



NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

c/o. 1 Coastguard Cottages, Rye Harbour, Rye, East Sussex.
TN31 7TS.

Telephone: Rye (0797) 223862

A registered charity founded in 1973 to aid in the establishment and maintenance of a nature reserve within the Rye Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest, (known as an SSSI).

Chairman: Ian Rumley-Dawson. Secretary: Clifford Percival. Treasurer: Mr. Pat Bonham.
Committee: Miss Evelyn Stewart, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Miss Liz Blackwell,
Miss Brenda Graves, Warden: Richard Knight, Assistant Warden: Miss Pam Haddon.

W I N T E R 1 9 8 3 / 8 4 .

N U M B E R 1 6 .

WARDEN'S REPORT.

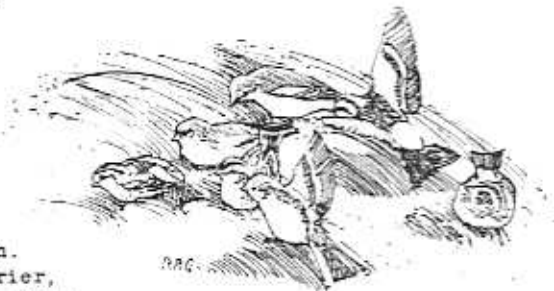
Richard Knight.

Exceptionally dry weather of autumn and early winter led one to speculate what form the rain would be when eventually it came. Will the New Year bring snow enough to sledge in or will it stay mild but soggy?

Unusually large numbers of bramblings and water rails in November were thought to be omens warning of freezing weather advancing from central Northern Europe and beyond. A superbly colourful finch and a notoriously secretive marsh bird, enjoyed by many. While water levels remained low, the little grebes stayed on at Ternery Pool - there being over 50 in November. Additional highlights of the autumn included good numbers of brent geese passing at sea, the largest flock noted being 400, a red-crested pochard, 4 avocets, at least 5 bearded tits and a very small share in the numerous jays that invaded the Southern Counties. Within the Rye Harbour SSSI jays are much rarer than avocets, so it is a treat indeed to see a jay! A kingfisher has also put in a few appearances and a gathering of 210 corn buntings goes down as an all time record.

What to look for now? Well, depending a little on the weather - the colder the better for seeing something a little out of the ordinary. Make a point of looking in the river mouth near Rye Harbour for the regular eider duck or two, and around the river mouth or on Camber Dunes golf course and shoreline for snow buntings. Six twites have been seen along the tidal saltings of the river Rother between Rye and Rye Harbour, mixing with a flock of linnets, so a walk along the footpath on the east side of the river from the Rye roadbridge may prove profitable - this walk is best just before high tide, when many small wading birds may also be seen. Keep a watch out too for the regular winter visitors - hen harrier, short-eared owl and merlin. If you're really keen, search all those gulls, for there is a glaucous gull about and leave no duck unturned, for it might not be a duck at all!

Good watching.



Bramblings and Chaffinches
by Bob Greenhalf.

CONDUCTED WALKS FOR MEMBERS ONLY.

Pam Haddon.

As previously advertised, there will be a conducted walk to the hides at Ternery Pool, led by the Warden, on Sunday 8th January 1984, starting at 2.30pm from the Information Centre in the Martello Tower carpark at Rye Harbour.

New ideas are being "hatched" for the spring and summer conducted walks - details in the next Newsletter.

WORK PARTIES

Pam Haddon.

Sunday 4 ~~April~~ ^{March}; Sunday 1 April; and Saturday 14 April. Meet at 10.00am in the Martello Tower carpark at Rye Harbour and please bring your lunch, rubber boots or tough shoes, work gloves and any useful garden tools, eg. shovels. Tasks will include island building and collection and burning of litter. New volunteers are always welcome for this essential and important work which all helps to produce better results in the spring and summer.

COFFEE MORNINGS APPEAL.

Pam Haddon.

