

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.naturalland.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 miles/3.2 km.

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

Description: A short, easy to follow walk through fields and woodland - largely on the Hall Place Estate. Be aware of livestock grazing along much of the route.



Education Resource



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

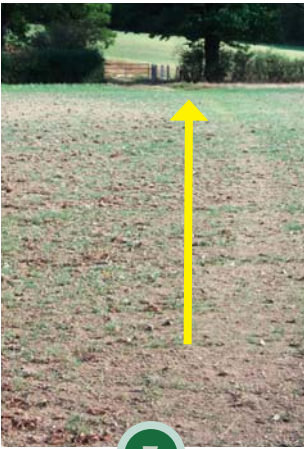
- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground and fallen trees, especially near water and in wet weather.
- Long trousers are advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with 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.
- Lots of animals to see, so remember, a large group of people can be intimidating to them.
- 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

Leigh 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 to the end of the pavement to meet the main road. Cross straight over and walk up the path towards the church **1**. Go through the metal gate into the churchyard and follow the path to the right. Go through the lych gate and bear left, across the grass, through the gates and down the side of Porcupine House **2**. Carry straight on, past a wooden gate on your right, and follow the narrow footpath, fenced on either side **3**. Go through a kissing gate and carry straight on, keeping close to the line of fencing on your left. Go through another kissing gate and keep going until the end of the footpath. There is a bridge to your right and a taller kissing gate on your left. Take the left hand option, through the kissing gate, **4** and follow the narrow wooded path.

Keep going straight on, the Hall Place Estate fields are to your left, trees and a small stream on your right. Continue forward through the woods until eventually you reach a metal squeeze gate **5**. Go through this and immediately turn right, through a large metal farm gate. Keep to the right hand edge of the field and follow the grassy path downhill to another metal gate **6**. Go through this and carry straight on, following the footpath across the field to reach another metal squeeze gate **7**.

Once through here, carry straight on and walk to the end of this field. At the junction of footpaths carry straight on over, 8 through the field (depending on the time of year, it might be through the tall maize!) At another junction of paths (after approximately 75 metres), turn right and follow the path through the field and into the woods 9.

Stay on the main woodland track, trees on either side of you, until it leads you out of the woods. Carry straight on across the grass 10 past the cottage on your right and then turn left along the wide track. Walk along here for approximately 200 metres until you reach the public footpath on your right hand side 11. Follow this through a small patch of trees and up to a stile. Cross over and carry straight on through the large field. Stay on the path and you will soon reach a bridge – cross over 12, go through the squeeze gate and you are now back at 4. Continue forward – you should soon be able to see the tower of St Mary’s Church. Now retrace your steps, back across the fields to Porcupine House. Head right through the churchyard and you will soon be back at Leigh Primary School.

