

High Weald Anvil ²⁰⁰⁹

A **free** guide to one of England's Finest Landscapes



Kent High Weald Project



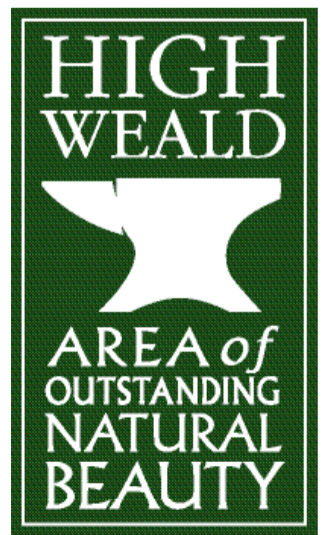
Find Out About • Explore • Enjoy • Be Proud Of • Take Action • www.highweald.org



John Bogle

In this issue

A Step Back in Time	2 & 3
Sussex Cattle Revival	4 & 5
News in Brief	6 & 7
Map and Attractions	8 & 9
Out and About	10 & 11
Volunteering is Great!	12 & 13
60th Anniversary of AONBs	14
Return of the Barn Owl	15
The High Weald Needs You	16





Welcome to the 10th edition of the High Weald Anvil, in this the 60th year since the legislation that created National Parks and AONBs was enacted. These two anniversaries mark the commitment and progress that has been made nationally by successive governments, and locally by the High Weald AONB partnership, to develop and promote a shared responsibility for some of our very special cultural landscapes. The High Weald is now one of a family of 49 AONBs and 9 National Parks located across England, Northern Ireland and Wales (page 15).

Although these anniversaries are meaningful to us now, they pale into insignificance when one realizes that the landscape character of the High Weald is essentially a medieval one, which was established by the 14th century, and has survived a number of subsequent major historical events and social and technological changes.

However we cannot be complacent. The recently revised High Weald AONB Management Plan sets out real threats to the area's landscape character and, throughout the Anvil, a number of related facts and figures have been highlighted.

To tackle some of these threats the £3.2 million Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme has been established. Focusing on the four medieval forests of the AONB's highest ridge, it seeks to involve more people in caring for the area's heritage. We have provided an insight into the area's forests (pages 2 & 3) and outlined some of the opportunities to help that will be available across the area – I challenge you to read Jennifer Stuart-Smith's article on volunteering (pages 12 & 13) and not be inspired!

Grazing animals have played a vital role in the creation and management of this landscape. The continued role of cattle in the High Weald's future should not be underestimated and fortunately Sussex cattle, thought to descend from the wild cattle that once roamed the area's woodlands, appear to be enjoying something of a renaissance despite the challenges facing agriculture. I myself have a small single suckled Sussex herd. To see why I and others love them, read pages 4 and 5.

I hope you enjoy our 'numbers-themed' Anvil.

Councillor Sylvia Tidy,
Chairman: High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

The High Weald Anvil has been published by the **High Weald AONB Unit**. The Unit is a specialist team that advises on the management of this nationally valued landscape. It furthers understanding of the area's special qualities and enables action to conserve it.



The **High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee** (a partnership of 15 local authorities, Natural England and organisations representing community, recreation, wildlife and farming interests) guides the work of the High Weald AONB Unit.

Editor/writer High Weald AONB Unit staff (except where otherwise indicated).

Published by the High Weald AONB Unit, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, East Sussex, TN5 7PR
Tel 01580 879500
Fax 01580 879499
Email info@highweald.org
Website www.highweald.org

Funded by members of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (see back page).

© High Weald AONB Unit 2009

A step back in time

From prehistory humans have enjoyed the views of the North and South Downs from the area's highest ridges

The High Weald is a cultural landscape, shaped by people since prehistory to the present day. The area held many riches for our ancestors and was an important source of raw materials: people literally made tracks into the High Weald to use its sands and clays, stone and iron ore, woodlands and water.

The story starts with the rocks beneath. Underneath the patchwork landscape of the High Weald lie bands of sandstone and clay. Originally laid down when dinosaurs roamed here over 130 million years ago, then folded by earth movements, and finally carved by rivers, these materials give the High Weald its shape.

The clay is soft and easily worn away. It forms the low valleys of the High Weald, with the harder sandstone forming the high ridges which run east-west. Steep-sided, wooded gills have been created by streams carving deep channels through the area's hillsides.

The rocks, and the poor acidic soils arising from them, have strongly influenced the area's vegetation, wildlife, agriculture, industry and buildings.

Hunter-gatherers and early settlement

Mesolithic hunters and gatherers were the first to appreciate the area. They roamed

Wealden sandstone was deposited when dinosaurs roamed the High Weald over 130 million years ago



Hundreds of prehistoric worked flints have been found. They indicate that Mesolithic people hunted



soft ground.

Over time, the dens became permanent farmsteads and hamlets creating the area's distinctive pattern of scattered settlement. The radiating network of roughly north-south droving routes lives on as the area's roads, lanes, bridleways and footpaths. The woodland pastures gradually turned into small, irregularly shaped fields and the farmed landscape we know today.

Beyond the pale

In the Medieval period large tracts of land were set aside as hunting forests and deer parks. The four great forests of the area were St Leonard's, Worth (now known as Tilgate), Ashdown, and Waterdown (now known as Broadwater). Deer parks were numerous and included Standen, Buckhurst and Frant.

Fences and ditches, known as pales, were built around the edges of the forests and deer parks. A pale was designed to mark the boundary of the forest and stop the deer jumping out. It consisted of an earth bank four to five feet high, topped with wooden fencing and hedges, and a deep ditch on the forest side. The pale around Ashdown Forest was 38 kilometres (23 miles) long and enclosed 15,000 acres of land. It is still possible to see the remains of these pales.

The Romans took advantage of the raw materials of the High Weald to produce iron on an industrial scale using bloomery furnaces



Prehistory (Mesolithic, Neolithic, Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age)

Roman
AD43



The four great hunting forests of the area were St Leonard's, Worth (now known as Tilgate), Ashdown, and Waterdown (now known as Broadwater)

The only way in and out of the forests was through gates or hatches in the pale. Gates were for riders on horseback and hatches were for people on foot. On Ashdown Forest there were 40 such hatches and gates. The entrances live on in the names of settlements like Chuck Hatch and Chelwood Gate, and some were – and still are – marked by pubs.

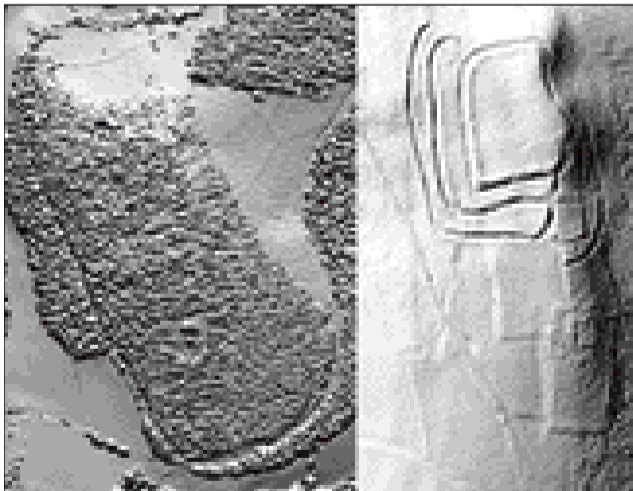
Warren peace

Rabbit warrens were often associated with the area's hunting forests and deer parks. Now peaceful places, they were once full of people tending their rabbits.

Rabbits were introduced to England by the Normans during the 12th century. They prized their meat and fur. Originally rabbits were delicate animals, not suited to the British weather, and people had to dig warrens to give them shelter from the elements and protection from predators. A warren was a mound of soil up to 200 metres long and seven metres wide with a fence around it. Small trees near warrens were coated with tar to stop them being nibbled by escaping rabbits.

Warrens are shown on Ordnance Survey maps by the word "pillow mound".

The LiDAR image reveals a hillfort hidden in the woodland



Sandrock provided shelter for Mesolithic hunter-gatherers

Place names like Broadwater Warren also suggest where warrens may have been.

An industrial heartland

It is hard to picture the High Weald as one of the main iron-producing regions of Britain. But the area held all the necessary raw materials to allow iron to be smelted for over 2,000 years, with industrial-scale exploitation during two periods – the Roman occupation and Tudor and early-Stuart period.

The Romans expanded a well-established local tradition of iron making, using small, clay bloomery furnaces to supply iron to their navy. The Tudors took advantage of the blast furnace introduced in 1496 – a much larger, and more permanent structure than the bloomery – and instead of a few kilos of iron being produced, daily output was nearer a tonne.

More ore and charcoal were required, and the need to operate the bellows by

A warren, or pillow mound



waterpower, instead of by hand, meant that streams had to be dammed to create ponds to store the water. In addition, the higher temperatures in the furnace meant that a different type of iron was being produced. A second process – the forge, with its own pond and supply of charcoal – was needed to refine the iron.

At this time, the woodlands of the High Weald would have been filled with the sounds of people digging ore and cutting wood, of hammers ringing and the smells of wood and charcoal burning.

Waiting to be revealed

For archaeologists, there are still questions to be answered about the human use of the High Weald. Many relics have been found but many more, protected by the area's relatively undisturbed woodland, are undiscovered and are not easy to spot.

Until now. Soon small planes will be flying over the Weald Forest Ridge with new equipment. It is called LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection And Ranging. Lasers will show up shapes in the ground; pales and warrens, furnaces and hammer ponds and charcoal hearths. Perhaps analysis of these shapes will develop the story.

Iron-stained streams indicate where iron ore is still buried underground

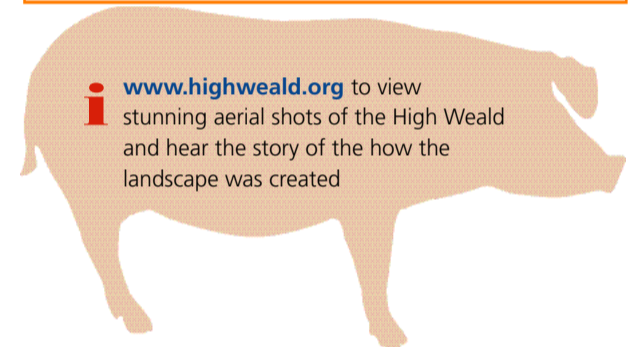


A Medieval Landscape

The character of the High Weald was established by the 14th century and has survived major historical events and social and technological changes. As a result the High Weald is considered to be one of the best surviving, coherent medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. The 5 key components of the High Weald that make it special are its:

- rolling hills, dissected by steep-sided gill streams and studded by sandstone outcrops
- small, irregular-shaped fields and open heaths
- abundant, interconnected ancient woods and hedges
- scattered farmsteads and hamlets, largely developing from temporary dwellings in wooded areas or 'dens' where farmers from the Downs grazed their pigs
- narrow, sunken lanes arising from pannage – the movement of animals from the Downs to the High Weald in the autumn to graze on acorns in the area's woodlands.

The Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme (page 5) focuses on the highest ridge of the AONB, the location for the remnants of the High Weald's four great forests. There are opportunities to work with local archaeologists to delve into the area's past through the Historic Environment Awareness Project. Those with no archaeological knowledge or experience are particularly welcomed! Contact Lyn Palmer on 01580 879959 or lyn.palmer@eastsussex.gov.uk



www.highweald.org to view stunning aerial shots of the High Weald and hear the story of how the landscape was created

Wilderness Wood

"Welcoming and magical" – Relax and have fun in this unique family-run working woodland park, eye-opening for adults and excellent fun for children.

Woodland trails and bluebell walk, play area, picnic places and BBQs, tearoom and tea garden with local produce, gift shop.

Wood products and garden furniture direct from the workshop.

Many special events and children's activities.

