

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 4c The District's Maritime Coast – Safeguarding the Coast**

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## 4(c) Safeguarding the Coast

### 1. Summary

With the district being so close to continental Europe the history has been inexorably linked with the maritime use and crossing of the Channel. The District's coastline is rich in heritage assets that reflect these maritime links, such as the Roman Saxon Shore fort at Lympne, the rich smuggling heritage evident across the Romney Marsh, through to the coastguard and lifeboat stations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These varied assets help to tell the story of the District's connection with the sea and the ways in which structures have safeguarded the coast as well as seeking to preserve life.

### 2. Introduction

#### ***Maritime importance***

As recent as 15,000 years ago, much of the North Sea and the English Channel was part of the continental land mass. As sea levels rose following the last ice age this land mass became submerged beneath the growing Channel and North Sea retreating to a land mass which bridged between Britain and the continent from what is now East Kent and East Anglia. Around 6000 BC the connection with the continental landmass was finally breached creating the Dover Straits and the island we live in today.

The evolution of the District's coastline has played a substantial role in the pattern of settlement, landscape development and maritime activity since ancient times. Its proximity to the continent has often placed it on the frontline in the defence of the coast as well as seeing the development of ports and harbours that have played important roles in international trade and maritime activity. Coastal processes and landscapes are considered in detail in a separate paper (Theme 1), whereas the present theme will discuss the heritage assets relating to the navigation of the coastal waters, some industries that grew to exploit the sea such as smuggling, and the role that the District's coastal communities have played in helping to preserve life at sea.

#### ***An overview of the development of ports and maritime activity in the District***

The purpose of this paper is not to describe the development of the main ports and harbour features within the district. These topics are covered in detail in separate theme papers e.g. 2 (a) Early Harbours, 2 (b) Cinque Ports, 2 (c) Folkestone Cross Channel Port and 4 (a) Fishing. The use of the coast and sea for leisure is also a topic that is covered in other separate theme papers within this strategy. The following is a brief overview of the development of ports and maritime activity within the district.

The district's proximity to Europe on the south-eastern coast of Britain has meant that it has had a long history of maritime links with the continent. The District's archaeological record provides important evidence for the trade and movement of different peoples, cultures, materials and ideas in and out of the country from abroad, as well as for their integration into indigenous cultures. This cross channel activity can be dated to as far back as the Bronze Age, with some of the most significant evidence including pottery and burial finds from the early Bronze Age "Beaker" tradition that has been found at Lymping and Holywell Coombe and would

have reached Britain from Europe around 2400 BC. Further evidence for early cross channel trade is also revealed in the recovery of “exotic” artefacts such as pottery and tool types at archaeological sites from across the District that reflect continental influences. Details of these archaeological finds will be covered in detail in a separate theme paper later on in this strategy (11 Archaeology).

The movement of goods and people across the Channel continued through the Iron Age and Roman period. Evidence excavated near East Wear Bay in Folkestone suggests that trade with the continent had begun to expand rapidly during this period. East Wear Bay, which is primarily known for its Roman Villa, is also the site of an important Iron Age occupation which by the second century BC appears to have been a major trading and production post along the south Kent coast. From around 50 BC onwards further evidence suggests that the site was one of the major points of contact between Britain and the Roman world as well as being a production site for rotary quern stones that would be distributed across Kent and other parts of the country.

During the Roman period, major ports of entry into the Roman province were established as well as other structures along the coastline that played roles in the protection and navigation of England’s shores and coastal waters. Archaeological evidence from Folkestone and Lympne suggests that they may have played a role in the presence of the *Classis Britannica* in the Channel. The Roman Villa site at East Wear Bay in Folkestone may also have served a number of functions, one of these being related to maritime activity such as housing officials overseeing naval activity. The Saxon Shore Fort at Lympne which is believed to date to around 270 AD, also referred to as Stutfall Castle, is further believed to have played an important role in the protection of the assumed Roman coastline which would have included the entrance to a substantial natural harbour and Roman port (*Portus Lemanis*) that is now part of the Romney Marsh. Stutfall Castle belongs to a series of Roman Saxon Shore Forts that stretches from the coast of Norfolk and around to Hampshire. They are located on strategic estuaries and perceived entry points into the Roman province, and so their purpose has frequently been suggested as defensive as well as logistical.

By the time the Romans had withdrawn from Britain in the early fifth century AD, the fort at *Portus Lemanis* had already fallen out of use and would ultimately become landlocked approximately 2.5km from the sea as the Romney Marsh continued to develop. The Roman Villa site at East Wear Bay was abandoned by the early fifth century AD and only seems to have been partially reoccupied during the ninth century AD with the focus of the Anglo Saxon town moving towards Folkestone's West Cliff with the establishment of the monastic site by St Eanswythe during the early seventh century AD. Evidence suggests that across the Anglo Saxon period, trade and links to the continent continued whilst land on the Romney Marsh progressively accumulated. Hythe and Folkestone began to grow as primarily fishing ports whilst various coastal towns along the evolving Romney Marsh coastline such as New Romney continued to develop.

The evolution of the Romney Marsh coastline, which stretches from Dungeness in the west of the District and then eastwards to Dymchurch which neighbours the small coastal market town of Hythe, is primarily a complex history of land

reclamation that began around 6000 years ago. This topic is covered in detail in a separate theme paper, 1 (a) Romney Marsh, but a brief outline will be given here to provide context for the development of early ports and maritime activity along this part of the District's coastline.

A series of environmental events initially triggered the formation of the Marsh 6000 years ago initiating the accumulation of sand bars and shingle spits as a result of longshore drift. The shingle barrier that developed across the Rye Bay resulted in the creation of a lagoon behind it that was open to the sea at Hythe and had the River Limen (later Rother) and its tributaries feeding into it. Over hundreds of years this gradually became swamp land, salt marshes and vegetated land that would remain intertidal for many centuries. Certainly during the Iron Age, Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon periods (approximately 800BC to 600AD) large parts of the Romney Marsh were still underwater making settlement of the Marsh more limited.

Old Romney was part of the earliest settlement on the Marsh, and acted as the original port of Romney. The name Romney is derived from the Old English for "at the spacious or wide river" and is recorded in 895 AD as *Rumenea* and then as *Rumenesea* in a charter that is dated 914 AD. This has led to a number of derivations which includes *Romenel*, *Romenal* and *Romney*. It was not until 1610 that the names Old and New Romney appear as they are known today.

Traditionally it has been believed that the settlement of Old Romney was a predecessor for New Romney. However, recent studies now suggest that there was a scattered village concentrated around the church of St Clement (survives at Old Romney) and that the *Romenel* (Romney) of the Domesday Book was situated around the Saxon church of St Martin (once stood at New Romney but has since been lost). The shingle spur on which Romney was founded had begun forming during the Neolithic period. Between 450 and 700 AD the shingle barrier that had been building from Hastings to Hythe was breached by the sea which created a wide marine inlet and an outlet for the river Limen between Dymchurch and Lydd. By the eighth century AD the shingle spur on the north-eastern side of this new inlet was occupied.

The settlement of New Romney was almost certainly developed as early as 700 AD with a small group of fisherman's houses and the church of St Martin being referenced in a charter dating to 741 AD. The settlement was evidently developing into a port and had a good shelving beach which provided sufficient anchorage. During the Anglo Saxon period, the port at New Romney had grown to a small market with shallow draught trading and fishing that could easily be floated on and off the beach. Vessels were also able to anchor in the river estuary here, which would later be known as the Rother. A new planned town was laid out sometime between 960 AD and 1000 AD, with the high street eventually developing along a route between Hythe and Old Romney. A market place was located along the high street and a harbour and wharf were to the south west at Old Romney.

Around this time, the towns of Hythe and Folkestone were also developing as ports. Evidence suggests that an occupation at *Sandtun* from the early to later ninth century AD gradually shifted eastwards first being replaced by West Hythe and then by Hythe. *Sandtun* appears to have been a seasonally occupied site that shows

evidence of trading, fishing and salt-working activity. The precise dates for the shifts in settlement are unclear; however a charter dating to 1036 AD indicates that Hythe was by this time on its present site. By 1050 AD Hythe was providing ship service to King Edward the Confessor along with Dover, Romney, Sandwich and Hastings as part of a new system of coastal defence which would later grow into the Confederation of the Cinque Ports.

The “old” town of Hythe grew up on high land that lay beside a natural harbour which had been formed by a broad creek that has long since silted up. By the later Saxon period, Hythe was established as an important sea port, and by 1086 is recorded as being a medium-sized market town. Throughout the early medieval period, Hythe must have had a substantial harbour and fishing fleet with the majority of its trade and industry being related to the sea. It was soon after this that Hythe would become one of the original five Cinque Ports with West Hythe as its only corporate “limb”.

By the twelfth century the accumulation of land on the Marsh meant that Old Romney was finding itself further inland and as a result gradually declined as a port. The harbour continued to silt up, and by the seventeenth century only the church and few other buildings would remain of the settlement. This had also been the case some years earlier for the Roman port of *Portus Lemanis* at Lympne which had found itself approximately 2.5km from the coast and so quickly became redundant. Further along the coast, Folkestone was developing as a small fishing community and like Hythe and New Romney would soon be granted privileges as part of the Confederation of Cinque Ports as a “limb” to the Cinque Port of Dover.

A Royal Charter during 1155 officially established New Romney and Hythe as two of the five original Cinque Ports, which also included Hastings, Dover and Sandwich. The chief corporate duty that was subsequently laid on these ports was the provision and maintenance of ships for the use by the Crown if needed. In return, the towns received a number of constitutional, fiscal and trading privileges that included permission to levy tolls, exemption from tax and tolls as well as self-governance. The ship services owed by the Cinque Ports to the Crown are formally mentioned in the Domesday Book, and evidence suggests that the formalised Confederation of the Cinque Ports was in existence with its “Court” meeting place established first at New Romney and then later moving to the Shepway Cross just north of West Hythe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The Cinque Ports continued to be important until the reign of Elizabeth I, by which time the Confederation had declined and effectively ceased to be of any significance due to a number of different circumstances such as the silting of harbours, the destructive impacts of the Black Death and civil war.

