

# **STAPLEHURST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024**

**15th May 2023 7.30pm  
Group Reports**



**Staplehurst Community Centre  
Illustratration by Ken Colins**

## **All Saints Church Staplehurst Rector's Report 2023/24**

As we reflect together on the last year let us remember those who have died. I am saddened by the passing of Peter Driver, Bruce Nicholls, Myria Knibbs, Anne Brenchley, Sylvia Lade, Margaret Holdaway, Ted Hall, and Catherine Abbott. They have left a void within our community. Each of them has enriched our church and the wider community, leaving behind a legacy of friendship and generosity that will be dearly missed. We are richer and better for having shared in the gifts they graciously bestowed upon us.

This period of bereavement and grief reminds us of the preciousness of life as we navigate this journey of loss and remembrance, holding onto the light and love that each of these individuals brought into our lives.

During Holy Week and Easter, the significance of Christ's resurrection resonated even more deeply as we worshipped together. The Maundy Thursday Passover feast and the moving Good Friday service, led by the choir, touched our hearts and souls, reminding us of the profound sacrifice and love demonstrated on the Cross.

The transition out of the pandemic has been marked by cautious steps and hybrid arrangements to ensure the safety and comfort of all members. While we have made progress, the lingering effects of Covid-19 remind us of the importance of continuing to prioritize the well-being of our congregation as we move forward.

Through the many challenges we have learned to adapt and innovate, finding new ways to connect and support one another. It is heartening to see our congregation come together in times of joy and sorrow, extending kindness and compassion to those in need. In a world marked by conflicts and challenges, our commitment to prayer and faith is tested. The ongoing crises in Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, and beyond serve as reminders of the enduring need for peace, justice, and compassion in our world. As a community of believers, let us hold fast to our values and extend our prayers and support to those in need.

Reflecting on the recent coronation and Christian commitment of King Charles III, we are reminded of the enduring principles of freedom, justice, and mercy that underpin our faith. The Oath taken by the monarch and the historical context of defending the church and fostering an environment of inclusivity resonate with our mission as a church community.

Moving forward into the next year, let us consider the following action points to strengthen our community and fulfil our shared goals:

1. Enhance Outreach Programs: Develop initiatives to reach out to those in need within our community and beyond, offering support, compassion, and practical assistance.
2. Foster Inclusivity: Create opportunities for diverse voices to be heard and valued within our congregation, ensuring that all members feel welcomed and included.

3. Deepen Spiritual Engagement: Organize and participate in regular prayer meetings, study groups, and spiritual retreats to deepen our collective faith and understanding of God's word.
4. Strengthen Community Bonds: Plan social events, volunteer activities, and fellowship gatherings to nurture relationships and create a sense of belonging among members.
5. Embrace Innovation: Explore new ways to integrate technology, music, and creative arts into our worship services and community activities, appealing to a wider audience and enriching our spiritual experiences.

Let us reflect on these action points and strive towards building a more vibrant, inclusive, and compassionate community that reflects the love and teachings of Christ.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our church and fellowship. May we continue to walk together in faith and service, guided by the light of love and the spirit of Christ.

With deep appreciation for your dedication and support,

Silke  
Rector at All Saints Church

### **Community Hub Afternoon Tea Club (Monday Chat Club)**

Chat club is held at the McCabe centre each Monday, excluding Bank Holidays, from 2pm to 4pm for members of the village aged 60 +.

The members, have quizzes and games which include bingo, categories, beetle drive and shut the box. They also enjoy tea, coffee and biscuits and fairly regularly a slice of cake. We hold a weekly raffle along with a lucky dip draw which sees the winner winning £10.00. This year we have had the wonderful Women's Voices in to entertain us with some lovely sing a long song.

We are currently at full capacity with 31 wonderful members and a committee of five. We have one fantastic volunteer driver without whom several of our members would not be able to attend.

Although we are currently at full capacity please get in touch if you require further information.

Julie Grice Chairman 07549 012657

Lorraine Pardoe Secretary

Jean Osler Treasurer

## Staplehurst Bridge Club 2024

The Staplehurst Bridge Club has been on the move over the past year, following the closure of the Youth Hut for use by Village activities.

In an emergency situation we were able to meet in the West Hall of the Community Centre for a few weeks, and then we were offered space in the Kathy Lamb Guid Centre in Headcorn Road. We are very grateful to both of these venues for allowing us to use their premises at the rate at which we were paying for the Youth Hut. However, neither of them was really suited for our purposes and in the Autumn, we came to an arrangement with Staplehurst Cricket and Tennis Club to use their bar area on Friday afternoons.

