



# 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**

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

Tel: 01797 223862 Mobile: 0850 667177

Summer 1995 Newsletter

No. 51

## Partners in Europe

In France, just across the sea from the Reserve lies the Baie de Somme Region with many similarities to Rye Bay: an estuary, with saltmarsh, sand dunes and shingle. In April Barry went to meet the countryside managers there to investigate the possibilities of a partnership in joint projects. He visited a Nature Reserve, called Hable d'Ault. It has a list of plants, 67% of which occur at Rye Harbour. It has breeding plovers, ducks, warblers but no terns. It has sea defence problems. It has water level problems. It has disturbance problems. It is very similar to Rye Harbour. In June the French managers visited Rye Harbour and we are now making plans to work together on wildlife projects.

### Warden's Report

#### April

As the spring migrants started to arrive in force during the month the last winter visitors departed: Sandwich Tern (first on 1st), with 350 at dusk by the end of the month; a Cuckoo (1st, but not recorded again until 22nd); Sanderling 41 (1st) but only 6 by end of month; Green Sandpiper and Little Gull (4th); Common Tern and

Yellow Wagtail (6th); Spotted Redshank (7th); Sedge Warbler and Redstart (10th); Reed Warbler and Greenshank (12th); Whimbrel (from 12th) with 270 at roost on 30th; unusually still 14 Curlew in area at the end of month; House Martin (13th); Whitethroat (14th); Bar-tailed Godwit (from 15th) increasing to 63 by end of month; Garganey 2 males (16th); Lesser Whitethroat (18th); Common Sandpiper and Little Tern (19th); Brent Goose last flock (19th); Turtle Dove (22nd); Swift and Little Ringed Plover (23rd); Jack Snipe (25th); Whinchat (30th). Other birds of note recorded during the month included Firecrest (1st); Bittern (3rd); Peregrine (6th); a pair of Bearded Tit (12th); Red-breasted Merganser (21st); Avocet 10 (29th) with 5 still present the next day; Ruff, Buzzard and Nightingale (30th). There was also the female Long-tailed Duck present on either the Long Pit or on Castle Water all month, although it was very elusive at times. The Mediterranean

Gulls were present at Ternery Pool all month with at least 9 birds in various plumages being seen, including some colour ringed.

Hares continued to be scarce all month with the largest group being just 3, the only mammal record of note was a Grey Seal in the River (9th).

During the month the moth trap was on for 18 nights, catching 22 species, of which three, Brindled Beauty, Lunar Marbled Brown and Small Quaker, were new for the Reserve. The other species of note seen was Dark Sword-grass, a migrant (from 3rd) which was caught on 9 nights. The trap was also irresistible for the Great Silver Water Beetle with up to 2 adults in the trap (until the 7th).

#### May

A single Little Egret (8th and 9th), an immature Spoonbill (12th) then 5 flying over (19th). Feral wildfowl included an immature Black Swan (18th), Snow Goose (from 20th), two Bar-headed Geese (from 17th) and 4 pairs of Ruddy Duck. A late group of 5 Brent Geese (30th) and a Long-tailed Duck (until at least 13th).

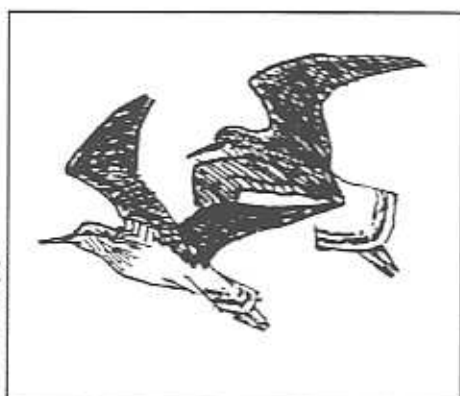
A female Marsh harrier (8th) and then two (13th), a female Red-footed Falcon (8th) and 1-2 Hobby (from 15th).

