

Dear Friends,

Chairman's Report

It is with a feeling of great sadness that I write this Report. As many of you will know, Guy Crittall, who was the founder and first Chairman of Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve died at the very end of last year. I find it difficult to express fully how much your Committee misses Guy's helpful Chairmanship. The founding of the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve was due entirely to Guy's own enthusiasm and the strength of the Friends today is a living testimony to that enthusiasm. Our greatest task will be to maintain the momentum that has been built up, to increase membership of the Friends and to do all that we can to assist in the running of the Reserve so that our Association can be a living Memorial to Guy. I, like a great number of you, knew him in connection with his interests and his work in other fields. I am sure that all of you will know of his great kindness, his thoughtfulness and his very friendly and easy manner, which, coupled with his dedication to any task that he undertook ensured the very best results. We shall all miss him greatly and we shall all owe him a great debt.

As Richard Knight reports, the past year has been a busy and successful one. The hide has been doubled in size providing additional accommodation sufficient to seat up to eighteen people. We have donated £40 to this, the S.W.A. much wood, and Mr. Coleman expertize and voluntary help to Richard.

During the past year the Secretary has reported a steady stream of favourable comments from individuals who have appreciated the facilities that are available at the Reserve. It is also pleasant to be able to report how many favourable comments have been made about the contribution of our Warden to the well running of the Reserve, resulting in our receiving more visitors than in the past.

During the Easter weekend there was an extremely successful working party. Taking advantage of the wonderful weather they worked hard and have improved the sites for the nesting terns, a few arriving the following week.

In addition the pool has been deepened and more such work is planned to be carried out in the near future. Richard again deserves a special mention with regard to the carrying out of this work. Due to his persuasive powers the equipment and labour has been donated and although we have stood by to meet any bills he has so far kept expenses to a minimum.

Recently we have had a number of minor expenses to meet including a new notice board in the hide, printing of posters to show the boundaries of the Reserve and the supply of materials for the hide. In addition we are providing a bronze plaque to be affixed to the collecting box by the information centre, generously to be contributed by the S.W.A.

You will see that Richard refers in his letter to the need for volunteers to protect the nesting sites during the period 15th May to 31st July. This is rewarding work and is not too demanding. Can I please urge you to contact him and let him know the hours when you will be available to assist.

Mr. Percival of 5 Tower Street, Rye (telephone Rye 4170) has undertaken to arrange a rota of people prepared to man the information centre during weekends and the summer holidays weekends. Would any of you who are able to assist in this task please contact him either at that number or at his work (Rye 2124). Whilst the centre can be left open and unattended during the day experience has shown that it is very useful to have a representative of the Reserve present. Their presence assists in the sale of pamphlets and in the making of donations. Any of you who are available for this work please contact Mr. Percival.

There is growing concern at the number of planning applications that are being made at Rye Harbour. An application has been made to Rother District Council for yacht berths and the erection of chalets on the Salt Marsh near Alsford's Wharf on the west bank of the river. This is a large area of sea purslone and a valuable source of food for the birds. Increasing development in this area will be detrimental to the Reserve.

(continued...)

In addition the continued activity on Castle Water is giving rise to concern. The Warden is trying to maintain a log of such activities as water skiing that are taking place. Any of you observing such activities which are clearly detrimental to the bird life of the area should please let Richard know as soon as you can. Would you please let him have the fullest details, i.e. time, place and date, so that he can continue to build up his log for submission in due course. As Castle Water is slightly outside his general area of activity he would welcome assistance with respect to reporting on these matters.

Finally could I mention that the Speaker at the Annual General Meeting is Mr. A. Lowes who is the Conservation Officer of W.A.G.B.I. He is coming down from W.A.G.B.I. Headquarters at Wrexham and his subject is to be "The wildfowler's role in practical conservation". Those of you who have any reservations about a speaker from W.A.G.B.I. should remember the important role that W.A.G.B.I. plays in conservation. The late Dr. Jeffrey Harrison was of course a leading member and one of this country's and indeed the world's leading conservationists.

I do hope that you will be able to come to the Annual General Meeting in order that a new Chairman can be elected and to ensure that all the Committee posts are properly filled.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN A. BALL (Acting Chairman)

Dear Friends,

During the winter months some major improvements have been made. The hide, now enlarged, can seat 18 people - better for visiting parties and individuals alike. Several work parties at Ternery Pool have built new island areas and fingers are now crossed for the return of the common terns. Last year's success with this species has injected new energy into our work parties and a new raft built by the Sussex Ornithological Society makes island building almost a pleasure!?

The prospect for little terns is also better than ever. Much research has been carried out and a new improved design of electric fence has been erected in an attempt to exclude foxes from the nesting areas.

With the nesting season upon us, it's time once again to appeal for volunteers to help guard the nests - both to deter egg collectors and unwitting disturbance from wandering public. It's a simple and rewarding task for all ages, one need not be an expert or an athlete. If you have a car you can sit and do the job from the driver's seat. 70-80 helpers are needed so if you can spare 3-4 hours (or longer) during the period 15th May - 31st July, please contact me at Rye 3862.

The coming season has the makings of a year to beat all years. Let's hope it proves to be so.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD KNIGHT

Warden, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.