

A Battle of Bossenden (bosci/bocage - woody)

On May 31st 1838 the battle of Bossenden Wood was fought near this spot. This was the era of the Tolpuddle martyrs and rural unrest was widespread. Here a group of disaffected country labourers, led by a madman who called himself Sir William Courtenay fought militiamen from Canterbury. The soldiers were attempting to restore law and order after Courtenay had murdered Nicholas Mears, a man who was helping his brother in his duties as local constable. The bodies of those who were killed in the engagement were taken to The Red Lion, Dunkirk (where you may learn more about these events). Courtenay had believed himself to be the Messiah and therefore immortal. His body was laid out in the stables for all to see!

B Denstroude Farm (den - pig pasture, strood - marshy place)

You are now at Denstroude, an isolated place to where those suffering from The Black Death in Canterbury were banished in medieval times. Superstition took over and in later centuries the land was farmed very little. Consequently, when persecuted Huguenots arrived from France in the late seventeenth century they were allowed to settle here. Huguenot Farm lies to your east and the Huguenot Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral still holds services in French each Sunday.

The skyline beyond Denstroude is relatively devoid of trees. Until the 1960s Ellenden Wood to the east and Blean Wood to the west were connected by Lamberhurst Wood. This was grubbed out to create arable fields but the area has now been replanted as Victory Wood. Named after Nelson's famous vessel it is indeed the flagship of the Woodland Trust's Trafalgar Woods project.

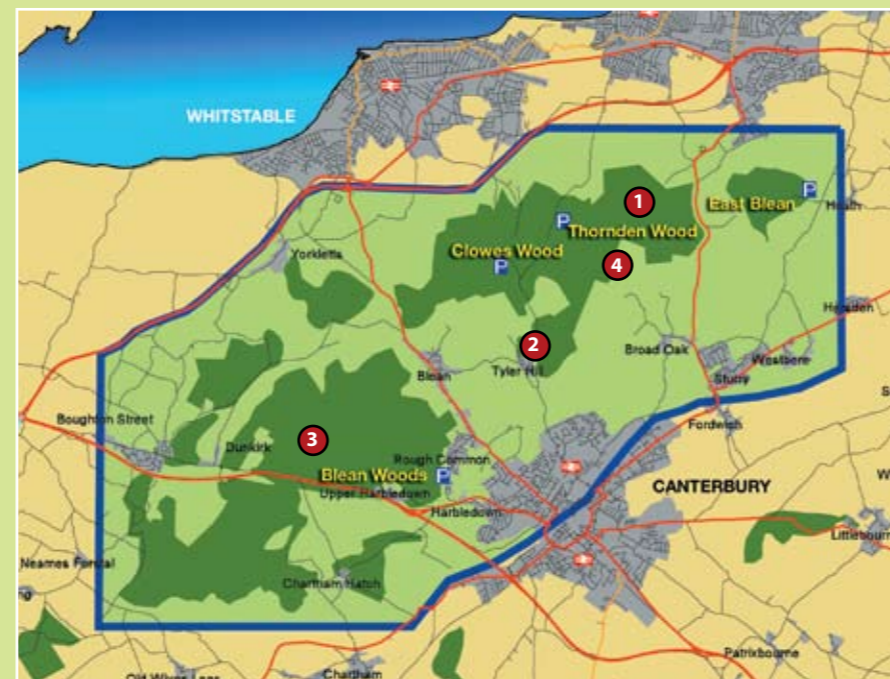
Oak from these woods was used to produce tanbark for the leather tanneries in Canterbury and was also shipped by rail from Canterbury East Station to Northampton's shoe industry. The Canterbury factory replaced Blean tanbark with a Brazilian bean in 1953 before finally ceasing manufacture in 2003.

C The Radfall and a Grand Old Oak Pollard

There are several former drove-ways known as Radfalls crossing The Blean. They are bounded by woodbanks on either side and the wood Reeves were required to keep the middle, at least a rod's width, clear for the passage of animals. The reeve was allowed to keep this wood for his own use as a *perquisite*, a perk of the job.

As you walk along this Radfall you will notice that the woodbank to the south (your right) is much larger than that on the north. It marks the boundary of Church Wood, formerly owned by Christchurch Cathedral Priory. Great Den Lees (to the north) was owned by Eastbridge Hospital and it is surmised that the size of the woodbank often reflected the wealth of the landowner.

Some 300m along The Radfall Road, where a track has been cut through the two banks, you will find a grand old oak pollard. Pollards are cut above the head height of browsing animals and were once numerous, serving as signposts for the woodsmen. This one marks the boundary between three woods, Church Wood, Great Den Lees and Grimshill Wood.



If you have enjoyed this walk why not try the others in this series?