The highlight among the waders was, as usual the regular spring roost of Whimbrel near Ternery Pool which reached a peak of 362 (2nd), but declined to just 135 (9th).

*continued on page 2*

#### Inside this issue ...

The water situation .....	3
Wildlife designations .....	4



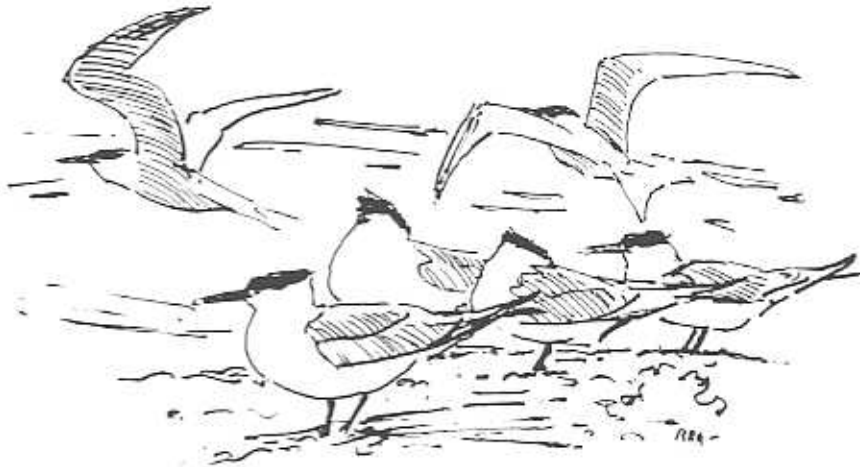
Green Sandpiper

then 6 (15th). A maximum of 129 Bar-tailed Godwits (11th), a summer plumage Curlew Sandpiper (8th), single Greenshanks (until 15th), 1-3 Common Sandpipers (3rd-24th). Mediterranean Gulls were regular all month with 1-7 of all ages on most days, up to 5 Little Gulls, mostly 1st years, were present all month. The first Black-headed Gulls hatched (22nd).

The most exciting birds of the month were seen at Ternery Pool, which lived up to its

seabirds had a good season with regular Mediterranean Gulls, adult Black Tern (28th), immature Little Gulls (until 10th), 450 pairs of Black-headed Gulls, 100 - 130 pairs of Sandwich Terns (poor success of both may have been due to Herring Gulls or Brown Rats) and 120 pairs of Common Terns rearing many young.

On the Beach Reserve 41 pairs of Little Tern had very good hatching success, the chicks grew rapidly, BUT once again Kestrels took most of them. There were



Sandwich Terns

name and reputation. A Lesser Crested Tern, in partial winter plumage, at dusk (7th) and two Gull-billed Terns roosted there (28th), presumably attracted by the good numbers of breeding Sandwich, Common and Little Terns. In May the moth trap was on for 15 nights catching 67 species (26 macros and 5 micros) There were two new species for the Reserve this month *Epiblema cynosbatella* and *Chamomile Shark*.

## June

Many of the feral wildfowl of last month remained, Black Swan, Snow Goose and Barnacle Goose, but a very late Brent Goose (11th) was probably wild. Duck numbers built up at Ternery Pool after their breeding season with Teal (from 15th), Pintail (from 19th) and Pochard reaching 39 by the end. However, there were two male and a female Garganey displaying (5th).

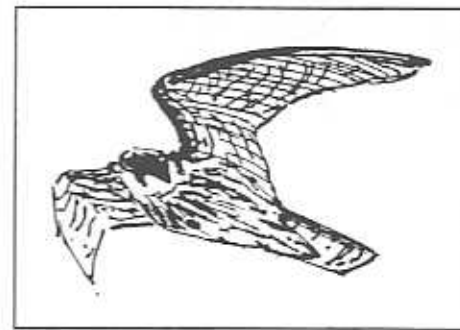
There was a single Marsh Harrier (8th), Hen Harrier (9th and 10th), female Red-footed Falcon (10th), Peregrine (21st) and regular Hobby. Water Rails were noted all month at Castle Water where there was also a Little Ringed Plover (5th and 16th), 1-3 Green Sandpipers (from 16th).