Open daily 10am – 5.30pm/dusk if earlier
On A272 in Hadlow Down, N.E. of Uckfield

Tel: 01825 830509

www.wildernesswood.co.uk



Farmers from the Downs bought their livestock, often pigs, into the High Weald to graze on acorns and beech mast during the autumn

Large tracts of land were set aside as hunting forests and deer parks. Pales were erected to stop deer escaping

The Tudors produced iron on an industrial scale using blast furnaces – to fuel them large areas of woodland were cut

Remains of training camps and defence lines indicate that the area had military uses from the 18th to the 20th century

Today the landscape is managed by over 2500 landowners. Remnants of the High Weald's four great forests are in public ownership and are accessible to all



Anglo Saxon
AD800

Norman
AD1000

Medieval
AD1200

Tudor
AD1400

Tudor
AD1600

Victorian
AD1800

AD2000

Red heads get a mixed press. And that's putting it politely. Fiery, quirky, distinguished or even exotic, it's a natural trait which carries with it a certain amount of cultural and historical baggage. Unless, that is, as Jennifer Stuart-Smith reveals, you're a conker-coloured Sussex cow.

Sussex cattle, it seems, can do little wrong these days. Whether it's because of their gentle nature, superb meat, or their ability to 'live on fresh air', this ancient and local breed is enjoying a renaissance across the High Weald. And it's about time too, according to fans of the breed.

Yet, things have not always gone so smoothly for the 'red cattle' which have inhabited the woodlands of the Weald since before the Norman Conquest. Fashions changed, wars came and went and farmers faced the age-old problem of making money – leaving the Sussex cow, or Sussex ox as it was also known, at the mercy of the economy.

Records of Sussex cattle breeding and numbers in the 19th century clearly reflect the social and economic conditions of the time. We know, for example, that in the early 19th the Sussex cattle breed was developed by the same farmers who were breeding Southdown sheep. It was also popular as a draught animal, being cheaper to buy and keep than a draught horse – and nicer to eat.

According to agricultural commentators of the day, it was "unquestionably ranked among the best in the Kingdom," and many butchers at Smithfield market considered it to be superior to its closest rivals, the Devons and the Herefords, because of its size and weight. And yet, in the first half of that century, there was a devastating decline in Sussex cattle.

As land was turned over to arable during the Napoleonic Wars, cattle were slaughtered and breeding halted. It was during this period that the High Weald played a crucial part in preserving the breed. The unsuitability of its



hilly terrain for growing corn, the ability of various 'noble' landlords to prevent the ploughing-up of their land and also the prevalence of hop gardens – which relied on good quality manure – all contributed to the breed's survival into the 20th century.

The next major threat to the breed also came from the continent, says Jane Howard, who has a herd of Sussex cattle at Stonegate. "As post-war industrial farming took over, our native breeds went out of fashion and the big continental breeds like the Charolais, Simmental and Limousin arrived on the scene." But, says Jane, as cattle feed nudges £300 a tonne, hardy British breeds that thrive on grass and hay alone, are making a comeback.

However, that wasn't before the continentals moved in on the Sussex breed in a profound way – by breeding with them. Technically, Sussex cattle can be up to one eighth Limousin, and still be classed as a Sussex... although stalwarts of the breed fought tooth and claw to resist this move. A compromise was made in the end, which means that if a Sussex cow has any continental breeding – up to six generations back – it must be marked on its pedigree.

SUSSEX CATTLE REVIVAL



In the showring



The Heathfield Agricultural Show (held on the Saturday before the end of May bank holiday)

To the untrained eye, one Sussex cow is much like another; four legs, a dark red conker-coloured coat and, if you're lucky, a kindly look in its eye. An expert judge of Sussex cows would disagree.

Les Stevens, who is on the Sussex Cattle Society's judging panel, has been judging for over thirty years, and sometimes has to choose between as many as 15 entries in a class. There are classes for cows, in-calf heifers, maiden heifers, bulls – senior, intermediate and yearling – as well as groups.

"We look for females which are reason-

ably square, side on, with a level top and bottom line. She should have strong hindquarter and a feminine head," says Les. A "feminine head" includes bright and prominent eyes. "A few white patches are allowed – but a good, dark coat is popular with judges at the moment."

"Bulls shouldn't be too heavy in front, should have a longer top and bottom line than the cows, and their hind quarters need to be well-muscled." A bull's ideal shape is determined by the job it has to do, 'covering' cows. "Judges also like the same, dark, colouring," he says.



Farm signs detail the names of the proud owners and the pedigree herd

Laurel Stevens, a former president of the Sussex Cattle Society, is one of a handful of breeders who have remained dedicated to pure Sussex bloodlines. Cattle from her Poplars Herd are now at a premium.

Another farmer who favours Sussex cattle over the continental breeds, is Andrew Hoad at



Parsonage Farm, Salehurst. "We had become concerned with the temperaments of the cattle we were rearing. They were mostly Blonde and Limousin crosses, and we had some interesting experiences with them!" he says. Handling unruly cattle can be frustrating at best and lethal at worst.

He and his wife Lynn had always liked the Sussex and noticed that they continue to put on 'condition' or weight long after their Continental and Hereford herd mates needed extra food. "We also knew of their reputation for good quality meat – and would always choose one for our own freezer," says Andrew. The Hoads now sell meat direct from their farm shop, Buster's Farm Produce, in Robertsbridge.

It certainly seems there is a market for Sussex beef, says Andrew: "We have built a solid reputation for our meat. Sussex beef has led the way in this, and we are constantly complimented on its excellent quality. The customers keep coming back for more!"

Sussex cattle are also ideal for organic production. The main reason for this is their ability to convert simple forage, such as meadow grass and hay, into top quality meat, therefore saving the farmer the outlay of expensive organic feed. The fact that they calve easily and have a plentiful supply of milk for their calves is a bonus. Much of the demand for Sussex breeding stock in recent years has been from newly formed organic herds.

Organic or not, breeders and consumers can all see the appeal of Sussex beef, says Jane Howard: "As 'local' takes over from 'organic'



as the buzz word for good food, shoppers will actively seek out the heritage breed that belongs to their region and has an association stretching back through time." What other breed fits the bill?

So it seems that the future for Sussex cattle is looking bright. Not only are they gaining ground across the world, in countries such as the United States, Australia and South Africa but once again they are a common site in the rolling meadows of the High Weald. In a repeat of history, the area is proving a stronghold for the breed. Let's hope Sussex Cattle are going strong in another 1000 years.

Conservation grazing

David Hobden has run his 60-acre family farm of traditional High Weald pasture since the 1980s and is fortunate in having half of it designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The SSSI, it seems, is also lucky to have him as its custodian. By using his 16 Sussex and Sussex-cross cattle for 'conservation grazing' David is preserving his meadows and helping flora and fauna to thrive. "I'm really just doing what I always did," he says modestly.

"In conventional agricultural terms, the land is considered poor quality," says David. However, for native wildflowers such as sedges and Green-winged Orchids, lightly grazed, well managed pasture is the perfect habitat. "It's also ideal for my Sussex cattle," adds David. "As a hardy native, they thrive on rough grassland, and the mixture of plants makes their meat taste better too!"



Ten years ago, Jane Howard and her husband Adrian Brewer bought a 140-acre farm in the heart of the Sussex High Weald. Starting with three cows, Daffodil, Clementine and Snowdrop, Coopers Farm is now home to a small herd of pedigree Sussex cattle.

Jane had heard of the Sussex cow's reputation for being docile, a 'good doer' as well as the ideal cow for those new to rearing cattle. She also realised that by buying a local breed, she would never have difficulty selling stock, finding a bull or simply getting expert advice. And it was the latter which Jane says was essential.

"We bought our first cattle from the Spring Sale at Ashford Market and it was a great relief to have Brenda and Tom Hide, who used to graze cattle at Coopers Farm several years ago, with us," says Jane, recommending that all newcomers to keeping cattle ask an experienced stockperson to help. "They are able to ask all the right questions, check on breeding history and importantly question why it is for sale. People rarely sell their best cows!"

Within ten years, Jane has gone from being a novice stock keeper to winning first prize at the Royal Smithfield Show with one of her pedigree Sussex steers. "It's been a steep learning curve," she says. But if her enthusiasm for the breed is anything to go by, it's been worth it.

Chef recommends...

Mark Ehrler, who is head chef at the Middle House pub in Mayfield, nearly always has Sussex beef on his menu. Known for its flavour, tenderness and light marbling of fat, it looks good both before and after cooking.

Middle House has sourced its beef from butchers Smithers of Mayfield, for the last 12 years and the butcher sources the meat from its own farm or other local farms. The beef is from cattle under 30 months old, usually from Sussex or Sussex-cross animals which are slaughtered in Heathfield, then hung for a period of no less than 21 days.



Quirky facts

The Petworth Herd of Sussex cattle is one of the oldest in the country and was founded over 200 years ago • The first Official Herd book was published in 1879 – detailing Sussex calves registered as far back as 1840 • In 1879, the herd book held the details of 313 bulls, 1894 females and 82 breeders • The number of registered Sussex cattle in the UK, in 2009, is around 2500 • There are 175 registered herds in the UK • The largest herd in the country is the Queen's Windsor Herd, with around 200 head of breeding cattle • HRH Prince Charles is Patron of the Sussex Cattle Society, and has his own organic herd of Sussex cattle in Gloucestershire

facts

Agriculture is still the main AONB land use, in 2007 accounting for 67.5% of the total farmed area – an increase of 6% from 2000. However agriculture may account for less than half the area by 2010. Only around 4,500 people are now employed in agriculture out of a total estimated population of 124,880.

Key facts and figures

- 41.5% of the farm workforce comprised part-time farmers in 2006
- Mean farm size declined from 45 to 40 to 35.7ha between 1990, 2000 and 2006
- 29,099ha or 30% of farm holdings are under agri-environment scheme (winter 2007) an increase of 11,352ha since 2004
- 38.8% of the High Weald is agricultural grassland, 14.2% arable and 1.5% horticulture
- There are 655 hectares of species-rich unimproved grassland

figures

Extracted from the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 Updated 2009

A simple, tasty recipe using Sussex beef – Mark's Braised Steak

Ingredients

2x 8oz chunk tender steak • 1x large sliced red onion • 1x rounded dessert spoon tomato puree • 100ml red wine • 2x sprigs of lemon thyme • 2x rounded spoons plain flour • 500ml beef stock • 1x small clove garlic chopped • 1x bay leaf • splash Worcestershire sauce

- Season the steaks with salt and pepper and fry in a shallow casserole dish with one tablespoon of vegetable oil until sealed and coloured.
- Remove the steaks. Fry the red onion until caramelized in the same dish. Add garlic and fry lightly. Add the tomato puree and cook for 3 minutes. Add the flour and cook for a further 3 minutes.
- Add the beef stock a little at a time allowing the sauce to thicken. Stirring continuously slowly add the red wine, the bay leaf and a splash Worcestershire sauce.
- Correct the thickness of the sauce to make runny gravy, season again to taste.
- Place the steaks back in the dish and cover. Covering is essential.
- Place in a pre-heated fan oven at 200°C for 2 hours. Check the meat is tender.
- Serve with steamed purple sprouting broccoli and creamed potatoes



www.highweald.org/localproducts and www.sussexcattlesociety.org.uk for suppliers of Sussex beef and www.highweald.org/guidance for wildflower grassland and conservation grazing information



Habitat Management advice pack online

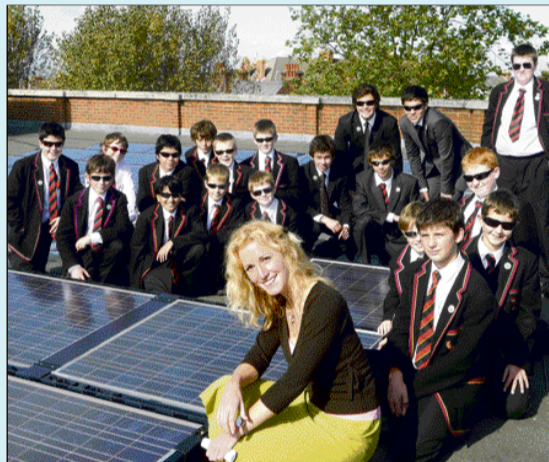
This pack will answer your questions on what, when, how and why, when it comes to the management, restoration or creation of the High Weald's special habitats; ponds, hedges, sandrock, woodlands, wildflower grasslands, rivers and orchards. It will be particularly useful to anyone who is new to land ownership and management or wants a refresher on management techniques.

