

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of England's Finest Landscapes, 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 1,457 square kilometres (570 square miles).

High Weald Heroes is a primary school programme that encourages children to do the following actions.

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.com.

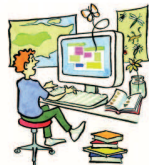


Enjoy! yourself and have fun outdoors whatever the weather.



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!



Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit with support from:



Walk Facts

Distance: 6 km/3.7 miles



Time: 1h30 (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops)

Description: A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through woods and farmland, with one main road to be aware of. Terrain is gentle, although there are a couple of steeper sections. The iron industry was once prevalent in this area and there are several reminders of this en-route.



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Consider adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads and stiles to cross.
- Plants such as nettles and brambles can sting and scratch; 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 clean their hands before eating.
- Remember, a large group of people can be intimidating, especially to animals.
- *Footpaths and rights of way are subject to change. The walk should always be checked for new risks before venturing out, especially when planning to take groups of children.*

Remember to follow the Countryside Code

www.highweald.org

Crawley Down Village C of E School High Weald Welly Walk




Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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

Photo guide and route description

FP indicates where you will see a West Sussex County Council rights of way finger post

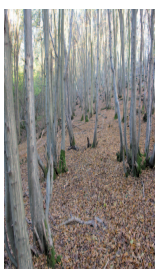
From the school's front gate turn left **1**. At the end of Hophurst Drive, cross the road by the war memorial and head down Sandy Lane. After approx 10 metres, turn right down Cuttinglye Lane **2**. At the end of the track, turn left towards the woods **FP**. Carry on for some distance, sticking to the tarmac road (do not veer off towards the trees!) Continue until you reach a large wooden gate, and at this point **FP**, bear left along the narrow track **3**. Go through the kissing gate.  You are now walking with woods on your left and open fields to your right. At the end of the track turn right, **FP** following sign to Furnace Wood. Continue forward and head downhill all the way to Furnace Pond **4**. Now a private fishing lake, this was once a hammer pond for the water powered forge. Cross the bridge and walk up the hill to the main road. Turn right along the road, which is lined either side with houses. After approximately 400 metres, look out for Jasmine Cottage on your right; just past this go through the metal farm gate **5** **FP** and follow the grassy track as it bears left. Go through another metal gate (silver) and head across the field. Walk towards black metal farm gate **6** and, once through this, bear slightly left **FP**. Continue on to cross a stile and meet the main road. Carefully cross this road and turn left - use grass verges as there are no pavements.

Continue along the main road, past the greenhouses of Felbridge nurseries (which are on your right). Keep going until you get to 'Minstrals' - a white house on the right hand side. Here, turn right down a narrow road ⑦ - the FP sign is nestled underneath a large conifer tree! Carry straight on to meet a wooded track. ⑧ FP Keep going, cross the stream and look to your right for a gate in the fence shortly afterwards. ⑨ Go through this gate and into the field, following the FP sign. Walk through the field uphill, keeping the fence on your left and the woods on your right. Go over the stile FP and follow footpath straight on. The footpath is fenced on either side of you. At the end of the path turn left as the FP directs, follow it to go over another stile ⑩ and meet a wider track. ✨ Turn right here and go straight on. To your left is a wildflower grassland - a rare habitat with a wide variety of plants and animals. Keep the meadow on your left and woodland on your right. Continue on, sticking to this main track. At a metal gate keep going, over the farm track ⑪ and through another metal gate FP. Continue to follow the track as it leads you back to the main road. At the main road, turn left and walk down Hophurst Lane which leads you back into Crawley Down Village. Again, take care to stay close to the road edge, walking on grass verges where possible. Once you have passed the sign to Crawley Down Village ⑫, look to turn left down Burleigh Way. Now take the first right down Hophurst Drive. Continue straight on until you are back at the school, which will be on your left!

