

## Dungeness before 1960: the landscape and the people

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**Number 571**

**Dungeness before 1960: the landscape and the people**

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ISSN 0967-876X  
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## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their thanks to all the contributors to this survey for their time and interest in the study. The report is especially dedicated to the memory of Harry Cawkell, who would undoubtedly have been a major contributor but for his death in the year 2000.

## Summary

Stinking Hawk's-beard *Crepis foetida* declined at Dungeness during the 1900s, to apparent extinction in 1981. Attempts to re-establish the plant during the 1990s at some of its previous sites met with limited success, possibly because of changes at Dungeness relating to the changing human population and its activities since the second world war. This survey was set up to identify any such changes using 1960 as a cut-off point. At the same time, the area of survey was broadened beyond specific sites where the plant had been recorded to include other areas of human occupation and activity, eg the Denge Marsh Road. Some 26 individuals and couples with knowledge of the Dungeness scene before the 1960s kindly completed an interview based on a detailed questionnaire designed to address the above points. Their responses are summarised in part four of this report and detailed transcripts are in Appendix 1.

It is concluded that there have been substantial changes in the nature and level of human activity at Dungeness since the second world war. A general overall reduction in day-to-day presence of people on the shingle in the Village area is considered to have been a significant change. The more widespread cessation of grazing by goats and sheep would likewise have been of significance in the Ballast Hole and perhaps the Open and Fossil Pits. It is also concluded that vegetation cover has greatly increased in the Village area, the Ballast Hole and in the Open and Fossil Pits. In all areas, natural succession would have contributed to these vegetation changes, but changes in human activity are considered to have been especially significant in the Village area. It is believed that reduced shingle disturbance and greatly increased vegetation cover in the Village area, and probably elsewhere, may have excluded Stinking Hawk's-beard from its previous sites.





# 1. Introduction

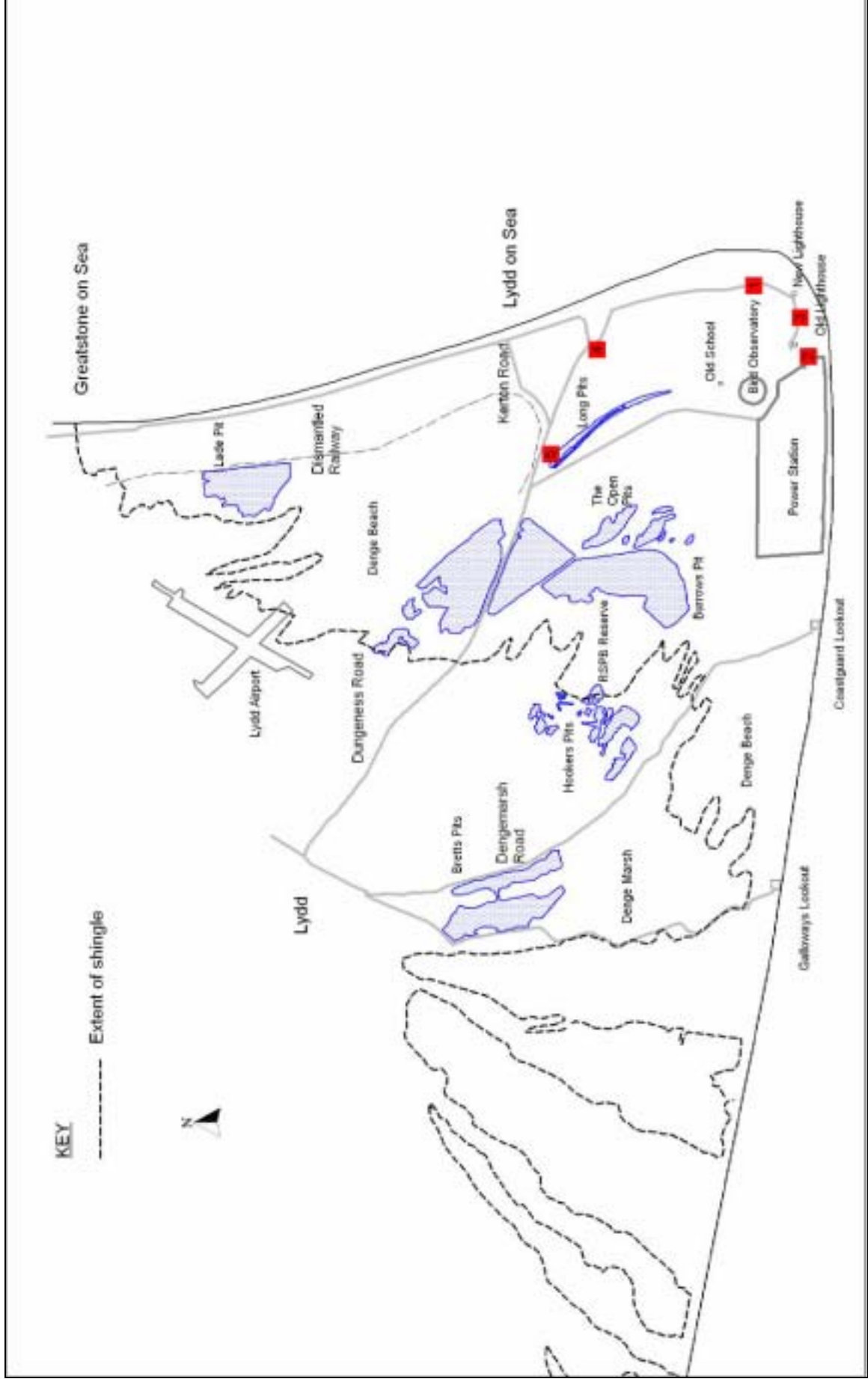
Stinking Hawk's-beard *Crepis foetida* probably became extinct at Dungeness in 1981. The unconfirmed record for that year is attributed to B. Hawkes as being somewhere north of the old Dungeness station. Other records for the 1900s at Dungeness are shown in Map1. The English Nature Species Recovery Programme started on the species in 1991 on Dungeness. Some defined goals have been reached but, it is becoming clear that we still have insufficient knowledge of the ecological requirements of this plant in the U.K in order to re-establish a long-term, viable population of the species in this location. Initially, a number of small colonies were established, both in the Dungeness Village area and at a second (back-up) site in the RSPB reserve. This was achieved by self-seeding from pot-grown plants translocated into experimental, prepared plots on the shingle. Over the last two years, these colonies have dwindled to just one remaining colony, in the Village area behind Pleasant Cottage. This colony, itself, has been showing a steady decline in numbers to now 16 individuals in the year 2000.

It has almost routinely been assumed, for two reasons, that the plant requires some substrate disturbance. Firstly, all records for Dungeness seem to have been in areas of quite heavily disturbed shingle, around Village gardens, alongside the miniature railway and in the Long Pits excavation area. Secondly, in its Mediterranean centre of occurrence it is always associated with disturbed stony terrain and in more close-by mainland Europe it favours limestone quarries. There is a possibility of a link between disturbance and lime, given the regular occurrence of concrete debris at some of the pre-1980 sites for Dungeness and also at the site of the remaining re-introduced colony.

In this present survey, the intention is to investigate whether disturbance levels on the Dungeness shingle may have been greater or different in the past, perhaps providing a more suitable environment for the Stinking Hawk's-beard at that time. There is no doubt that the human population at Dungeness has changed, both in terms of numbers and activities. Some useful general documentation already exists, but there is a clear need for more precise detail and timing, especially on factors likely to directly produce shingle disturbance.

To this end, the questionnaire below was designed and used as a guide to interview all residents and ex-residents of Dungeness, who we felt could contribute to the survey. The questionnaire comprises two broad elements; firstly the human population and various activities likely to disturb the shingle landscape, including direct disturbance like gravel excavation, construction of buildings and roads and wartime activities by the army and indirect disturbance by grazing of domestic stock; secondly the response of the vegetation to such disturbances. Local people are likely to have relatively clearer recollections of human activities.

A notional cut-off point of 1960 was set, the time of the construction of the first nuclear power station on the site. At the same time, the survey was broadened to cover all areas of the shingle where there was significant human presence, essentially from the coastal Lydd-on-Sea settlement to Dungeness and Galloways (now in the Lydd Ranges). Perhaps one significant omission has been the bulk of the Lydd Ranges and any involvement of the MOD in the study. However, there are no records for Stinking Hawk's-beard for the Ranges.



**Key to locations (red squares numbered 1-5)**

- 1 1978 and 1980 - five to 10 plus plants by the "Oasis" (Breda Burt).
- 2 1970 - recorded by power station boundary for about three years (Bob Scott).
- 3 1952 - recorded between old lighthouse and the Britannia until 1970 (Francis Rose).
- 4 1946 - at road junction just west of Pilot (R. David).
- 5 1947 - at north end of Long Pits (Francis Rose).

## 2. Questionnaire

### 2.1 Questionnaire for residents and ex-residents up to 1960 at Dungeness

1. Name

2. Address

3. Extent of experience of Dungeness shingle

4. Years

5. Nature of own movements about shingle, eg dog walking, bird watching etc.

#### **Pre-1060 knowledge (by decade if possible):**

6. Grazing by domestic stock- location, type of stock (sheep, goats, chicken etc.), intensity, seasonality

7. Rabbit activity – location, numbers, ferreting and other control measures

8. General state of vegetation (cover, height, shrubiness, open water etc) compared with now especially new plant colonies like valerian

9. Activities of fishermen on beach (net tanning etc.)

10. Tracks and footpaths – existence and extent of use

11. Dumping of and “foreign” material on the shingle (general rubbish, toilets etc.)

12. General public activities and “vehicles” on open shingle

13. Use by military (especially wartime and post wartime)

14. Gravel excavation – place and timing of such activities

15. British Rail – timing of developments (removal of tracks etc)

16. Knowledge of any particularly disturbing periods of development – other than power stations

**Any documented evidence of above:**

17. Diaries, photographs etc.

18. Permission to archive

19. Other interesting facts

### 3. Interviewees

**Adams Michael** - Pineways, Robin Hood Lane, Lydd

Local born bait digger and shoreman who has participated in almost every rural activity that has taken place in the local area. Has good recall of local tradition and passionately wishes to protect local traditional activities.

**Axell Bert** – Suffolk Punch Cottage, Baker Lane, Westleton, Suffolk IP17 3AZ

First warden of both the D.B.O. and the Dungeness RSPB reserve after the war, from 1952 until 1959 when went to Minsmere; much concerned with impact of predators on breeding bird populations on the open shingle and conceived the idea of a lake with safe breeding islands.

**Carter Lawrence** - Walters Farm, Poppinghole Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex

His grandfather, then his uncle were graziers on Lydd Military Ranges. He worked with his uncle from the mid twentieth century to 1989 and has good recall of the stocking and grazing regime on the ranges.

**Fair Bob & Pauline** - The Cabin, Dungeness

Bob was born, 1934, at the Coastguard Cottages at Dungeness. He has fished, shrimped and dug bait from the nineteen fifties to the present day.

**Firth Dr.** - 17 Tritton Gardens, Dymchurch

Author with special interest in birdwatching at Dungeness since the early nineteen thirties which led to an increasing interest in insects and the flora they live on

**Heritage Norris** - Poplar House, Poplar Lane, Lydd

Local born but not involved with fishing. Working for local builders took him all over the parish and involved him in works on local infrastructure. He was involved with Lydd Airport and the civil engineering there from it's inception

**Hubbard John** – 2 Clover Drive, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1SJ

First visited Dungeness in 1956, but main work in 1960's developing the use of aerial survey techniques in vegetation studies; employed help of City University students and carried out Burrows Pit survey in 1969.

**Laundon Jack** – 14 Victory Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 6DL

Lichenologist employed at the Natural History Museum; regular visitor to Dungeness from the early nineteen fifties to 1960 working on Denge Beach from near the lighthouse inland towards Lydd; recorded zonation ('succession') across ridges, noting both flowering plants as well as lichens.

**Makepeace Peter** – 18 Alfred Road, Greatstone

RSPB warden at Dungeness from 1979 until 1995; oversaw the construction of the New Excavations in Walker's Outland and the present Visitor Centre.

**Oiller Ken & Sylvia** - Beach Cottage, Dungeness

Oldest fisherman (retired) living at Dungeness on the beach. Born at Pleasance Cottage (two dwellings away). Has three brothers, all ex-fishermen, still living nearby.

**Paine Tony** - 53 Station Road, Lydd

Born at Porch House, which stood on the site of his present dwelling. His childhood activities included fishing and shrimping at Dungeness. From the late nineteen forties to 1960 he worked at Dengemarsh with free range poultry for Blacklocks. He was involved with fox shoots from the forties and along with his family picked blackberries and sloes for home use and mushrooms for market.

**Philp Eric** – 6 Vicarage Close, Aylesford, Kent

Naturalist, formerly employed as curator at the Maidstone Museum; author of the Atlas of the Kent Flora; first visited Dungeness in 1938, but seriously only from 1951.

**Prebble Len** - 35 Mill Road, Lydd

Born at Dengemarsh, 1927, where four fishing families scratched a living from the sea and the surrounding “grounds”. Still pokes about the beach down at Dungeness

**Prior Dennis** - Cedar Lodge, Manor Road, Lydd

Freeman of Lydd and retired farmer from Lydd farming family. Still involved with civic matters and local history

**Reeves Cyril** - Wickham, Mill Road, Lydd

Born at Forty-Acre Farm, Lydd 1914. Worked for G T Paine, Lydd farmer and landowner, rising to farm manager, until his retirement twenty years ago.

**Rose Francis** – 36 St Mary’s Road, Liss, Petersfield, Hants

Eminent plant ecologist; first visited Dungeness in 1936, but seriously only from 1945; author of the first detailed account of the vegetation of the area, produced as a report for the Nature Conservancy in 1953.

**Scott Bob** – 8 Woodlands, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1UE

Regular visitor to Dungeness from 1954; became warden at RSPB Dungeness in 1959 (moved to Boulderwall Farm in 1968) until 1974; probably the most significant long-term presence at Dungeness over the period concerned and covered everywhere from Denge Beach to the Midrips.

**Sims Norman** - 6 Queensway, Lydd

Grandson of Samuel Sims and son of William (Bill) Sims, lookers, he began his working life looking sheep for short periods in the spring. He then worked in the local gravel industry. As a marshman he still has an interest in local flora and fauna

**Tanner Robert** - 42 Mill Road, Lydd

Fisherman and shoreman. Throughout his life has been involved with bait digging, shrimping and all types of shoremans activities

**Tart Doris** - Ocean View, Dungeness

Oldest woman living at Dungeness on the beach. Lived in the same house all of her life. Widow of fisherman and lifeboatman helped in lifeboat launching and retrieval and other beach activities associated with fishing.



**Thomas Doreen** - Way o Wind, Dungeness

Came to Dungeness in the late nineteen forties to be a fisherman's wife. Became involved in the way of life, which made a striking impression after coming to it from "civilisation". Is still involved with fishing as sons carry on the profession.

**Vile Dennis** - 13 The Derings, Lydd

Went down to Dungeness and Dengemarsh as a child but was not involved with the fishing industry. His employment was in the gravel winning industry at Dungeness overseeing the excavation of Burrows Pit.

## **4. Summary of responses**

### **4.1 Grazing - sheep**

Sheep grazing at Dungeness was an annual event pre-war, becoming reduced in intensity during the war and ceasing finally in the mid 1960s because of the erection of the Power Station. Blacklocks had grazing rights to place up to 3500 tegs (one year old sheep) on Dungeness from mid-March to early-May, where they apparently fared very well. They were driven south from Greatstone Station, between the standard guage railway fence and the coastal road, past the Dungeness Bird Observatory, to the eastern edge of the Denge Marsh sewer, in the vicinity of Muddymore and the western margin of Walker's Outland, where they were left to fend for themselves.

The sheep were then allowed to find their way back to Greatstone, which they did typically within 24 hours. The favoured route was via the Ballast Hole (Long Pits area), where presumably the vegetation was more suitable and the area more sheltered. They occasionally invaded gardens in the Dungeness Village where they grazed garden produce. They were generally left untended, although bramble runners always plentiful in the Ballast Hole were cut by the lookers in the previous Winter to reduce chances of entanglement. According to Bob Scott, odd strays found their way to west Denge Beach amongst the nesting gulls and terns, and from here were driven back via the Open Pits. Sheep also favoured the area north of Lydd-on-sea Station up to Greatstone Station.

A much smaller number of sheep owned by Paine also strayed south onto the Dungeness area from time to time, tending to end up in the Ballast Hole, from where they were collected. These also strayed amongst the houses.

Finally, sheep owned by the Carter family (about 300 ewes and tegs) were Winter grazed on the Lydd Ranges, on Midrips, Jury's Gap and Forelands. In these same areas, the grass was cut for hay to provide Winter feed, seemingly in remarkable quantity.

### **4.2 Grazing – cattle**

Cattle were grazed only on the Lydd Ranges, as far east as the Denge Marsh road and these only occasionally strayed onto Dungeness. Those that did were rounded up on horseback. On the Ranges, Jack Carter kept about 100 cows and sucklers on Forelands, Wicks, Midrips and Jury's Gap and about 100 bullocks on each of South Brookes and west Denge Beach. Those on Forelands used to shelter in the hollies. Cattle disliked crossing shingle areas, so the herds did not mix. Grazing was throughout the year with supplemental feeding in Winter. Cattle were only moved off because of flooding (South Brookes) or occasional range use

(South Brookes and west Denge Marsh). Grazing was very tight and hay was taken from Midrips and Forelands (see Sheep grazing).