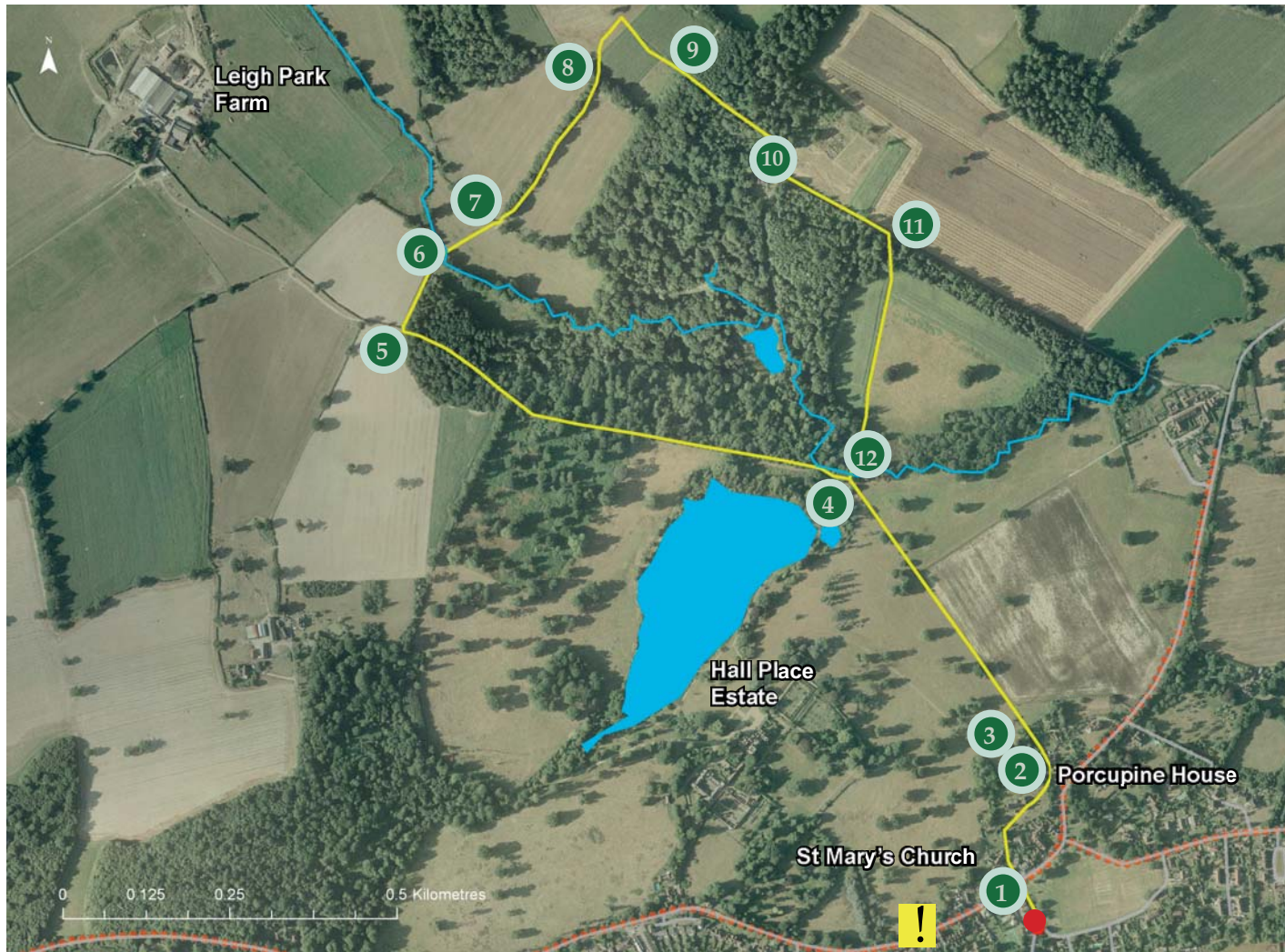
Look out for...










Coppiced Trees



Oast House



Key

-  Leigh Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  historic routeway
-  watercourse
-  1 numbered views
-  ! 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.

Visit www.highweald.org to learn more about the High Weald's woodlands

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 Moor den.

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

Oast Houses

Keep your eyes peeled for an historic oast house 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.

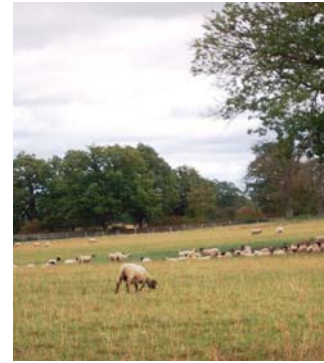
Today, only a handful of hop gardens and breweries remain and most oast houses have been converted for residential use.



Designing the Landscape

Although Hall Place is a large and impressive house today, this has not always been the case.

Hall Place was purchased by Samuel Morley in 1870 and, shortly afterwards, work began to dramatically redesign and enhance the house and gardens - including creating the large, picturesque lake in the middle of the Estate.



This type of refurbishment and creation of grand estates was common in the Victorian era (1837-1901). With the expansion of the British Empire and the work of exotic plant hunters during this time, it became very fashionable to develop and embellish parks and gardens with ponds, paths and unusual plants.

The Victorians introduced lots of rhododendron plants into their parks and gardens - can you spot any on your Welly Walk?



Deer Parks

Historically, the Hall Place Estate would have kept a herd of deer. Many deer parks existed in the High Weald, particularly during Medieval times, and were used as hunting grounds.

Traditionally, deer parks were surrounded by a ditch and bank with a wooden fence (known as a pale) on top of the bank. The ditch was on the inside, thus allowing deer to enter the park, but making it more difficult for them to leave. To establish a deer park, a licence was required from the King - a luxury only afforded by the rich.