- 1 Herne & the West Blean
- 2 Tyler Hill
- 3 Dunkirk & Denstroude
- 4 Broad Oak, Tyler Hill & Herne

For more information on walking in The Blean, wildlife, history and local products visit www.theblean.co.uk, telephone 01227 862015 or email blean.initiative@canterbury.gov.uk

The Blean is the area of woodland, countryside and villages between the cathedral city of Canterbury and the coastal towns of Faversham, Whitstable and Herne Bay.

For a thousand years The Blean has remained one of the largest and most distinctive areas of woodland in the south east, covering some 3000 hectares – over 11 square miles! Not only is most of this classified as ancient woodland but over half is recognised as being nationally and even internationally important for wildlife.

This walk is one of a series produced by volunteers of the Blean Heritage & Community Group and by the Blean Initiative. The aim of the Blean Heritage Group is to encourage people to visit The Blean, to experience and enjoy its heritage and wildlife. Anyone interested in joining in any of the group's activities please contact us on 01227 372519.



The Countryside Code Respect – Protect – Enjoy

Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs. Leave gates and property as you find them. Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home. Consider other people. For further information please visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or Tel: 08451 003298

This leaflet was produced with funding from the



the Blean

Circular Walks

Canterbury & Swale's Ancient Woodland

CIRCULAR WALK NO 3 Dunkirk and Denstroude

This walk passes through ancient woodlands including Bossenden Wood, the scene of the last armed uprising on English soil. The woods are now part of Blean Woods National Nature Reserve managed by the RSPB.

Distance: 7km (4.5 miles).
Allow 2½ hours



www.theblean.co.uk

Information: the walk is relatively flat but The Blean is on heavy clay so can get wet and very muddy – boots are recommended. Please note that dogs are not allowed in this section of the woods but do look at www.theblean.co.uk or ring 01227 862015 for alternative walks where dogs are welcome.

Start Point: The Red Lion public house, Dunkirk, 01227 750224. (Grid ref: TR085588). Steeped in local history the Red Lion still provides food, drink and overnight accommodation.

By bus: Canterbury – Faversham. Monday to Saturday; No. 3 or 3A. Sunday; No. 335. Visit www.stagecoach.com or telephone 0871 200 2233.

By car: From Canterbury, on the A2 London bound follow signposts to Dunkirk. From Faversham, on the A2 Canterbury bound, follow the signs for Boughton and drive through the village to Dunkirk.

OS map Explorer™ 149 Sittingbourne and Faversham, 1:25000 scale

- 1 Leave the Red Lion Inn, Dunkirk and proceed up the hill along Watling Street with Bossenden Wood on your right. Ignore two minor paths until you come to within 20 metres of the UAP (United Agri Products) entrance. Turn right onto the major track into the wood. Ignore a track almost immediately to the right and continue until you reach a fork.

A hundred metres into the wood start looking for a prominent woodbank to your right. In former times the area of land from this bank to Watling Street would have been cleared of trees. It was known as the *trenche*. Bandits could no longer conceal themselves effectively so that travellers using Watling Street could move in relative safety!

- 2 At the fork take the track to the left. Soon after passing a path joining from the right you will reach a T-junction.

Alder Buckthorn is found on this section of the route, a shrub whose charcoal was prized for the manufacture of gunpowder for reliable fuses. On your left you will pass Oak and Oak coppice. Conifers were never introduced into this area of Bossenden and here the wood has had a continuity of management over the centuries.

- 3 Turn left at the T-junction and descend into Denstroude valley.

The Battle of Bossenden Wood, considered to be the last battle on English soil, was fought near this junction (see **A** overleaf).

Look out for Wild Service tree (on your left) and Butcher's Broom, both indicators of ancient woodland. Near the valley bottom, a meandering stream marks the boundary between the wood and pasture and you enter Hornbeam territory, a tree whose wood is renowned for its calorific value (excellent for firewood and charcoal).

At a crossroads signed by waymarkers, go straight on, following the black arrow. After some 450 metres you reach a junction with the New Road, a major ride.

The New Road was constructed in the late 19th century because heavy machinery could not negotiate the wet clay rides!

A deviation to your left takes you to Denstroude Farm, a place to be avoided during the Black Death of the 13th and 14th century (see **B** overleaf).

- 4 Cross over New Road and follow the uphill path marked by a post with a black arrow until the land levels out and you reach a T-junction with the New Road.

In this section, the ditch and bank system of the parish boundary becomes clear after the field on the left. In autumn look out for dead Beech trees and their spectacular fungi.

Looking to the right at the T-junction you can see a fine specimen of the Bishop Pine, trees that used to form an avenue along the New Road.

- 5 At the New Road turn left and head for a large oak standing some 50 metres away that marks a crossroads with the Radfall Road.

At the crossroads a digression to your left of about 320 metres is recommended to explore the old droveway of Radfall Road and a grand old Oak pollard (see **C** overleaf)

- 6 From the crossroads turn right and walk around a barrier across the ride. Follow this ride for about 500 metres until you see a tractor track opening to the right. Take care to avoid roots, stumps and a deep hole on the left and, about 100 metres down this track, you reach the outer ditch of the moated site (M on map).

