



NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

2 Watch Cottages, Nook Beach, Winchelsea, East Sussex, TN36 4LU.

Telephone: Rye (0797) 223862

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

CHAIRMAN: Ian Rumley-Dawson. VICE CHAIRMAN: Clifford Percival. TREASURER: David Marshall.
SECRETARY: Miss Liz Blackwell. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot.
COMMITTEE: Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer, Mrs. Anne Yates,
Dr. Barry Yates.

SPRING 1988

NUMBER 29

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Dr. Barry Yates.

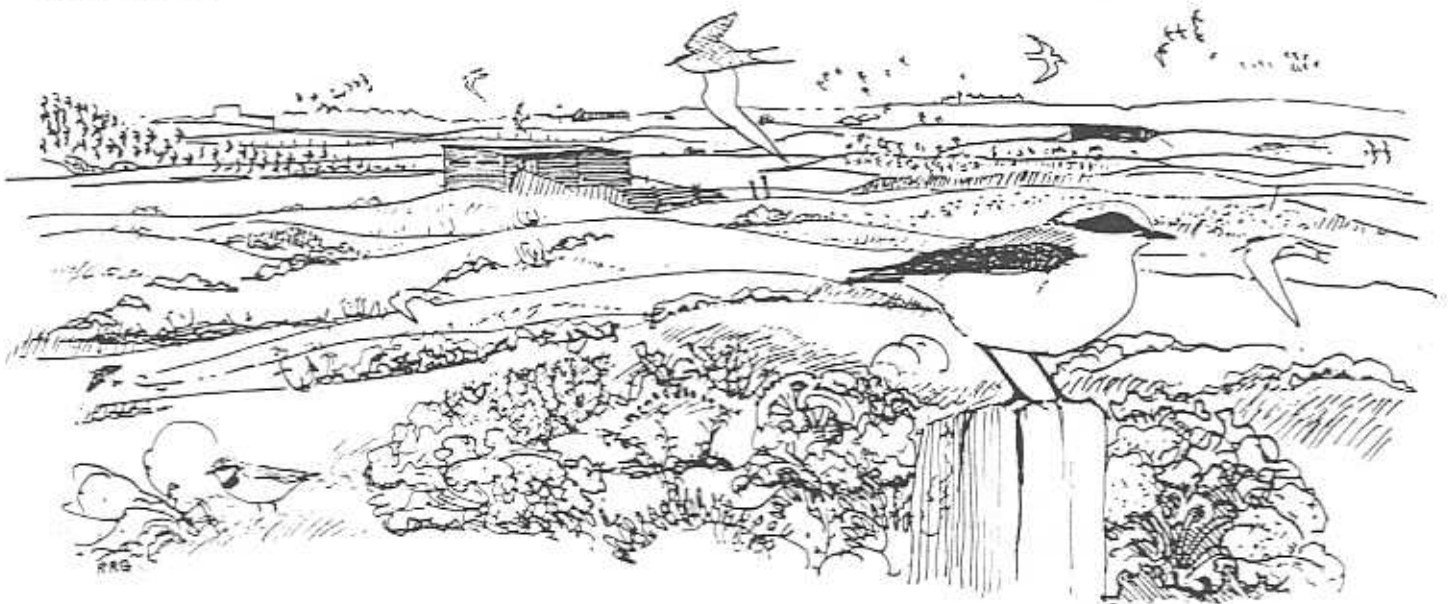
After four years at the Reserve I have, at last, experienced a mild winter. I thought this would have reduced the variety of the ducks that could be watched from the hides, but this was not so. In the last Newsletter I described how interesting the ducks had been at Ternery Pool. Since then there has been lots more interest - for long periods a Long-tailed Duck, 2 Eider Ducks, up to 11 Scaup, then in early March a drake Smew displaying to 5 "redheads" (a term for females or immatures) and in mid-March a superb drake Red-breasted Merganser that gave close views of its plumage and expert fishing technique. Elsewhere there were other ducks; hundreds of Common Scoters on the sea and amongst them a few Velvet Scoters (very similar but showing white on the wing), while at the Long Pit there was a striking drake Ruddy Duck. However, some of the usually common ducks, such as Wigeon, Shoveler and Pintail, have been quite scarce.

