

# Gunpowder, trees and a plot



The gunpowder works at Corning House, Oare in the 1920s. The man at the centre is emptying press cake into a bucket elevator.  
 (Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre.)

**Remember, remember the fifth of November  
 Gunpowder treason and plot  
 We see no reason  
 Why gunpowder treason  
 Should ever be forgot**

From the mid 16th century to 1934 there were gunpowder works at Oare near Faversham. Why was Oare a good place for gunpowder? It was well situated for receiving materials and transporting the gunpowder to the naval dockyard at Chatham. Also, many of the necessary ingredients are to be found nearby, not least of which were the trees of the Blean.

Gunpowder was made by mixing sulphur with potassium nitrate and charcoal derived from alder, hazel, willow and alder buckthorn (used for high quality powder). Imported potassium nitrate was expensive but could be made locally from animal manure mixed with earth, crushed oyster shells and potash obtained by burning beech wood. Beech, and charcoal made in the Blean, would originally have been brought out of the woods nearby by horse and cart and taken to Oare.

It is said that some of the kegs of gunpowder used in the infamous plot to blow up parliament in 1605, came from the Oare works. Every year on November 5th the occasion is marked all over the UK with fireworks and bonfires - Guy Fawkes Night.

**Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park is open 7 days a week. [www.gunpowderworks.co.uk](http://www.gunpowderworks.co.uk)**



The Gunpowder Plot conspirators.



Transporting gunpowder by boat.  
 (Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre.)



A charcoal oven in the woods.



Beech - one of the trees used in gunpowder making.

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).