

Achievements

Romney Marsh Countryside Project

April 2002/March 2003

Romney Marsh Countryside Project – Our Sixth 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
- BNFL Magnox
- British Energy
- Community in South Kent (CASK)
- South East England Development Area (SEEDA)

Our sixth year has been one of our busiest ever and our team has grown to 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 landowners).

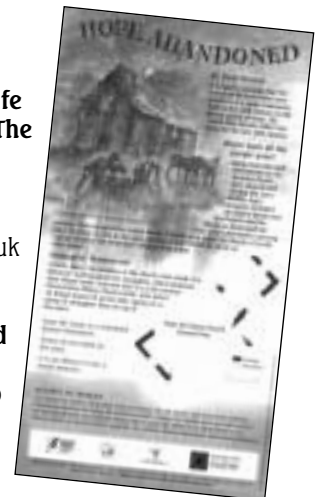
We can do more though and would like to extend our partnership working with local employers, landowners, town and parish councils and community groups for the long term benefit of the area's wildlife, landscape and economy.

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

- **Published two Countryside Activities leaflets, with 178 events.** The RMCP have led 75 of these, which have included 36 guided walks and children's activities with 1143 people attending, 12 cycle rides with 361 people attending and 27 volunteer tasks with 266 people attending.
- **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 partnership involves both Kent and East Sussex County Councils, Shepway and Ashford district councils and a range of conservation organisations. The project will include a new walks pack, information panels and a website.
- **Installed 32 cycle stands at key businesses and tourist attractions across the Romney Marsh,** through funding from

Community Action in South Kent (CASK).

- **The new Lydd Town Trail will be launched in spring 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".
- **Produced a display panel for the ruins of Hope All Saints.**
- **Submitted the Stage 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and a bid for Aggregates Levy money for the Dungeness area.** Published more editions of the Dungeness NNR Newsletter, "The Shingle Issue" in conjunction with English Nature.
- **Completed 314 volunteer days.** This total includes volunteer tasks on the Romney Marsh, voluntary wardens, surveys and work experience.
- **Created two new ponds on the Romney Marsh,** with grants from English Nature, in co-operation with the landowners.
- **Recorded c400 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 (8 in Kent and 1 in East Sussex) were submitted and all have been successful. This will create:
32.6 km of 6 metres of arable margins and 0.7 km of 2 metre margins, 14.39 hectares of bumble bee wildflower mix being sown, 96.85 hectares of arable reversion, 92.44 hectares of wildlife friendly grassland management. The creation of 14 ponds, 314 trees planted and 4714 metres of hedgerow planting.
- The RMCP website www.rmcp.co.uk continues to be popular with 15,664 visits in the year and 168,591 hits.
- **Presented 20 talks and carried out 2 school visits, attended 6 country, village fairs and spoke to 2793 people.**
- **Produced 327 press mentions, with 5 radio interviews.**



A partnership between



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY



ENGLISH
NATURE



Community Action in
South Kent (CASK)
Partnership

SHEPWAY
DISTRICT COUNCIL



BNFL

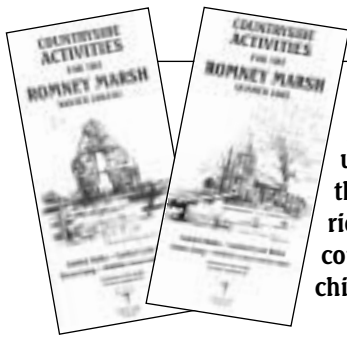
Magnox Generation

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.

35,000 Countryside Activities leaflets have been published for the Romney Marsh by the RMCP, with 178 events organised in 2002/2003. The RMCP led 75 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 five years. 361 people attended 12 rides in 2002/2003 and 221 people (61%) were visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £7250 to the local economy.

Year	Participants	Rides
99/00	328	(17)
00/01	386	(15)
01/02	336	(11)
02/03	361	(12)

Guided walks

The RMCP have led 36 guided walks and children's activities, attended by 1143 people. This is an average of 32 people attending per walk, with 824 people (72%), visitors to the Romney Marsh, contributing an estimated total value of £13,000 to the local economy.

Year	Participants	Walks
99/00	859	(25)
00/01	1222	(35)
01/02	965	(26)
02/03	1143	(36)

We have seen a 11% increase in the number of people attending RMCP guided walks and events, compared to 2001/2002.

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 sixth year of the project we have carried out 27 conservation tasks, totalling 266 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 10.

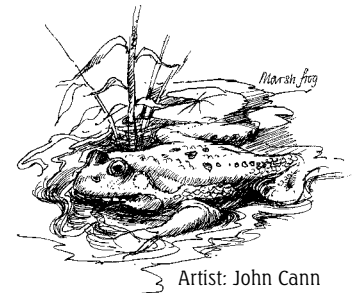
The RMCP has again been working at numerous sites on the Romney Marsh, including two National Nature Reserves (NNR's) and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

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 three beach cleans clearing just under one tonne of rubbish.

Woodland ride work has continued for the fourth 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!

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



Artist: John Cann

Pond Work

Since 1982, 142 ponds have been destroyed on the Romney Marsh and to counter this trend the RMCP has created 35 new ponds and restored another 7.

The RMCP worked on **New Romney Warren SSSI** and **Money Penny 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**.

2 ponds were created on the Romney Marsh specifically made for Great-crested Newts during the autumn at **East Guldeford corner and on The Dowels, Appledore** by the RMCP.

14 ponds are to be restored or created in the successful Countryside Stewardship Scheme applications for the Romney Marsh in the 2002/2003.

