

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](http://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](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:** 4.7 miles/7.6 km; alternative short route approximately 1.9 miles/3 km.

**Time:** 2.5 hours (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

**Description:** A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through woodland, parkland and farmland. Mainly flat terrain, with a couple of stiles 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, being aware of uneven ground. Long trousers are also advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- 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](http://www.highweald.org)

## Buxted Church of England 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

From the school car park, turn left and walk to the end of High Hurstwood Road. Turn right and cross the main road to head into the Buxted Park Estate **1**. Follow the drive down towards St Margaret's Church (If you have time, pop into the church yard and find the 2000 year old yew tree!) Continue past the church and, subsequently, the entrance to the Buxted Park Hotel. Keep going, through the staff car park, until you reach a gate in the fence ahead of you **2**. Go through it into the grassy field and bear left towards the kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and carry straight on. At the grassy crossroads shortly afterwards - where the trees on your left end - bear diagonally left **3** and head downhill. At the next crossroads of paths, turn left along a well-worn track, **4** following a barbed wire fence on your left hand side. Keep going until the path forks, and bear left through a kissing gate **5**. Follow the path for a short distance up to a large metal gate. Once through this, carry straight on. On your right is the river Uck and a large wildflower grassland. Continue forward, walking behind the Buxted Park Hotel and a large lake (on your left). Be aware of grazing sheep - they help to keep the trees at bay and preserve the grassland. Cross the small stone bridge and keep going straight on, sticking to the widest grassy path (for approximately 800m) until you reach another metal gate at the end of the path **6**. Go through the gate and walk up to the main road. Carefully cross over and turn right to walk along the pavement towards Buxted village. *If you are doing the short route, once you have crossed the road turn LEFT and follow the road for approximately 500m to reach High Hurstwood Road. Turn right and you are now back at Buxted School!*

Follow the main road, past Buxted station, and turn left at Church Road ⑦. Walk along Church Road, looking out for Great Totease farm, a 19th Century historic farmstead, on your left. Follow Church Road as it bends to the right and keep going (for approximately 700m) as it climbs gently uphill and turns into a stony track. At the stile on your right ⑧, cross into the field and follow the line of fencing on your right (Beware electric fence). Carry straight on towards the trees at the end of the field. Cross the stile on your left ⑨ and turn right. Walk to the end of the lane, turn right and follow the main road back towards Buxted. Take care to cross at appropriate points to ensure that you are walking on the pavement provided. For a lunch or activity spot, turn right up Littlewood Lane and bear left where the road forks. Shortly afterwards turn right ⑩ and follow the tarmac path towards the entrance to Littlewood ⑪. Go through the gate and bear left, following the main track through the trees ✨. Keep to the wide path as it curves right ⑫. On your left you will see the plaque that marks the Millennium tree plot, as planted by former Buxted school pupils. At the wooden fence turn right and follow the path back to the entrance of the woods. Retrace your steps to Littlewood Lane and the main road back to Buxted. At the main road, turn right towards the village and continue straight on for some distance, past Church Lane and the train station, all the way back to High Hurstwood Road and Buxted School!

