

- A** The name Bleangate, apart from being the gate into West Blean Wood, also referred to the whole area of Herne, Chislet, Reculver, East Stourmouth and Sturry, forming the Hundred of Blengate (Bleangate) in the middle ages. A hundred was an administrative area used to divide a larger region into smaller geographical units. It is situated on the highest ground locally and it could have been the location of the Hundred Court Leet, which dealt with disputes and levied taxes on behalf of the king. At one time West Blean and East Blean Woods were in the parish of Chislet. Although detached from the main parish area it provided woodland, for the benefit of St Augustine's Abbey who owned Chislet and got considerable income from the woods.
- B** Droveways were used for many centuries to drive animals from winter to summer pasture. Two woodbanks with ditches beside them 15 to 20 metres apart kept the animals from straying into the wood and browsing on the valuable the coppice re-growth. They also served as ownership boundaries and were also used by local people to bring out timber and underwood.
- C** There are two old pollards on the edge of Cripps Wood, to the left of the stile on the boundary of the open field. Pollards are cut at or above head height, often to prevent browsing animals reaching the new shoots. However they were also used to mark significant points, perhaps parish or ownership boundaries. Look out for other veteran trees when walking in woodland.
- D** To the left there are excellent panoramic views over Knockhimdown Hill and the escarpment that was Stubbs Wood. Vast quantities of clay were removed from here to fill the breach in the sea defences in the great storm of 1953. On a clear day you can see Sheppey and Essex beyond and the 30 turbines of the Kentish Flats Wind Farm in the Swale estuary.
- E** Bleanbottom Shaw - A shaw or shave is a strip of woodland, usually between 5 and 15 metres wide. Shaws commonly form boundaries between fields or line a road and are usually composed of natural woodland and they often have diverse woodland ground vegetation similar to other natural woodlands in the area. They should not be confused with hedges, even when these are made of mature trees. Like other woodland, shaws may be managed as high forest or as coppice. In some areas, shaws may be the remnants of larger woods out of which fields were assarted or cleared many centuries ago, or they may have developed from narrower hedgerows which have become unmanaged.
- F** The old Blean Union Workhouse, which later became Herne Hospital. Opened on 14th January 1836, the workhouse served 16 parishes, neighbouring the Blean and housed 420 inmates. Built by William Edmunds it comprised a large formal quadrangle enclosed by two-storey buildings. In 1879 the workhouse was extended with the construction of a hospital for 'infectious' cases. It was later used for 'difficult' women and finally a hospital for elderly patients. It has since been converted into residential use.

There are interesting Grade II listed cottages opposite.

Across the whole of the Blean there are mature oak trees. The poor nature of the clay soil makes them slow growing but of a higher density than normal. However, in the past the 'underwood' coppice had the most value commercially as poles, posts, faggots, bark for tanning, firewood and so on.



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

- 1 Herne & 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. 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. Keep dogs under close control. Consider other people. For further information please visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or Tel: 08451 003298

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the Blean

Circular Walks
Canterbury & Swale's Ancient Woodland

CIRCULAR WALK No. 1

Herne and West Blean Wood

This walk through ancient woodland crosses an old droveway before entering open countryside that has wide views across the Swale estuary. Kent Wildlife Trust own and manage much of the woodland.

Distance: 5.5km (3.5 miles)
Allow 1.5 to 2 hours walking time



www.theblean.co.uk

Information:: The walk has stiles, bridges and some moderate gradients. The Blean is on heavy clay in places so can get wet and muddy – boots are recommended. Please note that dogs must be kept under close control at all times. The public footpaths should remain as published here but please be aware that The Blean is a working landscape and features change from time to time.

Start Point: Herne Common, Anemone Way off A291 (800m south-west of Herne Village) TR 175651, opposite The First & Last Pub 01227 364465.

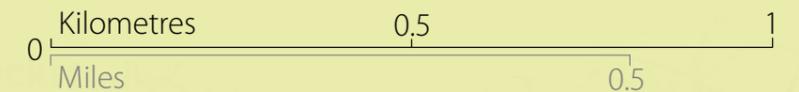
By bus: Canterbury, Whitstable, Herne Bay triangle buses no's 4 or 6 depending on direction. Visit www.stagecoach.com or telephone 0871 200 2233

OS map Explorer TM 150 Canterbury & the Isle of Thanet 1:25000 scale

- 7 Turn right. Head diagonally right, downhill, aiming for the narrow gap, marked by post, to the left of the pylon. *Sometimes there is an electric fence either at the top or at the bottom of the slope. The ground at the bottom is extremely uneven – please take care, especially when grass is long.* Pass through the gap in the trees; follow the narrow path which passes between West Blean Woods and Bleanbottom Shaw. Cross over a footbridge and into the next field (250m). (see E overleaf)
- 8 Walk straight on to the far corner of the field keeping the edge of West Blean Wood to your right. This path leads through a narrow strip of woodland and into the next field (500m).
- 9 Follow the path, which goes diagonally up the hill, across a small ditch, to the corner of Banker's Wood (350m).
- 10 Continue uphill, keeping the wood to your right and following the edge to the corner (200m). Continue straight across the field, currently arable, to a footbridge next to Bleangate Bungalow (125m).

- 11 Cross this bridge and continue, passing through two gates, behind the bungalow, into the next field. Keep the fence on your right until another footbridge. Cross the bridge and turn right. Keep to the edge of the field until the next footbridge which will take you back into Braggs Lane (150m).
- 12 Turn left and retrace your steps to Anemone Way and perhaps take refreshment at the First & Last Pub (550m) or in Herne Village 800m further on).

Points of interest please see overleaf



This walk starts at the old Blean Union Workhouse, which later became Herne Hospital and is now a residential development.

- 1 Turn right out of Anemone Way and walk along Canterbury Road to the junction with Bullockstone Road. Cross Bullockstone Road and turn right into Braggs Lane. Walk to the gate across the end of the lane - 'Bleangate' (950m).
- 2 Cross the stile which is immediately to the left of the gate but continue straight on following the track for 140m, where you will come to a turning on the right.

In the autumn look out for dragonflies hunting along the track.
- 3 Take this path. *Kent Wildlife Trust has widened this footpath to encourage wildlife.* After about 800m, look for a marker post and turning on the right to continue on the path. In another 200m you will come to a wide track. Cross over and carry straight on through the earth banks of an old droveway. Continue onward for about another 90m towards electricity pylons. .
- 4 Walk under the pylons and then electricity poles to the junction with another public footpath marked by a post (50m). *Take care as the ground here is very uneven.*
- 5 Turn right onto the path which follows the line of the poles. Cross the stile and continue straight across a flat open field, keeping the poles on your left (375m).
- 6 Cross by stile or hurdle gate and walk under the electricity lines. Bear right and walk along the ridge. Keeping the boundary fence to your right, continue all the way to the corner of the field (425m).

In summer look out for skylarks as you walk along the ridge.



D Knockhimdown Hill



F Blean Union Workhouse



C Old Pollard



B Drover



A Bleangate

