Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy

Appendix 1: Theme 2a

Harbours & Ports – Early Harbours

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2(a) Early Harbours

1. Summary

The District's proximity to the continent has meant that its history has been inexorably linked to the sea and maritime activity. This has led to the development of prominent early harbours beginning in the Roman period and going through to the early medieval period when two coastal towns were then established as head ports in the Confederation of Cinque Ports. These early harbours provide valuable evidence for the development of maritime activity and settlements across the district, as well as illustrating the district's close links to the continent. Whilst many of these early harbours have since been lost, their presence highlights important chapters in the development of the area as a coastal District.

2. Introduction

Evolution of the coastline

The evolution of the District's coastline has played a substantial role in the pattern of settlement and landscape development since ancient times. Coastal processes and landscapes are considered in more detail in a separate paper (Theme 1), however the main landscape features of the coastline are described briefly here (from west to east) in order to provide context for the development of early harbours within the district.

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

Today, the district's coastline is incredibly diverse and ranges from the desolate shingle expanses of the Dungeness Peninsula, along the sweeping and low-lying coastline of the Romney Marsh and then ending in the dramatic White Cliffs and open chalk grassland of the Folkestone Warren and Heritage Coast. Its formation is a complex story of land reclamation and other coastal processes that have given rise to and then later ruined early harbours and ports. The resulting coastal landscape is a rich historic environment that has many heritage assets lying along its course which reflect a number of significant historical events, maritime activities, international connections and the development of settlements. A number of assets have also survived which represent the early harbours that were located along the District's evolving coastline.

Moving from west to east, a cross-section through the Cretaceous system of geologies is exposed that reflects the dynamic and dramatic evolution of the coastline. In contrast to parts of the coast such as at Folkestone and Hythe, the Romney Marsh is significantly younger and has been formed far more recently. Beginning at Dungeness in the most southwestern part of the Marsh, around 5000 years of coastal evolution are represented here. The Dungeness peninsula forms part of a system of barrier beaches that stretches for 40km from Fairlight to Hythe

and constitutes an important geological feature known as a cuspate foreland (also known as a ness or cuspate barrier).

Cuspate forelands are found along some coastlines and lakeshores, and are primarily formed as a result of longshore drift which gradually produces an extension to the shoreline that extends outwards in a triangular shape giving it its distinctive appearance as is seen at Dungeness. This occurs through the accretion and progradation of sand and shingle which continues to accumulate, and in some cases then becomes stabilised by the growth of vegetation and is subsequently able to support valuable flora and fauna species. The cuspate foreland at Dungeness and Rye Harbour is an important example of this type of geological feature and is the largest in Britain. Other prominent examples worldwide include Point Pelee (Ontario, Canada), Cape Kennedy (Florida, United States) and Cape Hatteras (North Carolina, United States).

The peninsula is almost entirely made up of flint shingle which makes it unusual and has also resulted in the ongoing creation of extensive surface and buried shingle ridges. These ridges are of great importance as they record some 5000 years of coastal and environmental change and can also be directly related to the development of the barrier beach system. Today Dungeness is a private estate and is closely managed by a number of bodies as well as being protected by various designations including as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR). It supports rare flora and fauna in a number of valuable habitats which are also exceptionally sensitive. Its extensive coastline is largely characterised by buildings that relate to the safeguarding of the coast such as the lighthouses and Coastguard Stations.

The remainder of the Romney Marsh coastline today boasts extensive and attractive sandy beaches such as at St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch. Its evolution is however a complex history of land reclamation that began around 6000 years ago when various environmental changes triggered the beginning of its formation. Under the influence of longshore drift, sand bars and shingle spits began growing across the Rye Bay and formed a barrier from Dungeness to as far northwards as Dymchurch. This process resulted in the creation of a salt water lagoon behind the shingle barrier that was open to the sea at Hythe and gradually became mudflats with swamps and vegetation. In its early history, land continued to accumulate and as the Marsh became occupied by people deliberate efforts were made to reclaim and retain more land from the sea. Evidence suggests that these efforts may date as far back as the Roman period when an early natural structure acted as a sea wall and predecessor to the formal Dymchurch Wall of the thirteenth century.

The vast majority of the Romney Marsh Proper as it is known today had been reclaimed by the thirteenth century. Extensive networks of drainage ditches were employed to drain and maintain the fertile land that had been created, and continue to do so today. Other parts of the Marsh, the Denge and Walland Marshes, were still primarily comprised of islands that were separated from the mainland. Also during the thirteenth century was the construction of two major structures whose main functions were to provide adequate drainage and protection for the growing coastline and reclaimed land. These were the Rhee Wall and the formal Dymchurch Wall.

A number of storms battered the southern coast of England during the thirteenth century which caused dramatic changes to the coastline. Whole sections of coast were redrawn, and parts of the Marsh such as New Romney became significantly silted and thereafter were landlocked. It is also believed that the silting of the New Romney port caused the course of the River Rother to divert away from the town towards Rye where a new channel was created that joined the River Brede and the River Tillingham. A new harbour was subsequently created at Rye where these rivers now flowed into the sea and it later became a Cinque Port. Following the storms of the thirteenth century, a substantial amount of shingle had accumulated along the Romney Marsh coastline and created beaches that ran almost the entire length of the Marshland.

By the fourteenth century much of the Walland and Denge Marshes had now been reclaimed using “innings”; the process of building embankments around the sea-marsh and using low-tide to let the area run dry by means of one-way drains that were set into the new seawall, running off into a network of drainage ditches. These drainage ditches formed an extensive network that criss-crossed the Marsh and allowed for the drainage of water from the rich farmland into the sea via outlets and later into the Royal Military Canal. Land reclamation continued and was subsequently completed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by which time the Marsh landscape was already renowned for its sheep grazing and pasture. The Romney Marsh today is the largest coastal wetland on the south coast of England and covers around 100 square miles. A number of its coastal towns have acted as important harbours during their history and can boast assets that reflect this rich coastal heritage.