Coming soon at www.highweald.org/guidance

High Weald renewables advice online

A website has been launched to help you match renewable energy technologies with your energy needs and resources. The site explains the myriad of options for sourcing electricity and/or power: biomass, hydro, photo-voltaics, wind turbines, heat pumps, solar thermal and passive solar design. If you are interested in: replacing fossil fuel use, reducing carbon footprints, making savings, obtaining energy in 'off grid' situations and, in some circumstances even creating an income, then this website is for you.

www.highwealdrenewables.co.uk



South East Today presenter Kaddy Lee-Preston officially opening 60 new solar panels at Skinners' School, Royal Tunbridge Wells

A vision for the High Weald's future

On 1 April a revised Management Plan for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be launched. At its centre is a 20-year vision that sets out the long term goals for the 5 landscape components that make the area one of England's finest landscapes (see page 3). The vision is supported by guidance on the actions required to care for the 5 landscape components. Production of the Plan is a statutory duty for the 15 local authorities involved in the High Weald AONB and Government monitors their performance against it. The 2009 edition updates the 2004 Plan.



High Weald AONB Management Plan

www.highweald.org/policy

News in brief

Carbon neutral education buildings lead the way

Plumpton College at Netherfield has formally opened its 'Living Classroom'. The external walls have been constructed from rammed earth; the benefits of the material being the low amount of energy used in its production and its high thermal mass which helps stabilise building temperatures. Sheep's wool clads the rammed earth to provide further insulation, and Sussex-grown cedar wood forms the outer layer. The 'green' roof of the classroom has been planted with native species and links to a rainwater harvesting system. To heat both the classroom and other outhouses a woodchip burner has been installed.

Ben Law, whose woodland home featured in Grand Designs, has unveiled a unique, hand-sculpted barn at Pestalozzi International Village Trust in Sedlescombe. Locally sourced wood was used to create a traditional A-framed building and shingles were handcrafted to roof the structure. Local apprentices worked with Ben to learn more about how to take a modern perspective to constructing a Sussex barn. The barn, which will be used for storage, drying herbs and shelter for the pupils, is part of a project to create an educational garden to support the Trust's work with children from war-torn countries all over the world.



The roof of the new education barn at Pestalozzi International Village

www.thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk/living_classroom
www.pestalozzi.org.uk/Global+Garden+Project

WARR Partnership secures £2.4 million for rural parishes of Wealden and Rother

Following successful delivery of the Leader+ programme, the Wealden and Rother Rural (WARR) Partnership has now been awarded funding of £2.4 Million through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

This EU and Defra funding will be used to help revitalise and support businesses and communities based in the rural parishes of Wealden and Rother Districts (including the market towns of Hailsham,

Heathfield, Battle and Rye), over the next five years.

Grants of up to £50,000 will be available to cover activities such as farm diversification, adding value to agricultural and forestry products, tourism, renewable energy, and innovative community projects. Collaboration to develop new products and services, and the creation and development of micro-enterprises, will also be encouraged.

www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe
For Rother and Wealden districts –
www.warrpartnership.org.uk
Email: info@warrpartnership.org.uk
Tel: 01424 787400.

A similar scheme is also operating in the boroughs and districts of Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling
www.westkentpartnership.org.uk
Email: westkentleader@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Tel: 01732 227282

Woodland Garden restoration at Chelwood Vachery on Ashdown Forest

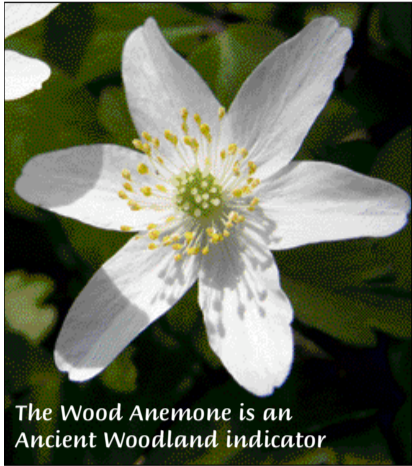


Most people will know of Ashdown Forest as heathland and woodland. In contrast to its popular open hill-top vistas, there are also quiet hidden valleys reached only by those seeking solitude. One such is the Woodland Garden in Chelwood Vachery.

It's an area with an unusual history. 'Removed' from the common land of the Forest in 1693 it was bought in 1905 by an MP, who erected a large house and engaged a well-known landscape gardener to plant up grounds around it. He and his successors built up a fine rhododendron collection and dammed the stream that formed the property's southern boundary. In 1994 British American Tobacco sold the site, half of it to the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. Funding by BAT, the Sussex Gardens Trust and private sources is supporting the restoration of the informal gardens, including dredging the lakes and removing invasive plants.

The garden is always open.

New protection for High Weald's smaller ancient woodland sites



The Wood Anemone is an Ancient Woodland indicator

The fourth in a series of district-focused woodland inventories has been launched for the Borough of Ashford. The new inventory, which for the first time has included woodland sites under 2 hectares, lists 88 previously unrecorded parcels of ancient woodland in the Ashford District of the High Weald AONB (the original inventory mapped 45 sites).

Ancient woodland is protected through planning and forestry policy. However, exclusion of the High Weald's many small woodlands from previous inventories has left them vulnerable. The new inventories, which are used as decision making tools by planners and others, will enable their protection.

To date the inventories for Wealden, Mid Sussex, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford, have led to a doubling of the number of ancient woodland sites in the High Weald. The value of the project in tackling environmental issues resulted in the prestigious, national 'Green Apple' award being made to Mid Sussex District Council following completion of their area inventory.

i www.highweald.org/projects
Email info@highweald.org
Tel: 01580 879962

Ancient trees hunted down

The Wealden Ancient Tree Survey (WATS) Inventory will be launched at Wealden District Council's Crowborough offices on 21st April.

The two-year project, carried out with the help of community volunteers, has close links with the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt. Nikki Williams, the Project Manager for the Ancient Tree Hunt said: 'Wealden is the first district in the country to complete their inventory of ancient trees and donate its results to the Ancient Tree Hunt'.

Ancient trees are important landscape features and support a wealth of rare and protected species.

i www.wealden.gov.uk



David L Phillips, Wealden District Council

£3.1 million heritage scheme for the Weald Forest Ridge gets thumbs up

The Scheme, led by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee, has attracted a Heritage Lottery Fund grant award of £1.92 million, or 60% of total costs. The project aims to involve people in the area's unique heritage through 28 projects run by 18 partners.

Activities will include: for adults – free or subsidised training in land management, rural crafts and traditional building restoration and volunteering opportunities; for children – new field trip packs, bushcraft sessions and improved education centres; for everyone – guided walks, storytelling and festivals. Habitat restoration and access improvements will be carried out in the area's four medieval forests. The biggest project will be an aerial survey of the area using a state of the art technique called LiDAR that can 'see through' vegetation to identify hidden archaeology (see page 3).



i www.highweald.org/WealdForestRidge
Email: info@highweald.org
Tel: 01580 879954

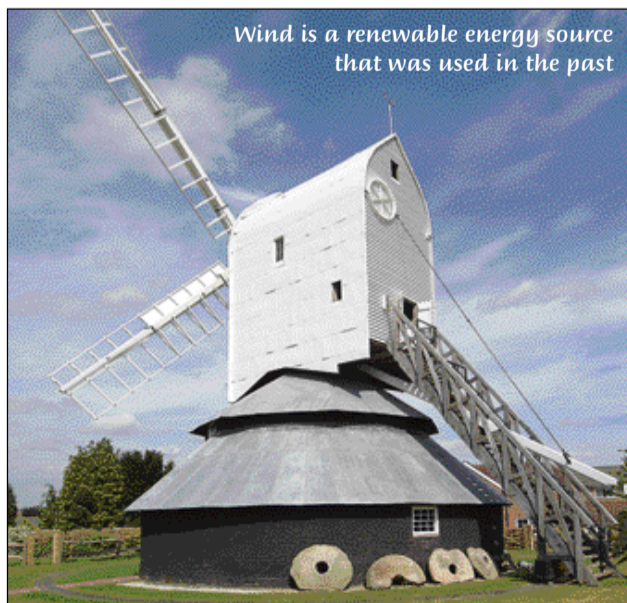
Renewable energy excites Kent primary schools

Where do we get our energy from today? Where will we get it from in the future? Why is this important? These are questions that primary school children involved in the High Weald Energy Story project will be asked.

Nowadays most of our energy comes from fossil fuels. The disadvantages of these are widely known, but what is the solution? It can help to look into the past for the answers. The High Weald was a hive of industrial activity, for example iron production in the Roman and Tudor times and intensive farming during the Victorian times, but where did these people get the energy to produce these outputs? They were all using renewable forms of energy such as wind, wood and water.

As part of the project a Renewable Energy day will be held for hundreds of children at Bedgebury Pinetum. A free renewable energy pack will be available for schools to borrow, along with educational resources to complement the kit.

i www.khwp.org.uk
Rebekah Bibby at the Kent High Weald Project
01580 212972 rebekah.bibby@khwp.org.uk



Wind is a renewable energy source that was used in the past

Wildflower grasslands created with Weald Native Origin Seed

Despite the drab and unsettled summer of 2008, 131kg of Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) was harvested, dried, cleaned and stored. Already 67kg of the WNOS has been re-sown on 12.09 hectares across 33 sites in the High Weald AONB with enhancement and creation advice provided by the Weald Meadows Initiative to enable successful meadow creation or enhancement.



Harvesting local wildflower seed with a small combine harvester

Staplecross School wins High Weald Hero Award 2008

The success of a High Weald Open Morning was one of the reasons that Staplecross Primary School was awarded the High Weald Hero School of the Year Award 2008 by the High Weald Landscape Trust.

Parents and other members of the community were welcomed to the village hall to see how the pupils had used the local countryside and countryside sites within the High Weald; Wilderness Wood, Guestling Wood and Ashdown Forest, as part of their geography, literacy, art, science, maths and ICT work.

Boxing Day for green bags



Proud pupils with their 'bag boxes'

Kent High Weald Project

Special box 'drop-points' in building entrances holding reusable 'Love Where We Live' cloth bags are part of a new venture which encourages staff to borrow bags to do a spot of lunchtime shopping, returning them when they have finished for someone else to use. The aim is to reduce the use of plastic bags.

The boxes, designed by the Kent High Weald Project, are made from thin planks of locally grown chestnut produced by Nick Raeside of Biwoodlands Sawmill, Crowborough using specialist milling machinery. Construction however, has been down to Year 5 and 6 pupils from Sherwood Park Primary School in Tunbridge Wells, using kits prepared earlier...

The scheme, initiated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and AXA PPP, has been a great success, enjoyed by the children in particular. It is hoped that other councils and businesses in the area will develop similar projects.

i www.khwp.org.uk
Ian Johnstone at the Kent High Weald Project
01580 212972 ian.johnstone@khwp.org.uk

News in brief

VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

Houses, gardens and castles

- 1 Bateman's**
TN19 7DS
01435 882302
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- 2 Battle Abbey**
TN33 0AD
01424 773792
www.english-heritage.org.uk
- 3 Bayham Abbey**
TN3 8DE
01892 890381
www.english-heritage.org.uk
- 4 Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest**
TN17 2SL
01580 879820
www.forestry.gov.uk/bedgebury
- 5 Bodiam Castle**
TN32 5UA
01580 830196
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/bodiamcastle
- 6 Borde Hill Gardens**
RH16 1XP
01444 450326
www.bordehill.co.uk
- 7 Brickwall House and Gardens**
TN31 6NL
01797 223329
- 8 Chiddingstone Castle**
TN8 7AD
01892 870347
- 9 Finchcocks Musical Museum**
TN17 1HH
01580 211702
www.finchcocks.co.uk
- 10 Great Dixter House and Gardens**
TN31 6PH
01797 252878
www.greatdixter.co.uk
- 11 Great Maytham Hall**
TN17 4NE
01580 241346
www.cha.org.uk
- 12 Groombridge Place Gardens and the Enchanted Forest**
TN3 9QG
01892 861444
www.groombridge.co.uk
- 13 Hammerwood Park**
RH19 3QE
01342 850594
www.hammerwood.mistral.co.uk
- 14 Hever Castle and Gardens**
TN8 7NG
01732 865224
www.hevercastle.co.uk
- 15 High Beeches Gardens**
RH17 6HQ
01444 400589
www.highbeeches.com
- 16 Hole Park Gardens**
TN17 4JA
01580 241344
www.holepark.com
- 17 Lamb House**
TN31 7ES
01892 890651
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- 18 Leonardslee Gardens**
RH13 6PP
01403 891212
www.leonardslee.com
- 19 Marle Place Gardens**
TN12 7HS
01892 722304
www.marleplace.co.uk
- 20 Merriments Garden**
TN19 7RA
01580 860666
www.merriments.co.uk
- 21 Nymans**
RH17 6EB
01444 405250
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

