

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.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 Unit with support from:



Walk Facts

Distance: 2.6 miles/4.2 km.

Time: 1 hour (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

Description: This is a gentle circular walk that, largely, follows a historic routeway through ancient woodland. There are no stiles but paths are mostly unsurfaced and can be very muddy!



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground. Long trousers are also advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Take care when walking along roads with no pavements; stay close to the edge/on grass verges where possible.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Consider adequate staff to pupil 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; 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 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

St Mark's C.E. School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12

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

Photo guide and route description

From the school gate turn left along School Lane. Shortly afterwards turn left again, following signs to St Mark's church and burial ground **1**. Go through the metal gate and turn right, following the path round to the kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and carefully cross Main Road. Turn right and walk approximately 40metres to reach the entrance to Woodlands Farm on your left. Turn left here **2** and follow the track, passing SMILE meadow (St Mark's Ideal Learning Environment)  on your right hand side. Continue until the track forks. Bear right into Waste Wood, an ancient woodland **3**. Stay on the main woodland path all the way through the woods (approximately 1.5km). You will walk along some sunken parts, along the edge of wildflower grasslands and eventually reach Warren Farm, a historic farmstead. As you emerge from the woods, carry straight on at the junction of paths **4** and walk with the farm buildings on your right hand side. Once past the last building, look for a footpath on your left **5** shortly afterwards, that leads into the woods. Follow the path downhill, passing a large pit on your right, and turn left to walk towards an open grassy field **6**. Walk through the field, close to the hedge on your left and with 2 ponds to your right. When you meet the farm track, go straight across **7**, towards Hole Farmhouse (pond on your right). Look out for the public footpath arrows as they guide you up and along the grassy bank, behind the hedge, and to the left of the farmhouse **8**.

As you pass the farmhouse, bear right and follow the route round the back of the property's fencing. Cross the stream. Turn left to walk uphill through the field **9**; the woods are now on your right. Walk past a stile on your right hand side and continue all the way up to the corner of the field. On reaching the corner, turn right to *briefly* enter the woods but immediately turn left **10** to follow a narrow path (beware barbed wire on your left). Again, use the public footpath arrows to guide you. Head uphill to reach another open field. Carry straight on and turn right at the corner. Continue forward, following the public footpath all the way uphill. Close to the corner of this field, look for the path on your left that leads into the woods **11**. Follow it and bear right through the trees. As you emerge from the trees, carry straight on across the grass. Bear left towards the farm building **12**. Beware of electric fence on your right. With the farm on your left (Woodlands Farm), follow the gravel track as it curves left then right, down to the gate at the end of the drive. You are now back at the entrance to Waste Wood (numbered view **3**). Retrace your steps along the track, heading past SMILE meadow (now on your left). At Main Road turn right, cross over and walk back through the kissing gate and the burial ground. Follow the path along to School Lane and turn right – you are now back at St Mark's School!

