

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



Education Resource

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: Starting from ① 2.5 miles/4.02 km.
Starting from Netherfield CEP School 4.7 miles/7.60 km.

Time: Starting from ① 2 hours approximately
Starting from Netherfield CEP School 3 hours approximately.

Description: A walk over mixed ground through fields and woods, over hilly terrain. There are several stiles to cross and some short road sections. Some areas are very muddy.

RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

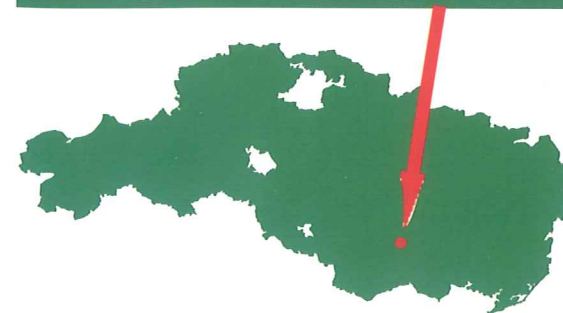
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads, bridges and stiles to cross.
- Plants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

Remember to follow the Countryside Code

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



Netherfield 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.

Valerie Alford, ESCC Landscape Group



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?

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?

Sandrock Outcrops

Sandrock outcrops are a distinctive local feature found scattered over the High Weald. The rocks are important geological features and home for some nationally rare



ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. These have survived so well in the High Weald because a number of factors, including the relatively high rainfall and extensive woodland canopy, have prevented the sandstone from drying out.

An Endangered Habitat

Sandstone is a very soft rock that can be worn away easily by people and the weather. Some people have left their mark by carving graffiti into the rocks. This rubs off the hardened skin that protects the rocks and speeds up how fast they wear away. It also rubs off the minerals that the plants need to grow. Rock climbers have to be careful and follow a special code to protect the rocks.

Rhododendron is another major threat to these fragile habitats as it kills surrounding plants by exuding a natural herbicide from its roots.

Sandrock was valued as a building stone and the remains of many small local quarries can be still seen today. Many of the most well known grand houses and churches are built of Wealden Sandstone.

Can you see the remains of an old stone quarry on your walk?

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.



Look at an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map to find out the names of the gills near your school.

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 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 the charcoal 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.

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.

On this walk you will go past the remains of two important iron works. Ashburnham Furnace was the last working furnace in the Weald, closing finally in 1813. You can still see the remains of stone and brick masonry and the huge pond bays. Panningridge Furnace dates from around 1542 and produced casts of iron, called sows because of their "hog-backed appearance" in cross section, which teams of oxen would have hauled up "Sow Lane" to the Robertsbridge Abbey Furnace.



Ashburnham Furnace

Look out for pieces of slag which were used to surface the old Sow Lane.



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

Photo guide and route description

To reach the start of the walk turn off the B2098 down Penhurst Lane, just past Little Sprays Farm there is some woodland on your right. Just at the end of this you can park on the grass verge opposite **1** taking care not to block the field gate. You can also walk from Netherfield CEP School, just follow the route marked on the map which will bring you to Penhurst Lane. To start the walk cross the road and head through the field gate **1**. Continue straight along the field edge with the woody shaw on your right. Carry on around the field edge, past the end of the woodland, until you reach the corner, turn right here and go through the gap in the trees. Turn left and head around the next field, keeping the hedge on your left until you reach a gateway into the woods **2**. Go into the woods and go through the gate at the end where you will see a sunken path ahead, **3** part of the old Sow Lane. Keep following the path down the hill **4** until you reach a gate at the bottom, walk past buildings on your right and continue along the path until you get to a wooden bridge. Cross the bridge **5** and walk on until you reach a T-junction where you turn right **6**. Follow the track uphill, past woodlands and ponds until you reach another T-junction, where you turn right at the entrance to the Beech Estate **7**. Walk down the concrete driveway, crossing a bridge with iron railings and follow the driveway up the hill until you reach a field gate on your left **8**.

Walk through the gate and follow the path until you reach a pond in front of you, turn left and take the right gate leading to Bunce's Barn **9**. Walk past the Barn on your left and cross over the stile. Turn right and head up the hill, keeping the hedge on your right **10**. At the top, turn left, keep the woods on your right and continue walking along the field edge until you reach a stile on your right, heading into the woods **11**. Cross the stile, follow the path uphill through the woods, emerging into a wide grassy track. At the end of the grass track cross over the stile **12** and turn right onto the road. Continue along the road for a short distance to either turn left at the stile to follow the footpath back to Netherfield or rejoin your vehicle at **1**.

