

# High Weald Heroes

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).

## 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](http://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](http://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:** 5.6 km/3.5 miles

**Time:** 2 hours (depending on conditions & numbers)

**Description:** A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through woods and farmland, over gentle terrain. There are numerous stiles, steps and foot bridges and one main road to be aware of.



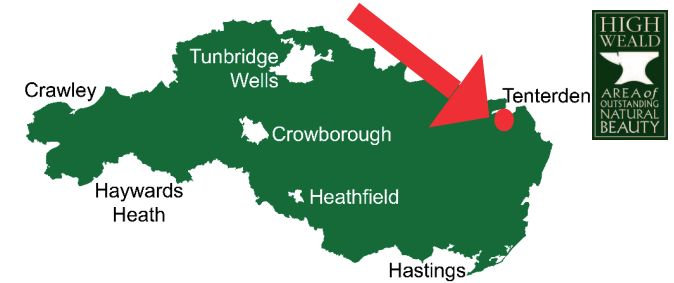
## RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- 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.
- *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](http://www.highweald.org)

# Tenterden Church of England Junior 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 that shown, depending on the weather and time of year*

## Photo guide and route description

Turn right out of school, follow the pavement towards the Leisure Centre. Go through the gate ahead of you into a field. Go downhill and across a field towards a large tree. **1** Cross the stream and walk round the field, keeping trees on your left. About half way round, where the trees end, find some wooden steps that lead down to a stile. **2** Cross this and continue straight, keeping the hedge on your left hand side. Before the path swings to the right, go through the gap in the hedge. Cross the track and walk on the grass by the hedge **3** (again on your left) until you come to another gap - beware of farm traffic. Turn left, along the road to Belcot Manor Farm. At the farm, go over the stile on the right hand fence. **4** Cross the field diagonally, keeping the pond on your left. Keep going until you reach another stile in the far corner. Cross this and keep near to the trees on your left but, as the path begins to curve back on itself, cross the field towards the woods. **5** With woods now on your right, continue towards the corner of the field to pick up the footpath and a set of steps into the woods. Go down the steps to a bridge, continue straight on and cross another bridge on your left. **6**  Turn right and follow the path through the woods (ignoring a bridge on your right!). Take time to enjoy the stunning gill streams in this ancient woodland. Keep going and after going down lots of steps, you will have to cross another bridge and go through a gate into a clearing. Carry on but slightly bear right and cross the bridge into another clearing.

Keep close to the trees on your right and you are led to another stile and bridge. Follow the path and you will see a large pond ahead.  Walk the length of the pond (which is on your left). Go down the steps and turn right uphill. **7** Keep going until you meet the main track near the woods and turn right through metal gates. Pause a moment to take in the stunning view. The path splits into 3, take the middle route and go over the stile. Walk on the road **8** around the farmstead until you get to some steps on your right. Go up these and cross the stile. Walk diagonally across the field towards 2 oak trees. **9** Continue to the fence and go over the stile. Follow the grassy path to the next stile and carry on going straight towards the farmstead, between an avenue of hedges. Another stile appears on your right, cross this and follow the fence and painted yellow markings **10** until you rejoin the main track. Keep going forward and through the kissing gate. Now keep the fence on your left and continue to another stile by the main road. Go over this and turn right. Carefully walk along the road (only partly paved) until you come to the gate and public footpath sign opposite Tenterden Cricket Club. Follow the concrete footpath **11** until you reach Bells Close. **12** Turn right by the allotments and you will soon be back at Tenterden Junior School!