- 22 Pashley Manor Gardens**
TN5 7HE
01580 200888
www.pashleymanorgardens.com
- 23 Penshurst Place**
TN11 8DG
01892 870307
www.penshurstplace.com
- 24 Priest House**
RH19 4PP
01342 810479
www.sussexpast.co.uk
- 25 Sackville College**
RH19 3AZ
01342 326561
- 26 Saint Hill Manor**
RH19 4JY
01342 326711
- 27 Scotney Castle**
TN3 8JN
01892 893820
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/scotneycastle
- 28 Sheffield Park Garden**
TN22 3QX
01825 790231
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- 29 Sissinghurst Castle Garden**
TN17 2AB
01580 710701
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/places
- 30 Smallhythe Place**
TN17 1HH
01580 762334
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- 31 Sprivers Garden**
TN12 8DR
01892 890651
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- 32 Standen**
RH19 4NE
01342 323029
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen
- 33 Wakehurst Place**
RH17 6TN
01444 894066
www.kew.org

Vineyards

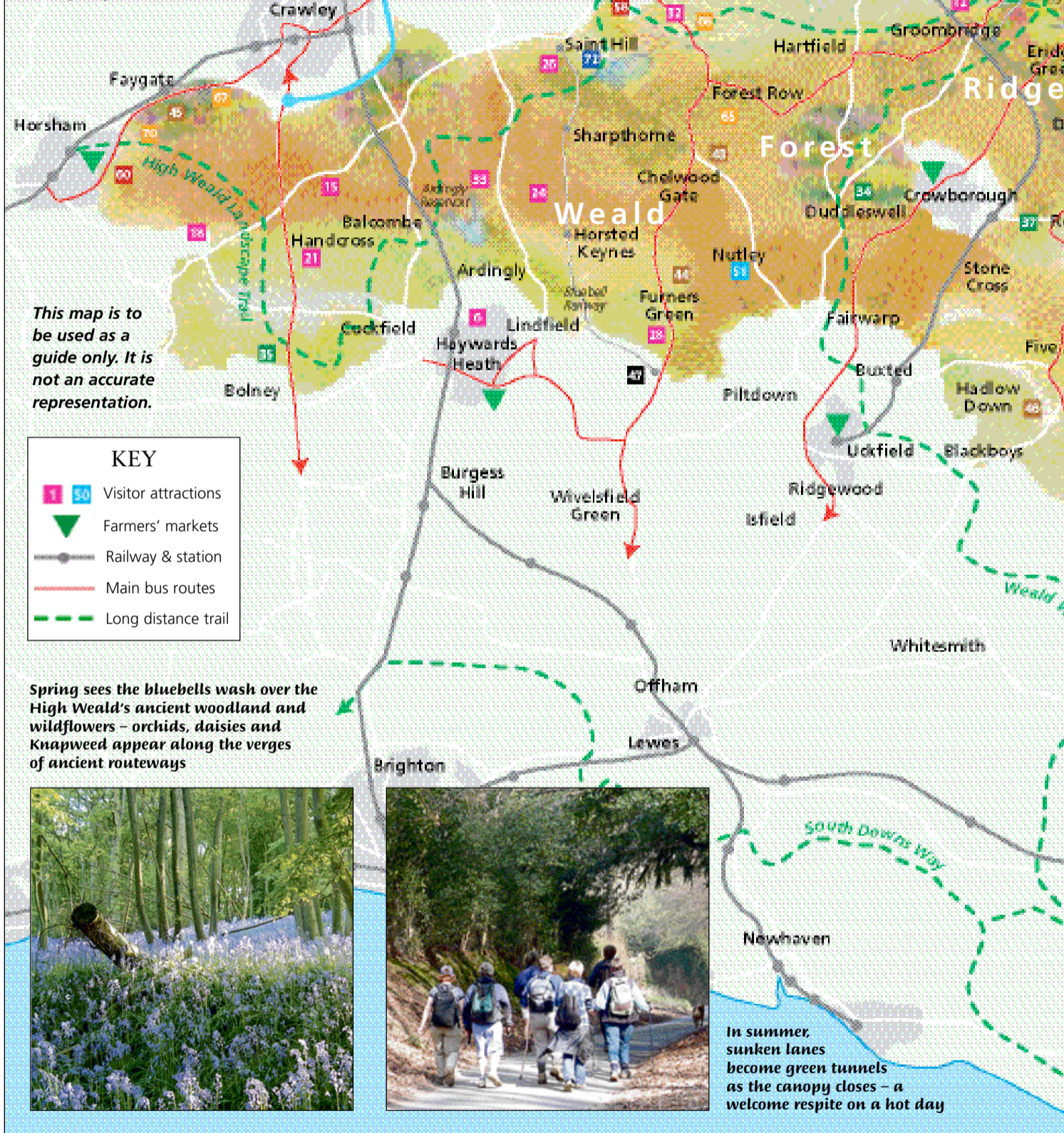
- 34 Barnsgate Manor Vineyard**
TN22 4DB
01825 713366
www.barnsgate.co.uk
- 35 Bookers Vineyard**
RH17 5NB
01444 881575
www.bookersvineyard.co.uk
- 36 Carr Taylor Vineyards**
TN35 4SG
01424 752501
www.carr-taylor.com
- 37 Davenport Vineyards**
TN6 3RR
01892 852380
www.davenportvineyards.co.uk
- 38 Lamberhurst Vineyards**
TN3 8ER
01892 890412
- 39 Penshurst Vineyards**
TN11 8DG
01892 870255
www.penshurst.co.uk
- 40 Sandhurst Vineyards**
TN18 5PA
01580 850296
www.sandhurstvineyards.co.uk
- 41 Sedlescombe Vineyard**
TN32 5SA
0800 9802884
www.englishorganicwine.co.uk
- 42 Tenterden Vineyard**
TN30 7NG
01580 763033
www.englishwinesgroup.com

Farms and woods open to the public

- 43 Ashdown Forest Llama Park**
RH18 5JN
01825 712040
www.llamapark.co.uk
- 44 Heaven Farm**
TN22 3RG
01825 790226
www.heavenfarm.co.uk



The Forest Way and the Cuckoo Trail, both disused railway lines, and Bewl Water and Bedgebury Forest cater for cyclists



This map is to be used as a guide only. It is not an accurate representation.

KEY

- ■ Visitor attractions
- ▲ Farmers' markets
- Railway & station
- Main bus routes
- - - Long distance trail

Spring sees the bluebells wash over the High Weald's ancient woodland and wildflowers – orchids, daisies and Knapweed appear along the verges of ancient routeways



In summer, sunken lanes become green tunnels as the canopy closes – a welcome respite on a hot day

- 45 Holmbush Farmworld**
RH12 4SE
01293 851110
www.holmbushfarm.co.uk
- 46 Wilderness Wood**
TN22 4HJ
01825 830509
www.wildernesswood.co.uk
- 47 Bluebell Railway**
TN22 3QL
01825 722370
www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Steam Railways

- 48 Kent and East Sussex Railway**
TN30 6HE
0870 6006074
www.kesr.org.uk
- 49 Spa Valley Railway**
TN4 8HL
01892 537715
www.spavalleyrailway.co.uk
- 50 Cranbrook Union Windmill**
TN17 3AG
01580 712256

Windmills

- 51 Nutley Windmill**
TN22 3HY
01435 873367
- 52 Stocks Mill**
TN30 7ER
01797 270295
- 53 Battle Museum**
TN33 0EA
01424 775955
www.battlemuseum.org.uk
- 54 Yesterday's World**
TN33 0AQ
01424 893938
www.yesterdayworld.co.uk

Museums

- 55 CM Booth Collection of Historic Vehicles**
TN17 4LP
01580 241234
www.morganmuseum.org.uk
- 56 Court Hall Museum**
TN36 4EU
01797 226382
- 57 Cranbrook Museum**
TN17 3JX
01580 712516
www.cranbrookmuseum.org
- 58 East Grinstead Museum**
RH19 3BJ
01342 302233
www.eastgrinsteadmuseum.org.uk

- 59 Eden Valley Museum**
TN8 7LE
01732 868102
www.evmt.org.uk
- 60 Horsham Museum**
RH12 1HE
01403 254959
- 61 Tenterden and District Museum**
TN30 6HN
01580 764310
www.ukpages.net/kent/museum.htm
- 62 Rye Heritage Centre**
TN31 7AY
01797 226696
www.ryeheritage.co.uk

facts

Visitors are important to the economy of the area. Regional analysis suggests that a significant proportion of the AONB has a level of visitor activity that is above average. This is defined as greater than **10%** employed in accommodation; visitor numbers greater than **0.5 million**; above average density of attractions; and an above average density of accommodation establishments.

There are:

- **56** major visitor attractions within the AONB including **9** National Trust properties
- **61** countryside sites
- **2063km** footpaths and **332km** bridleways
- Several long distance paths which cross the area: High Weald Landscape Trail, Weald Way, 1066 Country Walk, Saxon Shore Way, Vanguard Way and Sussex Border Path.
- **100** villages with **64** conservation areas
- **57** medieval parish churches
- the ruins of **5** major religious houses, including Battle Abbey
- **61** historic parks and gardens
- **2898** historic farmsteads with **36%** incorporating at least one building dating from the seventeenth century or earlier
- **50** Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- **202** Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
- **111** Scheduled Ancient Monuments including 6 iron-age hill forts, **22** iron-working sites, **21** moated sites and **4** castles
- **81** Grade I, **247** Grade II* and **4875** Grade II listed buildings
- **462** accommodation providers.



Historic gardens delight all ages



figures

Extracted from the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 Updated 2009

ACCOMMODATION

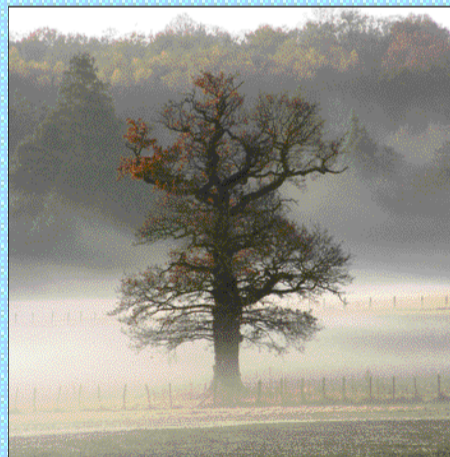
Tourism South East
023 8062 5400

or local tourist information centres -

Battle TIC 01424 773721	Herstmonceux Village Information Centre 01323 833961
Burgess Hill TIC 01444 238202	Horsham TIC 01403 211661
Cranbrook TIC 01580 712538	Rye TIC 01797 226696
Crawley TIC 01293 846968	Sevenoaks TIC 01732 450305
East Grinstead TIC 01342 410121	Tenterden TIC 01580 763572
Edenbridge TIC 01732 868110	Tonbridge TIC 01732 770929
Hastings (Old Town & Queens Square) TICs 01424 781111	Tunbridge Wells TIC 01892 515675



In autumn the area's numerous hedges bear berries and nuts: blackberries, sloes, rosehips and hazelnuts - and you may be lucky enough to catch the aroma of freshly cut hops



In winter, migrating birds are attracted to the coast, and valley mists emphasise the High Weald's rolling hills and the form of its native trees - Oak, Ash and Sweet Chestnut

63 Rye Castle Museum
TN31 7JF
01797 226728
www.ryemuseum.co.uk

64 Tunbridge Wells Museum
TN1 1JN
01892 554171
www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/museum

65 Ashdown Forest Visitor Centre
RH18 5JP
01342 823583
www.ashdownforest.org

66 Bewl Water
TN3 8JH
01892 890661
www.bewl.co.uk

67 Buchan Country Park
RH11 9HQ
01293 542088
www.westsussex.gov.uk/buchan

68 Forest Way Country Park
RH19
01293 542088
www.westsussex.gov.uk

69 Hastings Country Park
TN35
01424 813225

70 St Leonards Forest
RH13
01293 542088
www.westsussex.gov.uk

Nature Reserves

71 Rye Harbour NR
TN31
01797 223862
www.wildrye.info/reserve

72 Weirwood NR
RH19
01273 482670

REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Traveline
0871 200 22 33

NATIONAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

National Rail enquiries
08457 48 49 50
National Express (coach)
08717 818181



i www.highweald.org for additional information on attractions, accommodation, farmers markets, local producers and walks. Other useful websites

www.visitbritain.com
www.sussexcountry.co.uk

Country Parks/sites

Event tasters

Ashdown Forest Llama Park



Over 100 Llamas & Alpacas • Meet our lovely Reindeer
Adventure Play Area • Picnic Area • Coffee Shop
South American Craft Shop • Alpaca Knitwear

www.llamapark.co.uk

Ashdown Forest Llama Park
on A22 between East Grinstead and Uckfield
Wych Cross, Forest Row, E.Sx, RH18 5JN.
Tel: 01825 712040
Email: info@llamapark.co.uk
Open daily 10am to 5pm

GREAT DIXTER
HOUSE, GARDENS & NURSERIES




Great Dixter was both the family home and passion of gardening writer Christopher Lloyd, who devoted his lifetime to creating one of the most experimental and constantly changing gardens of our time, surrounding the 15th century manor house he called home.

