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“A green and pleasant land”



for a finer class of grass

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Laying a green future

The benefits of lush green grass for design and health

Romney Marsh has had an enviable reputation for growing high quality grass for many hundreds of years, so in one very important respect, nothing has changed! When the Romans came to Britain two thousand or so years ago, almost all the area we now call Romney Marsh was under the sea, yet by the time the Normans crossed the Channel a thousand years later, it had changed into an area of tidal salt marshes, partly protected from the open sea by ever changing shingle banks. The established Church was the first body to recognise the potential value of the Marsh, quickly followed by the great seats of learning. The landowners and their tenants began to drain the area by throwing up earth walls to keep the sea out. The first recorded tenancy was in the 12th Century to a man called Baldwin who installed a ditch (locally

called a sewer) which is still in use today as Baldwin's Sewer. The land was drained field by field, sea walls were built (Dymchurch 13th Century) and co-ordinated drainage of the whole area was centrally organised by the Romney Marsh Corporation in the 15th Century.

Cattle, and especially sheep, flourished on the rich pastures, giving rise to the wool trade which brought great wealth to England.

Sadly, the whole area at this time was pretty unhealthy as mosquitoes also flourished and gave the inhabitants a form of what we now know as Malaria, and yet the population increased presumably because the health risk to the working population was outweighed by the opportunities for landowners and farmers to make good returns.

This way of life continued pretty much unchanged until the 20th Century when power machinery gradually became available and enabled arable farming to become viable. Since the Second World War, many acres were put under the plough as part of the war effort, and now much of the Marsh grows wheat, barley, oilseed rape and potatoes very successfully – as well as really nice grass.

Towards the end of the 20th Century, turf became one of the crops being cultivated. The rich and varied soils of the marsh were known to grow good grass as had been proven for generations. The mix of sand from the sea together with silts and clay which had washed off the Kent and Sussex countryside for all those years, proved ideal for growing cultivated turf. But not only did the soil grow good turf but because of the mix of components, it proved to produce turf which was ideally suited to the local soils found throughout South East England. By far the greater part of the South East has soils which contain an element of clay, or in some areas, sand. By growing turf on a sand/silt/clay soil not only provides an excellent growing medium, but also means that when turf is relocated to its new “home”, the contrast between nursery and new location is minimised leading to very rapid establishment. This similarity of soils is greatly beneficial to final appearance especially when compared with turf raised on peat or very sandy soils which have to overcome a big change in growing mediums.

Now in the early 21st Century, around 1000 acres of quality turf are being cultivated by Grasslands within easy delivery distance of the built up areas of the South East including London. The enormous post war development of the greater South East of England has created an ever growing demand for “instant effect” grass areas. These include private gardens, sports facilities, public parks and



open spaces as well as every kind of commercial and retail park. Turf grown by Grasslands graces many well-known visitor attractions such as Kew Gardens, The Tower of London, Bluewater Retail Park, The Royal Pavilion Brighton, Greenwich Park and the National Maritime Museum among many others. The number of private gardens turfed with Grasslands turf over the past thirty or so years would be beyond calculation. What can be recognised is that the care and effort which is put in to producing really good turf for a very wide range of applications continues the tradition of growing top grade grass on Romney Marsh. Perhaps even better news is that the mosquitoes no longer carry Malaria... although that might possibly change if the climate warms up to nearer tropical levels.

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Grasslands as a business makes every endeavour to be as eco-friendly as we can. We use organic feeds and growth enhancers. We use state of the art machinery and technology and we deliver virtually all our turf on our own delivery vehicles which are powered with Euro 5 compliant engines, which keep emissions as low as possible. Grass is also a massive health promoter. It absorbs very large quantities of carbon dioxide (and other unpleasant pollutants) which it converts into harmless substances, and by photosynthesis, produces oxygen. In addition to this, grass acts as a surface coolant for the earth's surface. Typically, grass would be ten degrees cooler than tarmac on a sunny day. Most importantly for planning

considerations, grass areas provide spaces for children especially to use for play and physical activities, which help offset the increasing health problems being caused by obesity.

Yes, grass is an essential ingredient for modern healthy living and should be seen as an important component part of almost any development whether it be private or commercial. A nice lawn not only looks good and sets off the rest of the garden, but it provides an opportunity for exercise for its owners. A grassed open space however, like a park or a sports area, creates the opportunity for people in much larger numbers to keep active and healthy. By growing grass on Romney Marsh, Grasslands are following a



long tradition which has endured for the better part of a thousand years. Of course we no longer use the grass to fatten sheep for the population to eat, although many farmers still do, but we do offer turf as a product which helps the climate and the environment, and provides a surface for people to enjoy and which can help them to keep healthy. We hope to continue in this endeavour for many years to come but we do need, as part of the wider turf industry, to make every effort to encourage planners and builders alike to ensure that maximum space is found for locally sourced, health enhancing grass wherever possible when planning today's developments.



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