

# **STAPLEHURST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025**

**16<sup>th</sup> May 2025 7.30pm**

**Group Reports**



**Staplehurst Community Centre**  
Illustratrution by Ken Colins

## **ART SHED REPORT - 2025**

The Art Shed was formed in October 2024 by a small group of six friends who share a likeminded interest in art.

We feel lucky to have found a place where we can meet once a week and get creative.

Between us we use a variety of mediums for our art such as watercolours, acrylics, oils and inks. Two of our group have even started writing and illustrating a children's book.

We do not consider ourselves as serious artists by any stretch of the imagination, but we do enjoy getting together to share our passion. We find it very relaxing, taking time out from our otherwise busy lives.

Once a month one of us will choose a topic and we challenge ourselves to paint something under that heading, each producing a different interpretation of what was chosen.

We contribute a nominal fee weekly and this enables us to purchase commonly used materials such as paper and pencils, including tea and coffee.

We have been also been able to invite a tutor so that we can have help and guidance with various different techniques, and are hoping to do this on a quarterly basis.

We prefer a more relaxed approach to our common interest in art and collectively we have produced some lovely and interesting pieces of artwork.

## **BRIDGE CLUB – May 2025**

Staplehurst Bridge Club is still meeting at the Cricket and Tennis Club on Friday afternoons. We have a small and very loyal group of players but are in need of new members to enable the club to flourish.

We are able to offer lessons to those who would like to learn this fascinating game and we are happy to welcome beginners to our Friday sessions.

We play duplicate bridge in a friendly environment and uniquely we do not insist that members arrive with a partner - we have several movements which enable us to provide a competitive game for however many players are present. We play at 2pm on Friday afternoons at the Cricket and Tennis Club in Frittenden Road and all new members will be most welcome.

For any further information or for a chat about the bridge please get in touch with Liz on 07943 761573 or email [lizmitchell987@gmail.com](mailto:lizmitchell987@gmail.com)

Since we last submitted a report to the Parish Council we have undergone a number of minor changes.

In February 2024 Community Money Advice – our umbrella organization, released a new case management system. This meant the transferal of all of our cases onto the new system and then the task of familiarizing ourselves with new layouts and information fields. The new system is good but has taken a bit of getting used to.

During 2024 we were in discussion with the leaders and trustees of Staplehurst Free Church regarding the future of the center. During the Covid pandemic we were able to obtain grants towards our general running costs but since then we have struggled to obtain further grants and our funds were running low. Whilst we are always grateful for the financial support we receive from the Parish Council, it is not enough to cover the main costs of insurance and affiliation to CMA. Since opening in 2009 the Debt Advice Centre has sat as an independent body but not a registered charity. After some discussion we made the decision to come under the umbrella of Staplehurst Free Church. This way we can be just one part of the various community projects run by the church. The church, as a registered charity, is more likely to meet the eligibility criteria set by grant making bodies. Grants received for community projects can be used to fund the existing projects as well as the Debt Advice Centre. So far this has made very little difference to the running of the center, except our insurance and indemnity cover is now part of the church insurance package. We hope that raised awareness of the Centre, as it becomes more a part of the work of the church, may generate interest and new volunteers to continue the work.

With regards to work with clients, our mode of operation has always been to see clients face to face, work with them towards a debt solution and then continue supporting them for as long as they require. In 2024 we finally closed the case of a client who originally came to us in 2016. This client had seen constantly changing income and family situations, meaning her repayment plan was being regularly reviewed. She finally became debt free in the summer of 2024 and we were able to close her case knowing that she will continue managing her finances wisely to the best of her ability.

A number of our recent clients have had significant mental health challenges and this can mean the work is slow, as we wait for information to be found, forms to be filled in and appointments to be attended, sometimes needing to factor in the shift patterns of attending support workers. New training that we undertook in 2023, to comply with the FCA Consumer Duty rules, has been put to good use. We now have to show how we have adapted our practices in order to ensure we provide for the needs of those with physical or mental challenges and ensure that we are showing care and compassion to vulnerable clients.

Staplehurst Free Church is holding a Garden Party on 12<sup>th</sup> July, where there will be displays to showcase the various activities and community projects of the church. We anticipate having a stand at this event. Come along and chat to us if you want to know more.

**Staplehurst Community Centre**

Thank you to the local groups and hirers of the Community Centre. It's good to know that the halls continue to be used by a range of people for regular classes as well as private hires for celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries. We have our regular classes of Kick boxing, dance classes, Yoga, Pilates and the ELS toddlers' group, as well as the monthly Market and Sarah's Sound therapy. We have also welcomed Sandra's bi weekly Healing circle. There has been increased use for training and conference purposes.