Of the five Kentish headports, Dover was by far the longest established as a trading settlement. Dover had developed during the Roman period, and then Sandwich had grown from a small trading *wic* in the early Anglo Saxon period. Both Hythe and New Romney were of later Saxon origins, possibly in the case of Hythe replacing the seasonal settlement of *Sandtum*. The Cinque Ports were at the height of their influence between 1150 and 1350 when they contributed significantly to the defence of the realm as well as to important trading activity. Hythe and New Romney for example were important suppliers of salt to London and also contributed ships and

men to assist Edward III in the siege of Calais in 1345. Fishing also played an important part in the ports prosperity.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is evident that New Romney was a port of great importance along the District's coastline and was considered as the central port of the Confederation. Lydd had reached its height during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and was made a corporate member of the Cinque Ports as a "limb" to New Romney in 1155. The Confederation also had four non-corporate members which included Old Romney. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, New Romney along with the other Cinque Ports continued to provide ships for use in the wars against France as well as against the rising levels of piracy. Folkestone had also become a corporate "limb" to the port of Dover which would later flourish as a commercial port with the decline of Sandwich in the fifteenth century.

However, by 1500 all of the Cinque Ports were being seriously affected by the physical evolution of the coastline with their harbours becoming silted or being completely cut off by the growth of shingle banks. This was certainly the case at Hythe whose once busy harbour became increasingly silted and proper landing facilities could not be provided. In the 1566 national survey of ports and maritime activity undertaken by the Elizabethan government, Hythe is credited with having two landing places, the "haven" and the "stade", which soon became blocked by coastal changes. Hythe had also suffered a number of natural disasters during the previous century, such as the Black Death and fires which had destroyed substantial parts of the town and greatly diminished the population. This significantly affected Hythe's ability to provide ships for the Crown, and after 1414 the town was never again able to give full ship service. Some waterborne trade continued into the first half of the sixteenth century and fishing remained important, however by the sixteenth century the harbour had declined with access to the sea being blocked. Today the "old" town lies around 1km from the sea with modern residential developments to the south covering the former harbour.

The issue of silting was especially problematic for New Romney which became completely landlocked during the Great Storm of 1287 and in its current position now sits over a mile from the sea. Work to clear the harbour at New Romney was attempted during the 1380s, 1406, 1409 and 1413, but would ultimately be unsuccessful with the town finally ceasing to operate as a port during the fifteenth century. Records show that by 1427 the land around the Rhee Channel, which had dried, was let out for pasture and by 1545 dwellings were being erected along its course. Once the harbour had declined fishing boats were beached on the Warren Salts east of the town, and the economy became dependent on agriculture rather than fishing and international maritime trade.

Only the Cinque Port of Dover continued to receive investment which was driven largely by naval requirements and already established continental trading routes. Despite the decline of the Cinque Ports, they still retained many of their previous rights and privileges and some continued to operate fishing industries. Many would also play roles in the military defence of the Kent southern coastline during wartime in later centuries and continue today as prominent coastal towns and harbours.

Returning briefly to the thirteenth century, land on the Marsh had continued to accumulate. Efforts to retain this reclaimed land were made for example in the building of the Rhee Wall and Dymchurch Wall during the thirteenth century. That same century also saw a number of particularly ferocious storms hitting the southern coast of England which brought about dramatic changes to the coastline and its coastal towns and ports. The Great Storm of 1287 hit with such ferocity that whole areas of the southern coastline were redrawn. As described above, New Romney prior to the storm had been a thriving harbour town which sat at the mouth of the River Rother where it ran into the English Channel. The Rhee Wall helped to protect the reclaimed marshes to the north from flooding but the Walland Marsh was devastated as well as the ports of Romney to the south. The amount of silt that was deposited in New Romney was so substantial that the land level in the town rose by around 5 inches. This change in land level can still be seen at the parish church of St Nicholas where the floor of the church, which is the only building remaining to pre-date the storm, is several inches lower than the present street level.

It is also largely asserted that the silting of New Romney diverted the course of the River Rother away from the town to Rye where a new channel was created that joined the River Brede and the River Tillingham. These combined rivers now flowed into the sea near Rye and created a new harbour. Rye went on to become a Cinque Port in the thirteenth century, being added to the original five along with Winchelsea as "Ancient Towns".

By the fourteenth century much of the Walland and Denge Marshes had been reclaimed using innings; the process of building embankments around the sea-marsh and using low-tide to let the area run dry by means of one-way drains that were set into the new seawall, running off into a network of drainage ditches. An extensive network of drainage ditches and dykes was building up across the Marsh in order to retain the fertile land that had been reclaimed and also to maintain its condition. Drained water was able to flow from the farmland into the sea via outlets and later from the nineteenth would also be pumped into and out of the Royal Military Canal.

Storms continued to batter the Romney Marsh coastline during the fourteenth century, and the population on the Marsh was further devastated by the Great Famine of 1315 to 1317 and the Black Death in 1348 to 1349. The total population across the Marsh had already been relatively low, but it fell even further by over a half with mortality rates being twice as high when compared to villages only a few miles away. Work to reclaim further land continued into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was subsequently completed with its vast stretch of coastline stretching from Dungeness through to Dymchurch and neighbouring Hythe. By this time, the Marsh was divided into areas for sheep grazing and pasture, and was developing a flourishing wool industry. Coastal towns such as Dungeness and Dymchurch supported fishing industries with neighbouring Hythe and Folkestone continuing to provide fishing employment.

The wool industry had become one of England's most important commodities by the fourteenth century, and the pastures that were available across the Romney Marsh were renowned for their quality. However, during the thirteenth century the government had introduced a tax on the export of wool which quickly rose and had



doubled by 1298. It had also been made illegal to export wool from an undesignated port whilst laws relating to export taxes continued to fluctuate and remained expensive. Inevitably this led to the rise of smuggling which had reached epidemic levels by the seventeenth century. The Romney Marsh is often considered to have been the birthplace of smuggling activity along the southern coast of England largely due to its remoteness, high volume of grazing sheep and closeness to the continent. Between 1700 and 1840, smuggling was rife across the Marsh which often appeared to be at the centre of activities along the southern English coast.

By the eighteenth century many of Kent's prominent ports and maritime activities were concentrated in the north of the county. London was a major trading port and so the northern Kentish towns that were located along the Thames and in the estuary benefited greatly from this traffic. Dover had been made a "head port" during the eighteenth century with Ramsgate and Folkestone obtaining the status in the following century.

Kent's fisheries continued to operate on a small scale, with many boats fishing in local waters and some working the North Sea and even as far as Icelandic waters. Fishing slumped during the years of war with France (1792 – 1815) and did not recover until after the 1850s when the arrival of the railway in many towns made the transportation of goods to market easier and quicker. During the nineteenth century fishing off Folkestone included herring, mackerel, prawns, oysters and lobsters. Some of the coastal towns along the Romney Marsh coastline were also prominent fishing locations such as Dungeness. Shipbuilding and ship repair works were carried out at Sandgate amongst other towns around Kent throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though this had declined by the 1870s in the face of competition from yards in the north-east of England.

By the nineteenth century, Folkestone had become a small and fairly impoverished fishing village. However, the development of the Folkestone harbour during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coupled with the arrival of the railway in 1843 transformed the town. Construction of the formal harbour began in 1809 and was initially completed in 1820 with a western, southern and eastern pier enclosing the new harbour. This brought in a small increase in trade and shipping to Folkestone, though the old problems of silting continued to plague the harbour making it costly to operate and maintain. The Folkestone Harbour Company had invested heavily with little overall success, and by 1842 was declared bankrupt. South Eastern Railway Company (SER) then purchased the harbour with a view to operating a steam packet service to France.

By 1849, continued work on the harbour meant that a passenger and goods service could travel to the Folkestone Harbour station and connect directly onto a cross channel service to Boulogne. This was the first international rail-sea-rail service between London and Paris, and during its years of operation enjoyed varying levels of success. Services continued to operate between Folkestone and the continent until 2000, when it was finally closed and for the first time in its history the harbour no longer acted as a cross channel port. Ultimately the Folkestone harbour became financially unviable whilst passenger numbers had dropped dramatically largely due to the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994 and heavy competition from neighbouring ports such as Dover. The Folkestone harbour is currently owned by the

newly inaugurated Folkestone Harbour Company and is undergoing an extensive programme of regeneration. The harbour however no longer serves an industrial function and is open to the general public as a public and cultural space.

Hythe is now a small coastal market town with new developments covering the long silted harbour area to the south of the “old” town. The last ship service provided by the Cinque Ports had been in 1588 in support of the fleet against the Spanish Armada. Local Government Acts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries removed the final remnants of the ports former privileges though the Confederation still survives in name. Hythe had become a seaside resort by 1792, and continued to attract holidaymakers as well as military personnel who were stationed there during and after the Napoleonic Wars. Similarly coastal towns along the coast of the Romney Marsh such as Dymchurch, New Romney and Dungeness provide a rich leisure and tourism offering. Areas such as Dungeness also continue to be popular for fishing and remnants of the historic fishing industry and fisherman’s huts are still present along the coast.

### ***Navigation – Pilotage***

The term *pilot* in a maritime context is applied to a man who uses local knowledge of a region or District’s coastal waters to safely navigate mariners. *Cutters* were specialised sailing boats which were traditionally small single-masted vessels, fore-and-aft rigged with two or more headsails and often a bowsprit. They were designed for speed rather than capacity and were used by pilots to reach and board vessels when signalled. Records for this country suggest that pilots were being used as early as the twelfth century to safely navigate its seas and estuaries. Certainly some London logbooks reveal the pilotage charges for the Thames during the 1400s.

