



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 (SSSI)

Chairman Michael Saville
Secretary Liz Blackwell
Membership Secretary Peter Philpot
Committee Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer, Anne Yates

Vice Chair Nicola Frith
Treasurer Frank Clarke

Warden Dr. Barry Yates

Assistant Warden Dominic Funnell

Nature Reserve Address

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Spring 1995 Newsletter

No. 50

Castle Water Hide now open

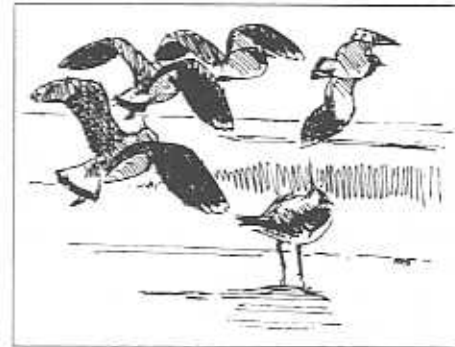
The new hide is now open - to find it, follow the fence that runs east from Camber Castle for about 400m. There is a stile in a fence that leads to the path into the hide. The Friends workparties have been working on the new hide on most Tuesdays since December. There have been several difficulties, but by the time you read this, it will be completed. The project was funded by the Friends, but we were fortunate to have a grant from Rural Action for the Environment.

The hide is larger than our others and should be able to accommodate the number of people that we often get on our popular guided walks. The 16 windows overlook part of Castle Water where we have done a lot of work to improve the area for wildlife - created a new island, enlarged another, provided rafts and floating logs, created a gently sloping shoreline and new bays, put up nest boxes, provided feeders and discouraged disturbance to the area. This work was made possible with grants from English Nature, National Rivers Authority and East Sussex County Council. As the area settles down it will provide another interesting area to watch on one of the circular walks - for details of these walks send a sae to the Reserve address.

and 7th, Bittern at Ternery Pool on 12th and female Long-tailed Duck on the Long Pit during the month. The first butterfly record of the year was of a Small Tortoiseshell on 23rd!

February

More mild and wet weather (it rained on at least 20 days, producing another 140mm. of rain). Duck numbers remained high with Shelducks increasing to 31 by the end of the month, 42 Gadwall, still 220 Teal and at least 180 Mallards, 2 Pintails, 90 Shovelers and up to 5 Ruddy Ducks. The American Wigeon (hybrid) drake was



Warden's Report

January

A mild, but very wet month with 187mm. of rain, which, added to the already high rainfall at the end of last year, produced extremely high water levels and large areas of flooded ground. At Ternery Pool most of the islands disappeared, whilst on Flat Beach the shallow pools were attractive to very many gulls, ducks and waders.

A single Black-necked Grebe was on the Long Pit until at least 14th, there was also a single Red-necked Grebe there on 21st. The hybrid American Wigeon that has been at Ternery pool since last October was still present, although it was extremely elusive. Duck numbers at Ternery Pool

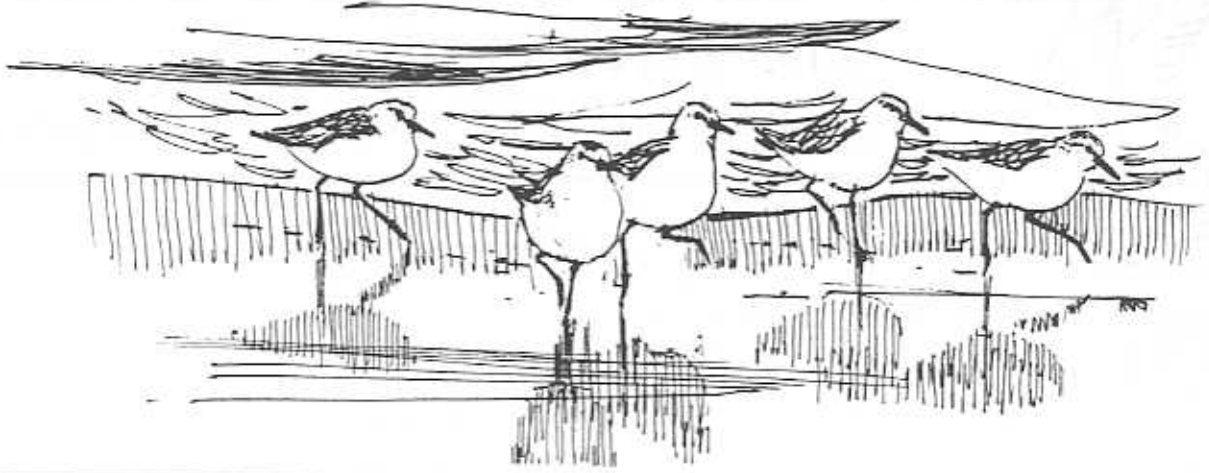
were quite high early in the month with peaks of 365 Teal, 219 Mallards, up to 7 Pintail and 23 Shoveler, some species were notable only for their absence, there were just 2 Goldeneye records this month, singles on 5th and 22nd. The Ruddy Ducks were absent during the middle of winter but re-appeared on 22nd and have been present ever since. Winter raptors have been quite scarce with just 4 records of a single ringtail Hen Harrier and a couple of Merlin records. Wader numbers were high during the month, especially at dusk, of particular note were the large flocks of Lapwings in the area (up to 5000+), up to 150 Golden Plovers in the fields, 800+ Dunlin, 381 Sanderling and 60 Grey Plover. Other highlights include a Spotted Redshank on Flat Beach on 5th