Open 1st April to 25th October
Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays
Gardens 11am – 5pm (last admission), House 2pm – 5pm
Admission: House & Gardens £8.00, Gardens only £6.50.
Discount for groups of 25 plus (booking essential).
Location – signposted off the A28 in Northiam.

Northiam, nr Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH
01797 252878
www.greatdixter.co.uk

Heaven Farm



Stable tea rooms
Nature Trail
Cart Lodge craft shop
Farm museum
Country coach tours
Caravans and camping
Organic farm shop

*180 years of farming
in the heart of the
Sussex Weald*

Open March to November inclusive, 10am to 5pm
Furners Green, Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 3RG

Tel: 01825 790226 Fax: 01825 790881
www.heavenfarm.co.uk

Key categories

- Displays, Exhibitions & Talks
- Training Courses
- Family Fun, Sports & Outdoor Activities
- Guided Walks
- Kids Activities
- Wildlife & Gardening

April

From 9 April
● **On the Forest Floor**
Ashdown Forest Centre, nr Wych Cross, E Sussex
01342 823583
hev@ashdownforest.org
One of several events being run by the Ashdown Forest Centre throughout the year. An exhibition of natural artwork by Pamela Hurwitz.

19 April
● **Go Wild in the Garden**
Buchan Country Park, Crawley, West Sussex
01293 542088
www.westsussex.gov.uk/buchan
11am-3pm
Discover how you can make your garden wildlife friendly. Visit the wild garden and browse the stalls. Your chance to buy native wild flowers, cottage garden perennials, bird boxes and butterfly friendly shrubs. Admission free.

May

6 May
● **Sussex Environmental Educators Forum Open Day**
Ashdown Forest Centre, nr Wych Cross, E Sussex
01342 823583
hev@ashdownforest.org
One of several events being run by the Ashdown Forest Centre throughout the year.

7 May
● **Bat Walk**
Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst, Kent
01892 891081
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/scotneycastle
8.30pm-10pm
Guided bat walk in the garden with the warden (not suitable for children under 5 years).

19 May
● **An Introduction to the Conservation of Weather-boarded and Tile-hung Buildings**
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, West Sussex
01243 811464/811931
courses@wealddown.co.uk
One of 3 workshops to enable people to learn how to conserve and repair the half-timber and tile-hung buildings that are so characteristic of the Weald Forest Ridge. The cost is usually £95 but there are subsidised places for those who live or work in the Weald Forest Ridge area and free places for volunteers who are working for the Landscape Partnership Scheme.



Building conservation training

23 May
● **Heathfield & District Agricultural Show**
Little Tottingworth Farm, Broad Oak, Heathfield, East Sussex
Organised by: Heathfield and District Agricultural Show Society
www.heathfieldshow.org
The premier one day agricultural show in the south east featuring livestock and horse show, trade stands and main arena events. Come and join us for the country atmosphere of Sussex.

23-31 May
● **Food Glorious Food**
Bodiam Castle, Bodiam, East Sussex
Organised by: Bodiam Castle
01580 830398
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/places/bodiamcastle
A celebration of the medieval 'grow your own' approach to food. Children's trail leaflet on the theme of a medieval meal. Normal admissions plus £1. Learn about feasting in the medieval castle with our short Courtyard Talks (at set times each day, normal admissions only).



Farm events

26-27 May
● **Dragonfly Makeover**
Bedgebury National Pinetum, Goudhurst, Kent
Organised by: Bedgebury National Pinetum
01580 879820
www.forestry.gov.uk/bedgebury
10am-12pm
Tuesday, 5-8 year olds; Wednesday, 9-13 year olds. Discover these fantastic insects and the amazing changes they go through in and around Bedgebury's ponds.

June

11 June
● **An Introduction to Timber Framed Buildings and their Conservation**
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, West Sussex
01243 811464/811931
courses@wealddown.co.uk
See 19 May entry.

11-13 June
● **South of England Show**
S'th of England Showground, Ardingly, W Sussex
www.seas.org.uk
Three day agricultural show with prize winning livestock, world class show jumping and equestrian events, displays and other shows.



Food events

22 – 28 June
● **Roses & Herbs Past & Present**
Hever Castle, Hever, Kent
01732 865224
www.hevercastle.co.uk
A colourful celebration of all that is in the summer garden. Meet the Head Gardener in the Rose Garden while sampling some rose wine. Learn about the culinary and medicinal uses of herbs through the centuries.

July

18 July
● **Common Countryside Trees**
Bateman's, Burwash, East Sussex
01435 882302
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
10am-12pm
Enjoy a walk around the Bateman's estate and learn how to identify common trees whilst hearing about their natural history, folklore and uses through the ages. Duration of the walk approximately 2 hours.

19 July
● **Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme Launch Event**
Calverley Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent
1pm-5pm
A chance to find out about the events that will be taking place across the Ridge throughout the 3-year scheme. The 18 partners will have stalls with 'have a go' opportunities. Same Sky will be beginning their 'Giant Maidens' project, that will lead onto arts workshops in school and community settings across the Ridge and a fantastic night time procession later in the year.

August

12 August
● **Hunt for the Missing Purse**
Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, Rye, East Sussex
01797 227784
www.wildrye.info
2pm-4pm
Take part in marine week by joining the great egg case hunt along the Rye Harbour shore. Meet at Lime Kiln Cottage Information Centre.

16 August
● **Heavy Horses Harrow the Wildflower Meadow**
High Beeches Gardens, Handcross, W Sussex
01444 400589
www.highbeeches.com
Horses from the Working Horse Trust harrow the meadow. A fun day for all the family, get close to the gentle giants and see how much they enjoy working the land.



Gatwick Greenspace

Bushcraft skills

September

18 September
● **Conservation of Ironwork**
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, West Sussex
01243 811464/811931
courses@wealddown.co.uk
See 19 May entry

October

Throughout October
● **Chestnut Celebration**
Wilderness Wood, Hadlow Down, East Sussex
01825 830509
www.wildernesswood.co.uk
10am-5pm
Gather and learn about sweet chestnuts on a special walk through the ancient coppice woodland. Try roast chestnuts, chestnut soup and chestnut cake. Usual admission prices.

As part of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme the following projects will be running events:

Gatwick Green Space will be delivering a series of Bushcraft events for children. The Forest Schools programme will work with schools and will also run in the school holidays, teaching children skills such as lighting fires with sticks, cooking a meal, building a shelter and making tools using knives and saws. Contact Tom Forward 07771 375254 tomforward@sussexwt.org.uk

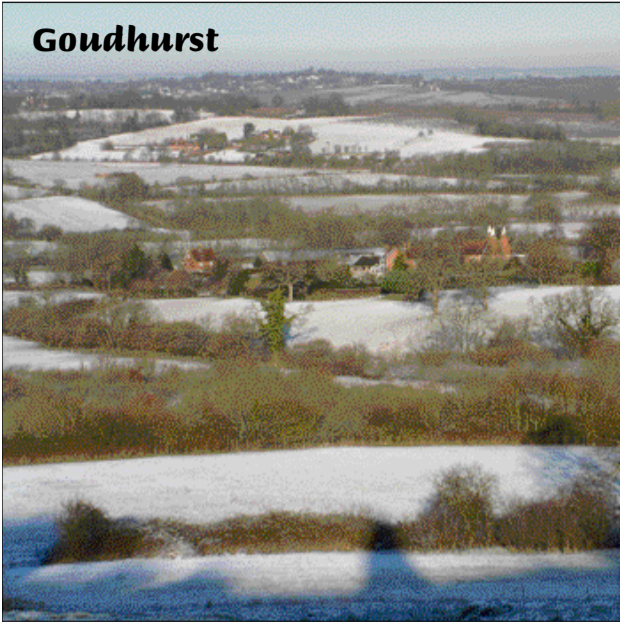
ESUS Forestry and Woodlands who specialise in woodland management training will be holding courses in coppicing, hedge laying, brushcutting and chainsaw use as well as fencing, charcoal, besom and hurdle making. There will be some free places for volunteers working as part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme. Contact David Rossney esus-forestry@btinternet.com

Plumpton College's Netherfield Centre for Sustainable Farming will be running various courses on sustainable farming throughout the year. Contact Topsy Jewell 01424 775615 jewell@plumpton.ac.uk

i www.highweald.org for a full list of events in the area. For queries about the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme events contact Ruth Dawson on 01580 879954 r.dawson@highweald.org

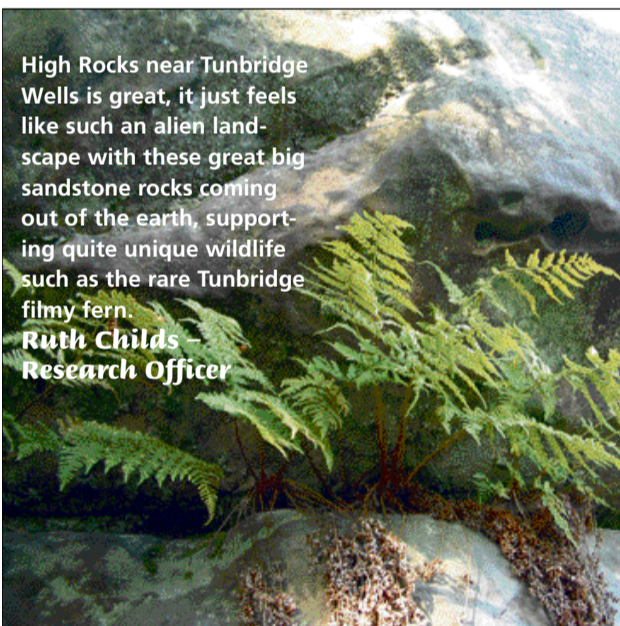


Goudhurst



Goudhurst in Kent is fantastic. From the church tower you get views of a landscape which hasn't changed in centuries. You can walk out in every direction from the village as they would have done in the past. A historic building is never far away; just one farmstead can include an original timber-framed medieval farmhouse, an array of barns (some of which may have survived from before the 17th century) workers cottages and the much-loved oasthouse. Finchcocks is a fine Georgian Manor in the vicinity of Goudhurst. It houses a collection of over 100 historical keyboards and it is only a short walk along a footpath from the village.

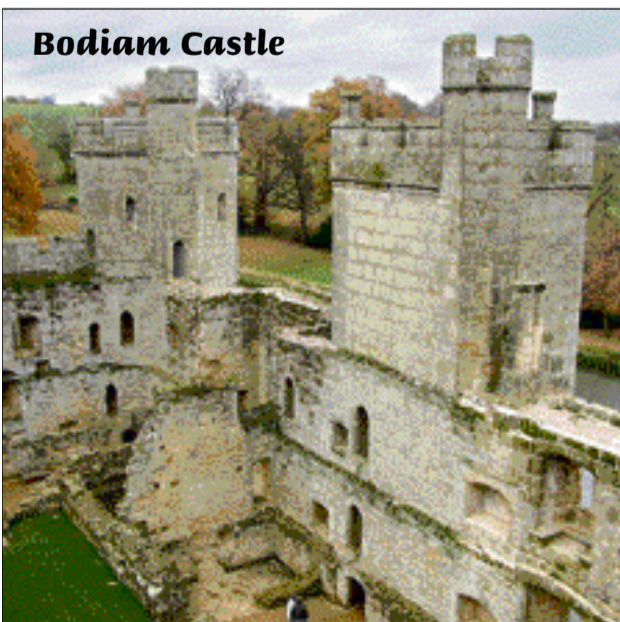
Sally Marsh – AONB Co-Director



High Rocks near Tunbridge Wells is great, it just feels like such an alien landscape with these great big sandstone rocks coming out of the earth, supporting quite unique wildlife such as the rare Tunbridge filmy fern.