An informal brotherhood of pilots for the Cinque Ports was in place by the thirteenth century, with each port having their own fraternity of pilots under the umbrella of the Cinque Ports Court of Shepway. These pilots were hired to conduct shipping through the Dover Straits to ports in Flanders, Holland and France as well as to London and the Medway towns. In 1312 the Lord Warden created four Wardens to ensure that pilots took their turn in conducting ships and divided the profits made between them. By 1526 a Fellowship of Cinque Port Pilots was officially founded to regulate the activities of the pilots. The pilot’s motivation for the fellowship was partly to keep the work to themselves, and partly to fend off foreign competition. The Fellowship was supervised by the Court of Lodemenage under the commission of the Lord Warden with regulations in place, officers and pilots who were self-employed and officially licensed. However in 1689 King William III allowed them to elect four wardens from amongst themselves and the pilotage became almost autonomous.

To achieve a licence, Pilots had to be knowledgeable seamen able to guide any ship through the Downs and the notorious Goodwin Sands and navigate to the Thames, Medway and any channel port. It was usually required that a candidate have at least seven years (later five years) at sea as a Master Mariner. Records show that the number of licenced pilots at Dover and Deal increased from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, highlighting the growing importance of the Downs anchorage and the naval importance of the Strait during times of warfare with France.

Pilots were also available in the Channel at numerous locations from far-cruising cutters as far west as Sicily. However, they were often missed or ignored by ships who were hoping to save money by only shipping a pilot at a point where it became either a pressing necessity or compulsory. When approaching the Kent coast, the last viable open-water rendezvous west of Dover was the low-lying coast of Dungeness.

For many centuries the Dungeness headland was only recognisable by the lighthouses that sat at Dungeness Point. This changed in the late 1950s with the construction of the Power Station that now also dominates the local landscape. Dungeness was a final “pre-Downs” pilot station with many advantages over its neighbour at Dover; the peninsula protrudes so far into the Channel that a ship could pass close to it without making a major detour, the water is deep on its seaward face and it is close enough to Dover and Folkestone to be readily serviced by pilots and cutters. If a cutter was not available, a ship could signal for and secure a pilot who would have boarded directly from the shore via a small boat. It was for these reasons that “from Dungeness inwards” became the official boarding point for London after the Pilots Act of 1807 which made pilots compulsory.

From 1807 onwards, a ship must take on a licensed pilot or have a good reason for not doing so. Some vessels were exempt from the regulations, for example in cases where a master or mate had been examined for a port that he frequently visited. Penalties for infringing the compulsory pilotage rules were stiff and could often result in hefty fines. Originally the signal for a “pilot required” was a union flag at the fore-masthead or in the fore-rigging, though this later changed to include a white border and became known as the “pilot jack”. At night a blue flare would be shown. After 1897 the new International Code of Signals prevailed and the blue and yellow vertically striped “G” flag replaced the “pilot jack”. Once a pilot had boarded, this was then replaced by a red and white striped “pilot on board” flag, below which around Dungeness in particular pilots would also fly their own personal recognition signal. This allowed the authorities to see who was doing the job as well as keeping them advised on requirements for manning the cutters.

As well as the Fellowship of Cinque Port pilots, three other societies of Mariners in England at Deptford Strond, Hull and Newcastle were chartered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as Trinity Houses, named after the church of that name in Deptford. In 1566 the Seemarks Act granted Deptford powers to set up “*So many beacons, marks and signs for the sea whereby the dangers may be avoided and escaped and ships the better come into their ports without peril.*” This later developed into Trinity House having sole responsibility for lighthouses and lightships in Britain. The Cinque Port Pilots were transferred to the Trinity House of Deptford and the Court of Lodemenage was closed following the death of the then Lord Warden, the Duke of Wellington who had resisted change to the organisation of pilotage. The last Court of Lodemenage was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1851.

The Deal pilots gradually transferred to the Dover Station from 1858 to 1937. In 1971 the cruising cutter was replaced by the Folkestone Pilot Tower as radio and fast launches meant that pilots no longer had to wait at sea. The Dover pilots moved to Folkestone in the same year. The Fellowship stayed in Dover in offices in Marine

Parade. In 1988 the Cinque Port Pilots were disbanded and local pilotage passed to harbour and river authorities.

### ***Navigation – Lighthouses***

The District's coastline has seen the construction of a number of lighthouses to assist with the navigation of potentially hazardous coastal waters and entry to ports. Within the district, lighthouses have been located at Dungeness and Folkestone for some centuries.

The construction of lighthouses to safeguard coastlines dates back to as far as the Roman period. A pair of lighthouses ("*pharos*") were built at Dover probably in the early second century AD and are the only confirmed examples in the country. There may also have been similar structures at Richborough but further investigation is needed to confirm this. During the medieval period, warning beacons were often placed on the top of or in the side of the chalk cliffs by local monks who saw it as their Christian duty to warn ships of peril. There is a record of a light at the South Foreland in 1367 which was maintained by a hermit who dwelt in a cave in St Margaret's Bay.

Despite the 1566 Seamark Act, before 1836 there was no single organisation of lighthouses and lightships in England. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the construction of many lighthouses around the country; while a number were owned and operated by Trinity House many were privately owned paying an annual fee either to the Crown or to Trinity House. The owners of the private lights were allowed to levy light dues from passing ships on reaching port. The reliability of these private lights left much to be desired and so in 1836 legislation was passed for all lights in England, Wales and the Channel Islands to be compulsory purchased and placed under the management of Trinity House.

The first record of a permanent lighthouse structure along the coastline of the district dates to 1615 and was located on the Dungeness peninsula. Dungeness lies at the southernmost point of Kent and is a large, flat expanse of shingle and sediment that has posed a hazard to shipping for many centuries. A number of shipwrecks have occurred along the Dungeness and wider Romney Marsh coastline with much loss of life and cargo; perhaps the best known of these being the *Northfleet* disaster of 1873. Lighthouses have been present at Dungeness since the seventeenth century and mark the end of the peninsula whilst also acting as an important way mark for vessels navigating the Dover Straits. In total there have been five high and two low lighthouses since the first in 1615 at Dungeness.

The first mention of the earliest lighthouse was made during a report by Trinity House against a proposal for a light at Dungeness Point. Trinity House's opposition was subsequently withdrawn and an open coal fire was erected with tolls of one penny per ton to be levied on passing ships. The first lighthouse was built in 1615 and was a wooden tower of around 35 feet high with a coal brazier at the top. Fuel for the fire was hauled up by a basket and pulley system. Eventually candles would replace the coal fire probably due to the difficulty of transporting coal to such a remote destination. However, the continual accumulation of shingle on the Dungeness cusped foreland meant that the sea began to recede leaving the lighthouse a distance away from the water's edge. Complaints were made about the

ineffectiveness of the Dungeness lighthouse being so far away from the sea, and so in 1635 the existing tower was dismantled and a more substantial brick tower which was 110 feet higher than its predecessor was built again with a coal fire and nearer to Dungeness Point. The keeper's accommodation was located around the base of the tower as a single storey building.

The quality of light from the coal fire of the second lighthouse would soon come under review, and in 1668 Trinity House insisted that more adequate illumination was provided. Despite this, a coal fire continued to be used at Dungeness until well into the eighteenth century and this lighthouse would operate for over 100 years. However, during the late eighteenth century the lighthouse became victim to the same issues as the first; the accumulation and growth of the shingle coastline at Dungeness left the lighthouse far from the water's edge. Gradually complaints were made about the poor visibility of the light from the sea and a new third lighthouse was demanded by Trinity House.

In 1792 Samuel Wyatt, the then consultant engineer for Trinity House, constructed a new tower around 115 feet high of the same design as Smeaton's lighthouse on Eddystone. It had eighteen oil lamps that used sperm whale oil and later vegetable oil in place of a coal fire. By 1818 parabolic reflectors were also being used. Unfortunately, the foundations of this third lighthouse were compromised by decomposition due to seawater having been mixed with the mortar. Strong buttresses were put in place, and after a violent storm in 1821 further repairs were required to strengthen the tower.

In 1862, the 1792 Dungeness lighthouse became one of the first to be illuminated by electric light. This was however quickly superseded by more efficient technology involving a large oil lamp surrounded by glass prisms which resulted in a more powerful illumination. It was at this time that the lighthouse was also painted in black and white bands so as to make it more conspicuous during daytime. The keeper's quarters were built in a circular form around the base, and although the tower was dismantled in 1904 these quarters still survive today and are designated as a Grade II Listed Building.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the shingle foreland at Dungeness had again increased to such an extent that it was deemed necessary to place an additional Low Light near to the water's edge at Dungeness Point to aid passing ships. Two would be built at Dungeness; the first in 1884 and was a metal structure on a wooden base that could be seen for 10 miles. By 1932 this first low lighthouse was in need of repair and so was replaced by a new second low lighthouse which lasted until 1959 when it was demolished to make way for the current high lighthouse.

By the beginning of the twentieth century further recession of the sea from the location of the 1792 lighthouse meant that a new structure was needed. In 1901 Trinity House commissioned Patrick & Co of London to build a new and taller lighthouse approximately 143 feet high. It was ceremonially opened by His Majesty, The Prince of Wales, in 1904 and began operation at Dungeness Point in March of that year. The tower was painted externally in black and white bands to again ensure that it was recognisable as a beacon during the daytime for mariners, and operated

as the lighthouse of Dungeness until 1960 when it was decommissioned. The tower survives today and has now been painted black and is open to the public as a museum and tourist attraction. It is designated as a Grade II Listed Building.

During the late 1950s building work began on the Dungeness Power Station, and it quickly became apparent that due to the height of the new building the light from the lighthouse would be obscured from the sea. It became necessary to place another lighthouse further east at Dungeness Point to be effective in aiding the navigation of the coastal waters. The new and current lighthouse is a cylindrical tower around 130 feet high and is capable of remote automatic operation. It was the first of its kind to incorporate the Xenon electric arc lamp as a source of illumination and has black and white bands impregnated into its concrete structure. This fifth lighthouse to operate at Dungeness was officially brought into operation in 1961, with the previous tower being decommissioned in 1960.