This has proved very popular with our members as it provides a warm and comfortable space with good kitchen facilities and car parking space. We decided to move to playing afternoon bridge instead of in the evening as more and more people are reluctant to drive in the dark especially during the winter months, and we are hopeful that this will increase our membership and provide much needed funds for the Club.

We continue to 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 to 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)

## Staplehurst Footpath Group 2024 Chairman's Report

The walking year has seen steady progress with the fortunes of the group. The statistics for the year were:

- 39 individual participants
- 156 total participants
- 16 walks conducted
- 640 miles in total walked.

There were some additions to the regular programme of monthly walks on the second Sunday plus a Saturday evening walk in June for the "longest day".

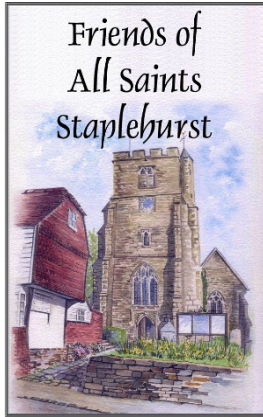
The September walk was affected by very hot weather, meaning that it had to be cut short from the original planned full day. Consequently, we did a Sunday morning additional walk at the end of September to cover the route that had been proposed for the afternoon of the original walk.

Also, for the first time, we tried a "shortest day" walk on the Saturday morning closest to December 21<sup>st</sup>. The weather was mild so, despite being only a couple of days before Christmas, it was well supported with eleven walkers turning out. Seasonal refreshment was taken at the Kings Head afterwards! This may well be repeated for 2024.

The group finished the year with 27 members, some new walkers taking half-yearly membership that became available for the first time this year.

The committee has planned a full programme for the summer so is hoping for fine weather (but not too hot!), plenty of walkers and a good sociable time for all for the next year.

## The Friends of All Saints



Registered Charity no. 1037964

### **Val Wallis, Chair**

4 Church Hill Cottages  
High Street  
Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0AX  
Tel: 01580 891390

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

### **Andrew Brady, Membership Secretary**

3 Weavers Close  
Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0SF  
Tel: 01580 891840

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

### **Ray Mann, Treasurer**

5 Weavers Close  
Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0SF

The Friends of All Saints is a Charity set up over 30 years ago to raise funds to help repair, restore and enhance the fabric of All Saints Church for the community. We hold fund raising events throughout the year.

In the last 12 months we have held the very popular Brain Game where up to 10 teams battle to answer all the questions to become the top scorers of the evening.

In June we held "Sing for your Supper Again". There were over 100 people in the audience singing at the top of their voices. A usual feature of Friend's events food and wine helped the evening along. A huge thank you to Steven Higgins who led the evening brilliantly with two guests' singers with wonderful voices.

This was followed with the Cream tea trail, when in ideal weather conditions 12 intrepid explorers set off across the field and another 20 joined us for a cream tea at Chapmans Farm hosted by David Twyman.

September saw the long-awaited Antiques evening with John Standon take place. This was a fascinating insight to the world of antique porcelain, china and glassware.

In October some of us treated ourselves to a proper Afternoon tea at the London Beach hotel in Tenterden. This is a very good fundraiser as the hotel donate all the costs back to the Friends. We ended the year with "Christmas with Friends." A lovely evening of singing favorite carols, and of course keeping up the friend's tradition a jacket potato supper and mulled wine.

**We are a small committee putting on the events and are always looking for new committee members. Currently we have 100 members and welcome new members.**

**If you would be interested in becoming a member of the Friends of All Saints, please do contact our membership secretary. Andrew Brady, [friends@saintsstaplehurst.co.uk](mailto:friends@saintsstaplehurst.co.uk) membership is a minimum of £5 per year. If you would like to join the committee or have ideas for fund raising events, please do make contact with me.**

**[chair\\_friends@allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk](mailto:chair_friends@allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk)**

**Val Wallis Chair Friends of All Saints**

## Hi Kent



Hi Kent, the local charity for people living with hearing loss continues to hold its monthly hearing aid aftercare clinic on every first Thursday between 2pm-3pm at the McCabe Centre. This free service helps people who have NHS hearing aids and our wonderful volunteers can re-tube the aids and give out batteries and advice. Providing this very local service means that NHS hearing aid users do not have to go to their local audiology department for routine maintenance, saving them the cost of travel and parking and possibly waiting to be seen.

In addition, we run a monthly Social Group at the United Reformed Church on every third Thursday between 10.30am-12noon. This group has gone from strength to strength and now has fifteen regular members. The group was set up to provide an opportunity for local people living with hearing loss to get together with other people, all living with the same challenges, and enjoy conversation, talks and activities.

