

Achievements

Romney Marsh Countryside Project

April 2004/March 2005

Romney Marsh Countryside Project – Our Eighth Year



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

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

- Shepway District Council
- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- British Nuclear Group
- British Energy
- Community in South Kent (CASK)
- South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

The Romney Marsh CP team consists of two full-time and two part-time staff covering:-

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

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 eighth year the Romney Marsh Countryside Project has :-

- **Published two Countryside Activities leaflets, with 165 events.** The RMCP have led 62 of these, which have included 31 guided walks and children's activities with 1130 people attending, 6 cycle rides with 508 people attending and 25 volunteer tasks with 355 people attending.

- **Implementing the successful Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Project in partnership with the RSPB.** The RMCP has been successful in securing a grant to complete a range of projects from Dungeness to Greatstone. The project has been supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, plus a range of other partners. The Project was launched in February 2004 and it will run for three years.

- The RMCP has **installed two boardwalks at Dungeness and Lade** and are recruiting a Project Officer to implement the series of projects across Dungeness.

- **Implementing the Royal Military Canal Heritage Lottery Bid.** The RMCP was 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 include information panels, access improvements and a website.

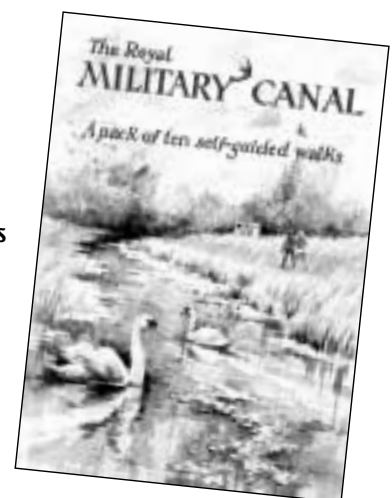
- **Published the Royal Military Canal Walks Pack.**

- **Completed 392 volunteer days.** This total includes volunteer tasks on the Romney Marsh, voluntary wardens, surveys and work experience.

- Recorded **412 Water Vole** sites, **105 Medicinal Leech** sites, **107 Great crested newt** sites and **1450 Greater Water Parsnip plants** at 129 sites.

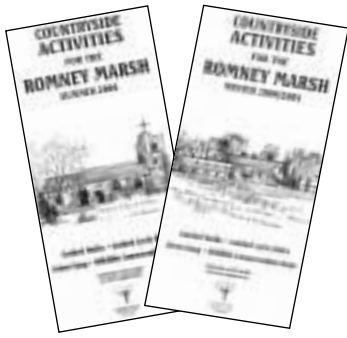
- The RMCP website **www.rmcp.co.uk** continues to be popular with visits in the year and hits.

- **Presented 14 talks**
- **Produced 233 press mentions, with eight TV programmes and three radio interviews.**



A partnership between





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.

22,500 Countryside Activities leaflets have been published for the Romney Marsh by the RMCP, with 165 events organised in 2004/2005. The RMCP led 62 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. A total of 508 people attended the 6 RMCP rides in 2004/2005 and 233 people (46%) were visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £3,728 to the local economy.

Guided cycle ride totals

00/01	386 (15)
01/02	336 (11)
02/03	361 (12)
03/04	358 (11)
04/05	508 (6)

Guided walks

The RMCP have led 31 guided walks and children's activities, attended by 1130 people. This is an average of 32 people attending per walk, with 850 people (75%), visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £13,600 to the local economy.

Guided walks totals

00/01	1222 (35)
01/02	965 (26)
02/03	1143 (36)
03/04	1197 (51)
04/05	1130 (32)

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 eighth year of the project we have carried out **25 conservation tasks, totalling 355 volunteer days**. 33% of these volunteer days have been given by people who live on the Romney Marsh. The average number of volunteers per task is 14.

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 **37 volunteer days** during the year.

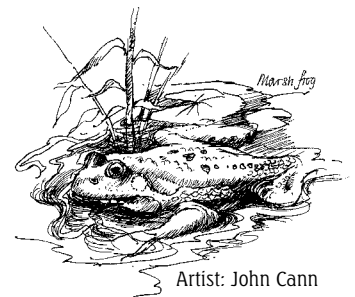
The RMCP has again been working at numerous sites on the Romney Marsh, including two National Nature Reserves (NNR's) and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

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 planted in the new wetland area of the RSPB reserve. The RMCP has also led two beach cleans clearing just over half a tonne of rubbish.

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

The **RMCP worked at Romney Warren Local Nature Reserve and New Romney Warren SSSI** over three tasks. This is the site of the new Romney Marsh Visitor Centre opened in 2004 and managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust in partnership with Shepway District Council. Willow was cut specifically around the seasonal ponds for great-crested newts, medicinal leeches and the marshmallow plant.

Continued to work on Walland Marsh SSSI at **Money Penny Pits** over two tasks to cut back scrub from around the seasonal ponds, to enhance the habitat for great-crested newts, medicinal leech and marshmallow moth.



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 employs Mrs Jane Reynolds on a part time casual

basis to promote and help landowners and farmers interested in the new Entry Level Scheme and Higher Level Scheme which was launched by DEFRA in March 2005.

This post was only made possible through 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 long.

Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer (Romney Marsh)

Richard Haynes was appointed in May 2004 and has been busy working primarily on the Royal Military Canal Project over the course of the year.

Richard and the RMCP were involved in two community projects during the year. One was the arrival of the Groundforce BBC Garden Makeover team to a scout and guide grounds in Greatstone.