Moving eastwards along the District’s coastline, the Lympne escarpment represents a relic coastline that originally defined the edge of the large saltwater lagoon that had begun to form at the coast here following the accumulation of shingle and sand that marked the beginnings of the Romney Marsh. It highlights an important chapter in the evolution of the coastline and is a striking landscape feature within the District that borders the Romney Marsh to the south and runs along through West Hythe and “The Roughs” to the east with the Royal Military Canal at its foot. It is a steep escarpment of Kentish Ragstone that is formed of the Hythe Formation and Lower Greensand.

Towards Hythe, the blue-grey Wealden Clay disappears beneath a narrow clay belt and the first of the major Lower Greensand Group. By the first century AD the area west of modern Hythe was a lagoon-like expanse of open water beside a marshland creek, the *Limen* (later Rother), which gave access to the Weald and formed a natural harbour. By the third and fourth centuries AD sea levels had risen and this site as well as other Romano-British coastal sites had become inundated and were subsequently abandoned. However the tidal inlet near Hythe probably remained as a natural harbour throughout the Saxon period until later in the eleventh century when the focus for maritime activity appears to have moved from Lympne to Hythe.

The estuary in this area continued to silt up forcing coastal settlements to move eastwards towards Hythe. By the eleventh century Hythe was an important coastal town that had grown up on high land that lay beside the natural harbour which had formed when the creek had completely silted up. Hythe became established as an

important sea port, though continued silting over the centuries would eventually block the harbour completely. Today Hythe is a small coastal market town with new developments covering the long silted harbour.

Along from Hythe, the sandy clays of the Sandgate Formation support Sandgate and then appear in much of the lower cliff face of the Leas at Mill Point. The urban centre of Folkestone rests almost entirely on the Folkestone Formation with the cliffs either side of Folkestone Harbour being shaped from its Sandstone. The entrance to the Pent Stream and the quayside at the base of the West Cliff have provided a harbour for trade, cross channel connections and at times a point of embarkation for military expeditions for many years in Folkestone, although a formal harbour was not provided until much later in the nineteenth century. The Gault Clay at Folkestone then first appears at the top of the sea cliff beneath the East Cliff Pavilion in Wear Bay Road where it extends eastwards and gradually declines to the foreshore where it is overlain by the Lower Chalk. The geology of the coastline here is particularly visible at Copt Point where the Gault Clay is divided into Upper and Lower formations and equates to the Middle and Upper Albian stages respectively. Fossils are frequently collected *in situ* from the Gault Clay at Copt Point as well as from the Lower Greensand on the foreshore.

Beyond Copt Point the East Cliffs and Folkestone Warren form part of the distinctive coastline here. It has been suggested that a shingle beach at East Wear Bay may have acted as an early 'harbour' during the Roman period. However extensive erosion of the cliffs between Folkestone and Dover since that time has likely removed any evidence of this. The Roman Villa site that is present at East Wear Bay has provided further evidence for a maritime association at the site, perhaps being the residence of an officer relating to the *Classis Britannica*. Today, much of this site has been lost over the cliffs edge and the East Cliff continues to erode.

The Folkestone Warren was formed through a series of landslips that have taken place over the past 200 years. The last significant landslip was in 1915, since which time the coastline has been stabilised by the sea defences installed to protect the Folkestone – Dover railway line. Photographs of the Warren in 1920 suggest that it was originally predominantly chalk grassland with virtually no trees and many grazing animals. The Folkestone Warren is a key feature of the Folkestone-Dover Heritage Coast as well as forming part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Today it is an area that is rich in nationally important wildlife and is protected by a number of designations such as a SSSI and Local Nature Reserve.

The section of the coastline that is included as part of the Folkestone-Dover Heritage Coast contains some of the most iconic coastal landscapes in Kent, namely the White Cliffs. The White Cliffs have formed through the erosion of the chalk North Downs following the breach of the land bridge around 6000 BC that connected this country to the continent. References to the White Cliffs have been recorded as far back as 55 BC when Julius Caesar made reference to them in his account of the attempted invasion of Britain. These cliffs are famous worldwide and have enormous symbolic value as well as historical association.

Early Harbours across the District

The evolution of the District's coastline has continued to play a substantial role in the development of settlements, maritime activity and harbour features since ancient times. The district's proximity to continental Europe has often placed it on the frontline in defence of the realm as well as seeing the development of ports and harbours that have played important roles in international trade and other maritime activity such as local fishing and safeguarding the coast. Structures and archaeological finds from across the District provide evidence for these early harbours and ports which first become prominent during the Roman period. Many have since been lost due to the progression of the district's coastline, and future archaeological work will be important in determining their existence and development as well as that of the settlement that built up around them.

Folkestone – East Cliff

Evidence excavated around the East Cliff area in Folkestone suggests that trade with the continent had begun to expand rapidly during the Iron Age and Roman period. Whilst there is no evidence for a Roman town at Folkestone, the presence of archaeological finds dating to these periods suggests that there was some type of occupation at the site. It has also been suggested that there may have been an early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff connected with this occupation, though archaeological evidence for this has likely since been lost to coastal erosion. If this was the case, it is likely that this early 'harbour' would only have been a shingle beach market that would have been able to cater for the ships of the time. Other Roman remains at the site do however suggest that the East Cliff area was still an important post along the south coast during the Roman period and may have also played a prominent role with the provincial fleet.

The East Wear Bay area on the East Cliff was known to produce Roman finds from at least the eighteenth century and had been notoriously difficult to farm due to 'old stones' that would break ploughs and disturb crops. Mosaic pieces, probably originally from the site, were exhibited at a meeting of the Harveian Society in the town during the 1870s. In 1923 amateur archaeologist S.E. Winbolt visited Folkestone and was persuaded to explore the East Cliff site for Roman remains. Excavations began the following year and immediately began attracting national as well as international attention.

