



The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

A registered charity (No.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: Michael Saville

TREASURER: Frank Clarke

COMMITTEE: Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer,
Stefan Wiener, Anne Yates (Tern Watch Organiser)

WARDEN: Dr. Barry Yates

SECRETARY: Liz Blackwell

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot

ASSISTANT WARDEN: Dominic Funnell.

NATURE RESERVE ADDRESS:

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

Tel: 0797 223862

Mobile telephone: 0850 667177

SPRING 1994 NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 47.

WARDEN'S REPORT

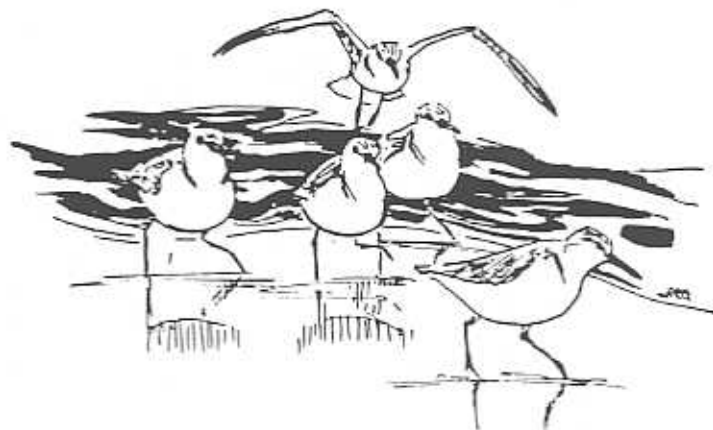
DECEMBER 1993

Few of the usually common winter visitors, such as Merlin and Short-eared Owl, were seen and duck numbers were low. Of particular note were 15 Scaup and a single Jack Snipe on 1st, Black-throated Diver on the Sea on 5th (the first record since 1989), a Bittern on 6th, 2 Eiders up to 15th, Water Rails on 2 dates, female Black Redstart on 2 dates and a single Chiffchaff.

JANUARY 1994

The Wetland Bird Survey on 16th produced the following wildfowl count: 54 Shelduck, 16 Wigeon, 54 Gadwall, 130 Teal, 230 Mallard, 54 Shoveler, 194 Pochard, 165 Tufted Duck and 29 White-fronted Geese. Other duck counts of interest were 35 Wigeon on 8th, 18 Scaup on 1st and 11 on 23rd. Unusually the only Goldeneye records were of females at Ternery Pool on just 2 days. Raptors were scarce with just 2 Merlin records, but there was a regular adult male Hen Harrier. A Bittern was again seen at Castle Water on 8th and may well have been around all month. Jack Snipe were scarce with just one at the Wader Pool on 18th. Sanderling on the other hand were quite common with more than 100 present all month, rising to 230 by early February. There was a single Ruff at Castle Water on 10th. Despite the storms there were very few

records of oiled birds, 2 Guillemots were caught and taken to the RSPCA at Mallydams for cleaning. Other unusual winter visitors included 2 Twite flying over the River Mouth on 5th and 6 Lapland Buntings by the Wader Pool on 8th. The highlight of the birds was the presence of an elusive Long-eared Owl roosting on an island on the Long Pit. Away from the birds we started to look more carefully at the Reserve's woodlouse populations and this quickly turned up a new species for the area *Trichoniscoides saeroeensis*. It is white, very small with red eyes and it is nationally notable.



FEBRUARY 1994

The winter remained mild and duck numbers were low, records of note were a male Pintail on 21st and 24th and 2 females on 2nd, up to 26 Eider and over 200 Common Scoter on the Sea mid month, a female Ruddy Duck was at Castle Water on 12th and 2 males were at Ternery Pool from 27th. Raptors were scarce, but the male Hen Harrier was still in the area throughout the month. Water Rails were seen regularly at Ternery Pool and occasionally around Castle Water. Some waders were scarce again this month with just a single record of Jack Snipe from the Wader Pool. Lapwing numbers were usually around 2000 in the area but most impressive were the numbers of Sanderling that were visible at low tide. The Long-eared Owl that had been roosting on the Narrow Pits was last seen on 8th. The other interesting records were of 2 adult Little Gulls at Ternery Pool on 14th, 2 Dartford Warblers on 2nd and a single Firecrest by the Long Pit on 3rd.

The first Bumble Bee was noted on the 28th and flowering Common Whitlow-grass on 26th.

