

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



Education Resource

Distance: 2.7 miles/4.3 km. Alternative short route 2.1 miles/3.4 km.

Time: 2 hours for the full route (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

Description: A picturesque circular walk through fields and woodland. There is one particularly steep section and some busy roads to be aware of.



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

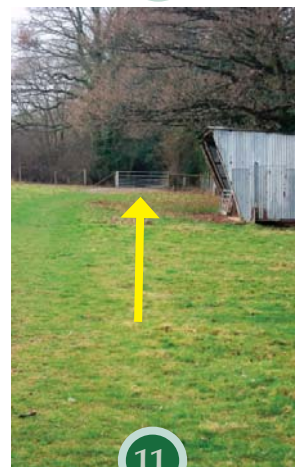
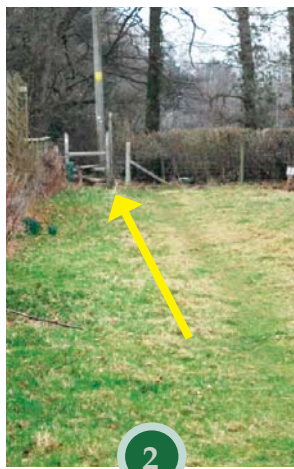
- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground and fallen trees, especially near water and in wet weather.
- Long trousers are advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Consider adequate adult to child supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are roads 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 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

Catsfield 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 gate, cross the road and turn right. Walk along the pavement until you reach the public footpath on your left **1**. Go through the gate at the edge of the pavement and then the subsequent gate on your left. Follow the path up the hill. Go through a gate and carry straight on, following the line of fencing on your right. Continue forward to reach, and go through, another gate. Keep going straight through the field and down the hill, towards the main road. You will pass a large clump of trees and some houses on your left. At the main road, cross the stile (found at the side of the house) **2** and turn right to walk along the grass verge for a short distance. Take care as the road is busy. You will pass a public footpath on your right. Just after this point, where the verge widens, look out for a path on the opposite side of the road that leads into the woods. It is marked by large logs at the side of the road **3**. Safely cross the road and walk between the large logs to head into the woods. Turn right and follow the track, walking parallel to the main road. Keep going straight along the path and follow it as it curves to the right and becomes stonier **4**. Follow the path towards the main road and car park. Walk straight through the car park, past the information boards **5** and continue along a narrow path - still walking parallel to the main road. You will soon reach a gate (opposite Millers Farm). Turn left here and follow the path between the tall trees, heading downhill to reach Farthing Pond **6**.

If you are doing the short route, turn left when you reach the pond and follow the woodland track with the pond on your right. Cross over 2 small wooden bridges and continue as the path bears left and becomes much wider, leaving the pond behind you. Cross straight over at a junction of footpaths and carry on uphill to meet another track – turn right here and you will soon be back at ③. You can now trace your steps back to the School.

To complete the full route, follow the path along the side of the pond (pond on your left) and carefully cross the bridge. Now carry straight on, following the line of fencing on your left ⑦. At the end of the fence turn right but, shortly afterwards, bear left to follow a narrow footpath up the hill ⑧, all the way to a kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and walk straight across the field to reach another kissing gate. Turn left once through the kissing gate and walk along the bridleway, passing Farthing Cottage on your right. Keep going for some distance, past the entrance to Farthings Farm, until you reach a stile and public footpath on your left ⑨. Cross over the stile and head up the steep hill into the woods. Turn right, following the public footpath and Hastings 1066 walk arrows. After approximately 100 metres, carry straight on through a small patch of trees ⑩ to reach a stile. Don't bear left along the woodland path! Cross over the stile, walk through the conifer trees and head across the open field to reach another stile. Cross over and turn right towards a gate and stile ⑪. Once past here, walk along the track to reach the main road. At the main road turn left and walk for a short distance until you see a stile ⑫ opposite. Carefully cross the busy road to then cross over the stile. Bear diagonally left through this field to reach the far corner and another stile to cross. Turn right and walk along the pavement until you reach Church Lane. Cross over, walk down Church Lane and then bear left along Church Road – you will soon be back at school which will be on your right!

