

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: 5.2 km/3.5 miles

Time: 3 hours

Description: A circular walk following a roman road and part of an old drove road. There are a number of stiles, two sections of main road with pavement and one short section of quiet country lane. The route goes through fields and woods and can get very muddy in wet weather.



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.

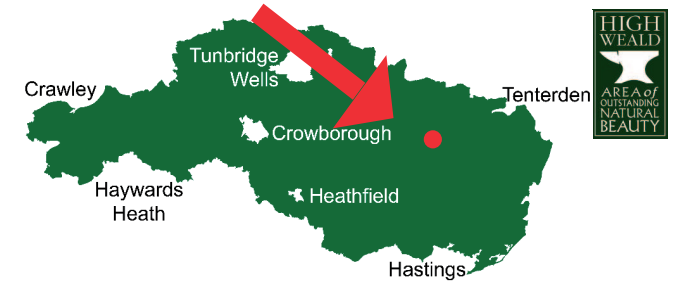
Remember to follow the Countryside Code

Produced by the High Weald AONB Unit with support from:



Sandhurst Primary School

High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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11



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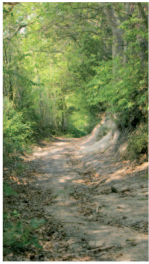
For guidance only, actual conditions may be different from that shown, depending on the weather and time of year

Photo guide and route description

From the school turn right out of the gate and walk along the road towards Hawkhurst. When you reach the Sandhurst Farm Shop **1**, cross the main road and then a smaller drive signposted Bayford House. Cross a small footbridge and stile **2** into the field. Walk straight up the bank and across the field towards the stile on the far side. Go over the stile and cross the grassy field, keeping to the left, whilst trying not to fall down any rabbit holes! In the far corner of the field, cross a stile on your left and then another immediately on your right, then continue on straight down a woodland path **3**. Follow the path through two more fields until you reach a kissing gate. Turn left onto the lane and walk until a public footpath sign on your right **4**. Follow the public footpath for a short distance and then cross the wooden bridge **5**. Keep the fence to your right and walk up the grassy slope **6** (be careful it may be slippery), and then cross the stile onto a lane. Turn right and then left if you want to take advantage of a great views **7**  of the High Weald behind the church. Otherwise, turn left and walk down the lane **8**, and enjoy views of Sandhurst and the windmill. You will come across a stile on the left **9**, which you will need to climb over. Cross the field heading towards another stile located to the left of the gap in the hedge **10**. Once over

the stile, continue across the corner of the next field and cross a well-hidden stile. Follow the path across the field and into the small wood. You will need to follow that path through the wood and cross the stile, then walk straight across the field until you reach the lane. Stay in the field and follow the lane and ditch keeping them both on your right (this lane is an old droving route). Cut across the corner of the field and head towards the woodland. Look out for some silver birch trees on your right, and go over the small stile at the bottom of the muddy bank **11**. Watching out for mud and brambles continue through ancient woodland following the yellow markers. Cross over a small stream and leave the wood via the stile. Continue over the slight hill and walk through the gate and over the bridge. Turn left and walk along the bottom of the field, turn right at the corner (do not go through the gate) and continue up the hill. At the top of the hill turn right and then walk along to a gap **12**, turn left through the gap and walk straight up the side of the field. Go through a kissing gate and into a sheep field, walk straight up the hill and go through the gate at the top. Turn right and walk up to the main road. Turn left and walk along the road and back to school.

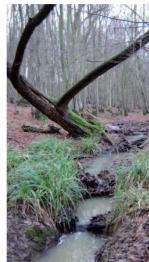
Look out for...



