

## Orvelte now protected

The Drenthe landscape around Orvelte had remained reasonably intact. Moreover, Orvelte was a typical Drenthe farming village. Therefore nature organisations and environmentalists pledged for the preservation and restoration of Orvelte and its surroundings. During the re-parcelling of the land in Westerbork, parts of the landscape were restored. The small, herb-rich fields on the Noordes near Orvelte, with their extensive flowers, are back. Hedges have been restored and some have been newly created altogether. Visitors to the area can get to know the pure Drenthe 'es' village landscape. Large areas of the landscape are managed by Staatsbosbeheer. Other areas around Orvelte were designed optimally for agriculture. This led to a great contrast between the old landscape between Orvelte and Westerbork and the modern agricultural landscape around it.

The village of Orvelte has been protected since 1967. It features wonderful old farms, such as Bruntingerhof, which dates from the 17th century. All this gives the village a distinctive 'es' village feeling that is so typical of Drenthe. Many buildings in Orvelte are currently owned by the 'Stichting het Drents Landschap' foundation.



Orvelte, c. 1910,  
Fotobank Het Drents Archief

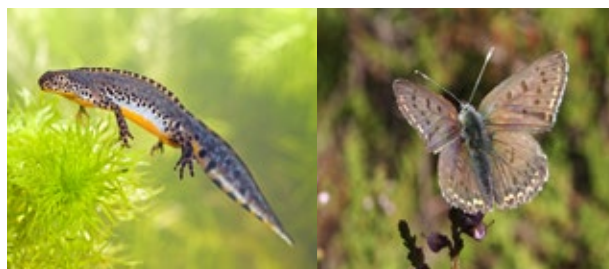
Oosterveld-Reijntjesveld Orvelte,  
2013

Tekst, kaartmateriaal en  
grafische verzorging:  
Provincie Drenthe  
Foto's: Hans Dekker, Alle  
Oldenbeuving  
Basisonwerp: Buro Kloeg

September 2017

## Diverse soils - diverse nature!

The Coversand-ridge Orvelte has a diverse soil structure and a richly varied landscape. This means there is a wide range of plants and animals. On the Noordes near Orvelte we find typical herbs, such as the corn marigold, and the cornflower. This in turn attracts many birds. The ancient woodland soils, with their boulder clay and high groundwater levels, are home to rare plants like the wood anemone and the goldilocks buttercup. The enclosed valley, with its ages-old woods, is home to butterflies and birds. Reijntjesveld is a varied heathland with different types of heather in the dry and wet areas. Lizards flourish in the sandy areas. In the meadows along the heathlands, we can find the woodlark, and the sooty copper butterfly. The village of Orvelte is home to the weasel and the European polecat, as well as the little owl and the barn swallow. Frogs and even the alpine newt live in the ditches and pools.



Alpine newt, Jelger Herder

Sooty copper butterfly

provincie Drenthe

(0592) 36 55 55  
bodem@drenthe.nl  
www.drenthe.nl/  
aardkundigewaarden



GEMEENTE  
MIDDEN-DRENTHE

www.middendrenthe.nl



www.staatsbosbeheer.nl

ivn natuur  
educatie  
www.ivn.nl

## Coversand-ridge Orvelte

Geologische Tijdschaal:

Hoofdtijdperk	Periode	Tijdvak	Tijd	Aantal jaar geleden
Kenozoïcum	Kwartair	Holocene	Subatlantisch	2.700
			Subatlantisch	5.000
			Subatlantisch	8.000
			Subatlantisch	9.000
			Subatlantisch	10.000
			Subatlantisch	115.000
			Subatlantisch	130.000
			Subatlantisch	370.000
			Subatlantisch	410.000
			Subatlantisch	475.000
Kenozoïcum	Kwartair	Holocene	Subatlantisch	850.000
			Subatlantisch	1,1 miljoen
			Subatlantisch	1,2
			Subatlantisch	1,5
			Subatlantisch	1,8
			Subatlantisch	2,45
			Subatlantisch	2,6
			Subatlantisch	2,8
			Subatlantisch	3,0
			Subatlantisch	3,2

