

Achievements

Romney Marsh Countryside Project

April 2003/March 2004

Romney Marsh Countryside Project – Our Seventh Year



The Romney Marsh Countryside Project was launched in July 1996 with the aim of helping to care for the special beauty and wildlife of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness.

The RMCP is managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Project and receives core funding from:-

- Shepway District Council
- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- BNFL Magnox
- British Energy
- Community in South Kent (CASK)
- South East England Development Area (SEEDA).

Our seventh year has been one of our busiest ever and our team consists of two full time and two part time staff covering:-

- Project Management
- Green Tourism and Community Wildlife
- Wetlands Survey and Wildlife Enhancement (including promoting wildlife grants with local landowner)

We can do more though and would like to extend our partnership working with local employers, landowners, town and parish councils and community groups for the long term benefit of the area's wildlife, landscape and economy.

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

- **Published two Countryside Activities leaflets, with 194 events.** The RMCP have led 91 of these, which have included 51 guided walks and children's activities with 1197 people attending, 11 cycle rides with 358 people attending and 29 volunteer tasks with 260 people attending.
- **Successful in a Dungeness Heritage Lottery Bid in conjunction with the RSPB.** The RMCP has been successful in securing a grant to complete a range of projects across the Dungeness, Lydd-on-sea, Lade and Greatstone area. The project

will be supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. It was launched in February 2004 and it will run for three years.

- **Successful in a Royal Military Canal Heritage Lottery Bid.** The RMCP has been successful in securing a grant to complete the promotion of the Royal Military Canal from Seabrook, Hythe to Fairlight in East Sussex. The project will be supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The partnership involves both Kent and East Sussex County Councils, Shepway and Ashford councils and a range of conservation organisations. The project will include a new walks pack, information panels and a new website.
- **The new Blast from the Past - Lydd Town Trail was launched in summer 2003.** A partnership project between the Friends of Lydd and is part funded by the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI). The trail will involve an information panel and leaflet, plus website pages promoting the town and its history - "A Blast from the Past".
- **Completed 346 volunteer days.** This total includes volunteer tasks on the Romney Marsh, voluntary wardens, surveys and Environment Task Force projects.
- **Our database shows 410 Water Vole sites, 91 Medicinal Leech sites, 104 Great crested newt sites and 1450 Greater Water Parsnip plants** at 129 sites.
- A total of **nine CSS applications** for the Romney Marsh were submitted in 2003 and **three are signed to date, while three have deferred a year.**
- The RMCP website www.rmcp.co.uk continues to be popular with **29,003 visits** in the year and **295,386 hits.**
- Presented **nine talks** and carried out **two school visits**, attended **six country, village fairs** and spoke to **2481 people.**
- Produced **312 press mentions, one TV and five radio interviews.**



A partnership between



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY



ENGLISH
NATURE



Community Action in
South Kent (CASK)
Partnership

SHEPWAY
DISTRICT COUNCIL



BNFL

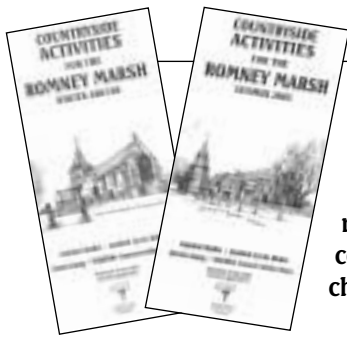
Magnox Generation

British Energy

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.

30,000 Countryside Activities leaflets have been published for the Romney Marsh by the RMCP, with 194 events organised in 2003/2004. The RMCP led 91 of these activities. Thanks to CASK for sponsoring both of these leaflets.

Cycle rides

The number of cyclists coming on a guided bike ride has been increasing over the last six years. The RMCP led 11 bike rides attended by 358 people in 2003/2004 and 179 people (50%) were visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £2,864 to the local economy.

Year	Participants	Visitors
99/00	328	17
00/01	386	15
01/02	336	11
02/03	361	12
03/04	358	11

Guided walks

The RMCP led 51 guided walks and children's activities, attended by 1197 people. This is an average of 24 people attending per walk, with 780 people (65%), visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £12,480 to the local economy.

Year	Participants	Visitors
99/00	859	25
00/01	1222	35
01/02	965	26
02/03	1143	36
03/04	1197	51

Volunteers

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

Through our seventh year of the project we have carried out **29 conservation tasks, totalling 260 volunteer days**. 38% of these volunteer days have been given by people who live on the Romney Marsh. The average number of volunteers per task is nine.

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project welcomes help from a range of volunteers helping look after sites, specific planting projects, plus help at village fairs and help with wildlife surveys and this totalled **86 days** during the year.

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).