Two blocks belonging to a Roman villa were uncovered, one which was constructed during the second half of the first century AD and then rebuilt at the same time as a second block which was added in approximately 90 AD. A number of finds were also excavated, including tiles that were stamped with *CLBR* which refers to the *Classis Britannica* or British Naval Fleet. The site and its finds received significant attention and was an immediate success with the public. Excitement was especially generated over the association of the site with the Roman navy and ideas of empire and national identity which could connect modern Britain to her Roman heritage. Several new ideas for interpretation and public engagement were tried at Folkestone which included an early aerial photograph of the villa site which was taken by the RAF. The site remained open to the public until the Second World War when it was closed to form part of a series of gun placements along coastal defences at Folkestone. During later excavations, tank tracks could be observed across some of the Roman walls. The site was not opened again until 1945 but continued to deteriorate due to

austerity measures following the end of the War. The decision was taken to backfill the villa site and in 1957 it was grassed over to be used as a public green space.

The site was not excavated again until 1989 when the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit began work to determine the level of erosion since 1924. The location of the site on the cliffs edge had also made it incredibly vulnerable to erosion through cliff falls with substantial parts of the site already being lost. It was also found that the earlier excavations had only explored the upper layers present and so the potential for more archaeological remains was significant. In 2010 and 2011 the villa was re-opened as part of the *A Town Unearthed: Folkestone Before AD 1500* community archaeology project, and the site was revealed to be far more complex than was first thought.

The earliest Roman building that was constructed at the site dates to around the first century AD. This 'proto villa' was almost certainly built within the confines of an existing Iron Age settlement. This first villa was then demolished in the late second century AD possibly due to the foundations being too shallow. A new villa complex was built around the same time on a much larger scale than the first and included mosaic floors, a substantial bath house and a second block that could either have been linked by a courtyard or acted as a separate residence. Evidence suggests that the villa was initially abandoned in the late third century AD but was then reoccupied in the fourth century AD although it may have been in poor condition by this time. Archaeological finds suggest that the site was then finally abandoned by the early fifth century AD.

A number of important finds from the villa site have been excavated over the course of various fieldwork seasons. These include Samian ware (pottery), brooches, coins, games pieces and a mother goddess figurine. Significantly, more *Classis Britannica* stamped tiles have been found which continue to indicate a naval connection and possibly even a function as a signalling station. The villa was obviously of a high status and would have been occupied by people of a similar social standing and wealth. It has been suggested that the villa may have housed a naval officer or belonged to the British fleet. Suggestions that the villa may have been the residence of a commanding officer or acted as the headquarters for the *Classis Britannica* seem unlikely. While the villa is a substantial complex, it is not that different from other rural villas of the same period. Its position on the East Cliff however remains significant and would have allowed its occupants to take full advantage of the landing place at the foot of the cliff.

During the recent seasons of fieldwork, evidence for an early Iron Age occupation of the site was also uncovered. Recent work has determined that the site was flourishing as a major coastal trading and production settlement from the second century BC. Manufacture of rotary quern stones from the local Greensand stone took place on an industrial scale during the first centuries BC and AD, with the finished products being found across Kent, the Lower Thames and East Anglia. To date it is believed to be the only Iron Age quern factory to have been excavated in north-western Europe and so is of international as well as national significance. From around 50 BC onwards evidence suggests that the site was a major point of contact between Britain and the Roman world. Finds which include Amphora vessels and Gallo Belgic wares demonstrates significant trade with the Roman world and the importation of luxury goods during the first century BC.

Further investigation would be needed to determine whether there was an early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff perhaps connected to the Roman villa site here. It seems likely that this landing place would have been used since ancient times, and that it may somehow have been linked to the structures on the clifftop which could have taken full advantage of this site. However, as has already been mentioned, coastal erosion between Dover and Folkestone has likely removed any evidence for this and so conclusions about its presence cannot be definitively confirmed. Folkestone and the East Cliff area does however remain an important coastal site of Iron Age and Roman origins that have connections to maritime activities and trade.

Folkestone Pent Stream and West Cliff

The Pent Stream is an ancient watercourse flowing from the North Downs into the sea at Folkestone. Historically the entrance to the Pent Stream and the quayside at the base of the West Cliff have provided a harbour for trade, cross channel connections and at times a point of embarkation for military expeditions in Folkestone. Today the Pent Stream is hidden by urbanisation and only occasionally makes its presence known by flooding. The construction of a formal harbour at Folkestone did not take place until much later in the nineteenth century. Structures relating to an early harbour at the West Cliff have since been destroyed, largely by harsh weather conditions over the centuries and due to many of the structures, such as jetties, being made from wood. Attempts to construct stone defences were also destroyed during particularly ferocious storms that battered the south coast during the medieval period.

Portus Lemanis

During the Roman period, major ports of entry into the Roman province were established as well as associated structures that played roles in the protection of the coastline and other maritime activity. At this time, the Limen (Rother as it would later be known) was a large navigable river which ran westwards from the area south of Hythe and across the Marsh into the neighbouring District. The river flowed down to the town of Appledore to the north of the Romney Marsh from the county of Sussex where it separated into two channels; one which flowed south-eastwards under the hills of Rucking and Bilsington and then passed under Lympne and into the sea by West Hythe, and the other which ran south-eastwards from Appledore across the Marsh to Romney where it formed a port or haven and emptied into the sea there. The inlet was reclaimed by the early medieval period and by the eleventh century formed dry land that became the parishes of West Hythe, Burmarsh, Eastbridge and Newchurch.

Early harbours were established along the north side of the Limen, such as at *Sandtun* and *Portus Lemanis*, as well as the port at Romney and other settlements which would become non-corporate Cinque Port 'limbs' such as West Hythe, Dengemarsh, Broomhill and Oswaldstone. The area around Lympne during the Roman period would have overlooked the entrance to a substantial natural harbour and was established as an ancient fort, settlement and port known as *Portus Lemanis*. The fort that was constructed at *Portus Lemanis* is part of a specific group of later Roman coastal defensive structures known collectively as the Saxon Shore forts. They form an important collection of heritage assets relating to early harbours within the District and the Roman occupation in Britain.