again present throughout the month as was the Long-tailed Duck, there were a few records of oiled Common Scoter at Ternery Pool and a flock of over 300 on the sea. The ringtail Hen Harrier was still around and a female Peregrine became a frequent visitor mid-month. Waders were

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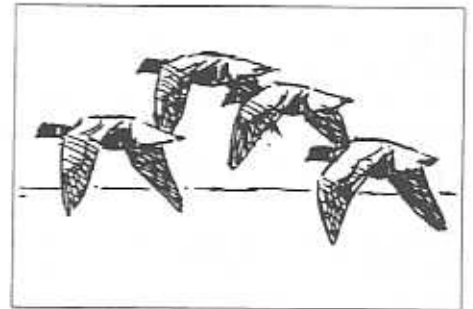
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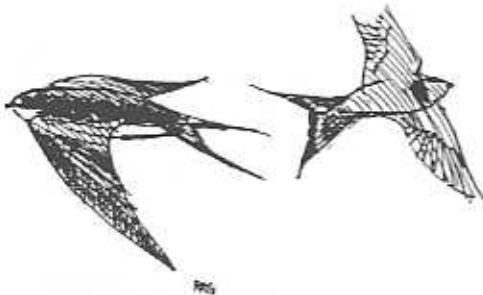


again well represented with up to 900 Dunlin and still 120+ Sanderling along the shore, Ringed Plovers became more vocal from mid-month as birds moved back on to the ridges to breed, the largest flock seen was of 40 at dusk and there was a single Green Sandpiper at Castle Water on 19th. Other highlights during the month included a single Jack Snipe on the Wader Pool throughout the month, a Cetti's Warbler at Castle Water on 9th and a Swallow in Winchelsea Beach on 17th.

probably only the Brent were truly wild. Gadwall and Tufted Duck numbers were good with up to 32 and 118 respectively, but other duck numbers were quite low. There was a single Long-tailed Duck at the Long Pit all month and at least 3 Ruddy Ducks at Ternery Pool. Merlin and Hen Harrier were last noted on 22nd, but Sparrowhawks remained regular. The first breeding was noted with Mallard and Ringed Plover nests on 1st and 9th, but there were at least 9 pairs of Lapwing incubating on Harbour Farm by 31st. There were a few scarce waders; Avocet on 5 days, Knot on 2, 8 Ruff on 9th, and Green Sandpiper on 2 days. There were single records of Great Skua and Kittiwake.



seen on cold, but sunny days. Hares are still scarce with a maximum of 3 seen together (10 years ago it was common to see more than 20 together). The first Pipistrelle bat was seen on 30th, Grass Snake 27th, Marsh Frog 19th and Peacock butterfly 15th. The second Small Tortoiseshell of the year was on 22nd. The warm days at the end of the month produced 3 new moth records; Oak Beauty, Pine Beauty and Twin-spotted Quaker, but the moth trap also produced a Great Silver Water Beetle on 31st!



