

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: 1.5 miles/2.4 km.

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

Description: A short circular walk through woodlands and meadows. The woods can get quite muddy and there is a mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths.



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 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

Churchwood Community 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 turn right and walk down Church in the Wood Lane **1**. Pass the church on your right and walk through the car park. Go through the kissing gate **2** and follow the main track, straight on, into Church Wood – graveyard on your right. Keep going along the wide track, don't veer off into the woods. At the first junction of paths **3** carry straight on (goes slightly uphill). Keep going until you have passed 2 benches on your right. After the second bench, there is a t-junction of paths **4** where you need to turn left and follow the path downhill. Keep going and the path will fork, bear left down 3 wooden steps **5** (don't take the steeper stepped path to the right).

As you follow the path downhill, the path becomes more open before getting narrower and steeper as you head towards the road. The path brings you out opposite Bodiam Drive. Turn left and walk along the pavement **6**, crossing Robsack Avenue and up to Crowhurst Road. Turn left at the main road and continue to walk on the pavement heading uphill.

After approximately 300 metres you will reach a metal railing and path on your left **7**. Turn down here and follow the path into the residential area. At the end of the path, head diagonally left towards a lamppost and corner of a house **8**. Walk along the path, fence on your right, towards a metal bollard **9**. Walk past the bollard and turn right along the grassy path. Follow the path, fence on your right, woods on your left. Eventually this path joins another track at the foot of some steps.

Carry straight on, through the grass **10**. Keep going until you meet another path (again at the base of some steps) **11**. Turn left here and walk down the wide, paved steps to reach a bridge. Turn left and walk over the bridge. Head up the steps and follow the path that curves right and becomes a stony track. Keep going, through the meadow, until you reach the hedge and tarmac path. Turn left towards the church **12** and walk into the church car park, opposite the lychgate. Turn right and walk back up Church in the Wood Lane to return to School!

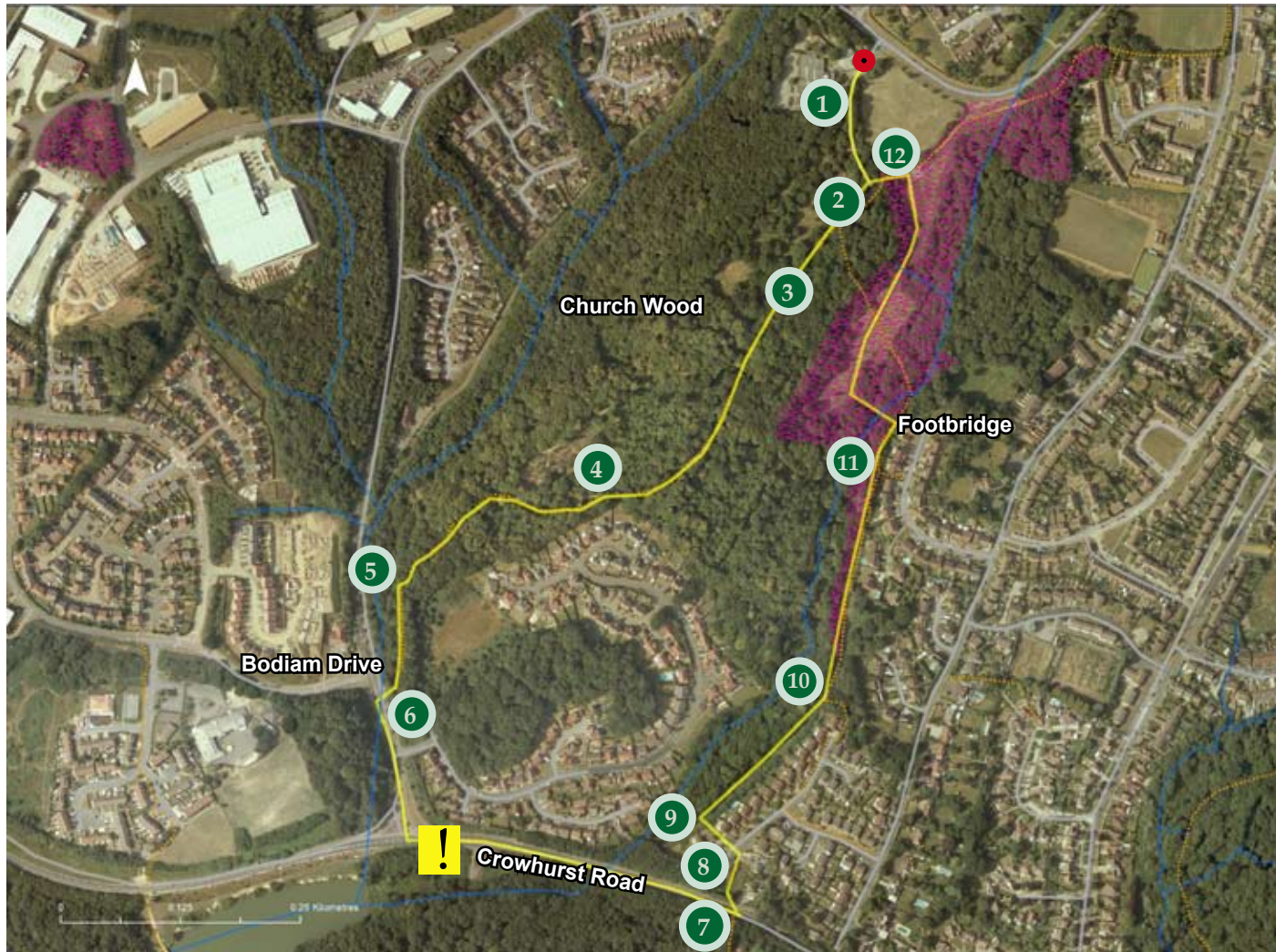
Look out for...




Coppicing



Wildflower
Grassland



Key

-  Churchwood Community Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  wildflower grassland
-  watercourse
-  1 numbered views
-  road
-  take care, busy road

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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.

Look out for signs of coppicing in the woods - can you spot 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.



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 Playden, Iden.



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.

Pigs were brought to the High Weald to eat acorns and beech mast - can you spot an oak and a beech tree on this walk?

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. Gill streams flow into rivers that have formed wide valleys in the eastern part of the High Weald, before reaching the sea.

Much of the woodland near Churchwood School is gill woodland - can you find a stream that has carved a twisting path?



Visit www.highweald.org to download more High Weald Welly Walks.

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 - examples of which you can see on this Welly Walk.



These 'unimproved' grasslands are some of our most important habitats for conservation, supporting up to 100 kinds of grasses and wildflowers - which in turn support a great variety of insects and other creatures.

Think about the different habitats that you walk through on this Welly Walk - can you spot any creatures that live in the trees or meadows?

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

This is why the High Weald's fields are relatively small and irregular in shape.