The Roman forts of the Saxon Shore were built along the east and south coast of England at potential points of penetration into the country such as inlets and estuaries. They stretch from Norfolk and around the coast to Hampshire; in Kent Saxon Shore forts were built at Reculver, Richborough, Dover and Lympne. The name ‘Saxon Shore’ that is given to the group seems to derive from a reference made to nine of these forts in the late fourth century document *Notitia Dignitatum* (the “Register of Dignitaries”) being under the command of an official “Count of the Saxon Shore”. They exhibit a number of different site plans and clearly illustrate the development of the Roman military architecture during the third and early fourth centuries AD.

They appear to be part of an organised defensive strategy which included forts on the opposite coast at Gaul. It has been suggested that this may have been in response to seaborne Saxon raiders, however the presence of the forts may actually have been more haphazard than it initially appears and so may have had more to do with maritime control over the Channel and the maintenance of shipping and military supply. Long-term occupation of the forts is not evident, and they appear to have been constructed piecemeal over a period of around 50 years. Certainly the fort at *Portus Lemanis* is believed to have been constructed around the 270s AD and was abandoned by around 360 AD. This may have been due to conditions in the harbour declining because of silting or coastal erosion.

The forts can be divided into two distinct groups for their different morphologies; an ‘early’ group that resembles most forts in Roman Britain by size and layout such as Reculver, and a “main” group that features novel aspects of Roman fort architecture that are unique in Britain and more common across the rest of the Roman Empire. The fort at Lympne, now more often called Stutfall Castle, belongs to the second group. The main differences to the ‘early’ group are the thickness of the fort walls (up to 3.5 meters), the variability of plan, and most importantly the presence of semi-circular bastions on the outer faces of the fort walls. The upstanding remains of the fort walls at Lympne are around 3.5 meters thick and were recorded as being approximately 5 meters high in the mid-twentieth century. The fort itself was built of flint with tile bonding courses that was common for this group. Semi-circular bastions covered the perimeter, and partial excavations have uncovered the main gate that was in the east wall of the fort flanked by a pair of semi-circular towers. The external bastions are a signature feature of this group, most of them being solid masonry “drums” as at Pevensey, Bradwell-on-Sea, Burgh Castle and Lympne. Bastions in late Roman military architecture were designed to give forts and town walls defensive capabilities, clearly demonstrating the intention for this type of function at Lympne and others from this group.

More recent geophysical work by the University of Kent at Lympne has further added to earlier excavations at the site and suggested that the bathhouse structure originally discovered by Charles Roach Smith in 1850 is perhaps larger than was first thought. The Principia structure was also confirmed as well as evidence of the internal organisation of the fort such as possible roads and streets. Unusually however, there is so far no evidence for any of these internal roads extending beyond the fort from either the west or east gate. Today the fort at *Portus Lemanis* survives relatively well although it has been significantly distorted by landslips. The

ancient port has now completely disappeared and is dry land that became part of the Romney Marsh during the early medieval period. Lympne is landlocked and finds itself 2.5km from the sea.

Significantly, there is evidence for an earlier fort around the site of *Portus Lemanis* as well as an association to the *Classis Britannica*. There has been a significant amount of literature and debate surrounding the *Classis Britannica* despite a lack of supporting evidence. It seems to have been a provincial naval fleet that may have been present for the logistical movement of personnel and support around British waters in order to retain control over the Channel and also to maintain communication and trade routes. There are few references to the fleet by name made by classical historians and archaeological evidence is also sparse. However, tiles stamped with *CLBR* (*Classis Britannica*) are common along the east Kent coast and in London which may suggest buildings that were related to the fleet and its personnel. Certainly *CLBR* tiles have been excavated at both Lympne and Folkestone which has led to some believing that these sites had an important connection to the fleet during the Roman period. However, in order to confirm this further investigation will be needed in the future.

In relation to the earlier fort associated with *Portus Lemanis*, excavations by Charles Roach Smith in 1850 uncovered a second century AD altar that had been reused as a gate platform. The altar had been dedicated by Lucius Aufidius Pantera who was Commander of the British fleet around 135 AD and was covered in salt water barnacles. Despite attempts to locate this earlier fort, archaeological remains are yet to be found though it is now believed that this structure was close to Stutfall Castle but rather than being on the same site as had previously been suggested. Recent geophysical work by the University of Kent at Lympne suggests that there are significant buried remains, and so the potential of the site to reveal further archaeological evidence is substantial. It will be important to further investigate this site to better understand the function and development of the early harbour of *Portus Lemanis* and its associated structures and settlement.

Sandtun

Several estates which were clustered around the area to the south and east of Lympne had an important commercial role from the eighth century AD. A Saxon occupation site was excavated at *Sandtun* between 1947 and 1948 on the sand dunes near West Hythe, which would have sat on the north side of the Limen inlet between the eighth and ninth centuries AD. Finds from the site suggest that it was a ‘non-urban port’ which sat on a sandbank adjacent to the Saxon Shore fort at *Portus Lemanis* between the late seventh century or early eighth century through to the mid-ninth century. A variety of activities were evidently practiced at *Sandtun* including seasonal fishing, salt-making and bone working. It may also have acted as a landing place for waterborne trade from the continent which is evidenced by ceramic assemblages found at the site.

Finds from *Sandtun* include hearths, fish-hooks, shears, scamasaxes, bronze pins, cod-fish bones in large quantities (probably locally caught) and continental ceramics. Evidence suggests a long albeit seasonal occupation at *Sandtun* which may have had two distinct phases probably based on local fish migrations. Burials have also been found at the site but are not believed to be contemporary with the Saxon

settlement. The majority of the finds are now in the British Museum with a small selection being held at the Hythe Local History Room.

