



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 (number 269535) founded in 1973 to aid in the establishment and management of the Nature Reserve within the Rye Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest, (known as the SSSI).

CHAIRMAN: Ian Rumley-Dawson.

SECRETARY: Miss Liz Blackwell.

TREASURER: Stefan Wiener.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot

COMMITTEE: Jill Barry, Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer,
Mike Saville, Mrs. Anne Yates (Tern Watch Organiser).

WARDEN: Dr. Barry Yates.

ASSISTANT WARDEN: Dominic Funnell.

WINTER 1992

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 43.

WARDEN'S REPORT

Dominic Funnell

The Reserve has just been through one of the most important stages in its development and it has been an exciting time. With the purchase of CASTLE WATER the work of the Reserve has changed greatly. There is great scope for habitat protection and improvement and we are now responsible for many more rare species of wildlife. There is much more to be considered, much more to learn and understand and there will be much more scope for visitors to the Reserve - but this will take time.

More detail about the new land can be found on pages 3 and 4 of this Newsletter.

AUGUST - With the end of the breeding season the summer visitors such as terns declined, but the waders did not come through in quantity - the only large wader numbers were during a gale on 30th when 100 Knot and 600+ Bar-tailed Godwits were on Camber Sands. Other highlights included Black-necked Grebe at Castle Water 27th, a Marsh Harrier on 29th, a Peregrine (recorded every month to the end of the year), a flock of 39 Greenshanks flew over on 20th and the bird of the year was a superb adult White-winged Black Tern on the pits from 28th-4th Sept.

SEPTEMBER - A generally quiet month with good numbers of the common migrants present, but waders were again poorly represented. The highlights included Black-necked Grebe again at Castle water on 3rd, last Garganey on 23rd, 2 records of Marsh Harrier, Merlins present from 9th, last Hobby on 20th, single Osprey on 9th at Castle Water, a very obliging Pectoral Sandpiper on the Wader Pool 15th-24th and at Camber Castle 2 Tawny Pipits between 13th-16th that were joined very briefly by a Red-throated Pipit as it flew over on 16th.

OCTOBER - A changeable month with the last summer visitors departing and more of the winter visitors arriving. The last Sand Martin on 9th and Swallow and House Martin on 24th. The first Jack Snipe arrived on the 1st, but numbers only reached 7 in November. Bearded Tits were present at Castle Water from early in the month to the end of the year with over 20 present for some time. Other highlights included Ring Ouzels on 3rd and 7th and a superb adult Great Grey Shrike on 16th, the first record since 1978.

NOVEMBER - A very, very wet month that was very good for ducks with a record count of 81 Gadwall and good numbers of other species including a maximum of 5 Goldeneyes, 1-2 Ruddy Duck from 17th stayed to end of year, increasing to 5 at Castle Water by the end of December. Black Redstarts were common at Castle Water from the middle of the month, but the highlight was a Bittern seen briefly on the morning of the 24th.

DECEMBER - After this autumn's rain, pit levels were very high and good numbers of ducks were present, including 7 Goldeneye, a female Red-crested Pochard present from mid-November, 3 Smew on 29th and the Black-necked Grebe remained at Castle Water. It is a good winter for Short-eared Owls, with 1-4 around. The months highlight was a Goshawk on the 11th and a few Chiffchaffs remained to the end of the year.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 1993