Although the numbers of passerines remained low on the Beach Reserve, there has been a sprinkling of birds of prey to reward the persistent birdwatcher. I was lucky on one day in February to see Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Merlin, Hen Harrier and most spectacular of all a Peregrine that was chasing the large roosting flock of Oystercatchers over Ternery Pool and along the shore.

The Sandwich Tern is a very sensitive breeding bird, and may desert a site for little apparent reason. However, the early indications for the coming year are good. They returned very early this year (first noted on 12th March) and have been present ever since with some pairs performing their spectacular and noisy display flights over Ternery Pool. By 2nd April there were more than 150 courting and displaying on their favourite island.

Other early arrivals have been Gargany reported on 9th March, and on 20th March a Chiffchaff in the garden, a Wheatear on the beach, and a Swallow on 23rd, then on 4th April there were Yellow Wagtails, a Sedge Warbler and 2 Avocets.

The winter is supposed to be a quiet time for a Warden, but this year there has been lots to do, completing the Colin Green Hide at the Wader Pool, preparing the van for its MOT test, renewing and improving the fences around Ternery Pool and the Flat Beach, giving talks to various groups, writing the Annual Report, designing a new information sign for the Reserve and updating the records of the Invertebrates of the SSSI. It is this variety that makes the job so interesting and the reward comes in seeing the wildlife thrive and people appreciate it.



With the mild weather has come a lot of rain, so the water levels at Ternery Pool are high and it was not possible to do some of the necessary work to the islands during the Easter Work Party. While on the subject of work parties, there has been regular disturbance recently around Ternery Pool on a Monday and Wednesday. I hope it has not caused too much inconvenience to visitors, but it was the only way to renew the electric fence and hopefully this year the Foxes will not affect the birds nesting at the Pool. The improvement to the fences has only been possible because of a £500 grant from the Nature Conservancy Council and a lot of hard work from some of you - for which many thanks.

LOOKING FORWARD.

Barry Yates.

April and May are exciting months with the return (!) of the Common and Little Terns to their shingle nesting areas, adding their noisy display flights to the activity of birds already into their nesting season. The variety of passerines will steadily increase and once again we will have to learn the different calls and songs.

As April progresses, colour will return to the bare shingle, first as a greening and then, into May the yellow, blue and pink flowers will emerge. By the time you read this, some plants such as Common Whitlowgrass will have set seed and you will have to wait another year to see their flowers.

With every day comes fresh interest with new birds arriving and new flowers appearing. So make the effort and visit the Reserve at this most exciting season.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

- Saturday, 7th May 1988: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, at 7.30pm in the Winchelsea Beach Village Hall, Sea Road, Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex. (See further details and agenda attached to this Newsletter).
- Sunday, 29th May 1988: FRIENDS EVENING WALK to see the breeding birds of the Beach Reserve. Meet at the Information Centre in the Martello Tower carpark at Rye Harbour, at 6.00pm. Returning about 9.00pm.
- Sunday, 12th June 1988: IDENTIFYING PLANTS OF THE SHINGLE. A maximum of 15 people for this study of plants, so please book your name with the Warden. You will need a field guide book and a hand lens.
- Sunday, 26th June 1988: LEASAM HOUSE OPEN DAY. The date of this event has been changed from 2nd May. Further details will be displayed in the East Sussex area nearer the time by leaflets and notices. It will be partly in aid of fund-raising for the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, as well as to further develop conservation liaison between organisations in the Rye locality.
- Friday, 22nd July 1988: BAT WALK! Meet at the Information Centre at Rye Harbour at 7.00pm for a walk to Ternery Pool to do some dusk birdwatching, then we will try to watch and listen to the bats flying over the area with the help of THE SUSSEX BAT GROUP.
- Monday, 29th August 1988: FRIENDS BAZAAR. A sale of handmade crafts. Further details in the next Newsletter, but if you would like to help with producing items, then please contact Mrs. Anne Yates (telephone Rye 223862).