MARCH 1994

The male Hen Harrier and Merlin were regular until mid month, and Kingfishers were common along the ditches. First spring migrants arrived at the start of the month; Sandwich Tern on 1st, White Wagtail from 10th, Chiffchaff singing from 10th, Avocet on 11th, Firecrest on 12th, Wheatear and Sand Martin on 14th, Black-tailed Godwit on 16th and Yellow Wagtail on 19th. Up to 3 Adult Mediterranean Gulls were present at Ternery Pool from 4th as were 2 males and a female Ruddy Duck.

The first record of Great-crested Newt was during a workparty at Castle Water on 1st.

At the Beach Clean on 19th we saw, as promised, Wheatear and Sandwich Tern, plus the Yellow Wagtail and Mediterranean Gulls, and the first flowering Scurvy-grass while we collected about 50 large sacks of rubbish from the shore.

MANAGEMENT OF THE RESERVE

by Michael Saville (chairman)

Barry Yates has recently completed a Management Plan for the Reserve, a formidable document of major importance, not only as a record of the Reserve's natural assets, but also as a statement of objectives and of the way the Reserve is managed. The structure and management of the Reserve are complex; some Friends may welcome a brief explanation.

At Rye Harbour the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was declared in 1970 by East Sussex County Council under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) on the land that is now owned by the National Rivers Authority (NRA) and since then further land has been included by agreement with other landowners.

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is an overall concept rather than a single unit. It is the totality of individual Local Nature Reserves so declared. There are four declared Local Nature Reserves, all within the Rye Harbour SSSI:

Beach Reserve, Castle Farm, Davis's Field

and Castle Water.

Each is subject to a Management Agreement between the County Council and the landowner. There are, in effect, two Agreements because Castle Water has its own. The reason for this dichotomy is historical rather than logical and a new umbrella Management Agreement is planned.

Each Management Agreement provides for a Management Committee. East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, National Rivers Authority, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Sussex Ornithological Society are voting members on both. Because the first Agreement was drawn up before the foundation of the Friends, we attend both Committees, but can only vote on matters affecting Castle Water. Rye Town Council, Icklesham Parish Council and the RSPB also attend on both Committees. The Committees meet jointly with a joint agenda, and formulate a joint budget and accounts. I hasten to add that these curious arrangements have not caused us difficulty, and that representatives of

the Friends have always been able to make their points. We hope that the arrangements will be rationalised during the course of the year.

There is a Management sub-Committee reporting to the main Committees composed of the Warden and interested individuals with a knowledge of the area and its wildlife and with experience in land management.

The Management Committees, with representation from local and public authorities and a variety of voluntary organisations, should be seen as the instruments of the County Council with responsibility for the running of the Local Nature Reserves. The Friends have a most important role to play on the Management Committees.

It is our aim to use every occasion to stress the unity of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve of which we are the Friends despite the legal requirement for individual declarations. In this we seem to have the support and understanding of everyone concerned.



WHAT ARE THESE WORKPARTIES ? - THE TRUTH

by Anita Gibbs.

"Rye Harbour's Winter Wildlife".

Little did I know what I was getting into when I spotted this entry in the "Exploring Sussex" guided walks booklet. I am ashamed to say that I had lived in Icklesham for eight years and never visited the Nature Reserve, so this seemed an ideal opportunity to rectify matters. My knowledge of birds only extended as far as the common garden varieties and the sea-front gulls, but Barry opened up a whole new world to me, so I went along to the walk in February, and joined the Friends.

My copy of the winter newsletter duly arrived, and I read the appeal for helpers at the Tuesday Workparties. I found Steve Denny's insight into the activities reassuring- "...it need not be an occasion for hard physical work clearing rubbish, weeding islands, cutting brambles, simple repair jobs..." It didn't sound too strenuous for an unfit, overweight, middle aged woman, who seldom lifts a spade to dig the garden.

The next workparty was on 1st March, a sunny day with a gentle breeze, so I turned up at 10am to "lend a hand", perhaps a spot of gentle weeding ?

Barry and Dominic turned up towing a boat, and off we went to Castle Water, where the eight volunteers were ferried two by two to a large island rising eight feet above the pit, together with a supply of spades & mattocks and a water pump. Our task was to turn this island

into an inviting habitat for Common Terns and Gulls by reducing its height by three quarters and increasing its area and exposing shingle.

Everyone was very friendly, and we all worked at our own speed and level of exertion - mine was somewhat lower than everyone else's, but no-one complained! There wasn't a lot of birdlife around, but we were all thrilled to find the first Great-crested Newt recorded on the Reserve as well as more common species like Field Voles, Smooth Newts and Toads. We finished at 3.30, when Barry assured us that one more session would see the job completed.

