

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, January 2013, with support from:



Walk Facts



Distance: 2 miles/3.2 km.

Time: 2 hours (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops).

Description: A short circular walk on the High Weald border, across fields and through Kent orchards and pasture. There are not many stiles but it can get muddy!



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.**

Horsmonden Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference

www.highweald.org



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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 School Gate turn right, following fingerpost along the tarmac track passing several houses, on your left **1**. When you reach a metal gate go through and turn right from the tarmac road onto a grassy footpath **2**. This is a tree-lined track with orchards on both sides. At the crossroads (electricity generator to the right) ***** go straight ahead following another tree-lined track **3**. Follow the footpath sign taking you into an orchard. Turn right keeping the hedge to your right and the orchard trees to your left *****. Continue around the edge of the orchard, the hedges still to your right, until you reach a footbridge. Go over the footbridge and stile **4** into an open field (beware horses). Head straight across the field heading down towards a bungalow on the right side of the field, go over the stile to the right of the bungalow **5**. Follow the path over another stile and turn left onto Grovehurst Lane. Walk along Grovehurst Lane (take care, small verge). On your left is Grovehurst Lake ***** which was once an iron-ore pit and is now a fishing lake.

Walk past Grovehurst Oast and turn left onto Haymans Hill ⑥, (take care, small verge) past some Hoppers' Huts on the left, until you reach a footpath on the left. Follow the footpath left, uphill, leading towards oak trees edging the orchard ⑦. Turn right at the edge of the orchard, following the hedge and keeping the orchard trees to your left, until you reach the corner of the field where you will see a path through a wooded shaw ⑧. Take the path and cross a tarmac drive (take care, entrance to apple packing area) and go through the hole in hedge ⑨.

Turn left following this hedged pathway, one side is a conifer hedge and on the other side the hedge is full of native trees and plants. When you see a metal gate walk to the side of it and carry on straight ahead ⑩, following the path as it narrows, and the hedge is soon replaced with a fence on your right ⑪. Follow the track along until you arrive back at the metal gate ⑫. Go through the gate and follow the tarmac road to the School Gate.

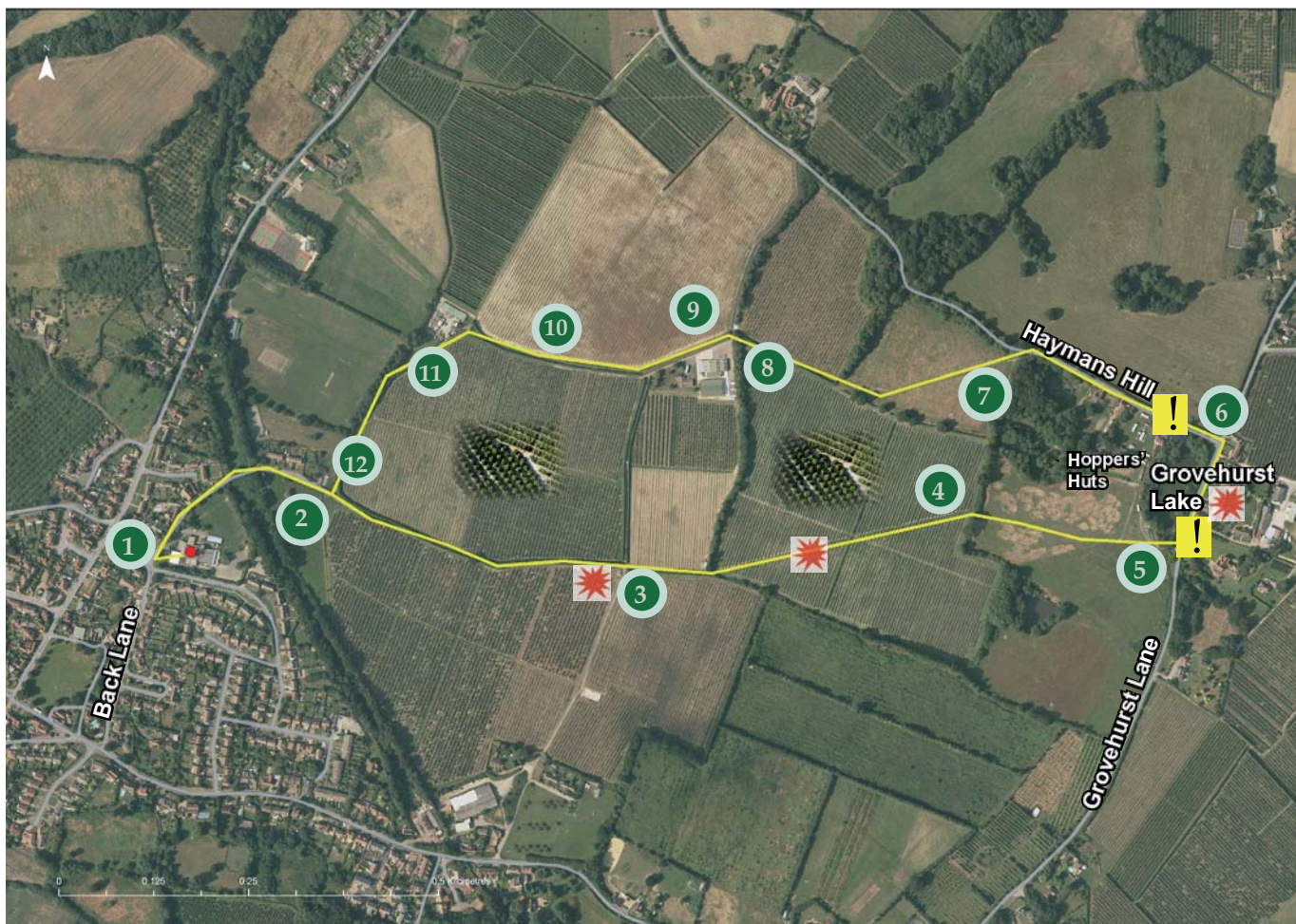
Look out for...



