

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 4a The District's Maritime Coast – Fishing**

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## 4(a) Fishing

### 1. Summary

As the District is located along the southern coast of the county, its history has been inexorably linked to the sea and maritime activity. The coastline is rich in heritage assets that reflect these maritime activities as well as the development of important ports and harbours. As part of this heritage, fishing has played a significant role in the local economy for many of the District's inhabitants going back as far as the Roman period. Today this heritage continues to shape the local identity of many of the coastal towns whilst continuing to form a small part of the local industry. It also remains a popular recreational activity that can be enjoyed at several points along the District's coastline as well as inland at places such as the Royal Military Canal.

### 2. Introduction

Fishing has been an important occupation to the inhabitants of the District going back to the Roman period. At various times, a number of the coastal towns have become well established as substantial harbours with active and often large fishing fleets. Some have also enjoyed particular privileges relating to the fishing trade, such as the Cinque Ports who for many years largely controlled the Yarmouth Herring Fair and the lucrative trade of herring that came with it. Whilst the progression of the physical landscape across the District has now left some historic coastal towns unable to continue operating as harbours, their fishing heritage continues to play an important role in the local identity.

#### Folkestone

There is still little known about the secular settlement at Folkestone between the seventh and twelfth centuries, though it is likely that it was made up of a few fishermen's dwellings that sat beside the shore and at the mouth of the Pent Stream constituting an easterly 'fishermen's quarter' that was probably focused around The Stade. There is no evidence for a Roman town at Folkestone, although the quantity of finds from this period such as the Roman villa sites and other associated artefacts suggests that there was a concentration of population here around this time. The presence of CLBR stamped tiles (*Classis Britannica*) further suggests that Folkestone was an important entry point into the kingdom and may also have had important links to the British fleet.

Archaeological evidence excavated around the East Cliff area suggests that trade with the continent had begun to expand rapidly during the Iron Age and Roman period. It has been suggested that there may have been an early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff connected with this occupation which may have also included fishing. Unfortunately, any archaeological evidence for this has likely since been lost to coastal erosion. If this was the case however, it is likely that this early 'harbour' would only have been a shingle beach market that would have been able to cater for the ships of the time.

The Saxon minster church probably formed the focus of the post-Conquest settlement at Folkestone, which by 1086 is recorded as being a wealthy estate. Fishing seems to have been the primary occupation, and by the early thirteenth century Folkestone's centre probably comprised of the priory and church, a castle,

market and a cluster of fishermen's houses located close to the shore. In 1214 the first market grant was issued to William de Abrinches for a market to be held every week on a Wednesday. At the same time an annual fair was also allowed between the 31<sup>st</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> September (the vigil and day of St Giles). The market was probably held in a triangular area between Old Butcher Row (now Rendezvous Road) and The Bayle and may have played a role in the fishing industry.

In the middle of the twelfth century King Stephen granted Folkestone the same privileges as were enjoyed by the Cinque Port of Dover, and it seems that from this point onwards the town was treated as a 'limb' of Dover although this was not formally acknowledged until 1313 when it acquired its Charter of Incorporation. Several privileges and rights were granted to the Cinque Ports, among these included rights relating to the Yarmouth Herring Fair. During the medieval period herring was a staple food throughout Europe and the annual migrations of the herring shoals through the English Channel and southern North Sea meant that the Yarmouth Herring Fair quickly grew and became one of the most important trading fairs in medieval Europe. The Fair lasted from the end of September through to mid-November, and every year lured hundreds of fishermen to the sandbanks with the promise of large catches and lucrative trade. In the early days of the Fair, there was freedom to all to catch, sell and buy herrings at Yarmouth, and so it quickly grew in popularity and importance. Great numbers of fishermen began to travel to the Fair from across the world; places such as France, Holland, Italy and Scandinavia.

The fishermen of the Cinque Ports had been accustomed since at least the Saxon period to following the herring shoals on their annual migrations. Early royal charters to the Cinque Ports confirmed their customary right to land and dry their net on the shores at Great Yarmouth, known as *Den and Strand*. The charters also entitled the portsmen to land their ships at Great Yarmouth during the herring season without paying a fee, and to act in the administration of the Herring Fair. Their responsibilities at the Fair included sounding the 'Brasen Horn of Saylence' as an official opening of proceedings as well as the right to appoint two bailiffs to assist in the control of the market. The fishermen of the Cinque Ports continued to enjoy significant influence over the Fair until the decline of the Confederation from the fourteenth century until 1662 when the Cinque Port Barons made their last visit.

