

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](http://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](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:** 5.1 km/3.2 miles

**Time:** 1h30 approximately (depending on conditions and numbers and excluding stops)

**Description:** A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths largely through woods and farmland. Terrain is gentle and route provides spectacular views across the High Weald. Be aware that some roads are unpaved.



## RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons.
- Check the weather - waterproofs or hats and sun cream might be needed.
- Taking a drink with you is advisable.
- Consider adequate staff to student supervision ratios as paths are narrow, the group will spread out and there are unpaved country roads to walk along.
- 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](http://www.highweald.org)

# Rotherfield Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12

*For guidance only, actual conditions may be different from that shown, depending on the weather and time of year*

## Photo guide and route description

**FP** indicates where you will see an East Sussex County Council rights of way finger post

Turn right out of school **1** and walk along Eridge Lane. This is a recognized historic routeway. Walk on the pavement as far as you can and then cross over to walk on grass verges. Be aware of passing vehicles. At Highgate Farm, look out for a footpath on your left and the sign to Old Lodge Warren Farm **2**. **FP** Follow this and, at the bend, take the right hand fork **3** **FP** continuing straight on towards a metal gate. Keep the fields on your right as you head for the left of the gate and continue along this path towards another gate. Turn right at this gate following the fenced path through the field (beware of the barbed wire!) and then left before leading you into Hornshurst Wood **4**. Take the path to the left of the Hornshurst Wood sign **4**. Stick to this path (don't branch left shortly after the sign!) as it makes its way downhill. The area to your left once bordered a medieval deer park. At a fork in the track, bear right to join a wider forest path. Carry straight on but look out for a **FP** signpost **5** on your right, shortly afterwards. Bear right, following the **FP** arrow downhill. At the bottom of the hill turn right **6** **FP** and continue straight along the main track. Be careful not to deviate from this main path and keep going for approx 400m, going straight over at a 'crossroads' of paths. Bear right only when you can go no further and the path

noticeably splits into 2. Follow the wide, right hand path, **7** up the hill and round to the right. The track is quite wide and wooded on either side of you. Continue for some way until the path reaches the main road, past a small car park on your right. **8** At the road turn right and follow it back towards Rotherfield - walk carefully in single file at the edge as there is no pavement and cars can speed along here. Walk past the cemetery and look out for a historic farmstead, 'The Little Oast' on your left. Opposite the road to Old Lodge Warren Farm (where you previously walked!) turn left down Chant Lane, **9** a bridleway and sunken routeway . On this track you will see many of the unique High Weald characteristics - as you walk down the routeway, look out across the rolling hills and admire the scattered farmsteads. Keep going until you reach a large cowshed on your left. Shortly after this, find the large 'Footway to Village' sign **10** next to a metal gate to your right. Follow this path to join the main road that leads to the village. Continue on the pavement at this point, heading back up towards Rotherfield. As you pass the Millennium Green on your left, look out for the blue pedestrian sign ahead that points to the High Street, **11** follow this path and once on to the High Street turn right and head down North Street **12** back to the school.