Blacklocks kept small numbers of cattle (about 20) along the Denge Marsh road, amongst their chickens.

### **4.3 Browsing – goats**

Several families living on Dungeness (the "Nessers") in what is now referred to as the Dungeness Village and 4 families (the Prebbles) living down the Denge Marsh road kept goats for milking. Numbers on Dungeness were estimated at 20-30 whilst down the Denge Marsh road there were about 8. Apparently the lighthouse keepers kept some billies for mating purposes. The animals browsed a wide range of vegetation, including apparently lichens. Most families ceased to keep goats during or by the end of the war, and three possible reasons have been offered.

Pre-war, goats were allowed to roam freely and to browse vegetation on the shingle during the day, and were penned at night. This led to the local name of "Nanny Goat Island". Many used the Ballast Hole and when the army mined this during the war, a number of goats were blown up. A similar fate befell goats down the Denge Marsh road. Tethered goats rather than free-roaming goats became the general rule.

In 1938 Southern Railway purchased land on Dungeness and this may have contributed to the cessation of free-roaming goats at Dungeness.

The most likely reason for the actual disappearance of goats was the completion of the road to the Ness in about 1938 that meant milk could easily be delivered there from outside the area.

Some goats were present into the post-war period. For a few years in the 1950s, a woman living in a corrugated shelter in the Ballast Hole kept a herd of about 20 animals, which roamed freely. In the 1960s another small herd was kept behind a property on the coastal (Lydd-on-sea) road, not far from the Lade Pit. The Oillers at Beach Cottage kept tethered animals in the mid-1980s. Also Ken Coleman kept a few penned goats into the 1980s.

### **4.4 Horses**

A small herd of about 10 animals were kept in a fenced area to the east side of West Ripe, on the ranges.

### **4.5 Chickens**

From 1949 to 1956, the Lyddite Chicks enterprise kept about 200 hens in chicken houses down the Denge Marsh road, which were free to roam locally on the beach during the daytime. They were shut up at night because of foxes. Fox shoots were a routine event in late Autumn then, from Galloways as far north as Belgar.

The Prebbles also kept about 50 free-range down the Denge Marsh road. Up to the 1950s, individual families at Dungeness kept chickens for their own needs, and some still do.

## **4.6 Rabbits**

There can be no doubt that, before the outbreak of myxomatosis in Britain in the early 1950s, rabbits were extremely common at Dungeness. Populations then, as now, comprised those, which lived in burrows in soft alluvial soil and others, which lived in surface tunnels in brambles and blackthorns.

Many residents speak of catching up to 150 per day (or night) mostly in particularly favoured areas, the Ballast Hole, behind Lade Pit and Lydd Airport, Denge Marsh and elsewhere on the Ranges (Jury's Gap, Midrips and Forelands). Methods varied but usually involved snaring or the use of dogs and the digging out of the animals; on the Ranges Lawrence Carter used ferrets and a shotgun. Most rabbiting was carried out in the Winter months. Some animals were for the home pot, but many were sold at Ashford Market. In the early 1900s rabbiting was a profitable business according to Dennis Prior.

Myxomatosis is estimated to have killed off over 90% of the rabbits at Dungeness, and numbers have never since recovered to levels to make rabbiting worthwhile. Although numbers can be high locally, the arrival of foxes at Dungeness post-war is probably a factor which helped suppress a fuller recovery.

The rabbits, pre-myxomatosis kept grassy vegetation very closely cropped and likewise broom. According to Bob Scott, increased rankness of grass led to an increase in breeding populations of meadow pipits but a reduction in lapwings.

## **4.7 Foxes**

Foxes are a post-war phenomenon at Dungeness, arriving in the 1940s. They have been controlled in the past by shooting (see - Chickens) and have probably been significant in controlling rabbit populations. They have also been of major concern with regard to birds which nest on the open shingle, and are the prime reason for the construction of the Burrow's Pit with its safe islands for breeding birds. Since the 1980s they have inhabited Dungeness village, to some extent encouraged by local residents who feed them.

## **4.8 Fishermen**

There seems to be a long history of fishing from Dungeness. Up to the 1960s, boats on Dungeness were spaced out and opposite dwellings between the Pilot and the Cabin/Spion Cop. Bait digging, shrimping and fishing with nets for herring, mackerel and sprats were all practised. Pre-war, catches were dragged across the shingle in wooden boxes on runners made from wooden barrel staves. For some time pre-war, miniature gauge rail tracks were installed on the beach from each boat to join a common track running between Spion Cop and the Pilot along the line of the present road. These were removed when the road was completed in 1938.

Other activities carried out on the open shingle included tanning of nets, a Springtime activity. Once the nets had been treated in boiling coppers of melted Kutch (an Acacia product, high in tannin) they were spread on the beach or hung on poles to dry. This activity stopped just post-war.

Also pre-war, four other boats were situated down the end of the Denge Marsh road, together with associated winch houses, a shed, lifeboat capstans and coastguard houses. Catches from these were conveyed directly to Lydd via the road. Lydd-based fishermen, operating beyond Galloways used the Galloways road. The sites was abandoned during the war, and only briefly re-used post-war.

The boats at Dungeness, now more in number, had moved to their present positions nearer the Ness by the 1960s. This move was, in part, a response to a pro-grading shoreline. Some people remember when the shore was much closer to the dwellings, and are therefore aware of pro-gradation.

## **4.9 Tracks and roads**

Until the concrete road from Lydd to the Dungeness lighthouse was completed in the 1938 (by G.H. Bates, Builders), access to what is now the Dungeness Village area was difficult. At various times before completion, the road extended only to Boulderwall Farm and then the Pilot. Before the road, there was a broad, well-used track on the shingle immediately behind the houses from the Coastguard Houses to the RNSSS Cottages and the School. This was regularly built up with ashes etc. It was used for delivering fruit and vegetables to the houses and for deliveries to the Britannia, the latter involving the special wide-wheeled carts. The miniature railway was also used as a line of easy access (including the use of a sail-driven trolley to carry goods!). Otherwise, people used backstays (short wooden "skis") to cross the shingle amongst the houses and "sledges" (boxes on wooden runners) to haul goods, including fish, over the shingle.

Another track, still in place, crossed the Ballast Hole from Lydd-on-Sea station to the School. This was well used but subject to flooding in winter.

The Denge Marsh and Galloways tracks were of good quality early on (prior to the Dungeness road), and made for easy access to and from Lydd for these areas. The only link across to the Ness was by a rough backstay track.

Relatively recent, other developments include the track into the RSPB reserve (built at the time of the Burrow's Pit excavation, about 1970), the building of a concrete road to the fishing boats (late 1970s) and a more direct access road for Power Station traffic.

## **4.10 War-time and post-war military use**

The Dungeness shingle was generally inaccessible during the war because of mines and other ordnance. Despite this, fishermen and their families remained at Dungeness; fishing for herring and mackerel was very productive and important. On Dungeness, land mines were placed in front of the houses down to the shore (mine-clear areas allowed access to boats). Behind the houses antitank mines were placed in the Ballast Hole.

Parts of the Dungeness shingle were used as target areas for shelling during the war, notably on and to the south of the Burrow's Pit site and on west Denge Beach. Shelling was from Orlestone Wood, Ham Street and Lydd. The remaining shingle areas are still pockmarked today. Their thinly vegetated state may relate to the wartime shelling, and odd patches of gorse south of the Burrow's Pit and the Open Pits may also be explained by these activities.

In wartime, tracked vehicles were everywhere on the shingle, including tanks which operated along the firmer terrain on the ridge tops. Occasionally aircraft ditched on the shingle; in one instance an American flying fortress was buried *in situ*, where it crashed by the Open Pits! The PLUTO pipeline and associated pumping houses were constructed at Dungeness.

Despite all this wartime activity, several people remark that damage to the landscape was in a sense light (so as not to attract the enemy), and that the post-war clear up was much more destructive. This involved mine clearance, the general demolition of wartime installations (gun emplacements etc) and the burial of much debris (much of it on the site of the old Dungeness Station). Land mines were dug from the beach and antitank mines were blown up *in situ*, the latter causing some damage to house roofs as well as producing large craters in the shingle. Some dogs and goats were killed by mines. Other general ordnance remained on or in the shingle after the war; for example at least 30 shells (25 pounders), many 6-inch mortar shells and one 6-inch naval shell were removed from the Burrow's Pit.

The Ballast Hole was used for post-war military exercises, which involved the use of dummy bullets and led to vegetation fires. This activity was stopped following local protest. A mortar range was installed just off the west side of the Denge Marsh road after the war. Post-war there have been at least two deaths and one pre-war injury to humans from unexploded ordnance, all on the Ranges.

#### **4.11 Dumping of rubbish and disposal of waste**

Human waste was routinely buried behind the houses on Dungeness, and further up the east coast concerns that human waste from cess pits might contaminate the aquifer have been expressed. General domestic rubbish was either buried or burnt. This latter practice still persists at the present day, despite collections of domestic waste commencing in the 1950s.

Some people remember domestic rubbish (from London?) being buried in the Ballast Hole, at the time of its excavation. Lines of earth-covered heaps remain to this day (see Changes in vegetation - Ballast Hole).

There appears to have been something of a history of fly tipping down the Denge Marsh road since the site was abandoned as a place to live after the war.

On the Ranges and elsewhere at Dungeness much wartime debris (concrete etc) has been buried. A great deal of ordnance debris remains to the present day, much on the surface.

#### **4.12 Lydd Airport**

This is post-war construction, built during the period 1953-54. Shingle was removed from south of the runway to contribute to its construction, leaving two water-filled pits. These were quickly colonized by leeches. Apparently, Shell Oil Company conducted a survey of the flora and fauna of the area in the 1960s. Norris Heritage reports that a caterpillar tractor was lost in "quicksand" between the runway and boundary fence, and is still there. Rabbits were a great nuisance, by damaging rubber insulation to underground cables, which resulted in electrical shorting and "melting" of pebbles to "glass".

#### 4.13 Changes in the vegetation - Dungeness

There are clear recollections amongst residents of the extent to which the east coast has prograded in their lifetimes, despite the advent of the beach feeding scheme set up after the Power Stations were built. The shingle from within two or three ridges of the coastal side of the road to the present coastline has accreted since about the 1930s. Robert Tanner remarks having to move his boat winch three times between 1972 and 1990 to accommodate this change.

Natural vegetation succession would be expected to have kept pace with this landscape development, ie the present day zonation pattern would have been shifted inland. However, it seems there was actually less Sea Kale *Crambe maritima* then, but there was some behind the houses (one family used to "force" it, like celery). Also, there was much less development of tall grass (fairly certainly False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*). Recollections of some residents and photographic evidence indicate that the shingle around the houses and towards the shore was remarkably clean of vegetation. This could have been due, in part, to "clean beaching" by the residents themselves (a spring-time activity, involving fairly major removal and replacement of shingle surface immediately around the houses, seemingly purely for aesthetic reasons). However, wartime disturbances, goats around the houses and a high density of rabbits could also have been responsible. It is estimated that both Sea Kale and False Oat Grass have increased, although the timing is somewhat uncertain, perhaps from the 1960s.

Other vegetation types were apparently present pre-1960, in quantities not notably different from the present day. Broom *Cytisus scoparius* seems to have spread (succeeded) closer to and amongst the houses, from being only inland of the miniature railway in immediate post-war times. Families collected it by a process called wringing (which involved twisting out of individual stems by hand) for firewood. Other species characteristic of older shingle ridges, recollected by residents, include Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and Nottingham Catchfly *Silene nutans*. Interestingly a number of "weed" species were recalled as being common, Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*, Yellow-horned Poppy *Glaucium flavum* and Red Poppy Papaver rhoeas. These could well reflect particular levels of disturbance then.

#### 4.14 Changes in the vegetation - Ballast Hole (Long Pits area)

This is the local name for what is also called the Long Pits (Crane Ponds) area or the Dungeness Bird Observatory (D.B.O.) trapping area. It was excavated over a period of a few decades from the late 1800s to the early 1900s with some light hand digging continuing into the 1920s (probably to 1927). The Long Pits were dug late in this period.

The scene post-war and into the 1950s, recollected by many people, was one of much more open vegetation (but see reference below to rubbish) with scattered sallow cover, less than 1.5m high. Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius* and/or *Anthoxanthum odoratum*?) cover was also less well developed. The area was very much wetter with extensive, deep flooding in the winter. Wetland species, like reedmace *Typha* spp., yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus* and ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, were present around the Long Pits and in craters left where antitank mines had been exploded. In season, local people picked blackberries and sloes (as they did elsewhere at Dungeness). Ducks and geese nested in the area and grass snakes were

plentiful. At this time, about 1951, rail tracks including sleepers were removed from the Ballast Hole.

In general, there has been a great increase in vegetation cover with time, and especially a massive increase in sallow height with concomitant increase in shelter.

Rubbish from three distinct sources was dumped in the Ballast Hole; general domestic debris buried under earth mounds of London Clay brought in when the excavation was progressing in the early 1900s (these mounds were rapidly colonized by weedy vegetation); concrete debris dumped just post-war, especially in the Long Pits themselves; finally more general wartime debris buried in the antitank mine craters.

#### **4.15 Changes in the vegetation - Open Pits and Fossil Pits**

The history of the Open Pits has been particularly well documented (Rose 1953; Ferry 1988). Changes in these pits have been largely associated with natural primary succession, with loss of open water and marsh and increases in reed-swamp and sallow cover. Pre-1960, two people remember collecting gulls eggs from an island in one of the Open Pits. One remembers cotton grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* in one of the Open Pits, and that this pit (the southern Open Pit we think) was burnt out during the war. It has certainly been burnt in part at least once since.

Especially interesting is a pre-1960 recollection of tall sallows filling the Swamp Pit, whilst being sparse and fairly low in the other pits. The Swamp Pit is very shallow compared with other natural pits at Dungeness and it has been surmised that succession would have been comparatively rapid there.

#### **4.16 Changes in the vegetation - Denge Marsh road and Lydd Ranges**

These areas were included in the questionnaire but limited useful information on pre-1960 vegetation was forthcoming. The poorly vegetated state of west Denge Beach has been referred to earlier (see War and post-war military use). Some feel there has been a decline in cover of species, such as broom and gorse, due either to the army or salt spray. Pre-1960, grassy areas (probably on alluvial areas rather than shingle) were very close-cropped by rabbits and sheep. Today these areas comprise rank, tussocky grass. Mushrooms were collected in quantity from Denge Marsh, South Brookes and Midrips. Gull and tern eggs were collected from the beach.

Sea Kale *Crambe maritima* was present along the eroding south coast ridge, just as it is now. There was a general awareness of the eroding nature of this south coast. Also, of the "Flounder Ponds" (Abnor and Wickmaryholm Pits), which were fished in then, but have now almost disappeared with south coast erosion.

Damage to the holly wood on Holmstone Beach has been previously documented (Susyn Andrews in "Sanctuary" No. 17, 1988). Some of this damage was due to the National River Authority removing shingle to replenish the eroding south coast shingle ridge. The army and the people of Lydd used to collect large amounts for Christmas decoration.

## 5. Discussion

It is very clear from the survey that Dungeness, especially around the area of the present-day Village, was a very different place pre-1960 and especially pre-war, compared with the present day. Pre-war, the few families living on Dungeness moved about freely amongst the houses on a daily basis over the shingle, with aid of backstays. They also hauled a variety of materials about on "sledges". Clean beaching (see above "Changes in the vegetation - Dungeness") immediately around the houses was a regular operation. Domestic waste was either buried or burnt behind the houses. The wide track behind the houses was well used, both by people and horse-drawn carts. Photographic evidence confirms that the shingle then was remarkably bare with no obvious vegetation.

During the war, free movement on the shingle ceased because of the mines, and after the war the road became the routine means of access between houses and elsewhere. Clean beaching had also ceased. Disturbance through burial and burning of waste may have declined also, but to what extent is uncertain. Free-range grazing by goats in the Ballast Hole had ceased by wartime, except for a brief period in the Ballast Hole in the 1950s. Rabbit numbers had collapsed dramatically because of the outbreak of myxomatosis in 1953. Sheep grazing on Dungeness had also finished in the late 1960s.

In total, these various changes seem to have led to a substantial growth of vegetation on what had previously been almost bare shingle around the houses in the Village area. In particular, many people speak of growth of the "grass", which was almost certainly *Arrhenatherum elatius*, which now forms a well developed community with a good range of associated species. Broom has also advanced to the rear of the houses. On the site of the old shingle track behind the houses, there is now a considerable cover of often dense grassy, mesotrophic vegetation, mixed with patches of broom and bramble.

Some people have offered one other possible reason for increased development of vegetation at Dungeness, and that is increased shelter from prevailing southwesterly winds provided by the power station and its fence lines. Clearly, this would be a man-made change to local climate. Several people remark that, in their lifetimes, there has been a natural change in climate too, with very hard winters with snow then, giving way to the milder winters of today.

