

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: 2.3 miles/3.7 km.

Time: 1.5 hours (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

Description: A short walk through ancient woodland with good views of the High Weald's rolling hills. Be prepared to walk up a long, steep hill at the end, which runs alongside a busy main road!



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.
- 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 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

Frant C.E 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 left and walk along the road – taking care where the pavement runs out and as you approach the bend. When you reach the church turn left through the lychgate **1** and into the burial ground. Follow the path round to the right, all the way through the grounds, until you reach a stile **2**.

Go past here and out into the field. Carry straight on, following the path, keeping close to the line of hedges and trees on your right. At the junction of footpaths carry straight on downhill towards the trees **3**. Go through the small patch of trees, down the steps and out into another field. Bear right slightly, crossing over the gravel path **4** and heading downhill to reach a stile at the edge of Chase Wood **5**.

Follow the path into the woods and continue straight on for some distance, sticking to the main track at all times.

After some distance, follow the path as it curves round to the left **6** and becomes stonier. Keep going for approximately 120 metres until you reach a small stream. Take the footpath on your right just after this point **7** . Shortly afterwards, the path you are on joins a wider track and you will pass a telegraph pole on your left.

Keep going until you reach the bridge **8**. Cross over the bridge and bear left up to a stile **9**. Now follow the narrow footpath uphill which is fenced on either side. Keep going until you reach a wider track **10**. Turn left and follow the track as it passes the houses. Eventually you will reach a main road. Turn left here and walk on the grassy verge until you reach the pavement **11**.

Follow the pavement all the way along the main road and up the hill, until you will reach Church Lane. Turn left here **12** and you are now back at Frant Primary School!

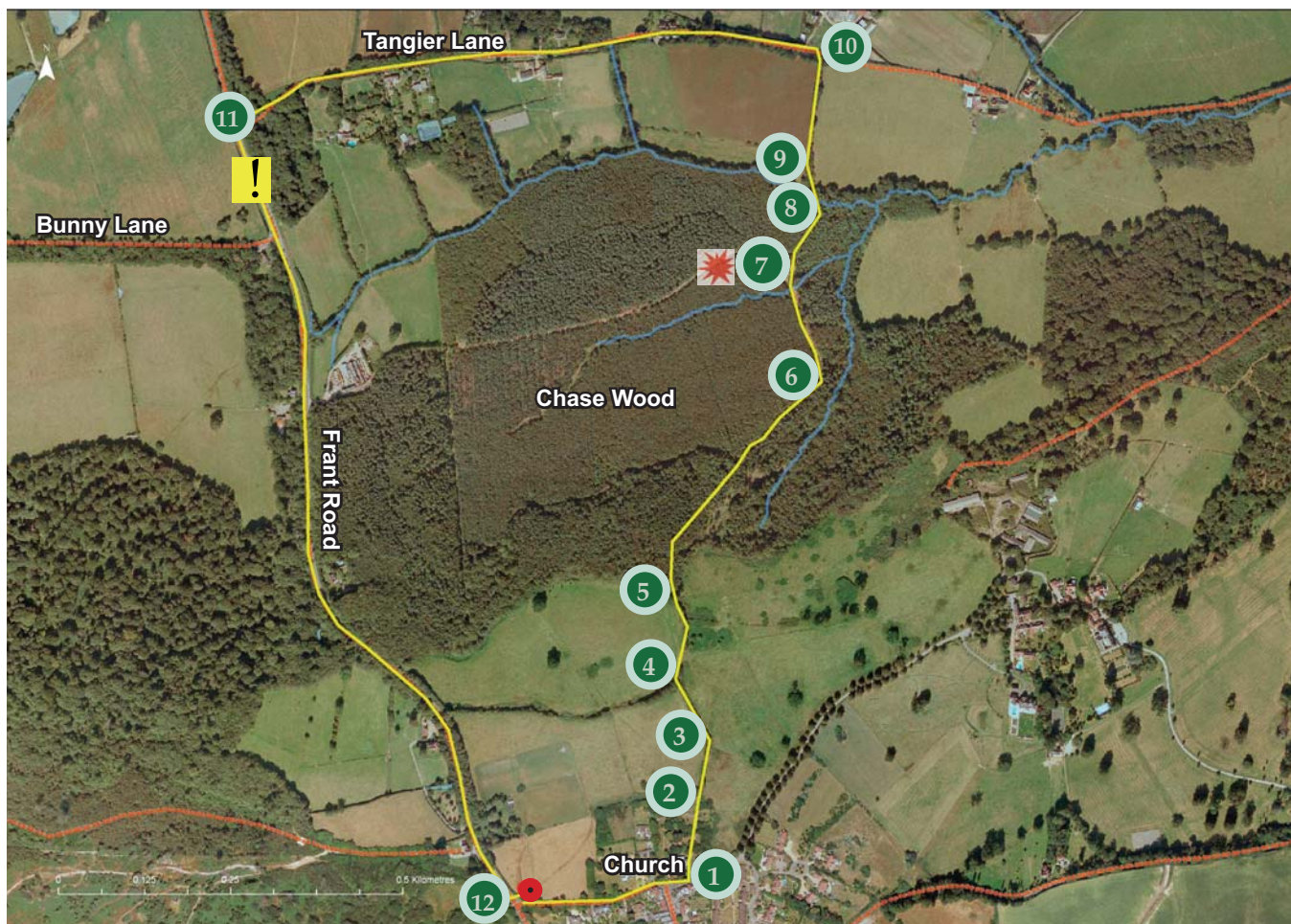
Look out for...






Coppiced Trees



Rolling Hills



Key

-  Frant C.E Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  historic routeway
-  road
-  watercourse
-  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 that you can enjoy on this Welly Walk.

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

Look out for signs of coppicing on your Welly Walk - 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 or nearby Rowden Farm.

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 historic routeways exist in and around Frant.

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 as you walk up the Frant Road on your way back to the school.**

Decorated Frant

Many cottages bear decorative plaques or crests, identifying past or present ownership by a particular estate.

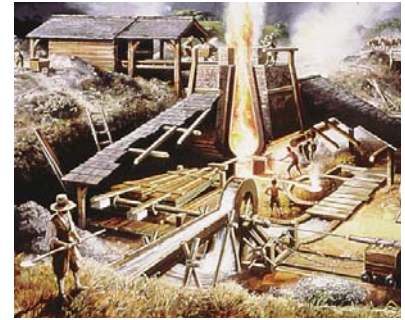
Look out for decorative 'A' plaques on some of the houses you pass on this walk. They show a connection to the Abergavenny Estate, linked to the Nevill family who inherited Eridge Park in 1448.



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 hammers and bellows of the forges and furnaces.

There are numerous former iron working sites scattered in and around Frant, particularly in Eridge Park - where iron production was prevalent.

So, where are the remains of such industry? Building stone was too valuable 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.

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.

Admire the twisting path carved by a gill stream as you cross the bridge at point 8.