The occupation appears to have ended abruptly around 850 – 875 AD though it is not clear as to what caused this. A suggestion has been made that this could be attributed to its vulnerability to sea-borne attackers, such as Viking incursions which affected the Romney Marsh at this time although it is not possible to confirm this. It is clear that the settlement moved eastwards towards West Hythe and then Hythe, which was established as a harbour market town by the eleventh century. Unfortunately the dunes on which the site was located are almost completely destroyed today and so very little remains besides the finds that were removed during excavation.

Romney Ports

The earliest origins of Romney can be traced back to a charter in 741 AD in which Ethelberht II granted a fishery at the mouth of the *Limin aea* and land on which fishermen's houses or sheds were to be located to the church of St Mary (Lyminge). The shingle spur on which Romney was founded had begun forming during the Neolithic period, and by the eighth century AD the north-eastern side of the new inlet was occupied. Between 450 and 700 AD the shingle barrier that had been building from Hastings to Hythe was breached by the sea creating a wide marine inlet and an outlet for the river Limen between Dymchurch and Lydd via a haven at Romney.

The traditional view that Old Romney was a predecessor to New Romney is now disputed. Recent fieldwork and documentary studies suggest that Old Romney, rather than being a predecessor, was actually a scattered village concentrated around the church of St Clement and that the *Romenel* of the Domesday Book was situated close to the Saxon church of St Martin (New Romney). It is unclear when these settlements began, but it is clear that both must have grown in size and importance from the eighth century AD. A long port was probably laid between the two along the banks of the Limen. The estuary of the Limen was a narrow tidal channel flanked by extensive mudflats and numerous salterns which were located in the slow-flowing water. Temporary fishermen's huts have been excavated on the eastern side and it is believed that the early town would have been established on a shingle bank along which a shelving beach ran.

During the late Anglo-Saxon period the port at Romney appears to have developed as a market town with shallow draught trading and fishing that could easily be floated on and off the beach. By the tenth century New Romney and much of the surrounding land had passed from the nunnery of Lyminge to the archbishop. A mint was established during the reign of Aethelred II (c. 997 – 1003) and a port was founded there, probably by the archbishop. Famously in 1066 the men of New Romney repulsed William, Duke of Normandy when he and some of his men attempted to land at the town. The invading force landed along the coast at Pevensey in Sussex, though upon the conclusion of the Battle of Hastings the town and port of New Romney were one of the first places to be suppressed by William as a consequence of their earlier actions. Twenty years later the town's population was recorded as being between 650 and 800 with a harbour, church and mint laid out in a grid pattern along an east-west axis with the river Limen to the west and north-west and the sea to the east and south-east.

The continued urban development of New Romney is clear with the construction of the church of St Nicholas during the twelfth century which lay near the harbour and market. By the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042 – 1066) the town and port had become well established and was supplying the King with ship service as one of the original five Cinque Ports. Other small ports along the Limen (later Rother) which also acted as ports during the Saxon and early medieval period became non-corporate Cinque Port 'limbs' to New Romney as a head port. These included Broomhill, Dengemarsh and Oswaldstone, all of which have since been lost as villages on the Romney Marsh. The river Rother continued to exit to the sea at Romney until the late thirteenth century when great storms ultimately changed the course of the Rother towards Rye and deposited such a substantial amount of silt into the Romney harbour that it would find itself landlocked over a mile from the sea. Other parts of the Marsh were also significantly affected, such as Broomhill that was lost to the sea during the Great Storm in 1287.

Today the town of New Romney sits over a mile from the sea and there is little evidence for the early medieval port. As part of the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme, a community archaeology project will work to locate archaeological evidence for the location of the port in order to enhance understandings about its historic development and the communities that built up around it.

Hythe

In the first century AD the area to the west of modern Hythe was a lagoon-like expanse of open water beside a marshland creek of the river Limen which gave access to the Weald and formed a natural harbour. By the early second century AD an area of dry land on the edge of the lagoon close to todays West Hythe was chosen for the establishment of a base and harbour for the *Classis Britannica* named *Portus Lemanis*. As has already been detailed, excavations at the site have recovered evidence for this early fort as well as tiles stamped with *CLBR* (*Classis Britannica*), though the fort itself has remained undiscovered. A Romano-British altar dedicated to Neptune by Lucius Aufidius Pantera, the Commander of the British Fleet in 135 AD, has also been found providing further evidence for the existence of an early Roman naval base. More recent excavations have again failed to find the location of the fort, but the discovery of reused masonry, the altar and more *CLBR* stamped tiles suggest that it either still lays undiscovered or may have already been lost to coastal erosion.

During the third century AD a series of Saxon Shore forts were established along the east and south coast of England, including at *Portus Lemanis.* As has already been explained, the fort was not occupied for long and was abandoned by the late fourth century AD perhaps due to coastal erosion or silting of the harbour. Although the port at *Portus Lemanis* had been abandoned, the tidal inlet probably remained as a natural harbour throughout the Saxon period. By the early ninth century Lympne was a centre for administration of properties of the archbishop of Canterbury and from 928 through to 1035 a mint operated there.

As the estuary continued to silt up the seasonal settlement at *Sandtun* was established which lay immediately south-east of the Roman fort. Progressive silting

forced the settlement to gradually move eastwards first being replaced by West Hythe and then by Hythe. The precise dates for the shift are unclear, however a charter dating to 1036 AD indicates that Hythe was by this time on its present site and well established. By the later Saxon period Hythe was an important sea port and by 1086 is recorded as being a medium-sized market town. In the mid-eleventh century AD the mint at Lympne moved to Hythe where a new port was established. Throughout the early medieval period Hythe must have had a substantial harbour and fishing fleet with the majority of its trade and industry being related to the sea. By 1050 AD Hythe was providing ship service to King Edward the Confessor as one of the original Cinque Ports which would later become the Confederation of the Cinque Ports.

3. Description of the Heritage Assets

Below follows a table detailing the key heritage assets that survive which relate to the early harbours of district. Unfortunately many have been lost due to factors such as coastal erosion whilst others are yet to be uncovered as part of future archaeological work.