Given the apparent requirement of *Crepis foetida* for open habitats and perhaps a level of substrate disturbance, it seems very likely that the Village area in which this species has mostly been recorded up to 1981 may well have become unsuited to the plant. Thick continuous vegetation cover, of the type described above, would almost certainly lead to loss of the species through competition. The Species Recovery Programme started in 1991 provides evidence for this, with the rapid decline and loss of self-seeding colonies from Village gardens where vegetation has become thick and rank. The same seems to have happened more generally throughout the RSPB site. The single, surviving colony in the Village area is on more open, low growing vegetation by comparison.



## Appendix 1. Transcripts of interviews

1     **Michael Adams**

2     Pine Ways, Robin Hood Lane, Lydd.

3     Whole area.

4     Late 40's to present.

5     40' & 50's childhood experience; 60's, 70's & 80' bait digging and shore fishing, including drag netting, for a living; 90's to present, poking around doing a bit here and there.

6     Throughout the year you would see sheep down at Dungeness but they were only straying. I know Blacklocks used to graze sheep down on the beach at certain times of the year but don't remember seeing them.

Carter used to have the grazing rights on the ranges. There were cattle behind the winch houses at Galloways. I used to go down and pick up cowpats for my father for his allotments. There were ponies on the ground behind Herons Park.

7     As kids, in the 50's, we went rabbiting over the other side of the airport at the back of the water tower. (We would go swimming in the pools that had been left from the bulldozers moving beach and pushing it up to make the runways. The pools were shallow and safe and the water got quite warm. Soon after the holes had been made the water was full of leeches.) We took dogs and dug the rabbits out. The reason you can't use ferrets is the warrens are so big that the burries (burrows) all interlink and you would need a little army of ferrets to deal with them We would catch 10 to 20 rabbits, paunch them and leave them in the fur. We had regular customers and also Mr Middleton, who had a grocery business and was a bit of wheeler-dealer would have the lot if he saw us coming back. That was the main place we rabbitied at the weekends but every day we went to check our wires, which we set all over the place. Another thing we did was to spy on locals and find where they set their wires then have an exciting time at dusk nipping along and pinching their catch. The place was alive with rabbits even up in the town here. Over the back of Poplar Lane where the new estate is being built there was a huge warren. We kids had gangs and the kids down that end were called "Gas House Rabbits". Jackie Foster, known as Rabbit Foster, used to set traps out there, the clamp type like a gin trap, us kids didn't like that so we would go of out there and spring them all with a stick. My father rabbitied down at Dengemarsh Quarry with wires and the dog. One time my father was rabbiting out on G T Paine's land at North Lade and Cyril and Albert Reeves caught him and confiscated the rabbits. He was taken to court and fined £2 for "the pursuit of conies". It was a lot of money then, the 30's, and he had to ask for time to pay. There are far fewer rabbits now, but there are enough that if time permitted I would still go rabbiting. My grandfather had a shop in Park Street and I remember there were rabbits, in the fur, and bloaters hanging up – loads of them – Lydders lived off the products of the sea and surrounding countryside.

8 Things have changed so much it's frightening. At the back of the airport, along the old railway line and out towards the runways there are actual trees. There was gorse and broom there but when I went out recently I couldn't believe it, it was so different, I really didn't recognise the area. At Galloways the broom and gorse was quite thick right up to the back of the Green Wall and there was some on the seaside too but most of it has died back and it looks barren there. Also the gorse and broom has gone from Dengemarsh. There is still some on the sides of the Dengemarsh sewer but nothing like it used to be. On the other side of the road there was beautiful broom. We would go down there and put a blanket down, sunbathe and have a picnic. Now that blooming army has devastated the place. I noticed that the hurricane in 87 affected the vegetation down at Galloways and Denge, it scorched it off and it has not recovered properly since. The salt spray definitely singed the broom the gorse and even the brambles were affected. Both Galloways and Denge look barren and infertile the gorse and broom that is left looks dirty and grey not fresh and green. Both places used to look quite green in the spring and had smashing flowers in the summer. There was a lot of thrift at both places on the ridges between the Green Wall and the sea but the beach has been eroded and that's almost gone now. My father used to go to the flounder ponds at Galloways/South Brooks and catch flounders with a forked stick. There were foxgloves on the beach at Denge and loads of the little white flowers (campion). But there is more sea kale – a lot more. It's spread right up to where the sand dunes are coming south along the beach near New Beach Holiday place. In the 50's, 60's and 70's we used to get down to Galloways and Denge to fish even though the army were using the mortar range as the range warden would phone up and get the firing stopped while we made our way to the beach. He would do the same when he saw us coming back. It was still reasonable down there then but since we have been kept out and the army have used it more intensively they have ruined it. How on earth it can be called a special area for nature when they ruin the beach like that I will never know. At Dungeness there is a lot more willow, big willow at that, round the crane ponds because of the lower water table. In one way there is less of some kinds of vegetation, the interesting type, it's been destroyed by digging all those lakes and because of that there is all this willow stuff. So there is more open water now with the lakes at RSPB, ARC and Kerton Road. I think there has been too much beach excavated and I wish it would all stop. On the Dungeness foreshore there is a lot more sea kale, more valerian too. We did go over to the Oppen Pits, I remember there were willow trees there, we used to try and poke the magpie nests out, but the thing I remember most was a thick mat of sedge grass, don't know what it was called. We used to walk though and on it so it couldn't have been sharp. There is much less elder and blackthorn all over the area too. Perhaps the spray being blown in from the sea is polluted and causing some of these problems.

9 I have been a bait digger all my life on all the beaches from Greatstone westwards to Camber. There must have been tons of lug dug from these beaches over the years as Nessers and Lydders have had a living from it. We would go draw netting too especially down at Galloways. That's why I know the area well. Shrimping is another thing shoremen get a living from. My grand father used to leave a shrimp net on the beach in the east bay and another in the west bay. They were quite safe, nobody touched them, but you can't do that now. My grandfather shrimped in the east bay and carried his shrimps back in a basket on his back up the footpath that comes near the water tower. My father used to meet him there with the bodge, as it was off the beach, and help him back with the catch. He told me his father was exhausted by the

time he had pushed the net for a few hours then walked over the beach with a big catch. Then he would cook and sieve the shrimps – and go out to sell them! The family would eat the small ones that had been sieved out.

- 10 The roads were in place when I went to and fro but I have used footpaths from Lydd to the beaches. I don't think the army should be allowed to close paths.
- 11 Unfortunately over the years there has been a lot of fly tipping at Dengemarsh especially. Builders waste of all kinds has been tipped down in the Dengemarsh sewer where it's piped down the end there. The road is so bad now it has reduced it but we get burnt out cars down there now.
- 12 In the 50's, when I was a kid, I remember Jack Proctor had a large four-wheel drive German lorry that he would go down over the foreshore with. There used to be a steam digger at Galloways that was used to repair the groynes. My father worked along with other Lydders setting faggots in the beach at Galloways to stop the sea eroding the shingle away. In the 50's and 60' you could still see the remnants of the faggots in the beach after a storm. Also there were iron spikes and barbed wire from the war sticking out.
- 13 N/A.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 Gravel extraction.
- 17 Has a set of photographs of the beach around the power station and new lighthouse taken from 1987 onwards. [Good quality, colour] A few in an old album show the beach around houses at Dungeness. [Good but the area has been "clean beached"!!]
- 18 Yes.
19. I've got lots of moans about the army. I think they are making a right mess of OUR beach. Really the beach they are on belongs to Lydd and they are NOT looking after it. They may have a conservation committee and make out they are looking after the environment but you only have to go down to Galloways and Dengemarsh to see they are destroying it. Why are they allowed to have all those awful barbed wire fences that catch up all the plastic rubbish blown in from the sea? If they were not there the stuff would just be blown back out to sea again. And why are they allowed to put up all those concrete buildings – they look awful – every year they build more. Would the army be allowed to build stuff like that on Salisbury Plain – I bet they wouldn't. Why is the vegetation getting less and less out there – they must be running stuff back and forth over it – or the vegetation would increase as at Dungeness. There is a board up at Galloways telling us what a special place it is and how it must be looked after – well that's a joke.

The wind is worse and comes from a different direction now. It used to blow N to NE in the summer and we had good hot dry days but now it blows S, SW and W and you

don't seem to get a proper summer. In winter it was colder we had hard frosts but now it stays warmer. There are no proper seasons now.

Interviewed 23rd November at Pine Ways, Robin Hood Lane, Lydd.

1     **Bert Axell**

2     Suffolk Punch Cottage, Baker Lane, Westleton, Suffolk IP17 3 AZ.

3     Denge Marsh road (actually lived there in a hut in 1952) and RSPB reserve mainly.

4     1920s to 1959.

5     D.B.O. and RSPB warden from 1952.

6     Remembers sheep down Denge Marsh road to shore, seasonally in early summer when birds were breeding. About 1000 belonging to Blacklocks.

7     Rabbits very significant grazers up to 1953, then approximately 90% kill due to myxomatosis.

8     Some recollections of particular species, rather than general vegetation. Crambe thin along east coast road, but no obvious "grass" (*Arrhenatherum elatius?*). Broom (mainly) and some gorse present. *Armeria* down the end of the Denge Marsh road, but shingle to either side rather bare. *Silene nutans* around the D.B.O. Wood sage common and used by nesting corn buntings. Remembers valerian *Centranthus ruber* pre-1960.

In 1920s Open Pits mostly open water and reeds, but there was some willow present.

9     No recollection.

10    Lydd to Denge Marsh track well used by carts.

11    No recollection.

12    None.

13    Mortar range put in place just off Denge Marsh road post-war.

14    Early recollection of Long Pits excavation being finished (workmen by hand) and very bare of vegetation; small gauge rail tracks all gone by then.

15    Main Railway track closed.

16    Damage by army during and post-war considerable but personally got on well with the military. Considers stopping of egg collecting to be a very significant event.

Interviewed 4th January 2001 at Westleton, Suffolk

1     **Lawrence Carter**

2     Walters Farm, Poppinghole Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

3     Dengemarsh to Jurys Gap (whole of military area).

4     1950's to 1989.

5     Early 50's childhood memories and later grazing sheep, cattle and horses.

6     Sheep We had sheep out on the ranges in the winter grazing on the areas that we cut for hay in the summer. They were in the areas JG, M and F. [Using the Conservation Management Plan (Plan 1). Capitals referring to specific areas.] There were about 300, a mixture of ewes and tegs. They came off for lambing as it would have been impossible for us to keep going over there to looker them and we needed that grass for hay. Of course in the winter we took hay on to supplement their feed. Water was not a problem, there was always plenty and there was not a problem with saline intrusion. When areas became flooded the sheep just found their way around it.

Cattle They were in three main blocks and stayed on all year at about the same intensity. In the west, areas F, W, M and JG, we kept about 100 cows and sucklers. They did not cross the main beach bank, (cattle do not like walking over beach) into the east, where we kept about 100 bullocks in area SB and another 100 in area D. So all year round we had around 300 cattle on the ranges. The feed was supplemented with hay and mineral blocks in winter and they found water around their own areas. Sometimes, in dry summers, we had to dig holes in the ditches or dig out springs for them. Occasionally we did have to move some off in the winter if there was severe flooding usually just the SB area. When the army was using the mortar ranges, D and when there was firing on SB we had to move the cattle off. We used a land rover to get feed onto the ranges except in really bad weather when we used tractor and trailer. We made hay in area M, mowing the small "islands" of grass and the strange little paddocks in area F. We had approximately 7,000 bales a year. Some years we combined the grass areas after mowing, for seed, followed of course, by baling the hay. There was white clover, red clover and two kinds of vetches, I don't know what they were called but one was yellow and the other, perhaps, blue. We had to get rid of anthills and did this by dragging rails (from the army's railway) behind a tractor to knock them down and spread them. We cleared ditches occasionally in areas F, W, M and SB. There was no spraying, no thistle cutting or ragwort pulling. There was no coarse grass out there at all we kept it grazed really tight and if it begun to get away we would increase the stocking.

Horses We kept up to ten horses and ponies in the triangle piece of ground that was fenced off and had a footpath running across it, on the east side of WR. They were fed hay too.

7     We shot rabbits with cartridges provided by the Ministry of Agriculture. There were thousands and thousands out there. It was not unusual to shoot 100 per night. Local butchers had them and friends were kept supplied. Ferreting went on in the JG, M, F

and D areas. We never saw mink and foxes were no problem nor were badgers, they were around but in acceptable numbers. The army had the garrison shoot and carried out their own vermin control but I know nothing of it.

- 8 There was no rough grass at all as the stock kept everything grazed off except the grass on the seaside of the green wall; perhaps it was salty. There was ragwort but they never touched it. There were millions of foxgloves; seakale along the shore areas (we used to eat it) and samphire in SB and M. Thrift was everywhere in JG and M. The stock used to lie up in the gorse bushes in the shelter. We had many feasts of mushrooms from SB area – they were everywhere – hundreds.
- 9 Down at Jurys Gap the Southerdens used to fish and collect cockles by the bucketful. They were frozen and wiped out in the winter of 63.
- 10 N/A.
- 11 N/A.
- 12 Usually the army did not drive on the beach excepting using the bulldozer with a sledge behind it with a hut on for the range wardens. The shingle had an undisturbed look.
- 13 N/A.
- 14 see 19.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 Building the sub-station and putting in pylons.
- 17 No.
- 18 N/A.
- 19 Sometimes flooding was serious with water right up to the camp buildings. I can't remember the dates, as there was always water there to some degree or other. One hard winter the water froze and we drove over it with a land rover.

NRA took beach from around the hollies in areas F, H and CR to replenish the beach. Our cattle used to lie up in the big old hollies. I don't think the bushes changed much over the forty years we were out there.

Firing used to catch the peat alight and it would burn for weeks.

Our cattle had blood tests every year for some university or other, (Oxford or Cambridge, I think), as they had a tick on them that was usually only found in South Africa.

We have seen all sorts of strange birds there too, flamingos, bee-eaters and hoopoes.

I loved it out there and if anybody could arrange it for me to go on again I would be pleased to do so. Perhaps it would jog my memory and I could provide more information. We were sad to finish and hand over to Eric Link but it became impossible with the army doing more and more firing and making it awkward for us to continue.

Interviewed 14th December 2000 at Walters Farm, Poppinghole Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex.

1 **Pauline Fair (PF) & Bob Fair (BF)**

2 The Cabin, Dungeness.

3 PF whole of Dungeness. BF whole of Dungeness.

4 PF 1950 to present. BF since birth (1934) to present. BF born in Coastguard Cottages, Dungeness.

5 PF Walking over the beach to and fro to friends' houses. Over to the Crane Ponds [Long Pits] with the dog most days. Outside supervising and playing with her children. Down to the boat to help launching etc almost every day until the early 70's.

BF Childhood activities up until 49 when left school. Fishing, lug digging and shrimping in the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and early 90's. Still lug digging and shrimping now.

6 Goats: PF A woman lived in the Ballast Hole for 4 to 5 years and kept goats. They wandered all over the Ballast Hole and occasionally strayed over to the houses. There were about 20. It was in the 50's. There were only a few goats kept by the Nessers at this time and they were kept tethered, not allowed over with her goats. She lived under a shelter made of corrugated iron that had been left from the war.

BF From when I was a boy I can remember almost everyone kept 3 or 4 goats for milk. They were penned at night and allowed to roam about in the day. In the war they got blown up by mines and things. After the war everything changed.

Cattle: No knowledge of any at all.

Sheep: PF There were a few stray sheep at any time of year but can't really remember there being many.

BF: I can remember once a year Paines brought sheep down to graze. Sometimes there would be about 100 grazing in the Ballast Hole. Some of them strayed over to the houses from there.

Chickens: PF Quite a few families kept hens for their own needs. They were not penned up just scratched around.

BF Up to the 50's people kept chicken. I suppose there about half a dozen different lots. They just kept around each house and had scraps thrown out to them.

- 7 PF In the 50's there were loads of rabbits especially in the Ballast Hole. The myxomatosis knocked them back and they did not really recover the same numbers and now there are very few.

BF. In the 40's and 50's we went rabbiting all the time. Apart from fish it was our main meat source. There was no ferreting, don't think anybody had ferrets, just snares and mainly shooting.

- 8 PF I used to go over to the Ballast Hole every day with the dog or the children. Through the winter until spring it was flooded and seemed very open with no bushes to speak of. There was broom from the little railway line towards the Ballast Hole but no broom near the houses. When I got married and moved here the shingle was bare with just a little island of greenery here and there. There was no grass. I remember the little White Champion *Silene maritima*, that's gone now, Birds Foot Trefoil's gone too and there are not so many Foxgloves. We used to go picking sloes and blackberries in the Ballast Hole – where are the sloes now? In the bomb holes there were Bulrushes and Yellow Iris growing. Round the Crane Ponds were Bulrushes and Iris too but not much growth of bushes.

BF. Since I was a boy the bushes have all grown up. You can't see over them now. We used to walk to school through the Ballast Hole but in the winter it would be flooded so we had good fun finding a way through. There was a good clear view across the beach not like now. There was grass at the Battery and some in the gardens but none on the beach.

- 9 BF The main difference is that now we use the road to get to the beach. Nobody walks over it like we used to. We would be to and fro to the boats all day. The children and women would be over. Then we would go lug digging and shrimping and just cut across the beach to the house when we finished. It all changed when the boats got moved up this end and the fishermen used trucks and vans to take the fish away. Before then they pulled stuff up on sledges or on the rail lines. We pulled fish boxes to the station on sledges before road transport was used. I still go shrimping and lug digging but I go by car now. Up to and just after the war we tanned nets on the beach. Spread the nets on the beach to dry and hung them up on poles too. When we were herring fishing and spratting the nets were washed and hung over criss-crossed poles to dry or they would rot. We were always dragging nets about.