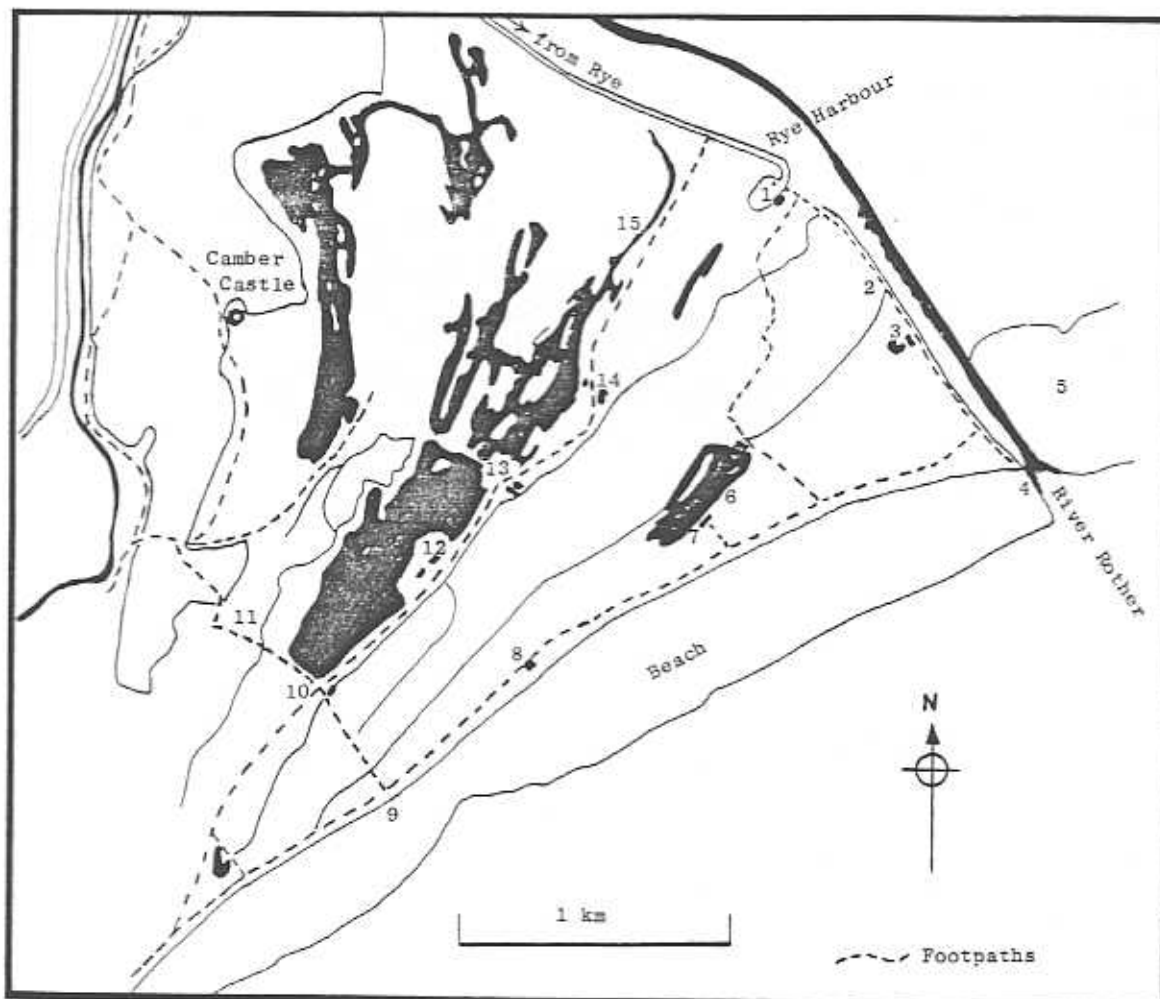
HELPING TO PROTECT THE RESERVE.

