

The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an outstanding medieval 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 (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 Partnership with support from:



Walk Facts



Education Resource

Distance: 4.8km / 3 miles

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

Description: A gentle walk through ancient woodland, across meadows and through farmland. There is some road walking without pavements. The woodland paths can get very muddy and slippery.



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.
- Adequate staff to student supervision ratios.
- Fields may contain farm animals.
- Remember that a large group of people can be intimidating, especially to animals.
- Long trousers are advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- 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 antibacterial hand gel are taken as a precaution.
- Everyone must clean their hands before eating.
- Remember to follow the Countryside Code.

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.

www.highweald.org

Speldhurst C E Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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

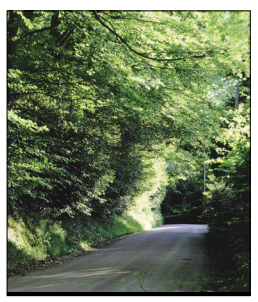
Photo guide and route description

Turn right out of Speldhurst School gate. Look out for the footpath sign on the left and cross over the road to follow it. Walk down the lane with houses to your left and keep on the path as it turns right. Go through a chain gate to walk between two fields **1**. Go down steps to enter Shadwell Wood  and follow the path over a bridge. Continue uphill on this path as it bears right (look at the iron-stained clay across the river) and follow it along the stream through the wood. Stay on the path as it leaves the wood **2** and crosses two fields. Climb the next stile to take you onto a road. Turn right (watch out there is no pavement) and keep to the edge of the road passing a junction on your right. Just after this look out for a footpath on your right. **3** Take this path and walk over a bridge and up the hill. **4** . At the top of the hill continue along the edge of the field with the boundary on your right.

At the end of the field pass through a wide gap on your right **5** and enter another field. Continue in the same direction to cross the field and pass through a wooded shaw with a pond to the left. Bear right out of the trees to meet Speldhurst Road via a stile. **6** Turn left and walk along the pavement to the junction with Leggs Lane on your right. Cross Speldhurst Road and walk down Leggs Lane (watch out there is no pavement). Look out for a footpath on your right **7** and follow it over a small bridge. Turn left to follow the edge of a field. Follow the path as it bears left putting the field boundary on your right. Cross a track via stiles and walk along the right hand edge of the field. The path enters a wood with a gill on your right **8**. Turn left when a T junction of paths is

reached. **9** Continue on this path following signs for the Tunbridge Wells Circular walk. Watch out for the footpath sign to turn right and head down a slope **10**. Cross a bridge and climb the path and steps up the other side. When the path forks take the right hand path to meet Bullingstone Lane. Turn right (watch out there is no pavement) and after about 20 metres take the footpath signposted on the left. **11** Cross over a stile and follow the path that goes between fields, and then between the backs of houses. Continue to the end of this footpath and pass through a metal gate onto Penshurst Road **12**. Turn right to walk along the pavement. Cross over the road just before St Mary's Church and continue down Langton Road back to the school.

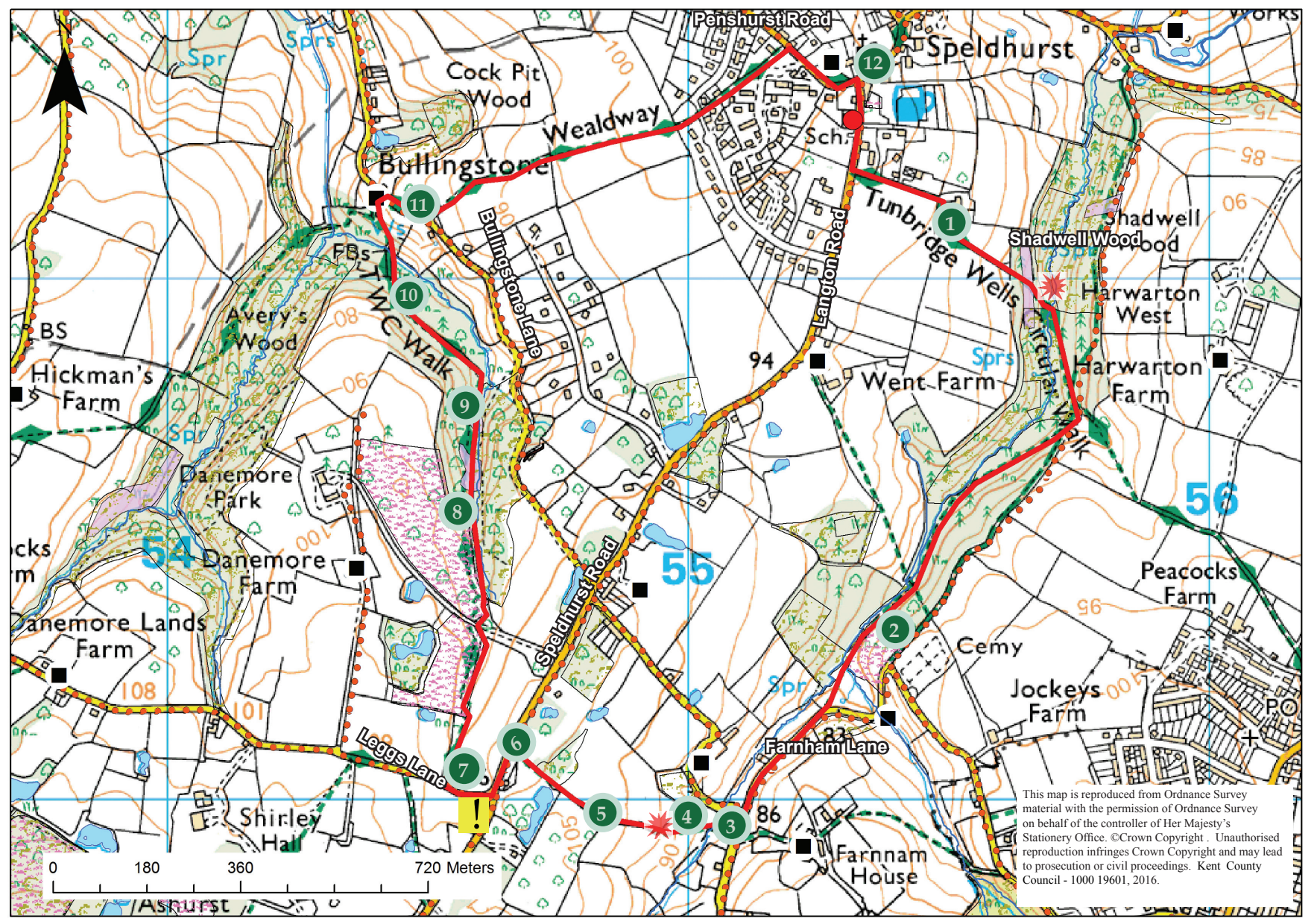
Look out for...



