

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.countrysideaccess.gov.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:



LOTTERY FUNDED



Walk Facts



Education Resource

Distance: 3.8 miles/6.1 km; alternative short route approx 2 miles/3.2 km

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

Description: A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through woods and farmland, over gentle terrain. There are numerous stiles, steps and foot bridges, with one main road 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.
- 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 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, 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

Rolvenden Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



1



2



3



4



5



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10



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

At the school, take the path that leads behind the buildings, to the staff car park **1**. Go through the kissing gate into the school field. Continue forward, keeping right, to walk between a small patch of trees to a large field beyond. Follow the clearly defined path across the field, heading towards the main road. At the road, turn left and cross over (beware, busy road!). Continue forward, past the oast house and historic farmstead on your right, heading towards the windmill, which you can see on your left. At the end of the path, go through a gate on your right, following the footpath arrow into the field **2**. Head left downhill, to walk parallel with the main road. Walk towards the single track road ahead of you. When you meet the track, turn left, to go over a cattle grid **3** and walk back up to the main road. Cross over into Sandhurst Lane **4**. The windmill will now be behind you. Continue down Sandhurst Lane for approx 1400 metres, taking care to walk on the grass verges where possible; there are no pavements and some cars can speed along here. **NB. If doing the alternative short route, only walk for approx 600 metres until finding a kissing gate on your left, at the top of some steps. Now follow the directions from 'Point 9' to complete.** As you walk past Toad Hall look out for evidence of coppicing in the ancient woodland on your right. Keep going down Sandhurst Lane until you see a narrow road on your left **5** just before Devenden Farm. Turn down this road and continue forward downhill. This is Alder Lane, a historic routeway, and a good example of a sunken lane. Follow the road into the ancient woodland. As the road bends back on itself uphill, stick to the main road as it curves left **6**. Continue on uphill, until you reach

a byway sign on your left, by a metal gate **7**. Go through this gate into the field. Walk straight on, keeping close to the left hand edge, near the trees. At the corner of the field continue on through another metal gate. Keep going; you are now walking with trees to your left and open fields on your right. Eventually you will reach another metal gate, diagonally opposite a white weatherboarded house - a historic farmstead. Go through this gate and head diagonally left across the track towards another metal gate with wire at its base **8** (don't be deceived, it does still open!). Go through this gate - beware of barbed wire - past the farmhouse which is now on your right, and carry on down the bridgeway. At the road, turn right - you are now back on Sandhurst Lane. Shortly after the 'Duck and Drake' farmhouse, find a kissing gate **9** on your right, at the top of some steps. Go through this gate into a field and head diagonally left towards a lone tree and corner of the hedgerow **10**. Once here, follow the line of the hedge down towards a stile. Cross this, and the subsequent bridge, to head uphill through the trees to meet another stile, which again you need to cross. Keep going, staying close to the fence on your right. Cross the next stile and carry straight on towards a brown metal gate. Go through this gate and walk across the field heading towards the houses in the distance. Keep the church tower on your right and the windmill on your left. Be careful not to go through the gate near the barn but instead, look for the stile in the hedge **11**. Go over this and continue forward to cross another stile shortly afterwards. Now pick up the track straight ahead of you through the field towards the trees. At the edge of the trees, follow the grassy path as it bears right into the woodland **12**. Stick to the narrow track through the woods as it leads you back to the school field.  Head towards the kissing gate and you are now back at Rolvenden Primary School!

