

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.naturalland.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



Education Resource

Distance: 2.8 miles/4.5 km.

Time: 1.5 hours (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

Description: A gentle walk, through ancient gill woodland and a Local Nature Reserve. The woods can get very muddy and care will need to be taken when crossing busier roads.



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

Sir Henry Fermor CE 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

Turn right out of the school gate and, almost immediately, turn right again to walk up the Poundfield Footpath **1** between the school car park and the hedge. Follow the concrete path past the playing fields on your left and continue straight on and past the entrance to Beacon Community College on your right. Keep going to enter a small patch of woodland and, at the crossroad of footpaths, turn right **2**. Follow the path (fenced on either side) down to the road.

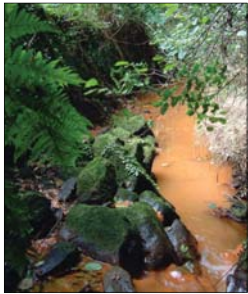
Cross straight over (Pellings Farm Close) and continue to follow the footpath down to Green Lane. Cross over and turn right. Look out for the public footpath on your left **3** shortly afterwards and follow it into The Ghyll. Stick to the main woodland path all the way downhill until you reach a bridge. Cross over and *immediately* turn right **4**. Follow the footpath up a small slope to reach a junction of footpaths. Take first right **5**, following the footpath that leads into the woods. Stick to this path, for approximately 250 metres, as it continues through The Ghyll. Always keep the stream on your right hand side as a guide! When possible, take the higher path where the path forks. Bear left and, shortly afterwards, carry straight on - passing a yellow metal marker pole on your left hand side **6**. Keep going as the path twists and turns to the right. At the next junction turn right, to pass a distinctive oak tree with branches that reach out over the path on your right hand side **7**. Continue straight on, again keeping the stream on your right.

The path begins to widen out and you will pass through a small clearing. Follow downhill to reach a larger clearing that brings you level with the stream **8** . Keep going until you reach another bridge.

Cross over the bridge and turn left to walk up to the gate and main entrance of the site **9**. Walk through the car park and turn right. Cross over Bracken Way and continue to the end of Burdett Road. At the main road (Crowborough Hill) turn right and, at a safe place, cross over. Pass Windsor Road on your left and turn down Osborne Road (also on your left). Keep going until you reach Crowborough Country Park. As you go through the gate bear left towards the kissing gate at the beginning of the car park **10**. Now follow the main path through this Local Nature Reserve, the site of an old quarry . You will pass a pond dipping platform on your left. Continue along the main path until you cross over a bridge, bear left and head towards the entrance of the reserve **11**.

Go through the kissing gate and cross straight over the road. Follow the path with houses on your right and stream on your left. At the end of the path turn right uphill **12** and cross over Hilders Farm Close into Montargis Way. Turn right and walk for a short distance until you reach the main road. Turn left to walk up Crowborough Hill. Follow this road for approximately 800 metres and you will soon be back at Sir Henry Fermor School!