We have begun making small changes to internal areas, such as electrical changes to be able to implement improved connectivity between the halls for future use. We also now have WIFI in the building which we hope will improve the experience for our visitors. It is pleasing to note that over the last five years the trustees have worked hard to ensure that the building is being managed in such a way that it pays for itself. To enable the agreed improvements to take place, however, will require substantial fundraising, which we have begun to do.

A big thank you to all who use the halls as well as our volunteers, working hard behind the scenes, making things happen.

If you have some spare time to give, whether with gardening, DIY skills, fundraising or event planning and would be interested in joining our volunteer group, please contact us at [secretary@staplehurstcommunitycentre.org](mailto:secretary@staplehurstcommunitycentre.org).

### **Community Hub Afternoon Tea Club**

Our club, which is self-funding, runs every Monday, excluding bank holidays with a break over the summer holidays. We meet at the McCabe Centre between 2 - 4 pm.

We currently have 27 regular members and have space for three more. The club is very sociable and our members enjoy a good chat. We have one volunteer driver for which we are very grateful.

Last year was a busy year for the club.

We celebrated valentines with red roses and chocolates, held an Easter themed competition, with lots of amazing entries, Rachel Callister, kindly judged this event for us. The members each took home an Easter egg.

We visited Hawkhurst Fish Farm for scones and tea.

Several musicians visited throughout the year to entertain us, and guide dog Orwell also paid a visit.

In November to celebrate bonfire night we visited the King's Head for a meal. The staff looked after us very well.

In December we held our annual Christmas party. A lovely afternoon tea with a raffle and each member took home a Christmas gift. Our thanks to the Events Group for their kind donation to this event and also to Crouch's butchers for their generous raffle prize.

This coming year is looking busy too with several events already in the pipeline.

### **STAPLEHURST EMERGENCY HELP TEAM 2024/5**

The SEHT remain busy and active behind the scenes. All the while we seem quiet means there are no emergencies going on!

Our application for charity status has been submitted and we await their decision.

We had a busy Autumn & Winter with a number of storms knocking down trees and generating flash flooding. Our chainsaw experts were certainly put to good use.

The Parish Flood Plan has been updated and the Resilience Plan reviewed.

SEHT were privileged to have supported the Tractor Run providing first aiders, crowd control and 'bucketeers'.

In April 2025 SEHT attended the KALC Resilience forum and it was a great opportunity to meet in person the people who have delivered the online trainings, and those that have supported us through email. It was also great to know that we are leading the way with our resilience plans.

May 2025 SEHT attended the Kent Resilience Forum Exhibition at Detling Showground. A real honour to have been invited as we hosted a stand amongst key players such as Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue, Environment Agency, RAYNET, Search & Rescue etc

VE Day – SEHT has the honour of lighting the beacon as well as running a stall to raise some much-needed funds.

2 more face to face meetings with KRF are scheduled in the coming months and meetings with neighbouring Parish Councils to assist them in getting their resilience plans up to date.

June will see SEHT hosting first aid courses with Rachel Callister

### **Trainings:**

- CPR and Defibrillator use lead by Wealden First Responders sponsored by SPC
- Welfare Centre Operation induction lead by MBC
- Radio Set-up and Use by Kent RAYNET

### **Duke of Cornwall Awards**

You are never too young to learn about resilience and these awards enable children from 5 to 18 to be involved in age-appropriate levels of becoming resilient and assisting those around them.

We have a number of children signed up and our local heroes are proudly displayed on our boards receiving their certificates and badges.

### **Staplehurst Youth Merit Award**

SEHT was immensely proud when our youngest member was awarded the Youth Merit Award for 2024. Savannah Rhodes (6) has assisted at water collection, local fundraising events and exhibitions.

Savannah is our biggest advocate for the DoC awards and readily offers advice to those that need it.

SEHT is always looking for volunteers in a number of roles please reach out if you feel you could help.

### **STAPLEHURST FOOTPATH GROUP REPORT**

Staplehurst Footpath Group has been active in the village for the past fifty years or so. It currently has around thirty members; casual walkers are also welcome.

The walking year, May 2024 to April 2025, saw it undertake 13 walks, with 31 individual participants walking 631 miles between them!

The Group's regular walks are on the second Sunday each month, plus a Saturday evening in June for the longest day. Other walks are also sometimes arranged. They are a mixture of local walks from the village and from other locations, such as the North Downs or Romney Marsh.