The current lighthouse has been modernised more recently in 2000 with the sealed beam light being replaced with a Pharos PRB20 optic that has a range of 21 nautical miles. It was converted to automatic operation in 1991 and is monitored remotely from the Trinity House Operations and Planning Centre at Harwich. It has been designated as a Grade II\* Listed Building and forms an important part of the local landscape character at Dungeness along with the Old Lighthouse and Lighthousemen's dwellings from the 1792 tower.

There has also been a lighthouse at Folkestone since the second half of the nineteenth century due to the construction and ongoing works to the formal harbour. Folkestone had been a small fishing community since the twelfth century and in 1313 rose in prominence when it was established as a corporate "limb" to Dover as part of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. However, Folkestone port was consistently difficult to use due to the shallow waters, constant accumulation of shingle and silt resulting in the harbour becoming blocked as well as the lack of stone harbour before the nineteenth century.

During the 1540s, King Henry VIII was heading to war with France and plans were made for the use of the Folkestone port as a point of embarkation for supplies and troops. However, the Folkestone Harbour plan was never realised and was abandoned in favour of Dover. Over the next few centuries, continued silting and heavy storms made Folkestone's port a perilous place for shipping. Local attempts were made to stabilise the coastline with timber and stone jetties, however these were often severely damaged in bad weather and subsequently demolished. Whilst a small fishing industry continued to operate at Folkestone, the loss of life, boats and cargo was a constant threat and the need for a stone harbour was ever present.

In 1804 the Earl of Radnor petitioned Parliament for the construction of a stone harbour at Folkestone, and finally in 1807 an Act of Parliament passed that granted permission for the newly inaugurated Folkestone Harbour Company to build a pier and harbour to serve the Folkestone port and also to provide anchorage for warships during the Napoleonic Wars. Construction began in 1809 by a team that included the renowned engineer Thomas Telford, and would continue with the completion of the western pier in 1810 followed by the southern and eastern piers in 1820.

By 1843 the harbour was owned by the South East Railway Company who was working to provide steam packet business to France. The railway reached Folkestone in the same year, and by 1849 passenger services to the Folkestone Harbour station were available becoming the first international rail-sea-rail service between London and Paris. As business increased a pier was built in a south eastern direction from the horn between 1861 and 1863, though this was later damaged in a storm during early 1877. Between 1881 and 1883 the pier was rebuilt and extended into deeper water so that larger vessels were able to use the pier at low water. Plans of the pier dated to 1882 show an elaborate lighthouse that was located at its south eastern end. This was however replaced by the current lighthouse during the late nineteenth century when the pier was further enlarged and extended to act as a beacon for the Folkestone harbour.

The lighthouse survives today and has been designated as a Grade II Listed Building. It has been reused as part of the Folkestone Harbour regeneration and is currently utilised as a champagne bar whilst retaining the fabric of the building.

### ***Coastguard, customs and smuggling***

Originally the term “customs” referred to any customary or dues of any kind paid to such as the King, Bishop or Church. The term later became restricted to duties paid to the Crown on the import or export of goods. A centralised English customs system where dues were to be collected and paid into the state treasury can be traced to the Winchester Assize of 1203-4 in the reign of King John. Legislation was passed concerning customs in the reign of Edward I. The “*nova custuma*” in 1275 enabled the appointment of Collectors of Customs by the Crown. In 1298 *custodes custumae* were appointed in several ports to collect customs for the Crown. The first Customs Officers were appointed in 1294. A Board of Customs was created in 1643 which entrusted the regulation of the collection of customs to a parliamentary committee.

Given the narrow crossing to the continental mainland, smuggling was rife along the Kent and Channel coastlines. This is especially true of the Romney Marsh which is believed to have been the birthplace of smuggling in southern England largely due to its remoteness and high volume of grazing sheep. In 1275 the government introduced a tax on the export of wool which quickly rose and had doubled by 1298. It was also made illegal to export wool from an undesignated port and laws relating to export taxes continued to fluctuate and remained expensive. Smuggling began to expand in response to these laws with incentives to smuggle wool illegally continuing to grow. By the seventeenth century, the problem of smuggling on the Romney Marsh had reached epidemic levels and was largely considered to be at the centre of this activity in southern England.

During the 1660s the death penalty had been introduced for the smuggling of wool. This was meant as a deterrent but in fact caused smugglers to become more aggressive towards their pursuers, also known as “Revenue Men” and later “Riding Officers”. Smuggling on the Romney Marsh continued and was at its height between 1700 and 1840 where wool continued to be the primary material smuggled out of the country along with goods such as tin and graphite. Early smugglers on the Marsh were known as “owlers” as they only operated at night and used the hoot of an owl as a signal to fellow smugglers. A number of the men involved in smuggling were fishermen by trade and so could navigate the English Channel well and capitalise on

this advantage over the Revenue Men and Water Guard. A number of the medieval churches on the Marsh were involved in smuggling and were used as hiding places for smugglers and their contraband. The churches at Ivychurch, Snargate, Brookland and Fairfield are all believed to have been involved, and there are tombstones in the cemetery of the parish church at Dymchurch belonging to Revenue Men.

In 1690 Charles II formed a body of mounted customs officers known as "Riding Officers". The initial force, established on the south coast was totally inadequate to the job. Only eight officers were employed to patrol the entire Kent coast. In 1698 the numbers of the force, known as the Land Guard was increased. Kent initially had fifty officers which eventually grew to three hundred. The main duty of the Riding Officers was to patrol a predefined area of the coast and gather intelligence about and seize smuggled goods. The Riding Officers were hampered by being land based and were in the main ineffective against the smugglers. The officers were usually outnumbered by the smugglers and generally lost any confrontation. Many were employed part time and carried out their duties to their own convenience, prosecutions were notoriously difficult to achieve and often not pursued by the officers who needed to fund them out of their own purse.

To support the Land Guard, the Preventive Water Guard was established in 1809 to patrol the coastal waters. The Water Guard was under Admiralty control from 1816 to 1822. During this time, immediately following the French Wars, a rigorous blockade was mounted of the Kent and Sussex coasts. The Coast Blockade as it was known functioned until handed over to the Coastguard in 1831.

During the height of smuggling activity, Dymchurch is particularly well known for being home to one of the most notorious smuggling gangs called the Aldington Gang or the Blues who rose to notoriety during the nineteenth century. The Blues worked along the coastline from Deal to Camber in neighbouring East Sussex and were extremely successful until a run-in with the law in 1821 saw the leader and other members of the gang arrested and some hanged. The group was disbanded but smuggling continued until around 1840 on the Marsh.

Folkestone's economy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also relied heavily on less reputable employment. Alongside legitimate maritime activities such as fishing and trade, smuggling and piracy became a second income for many families in the town. It has been suggested that this may have been the case due to the freedoms from taxes and customs duties that Folkestone enjoyed as a corporate member of the Confederation of Cinque Ports, which encouraged a relaxed attitude to obeying the law of the land. Daniel Defoe visited Folkestone in 1724 and notes seeing "*several dragoons riding, officers and others armed and on horseback....upon inquiry I found their diligence was employed in the quest of owlers*". He also noted "*that often times these are attacked in the night, with such numbers, that they dare not resist, or if they do, they are wounded and beaten, and sometimes killed*".

During the eighteenth century there were a number of wars fought between Britain and the Dutch or French. During these times of warfare, many private ships were equipped with guns and operated as privateers that were effectively sanctioned by government. Goods that were 'liberated' for the Crown included sugar, chocolate, tobacco and wine. There is evidence for a number of privateers that operated out of



Folkestone, the most famous of these being Captain Fagg of *The Buck*. One of his best known exploits concerns the blockade of Gibraltar between 1779 and 1783. A substantial French and Spanish fleet had been blockading the British fleet in harbour at Gibraltar when Captain Fagg was then observed out sailing enemy ships, including the flagship *St Jean Baptiste* before heading beneath the British coastal batteries. Though Fagg had brought little with him, it boosted British morale and temporarily lifted the blockade leaving enemy vessels out of position. Other privateers are recorded as operating out of Folkestone, and it also appears to have been a family business at times.

In 1822 the Preventive Water Guard and the Land Guard were placed under the authority of the Board of Customs and the Coast Guard was formed. In 1829 the first Coast Guard instructions were published and dealt with discipline and directions for carrying out preventative duties. They also stipulated that when a wreck took place, the Coast Guard was responsible for taking all possible action to save lives, to take charge of the vessel and to protect property. The Coast Guards were often recruited from the Royal Navy. At first the Coast Guards and their families were housed in the villages near to their watch houses. Later in the 19th century more formal stations were developed and a chain of these, along with their associated cottages and watch towers, could be traced along the District's coastline at places such as Lydd, Dungeness, Littlestone (New Romney), Dymchurch, Hythe and Folkestone. Given their duties the Coast Guards were not encouraged to become too familiar with the local populations and were often moved around from station to station and provided accommodation on or near their stations.

A third branch of the Customs service was the Landing Service who were responsible for the examination of imported cargoes and collecting the required duty. Customs Officers from the Landing Service would be stationed in the major ports and landing places and distinct from the Water Guard. In lesser ports the duties crossed over between the branches. At Folkestone, a Customs house was built as part of the developing harbour in 1859, and partially survives today. The Landing Service and Water Guard were amalgamated in 1860 but separated a few years later. 1908 saw the transfer of the excise duties of Inland Revenue to the Board of Customs to create the Board of Customs and Excise. In 1923 the preventative duties completely passed from the Coastguard to the Water Guard service within Customs and Excise.

### ***Preserving life at sea – Lifeboat Stations and the RNLI***

The Straits of Dover was one of the busiest sea routes in the world, and so unsurprisingly the coastal waters of the district and neighbouring Dover District saw many souls losing their lives in these waters. There has been a long tradition of rescue associated with places such as Dungeness, Greatstone and Hythe, following the foundation of the RNLI in 1824. Today there are RNLI Lifeboat Stations located at Dungeness and Littlestone-on-Sea that work to preserve life at sea.