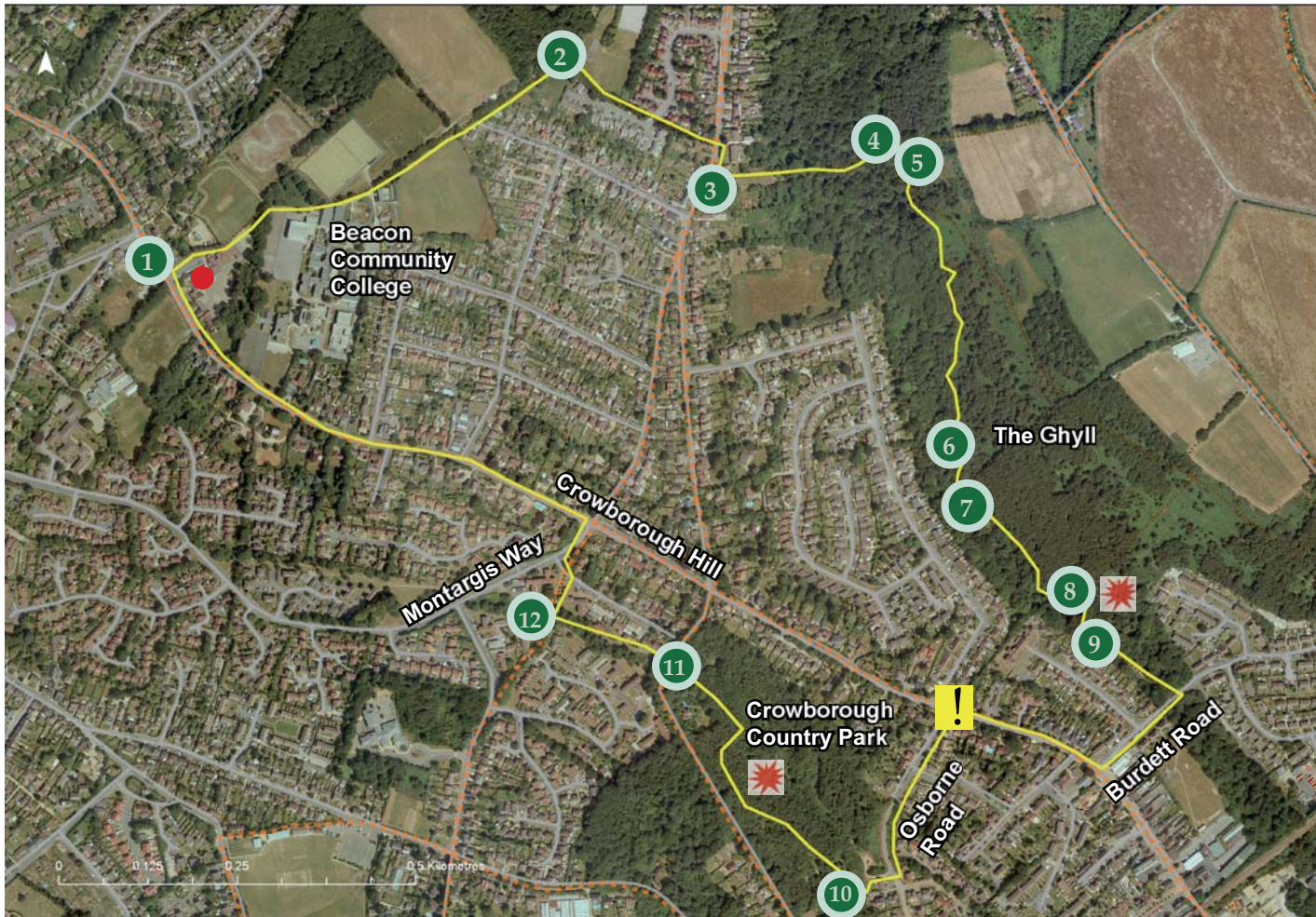
Look out for...



Iron-stained water



Ancient Woodland



Key

-  Sir Henry Fermor CE School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  historic routeway
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  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.

On this Welly Walk, The Ghyll is an example of ancient woodland.

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.

The High Weald Iron Industry

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.

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 charcoal for fuel; and the numerous small streams and valleys ensured water power for the hammers and bellows of the forges and furnaces.



The raw materials for making iron were prevalent in Crowborough. There are numerous former iron working sites, furnaces and bloomeries scattered in and around the town - including two in The Ghyll.

As you cross the bridge at **4**, look down at the water.



You might see some water that looks like this. The orangey-red colour is a clear indication of the substantial iron content.

So, where are the remains of the High Weald iron industry? Building stone was too valuable to be left unused, so the works were dismantled, and the woods grew back over the former sites. Reminders of the once great Wealden iron industry can be found in place names, remains of charcoal hearths or pits in the woods - flattened circular areas with blackened soil beneath the leaf litter - or in finding chunks of telltale waste, called slag, from the smelting process.

Text adapted from Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group

Special Habitats

You will experience a diverse range of habitats as you walk through The Ghyll and Crowborough Country Park. Wet woodlands, wooded streams, dry woodland, scrub, wet and dry heathy glades, ponds, fen and grassland can all be found and are home to a huge range of plants and animals. Species of interest include rare mosses, dormice and even the Golden-ringed Dragonfly - the longest dragonfly in the UK.



Text adapted from Crowborough Town Council information leaflet

Ancient Routeways

As far back as the Neolithic period (c.4500 - 2300BC) 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 places in the High Weald have names ending in den - for example Marden's Hill, Tenterden and Standen.

The frequent passage of pigs being driven to and from the dens formed tracks known as droves. Over time the dens became settlements in their own right, and the roughly north-south droving routes remained. They can be seen today in the pattern of lanes, bridleways and footpaths radiating away from the High Weald. Centuries of use by many trotters, feet, hooves - and, later, cartwheels - have worn the soft ground away so that, today, many of the routes have deeply sunken sections.

Look closely at the map in this Welly Walk leaflet to see where historic routeways exist in and around Crowborough.

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.



Gill streams flow into rivers that have formed wide valleys in the eastern part of the High Weald. For most of this Welly Walk you are walking alongside a fantastic example of a gill stream - admire the twisting path carved by the water as you walk from point **4** all the way through the woods.

Listen carefully as you walk through The Ghyll - can you hear the water?