GUIDED WALKS

- Friday, 1st January. New Years Day Birdwatch. We saw 52 species including Bittern !
- Saturday, 20th March. 10am-1pm. A short walk to see early flowers and your first British Tern of 1993 - hopefully ! Meet at Information Centre.
- Sunday, 18th April. 10am-1pm. Castle Water - a circular walk of the New Reserve looking at all of the varied habitats there. Meet at car park near Brede Lock at top of Harbour Road (TQ 919 198)
- Sunday, 2nd May. 5.30pm-9pm. A sunset walk for Warblers and Whimbrels. Meet at Information Centre.
- Sunday, 13th June. 10am-1pm. Castle Water - a circular walk of the New Reserve looking at all of the varied habitats there. Meet at car park near Brede Lock at top of Harbour Road (TQ 919 198).
- Saturday, 24th July. 10am-12 & 1pm-3pm Pond Dipping at Castle Water - limited numbers, please phone Warden for details and booking (0797 223862).
- Saturday, 14th August. 2pm-5pm. Insects of Castle Farm. 3 mile circular walk - meet at car park near Brede Lock at top of Harbour Road (TQ 919 198).
- Tuesday, 14th September. Mid-week Birdwatch. Meet at Pett Pools (TQ 903 145) 9am or Dog's Hill Road Toilet Block (TQ 917 160) 10am for circular walk ending about 2pm.
- Sunday, 17th October. 10am-1pm High Tide. The year's highest predicted tide (4.3m) may coincide with strong winds to create spectacular scenes along the shore. There should be much wildlife washed up along the tideline. Meet at Information Centre.
- Sunday, 14th November. 2pm-4.30pm. Low Tide. Another high tide will also be a very low tide which we will follow out to look for animals that live between the tides. Meet at Information Centre bring wellingtons and warm, windproof clothing.
- Saturday, 18th December. 2pm-4.30pm. Gulls Galore. Meet at Information Centre bring wellingtons and warm, windproof clothing..

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 8th May. 7.30pm. AGM at Rye Community Centre.

SPECIAL EVENT

Saturday, 8th May. Bird Count. How many bird species can you see on the day of our AGM within the SSSI and the Wood. Lists to be handed in before the AGM and winner announced during the evening.

WORKPARTIES

- 1st & 3rd Tuesdays, January - April, 10am-3ish - Meet at the Information Centre to look at details on the door. Tasks at Castle Water or Beach Reserve, bring lunch, binoculars, waterproofs, boots, work gloves and enthusiasm.
- Saturday/Sunday 13/14th March, 10am-2pm - Beach Litter Collection with soup and rolls in conjunction with the ROTHER ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP. Meet at Information Centre.
- Sunday, 21st March, 10am-3ish - Weeding the islands of Ternery Pool. Meet at the Information Centre with lunch, wellingtons, work gloves, garden forks and binoculars.

PLANT AND PRODUCE SALE

Liz Blackwell

This event was held on the August Bank Holiday and raised £355.75p.

We would like to thank all those who contributed plants, cakes and bring and buy items for the sale and all those who helped at the event.

WILDLIFE IN FOCUS

Liz Blackwell

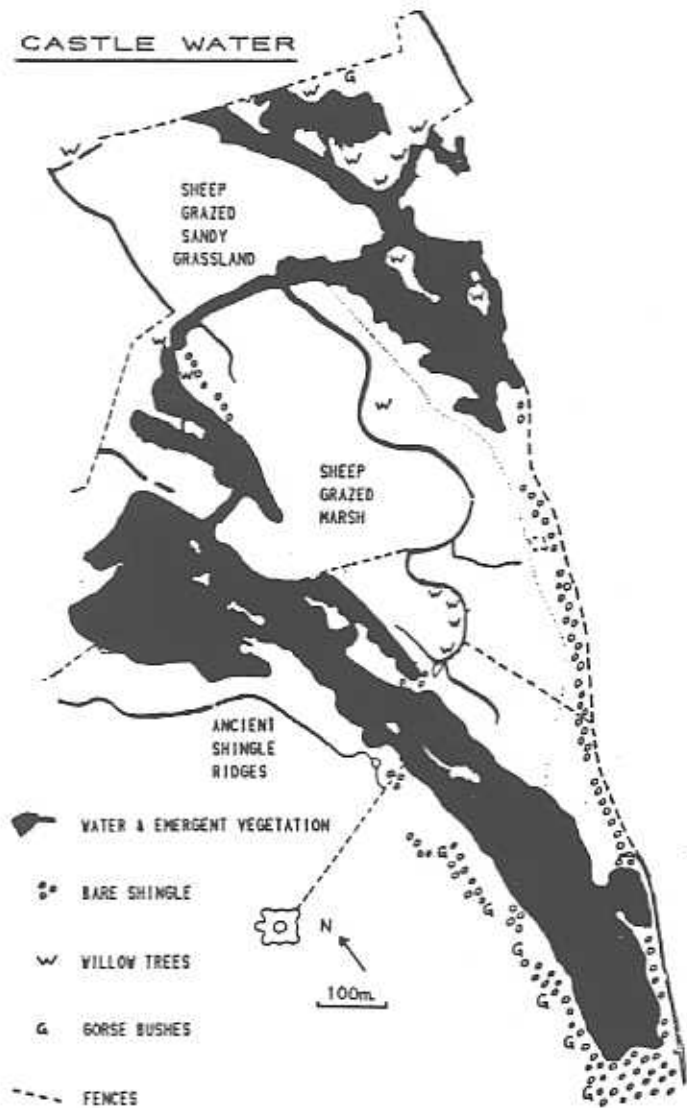
This was an illustrated talk by local naturalists and photographers, Colin Page and Melvin Smith, who are also FRIENDS. They described, with superb slides, much of the variety of our local natural history through the seasons. The evening was well attended and provided good publicity for the Reserve, which resulted in several people joining the FRIENDS.