A major disadvantage of Folkestone as a Cinque Port 'limb' and as a port was the lack of formal harbour and sheltered haven for shipping. This continued to make itself felt into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries though nothing was done. In 1541 plans emerged to use Folkestone as a port of embarkation for supplies and troops during Henry VIII's wars with France. This would have required the construction of a formal harbour; however, these plans were never realised and attention at the time turned to Folkestone's neighbouring port; Dover.

During the eighteenth century little improvement was made. In 1703 a fishermen's boat was swept away during a storm and damage was also done to other vessels and some houses nearby. By 1709 there was such a fear for the future of the fishery that the fishermen agreed to pay for three wood and stone jetties in an attempt to provide better protection and shipping. Unfortunately, these were later destroyed by a storm in 1724 and were not replaced. In the following year The Stade was described as an open beach with capstans to pull up the boats. The two small

headlands that had once provided some protection had since been eroded away. Numerous attempts over the following years were made to protect the West Cliff area which was in danger of being undermined. All jetties were ultimately destroyed by the sea yet there was still a need for a harbour at Folkestone and so in 1809 work had finally been approved and began on a formal harbour.

Fishing had continued to be the mainstay of the town's economy, with locally caught fish including salmon that were sent overland or by water to the London markets. In 1566 Folkestone is recorded as having 70 fishermen and 25 ships and boats. There was little other coastal trade largely due to the poor anchorage. Smuggling and piracy also often played a significant role in the local economy as they were better paid than fishing alone. Prior to the arrival of the railway in 1843, Folkestone remained a small and fairly impoverished fishing village. Hasted describes Folkestone in his *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1799) as being "a steep, badly paved street of small houses occupied by tradesmen or fishermen". The arrival of the South Eastern Railway in 1843 transformed Folkestone with its harbour quickly becoming a popular cross channel port. The town plan began to move from its basic division into an eastern mainly fisherman's quarter (focused on The Stade) and a more commercial western area around The Bayle and High Street.

Folkestone would develop as a fashionable resort town during the second half of the nineteenth century, and by 1901 was renowned as the most aristocratic seaside resort in the country. The Stade and harbour area remained a focus for fishing activity with fishermen's huts, fish markets, sail lofts, net drying sheds, ships chandlers and public houses. Today the old harbour remains home to the Folkestone fishing fleet, and recreational fishing is open along the Folkestone Harbour Arm. The fishing heritage of Folkestone continues to play an important role in the local character and identity as a coastal town and port.

### ***Blessing of the Fisheries: St Peter's, Folkestone***

The Blessing of the Fisheries is first mentioned in the records of St Peter's church at Folkestone during the early 1890's. It is a ceremony which involves a long procession of fishermen and other members of the parish, servers, choirs and clergymen from St Peter's and other parishes together with the town Mayor and Civic Dignitaries leading the Bishop from the church to the Stade either via North Street and along Radnor Street or over Radnor Bridge and down Dover Street. The Bishop then blesses the fleet and the fisheries, and in previous years fishing boats were also dressed and decorated by their owners. The ceremony usually took place on the Sunday following the patronal Festival of St Peter (29<sup>th</sup> June) but tides must be taken into account. Today the ceremony is held to coincide with Town Sunday on the last Sunday in June when the new Mayor is proclaimed from the churchyard cross of the church of St Mary and St Eanswythe.

The origins of the festival are believed to link to The Feast of Saint Rumbold, an infant Anglo-Saxon saint who was the Patron Saint of 'Fishermen of Folkestone' up until the seventeenth century. St Rumbold was only supposed to have lived for 3 days proclaiming the Gospels and providing miracles. It is still unknown how he became linked to the fishermen of Folkestone, however Hasted records the following in his account of the town:

*“There was a singular custom used of long time by the fishermen of this place (Folkestone).*

*They chose eight of the largest and best whittings out of every boat when they came home from that fishery, and sold them apart from the rest, and out of the money arising from them they made a feast, every Christmas-eve, which they called a rumbald.*

*The master of each boat provided this feast for his own company, so that there were as many different entertainments as there were boats. These whittings, which are of a very large size, and are sold all round the country as far as Canterbury, are called rumbald whittings.*