March

At last a reasonably dry month with below average rainfall, gave the water levels a chance to drop, but not enough for the islands at Ternery Pool to reappear. There was a good variety of geese around all month; several flocks of Brent flying east along the channel, 70 Canada, 1 Barnacle, 4 White-front and up to 16 Greylag, but

Mediterranean Gulls were regular all month at Ternery Pool with up to 2 adults, 1 2nd year and 2 first years. The first returning Sandwich Tern was not seen until 24th, Sand Martin on 18th (but not regular until 25th), Swallow on 29th (after the one on 17th February), Wheatear 12th, Chiffchaff 4th and Firecrest 11th. During the middle of the month there were up to 5 Long-eared Owls on the islands of the Narrow Pit, best

Tern Watch

From late May until early August there will be volunteers looking over the Little Terns and other wildlife of the Beach Reserve. However we will need more volunteers. If you would like to know more please contact Barry or Anne Yates at the Nature Reserve address.

What a load of rubbish!

Once again the Friends and the Rother Environmental Group joined forces to clear the beach of the Winter's accumulated rubbish. Over a weekend in March more than 25 people helped to collect over 130 sacks of rubbish - mainly plastic, with an interesting variety of containers from all over the world. The great mound of rubbish collected was larger than previous years. This may be due to the very windy weather of the Winter, but might reflect the increase of dumping at sea.

Anyway, the Winter's rubbish has now been collected and visitors will be able to enjoy a much cleaner beach. A big thank-you to all who helped.

Dates for Your Diary - 1995

- Sunday 30th April** **Annual Whimbrel Walk**
An early start to see one of the largest roosts of Whimbrel in Britain (peaked at 416 in 1994). Meet at Information Centre at 4.30 am, returning about noon
- Saturday 13th May** **Members' Evening**
Our Wild Orchids - an illustrated talk by Fred Booth, formerly Director of the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation at Winchelsea Beach Village Hall at 7pm
- Saturday 27th May** **Shingle Flowers**
A short but slow circular walk to find some of the flowers of the Beach Reserve. Meet at Information Centre at 2pm, returning by 5pm
- Sunday 11th June** **The Annual Cycling Tour of the Nature Reserve**
Please bring your own bicycle, lunch and energy. Meet at Information Centre at 10.00am, returning about 2pm
- Saturday & Sunday
8th & 9th July** **A Vision of Sussex**
To mark the European Nature Conservation Year (ENCY 95) there will be a major environmental conference at Sussex University
- Saturday 15th July** **Wildlife at Night**
Bats and Moths, Badgers and Owls may all be seen on this evening walk. Meet at Brede Lock car park at 8.30pm, returning about midnight
- Saturday 12th August** **Wildlife of the Beach**
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 4pm, finishing about 6pm
- Thursday 7th September** **Waders and other Migrants at Pett Pools 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 23rd September** **Annual General Meeting**
At Winchelsea Beach Community Centre at 7.30pm
(NOT Community Centre, Rye as stated in last Newsletter)
- Sunday 15th October** **The Castle Water Circular Walk**
With a chance to go inside Camber Castle. Meet at the Brede Lock car park (TQ920198) at 9am, returning about midday. Leaflets @ 20p
- Saturday 25th November** **Birdwatching at High Tide**
A very high tide will provide a good chance to watch birds. Meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 1pm
- Saturday 16th December** **Birdwatching at Dusk**
A good time to count the roosts of gulls and waders and perhaps see an owl or two. Meet at Information Centre at 2pm, returning about 5pm

— Sale Items —

	Price	Postage
Annual Report -1994 (available late May)	£2.00	36p
Descriptive Leaflet - a short introduction to the Reserve and its wildlife, including map	20p	19p
Breeding Birds of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve - notes on 14 species that regularly breed	20p	19p
Wintering of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve - notes on 14 species most likely to be seen	20p	19p
Shingle Flowers of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve - notes on 14 species of the Beach Reserve	20p	19p
Castle Water Circular Walk - with map - a 2.5 mile walk taking in Camber Castle and part of the Nature Reserve	20p	19p
Guided Walk Leaflet - a self-guided interest trail starting from the Information Centre	20p	19p
A Checklist of Birds - all the species recorded to 1992	20p	19p
List of Flowering Plants - a list of the 300+ species found within the LNR	50p	19p
Illustrated Tea Towel	£2.50p	36p
Car Window Sticker	50p	19p
Pack of Writing Paper	£1.50p	36p
Pack of Notelets	£1.50p	36p
Illustrated Mug	£2.50p	not by post
Illustrated Tray	£5.50p	not by post