Before the 19th century there had been talk about creating official lifeboats but it wasn't until 1809 that any formal arrangements were in place. The Preventive Water Guard was established; an organisation that was the immediate predecessor of the Coastguard. While the Water Guard's primary role was to prevent smuggling it was also responsible for giving assistance to wrecked ships. The Water Guard was

based in watch houses along the coast and cutters patrolled the coastal waters at night. Each station was equipped with Manby's Mortar which fired a shot with a line attached out to stricken vessels.

The RNLI was founded in March 1824 as the *National Institute for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck*, and later changed its name to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1854. In its first year the institute added 13 boats to the existing 39 independent boats. On the Romney Marsh, the first lifeboat station was established at Martello Tower No. 27 at St Mary's Bay in 1826. Its lifeboat was built by William Plenty and was owned by the RNLI. The station was known as Dymchurch No. 27 Tower and the crew were all members of the Coast Blockade. Most notably, in 1832 the lifeboat was launched into a full gale to aid the vessel *Osiris* that was floundering between Littlestone and Tower No. 27. The lifeboat crew managed to rescue all of the men aboard the *Osiris* for which they received the RNLI Silver Medal. The station was later closed and then demolished in 1841.

For the next 16 years there was no official lifeboat station along the Romney Marsh coastline, and all rescues were carried out by the Coastguard and/or local fishermen. However, two shipwrecks in 1852 which both resulted in loss of life of crew and Coastguard personnel prompted the first lifeboat station at Dungeness to be established in 1854. The station was located close to Dungeness No. 1 Battery on the Dungeness peninsula, though this proved to be an inadequate location to launch from as crews had to travel distances to reach the stations remote location. Because of this, the station was moved northwards towards Littlestone in 1861, where it was initially still known as the Dungeness Lifeboat Station. In 1871 a new lifeboat, *Doctor Hatton*, arrived at the station and resulted in it being renamed as the New Romney Lifeboat Station. The *Doctor Hatton* was replaced in 1884 by the *Sandal Magna*. The station was eventually closed in 1928 following a 16 year period with only three recorded service launches.

In 1873 the *Northfleet* disaster off the coast of Dungeness had prompted the re-opening of a lifeboat station at Dungeness in 1874. The *Northfleet* was a British full-rigged ship that spent much of her career trading between England and Australia, India and China. In 1873 the *Northfleet* was on-route from Gravesend to Tasmania with a cargo of equipment for building a railway as well as 379 persons on board. Bad weather had forced the ship to drop anchor at several points along the Kent coast before leaving the Channel and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1873 she was anchored about two or three miles off the coast of Dungeness. Late into the evening the *Northfleet* was run down by a steamer that quickly backed off and disappeared. The heavily laden ship sunk within half an hour with 293 people drowning before any vessels within the vicinity realised that she was in trouble.

The offending steamer was eventually proved to be the Spanish *Murillo*, which was stopped off the coast of Dover later that year. A Court of Admiralty condemned her to be sold and its officers were severely censured. A window in the south chapel at St Nicholas church in New Romney commemorates the crew and passengers who had drowned in the disaster. A lifeboat station has been located at Dungeness since its reopening in 1874. The original lifeboat station building survives and is now a private residence.

The present Dungeness Lifeboat Station is located off Dungeness Road and guards the Channel from Folkestone to Rye Bay. It has a rich history which includes the Dungeness Lifeboat being one of the 19 that took part in the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk in France in 1940. Through the 1950s, the station was famous for its Lady Launchers; local women who helped to haul the lifeboat down to the sea and then recovering her upon return. The station also became the first to receive the RNLI Shannon class lifeboat which was named the *Morrell* in 2014 by HRH The Princess Royal. The lifeboat was paid for as part of a generous legacy gifted to the RNLI by Mrs B Morrell who had requested that the money fund a lifeboat for Kent as she was local to the area.

There is also an RNLI Lifeboat Station at Littlestone-on-Sea which operates off Coast Drive from a purpose built brick boathouse dating to 1977. The station overlooks the busy shipping lanes in the Channel and has a crew member who is part of the Rapid Response Unit. In 2007 the team was involved in helping the flood-hit areas of Great Yarmouth as well as Gloucestershire and Norfolk.

Along the coast, a RNLI Lifeboat Station was established at Hythe in 1876 on a site at the junction of Princes Parade and Seabrook Road. In 1891 the loss of the *Benvenue* resulted in the move of the station to another site. This became the Seabrook Road Lifeboat Station which was converted to a residential property and then later demolished in 1956.

In 1893 a Lifeboat House was built on a site adjacent to the Hythe and Sandgate Gas Company premises at the end of The Parade in Hythe. The existing lifeboat from the Seabrook Road station, the *Meyer de Rothschild*, was moved to this new lifeboat house. The three successive lifeboats were also named as such after the donor as was customary. In 1929 the *City of Nottingham* came into service as a gift from the Nottingham Lifeboat Fund. In 1934 a new and larger lifeboat, *The Viscountess Wakefield*, was donated to Hythe but was too large for the existing lifeboat house. As a result, a new lifeboat house was immediately constructed to the south east of the 1893 lifeboat house that same year.

In 1940 the coxswain of *The Viscountess Wakefield* refused to take the vessel to Dunkirk as part of Operation Dynamo unless he could take his own crewmen, believing them to be more capable of navigating the Channel than Royal Navy petty officers. The Royal Navy commandeered the vessel and it was the only lifeboat to be lost in the operation. During the Second World War, the upper floor of the 1934 lifeboat station was used as a lookout for doodlebugs. A mine-watching post was also built on the landward side of the 1893 lifeboat house as Hythe beach was mined to prevent an enemy landing. Following the war, the lifeboat was not replaced and the coxswain was dismissed from the lifeboat service.

The 1893 lifeboat house was subsequently used for storage by the local Scout group and the 1934 lifeboat house was also put to various uses such as a studio and clubhouse. The two buildings were recently at risk of demolition as part of the beach-side development on Hythe's Fisherman's Beach. The development was opposed by local residents on grounds that the buildings were intensively used by the local fishing fleet as well as being the last remnants of infrastructure associated with the maritime activity of this Cinque Port. Both buildings are now designated as Grade II

Listed Buildings and are being reused as part of the development, which has also been scaled-down.

At Folkestone, the demand for a steam lifeboat had intensified following the *Northfleet* disaster in 1873. It was felt that there was a need to supplement the Rye and Dungeness sailing and establish a lifeboat for cruising off the coast of Dungeness. This further intensified in 1878 when another tragedy occurred near the same place when two German warships, *Grosser Kurfurst* and *Koening Wilhelm*, collided. The *Grosser Kurfurst* sunk as a result with a substantial loss of life. Nothing was done until 1887 when a lifeboat was provided by the South Eastern Railway Company, arriving at Folkestone Harbour in July of that year. The vessel's official name was *Jubilee Life Saving Ship No. 1* and was equipped with lifelines, lifebuoys and a 'resurrection cabin' containing a large bath. The *Jubilee* never fulfilled her intended purpose, and was later sold in 1899.

The next shipping disaster to cause concern about the lifesaving facilities along this section of the coast was the loss of the sailing ship *Benvenue* in 1891. Despite efforts by the Coastguard and the *Meyer de Rothschild* lifeboat from Seabrook, there was loss of life both for the *Benvenue* crew and members of the Coastguard and Seabrook lifeboat. Eight days after the disaster a public meeting was held at the Folkestone Town Hall and a lifeboat committee was formed in accordance with the wishes of the local residents. Early in 1892 the RNLI decided to establish a lifeboat station at Folkestone.

The Folkestone Lifeboat House was built opposite the Bathing establishment just east of the Leas Lift. The lifeboat provided was equipped with the latest improvements in self-righting and self-ejecting water, and was named the *J. McConnel Hussey* at the behest of her benefactor. The boat arrived in Folkestone late in 1893 with the formal inauguration taking place the following year. The *J. McConnel Hussey* was stationed at Folkestone until 1903, during which time it was launched four times and saved ten lives. In 1903 Folkestone received its second lifeboat the *Leslie* who was launched twenty-one times during her career saving sixteen lives.

Folkestone was due to have a new motor lifeboat, but by the time the boat was ready the RNLI had decided to station the boat at Hythe instead and close the Folkestone station. This was partly due to Dover and Dungeness both also having motor lifeboats with greater ranges than older boats. This meant that there would have been two stations between Dungeness and Dover which was deemed as unnecessary. Folkestone station also had its limitations and could not be used one hour before low water or until one hour after low water due to an obstruction caused by Church Rocks. Ultimately the Folkestone Lifeboat Station was closed on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1930 with the lifeboat remaining as an exhibition until 1936 when the boathouse passed to a landlord and was later demolished.

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

The heritage assets connected with the evolution of the District's coastline, coastal leisure and tourism and the District's ports and harbours are described separately in other theme papers for this Heritage Strategy (see Themes 1, 2, 3) and are not repeated here.

### **Navigation – Pilotage**

There are very few heritage assets relating to pilotage throughout the district. At Dungeness there is a cottage with a square “watchtower” which is believed to have previously been used as a lookout and contact point for the local pilots. It is now a private residence and is undesignated.

The 1938 Trinity House **cruising pilot cutter *Bembridge*** is linked to Dungeness pilotage and still survives after being recently sympathetically restored in Poland. The Trinity House Pilot Vessel (THPV) *Bembridge* was designed by Sir William Reed in early 1938 for Trinity House London to be the first British Motor Cruising Pilot Cutter. She was built by the famous Smith’s Dock Company Ltd South Bank in Middlesbrough and initially served the Isle of Wight District based at Cowes. During the Second World War she took part in the British evacuation of Dunkirk during Operation Dynamo. Shortly afterwards, a hit by an unexploded German bomb caused extensive damage to the vessel which was repaired and she then took part in the Normandy landings during Operation Neptune and Operation Overlord.