*This custom, which is now lost off, though many of the inhabitants still meet socially on a Christmas-eve, and call it rumbald night, might have been antiently instituted in honor of St. Rumbald, and the fish designed as an offering to him for his protection during the fishery”.*

The tradition seems to have disappeared through the eighteenth century, but can be seen reflected in numerous aspects of Folkestone’s fishing heritage surviving today. The Patron Saint of Folkestone, St Eanswythe, is often depicted with two ‘Rumbold’ or Folkestone Whiting either side. An example of this can be seen in a stained-glass window at St Mary and St Eanswythe church. There is also a church dedicated to St Rumbold at Botolph’s Bridge on the Romney Marsh. The long tradition of the Folkestone fishermen seeking divine protection for the fishery has also become an important part of the Blessing of the Fisheries which is still celebrated every year.

## **Hythe**

In the first century AD the area to the west of modern Hythe was a lagoon-like expanse of open water beside a marshland creek. The Limen (later Rother) gave access to the Weald and formed a natural harbour. By the early second century AD an area of dry land on the edge of the lagoon was chosen for the establishment of a base and harbour that is believed to have been associated with the *Classis Britannica* (the Roman fleet in British waters). The Saxon Shore fort at Lympne, *Portus Lemanis*, was established during the third century AD though it was abandoned by the late fourth century AD. The tidal inlet probably remained as a natural harbour throughout the Saxon period, however it continued to silt up and by the eighth century records refer to a settlement called *Sandtun* on the sand and shingle bank which lay immediately south-east of the Roman fort.

Several estates were clustered around the area to the south and east of Lympne, which had an important commercial role from the eighth century. Excavations during the twentieth century revealed the remains of a trading, fishing and probably salt-working settlement which dates to the late seventh or early eighth century through to the ninth century. *Sandtun* appears to have been a non-urban port for waterborne trade as well as for seasonal fishing. The precise dates for the shifts in settlement are unclear, but evidence suggests that the occupation at *Sandtun* gradually shifted eastwards, first being replaced by West Hythe and then by Hythe. A charter dating to 1036 indicates that Hythe was then on its present site. By 1050, Hythe was

established and became one of the five original Cinque Ports providing ship service to the Crown.

In 1086 Hythe is recorded as being a Borough with a population of between 900 and 1200 people. It must have had a substantial harbour and fishing fleet by this time, and may also have held a market. The town's records mention a number of trades and crafts which include fishing among them. This is unsurprising as Hythe's trade and industry were mostly related to the sea during the medieval period. The fishermen of Hythe would also have been entitled to the privileges relating to the Yarmouth Herring Fair as one of the five original Cinque Ports (mentioned earlier).

Hythe was at its peak as a port between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Records show that the town was able to muster a fleet of fishing vessels as well as five good vessels of around 50 tons for ship service and trade during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Although the town was devastated by plague and fires around the fourteenth century, fishing continued and remained the most important commercial activity in the town. Fish such as sprat, whiting, haddock, porpoises, mackerel and herrings were all caught. In 1553 Hythe had around 80 fishing vessels, more than any of the other Cinque Ports, and by 1566 there were 160 men from 122 households who were engaged in fishing. Many late medieval wills include bequests of fishing boats, shares in boats, nets, lines, stadoats and hooks which highlights the extent and significance of this trade. 17 farmers are recorded compared to 74 seamen and fishermen which again clearly indicates the importance of the fishing economy at this time.

As the harbour began to silt up larger merchantmen were unable to berth at Hythe and commerce began to decline though fishing appears to have continued to flourish for a time. By the mid-sixteenth century the harbour was so badly silted that it ran dry and was finally reclaimed. The new land belonged to the town and the corporation leased it out to individuals, although rights to the beach for the townspeople were retained for collecting shellfish and landing boats. Today the old harbour has now been largely built on, and fishing is now a popular recreational activity along the Hythe coast or inland at the Royal Military Canal.

### **Romney Marsh**

The evolution of the Romney Marsh is a complex story of land reclamation and accumulation which began around 6000 years ago. At various times a number of towns and villages have played an important role in the local fishing economy, though some of these have now had to move away from maritime trade and activity due to the progression of their physical landscape. Today the coastline of the Marsh stretches from the shingle foreland at Dungeness through to Dymchurch, and boasts various popular locations for recreational sea fishing. However historic fishing on the Marsh continues to play an important role in the local character and several assets relating to this heritage can be found at many of its towns and villages.