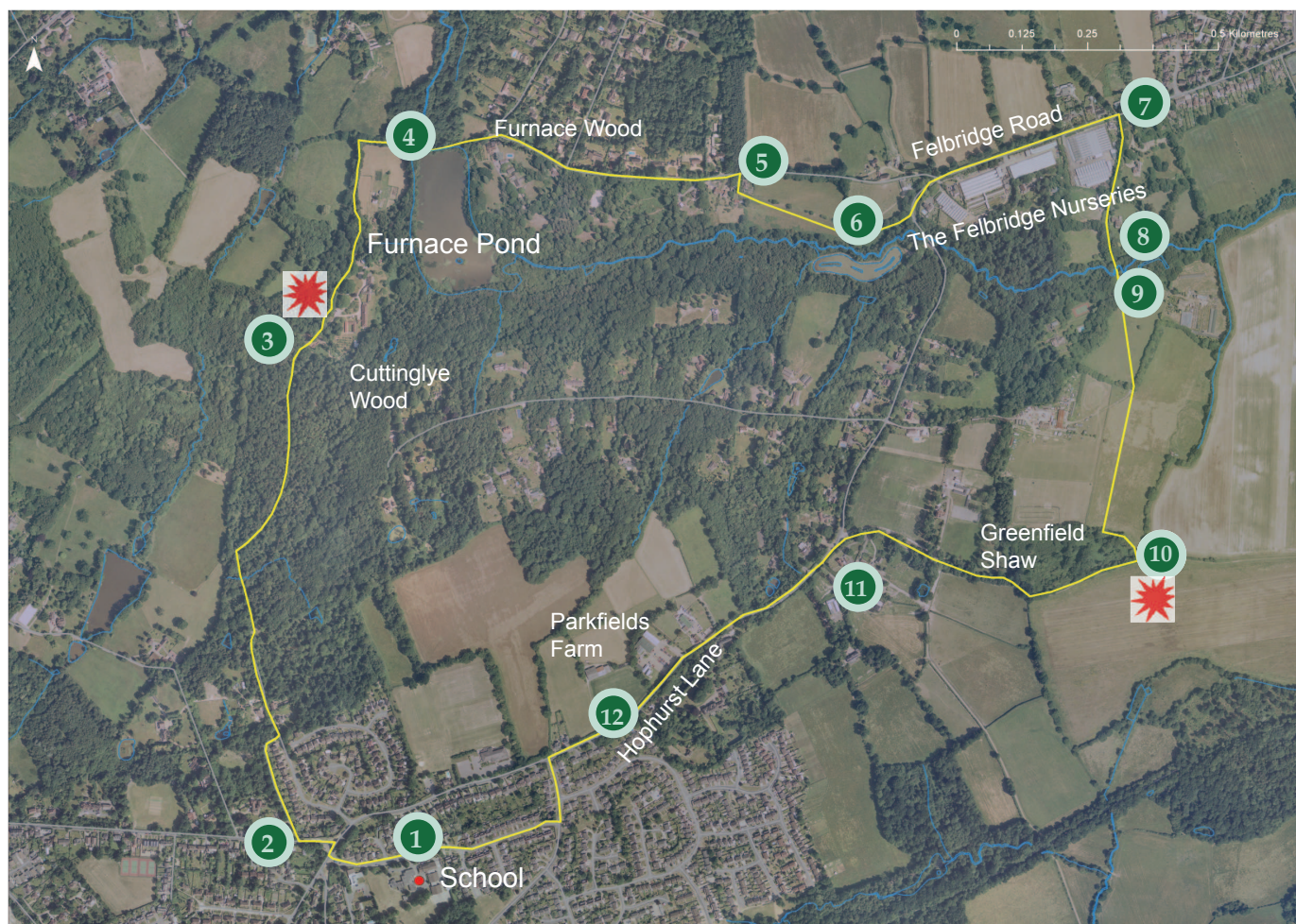
Look out for...



Wildflower grassland



Ancient woods



Key

 walk route

 road

 watercourse

① numbered views

✨ suggested activity point

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. ©Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. West Sussex County Council 100018485, 2010.

Scattered Farmsteads

The High Weald has many isolated farmsteads, hamlets and dwellings dotted across the countryside. This scattered settlement pattern means the High Weald is the most populated protected landscape in the UK.

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. The building materials have led to a particularly rich architectural heritage of distinctive farm buildings – for example hipped and half-hipped barns.



A Medieval Landscape

By the 14th century, the High Weald was settled and looked much the same as it does today. The landscape of the High Weald is essentially medieval: this can be said of few other places in the country.

With their heavy clay soils and steep slopes, many High Weald fields have never been ploughed up to grow crops and have traditionally been used for rearing cattle and sheep.

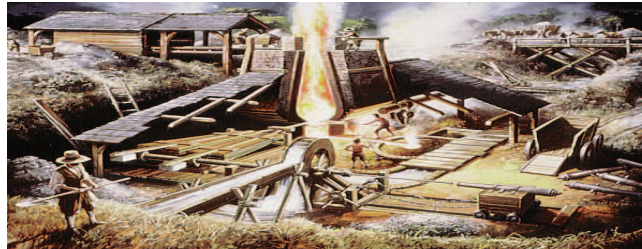
Compared to many areas of Britain, the High Weald still has a relatively large number of ancient, undisturbed, wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures. These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation.



The High Weald Iron Industry

For two periods - in the first two centuries of the Roman occupation, and during Tudor and early-Stuart times - the Weald was the main iron-producing region in Britain.

It is hard to picture the former iron industry in today's countryside of small fields, woodlands and steep, narrow, gill valleys, but in this landscape exist all the necessary raw materials that allowed iron to be smelted for over 2,000 years.



The Wealden geology of sands and clays yielded the iron ore, as well as the stone and brick to build the furnaces; the coppiced woodland provided charcoal for fuel; and the numerous small streams and valleys ensured water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces.

Look out for evidence of the iron industry on your walk - how many house names include furnace or forge?

Charcoal was traditionally produced by burning wood on a circular levelled hearth, or pit, in a cleared area of the woodland. The wood was assembled to form a domed kiln which was covered with turves to prevent air entering or smoke escaping. The men who made the charcoal were called colliers and during a charcoal burn they would live in the woods, in temporary shelters, to tend the kiln.

So, where are the remains of iron production? Building stone was too valuable in the Weald to be left unused, so the works were dismantled, and the woods grew back over the former sites. Only place names, the remains of charcoal hearths or pits in the woods, flattened circular areas with blackened soil beneath the leaf litter, the telltale waste, called slag from the smelting process, and some hammer and furnace ponds are left to remind us of this once great Wealden industry.



Created from text by Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group

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

Ancient Woodland

Trees and woodland cover over one third of the High Weald and are a key landscape feature.

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.

Today, 70% of the High Weald's woodland is classed as ancient - having existed continuously since at least 1600AD. They 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, hurdles and trugs. 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.

Woodlands have been managed in this way for hundreds of years and it is important for the plants and the wildlife that we continue to manage them in this way. Buying local wood products helps to ensure that these woodlands are managed in a way that supports a wide variety of wildlife.

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.