Two weeks later high winds and steady rain made Barry change his plans, and instead of braving the waves to work on the island, we spent an hour pacing out a new boundary fence at Castle Water and depositing fence posts at the appropriate intervals ready to be driven mechanically later. Then to the water's edge and back to spades, mattocks and water pump to cut out a nesting site for Sand Martins and Kingfishers. At 2.30 the rain stopped, the sun began to break through - and we finished for the day - wet and tired but, as Steve Denny promised, very satisfied to have done something to assist the wildlife. I have to agree with Steve - its a pity they are called workparties - chain gangs would be more appropriate !

. I can't wait for the next one !

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 1994

- Saturday, 23rd April. A MEMBERS EVENING. With a talk by Andrew Lee, the Director of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, and a Nature Reserve update from the Warden. At Winchelsea Beach Village Hall 7.30pm.
- Sunday, 1st May. A CIRCULAR WALK. Starting at the Information Centre at 5am to watch the Whimbrel leave their roost at Ternery Pool, then migrants in the Wood and then to Castle Water, hopefully finding 70+ species of bird and much other wildlife before returning about noon.
- Saturday, 11th June. THE GRAND CYCLING TOUR OF THE NATURE RESERVE. Meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 2pm. Please bring your own bicycle, lunch and energy.
- Saturday, 16th July. WILDLIFE BENEATH THE SAND. A chance to build sandcastles and find what lives below the sand. Please bring a small bucket and spade, if you can! Meet at River Mouth at 10am (until 12 noon).
- Saturday, 6th August. WHAT CAN WE CATCH AT CASTLE WATER ? A morning's study of the animals there, hopefully getting a close look at insects, mammals and birds. Limited numbers, so please book with Barry; 0797 223862.
- Monday, 29th August. PLANT & PRODUCE SALE. In aid of the FRIENDS, to be held in the Winchelsea Beach Village Hall. Cakes, plants and bring-and-buy items will be most welcome, preferably on the day, or beforehand to the Warden at the Reserve address. Anyone with new ideas for different or additional stalls please contact Liz Blackwell (0424) 753016.
- Tuesday, 13th September. WADERS AND OTHER MIGRANTS AT PETT AND RYE HARBOUR. Meet at 9am at Pett Pools (TQ9014) or at 10am at Dog's Hill Road toilet block (TQ917160) for a circular walk around the Reserve, returning about 1pm.
- Saturday, 17th September. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. At Community Centre, Rye. Meeting starts at 7.30pm.
- Sunday, 16th October. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OF CASTLE WATER. A three hour circular walk to look at principles and progress! Please book with Barry; 0797 223862.
- Saturday, 19th November. THE CASTLE WATER CIRCULAR WALK. Leaflets available @ 20p, with a chance to go inside Camber Castle. Meet at 9am at the Brede Lock car park TQ920198, returning about mid-day.
- Sunday, 18th December. WINTER WILDLIFE AT RYE HARBOUR. Are there any Swans, Partridge, Geese and Turtle Doves for Christmas? Meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 1pm.

LEAFLETS

There are several leaflets available from the Wardens which give information about the Reserve and its wildlife.

There are the old favourites;

Guided Walk - which although dated is a good introduction to the walk from the car park to the River Mouth.

Introductory Leaflet - up to date information with a map of the Reserve.

Plant List - 8 pages of all the species of flowering plants recorded up to 1993.

Checklist of Birds - 4 pages of all the species recorded up to 1993.

Castle Water Circular Walk - guides you around a 2.5 mile circuit, giving information on the history and wildlife of the northern part of the Reserve.

There are now 3 new leaflets;

Breeding Birds

Wintering Birds

Shingle Flowers

Each deals with the 15 species "most likely to be seen", together with an illustration of each.

There is also the Annual Report which for 1992 gives details of the Reserve's year, the weather, all the birds and other vertebrates, some plants and some details of the invertebrates, especially the rare insects, an article on Castle Water and the accounts of the Management Committee.

PLEASE NOTE; the report for 1993 will not be available until sometime in May.

The leaflets are 20p each, but the Plant List is 50p and the Annual Report is £1.50p. Please send an A5 s.a.e. to the Nature Reserve Address.