### ***New Romney***

The shingle spur on which New Romney was founded probably began to form during the late Neolithic period. Between 5000 BC and 500 AD a long shingle spit which formed as a result of longshore drift was deposited between Hastings and Hythe creating a barrier behind which salt marshes developed. Sometime between 450 and

700 AD the shingle barrier was breached by the sea creating a wide marine inlet and an outlet for the river Limen (later Rother) between Dymchurch and Lydd. By the mid-eighth century a shingle spur on the north-eastern side of the new inlet was occupied by a small settlement consisting of fishermen's huts and an early church, St Martin.

The traditional view of the Romney settlements proposed that New Romney was a resettlement of the earlier town of Old Romney. However, recent field work and documentary study now suggests that Old Romney was not a predecessor of New Romney, but a scattered village with a concentration around the surviving church of St Clement (Old Romney), and that the *Romenele* of Domesday Book was situated close to the Saxon church of St Martin (New Romney). It is still uncertain as to when the settlement at New Romney began, however a charter of Aethelberht, King of Kent, dated to 741 AD grants fishing rights in the river Limen and land around the *oratorium* of St Martin and the fishermen's houses. The settlement must then have grown in size and importance as by the reign of Edward the Confessor the town and new port had become well established and was supplying the King with ship service as one of the original Cinque Ports. A market was also held weekly for poultry, livestock, general goods and fish.

Records regarding New Romney's trade over the medieval period suggest that fishing played an important role in the local economy. Daniel Rough's *Memoranda Book* (begun in 1352), which contains lists of dues levied on tradesmen and market transactions, refers to seafaring activities by the presence of 'master fishermen' and by produce sold at the market which included fish. Fishermen are also listed as tradesmen in the Poll Tax of 1380. All towns that became Cinque Ports were known to have harbours and fishing fleets, and New Romney is recorded as having at least eight fishing vessels during the fourteenth century. Catches included herrings, sprats, turbot, mullet and porpoises. In 1413 John Payne was prosecuted for profiteering from the sale of 7000 herrings which suggests that the catches must have also been quite high.

Following the Great Storm of 1287 an extensive amount of sand and sediment had been deposited over a large area of the town when sea defences were breached. The end of the Rhee Channel which served the town was completely blocked and the harbour had also suffered from extensive silting. Several attempts to clear the sediment were made during the 1380s, 1406, 1409 and 1413. However, despite efforts the Rhee Channel dried up and by 1427 was let out for pasture, and then by 1545 had been built on for residences. The sea continued to retreat from New Romney and by the reign of Henry VIII the town found itself approximately 1.5km from the sea. Once the harbour fell out of use, fishing boats were beached on the Warren Salts to the east of the town. By the post-medieval period New Romney's economy became dependent on agriculture as opposed to fishing and it could no longer provide ship service to the Crown although it has remained a member of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports.

Whilst New Romney is no longer a coastal town, its maritime heritage continues to play an important role in its local identity and character. There are also current projects which aim to uncover archaeological evidence for the medieval harbour in order to better understand the evolution of the town and its maritime past. This may



also shed further light on the role that fishing has played in the local economy as well as providing physical evidence of this activity.

### **Lydd**

Lydd appears to be part of the shingle barrier that was formed between 5000 and 3400 years ago as described above. By the Romano-British period Lydd was situated on a peninsula that was almost an island towards the south-east end of a large inland lagoon that was formed behind the barrier. Evidence suggests that the site was originally occupied by salt workers and fishermen initially on a seasonal basis and then by the second century permanently. Rising sea levels after the late Roman period probably caused a change in the course of the river Limen where the shingle barrier was breached and a new marine inlet was formed to the north-west of Lydd, much to the towns advantage.

During the Saxon period a small settlement grew up around the church with a port on the inland lagoon. The sea became an important factor in the development of the town where fishing and maritime trade played a major role in the local economy. By the eleventh century Lydd had grown to sufficient importance and prosperity to become a 'limb' of the Cinque Port New Romney, whereby it assisted in ship service and shared in some of the privileges granted as a result. Lydd is one of the few 'limbs' who remain a member of the Confederation today.