## Look out for...



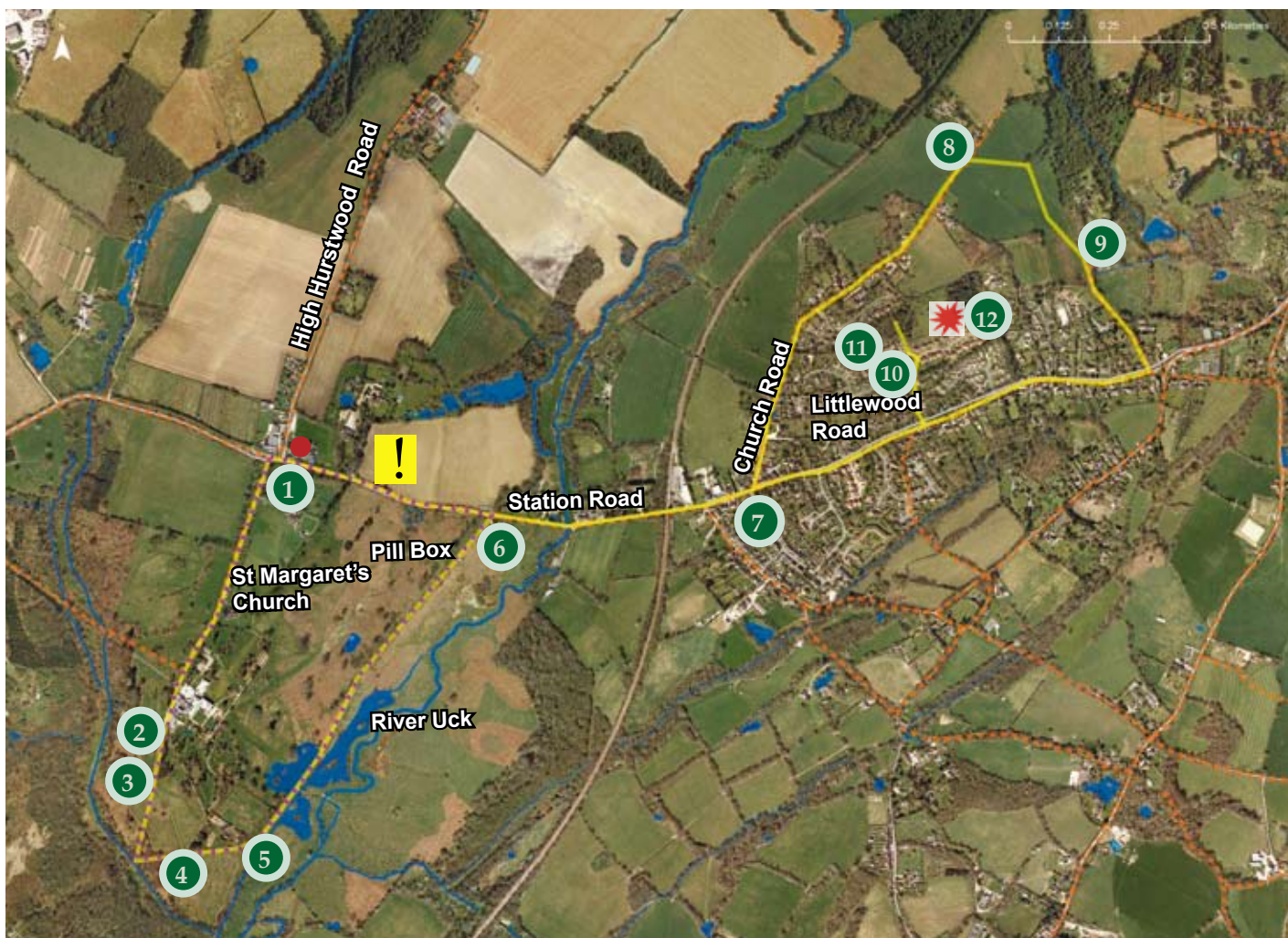
Wildflower Grassland











Rolling Hills



Historic Buildings



## Key

-  Buxted CEP School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  alternative short route
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  historic routeway
-  watercourse
-  busy road

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## 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 - including one in the Buxted Park Estate. These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation.



## 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 - an open place for grazing. Many places in the High Weald have names ending in den - for example 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. Look closely at the map in this Welly Walk leaflet to see where some of these historic routeways exist in and around Buxted.

## 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 Buxted. There are many former iron working sites, furnaces and bloomeries scattered in and around the village.

*Can you find any blackened soil on this walk?  
Charcoal rich soil is a reminder of the iron industry in Buxted.*

The history of the High Weald iron industry has particular significance for Buxted village. In the 1540s, William Levett - an ironmaster and Parson of St Margaret's church, employed Ralph Hogge as his works manager.

In 1543, Hogge made the first canon in England to be cast in one piece. Hogge's house still stands at the entrance to the Buxted Park Estate.

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. Only place names; the remains of charcoal hearths or pits in the woods - flattened circular areas with blackened soil beneath the leaf litter; the telltale waste, called slag, from the smelting process; and some hammer and furnace ponds are left to remind us of this once great Wealden industry.

Adapted from text by Jeremy Hodgkinson, Wealden Iron Research Group

*Visit [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) to learn more about the High Weald's Iron Story.*

## Managing the Landscape

Part of this Welly Walk goes through the Buxted Park Estate. This was once the site of the main village. However, in 1828 the Estate's new owner, the Earl of Liverpool, was unhappy at having to live so close to the villagers and offered relocation bribes. Over time the village moved to its now current site, approximately one mile away from the Estate.



Buxted Park Estate is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and an important acid grassland habitat. To help preserve this grassland, a herd of sheep and deer are used. "Work includes bracken control and felling of self sown trees and saplings. Grazing is important as it prevents the acid grassland from being overgrown with bracken, allowing wildflowers to flourish. Buxted Park contains a herd of about 50 fallow deer known as 'Dama Dama' which can be seen during quiet times grazing the sward." (Buxted Park Estate Interpretation Board).

*Can you spot any deer as you walk through Buxted Park?*

## 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 many High Weald farmsteads 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. A number of these can be seen on this Welly Walk - Great Totease Farm on Church Road is a good example.