- 10 PF. I was to and fro to the other houses all day in the 50's and 60's. After that people went out shopping and to work so there was not the same visiting, - the community seems to have gone now. The main track was behind the houses from the Coastguard Cottages to the school and RNSSS Cottages. It was built up with any thing solid, ashes and stuff.

BF. We just went where we liked. Sometimes you could see a backstay track but the only main tracks were to the school, Coastguard Cottages and RNSSS.



- 11 BF We just dug a hole and buried the stuff from the privy. Old Tommy Croft did it until he died. [About 2 years ago] There was a garbage hole out the back of our house where we buried tins and things, they just rotted away. The only other rubbish I know of was the stuff that came back down on the beach train. I don't where it came from but there was all sorts of stuff, bottles, china, clinker and ash.
- 12 BF The only activities on the beach were walking and pulling stuff about. There was a beach cart for the pub and the horses and carts came down the track at the back.
- PF Before the war women did not have prams. They pulled the babies and young children on sledges with barrel staves as runners. We always had sledges to get stuff to and from the houses.
- 13 BF Everything was a mess in the war. There were mines all around. Of course, I forgot, the army buried rubbish in the beach, just pushed it in the bomb holes and covered it in. I seem to remember there was an accident some of the anti-tank mines blew up and the roofs came off the houses. The army had to come and sort it all out. Sometimes we would wake up in the morning and they would have put up buildings in the night, never knew what we would find. Even roadways would be put in after dark. They laid the PLUTO pipes at nighttime. Dogs and goats were blown up with mines. Everybody had dogs that roamed all over. Up by the station buildings were knocked down and buried along with pumps and other debris.
- 14 The Ballast Hole was finished by ? but I do have some early memories of digging there.
- 15 BF When I was 17 (1951) I was employed in the winter removing the railway tracks. There was one main line and two in the Ballast Hole. The good sleepers were taken and the rotten ones Jimmy Tart had for his fire. He went down and took one a day. We worked up to the line gates.
- 16 BF The most disturbing thing was war and the activities after, like the demolition of buildings, it went on up to about 1951. When the new lighthouse was opened there was a sort out to "tidy up" because the Duke of Gloucester was coming to open it. They removed the school the old Britannia and other structures that had been left. That made a bit of a mess again.
- 17 PF A few (8) [I do not think they will be useful. They have children in the foreground so the depth of field is not good enough to really show the vegetation].
- 18 PF Yes.
- 19 BF Generally in the spring we would have to go "clean beaching". Most people did this. Only the untidy rough families didn't. Father and we boys would have to dig off two to three inches of beach around the house and drag it 30 – 40ft away. We would tip out the old stuff and bring in clean beach to replace it. It took us a few days until mother was satisfied the entire old dirty beach had been taken. The boards of the path would be replaced and woe betides anyone who stepped off the path and messed up the clean beach. Mother would come out and level it off with the back of a broom if it was trodden on and dented.

I think the rabbits and us moving about stopped the grass growing. Really the sheep can't have made much difference down here but they did eat off all the new shoots on the brambles and things in the Beach Hole.

PF The winters used to be harder. Our children used to great fun in the Ballast Hole skating on the ice there. The water was shallow and froze right through so they were safe. The wind is less too. Don't have to be so careful about the washing on the line now.

Interviewed 25th October, 2000 at The Cabin, Dungeness.

1     **Dr Firth**

2     17 Tritton Gardens, Dymchurch.

3     Whole Dungeness area.

4     1933 to present day.

5     Pre-war just bird watching, post-war bird watching and then an interest in plants and insects.

6     Goats I can't remember them before the war and only saw the odd one or two post-war.

Cattle None.

Sheep I think I remember seeing the odd sheep up near Boulderwall and in the Dengemarsh area. I have not witnessed any great number and those I have seen I presumed were straying.

Chicken I knew of chicken in the fields on the edge of the shingle at Dengemarsh.

7     Judging by my walks over the beach I would think the rabbit population is similar now to pre-war.

8     There is much more ground cover now. There used to be great mats of prostrate blackthorn so dense that you had to walk around the areas – it was impossible to get through it. I think there is less now because of the lower water table. I used to go to the Oppen Pits before the war, the open water was extensive and there was very little willow. Some of the pits seem to have dried and disappeared altogether. Some sedge species have died out too. There seems to be a similar amount of bramble; less gorse and much more broom. The broom has moved over on to the shore side of the houses at the Ness. I have noticed that it is sensitive to salt spray and has been singed after gales. Nottingham Catchfly was scarce before the war but there are great drifts of it now. Bugloss and foxgloves seem stable with the usual cycles that crop up. Sea kale appeared in the New Lighthouse area post-war. I seem to remember sailing past the Ness close to the new lighthouse site and the whole area was just bare beach – no sea kale. Weld seems to be post-war.

- 9 N/A.
- 10 N/A.
- 11 N/A.
- 12 N/A.
- 13 Dungeness was shut off during the war but I knew there were tracked vehicles all over the place. It was torn to pieces and after very little vegetation was undamaged.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 Wartime and gravel excavation.
- 17 I have plant maps post 60's (B Ferry has these). My plant photos are mainly close ups but I may have some showing vegetation. Owen Leyshon has a set of my slides of the Dungeness area taken about 20 years ago.
- 18 Yes, if I have anything that would help.
- 19 The whole place has grown up with bushes it is nothing like it used to be. There is an area between Dengemarsh and the power station that looks similar to the old Dungeness. The Oppen Pits looked like the Cladium Pit now.

We have many more hours of sunshine each year now but I don't think the winters are very different – we just remember the severe ones – perhaps we are due for another?

What has happened to the terns? I remember a colony between where Burrows is now and the B station.

Interviewed 15th November at Visitor Centre RSPB, Dungeness.

- 1 **Norris Heritage**
- 2 Poplar House, Poplar Lane, Lydd.
- 3 Dungeness and Dengemarsh.
- 4 Late 1920's to present.
- 5 Childhood fishing trips; early working life and development of airport from 1954.
- 6 Goats the Nessers had goats all over the place down there that's why they called it "Nanny Goat Island". I suppose they were mainly in the Ballast Hole and over by the lighthouse. There would have been 20 to 30.

- 7 There were a lot of rabbits all over the place, even up here in Lydd but I was never involved with catching them.
- 8 The Ballast Hole used to be clear of shrubbery, perhaps the sheep and goats kept it down, anyway there is so much cover now, it's like a different place. In the late 40's we used to take the children to the beach at Greatstone. On the way we watched the kingfishers at Cockles Bridge. The beach was much clearer then but I can remember some seakale behind the houses, not at the front as it is now. One of the Nessers told me how he covered and forced it, for his family to eat. At this time there were foxgloves everywhere each year, not so many now. From 55-60 we used to go to the crane ponds and walk over to the lighthouse with the boys. The place was alive with dragonflies and there were yellow iris; purple loosestrife; bulrushes [great reed mace]; yellow horned poppies; both kinds of stoncrop; bugloss; great big teasels-not the little short stunted ones; fennel; blackberries (we used to pick them) and prostrate blackthorn (we picked sloes too). As children we picked sloes over the back of the water tower, near where the airport is now. We went in opposite Boulderwall Farm; the whole area was open and windy, now it's sheltered by the willow trees that have grown up. There were loads of sloes, on the low bushes [prostrate blackthorn]. We would pick ten to fifteen pounds, I suppose, for mother to make wine and sloe gin. My uncle used to work for Blacklocks as a looker and I used to help him dig holes in the bottom of ditches in August, when water was short, for the sheep. Although I can't remember the sheep grazing the beach I knew it went on and I can remember Lydd roads being peppered with sheep treddles up towards Lydd railway station when they were being gathered to go by train. Down at Dengemarsh the beach was much clearer, it had the appearance of being neat and tidy, everything short and grazed off – by sheep and rabbits I suppose. At Denge there was a lot of gorse and broom my wife and her friends used to collect broom and bulrushes [great reedmace] for flower arranging, they collected a lot for decorating the churches around the marsh.
- 9 N/A.
- 10 Around 1938 G H Bates Builders constructed the road at Dungeness. Before it was built, if I had to go down there, I would walk down the light railway line to the lighthouse – I think most people did that. One job I did while working for Bates was re-caulking the lifeboat it was propelled by oars of course.
- 11 N/A.
- 12 At Dungeness Bates' used a horse pulling a "sledge" of corrugated iron with the front bent up to get materials over the beach to jobs. We all wore backstays. Also we used a trolley on the light railway line with a sail to help us get along.
- 13 I used to go down during the war to work on the defences. I can remember an aircraft landing on the beach near the Britannia. It was about 1940/41, the RAF had to come and collect it. There was a gun emplacement for machine guns opposite the new Britannia. Visually I would say there was not a lot of disturbance, as it had to appear the same from the air for security. For instance we were not allowed to mix concrete on roadways as the white patch could show up. Post war I worked for Ellis the builder and I have to say it certainly looked a mess around the Pilot area. I think the damage was done post war clearing everything up.

- 15 The line was extended to Lydd on Sea Halt and Greatstone to get the holidaymakers to Maddison's Camp. Special trains came down, great long ones, with the punters.
- 16 Wartime and gravel extraction.
- 17 Has aerial photographs of progress building the airport in 1954, with some beach visible in the background.
- 18 Yes.
- 19 In 1953 I heard rumours of an airport so I got in touch with the employment people in London and put my name down if anything came of it. Costains came to Lydd late 53 and began construction of the runways just off the shingle. The airport opened in 1954. On the Dungeness side of the runways two pits were excavated, where the shingle was best, for making the "flexible runway". Twenty-one inches of ground was taken off and replaced with twenty-one inches of shingle. The top seven inches was mixed with cement and consolidated with no joints making what was called a "flexible runway"; - it was the cause of many a headache. During construction and earth moving a caterpillar tractor sunk in quicksand, the driver jumping off just in time. It is still there, between the runway and boundary fence – Brim Adams knows where it is. Not long after the beach was excavated, probably within two years lots of leeches could be found in the ponds. Shell Oil refinery carried out a survey on the flora and fauna in the SSSI area south of 042 runway, in the 60's. I think it was carried out as we needed to use brushwood killer and grass inhibitor near the runways so that airport safety was not jeopardised. Rabbits were a damn nuisance; they gnawed the rubber casings off the underground cable, which carried 11,000 volts. The rabbits were not electrocuted but the heat, caused by shorting out, melted the beach to a glass-like substance. We had problems with swans; geese and foxes on the runways but rabbits were the worst. We used tapes for bird scaring. In 1954 when the airport began the beach edge was clear but by the 70's we had a battle to keep back the gorse and bramble. Apart from Shell coming to look at the area I think Wye College came too.

Interviewed 5th December 2000 at Poplar House, Lydd.

- 1 **John Hubbard**
- 2 2 Clover Drive, Cullompton, Devon EX15 1SJ.
- 3 Denge Beach, especially Burrow's Pit area.
- 4 From 1956, but most intensive in the late 1960s; finished there by 1970.
- 5 Concerned with developing methods for aerial survey of vegetation.
- 6 Remembers cattle to north (probably not on shingle), but no recollection of sheep. Goats were kept in the coastguard houses.

- 7 Recalls return of rabbits by 1969, to significant numbers - grazed the broom very tight. Mentioned experimental transect west of Denge Marsh road (relevant paper in Journal of Ecology (1957) by A.S. Thomas on rabbit grazing).
- 8 *Crambe* new along shore near new lighthouse and *Arrhenatherum* vegetation well developed (to 1m); *Silene nutans* plentiful. Plants of disturbed shingle common - *Echium vulgare*, *Papaver rhoeas*, *Glaucium flavum* and locally *Centranthus ruber*.  
  
Carried out Burrow's Pit survey (completed 1969) using aerial and ground surveys. Used autogyro developed and flown by Ken Wallis (of James Bond movies!). Students from City University helped with ground survey (stayed in Sargent's Mess, Lydd Camp and used army boat on Open Pits).
- 9 Little recollection, but remembers big deep freeze near lifeboat house.
- 10 Did not use these during work, but probably much as now.
- 11 Recalls use of cess pits in coastal houses and concerns about seepage of waste landward into aquifer. Ordnance on/in shingle always a worry.
- 12 Cars used to get trapped in shingle by old lighthouse and miniature railway station at Dungeness.
- 13 None from 1956 onwards on Dungeness.
- 14 No activity in Long Pits area but wooden sleepers still in place.
- 15 British Rail track.
- 16 Military probably the major disturbance but all done by his time.
- 17&18 Has donated .... colour slides and granted permission to use in archive. Also mentioned a Dr Kit Kison, a geomorphologist with Nature Conservancy who had experience of Dungeness (address The Wheel House, Burford Road, Lechlade GL7 3ER).

Interviewed on 2nd January 2001 in Cullompton, Devon.

- 1 **Jack Laundon**
- 2 14 Victory Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 6DL.
- 3 Denge Beach only.
- 4 From early 1950s to 1960.
- 5 A lichenologist, but with an eye for the general vegetation and the landscape.
- 6 Has no recollection of sheep or other domestic stock on the shingle.

- 7 Remembers rabbits being around.
- 8 Recalls a generally undisturbed landscape of shingle ridges with an abundance of lichens.
- 9 Recalls presence of fishermen but no detail.
- 10 Recalls shingle being very quiet with no other people about. Roads and tracks then much as now.
- 11 No recollection of any rubbish dumping.
- 12 No recollection of vehicles on shingle.
- 13 Pill box(es) on road towards Pilot (before railway crossing).
- 14 No activity then in the Long Pits area.
- 15 Southern Railway still operating service to Lydd-on-sea, which he used regularly, until 1960.
- 16 Recalls that railway company set out old carriages around lighthouse in 1928. These were sold for houses and the Dungeness settlement was thus established.
- 17 Has produced a xerox copy of a diary entry for 3rd August 1954 with details of a transect from roughly where east margin of power station is now, inland to Lydd.

Interviewed on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2000 at Morden, Surrey.

- 1 **Peter Makepeace**
- 2 18 Alfred Road, Greatstone.
- 3 Denge Beach, mainly RSPB reserve.
- 4 Pre-1960, but RSPB warden from 1979.
- 5 As RSPB warden covered whole of reserve area.
- 6 No direct observations of sheep or cattle on the shingle. Ken Colman kept a few goats into the 1980s.
- 7 Numbers around Boulderwall generally high in his time as warden.
- 8 Big reduction in bramble since 1979 (loss of fox hunting cover); was aware of declining water levels and harder winters which may have been contributory to decline.

9. Mentioned reduction in level of charter angling in his time, from 6 boats to one. Commercial fishing maintained.
- 10 Track across shingle by Open Pits very little used in his time (2-3 people at most per year).
- 11 Mentioned problem of fly tipping down Denge Marsh road.
- 12 An increasing major concern in his time was motor cycles and later 4/3 wheel bikes down the Denge Marsh road, being driven across the shingle. Later stopped.
- 13 Shells (25 pounders) targeted on area south of Burrow's Pit (now colonized by gorse); also about 30 such shells and one 6 inch naval shell emerged from Burrow's Pit digging and were blown-up by army.
- 14 Last gravel for A.R.C. in 1980.
- 15 Nothing in his time.
- 16 Nothing particular in his time.
- 17 Has slides of RSPB activities, all aspects post-1979.
- 18 Yes, if required.

Interviewed on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2000 at Greatstone.

1 **Ken Oiller (KO) & Sylvia Oiller (SO)**

2 Beach Cottage Dungeness – since 1961.

3 Whole of Dungeness.

4 All of life – 68 years - born and brought up in another dwelling at Dungeness.

5 Childhood experience; fishing; dog walking; day to day living at Dungeness.

6 Personal experience of goats & sheep at Dungeness. Oral tradition – cattle (pers. com. of Jimmy Tart now of Dymchurch).

Goats were owned by Nessers and wandered freely during the day but were penned at night. There may have been the odd exception to this. KO remembers goats wandering freely from 1936; can't say when this ceased. The lighthouse keepers may have kept goats too. Pre-war the Prebbles kept goats at Dengemarsh. The billies wandered over the beach to Dungeness when the nannies were in season. KO's mother kept 3 goats. He can't remember great herds but thinks each family had a few and that they grouped up when wandering in the day. The last goats were tethered and did not wander. KO & SO kept goats at Beach Cottage (tethered) in the mid-80's.



Cattle according to Jimmy Tart wandered over the beach. They had gradually moved from Lydd way. Every so often they were rounded up by men on horseback. This would have been before 1936.

Sheep wandered over the beach until the late 60's. They were not numerous and belonged to either or both Blacklocks and G T Paine (who owned the beach). KO feels they moved down from the Lydd/Dengemarsh area and were collected up every so often much as suggested with the cattle. Consequently the sheep were not a permanent feature just seen periodically but no pattern to it.

Chickens were kept but usually in runs. There were only a few. Sometimes a few ducks were kept but KO thinks these were a passing fad – pets.

