



High Weald Hero Activity Card

Saxons



Equipment: Blindfolds, magnifying glasses (optional)

Location: On your Welly Walk or wooded area

Audience: KS1 & KS2

Curriculum Links: History, science and literacy

High Weald Teaching Point

During Saxon times, farmers (drovers) came to the High Weald in the autumn. They travelled from the North and South Downs with their herds of pigs because the High Weald was thickly wooded compared to the Downs. The nuts from oaks and beeches provided lots of easy food for the pigs to forage. The pigs were fattened up on the acorns and beech mast during autumn and were then driven back to the Downs in the winter to be eaten. The Weald is still one of the most wooded areas in England. Wild boar still roam the Weald after escaping from farms.



Activities:

Here are some woodland activities to help you identify trees including the trees those Saxon pigs would have loved. Try and do it where there are native trees. These are trees that have grown in England for hundreds of years such as oak, beech, ash, hazel and hornbeam.

Feel a tree

Ask each child to find a partner. One of the pair is blindfolded. The partner leads the blindfolded child to a tree (ensure that this is done carefully) where they must feel the bark (is it rough or smooth etc), hug the tree to find out how big the trunk is, reach up and down to feel for any markings. Ask them to describe out loud what they are feeling to encourage lots of descriptive words. The blindfolded child is then led away. When they remove the blindfold they have to find their tree again by remembering how it felt. Show them the difference between an oak tree and a beech tree? They have very different bark. Ash trees were considered a lucky tree by the Saxons. The children could find one and touch it for luck.

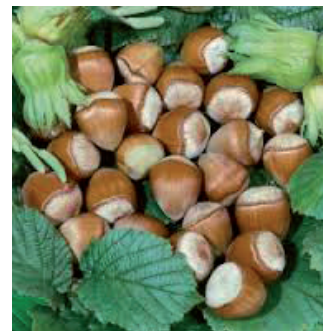


Tree detective

Put the children into small groups. Give them 5 leaves and 5 seed pods or nut casings from the trees in the wood. Get them to find the trees that they have come from. This is easiest in the Spring and Summer and hardest in the Winter. Ask which trees would Saxon pigs have liked?

Pigs love nuts but so do...

Ask the children to collect up some nuts from under the trees and look at any holes or bite marks on them. See if they can work out who has been eating them. They could use a magnifying glass for this. Can they find a favourite eating place where an animal has eaten a few nuts and torn up and discarded the casings. Get them to look on the tops of tree stumps or low branches. .





High Weald Hero Activity Pack

Saxons



Equipment: String

Location: On your Welly Walk, wooded area or school grounds

Audience: KS1 & KS2

Curriculum links: History and literacy

High Weald teaching point

The drovers walked the same routes each year, probably many of the same routes people had used since the Stone Age. All those feet and trotters wore away the Wealden clay to create the sunken routeways that exist today. Some of those historic routeways have become the roads that now cross the High Weald. Others are much as they were in Saxon times.



Activities:

Take the children down a High Weald sunken routeway. There might be a sunken routeway on your Welly Walk or contact us to suggest a nearby walk with one.

Make a Saxon charm

Ask the children to imagine that you are a Saxon walking your pigs along the drovers' routes. This could be done as a role play with costumes. They can imagine they are a long way from home, perhaps for the first time. There are wild animals such as bears and wolves around and there are no torches to light their way. It must have been quite scary and the Saxons were very superstitious. To make themselves feel brave they made charms to carry with them.

Get them to select a few natural materials and think about the plants or animals that they come from and the qualities that they have which might make them feel braver. For instance, an acorn cup comes from a mighty oak, putting that in their charm would make them feel stronger. A bird is quick and can escape easily. Putting a feather in their charm would make them feel they can escape danger. Bind the objects together with wool, raffia or string to create a charm to keep in their pocket or wear around their necks.

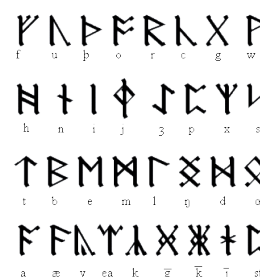
Saxon stories

The Saxons loved telling stories. As the drovers sat around their fires at night, they must have told each other stories to entertain themselves. As they walk get them to pick up an object from each part of the journey and tie it to a stick. When they get to the destination untie them and see if they can put them in order. Get them to tell the story of your journey as a Saxon drover through the objects. Remind them to throw in a few interesting incidents to liven it. For instance the holly leaf might remind them about the part on the journey when their pigs got stuck in the holly hedge and they got prickled all over trying to get them out.



Saxon runes

Runes were an Anglo-Saxon alphabet. Most of the letters made from straight lines which made it easy for people to spell things out in sticks or scrape onto stone. A single letter could also mean a whole word such as oak or yew tree. Runes were also written on to clay tablets. Ask them to create a rune by breaking up sticks or writing in the mud. What messages might a Saxon drover want to have left for someone to read? Give them the rune sheet and see if they can spell out their name.





High Weald Hero Activity Pack

Saxons



Equipment: High Weald map

Location: Classroom

Audience: KS2

Curriculum links: History, geography and literacy

High Weald teaching point

The Saxon drovers returned to the same places in the High Weald every year. These would be woodland clearings where they could set up camp for the autumn and let their pigs forage for food. They called these dens. Den is a Saxon word meaning pig pasture. After a time some of the drovers began to settle at the dens instead of returning back to the Downs. These then became farms or villages. There are still places in the High Weald which end in den, such as Tenterden, which began as a pig pasture.

Activity

Use the Ordnance Survey 50k map in your High Weald school mapset. It can be found under your school's name at www.highweald.org/learn-about/education/high-weald-heroes-partnership.html. Alternatively download or project the High Weald AONB map on our website www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/maps/1084-high-weald-aonb-boundary-map/file.html. How many places can you find that end in den? It looks as though many people settled in the High Weald during Saxon times as there are lots of other Saxon place names too. The names usually relate to the landscape but they might be linked to the name of a chief or tribe. The name may have changed over time, for example, it is thought that Tenterden was a den for the people of Thanet.

In how many place names on the High Weald can you find that include the Saxon words:

- Den – meaning pig pasture
- Hurst – meaning wooded hill, or woodland clearing
- Feld or field – meaning open space



Check out the Learning Zone at www.highweald.org



High Weald Hero Activity Pack

Saxon Alphabet



f u þ o r c g w

h n i j 3 p x s

t b e m l ŋ d œ

a æ y ea k $\bar{g}$ $\bar{k}$ $\bar{j}$ st