

High Weald Heroes

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 1,457 square kilometres (564 square miles).

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



Distance: 4.4 km / 2.73 miles

Time: 2 hours 30 minutes

Description: A circular walk through fields and woods. There are some stiles and one section of main road with a pavement and two short sections of quiet country lane. It has some short hill sections.



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.
- 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.

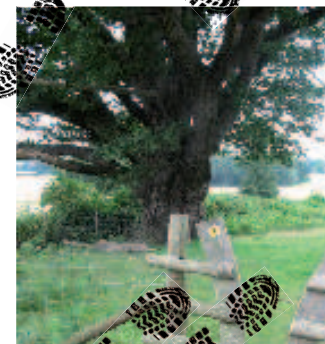
Remember to follow the Countryside Code

Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit with support from:



Hawkhurst C of E Primary School

High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



1



2



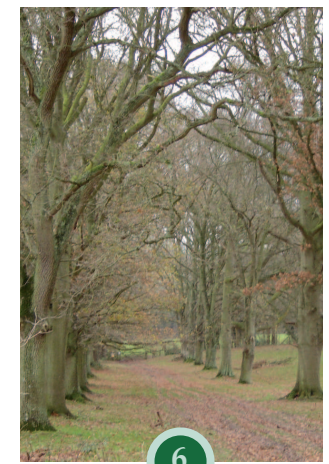
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11



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

From Fowlers Field CP turn left along Rye Road. Walk along the pavement until you reach Fowlers Paddock and turn left through a metal gate. (Activity point) Follow the footpath signs through the wood into the field **1** . Head straight towards gap keeping the woodland on your right to the next field. Walk across the field towards the farmhouse. Go through the gate onto Whites Lane. Turn right and walk past Duvals Farm. **2** Go over a stile into a field on the left. After a second stile the footpath turns right, past Wilson's Shaw with its lake **3**. Go over a stile and a gill, up the hill, and over another stile leading into Water Lane (Gun Green). Turn left passing an old thatched barn **4**. Ignore the entrance to St Ronans school. Once past it look out for a kissing gate on your right and follow the path. A second kissing gate leads into parkland with some specimen trees, Keep to the right and head for another kissing gate. Cross the drive at the entrance to Orchard House and continue on footpath between buildings **5** and through a kissing gate. Walk down the avenue of old trees **6**, through wooden kissing gate and continue with care along the edge of the plantation. Just past a large old oak, and when you reach a wooden field gate on your right, turn left following the waymarker. **7** Go through plantation with deep stream to your

right. Don't cross the bridge, but bear left round edge of wood. Cross a stile on your right and continue ahead through the gate in the direction of electricity cables this section can be very muddy ⑧ ✱. Walk through three fields, passing a pond on your left ⑨. Go into the next field and turn right into Water Lane at Forge House taking care when passing through two electric fences ⑩. Take the footpath on the left into a field with Furnace Mill Farm on your right ⑪. Continue towards large oaks with a ditch to your right. Cross the stile into next field ⑫. Aim for the hedge, following it to corner of field. Ignore the stile in corner, continue anticlockwise round the field, keeping White's Wood on your right. Head uphill along a line of trees to a metal gate. Pass through two fields. Go over the stile and turn left into White's Lane. Continue down the lane for a short distance and turn right through a gate. Head back across two fields towards Fowlers Paddock. Turn right onto Rye Road to return to Car Park.

Look out for...