Occasionally there is some disturbance to the Reserve that causes damage if it goes unchecked. Such disturbance may include people using dogs to chase the Hares, people inside the fenced areas or perhaps tampering with the fences, signs or hides, or people picking flowers. You could help to reduce this damage if you are prepared. If you feel able to assist, then please try to follow these brief guidelines:-

- 1) For minor disturbance try pointing out to the people that it is a Nature Reserve that is specially protected with Byelaws. If they then become rude or offensive, just leave them and follow on with the next points.....
- 2) Try to contact the Warden or Voluntary Wardens who may be on duty by:-
 - a) phoning the Warden - Rye 223862,
 - b) or phoning Peter Philpot - Rye 225998,
 - c) or contacting the Tern Watch volunteers who will be near the Old Lifeboat House,
 - d) or visiting the Warden at Watch Cottage.

(N.B. There are telephones in the Caravan Site; in Rye Harbour; and near the Winchelsea Beach gate)

If you could do this then please make a note in your notebook or field guide at the time that the incident occurs so that you get the full facts. It might be helpful also if you could make a note of the make, colour and number of any vehicle which is used by the culprit. Obviously it is very difficult to advise people how to handle any such incidents and if you feel unable to intervene, then please do let the Warden know anyway as to what has occurred so that we can keep a close guard for the future. Suffice it to say that we do have a very good relationship with the local Police Force - they do occasionally drive through the Reserve on patrol with their own key. In fact one policeman is quite a keen birdwatcher and always brings his binoculars on his patrol. However, neither the police nor our wardens can be everywhere at once. Therefore it is up to everyone who visits the Reserve to keep a watch out for problems at all times, so that the place can be safer for wildlife and enjoyable for other visitors.



MY FAVOURITE WALK AROUND THE RESERVE.

Barry Yates.

To see some of the birds that you read about in my reports you will have to look at the full range of habitats in the area. New Friends of the Reserve (as well as some old Friends) may not know the area well, so I will describe my favourite circular walk which is about five miles long and takes in most of the best places (numbered below and on the map above) for stopping and looking for birds. To give yourself the best chance of seeing all the birds present, stay at each place for at least five minutes and wait for them to show themselves.

Starting at the Information Centre (1) at Rye Harbour, follow the private road down beside the saltmarsh, to the bridge and gate (2). Follow the road down to the new Colin Green Hide which now overlooks the Flat Beach and Wader Pool (3). Then continue along the road to the River Mouth (4) and views across to Camber Sands (5). Follow the road westwards to the Ternery Pool (6) where the best views are usually from the Crittall Hide nearest the road (7).

After a long stay in the hide, continue on along the road to the Old Lifeboat House (8), which gives the best views of the sea and shore without disturbing the feeding birds. Next stop is 500m along the road, where the footpath will take you inland. At this point (9) it is always worth a last look out to sea, especially at high tide.

Follow the footpath inland until you reach the edge of the Long Pit (10). This place is relatively high and gives commanding views of the farmland, the wood and the water. If you have time and especially in the Spring and Autumn it is worth a detour down the track to the Wood (11).

Retrace your steps back to (10), then continue eastwards down along the track (NOT on top of the embankment please) to the Watch Cottages (12) and the scrub just beyond. (PLEASE do not enter the gardens). Continue on to another raised area at the Farm Barns (13) that gives good views over both the Long and Narrow Pits.

A further 300m east there are two small pools (14) and another good view over the Narrow Pit. Follow the path down towards the village where there is a new pit being excavated, but look to the north of the track in the scrub and rough ground (15). When you reach the main road, turn right and walk back to the Martello Tower carpark to complete the full circuit.

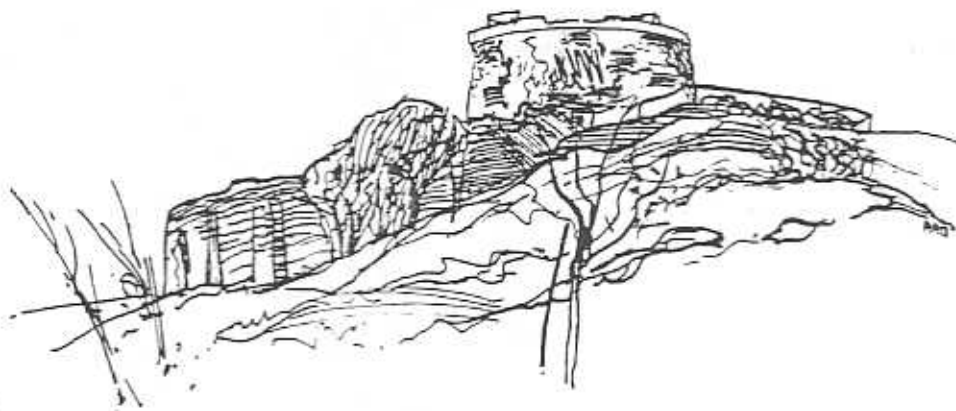
How long does all that take? Well it obviously depends on how fast you can walk. However, that is not the object of the exercise. The longer you take, the more chance you have of seeing more wildlife - if you go racing round, then you will just not notice all the variety of species that can be seen, for many of them will not reveal themselves unless you linger along the way - especially some of the smaller birds.