There were signs of Autumn with post-breeding flocks of Lapwing (from 5th), a single Avocet (from 7th), roosts of Curlew (from 22nd), Greenshank (28th) and Ruff (from 27th). At Ternery Pool the

also 7-8 pairs of breeding Wheatear which raised many young, as did more than 50 pairs of Ringed Plovers and several pairs of Redshank, Oystercatcher and Lapwing. A singing Grasshopper Warbler was heard (from 29th), but the most intriguing record was of a female and then a male Red-backed Shrike (11th) and then only the male (12th)!!!

During June the moth trap was on for 22 nights, a total of 124 species were caught (97 macros and 27 micros). The best night was the 29th with over 500 moths of 56 species caught. There were two new species for the Reserve this month, Bird's Wing and *Convolvulus Hawk* - moth (a migrant) (both 22nd). Other migrants of note included Diamond Backed Moth on 3 dates with a maximum of 35 on the 30th; a single Bordered Straw (16th); Dark Sword-grass (27th) and *Udea ferrugalis* (30th). Other species of note included *Ethmia bipunctella* (a rare species found only here and at Dungeness); *Chilo phragmitella* (29th); *Synaphe punctalis* (27th-30th); single Cream-spot Tiger (1st); Water Ermine (19th-30th); White Colon (19th and 22nd);

Apart from those caught at light the only other record of note was of a plume moth, *Pterophorus spilodactylus* that was recorded from 3 sites late in the month. This very rare moth only feeds on White Horehound (itself a scarce species) and prior to our records in 1994 had not been recorded in Sussex this century!



Hobby



Kestrel

## Sad news

The opening of the Castle Water hide was announced in the last Newsletter, but now, only a few months later, we have to announce its closure! On the evening of Sunday, 2nd July it was completely destroyed by fire, which was most probably arson. Generally, we are fortunate with a low level of vandalism, and the hides on the Beach Reserve are rarely damaged, but we have to expect these problems. The hide was insured and we hope to rebuild.

## From the Membership Secretary

The membership of the friends is always very difficult to quantify - I believe at the time of writing we have 1,388 members, covered by 1,140 subscriptions. However, 282 members have yet to pay their subscriptions which were due on 1st May.

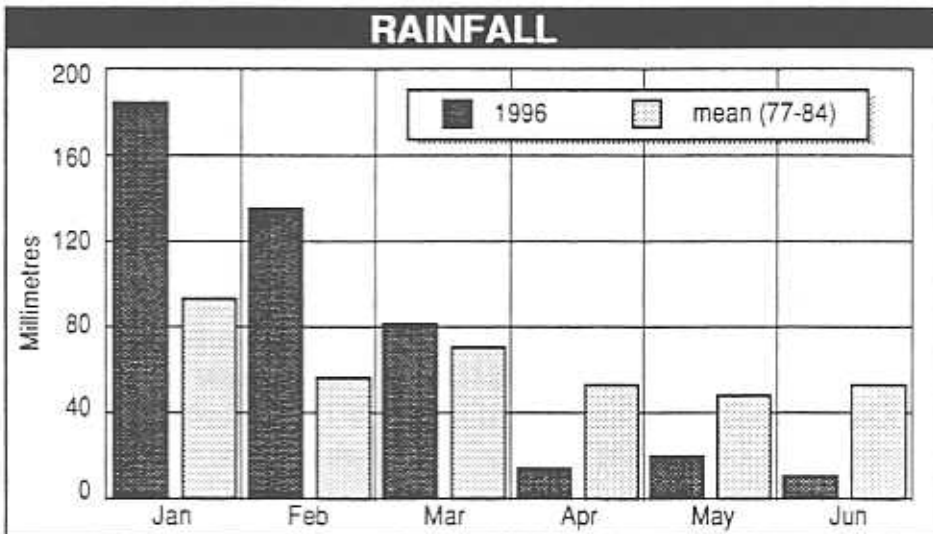
If you find enclosed with this newsletter a subscription reminder please return it with your payment as soon as possible. Thank you.