Coffee Mornings can be an enjoyable way of raising money, especially if the work is shared among friends. Are there any members who feel they would like to put on a coffee morning in aid of the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and/or who know of a suitable venue for such an event in their local area? Any offers of help would be most gratefully received by the Friends Committee, who can be contacted via the Warden on Rye (0797) 223862, or at the address shown in the Newsletter heading.

NEW RESERVE LEAFLET.

Ian R-D.

At long last the new colour leaflet has been printed and is now available from the Wardens, price 20p., and please remember if you request one by post - please enclose a stamped addressed envelope size 4½" x 9½". The detailed map on the back of the leaflet has been extensively up-dated and Richard has rewritten the internal text, so that this new edition now contains all the latest information in summary form, about the area of the Reserve, main species that can be seen and brief history over the last few hundred years. This illustrated leaflet is well worth obtaining for newcomers as well as for those who regularly visit the Reserve, as the excellent map clearly names the main areas within the SSSI, which can be most useful when making field observations or when reading various reports connected with the Reserve. This leaflet now replaces the old leaflet which has been out of print for five years.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Pam Haddon.

Thirty years ago the triangle of land lying between Rye, Rye Harbour and Winchelsea Beach was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Nature Conservancy Council. In 1965 the East Sussex County Council published a report on the future development of the East Sussex Coast which included proposals to encourage the establishment of a Nature Reserve over the whole of the 1800 acre SSSI. In 1970 the 209 acres of shingle beach owned by the Southern Water Authority was declared a Local Nature Reserve by the County Council, who also appointed a Management Committee to administer the Reserve. In recent years other landowners within the SSSI have signed agreements which give their land Nature Reserve status, and so Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve was established and has grown to its present size of 880 acres. Not only has the size of the Nature Reserve grown, but also its reputation, popularity and support (the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve currently has 548 members). All this perhaps reflects the National growth in support of conservation societies and the increasing public awareness of wildlife and the need for its conservation. It is then, ironic that the Rye Harbour SSSI is now more threatened, damaged and disturbed than ever before in its history. Threatened by one planning application after another, proposing all kinds of recreational activities - boating marinas, moorings and gravel extraction. Modern arable-farming practices, encouraged by Government and EEC policies and subsidised with taxpayers' money, have irrevocably damaged unique features of the SSSI. Sailing, water-skiing, swimming, fishing, shooting and hunting all take place and inevitably disturb and destroy the wildlife we are trying to protect. Undoubtedly the future will bring yet more unwelcome planning applications and new threats to the wildlife. The only solution to this, the only real, long-term safeguard for the area and its wildlife, is land purchase. If at all possible the Nature Reserve must own the land and with this aim in mind, a LAND FUND has been established. The Land Fund has been given a very good start by a generous bequest from the late Lady Margery Mostyn to whom we are most grateful. We are appealing for more contributions and any donations for the Land Fund, however small, will be very welcome. We must now look to the future, for an opportunity to purchase land for the Nature Reserve and so give lasting protection to a small part of a very valuable natural resource.

TONY MARR FLIES IN FROM IRELAND.

Ian R-D.

Autumn is the peak season for bird migration. Trust Tony then to "arrange" to move his work to Ireland for the autumn and winter period, so that he just happens to be on one of the main flyways of migratory species from the Arctic, as well as seabirds circuiting the North Atlantic just off the Northwest coast of Ireland. It was from here that Tony very kindly returned for a brief weekend, to lecture to the Friends for a fund-raising event on 8th October 1983, at St. Michaels Hall near Tenterden. Although Tony had some wonderful tales to tell about some of the interesting species that he had been seeing around Ireland in previous weeks (complete with Irish accent!) his lecture subject was about the BIRDS OF THE SUSSEX COAST, illustrated by a wide variety of interesting slides. He included some anecdotes of early birdwatching days at Selsey Bill and gave us a glimpse of the RSPB's latest top secret rarity - Plastic Brent Geese (*Branta synthetica*)! Tony certainly gave us an instructive and amusing evening, with stories of some unusual experiences plus a few good ticks to keep the experts happy - all worthy of his own version of the Little Black Bird Book! Very many thanks to Tony and all the helpers who banded together to make a successful and profitable evening for the Friends and ultimately for the Reserve.