In 1947, *Bembridge* was transferred to the London District where she worked as a cruising cutter, alternating service between the Dungeness and Sunk boarding grounds. By the late 1960s she was being used as a Mother Ship in the Solent and as a communications vessel until being finally withdrawn from Trinity House service in 1970. By 1976 the *Bembridge* had been sold to the Essex Yacht Club and was being used as their clubhouse. In 2004 she was replaced by GRP minehunter *HMS Wilton* and was towed to the Medway where there were plans to convert the vessel into a floating restaurant.

Due to planning restrictions, these plans were never realised and the vessel was subsequently purchased in 2009 by the Polish shipping logistics group Magemar based in Szczecin for use as a head office and museum. After being towed across the North Sea to Poland by Polish tug *Argus*, the *Bembridge* has been sympathetically restored.

The **Folkestone Pilot Station** was built in 1971 to accommodate the Cinque Port Pilots as improvements in radio communications meant that pilots could reach vessels from shore by speed launches rather than being based at sea in cruising cutters. Pilots based here oversaw shipping in the Margate and northeast spit as well as around Folkestone, and it was viewed as a state of the art facility for its time. The building had cost around £250,000 to construct and marked a considerable change in operations. In 1977 Margaret Thatcher visited the Pilot Station as a tribute to lighthousemen, lifeboatmen and pilots for safeguarding the coast and preserving life at sea.

However, it was only in active use for a short time and was closed in 1988 due to technological advances in radar and communications rendering the Cinque Port Pilots redundant for the first time in their long history. The Cinque Port Pilots were subsequently disbanded and local pilotage passed to harbour and river authorities. Following years of remaining empty, the building was eventually declared structurally unsound and considered to be beyond any type of economical repair. Ultimate removal of the Pilot Station as well as old surrounding warehouses was completed in

2014 as part of wider redevelopment work to the Folkestone Harbour and seafront. Today there are no surviving remains of the station.

### ***Navigation – Lighthouses***

Lighthouses within the district are found at Dungeness and Folkestone. Since the seventeenth century, there have been five high and two low lighthouses at Dungeness Point that act to help mariners navigate the coastal waters off the Dungeness and Marsh coast as well as acting as a way mark for those navigating the Dover Straits. Whilst there are no surviving remains of the first two high lighthouses or the two low lighthouses, the Lighthousemen's dwellings from the third lighthouse built in 1792, the fourth lighthouse built in 1904 and the current lighthouse built in 1961 all survive.

The **Dungeness Lighthousemen's dwellings** are formed from the remains of the high lighthouse that was built at Dungeness Point in 1792 following two predecessors from 1615 and 1635 that had both been dismantled previously. When this third lighthouse also became redundant due to the growing shingle foreland and receding sea at Dungeness like those before it, a new lighthouse was erected in 1904 and the upper parts of this structure were demolished. The two lowest storeys were left and converted into dwellings for the lighthouse keepers, with two separate houses being added during the early nineteenth century. The original structure forms a circular flat roofed building with a hollow centre that creates a circular courtyard. The two dwellings that were added later are small square single-storey houses or pavilions. The coat of arms of Trinity House can still be seen on the outer side of each building. These buildings together are designated as a Grade II Listed Building and make an important contribution to the collection of maritime heritage assets explored in this theme paper as well as the local maritime heritage of Dungeness.

The **Old Lighthouse** was the fourth high lighthouse erected at Dungeness between 1901 and 1904. It is a tapering structure of six storeys built of glazed brick with iron handrails at the top and a glass lookout. It is around 143 feet high and 38 feet in diameter with a plinth and central part that is now painted black so as to avoid confusion with the current lighthouse which sports black and white bands as this lighthouse previously did whilst it was still in active operation. The lighthouse fell out of use and was ultimately decommissioned in 1960 when the Dungeness Power Station building obscured the view of the lighthouse from the sea and a new structure was needed. The building is designated as a Grade II Listed Building and is used as a museum and tourist attraction.

The **Dungeness Lighthouse** is the current and fifth high lighthouse to have been built at Dungeness Point. It was commissioned and built between 1959 and 1960 due to the previous lighthouse being obscured by the new Dungeness Power Station. In June of 1960 it was officially opened by the Duke of Gloucester and was fully operational by the following year. The structure comprises 21 concrete drums, each 5 feet high, surrounded by a white concrete spiral ramp enclosing the machine room. High tensile wires were run through the walls from top to bottom and post-tensioned using the Freyssinet system to provide strength for winds of up to 80 miles per hour. There is extra strength towards the base of the tower by having extra prestressing cables rather than the traditional taper which gives it a more sophisticated and elegant form.

The concrete drums were coloured in black and white to denote the lighthouse as an active aid to navigation, hence the previous lighthouse was painted completely black to signal its redundancy. The tower is 130 feet high and 12 feet in diameter with walls that are only 6 inches thick. The interior of the lighthouse contains an elegant cantilevered spiral staircase which is slightly kinked in plan and has steel handrails that lead to a miniaturised 134,000 candlepower lantern that was installed in 2000 and has a range of 21 nautical miles. There is no need for accommodation at Dungeness because it is operated automatically and remotely by Trinity House. This lighthouse is designated as a Grade II\* Listed Building due to its high degree of sophistication.

The **lighthouse at the end of the Folkestone Harbour outer pier** was erected as part of the extension to the outer pier at Folkestone Harbour between 1897 and 1904. The harbour had been owned by the South Eastern Railway Company since 1843 for steam packet business to France. By 1849, the first international rail-sea-rail service was being provided and over the coming years enjoyed varying levels of popularity and success. As business increased, a pier was built in a south eastern direction from the horn between 1861 and 1863. This was rebuilt and extended again between 1881 and 1883 into deeper water to provide better shipping for vessels at low water. Plans published in 1882 show an elaborate lighthouse at the end of this pier. However, when the pier was again extended in 1897, it was replaced by the current lighthouse.

The lighthouse is constructed of granite blocks and comprises a tapering cylindrical tower of two storeys. It is incorporated into the south wall of the pier with a deep moulded plinth and cornice. Above the tower is a metal handrail which surrounds a central glazed cylindrical lantern with a domed cap surmounted by a metal weathervane. The lighthouses design and materials are of high quality and exhibit elegant craftsmanship. There is an inscription on the west side that reads "This pier was commenced by the South Eastern Railway Company on 28th January 1897 and completed by the South East and Chatham Railway Company on 12th July 1904. Coode Son and Matthews Engineers. William Rigby Contractors." An adjoining panel also records that the stone was laid by Paul Gambon on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1904. It is a Grade II Listed Building and has been reused as a champagne bar as part of the regeneration work on the Folkestone Harbour Arm.

### ***Coastguard, customs and smuggling***

Evidence for the Land Guard and the Preventative Water Guard is likely to be very limited. Traces of the watch houses used by the Guard may survive in the District's archaeology or reused in later Coastguard stations. The 19th century chain of Coastguard stations along the coastline is far better understood and a number of key heritage assets survive.

A useful list of the 19th century coastguard stations in the District has been sourced from the website: <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Coastguards/Table.html>. This details census records for coast guards and their families thereby giving an idea of the period of occupation of each of the stations. In addition, examination of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps has identified 15 stations within the District. From east to west the stations around the District are:

<i>Asset</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Survival</i>
Lydd Coastguard Station	Lydd, south of Denge Marsh	Demolished  The station and several associated structures are visible on 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps, but appear to have been demolished by the turn of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
Galloways Coastguard Station and Lookout (Dungeness Coastguard Station No. 4 and site of Dungeness Battery No. 4)	Lydd, coast of Denge Marsh	Demolished  The station is visible on OS maps until the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century. It may have been demolished due to the building of the Lydd Ranges.
Dengemarsh Coastguard Station (Dungeness Coastguard Station No. 3 and site of Dungeness Battery No. 3)	Lydd, east of Lydd Ranges	Demolished  The station is visible on OS maps until the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century, when it is no longer labelled as a Coastguard Station. This may have been due to the building of the Lydd Ranges.
Dungeness Coastguard Station (Lloyd's Signal Station)	Dungeness (Redoubt)	Extant  A terrace of Coastguard cottages survives inside the Dungeness Redoubt.
Dunge Coastguard Station	Lydd-on-Sea	Extant  The station appears on OS maps for the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century but then is no longer labelled as such by the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century. Structures survive that are labelled as Coastguard cottages.
Coastguard Station and Lookout at Lade Fort (Dungeness Battery No. 2)	Dungeness, Lade Fort	Extant  In the late 19 <sup>th</sup> century Lade Fort was converted to use as a Coastguard Station. The structure survives as Coastguard cottages within the fort.
Greatstone Coastguard Station	Approximately 1km inland between Littlestone-on-Sea and Greatstone-on-Sea	Demolished  The station is visible on 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but appears to have been demolished at the turn of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century close to the



		New Romney branch line.
Littlestone Coastguard Station	Littlestone-on-Sea	Demolished  The station is visible on 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but appears to have been demolished by the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century.
St Mary's Coastguard Station	St Mary's Bay	Demolished  The station is visible on 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but appears to have been demolished by the turn of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
Dymchurch Coastguard Station (near Martello Tower 24)	Dymchurch	Partially demolished  The station is only visible on early 20 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but appears to have been demolished soon afterwards. Coastguard cottages were built in 1905 and still survive as private residences.
Dymchurch Coastguard Station	Dymchurch	Demolished  The station is visible on later 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but appears to have been demolished by the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
Hythe Coastguard Station	Hythe (off St Leonards Road)	Extant  The station is visible on late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but does not appear later.
Sandgate Coastguard Station	Sandgate	The station is visible on late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps. It now survives as a private residence.
Folkestone Harbour Coastguard Station	Folkestone Harbour	Demolished  The station is only visible on late 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps and then appears to have been demolished during the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
Folkestone Warren Coastguard Station	Folkestone Warren, East Wear Bay	Possibly Demolished  The station is visible on late 19 <sup>th</sup> century OS maps but then no longer appears on later editions.