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). Nine CSS applications for the Romney Marsh (8 in Kent and 1 in East Sussex) were submitted and all have been successful. This will create:

32.6 km of 6 metre wide arable margins and 0.7 km of 2 metre wide margins

14.39 hectares of bumble bee wildflower mix being sown
96.85 hectares of arable reversion
92.44 hectares of wildlife friendly grassland management
Creation of 14 ponds, 314 trees planted and 4714 metres of hedgerow planting.

A further eight CSS applications are being developed in early 2003 by the RMCP in conjunction with the landowners and these will be submitted in spring 2003.

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

Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer (Romney Marsh)

Andy Morris was appointed in April 2002 and has been busy working on a wide range of projects during the year as the Green Tourism and Community Wildlife Officer. Work completed in the year included:-

Lydd Town Trail - A Blast From The Past. To be launched in late spring 2003. This project, which is a partnership between the Friends of Lydd (FoL) is part funded by the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI). The trail will involve a new panel in Coronation Square and a new leaflet and website pages promoting the town and its history.

Hope All Saints Panel. A historical panel has been produced and installed at an area in front of the ruins at Hope All Saints church. The land is accessible to the public through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Sponsorship for the panel came from Community Action in South Kent (CASK).

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 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, Shepway District Council and Ashford Borough Council and a range of conservation

Lydd Housing Landscaping Scheme. The RMCP in partnership with Shepway District Council are developing a range of landscaping opportunities within the town of Lydd.

Brookland School. The RMCP have carried out more pond improvements and several activity events with the after school wildlife groups. **Sponsorship came from CASK.**

Sponsored Beachclean, Littlestone. The RMCP helped organise a beachclean at Littlestone, with a local community group raising money to build a skateboard park at Littlestone. A total of 47 bags were removed from the beach.

Toad Fencing, New Romney. The RMCP carried out the annual task to construct toad fencing on the Ashford Road, New Romney. **Sponsorship came from CASK for the materials and kind loans from HM Prison Services.**



organisations including the Rye Bay Countryside Office. The project will produce a new walks pack, information panels and a website for the 28 miles of canal.

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.

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.

Installed 32 cycle stands at key businesses across the Romney Marsh. **Funding came from Community Action in South Kent (CASK) for the stands and installation.**

The RMCP worked with Shepway District Council to make Shepway Cyclethon 2002 a great success. In June, 193 cyclists followed National Cycle Route 2 in their free, green T-shirts around the Marsh stopping at Lathe Barn tea rooms and back to New Romney, before finishing off with a barbecue snack.



Dungeness National Nature Reserve

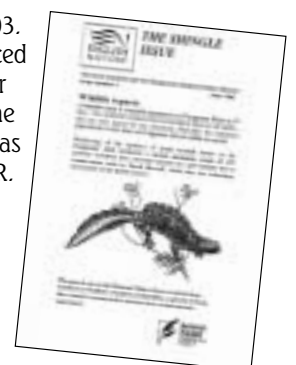
Our aim is to care for Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR) through a partnership approach with other conservation organisations, private companies and the local residents.

In autumn 2002, the RSPB and other interested parties, including the RMCP, submitted 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. A decision by the HLF Board will be made in summer 2003.

Further bids were put in for Aggregates Levy money to supplement the work which is being proposed for the Dungeness

area. Decisions will be made in spring 2003. English Nature and the RMCP have produced the third 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 prevents four wheel drive vehicles, motorbikes and quadbikes driving on the shingle. A new fence has been installed in winter 2003 along the edge of a



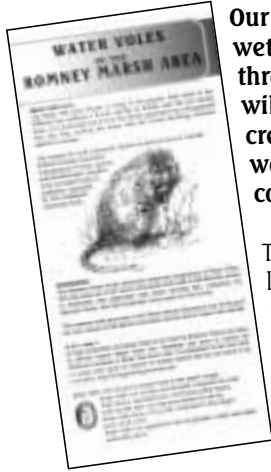
car park at Greatstone to prevent four wheel drive vehicles accessing the National Nature Reserve. The success of this order depends on regular wardening and close liaison with the relevant authorities and agencies.

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.

The RMCP continues to work on a range of issues like car parking problems, visits by film and fashion crews and the removal of rubbish.

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 fifth year with financial help from the Environment Agency.

Water Voles increased by around 30% compared to 2001 in a range of monitoring 1km squares on the Romney

Marsh during the year. A total of 20 1km squares were surveyed during 2002 of which 15 were long term monitoring squares. A range of projects are on going involving weedcut standards in ditches, water level changes and Mink diet analysis.

The RMCP have also collated 60 **Mink** records for the Marsh

during 2002, with a figure of 191 Mink being trapped or shot during the year.

Medicinal Leeches are now found in 33 pits/ponds and 58 ditches on the Romney Marsh. This constitutes the national stronghold for this species. The number of blood slides obtained was very low as in 2001 and monitoring of the leeches at sites was restricted to six sites.

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

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

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

One **Water Vole** training day for the public and volunteers was conducted at Fairfield SSSI in May 2002.

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 2002/2003 totalled 322 in local papers and magazines. The publicity included five radio interviews.

The RMCP has given 20 talks to councils, conservation groups and societies attending by 541 people. Our stall featured at Shepway Environment Day, Lydd Club Day, New Romney Country Fair, Brookland Village Fete and the Dungeness RSPB Bird Fair and a total of 2252 people visited our stall.

The RMCP website continues to be popular and has achieved 15,644 visits over the year and 168,591 hits - which to a small website is rewarding. We have added extra links and new pages on wildlife gardening 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 Nick Johannsen, Owen Leyshon, Andy Morris 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 and the South East England Development Area (SEEDA).