

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE 1999 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH MEETING OF SEDLESCOMBE

POWER FAILURES

Last year, a complaint was made to Seeboard that Sedlescombe was suffering far too many power failures. When the matter was raised at a meeting of the Rother District Association of Local Councils, it appeared that most other villages were not so badly affected. Seeboard agreed to make alterations to the supply and to carry out a programme of cutting branches and foliage clear of the overhead power lines. This action appears to have been successful in that we have experienced far fewer failures despite the many gales this winter.

CAR SALES

The Council has received many complaints from residents about the unsightly car sales area at the southern end of the Village. Planning permission was granted for car sales on that ground as far back as 1980. It is only recently that the number of cars for sale has increased and, in the last few months, colourful bunting added. The Parish Council agrees with complainants that it is inappropriate for such a prominent site in the centre of an historic village to be bedecked with bunting. However, unfortunately, Rother's Planning Department can find no planning reason for insisting on its removal and, despite appeals from the Parish Council to the operators of the site, they have refused to co-operate.

DOG BINS

There are now two dog waste bins in Sedlescombe. One is at the public car park in Brede Lane and the other, new and larger bin is near the tennis courts. The Parish Council believes that the money spent on purchasing and installing the bins and on the weekly emptying is a good use of Council funds and results in a cleaner and more attractive environment for us all.

NEWSLETTER & WELCOME PACK

This year, the Parish Council has re-introduced the production of a quarterly Newsletter that has been distributed to those who take newspapers from Sedlescombe Post Office. There are always a few spare copies left on the counter and a copy on the noticeboard. It is hoped that residents will find the Newsletters interesting, keeping them informed of the month by month decisions of the Parish Council. Another re-introduction is the "Welcome" letter the Council sends to people moving into the Village, together with a list of services available and of local organisations and their contacts. Again, these lists are on the noticeboard for everyone's information.

TRAFFIC CALMING

The residents of the road beside the Village Green are very concerned about the danger for pedestrians caused by vehicles using the slip road, and appealed to the Parish Council for some form of traffic calming to be installed. The Council, in consultation with East Sussex County Council, the Traffic Police and the residents, considered all sorts of traffic calming methods, but none that would not also cause problems for other users of the road could be found. Methods considered included road humps, signs, road closure at one end, one way system, and build outs. The Traffic Police have, however, agreed to monitor the speed of vehicles and take appropriate action if any dangerous driving is seen.

RED BARN FIELD

This year has seen the purchase by the Parish Council of Red Barn Field which is almost 3 acres in size and lies between Balcombe Green and The Street. It is unusual for a piece of land to become available in the centre of the Village and the Council decided it was an opportunity not to be missed. The land was for sale by auction and it was not possible, therefore, to consult widely before agreeing to buy. Since the purchase, there has been much speculation in the Village about future uses of the field but nothing will be done at least until the outcome of the application for Village Hall lottery funding is known. As many will know, the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council have been looking for a suitable site on which to build a replacement hall for more than nine years. Every site considered in the past had its drawbacks and, of course, the Sportsfield is no exception. Even if funding is procured, there are still matters to resolve. Red Barn Field is a back-up site on which it might be possible to build a very acceptable hall with plenty of space for parking and much better access than from the Pestalozzi road. Even if not used for this purpose, it is a very pleasant site with good views and has potential for use as an amenity area for the Village.

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MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS

With the year 2000 rapidly approaching, the Council is formulating its plans for celebrating the coming of the new Millennium. Although the planning of a Midsummer Village party for all ages had been started, the lack of definite offers of help has caused the Council to think again and it has decided to drop the idea altogether. However, the Parish Council is backing the Parish Church's Millennium Celebrations that are to take place with the Church Patronal Festival at Midsummer. The planting of a tree on the Green with a time capsule buried beneath is also currently favoured by the Council. The Council would like to hear from anyone who would like to suggest anything that could go into our time capsule. Please contact the Clerk or bring your ideas to the Parish Assembly. The Council has been pleased to be kept informed about proposals for the Sedlescombe Community Millennium Tapestry and will help this project in any way it can.

The Council's main contribution to the celebrations is the production of the Sedlescombe 2000 Mug which will be on sale at the Assembly. A competition to find a design for the mug was held last year; the winning design was submitted by Sedlescombe School and a very nice commemorative china mug has been produced. The Council has agreed to present a mug to any child who lives in the Parish of Sedlescombe and is under 11 on 1 January 2000. Parents should apply to the Clerk for a free mug for their child as soon as possible.

SCOUT HUT FENCE

The Parish Council is always pleased to help Village organisations that try to help themselves. It was therefore appropriate to support the Sedlescombe Scout Hut Committee when a new fence was needed around the Hut. The Hut which is available for hire on application to the Committee is maintained by a small group of dedicated people who often find themselves battling against the Hut's deterioration by time, the weather, and damage by vandals. With help from D&B Fencing of Marley Lane, the Parish Council's purchase of materials and a lot of voluntary work, the erection of the fence was completed. A report and photograph appeared in the Rye and Battle Observer.

CHURCH HILL SEAT

There is now a new seat halfway up Church Hill thanks to the generosity of Mrs Ruth Hodges. The seat will provide a welcome place to stop en route to the Church.

VANDALISM

Two separate cases of vandalism at the Sportsfield have caused extra work for Village organisations. The damage to the marquee on Fete night appalled us all and the Council agreed to make a donation to the Societies Association towards the cost. In September, a car was driven around the Sportsfield causing damage to the surface. This resulted in extra voluntary work for the Sports Association's groundsman and the culprit being taken to court for the cost of the materials involved in the repair.

PRECEPT

The Parish Council's precept for the year 1999/2000 has been set at £21,000. This money is paid by Sedlescombe Council Taxpayers and is used entirely for the benefit of the parish. Budgeted expenditure for next year includes repairs to the Pumhouse on the Village Green that is 100 years old next year.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Once every four years, there is an opportunity to stand for election to the Parish Council and 1999 is that year. Elections will be held on Thursday 6 May, if there are more candidates than vacancies. Nominations are being invited. The job of parish councillor is an interesting one with the opportunity to influence all sorts of decisions directly affecting those who live in your own Village. Most people are surprised to hear how far a parish council's powers stretch. It is important, therefore, that the Council is made up of a wide mix of people of differing age groups who can effectively represent the views of residents. This past year, there was a casual vacancy caused by the resignation of Kaye Crittall who has moved from the parish. Kaye is missed very much for she was involved in organisations throughout the Village and the Council is grateful for the work she did on its behalf, especially relating to the plans for a new hall. The Council was, however, very pleasantly surprised to receive four applications to fill the vacancy so feels that this bodes well for the forthcoming elections in May. Sedlescombe has not had an election for a full Council since 1987 but maybe this year will be different. There are nine places to stand for. Don't forget, of course, to cast your votes for members if an election is held. Watch the noticeboard for details.

Chairman, Sedlescombe Parish Council