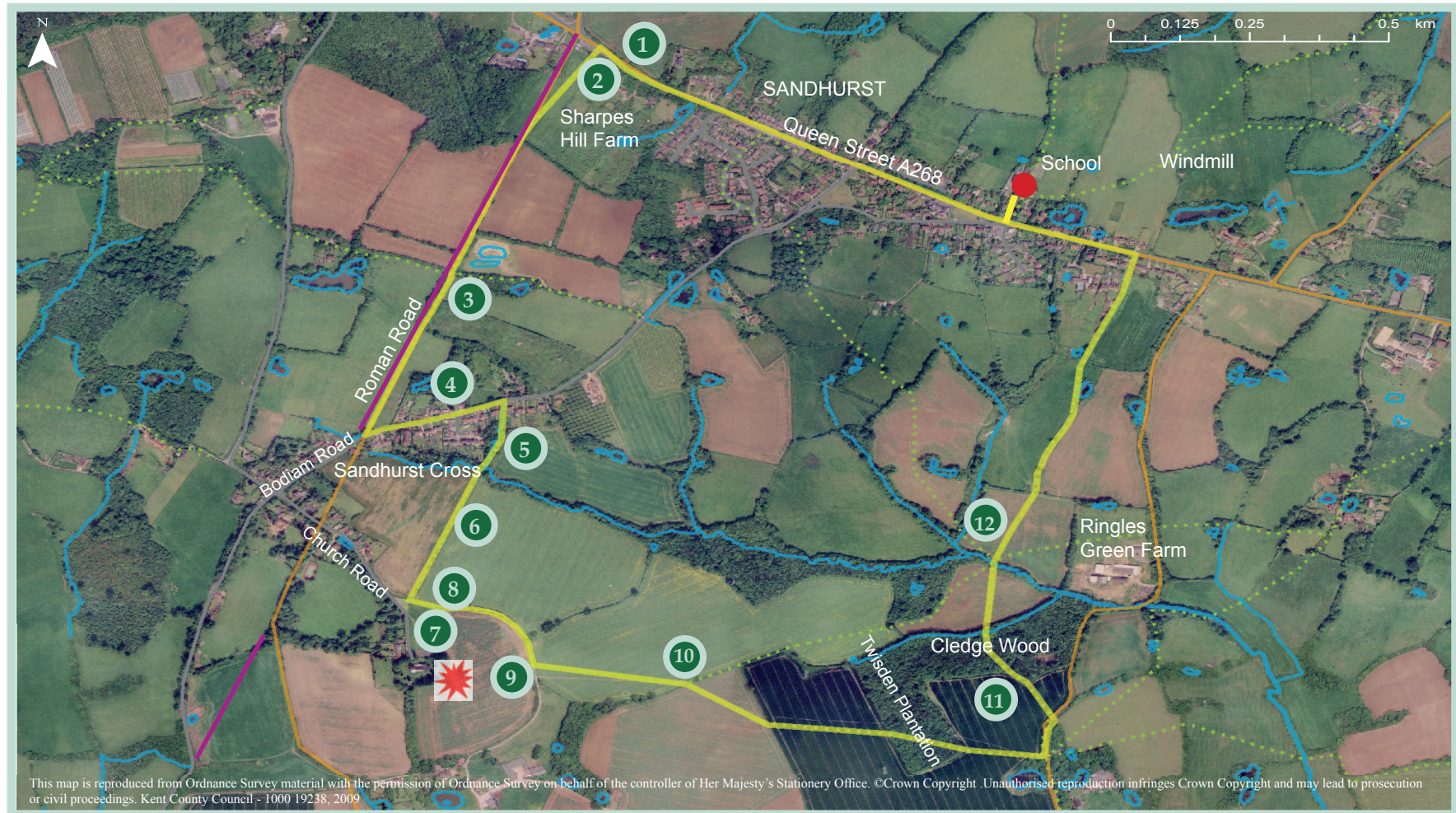
Sunken lanes



Local building materials



Gill streams



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Key

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

The Romans in the High Weald

The Romans came to Britain nearly 2000 years ago, and built roads so that their army could march from one place to another. They built the roads as straight as possible, so that the army could take the shortest route. At its peak, the Roman road system spanned over 50,000 miles. In fact some of our modern day roads are in the same place as Roman ones. If you are ever travelling on a really straight road, with no bends, it's probably Roman (although they have put some new Tarmac on it over the years!).

When the Romans invaded Britain, they found a well-established local tradition of iron making within the High Weald. With growing markets generated by the building of towns, villas and farms, the Romans encouraged the growth of the iron industry, and the High Weald became the industrial heartland of Roman Britain. In the High Weald the Romans often used the waste from the iron smelting process (slag) to surface the roads.



Created from text by Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group

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. This is why the High Weald's fields are relatively small and irregular in shape. The boundaries were simply formed by leaving strips of woodland between the fields.



Valerie Allford, ESCC Landscape Group

Ancient Routeways

As far back as the Neolithic period (c.4300 - 1400BC) 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 to keep warm while watching their pigs. These



woodland pig pastures were called dens. Many of the lanes in Sandhurst village have names ending in den. The frequent passage of pigs being driven to and fro between their parent villages (often 20 miles away) created drove roads. Part of this walk follows the path of one of these drove roads.

Can you find any lane names ending in den in Sandhurst village?

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. The nave and chancel of St Giles's churchyard was rebuilt in 1864 from sandstone quarried from the parish. 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.



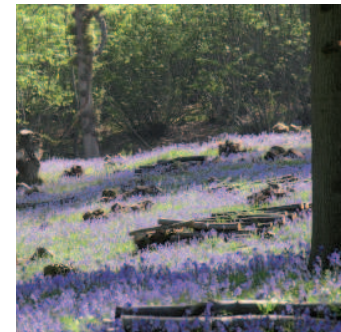
Visit www.highweald.org to download more High Weald Welly Walks

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. 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.

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.