It is thought that the moated site dates from the 14th century. Do investigate the site; but beware! Beyond the west edge lies peat which can become a quagmire in wet winter weather.

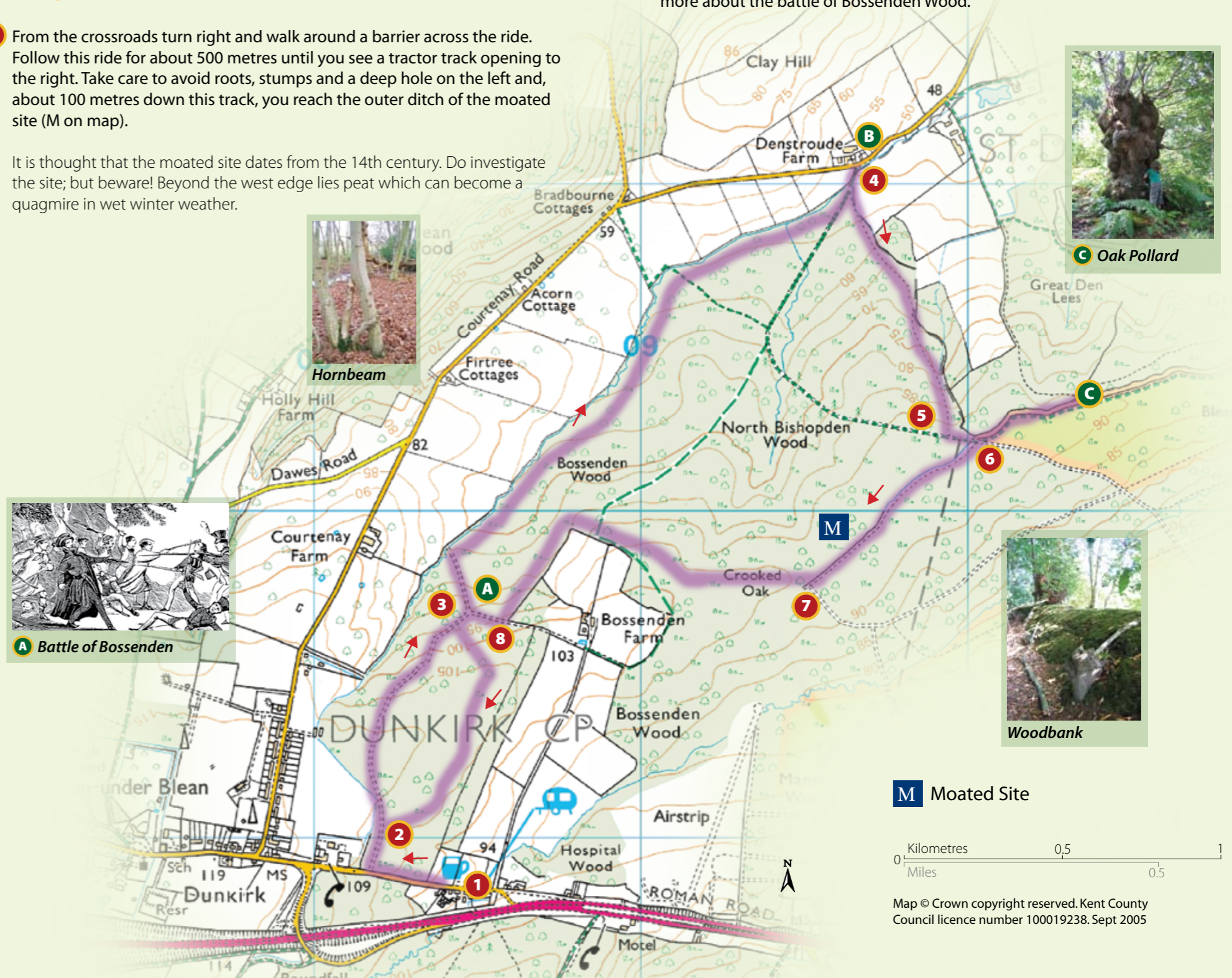
Return to the main ride and continue along for another 140m until the main track swings to the left and a smaller path leads off to the right, marked by a post with 'short cut' written on it.

- 7 Take the path on the right (towards Bossenden Farm). When you reach a T junction, turn right (directed by a black arrow) and follow the path around the farm. Keep on this path (ignoring a woodland ride on the right) until you eventually meet a path on the left in about 900 metres.

- 8 Turn left on this path and after 20 metres turn left again. Continue up the slope until you reach a junction and bear left. You will find you are retracing your steps back to the A2.

The remains of old gravel pits and a rustic oak and chestnut bench can be seen on your left.

Return to The Red Lion for some welcome sustenance! Here you will also learn more about the battle of Bossenden Wood.



C Oak Pollard

Hornbeam

A Battle of Bossenden

Woodbank

M Moated Site

Kilometres 0 0.5 1
Miles 0 0.5

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