The wetter summer and winter were offset in the past few months by fine weather for walking, this being reflected in good recent turnouts. The Staplehurst mud in winter is legendary!

The Group always welcomes new walkers and members, although we do not permit dogs on our walks as we regularly pass through farmland with animals.

### **Staplehurst Free Church – The year in review - 2024**

In 2024 we celebrated 55 years as a community church for Staplehurst.

Our social, health and wellbeing activities have continued to expand alongside our usual services. The building is now in use each day of the week as follows: -

- Mondays – Debt Advice Centre, Men's Walking Group, SFC Choir
- Tuesdays – Friends Together, Warm Hub, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off site)
- Wednesdays – Prayer Meeting, Community Fridge, Home Groups (on site)
- Thursdays – FreeBees, Community Fridge, Mixed Badminton
- Fridays – Pastoral Care Meeting, Interest Group, Ladies Badminton, Youth24, Worship Group Rehearsals
- Saturdays – Community Fridge, Family Fun, and ad hoc Social Events
- Sundays – Church Services, Sharing Lunches and Social Events (occasional)

Key developments in the year have been as follows:

- In person attendance at Church services continued to increase with 110 regular attendees and several new families attending. Online broadcasting has also been maintained with over 2000 views in the year.
- We also celebrated 8 baptisms in the year.
- The Community Fridge has seen almost 6000 visits in 2024 a 26% increase driven by the continued cost-of-living crisis. This initiative is part of the Shepherd's Pantry portfolio a food-insecurity community support programme which started during the Covid pandemic to reclaim food from retailers and suppliers that would otherwise go to waste or is surplus to their requirements. This is then made available to the public, particularly those in financial hardship at no cost. The Fridge is open at varying times over 4 days a week with over 20 volunteers in the team collecting food, undertaking stock control and welcoming and informally supporting visitors. Other building users are invited to make use of the

Community Fridge on other days. Our busiest month of the year was August which we believe is related to the school holidays.

- The Winter Welcome Space became the Warm Welcome Hub opening up our premises to local people and to provided warmth, company and refreshments. During the coldest months free hot soup and rolls were also provided. Up to 40 people are served each week.
- The FreeBees support sessions for new parents continue to be popular. Two age-appropriate groups operate on Thursday mornings and afternoons with a waiting list in place for the morning session. Places are freed up as parents return to work, so over time we are able to provide support to many families who benefit from the help and encouragement given by the sessions hosts and other parents with shared experiences. At any onetime we have up to 66 children registered with us.
- In the autumn we concluded our training programme the 'Emmaus Project' helping us plan and deliver a coordinated programme of community engagement events. In the last year we have held a free barn dance, a free quiz night, a Santas Grotto, a summer music event and an Anniversary celebration. Further events are planned for the coming year.
- Also, in the Autumn we launched Youth24 an interactive fun evening for young people of secondary school age. Sessions run on the second and fourth Fridays during term time.
- Following his successful first year with us our Church Leader, Peter Brook has increased his hours and will now work four days per week in the coming year.
- In late June we had solar panels and back up batteries fitted thanks to a generous grant from Maidstone Borough Council. This has helped reduce our electricity bills, reduced our carbon emissions and we are sharing any excess electricity generated with the Staplehurst community.

One of the cornerstone activities of the Church is providing financial support for a variety of third-party charitable organisations and we are pleased to be able to report we have sustained this activity through the continuous generous donations of our members and regular attendees. This past year we have had a particular focus on practical relief work in Ukraine, Palestine/Israel and Darfur. Rent-free office space and funding support was also provided to Staplehurst's Debt Advice Centre – who helped clients manage over £250,000 of personal debt.

### **FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS STAPLEHURST**

The Friends of All Saints was set up over 30 years ago as an independent Charity whose objectives are to raise funds to help maintain, repair, restore preserve, improve, for the benefit of the public, the fabric of All Saints Church.

Over the years we have supported many projects, the first being the restoration of the bells and the most recent the reconstruction of the Turret.

We hold many events during the year to which everyone is welcome to attend. We started 2024 with our very popular Brain Game in March which saw 11 teams testing their brains.

Being our 30<sup>th</sup> year we made our AGM in May a bit of a party to celebrate all that we had achieved in those years. In June we held a concert led by Steven Higgins that saw over 100 people enjoy a fabulous evening of music. In July we were hosted by Adam Houghton for a cream tea and watching the Gauge 1 trains in his garden. Some of us walked across the fields and we were blessed with fine weather. In September we had a croquet afternoon with the added delight of a cream tea. In October we had an Autumn tea party with some parlor games to add to the fun. A Christmas evening with supper and a good old sing song of carols completed the year.