CASTLE WATER

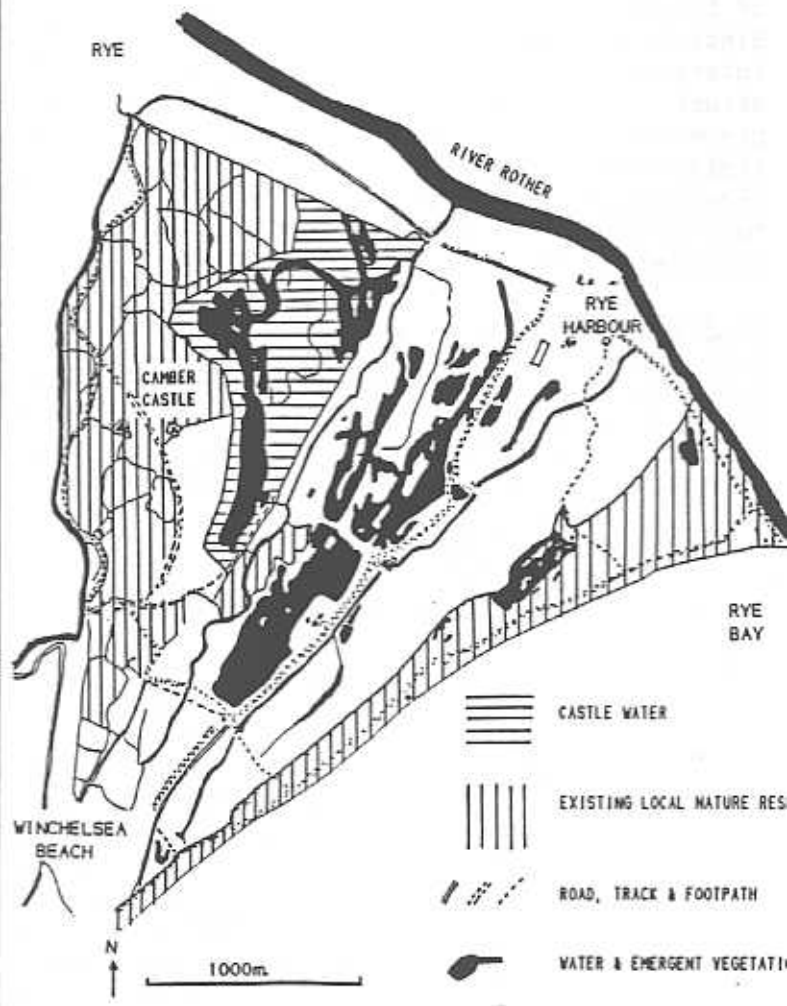
Barry Yates

The 219 acres of CASTLE WATER is an important acquisition for the SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST, for RYE HARBOUR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE and for some of Britain's rarest wildlife. From the maps below you can see how it fits in with an existing area of the Reserve and that it is a key central area of the Site of Special Scientific Interest which is an 1800 acre triangle of land lying between Rye and the sea. The whole area is outstanding for wildlife - since the Reserve was established in 1970 it has recorded over 2,500 species, of which more than 50 species are considered as Nationally rare or endangered (Red Data Book species).