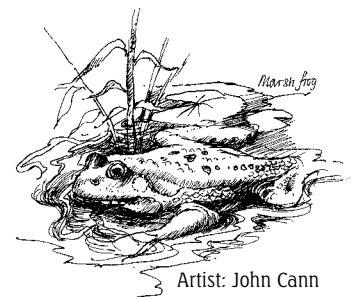
The RMCP has worked at **Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR)**. The tasks have involved clearing Willow from the RSPB reserve on two of the Fossil Pits and fencing off reed, which was planted in the new wetland area of the RSPB

reserve. The RMCP has also led two beach cleans clearing half a tonne of rubbish in April and September.

Woodland ride work has continued for the fifth year at **Hamstreet Wood NNR**. A stretch of 80 metres of woodland path has been widened at the entrance to Bournewood. The Christmas task was also a success, with no rain and no burnt sausages!

At **New Romney Warren SSSI and Local Nature Reserve**, Ragwort has continued to be dug up by volunteers.

The RMCP worked on ponds at **New Romney Warren SSSI and Moneypenny Pits SSSI** over four tasks. Willow was cut specifically around the seasonal ponds for Great-crested Newts, Medicinal Leeches and the Marshmallow Plant.



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

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 casual basis to promote and help landowners and farmers interested in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) to apply. A total of nine CSS applications for the Romney Marsh were submitted in

2003 and at going to press three applications have been signed.

A further three CSS applications are being developed in early 2004 by the RMCP in conjunction with the landowners and these are planned to be submitted in spring 2004.

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

The Magic Of the Marsh walks pack and the Romney Marsh Meanders cycle pack

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

The RMCP continues to monitor, upgrade and repair lengths of the footpaths involved in the nine self guided walks and the five routes in the cycle pack, a combined length of 154 miles.

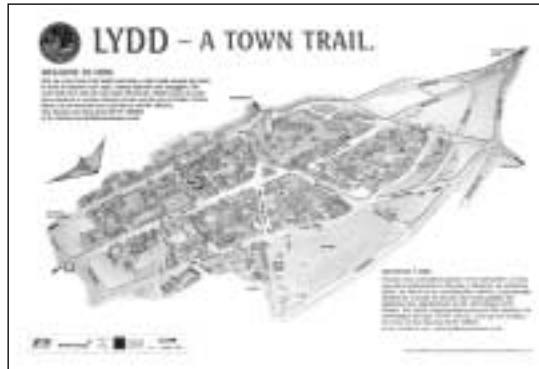
Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer (Romney Marsh)

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project has been busy working on a wide range of projects during the year with the Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer. Work completed in the year included:-

Lydd Town Trail - A Blast From The Past. Was launched in June 2003.

This project, which was a partnership between the Friends of Lydd (FoL) and part funded by the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI). The trail involves a new panel in Coronation Square and a new leaflet and website pages promoting the town and its history.

The Camp, Dymchurch. A couple of tasks were completed to help clear



bramble from this newly adopted land by the Dymchurch Parish Council.

Toad Fencing, New Romney. The RMCP carried out the annual task to construct toad fencing on the Ashford Road, New Romney.

Lydd Housing Landscaping Scheme.

A range of wildflower planting was conducted in a housing estate in Lydd, with sensitive management of the grassy verges and flower beds with wildlife in mind. This was partnership between Shepway District Council and the Employment Training Scheme (Folkestone).

Royal Military Canal

At 28 miles the Royal Military Canal is the third longest defensive linear monument in Britain. It has a long distance footpath adjacent to the canal with great potential as a recreational resource.

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project has successfully secured a Heritage Lottery Grant to complete the promotion of the Royal Military Canal from Seabrook, Hythe to Fairlight in East Sussex. The project will be supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The partnership involves both Kent and East Sussex County Councils, the Environment Agency,

Shepway District Council and Ashford Borough Council plus a range of conservation organisations. The RMCP will be leading on this project and will produce a new canal walks pack, information panels and a website for the 28 miles of canal. Work will start on this project in April 2004 and will last for eighteen months.



Royal Military Canal, Kenardington

Cycling

The Romney Marsh is an ideal area to cycle with your family or to escape the congested roads of the south east. Flat, peaceful with plenty to see in the villages or in the watery ditches.

The RMCP worked with Shepway District Council to make Shepway Cyclethon 2003 a great success. In June, 248 cyclists followed National Cycle Route 2 in their free, blue T-shirts around

the Marsh stopping at Lathe Barn tea rooms and back to New Romney, before finishing off with some free snacks.

The Romney Marsh is part of a new publication for Rural Ways (South East England Tourism Board) on cycling. Self guided routes used, are part of the routes in the Romney Marsh cycle pack.