- 7 There have always been rabbits. In the 40's KO and brothers went rabbiting with slingshots. When they were older they had guns. Ferreting was practised. SO said that about 15 years ago there were still enough rabbits to make it worthwhile a gang coming from London with lurchers, ferrets etc after rabbits. [Perhaps this was just a fun day out] Myxomatosis knocked them back but they picked up again and flourished until the power station came when they gradually declined. Recently, when walking the dog, have noticed only one or two rabbits. KO thinks this decline is due to foxes.
- 8 KO moved to Beach Cottage in 1961 and says at that time there was no broom on the seaside of the D road. The beach was more or less clear with no grass around the house. He can remember the clear beach with no grass through the 40's, and 50's From the 60's grass began to take over the beach. At the back of the house plant life has changed. As a child he remembers lots of reeds around open water, so many, that the boys used to gather them to make wigwams. [When questioned it appears the reeds were *Phragmites*] Post war the anti tank mines were blown up leaving huge holes that filled with water, which was too deep for thigh boots in the winter. Sometimes water would be in them in the summer too if it was a wet season. Tadpoles were in the water. Not much willow in the Ballast Hole but from around the mid 60's Aspen had grown up enough to be cut for clothes props. The willow started to come on and the open water disappeared. From childhood he can remember Scotch Thistle and Teasels. Post war he can remember collecting, with his brothers, broom for bonfires but had to go inland of the railway line (BR) to find it. They would twist it out of the ground not cut it. The open water in the craters was too deep in winter for thigh boots. Pre war, in a wet season the children had to make a diversion to school as the "diggings" were waterlogged.
- 9 The fishermen's activities have changed on the beach as up to the 60's there were no boats to the south of The Cabin. The concentration of boats has changed entirely. Boats were generally opposite the dwellings of the fishermen so more spaced out. When the lifeboat house was moved [date?] the fishermen moved to the present position with the exception of Len Prebble and the Genders (Oillers). The northernmost boat was opposite the Pilot. Every day separate trackways to each boat would be used also rail tracks were laid and jointly used. KO can remember his father tanning nets. After they had come from the beach copper they were piled into tin baths and taken to the house wrung out and hung from poles to dry. He can't remember his father laying nets out on the beach.

- 10 KO remembers about 4 railtracks to the boats and of course a trackway for each boat. Blackmans helped the Genders build their track prewar. Dungeness road stopped opposite Beach Cottage but by the time he went to Lydd school (40's) he was picked up by Austin's taxi, which went right down to the point. As a child he used the track from the Pilot to RNSSS cottages, everybody used it – it was always passable. There was a separate track to the school. Nessers used to walk over to Dengemarsh but KO can't remember a delineated track as such. Nessers used to cross the beach by the shortest route to neighbours and the pubs. There was a lot of general passage from house to house. There was a lot of walking over the back of the beach to shoot mallard, geese etc.
- 11 Combustible material was burnt. Effluent was disposed of by digging a large hole in the beach and burying. Chemicals were used when they became the norm but before that just a bucket job. Next to no fish debris was at the house it was all dealt with at the boat. Refuse was brought down from Ashford railway works via the beach tubs and dumped in the beach hole. It included ash/accumulators/oil/bottles and crockery.
- 12 A beach cart was used to transport beer to the Britannia [wide wheeled horse drawn cart]. KO helped his father take fish to the railway station by dragging the boxes on a sledge with runners made of barrel staves. Children and adults moved stuff about by this method.
- 13 Most of the beach area was mined. At the back of the houses there were anti-tank mines, which were blown up after the war in-groups of 5 at a time. This left huge craters. In front of the houses were smaller mines that were dug up post war. Wartime activity disturbed almost all the beach. The foreshore had anti-invasion defences and PLUTO caused upheaval too.
- 14 This probably ceased about 1927. There was a lot of vegetation in the areas where the rubbish had been dumped.
- 15 The locals removed sleepers for firewood.
- 16 Without doubt wartime was the most disturbing period.
- 17 May have some photos of the children playing in the 60's, 70's and 80's showing the clear beach. Will search them out.
- 18 Yes.
- 19 Foxes are really new to the beach. Have come since the power station. People feed and encourage them. Foxes pick over the rubbish at the boats. KO feels that the force of the southwesterly wind has been altered since the power station and all its fences have been built. That this is a factor in altering the plant growth at D. He feels that seeds drop onto the beach on the east of the power station as the wind flow is lessened by the building and that is why there is more grass now.

Interviewed 13th October at Beach Cottage.

1     **Tony Paine**

2     53 Station Road, Lydd (site of house he was born in, called Porch House).

3     Dungeness and Dengemarsh.

4     Dungeness in the 30's. Dengemarsh circa 50 years.

5     Dungeness went shrimping and fished off beach so walked over the foreshore. Worked with poultry at Dengemarsh from 1948 to 1960. From late 40's to mid 50's picked mushrooms. Went sloe and blackberry picking. Walked over the beach fox shooting from the 40's.

6     Goats. I knew several houses at Dungeness had them.

Cattle. There were Sussex cattle in with the chicken at Dengemarsh and they did occasionally stray down towards Dungeness but they were not put to graze on the Dungeness beach.

Sheep I knew they took sheep down to graze the beach as I worked for Blacklocks and they were their sheep but I can't say when that was. Odd strays did get down there all year round but not many.

Chicken I worked for Blacklocks poultry enterprise. We had farms in Cambridge, Salop and down from East to West Sussex and others, it was a massive concern. We supplied the hatching eggs for the Lyddite Chicks side of the business. We had chicken all over Dengemarsh some in arks some in houses. The pullets in arks were not let out just moved over the grass every day; they were north of Harts Farm. The ones in houses roamed over onto the beach but only the houses closest, they were the ones in "Edmonds" and "Old Barns" [Hamilton Farm area. Now all dug out]. Each house had about one hundred hens. They were trap-nested and we collected the eggs writing the ring no on each egg before releasing the hen. This was from 1949-1956. So altogether there would be about 200 hens that were able to get onto the beach at Dengemarsh. Chicken like to stay close to their houses so it would only have been a proportion of them each day I really can't say how many. They all had to be shut up each night because of foxes that's why Blacklocks had foxing days. Rabbits had to be controlled too as they ate the chicken food. We went rabbiting in winter in Blacklocks work time too.

7     The rabbits were a pest so in the firm's time we went catching them. We took dogs and spades. They were only in very shallow and the sandy soil meant they were easy to dig out. Never used ferrets. In wintertime we would get 30-40 in an afternoon. They were killed, paunched, left in the fur and taken up by lorry on a Monday to sell in Ashford market on Tuesday. That was just two or three of us so when all the men and lads had brought their rabbits back you can imagine how many there were. Folk catching them for the pot at home would use snares. My family would have rabbit at least once a week, everybody did.

- 8 I can't remember much about Dungeness never really thought about the vegetation there. I can remember some water being in the Ballast Hole, short bushes, bare shingle, no grass that was before the war when I went down fishing and shrimping. When the war came we were not allowed down there and then life changed. I don't know when I went down there last. We went onto the beach at Dengemarsh a lot. Collected wood to burn from the shore – don't get it now – just plastic. When we went fishing we collected up some wood and had a fire on the beach. In the spring Bert Frost's father used to collect sea gulls eggs down at Dengemarsh. I can't remember much about the plants but I know the beach has been eroded away. We went mushrooming down where the grass meets the beach at Dengemarsh that was late 40's to mid 50's. We sent them by train to Covent Garden. The men went eeling in the Dengemarsh sewer. They splashed the water with poles and drove the eels into the nets they had set. That all finished by the early 50's.
- 9 N/A.
- 10 N/A.
- 11 N/A.
- 12 N/A
- 13 There was a lot of ordnance down between Dengemarsh and Galloways.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 Just the war and all the gravel extraction.
- 17 None.
- 18 N/A.
- 19 The weather has altered. We used to have proper seasons with cold frosty weather in winter. We don't get that now; sometimes you can sit outside in December and walk out without a jacket.

From when I went to work for Blacklocks [1948] we went fox hunting on Friday afternoons, late autumn for about six weeks. Each Friday we took a different section say from Galloways to Dengemarsh, Dengemarsh to the Ballast Hole, Ballast Hole to the back of where the airport is and up to Belgar. First we collected the beer from The Rising Sun and went down to where we were to begin. There would be about 30 of us driving the foxes across the beach. There would be about 20 guns laid up to shoot them so the whole thing would involve about 50 people. One Friday we had seventeen foxes – that was the biggest bag – usually we had about six. Foxing went on for about fifteen to twenty years.

Interviewed 28th October, 200 at 53 Station Road, Lydd.

1     **Eric Philp**

2     6 Vicarage Close, Aylesford, Kent.

3     Generally over Denge Beach, but also on the Lydd Ranges.

4     First visited as child in 1938, but only seriously from 1951.

5     As a naturalist.

6     No personal observations of domestic stock of any kind on the shingle.

7     Rabbits in great numbers until myxomatosis.

8     Pre-1960, very wet in Ballast Hole area in winter; shallows sparse and less than 1m high. On beach, *Arrhenatherum* less then, and perhaps *Crambe* also. Gorse present.

9     No particular observations.

10    Remembers old school, but generally tracks over shingle not in use.

11    No recollection.

12    No vehicles on shingle.

13    By 1950s no military on the shingle, only on the Ranges. Recalls 2 people being blown up and killed on the Ranges in the 1950s, digging for bits of metal.

14    Nothing then in the Ballast Hole.

15    Main rail track still present in 1940s. Recalls people collecting “blue” pebbles from that area, but uncertain what these were or purpose of collecting.

16    Mentioned existence of Mannering collection of birds in Maidstone Museum, derived from lighthouse kills at Dungeness.

Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2000 at Aylesford.

1     **Len Prebble**

2     35 Mill Road, Lydd.

3.    Whole area but mainly Dengemarsh and Dungeness.

4.    Childhood (born 1927) to present day.

5     Born and lived at Dengemarsh until 1942. Childhood experience then fishing from the beach at both Dengemarsh and Dungeness.

6 Goats. There were four families living at Dengemarsh and they all had about two goats each. We used to milk the goats from spring to the end of the summer then we mated them and had new kids each year. We only had one Billy and that was just before the war but he was dangerous and we had to tie him up so we soon got rid of him. The lighthouse keepers had two Billies and kept them chained up. Everybody took goats there to be mated. Some people at Dungeness had their goats lactate two years but we mated them each year. As we had a road up to Lydd we didn't have the problem getting milk that the Nessers had. In all there were around eight goats each year. Finally they were all blown up by land mines except two. In the day they wandered over the beach and never went onto the fields at the back of us at Dengemarsh although they could have. It shows they preferred to eat what they had on the beach. They loved the moss, [lichen] broom, gorse, brambles and all the other vegetation as it came along. Our houses had solid fencing round made from driftwood, it was a bit like a corral and the goats came inside there at night. I think they kept the vegetation in good condition – it's like pruning the more you cut it the more it grows and good healthy young growth. The gorse and broom bushes were always short and in prime condition but their favourite food was definitely the moss - they went mad for it and fought each other to get at it. We had no problem with our goats but the goats at Dungeness would come over to the boats and try to eat the fish, when we were fishing in the winter. We had to walk over to Dungeness to fish for herrings and sprats in the winter and my family had a hut on the beach, it's still there, with three bunks so the men could sleep over when the herring were around. At Dungeness they had twenty to thirty goats and they wandered all over but were in the Ballast Hole most of the time. In 1938 the goats at Dungeness had to go as Southern Railway purchased the ground and would not have them there. After the war G T Paine bought the ground, I think he only paid £7,000 for it. Goats have always been at Dengemarsh in my family's memory.

Sheep. The farmers used to send their lambs up to the hills for the winter and when they returned in the spring they were set on the beach to graze it. They did really well on the herbage there. I suppose they were down there about six to eight weeks and they went all over from Dengemarsh to the other side of Dungeness. Blacklocks had sheep on the beach and before them Finns did. I suppose it finished after the war but I can't remember exactly when. There were lots of them; it must have been in the high hundreds. Blacklocks men used to trash the beach and cut back all the bramble runners, not the bushes themselves, just those long runners they send out, so the sheep didn't get caught up. They did this from Dengemarsh to Dungeness.

Cattle. Carter had cattle grazing on the ranges and there were a few ponies too.

Chicken. Down at Dengemarsh we had about fifty chickens running wild on the beach. We sold the eggs to Hutching's and White's the grocers in Lydd. We sold fattened cockerels to Cliff Cole the butcher.

7 At Dengemarsh I can't begin to tell you how many rabbits there were. There were loads and loads – must have been thousands. We only caught them for the pot and we lived on them all the time. You can do so many different things with rabbit meat but we have not eaten any since the mxy. When we came home from school in the winter we would have a huge pot of bunny broth and mother made pasties and pies with

them too. Before the war I used to go with Blacklocks and Mike Sharp shooting rabbits – I suppose I first shot for them at the age of about eleven. In the autumn the farm hands would go every day digging them with dogs or ferrets on lines to drive the rabbits to one place in the warren. They would get well in excess of a hundred every day. There were rabbit shoots too with twenty or so guns driving through the gorse. There were no foxes on the marsh before the war; I saw my first fox in 1942. Soon there was so many that the fox shoots started. Once we had a stag run down on the beach and out to sea. It eventually came ashore and spent a long time on the ranges. The rabbits kept the herbage short and soon after the mxy Dengemarsh began to look scruffy and neglected.

Hares. At Dengemarsh and Dungeness there were loads of them and coursing would take place about two or three times a year. The coursing finished with the war.

Foxes. Once foxes came, in the early 40's, the population exploded, they had plenty of rabbits to eat! Lyddite Chicks [Blacklocks] had fox shoots. They would drive through an area with gorse and get three or four foxes each area. It was dangerous as the drivers had guns too and were not too particular how they used them. I remember wading through reeds up to the waist at the back of A and B range over to the Brooks with Jummer Blacklocks and the cunning old foxes nipped back through behind us, we noticed six get through so no telling how many were in there.

- 8 I was born at Dengemarsh and spent my childhood there, it was wonderful, just idyllic. We were free to wander over the beach and make our own fun using what was there. To get to and fro Lydd to Dengemarsh we had to open and close seven gates. I remember collecting glowworms from the wood sage and putting them in a jar so we could see to read by them. The broom and gorse was beautiful on both sides of the sewer [Dengemarsh sewer]. On the open beach there were areas of broom, not the tall stuff that grew over near Spindle Cottage, where the power station is now, but the stuff that grows close to the beach. There was more on the east side of the Dengemarsh road than the west. Terns nested in the thrift and we collected gulls eggs by the dozen in the war and Mother preserved them in isinglass. We went over to the Oppen Pits to collect Black Headed Gull's eggs. There was a well at Dengemarsh for ships to put in there for water. They would roll barrels up the beach and fill them. We had a pump for our water and sometimes it would become salty, then we went over to the springs. The spring water was beautiful and when we went over there we collected watercress. We used to walk to Muddymoor Pit and then over two ridges. We scrapped the shingle down and could see the water running in always from the sea side landwards, it never ran the other way. [He is talking about the Springfield area] Father used to catch eels up the Dengemarsh sewer and Grandfather had a garden in the Garden Hole and we used to go out there. We would walk down towards Muddymoor and then turn towards Galloways. It was an area in the beach that was lower and had good soil in it. It was very sheltered, didn't dry out and grandfather grew good produce there. I expect the army has bulldozed it in now. There was always loads of foxgloves, dolly bells (campion), shoes and stockings [birds foot trefoil – I think], the stuff like red string (dodder), milkmaids along the sewer, bugloss, stonecrop white and yellow, yellow iris and French may in the garden (valerian). We used to pick sloes from the bushes, the low ones on the beach and always picked pounds and pounds of blackberries. Butterflies were everywhere they went up in clouds as you walked along, lots of blues, it's so different now – dead

looking and rubbish dumped and all that awful barbed wire. What a mess the army has made, they have ruined the ranges.

Down at Dungeness it's completely different too. When you drive along the estate road it's difficult to say where the beach is. Since the war grass and other vegetation has moved in. Each spring there is the little red plant near the boats – about ten inches high – don't know what it's called. There is a lot of broom now, before there was very little and in the ballast hole are all those trees. They have come in from the railway bringing seed down, apple, and figs all sorts. There used to be lots of snakes in there. In the winter we walked from Dengemarsh to Dungeness to go herring fishing so went close to the Oppen Pits. I haven't been out there lately but it used to be open water with some willow trees round and some sedges and reeds. In the pit nearest to the Dungeness road was cotton grass the only place you could find it I think. That pit was burnt out during the war and I haven't seen the cotton grass since. Sometimes on Sunday afternoons we would go out there just for the walk and to look at the ducks – there were loads there, especially on rough days – mallards mostly but a few teal and widgeon. There is much more seakale now. The only place you used to find it was down Jurys Gap way but it has increased since the war. Up at Greatstone there is seakale now and the French may is everywhere, it used to be quite barren. Lorry loads of holly were cut by the army and by Lydd people for Christmas. A lot of holly bushes have gone and the army have dug beach round the trees leaving them up on a platform – I think they will dry out and die.