If you would like to know more about our activities or become a member, please do make contact or come along to our AGM in All Saints Church on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May, commencing with drinks at 7.30

Val Wallis

Chair Friends of All Saints

[friends\\_chair@allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk](mailto:friends_chair@allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk)

### **Hi Kent Social Group**

Our Social Group for people in Staplehurst who live with hearing loss has been running for three years now and meets once a month at the United Reformed Church. Attendance varies in the region of 8 to 20 people per meeting and the group is welcomed as a valuable resource that enables people to share experiences and coping strategies with others who also have hearing loss. Two local volunteers help to run the group's meetings.

Hi Kent arranges guest speakers for most meetings, in consultation with the group. Topics include from dealing with potential scams, general finance matters, first aid as well as interesting talks from group members on their careers. The group also has updates from Hi Kent on the free help that we can provide to help people in their daily lives. These include talks and demonstrations of assistive equipment and the benefits of learning to lipread. Hi Kent is also able to signpost people to other local support agencies.

### **Staplehurst Interest Group**

Founded in 2002, this group has met weekly about a thousand times. We welcome all to enjoy a couple of hours of friendship through laughter, activities, illustrated talks from speakers and occasional visits. We meet in the Free Church in Station Road for a 10am start on Friday mornings for a cuppa and chat which is a great way to widen your circle of friends.

Members suggest the programme's content so in the last year we've tried to solve a murder mystery and whether facts were true or false; visited Cranbrook Museum and Bateman's; had



Countdown and Bluffers sessions and a 60s music quiz; had fascinating talks from members of the Photographic Society, on Canterbury, Fraud Prevention, Parks, Leeds Castle; played dominoes, beetle and board games; tried to write short stories and poems; made cracker boxes; discussed how people came to be in Staplehurst, pets and things that have inspired us, along with many, many more.

If you have a topic you would like to share with us, please get in touch. If you wish to widen your circle of friends or are interested in any or all of our programme, come and join us.

Joan and Malcolm Buller

### **Staplehurst Library User Group (SLUG)**

SLUG members meet in the library to discuss ways to aid our librarians and make suggestions as to how we can encourage residents to more fully use the facilities offered within. We recognise what a valuable asset this has been for over 50 years and hope that others do too.

SLUG has held regular meetings with library managers within this last year, which has proved very productive. There is now a large display board which can be booked for a three-week slot to be used by village groups to advertise their activities and attract new members. The range of books has been increased through developers' contributions to KCC Libraries and the library has had a refurbishment.

On a sad note; vandals have destroyed the outside bench that SLUG organised to commemorate the forty years since our library opened. To conclude positively; our helpful staff can explain the range of activities on offer which cover an all-age spectrum; there's something for everyone in Staplehurst Library!

Malcolm Buller (SLUG Chairman)

### **Paddock Wood and District Lions Club**

We continue to support the needy in Staplehurst, and across our area, which spreads from Lamberhurst to Yalding, Five Oak Green to Staplehurst.

Over the last year or so we've raised and spent c £16000 helping people, from schoolchildren to the elderly and many in between.

We have helped with school uniforms, assisted with funding for school special programmes and helped fund school trips; helped vulnerable women, and purchased beds and furniture, white goods and carpets for a number of people in need, as well as making donations to food banks etc.

We have been working with primary schools locally supporting the Lions Junior Peace Poster Competition, sponsoring a District winner last year and 2<sup>nd</sup> place this.

Our fundraising activities include Paddock Wood Carnival weekend, Santa's sleigh collections, a Duck Race, Easter Egg draws and quiz evenings.

It's not just all work though, as our members enjoy regular social meetings as well.

Every penny we raise is used for the charity, with no admin costs as these are met by members.

We would like to do more, but are always in need of extra help, so if you'd like to find out more, please do get in touch - you can email us at [Enquiries@paddockwoodlions.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@paddockwoodlions.co.uk), give us a call on 0345 833 9564, or find us on Facebook- [www.facebook.com/pwlions](https://www.facebook.com/pwlions) - and drop us a private message.

**McCabe Day Centre**  
**Report on Lunch Clubs for Staplehurst Parish Council**  
**Annual Parish Meeting May 2025**

The Lunch Clubs at McCabe Day Centre provide lunches for McCabe Close and Kirkman Court residents and Staplehurst residents over the age of 60.

