

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO 1993 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH MEETING

1. EAST VIEW TERRACE. Sedlescombe Parish Council took over the playground from Orbit Housing Association in June 1992. Unfortunately before it could be opened, the area was subjected to vandalism. Damage mainly to the surrounding fencing has continued, but this remains Orbit's responsibility. The future of the playground will depend on whether these appalling acts of vandalism can be stopped. The Council appeals to you, especially if you overlook the area, to report damage being caused to equipment, the surface or fencing to the Police at once. To control the use of the playground the Council has made byelaws including one restricting its use to those under ten years of age. The maximum penalty for offending against the byelaws is £500. The playground by the tennis courts remains available to the over 10s.

At last year's Assembly the Brownie Leader asked the Council to investigate the possibility of providing a grassed play area at East View. A piece of ground was found but it was decided that, because of the damage being caused to the equipment area, the Council should not be committed to spending a large sum of money converting the area to a grassed playground and ongoing maintenance costs. If, in future, it can be seen that care is being taken of the equipment area, the grassed play area can be considered again.

2. POLICING. Without a resident policeman, vandalism and break-ins increased. The Council is hopeful, now that PC Patrick Fisher is living in the Village, that incidents of crime will reduce. Unfortunately, rural policemen now have to spend much of their time away from their own villages.

Various problems were reported to the Council soon after the transfer of the Police Control Room to Eastbourne in November. The communications system has been completely modernised and civilian staff now answer all routine calls to the Police from Eastbourne. Emergency "999" calls are still dealt with at Lewes. It appears that at first the expected number of calls to the Control Room was underestimated as well as the staff being unfamiliar with the areas but the Control Room Superintendent has assured the Council that he is confident that early teething troubles will soon be a thing of the past. The Council hopes that the Superintendent's optimism is well founded.

A meeting in the Village at the beginning of March, arranged by the new Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator Mr W Beaney and his deputy Mrs S Martin, heard that a new computerised system to be known as the "Neighbourhood Crime Ring" had been introduced in some areas and was just about to be launched in Sedlescombe. The main purposes of Neighbourhood Watch are:
to help prevent crime by encouraging people to look at their homes and lifestyles
to aid the Police in circulating information to a number of "co-ordinators" who in turn pass the information onto those living around them
and to make people more confident in telephoning the Police to pass on information which, although apparently insignificant, could be the missing piece of the jigsaw.

With the current interest in rural policing, the Council has invited Superintendent John Pearce, who heads the combined new Hastings/Rother Division, to the Assembly to speak on that subject.

3. TENNIS COURTS PLAYING AREA. After some 2½ years, the Council has had its claim to a vehicular right of way to the area legally accepted.

There has been little use of the tennis courts by the Tennis Club but a great deal of use by the general public. Again Mr and Mrs Durling at the Bridge Garage have been of immense help in handling the key and court charges

4. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR. I was very sorry that Mrs Sheila Leach had to resign as our District Councillor. Mr Roger Fisher now holds that position and is available to listen to and take up any problems with Rother District Council on your behalf.

5. VILLAGE HALL. During the year, a planning application was submitted for a new hall on the car park site. However, when it became apparent that the site did not meet with the approval of Rother's Planning Officers, it was withdrawn by the Parish Council. Towards the end of 1992, another application for a new hall was submitted by the Village Hall Management Committee, this time next to the tennis courts. Rother's decision is awaited. It is now three years since it was decided to investigate the provision of a new hall and I hope that a suitable site will soon be found so that fund-raising can begin.

6. VILLAGE GREEN. A new set of byelaws for the Green have been made by the Council to replace those of 1902 which had become outdated. In 1902, Mr Arthur Pratt was Chairman of Sedlescombe Parish Council and it was interesting for me to discover that he was living in my house at that time. The maximum penalty for offence against these byelaws is £500.

7. "SEDLSCOMBE" VILLAGE SIGNS. Two new signs have been erected in new positions to encompass more of the built-up areas. The Council was very grateful to Mr Pollio of the Brickwall Hotel for generously paying one half of the cost of their provision.