During the medieval period, Lydd's incorporation as a Cinque Port 'limb' is likely to have meant that the settlement was fairly substantial by this time with its local economy largely dependent on fishing as well as stockbreeding, arable farming and salt production. However, by the seventeenth century the progression of the physical landscape meant that Lydd ceased to be a port with only limited access to the sea along Jury's Gut. In 1588 when Elizabeth I ordered Lydd and New Romney to provide a ship to join the fleet against the Spanish Armada neither had a harbour or anything bigger than a small fishing boat and so had to hire a ship from elsewhere. Lydd's economy became largely agricultural, primarily sheep farming, though fishing off the beaches at Dungeness remained important.

### **Dungeness**

Dungeness is located in the most south-western part of the District and Romney Marsh. As has already been explained, the evolution of the Marsh is a long and complex history of land reclamation and accumulation which began around 6000 years ago. The Dungeness peninsula is a cusped foreland which was primarily formed by longshore drift and is currently the largest of its kind in Britain. It is a unique geological feature that is found to form as an extension to the shoreline along coastlines and lakeshores. It extends outwards in a triangular shape which is produced as a result of the accretion and progradation of sand and shingle, giving it its distinctive appearance. The foreland at Dungeness represents around 5000 years of coastal evolution and environmental change, and forms part of a system of barrier beaches that stretches for 40 km from Fairlight to Hythe. The development of Dungeness has been well documented through geological study as well as historical records and continues to be monitored today.

There is a long history of fishing at Dungeness and some of the first beach residences to have been built here are believed to have belonged to the Tart and

Oiler fishing families. Leading up to the 1960s, fishing from Dungeness was widely practiced and several fishing boats would have been spaced out along the beach opposite dwellings that follow what is now Dungeness Road. Bait digging, shrimping and fishing with nets for herring, mackerel and sprats were all practiced, and for some time prior to the World Wars miniature gauge rail tracks were installed on the beach to meet each boat and joined a common track that ran along the present-day Dungeness Road. These have now been removed upon the completion of the road in 1938, but some remains of the old tracks can still be seen across parts of the beach and reflect the local fishing heritage.

Tanning Coppers have also survived at Dungeness and offer strong connections to the fishing heritage and activity that has long been practiced here. They were used by fishermen to help preserve and dye fishing nets as well as their clothing. Tanning the nets and clothing often became a social occasion and brought many local fishermen together.

Fishing continues at Dungeness today and is a popular activity for local Angling Associations as well as visitors. There are a number of professional and leisure fishing agreements for the estate which provide individuals with the right to fish from a designated plot along the shores of the Denge beach. It has also been recognised as an excellent location for cod fishing during the winter months. Houses near the Lifeboat Station are mainly occupied by local fisherman and the fishing heritage at Dungeness continues to play an important role in the local character.

### **3. Description of the Heritage Assets**

Evidence for the historic fishing industry in the District is mainly contained to the archaeological record and a number of archaeological sites that have produced fish remains and artefacts relating to fishing. Excavations between 1947 and 1948 of the Saxon occupation site at *Sandtun* near West Hythe produced finds relating to fishing including fishhooks and large quantities of cod bones. The site has been interpreted as a seasonal occupation site, probably a summer-camp for fishermen. Later excavations between 1993 and 1998 in advance of housing development recovered further evidence for a diverse range of activities which included fishing.

Substantial evidence for historic fishing was uncovered at New Romney during a scheme of archaeological works which were undertaken during the installation of the First Time Sewerage Scheme between 2004 and 2008. A large assemblage of 6387 individual fish bones were recovered from thirteenth and fourteenth century deposits. A far smaller assemblage of 2187 bones were recovered from deposits dating to the late medieval period, perhaps reflecting the decline of the harbour following the Great Storm of 1287. Both assemblages showed a marked similarity across the town being dominated by small gadids (mostly whiting) and herring together with plaice/flounder. Only small quantities of larger gadid species such as cod and haddock were represented by comparison, with a small number of ling and hake also being found. Other identified fish included mackerel, brill, turbot sole, mullet, smelt, anchovy and eel. The shellfish assemblage from the twelfth to the sixteenth century was dominated by cockle, oyster, whelk and mussels.

