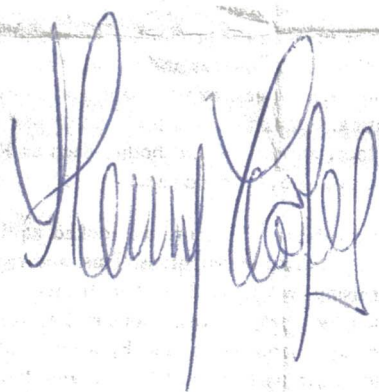


THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF
SELLINDGE PLAYING FIELDS

BY
HENRY COOPER O.B.E.



Saturday 7th October 1972
at 3 p.m.

SELLINDGE PLAYING FIELDS: A BRIEF HISTORY

A few years ago 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; another housing estate (the first phase of it now completed) was 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 must now be met. Sellindge might one day wake up to find itself with a large population, nowhere to play football, cricket or tennis and no convenient place, for a children's playground. The Parish Council called public meetings and, in November 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 interests 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.

Fund-raising 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 has been the pattern throughout the entire project, for in the later stages, expert skills and knowledge were freely given in electrical installation, tree-planting, signwriting, site preparation and transport, to name only a few. Advice was obtained from local authorities and bodies such as Kent Playing Fields Association, as well as from successful clubs already in existence.

Meanwhile, fund-raising was a problem. The more we looked at the idea of playing fields, the more facilities we wanted to incorporate in our plans. This, and rising prices, meant a steady rise in our target figure. Fund-raising was tackled on two fronts: inside Sellindge and outside. In the village £8,785 was raised by fêtes, dances, sponsored walks, a monthly draw, wastepaper collections, concerts, steam rallies and so on, and by a 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), the National Playing Fields Association (£150) and Kent Playing Fields Association (£50). 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. The playground is in its third year. The football clubs are

well into their second season. while the tennis, netball and cricket clubs have just ended their first. The bowling-green will be in use in 1974; people could play hockey now if they wished. The pavilion houses a thriving sports and social club, apart from providing excellent changing facilities. Maintenance and improvement of the pavilion, playing fields and playground are planned and financed by the same committees that looked after the original planning and fund-raising. If all this sounds smug, it is not intended to. We are proud of Sellindge Playing Fields and of the Village's efforts to bring them into being. Most of all, we are delighted to see that they are being enthusiastically used "for recreation or other leisure time activities . . . in the interests of social welfare".

THANKS

The foregoing historical notes mention official bodies, charitable organisations, commercial enterprises and individuals who have contributed in cash or effort to the creation of the playing-fields. To list all who have helped would be impossible, for much has been given anonymously. If we printed the name of everyone who is known to have helped, the list would seem endless, taking several pages. We believe that the people to whom thanks are due know how grateful Sellindge is to them and that the existence of the playing-fields, and the pleasure they give, expresses their achievement better than any words.

HENRY COOPER, O.B.E.

It is an honour and a pleasure to have Mr. and Mrs. Henry Cooper here today to perform the official opening ceremony. Mr. Cooper's ready acceptance of our invitation is all the more welcome because of the many demands upon his time, He is surely one of the most popular figures of Britain's sporting history. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the story of his boxing career, a 'potted history' follows:

He was born in Bellingham, London, on 3rd May, 1934, one of twins who both became boxers. His first title fight, a losing one, was against Joe Erskine in September, 1957; but Henry Cooper came back on 12th January, 1959, to beat Brian London on points for the British and British Empire heavyweight championship. In the following years he twice beat Joe Erskine inside the distance. knocked out Zora Folley in the second round and won the European heavy-weight title from Karl Mildenberger. Only the bell saved Cassius Clay from a knock-out.

After holding the British title for a record 10 years and 5 months, Henry Cooper resigned it in June, 1969, a few months before injury compelled him to give up his European title. He regained his British championship on March 24th, 1970, by outpointing Jack Bodell and retired as the first man to win three Lonsdale belts.

HYTHE TOWN MILITARY BAND

Programme of Music

March	Sousa on Parade	<i>Arr Palmer</i>
Selection	Works of Robert Farnon	<i>Arr Duthoit</i>
Medley	Savoy Scottish Medley	<i>Arr Somers</i>
Selection	Rogers and Hart Songs	<i>Arr Duthoit</i>
Waltz	The Grenadiers	<i>Waldteufel</i>
Selection	The Belle of New York	<i>Kerker</i>
Overture	Mirella	<i>Gounod</i>
Polka	Tik Tak	<i>J. Strauss</i>
Selection	Marching with Sullivan	<i>J. Helyer</i>
Selection	The Dancing Years	<i>Novello</i>
March	Blaze Away	<i>Holzman</i>