While the second was a garden makeover for the Romney Marsh Day Centre in partnership with Goddard Landscaping, New Romney. The work resulted in a wildlife pond, bird feeding area, herb garden and many wildflower beds.



Work continued around the Newchurch Wildlife Area, cutting the grass, improving the pond for amphibians and aquatic flowers, where an interpretation board was erected in 2002.

The RMCP widened the Eighteen Acres Lane, near Brookland which is a bridleway to help walkers and horse riders use the track.

Toad fencing continued again for the fourth year in New Romney to help the toads reach the breeding ditch adjacent to a busy road.

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 successfully secured a Heritage Lottery Grant to complete the promotion of the Royal Military Canal from Seabrook to Fairlight in East Sussex. The partnership involves both Kent and East Sussex County Councils, the Environment Agency, Shepway District Council and Ashford Borough Council. The project is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In November 2004 to mark the 200th anniversary when the first canal sod was turned over, the Romney Marsh Countryside Project held a launch at the Hythe Town Hall to publish The Royal Military Canal walks pack.



Further projects to be completed will include ten information panels, access improvements and a new website for the 28 miles of Canal. website is www.royalmilitarycanal.com

Cycling

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

The RMCP worked with Shepway District Council to make Shepway Cyclethon 2004 a great success. In June, 403 cyclists followed National Cycle Route 2 in their free, white T-shirts around the Marsh stopping at Lathe Barn tea rooms and back to New Romney, before finishing off with a light refreshments.

The RMCP worked with Tourism Plus, with funding from LEADER+ and Kent County Council to produce a cycling food trail around the Romney Marsh, which was published in a free leaflet called "Sheep Ahoy" and launched in spring 2005.



The Project in partnership with Rural Ways, Tourism South East has produced a three day itinerary of walking and cycling which will be promoted on a new website.

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 2005, the Romney Marsh Countryside Project advertised for the **Dungeness Project Officer** to implement the projects which have received successful funding and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Dungeness Wetland and Shingle Project started in February 2004.



During the year, **new boardwalks** have been installed at Dungeness Point and at Lade car park to improve access and help manage the half a million visitors per year to the National Nature Reserve. **Old metal barriers and concrete blocks have been removed** from

the Point by British Nuclear Group in March 2005.

supplement the work which is being proposed for the Dungeness area. Decisions will be made in summer 2005.

A new initiative to clear rubbish from the tideline in front of the power stations by British Nuclear Group, RMCP and local residents resulted in just over a tonne of rubbish being removed during 2004. It is hoped certain user groups and other landowners on Dungeness will join the partnership in 2005.



The Special Nature Conservation Order (NCO) has again been renewed for Dungeness, which allows four wheel drive vehicles, motorbikes and quadbikes driving on the shingle to be prosecuted.

Wardening duties over the year include **managing 23 film and fashion shoots** on the Dungeness Estate, tackling damage caused by four wheel drive vehicles, lorries, motorbikes, quadbikes and utility companies.

Further bids have been submitted to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) Partnership Grant Scheme to

The RMCP have completed further Broom planting on the MOD Lydd Ranges in the winter 2004/2005 in conjunction with English Nature.

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 seventh year with financial help from the Environment Agency and also a small amount of private funding.

Water Voles increased by around 30% compared to 2003 in a range of monitoring 1km squares on the Romney Marsh during the year. A total of 15 1km squares were surveyed during 2004.

A new monitoring scheme introduced on the Romney Marsh to study the movements of **Mink** along large water channels continues. A total of 34 mink rafts were installed during 2004 in partnership with the Environment Agency.



Mink Raft, White Kemp Sewer

The RMCP have also collated 51 Mink records for the Marsh during 2004, with a figure of 90 Mink being trapped during the year by landowners.

A survey of East Guldeford Levels (Walland Marsh SSSI) for **Medicinal Leeches** was conducted in late spring 2004 for English Nature. The aim to evaluate the impact of low water levels in 2003 on the breeding success of the leeches. Medicinal Leech are now found in at least 34 pits/ponds and 71 ditches on the Romney Marsh. This constitutes the national stronghold for this species.

Work continued to protect the **Early Spider Orchid** and **Stinking Hawk's Beard** populations both at Dungeness, which are both declining.

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

Conducted **Great-crested Newt** surveys and bottle trapping at a proposed development site at Camber, East Sussex in partnership with consultants in April 2004 and March 2005.



Publicity



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

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

The number of press mentions in 2004/2005 totalled 233 in local papers and magazines. The publicity included eight TV programmes including Groundforce (BBC), Countryfile (BBC) and the Seven Wonders of the SE (BBC) and three radio interviews.

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project continues to write a weekly Nature Notes column in the Kentish Express, now in its fifth year. Also contributing a monthly wildlife snippet for the Marsh Harrier magazine.

The RMCP has given 14 talks to councils, conservation groups and societies attended by 630+ people. Our wildlife stall featured at Lydd Club Day and New Romney Country Fair.

The RMCP website provides an important green tourism and wildlife link for the Marsh. The website has achieved 36,542 visits over the year and 367,517 hits. We have added extra links and new pages on the Royal Military Canal and updated our noticeboard with a selection of images and articles on a regular basis.

	Visits	Hits
April 02 - March 03	15,622	168,449
April 03 - March 04	29,003	295,386
April 04 - March 05	36,542	367,517

Be part of it

**We are keen for you to become involved – contact us
Kirk Alexander, Owen Leyshon, Richard Haynes, 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, British Nuclear Group, British Energy, Community Action in South Kent (CASK) and the South East England Development Area (SEEDA).