

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.naturalengland.org.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!



Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit with support from:



Walk Facts



Distance: 1.5 miles/2.4 km.

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

Description: A short circular walk across fields and through part of Ifield Conservation Area. Be aware that there are some busier roads to cross.



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground and fallen trees, especially near water and in wet weather.
- Long trousers are advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Consider adequate adult to child supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads 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 that 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

Our Lady Queen of Heaven RC Primary School High Weald Welly Walk




Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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

Photo guide and route description

From the school gate turn left. Follow the pavement, crossing over Fitchet Close, until you reach Rushetts Road. Turn left and carry on until you reach the main road – Ifield Avenue. Cross over and turn right **1**, walking for a short distance to reach a public bridleway on your left **2**. Turn down here and walk all the way to the end of this road (Langley Lane). Take care as there are no pavements but occasional cars. At the end of Langley Lane turn right and then cross the main road. Look for Mill Lane on your left and walk down here. At the end of Mill Lane follow the public footpath on your right **3** that leads you out onto Ifield Green .

Bear diagonally left across the Green, heading towards the trees **4** and walking between the two football goals (stick closer to the goalpost on your left). You will reach a kissing gate **5** and a gap in the fence at the edge of Rectory Lane. Go through here and turn right. Look for the public footpath opposite you **6** and head down here, along the side of The Coach House. Stick to this footpath as it goes through a kissing gate and carries straight on, eventually reaching a bridge.

Do not cross the bridge but go through another kissing gate and turn left **7**, following the public footpath across the open field. Head straight towards the church **8**.

After approximately 100 metres, the path splits but bear left to reach a kissing gate **9**. Go through here and cross over the pond. Go straight over the track and into the churchyard **10**. Turn left and walk along the path towards the lychgate **11**. *You may wish to bear right and follow the path around St Margaret's Church - the oldest part of this building dates from the 13th Century!*

Go through the lychgate and walk along the street, towards the Plough Inn. Bear right to reach the end of Ifield Street. Now turn left and walk all the way along Rusper Road, passing the playground on your left. At the end of Rusper Road turn left, carefully cross over and you will soon be at the end of Langley Lane once more **12**. Turn right here and retrace your steps back to School (*Turn right at the end of Langley Lane, cross the road and turn left down Rushetts Road. Turn right down Hare Lane and the School will be on your right*).

Look out for...



Local Building Materials



Ponds



Key

 OLQOH Primary School

 WALK ROUTE

 numbered views

 suggested activity point

 wildflower grassland

 road

 take care, busy road

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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 woodlands are classed as ancient - having existed continuously since at least 1600AD. They have been maintained for centuries by skilled workers using a rotational coppicing system.



Coppicing is 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. Buying local wood products helps to ensure the continuation of traditional management.

Watch the 'Jacob' video at www.highweald.org to learn more about coppicing.

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 attract insects to feed on the nectar, and birds and small mammals eat the fruits and seeds.

Often, rarer species are now only found in working coppice.



High Weald Ponds

The Weald has one of the highest concentration of ponds in South East England.

As you walk over the pond on this Welly Walk, think about why it might have been created. Many ponds have developed because of human activity e.g. quarrying, while others were created as drinking ponds for farm animals.



In the High Weald, some large 'hammer ponds' can also be found. These were created to power the bellows and hammers of the iron industry.

Think about the different habitats that you walk through on this Welly Walk - can you spot any creatures that live in the ponds, trees or fields?

Local 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.

You can see examples of some traditional-style buildings just after the church at point 11.



What local building materials can you spot on the houses that you pass?

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, wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures.

These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation and you can enjoy walking through one on this Welly Walk.

*Did you know...?
Along with Worth, Ifield is the only existing part of Crawley to have been mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086.*

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.



Valerie Alford, ESCC Landscape Group

This is why the High Weald's fields are relatively small and irregular in shape.