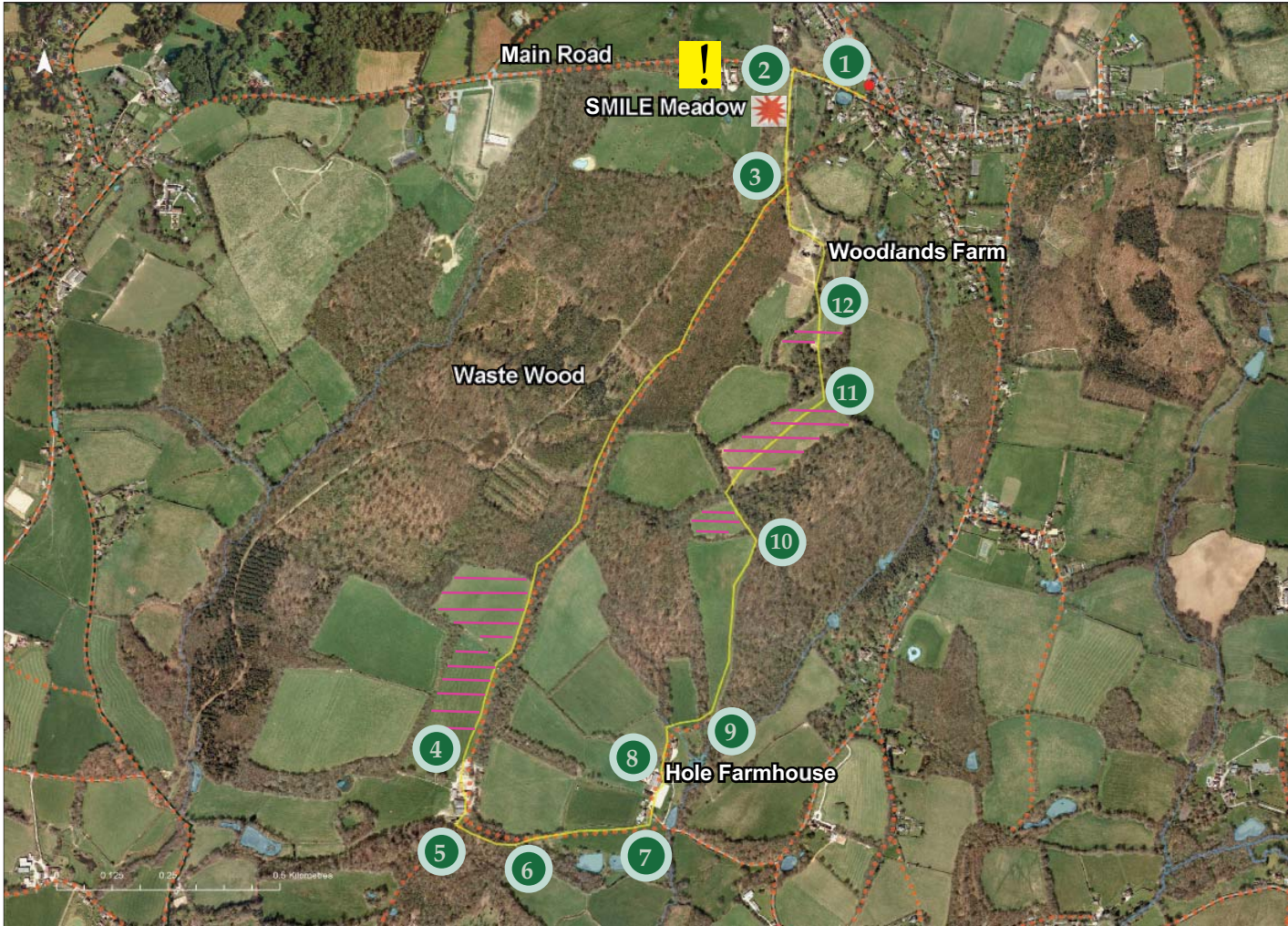
Look out for...



Coppiced Trees



Historic Routeway



Key

St Mark's C.E. School

WALK ROUTE

road

historic routeway

watercourse

wildflower grassland

1

numbered views

!

busy road

suggested activity point

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. ©Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. East Sussex County Council, 1000 19601, 2011.

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. Waste Wood is an example of ancient woodland on this Welly Walk.



Ancient woodlands 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.

Look out for coppiced trees in Waste Wood - can you see any trees with multiple trunks?

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 bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces.

The raw materials for making iron were prevalent in Hadlow Down. There are numerous former iron working sites, furnaces and bloomeries scattered in and around the village.

So, where are the remains of iron production? Building stone was too valuable in the Weald 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.

Adapted from text by Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group



High Weald Ponds

The Weald has one of the highest concentration of ponds in South East England. Many ponds have developed because of human activity e.g. quarrying, while others were created as drinking ponds for farm animals.

In the High Weald, some large 'hammer ponds' can also be found. These were created to power the bellows and hammers of the iron industry.



How many ponds can you count on this Welly Walk?

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 places in the High Weald have names ending in den - for example Heatherden or Tenterden.



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 out for this in Waste Wood!

Look closely at the map in this Welly Walk leaflet to see where some of these historic routeways exist in and around Hadlow Down.

A Medieval Landscape

By the 14th century, the High Weald was settled and looked much the same as it does today. The landscape of the High Weald is essentially medieval: this can be said of few other places in the country.

With their heavy clay soils and steep slopes, many High Weald fields have never been ploughed up to grow crops and have traditionally been used for rearing cattle and sheep. Compared to many areas of Britain, the High Weald still has a relatively large number of ancient, wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures.



These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation and several can be enjoyed on this Welly Walk.