Black and White Postcards

Price: 10p Postage: 19p

Little Tern
Hare
Pintail
River Mouth View

Colour Postcards

Price: 25p Postage: 19p

Sea Kale
Biting Stonecrop
Long-eared Owl
Shore at Low Tide



Little Tern

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, Sussex

Message from the Chairman

In this, the 25th year of the Nature Reserve and European Nature Conservation Year (ENCY 95 see Diary) we are planning a small occasion to officially open the new hide in early May, not least to say "thank-you" to those who have done the job. Councillor Ann Moore, Chair of East Sussex Environment Committee and of the Reserve's Management Committee will "open" the hide and we hope to get some coverage from the media. I regret that this cannot be an open day because of the restricted space.

In the last issue of the Newsletter we sought someone who might be willing to take on the editing and production of a master copy of the Newsletter. I was not confident about the outcome but in the event there were four offers of help and we are most grateful. This left us in the invidious position of having to decide whom we should select. We have chosen Richard Byatt and this Newsletter will be his. Our thanks to all four for their generous response.

Please make special note that the venue for the AGM has changed! See Diary on page 3.

Smeaton's Harbour

There is more than one harbour close to the Nature Reserve. Just to the West of the Reserve lies the remains of an ambitious project to provide a "new" harbour for Rye. From the sea-wall at Winchelsea Beach look north; the field is the channel of the New Harbour of Rye; look south and you will see part of the eastern stone pier and, at low tide, the timber framework of the two harbour arms. The New Harbour needed 7 Acts of Parliament, and took 63 years to build. Its effective life was just 4 months. John Smeaton was born in 1724, the year that work started on the harbour. He was briefly a consultant but never the resident engineer. To name it after Smeaton is to associate him with local incompetence, delays and sterile conflict between landed and maritime interests. The decline of Rye after the 1570s was rapid and attributable to the retreat of the sea, the winning of new land and changes in the pattern of trade. In 1698 Navy Commissioners wrote off the harbour as "in no condition to be preserved

for any purpose of the navigation". Parliament authorised a western solution; in 1724 Commissioners were appointed and work started on access from Rye and on a new cut from Winchelsea Water (the Brede) to the sea. The stone piers and the great sluice (to the rear of the Ship Inn) were completed by 1733. In the 1740s and '50s there were problems over keeping the entrance of the harbour clear of beach and silt, and over lack of money. Work was halted for a decade. In July 1762 (38 years after work had started), the Commissioners ordered that "the Sea be forthwith let into the said new Cutt or Canal". The Commissioners sought the advice of John Smeaton. He recommended the turning of the Rother and the Tillingham together with the Brede into the new channel to obtain a head of water to keep the entrance of the harbour scoured. Delays followed. By 1768 the wall separating the Winchelsea Water from the new channel had still not been cut; not until 1786 were measures taken to train the Rother into a

by Mike Saville

new channel. In July 1787 navigation in the old harbour was restricted; a pilot at the New Harbour was appointed. In November of the same year crisis struck. The levels flooded and could not be drained into the waterways of the New Harbour. The Commissioners in despair minuted that "the said Harbour is now totally inadequate to the purposes of Navigation and Sewage". Works were abandoned, and the dams opened. Maritime interests offered the Commissioners "sincere thanks for having restored to us the Ancient Harbour of Rye". The portland stone of the west pier and the sluice was sold. The east pier was retained as a breakwater, some of its massive stones emerge periodically from the beach to remind us of years of misguided effort: some have been removed to form a kerb for the National Rivers Authority road.

On the sea wall at Dog's Hill Road there is an information board about the harbour.

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

Renewals are due on 1st May (£5.00 minimum). Please renew by using this form. If you have paid or pay by Bankers Order please ignore this.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FORM

Subscription renewal for the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve for the period 1st May 1995 until 30th April 1996

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Cash/Cheque enclosed for: £

Please return this form to:

Membership Secretary, Broadwater, The Ridge, Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex, TN36 4LU