

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - Autumn 1979

When taking up a new post, it is always difficult to know exactly where to start. Therefore let me begin this Newsletter by bringing everyone up to date on the subject of administration.

Since the sad loss of our late Chairman and founder, Guy Crittall, the committee was elected at the last Annual General Meeting as follows:- Chairman = Ian Rumley-Dawson; Secretary = Clifford Percival; Treasurer = Colin Green; Committee = Richard Knight, Evelyn Stewart, John Ball, Edwin Cawkell, Kelvin Cawte, Mary Milliner. We hope that you will give us your full support, and we will be specially interested to hear about any new ideas or suggestions that you may care to offer, so that we can achieve the main aim of the "Friends" which is to improve the Reserve.

It was suggested at the last A.G.M. that the committee should look into new ways of raising funds for the Reserve. To this end, we will be holding a public lecture in Rye, which we hope will not only raise funds but also make people more aware of the importance of the Reserve as far as wildlife is concerned, as well as to emphasise the educational value that it has to offer. Naturally, we also hope to recruit more members so that we have increased moral and financial support for the future as well. Full details of this event on Saturday 24th November, 1979 are enclosed with this Newsletter. Please come along and help make it a success, and of course do please give it as much publicity as possible. Ask your local shop/library/school/village hall to display the enclosed leaflet now. Tell your neighbours or better still, bring them along on the evening. It will be suitable for children and you may learn something new about the Reserve as well.

In the Warden's report, Richard mentions the coming of the new hide at the east end of Ternery Pool. However, this is only the start of interesting new developments in that area. There are also plans to improve the islands there as well, but of course all this takes time and money. This is why we really do need your support. In fact during a recent visit to the Reserve at Rye Harbour by one of the high officials of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Sandy), he was heard to remark that he thought it was just as good a place for birdwatching as Minsmere!!! So you see it is well worth the effort.

Now for the bad news. As briefly mentioned in the last Newsletter, some recent planning applications in the Rye Harbour area have given rise to concern. One is for yet another proposed marina and warehouse units etc. on the river Rother, this time on the west bank. However, the planning application which will more directly affect the Reserve, is the one for increased sailing, water ski-ing (that means noisy power boats) and other sporting activities on the adjacent Castle Water Estate. Aircraft that now land and take-off on that estate, already cause disturbance to wild life in the area of the Reserve. After receiving over 100 letters of protest against these planning applications, and after a public meeting attended by approximately 200 local people, most of whom were against the applications, the County Council have now just recently approved both of them!!! Needless to say, all the major nature conservation societies in East Sussex as well as many local people are making further protests to higher authorities, such as the Department of the Environment, local Members of Parliament and the Ombudsman. Obviously in a short report like this, full details of all the aspects involved cannot be explained. However, suffice it to say that your committee will be keeping a tight eye on the whole situation as it effects the Reserve, and we are in close liaison with all the other natural history societies.

As far as the wildlife is concerned, this year's breeding season has certainly been most successful, with a record number of tern chicks being reared to the flying stage. This has in no small measure been due to the tireless efforts and inventions of Richard Knight and his Assistant Warden Pam Haddon, including the excellent backing of over 90 volunteer wardens. To all those who took part in operation Tern Watch this year-many thanks. Let us hope that we can keep the whole team together for next year as well.

Ian Rumley-Dawson  
(Chairman)

FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE  
AUTUMN 1979

Dear Friends,

The spring speculation for a year to beat all years was rather a risky prophesy to make as virtually anything can happen when dealing with the natural world. However, I felt that with the management plan in its third year some satisfactory results should begin to show, and show they did.

The problem of maintaining a breeding sanctuary of terns and other shore birds are many fold. Especially in the well populated south-coast where the demands for human recreational areas constantly grow. At Rye Harbour Nature Reserve it has been possible to form sanctuary areas away from the foreshore without hindrance to the general public wishing to visit the seashore. This combined with a private road with restricted vehicular access but enabling management and wardening work to be carried out most effectively, makes the R.H.N.R. a more fortunate coastal nesting area than many sites in the south-east.

Careful habitat management and constant wardening from May-August, as many of you know all to well having spent hours tern watching and baby sitting, is now the scheme of things from year to year.

The knowledge gained during '77 and '78 and the invaluable determined help from you all has paid real dividends this year. The huge new island area built by the usual 4 day Easter working parties was barely finished before the common terns were eyeing-it-up with the result that 40 pairs nested and reared at least 45 young to the flying stage. While on the open shingle our new design of electric fence to control the movement of foxes apparently worked and a satisfactory fledging success was achieved. 29 pairs of little terns nested, the most for 10 years, and reared 13 young to the flying stage. A satisfactory result despite a problem kestrel with a distinct taste for little tern chicks. Ringed plovers nesting within the electric fenced areas also had a good year.

Looking to the future and improvements proposed for the coming winter, it is hoped to build and position a second hide at Ternery Pool. Flanning consent was granted earlier this year for both the hide and some slight alteration to a nearby footpath. A generous grant of £500 has been received from the Sussex Ornithological Society and the project will hopefully be completed by next spring. Some extension to the electric fenced sanctuary areas is also planned and of course further work to the islands in Ternery Pool.

With the help of all concerned the future seasons have promise of a more relaxed balance, a real control to the areas' distressed state prior to the establishment of the Nature Reserve.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Knight