

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE PARISH ASSEMBLY 1985

The Parish Council has met each month except August to consider topics relating to Sedlescombe. Attendance by the public at the Open Forums has been low but only occasionally has the main Council meeting been held without an attendance of one or two members of the public. Hopefully, this is an indication that the majority of the Village is satisfied with the results of the Parish Council's deliberations. To keep the parish informed of the subjects discussed, the quarterly newsletter has continued to be distributed with the newspapers. This has resulted in some useful feedback from residents. The information sheet "What's What in Sedlescombe?", which has been given free of charge to newcomers to the Village, has been revised this year and contains local information including a revised list of representatives of Sedlescombe organisations. Also included is a map of the Parish and advertisements by fourteen local businesses.

The Parish Council continues to have representatives sitting on the following bodies: Board of Governors of Sedlescombe C.E. School, Rother District Association of Town and Parish Councils, Village Hall Management Committee, Sports Association and the Tennis Club.

Last year my report contained the statement "that the Council is hoping for completion of the purchase of the sportsfield in June this year". Unfortunately, the Council has been frustrated in its attempts to achieve this aim by the protracted negotiations firstly with the Pestalozzi Children's Village Trust and then with the Charity Commission but continues to hope that this delay will soon be ended. We were very encouraged by the generous response to our appeal for funds, from residents by personal donation and from organisations. The Council is grateful also for the efforts of those who took part in the Round Table Fun Run, Pool Marathons and Snowball Coffee Mornings. By careful investment, more than £500 interest has accrued. Repayments of the loan totalling £1,500 have been made during the year. Problems have also arisen to hinder the construction of a small car park at the sportsfield. The main problem has been the appalling weather conditions of rain and snow but the work will be undertaken as soon as the site is free from surface water. The Council is grateful to Mr Dennis Thomas for his preliminary work on the car park and to Mr Ralph Olesen, Divisional Highway Engineer of the County Council, who has given helpful advice. Discussions are taking place to pass the day-to-day running of the field to Sedlescombe Sports Association.

The agreement between the Tennis Club and the Parish Council for the leasing of the tennis courts is due for renewal in April and discussions between the two parties have resulted in an agreement satisfactory to both sides. The Council will set aside £250 p.a. for five years towards the next resurfacing of the courts and the Club £150 p.a. £1,000 has already been saved by the Club and the Sports Association between them towards this project. It is hoped that in five years time most of the money will be available for the resurfacing.

A further Sedlescombe sports club experienced difficulties in 1984 when the Bowls Club lost its Bowling Green. This resulted in an approach to the Council for permission to consider the use of the land next to the tennis courts as a bowling green. The Council has agreed in principle.

The Rother District Council car park development in Brede Lane has not materialised this year as had been planned. Cuts in the District Council's current year expenditure have postponed the construction but £5,000 has been retained for initial work.

The TV Relay Station which is to be erected in Brede Lane is scheduled for the Summer of this year and the BBC state that this will improve TV reception for many people living in and around Sedlescombe.

The Parish Council entered Sedlescombe in the Best Kept Village and Anti-litter competitions again in 1984 and several societies kindly helped in the preparation by providing attractive hanging baskets for the Pumhouse and the Village Hall. Unfortunately, three hanging baskets were stolen from the Pumhouse on different occasions which was a disappointment to the Council and for those who had worked hard to provide and maintain the baskets. Sedlescombe was awarded a certificate of merit. The competition gives the Parish Council and residents an additional incentive to keep the Village attractive for everyone's benefit. Sedlescombe is to be entered for the Best Kept Village competition again this year.

The Parish Council has agreed to take part in a survey of woodlands in the Parish which has been organised by the County Council and Brighton Polytechnic. Mr Pat Martin will be completing a form on each woodland area noting especially whether it is visually important in the landscape. Owners can be helped to preserve their woodland and planners will have an idea of the relevant importance the local community attaches to each piece.

The Parish Council is also involved with "The Domesday Survey of Barns" in the Parish.

Minor maintenance work has been undertaken in 1984 particularly the application of wood preservative to litter bins, seats, the Pumphouse timbers and the bus shelter. A major repair to the roundabout at the playground was also carried out replacing the top, sides and three footboards. Two more will be replaced this year. One slide was repainted and the support tubes of the other were replaced. Parish Council signs have been repainted and new ones made for the sportsfield car park. The gate and fence around the children's play equipment by the river and the bus shelter have been repaired. During the year, the Council has considered updating its office machinery, but has decided on the grounds of cost to retain its hand-operated Gestetner duplicating machine and to purchase a secondhand manual typewriter to replace its small portable. Owing to increased expected expenditure on the sportsfield, the Parish Rate has unfortunately increased for 1985/6. However, as little routine maintenance work in the Village is planned, the increase has been kept to a minimum.

The Council has continued to have a useful liaison with the highways department of the County Council and numerous small matters relating to our roads and footways have been brought to their attention. Residents will have seen the experimental kerbing at the southern end of the Green which has received the support of the majority of people living in the Green. However, it has not been popular with everyone and the County Council is to decide whether the kerbstones should be placed there permanently.

The Planning Committee has met on fifteen occasions during the year and has considered all planning applications relating to proposed development in Sedlescombe. These applications have been varied and from all parts of the Parish. Of the 29 applications considered by the District Council to date, only two resulted in a refusal of permission. On two other occasions, the Parish Council would have preferred the District Council to refuse the application. A start has been made on the demolition of the old Bakery buildings at the southern end of the Village and applications relating to restoration of two old cottages on the site and conversion of The Bakery House into two dwellings were approved. On the opposite side of the road the Old Chapel is being converted into a dwellinghouse. The application which aroused interest in the Crazy Lane area was for a caravan park for 16 touring caravans and access alteration at Whydown Farm. This has been approved with conditions.

The Footpaths Committee has met quarterly and continued to keep a close watch on the footpaths in the Parish. By the time of the Assembly, six conducted walks will have been held as usual in the winter with, on most occasions, an increase in the numbers taking part. The footpath leaflets on sale in Robinsons continued to sell well.

Sedlescombe has been fortunate in being able to call upon the labour force of the Community Programme Team to undertake various work in the Parish mainly maintenance work on footpaths and clearance of the sportsfield ditch. Communication with the Team has not always been satisfactory but, on the whole, it has been a useful way of tackling jobs which might not otherwise have been undertaken.

Although the Home Defence Committee of the Council has not met frequently in the past year, an up-to-date plan has been prepared and some members have attended courses. The Council relies heavily on local voluntary help in fulfilling the role which it has been given by government.

The Transport Committee which monitors the Parish Council Lift Scheme has not been overworked as the numbers using the Scheme have dropped. When the Council started the Scheme in 1980, it was to help those people who did not have transport of their own and found the restricted bus service did not meet their needs. It was envisaged that in time car sharing arrangements would be made on an informal basis without the need of a co-ordinator and it seems as if this stage has been reached. This Committee's Terms of Reference were extended by the Council in February to include consideration of all types of transport available to residents of the Village.

Finally, the Council is appreciative of the help and co-operation received from County Councillor Mrs Ann Moore during her terms as representative of the Salehurst division of the County Council. Owing to reorganisation, Mrs Moore will not be standing for election for this division in May.

D WOODMAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
March 1985.