- 9 Before cotton trawl nets were tanned they were treated with linseed oil. The nets were pushed down in a tub with the oil in, then hoisted up over a couple of tripods with a bar across, over the tub. We would insert another bar through the net and go around to twist/wring the net out of as much oil as possible. Then the nets were spread on the beach to dry followed by them being tanned in the kutch copper. They had to be spread out a second time to dry them. The rails at Dungeness came from Blackman the fish merchant from Hythe and we got some replacements from the army at Lydd camp. Before the estate road when the rails were put in there were rails across to the boats running at right angles to the shore. Up the inland end of each rail was a turntable thing, which turned your truck onto another line, which ran from approximately where the new Pilot is now to Spion Kop so you could bring your fish up to the road at the Pilot easily. That went when the estate road was put in, of course – about 1935, I think. My great grandmother was the landlady at the old Britannia and the capstan for the boat was just outside the back door – that's how close the sea was – think it could have been the 1890's or earlier. [? location- his grandfather was baptised in 1865 so it probably was earlier].

Down at Dengemarsh we used to go seine netting that was my favourite form of fishing. We had a road right down to the beach so didn't have a problem getting fish away like they did at Dungeness. When the mackerel shoals were around we could have literally tons of fish so we used the "Bobs-up" system of getting the fish back to Lydd. We would haul baskets up the flagpole so up in Lydd they could see how many carts we needed – two baskets – two carts or one upside down basket meaning send all the carts you could muster. The mackerel were taken back to Lydd, washed and packed in boxes on Gilletts bit of the Rype, in front of Vulcan Cottages. There was so much fish it was sent to Billingsgate on special trains. Dengemarsh had four boats, four winch houses and a big shed made of driftwood to keep the boats in, in summer –



sun ruins a boat. There was a lifeboat capstan at Dengemarsh and coastguard houses. The houses were sold off to professional people wanting to get away from it all. Before engines came along (just after the First World War) the boats used sail or had to be rowed. My Grandfather used to row round to Folkestone or Hastings to sell his fish and sometimes fish his way back. We had to leave Dengemarsh during the war but brought the boats back again in 1946. We lived up in Lydd then and by 1958 had to abandon it as stuff was continually being stolen. You could not carry on without living there and as the beach was being eroded and we had got used to having electricity and water up in Lydd that was the finish.

- 10 There was a track from the Pilot to the school at Dungeness otherwise everybody went from A to B with backstays. There was a backstay track that you could see clearly from Dengemarsh to Dungeness made by the fishermen.
- 11 After the war concrete was buried on the beach, in hollows and tank traps were pushed in the crane ponds. We had bonfires at Dengemarsh, buried rubbish in the beach and had muckheaps (rottable rubbish and privy waste), which we used, on the garden. The first year we would grow cabbages – they were wonderful – better than I can grow on my allotment.
- 12 We pulled stuff up the beach with sledges.
- 13 A lot of the area was ruined during the war. As kids we played in the brick revetments, over where the switch house is now, and all that masonry was buried in the beach.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 Wartime and gravel excavation.
- 17 Yes a few of Dengemarsh and the old coastguard houses.
- 18 Yes.
- 19 Weather is always altering and you only remember the extraordinary things so I can remember hard winters in 1938 and 1947 but down here the ice in 1963 was terrible. The gravel industry tried to get back to work by blowing the ice up with explosives but it was unsuccessful.

It's sad that there are no fishermen at Dungeness now, just foreigners. I don't think it should be managed except keeping those quad bikes off. I've got no time for English Nature with all these silly rules and regulations. Just make as few regulations as possible, like stopping those quad bikes and stopping dumping and enforce them and let the rest get on with it.

Interviewed 28th November 2000 at 35 Mill Road, Lydd.

1 **Dennis Prior**

2 Cedar Lodge, Lydd.

3 Greatstone, Dungeness, Dengemarsh and the Ranges.

4 70 (ish).

5 Whole area childhood activities followed by agricultural connections.

6 Goats. I didn't live at Dungeness or Dengemarsh but when I went there as a child and up to the war there were goats around. About 10 to 12 of them at Dungeness, they were kept for milk for the family, no commercial connection. The Prebbles at Dengemarsh kept goats too but I don't know how many, never really saw much of them. The coastguard houses at Jury's Gap had goats too. They wandered over the military ranges. I suppose the war and the road put paid to them. Once there was a proper road milk could be delivered.

Cattle. I can't remember cattle down at Dungeness but of course they could stray down there. Cattle were put on the ranges to graze with sheep.

Sheep. Blacklocks and Paines grazed sheep on the beach at Dungeness. I think they were just tegs, can't remember there ever being ewes and lambs down there. They went on in about March. I can't remember how long they were there but guess it was not more than two months. There were still some in wartime but remember in 1940 50% of the sheep were moved off the Marsh so no great number of them. Post war Blacklocks still had sheep down there. In the 50's Jack Carter grazed sheep and cattle over the whole of the military ranges. Before Jack took over the area Bass' had the grazing.

Chicken. Blacklocks kept chicken down at Dengemarsh on the edge of the beach.

7 From the 30's to the war rabbits were everywhere they could form a warren. As you walked over the beach they were under your feet all the time. They came from their warrens and grazed the stuff on the beach. They "laid up" under the bramble bushes. They never recovered from the myxomatosis and nobody wanted to eat them after that. Up to then everybody had rabbit. Our area to go rabbiting was on the edge of the beach up from Belgar across the back of Lade and along the old railway line. They were good fat rabbits there. This was a commercial venture part of the agricultural calendar. It took place in winter and we used to have a three-week blitz on them. We used ferrets but only to drive them into one place and then we dug them out. They were put into sacks and taken back to the farm. The reason for this was, we stuck ours so we could sell them at a premium price. On a poor day we would have 60-70, a good day 150. I suppose over the three-week period that was a lot of rabbits. Turks took them up to Ashford market for sale on Tuesday. It was quite a sight when you looked at them all in the van – remember there were all the other farmers who used Turks too. The rest of the year we just lived with them – there was no control. Local people took rabbits for the pot, shot or ferreted but not commercially. They were so lucrative that it was not in the farmers' interest to control them. When my father married and moved to Belgar (about 1910) he took no money from the business for

ten years. The family lived on the proceeds of the rabbits the whole of those 10 years and by then there were seven children!

- 8 In the Greatstone area there was less vegetation on the beach than now but more stands of blackberries. We used to go down to the back of Lade blackberry and sloe picking from the 30's to the war. The beach seemed bare except for great clumps of blackberries. When you looked inland from Dungeness you could see the ridges easily with just short stuff here and there on the bare shingle less broom and gorse than now. I can't remember open water in the Ballast Hole but we didn't really play down there in the winter. In the Crane Pits the water could be seen easily as there were no bushes. I don't remember Valerian but there was Foxgloves and Bugloss. We used to go "roaming around" down Dengemarsh, over the ranges, Galloways and the Wicks. How on earth we didn't suffer serious injury I don't know. We kicked about at and rolled around the ordnance, even tried to smash stuff open. Dave Arter did get his arm blow off. Bramble bushes were everywhere and there were odd stands of holly not just in the Holmstone. There seems to be less gorse now, more coarse grass and less thistles and docks. For harvest festival I would be sent out to the bramble bushes to collect Old Mans Beard. I don't think it grows here much now.
- 9 N/A.
- 10 We walked everywhere. Just followed the trackways and then went over the beach in a direct line for wherever we were making. Sometimes mother took us children down to Dungeness for the day. Father took us by horse and cart down to Boulderwall where there was a gate on quite a good road then we passed through the gate onto the horse track down to where the Pilot is. We spent the day having a fire on the beach and father came for us in the afternoon. There was a track from the coastguard cottages down to Dungeness School. One day the church choir was to sing at the school, must have been harvest or Christmas, we went by cart and then had to walk over the beach from the coastguard cottages, it was dreadful weather, windy and cold. There was always a good track down to Dengemarsh as the Prebbles lived there and had to bring their fish up to Lydd and bring their goods back. When we went to Galloways we often went onto the ranges, there were all sorts of tracks and roadways in there. Sometimes we went over to the keddlenet stands at the Wicks. Horses and carts went down there to collect fish too. There were no real tracks out at north Lade, just walked along the rail line and out to the bushes to pick blackberries. Our favourite place was Devils Bush at the back of North Lade as there was an enormous stand of berries – about half an acre. Another good place was at Boulderwall. In the Depression most Lydd families supplemented their income by berry picking. We only had them for home use but mother seemed to make dozens and dozens of jars of jam. A real favourite was blackberry and apple pudding with a little quince added – wonderful.
- 11 We did find quite a lot of rubbish that had blown in from the sea around the bramble bushes. There was a lot of iron, not ordnance, but iron rings. I think they came from the shooting butts. Everything seemed to end up in the bramble bushes. Funnily enough another thing we found a lot was latrine buckets – from the army I suppose!
- 12 We just had horse and cart, handcarts and sledges pulled over the beach.

- 13 I was in the fire service so had to go down the Ness to put out bushes and vegetation on fire and to recover aircraft. The tanks kept to the vegetated parts, as the stones would have ruined their bearings. After the war when the anti tank mines were cleared it was a bit of hit and miss and sometimes blowing one up would set off others with damage to the houses down there. Before my time, early in the century, there were a lot of horses on the ranges.
- 14 Down at Belgar we always dug our own beach for roads walls and buildings [shuttered concrete]. Every one in Lydd made shuttered concrete. A lot of houses were built with it. [My house, 27 Station Road, is shuttered concrete, built about 1850] All Lydd roads except Tournery Road are made of local beach. For some reason Tournery was crushed rock. The army made it I suppose.
- 15 I can't remember when the new line was laid to New Romney – 34 or 35 – perhaps? I think the old line remained until after the war.
- 16 Wartime and gravel extraction but the new road to Lydd and from Dungeness to New Romney brought housing development and changed the way of life altogether. When I was a boy I can only remember about three or four properties along the coastal strip – look at it now!
- 17 When I first had a camera I took local views, so I might have some.
- 18 N/A at the moment [I don't want to press him on this but get the feeling he might just take a look if it's not too much trouble].
- 19 I don't think the weather is all that much different. You just tend to remember the most outstanding events.

In the depression Boulder Picking supplemented the income. Young lads looking for work had to take it on. It was considered the lowest type of employment. Certain types of beach was picked up in baskets on a receding tide and tipped into sacks up on the top of the beach. It was paid piece rate according to the type and grade of beach picked. Only one firm was involved. They came down and collected it up. I know the "Blues" were picked, for the glass industry, I think.

Wrecking, and scavenging for coal was another beach activity that supplemented the income too and if you were lucky a whole years supply of coal could be collected. The word would go round when the coal had come in and dozens would be at the beach with handcarts, old prams and bodes of all kinds. If you were lucky and the wind in the right direction collecting could go on for weeks.

The local farmers controlled foxes and anyone interested could go along for the sport. The army helped organise it and went along too. It took place in winter and just through to spring. The guns would be laid up and the workmen would drive the foxes along to them.

Sometimes the hunt would get down this way, as the foxes inland would head down here to the beach. The hounds would go after them but not the horses. Very

occasionally a stag would come down, perhaps released up Woodchurch way, pursued by the staghounds. The beast always tried to make for the sea and would swim out.

Interviewed 3rd November, 2000 at Cedar Lodge, Lydd.

1     **Cyril Reeves**

2     Wickham, Mill Road, Lydd.

3     Greatstone; Lade; Lydd on Sea; Dungeness; Dengemarsh.

4     86 years (born at Forty Acre Farm 1914).

5     Childhood, working life as a shepherd/looker for G T Paine and later his farm manager until retirement 20 years ago.

6     Goats. I knew there were goats at Dengemarsh and Dungeness but had no experience of them. Thought there were about 50. There was one house, stood on its own between the Pilot and Greatstone, that old boy had round about a dozen goats which wandered over the beach at the back. I think that the goats foraging would have had an impact on the plants at Dungeness.

Cattle. Said there were none but after I told him what JT had said changed his mind and said perhaps they did wander down but after the railway they stopped. [Not sure about the accuracy of his memory. His short-term memory is poor and I feel he could be easily led into agreeing with suggestions.]

Sheep. I had six full time shepherds to oversee. Paines flock was over 1,000 head of breeding ewes. It was not surprising the sheep strayed to the beach they wandered all over. They were not deliberately grazing there. They just followed the beach ridges down to Dungeness and then the silly things didn't know what to do when they got there. Every so often we would round them up but there would only be about 50 or so – no more. This would be any time of year. They would mainly end up in the Beach Hole. I don't think grazing by sheep would have very little perhaps no impact on the plants at Dungeness. The sheep were there because of straying not a deliberate grazing regime. Nobody with any sense would have sheep down there, nothing for them to graze, just get messed up with bramble and gores [thistles].

7     There were loads of rabbits. We had a rabbit man who trapped them, used wires; he worked from the end of October to the end of March. Ferreting was carried out too. The rabbits noticeably grazed the grass down – they were pests. [I think he is referring to the whole of the acreage farmed by Paines when he makes this statement] Most were in the Beach Hole. Up at Greatstone they were where the green grass started. There were a few at Dengemarsh.

8     I can remember seeing the beach digging in the Beach Hole as a child. Used to walk down there to watch them. The men had to go round to the Old Lighthouse to gain access, as the area they had already dug was flooded. The Nessers had a job at times to get to school, as it was flooded there. There were no bushes just reeds and lots of

ducks and geese. There were about 15 men working digging the beach by hand and throwing it in the tubs. The coalman and his son went shooting one morning and came back with nine greylags.

- 9 No experience.
- 10 If we went to Dungeness from Lydd we would walk. When we got to Boulderwall the road ended and we crossed the beach with backstays. The Nessers came up to Lydd by train. They came up at two o'clock on Saturday, did the shopping, and went to Gobles café for their tea then went to the cinema. After that they would have to hurry up to the Railway for the ten o'clock train back.
- 11 No experience.
- 12 I used to cross the beach is with backstays.
- 13 I was in the same position as other Lydd folk, excepting traders, as they were not allowed down to Dungeness.
- 14 I remember the Beach Hole as a child. Think the digging finished by the war. It was just left as open water with reeds round the earlier part. No trees.
- 15 Can't remember much about this.
- 16 Wartime.
- 17 Has none.
- 18 N/A.
- 19 Foxes were not a problem when I was managing the farm. There were never enough to be a problem even with the lambs. The weather has changed, less wind, no cold snowy winters.

Interviewed 16th October 2000 at Wickham, Lydd.

- 1 **Francis Rose**
- 2 Brockenhurst, St Mary's Road, Liss, Petersfield, Hants.
- 3 First visit in 1936, but as a serious botanist from 1945.
- 4
- 5 Plant ecologist.
- 6 No personal recollections of domestic stock on shingle.
- 7 Recalls lots of rabbits, especially around the Open Pits in *Prunus*; also foxes.

- 8 Whole landscape very low pre-1960s, with lots of open water (Open Pits and Ballast Hole) and shallows low. Older ridge vegetation much as now (lots of wood sage, foxgloves amongst dead broom), *Silene nutans* abundant, but less gorse then. Recalls *Arrhenatherum* zone towards coast as being of low diversity.
- 9 No particular recollections regarding fishermen.
- 10 Main track over shingle to coastguard houses out of use, because road to Pilot and lighthouse in place in 1936.
- 11 Recalls old "railway line" at north end of Long Pits being site for *Lactuca saligna* and *Crepis foetida* (1950).
- 12 No recollections but tracks were present over shingle.
- 13 None post-war.
- 14 No recollections.
- 15 No comment on British Rail, but did go on miniature railway as a boy in 1929.
- 16 No particular comment.
- 17 Has wealth of diaries and reports, which could be accessed at some time (big job!).

Interviewed on 30th November 2000 at Liss.

1 **Bob Scott**

2 St Neotts, Cambs.

3 Visited Dungeness every year from 1954, becoming RSPB warden in 1960. Lived initially near old lighthouse, then at Boulderwall from 1968 until 1975.

4

5 Pre-1960s in D.B.O. area, Open Pits and Lydd Ranges to Midrips.

6 Recollects sheep (tegs) on shingle at west Denge Beach in summer amongst breeding gulls and terns (until 1961). Also sheep in Village area and D.B.O areas; lookers used to cut brambles, occasionally driving tractors over shingle. Goats (small herd) in early 1960s somewhere north of Kerton Road.

7 "No" rabbits after myxomatosis but returned steadily through 1960s. Their loss resulted in increased cover for breeding meadow pipits, but disadvantaged lapwings because of too much cover.

- 8 Pre-1960s, Long Pits area flooded to thighs every winter. Vegetation (sallow, broom and gorse) to NE of power station now much taller than pre-power station times (caused by power station?). Little terns nested seaward of coastal road and oatgrass was not obvious, but sea kale and yellow-horned poppy were (fishermen very active then) - active prograding of shoreline obvious in 1950s (storm beaches). Red\valerian present in 1960s. In 1950s and early 1960s, Open Pits with low fringe only of tallows and reedmace cut and sold by RSPB. Recalls 1959 drought. Swamp Pit did have tall tallows in 1950s.
- 9 Recalls net tanning in 1950s but always seaward of road.
- 10 Pre-war road stopped at Boulderwall and people used track from D.B.O. to Lydd used by carts. Post-war tracks from school area (D.B.O.) to Pilot, Britannia and to Hope And Anchor (Pen Bars) - children would have used these pre-war.
- 11 No comment.
- 12 See under 6 - tractors.
- 13 No military vehicles on Dungeness in 1950s.
- 14 In Long Pits area, just debris left in 1950s but no rail tracks.
- 15 Platform of Dungeness Station still there now, not far from lighthouse and D.B.O.
- 16 No comment.
- 17 Has made available a number of colour slides and b/w prints from 1950s. Also a further contact: Phil Redman, 20 Rue Dauphine, Paris 75006, France; fax/tel no. 0033143265.