Ruth Childs – Research Officer

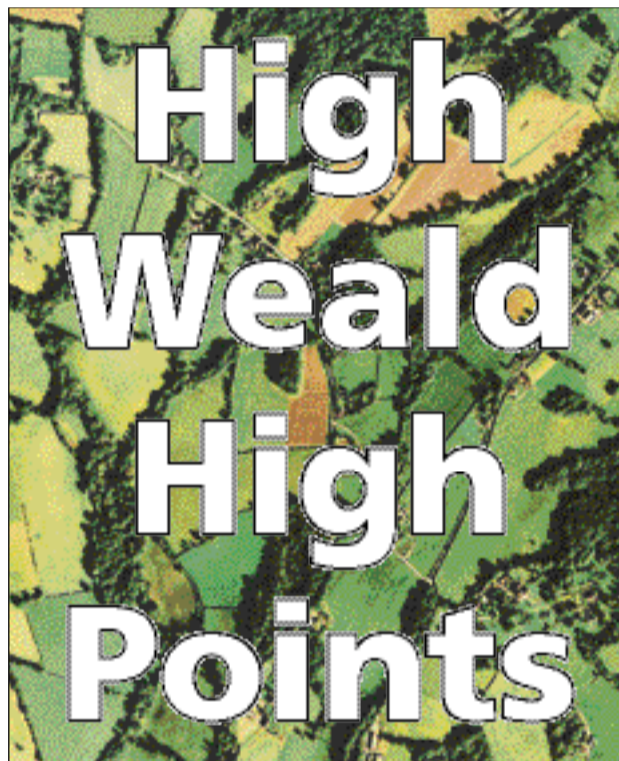
Bodiam Castle



I was lucky enough to be involved with the development of the High Weald Landscape Trail so have walked the whole length of the AONB – from Horsham in the west to Rye in the east. I have loads of favourite places – normally sunny spots on woodland paths where I have spent a quiet moment watching wildlife; a deer, fox or snake or admiring bluebells or the pink fluffiness of an orchard in flower. One of the reasons I like walking in the area is because there is often a surprise around the corner – the most memorable being a scrumping camel in an orchard near Wittersham!

A favourite part of the Trail is the stretch from Ardingly to West Hoathly – a gentle climb through woodland to the quiet village of West Hoathly with its fascinating sandstone buildings, including the Priest House owned by the Sussex Archaeological Society.

Gerry Sherwin – Business Manager



With so many ways of exploring the High Weald it can be hard to decide where to go. Members of the High Weald AONB Unit were asked about their favourite destinations...

For someone fed a diet of stories about medieval chivalry and the Indian jungles during childhood, my two favourite places can only be Bodiam Castle and Kipling's home at Bateman's – I really can't choose one over the other. Both are built using large sandstone blocks dug from the bedrock of the High Weald, they both take on the colour of butter as the sun begins to set, and they both, in very different ways, command their landscape settings – Bodiam does this theatrically by dominating the hillside over the broad Rother valley while Bateman's casts an understated authority over the more intimate and unassuming Dudwell valley.

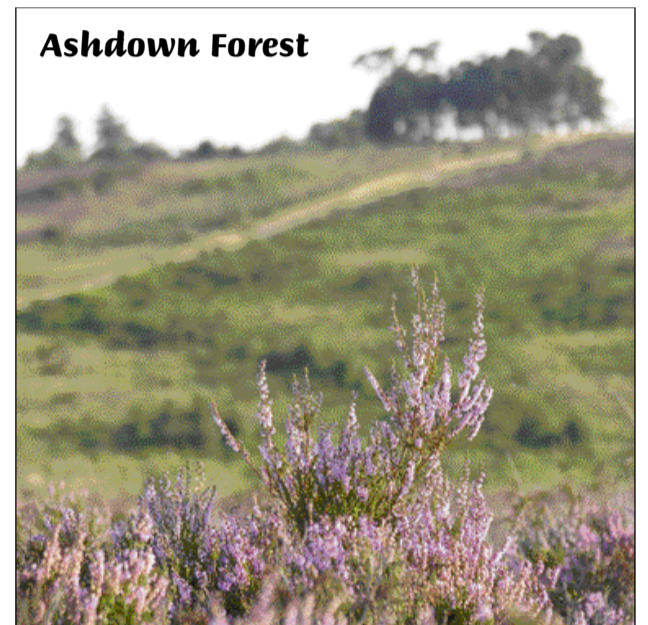
Don't be put off by the number of cars parked at Bateman's as the house and grounds seem to effortlessly absorb all visitors. The house will pass on its atmosphere and you'll understand something of the deep affection Kipling had for this place. Do look out for the initials Kipling and his family carved into the soft walls of the entrance porch. Bodiam Castle rises out of the hillside and is perhaps everyone's idea of how a castle should look. Visit it regardless of the weather – it always looks fabulous.

Jason Lavender – AONB Co-Director

Priest House at West Hoathly



Ashdown Forest



I am a keen bird watcher and two places top my list. One is Old Lodge Nature Reserve on Ashdown Forest where I go on a still evening every summer to hear Nightjars, and the other is Rye Harbour Nature Reserve where I go in the winter to watch migrating waders and listen for booming bitterns. A drive along the area's smaller lanes is often part of a visit to either place, there are always wonderful cottages, wildflower verges, boundary banks topped with gnarled old trees and other interesting features to see. One of the reasons I love living in this area is the diversity of places to visit just a short distance away.

Kerry Baldwin – Administrator

My favourite place has to be a wildflower grassland! Nothing beats sitting down in a hay meadow in June and July, surrounded by a myriad of swaying grasses and wildflowers, with butterflies, grasshoppers and bees flying overhead. The meadows at Bedelands Nature Reserve near Burgess Hill, Marden Meadow near Marden and Great Dixter in Northiam can be enjoyed by everybody.

Dawn Brickwood – Meadows Officer



Volunteering opportunities

The High Weald is already buzzing with volunteers – and things are about to get even busier in one part of this beautiful area, namely the Weald Forest Ridge, thanks in part to an award of nearly £2 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund (see page 5).

One project, which is already up and running, is the Forest Schools Project. It will teach bushcraft and Ray Mears-style survival techniques, an excellent way of building awareness and appreciation of the local countryside. Volunteers are needed to help run the courses, and accredited training will be provided so that the volunteers can gain the qualifications and experience they need to run courses in the future; as a legacy of the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership. If you are interested, please contact Tom Forward on tomforward@sussexwt.org.uk 07771 375254

A number of conservation organizations will be recruiting volunteers to tackle jobs such as scrub clearing and coppicing in the winter, and constructing boardwalks and installing kissing gates in the summer. These include the Kent High Weald Project www.khwp.org.uk, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers www.btcv.org.uk and the Sussex Wildlife Trust www.sussexwt.org.uk

If you're a keen twitcher, or simply care about our feathered friends, then the RSPB will be recruiting volunteers to help restore and maintain Broadwater Warren: to encourage rare birds such as the Dartford Warbler, the enigmatic Nightjar and the Woodlark to live and breed in the area. Contact Caroline Fitzgerald on 01892 752430 or caroline.fitzgerald@rspb.org.uk

Time Team enthusiasts may be more tempted by the East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership, which will be recruiting volunteers to assist with their



Volunteers can bring local heritage alive through living history walks

schools' education programme: where children will learn about the rich archaeological and cultural heritage of the area. Contact Tristan Bareham on 01273 486959 or esamp@eastsussex.gov.uk

And, if you work for the police, Sussex Police will be recruiting staff of all ranks to help maintain fifty acres of heathland that they own and manage within the Weald Forest Ridge. Contact Steve Wheatley on 01580 879958 or swheatley@butterfly-conservation.org

Volunteer historians, writers and actors would be welcomed by the Weald Forest Ridge management team to help research, create and bring to life stories about the area's rich historical, cultural and mythical heritage through 'living history walks'. Contact Ruth Dawson on 01580 879954 or r.dawson@highweald.org

If the perk of volunteering is not enough, the Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme is also offering some fantastic opportunities for volunteers to take up free or subsidised training places with partner organizations. Courses include the conservation of ancient buildings, as well as iron work restoration and conservation, at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. Or you can gain training in coppicing, hedge laying and rural crafts with ESUS Forestry and Woodlands, who specialise in woodland management training (see page 10 for details).

Why volunteering is



The time and energy of volunteers plays a key role in ensuring that the High Weald's medieval landscape of rolling hills, woodland, small fields and heaths, farmsteads and ancient routeways is maintained for future generations. Jennifer Stuart-Smith explores the benefits to people and the landscape (page 16)

Once in a while, something appears in the news which is totally uplifting, whether it's the tale of a selfless pilot, the victory of a village campaign group over a ruthless multinational or the actions of a 'have-a-go-hero'. In amongst the reports on broken Britain and the credit crunch you can still find diamonds in the dust.

One such gem was a recent article in the Sunday Times revealing that, as our economy flounders, the 'crunch spirit' has led to a surge in people giving up their time for others. The theory that tough times bring out the best in people seems to be true when it comes to volunteering.

This year an estimated three-quarters of the population volunteered at some point and nearly half of all people volunteer – formally or informally – at least once a month. Although the increase in the number of volunteers has been most pronounced in the last few months, this groundswell of voluntary action has been notable over the last decade. Between 2001-5, Britain's band of volunteers grew by 10 per cent to more than 20 million. And what's great news for the country, is great news for the High Weald too.

So, apart from the credit crunch, what motivates people to work for no financial gain?

Despite the common assumptions about volunteering, it's not a selfless act. That's not to say it isn't a brilliant and

worthwhile thing to do but, one of the main reasons for volunteering is the personal benefit – even if that is the satisfaction of helping others or making a difference to the countryside.

Health and wellbeing

Bombarding people with frightening statistics about the state of the nation's health can simply make people despondent. Yet motivate them with a solution which has undeniable benefits, and you may just get the response you are after.

A raft of scientific studies has shown that getting out into the natural environment makes people happier, lowers blood pressure, improves concentration levels, speeds up physical recovery and can reduce obesity. One positive change leads to another – and getting some exercise is a good place to start.

Rather than paying an expensive gym membership, to stand on a tread mill looking at the wall, volunteers in the High Weald get all the exercise they want, yet in beautiful surroundings: "You can have a go at coppicing, scrub clearance or build-



Volunteers can help children discover woodlands through bushcraft



Kent High Weald Project

ing a boardwalk," says Nick Robinson. "We cater for all levels of ability."

As well as the physical benefits of exercise, such as better cardiovascular health and improved strength, the benefits to a person's mental health cannot be overestimated. Last year, Mind, the mental health charity published a report on 'Ecotherapy' – or getting exercise in the great outdoors. Their findings were remarkable, although perhaps not to those who are already involved in such schemes.

Of those who took part in the study, 94 per cent said that it had benefited their mental health, with comments such as: "My fitness has improved, I feel refreshed and alive." Another said: "I am more relaxed, have better focus of mind, greater coordination and greater self-esteem." They also highlighted that exercise can be an effective alternative to antidepressants as a treatment for mild to moderate depression.

A social scene

Humans are gregarious creatures and time spent alone, for whatever reason, can leave people feeling lonely and isolated. Rural communities especially can seem like an idyll, but be low on social interaction – especially with the decline in the agricultural economy.

According to Nick Robinson, the social side of volunteering is many people's greatest incentive: "You get an interesting

mix of people, who otherwise would probably never meet," he says. "But there's rarely friction. It tends to just be positive interaction. People are pretty accommodating – and they are all joined by a common purpose."

Volunteers may be retired City executives, the long-term unemployed, local council directors and their staff, foreign students, people with special needs and minority groups. All are equally appreciated, as are the different skills and expertise they bring.

Helping the environment

Social or 'community cohesion', in practical and volunteering terms, means that by joining force, individuals can make a real difference – and share in the satisfaction. "Individuals may feel powerless in the face of global crisis," says the BTCV.