## Look out for...



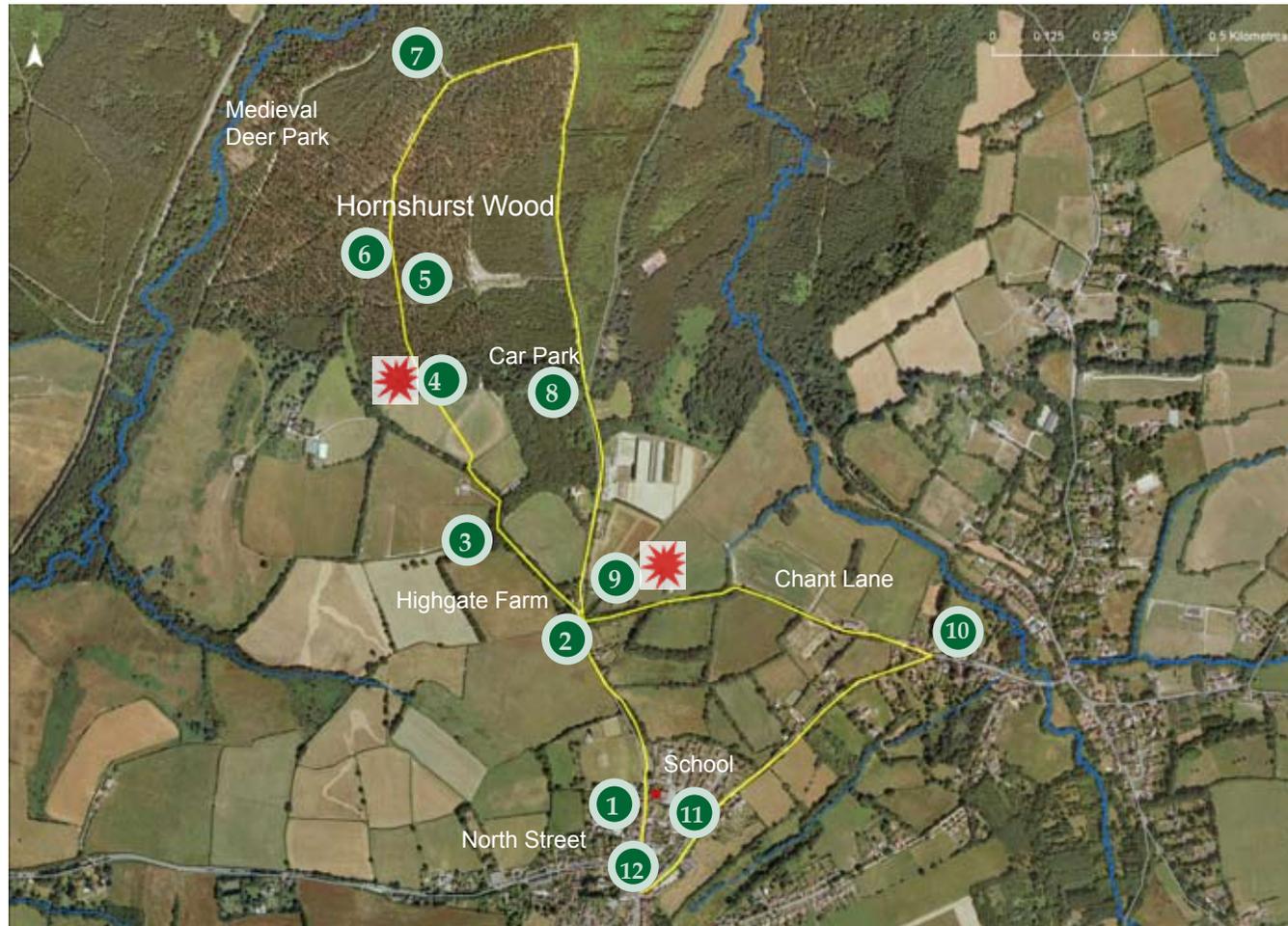
Rolling hills



Sunken lanes



Historic farmsteads



## Key

-  walk route
-  road
-  watercourse
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point

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## Scattered Farmsteads

The High Weald has many isolated farmsteads, hamlets and dwellings dotted across the countryside. This scattered settlement pattern means 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.



## 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

## 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 means 'The den of the men of Thanet'. The frequent passage of pigs being driven to and fro between their parent villages (often 20 miles away) created drove roads and sunken lanes. *Keep an eye out for a great example of a sunken lane on this walk.*

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

## 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.



Visit [www.highweald.org](http://www.highweald.org) to download more High Weald Welly Walks

## 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. They have been maintained for centuries by skilled workers using a rotational coppice system.

Coppicing is the name for 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 can attract insects to feed on the nectar and birds and small mammals to eat the fruits and seeds. Often the 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 that these woodlands are managed in a way that supports a wide variety of wildlife.

## Deer Parks

In Medieval times, two deer parks would have been found in Rotherfield. These were enclosed areas of land, often owned by nobility, containing deer. Traditionally, the park was 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.