Interviewed December 20th, 2000.

- 1 **Norman Sims** (son of Bill Sims, grandson of Samuel Sims –lookers.)
- 2 6 Queensway, Lydd.
- 3 Greatstone; Lydd-on-Sea; Dungeness and Dengemarsh.
- 4 60 years. Has memories from early childhood (40's to present day).
- 5 40's as child; 50's as youth working as shepherd for Blacklocks and 60's to 90's working in the gravel extraction industry on a dragline.
- 6 Goats: Has vague memories of goats in the Beach Hole when he went fishing there as a boy in the 40's.  
Cattle: No.



Sheep: I left school at 15 at the end of the war and went to work for Blacklocks. My father was a shepherd and I was taken on. The current years lambs were moved “up on the hill” for the winter, after being taken from the ewes. They were all over even as far as where Gatwick airport is now. After the winter they were moved back to the marsh, still being kept separate from the flock/s. Blacklocks had flocks on their grounds at St Mary's; Blackmanstone; Newchurch; Ivychurch and Brenzett as well as the flocks around the Lydd grounds. In mid March the ewes were in the lambing fields and all the shepherds and lookers were needed to attend to them. It was a very busy time so the tegs (all the last years' lambs from all these flocks, about 3,500, that had been up on the hill) were moved to the beach to graze. Every morning I was taken down to Greatstone station (railway) with two dogs and it was my job to drive the sheep over to the back of Burrows and out to Muddymore, Springfield or Walkers Ground [Walkers Outlands where Ken Coleman is now]. I used to drive them down between where the Bird Observatory is now [RNSSS] and Dungeness school and over the back of Burrows. Jumbo Blacklocks would pick me up in the early afternoon and by next morning the sheep would almost all be back up at Greatstone station. I had to do this every day weekends as well or they would be off up to Littlestone and New Romney. Only if there was an easterly wind, quite unusual then especially at that time of year, would they get “hooked up” (sheltering) and not get back to Greatstone until the wind had changed. The favourite place for the sheep was between Lydd-on-Sea station and Greatstone station so they worked their way back there. The sheep were kept in between the railway fence and the sea road and when I drove them down Muddymore way the Dengemarsh Sewer was their boundary. They missed Dungeness as they worked their way across back to Greatstone. There were not many houses then but they did eat things in the gardens. There were up to 3,500 sheep and they grazed the beach from mid March to early May for about seven weeks. They “did” well and when we brought them off they were taken to Walker Ground in two fields there. They all had to be clatted or they would get in a real mess when they went on to the green grass. They were taken back to the other sheep and spread around the various flocks. Blacklocks had the grazing rights for these areas but not solely as Paines had sheep up by where the airport is now and the back of Belgar. In the winter several workmen would go on the beach and cut and burn bramble. This was done from Muddymore, Christmas Dell and anywhere the bramble was growing and would tangle up the sheep. They did not cut willow or bushes, just bramble. [He doesn't know if they cut stuff at the Oppen Pits but thinks perhaps not as he can't remember bramble there only bushes.] Sheep were not put on the beach to graze at any other time only the 6-7 weeks from mid March. This went on until I left to go gravel digging in the early 60's. It all had to stop then as the power station infrastructure was going in.

Chicken: No.

- 7 I did a little rabbiting at Dengemarsh but went with my father and brothers up to the listening ears area and round the back of the air port with a whippet and spades. The place was crawling with rabbits we ate them all the time. We all had our own areas we used. Rabbits did not bolt so we dug them out, as they were only a spades depth. We did this a lot in the winter everyone did. It was a seasonal job. It was not unusual to get 150 rabbits from one warren in a day. They were good quality rabbits too.

- 8 As a boy in the 40's I went fishing in the Long Pits. There were no trees just a little low scrub here and there. In the 50's I can remember all the concrete being dumped in there. There were brambles and lots of broom and it was easy to see the open water. There were ducks in there but I can't remember geese. By the 60's the bushes were beginning to grow but it was still very low and the water could easily be seen, not like now.
- 9 No experience.
- 10 Just wandered all over the beach.
- 11 No experience.
- 12 Just driving sheep over the beach.
- 13 No experience. Wasn't allowed down there.
- 14 When I started with ARC, mid 60's, they were still digging the pit by the water tower. Draglines were not used only the suction barges. About 70-72 we began on the other side of the road and fencing was put up. It was open until then with dry short vegetation, no bushes only the Halfway Bush.
- 15 No comment.
- 16 Gravel digging.
- 17 None.
- 18 N/A
- 19 In November each year Blacklocks had organised fox shoots. We would finish work at lunchtime on Fridays and go on a shoot. We shot from Jurys Gap through Dengemarsh and up to Burrows Pit.

We used to have very cold winters with loads of snow. It's warmer now. The prevailing west wind seems to have gone. I think the growth of bushes and grass at Dungeness is all a natural progression. Sheep grazing made little or difference, I can't remember it looking different after the sheep came off. [Would he notice if he were there everyday. Surely that many sheep must have stopped spring growth].

Interviewed 19th October 2000 at 6 Queensway, Lydd.

- 1 **Bob Tanner**
- 2 42 Mill Road, Lydd.
- 3 Whole area.
- 4 Since mid 40's to present day.

- 5 Fishing (own boat), shrimping and bait digging.
- 6 Goats Seen goats around the coastguard station and in the beach hole. They disappeared soon after the war.
- Cattle and sheep Have seen both cattle and sheep mostly the latter straying down at the Ness at any time of year.
- 7 There are two sorts of rabbits in the area ones on the top of the ground and ones with burrows. When we had myxomatosis the ones in burrows were most affected. I'm sure the number of rabbits there used to keep the grass down; I noticed more grass and weeds when the myxomatosis came. Every family in Lydd used snares and dogs to take rabbits for the pot and some caught them to sell to the butcher too. The farmers used to set their men on catching rabbits at certain times of year, hundreds were sent to market. I think they have increased a little in the last 10 years; they seem less susceptible to the myxomatosis now. On Boxing Day we used to go out behind the airport shooting hares. Nobody shoots them now but there seem less of them.
- 8 Since the war there is a lot more sea kale especially around the new lighthouse. Perhaps it's because they stirred the ground right up building it. We used to pick sloes and blackberries in the ballast hole. The blackberries are about the same but much less blackthorn. Down the Dungeness road were lots of foxgloves I'm sure there are less now. Just before the war when you went down the Dungeness road the only thing of any size was the Halfway Bush now there are loads of trees in the ballast hole and round the crane ponds. The beach was bare except for small clumps of prostrate broom here and there. There was not much oat grass that seemed to come along from about the late 50's and has increased very quickly in the last 10 years. We used to go over the beach to the Bottomless Petts (Oppen Pits) to pick up gull's eggs. One pit had an island in the middle and we used the dinghy from a Flying Fortress to get out and collect the eggs. The ones on the island were Kips (Blackheaded Gulls) and we would get up to 120 in a day. We collected the eggs from Crockers too they had bigger eggs. I loved eating gulls eggs and they were very popular in the war. There were willows at the pits (about 5 feet high) reed mace round the edges and *Phragmites*. At Dungeness there is more broom but less gorse. The sea kale seems to be increasing and the oat grass too.
- 9 I've not been net tanning but I know it used to go on. Everything was dragged over the beach but not now everything goes right down to the side of the boats by van or truck. When I first started my boat was opposite Mike Bates' house and my fish was brought up on rails. Joe Henley, the fish merchant from Dymchurch, supplied me the rails. The beach is an entirely different shape now. The point has gone and there are several "false points" on the East Side. The beach digging is causing this as when they stop in the summer the beach profile rights itself again. From 1972 to 1990 my winch had to be moved three times as the beach had grown out so much.
- 10 The road to the boats was made about 1975-80. The rubble for it came from the power station and G T Paine had to give permission, as he owned the beach. As I didn't live at Dungeness I didn't use the tracks out the back.

- 11 N/A.
- 12 Always used road. I don't think they should have these quad bikes over the beach they leave great big ruts.
- 13 N/A.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 N/A.
- 16 The war cut Dungeness off from Lydders and mashed the beach right up. There was another stir up when the Duke of Gloucester came to open the new lighthouse. They removed old buildings and tidied up the area.
- 17 Some photos [20ish] taken in the main at East View, Dungeness around 1933. The beach can be seen – it is very clear. One picture of East View with a proper lawn, which was made by bringing turf in from the ballast hole, [possibly growing on areas where the rubbish had been dumped]. There are kids (goats) in the shots as the children are playing with them. One picture (early 60's) of chicken outside the house on the beach, which shows the oat grass coming in. Few pictures of the ballast hole but not very revealing. A picture with a bodge-cart and sledge. Some pictures of the boat in 1972.
- 18 Yes.
- 19 The wind is all over the place now. It used to set in and stay in the same direction for long periods. We used to have hard winters.

Fly tipping should be clamped down on.

Interviewed 21st November at 42 Mill Road, Lydd.

- 1 **Doris Tart**
- 2 Ocean View, Dungeness – lived in same house whole of life.
- 3 Whole Dungeness area.
- 4 All of life - 79 years.
- 5 Childhood experience; fisherman's wife since 1942.
- 6 Personal experience of goats and sheep at Dungeness.

Goats were owned by residents, only a few each house. I remember them from my earliest childhood. They were penned at night and wandered in-groups during the day. There were no feral goats. There was only one billy. Billies came over from Dengemarsh to mate. Goats were blown up during the war owing to the minefields

this led to tethering. Post war they were not allowed to keep goats. Can't remember why. The goats ranged up as far as the Battery but spent most of the time in the Ballast Hole.

Cattle Can't remember seeing them but thinks it was possible that they strayed down from Lydd.

Sheep were always around in the Ballast Hole and occasionally came around the houses. They ate off my wallflowers [spring]. I remember them from earliest childhood memories until the 60's. The sheep wandered down from Lydd so numbers varied. There was no pattern to their being there just when they wandered down.

Chickens were kept for eggs for the house not commercially and not everyone had them. My mother did not have them. Some were in runs but mainly scatted freely round the house.

- 7 There have always been rabbits at Dungeness. There used to be "hundreds" in the Ballast Hole. Used to eat lots of rabbits father shot them not to control them just for eating. Had no ferrets.
- 8 The beach used to be clear but in the late 60's the grass began. In the Ballast Hole we used to pick blackberries and sloes. There was no willow but lots of reeds. The nearest greenery was the holly bush, which we cut for berries. In the late 20's we would walk over to the Oppen Petts There was no track as the beach was all clear we wore backstays. There was some greenery in the Petts (bushes) but I remember there was a lot of open water. There has always been broom at the back of the houses roughly 1.5 miles from the sea. As children we went broom wringing (4 or 5 would grasp the bush and run round and round until it was wrung from the beach). It was great fun we would all be very giddy. We used it for bonfires. Broom was used for fire lighting in the home we used about a sackful a week. At school we went for walks looking at the flowers. There were no orchids but always valerian; bugloss; yellow horned poppy; sea pinks; ragged robin and a flower we called milkmaids, it was white, don't know its proper name. On the beach were very small white wild roses, small and thorny. They grew amongst the sloe bushes. Some people ate the sea kale but I did not – didn't like it. In the 20's there was a lot of open water in the Ballast Hole. Had to make stepping stones to get through to school. Sometimes the south end track to the school was flooded and could not be used. The open water was still there pre and post war. The bomb holes, post war, had water in too if it was a wet season. After the war, late 40's to 50's there was a lot of growth in the Ballast Hole and by the late 50's the willow was noticeably taking over. When we walked up to Lydd-on-Sea station we collected ducks eggs there were lots of ducks and geese – widgeon, mallard father went shooting them all the time. There were a lot of grass snakes in the Ballast Hole.
- 9 Fishermen used to walk to and fro their boats every day. They used the rails for bringing boxes of fish up but dragged stuff over the beach. Up to the 60's the boats were more to the north. In the 20's fishing was seasonal – spring trawling – summer mackerel – winter herring and sprats. Once a year each boat would tan nets. It was an all day job. The copper was lit early and the Kutch melted into the water. Then the nets would be boiled up to tan them and spread out on the beach to dry. It would

cover a large area. When they were dry they were pulled together and taken up to the net loft at the house. When the nets were done the tan frocks were tanned. They were smocks (called frocks) made at home. They were calico after tanning they were called tan frocks. Bait diggers and shrimpers walked over the beach a lot too. The boats moved down about the late 60's. I can remember the shore right up to Penny Cottage, originally a winch house, in front of my house.

- 10 Each boat had a track, which was made up of anything like ashes and clinker, wood etc. There were a few railtracks to the boats too. There were no winches just a capstan. In front of the houses there were only the boat tracks no road our roadway. Our roadway was the track behind the houses. The track to school went through the Ballast Hole but there were two, the north and the south track. The path from the Pilot end to RNSSS cottages was always dry and clear. By about the mid 30's there was a road at the front all the way down to the point I think, but I'm not sure. We used to walk to and fro by the shortest route all over the beach.
- 11 We had outside privies – just a bucket. The buckets were emptied every Friday night. You could hear everybody out digging. My father would say “Listen- old Joe's out diggin' early tonight”. Every 2-3 weeks we would have a good bonfire and in-between if needed. Rubbish was brought in to the Ballast Hole by rail. I was sent out to dig it over for coal. I collected a lot of coloured glass there. After a while plants started to grow well on the rubbish.
- 12 A beach cart was used at the Britannia. A horse and cart came once a week with fruit and vegetables. It came down the track at the back of the houses. Fish was dragged to the station by “sledge”. Shrimps were carried in baskets on backs (4-5 gallons). They were cooked and went to Bob Leach at Brighton.
- 13 Tracked vehicles were all over the beach in the war. The front was all mined with access left for the lifeboat and the fishing boats. Anti-tank mines were at the back and some of the goats were blown up [perhaps leading to tethering?]. Very little beach was left unturned. Crossing the beach willy-nilly stopped in the war because of the mines. Post war everybody used the roads as there was more money about and vehicles came. The way of life changed different people came; the tracks were not used. Mines were blown up at the back leaving huge holes, which filled with water in wet seasons. The beach gradually fell in these craters. At the front the mines were dug up.
- 14 I think this finished about the early 30's. By the time it finished the first part that had been dug was growing up with vegetation.
- 15 Rotten sleepers were collected and used as firewood. The railway was not used for sending fish to market when the lorries came so no more dragging the sledge. Blackman of Hythe started it by collecting fish with his motorcycle and sidecar. Later he had a lorry.
- 16 Wartime.
- 17 Yes 30's to 60's.

18 Yes.

19 Foxes have become a nuisance. Since the late 80's they have been awful. They live under the houses encouraged by people who feed them. There used to be a shoot. I think that's why we didn't have them. They have no fear just come up to your door. I would like to see them controlled.

I think the change in vegetation is because nobody walks over the beach now. There's no digging or bonfires no activity on the beach at all. It will all grow over.

There are weather changes too – no seasons anymore. We used to have really cold winters with a lot of snow. There were proper hot summers too now its all higgledy piggledy. We don't have fog now just mist. We had real pea-soupers. Even the wind seems less strong now.

Interviewed 14th October 2000 at Ocean View, Dungeness.

1 **Doreen Thomas**

2 Way o Wind.

3 Dungeness to Dengemarsh.

4 Late 40's to present day

5 Living at Dungeness as part of a fishing family. Notices flora.

6 Goats. I came after the war and there were only a few goats left.

Sheep and Cattle. I can't remember seeing sheep on the beach but I have heard that they were brought down from Lydd to graze the beach years ago.

Chicken. We had 6 to 8 hens for the eggs. They had a run but were out most of the time. When I came down here I lived at RNSSS cottages and kept the chicken there.

7 We had rabbits everywhere when I first came. Our dog used to catch them and bring them home. Everyone had rabbit for the pot. Most people went shooting rabbits and ducks.

8 In the late 40's the beach was clear except for small, short clumps of broom. Over in the Beach Hole there was ragged robin, violets, ox-eyed daisies, stoncrop and dolly bells (campion). The crane ponds had reed mace and yellow iris round the edges. The bushes were very short not like trees at all. My children played there and in the winter came back with wet feet where the water in the Beach Hole was so deep it overtopped their Wellingtons. In the crane ponds they had boats and went swimming and often had leeches on their legs. They still played there in the 50's but when the power station came things seemed to change and the children were older so I didn't seem to go over there so often. I can't remember the Nottingham catchfly and I'm sure there was less seakale then. Near the cottages we had teasels, foxgloves, and orchids. There

seems to be more toadflax and broom now. I think the broom that was here when I came bloomed more - perhaps because the water table was higher? Up near the Pilot and over towards the railway station was valerian. There was grass but it was very short and you could see where the rabbit droppings were all over the ground so I suppose they kept it short. Everybody picked sloes to make wine and sloe gin and we picked huge blackberries too. The sloes seem to have gone now and the brambles are less, or the bushes are higher and I can't see them. There were craters where the mines were blown up and the children caught newts there. When the power station was built everything changed, tall grass grew and the beach, which had been clear, could not be seen.

