Rabbits were introduced into England by the Normans in the 12th century. They were an excellent source of both meat for food and fur for clothing, so people decided to breed them and started rabbit farms.

At that time rabbits were delicate creatures and not used to the English weather. The rabbit farmers had to dig large warrens for the rabbits to live in, to protect them from the cold and wet. This was easier to do in the sandy soil of heathland in areas like Ashdown Forest.

The farmers made fences around the warrens to keep foxes and other predators away and to keep the rabbits in. You can see lots of these warrens, known as pillow mounds, marked on modern maps.

Iron had been produced in the High Weald for centuries, but from the first use of the blast furnace in Coleman’s Hatch in 1496 the industry expanded rapidly.

At this time the town of Calais, although in France, belonged to England. Weapons for the English royal armoury were made there. The French wanted Calais to belong to France, so Henry VIII declared war on them. High Weald foundries were kept busy supplying cannon and shot.

French High Weald iron workers had to swear allegiance to the King and pay a fee, or they would be made to leave the country. By this time these men and their families were quite settled here, so they would not want to lose their jobs and be sent away. England lost the fight for Calais in 1558, but the iron industry in the High Weald was even busier. Weapons could no longer be made in Calais, and now there were wars to be fought against Spain. The High Weald iron industry was more important than ever.

We are expert deer park fitters, established in 1250. We can get your park up and running in no time. Or we can supply the kit for you to fit your own.

Comes complete with spades for digging the ditch and mounding up the earthworks. But it needn’t cost the earth! Our customised circular layout gives you maximum space for minimum outlay. Keeps fencing costs down.

Blast furnaces were powered by a continuous flow of water from fast-flowing gill streams.

Forges needed large supplies of water, but not all the time. Hammerponds were created to store water for when it was needed. Ironworks were sited in valleys where water was easily available.

The success of the iron industry led to new wealth for the ironmasters (or to even greater wealth for the ones who were rich already). To show off their wealth and status, some ironmasters built large and rather grand manor houses. These were generally built of stone or, later, of brick.

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The expansion of the iron industry meant a large amount of High Weald woodland was used to fire the furnaces. But there were other demands on the woodland too...

**Iron and Wood Crossword**

**Across**
1. Slow-burning fuel made from wood.
2. French town where weapons were made for England.
3. Wooden houses were - - - - framed.
4. Thick bouquets and trunks were needed for this.
5. People gathered this for heating and cooking.
6. The word for heating iron.
7. Woodland was - - - - - - - - to make space for agriculture.
8. Religious houses closed by Henry VIII.
9. Tree introduced by the Romans.
10. Continental invention that changed the iron industry.
11. The word for heating iron.
12. Ironmaster's house with six brick chimneys.
13. Tree introduced by the Romans.
14. Workers who made wool into cloth.
15. What the cloth workers need for their trade.
16. Some ironmasters don't care who else needs the wood. They own the woodland and tell off what they're not using at a high price to people in London who can afford it.

**Down**
1. Cutting trees close to ground level so they produce several thin trunks is called
2. - - - - - - Hatch, where the first blast furnace was used.
3. Area where all of these stories happened.
4. Tree introduced by the Romans.
5. Cutting trees close to ground level so... is called
6. The first Tudor king
7. First cast iron cannon made in Buxted.
8. Wooden houses were - - - - - - framed.
9. Area where all of these stories happened.
10. First cast in Buxted.
11. Religious houses closed by Henry VIII.
12. Ironmaster's house with six brick chimneys.
13. Workers who made wool into cloth.
14. Some ironmasters don't care who else needs the wood. They own the woodland and tell off what they're not using at a high price to people in London who can afford it.

**Solution**

1. Charcoal
2. Colemans
3. Gill
4. France
5. Bloomery
6. High Weald
7. Cannon
8. Timber
9. Shipbuilding
10. Blast furnace
11. Fuel
12. Batemans
13. Smelting
14. Weavers
15. Cleared
16. Monasteries
17. Sweet chestnut

**ON THE THRONE**

The wood in the woods is that High Weald timber could be used to create the highest seat in the land, by Royal Command! His Royal Highness King Henry VIII has ordered a 'close stool' for his exclusive use. It is to be made by William secure, coffee-maker, and, being a water closet, will be the first of its kind in the world.

The seat, back and elbows will be made of stout wood (which it is hoped will be sourced from High Weald woodland). It will be padded with 3lbs (1.3kg) of down covered in black velvet and will be decorated with silk fringes and ribbons, all tucked down with gilt nails. It is believed the final cost will be around £640.

"We are all hoping that the King will bestow this honour on the High Weald," said woodland manager Gabriel Oak.

As major suppliers of the finest timber to His Majesty's Royal Navy, we feel it would be a fitting tribute. The woodsmen are going at their best shot and their efforts are not to be pooh-poohed."

The court astrologer says that in around 465 years time, this amount of money will be worth £2,060.00

"Yes, but you can't make weapons too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building? There's nails, bolts, latches, keys, locks, firebacks..."

"Well, we need iron for building too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building?"

"Don't forget we need timber for building as well as stone and clay.

We keep people in work. We buy from the farmers, we pay cottagers to dye it, spinners to spin and weavers to make it into cloth."

