

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:** 2.8 miles/4.5 km.

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

**Description:** A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through ancient woodland and farmland, over gentle terrain. There are numerous stiles to cross and some 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. 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 many roads and stiles to cross. Be aware that some stiles are quite high.
- 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.
- A large group of people can be intimidating, especially to animals. Take care when entering fields containing livestock.
- Be aware of barbed wire/electric fencing, particularly when crossing farmland.
- *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)

## Guestling-Bradshaw C of E Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



1



2



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11




12

*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 entrance **1** carefully cross the busy road. Turn left and walk a short distance along the hedge until you reach a metal kissing gate on your right hand side **2**. Go through the kissing gate and head diagonally left, heading towards the church spire, following the well-worn path across the field. At the end of the path, go through the kissing gate and down the track to meet the road. On reaching the road, turn left and cross over to walk up towards the church. Go through the archway **3** and walk through the graveyard – keeping the church on your left. Keep to the defined path and go through the ‘Millennium’ kissing gate. Now bear right towards the metal farm and kissing gate **4** following the path towards the trees. Walk past the pond on your right hand side and stay on this grassy path all the way downhill.

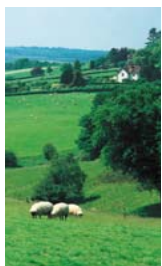
Go through the kissing gate at the edge of Guestling Wood **5** and follow the main track ahead of you into this ancient woodland. Stick to this track as it widens out, taking care not to veer off in either direction. At the first clear fork in the path, find the tall finger post and bear left of it **6** (don’t follow the public footpath arrow that points right!). Carry on for approx. 150m until the path forks again. Now bear right off the main track **7**. Continue to follow this path and look out for signs of coppicing and traditional woodland management . The track widens out but carry straight on up to the wooden kissing gate by the road. Go through this and cross over to find the narrow footpath opposite **8**

leading you into Fairlight Wood (at the side of Watermill House.) At the end of this path, cross the wooden bridge, and bear right through the field, heading towards metal gates and a stile. Once over the stile, turn right and walk up the drive, away from Pett Village Hall. At the main road, turn right and cross over to walk on the pavement. Just past the Two Sawyers pub (which will be on your right) look for the public footpath on your left ⑨ that leads downhill into another patch of ancient woodland. Keep going through the woods, sticking to the main path. At the edge of the woods, cross the stile to follow the grassy path ahead of you. Be aware of the electric fence on your right and keep going straight on until you reach another stile at the edge of the road. Once over this, cross the road with care and find the stile opposite leading into another field ⑩. Keep to the right in this field and continue straight on until reaching another stile at the next road. Again, go over this, cross the road with care and find the stile in the hedge opposite. Follow the grassy path through the field. At the hedge, find the double stile ⑪, cross over and immediately turn right, walking towards the houses. At the bottom of the gentle hill, cross another double stile and carry straight on uphill, to meet another stile shortly afterwards. Follow the path up to the road. Take care on this corner as you cross over into Chapel Lane, ⑫ a historic routeway. Walk straight down the road and, at the end of Chapel Lane, turn right to make your way back to the school, which will be on your left!

