

Explore



the local countryside around your school - there's nowhere else quite like it.

Take care of



your local environment as you walk. Remember to follow the Countryside Code. For more information, visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

Enjoy!



yourself and have fun outdoors whatever the weather.

Find out about



the habitats you walk through - discover the story behind the landscape. To find out more go to the learning zone on www.highweald.org

Be proud of



your countryside. Tell other people about the special landscape around your school - even better, take them on your school's welly walk and show them!

www.highweald.org

Walk Facts



The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally important landscape, protected for its historic character of rolling hills draped with small irregular fields, abundant woods and hedges, scattered farmsteads and sunken lanes. It covers parts of 4 counties: East Sussex, West Sussex, Kent and Surrey and has an area of 570 square miles (1,457 square kilometres).

Distance: 2.5 miles/4.2 km.

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes (depending on numbers).

Description: A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through the town and woodland, over some hilly terrain. There are some kissing gates and foot-bridges and 3 road crossings. Some areas are very muddy.

RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

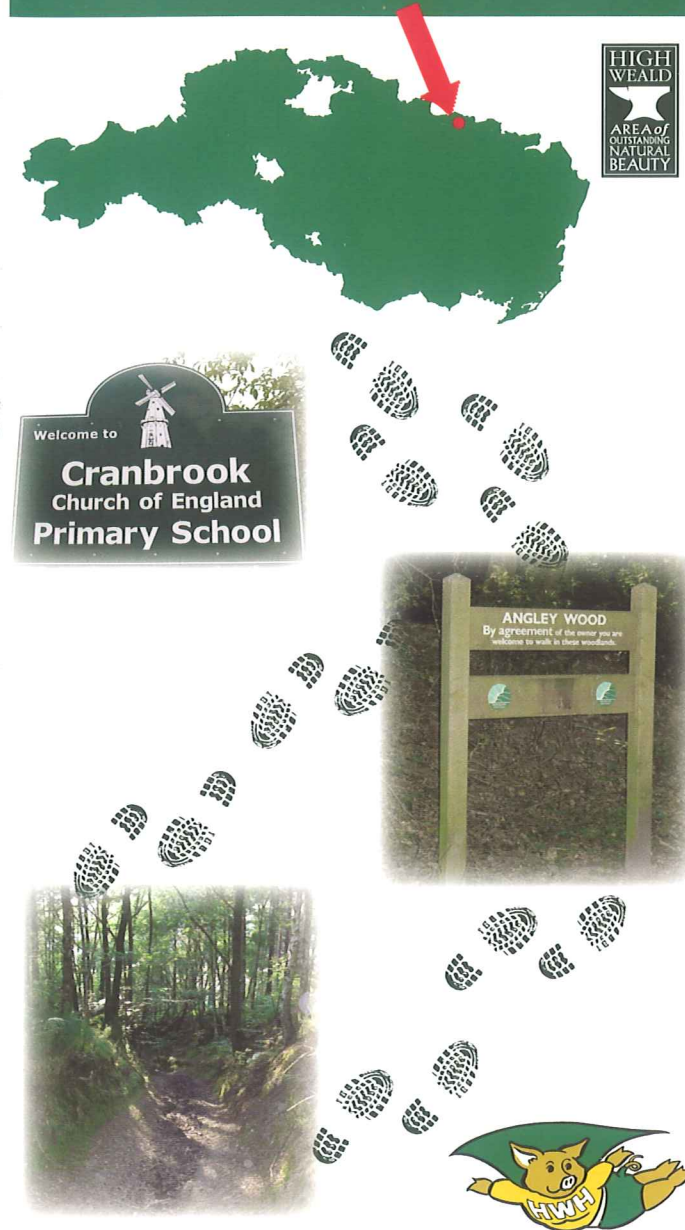
- Wear waterproof, sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads, bridges and stiles to cross.
- Plants such as nettles and brambles can sting and scratch and berries from plants can cause stomach upsets if eaten.
- There are no toilet facilities, so we recommend that toilet paper and hand wipes are taken as a precaution.
- Everyone must wash their hands before eating.
- A large group of people can be intimidating, especially to animals.
- Beware of forest operations in woodlands.

Remember to follow the Countryside Code

Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit, with support from:



Cranbrook Church of England Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - You can make a difference!

Ancient Routeways

As far back as the Neolithic period (c.4300 - 1400BC), or even earlier, farmers from the Downs and coastal plains would drive their pigs into the woods each year to fatten them on acorns and beech mast.



This happened during the late summer and early autumn and the farmers would have built temporary shelters in which to keep warm while watching their pigs.

Farmers from a particular village returned with their pigs to the same woodland place year after year. These woodland pig pastures were called *dens*.

To find out more about dens and droving visit www.highweald.org. Look out for the links to 'Edmond - an early Saxon drover'.

The Story of the High Weald's Fields

One of the distinctive landscape features of the High Weald is its pattern of small, irregular fields. After the Anglo-Saxon period, settlers began moving into the High Weald in increasing numbers. These early farmers began clearing the surrounding woods and scrub to make fields for crops and livestock.



These clearances were done in an unplanned way by the individual farmers. This is why the High Weald's fields are relatively small and irregular

in shape. The boundaries were simply formed by leaving strips or 'shaws' of the old woodland between the fields.

Can you count the number of edges in the fields you walk through? How many fields have strips of woodland along their edges?

