

Achievements

Romney Marsh Countryside Project

April 2000/March 2001

Romney Marsh Countryside Project – Our Fourth Year



The Romney Marsh Countryside Project was officially launched on July 26th 1996. The RMCP is managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP), with funding from Shepway District Council, English Nature, Environment Agency, BNFL Magnox Generation, British Energy, Glaxo Wellcome, Kent Rural Development Area (RDA) and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

The Project aims to help care for the special beauty and wildlife of the Romney Marsh, Walland Marsh and Dungeness. Our fourth year has been one of our busiest ever. The RMCP has grown from one member of staff in 1996 to three during the year 2000.

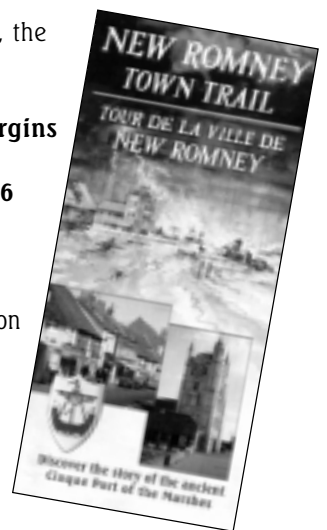
Building on our partnerships, we have employed a new Green Tourism Officer for the Romney Marsh, through funding from the Community Action in South Kent (CASK) Partnership /SEEDA for seven years. The Wetlands Survey and Wildlife Enhancement Officer post continued for another year, with extra funding. The RMCP has also run projects to survey for rare plants and promote wildlife grants with Marsh landowners and administrative support.

We hope to do more by building the partnership with other organisations, town and parish councils for the long term wildlife, landscape and economic benefit of the Romney Marsh.

In our fourth year the Romney Marsh Countryside Project has:-

- **Published two Countryside Activities leaflets, with 133 events.** The RMCP have led 78 of these, which have included 35 guided walks and children's activities with 1222 people attending, 15 cycle rides with 386 people attending and 25 volunteer tasks with 342 people attending.

- **Produced the New Romney Town Trail**, with two interpretation panels and a free, full colour leaflet of the town, funded by the Kent Rural Development Area/SEEDA.
- **Produced a series of 9 full colour interpretation coastal panels from St.Marys Bay to Lade funded by CASK/SEEDA.**
- **Published a Dungeness NNR Newsletter and Shepway District Council started work on a Heritage Lottery Fund for Dungeness.**
- **Completed 402 volunteer days.** This total includes volunteer tasks on the Romney Marsh, voluntary wardens and work experience.
- **Created 5 new ponds on the Romney Marsh**, with grants from English Nature, in co-operation with the landowners.
- **Planted 477 metres of hedging and planted 121 trees.**
- The RMCP has now recorded **376 Water Vole sites, 83 Medicinal Leech sites and 101 Great Crested Newt sites** to date on the Marsh.
- **Completed a Greater Water Parsnip plant survey with 129 sites of 1450 plants recorded.**
- In partnership with landowners, the RMCP has successfully completed 3 Countryside Stewardship Schemes totalling **41.5km (6m) arable margins 9.5km (2m) arable margins, 2.5 hectare reedbed creation and 3.6 hectare arable reversion for bumble bees on the Romney Marsh.**
- The RMCP website was launched on **www.rmcp.co.uk**
- **Presented 18 talks and carried out 7 school visits.**
- **Generated 161 press mentions, with 1 TV and 3 Radio interviews.**



A partnership between

SHEPWAY
DISTRICT COUNCIL


ENGLISH
NATURE


Community Action in
South Kent (CASK)
Partnership

GlaxoWellcome
 **ENVIRONMENT**
AGENCY


RDA
Kent Rural
Development Area


British Energy
 **BNFL**
Magnox Generation

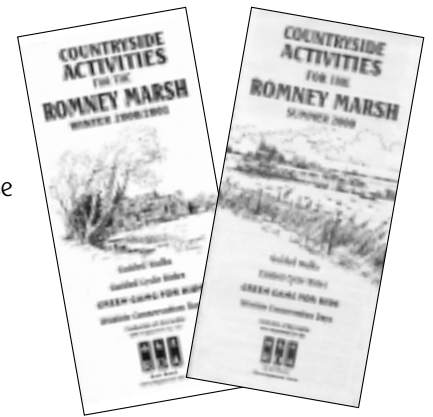

SEEDA SOUTH EAST
ENGLAND
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY
Working for England's World Class Region

Countryside Activities

Our aim is to encourage people to enjoy and understand the countryside through guided walks, cycle rides, countryside conservation events and children's activities.

