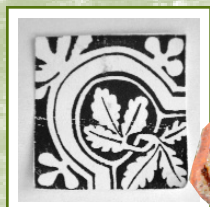




# A centre of Medieval Industry

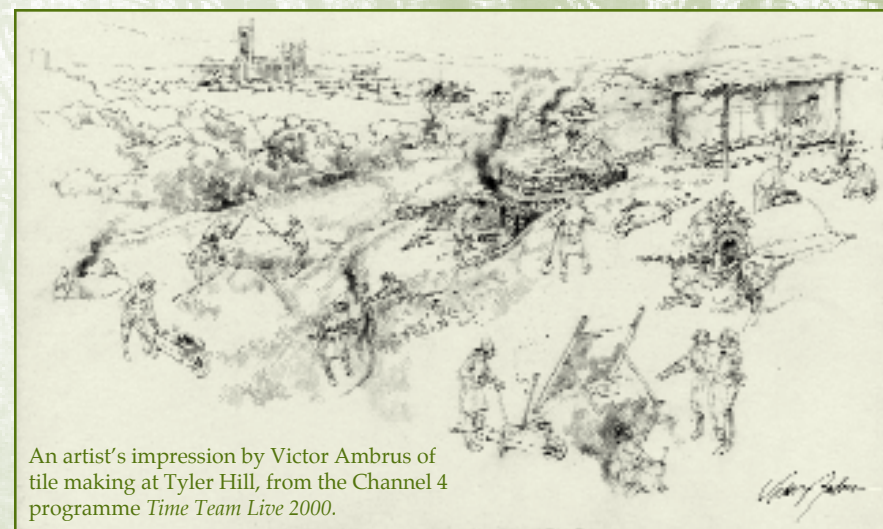


Tyler Hill, as the saying goes, once did what it says on the tin. Here, at the top of the hill, and at the edge of Blean woods overlooking Canterbury, a medieval tile industry once thrived. It grew out of an existing pottery, which was thought to have begun with kilns dating back to around the 9th century.



Oak leaf and nightingale floor tile fragments and designs.  
 (From the collection of, and design illustration by, Irene Pellett.)

This was an ideal place to make pottery for a number of reasons. Firstly two of the most important elements were found here - clay and firewood. Secondly, there was a market for the pots and jugs in Canterbury, and thirdly, kilns situated close to the hill brow could use the prevailing wind as a natural form of bellows for their fires. The remains of kilns and clay pits can still be found in the woods and surrounding areas nearby. While Tyler Hill was the main centre of this industry, kiln remains can be found elsewhere in the Blean.



An artist's impression by Victor Ambrus of tile making at Tyler Hill, from the Channel 4 programme *Time Team Live 2000*.

The tile industry really took off after the fire of 1174, when Canterbury Cathedral Choir was damaged and many timber houses destroyed. Afterwards, a decree was made that all roofs should be made of tiles. By the 14th century the small hamlet was supplying most of East Kent with roof tiles, chimney pots and other clay ware.



Floor tiles from Tyler Hill in St Mary's Church, Brook, near Ashford.  
 (By permission of St Mary's Church, Brook.)

Decorated floor tiles were made at Tyler Hill in the 12th century, and examples of these can still be seen in the Cathedral, museums, and a few other churches and locations in the area. These tiles had a distinctive range of designs, including heraldry, hunting scenes, patterns and other sometimes more exotic images. The oak leaf and nightingale are two very lovely design elements found on some tile fragments. Elements which relate to the area in which they were made - the woodland of the Blean.



Medieval jugs from Tyler Hill.  
 (Canterbury Archaeological Trust).

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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