All Hi Kent's other services are available too of course and these are:-

- Assessment for and provision of assistive equipment
- Free online lipreading classes
- Deaf awareness training
- British Sign Language classes
- Tinnitus support groups
- Wellbeing advice and guidance
- Advice about and installation of hearing loop systems in shops/banks/churches/public buildings
- Ear health checks and wax microsuction service (available from our Canterbury centre)

With 1 in 5 of us now living with some degree of hearing loss, we are finding that our services are more important than ever, offering the help and support that so many of our clients need to 'live well with hearing loss'.

We have had such support from Staplehurst residents for the work that we do and thank the Parish Council for including this piece in its Annual Report and for helping us promote how we can help.

Where: URC Church, High Street, Staplehurst TN12 OAS

When: Every 3rd Thursday, 10.30am - 12pm

## **Staplehurst Horticultural Society**

Fully recovered from the constraints of the Covid era, we were able to enjoy our full range of events from our monthly evening meetings and talks to a range of other events.

Our outing this year was to Penshurst Place, following a talk to the Society by the Head Gardener. As with many of our own gardens, Penshurst had been hammered by a particularly harsh spell of frost. Notwithstanding this, it was still a joy!

Fund raising activities included our annual plant sale, again conducted around the village at a few members' homes. This "safari" format has proved very successful and enables a greater interaction with the general public than our previous format at the Village Centre. Our Quiz again proved very popular with villagers at large; there seems to be a fixation in winning the booby prize! Our summer members' barbecue continues to prove very popular, with over 40 members having a splendid time. (Good weather helps!)

Our membership continues to rise slightly and includes several younger members which is most welcome.

All in all, there is a much-improved sense of camaraderie within the membership and a sense that all is well with the Society!

As ever, thanks to all who all who have contributed with especial thanks to the members of the Management Committee.

Alan Pett

Chairman    May 2024

## **Staplehurst Interest Group**

Three times each year our members suggest things to do on a Friday morning. These may be discussion sessions, practical activities, speakers on diverse subjects, fun games to play or occasional visits elsewhere. From these our weekly programme is organised.

Meeting in the welcoming café area of the Free Church in Station Road ready for a 10am start with tea, coffee and biscuits, members settle down for social interaction which inevitably involves a lot of laughter. Because the premises are disabled-friendly, everyone can access this community club. We ask for a £1 donation when attending in order to cover all expenses.

Running now since March 2002, we know that what we offer has helped many residents find new friendships and forge lasting memories. If you would like to give a talk to our group or just come along when you fancy doing so, you will be made most welcome.

Joan and Malcolm Buller

## **Lunch Clubs – McCabe Day Centre 2024**

The Lunch Clubs at McCabe Day Centre provide lunch for McCabe Day Centre 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, which includes a raffle. In addition to enjoying the food it is a good opportunity for the members to meet and chat together.

Transport is available for those less able at a cost of £2, which goes towards the hire of the Weald Club for the Disabled minibus.

Once a month we also offer Sunday lunch, usually on the second Sunday of the month. This is always a roast dinner with all the trimmings plus dessert and tea and coffee for £5, which again includes a raffle.

We enjoy an annual coach outing to Eastbourne in the summer, usually on the last Thursday in July. This has become very popular, our members enjoy strolling along the promenade, doing a bit of shopping, often having a fish and chips lunch and even an ice cream! We also provide a special Christmas lunch with festive food and organize parties to celebrate special events.

Our Annual General Meeting is held in September and all people interested in the work of the Day Centre are welcome to attend.

All the cooks and helpers at our lunch clubs are volunteers and we aim to provide a happy, cheerful time for everyone.

We can accommodate up to 36 members, and we do have a few vacancies at the moment. For further information, please contact our Chairperson, Caroline Highwood on 892787.

## **Staplehurst Men's Shed**

Once again, we have had to spend several months in exile, this time waiting for work to be carried out on the Youth Club Hut. We are extremely grateful to Bill Best and the Staplehurst Scouts for enabling us to meet in their hut.

Regardless of the meeting place, the Shed exists as a place where men come together to socialise and make new friends, play pool, scrabble, share ideas and skills, participate on practical projects. Tea and coffee is provided. Current Membership ages range from 50 –90.

The Staplehurst Shed has been running for 7 years and many early members are still involved. But we are keen to welcome new members. Why do people join? Whether it is retirement or some other reason, men are typically more prone to feeling isolated. But you don't need to be retired or to feel lonely. You might just want some conversation or a bit of banter and a laugh with a bunch of blokes. At the very least, we offer an opportunity to get out of the house for a few hours each week.