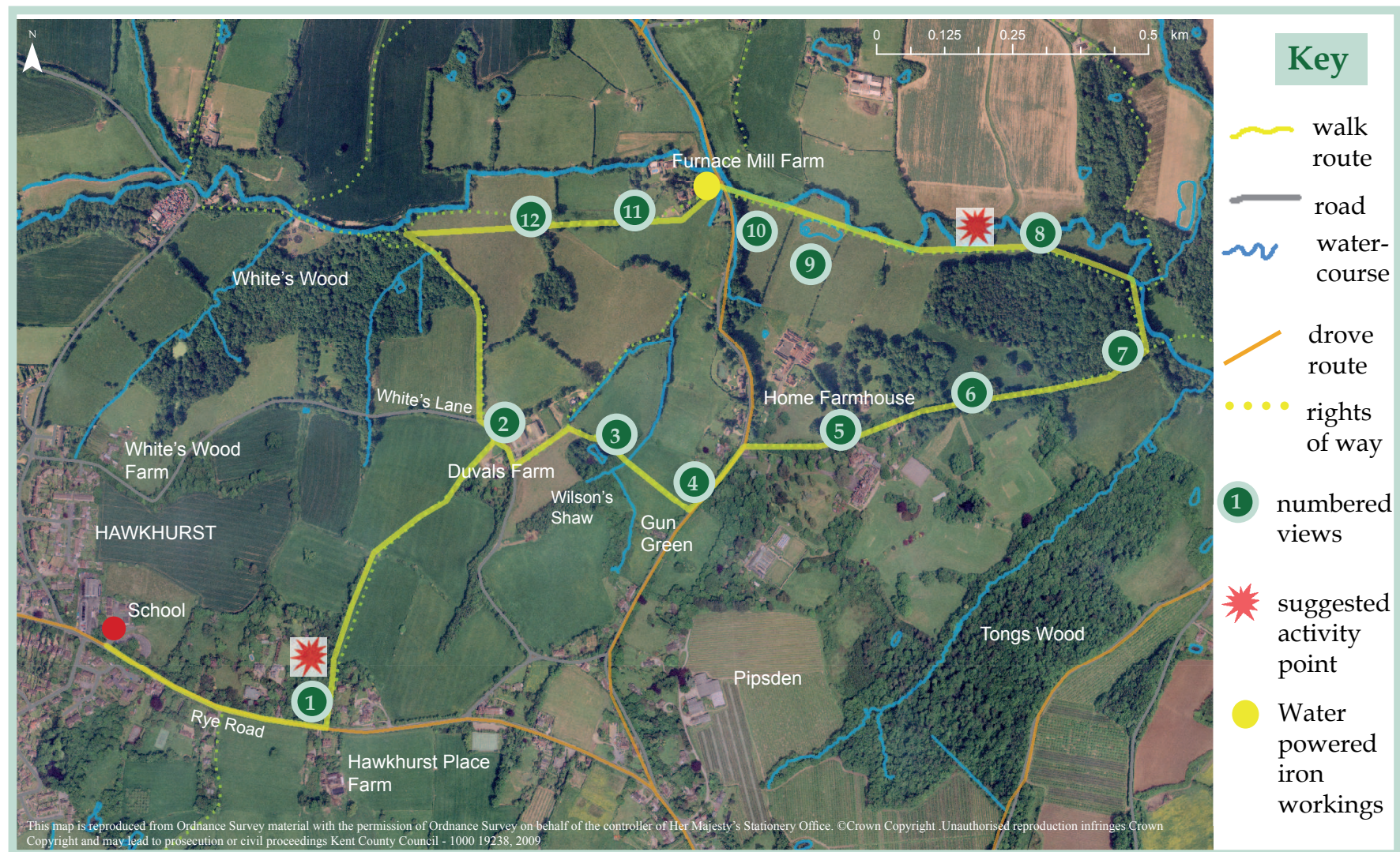
Oast houses



Weatherboard cottage



Open parkland features



Comparing Two Man-Made landscapes

The High Weald is a cultural landscape which means that it is the way it is because of the interaction of people and nature over time. The locally distinctive features of the High Weald were more or less established by the 14th century and it is now one of the best surviving examples of a medieval landscape in Northern Europe.

The grounds of St. Ronans School retains many features of the original parkland estate that are in contrast with the surrounding farmland and woodland. There are open expanses of grassland with specimen trees and an avenue of oak trees. The distinctive estate furniture of iron railings and kissing gates can still be seen.



Look out for the specimen trees set in open expanses of grassland which are typical features of parkland

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.



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.

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 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.

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

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.



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

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

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



William Penn

This walk passes the site of an old ironworks which was founded by William Penn. The names of local houses, Forge House and Furnace Mill Farm indicate the location. Forge House also has fine examples of ironwork in its construction.