Good walking.

TERN WATCH.

Once again we will be arranging for the Reserve to be wardened by volunteers from mid-May to mid-August. Anyone who would like to take part in this valuable protection of the nesting areas during this period should contact Peter Philpot (Rye 225998) or see him after the Annual General Meeting to fix some dates and times.

We hope that this breeding season will be even more successful than last year, with the extension of the improved electric fencing round the Ternery Pool and the Flat Beach areas. We would like to thank all those who took part in last year's Watch, we hope you will also help again this year.



Martello Tower at Rye Harbour

CLOSE-UP ON INVERTEBRATES.

Ian R-D.

In our last Newsletter comment was made on the comparative lack of studies which have been made on some of the Reserve's other species apart from birds and flowers. In fact Miss Kathleen Goldie-Smith has made a special study of some of the aquatic species and Miss Elizabeth Blackwell has been identifying some of the spiders to be found around the Reserve. Their results have appeared in the Annual Reports. However, we are still keen to hear of other people who could devote considerable time and knowledgeable experience to study other aspects/species of the Reserve, so that we can build-up as comprehensive a record as possible of our wildlife and its changes over the years. Those interested please contact the Warden.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Peter Philpot.

I am sorry to have to report that this last year we have "lost" for one reason or another 70 of our members. So the year has not been as good as I had hoped it would be. However, despite the very low minimum subscription of £2 (to encourage younger people to join), our average subscription rose from £5 last year to £5.30 this year, which of course helps to keep our income in line with inflation.

At the moment our membership stands at 924 compared with 769 at this time last year. Approximately one third of these are paid by Bankers Order and most of those also have Covenants. Therefore the Inland Revenue is probably our most generous "Friend" as we receive from them, through our Covenanted subscriptions, nearly £600 per year at no extra cost to our members. This is obviously a very useful additional sum indeed and should any of you wish to help to increase this amount by paying your subscriptions by Covenanted Bankers Order, then appropriate forms will be available at the Annual General Meeting or I can post them to you on request. Please bear in mind that perhaps your subscription could be worth at least 25% more to us if it were to be Covenanted.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS FOR THOSE NOT ALREADY PAYING BY BANKERS ORDER:-

Please note that subscriptions for 1988 are due on 1st May 1988. These can be paid to Peter Philpot (the Membership Secretary) at the Annual General Meeting, but please fill in the Membership Renewal Form at the bottom of this page, cut it off and have it ready to hand in with your money at the meeting, so that we can save as much time and congestion as possible in the hall. Cheques etc. should be made payable to the FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE.

If you are not able to attend the A.G.M., then please send your Renewal Subscription to the Membership Secretary at the address shown on the form below. Please **DO NOT** send it to the Warden.

It would be much appreciated if all Renewals could be paid by the end of MAY 1988, as this would save us a lot of money and time in sending out reminders. We would also be able to use the subscription moneys earlier and it could enable us to assess our expenditure more accurately for future projects. Please note that those members who have joined after 1st January 1988, need not pay their first Renewal Subscription until 1st May 1989.

----- CUT ALONG HERE -----

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL for the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve for 1988.

Name: Address:
(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

Sum enclosed £ cash/cheque. Post code:

Tick box if Bankers Order & Covenant form required.

Please return this form to:-

Membership Secretary, F.R.H.N.R.,
Broadwater, The Ridge,
Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex, TN36 4LU.

