

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 with support from:



Walk Facts



Distance: 2.5 miles/4 km.

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

Description: This is a gentle town walk which goes across Tunbridge Wells Common, past Wellington Rocks and through the historic Pantiles.



RISK ASSESSMENT - Points to consider

- Please use with an Ordnance Survey Explorer Map.
- Wear sturdy footwear or wellingtons, being aware of uneven ground. Long trousers are also advised.
- 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 to cross.
- Plants such as nettles and brambles can sting and scratch; berries from plants can cause stomach upsets if eaten.
- Whilst there are toilet facilities on Tunbridge Wells Common, we recommend that toilet paper and hand wipes are taken as a precaution.
- Everyone must clean their hands before eating.
- *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

St Barnabas C of E 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

Starting at the school gate **1**, turn right along Quarry Road. Walk along the pavement, crossing several minor roads. Keep going straight down Camden Road and continue to follow the road as it bends right, round to Monson Road. At the end of Monson Road, by the library, cross the main road **2** and then turn left. Keep going towards the road junction. Safely cross Church Road and then turn right along it, passing Trinity Theatre on your right (on the other side of the road). Keep going until the traffic lights, follow the pavement leading up to the main road and cross over onto Tunbridge Wells Common **3** .

Once on the Common, turn left along the well-defined path and walk parallel with the main road (on your left). Keep going until you reach the end of this path and cross straight over heading into the woods **4** to follow the path uphill. As you emerge from the wooded path, Wellington Rocks, a sandstone outcrop will be on your right . Keep going towards the cricket pitch's perimeter fencing **5**. Now turn left and follow the path downhill - walking with Wellington Rocks behind you and the cricket pavilion on your right. Shortly afterwards, at the first junction of paths, turn right and immediately bear left where the path forks **6**. Keep going until you emerge at the end of Fir Tree Road. Carefully cross the main road (Major York's Road) and find the path leading diagonally left, near the start of Hungershall Park Road **7**. Follow this path downhill. Keep going,

crossing 2 junctions of paths. At the 3rd junction turn right **8** and follow this path.

At the first opportunity bear left off the main track and follow the path down some steps **9** round to Brighton Lake - a large pond at the roadside which is an important habitat for wildlife. Bear right to walk around the pond and then walk on the grass, by the side of the road, up to the Sainsbury's roundabout. Here, turn left back into the woods and follow the path uphill. At the crossroad of paths, turn right to walk towards the car park **10**. Keep going until you reach Major York's Road and carefully cross over. Bear right, heading towards the main road and zebra crossing. Cross over and turn right, heading back towards the roundabout. At Swan Passage **11** turn left into the Pantiles - a historic passageway and home to the Chalybeate Spring, an iron rich source of water discovered in 1606. Turn left along the Pantiles and, at the end, cross the road at Nevill Street. Once you have crossed over, turn left and then immediately right, around the church **12** into the passage. Shortly afterwards, turn left towards the High Street, walking up some steps, to continue straight on towards the shops. Walk all the way uphill for approx 800 metres. Just after the library, turn right down Monson Road and follow it as it becomes Camden and then Quarry Road. Eventually you will reach the school again, which will be on your left!

