

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: 3.5 miles/5.7 km.

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

Description: A gentle walk through woods and fields with a short section of road walking. The woods can get very muddy and there are stiles to cross.



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. Long trousers are also 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 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

Stonegate Church of England Primary School High Weald Welly Walk



Be a High Weald Hero - you can make a difference



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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 school, turn right and walk to the end of Station Road. Carefully cross Cottenden Road and carry on up Lynden Lane **1**. Walk for approximately 850 metres, taking care as there are no pavements. When you reach Lynden Farm House on your right (opposite Orchard Place and just before the bridge) go through the gate **2** at the edge of the drive. Carry straight on, bearing slightly left towards a wooden gate. Go through this and carry on to reach an open field. Follow the path around the right hand edge of the field up to a stile and gate by a stream. Cross over and head diagonally left uphill, towards the trees **3**. At the trees turn right and continue straight on – following the line of fencing and the trees on your right. Keep going, through a gate, into the next field until you reach a stile on your left. Go over this and bear slightly right through the field to reach a kissing gate shortly afterwards **4**. Go through it and follow the grassy path downhill, past the pond, through another kissing gate and around the tennis courts. At the end of the grassy path, continue straight on down the track ahead of you **5**, passing an oast house on your right. Stick to this track for approximately 500 metres, until you reach, and cross, a stile on your right into a field. Carry straight on, through a gate and across a small stream, until you reach another gate and stile at the edge of Limden Wood. Cross the stile and follow the main track all the way through the woodland. Where the path forks, continue straight on **6** until reaching a gate and stile at the end of the woodland path. Cross this stile and turn left uphill, keeping the trees on your left and open fields to your right **7**.

Follow the gravel path as it rises sharply. At the 'summit' continue on the path as it bears left towards the road and hedgerow. Look for a stile at the roadside. Go over this and find a safe place to cross the road. Continue straight on 8 along a wide grassy verge. Pass the end of Cottenden Road on your right and walk down Battenhurst Road. Ensure you stay on the grassy verges as you walk down the road as there are no pavements. Keep going, past the cheese dairy, until you reach Bearhurst Farm (on your right). As the road bends left, opposite the pink house, turn right down a concrete track 9. Head downhill and follow the road, passing a pond on either side of you. The track now has trees on either side. Keep going until the trees end and then, after approximately 50 metres, turn right into a small field. Bear left, (between the old tractors!) towards the trees 10. As you emerge at the edge of a large field, turn right and then left to walk uphill. Keep the hedgerow on your right, as you enter the next field, again continue around the right hand edge, heading in the direction of Stonegate church 11. At the stile, cross over, and carry straight on to reach another gate and stile on your right. Cross this and bear left towards the trees and a stile at the edge of the woods. Enter the woods and turn right, following the path through the gill woodland. At the next stile, by the sewage works, cross over and turn right. Keep going, following the narrow footpath towards a stile. Go over the stile and turn left, walking up the track towards Stonegate church 12. Go through the large metal gate and then through another gate (on your right) heading into the graveyard. Follow the path to reach the front of the church and out onto Station Road. Now turn right and you will soon be back at Stonegate Primary School.

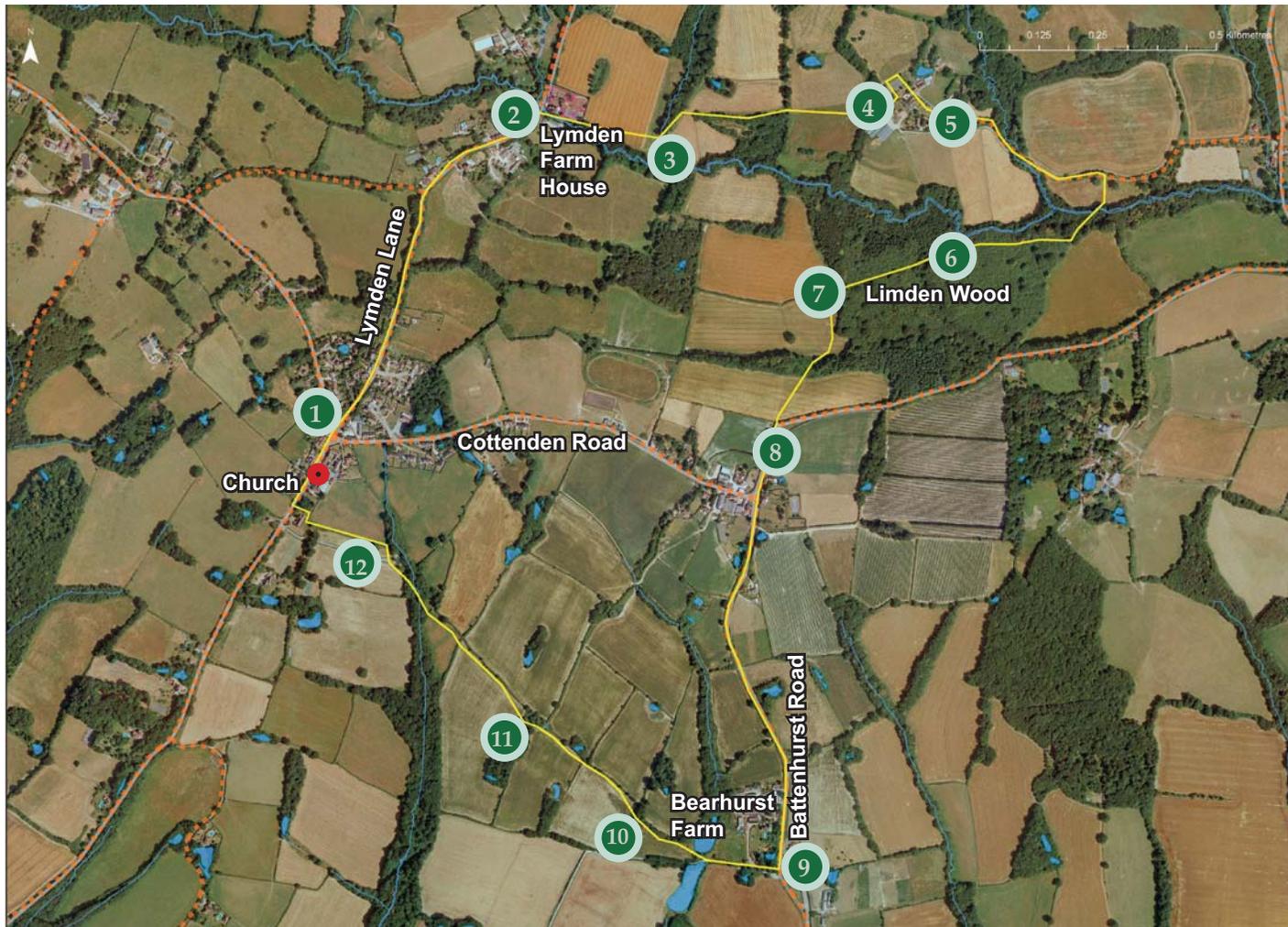
Look out for...



Funny shaped fields



Ancient Woodland



Key

-  Stonegate CEP School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  historic routeway
-  watercourse
-  wildflower grassland
-  numbered views

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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, Limden Wood 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.

Look out for signs of coppiced trees in the woods - see if you can spot trees with multiple trunks!

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.



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.

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. 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 often small and irregular in shape.

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.

High Weald Ponds

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.

How many ponds can you count on this Welly Walk?

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 and some are included on this Welly Walk - for example Cottenden Road and Lynden Lane.



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 Stonegate