

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: 4.6 km / 2.5 miles

Time: 2 hours

Description: A circular walk through farmland (arable and orchards, some neglected) mixed deciduous woodland, conifer plantation and urban areas. Soft terrain, can be very muddy in parts, some inclines.



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:



Pembury Primary school

High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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2



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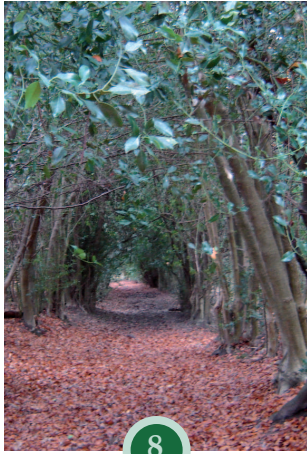
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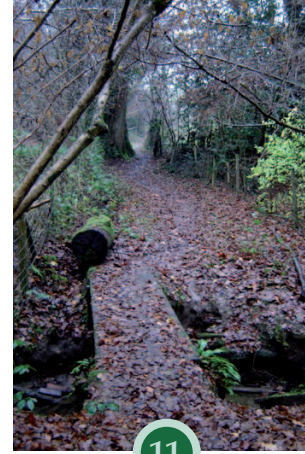
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10



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

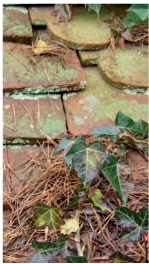
With your back to the main gates of Pembury School turn left down Maidstone Road. Take the next right into Stone Court Lane. Follow the path behind the houses until Stone Court Farm. Turn right at the house and follow the path past orchards on your left. Stop at the small brick building. Look for the small derelict brick hut and notice the different clay peg tiles on the roof. Go left along bridleway through more orchards ①. Notice the row of trees between orchards on the left. Why are they there? Go past the iron hut and turn left past the telegraph pole ②. Follow the edge of the field towards Pippins Farm ③. Pippins Farm has three beautiful oasts ④. Turn right at the oasts behind you. Veer left of hedge with a sign to the fishing lake. There is a ditch at the bottom of the hedge. ✳ How much water is in it? What do you think might live there? Climb over the stile and go down the old farm track. Go past the lake, over another stile into the wood. Cross straight over another footpath. Go down the hill through the woods to a bridge ⑤. Notice how some of the trees grow very close to the water. Cross the stream at the bridge and up the hill ahead, past the fallen tree with its very shallow roots. At the top of the hill are two old beech trees. Why are they such a strange shape? Turn right here ⑥ ✳. Where the wood finishes, fork right, go over a stile

and across a field. There is another oast house on the left. At the corner of the field, go over the stile **7**. Walk along the edge of the field. Look out for another lake down in the woods on the right. Walk through the gap in the fence and ahead into ancient woodland. Go left at the junction of paths. Eventually the route curves right through an arch of trees **8**. When you come to the point when the paths cross, turn right and go downhill **9**. Go past the water pumping station and follow the High Weald Walk footpath, passing through a coppiced chestnut wood and along sunken paths with exposed sandstone **10**. Carry straight on past the gated entrance to Snipe Wood Farm. What is a Snipe? Go downhill along more sunken paths. Be careful crossing the bridge **11** and watch out for the ditch on the left of the path. You will soon be walking along the backs of gardens. Look for the woven fence **12**. What is it made of? When the path meets Beagleswood Road, turn right then left. Take a left path towards garages and right onto a narrow path that leads to Romford Road. Turn right to return to the school.

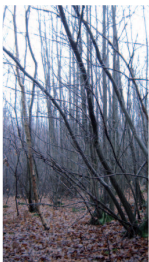
Look out for...



Farmsteads



Local building materials



coppiced woodlands



Key

- walk route
- road
- watercourse
- numbered views
- suggested activity point
- drove route
- rights of way

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.

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.

Listen out for the laughing call of the Green Woodpecker - how many different bird songs can you hear?

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.

Hop Farming

Early in the 15th century people started to use hops in ale to add flavour and as a preservative.

Initially the hops came from Flanders. However, when a tax was introduced on imported goods, home-grown hops increased. They became a distinctive feature of the eastern end of the High Weald.

Hop plants can grow up to 6 metres so were supported by groups of 3 or 4 chestnut poles. Chestnut poles were favoured because the fibrous wood was strong and more resistant to rot, ideal for slim poles.



Higher beer sales were good news for the coppice workers who produced the poles. To meet the demand for poles more chestnut coppice was planted across the area. In later years, bines with steel wires supported the hops and fewer, taller, but stronger, poles were used.

The hop industry provided a lot of useful employment for poorer families, including children as young as five. In the summer, workers from London's East End fought their way onto crowded trains heading for the hop fields.

After the harvest, the hops were dried in oast houses to prevent them rotting. Fires were lit at the bottom of the oast and hot air rose up through the wooden floor where the hops were spread out. The steam escaped through the pointed cowl in the roof. The work was done by skilled men who lived in the oast till the work was finished.

Oasts were originally square but after 1840 were built round because the circulation of hot air was better.

Many oasts remain today as interesting houses. Hops can be seen in hedgerows and are often depicted in church carvings.

The hop has separate male and female plants. The larger female flowers are the source of the aromatic oil which was used as a pain killer and appetite stimulant, long before it was added to beer.

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

The Garden of England

Kent is famous for its orchards full of fruit. In ancient times, crab apples, sloes and gean (wild cherry), were the only types of fruit available. In the 16th century apples, pears and plums were increasingly planted in the High Weald. In the 19th century Victorians, who were very enthusiastic about growing fruit, developed over 1,500 different apple varieties. The apples were used for cooking, eating and making cider. In the High Weald orchards were particularly plentiful in a belt around Matfield and Brenchley. They were called 'gardens' to avoid the tax on farmland.

The fruit trees were tall and widely spaced, with sheep grazing the grass underneath. The trees supported a lot of wildlife such as mosses, lichens, insects and birds.



We have lost most of the traditional orchards from the High Weald. However, the tall hedges that were planted as windbreaks around the orchards, often remain.

Modern orchards have much smaller, or 'dwarf' trees, that are grown closer together to produce more fruit per acre or hectare. The grassy strips between the trees are mown with a tractor. Wooden ladders are no longer needed. Apple pickers use padded buckets to pick the fruit. Fruit is stored in large boxes called bulk bins.

Apples continue to provide food for wildlife such as field mice, hedgehogs, Small Tortoiseshell butterflies, redwings and fieldfares.

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.