The Thursday Lunch Club meets at the McCabe Day Centre every week, except for a short break at Christmas, and during August to mid-September. We offer a freshly cooked two-course meal with tea and coffee for £4 (including a raffle ticket). It is a chance for members to come together and to meet and make new friends, as well as enjoying a nourishing meal.

Transport is provided for the less able, at a cost to them of £2, which we put towards the cost of hiring the Weald Club for the Disabled minibus.

We also provide a Sunday lunch once a month, usually on the second Sunday of the month. This is always a roast dinner, together with dessert, and costs members £5 (again including raffle ticket). Sadly we are unable to provide transport for these meals.

When we can, we arrange special events for the members. One of the most popular being the day trip down to Eastbourne by coach every year. We subsidise the cost of this for members, and any family or friends they would like to bring along, and it is a popular outing, allowing opportunities for fish and chips, and ice creams, a little shopping, a good stroll along the promenade or even all of these.

We also celebrate Christmas each year with a party, and turkey lunch with all the trimmings. Generally we bring in an entertainer of some sort to make the afternoon even more festive. In fact, we definitely enjoy a party when we can find the opportunity. Over the last year we have taken members to Millbrook for a trip around the garden centre, and a tea and cake in the café; and then in April, we made a tea party at McCabe with a "proper" tea (sandwiches, scones and cake) together with an entertainer. These last two events were paid for from a generous legacy from one of our previous members.

We are also well supported by businesses in the village, and are very grateful for the support we get from Crouch the butcher's and the Adam and Eve Farm Shop. Spar has provided many

vouchers which has allowed us to acquire a lot of raffle prizes for free. Last, but not least, the Newlyn Trust charity has funded food safety training for our volunteers, to make sure we keep our members safe. We thank all involved, it makes us feel cherished to benefit from so much support.

All of the helpers (cooks, helpers, drivers and escorts) are volunteers, and help us to generate a cheerful, welcoming time for everyone. We hold our Annual General Meeting in September, and anyone interested in the work of the Day Centre is welcome to attend.

We can accommodate up to 36 members, and if anyone is interested, on behalf of themselves, or a family member, they should contact Caroline Highwood, chairperson, 01580 892787, [chighwood5@gmail.com](mailto:chighwood5@gmail.com)

Caroline Highwood, April 2025

### **Staplehurst Men's Shed Spring 2025.**

The Men's Shed began 2024 holding its meetings in the Scout Hut and again we are extremely grateful to Bill Best and the Staplehurst Scouts for enabling this while the youth club was closed.

Following on from the completion of safety and other works carried out by the Parish Council on the Youth Club building, the Men's Shed were able to return there for their meetings at the end of May.

Many of the members of the group were involved in the complete repainting of the inside of the building. This proved to be a bigger project than anticipated but together with the other works the transformation has been remarkable. The building is now much brighter, lighter and more pleasant.

The Men's Shed is a social club that welcomes men of all ages from 18 years onwards and has been held in the Youth Club building (usually) on a Thursday morning for a good number of years.

We offer a warm friendly environment with unlimited tea and coffee, comfortable settees for a good chat and a laugh, plus a pool table and a number of table games such as scrabble and Mexican rules group dominos.

We are currently open between 10am and noon, although this could well be extended in the future if members so desire, as has occurred in the past.

Look in and see for yourself, you will not regret it!

The repainting of the youth club was one of only a few projects carried out by the group last year in part due to the fitness of our members. We would like to rekindle that aspect of the Shed, to run alongside the social side, and we would welcome new members interested in carrying out more practical activities or community work.

We would also be very happy to support and assist anyone or group interested in the establishment of a Men's Shed workshop here in Staplehurst.

To find out more, contact Richard James, Leader, 07976 009522 or [thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com](mailto:thestaplehurstshed@outlook.com).

### **Staplehurst Monarchs FC CIC (Senior Section)**

This season has proved to be more of a rollercoaster than last. Our First Team have sadly not been able to replicate the success of 23/4, although they reached the semi-final of the Kent Intermediate Trophy. We will be rebuilding during the summer with a new management team, and look to achieve our 5-year plan in the future.

Our U23s have been working hard and the management team have built a solid squad who are competing well with the teams in their league. They have had several players called up to the first team, including 18-year-old Ollie Styles and 16-year-old Kester Jones – who has played for the club since he was in the Development Team aged 6 and still plays for the U18s. The U23s also have squad players brought through our junior section, proving the player pathway is working well.