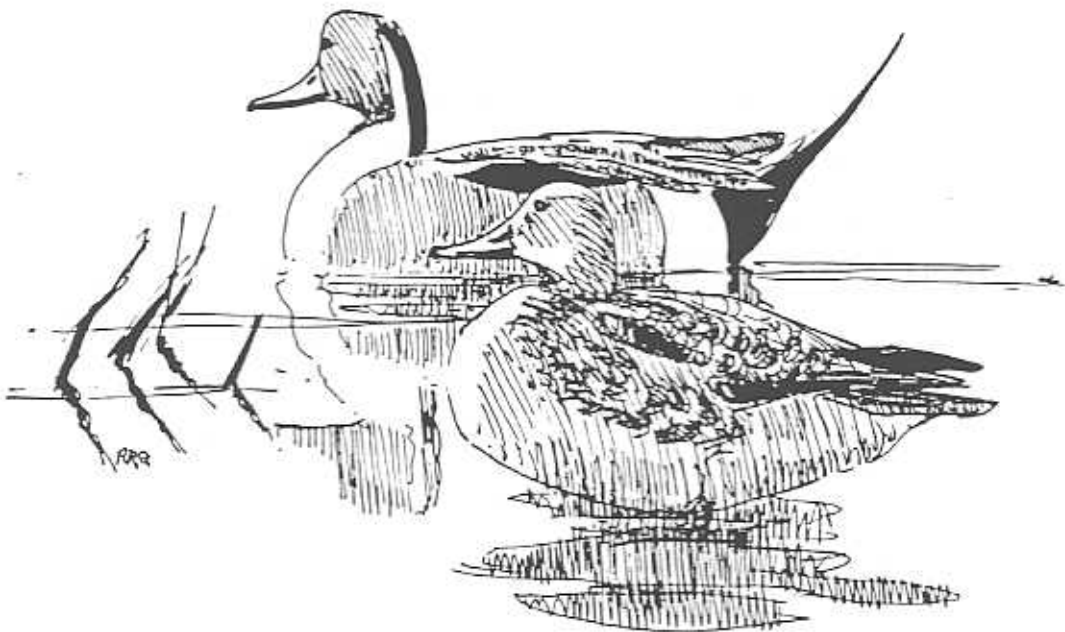
TREASURER'S NOTE

by Frank Clarke.

A request for Auditors for the Friends accounts in a recent Newsletter was successful in finding two people willing and able to do the job. They are Roger Bailey and Michael Russell.

It has been decided that since the bank accounts of the Friends are becoming more substantial, and with the hope of further land purchases, a more detailed account analysis would be the way

forward. The old style Income and Expenditure account will again be produced at the end of this financial year on 31/3/94, together with a proper balance sheet for comparison (in next Newsletter). In future years only the new style balance sheet will be produced.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

by Peter Philpot

The membership of the Reserve has remained virtually static over the last 3 years. There has however been a regrettable downward trend from 1137 in 1992 to 1096 last year. So far this year we have 14 new members, but can reasonably expect more in May and June when the Reserve is visited more frequently.

Although the minimum subscription remains at £5 I am glad to say that most of you are more generous and that the average subscription is now £11.58 (£10.29 in 1992). This average includes the amount we are able to claim from the Inland Revenue on Covenants, which was £1218 in 1992 and £1381 last year.

COVENANTS AND BANKERS ORDERS

From the above report, you can see that an obvious way to increase your subscription is to take out a Covenant, so that for example a £10 subscription becomes £13.34 to the Friends. Quite a large number of Bankers Orders have been running for 5 or even 10 years without being updated. If you are considering updating your existing, or taking out a new Bankers Order and Covenant then please write to me at the address below enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

GIFT AID

Should any of you consider giving a large donation to the Friends Land Fund or to the Reserve generally, then the minimum amount which qualifies for Gift Aid is now £250. Giving through Gift Aid enables us to reclaim the tax, as in Covenants, which increases your gift to approximately £333.32. If you are considering this, then please contact me so that I can send the correct form. Telephone 0797 225998.

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

Renewals are due on 1st May. Please renew by using the form at the bottom of the page - if you have paid or pay by Bankers Order please ignore this.

I am sure that some of our lapsed members of previous years had every intention of renewing, but did not do so at the time for one reason or another, I am afraid we are all inclined to let things slip and then regret it.

If you wish to pay at the members evening on 23rd April then please do so, BUT the form must be completed and attached to your subscription so that I can easily check that all is in order. Please do not put them in an envelope.

Thank-you.

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SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FORM

Subscription renewal for the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve for the period 1st May 1994 until 30th April 1995.

Name:..... Address:.....

[PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS]

.....
.....
Telephone No.....

Cash / cheque enclosed for: £.....

Please return this form to:
Membership Secretary, Broadwater, The Ridge, Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex. TN36 4LU.