The general absence of more expensive fish such as cod may suggest that the Romney fishery was low investment where these fish were not widely exploited. It could also indicate that the status of the local consumers was perhaps lower with more expensive fish being consumed outside of town. Alternatively, it could also indicate that the local market was quite poor. The variety of fish species represented suggests a range of resources were exploited including the sea, inland and freshwater sources. Fishing in New Romney can be broadly divided into two categories; offshore from boats generally using nets, and inshore. This allowed for the exploitation of both inshore and estuarine fish, such as mullet and various flatfish, as well as off-shore species such as haddock, cod and herring.

Gravel extraction around Lydd has provided opportunities for archaeological finds relating to historic fishing activity in the area. Gravel extraction at Pioneer Pit in 1986 uncovered large quantities of Romano-British pottery, primarily of second century date, which prompted a limited rescue excavation as a watching brief was precluded due to the method of gravel extraction. Domestic rubbish and large quantities of Romano-British late first to late second century pottery were recovered which indicated that a substantial Romano-British settlement based on stock grazing, fishing and salt production had existed here at that time.

There are also surviving assets that relate to more modern fishing activity, such as the Tanning Coppers that can still be found on the beach at Dungeness. One of these Tanning Coppers in particular is larger than most and was built in 1910 and is still owned by the Tart family (believed to be one of the original fishing families to reside at Dungeness). As a result, it has been designated as a Grade II Listed Building. There are also remains of the miniature gauge rail tracks again along the beach at Dungeness which were installed prior to the First World War to meet fishing vessels and join a common track that ran along the present-day Dungeness Road. Whilst the tracks have largely been removed following the completion of the road in 1938, parts still remain and reflect the historic fishing on the beaches at Dungeness.

#### **4. Statement of Significance**

With the District being located along the southern coast of the county, its history has been inexorably linked with the sea and maritime activity. The development of several important ports and harbours within the district throughout its history has meant that fishing has played a vital role in the local economy from early times. Whilst a number of these harbours have since suffered as a result of the progression of the physical coastline, fishing continues to be important to the local character and identity. There are also many assets that relate to this heritage, and they have been assessed as being of **moderate significance**.

##### ***Evidential Value***

There is a potential for future archaeological work to provide more evidence for the historic fishing activity within the District. This is especially true for places such as New Romney where archaeological remains relating to the medieval harbour and associated maritime activity are yet to be investigated in detail. Previous archaeological works such as those undertaken as part of the First Time Sewerage Scheme throughout the town have uncovered some important evidence for historic fishing, primarily in the form of fish bones. However, remains relating to structures

that would have been working buildings on the harbour offer a hint of the potential for more extensive archaeological finds relating to the harbour and maritime activities. This will also help to enhance understandings about the early town and how this grew up around its harbour. The potential for the survival of remains beneath the deposits from the Great Storm of 1287 is good.

There is also the potential to uncover further evidence of historic fishing in areas such as Lydd or Hythe, both of which are no longer able to function as ports but may contain remains associated to this historic role and maritime activity.

### ***Historical Value***

The fishing heritage of the district has historical significance in highlighting past ways of life as well as the development of the local settlements and economy. For many of the coastal towns, fishing constituted a major part of the local industry and was therefore an important trade for many of its inhabitants. Settlements may have grown up partly due to the ability to fish and provide a location for waterborne trade, such as at *Sandtun* and the Cinque Ports of Hythe and New Romney. Their importance was linked to the substantial harbours and fishing fleets that some of these places were able to provide, and many enjoyed a number of privileges as a result as part of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. Many surviving assets, such as fishing huts and the Tanning Coppers at Dungeness, highlight fishing as an important aspect of life along the coast going back as far as the Roman period. These assets also continue to provide an important link to this past at places which are no longer able to act as ports due to the progression of their physical landscape.

### ***Aesthetic Value***

The aesthetic value of this theme is limited, however there are some assets such as the Tanning Coppers, fishermen's sheds and vessels along the beaches at Dungeness which provide a valuable visual experience of this type of activity. These assets at Dungeness in particular are also significant to the local character which is dominated by the vast and desolate shingle expanses of the foreland. The 'fishermen's quarter' in the old harbour area at Folkestone is also aesthetically valuable and again provides a distinctive visual experience of the local fishing heritage and community.

### ***Communal Value***

There is a high communal value placed on the fishing heritage within the district. As a coastal District, its history is inexorably linked to the sea and to maritime activity, and so industries such as fishing have played an important role in the evolution and development of communities throughout the district. It is also an industry that is still practiced on a smaller scale today at places such as Folkestone, and so a high value is placed on the history of fishing and its role within the local community. Fishing has helped to shape the local identity of several places along the coast, such as the Cinque Ports and early harbours, and continues to do so today even where a town is now unable to act as a port such as New Romney and Hythe.