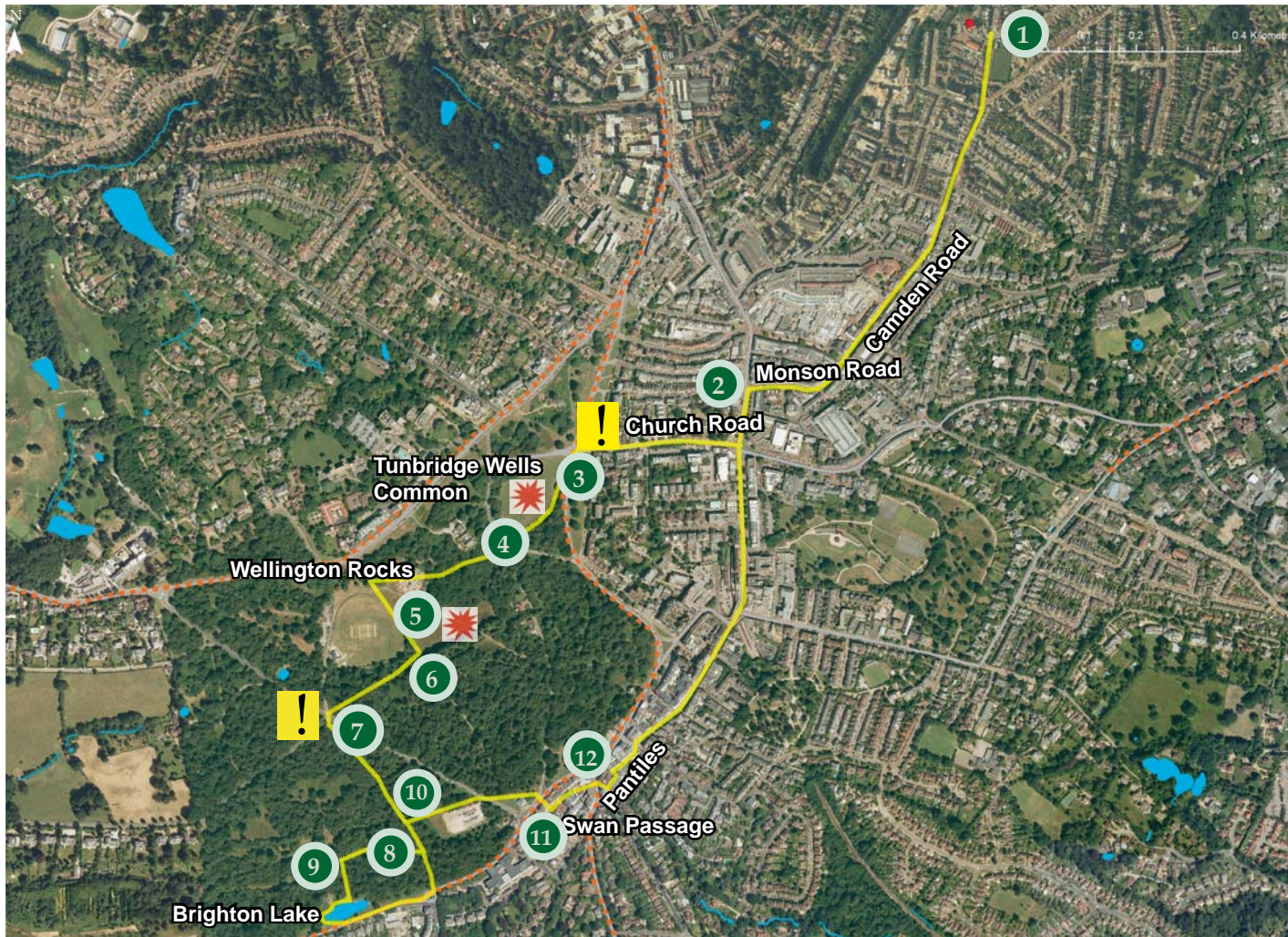
Look out for...











Sandstone Outcrops



Ancient Spring



Key

-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  watercourse
-  historic routeway
-  busy road
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  St Barnabas CE Primary School

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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. Tunbridge Wells common originally existed as one such den - an open place for grazing. Many places in the High Weald have names ending in den - for example Tenterden.

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. Look closely at the map in this Welly Walk leaflet to see where some of these historic routeways exist in and around Tunbridge Wells.



Special Sandrock

Sandrock outcrops are a distinctive local feature found scattered over the High Weald. Wellington Rocks, on this Welly Walk, are a good example. The rocks are important geological features and home to some nationally rare ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. These species have survived so well in the High Weald because of a number of factors, including the relatively high rainfall and extensive woodland canopy, which have prevented the sandstone from drying out.



Sandstone is a very soft rock that can be worn away easily by people (e.g. rock climbing, graffiti) and the weather. These actions can rub off the hardened skin that protects the rocks and speeds up how fast they wear away. It also rubs off the minerals that the plants require to grow. Where rocks are used for climbing, special rules are in place to prevent damage.

Can you spot any liverworts or lichens growing on Wellington Rocks?

Sandrock outcrops were first used as shelters for Mesolithic hunters (c.8000 - 4300 BC). Later, sandstone was valued as a building stone. Remains of numerous small local quarries can be still seen in the High Weald today. Many grand houses and churches in this area are built of sandstone, e.g. Battle Abbey, Bodiam Castle and Wakehurst Place.



Visit www.highweald.org to watch the 'Tarneg' video and discover how Mesolithic hunters used sandrock outcrops.

High Weald Ponds

Look out for Brighton Lake on this walk, created in 1858 and an important habitat for wildlife. The Weald has one of the highest concentration of ponds in South East England. Many ponds have developed because of human activity e.g. quarrying, while others were created as drinking ponds for farm animals.



In the High Weald some large 'hammer ponds' can also be found. These were created to power the bellows and hammers of the iron industry.

Happy Habitats

This walk takes you through a variety of habitats for plants and animals. "Tunbridge Wells Common provides an important refuge for plants and animals within the urban area. Woodland, grassland, heathland and rocky outcrops along with a small lake and several ponds provide varied habitats. 300 species of flowering plants have been recorded so far along with 25 species of butterflies, 18 species of dragonflies, 135 species of solitary bees and wasps and 35 breeding species of birds. There are also lizards, snakes, frogs, toads, newts and a variety of mammals including rabbits, foxes and badgers" (Tunbridge Wells Common Interpretation Board).

Iron-rich Water

In the Pantiles, you will pass the Chalybeate Spring, an iron-rich source of water, discovered in 1606. Drinking the water reportedly had extensive health benefits, thus the spring fast became a tourist attraction. The orangey red colour is a clear indication of the substantial iron content.



In both Roman and Tudor times, the High Weald was the main iron-producing region in Britain. The iron can be seen in springs and streams across the area.

The High Weald contains 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 woodland provided the charcoal fuel; and the numerous small streams and valleys ensured water power for the bellows and hammers of the forges and furnaces.