

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://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:** 3.25 miles/5.2 km.

**Time:** 2 hours (depending on numbers).

**Description:** A route along mixed terrain through grassland, arable land and woodland. There are numerous stiles and bridges to cross, some road crossings and quiet lanes.

### RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

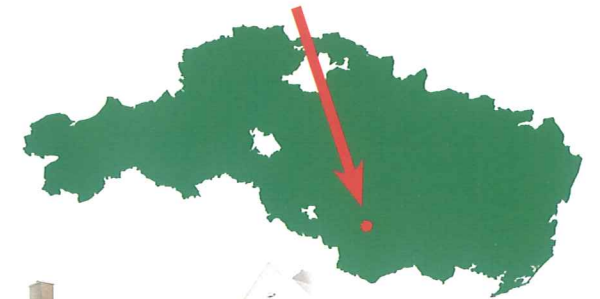
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads, bridges and stiles to cross.
- Plants 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.

**Remember to follow the Countryside Code**

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



# Dallington Church of England Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



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

## 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.



Valerie Alford, ESCC Landscape Group

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

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 wildlife conservation.



*How many different wildflowers and grasses can you see on your walk? Many species can be seen in St Gile's churchyard.*

## Coppiced Woodland

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. In fact a whole range of wildlife can use the coppiced woodland to find their food and make their homes.

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.

On your Welly Walk you will see coppiced hazel and sweet chestnut. At the edges of the path you can see some of the products that the coppiced timber is made into such as posts and rail and pale fencing. Buying local wood products helps to ensure that these woodlands are managed in a way that supports a wide variety of wildlife.

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

## 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.



*Can you spot any red water where it has been coloured by the iron ore?*

## The High Weald Iron Industry

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 existed 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 as fuel; and the numerous small streams and valleys ensured water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces. 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. There is evidence that iron has been smelted in Dallington parish since the Iron Age.

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 the telltale waste, called slag, from the smelting process, and some of the hammer and furnace ponds are left to remind us of a once-great Wealden industry.

Created from text by Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group

## 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. The nave and chancel of St Gile's churchyard was rebuilt in 1864 from sandstone quarried from the parish.



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.

*Look at a map to see how many place names you can find related to the local iron industry.*



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11




12

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

## Photo guide and route description

Turn left out the school and walk down the road. Turn left **1** by Tudor house just past the church. Follow the grass track and go through the gate straight ahead and follow the path around to the right across the field. At the way marker arrow **2** by the gateway follow along the field edge turning left (do not go through the gateway). Follow the path down the slope into the woody shaw and across the stream. Go through the gate and head straight across the field. Go through another gate and walk along field edge and through another gate into neighbouring field continue in the same direction on the other side of the hedge. Ignore the stile ahead that goes down to the road, turn around doubling back on yourself, follow the path diagonally corner to corner across the field **3**. Cross over the stile and head across the middle of the field towards the trees and the pond **4**. Continue towards the buildings along fence line. Take care as you unhook and pass through the electric fence. Exit the field through the gate into the stable yard and follow the driveway around to the right **5**. Press button to open gate and walk to the road. Cross over and turn left, walk along pavement and turn right onto Carricks Hill Lane **6**. Cross over the double stile on your right just past the two houses on the right **7**. Follow the hedge down hill and cross through wet flush.

Go under the power lines overhead and head towards the stile under the large oak tree **8**. Cross the stile and head towards the second telegraph pole in the field. Go under the power lines and continue along field edge to a large oak tree. Go through the gap in the hedge and follow to the left side of the hedge in front of you heading towards the woods **9**. Go through the gap into the woods **10** . At T-junction in woods, turn left. Continue on the woodland path, go through the gate, ignore the stile and continue on path to the left, the ground slopes down to the stream on your left. Follow the way marked path crossing over the drove road and down onto the concrete road. Continue left over bridge and follow the road round. When you reach the lane go straight over, follow the way marker and go through the kissing gate **11**. Go straight on through another kissing gate and head towards the next gate. Go through gate and head towards the woods and another gate. Go through it and walk along the edge of the woods. Go through the gate by the house and continue straight. Turn left at way marker and follow the path down between the trees **12**. Go through two gates and you will reach the road. Turn right and walk along verge until opposite the lane. Cross over the road in small groups taking care and follow the lane to the end. Turn left and walk back up road to the school.

## Look out for...



ancient woodland



small irregular fields



sunken lanes