CASTLE WATER



RYE HARBOUR SSSI



CASTLE WATER is dominated by a 50 acre freshwater gravel pit that was created by extraction from 1934 to 1970. The water is clear and rich in invertebrates, including the rare water boatman *Sigara striata* and the leaf beetle *Macrolepta mutica*. There is much pondweed and in some sheltered places there are dense stands of reed, reedmace and bulrush. Several small wooded islands add further diversity to the pit.

To the north and west of the pit there is grassland on thin sand and shingle soils that link up with the unique vegetated shingle ridges around Camber Castle.

The central area (labelled sheep grazed marsh) is low lying with a reed filled ditch where Hairy Hawker dragonflies and numerous Reed Warblers are found in summer. In the north there is a sandy area (labelled with G and W's) where fen vegetation has developed with a profusion of Common Spotted, Pyramidal and Bee Orchids and the only known British site for the weevil *Limobius mixtus*. Other rare beetle species here are *Lathrobium quadratum* (only one other British site) and *Bledius occidentalis*, *Heterocerus hispidulus*, *Cercyon bifenestratus*, *Omophron limbatum* and *Dyschirius obscurus*.

MANAGEMENT OF CASTLE WATER

Although the freehold of Castle Water is in the name of the SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST, responsibility for the management of the site will lie with the Management Committee of the Reserve. The aim is to protect the populations of rare and endangered species and improve the edge of the pit and central area for all wetland wildlife. There is a potential for increasing the water table in some areas.

An important aspect of the site is finding a balance between public access and wildlife sanctuary areas. At the moment, formal access is to the southern end of the pit only, but it should be possible to provide paths that link up with public footpaths from Rye, Rye Harbour and Winchelsea Beach (more details in the next Newsletter). The area east of the pit will be free of disturbance (except from shepherds and wardens!).

Since the purchase of the site in August we have been busy preparing a plan for the future management and carrying out some urgent work - making safe and clearing derelict structures and buildings, clearing willow scrub that was invading the reedbeds, preparing an island and making rafts for ground nesting birds such as Gulls and Terns, installing nestboxes for Tree Sparrows and Ducks, building fences to protect reedbeds from sheep grazing and installing devices for monitoring water levels.

Much of this work has been carried out by the FRIENDS during workparties that have been arranged for the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month - see Dates For Your Diary.

FUNDING OF CASTLE WATER

Over the last ten years the FRIENDS had built up a fund of £43,000 for land purchase and this attracted support from other Conservation Groups. The purchase of CASTLE WATER by the SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST could not have been contemplated without the FRIENDS. The TRUST negotiated for the purchase and pulled together all the various sources of grant for a successful completion last August.

	£
NATIONAL HERITAGE MEMORIAL FUND	75,000
SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST	50,000
FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE	40,000
ENGLISH NATURE	25,000
SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY	10,000
TOTAL	200,000

The purchase of Castle Water has been a major expense and the cost of running it as a Nature Reserve will be considerable. We seem to be in a position to meet the costs, both capital and recurrent. EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL already employ the Reserve's full time Warden, they have employed the Assistant Warden for this Winter and may continue to part fund the post in the future and they have provided a fund of £13,500 for the setting up of CASTLE WATER as part of the RYE HARBOUR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE. CASTLE WATER will also generate some money (£2,500-£6,000 a year), from grazing, fishing and, hopefully, an agreement with COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION under their STEWARDSHIP SCHEME (more detail in next Newsletter).

THE FUTURE

There has been successful co-operation with other Conservation Groups and it seems likely that other, equally important areas within the SSSI may become available soon. It was possible to complete the purchase of Castle Water without an appeal, but we have now used most of our funds.

You can help the Reserve's future by;

- maintaining your subscription to the FRIENDS (due 1st May !)
- recruiting new FRIENDS
- helping in a practical way 'on the ground' by attending our workparties, or joining our voluntary wardening scheme.
- contributing to our Land Fund, so that further land purchase will be possible.

This has been a major landmark in the development of our Reserve, it has been a very long time coming, but we were well prepared and have been successful in ensuring the best future for a unique wildlife area and our quiet enjoyment of it.