Our women's team have also demonstrated their commitment to the player pathway, with former U18s players stepping up to the team, and former youth section players returning to football. The management team have reaped the benefits of their dedication, finishing our home fixtures with a superb win in front of a crowd of 50+ supporters.

We also added a Sunday team to our stable this year, comprising of last season's SMYFC U18s mixed in with former Staplehurst players to give experience of senior football. Currently looking like they will finish in the top 4 in the league, and with Ash Wright currently top goal scorer in all 3 divisions, they have undoubtedly had the most successful season with 2 cup finals, both staged at the Gallagher Stadium. The first, The President's B Cup, was played out in front of a huge crowd and sadly ended in heartbreak as they lost 9-8 on penalties. The second, the Kent Invitational Cup, will be played on 9 May against Cuxton U18s and we hope to bring the silverware home.

Our work in the community has continued through the season, including donations to the Shepherd's Pantry and several charity collections, and coaching sessions for Junior teams. We have offered a local young photographer the opportunity to work with our club photographer to gain valuable experience of sports photography. Most notably, we hosted the Inaugural Nigel Best Memorial Trophy at the Jubilee, in memory of our great friend who we sadly lost in 2023. Many former and current players took part, and we raised over £2500 for MacMillan Cancer Support. We hope to play this again this season.

We are also delighted to have formed a Community Interest Company (CIC) with our Junior section, bringing us back together as one club. This is vital for the club's future, and for the player pathway.

Planning permission for our much needed clubhouse was granted in November 2024 and we are working with the Parish Council to make this a reality. Without a proper clubhouse, the future of the club is not secure, and it will also be a fantastic community facility.

### **Staplehurst Monarchs Youth**

This season we have 22 teams ranging in age from U7s to U21s including 6 girls' teams. We are also running 2 age groups of development football for U6s and U7s who are known as 'Mini Monarchs' through our partners 'Football Five Star'. Our players range in age from 5 to 48 (1 only!).

We are pleased to say that a number of our older boys played for the Men's U23s and even 1<sup>st</sup> team during the season. Same with the Women's team too. This is a defined policy for both seniors and juniors.

We continue to use social media notably Facebook and Instagram to publish the club's news. We also occasionally contribute information and photos to the Staplehurst Parish Magazine.

Both Jubilee Sports Field and Staplehurst School Field suffer from drainage problems and we struggled to play at either venue between December 2024 and March 2025. We decided it necessary to book alternative pitches in order to keep everyone playing which we managed to do on the whole.

Due to the commitment of our teams and parents we were able to play league matches at alternative venues such as Mote and South Park, Cornwallis Academy, Mangravet and Homewood.

In terms of results, we have had some notable successes on the pitch this season. Both our U8 Royals and U10 teams won their Autumn competitions with the U9s coming runners up. More recently both our U16 Girls and U12 Boys' teams have finished runners up in their respective league competitions.

With a few matches to go, our U14 Girls and U18 Boys have opportunities to win their respective leagues. 3 of our younger teams (U7s/U8s and U8 Royals) also have cup finals this Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

We continue to adopt a policy of 'Sport for All' to encourage young people in our area to get involved in sport.

We provide sport for more than 300 young people and their families. This wouldn't be possible without the commitment of our small dedicated committee, managers, coaches, parents, sponsors and the young people themselves. We would also like to thank Staplehurst Parish Council for their continued support together with the Jubilee Field Working Group.

28/04/2025

### **STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW GROUP.**

The group of residents and parish councillors, who started the original work in 2021, are continuing to work towards a successful completion of the review process with the excellent assistance of our consultant to make sure we cross the T's and dot the I's! The public consultation held July 6, 2024, gave further feedback to support the recent Residents Survey. With the political

changes both at Maidstone and Westminster OUR Neighbourhood Plan becomes even more important as the push for more housing grows. The new plan, which if approved would run until 2038 is now at the stage where the final draft was approved and signed off by the Parish Council by 31 March, 2025.

The next stage is a statutory Pre-submission in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The consultation will run from Tuesday June 6, 2025 to Friday June 27, 2025. This will be an opportunity to give your views on the draft policy.

As always, we are grateful to the Parish Council for their ongoing support and to our consultant.

My thanks as always to the members of the group who have continued their hard work and commitment.

Margaret Arger.

### **STAPLEHURST PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY – 2025**

It has been another busy year for the Staplehurst Photographic Society, both internally and externally to the club. The group meets every Friday evening in the Parish Rooms, from the beginning of September through to the end of May. The published programme always contains a mix of Talks, Workshops, Competitions and Fun Evenings for all levels of ability.