Key Components

Name	***Description***	***Survival***
East Wear Bay Roman Villa (East Cliff, Folkestone)	The monument at East Wear Bay includes an unenclosed Iron Age urnfield and Roman villa that survives as buried remains. It was first excavated in 1924 by Samuel E. Winbolt who found two blocks; one that was constructed during the second half of the first century AD and then rebuilt at the same time as the second block in approximately 90 AD. The site had remained open as a heritage attraction until the onset of the Second World War when it was closed and used as part of a series of gun placements along coastal defences at Folkestone. It was briefly reopened after the war but was again backfilled in 1957. Later excavations in 1989 uncovered further evidence of the villa complex. The first villa was constructed in approximately 100 AD on	The Roman Villa and unenclosed Iron Age urnfield on the same site are designated as a **Scheduled Monument**. The Roman Villa survives well below ground despite damage and disturbance, particularly during the Second World War and more recently through coastal erosion to the cliff edge. There are no remains that survive above ground. The walls and foundations of the later buildings survive up to 2.4m high. Several of the rooms of the bath house have been destroyed through coastal erosion. The site retains significant potential for further archaeological investigation which will further improve understandings about the site and the phasing of its buildings and occupations. The villa also contains a Roman mosaic with a

	the site of an Iron Age coastal trading post and rotary quern stone production settlement. This was then demolished possibly due to shallow foundations and replaced with a new villa complex in the late second century AD. The new villa was more complex and included mosaic floors, a large bath house and a second block that may have been linked by the courtyard or may have been a separate residence. Important finds at the site include Samian ware (pottery), coins, brooches a mother goddess figurine. Tiles stamped with *CLBR* have also been found possibly relating to the *Classis Britannica*. The villa appears to have been abandoned by the early fifth century AD and now only survives as buried remains. It has been suggested that this site may have been linked to an early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff. Coastal erosion since this period has likely however removed any evidence of this.	tessellated design which is unique in this country. Evidence relating to the early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff has likely been lost to coastal erosion since the Roman period.
Portus Lemanis and Stutfall Castle (Lympne)	The monument includes a Roman fort from the Saxon Shore series and is now often called Stutfall Castle. It is situated towards the foot of a steep escarpment at the north-east edge of the Romney Marsh, just south of Lympne. During the Roman period, it would have protected the entrance to a substantial natural harbour that is now part of the reclaimed land of the	Stutfall Castle is designated as a **Scheduled Monument**. It survives well with a good amount of upstanding masonry as well as buried remains. The site is however in a fragmentary state owing to a number of landslips that have occurred in the clay soil on which the fort is built. This has distorted the original layout of the fort with large portions of walling having

	Romney Marsh. Stutfall Castle currently lays some 2.5km inland. It was first excavated by Charles Roach Smith in 1850 and then again in 1894 by Sir Victor Horsley. The excavations made by Charles Roach Smith uncovered a second century altar that had been reused as a gate platform. Its dedication to Lucius Aufidius Pantera, the Commander of the British fleet around 135 AD, as well as tiles stamped as *Classis Britannica* (British Fleet) suggests that a naval base existed at the site before the construction of the Saxon-Shore fort in the third century AD. Later excavations by Barry Cunliffe between 1976 and 1978 uncovered no further evidence of this earlier fort which is now believed to have been located near to the site of the current fort rather than on the same location. Evidence suggests that the later fort was built in the mid to late 270s AD with the other Saxon Shore forts being constructed piecemeal over approximately a 50 year period around this time. It appears to have originally been of irregular pentagonal plan with semi-circular bastions around the perimeter. Three of these survive at the north, north-west and south-east corners with evidence of two more in the middle at the south end of the south-west side. It is built of flint with tile bonding courses. Partial excavations	either fallen down or been thrown from their original positions. The south wall has disappeared entirely. Evidence that suggests the presence of an earlier fort on the site relating to *Classis Britannica* is likely to lie at the site or at least close by, although there is also the chance that it has already been lost due to coastal erosion. Only part of the fort has been excavated or disturbed by later activity and so the archaeological potential of the site is high. A geophysical survey undertaken by the University of Kent in 2015 indicates that the survival of buried remains is strong and so there is significant potential for further archaeological investigation to better understand the function of this structure and the early harbour.

	have shown that the main gate was located in the east wall flanked by a pair of semi-circular towers. Two masonry buildings have been excavated inside which include the principia and a small bath suite. Substantial portions of the perimeter walls run along the north-east and west boundaries. The fort appears to have been abandoned by 360 AD based on coin and pottery evidence.	
Sandtun (West Hythe)	A Saxon occupation site was excavated between 1947 and 1948 at *Sandtun* on the sand dunes near West Hythe. The settlement would have sat on the north side of the Limen inlet between the eighth and ninth centuries AD. Finds suggest that it was a 'non-urban port' where seasonal fishing, salt-making and bone-working were practiced. It may also have acted as a landing place for waterborne trade from the continent which is evident from ceramic assemblages found at the site. Other important finds from *Sandtun* include hearths, fish-hooks, shears, scamasaxes, bronze pins, cod-fish bones in large quantities (probably locally caught) and other continental ceramics. Occupation of the site seems to have ended abruptly around 850-875 AD though it is not clear as to the reason why. It has been suggested that its vulnerability to sea-borne	Unfortunately the sand dunes on which *Sandtun* was located have almost entirely disappeared and so little evidence of the early harbour remains. However, the finds excavated from the site are now kept at the British Museum and Hythe Local History Room. They include important finds such as continental ceramics and fishing hooks which provide evidence for the function of this early harbour.

	attackers such as Vikings may have contributed to its abandonment in favour of West Hythe and Hythe to the east.	

Assets relating to the early harbour at the **West Cliff** in **Folkestone** do not survive. The estuary created by the Pent Stream together with the tidal inlet had slowly become silted and unusable as a harbour. Early structures which were constructed in attempts to maintain the harbour were either destroyed by bad weather or have not survived in the archaeological record due to the materials that they were constructed from, namely wood, not surviving well and being demolished soon after they were erected. A formal harbour was not constructed at Folkestone until much later in the nineteenth century despite hints at a plan to do so during the reign of Henry VIII.