## **5. Vulnerabilities**

The fishing heritage assets are vulnerable to the natural processes of coastal erosion and flooding that their locations present. The erosion of the coastline is a significant threat to sites such as the East Cliff at Folkestone where any evidence for

an early 'harbour' and associated maritime activity has likely already been lost. The continued evolution of the Dungeness foreland may also put at risk assets such as the miniature railway tracks and wooden boat winches that now sit abandoned along the beach. Significant silting which leads to the blocking and ultimate decline of harbours such as at Hythe and New Romney is also a significant threat. Where these harbours have fallen out of use and the towns now find themselves landlocked, assets relating to the fishing heritage have been lost as this activity has ceased, and others are likely buried awaiting future discovery.

Development and alterations of properties and other structures in the historic port towns can potentially impact on important archaeological remains associated with the maritime aspects of the ports and the use of the properties by the District's maritime communities, trades and occupations. The redevelopment of the Folkestone Harbour and seafront area will result in a significant change to the harbour area. Assets relating to the fishing heritage may be at risk of loss or deterioration if development proposals do not take into account their important role in the towns local identity and character. This redevelopment will be an valuable opportunity to enhance these assets and make more accessible the maritime heritage of Folkestone of which fishing is an important part.

Some assets from this theme are also vulnerable to criminal action such as vandalism. This is especially relevant to the various remnants of historic fishing that lie along the Dungeness beach which have been subject to vandalism. As they are also undesignated, they are not protected in this way and are at risk of being damaged or lost completely. The use of a local list may help to identify the heritage value of currently undesignated sites and ensure their future survival.

## **6. Opportunities**

The fishing heritage as part of the overall maritime heritage of the District connects with those who live in the area and provides a source of many stories and points of interest that can engage with visitors. Opportunities should be taken to promote the District's maritime heritage assets as a theme. Many of the assets are located close to coastal routes and footpaths providing opportunities for linked trails and interpretation. These include the England Coast Path, the Dungeness Trail, routes along the Royal Military Canal and the Shingle Trail within the Dungeness National Nature Reserve.

There is also a strong potential for the recording of oral histories by members of fishing families who still reside in the local area. In some cases, it is possible to trace back many generations of fishing families in areas such as Folkestone and Dungeness who still have very close connections to this heritage. Not only does this provide valuable opportunities for communal involvement with the heritage from this theme, but it is also an important resource and living link to the local fishing industry.

Other opportunities for the local communities and other visitors to engage with this heritage can be found in activities and events such as the Blessing of the Fisheries ceremony (Folkestone) and Folkestone Trawler Race. Both celebrate the historic association to fishing of Folkestone and the continued support of the local fishermen. The new Folkestone Museum in addition to other local exhibitions further provide

opportunities for the promotion of the fishing heritage and act as a visitor hub which links other aspects of the maritime heritage of the District to this theme.

The redevelopment of the Folkestone Harbour and seafront area should be used to enhance and make more accessible heritage assets from this theme as well as providing additional interpretation. The creation of the new seafront area could act as a focus for interpretation relating to this theme as well as the wider maritime heritage of the district. There are also opportunities for archaeological work at New Romney as part of the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme to uncover valuable evidence relating to historic fishing in the area, as well as shedding new light on the medieval harbour and associated maritime activity.

## **7. Current Activities**

There are several activities relating to the fishing heritage of the district. A number of local historical societies highlight the important role that fishing played in the local economy and settlement development. The Folkestone's Fishing History and Heritage Group facilitate an exhibition of local fishing history in the Folkestone's Fishing and Heritage Museum. The current venue for this is within the Old Booking Hall on the Folkestone Harbour, though a new venue may need to be found soon due to the harbours redevelopment. There is also a selection of local events which again highlight this important heritage such as the Blessing of the Fisheries (Folkestone) and the Folkestone Trawler Race.

Fishing is still popular as a recreational activity, and there are several places within the District that are popular locations for this such as at Dungeness, Lydd Lakes and the Royal Military Canal. Several Angling clubs such as the Cinque Ports Angling Society fish recreationally throughout the District.

## **8. Sources Used & Additional Information**

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