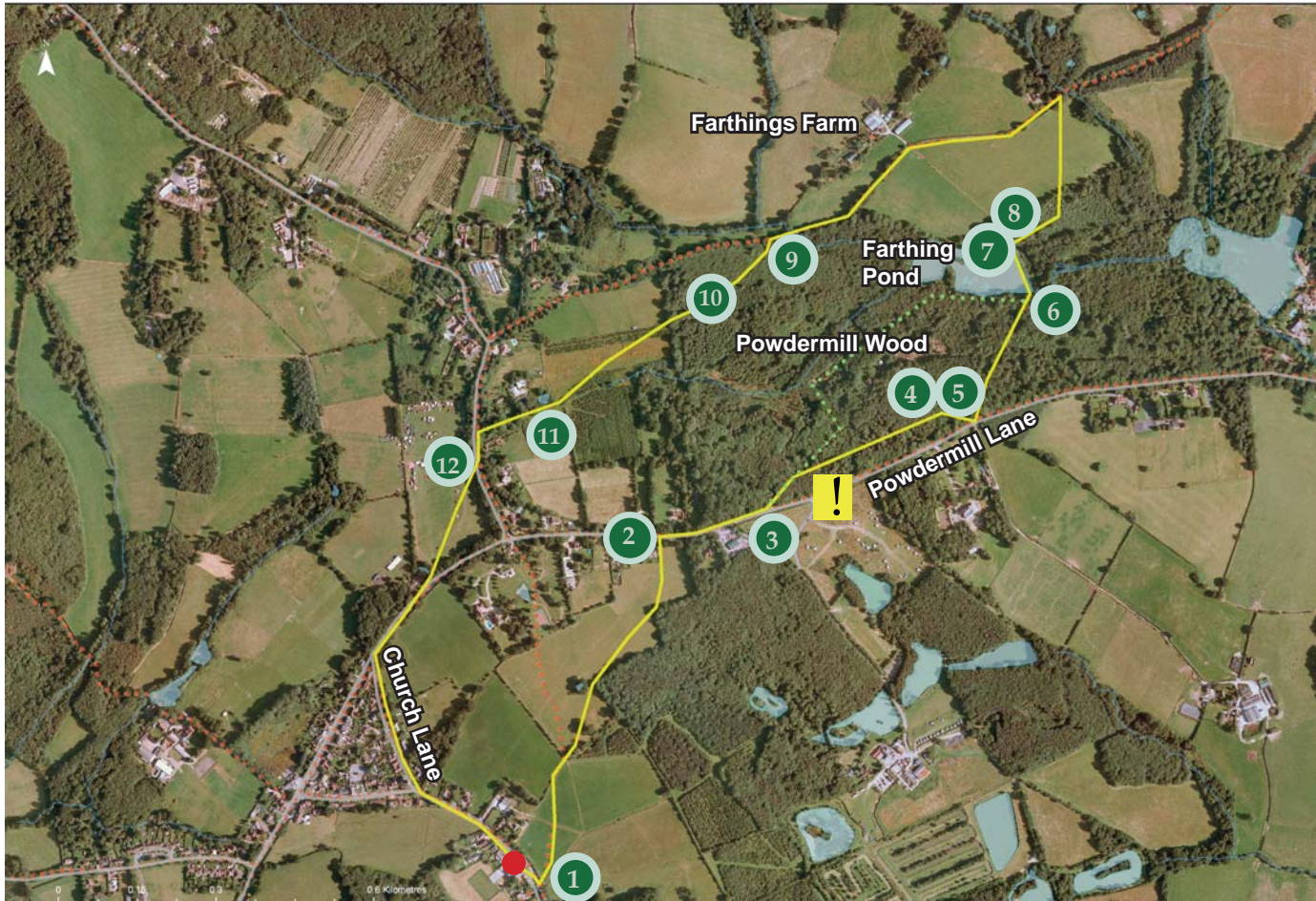
Look out for...











Coppiced Trees



Sunken Lane



Key

-  Catsfield CE Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  alternative short route
-  historic routeway
-  watercourse
-  ① numbered views
-  road
-  ! take care, busy road

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, 2012.

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

Look out for signs of coppicing in Powdermill Wood - can you spot a tree 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.



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 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 after point

8

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

High Weald Ponds

The Weald has one of the highest concentration of ponds in South East England.

As you walk by Farthing Pond, think about why it might have been created. 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.



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 and around Catsfield and there are two former iron working sites close to 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. 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

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.



Valerie Alford, ESCC Landscape Group