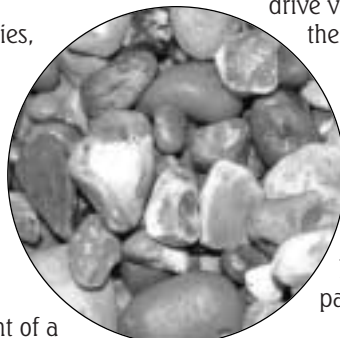
Dungeness National Nature Reserve

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 spring 2004, the RSPB and other interested parties, including the RMCP, were successful for the second stage Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Dungeness. The proposed work is on the RSPB reserve, on the Dungeness Estate and other areas at Greatstone, Lade and Lydd-on-sea owned by English Nature and Shepway District Council. This project will be supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Work on proposed boardwalks and the appointment of a Dungeness Officer started in March 2004.

English Nature and the RMCP have produced the fourth publication of the local newsletter for the residents of Dungeness to Greatstone called the "Shingle Issue". The newsletter was



posted to every resident adjacent to the NNR.

The Special Nature Conservation Order (NCO) has again been renewed for Dungeness, which allows prosecutions of four wheel drive vehicles, motorbikes and quadbikes if they drive on the shingle.

A new launch by BNFL Magnox and British Energy to clear up the rubbish along the tideline and against the perimeter wall started in March 2004. Monthly rubbish clear ups are planned by the Power Station, in conjunction with the RMCP which conduct two beachcleans annually. It is hoped other landowners at Dungeness will join this partnership in 2004.

The RMCP have been monitoring a long term project for broom seed tubes on the Dungeness RSPB reserve in partnership with National Grid. The project was started in spring 2001. Another trial has been conducted on broom on the Folkestone and Dover Water Services land at Dungeness in autumn 2003.

Wetlands Survey - Promoting Biodiversity on the Marsh

Our aim is to improve our knowledge of wetland species on the Romney Marsh through extensive surveys on key wildlife species like Water Vole, Great-crested Newt and Medicinal Leech. This work is closely linked to national and county wide species action plans.

The Wetland Survey Post, an initiative launched in March 1998, has continued for its sixth year with financial help from the Environment Agency.

Water Voles decreased by around 34% compared to 2002 in a range of monitoring 1km squares on the Romney Marsh during the year. A total of 15 1km long term monitoring squares were surveyed during 2003.

New weed cut standards have been adopted in 2003 across the county, including the Romney Marsh. Reed fringes are now left on one side of channels managed by the Environment Agency for the benefit of species like the Water Vole.

A total of 86 survey points were visited to assess the changes across the Marsh.



Mink Raft, White Kemp Sewer

The RMCP have also collated **Mink** records for the Marsh during 2003, with a figure of 177 Mink being trapped or shot during the year.

A new monitoring scheme is being introduced on the Romney Marsh to monitor the movements of Mink along large water channels.

This project is led by the Environment Agency, and was developed by the Game Conservancy Trust. These floating rafts contain a wet clay pad, which shows the footprints of Mink as they walk over the rafts and these are checked regularly.

No survey work was conducted for **Medicinal Leeches** on the Marsh in 2003, although conducted some filming for a TV programme. Leeches are now found in 33 pits/ponds and 58 ditches on the Romney Marsh. This constitutes the national stronghold for this species.

In partnership with the Romney Warren Project, New Romney, the nationally scarce **Marshmallow plant** was grown from seed, which were then planted out specifically for the endangered **Marshmallow moth** at two ponds on the Marsh.

Worked on protecting the **Early Spider Orchid** and **Stinking Hawk's Beard** populations both at Dungeness.

Worked with the Romney Marsh Potato Company on the creation of a new ditch for **Water Voles**. **Marshmallow** seed was also scattered along the banks of the ditch.

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



Engine Sewer, The Dowels

Publicity



'Green Tourism' which does not damage the local environment.

We aim to raise awareness of the local and national importance of the Romney Marsh. The wildlife and attractive landscape can help to market the area to a wide audience attracting new visitors and supporting the local economy through

The number of press mentions in 2003/2004 totalled 312 in national and local papers plus magazines. The publicity included one TV and five radio interviews.

The RMCP has given nine talks to councils, conservation groups and societies attended by 319 people. Our stall featured at Lydd Club Day, Dymchurch School Fete, New Romney Country Fair, Brookland Village Fete and the Dungeness RSPB Bird Fair and a total of 2,079 people visited our stall.

The RMCP website continues to be popular and has achieved 29,003 visits over the year and 295,386 hits - which to a small website is rewarding. We have added extra links and new pages on town trails and updated our noticeboard with a selection of images and articles on a weekly basis.

Be part of it

We are keen for you to become involved - contact us Kirk Alexander, Owen Leyshon, Mary Tate and Jane Reynolds

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The Romney Marsh Countryside Project is a partnership between Shepway District Council, English Nature, Environment Agency, BNFL Magnox Generation, British Energy, Community Action in South Kent (CASK) and the South East England Development Area (SEEDA).