

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: 4.3 miles/6.9 km.

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

Description: A walk largely through ancient gill woodland and across heathland. The woods can get very muddy and care will need to be taken when crossing busier roads.



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.
- Take care when walking along roads with no pavements; stay close to the edge/on grass verges where possible.
- 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.
- 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

St Mary's Catholic 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

At the end of the school drive, turn right and walk along Chapel Green. At the roundabout turn right and use the crossing to cross Crowborough Hill **1**. Once over the road, walk through the metal barrier and up the Poundfield Footpath. Follow the concrete path past the playing fields on your left and continue straight on and past the entrance to Beacon Community College on your right. Keep going to enter a small patch of woodland and, at the crossroad of footpaths, turn right **2**. Follow the path (fenced on either side) down to the road.

Cross straight over (Pellings Farm Close) and continue to follow the footpath down to Green Lane. Cross over and turn right. Look out for the public footpath on your left **3** shortly afterwards and follow it into The Ghyll. Stick to the main woodland path all the way downhill until you reach a bridge. Cross over and *immediately* turn right **4**. Follow the footpath up a small slope to reach a junction of footpaths. Take first right **5**, following the footpath that leads into the woods. Stick to this path, for approximately 250 metres, as it continues through The Ghyll. Always keep the stream on your right hand side as a guide! When possible, take the higher path to where the path forks. Bear left and, shortly afterwards, carry straight on - passing a yellow metal marker pole on your left hand side **6**. Keep going as the path twists and turns to the right.

At the next junction turn right, to pass a distinctive oak tree with branches that reach out over the path on your right hand side. Continue straight on, again keeping the stream on your right. The path begins to widen out and you will pass through a small clearing. Follow downhill to reach a larger clearing that brings you level with the stream  7. Keep going until you reach another bridge.

Cross over the bridge and turn left to walk up to the gate and main entrance of the site 8. Walk through the car park and turn left along Burdett Road up to Forest Rise. Walk up hill, past Brook Close on your left. Follow the road as it bends right and becomes 'Heather Walk'. Keep going, but look to your left and, when possible, walk across the grass and go through the gap in the fence 9 that brings you out onto Palesgate Road. Turn left and walk up the road until you reach an uneven track on your right hand side 10. Follow this track all the way uphill to reach Lime Kiln Oast. Now carry straight on along the narrow track, fields on either side, until you reach a small road. Cross straight over 11 and follow the well worn footpath along the line of telegraph poles, across the heathland, into Limekiln Wood. You will soon reach a junction of footpaths. Just *after* this junction turn left, off the main path through a small patch of trees 12. Follow the track that is fenced on either side. Keep going until you can go through a gate and follow the road, past farm buildings, to reach another gate and stile. Cross this and continue straight on to reach the main road. Turn left and walk down the road all the way back to Pellings Farm Close. Turn right here and walk along the pavement until you reach the footpath on your right hand side where you previously walked down. Turn right up the footpath and retrace your steps past the playing fields (now on your right) and down to Crowborough Hill. Cross over to reach Chapel Green and back to St Mary's School!

