

To all Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

I think all those who have visited the Reserve over the last few years would wish me to open this year's report with a salute to Richard Knight. Throughout the year with the help of volunteers from the Friends, Thomas Peacocke School, the Sussex Ornithological Society and others he has greatly improved the whole upkeep and tidiness of the area. We are very grateful for his enthusiasm and leadership in this as well as the more general conservation side of the work, not to mention the slow but steady trickle of new members largely enrolled through his efforts. Membership now stands at 169 in terms of subscriptions, but as many of these include the family the actual numbers must be well over 200.

This naturally leads on to our financial position. You will see from the accounts that we now have a balance of about £750 in hand. We perhaps could be criticised for holding so much unused, but were anxious that should costs on the Information Centre rise we should be able to meet them. In the event this was not necessary and we are now proposing to suggest to the Management Committee that the hide is doubled in size and that the major part of our funds be used for this purpose. This is urgently needed and, with the Information Centre where the Warden can give brief introductory talks, would greatly improve the facilities for visiting parties.

The Information Centre itself will be officially opened at a brief ceremony on May 24th by the Lord Lieutenant of the County, the Marquess of Abergavenny, K.G., O.B.E., in the presence of Mrs. Kleinwort, the widow of Mr. Ernest Kleinwort who among his many gifts to the World Wildlife Fund gave the funds which really made the Centre possible. We are truly grateful for this help and sad that he did not live to attend the opening.

Events on the reserve have been covered by Richard Knight's and my periodic newsletters and Richard is adding his note on today's conditions to this. The only mention I would make is of the short visit of the Little Bittern last year. These birds are very rare visitors to these parts and it is sad that such visits seem invariably to lead to large crowds, generally with cameras, and the rapid flushing out and scaring off of the visitor.

Finally I would refer to the Rother District Council's discussion on a mineral extraction plan for the whole S.S.S.I. We were invited to comment on this and I attach a copy of our reply. These are the points I would like to emphasise: first, the great importance of the area in many and far removed scientific fields; second, our determination to oppose any wider recreational use of the area than that already enjoyed by the School sailing on Castle Water and the small amount of fishing which has always taken place, and thirdly that any opening of Camber Castle to the public must be carefully controlled. There is no predator so damaging as man. Your Committee were unanimous in the views expressed and received the most useful advice from Mr. R. Langrish of Castle Farm. As one of the principal landowners in the area we have invited him to attend our meetings as an observer with power to speak but not vote at our future meetings.

Yours sincerely,

GUY CRITALL.

April 1978

FROM THE WARDEN - SPRING 1978

Dear Friends,

At the time of writing one wonders whether 'spring' is an accurate heading for this letter; cold north easterly winds which have been blowing for over a week have brought snow flurries and recollections of winter.

This, hopefully short lived airstream, in combination with the earlier strong to gale force south westerly winds has caused the late arrival of the first batch of summer visiting birds. Wheatears, chiffchaffs and sandwich terns were up to a fortnight late and are still only thin on the ground.

Much improvement work has been carried out over the winter, both in and around the Ternery Pool and further single strand fencing has been erected around areas favoured by the beach nesting sea-birds. Around the main little tern nesting area an extensive electric fence has been positioned to aid the protection of this species from fox predation, but even with these aids, intensive wardening during the breeding season is essential.

Appeal - if you or your friends can help with little tern baby sitting between May 10th and June 30th, please contact me at 1 Coastguard Cottages, Rye Harbour, Rye, East Sussex, or better still phone Rye 3862. It's a simple task but most effective.

Finally I wish to personally thank you all for the continued support which has made improvement work possible.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD KNIGHT.