Ancient Woodland

Trees and woodland cover over one-third of the High Weald. Seventy percent of it is classified as Ancient Woodland, which means it has existed continuously since at least 1600AD.

The woods of the High Weald were relatively slow to be cleared because they were a valuable resource: providing timber for building, fuel for heating and charcoal for iron smelting, as well as animal feed - acorns and beech mast for pigs. Even when agricultural clearance did begin in the High Weald, much woodland was retained and continued to provide valuable resources, particularly for the iron industry.

The ancient woodlands of the High Weald have been maintained for centuries by skilled workers using a rotational coppice system.



Coppicing is the name for when trees are cut down low to the ground in such a way that the stems grow back afterwards. The trees are cut once every 10-15 years. The harvested wood is used to make products such as fencing stakes, charcoal and hurdles.

Listen out for the laughing call of the Green Woodpecker. How many different bird songs can you hear?

When the trees are coppiced, the light can reach right down to the ground as the branches and leaves are no longer shading the floor. This means lots of wild plants can grow including bluebells, wood anemones and wild garlic. These plants can attract insects to feed on the nectar and birds and small mammals to eat the fruits and seeds. Often the rarer species are now only found in working coppice.

Buying local wood products helps to ensure that these woodlands are managed in a way that supports a wide variety of wildlife.

The Cranbrook Cloth Industry

Both the cloth and iron industry benefited from the High Weald's natural resources of wood and water and sometimes they found themselves in competition with one another. In the



17th century, the Cranbrook clothiers complained that a local iron master was using up the local wood supplies for fuel for his furnace.

The clothiers used the fast flowing water to power wooden hammers that smoothed the folded cloth, giving it a much sought after finish.

The town's most famous cloth was called Cranbrook Grey. During the 14th to 16th centuries this Wealden broadcloth brought wealth to Cranbrook. The church was extensively rebuilt at this time and also many of its fine buildings date from this period.

Building Materials

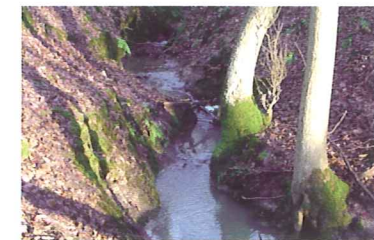
The traditional building materials and styles of the High Weald are an essential part of the landscape's distinctive character. The building materials have come, in fact, from that very landscape, so it is hardly surprising that they blend in so well. Links with the area's wooded past are evident in the number of timber-framed and weather-boarded buildings, whilst the widespread use of sandstone, bricks and tiles is testimony to the High Weald's underlying geology of sandstone and clay.



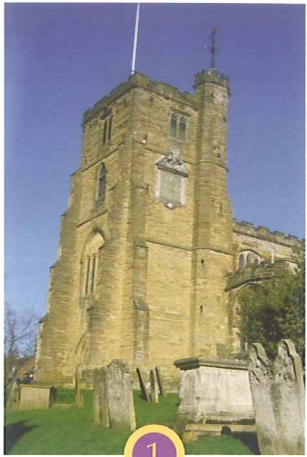
Which do you think is the most common building material in Cranbrook?

Gill Streams

Steep-sided, wooded gills are a special feature of the High Weald. Gills are formed where a stream has carved a deep channel for itself through the clay and sandstone of a hillside.



Visit www.highweald.org to download more High Weald Welly Walks.



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For guidance only, actual conditions may be different from that shown, depending on the weather and time of year.

Photo guide and route description

Go through the kissing gate between 2 houses directly ahead of you as you exit the school. **1** Go through the churchyard following the High Weald Landscape Trail (HWLT). Cross over Carriers Road, go up the High Street **2**. Go past the fire station, across Wheatfield Drive and take the next right signed HWLT. Cross the road into Angley Woods, a mixed woodland of birch, hazel, chestnut, beech and oak with some areas of pine plantation. Go past the woodland welcome sign **3**. Where the path divides, ignore the HWLT sign going left. Instead, follow the path straight on along the track. Ignore the minor paths to the left and right, continue to where the track forks at the pine trees, go to the right **4**. Beware of possible forest operations and look out for wood ants. Shortly, the path bends to the left and goes downhill. You can see the soil getting sandier and there are different plants including bracken, heather and rhododendron. At the junction continue straight, ahead of you the path goes slightly uphill and veers to the left and you can see a large stand of spaced out oak trees to the right of the path sloping uphill to the edge of the woodland **5**. Continue on this path past some pools and muddy patches. At the waymarker turn left **6**. Continue down the sunken path **7** heading downhill and around to the right as shown by the waymarker.

You will soon reach some old gravel pits and a large clearing with 4 mature beech trees, a good space for an activity . Continue straight through the metal barrier, over the footbridge, **8** beware of the steep drop to the right. At the waymarker turn right, to the left through the trees you can see a Tudor farmhouse. Cross over a footbridge and up the sunken path, **9** beware this path can be very muddy. Continue straight past more rhododendrons and an area of rotation chestnut coppice **10**. Further on to the left there is a chestnut pale fence made from coppiced timber **11**. Continue through the woods and past some horse fields and through a wrought iron kissing gate bearing right onto a driveway **12**. At the end of the drive, cross over the road and go down a footpath opposite. Go through a kissing gate into a large meadow, continue straight across and through a kissing gate onto a path with a chestnut fence to the right and sports fields to the left. Follow this path back to the primary school.

Look out for...



ancient woodlands



sunken routeways



local building materials