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



## **Staplehurst Monarchs FC**

This has been the most successful season for the Senior club in its 130-year history. Our First Team reached the play off final, the furthest we have ever been and were unlucky to not beat our opponents Larkfield who are promoted on their third time of trying. To be competing at this level of football is incredible for a village team (as the Kent Non-League podcast said "where even is Staplehurst?") and we are proud to put our village and club firmly on the map – our play off semi-final had an attendance of 342, the biggest crowd we have had at home!

We now look to next season where hopefully the First Team will be competing for promotion once again. Our U23 development team have a new management team in place and will move from strength to strength in what is a very difficult league, competing against teams from Chatham Town, Ashford Utd and Maidstone Utd. Finally, our women's team have now completed their first ever competitive season, finishing 7<sup>th</sup> in the league and we will look to build on this. We will also add a Development team to the Senior club next season, bridging the gap from junior to senior football.

We continue to fundraise to build a clubhouse at Jubilee Sports Field, and thank everyone for their support so far – if you would like to donate, please visit our crowdfunding page ([crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-us-build-a-clubhouse](https://crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-us-build-a-clubhouse)).

We would like to thank all of our players, fans and sponsors for their wonderful support this season and look forward to welcoming you back to the Jubilee Sports Field soon.

## **Staplehurst Monarchs Youth Football Club**

It's been another good season for the club despite all the rain!

We fielded 21 teams this season, 14 male and 7 female. Progression this season was measured by the introduction of an U21s men's team to aid the transition from boys' to open age football. We also started up an U18s Girls' team. In total, we provided team sport for more than 300 people during the season ranging from 5 to 47!

We also continued to run Mini Monarchs, a development group for 5 and 6 year olds at Staplehurst School on Saturday mornings together with Wildcats (Girls aged between 5 and 11) and Squad Girls (older girls) during the summer months at Jubilee Sports Field.

At this time with the season incomplete, it looks like we will enjoy some success in terms of trophies with the U9 Girls and U16s Boys doing well in their respective leagues and three of our teams (U11s/U13 Royals and U16s) all reaching cup finals. Our U21s team have also recently won the Powerplay Maidstone 6v6 Premiership at the Gallagher Stadium.

We continue to have good relations with the senior club Staplehurst Monarchs United FC and during the season supplied them with a number of our players to train/play for their U23s team. Training continued to be at Jubilee between March and the end of October, weather permitting. Thereafter, our teams needed to travel 'far and wide' for floodlit winter training. Venues ranged from Maidstone to Tenterden.

The long wet winter also meant that we were unable to play at Jubilee for many weeks at a time between November and March. This required for us to source a number of alternative pitches round the Maidstone area.

Ongoing, it looks like we will have even more teams next season. We also hope that the Council's 3G project continues to progress so that the vast majority of our training and matches can take place in the village,

## Paddock Wood & District Lions Club

Paddock Wood & District Lions Club is celebrating its 41st anniversary this year and remains as busy as ever. Our aim is to serve our community and fundamentally, we try to make a difference to individual's lives – welcoming enquiries from organisations, social workers, schools and families. Over the past year, we have been increasing our spending in our communities as we continue to receive more requests for assistance. Examples include the provision of white goods for struggling families placed in accommodation with no furniture, our Winter Fuel project to support individuals to pay their energy bills and helping deserving children with the uniform cost for secondary school.

This year, we have continued our most popular fundraising & community events such as Santa's sleigh and the Easter Egg Raffle, and are in the final planning stages for the summer events. Rockin' in the Rec, our free live music event, the Paddock Wood Carnival & Fete and the East Peckham 10k Run will all be taking place in July.

We cover a large area including Brenchley, Collier Street, East Peckham, Five Oak Green, Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Marden, Matfield, Paddock Wood, Staplehurst & Yalding. Similar to other charities, we rely entirely on volunteers who have been working incredibly hard this year to ensure our fundraising events are a success and that we can continue to help those who most need it.

If you want further information on who we are and what we do, please visit our website [www.paddockwoodlions.co.uk](http://www.paddockwoodlions.co.uk) or our Facebook page Paddock Wood & District Lions Club. We are a very friendly club with a huge age range so if you are interested in potentially becoming a member, please email [enquiries@paddockwoodlions.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@paddockwoodlions.co.uk) or ring 0345 8339564 for a chat.'

