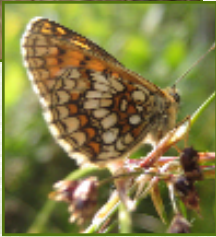


# Hoath, heaths and hurdles



Heathland in the Blean. (Diane Comley.)



Heath fritillary butterfly.

Nightjar.



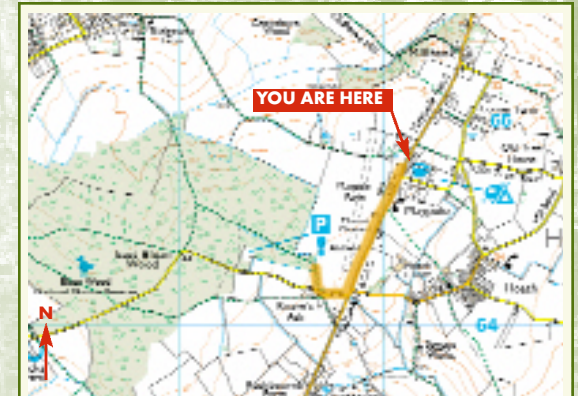
Hurdle making.

Once part of the 7th century Reculver Monastery estate, Hoath, meaning 'boggy heath', is situated between Chislet Marshes and East Blean Wood. Around 2000 years ago, the coastline would have been only a mile or so away, as this is where the Wantsum Channel separated mainland Kent from the Isle of Thanet (see lower map). All that remains of this once substantial shipping channel, used by the Romans and Vikings, is the narrow, and at times almost dry, Wantsum River. Shingle and silting gradually narrowed the channel, and in the 11th and 12th centuries, Augustinian monks constructed intricate systems of drainage, walls and counter-walls to claim land from the sea, many of which can still be seen today.

The reclaimed land was used for agriculture, and the original farms, small businesses and population of Hoath in general, would have relied on Blean woods for all sorts of woodland products and resources. It is even thought that it was the proximity of the woods which led the inhabitants to move here from the coast.

The woods would have provided fuel for fires and timber for homes, boats and all kinds of structures and implements. Hurdles, a form of moveable fencing made from coppiced wood, hazel most likely, would have helped the local farmers move and contain their livestock on Chislet Marshes. Pigs would have been taken into the Blean to feed on fallen nuts, such as acorn, beech and chestnut - a practice known as 'pannage'.

Heathland, in all its varieties, has diminished drastically nationally, and what remains supports a range of increasingly rare wildlife species. Today, a number of the conservation organisations who own and manage the Blean are re-creating heaths within the woodland and are largely managing these areas with livestock. These heaths are successfully providing habitat for endangered species such as the heath fritillary butterfly and nightjar. In the Spring you may be lucky enough to hear a nightingale sing, while enjoying this wonderful and still changing landscape.



Route shown is not a recommended walk route, but indicates the nearest public entrance to the Blean approximately 800 m away.

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



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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