Volunteering addresses this lack of confidence and knowledge. "The size of the collective effort is empowering: when 270,000 volunteers and 5000 community groups are taking action, individual effort no longer feel so futile," says the organisation.

Knowledge is gained through interaction and activity – which means that people not only absorb information more effectively but retain it too. People who are lectured and dictated to are far less ready to comply than those who are encouraged and inspired. As a Demos/Green Alliance report for Defra put it: "Information does not necessarily lead to increased awareness, and increased awareness does not lead to action."

Conservation volunteering is a key example of this. There is, most obviously, the direct effect that volunteer groups have on the environment, i.e. by improving habitats, encouraging biodiversity and restoring the natural environment. But, it has also been shown that increased exposure to nature and the outdoors leads people to adopt more eco-friendly behaviour in their everyday lives.

According to the BTCV –

- 71% of volunteers had given advice to others on being environmentally friendly
- 71% increased the amount of household waste they recycled
- 74% said volunteering gave them a greater sense of responsibility

For some people, becoming a volunteer may simply help them get fit or offer a form of relaxation. For others, it can be a life-changing experience. Making friends, improving your chances of employment, making a difference to the environment as well as to your physical and mental health...No wonder so many across the country are getting involved.

i www.highweald.org/YourInvolvement to be inspired by other people's actions and find out how you can help the area. You can join Friends of the High Weald on line – membership guarantees annual delivery of the Anvil.



Conservation volunteering does not have to involve hard physical activity



Kent High Weald Project

There are no age barriers to volunteering



Kent High Weald Project

Team work helps with constructing traditional chestnut fencing



Kent High Weald Project

Corrugated iron provides a warm home for reptiles – habitat, wildlife and archaeological surveys play an important part in protecting the area

facts

With an estimated population of around **124,880** and a density of **0.85** people per hectare, the High Weald AONB is a reasonably populated but essentially rural area: the boundary excludes urban areas such as Tunbridge Wells town and Crowborough, but includes Battle (population over **6,000**) – the largest built-up area within a landscape of scattered villages and dispersed settlement.

The population is high for a designated landscape but, compared to urban areas and the neighbouring parts of rural West Sussex and north Kent, it is lowly populated.

The High Weald has scattered settlement pattern of farmsteads, hamlets, and small villages. There are around **100** villages but **38%** of the population lives in the countryside outside villages.

figures

Extracted from the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 Updated 2009

Volunteer case studies

Richard Newman

“I got started in volunteering by my mum. I am on the autistic spectrum (aspergers and dyspraxia) and volunteering for the project has given me confidence to talk to people, improved my hand to eye coordination and has helped me in getting through my qualifications in countryside management. Now I am working part time for the project as a Promotion and Volunteer Development Officer and as a warden at Scotney Castle. I also help at Sprivers Garden and manage an area called Nap Wood.”



Richard Newman handing out volunteer awards

Kent High Weald Project

Wendy Saunders

“I enjoy walking in the country, just being surrounded by trees and grass, and I'm concerned about conservation issues. I felt that being outdoors was more important to me than shuffling papers on my desk. I have my name down for the Kent Wildlife Trust's brush-cutting course and I've just started an OU degree in environmental studies. Volunteering is great fun, you make lots of friends and there's nothing too difficult or physically demanding. We usually do any heavy work in teams. Women needn't be put off volunteering because they think it'll be too physical – I'm only 5ft and very slim, and it hasn't hindered me. The weather can be a bit grim at times – but think how much more you'll appreciate that lovely warm bath and cup of tea when you get home. I'd advise anyone to go for it. You'll make loads of friends, you'll get fit and you'll have a warm sense of achievement at the end of the day that comes from physical exercise and seeing a good job done.”

ASK ANDREW



Andrew Shaw
of the High
Weald AONB
Unit answers
one of your
most frequently
asked questions

How do I know if I am in the AONB?

The occasional paper map, for example the Ordnance Survey Explorer series, will have the AONB marked on but it can be hard to tell if an individual house or field is inside the boundary – especially near the edge of the AONB.

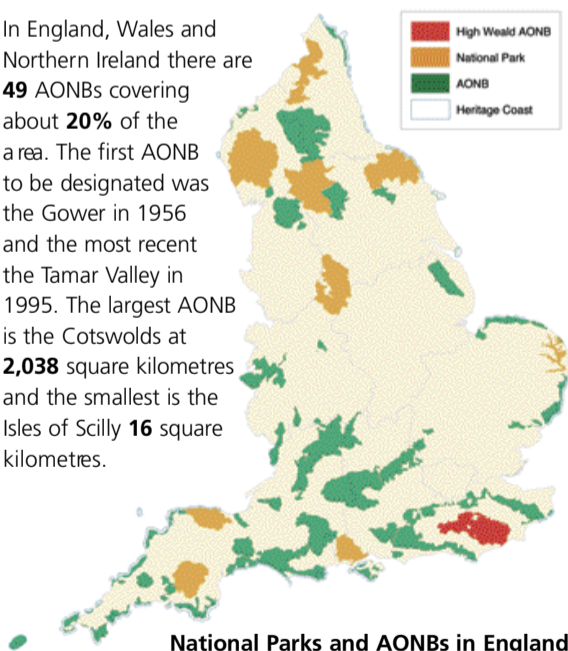
The original boundary was drawn in 1983, on large scale paper maps, before digital maps were available. Where it doesn't follow a boundary feature, for example a road, river or field edge, it can be hard to interpret, particularly where development appears to have occurred on the boundary after it was drawn. The High Weald also has some spaces inside the boundary that are not in the AONB (around Crowborough and Heathfield) which need to be carefully checked.

The best way to find out if your house or land is within the AONB is to ask your local council's planning department. A second port of call is the High Weald AONB Unit. Both now use digital maps.

For the experienced web user, there is a website called www.magic.gov.uk which provides details of many official boundaries (and lots of other data) including AONBs. It has an interactive map feature that can zoom into very close detail. The site is quite complicated though and needs some understanding of digital maps to use successfully – start in the interactive map and search on "Rural Designations – Statutory" in the topic box, then enter a postcode. You may want to switch off many of the 'layers' that appear to see the AONB clearly.

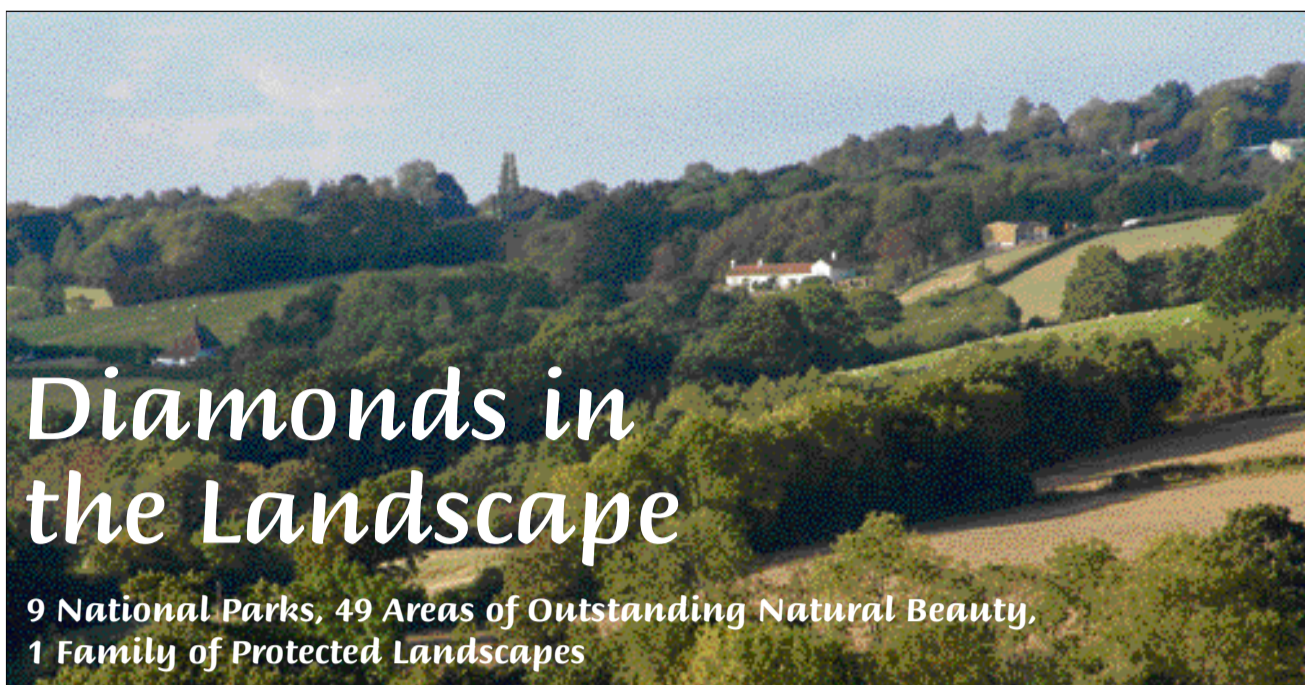
Any dispute about the boundary is ultimately decided by Natural England – the Government advisor on countryside matters.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are **49** AONBs covering about **20%** of the area. The first AONB to be designated was the Gower in 1956 and the most recent the Tamar Valley in 1995. The largest AONB is the Cotswolds at **2,038** square kilometres and the smallest is the Isles of Scilly **16** square kilometres.



www.diamondsinthelandscape.org

The High Weald AONB Management Plan can be downloaded from www.highweald.org/policy. Hard copies available from the High Weald AONB Unit – see page 2.



Diamonds in the Landscape

9 National Parks, 49 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
1 Family of Protected Landscapes



Come December, the 1949 National Parks and Access to Countryside Act will have been in existence for 60 years. Its effect has been to ensure that everyone living in the UK can enjoy great areas of spectacular countryside. Ted Fellows, retired editor of *Farmers Weekly*, reflects on the past 60 years and what the next 60 years might hold.

There may just be people still alive who remember the day in 1932 when walkers en masse set foot on Kinder Scout in the Peak District. This day went down in the annals of countryside access history as the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass. Thankfully today, because of subsequent Government legislations, walkers are more welcome in the countryside throughout the UK.

The 1932 Mass Trespass was the culmination of years of frustration, resentment and sheer need-to-leave-behind, if only for a few hours a week, the stink and dirt of the industrial towns of Victorian England.

The bad-tempered scuffles on the slopes of Kinder Scout achieved what the mounting pressure for National Parks from ramblers and country lovers had so far failed to do – it got things moving. A UK-wide rethink of access to the countryside was the positive result.

In 1936, the founders of the Council for National Parks – the Standing Committee for National Parks – got together to lobby for legislation. Then the Second World War broke out and the nation had other things on its mind.

War or no war, John Dower – civil servant, architect, keen Rambler and secretary of the Standing Committee on National Parks – kept the enticing concept of National Parks in the front of his mind. In 1945 he produced the first post-war official report, which set out what National Parks in England and Wales should be. The report stated:

"An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate

national decision and action:

- (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved,
- (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided,
- (c) wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historical interest are suitably protected, while
- (d) established farming use is effectively maintained."

John Dower also included details of other areas of countryside that, although not suitable as National Parks because they lacked size and wilderness, were nevertheless beautiful enough to deserve protection. He suggested they might suitably be designated as 'other amenity areas'.

