

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: 2.9 miles/4.8 km.

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes (depending on numbers).

Description: An easy walk on surfaced and unsurfaced paths through the Penshurst Estate, passing through both grassland and woodland habitats. It includes a number of squeeze gates and there is one hill to ascend.

RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

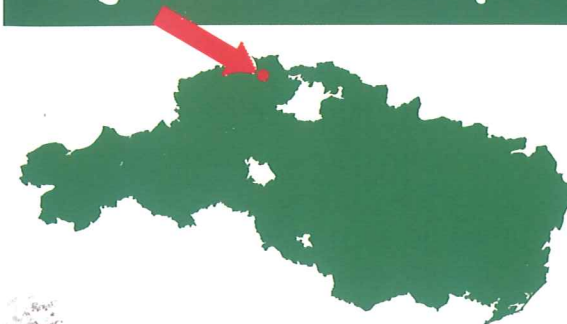
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads and stiles to cross.
- Plants such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



Penshurst Church of England Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - You can make a difference!

Comparing Two Man-Made Landscapes

The High Weald is a historic landscape which means that it is the way it is today 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.



Penshurst Estate, like many of the other great estates in the High Weald, created landscape features such as fishing ponds and deer parks, both of which can be seen on this walk. The Penshurst Park deer park dates from at least the 12th century, when it would have covered approximately 600 acres of mostly open countryside.

The Penshurst Estate has been owned by the Sidney family since 1552. The enclosed, planted parkland you see today, dates from the 18th century. Seemingly natural looking, this historic parkland has a more genteel appearance than the surrounding High Weald landscape, views of which can be seen on the walk.



Look out for the distinctive estate furniture such as gates and avenues of trees- typical features of parkland.

Ancient Routeways

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. The main road through Penshurst began its life as an early drove road and the school itself sits on a junction of two drove roads.

To find out more about dens and droving visit www.highweald.org. Look out for the links to 'Edmond - an early Saxon drover'.

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. Penshurst Place itself is built from local sandstone. 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.



An ornamental "S" on a building shows that it has past or present ownership by the Sidney Family of the Penshurst Estate.

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

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.



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

Photo guide and route description

Walk into the village to the main entrance for Penshurst Place and follow the Eden Valley Walk footpath along the drive. Beware of moving vehicles.

Continuing straight on, the drive goes around to the left and starts to go up hill, before the hill turn left and go through the squeeze gate into a field and head up the hill **1**. Go through another squeeze gate and continue up the hill through the grass field. At the top of the field there are good views of Penshurst Place, the parkland estate and the surrounding High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty **2** . At the top edge of this field do not go through the squeeze gate but instead turn left along the edge of the field and between an avenue of trees. Go through the next gate and continue straight on along the track and through a small wood and a field and to the plantation woodland. At the grassy crossroads turn left **3** walking through a wide glade with grasses and flowers at the edges, making a good place to hunt for mini-beasts and compare wildflowers . Follow this glade and go left down the hill **4** passing through a squeeze gate next to a mature oak tree **5**. Follow this path around to the right past an old hollow oak and through a gateway into open parkland.

You will pass a lake on the left and go through another squeeze gate towards Penshurst Place, 6 look out for the red brick war bunker on your right 7 . Head to the right of Penshurst Place past the cricket pitch and through two kissing gates either side of the drive to the house 8 . The views of Penshurst Place are good from this angle and you can clearly see the sandstone used in the building 9 . Continue on the path towards the church and through a squeeze gate into the churchyard 10 . The St John the Baptist Church is also made from local sandstone 11 . Continue through the churchyard and under the archway into Leicester Square, these buildings also feature many local building materials and traditional styles 12 . Go down the steps onto the road and turn right heading back to the primary school.

Look out for...



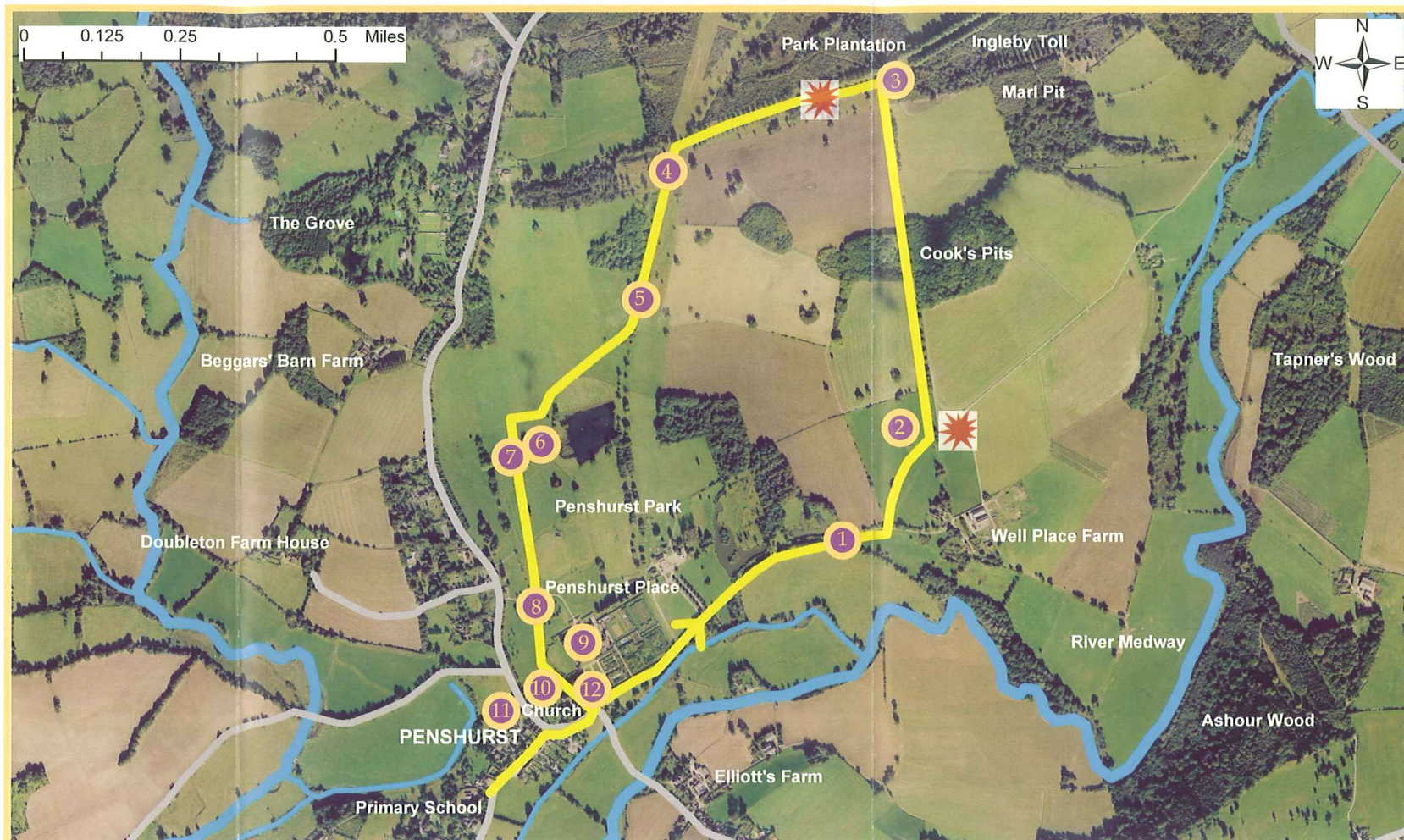
local building materials



historic parkland



wildflowers



Key

- walk route
- road
- watercourse
- 1 numbered views
- suggested activity point

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