Archaeological remains from the early harbour at **Romney** are currently sparse and there is a need for future work to clarify its location as well as enhance understandings about its historic development. Few remnants such as boat hooks on the side walls of the St Nicholas church at New Romney which would have originally stood harbour-side illustrate the presence of an early harbour being located here. A programme of community archaeology as part of the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme, *The Hunt for Romney Port*, will work to uncover evidence for this early harbour.

4. Statement of Significance

With the District's proximity to continental Europe, its history has been inexorably linked with the sea and maritime activity. It has played an important role in cross Channel trade, transport and defence for hundreds of years giving rise to prominent early harbours beginning in the Roman period. A number of early harbours were established along the evolving coastline and provide important evidence for the development of maritime activity as well as the settlements that grew up around them. There is also significant archaeological potential at some of these sites to reveal further remains and information regarding aspects such as links to the *Classis Britannica*. The surviving assets in many cases are important examples relating to this theme, and so they have been assessed as having **outstanding significance**.

Evidential Value

The assets highlighted in this theme have exceptional evidential value. The archaeological potential to uncover further evidence of the early harbours and their development within the district is significant particularly as buried remains survive so well. Geophysical surveying undertaken by the University of Kent in 2015 at Stutfall Castle (*Portus Lemanis*) has identified the significant potential for buried remains which would reveal more detailed information about the layout and function of the Saxon Shore fort. This is perhaps particularly important for this site as it has been substantially distorted by land slippage over the centuries which have made interpretations of the site far more difficult. Future archaeological work could vastly improve understandings as well as adding to knowledge regarding the Saxon Shore fort group and their function at early harbours. There is also the continued potential

to uncover the location and evidence for the earlier fort at this site that is believed to have had a close association with the *Classis Britannica*. This would not only be important to improving understandings about the development of *Portus Lemanis*, but also in providing evidence for the *Classis Britannica* which so far is sparse.

There is also significant potential for further important archaeological evidence to be produced from the Iron Age and Roman site at East Cliff, Folkestone. Buried remains of the villa and earlier Iron Age quern production site have survived well despite sections being lost to coastal erosion due to the sites proximity to the cliffs edge. The *East Wear Bay Archaeological Project* continues to work at the site and uncover important archaeological finds that are exceptional for this period. Further evidence may also help to clarify any association to the *Classis Britannica* as well as a possible early 'harbour' that may have been located at the foot of the East Cliff but has since been eroded.

Archaeological remains relating to the early medieval port of Romney are also a potential which will be explored as part of the Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme. Overall whilst many of the assets relating to this theme have since been lost to factors such as coastal erosion and silting, those that have remained have survived well largely as buried archaeology and represent important evidence for early harbour function and development within the district. They will also go further to provide information regarding the development of these coastal settlements and the communities that have grown with them.

Historical Value

The historical value of these sites is significant in illustrating major historical events as well as important local history such as the Roman occupation of Britain and the reclamation of the Romney Marsh coastline. They are also important in revealing information about the development of coastal settlements across the district and how these communities grew up around the early harbours and growing maritime activity.

Sites such as *Portus Lemanis* and Stutfall Castle are valuable in illustrating the development of Roman naval architecture in relation to the administration of coastal defence and control over the Channel. The presence of *Classis Britannica* stamped tiles at both *Portus Lemanis* and the East Cliff at Folkestone further demonstrates a possible link to the British Fleet and its function in British waters. Evidence from other early harbours such as Hythe and Romney will also be important in illustrating the historical development of settlements and activities such as markets and maritime economy. Aspects of life within these early harbour towns can also be represented and the potential for further evidence is significant across many of the sites such as *Portus Lemanis*, Romney and East Cliff, Folkestone.

Aesthetic Value

The aesthetic value of these assets is limited as many are buried remains whilst others are fragmentary. The upstanding remains of Stutfall Castle at Lympne for example are striking within the landscape and serve as an important representation of Roman naval architecture. They also serve as a strong reminder of the progression of the Marsh coastline over its recent history compared with the coastline at Hythe and Folkestone. The remains clearly illustrate the problem that many early harbours faced with becoming inundated and eventually redundant, and

so in this way they provide a valuable sensory experience of this part of the District's history. Other assets such as the Roman villa on the East Cliff in Folkestone and early medieval port of Romney are buried and so cannot make a contribution to the aesthetic value of this theme.

Communal Value

The communal value of the assets highlighted in this theme is high. There are significant opportunities for community archaeology projects at sites such as New Romney, *Portus Lemanis* (Stutfall Castle) and the East Cliff at Folkestone relating to the assets from this theme. Existing projects such as the *East Wear Bay Archaeological Project* have highlighted the significant communal interest in the archaeology and heritage represented at these sites, and the ways that they can instil a sense of pride of place. Various open days at the East Cliff Roman villa site, for example, have raised its profile and is now highly valued by its local community as well as by visitors and professionals from further afield. The Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme is also offering valuable opportunities to become involved in various programmes, such as the *Hunt for Romney Port*. This is not only important for the community, but also for better understandings about the site and its historic development.

5. Vulnerabilities

The assets relating to early harbours from across the District identified in this theme are particularly vulnerable to a number of natural processes such as coastal erosion and silting. The progression of the Romney Marsh coastline over many centuries as well as silting largely due to harsh weather and coastal conditions has left a number of early harbours across the district landlocked and unusable for shipping. This is especially evident in the case of *Portus Lemanis* and the Romney ports which both became inundated and currently sit landlocked miles from the sea. Evidence suggests that the Saxon Shore fort at *Portus Lemanis* was only occupied for a short time and it has been suggested that this is largely due to the site becoming inundated and unusable as a harbour. The port of Romney acted as an important harbour for a number of years, however by the storms of the thirteenth century also became victim to extensive silting and found itself over a mile from the sea. This has also affected the survival of heritage assets relating to the Romney harbour, with only a few still being evident. There is a need to conduct future archaeological work to locate the early harbour and enhance understandings about its development.