- 9 Our boat was opposite Deli Cottage. We had rails from the boat and the road was in when I came so our fish went by road then. The boats used to be further up but have had to move down this end, as you would not be able to get off up where they used to be. They used to tan nets in the spring and spread the nets all over the beach to dry. I used to help getting the boat up the beach and helped shaking sprats out. Sometimes we went draw netting but that was up near the Mulberry harbour. Everything was pulled about in boxes with runners except down at the pub they had a beach cart – it's in Lydd museum now. My mother in law told me that nobody had prams; the babies were transported in a fish-box with runners made of barrel staves.
- 10 Although the road was in when I came I used to walk the trackway that goes from the school up to the Lydd on Sea halt. The power station wanted the track for something, I can't remember what it was all about, there was an investigation and I helped prove it had been a right of way for years. We just used to walk over the beach wherever we wanted.
- 11 Our rubbish was buried out the back and the toilet waste was buried too. At RNSSS we threw rubbish in the moat. We had bonfires to burn stuff. The dustcart came in the 50's. We had water from a well but that became polluted by petrol from the PLUTO pipes so the army laid mains water.
- 12 The only things used on the beach were the special cart, bodes/sledges and walking over in backstays.
- 13 In 47 there were still remnants of war with gun emplacements and the PLUTO pumping houses. After the war the army used the Ballast Hole for exercises. They set the vegetation alight and the children picked up dummy bullets. The fire service had to come and put out the fires. Some of us complained and had it stopped.
- 14 N/A.
- 15 I used the mainline railway to go up to Lydd and to Ashford.
- 16 The beach was disturbed again when the old school was pulled down and other bits and pieces tidied up for the Duke of Gloucester to open the new lighthouse. Wartime and gravel extraction.
- 17 No.



- 18 N/A.
- 19 The wind is all over the place now. We used to have really dense fog, don't now. I think there is too much traffic now; it's spoiling the place. We want to be left alone to get on with things, don't want this silly "management". Once managers come along they have a lot of silly ideas and put everybody's back up. They advertise the place as quaint and all the visitors come and then want things like public toilets and the next thing will be a gift shop etc. The place will change, it was different fifty years ago to what it was a hundred years ago and these "do-gooders" are trying to keep it the same. It won't work, just leave us alone.

Interviewed 18th November 2000 at Way O Wind, Dungeness.

1 **Dennis Vile**

2 13 The Derings, Lydd.

3 Dungeness and Dengemarsh.

4 Dungeness early childhood but mainly post war. Dengemarsh childhood.

5 Fishing off the beach as a child. Gravel excavation in the 70's.

6 No experience.

7 There used to be rabbits everywhere, lots of them but the myxomatosis thinned them out and there are very few now. I never went rabbiting or foxing but I knew it went on.

8 I can't say that I took a lot of notice of the vegetation when I was a boy but I can remember that it was very bare and open with no bushes. The Crane Pits [Long Pits] were easy to see. There was very little grass. The only thing I can remember about Dengemarsh is the out-fall and the coastguard lookout. They have all been washed away and the beach has been taken away.

9 N/A.

10 In the 70's ARC made the track from the bridleway on RSPB to where the Visitor Centre is now for access to excavating Burrows Pit.

11 N/A.

12 N/A.

13 In the war Lydders were not allowed to the Ness. I can only say that when the war was over the beach from where Burrows is now to where the Power Station Road is was pock marked with ordnance. They used to fire 25lb shells from Orlestone Woods and they landed on the beach there. There were signs of vehicles all over. The

Americans were the worst offenders. When a Flying Fortress ditched over near the Oppen Pits they just scooped out a hole and bulldozed it in.

- 14 I worked on Burrows Pit from the beginning; in fact my first job was to set the boundaries for the work. I had to determine where G T Paine's beach was and which was RSPB's. When work began in the early 70's the beach looked like the surface of the moon. There were craters all over from wartime. The army were supposed to have cleared it but they had only gone over with metal detectors not proper bomb locators. To have done that would have taken a good long time and as time showed, when we excavated, there was a lot of stuff still there.

We found 3" and 4" mortars and 25" shells. There were broom bushes and the whole area looked a bit like the beach belonging to F&DWC at the back of the Water Tower but messed up by the army. I think I did the surveying in the summer as I remember foxgloves. Can't remember any coarse grass. We began digging to the south where Scott Hide is now. Between Scott Hide and Makepeace Hide we had four separate lakes but they were later made into one. By the time we finished (10years) there were small bushes growing at the Scott Hide end but no reeds. How did they get there, I'm sure nobody planted anything? We didn't go over the Oppen Pits side as all our activities took place on the Lydd side of the excavation where we had put in a roadway. In the 70's a drilling rig came on to the Oppen Pits side of Burrows to test the depth of the beach. I think that was the only time anything went over there. They used tracked vehicles to move the rig about. I know that as I was seconded to drive the tracked vehicle for them. When Burrows finished we moved on to New Diggings but I changed my work place to "ConBlock" at Dengemarsh so had nothing to do with digging that.

- 15 ARC had their own siding for taking the beach away by the Water Tower. We had a maximum of six trains a day, each train took around 2,000 tons of beach.
- 16 Wartime and gravel extraction.
- 17 No.
- 18 N/A.
- 19 The winters were harder. The lakes used to freeze to about one foot thick. One year we tried to free the dredging barges by blowing up the ice with explosives but it was unsuccessful. We don't seem to have seasons now.

Interviewed 1st November, 2000 at RSPB Visitor Centre, Dungeness.

## **Appendix 2. Dungeness chronology 1900 –2001 and further notes**

- 1900** Vast number of gulls and terns breeding on the beach including 1,000 pairs of common terns and many hundreds of black-headed gulls; 30-40 pairs of common gulls; 8-10 pair of stone curlews and a few pairs of Kentish plovers.
- 1904** Lighthouse completed and operational on site adjacent to previous one.
- 1908** First ‘watcher’ appointed by RSPB to guard stone curlews and Kentish plovers.  
Second ‘watcher’ appointed to guard seabird colonies.  
Up to 40 pairs of Kentish plovers breeding at Dungeness.
- 1915** Society for the Protection of Nature Reserves lists Dungeness as an area of prime importance.  
British Rail spur to Dungeness closed.  
Light railway built on Kentish plovers breeding site.
- 1929** Richard Burrows buys 50 acres of land adjoining the Lydd-Dungeness road including Boulderwall Farm.
- 1931** Walkers Outlands area (253 acres) bought by RSPB with the help of a large donation by Burrows. Later in the same year Burrows again contributes substantially towards the purchase of a further 271 acres. Kentish plovers cease breeding at Dungeness.
- 1935** Coast Road was built (illegally) between Littlestone and the Point with subsequent housing development and increased human activity.  
Large area, including the Oppen Pits, purchased by RSPB making the total area of the reserve 1243 acres.  
Road on Dungeness estate constructed by G H Bates, builders. Goats no longer allowed to roam over the beach at Dungeness as Southern Railway purchased the ground.  
Military take over the reserve as a gunnery training area. Beginning of decline in the number of breeding seabirds.  
Dungeness School closed owing to war and some children being evacuated, therefore, the tracks used by the children twice a day, from Dengemarsh and through the Ballast Hole were no longer used.
- 1948** Regular fox shoots across beach organised. Went on for 15 to 20 years.
- 1950’s** A herd of goats ranged in the Ballast Hole for about five years (around 20).
- 1951** British Rail spur to Dungeness removed leaving just rotten sleepers.
- 1952** Most of area returned to RSPB control but not part of the Dungeness area. Herbert Axell appointed as warden. He quickly becomes convinced of the need to control predators and conceives the idea of building a lake with islands to protect breeding birds.  
Myxomatosis destroys 99.5% (see Axell Appx 1) of rabbits, allowing vegetation to develop unchecked thereby changing the character of the peninsula. Bob Tart moved

his fishing boat from the Pilot end of the beach to the point. His was the first boat to move down and this trend continued into the 60's.

Lydd Air Port opened. Work all completed within a year, from 53.

- 1956** Richard Burrows dies, aged 85, leaving his land at Dungeness, including Boulderwall Farm to the RSPB.
- 1956/7** Army keep Dengemarsh beach to extend mortar range. As a result the plan to build a lake in the seabirds traditional breeding area, to provide safe nesting, is abandoned.
- 1958** In spite of opposition by conservation groups, including RSPB, the public enquiry approves building a nuclear power station at Dungeness.
- Plans to designate Dungeness a National Nature Reserve are abandoned. Herbert Axell leaves to become warden at Minsmere. Bob Scott appointed as warden.
- 1960's** Sheep grazing with tegs from March to May ends as Power Station infrastructure goes in. This grazing regime had been in place for the whole C20 and probably earlier.
- 1961** New lighthouse opened. New position needed as power stations obscured 1904 building from the west.
- 1965** Stone curlews cease to breed at Dungeness.
- 1970** Work begins to excavate Burrows Pit. Trackway made from bridlepath HL33 to present RSPB visitor centre site.
- 1974** Tony Pickup takes over from Bob Scott.
- 1978** Work on Burrows Pit completed. Terns and gulls already breeding on the new islands. Sandwich Terns breed for the first time.
- 1979** Peter Makepeace takes over as warden.
- Mediterranean gulls breed for the first time.
- 1981** *Crepis* (stinking hawksbeard) extinct.
- 1984** Work begins on New Excavations.
- 1991** New Visitor Centre at RSPB opened.
- 1992** RSPB purchase a further 28Ha of grassland to benefit wintering wildfowl such as geese and widgeon.
- 1993** Honey Pot extension of Burrows Pit (north-west side of lake).
- Simon Busuttil appointed Dungeness and area manager.
- Deal signed with ARC securing over 100 acres of undisturbed shingle, shallow lakes and grassland for the RSPB reserve, as well as the ARC Plant Site, on completion of gravel extraction by the company in the area. Jersey Cudweed found on RSPB reserve.
- 1998** In June Dungeness designated a National Nature Reserve.
- RSPB grazes approximately 250 sheep over 25% of shingle within the reserve in winter months.
- 1999** Avocets breed at Dungeness for first time on ARC site. Eggs hatched but chicks died.

**1999/00** Sheep graze again on the RSPB reserve for the winter months, as the previous year proves successful. Drainage ditches on RSPB “stopped” to retain water and elevate water levels.

**2000** Summer grazing by sheep within the Cladium Pit, False Oppen Pit & New Excavations by enclosure with electric fence.

**2000/01** Grazing in the winter on RSPB reserve continues. Landscaping work to create a reed bed of approximately 25 ha west of Hookers Pits.

## **Further notes**

### **Dungeness settlement**

Archive material has been examined and a paper published by Dr Mark Gardiner, 1998. This paper covers fishing activity from C14. (See THE ROMNEY MARSH IRREGULAR No.13 February 1998) The article has a comprehensive bibliography.

Later settlement could be traced by examining the Lydd records, which have recently been moved to Whitfield, Dover and will not be available, until cataloguing is complete.

### **Dungeness road**

Private unadopted road so information unavailable from local, district or county council. Estate archives must be used.

Trustee of Dungeness Estate Settlement: Mr Ede, Strangford House, Church Road, Ashford TN23 1RD Tel: 01233 631062.

Road possibly first built by army. Only went as far as Beach Cottage.

### **Coast road (Dungeness to Littlestone)**

This concrete road was constructed in 1935, which led to building along its periphery.

Photographs of the new road appear in ROMNEY MARSH A SECOND SELECTION by Edward Carpenter, published 1996, by Sutton Publishing, ISBN 0-7509-1152-2. There are many useful photographs and text in this publication. Another publication, which would prove useful, is ROMNEY MARSH IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS by Edward Carpenter, published 1994, by Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., ISBN 0-7509-0653-7.

### **Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Light Railway**

The track to Dungeness opened in 1927/8. It was a double track and was requisitioned by the army in WW2. Pipes were welded together at New Romney station and taken by train to Dungeness for the PLUTO scheme. This was not a success so the work was carried out at Dungeness with tracked vehicles. By the end of the war Dungeness was completely overturned from the light railway tracks to the shore. Rubbish was buried including tanks etc. As it was impossible to come by steel to replace tracks Captain Howey reduced the line to a

single track. There is a copy of a photograph in the 1949 guidebook with him looking along the “disaster area”. RH&DR archive was destroyed during the war.

pers com. Derek Smith, manager.

British Railway development & removal of tracks.

The railway to Dungeness opened for goods in 1881, followed by the passenger service in 1883. Railway closed in 1927.

## **Appendix 3. Photographs in E Carpenter Collection at Lydd Library**

Lydd library holds a photograph archive kindly deposited by Edward Carpenter. The collection has been catalogued, is available to the public and copies can be made if Mr Carpenter gives permission.

### **Dungeness Beach**

Portraits of R B Burrows standing on the beach. Location not stated but someone might know.  
Dungeness beach cart outside the Britannia pub.  
Dungeness Lifeboat.  
Launchers summoned by the maroon run to the lifeboat house (old site) 1949.  
Good view across beach east of the houses showing lack of vegetation. Ridges show.  
View from on top of lifeboat ashore at old lifeboat house looking inland towards Spion Kop.  
Good view of beach.

### **Dungeness Lighthouses**

1904 lighthouse taken 1960. Vegetation visible.  
Lowlight taken late C19 or early C20. Beach can be seen.  
Mainline railway station and 1904 lighthouse c1925 vegetation visible.  
1904 lighthouse around completion. Vegetation visible.  
1964 new lighthouse. Vegetation visible (foxgloves).

### **Dungeness School**

School building showing “gardened” shingle around it. 1920 (Shows “clean beaching”) RNSSS.  
Picture of cottages taken from the lighthouse 1982 looking towards Folkestone. Shows vegetation, long pits and beach hole.

### **Dungeness Streets**

High Street Dungeness c1920. Shows board tracks and open shingle – good.  
Dwellings and mainline railway c1927. Shows vegetated ridge with building on and disturbance near rail line.  
Building the Dungeness road c1925. Open shingle with vegetation in background.





## Appendix 4. Old images of Dungeness

Colour slides, kindly donated by Bob Scott and John Hubbard and mostly pre-1960.



1. View of old school at Dungeness



2. Old school in distance across shingle landscape



3 Footpath leading to old school from the coastguard cottages



4. Old track from Lydd to Dungeness, across the shingle ridges, much as it is today



5. View over the shingle ridges from the power station towards the water tower



6 Coastal ridges viewed from the old lighthouse



7 View over the Ballast Hole with Harry Cawkell; note lack of scrub



9 View over the Ballast Hole towards the old lighthouse; note lack of tall scrub



10 View from the old lighthouse over the Coastguard Cottages and Bird Observatory



11 Northern Open Pit from the air; extent of open water double today's



12 One of the fossil pits

**Black & white prints, from publications of Ted Carpenter and photographs of Bob Scott**



Dungeness in 1932, looking towards the north. The little cottage, Spion Kop, with the cart track at the rear, was the home of Jerry Bates. There were no roads in Dungeness at this period and today the cottages are even further from the receding sea.

1 View over Spion Cop to the north through the village area, 1932; note lack of vegetation



The scattered cottages of Dungeness, c. 1920. This shows the tracks across the beach from one cottage to another, and to the lighthouse, passing the low light and foghorn seen at top left. The first cottage belonged at this time to Twosign Richardson and was called The Cabin, with the goat and chicken houses to the left. The next house, Southview, was the home of Tom Richard Tart, father of the present T.R. Tart, known as Ben, the well-known ex-coxswain of the Dungeness lifeboat.

2 View south of the village area, over The Cabin and Southview, with the old lighthouse in the distance, c1920; note lack of vegetation



The cabins, c. 1930, in the shadow of the 1904 lighthouse. It is hard to recognize some of the cabins today, as extensions have been added through the years.

3 Various cabins surrounding the old lighthouse, c1930



4 The mote Heligoland trap at the Bird Observatory, 1950s; scrub almost non-existent



Dwarfed by the lighthouse, a train of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway leaves Dungeness for New Romney, c. 1935. This miniature railway, the brainchild of Captain J.E.P. Howey, was opened in 1927.

5 The miniature railway train leaving Dungeness for Hythe, c1935



6 The Bird Observatory area, 1950s; note lack of tall scrub



7 Bird ringing activity (Harry Cawkell left, Bob Scott centre), 1950s; note lack of tall scrub



*Spindrift Cottage, 1958, once a fisherman's home, standing in isolation between Dungeness and Dengemarsh. It was demolished to make way for a much bigger structure – the nuclear power station.*

8 Spindrift Cottage between Dungeness and the Dengemarsh, now replaced by the power station, 1958





English Nature is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England.

This is one of a range of publications published by:  
External Relations Team  
English Nature  
Northminster House  
Peterborough PE1 1UA

[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

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Cover printed on Character Express, post consumer waste paper, ECF.

ISSN 0967-876X

Cover designed and printed by Status Design & Advertising, 2M, 5M, 5M.

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Front cover photographs:

Top left: Using a home-made moth trap.

Peter Wakely/English Nature 17,396

Middle left: Co<sub>2</sub> experiment at Roudsea Wood and Mosses NNR, Lancashire.

Peter Wakely/English Nature 21,792

Bottom left: Radio tracking a hare on Pawlett Hams, Somerset.

Paul Glendell/English Nature 23,020

Main: Identifying moths caught in a moth trap at Ham Wall NNR, Somerset.

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