8. VILLAGE TRAFFIC is unfortunately still on the increase despite many attempts by the Council to encourage it to use roads other than through the Village. Some firms such as Tesco have managed to persuade most of their drivers to avoid Sedlescombe but other companies have not been so helpful. In January and February of this year many ARC lorries were noted travelling through the Village and when the Council complained to the company they replied that the B2244 was the most direct route between the collection and delivery points. However, this was only a temporary contract and it is hoped that by now the disturbance has stopped.

9. COMPETITIONS. Sedlescombe was entered for the 1992 Best Kept Village Competition but, despite efforts to tidy up, was not placed. No volunteers could be found to organise an entry to the "South East in Bloom" competition neither last year nor this!

10. SPORTSFIELD. The Council was pleased to note that the Sports Association's maintenance of the field was excellent last year and the ditch has looked its best for many years. Two boot sales were successfully run by the Association to help pay for maintenance, the cost of which is always increasing, and the Council has agreed that more can be held this year.

A new "Dogs on Leads" byelaw has been introduced during the year and dog owners are asked not to allow their pets to foul the field. Again £500 is the maximum fine for offending.

The Council was very interested to hear that cricket was being played here 225 years ago and that the Cricket Club plans to celebrate this anniversary in August with a match played against the M.C.C.!

11. NEW ENGLAND LANE/A21 JUNCTION. After a great many attempts by the Parish Council to get East Sussex County Council to make some improvement to this very dangerous turning, they have now agreed to consider banning the right turn from New England Lane onto the A21 and to provide a "STOP" sign to replace the existing "GIVE WAY" sign.

12. VILLAGE SHOP AND POST OFFICE. Many village people rely on our village shops. According to the 1991 census, 15.1% of Sedlescombe households do not own a car and 27.3% of the people are over retirement age, thus making village shops invaluable. Please use them whenever you can so that they can continue to serve our Village.

13. BREDE LANE PARKING. Most of the time people are using the car park but occasionally they do not. Please will everyone use the car park at all times, no matter how brief their stay in the Lane.

14. ALLOCATION OF HOUSING TO OWNER/OCCUPIERS. Rother's Chief Housing Officer has informed the Council that all applicants will, in future, be assessed in the same manner, ie in accordance with the Council's points scheme irrespective of their financial position.

15. PLANNING APPLICATIONS. The Parish Council's Planning Committee, under Mr Barter's Chairmanship, has met about every three weeks to consider a range of applications. A list of applications, the Parish Council recommendations and the District Council decisions, are now posted on the noticeboard. This year also saw the introduction of Parish Councils in Rother District being sent photocopies of planning application results.

16. FOOTPATHS. The Council is very appreciative of the help it has received this year from the County Council Rights of Way Section. Many paths have been improved and with the implementation of the Rights of Way Act 1990 it should be easier to follow the routes of paths on the ground. The Footpaths Committee has once again led six Sunday afternoon walks to encourage use of the paths and has revised the "Walks around Sedlescombe" leaflet which can be bought in the Post Office for 50p. This Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mr Martin, consists of parish councillors and two co-opted members; it only meets three times a year but undertakes a great deal of practical work between meetings. Please let the Clerk know about any footpath problems you come across.

17. FINANCE. Each quarter the Finance Committee, under Mr Giles' Chairmanship, has met to consider what work needs to be done in the Village and to decide how funds should be invested to the best advantage. One of the Committee's decisions this year was to erect another noticeboard beside the Pumphouse on the Village Green and it should soon be in use. In the Summer, seats and litter bins will be given a coat of preservative. This year, there were considerable problems with the Council's insurers, Municipal Mutual and, at one time, it seemed that the Company would not be able to meet claims. The Committee was, therefore, pleased to be able to obtain cover from the Cornhill Insurance Company. Recently, software has been purchased enabling the accounts to be computerised; the Council is most fortunate in having a Parish Clerk who is so able and competent to undertake this work. The Parish Council will receive £10500 from the Council Tax in 1993/4 for Village expenses.

Please come along to the Parish Assembly on 27 April; it should be a very interesting meeting.

Sheila M Betts