"Don't talk to me about farmers. They're always clearing the trees to make extra fields for themselves too."

"But, but you can't make weapons too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building?"

"Well, we need iron for building too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building?"

"Hear, hear! You're right."

"Yes, but you can't make weapons too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building?"

"Don't forget we need timber for building as well as stone and clay.

We keep people in work. We buy from the farmers, we pay cottagers to dye it, spinners to spin and weavers to make it into cloth."

"Don't talk to me about farmers. They're always clearing the trees for building as well as stone and clay.

"Well, we need iron for building too. We don't just make weapons you know. What about tools for building?"

"Hear, hear! You're right."
Hopping Down to the High Weald

From the late 17th century road networks improved, stagecoaches ran between London and the south coast passing through the High Weald...

People from London came to the High Weald for pleasure...

Tunbridge Wells was a very fashionable place to visit. Daniel Defoe, who wrote Robinson Crusoe, said it was a place where “rich clothes, jewels and beauty” dazzled the eye and that “without money a man is no-body at Tunbridge”.

Although the road network had improved, the road surfaces of High Weald clay were as bad as ever. They were sometimes too muddy for a vehicle to use, and were generally full of ruts and holes. There were often accidents. Visitors to Tunbridge Wells took their personal bonesetters with them just in case! These were specially trained people who could put dislocated bones back in place.

Visit the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum
www.wealldown.co.uk to find out more about historic rural life.

Exhibits at:
- Bexshill Museum
- Cranbrook Museum
- East Grinstead Museum
- Hastings Old Town Hall Museum
- Horsham Museum
- Rye Castle Museum
- Tenterden Museum
- Hastings Old Town Hall Museum
- Horsham Museum
- Bexhill Museum
- Cranbrook Museum
- East Grinstead Museum
- Hastings Old Town Hall Museum
- Horsham Museum
- Tenterden Museum

More online at:
- www.kentlife.org.uk
- www.hop-growing.co.uk

iron brew

– It’s what the TOP BRASS is drinking!

Members of the aristocracy have been beating a path to our CHALYBEATE SPRINGS since their chance discovery by Lord North in 1660. Here’s what those top-notch tourists are saying:

“Forget the expense and inconvenience of travelling to the Belgian spa, or to Bath. This is just 35 miles from London.”

“I just know it must be doing me GOOD because it tastes so AWFUL!”

“Great place to relax, catch up with friends and get healthy at the same time!”

“My doctor recommended spa water for my palsy, and now I feel a million dollars!”

Just some of the many CAST IRON reasons to visit TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

round or square, which is best?

In the early days of growing, hops were dried in converted barns. Later, specially designed oast houses were built.

The first oast houses had square towers. But then people started to think that round oast houses were better as the heat could rise more evenly, so circular buildings with conical roofs were built. The white “cowl” on top would turn as the wind changed and open and close to let the air in.

Later still, it was decided that square oasts were best after all, and were also easier and cheaper to build! You can see both types around the High Weald.

Oast houses were built using brick, tile and open and close to let the air in.

Dear Susannah,

I love our new home in Morden but I miss all my old friends, especially you.

Daddy is growing hops on our farm as he says the brewing industry is on the rise. Here, close to the river Rother, we have the right type of soil for hop crops to grow well. The fields they grow in are called hop gardens. “That sounds lovely doesn’t it? The gardens are full of rows of poles made from sweet chestnut... Daddy says this makes the best poles, good and straight and it doesn’t rot. Farmers need a lot of people to help with the growing and picking of hops. Whole families from nearby work on the hop farms and in the picking season people come from London too. We had very special helpers this year. A travelling circus was passing through and the circus folk helped us to wrap the hop bines around the poles. The clowns are all still walkers so they could reach to the very top, but kept pretending to fall off! They have given lessons to some of Daddy’s workers so now we have our own stilts walkers (unless they run away and join the circus!)

Love Anabelle XXX.

people from London came to the High Weald to live...

Rich people from London moved to the High Weald and bought land and built large country mansions. Others bought old manor houses and modernised them to their own tastes. Some new landowners started farms.

Wash your hands. Set the oven at 160°C gas mark 3 with the shelf in the centre.

Sift the flour, ginger and mixed spice into a bowl. Lightly rub the margarine into the flour using your fingertips. Add the sugar and fruit. Dip a tablespoon into very hot water and spoon your treacle into a saucepan with the milk. Have another spoon handy to help get the treacle off. Warm the milk gently, stirring in the cream of tartar and bicarbonate of soda. Pour the milk into the dry mixture and stir with a wooden spoon. Pour into an oven.

Please be sure to ask an adult to help with warming the milk and using the oven.

Hop-pickers’ cake

This old Kentish recipe tells you to bake the cake for one and a half hours. Ovens cook more quickly now, so your cake might be ready in an hour or so.

275g self-raising flour
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon mixed spice
175g margarine cut into pieces
100g soft brown sugar
100g sultanas
100g currants
50g mixed peel
425ml milk
1 tablespoon black treacle
1 level teaspoon cream of tartar
½ level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

2lb (900gm) tin greased and lined with baking paper.

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Love Anabelle XXX.