



# NEWSLETTER

## The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

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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 the SSSI).

Chairman: Ian Rumley-Dawson.  
Committee: Miss Evelyn Stewart,

Secretary: Clifford Percival.  
Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf,  
Warden: Dr. Barry Yates.

Treasurer: Pat Bonham.  
Miss Liz Blackwell.

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### WELCOME TO OUR NEW WARDEN.

Ian R-D.

By now probably everyone who has recently visited the Reserve will have met our new Warden, Dr. Barry Yates. However, of course this is the first Newsletter that has been issued since his arrival in April this year, after Richard and Pam moved to the West Country (reported in our last Newsletter). So we offer a warm welcome to Barry, his wife Ann and their two small children.

Barry's previous job was with the RSPB as a Warden on their reserve on the island of Petlar, in the Shetlands. Therefore he is well qualified on the birds of that remote region, several of which may even pass through Rye Harbour Nature Reserve on their migrations! Particularly some of the waders for which Petlar is famous, in fact Barry has done a special study on the Redshank. He is of course fairly familiar with the Snowy Owl, as several of this Arctic species visit Petlar each year. However, they have not bred there since those famous years of 1967 to 1975, as there have been no males in the area since that time - only females. Other birds for which the Island is well known are the large breeding populations of Whimbrels, Arctic Skuas and Arctic Terns, not to mention the masses of sea birds. In the wetter moorland areas two-thirds of the British population of Red-necked Phalaropes breeds. It is truly a part of Britain which is well worth visiting during the summer months, as Barry will tell you, when it is almost light all night "land of the simmer dim". However, hopefully, he will be equally rewarded by sights of some of the unusual migrants that appear at this southern end of Britain at Rye Harbour, as well as the different variety of breeding populations that we have tried to encourage here on our Reserve.

### WARDEN'S REPORT.

Barry Yates.

My first four months on the Reserve have quickly passed, but I am left with many memories of the breeding birds, the wayward birds, the interesting flora and the many Friends who have contributed to the smooth running of the Reserve.

The breeding season this year was successful for most species. A mild and dry April meant an early start for some species, but then a cold and wet May delayed most. In line with a National trend, Sand Martins were a noticeable absentee, with very few sightings and no pairs breeding at Rye Harbour. In contrast to this, the Reserve gained a new breeding species, the Sandwich Tern. For many years several pairs have summered here and there have been hopes of breeding. This year 2 pairs began incubating very late in the season, but both failed to rear young. Hopefully, this may be the beginning of regular breeding of this species on the Reserve? They already do so in fair numbers a bit further along the south coast on the RSPB reserve at Dungeness.



The Little Terns numbered 68 pairs and had a moderate breeding season producing 45+ young after early losses to a Fox and later losses to a Little Owl. 70 pairs of Common Terns had a greater success and produced about 100 young.

During the summer, three species were outstanding for their rarity, all adults in fine plumage. On 30th June a female Wilson's Phalarope, first record for the Reserve, in full breeding plumage, was feeding around the islands of Ternery Pool, (as illustrated by Barry above). Two other rarities occurred during a very good day's watching on 9th July. At 9.00am a visit to the hide was rewarded by 2 Ruff in summer plumage feeding together, 1 immature Little Gull, 140 Sandwich Terns including 19 juveniles and a colour ringed adult, 2 adult Kittiwakes and 16 moulting Mute Swans. On the sea close to shore were 4 Eiders, but a glance back to Ternery Pool revealed a large dark bird, reminiscent of Arctic Skua, flying with the terns. It was a Sooty Tern, another first for the Reserve! It stayed for about 3 hours. Also there were 4 Shoveler, 1 Garganey, 1 Pochard and 1 Green Sandpiper. By the evening the Sooty Tern was at Dungeness, but at Ternery Pool were 3 Whimbrel, 1 Wigeon, 1 Little Stint, 1 Greenshank and 1 Caspian Tern the first on the Reserve for 20 years. The latter flew in to roost with the Sandwich Terns and dwarfed them. It left at 5.00am the next day. Also on that excellent evening were 35 Common Scoter and a light phase Arctic Skua out at sea.