Look out for...



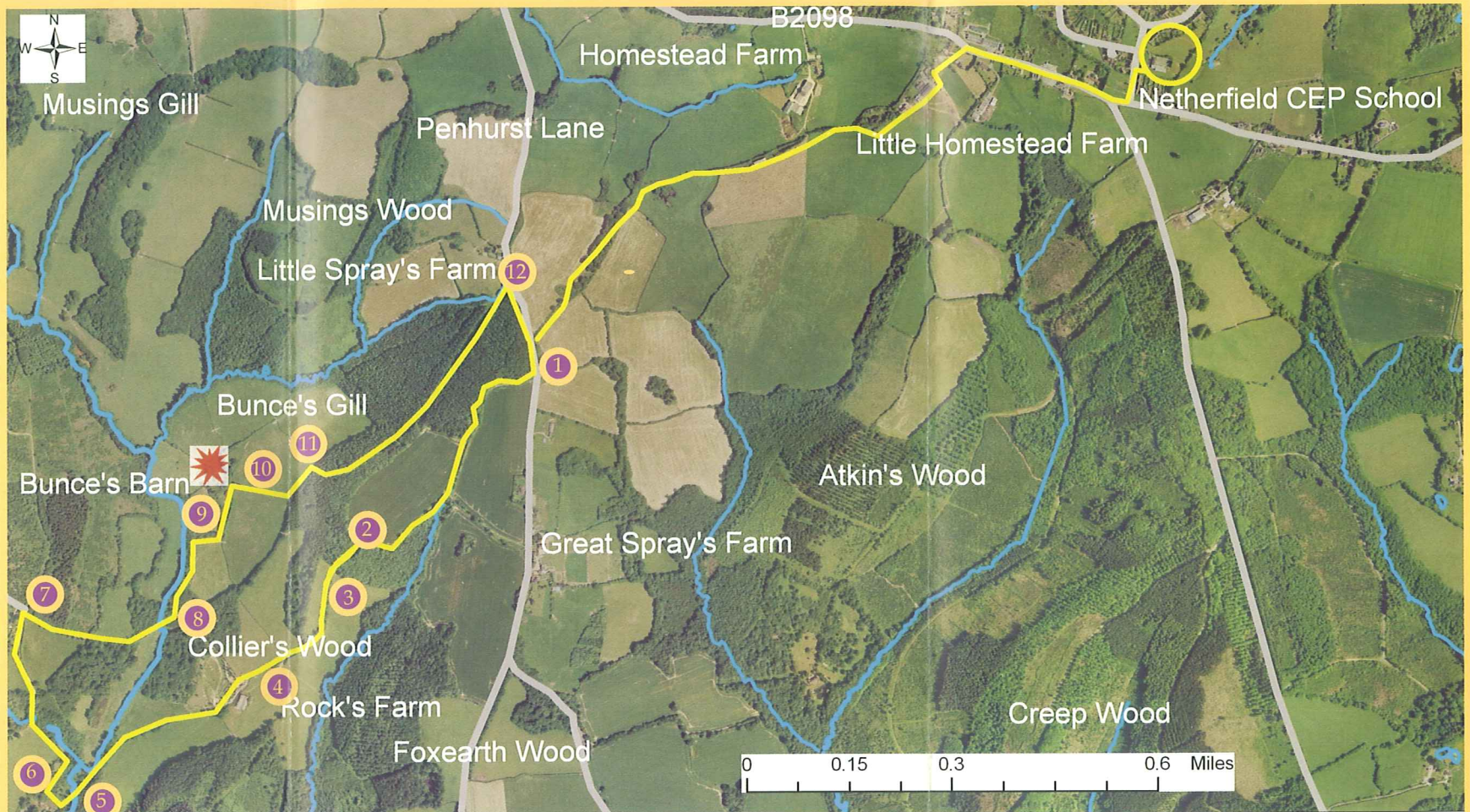
irregular fields



traditional buildings



plantation on ancient woodlands



Key

walk route

road

watercourse

numbered views

suggested activity point

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