Orchards



Buildings



Key

- Horsmonden Primary School
- WALK ROUTE
- ① numbered views
- ✶ suggested activity point
- road
- Orchards
- ! caution small verge

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The Garden of England

Kent is famous for its orchards full of fruit. In ancient times, crab apples, sloes and gean (wild cherry) were the only types of fruit available. In the 16th century apples, pears and plums were increasingly planted in the High Weald. In the 19th century Victorians, who were very enthusiastic about growing fruit, developed over 1,500 different apple varieties. The apples were used for cooking, eating and making cider.

In the High Weald orchards were particularly plentiful in a belt around Horsmonden. They were called 'gardens' to avoid the tax on farmland. The fruit trees were tall and widely spaced, with sheep grazing the grass underneath. The trees supported a lot of wildlife such as mosses, lichens, insects and birds.

We have lost most of the traditional orchards from the High Weald. However, the tall hedges that were planted as windbreaks around the orchards, often remain.

Modern orchards have much smaller, or 'dwarf' trees, that are grown closer together to produce more fruit per acre or hectare.



How do you know whether the orchard trees on this welly walk are traditional or modern?

The grassy strips between the trees are mown with a tractor. Wooden ladders are no longer needed. Apple pickers use padded buckets to pick the fruit. Fruit is stored in large boxes called bulk bins.



Apples continue to provide food for wildlife such as field mice, hedgehogs, small tortoiseshell butterflies, redwings and fieldfares.

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.

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. 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

The raw materials for making iron were prevalent in Horsmonden and its surrounding areas. A reminder of this old industry is Grovehurst Lake. This Lake was created when



iron-ore was extracted during Tudor times. The iron-ore pit is now a fishing lake, fed by natural spring water.

In other parts of Horsmonden you can find Furnace Pond, a 'hammer' pond, so called because water power from it was used to drive hammers which beat iron into shape. Now this large pond is a haven for wildfowl.

Can you find any clues to the iron industry on this welly walk?



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 - Horsmonden.

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.

Every July, on Horsmonden village playing fields, a sheep sale was held which drew buyers from all over England. This stopped in 2001, due to an outbreak of foot-and mouth disease, but was a reminder of an older pastoral tradition, before most of the local land went over to the growing of fruit and hops after the 16th century.

Adapted from text from the Horsmonden Village Website text - www.horsmonden.co.uk

What's in a name? Den is a term for pasture mainly for pigs. Can you find place names with 'den' where you live?

Hop Farming

Early in the 15th century people started to use hops in ale to add flavour and as a preservative.

After the harvest, the hops were dried in oast houses to prevent them rotting. Fires were lit at the bottom of the oast and hot air rose up through the wooden floor where the hops were spread out. The steam escaped through the pointed cowl in the roof. The work was done by skilled men who lived in the oast till the work was finished. Today oasts have been converted to home dwellings such as the ones at Horsmonden Oast Towers.



The Romans used to flavour their hops with berries from the wild service tree (chequered or chequers tree), which can still be found growing around Grovehurst Lake.