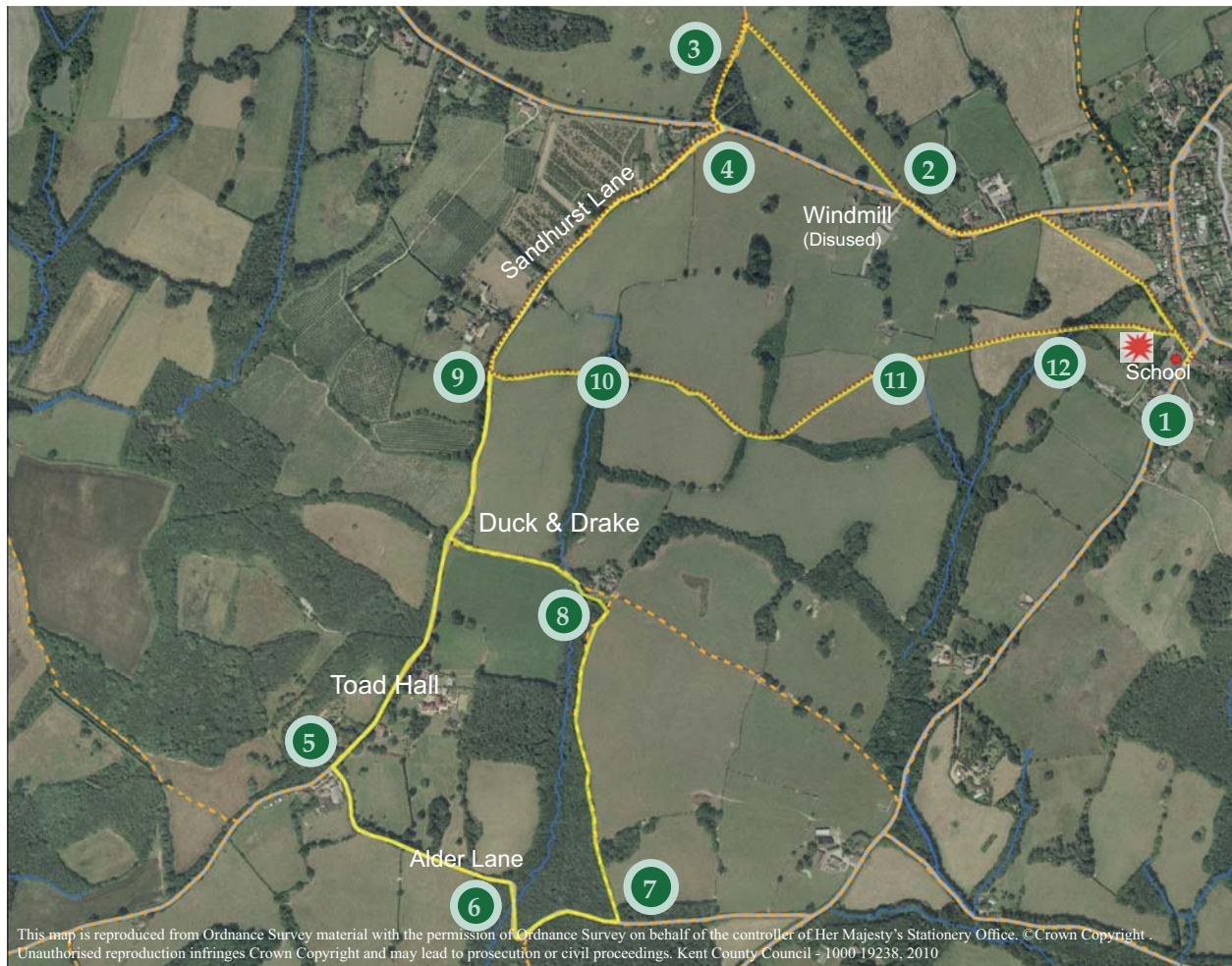
Look out for...



Ancient Woodland










Historic Routeway



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Key

-  WALK ROUTE
-  alternative short route
-  road
-  watercourse
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  drove route

Scattered Farmsteads

The High Weald has many isolated farmsteads, hamlets and dwellings dotted across the countryside. This scattered settlement pattern means that the High Weald is the most populated protected landscape in the UK.

The traditional building materials and styles of the High Weald are an essential part of the landscape's distinctive character. The building materials have come, in fact, from that very landscape – so it is hardly surprising that they blend in so well. Links with the area's wooded past are evident in the number of timber-framed and weather-boarded buildings, whilst the widespread use of sandstone, bricks and tiles is testimony to the High Weald's underlying geology of sandstone and clay. The building materials have led to a particularly rich architectural heritage of distinctive farm buildings – for example hipped and half-hipped barns.



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 - Rolvenden being an obvious example! The frequent passage of pigs being driven to and fro between their parent villages (often 20 miles away) created drove roads. Part of this walk follows the path of one of these drove roads.

How many more examples of local places ending in 'den' can you think of?

A Local Study

As part of the High Weald Historic Routeways Project, a group of volunteers from the Rolvenden community are surveying many paths covered by this Welly Walk, including Alder Lane. This is a great example of a sunken routeway running through ancient woodland. The aim of the project is to record and describe the local networks of roads, lanes, tracks, and footpaths.



Visit www.highweald.org to find out more about the High Weald's historic routeways

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.

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.

