to spot amongst the seaweed; (d) dog poo continues to be a problem, and although there are fewer of those little plastic bags stupidly left on the ground or tied to branches, there is more of it left unbagged on the ground. This does however encourage the spread of vegetation over the shingle beach. Just watch your step!

- *Tide Mills v Tidemills?* You may see either, but the Friends of Tidemills prefer it as one word.

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