

**REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL TO THE  
2002 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
PARISH MEETING OF SEDLESCOMBE**



I am pleased to submit the following report to the 2002 Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting of Sedlescombe.

**Village Hall.** It has indeed been a memorable year for Sedlescombe because, at last, the new village hall is open for business. Congratulations to everyone who has been involved. It is a magnificent achievement. The hall has allowed a range of new activities to be held in the Village and we know that, under the guidance of the Village Hall Management Committee, there are even better things to look forward to. We are also very pleased to hear that some long-established Village services, such as the Library, have recorded increased usage since moving to the new Hall.

**Red Barn Field.** This time last year, when the village hall building was still in progress, the Parish Council was making plans for the management of the remainder of Red Barn Field. The area is now called "Red Barn Field Nature Park" and, with the help of the Countryside Rangers and grant aid from the High Weald Unit, has two new kissing gates, an interpretation board, a picnic table, litter bin and seat. Bat boxes and bird boxes have been made by Cllr Dellow and put up at the Field. There is now a Management Plan and this will guide how we look after the Field to the benefit of wildlife in general. Anyone is welcome to quietly enjoy the Field or to walk through it to reach the rear of the village hall. Because we are protecting wildlife, dogs are not allowed in this area. The children at the Primary School have

already been introduced to what we are trying to do at the Nature Park. They had a talk in School by the Countryside Rangers particularly focusing on creatures of the night and did some excellent work afterwards. They have also had a school visit to the Field that included a short talk by bat expert Roger Jones (and the opportunity to see two live, but sleeping, bats) and another talk by local naturalist Dr Patrick Roper before he planted several of the interesting rare wild service trees.

**Safer Villages Scheme.** Last spring, Sedlescombe was being plagued by mindless vandalism and I agreed to arrange a special crime meeting in the Village. This was the first meeting to be held in the new hall last September and was attended by 70 people who were able to put forward their concerns about rural policing. As a result of the interest shown, Sedlescombe was asked if it would like to join Northiam and Burwash in a Safer Villages Pilot Project. This has been arranged and Parish Cllr Dellow and a small group of local people have worked tirelessly on this project. In order to qualify for funding this year, a business plan has had to be drawn up and a survey undertaken in the parish at short notice. As you will have seen from the survey, there are opportunities for the Neighbourhood Watch scheme to help you protect your own home and the working group is planning to use some of their funding for this purpose. The group is also planning a Safety Morning in the Village Hall on 3 April, 10am to 1pm. We are all grateful to this small group of



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residents who are putting in so much work on our behalf.

**East View Terrace Kickabout Area.**

Another success story this year is the installation of a new tarmac kickabout area at East View Terrace. Not only has tarmac been laid, but we have also installed two storm shooters which are rather grand football and basketball units. Without the substantial grant aid that has been obtained from SEEDA, Rother District Council, Orbit Housing Association and Rother Homes, this project would not have gone ahead and the Council is very grateful for this support. As part of the overall project, local volunteers are constructing a shelter for the young people to use at the Kickabout Area. As this whole project was supported by the youngsters themselves, we are hopeful that it is what they want and that it will help alleviate problems in other parts of the Village.

**Sedlescombe Directory & Welcome to Sedlescombe Pack.**

Again, this year, we have been fortunate in having grant aid from the Rural Tourism Initiative and all the projects that we were planning this time last year are, or are very nearly, complete. The new Sedlescombe Directory has been quite a success with other parishes planning to copy it. More Sedlescombe businesses want to be included in the reprint and we hope that, as time goes by, more people will think of turning to it for a phone number or other local information. It has been included in the new "*Welcome to Sedlescombe*" pack that is delivered to people moving into the Village. If you would like a pack, please let the Clerk know (870508).

**Walks.** Considerable time has also been spent this year on two other leaflets. The first is a completely new subject – "A Walk through History in Sedlescombe". Copies are available free of charge and include several old pictures of the Village and brief snippets of historical information. We hope that visitors will also enjoy looking at this leaflet and trying out the short walk around the Village Green. Longer walks are detailed in our revamped "Footpath Walks around Sedlescombe". There is a very nice painting on the front cover by John Cook of Hurst Lane and I should like to thank him for allowing us to use it. We plan to launch the full-colour leaflet at the Parish Assembly and afterwards it will be on sale in the Post Office. All the paths featured in the leaflet will receive care and attention from the Countryside Rangers who hope that those who volunteered to help with footpath maintenance work last year will be able to join in.

The final part of the Rural Tourism Initiative is the signposting of a footpath route that links Sedlescombe with the 1066 Country Long Distance Path.