A total of 35,000 Countryside Activities leaflets have been printed for the Romney Marsh by the RMCP, with a total of 133 events organised in 2000/2001. The RMCP led 78 of these

activities. Thanks to the Kent RDA and the CASK partnership for sponsoring both of these leaflets.



Guided walks

The RMCP have led 35 guided walks and children's activities, attended by 1222 people. This is an average of 35 people attending each walk, with 598 people (49%), being visitors to the Romney Marsh and contributing an estimated £9360 to the local economy.

98/99	876 (44)	Guided walks totals
99/00	859 (25)	
00/01	1222 (35)	

This is a 42.3% increase in walkers compared to last year.

Cycle rides

The guided cycle rides remain popular, with 386 people attending 15 rides. This is an average of 26 people attending per RMCP bike ride, with 216 people (56%), being visitors to the Romney Marsh and contributing an estimated £6597 to the local economy.

98/99	139 (13)	Guided cycle ride totals
99/00	328 (17)	
00/01	386 (15)	

This is a 17.7% increase in cyclists coming on a RMCP guided ride compared to 1999/2000.

Volunteers

We aim to encourage local people of all ages to find out more and get involved in helping to protect their local countryside.

In the fourth year of our project we have carried out 25 conservation tasks, totalling 342 volunteer days. 47% of these volunteer days have been given by people who live on the Romney Marsh, a 5% increase on last year. The overall number of volunteer tasks is down, due to the movement restrictions during the foot and mouth disease outbreak in March 2001.

The RMCP has again been working at numerous sites on the Romney Marsh, including two National Nature Reserves (NNR's) and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

The RMCP has worked at **Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR)**. The tasks have involved clearing Willow from the RSPB reserve on one of the Fossil Pits and Sea Buckthorn from the ARC Pit. The RMCP has also led two beach cleans clearing just over a half a tonne of rubbish.

Woodland ride work has continued for the third year at **Hamstreet Wood NNR**. A stretch of 100 metres of woodland path has been widened for Dormice and White Admiral butterflies.

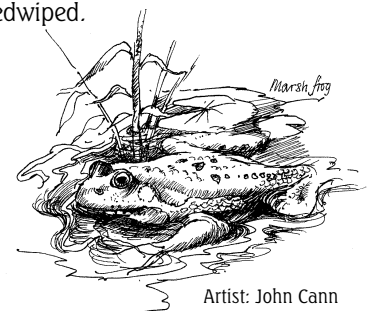
At **New Romney Warren SSSI**, Ragwort and Nettles have continued to be dug up and weedwiped.

Pond Work

When the RMCP was launched, 131 ponds had been destroyed since 1982 on the Marsh, with 11 lost since 1994. In four years, the RMCP has created 21 new ponds and restored another six.

The RMCP carried out 5 tasks at **New Romney Warren SSSI** and **Moneypenny Pits SSSI**. Willow was cut specifically around the seasonal ponds for Great-crested Newts, Medicinal Leeches and the Marshmallow Plant. Supervision of two contracts for scrub removal was also completed, at both these sites.

Work to cut back Willow and aquatic vegetation was also carried out at a pond at **Orgarswick, Dymchurch**.



5 ponds were created on the Romney Marsh during the autumn, at **East Guldeford, Moneypenny, Appledore, New Romney and Newchurch** by the RMCP, with grants from English Nature, specifically made for Great Crested Newts.

Working with farmers and landowners

Our aim is to conserve the wildlife and landscape of the Romney Marsh, working with farmers, local communities, landowners and business.

The RMCP employed Mrs Jane Reynolds on a part time basis to promote and help landowners and farmers interested in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS). Jane has helped to secure 3 successful CSS grant applications for local farmers

which will create:

- 41.5km of 6 metre arable margins
- 9.5km of 2m arable margins
- 2.5 hectare reedbed creation
- 3.7 hectare bumble bee grassland creation

This post was only made possible through funding from English Nature.

Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer (Romney Marsh)

Andrew Nixon was appointed as the new Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer for the Romney Marsh in June 2000. This post was funded by the CASK Partnership and will run for seven years. A selection of some of the work completed in the first six months is listed below.

