

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, June 2014, with support from:



Walk Facts



Distance: 2 miles/3.2 km.

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

Description: A short circular walk in the heart of the High Weald, across fields, through ancient woodland and alongside gills. It can get muddy in places.



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

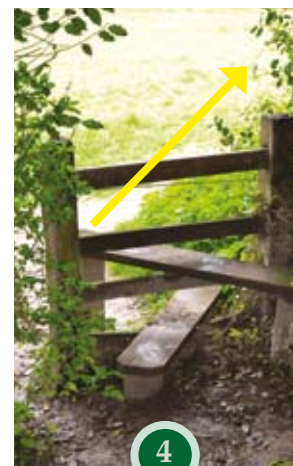
- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground and fallen trees, especially near water and in wet weather.
- Long trousers are advised.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with 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

Mayfield Church of England 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 Memorial Hall car park follow the tarmac path that leads down the hill, past the hall and basketball court, towards the lower field (football pitch) ✨. Where the path splits after the basket ball court, leave the path and cross the football pitch, heading for the corner of the field past the goal posts ①. Go down the steps, cross the track and climb over the stile opposite ②. Turn right, keep to the edge of the field and climb another stile. Walk along the track to the four-way footpath sign. Take the path to the left, with a fence on your right ③. Cross over 2 stiles into another field ④. Turn right and keep to the edge of the fields, crossing another stile. Enjoy the High Weald views to the left. ✨ Look out for an oast house with working cowl and boundary banks with old trees. Follow the path where it veers round to the left to enter a woodland at the bottom of the hill ⑤. Follow the woodland path, crossing a bridge, ignoring the path on your right until you hit a track. Turn right ⑥. Cross the bridge over the stream and immediately past the stream, turn right ⑦ ✨. This area is the site of an old iron furnace and you can read the information board to find out more. Follow the path alongside the stream until you reach another bridge on your right ⑧.

Cross the bridge and follow the path uphill, bearing right at the waymarking post 9. Enter a narrow, sunken section of path and cross another stile to gradually emerge from the wooded path into a field 10. Keep to the left hand side of the field, crossing another stile. Follow the tree-lined path at the edge of a field uphill, crossing another stile 11, to arrive back at the four-way footpath sign. 12 Re-trace your steps back to the Memorial Hall car park.

Look out for...



Ancient trees



Oast house



Gill streams



Key

● Mayfield Primary School

— WALK ROUTE
 ① numbered views

★ suggested activity point
 — road

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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. The boundaries were simply formed by leaving strips of woodland between the fields.



Valerie Alford, ESCC Landscape Group

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.

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 Mayfield 'Falcon' Cannon

The cannon in Mayfield High Street was reportedly cast during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603) at the Mayfield Furnace, owned by Sir Thomas Gresham. Sir Thomas Gresham had been a royal agent in Belgium buying weapons for the crown. He returned in the 1560's, buying the Old Palace Estate in Mayfield. He quickly realised how rich the High Weald



was in natural resources like iron ore, water and wood and established a blast furnace in Vicarage Wood, Mayfield. He may also have been involved in the setting up of lots of local foundries which made iron for the thriving weapons and armoury industries.

Foundries were obviously very important in defending the country from invasion which was always a threat throughout the Tudor age. Gresham also made naval guns for other countries allied to England. At one stage the Mayfield Furnace made more guns than any other place in England! The cannon was discovered in a cinder pit in 1824 and placed on top of the porch of the Old Palace. It was finally restored by the local Historical Society and in 1977 it was presented to the village as part of the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Now it is an important feature of Mayfield's village centre and is a reminder of how important the High Weald was in terms of the Iron Industry.

Can you find any clues to the iron industry on this Welly Walk?

Mayfield's Legend

Saint Dunstan's church stands proudly in the village and is famous for the legend of Saint Dunstan and the Devil! St Dunstan was formerly a blacksmith and one day whilst working in his forge he had a visitor. A beautiful woman stood in the door and the Blacksmith was mesmerised until

he spotted the cloven hooves of the Devil hidden beneath her flowing dress! He grabbed the Devil with his red hot pincers and the Devil disappeared! However, he was to have another visit from the Devil not long after. Again the Devil disguised himself as a weary traveller and asked that the blacksmith help his horse by giving him a new horseshoe. St Dunstan luckily saw through his disguise again and gave the Devil such a hard time that the Devil promised that he would never enter any house with a horseshoe above the door! Hence the horseshoe is now associated with good luck. The church in Mayfield was thus named after this very brave Blacksmith!



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 woodland is classed as ancient - having existed continuously since at least 1600AD.

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. Look out for them as you walk through the woods on this walk.