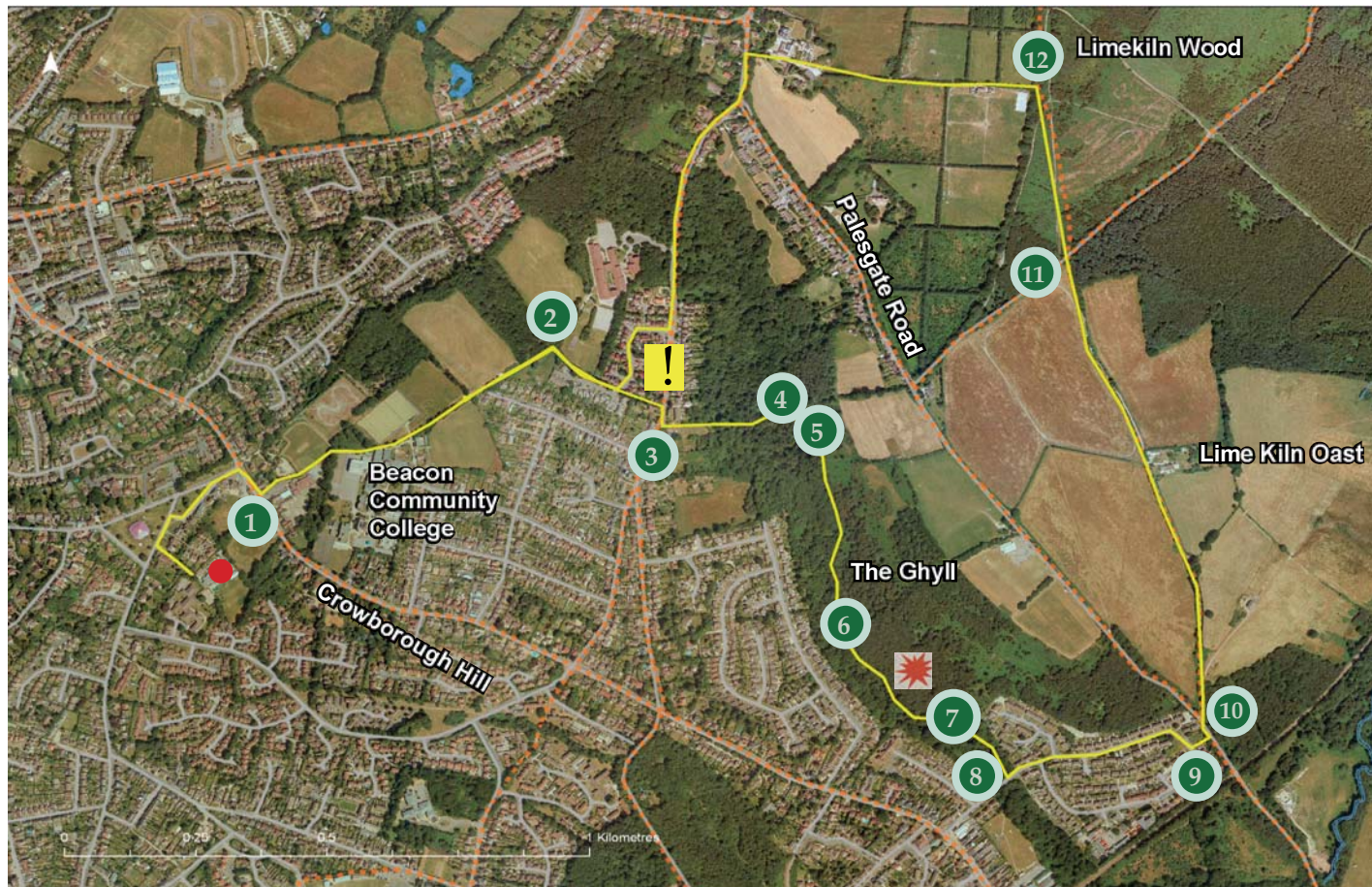
Look out for...






Iron-stained water



Rolling Hills



Key

-  St Mary's Catholic Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  watercourse
-  historic routeway
-  numbered views
-  suggested activity point
-  busy road

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. East Sussex County Council - 1000 19601, 2011.

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. On this Welly Walk, The Ghyll is an example of ancient woodland.



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.

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 hammers and bellows of the forges and furnaces.



The raw materials for making iron were prevalent in Crowborough. There are numerous former iron working sites, furnaces and bloomeries scattered in and around the town - including two in The Ghyll.

As you cross the bridge at **4** look down at the water.



You might see some water that looks like this. The orangey-red colour is a clear indication of the substantial iron content.

So, where are the remains of the High Weald iron industry? Building stone was too valuable 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

High Weald Heathland

Part of this walk, in Limekiln Wood, is across heathland - a very special, and rare, habitat.

On heathland you can find 5,000 types of invertebrate, 27 out of all 39 British dragonflies, more than 500 species of spider (all of which are carnivorous) and all British amphibians and reptiles, including adders!



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 Marden's Hill, Tenterden and Standen.

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 Crowborough.

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.



Gill streams flow into rivers that have formed wide valleys in the eastern part of the High Weald. For much of this Welly Walk you are walking alongside a fantastic example of a gill stream - admire the twisting path carved by the water as you walk from point **4** all the way through the woods.

Listen carefully as you walk through The Ghyll - can you hear the water?