Newchurch Wildlife Area. A wildlife pond was created and an area sown with bumble bee mix and wildflower plants have been added. Fencing, a path and a bench will be added in spring 2001. **Sponsorship came from Kent Rural Development Area.**

Lydd House. The RMCP organised a volunteer task to plant 56m of hedging, tree planting, along with bedding plants in the grounds. Further projects in the spring are planned, including a wildlife mural. **Sponsorship came from CASK and SEEDA.**

Lydd School. The RMCP carried out a mammoth planting day in the summer in three areas of the grounds with all the classes from the primary school. A total of 30 trees were planted during

another days planting in February 2001. **Sponsorship came from British Energy, CASK and SEEDA.**

Lydd Football Club. The RMCP have planted a 125m hedge and 46 trees around parts of the perimeter of the Lynsey's Field. **The hedging was paid for by CASK.**

Toad Fencing, New Romney. The RMCP carried out a task to construct toad fencing on the Ashford Road, New Romney in February 2001. **Sponsorship came from British Energy and CASK.**

Greatstone Guide and Scout Hall's ground will be re-landscaped. The RMCP have been working through the late winter to start this exciting new project.

Launched the RMCP website. This new site promotes the work of the project and the Romney Marsh area for Green Tourism. **www.rmcp.co.uk**

Interpretation Panels. Produced 9 coastal panels between St Mary's Bay and Lade.

New Romney Town Trail

The RMCP has produced and launched the New Romney Town Trail with funding from Kent Rural Development Area and SEEDA.

The two panels depict a storm in the thirteenth century and a modern day view of the town through the eyes of a seagull. The

panels are accompanied by a free colour town trail leaflet, encouraging everyone to a short, pleasant walk through New Romney, to discover the history and stories of the Marsh town and to support local businesses. A total of 20,000 leaflets were printed.

The Magic Of the Marsh walks pack



With quiet rural villages, numerous church towers on the horizon, the Romney Marsh is an ideal place to explore on foot.

The RMCP have reprinted the "Magic

of the Marsh" walks pack, with financial support from the Environment Agency.

The RMCP has up-graded 83km of footpaths involved in the nine self guided walks, with new kissing gates, stiles, waymarking posts and discs during winter 2001 funded by CASK Partnership /SEEDA.

The Romney Marsh Meanders cycle pack

The Romney Marsh is an ideal place for family cycling. It is flat, with wide open landscapes and quiet rural lanes.

The Romney Marsh Meanders cycle pack continues to sell well and was financed through the

Kent Rural Development Area (RDA) by SEEDA.

The RMCP worked with Shepway District Council to make Shepway Cyclethon 2000 a great success. In June, 192 cyclists followed National Cycle Route 2 in their free yellow T-shirts across the Marsh to the Folkestone Lower Leas Coastal Park, finishing off with a free barbecue and a lift back to the start.

Dungeness National Nature Reserve

Our aim is to care for Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR) through a partnership approach with other conservation organisations, private companies and the local residents.

In autumn 2000, English Nature and the RMCP produced a local newsletter for the residents of Dungeness to Greatstone called the "Shingle Issue". The newsletter was posted to every resident adjacent to the NNR, further editions are planned.

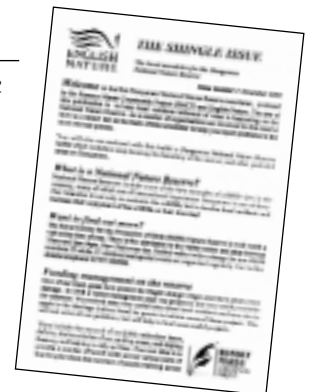
The RMCP, English Nature and the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway (RH&DLR), cleared rubbish on NNR land in the autumn 2000. Supervision of the removal of low grade asbestos was completed on parts of the NNR in summer 2000.

End of road barriers were constructed to prevent vehicle access onto the NNR at 8 sites from Greatstone to Lade, along with the additional siting of 15 miniliths explaining the NNR. The Nature Conservation Order (NCO) has been renewed for

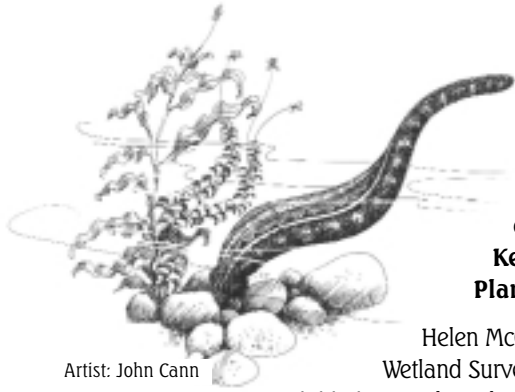
Dungeness, which prevents four wheel drive vehicles, motorbikes and quadbikes driving on the shingle. English Nature were successful in prosecuting a local man for driving a quadbike on Dungeness in partnership with the RSPB and the Kent Police.