*Peter Philpot*

# The Water Situation

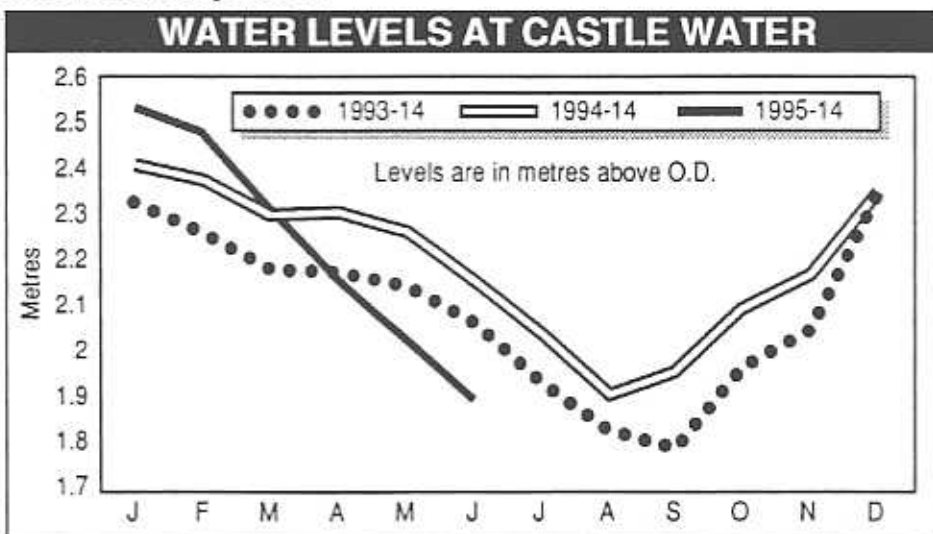
Every morning since 1977 the Wardens have recorded the minimum and maximum temperatures and the rainfall. These measurements are summarised in the Annual Reports and are sometimes useful in interpreting changes in wildlife.

The 1131mm of rainfall in 1994, proved it to be the wettest year on our records (average 826mm), and the graph below shows that the first two months of 1995 were also much wetter than normal. However, March was average and then April, May and June were very dry. This did enable the islands of the pits to reappear, providing safe nesting sites for gulls and terns, but it caused difficulties for many flowering plants, especially on the thin soils of the shingle ridges.



We also record the water levels at about 20 places on the Reserve and the graph below shows the level of Castle Water during the last two and a half years. It is clear that this year the pit started at a higher level than normal, but the dry months of April May and June have resulted in lower levels than normal, dropping by about 5mm a day.

It is this seasonal fluctuation in water levels of some 0.75m that makes it desirable to improve the margin of Castle Water for wetland wildlife by reprofiling. By widening the shallow edge of the pit we have created a much larger area of suitable habitat for very many rare and common wetland plants and animals. There are plans to carry out more of such work in September.



## New sales items

These items will be available at the AGM or by post from the Reserve address (please enclose large sae).

### Castle Water Prints

In connection with the opening of the Castle Water Hide the Friends commissioned a limited edition, hand coloured, print by Bob Greenhalf of a view at Castle Water which includes: the Castle, the Hide, islands, water, reeds, swans, grebes and a reed bunting. There will be only 40 prints made and they cost £45 with card mount or £58 framed.

### Three circular walks

A leaflet showing three circular walks around the Reserve is available free.

### Greetings cards

For many years Friends have been requesting a Greetings Card and now, to celebrate the Nature Reserve's 25th year, we have one. Bob Greenhalf has painted a watercolour looking over the Wader Pool towards the cliffs at Fairlight with small flocks of waders in the foreground. These high quality cards are available with a seasonal Christmas message, or blank, at a cost of 40p each or £2.00p for 6.

