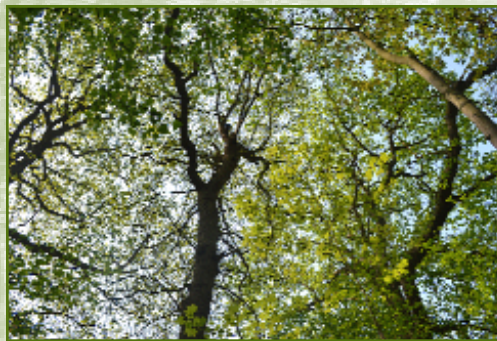


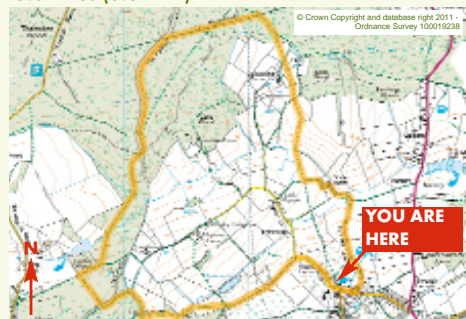
# The trees of the Blean



The forest canopy - most of the tallest trees are sessile oaks.  
(Diane Comley.)

## Walking in the Blean

5.3 miles (8.52 km)



Taken from the *Train Rides to Ramble in the Stour Valley* series of walks produced by the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership. For more information contact kentishstour@kent.gov.uk, or download the map from www.kentishstour.org.uk. For alternative walks in the Blean also starting from here, a leaflet by The Blean Heritage Community Group is available from the Tourist Information Centre or on the Blean Initiative website - www.theblean.co.uk.

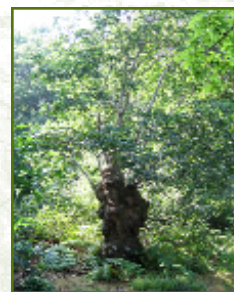
**Please follow the Countryside Code**  
Respect - Protect - Enjoy

The ancient woodland of the Blean is a national treasure, and this panel celebrates some of the trees you can find there. There is a circular walk from here (see map).

The types of tree found in the Blean are determined by things such as soils, commercial interests and land ownership. For example most comparable large woodlands in England were once owned by royalty who introduced deer for hunting. Too many deer reduce the richness of the under-storey, as they feed on the young saplings and other plants on the woodland floor. However, deer are almost entirely absent from the Blean as it was largely owned and managed by the church for a large part of its history. Commercial interests have had their impact by introducing species such as sweet chestnut and more recently conifers.

A rare tree is **Sorbus vagensis**, a natural hybrid between whitebeam and wild service that is found in only a few places in the UK. It is thinly spread throughout the Blean, growing mostly at the edges of woods. Its main distinguishing features compared to the common whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) are that the backs of the leaves are not as white, they are much more heavily toothed and in the autumn the berries are brown instead of red.

**Wild service** or the chequer tree as it is sometimes known, is mostly found in ancient woodland and is one of the indicator plant species which tells us that woodland has existed on a site since before 1600 AD.



Pollarded oak.



*Sorbus vagensis*.  
(Michael Walter.)



Wild service.

**Oak** is one of our most valuable wildlife trees and practically a national symbol. Some of the oldest trees in the woods are oak pollards dating back to the 17th century, many of which were used as boundary markers. There are two forms of native oak in the Blean, sessile and pedunculate.

**Beech** coppice, which is highly unusual, can be found in Blean NNR and Ellenden Wood, near Whitstable. Beech is not usually coppiced as it is historically grown for timber. Coppice is when trees are cut almost to ground level, allowing new multiple stems to grow from the stump or 'stool'. The ancient beech stools in Ellenden Wood are about two metres in diameter, and are evidence of centuries of felling and re-growth.

**Silver birch** is a prolific tree that has not been planted. It is considered a 'pioneer' species, as it is usually the first and fastest to naturally grow from seed in clearings.

**Hazel** is neither grand nor rare and is mostly found growing in the under-storey and beside the woodland paths and tracks. It is in fact considered a shrub, but most of us know it as a 'little tree', much loved for its delicious nuts and the refreshing sight of its yellowy catkins in February.

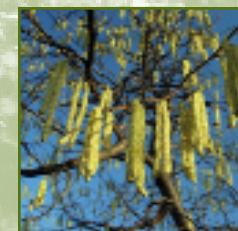
The most commonly found tree species today are sessile oak, sweet chestnut, silver birch, hazel, hornbeam, beech and Corsican pine.



Beech.



Silver birch.



Hazel catkins.

the **Blean** is just minutes away...

Covering over 11 square miles, the Blean is one of the largest and most distinctive areas of ancient woodland in England, important nationally for both its wildlife and its history. The Blean has been a working woodland for over a thousand years, and continues to provide woodland products, including firewood and fencing materials, for local people. The splendour and tranquillity of this special landscape can be enjoyed on a network of paths and trails. This panel is part of a series of 18 located around the Blean. To see all 18 panels, visit [www.theblean.co.uk](http://www.theblean.co.uk). For information about walking in Kent visit [www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent).

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