Other interesting or unusual birds recorded around the Reserve this spring and summer have been a pair of Golden Orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*), as well as 1 Osprey, 3 Spoonbills and 1 Nuthatch, the latter is the first on the Reserve for 12 years although of course they are very common in the woodlands further inland.

After a very busy spring and summer, I feel I am now settling into the Reserve. It offers great interest to anyone who looks carefully and I anticipate a long association with it.

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SOOTY TERN. The illustration on the right by Barry Yates, shows the bird in flight as seen over Ternery Pool. It is a species not often seen in Britain and is usually found in tropical waters of the Caribbean, Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and the China Sea down to Australia. It is a truly oceanic species spending most of its life far out from any land and is often seen in huge flocks which look from a distance like clouds of drifting smoke! They do not plunge-dive like our other terns at Rye Harbour, but instead they seem to swoop low over the water and snatch food from the surface. Maybe that is why this individual was attracted to Ternery Pool where it could collect some of the vast number of surface insects that can be found there.



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COFFEE MORNING SUCCESS.

Barry Yates/Ian R-D.

The coffee morning held recently at the Watch House, Rye Harbour, was well attended and through the efforts of our generous hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Blattman, as well as other helpers, we raised £130 for the benefit of the Reserve. Our grateful thanks to all those who supported this event and particularly to Mr. and Mrs. Blattman.

Our thanks also to the Headmaster and staff at Leasam House for their kind hospitality for our Nature Day in June. It was a gloriously hot day (at Rye anyway!) which attracted a good number of visitors who saw quite a variety of exhibits - probably one of the most interesting was an inside look at a working beehive with the occupants flying in and out collecting honey and illustrating their famous figure of 8 dance, which passes on information to the other bees as to the location of nectar outside the hive. This exhibit was provided by Peter Greenhalf and was most popular with children.

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TERN WATCH.

Peter Philpot.

By the time you read this Newsletter, most of our protégés, the summer visitors at any rate, will have left these Islands. Some of us no doubt will wish that we could continue our watch in their winter quarters.

As co-ordinators of the wardening scheme this summer, Joan and myself would like to thank all of you who helped so willingly and consistently to make our task relatively simple. In fact you have been so co-operative that we have volunteered for another stint of duty next year. We feel that having muddled through one season, the next must be simpler, providing of course that we have not offended too many of you en route. If we have, then please forgive us and "tern up" once again next year. A very big thank you to you all from both of us.

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WORK PARTIES.

Barry Yates.

Sundays 30 September, 14 October 1984, and 3 March 1985 are the dates set aside for winter work parties. These days are important to carry out essential maintenance on the Reserve. Work can be as heavy or as light as you wish, from moving shingle to collecting litter. For an enjoyable and satisfying day out, meet at 10.00am in the Martello Tower carpark at Rye Harbour, (or later at Ternery Pool). Bring lunch, working gloves and shovels if possible. Wear suitable working clothes and don't forget your binoculars!

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Saturday 13th October 1984, at 7.30pm, a fund-raising event in aid of the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve:

**WILDLIFE OF BHARATPHUR (INDIA)**

One of the most productive birding areas in the World. An illustrated lecture by John Gooders, who has travelled to many distant lands in search of birds. He is a well known lecturer, tour leader and author of many bird books.

Dr. Barry Yates (Warden), will also give a slide illustrated report on the latest developments on the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. Sales and RHNR publications will be available before the lectures start and again during the interval.

To be held in the Thomas Peacocke Upper School, The Grove (beyond Rope Walk), Rye.

Admission at the door: Adults = 90p. Children = 40p.

Please publicise this event for us as widely as possible so that the Reserve at Rye Harbour as well as the wildlife there can gain as much support as possible. Thank you.

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