**Businesses.** We have been amazed at the number of small businesses in our parish and the Council has been doing what it can to help them. They are, of course, listed in the Directory but businesses that are of interest to visitors have also been included in the Footpath Leaflet and will feature on a new information board that will be sited in the public car park.

**Increase in traffic.** Two matters have continued to be of concern this year both



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of which will result in a considerable increase in traffic on local roads. The first is the well-documented proposed Energy from Waste plant at Mountfield which is still supported by East Sussex County Council. The Parish Council has always opposed the proposal believing that waste should be treated as close to those who produce it as possible. We expect the matter to be taken to a future Public Inquiry.

The second matter is the planning approval following a Local Inquiry for a business park on the Blackman, Pavie & Ladden site in Marley Lane. Although this is on a smaller parcel of land than was previously proposed, there is little doubt that most of the people who will work in the park will have to travel along the A21 or through the village each day and will therefore help to swell the traffic on already-congested roads.

**Pumphouse.** During work to the Pumphouse last spring, it was found that a substantial repair of the roof was necessary and urgent. Despite not having budgeted for the work, it was decided that, as the Pumphouse is of vital importance to Sedlescombe, there should be no delay in having the work done. During the carrying out of the work, it was found that it was even more badly decayed than was thought and even greater expenditure had to be incurred. However, the Council is confident that you will support this action and that the Pumphouse's roof will not need a lot of money spent on it for some years to come.

**Parish Plan.** Looking ahead to the year 2002/3, there are many challenges facing

the Parish Council. A major project is currently underway to produce a Sedlescombe Parish Plan before 31 December 2002. Parish Plans emanated from the Rural White Paper and do, unfortunately, coincide with the production of other plans. However, funding has been obtained from the Countryside Agency under the Vital Villages Scheme and the Council will, with your help, be working hard to produce a useful Plan that will guide it in the coming years. Please help us by completing the questionnaire and returning it in the FREEPOST envelope provided.

**Quality Parish Councils.** The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has issued a consultation paper about "Quality Parish and Town Councils" and, if we are to be eligible for some further grant aid, we need to try to obtain quality status. We await final details of the tests we will have to pass to achieve quality status but it will inevitably mean an additional workload.

**Elections.** This is the last year of this Council's term of office. Parish Council elections will be held in May 2003. Have you thought of standing for election? Unless amended after consultation, in order for parish councils to be eligible for quality status, all seats will have to be filled by members who have stood for election. This is the only requirement that Sedlescombe might find difficulty in fulfilling.

**Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councillors.** At its meeting on 12



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March, the Parish Council adopted the new Code of Conduct for Members, a copy of which can be seen on the noticeboard. The Code and Registers of Interests and gifts/hospitality (over £25 in connection with the business of the Council) can be viewed by the public by contacting the Clerk on 01424 870508.

**Audit Regulations.** Changes to the Audit Regulations that are about to be introduced will give more responsibility to councillors.

**Financially,** a precept of £25,000 has been set for 2002/3. As well as carrying out its normal duties such as mowing, dog bin emptying and litter collection, the Council plans to

- have the village sign repainted on both sides,
- to replace the remainder of the fence by the river near the tennis courts,
- to have work done to the stone pillars of the Pumphouse,
- to repair the bus shelter,
- to paint several seats

The introduction of new working arrangements for the inspection and maintenance of the playgrounds will necessitate an increase in expenditure.

As a contribution towards the Jubilee celebrations, the Council is paying for the hire of tables and chairs at the Jubilee Fayre at the Sportsfield on 1 June. £20,000 is still being held in reserve as the Council's contribution towards a new sports pavilion.

**Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting of Sedlescombe.** Finally, as a

new departure this year and in celebration of the opening of the new hall, we have invited local businesses and organisations to mount small table displays at the Parish Assembly on 23 April. This has proved popular and it is expected that there will be sixteen tables on show for half an hour before the meeting (7pm to 7.30pm) and for as long as you like afterwards. There will not be an outside speaker and after the shortened main meeting tea and coffee will be available. Whether you are new to the Village or have lived here a long time, this is an opportunity to see something of what's going on in the Village.

The following organisations and businesses are expected to have displays at the Assembly:

Sedlescombe Parish Church  
Sedlescombe School  
Sedlescombe Flower Club  
Sedlescombe Garden Society  
Royal British Legion  
Sedlescombe WI  
Sedlescombe Green WI  
Neighbourhood Watch  
Sussex Police (PC Kempster)  
Pestalozzi & Friends of Pestalozzi Estate  
Sedlescombe Parish Council  
Harts Green Construction Ltd.  
Conquest Cleaning Services Ltd.  
Sedlescombe Post Office  
AMG Business Services  
Camden Frames  
Rye Bay Countryside Office

I look forward to meeting you on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Valerie Wright  
March 2002