The RMCP continues to work on the issues involving sea angling at Dungeness, car parking and rubbish. A new fishing agreement for the Long Pits, Dungeness has been set up with Ready Mixed Concrete (RMC) and a local fishing club, which have liaised closely with the RMCP.

Numerous filming problems on Dungeness Estate have occurred over the year. This has resulted in a prosecution under the NCO for a London based company filming a pop video which damaged the shingle during September.



Wetlands Survey - Promoting Biodiversity on the Marsh



Artist: John Cann

Our aim is to improve our knowledge of wetland species on the Romney Marsh through extensive surveys, in close conjunction with the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Helen McConnell was appointed to the Wetland Survey Post in June 2000. This initiative was launched in March 1998 and has

continued for its third year with financial help from English Nature and the Environment Agency. Additional financial support came from Glaxo Wellcome, specifically for work on the Medicinal Leech.

Water Voles suffered a slight decline in the ten monitoring 1km squares on the Romney Marsh during the year. A total of ten new 1km survey squares were completed, bringing the total number of 1km squares surveyed to 57.

The complete length of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) watercourses on the Marsh totalling 185 km has been surveyed. 47% (86.5 km) of the IDB ditches contained Water Voles. In comparison, Water Voles were found on 9.8% (14.4km) of Main River maintained by the Environment Agency on the Marsh (324km). The RMCP have collated 45 **Mink** records for the Marsh during 2000.

Medicinal Leeches are now found in 32 pits/ponds and 51 ditches on the Romney Marsh. This constitutes the national

stronghold for this species. Analysis of 64 blood slides and monitoring of 424 leeches caught, suggest young leeches favour feeding on fish, while the larger leeches tend to feed on birds and amphibians.

The RMCP conducted a two month survey of the **Greater Water Parsnip** on the Romney Marsh. The plant was found at 129 sites, totalling 1450 plants. The distribution showed a concentration along the northern fringe of the Marsh from Burmarsh to Appledore.

The RMCP has conducted **Water Shrew** surveys on the Romney Marsh and have collated 8 records.

In partnership with the Romney Warren Project, at New Romney Warren several hundred of the nationally scarce **Marshmallow plants** were grown from seed, and then planted out specifically to provide a food plant for the endangered **Marshmallow moth** at Old Romney and at three ponds on the Marsh.

Barn Owl boxes funded by the Environment Agency were installed at Old Romney and Brookland, bringing the total to 7 owl boxes installed on the Marsh. Thirty **Tree Sparrow** boxes were made at New Romney Warren SSSI in February 2001 and 18 were put up on site.

The winter wildfowl and breeding bird counts at Fairfield SSSI were conducted for English Nature in partnership with the landowner.

Two training days for surveying Medicinal Leeches and Newts (including Great-crested Newt) were organised. These were held at Dungeness RSPB reserve and New Romney Warren SSSI.

Publicity

Cycling is done to a tea

Sea side panels tell coast stories

Team help for garden

Shore thing for the litter crew

Holiday fun days for local children

Families on trail of smugglers

On the toad patrol

Helpers hedge their best

On your bikes for fun ride

We aim to raise awareness of the local and national importance of the Marsh and Dungeness. The wildlife and attractive landscape can assist in marketing the area to a wide audience attracting new visitors and supporting the

local economy through 'Green Tourism' which is sustainable to the local environment.

The number of press mentions in 2000/2001 totalled 161 in local papers and magazines. The publicity included 3 radio interviews and 1 TV interview.

The RMCP has given 18 talks to councils, conservation groups and societies totalling 715 people. Our stall featured at Lydd Club Day, New Romney Country Fair, New Romney School Fete, Brookland Village Fete, Dungeness RSPB Bird Fair and a Dungeness Power Station Promotion Day.

Be part of it

We are keen for you to become involved - contact us Nick Johannsen, Owen Leyshon, Andrew Nixon, Andrea Hutchens or Helen McConnell.

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