Tertair



Orvelte Noordes,  
2013

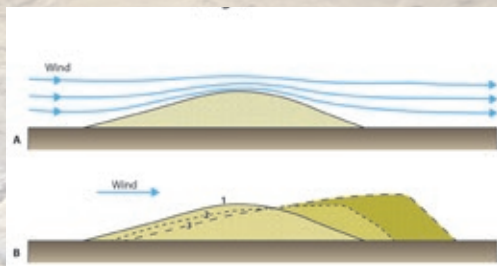
**In the heart of Drenthe is a 10 kilometre long sand ridge in a wonderful setting that has a turbulent history. The villages of Westerbork and Orvelte are built on it. The ridge is up to three metres higher than the surrounding land. Ice, wind, and rain have all helped shape the development of this iconic sand ridge. Because of its remarkable history and distinctive landscape, the ridge was designated a Geological Monument in 2017.**





## Remarkable history

It was certainly cold 120.000 to 240.000 years ago! During this period, known as the Saale Glaciation, the northern Netherlands was covered with land ice from Scandinavia. The ice transported rocks and clay as it moved. When the ice melted, the rocks and clay were left behind, leading to the formation of the Drenthe boulder clay plateau. From the northeast land-ice had pushed up a low boulder clay ridge, enclosed by stream valleys. These valleys can still be clearly identified. To the north of the ridge is the Westerborkerstroomb valley, while to the southwest lies the Ruimsloot valley, a tributary of the Westerborkerstroomb. During the most recent ice age around 116.000 to 12.000 years ago, the Weichselian Glaciation, Drenthe was not covered by ice. It was still very cold though and the winds were fierce. Enormous quantities of sand blew across Drenthe and covered the boulder clay ridge. This led to the creation of continuous dunes at the edges of the ridge.



*Creation of the Coversand-ridge Orvelte*

## The arrival of humans

People have been living here for about 10.000 years. The first were Hunter-gatherers and the like who built their encampments at the edges of the stream valleys. The higher land was used for agriculture from the time of the Bronze Age (2000 - 800 BC). In particular, the highest parts of the ridges were found to be suitable. Traces of habitation and human activity have been found both on and in the sand ridge. These include burial mounds, small celtic fields surrounded by low walls and prehistoric farmyards. The mounds of old celtic field complexes can be seen on aerial photos. On these celtic fields prehistoric peasants grew primitive grains such as emmer wheat and spelt. There is a burial mound in the Reijntjesveld. A rebuilt 'Iron Age farm' and reconstruction of celtic fields gives an impression of how people lived at that time. In the late Middle Ages the agricultural system led to a typical landscape with upland fields ('essen') and villages on the edge of a stream valley. Due to the intensive use of the land, the sand started to drift after the Middle Ages, with several sand drift areas being created.



*Orvelte Iron Age farm*

*Orvelte Noordes*

## Major changes

In the 19th century, some 70% of Drenthe was heathland. All the woodlands had more or less gone. The stream valleys were soaked and really only suitable as hayland. Cattle grazed on the upper areas of the stream valleys. They were kept in the fields by hedges. Villages were surrounded by 'essen', or upland fields. It was here, where farmers grew grains like winter rye, as well as potatoes and fodder beet. Flocks of sheep and herds of cattle roamed over the heathland with their shepherds. For centuries, the fields were fertilized using sheep manure from the barns and the heathland topsoil. That is why the 'essen' came to be higher than the surrounding area. The soil beneath the 'essen', the drift sand, and the old hedges are the legacies of this history. When artificial fertilizers were introduced, the sheep were no longer needed. From the end of the 19th century, the heathlands were rapidly turned into fields, meadows, or woods. Around Orvelte fortunately the Reijntjesveld has survived. The land was re-parcelled in about 1950. Large machinery was introduced. Agriculture became larger in scale, with many hedges disappearing. The wet stream valleys were made dryer.



*Orvelte and environs, c. 1900*