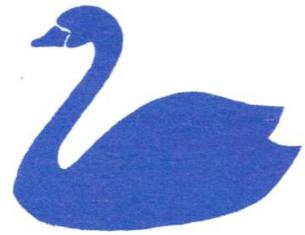


## A brief history

In the late 1960s, the village found itself in the middle of a period of change. The building boom had brought a whole new area of housing, with a consequent increase in population: other housing estates were also planned. The twin possibilities of a motorway through or near the village and railway developments connected with a Channel tunnel made the future look of Sellindge something of a mystery.



One thing was certain – the long-felt need for a recreation area was needed. The Parish Council called public meetings and, in October 1967, Sellindge and District Playing Fields Society was formed and registered as a charity. The object of the charity was

“providing or assisting in the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation to be available to members of the public at large in the interest of social welfare and the provision and maintenance of playing fields, grounds and buildings and provision of funds for such purpose”.

The word “District” was included in the name because nearby villages with no games facilities could benefit from an ambitious scheme in Sellindge: Benevolent was added later, for legal reasons.

Fundraising and planning went ahead immediately. A seven-acre site vested in a charity trust was found and a lease obtained at low rent for sixty years. Plans were drawn up and work began, much of it being done by: members of the Society, the Vicar (a qualified architect) designed the pavilion, a surveyor planned the grounds, a grassland expert gave advice, a solicitor saw to the legal side, an accountant to finances and so on. This was the pattern through the whole initial project with expert skills and knowledge given freely in electrical installation, tree-planting, signwriting, site-preparation and transport.

Meanwhile, fundraising was a problem and was tackled on two fronts – inside Sellindge and outside. In the village £8,785 was raised by fetes, dances, sponsored walks, a monthly draw, wastepaper collections, concerts, steam rallies and so on, and by direct appeal for contributions and covenants. The remainder and larger part of the £25,000 came from the Government (£9,215), Elham Rural District Council (£3,800), the Butlin Foundation (£2,000), Investments Overseas Services (£1,000), with smaller amounts from the National Playing Fields and Kent Playing Fields Associations. What convinced these bodies was the evidence the Society provided of careful realistic planning and of the Village’s readiness to go to the utmost of its ability to raise money. If they had sent observers to Sellindge at the weekends or on light evenings they could have seen how ready people were to work on the site, even to children picking up stones.

Such hard work and commitment by the Village contributed to the early opening of the Children’s playground in 1969, the football pitches in 1970 and the Tennis, Cricket and Netball in 1971, while the Pavilion was up and running in early 1972 and was officially opened by Henry Cooper OBE on Saturday 7 October 1972.