

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: 3.2 miles/5.2 km.

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

Description: A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through woods, town and farmland, over gentle terrain. There are stiles and foot bridges to cross, with some busier roads 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 and fallen trees, especially near water.
- 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.
- Whilst there are toilet facilities at East Court 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

Blackwell 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 gate turn left. Cross Hilda Duke's Way and take the next left towards Hackenden Lane, bearing left as the road curves right **1**. Keep going until you reach a public footpath on your left **2**. Turn down here and follow the path, behind the school and the allotments. Keep going, into Mount Noddy Recreation Ground. Go past the swings, and keep walking until you reach the main road. Use the zebra crossing to cross Cranston Road and carry straight on down Moat Road **3**, passing Moat Pond on your right. When you reach the bridge turn left and walk down Sandy Lane, houses on your left. Keep going to reach another main road and cross straight over (use nearby zebra crossing). Turn left and walk past the end of Estcots Drive. Turn right down a narrow track, just before East Court Lodge **4**, following the Sussex Border Path sign. Walk down this sunken routeway, past Estcots Farmhouse, an historic farmstead. Where the road ends, carry straight on along a narrow fenced path between the trees. Head downhill and where the path emerges (car park on your left) carry straight on, continuing between the trees. At the end of the trees, continue onto the grass but immediately bear left heading **5** back on to a narrow, wooded path by the stream – fence on your right. Follow this narrow path, keeping the water on your left and houses on your right. At the wooden bridge carry straight on and follow the path uphill towards the houses. Continue straight ahead to cross the road and follow the pavement, passing some swings on your left. Cross another road and then the stile at the edge of the woods. Follow the path up to the next stile. Cross over and carry straight on, following the footpath across the field **6**.

Bear left and continue to follow the footpath as it then bears right around the edge of woodland up to another stile **7**. Cross this and the subsequent stile, at the other side of a small field, to emerge at Fairlight Farm, another historic farmstead. At the track, turn left and walk past the stables. Walk along the road until you reach Fairlight Cottage (on your left) and immediately afterwards, turn left down a footpath leading into Ashplats Wood **8**. Continue along the line of fencing until the path splits. Take the footpath to the right and go over the wooden bridge **9**. Follow the footpath uphill until you meet the main track. Turn left along here **10** and continue until you reach the crossroad of paths. Carry straight on **11**, following the path downhill (take care as can be slippery) until you reach a wooden bridge. Cross over and follow the path uphill, to emerge at a clearing . Turn left across the grass, past the 'Primroses' signpost and bear right where the path forks shortly afterwards. Follow this path all the way through the woods until you emerge at the playing fields . Bear right uphill, walking towards East Court **12**. Go up the steps. At East Court, walk past (and rub!) the iron stone on your right and then carefully follow the path away from the car park, past the Old Court House on your left and back to the main road. When you reach Holtye Road, cross over and carry straight on up Blackwell Farm Road. You will shortly be back at School, which is on your left!

Look out for...



Historic Farmsteads



Ancient Woodland



Key

-  Blackwell Primary School
-  WALK ROUTE
-  road
-  historic routeway
-  watercourse
-  numbered views
-  activity point
-  busy road

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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, Ashplats 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.



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.



On this Welly Walk, there are various clues that the iron industry used to be present in and around East Grinstead. It is thought the name 'Noddy' from Mt. Noddy Recreation Ground, derives from the quantities of "slug, slag, noddy or cinders" which were a by-product of the iron industry and were left in heaps on the banks of many ponds in the Weald. The large iron stone at East Court is also a reminder that the iron industry used to be important in this area.



So, where are the remains of such 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 & East Grinstead Society.

Visit www.highweald.org to learn more about the High Weald's iron story

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. Look out for the paths carved by the gill streams as you walk through Ashplats Wood.



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.

Both Fairlight Farm and Estcots Farmhouse are beautiful examples of historic farmsteads that you will see on this Welly Walk.



Look at the houses and farm buildings on this Welly Walk - what local materials have been used to build them?

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 Hackenden 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.