The membership has remained constant and bucks the trend compared with our much bigger rivals. However, we would welcome more photographers to join us. Many more images are now being taken on mobile phones, this has enabled us to give specific training in how to set up phones to take the best images and how to use free editing software to modify photos. Come and see how we can help you improve the quality of your photography, whatever your camera.

The club has continued to offer monthly outings to a diverse selection of locations. The highlight of the season, undoubtedly, was a private tour of the massive Victorian Crossness Pumping Station on the Thames at Abbey Wood. The group of 20 photographers had unhindered access to the building. Other locations visited also included Dungeness, the Tate Britain and East London Docks.

Externally the Society has competed well against the South-East's big clubs, coming second to Maidstone in the Marley Medallion Trophy and again only five points behind Maidstone, the eventual winners of the prestigious Kent County Photographic Association's Diamond Jubilee Trophy. We had exactly the same result in the annual Malling Battle of the Prints.

Internal competitions, both projected images and prints, have continued to attract large entry numbers. Many of these will be displayed at the SPS Annual Exhibition held in the Autumn at the United Reform Church. The next will be on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

The Staplehurst Scout group has had another successful year creating adventure and learning for boys and girls in the village between 4 and 14 years old. It's impossible to fit everything we do into this report, but here are a few of the highlights.

Staplehurst Squirrels won the Kent Scouts Community Project Highly Commended Award and were picked to pilot the new Squirrels You Shape Badge. We had a visit from the RNLI to teach us about water safety. We also learnt about water pollution and the dangers to sea creatures. The Squirrels and Beavers had two sleepover events during the year and undertook a number of visits including a trip to the Rare Breeds farm, Lower Grange farm to GO NUTS! and still had time for a Chinese workshop and a trip to the pantomime.

As is the tradition with all Scout Groups, participation in the annual St George's Day parade and the Remembrance Day commemorations are an important part of scouting and we were pleased to march to the service held in the village.

Raising funds for others not so well off is also an important part of scouting and the Group raised £300 for Make a Wish and £250 for the Air Ambulance charities.

Our cubs and scouts had a combined week-long summer camp in Sevenoaks and learnt many outdoor living skills. All our sections have continued to encourage learning through our badges programme and by embracing the ethos of scouting and the values we uphold. Looking at the VE day 80th centenary commemorations, the scouts renovated the Sgt Fitzgerald memorial bench and we will renew the flags at the airfield memorial. The Cubs and scouts are also preparing a pop-up museum to display period photographs and artefacts.

Finally, the only thing holding us back is the need for more volunteers and leaders, so if you can help us, even on a part time basis, to keep Staplehurst scouting, please do get in touch.

Bill Best

Chair, Staplehurst Scout Group.

Staplehurst Health Centre is now known as The Mote Medical Practice, Staplehurst. It is a branch of The Mote Medical Practice in Maidstone, this being the successful bidder chosen by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), after Malling Health's contract came to an end.

A very successful PPG meeting was held in April, when one of the GP Partners at the Mote Medical Practice Maidstone and the Practice Manager explained the aims of the partnership and answered questions from attendees. I think we can remain confident that our Health Centre is in safe hands and would like to thank all the current staff for their hard work, especially during the changeover.

Staplehurst PPG meets 4 times a year and is open to all registered patients at Staplehurst and/or their Carers. It is an opportunity to learn about the practice and new initiatives being undertaken. It is a voice for keeping patients informed, relevant to and supportive of the health centre.

We also have our own Face Book page for news and updates: Staplehurst PPG

You can join by completing a form at the surgery, or by emailing [chairstaplehurstppg@gmail.com](mailto:chairstaplehurstppg@gmail.com)



## Staplehurst Trefoil Guild

### Annual Report

Our active membership has been tackling quite an active programme for 2024 as we did exercises with Hamish, the local physiotherapist and we undertook our own Olympic Games! One of our talks was about the best church walks in Kent, as most churches have a seat in their grounds to admire the view and eat your packed lunch.

Then in August we visited Tram Hatch Gardens for a long and fascinating stroll through all the different aspects of the garden and greenhouses. The cream tea provided was stunning!

Hypo Hounds came along to tell us about the amazing work they do to train dogs for children with diabetes. It's like sniffer dogs with a difference!

The Great Trefoil Bake Off was a flapjack competition this time and nearer to Christmas we made wreaths using fabric and bottle tops.