His report, and a subsequent one by Sir Arthur Hobhouse in 1947, laid the foundations for the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which created both the National Park system and a system of other amenity areas that became officially known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

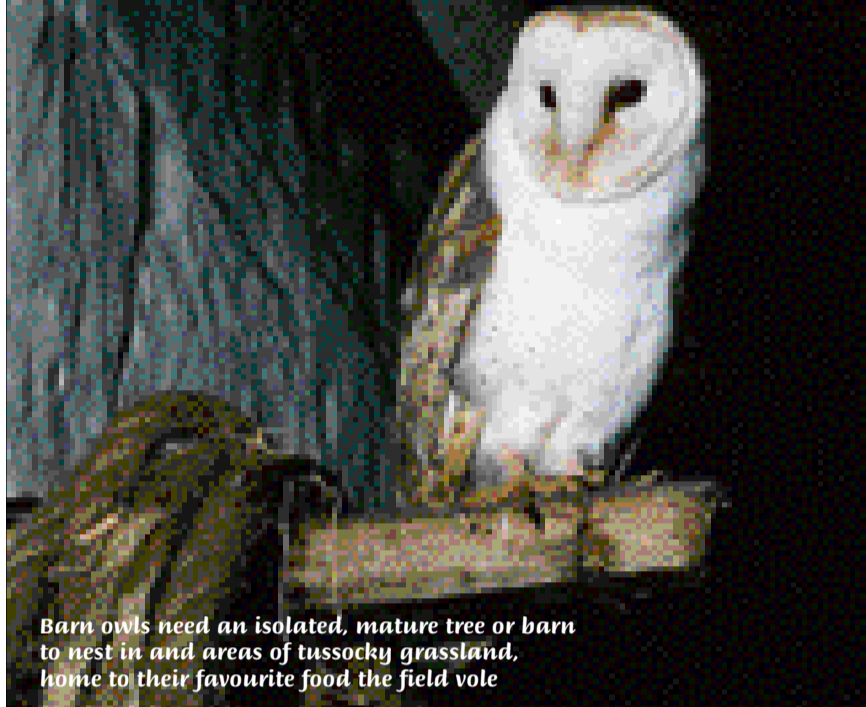
Thanks to the 1949 Act, England and Wales' Protected Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) now make up some 25% of the countryside. These areas are better protected than the rest of our countryside as important oases of natural beauty for all to appreciate.

However, challenges to conserve and enhance our Protected Landscapes still exist. The job of managing the differing needs of local residents, businesses and visitors, the environment, modern food production and biodiversity, is no light undertaking and, in the minds of all those who treasure this country's finest landscapes, there is little doubt that Protected Landscapes will grow in relevance during the next 60 years. As well as providing access to stunning landscapes, wildlife and historic places, Protected Landscapes will have an important role in meeting immediate and pressing needs for climate change mitigation; improving accessibility to the countryside, supporting health agendas and providing models for sustainable living.

To protect our AONBs and National Parks – our Diamonds in the Landscape – for our children and our children's children, it is essential that we all work to strengthen the aims of their founding fathers. After all, "Diamonds are Forever", if looked after properly.



Return of the Barn Owl



Barn owls need an isolated, mature tree or barn to nest in and areas of tussocky grassland, home to their favourite food the field vole

Hugh Clark/Sussex Wildlife Trust



Mark Monk-Terry/Sussex Wildlife Trust

Barn owl boxes come in different forms: A-framed, pole boxes and even the occasional tea chest!



Colin Shawyer

Twenty seven barn owl boxes are to be erected along the upper reaches of the Rivers Rother and Ouse. This will be the culmination of a project to create a corridor of nesting sites along the nation's rivers, linking North Yorkshire with Kent. In the 100 boxes already installed in the High Weald, 60 barn owl pairs have been recorded. Jason Lavender outlines the reasons for the scheme.

Sir David Attenborough once said "the barn owl is one of our most familiar birds, instantly recognisable by almost everyone and it has gained a particular place in our affections." He recalled how for centuries farmers built special windows in their barns to allow these owls to enter, roost and breed.

Many of you will have felt your heart miss a beat, as I have, when suddenly a tremendous hissing comes out of the dark, high up on a ledge, warning you to keep your distance. Many of you will have stood captivated in the evening gloom as a barn owl slowly and silently floats along a hedgerow, occasionally dropping down into grass to catch its prey.

It may come as a surprise, therefore, that the barn owl had become one of our rarest breeding birds. Numbers declined by more than half between 1930 and 1980 and population numbers were of concern. The reasons for this decline are complex and it was not until Colin Shawyer, then of the Hawk and Owl Trust, published his hugely influential report "The Barn Owl in the British Isles" in 1987 that we knew clearly what the causes were.

Climate is a fundamental natural factor affecting the barn owls. Periods of prolonged poor weather, such as deep snow cover or heavy and continuous rain, severely reduce hunting efficiency and cause a crash in the owl's main prey species – small mammals. The result is a lack of food when the owl desperately needs it most, which often means starvation or a decline in

reproductive success. Either way population levels are regulated.

The natural impact of climate was exacerbated by agricultural intensification and land use changes that took place throughout the last century. As the barn owl is a specialist predator of small mammals (particularly the short-tail vole and the common shrew), it relies on a large and continuous supply. And as both the vole and the shrew depend on a mosaic of tussocky grassland, hedgerows, ditches, banks and woodland edges, the destruction of these habitats resulted in a major decline in foraging ground for the barn owl.

By the 1980s it was widely recognised that barn owls in Britain faced severe problems. Colin Shawyer developed a conservation plan based on the protection and enhancement of barn owl strongholds from which expansion of the existing population could be expected. The aim was to improve and create suitable habitat, protect and provide nesting sites within farm buildings and trees, and establish a network of habitat corridors nation-wide.

The plan was successfully implemented.

A total of 2750 boxes have been installed nationwide through collaborative ventures with the farming and forestry community.

The first box in the High Weald was installed on the Rother in the mid-90s and there are now boxes along the Rivers Medway, Brede, Cuckmere, much of the Rother and their main tributaries. This year new boxes will be erected along the upper reaches of the River Rother and its tributary, the Dudwell, and along a tributary of the Ouse, the River Uck.

The remarkable success of the project has been strengthened by the enthusiasm of local farmers who have created extensive areas of suitable habitat (through changes in farming practice, often supported by Environmental Stewardship grants) to help ensure the long-term conservation of the barn owl.

Hopefully our children's children will also have the opportunity to stand at the edge of a field and share the same experience Gilbert White did when, in 1773, he watched a barn owl "an hour before sunset sally forth in quest of prey, and hunt all round the hedges of meadows."



Colin Shawyer

facts

- The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation was confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October 1983.
- The total area of the High Weald AONB is **146,170** hectares (**1,461** square kilometres).
- This makes the High Weald AONB the largest in South East England and the fourth largest in England and Wales
- The AONB lies at the heart of the South East and extends across parts of four counties (Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent), **11** districts or boroughs, and **99** parishes.

figures

Extracted from the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 Updated 2009

Friends of the High Weald Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

In order to save paper and postage we would prefer to send you information by email.

To give us permission to email you, please tick here and give us your email address (for our use only)

Email: _____

Reduced-rate admission to a High Weald attraction

As a new member we can offer you a saving on visiting a High Weald attraction. Details will be sent to you once you have registered.

Your Commitment to Caring for the High Weald

In return for membership we would ask you to show your commitment to caring for the High Weald by signing up to the charter (see www.highweald.org). In addition to your general commitment, would you also – as your annual subscription – name a particular action you intend to take over the next year, e.g. create a meadow, take part in a volunteering scheme, or not use the car every other Sunday.

Please complete, sign and date the following declaration:

I would like to become a Friend of the High Weald. As a Friend I choose to have regard to the charter 'Caring for the High Weald' in my day-to-day actions, and for the year ending 31st March 2010 I pledge to

Signature _____ Date _____

Voluntary donation

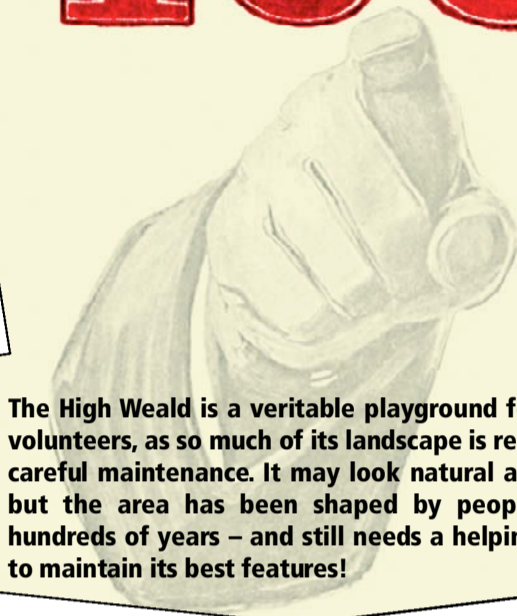
There is no membership fee, however if you would like to make a donation to support conservation work in the High Weald, please make your cheque payable to the 'High Weald Landscape Trust'. Many thanks.

I enclose a donation of £ _____
(We apologize for being unable to accept credit card donations.)

Please return this form to Friends of the High Weald, High Weald AONB Unit, Woodland Enterprise Centre, Hastings Road, Flimwell, East Sussex TN5 7PR.

Please tick if you do not wish to receive any information from third parties

The High Weald needs YOU



The High Weald is a veritable playground for keen volunteers, as so much of its landscape is reliant on careful maintenance. It may look natural and wild but the area has been shaped by people over hundreds of years – and still needs a helping hand to maintain its best features!

Around a third of the High Weald is covered in woodland. **Coppicing** is a traditional woodland management technique that creates a unique habitat that has vital biodiversity benefits. Many British flowering plants, mammals and insects thrive under this rotational system – many rarer species are only found in working coppice. **Creating access paths or 'rides' and making glades** also allow light into woodland to the benefit of butterflies and other insects.



Coppicing – where trees are cut down in a way that allows them to grow again

Kent High Weald Project



Dragonflies thrive in new ponds

Paul Marten, Sussex Wildlife Trust

The Weald has one of the highest concentrations of ponds in the South East. Many have developed as by-products of past human activity such as mining and marling whilst others were created for use as drinking ponds for farm animals. Larger hammer ponds were created to power the bellows and hammers of the iron industry, and mill ponds to power water mills. Although many ponds will need little or no management others may need to be **cleared of invasive plants** such as duckweed, blanket weed and the invasive plant and water fern. Also, as part of the Million Ponds Scheme, volunteers are always needed to help **create new ponds**. This may involve lots of **digging**, or the more entertaining job of **'puddling' (stamping down) clay** with your feet.



High quality stiles make it easier to cross the area's numerous woodland and field boundaries

None of us would be able to enjoy the High Weald to the same extent if people did not help to **maintain public rights of way**. Footpaths and tracks allow us access into the heart of the High Weald and are in constant need of maintenance in the form of **path clearance, the building of stiles, kissing gates and board walks**.



Hay meadows need to have their grass cut and removed if they are to continue to buzz with bees, grasshoppers and other creatures

Meadows also need maintaining – with the help of four-legged helpers such as sheep and cattle – and human volunteers. These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for wildlife conservation, supporting up to 100 kinds of grasses and wildflowers – which, in turn, support a great variety of insects and other creatures. If they are not managed and maintained, bramble and scrub will take over. **Clearing brambles and bracken – especially around field boundaries – strimming, and raking up cut grass** are all essential tasks.

Hedges and woodland strips, which act as essential corridors for wildlife, also respond well to coppicing or in some cases can be **cut and laid**. In other areas, where hedges have been pulled up because of modern farming methods, or damaged by stock, they may need to be **replanted**.

You don't have to be a skilled woodsman to help with coppicing. Volunteers are often used for **light coppicing of hazel and birch** using bow saws and 'loppers' like long-handled secateurs. Groups will sometime be accompanied by skilled chainsaw operators – but there is always a volunteer leader on hand to demonstrate the art of coppicing.



A hedge being cut and laid

Kent High Weald Project



Nightjars like heathlands with a good proportion of old mature heather, small gaps and a sparse scatter of trees as lookout or song-posts

Another important landscape feature is lowland heath. Weald heathlands are a unique habitat, occurring mainly on the sandstone ridges that characterize the High Weald AONB, yet the extensive tracts of heathland that once covered the area have gradually disappeared. Volunteers play a vital role in protecting these areas through **scrub clearance, the removal of birch saplings and cutting of heather**.



Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit with funding from members of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee: Natural England; West Sussex County Council; East Sussex County Council; Kent County Council; Surrey County Council; Horsham District Council; Tandridge District Council; Mid Sussex District Council; Wealden District Council; Sevenoaks District Council; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council; Rother District Council; Ashford Borough Council; Crawley Borough Council; Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council; Hastings Borough Council.

Photography: High Weald AONB Unit staff past and present. Others as indicated. Illustrations pages 2 and 3 Kate Chitham. Designed and produced by Angel Design Partnership Ltd – www.angeldesign.org.uk
Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this publication is accurate. However, the publishers can accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

The Ordnance Survey mapping and map data included within this publication is provided by Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey County Councils under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil their public function to conserve and promote the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey Copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping for their own use.