### Annual report

The 1994 report, containing details of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, moths, lichens and much more... is available for £2.00p.

# Wildlife Site Designations *by Barry Yates*

*The Nature Reserve, is now 25 years old and it is getting ever more complex. The many labels attached to it make it more confusing. I thought that it was now time to review these important designations.*

**1947**

The conservation status of the site dates to at least 1947 when it was part of the large area considered in the Government publication, Command 7122 (1947) as Scientific Area 25. DUNGENESE, Sussex and Kent

**1956**

The next designation of the site came with the notification of the Rye Harbour SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), which was then revised in 1966. Following the Wildlife And Countryside Act, 1981 the site was renotified in 1984.

**1970**

The 209 acres of shingle beach owned by Southern Water Authority (now NRA) was declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) by the County Council, pursuant to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. The County Council also appointed a Management Committee to administer the Reserve. This was the beginning of Rye Harbour Local Nature Reserve, which has since grown as other Management Agreements have been made.

**1971**

The convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat was adopted at a meeting of countries concerned with wetland and waterfowl conservation which was held at Ramsar, Iran in 1971. The objectives are to stem the progressive encroachment on, and loss of, wetlands now and in the future. The UK Government signed the Convention in 1973 and ratified it in 1976 (Command 6465). Rye Harbour is part of the proposed Dungeness to Pett Level RAMSAR site - still awaiting to be declared!

**1979**

All of the LNR is listed as part of the proposed Dungeness to Pett Level Special Protection Areas (SPA) - as the UK is a member of the European Union, the Government is bound by the Birds Directive (79/409/EC). Member states are required to take special measures to conserve the habitat of certain vulnerable or migratory birds. Particular attention must be paid to the protection of wetlands, especially wetlands of International Importance.

**1995**

Most of the LNR is listed as part of the proposed Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) was adopted by member states of the European Community (EC) in May 1992. It is intended to provide a common standard across the EC for nature conservation.

In the immediate future we hope that Rye Harbour will be declared an SPA, RAMSAR and SAC which will lead to it being recognised as one of Europe's important wildlife areas. It will become part of the network to be called Natura 2000.

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## Dates for Your Diary - 1995

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Thursday 7th September  | <b>Waders and other Migrants at Pett Pools and Rye Harbour</b><br>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 | <b>Annual General Meeting</b><br>At Winchelsea Beach Community Hall at 7.30pm. See enclosed agenda. After the business there will be a talk by John Buckingham  |
| Sunday 15th October     | <b>The Castle Water Circular Walk</b><br>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  | <b>Birdwatching at High Tide</b><br>A very high tide will provide a good chance to watch birds. Meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 1pm   |

FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE  
Notice of the 23rd. Annual General Meeting  
to be held

on  
Saturday 23 September 1995  
at 7.30 pm  
in the Winchelsea Beach Community Hall