A number of the Napoleonic Martello Towers located along the coastline were also utilised by the coastguard and their families.

**Martello Tower 27**, which was located at Dymchurch to defend the Globdsen Gut sluice gates, was seemingly occupied by the Coastguard in 1840, though the Tower was demolished the following year in 1841 as a result of the advancing sea. **Martello Tower 24**, which was paired with Tower 25 and also located at Dymchurch, was occupied by the Coastguard and their families during the 1840s. Following the Second World War, the Tower was again occupied by the Coastguard up until 1959 when it was acquired by the Ministry of Works and subsequently restored. Tower 24 was first opened to the public as a museum in 1969, owned by English Heritage (now Historic England). It remains the only tower that is solely devoted to the history of the Martello Towers and is designated as a Grade II Listed Building as well as a Scheduled Monument.

**Martello Tower 3**, which is located on the cliffs above Copt Point overlooking the Folkestone Harbour, was occupied by the coastguard and their families from the 1850s. **Martello Tower 1**, which is located along the coast within sight of Tower 3 at East Wear Bay, was possibly used by the Coast Blockade and then the Coastguard during the nineteenth century. However, it is described as being unoccupied and missing its outer skin of brickwork as early as 1870. Both Towers are designated as Scheduled Monuments, and Tower 1 is also a Grade II Listed Building.

A site relating to the Customs service has also been identified by the present study within the district. The **Folkestone Customs House** on the Folkestone Harbour was built in 1859 when the international rail-sea-rail service was established and the harbour had undergone significant development. It was originally a grand and impressive building that would have been the first place that passengers arriving from Calais and Boulogne would have passed through on their way into this country. The building was befitting of a busy port and would have served as an epicentre of activity for the Folkestone Harbour during its heyday as a cross channel port. It has now largely been demolished and only a small part of the original building remains, including an entranceway adorned with the face of Poseidon; in Greek mythology the god of the sea and protector of seafarers.

Recent regeneration work to the remaining section of the Customs House has replaced the entrance doors and renovated the interior space. The Customs House is currently being used as an *Urban Room* for the Folkestone Triennial 2017. Artists have used line markings to illustrate the extensive footprint of the original nineteenth century building and have furnished the interior to create a space that is dedicated to remembering the history of Folkestone as well as encouraging debate about its future.

Evidence for smuggling in the District survives within the historic towns and villages across the Romney Marsh, in particular at places like Dymchurch. The remoteness of the Marsh and its scattered settlements would have provided ideal places from which to operate and hide contraband. A number of the surviving dwellings within Dymchurch are reputed to have been used as lookouts as well as being residences of famous smugglers:

- **Dunkirk End, 26 Mill Road** is a Grade II Listed Building and is believed to have been a lookout used by smugglers. Today it is a private residence.
- **Wraights Cottages, Mill Road** was previously the residence of smuggler William Wincles. Today it is a private residence.
- **Clissold Cottage, 6 Sea Wall** was previously the residence of smuggler William Tolhurst. Today it is a private residence.
- **Marine Terrace, 50-60 Sea Wall** was previously the residence of famous author Russell Thorndike who wrote the fictional stories about smuggler Dr Syn on the Romney Marsh.

A number of the public houses were involved in smuggling activity such as The Ship Inn, Ocean Inn and City of London in Dymchurch. The Ship Inn is the oldest of the three and the only one that is designated (Grade II Listed Building). It is first mentioned in 1530 and appears to already of had a longstanding connection to the local fishermen and smugglers which is believed to be the reason for its name. The inn is famously the headquarters of Russell Thorndike's fictional character Dr Syn and is also believed to have had many associations with real-life notorious smugglers and the Lords of the Level at the time when the Romney Marsh was self-governed. The proximity of the inn to the New Hall and adjoining gaol makes it highly likely that this would have been the case on a number of occasions. It is reputed that in 1781 a gang of smugglers were apprehended exporting live sheep to France and were subsequently tried and imprisoned at New Hall. They were later able to escape with the aid of friends who mounted their efforts from The Ship Inn. The building itself is also believed to have a number of hidden passageways and voids that may have been used in smuggling activity and some have been found during more recent restoration work. The original Pilot public house at Dungeness is also alleged to have been built using materials from a Spanish vessel that was looted by smugglers.

The medieval churches across the Romney Marsh also played an important role in smuggling activities. Many provided ideal hiding places for contraband and contain various voids and hidden storage spaces. St George church (Ivychurch) had a section of flooring in the north aisle that was removable to enable the storage and concealment of contraband. At St Dunstan church (Snargate) a section of the north aisle was sealed off and frequently used as a hiding place for smuggled goods. There is a painted galleon on the churches interior wall which was allegedly a signal to smugglers that the church was a safe hiding place. The St Thomas Becket church (Fairfield) is also associated with smuggling which is unsurprising given its isolated location. Other churches contain burials of smugglers and Riding Officers. St Augustine church (Snave) contains two headstones believed to be of local smugglers and St Peter and St Paul church (Dymchurch) contains the headstones of Riding Officers.

There are also a number of heritage assets at Dymchurch that relate to the fictional smuggler Dr Syn and the author Russell Thorndike. They form an important part of the local cultural and tourism offering, and continue to attract visitors to the town today. These assets are explored in detail in a separate theme paper (3b Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands) and so will not be repeated here.

### ***Preserving life at sea – Lifeboat Stations and the RNLI***

A number of assets relating to the preservation of life at sea have survived well across the district. The building believed to be the original 1854 Lifeboat Station at Dungeness survives as a private residence and still retains many of its original features. The present RNLI **Dungeness Lifeboat Station** off Dungeness Road guards the Channel coastal waters from Folkestone to the Rye Bay. The station is also open to the public on specified days and hours, and includes a shop run by volunteers.

The RNLI **Littlestone-on-Sea Lifeboat Station** off Coast Drive between Littlestone and Greatstone also guards the Channel waters between the Rye Bay and Folkestone. It is housed in a modern 1977 purpose built brick building and can also be visited via special arrangements.

The two **Hythe Lifeboat Stations** survive well and are designated as Grade II Listed Buildings. The northern lifeboat station which was built in 1893 (with a circa 1940 addition) is a rectangular lifeboat house of four bays with a splayed northern addition that is divided into two rooms. The southern lifeboat station built in 1934 has five bays with a barrel-vaulted roof; the south-east bay being two storeys and the remainder one storey. Both stations were under threat of being demolished as part of recent development work to the Hythe Fishermen's Beach. However, due to opposition by local residents and a successful listing status, the buildings are now being reused as part of the development and are protected as the last remnants of infrastructure associated with the maritime activities of Hythe as a Cinque Port.

There are no remains of the **Dymchurch No. 27 Tower Lifeboat Station** which was the first to have been established on the Romney Marsh in 1826. The station was housed in Martello Tower No. 27 at St Mary's Bay which was eventually demolished in 1841. The **Folkestone Lifeboat House** which was built in 1893 has also since been demolished and no remains survive today.

## **4. Statement of Significance**

With the District's proximity to continental Europe, its history has been inexorably linked with the sea and maritime activity. It has played an important role in marine trade, transport, defence and navigation for hundreds of years going as far back as the Bronze Age. The District's coastline is rich in heritage assets that reflect these maritime links, from the Roman Saxon Shore Fort at Lympne through to twentieth century coastguard stations and lifeboat houses. These varied assets help to tell the story of the District's connections with the sea and the hazards that the waters off the coast presented in the past. The maritime coastal features in the District are of **considerable significance**.

### ***Evidential Value***

The District's maritime coastal features have strong potential for archaeological and structural evidence that can provide in particular a better understanding of:

- The area's historic maritime and trade connections;

- The lives of the mariners who operated or visited the District's coast and ports;
- The development of early harbours and the associated buildings, in particular the function of the Roman Saxon Shore Fort at Lympne and the development of the medieval port of Romney;
- The role of fishing in the District's past economy;
- The practice of smuggling and the development of revenue protection services such as the Coastguard to counter this.

The port towns of the District have numerous buildings which developed to accommodate the mariners of the area, their families and to service the needs of the visiting ships and seamen. Within the fabric of these buildings and the archaeology of the towns lies important evidence for how these people lived and worked and the provisions, industries and entertainments needed to satisfy the needs of ships using the ports. A number of buildings also have the potential to reveal further evidence for smuggling activity, particularly across the Romney Marsh. Renovation works on public houses, for example, continues to find new evidence relating to smuggling that was particularly rife across the Marsh between 1700 and 1840.

There is a significant potential for buried remains at the Roman Saxon Shore Fort in Lympne, also known as Stutfall Castle, which would reveal more detailed information about the layout and function of the fort as well as evidence for the early harbour and maritime importance of *Portus Lemanis*. This is perhaps particularly important for this site as it has been substantially distorted by land slippage over the centuries which have made interpretations of the site far more difficult. Future archaeological work could vastly improve understandings as well as adding to knowledge regarding the Saxon Shore fort group. There is also continued potential to uncover evidence of the earlier fort that is believed to occupy the site near to the *Portus Lemanis* fort as well as clarify any association to the *Classis Britannica*.

The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme has also identified the potential for archaeological remains relating to the port of Romney. This again would not only provide important archaeological finds relating to this lost Port, but it would also better understandings about maritime activity over a number of centuries at this once important Cinque Port.

Other buildings such as the Coastguard Stations and Lifeboat Houses form an important part of a chain of marine safeguarding structures along the coast that continue to tell the story of the District's long connection to the sea and efforts to navigate and preserve life in often dangerous coastal waters.

### ***Historical Value***

The maritime heritage assets from the District have considerable potential to provide connections to aspects of the maritime past explored in this theme. Many of the assets are also able to demonstrate the maritime past going back many centuries and clearly illustrate the district's longstanding relationship with the sea. For example, the Roman Saxon Shore Fort at Lympne is part of an important collection

of this type of structure and represents the District's early maritime heritage. Evidence from other early ports such as Romney and Hythe will also add to understandings about the district's maritime past and how these ports have developed over time.