## Look out for...



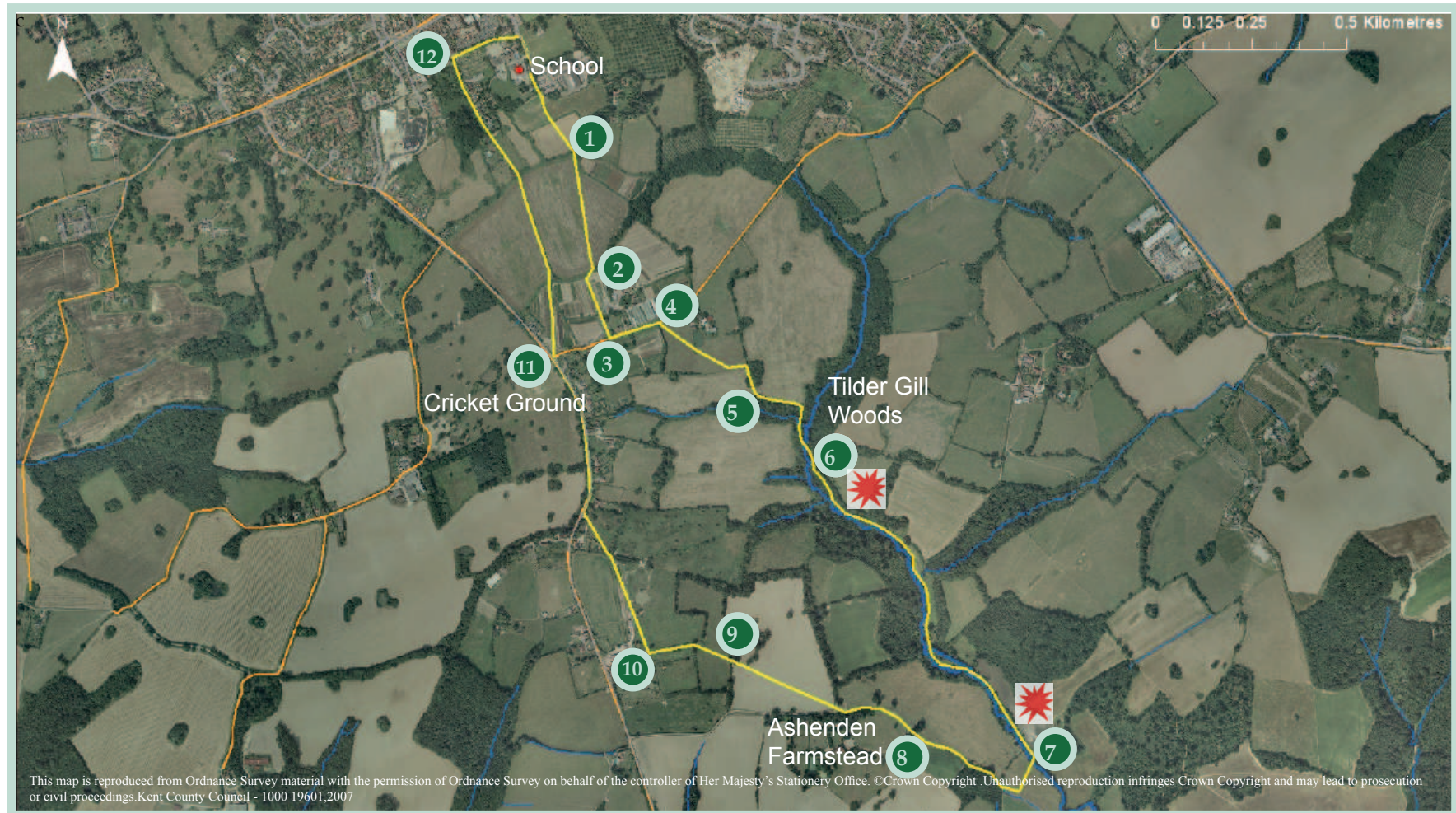
Rolling hills




Ancient woodland



Gill streams



### Key

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

## Scattered Farmsteads

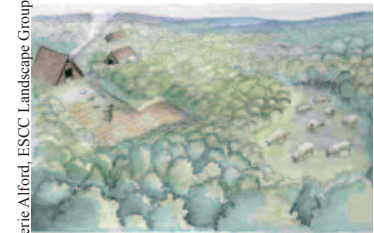
The High Weald has many isolated farmsteads, hamlets and dwellings dotted across the countryside. This scattered settlement pattern means the High Weald is the most populated protected landscape in the UK.

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. 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. The building materials have led to a particularly rich architectural heritage of distinctive farm buildings – for example hipped and half-hipped barns.



## 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 Alford, 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 places in the High Weald have names ending in den. For example, Tenterden means 'The den of the men of Thanet'. 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.

*How many more examples of local places ending in 'den' can you think of?*

## 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, undisturbed, wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures. These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation.



Visit [www.highweald.org](http://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. Look out for them as you walk through the woods on this walk.

