

# Rebel rising in the woods



A dramatic depiction of the uprising by an artist of the time.  
(Courtesy the Director, National Army Museum, London.)



Sir William Courtenay.  
(Courtesy Dawes Collection.)

## The Battle of Bossenden 1838 - the last armed uprising on English soil

In the era of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, when workers' conditions were worsening, rural unrest was widespread. In nearby Bossenden Wood a group of disaffected labourers, led by a madman who called himself Sir William Courtenay, fought with militia from Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> The soldiers were attempting to restore law and order after Courtenay had killed Nicholas Mears, a man who was helping his brother in his duties as local constable. Courtenay, who believed himself to be the Messiah and therefore immortal, died along with eight of his supporters. Courtenay's body was laid out for all to see here at the Red Lion.

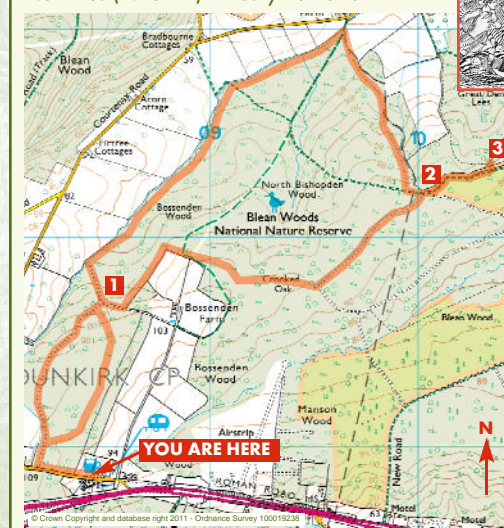


Courtenay's body at the Red Lion.  
(From *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Sir William Courtenay*, 1838.)



## Walking in the Blean Circular walk of Bossenden Wood

4.5 miles (7.25 km) - mostly flat terrain



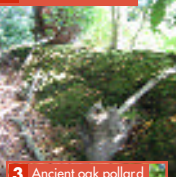
Leaflet for this walk available from The Red Lion. Information on alternative walks from Tourist Information Centres or The Blean Initiative: [www.theblean.co.uk](http://www.theblean.co.uk)

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

1 Site of the Battle of Bossenden  
(Courtesy of the Fleet de la Heritage Centre, Faversham)



2 Ancient woodbank



3 Ancient oak pollard



Fly agaric



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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