Sunken lanes

Key

- WALK ROUTE
- suggested activity point
- Speldhurst C E Primary School
- numbered views
- historic routeway
- busy road
- heathland
- meadows



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Look out for these key High Weald landscape features on the Welly Walk

Ancient Woodland

Almost one third of the High Weald is covered in woodland. Most of these woodlands are classed as ancient. This means they have existed since at least 1600AD. Coppicing has been used for centuries in many of these woodlands, helping to maintain them. The woodland on this Welly Walk is ancient. Look out for bluebells, wood anemones and ransoms (wild garlic) in the spring. These flowers are good indicators of ancient woodland.



Bluebells



Wood anemones

Coppiced Woodland

Coppicing is when trees are cut down low to the ground allowing multiple stems to grow back.

The stems are harvested to make products such as firewood, fencing, charcoal and trugs. Hazel and sweet chestnut are trees that were commonly coppiced on the High Weald. Which can you see on this walk?



Hazel



Sweet chestnut

Wildflower Grassland

The High Weald has a relatively large number of ancient, undisturbed wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures. These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation. They support a wide range of plant and animal species. Shrews and voles are plentiful here providing a fantastic feeding ground for barn owls. On the Welly Walk you will pass through unimproved grasslands in the first field after Shadwell Wood and the two fields before Avery's Wood.



Lesser spotted orchid



Bird's-foot-trefoil

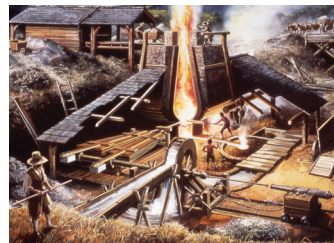


Barn Owls

Count how many grasses and plants there are in a small area. Compare it to another field on the Walk.

The High Weald iron industry

The High Weald was at the heart of the great Tudor iron industry. In this landscape were all the raw materials needed: iron ore in the sandstone and clay, wood for fuel and plentiful streams to create water power for the huge blast furnaces and forges.



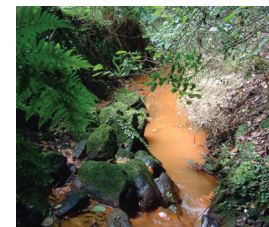
The quiet countryside of today was full of the sounds and sights of the iron industry in Tudor times. Not much remains of that industry now but look out for clues in

If you are interested in finding out more then please visit www.highweald.org/learning_zone

local place names such as Barden Furnace Farm (north of Speldhurst) and evidence of iron ore in the rocks which shows in the orange-coloured water and clay of Shadwell Woods.

Gill Streams

Steep-sided, wooded gills are formed where a stream has carved a deep channel through the clay and sandstone of a High Weald hillside. Look out for gill streams on this Welly Walk. Plants growing on the unique environment of the gill slopes such as ferns, liverworts and mosses form an important, fragile eco-system.



Ancient Routeways

From Neolithic times, farmers from the Downs and coastal plains would drive their pigs into the woods of the High Weald each autumn to fatten them on acorns and beech mast. These same tracks or droves were used for centuries, gradually wearing away the soft ground so that, today, many have deeply sunken sections. On this Welly Walk notice the steep sides of the road in Bullingstone Lane, an historic routeway.

The farmers would have built temporary shelters in the woods. These pig pastures were called dens. Over time the dens became settlements, and many places in the High Weald now have names ending in den – such as Birchden and Rolvenden.