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AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 22nd. Annual General Meeting held on 17 September 1994. (Copies of the Minutes will be on display in the Hall.)
3. Any matters arising from the Minutes
4. To receive and approve the Committee's Report for the period July 1994 to June 1995.
5. To receive and approve the audited accounts for the period 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995.
6. Election of the Committee for 1995-96  
ANY NEW NOMINATIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE, DULY SECONDED AND ASSENTED TO BY THE NOMINEE, SHOULD BE SENT IN WRITING TO THE HON. SECRETARY AT 'Oakhurst', Whatlington Road, Battle, E. Sussex TN33 0JN to reach her by Wednesday 20 September. Under clauses 3 and 5 Officers and members of the Committee shall hold office until the next AGM when they will retire but are eligible for re-election from year to year. The outgoing Committee is as follows:  
Chairman Michael Saville                      Vice-Chairman Nicola Frith  
Hon. Secretary Liz Blackwell                  Hon. Treasurer Frank Clarke  
Membership Secretary Peter Philpot  
Steve Denny                                      Pete Greenhalf  
Bob Greenhalf                                    Frank Palmer  
Anne Yates                                        The Warden (ex officio)  
Michael Saville, Peter Greenhalf and Anne Yates wish to retire. The remainder offer themselves for re-election. If there are no nominations, it is recommended that the Committee for 1995-96 should be  
Chairman Nicola Frith                              Vice-Chairman Frank Palmer  
Hon. Secretary Liz Blackwell                    Hon. Treasurer Frank Clarke  
Membership Secretary Peter Philpot  
Steve Denny                                      Anita Gibbs  
Bob Greenhalf                                    Peter Lloyd  
(1 vacancy)                                        The Warden (ex officio)
7. Appointment of Hon. Auditors, currently Roger Bailey and Michael Russell.
8. Warden's Report
9. Any other business.

There will be an interval for refreshments, sales and a raffle. After the interval there will be an illustrated talk by John Buckingham, natural history lecturer and tutor and photographer.

Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

Income & Expenditure Account  
For the Year ended 31st March 1995

1994/5

Sales of Publications & Goods	641.18
<u>Cost of Sales</u>	
Opening Stock	572.00
Purchases	433.28
Less Closing Stock	(1) (721.75)

<u>Income Received</u>	
Subscriptions & Donations	13,719.29
Other Donations:	
Land Fund	Nil
Bequest (U.J.Vidler Decd)	250.00
J. Veness Memorial Fund	369.60
Deeds of Covenant & Other	
Tax Refunds	(2) 1,444.36
Events	466.93
Sundry Income	90.00
Interest on:	
Savings Account	385.89
Land Fund	<u>2,835.09</u>

<u>Less Expenses</u>	
Printing etc	Nil
Postage Newsletters	365.86
Stationery & Sundry Postages	182.34
Books etc	28.70
Equipment	120.00
Sundry Expenses	314.13
Management Committee	(3) 500.00
Assistant Warden	2,750.00
Legal Fees	Nil
Room Hire	94.00
Castle Water Hide	(4) <u>1,736.81</u>

Excess of Income over Expenditure

13,827.97

15,117.11

Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

Balance Sheet

For the Year Ended 31st March 1995

1994/5

1993/4

<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>		
Freehold Property at Cost	48,000.00	
(Hurdens Cottage)		
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
Stock	198.00	721.75
Premier Interest Account	408.80	11,337.68
Current Bank Account		162.08
Land Fund		55,040.93
J. Veness Memorial Fund		<u>369.60</u>

TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES

101,804.07

REPRESENTED BY :

Accumulated Fund	101,804.07
Add; Excess of Income Over Expenditure	13,827.97
	<u>115,632.04</u>

86,686.96/  
15,117.11/101,804.07

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

- (1) Stock. Pricing policy is to double the purchase price, and valuation is to halve the selling price for most items.
- (2) Deeds of Covenant and Tax refunds. 1994/5 figure includes Gift Aid Tax refund on £300, and a further refund is awaited on £250.
- (3) Management Committee. Donation of £500 towards Research and Monitoring Programme.
- (4) Castle Water Hide. Total cost at 31.3.95, is £3256.81. £1520 Grant received from Sussex Rural Community Council.
- (5) Premier Interest Account. Sums in excess of £10,000 no longer transferred to Land Fund account, effective July 1994.

I have examined the books and vouchers of the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve for the year ended 31st March, 1995 and certify that their accounts are in accordance therewith.

.....  
(R.A.O. Bailey Hon Auditor.)

FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE  
(registered charity 269535)

REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE  
FOR  
1994-1995

1. Background Although the financial year is from 1 April to 31 March, this Report covers the period 1 July 1994 to the end of June 1995 in order to bridge the long gap between the end of the financial year and the month of the AGM. The new arrangements whereby the Committee was strengthened by a Vice-Chairman with the Membership Secretary as an Officer have worked satisfactorily.
2. Meetings The Committee has met 6 times over the year since the last report. Michael Saville and Frank Palmer represented the Friends at the quarterly meetings of the Management Committee.
3. Membership This has remained stable. At the last count there were 1121 subscriptions including group and junior subscriptions; this represents about 1400 individual members.
4. Castle Water The construction of Castle Water Hide has been the main project of the year. Its destruction by fire in the evening of Sunday 2 July within weeks of it being opened has been a severe and infuriating loss. The cost of materials for the Hide was funded by the Friends with a grant from Rural Action. The Hide was designed by Peter Lloyd and the work was carried out by work-parties of the Friends led by the Warden and Assistant Warden. It overlooked part of Castle Water where much work has been done to improve the area by the creation of a new island, and by the provision of rafts and floating logs. The Hide was opened by Cllr. Ann Moore, Chair of the County's Environment Committee and of the Reserve's Management Committee, on 12 May; we welcomed representatives of authorities, organisations and groups associated with the Reserve. Bob Greenhalf painted a lovely picture of Castle Water and the Hide; a limited number of prints were prepared and it gave the Committee much pleasure to arrange that a print be presented to each member of the work party and to Peter Lloyd. The picture is now both a celebration of what was achieved and a reminder of what has been lost.
5. Financial support for the Reserve The Committee has continued to pay one quarter of the Assistant Warden's salary. An undertaking has been given that the Friends will meet the cost of the provision of a new leaflet and of interpretive signs and £1300 has so far been set aside for this. It did not prove necessary for the Friends to contribute to the cost of the used Land Rover acquired by the Reserve last autumn; without this vehicle, the new hide would not have been completed during the winter and early spring.

6. Financial policy and the Land Fund The Committee has been concerned lest support for the Reserve from the local authorities may falter. Income from Sussex Wildlife Trust via countryside stewardship will continue for another 7 years and support from the NRA is expected to continue at the present levels. It is likely however that the Friends may wish to fund activities beyond the base costs of running the Reserve. The Committee will continue to build up the Land Fund so that the Friends can take the lead in the acquisition of any land within the SSSI which may come on to the market.
7. Visitor Centre at Rye Harbour The Committee is well aware that the Information Centre is dated, and inadequate for visitors to Rye Harbour. The County Council has briefed consultants to study the feasibility of a Visitor Centre for Rye Harbour. The Committee has been involved in the discussions. While seeing advantages in such a Centre providing a meeting and changing place for the Friends and a base for the Wardens, we have advised that it should not be assumed that the Friends would be able to man the Centre on a regular and on-going basis.. Reservations have also been expressed about the running costs of the Centre. It may be possible to add to this report at the AGM.
8. Newsletters and publications An appeal was made for a Friend to take over the editorship of the Newsletter from the Warden. The response was generous. We were faced with the invidious task of selecting an editor. Richard Byatt started with Newsletter no.50. Our thanks go to him and to Bob Greenhalf for his drawings which do so much for this publication. The Committee has commissioned a painting by Bob Greenhalf for reproduction as a Christmas or greetings card. These cards will be available this autumn.
9. Tern Watch Our thanks go to Anne Yates for organising this; despite a stable membership it is proving increasingly difficult to fill all the slots to maintain a daily watch from dawn to dusk during the breeding season.
10. Guided Walks and events The walks were arranged on a monthly basis and details published in the Newsletters. They have been well attended and our thanks go to the Wardens for all that they do to make the days so enjoyable. A Members' Evening was held on 13 May when Mr Fred Booth, former Director of the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, gave a most stimulating and informative talk on Our Wild Orchids.
11. The future We need to find ways in which the Friends might make a more practical contribution to the Reserve; a scheme for guides or helpers who might also serve as additional eyes for the Warden is under consideration and will be put to the Friends through the Newsletter.