Other assets have important links to major historical events, most notably in relation to times of war such as the Napoleonic and World Wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The RNLI Dungeness Lifeboat was one of the 19 that took part in the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk in France in 1940 during the Second World War. The string of Martello Towers along the District's coastline that in some cases have also served as bases for the Coastguard and their families are again significant heritage assets relating to the defence of the realm, this time during the Napoleonic Wars.

Other assets reflect local heritage that is of national importance, such as the Folkestone Harbour which in 1849 provided the first international rail-sea-rail service to France. Surviving assets such as Coastguard cottages and Lifeboat Houses that are now private residences or utilised as communal spaces continue to represent a historic way of life for a community that relied on maritime activity for their livelihood and the town's prosperity. Aspects of life such as fishing and operating lifeboats continue to play an important role for some members of the local community, and the surviving heritage assets relating to this continue to reflect that legacy.

### ***Aesthetic Value***

Considerable aesthetic value of the maritime heritage assets on the District's coastline derive from the close relationships many communities have with the sea as well as the iconic views of the coastal landscapes that can be had from inland out to sea and whilst entering the country from the Channel. The Dungeness lighthouses are prominent landmarks that stand proud against the sparse and open shingle landscape on the peninsula. Individual maritime heritage buildings further add to the aesthetic value of this theme with their own distinctiveness and aesthetic qualities. The string of Coastguard Stations and cottages across the District make strong references to the maritime past and efforts to safeguard the coast. Other buildings such as the Lifeboat Stations and harbour buildings at Folkestone enhance the aesthetic quality of the coast and its maritime historic environment. Some of the public houses and medieval churches across the Romney Marsh illustrate the remoteness of the landscape that proved to be ideal for smuggling activity.

### ***Communal Value***

The connection of the District's coastal communities with their maritime heritage is strong. The port towns' historic sense of place is highly valued by those who live in them and they are important visitor destinations in their own right providing open access to the sea and river frontages, hubs for waterborne activities and visitor attractions. Coastal towns such as Dymchurch, Folkestone and Dungeness are particularly popular and continue to demonstrate a strong local maritime heritage.

The role that the RNLI stations at Dungeness and Littlestone-on-Sea continue to play in saving lives at sea is a point of local pride. The various Lifeboat Stations and Coastguard Stations are further reminders of the long history of safeguarding the coast across the District. The District's lighthouses at Dungeness and Folkestone

play a key role in telling the story of sea navigation and are important landmarks. The Old Lighthouse at (Dungeness) is open to visitors as a museum and serves as a valuable historic resource. It also forms part of the distinctive landscape and panoramic views that are available across the Dungeness peninsula and wider Romney Marsh that make it so special. The lighthouse on the Folkestone Harbour has been reused as a champagne bar as part of the regeneration of the Folkestone Harbour Arm and now plays an important role not only as a reminder of the town's role in sea navigation, but also as a cultural and social hub.

The naval life, particularly at the time of the French and Napoleonic Wars generates a significant level of public interest and there are a number of structures across the District that belongs to this group, such as the Martello Towers and redoubts. Similarly tales of the smugglers of the Romney Marsh and the measures taken to prevent the practice are evocative and important to the local historic character. There are many heritage assets that connect people to this past and illuminate the life of those communities who depended on the sea for their livelihoods.

The maritime coastal heritage assets have considerable interpretative potential, and a number are already important visitor attractions. As mentioned already, the Old Lighthouse at Dungeness is open as a museum and tells the story of sea navigation on the Dungeness peninsula. The Folkestone Customs House has been reused as a communal space and its historical context is highlighted for visitors to experience. A number of other assets relating to the Folkestone harbours history also still survive and are being utilised as part of the current regeneration work to enhance the harbour's heritage offering and connections to its maritime past. The RNLI Lifeboat Stations at Dungeness and Littlestone-on-Sea are also open to the public at specified times and again highlight the District's role in preserving life at sea.

## **5. Vulnerabilities**

The maritime coastal assets identified in this theme are vulnerable to natural processes such as coastal erosion, silting and sediment accumulation. Silting and sediment accumulation have been a particular problem for many of the ports along the coastline, and in some cases has resulted in a harbours complete decline. For example, the Roman port (*Portus Lemanis*) at Lympne and the ports of Romney became completely landlocked over time and are now located miles from the sea in their current locations. The harbour at Hythe also became silted to such a degree that it became blocked and was no longer viable as a working harbour. The Folkestone harbour has experienced consistent problems with silting that has dramatically affected its function as a successful and viable cross channel port.

With the decline of a number of the ports due to natural processes such as silting, the assets relating to maritime activity such as lifeboat stations and other associated harbour buildings become vulnerable to neglect and dereliction if other appropriate uses cannot be found. They may also be demolished if the coastline is affected by natural processes to such a degree that the building is no longer needed. This was the case for a number of lighthouses on the Dungeness Peninsula that frequently found themselves far away from the sea due to the ongoing accumulation of sediment on the Dungeness foreland. Two of the seven lighthouses that have existed at Dungeness since the seventeenth century now survive, one being operational in safeguarding the coast and its immediate predecessor close by.

As maritime practices, technologies and organisations change, many key heritage assets are no longer required for their original use and are vulnerable to alteration as new uses are found for them. Some have been retained as heritage features in their own right such as the Old Lighthouse at Dungeness and the *Bembridge* pilot cutter that has been sympathetically restored recently in Poland. Many have also been converted into residential properties or other communal spaces such as the Customs House on Folkestone Harbour which is now being used as an *Urban Room* as part of the Folkestone Triennial and the original Dungeness Lifeboat Station which is now a private residence. Many of the historic buildings are not protected through Listed Building status and remain vulnerable to alterations that may not take full account of their historic features.

Development to historic port towns can potentially impact important historic assets associated with the maritime aspects of the ports and the use of the properties by the district's maritime communities. Proposals to develop the Hythe Fishermen's Beach put the Hythe Lifeboat Stations at risk of demolition which was strongly opposed by the local community. Whilst the stations were no longer active in safeguarding the coast, they were intensively used by the local fishing community and also represented the last remnants of maritime infrastructure relating to Hythe as a Cinque Port. These buildings have since been listed and are now being reused as part of the development.

The extensive development plan for the Folkestone Harbour and seafront area could also potentially pose a significant threat to various assets relating to the towns maritime heritage. Buildings are vulnerable to demolition or relocation which would detract from the local character and significance as a historic cross channel port. Some buildings have already been lost, such as the Folkestone Pilot Station and most of the Customs House where only a small portion survives. It will be important to incorporate the existing heritage assets relating to this theme into new development work in order to preserve this unique historic resource and the overall character of the harbour.

## **6. Opportunities**

The maritime history 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 easily accessible, and there may also be opportunities to link trails and interpretation between sites along the coast. There are also local projects to record oral histories and experiences relating to maritime activity in the harbour towns such as at Folkestone. It will be important to continue this work as some activity will be in living memory and many of the local communities still connect strongly to this maritime heritage.

There are also important opportunities to reuse assets in the redevelopment of areas such as the Folkestone Harbour and seafront. This is already been demonstrated for example in the case of the Folkestone Customs House which partially survives and has been restored to act as an *Urban Room* as part of the Folkestone Triennial 2017. The Lifeboat Stations at Hythe will also be reused and retained as part of development to the Hythe Fishermen's Beach. This is important in retaining and



enhancing existing maritime heritage assets that highlight powerful aspects of a places history. The sympathetic restoration of the *Bembridge* pilot cutter in Poland is a further example of reusing a maritime heritage asset to continue telling the story of maritime activity within the District.

Many of the key heritage assets are not protected through designation. The use of a local list would help to identify the heritage value of these sites and ensure that their significance is not lost through development and alteration.

## **7. Current Activities**

A number of events and activities relate to the assets identified within this theme paper. The sympathetic restoration of the 1938 Trinity House cruising pilot cutter vessel *Bembridge* has been undertaken since 2009 by Polish shipping logistics group Magemar based in Szczecin. The vessel now serves as a museum containing many original and contemporary items which provide a unique educational and historic resource. The *Bembridge* is now for sale and it is hoped that it will continue to serve as a valuable heritage asset that tells the story of British maritime activity.

At Dungeness, the Old Lighthouse (predecessor to the current lighthouse) is a Grade II Listed Building and is open to the public as a museum. It is a popular attraction that highlights the District's long history of safeguarding the coast as well as the longstanding presence of lighthouses on the Dungeness Peninsula. Panoramic views from the top of the lighthouse provide a unique experience for visitors and also highlight other structures along the coastline that have played an important role in safeguarding the coastal waters such as the lifeboat stations and string of Coastguard buildings. As well as being a museum, the Old Lighthouse is also available for hire as a venue for events such as weddings, fashion shoots, music performances and film shoots.

In Dymchurch, the *Day of Syn* is a bi-annual event that celebrates the local theme of smuggling and the association to the Dr Syn novels by Russel Thorndike. It started life as a day of celebration in 1964 to raise funds for repairs to the St Peter & St Paul parish church roof. The celebrations gradually grew into a bi-annual event that is now held across a weekend and attracts thousands of visitors to the local area. The weekend includes battle re-enactments between smugglers and Riding Officers, a "court trial", historical demonstrations, Morris dancing and other musical entertainment. It is an important event that highlights the significant part that historic smuggling plays in the local character of Dymchurch and the surrounding Marsh. The event is organised by volunteers and is free to attend.

The remaining section of the Folkestone Customs House has been regenerated and is currently being used as an *Urban Room* for the Folkestone Triennial 2017. Its reuse aims to encourage a new era of activity at the site which provides opportunities to engage with local history as well as debate the future of Folkestone through a programme of discussion, debate and workshops. An *Urban Room* library will be created to archive the conversations and activities that take place here in order to produce a growing catalogue of knowledge including contributions from local residents and artists. This work is part of a wider programme of regeneration to the Folkestone Harbour and seafront that is currently taking place.

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