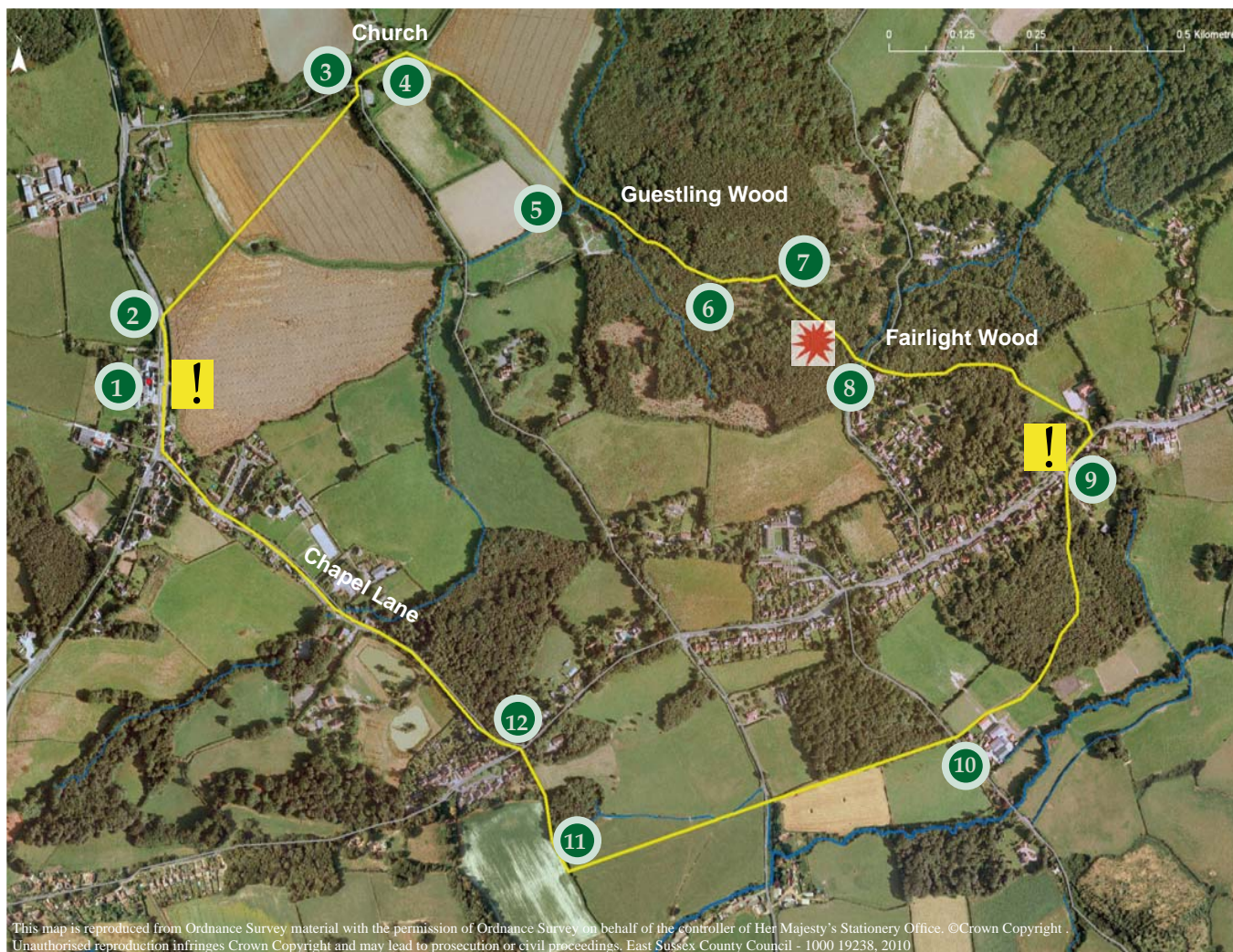
### Look out for...










Ancient Woodland



Rolling Hills



### Key

-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  watercourse
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  busy road
-  Guestling-Bradshaw CE Primary School

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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 coppice 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. 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 to eat the fruits and seeds. Often 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 the continuation of traditional management.

This walk takes you through parts of Guestling, Fairlight and Roughter's Woods - all of which are ancient woodlands.

*Can you spot any evidence of coppicing in Guestling Wood?*

## 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.



## 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.

*Visit [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) to find out more about the High Weald's historic routeways*



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, bridledways and footpaths radiating away from the High Weald.

## 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.



*How many funny shaped fields can you count on this walk?*

## Rolling Hills

The High Weald gets its rolling countryside from underlying bands of sandstone and clay. The hard sandstone forms the high ridges, running east-west. The softer clay is easily worn away: it forms the low valleys in-between.



## Oast Houses

Keep your eyes peeled for some historic oast houses on this Welly Walk. Traditionally, oast houses would have been used to dry and cool hops before being transported to local



breweries and made into beer. Hops have been cultivated in the High Weald since the 16th century. Hopped ale or beer was popular for both its taste and superior keeping qualities and, as trade flourished, so too did hop gardens, oast houses and breweries. Today, only a handful of hop gardens and breweries

remain and most oast houses have been converted for residential use.