

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: Short route - 1.5 miles/2.3 km.
Long route - 3.1 miles/5.0 km.

Time: 1-2 hours (depending on numbers).

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

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:



John Mayne 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.

Valerie Allford, ESCC Landscape Group



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?

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. Five acres of the Millennium Field have been sown as a wild flower meadow.



How many different wildflowers and grasses can you see on your walk?

What's in a Name?

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*.

The frequent passage of pigs being driven to and from the dens formed tracks known as droves, connecting the dens to their parent villages - often 20 miles away.

Look out for steep-sided sunken lanes on your walk. Follow their route on an Ordnance Survey map.



Over time the dens became more permanent places of settlement, and if you look at a detailed, modern map of the High Weald - particularly in Kent - you will see what remains of the dens: many villages, farms, fields and woodlands with names ending in '-den'.

Biddenden, recorded in 993 as Bydyndene, is believed to have been the den used by the family of Bidda, a Jutish Man, who probably lived near Wye.

To find out more about dens and droving visit www.highweald.org. Look out for the links to 'Edmond - an early Saxon drover' and other film clips which tell this landscape story.

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.



The Cloth and Iron 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 were worried that there would not be enough left, to heat the vats used for dyeing their cloth.

The numerous small streams and valleys ensured water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces of the iron industry. The clothiers also used the fast flowing water to power wooden hammers that smoothed the folded cloth, giving it a much sought after finish. During the 14th to 16th centuries this Wealden broadcloth brought wealth to Biddenden and the surrounding area. Many of Biddenden's fine buildings date from this period.





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

Photo guide and route description Exit the school and cross over the road turn left, to the church **1**. Follow the path to the right of the church. Take the right turn out of the churchyard. Cross over the road and go down Church View. Follow the path straight on past boulder signs and arrows **2**. Continue straight on along un-surfaced path through young woodland. Cross over a stile and go straight on through fields and over bridge. Cross another stile and go through the field with oak tree boundary and a pond. Cross a stile and continue straight on **3**, cross over a stream, follow the path to a pond. Bear right at the pond and head towards marker on the edge of the wood **4**. Do not cross the bridge at **5** turn left and walk along field edge. Go to the right of the pond and go straight on through the gap into the next field. Continue straight and cross stile with vineyard to your right **6**. Continue straight on. Cross bridge and stile, about halfway across the field turn left **7** and cross bridge over Claybridge stream. Head diagonally across field, keep to the left of the scrub and pond in the middle; head towards the church. When you reach the gates for the short route go left **8**, for the longer route go right **9**. Short Route: go through visible kissing gate and along edge of new houses (not on map) go through kissing gate and past the playground. Cross over road and head towards the trees. Turn left at path and cross over the stream. Go straight over road along path into churchyard.

Long Route: walk along the edge of the field, go through kissing gate, bear left across the field towards the scrub and post 10. Continue straight on to next post at edge. Turn left and follow field edge for a short way then head towards kissing gate. Go through and continue straight past pond on your right and sunken lane on the left. Go through kissing gate and along path to the road. Cross over road, walk down Fosten Lane. After Worsenden Farm turn left over stile and head straight across the field 11. Cross over stile and go right along field edge 12. Continuing straight, cross two more stiles and then bear left across field towards the church. Cross the stile by the road and then turn right through kissing gate into Millennium Field, follow the left edge of the Field. Exit the Field through kissing gate by the Recreation Ground car park. Take path on the left back to the school or public route left at road into Biddenden High Street.

Look out for...



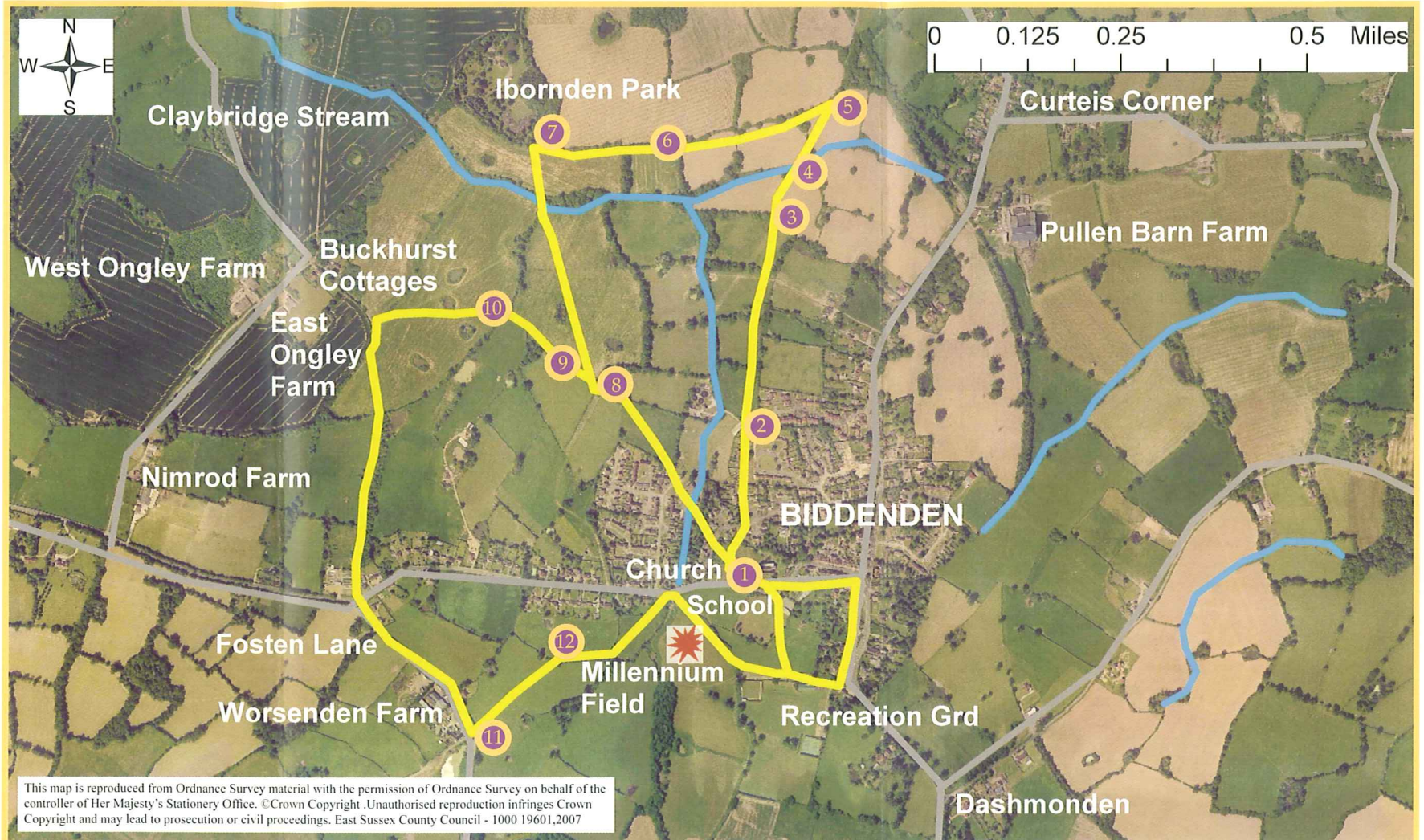
small irregular fields



sunken lanes



local building materials



Key

 walk route
  road
  watercourse
  1 numbered views
  suggested activity point