We rounded the year off with an absolutely delicious Christmas Lunch at The Unicorn in Marden, so now we are launching into 2025 with our Scrabble Challenge.

### **STAPLEHURST UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

Staplehurst United Reformed Church continues to hold worship services at 10.30 on a Sunday morning and these are live streamed on our YouTube channel enabling people who are unwell or on holiday to continue to worship with us. We share our minister, Revd. Andrew Royal, with the United Reformed Church at Maidstone. Andrew preaches once a month and on the other Sundays



we have a variety of visiting preachers and members of the congregation leading the service. We have also continued to hold monthly evening zoom communion services during the winter – one positive development that came from the Covid pandemic.

We have held 2 coffee and gift mornings during the year supporting The Symbol Trust and Staplehurst Music Centre and these have been enhanced by performances from local music groups. We also held a quiz evening as part of Tearfund's 'Big Quiz' initiative, and members of the congregation participated in 'Ride and Stride' raising money for our church and 'The Friends of Kent Churches'.

Our church doors have been open on a Thursday over the Winter for 'bookswap and beverages'. We welcome anyone for free hot drinks or soup and to take a book away. We hope to continue this later in the year.

Our carer and toddler group on a Tuesday morning continues to thrive. We have free play time with a craft activity and then share a story and singing time.

We are active participants in Churches Together in Staplehurst and the World Day of Prayer service is held at our church in March. We opened our doors during the 'tractorfest' and served hot drinks and the use of toilet facilities.

We have enjoyed various social events and have had sharing lunches, a boat trip and a ramble.

We welcome anyone to come along and worship with us.

Alison Alderson

secretary@staplehursturc.org.uk

### **Village Golf Club Report**

The Village Golf Club has celebrated its most successful year ever and has provided affordable access to golf to 475 members and at least a further 500 guests. For many of our members this facility provides an initial introduction to the sport but for another sizeable group the Village Golf Club provides an environment that allows older players to maintain their participation in a healthy outdoor activity. Our aim is to make golf an affordable and accessible sport irrespective of financial or physical constraints.

This totally not for profit community venture is run entirely by volunteers and all money raised through the deliberately low membership fee goes back into maintaining the course and equipment. We are always keen to hear from anyone who is able to help us to develop the infrastructure of the club or who is willing to serve on the committee in order to help us ensure this unique and valuable community resource can be sustained as a forever asset for Staplehurst and the surrounding area.

Annette Scott  
Chairperson Village Golf Club

### **WI report for annual parish meeting May 2025**

We had a good and varied year this year, once more. We are a sociable group and make the most of the opportunities we have to get together and chat – the buzz of conversation has sometimes to be heard to be believed!

The formal part of our programme consists of various talks or presentations, on a wide variety of subjects, this year these included life on the River Thames, Great Grandma's workbook, Fit Steps

(keep fit based on ballroom dance steps) and an author telling us about her life and debut novel. A really eclectic range. We also added in our regular Produce Show, where we practise and show off some of our skills (well we try!).

Less formally, we also arranged a fun Christmas party, a social afternoon with crafting and cakes (tea as well!) and our regular garden party. This time we held the garden party in the Kathy Lamb Centre, which proved to be a wise decision, given that the weather was not particularly good; we would have had to cancel if we had not had the option of moving indoors for the event.

It's noticeable that a lot of our informal events are based on food, so it's no surprise that groups of us have been meeting for lunch at the Kings Head this year. We were also keen to attend a cookery demonstration arranged by our sister institute in Frittenden. This was a selection of far eastern dishes, and they were absolutely delicious! Now to get my act together to try for myself.

In March a few of us attended the West Kent Federation AGM in the Woodville Halls in Gravesend. This was a new venue for us, and so we were glad to join with a partnership of other local WIs who had hired a coach to get us there and home. It made the whole event more sociable, as we didn't have to worry over traffic congestion or car parking. The meeting had some interesting speakers, notably the garden designer Adam Frost, who gave some very helpful advice on how to look at putting together a garden.

We continue to get involved with other community activity, helping to serve teas at the Village Clean up in October (and, indeed helping with the clean-up); joining quizzes put on as fund-raisers by other charities, contributing to local food banks, and supporting the WI's charity for Country Women of the World. It all made for a lively, sociable and enjoyable year once more.

To sum up, we are a friendly, lively and fun-loving group who enjoy getting together, and getting involved, whether with our own club, or more widely. We are always happy to meet and greet new members. Why not give us a try? (Contact Caroline Highwood [chighwood5@gmail.com](mailto:chighwood5@gmail.com); 01580 892787)