Other early harbours across the Romney Marsh have since completely disappeared as a result of silting and bad weather that has continued to significantly alter the Marshes coastline over its history. Examples include Broomhill, which was located west of Dungeness and had been an early harbour on the south bank of the Limen when parts of the Denge and Walland Marshes were still separated from the Romney Marsh Proper during the Saxon and early medieval period. Broomhill had been a non-corporate Cinque Port 'limb' of Romney but was lost to the sea during the Great Storm of 1287. Few assets survive that relate to these early harbours though further investigation may reveal new information.

Silting has also affected the early harbours at Hythe and Folkestone, at times making usage of the harbours and shipping beaches difficult. Problems with silting would continue to plague both of these ports, ultimately resulting in the complete inundation

of Hythe's harbour and a continued battle to retain the later formal harbour at Folkestone. With the redundancy of the original harbour at Hythe, new development now covers the area making surviving heritage assets sparse.

Coastal erosion is another natural factor that makes a number of the early harbour sites along the district's coast vulnerable, as well as their associated assets. At the site of *Portus Lemanis* there is evidence for a fort that predates the Saxon Shore fort which may have had strong connections to the *Classis Britannica*. However, the location of this fort has never been found although finds relating to it have. It has been suggested that it is either still lying undiscovered or it has already been lost to coastal erosion. Future archaeological work will be important in determining whether any remains do survive of this important site relating to the early Roman harbour at *Portus Lemanis*. Land slippage is another natural factor that affects this site specifically, and to date has now significantly distorted the upstanding remains of the Saxon Shore fort. Whilst this makes it difficult to interpret the site, the potential for buried remains is strong and so future work will help to overcome this.

The Roman villa site along the East Cliff in Folkestone is significantly affected by coastal erosion, and substantial sections of the site have already been lost. Its location close to the cliffs edge makes its particularly vulnerable to future coastal erosion, and work is being done to excavate and record as much of the site as is possible before it is completely lost. Evidence for an early 'harbour' at the foot of the East Cliff may also have already been lost to coastal erosion between Folkestone and Dover, making it very difficult to definitely confirm its existence during ancient times.

Another factor to consider is new development which puts assets from this theme at risk. There are examples within the District where a harbour has fallen out of use or become inundated and so the area that it once occupied has been developed for an alternative use, such as housing. The original harbour at Hythe became completely silted by the sixteenth century and has now been developed, leaving little evidence of its original function. Another example includes Dengemarsh which was once a non-corporate Cinque Port 'limb' to Romney before falling out of use and eventually being built on as part of the Lydd ranges for the Second World War. Not only are early harbours at risk from redevelopment, but also its associated assets that illustrate its historic function and development.

6. Opportunities

There are important opportunities relating to the assets from this theme primarily concerned with the potential for future archaeological work. The survival of significant buried remains at both Stutfall Castle and East Wear Bay have been identified and present valuable opportunities for further investigation and future archaeological discovery. This also offers the opportunity to build on understandings of the sites and their functions relating to the sea. Stutfall Castle for example is part of a series of Saxon Shore Forts that could benefit from further research to better understand their functions. It is also believed that an earlier fort existed within close proximity to this site but remains have yet to be found. Continued archaeological investigation could shed light on this earlier site as well as produce archaeological evidence for its existence. Whilst Roman Kent in particular is well documented, certain elements such as the *Classis Britannica* still remain largely unanswered and

would benefit from further research. Both sites have produced stamped CLBR tiles which need more detailed research and documentation to better understand their significance.

There are also opportunities to build community projects around the assets from this theme, such as the *Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme* which will provide a number of such projects over a three year period (2017/2018 – 2020). The *Hunt for Romney Port* encourages participation from the local community as well as archaeological professionals and will be important in revealing archaeological evidence for the early medieval port of Romney. Remains of the port have yet to be discovered, and so this is an important opportunity for significant archaeological investigation to enhance our understanding of the development of early harbours along the coastline as well as the settlements and communities that grew up around them.

The *East Wear Bay Archaeological Project* also offers a number of opportunities for public participation in project work, such as excavation or supporting research, as well as open days. This is important in encouraging local ownership and feelings of pride in the local heritage and also attracting wider interest from visitors further afield. It is also an important opportunity to gather a substantial amount of information about the site before it is completely lost to clifftop erosion. Much of the site has already been lost, and it is especially important to record and preserve as much of the site as is possible as many elements are of international significance such as the Iron Age quern production site and Roman mosaic remains.

7. Current Activities

Community archaeology projects in and around Folkestone have enjoyed substantial local support and are ongoing. The *East Wear Bay Archaeological Project* is a long-term research project that is led by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in conjunction with the Kent Archaeological Society, Folkestone Research and Archaeology Group and Dover Archaeological Group. It continues the work at the East Wear Bay site that was started as part of the *A Town Unearthed: Folkestone Before 1500* community archaeology project in 2010. The project aims to collate the results from the previous seasons of fieldwork on the East Wear Bay Iron Age occupation site and Roman Villa and to continue excavating the site in the hopes of obtaining as much information and archaeological material as is possible before the site is completely lost to clifftop erosion. This work is very important to building a more detailed understanding of this site, particularly as the site was probably of particular maritime significance and its function is not fully understood. The *East Wear Bay Archaeological Project* continues to offer voluntary positions on excavations and research exercises relating to the site which have been very well attended. Open days at the site have also attracted large numbers of visitors.

The *Fifth Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme* is also offering important opportunities to participate in community archaeological programmes relating to the assets explored in this theme. The *Hunt for Romney Port* project will draw together the local community and archaeological professionals to find archaeological evidence for the early medieval port at Romney. This will also improve understandings about the development of the port as well as the surrounding settlement and local community. Currently no archaeological evidence for the port

exists and so this work could greatly enhance the archaeological record for this theme.

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