## Poppy's Day Nursery & Poppy's Baby Care Unit 2024

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 the Baby Unit at London House in the High Street was inspected by OFSTED and graded as **"Outstanding"** in all areas with no recommendations.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 our Main Nursery at Headcorn Road was inspected by OFSTED and graded as **"Outstanding"** in all areas with no recommendations.

As we approach 16 years of providing "full day childcare" for Staplehurst and the surrounding area we are very proud of the Outstanding Grading's awarded, our achievements over many years, and the staff teams at both settings.

We will hold a Graduation Ceremony at The Free Church for **23** children leaving to join Primary Schools this September. We have waiting lists for new children wishing to join the Nursery till 2025.

For more information on Nursery care contact Katherine Tunnicliffe

Poppy's Day Nursery Tel: 01580 892600 Poppy's Baby Care Unit Tel: 01580 890480  
Email: [poppysdaynursery@gmail.com](mailto:poppysdaynursery@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.poppysdaynursery.com>

## The Staplehurst Patients Participation Group

In this last year 23/24 we have attempted to broaden the 'profile' of residents who attend our meetings, and the actual numbers have risen considerably. However, the 'profile' has remained the same – representing only the retired population.

So what about all those younger and fitter members in our community – the cricket and football clubs, those still at school, young mothers and mothers-to-be..... all those people with back pains, working at home and sitting in unsuitable chairs!! It is inconceivable that all their requirements are actually being catered for, but we have never heard from one of them.

The purpose of the Participation Group is to provide a means through which residents can suggest improvements and additions to the services our Health Centre provides – and the way these services are delivered. And it is essential that residents retain this conduit, which is independent of the Health Centre itself (currently Malling Health, but could change when the current agreement expires). The chairs of the local PPGs (Marden, Yalding etc) do meet with the NHS regularly to discuss the issues of the day, and these can be escalated to NHS Kent if appropriate. For example, if in the future there might be no chiropodist or physio services locally, residents would have either to travel greater distances for their treatment, or suffer longer delays before they receive it.

So it is important that these meetings are attended by a wider range of people, so that all residents are represented. **The next meeting will be held at the Health Centre, at 7:15 on Tuesday 11th June.** If the way these meetings have been held do not suit you, please come along and tell us how you would like them to be held – such as zoom, for example, at lunchtime.

## The Staplehurst Society

The Staplehurst Society was founded in 1974 to preserve the history of the parish and provide an ongoing archive and history of the day to day lives of the parishioners dating back to the beginning of photography. We also preserve the postcards people sent to record the events in their lives which affect the history of today. We are contacted by people around the world who seek information on their families who lived in Staplehurst. We would welcome anyone interested in seeing what we have and are available 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Staplehurst Community Centre most Monday mornings.

## Staplehurst Community Events Group

STAPLEHURST COMMUNITY EVENTS GROUP, (FORMERLY STAPLEHURST CARNIVAL & FETE), HAVE BEEN PUTTING ON EVENTS FOR ALMOST 60 YEARS AND WE WANT TO CONTINUE DOING THAT, **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP.**

It is with great sadness that the Staplehurst Community Events Group have made the very difficult decision to cancel the Summer Fete this year due to lack of new committee members and helpers. This annual event is something that, as a group, we look forward to organising for the whole community and it also gives local groups the opportunity to raise much needed funds. We have not taken this decision lightly, but we cannot organise such an event with the few committee members we have at the present time. Hopefully we will be able to go ahead with the event again next year if new committee members and helpers come forward.

We aim to do a Christmas event at the beginning of December, but again this will depend on new committee members and helpers coming forward.

If you would like to join our committee or go on our helpers list then please contact us on:

Facebook – Staplehurst Community Events Group

Email – [Staplehursteventsgroup@gmail.com](mailto:Staplehursteventsgroup@gmail.com)

Please leave a short message with your name and telephone number and we will get back to you.

## Staplehurst Free Church – The year in review - 2023

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

- Mondays – Debt Advice Centre, Men's Walking Group, Signing Group, SFC Choir
- Tuesdays – Friends Together, Warm Welcome Space, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off site)
- Wednesdays – Leadership Meeting, Prayer Meeting, Community Fridge, Home Groups (on and off site)
- Thursdays – FreeBees, Community Fridge, Mixed Badminton,
- Fridays – Pastoral Care Meeting, Interest Group, Ladies Badminton, 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. Online broadcasting has also been maintained.
- The 'Signing Group' continues to be held periodically on Monday afternoons. These sessions help people develop their sign language skills in an informal and encouraging setting.
- The Community Fridge continues to see increased numbers of visitors due to the 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 general 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.
- The Winter Warm Room became the Warm Welcome Space opening up our premises to local people and to provided warmth, company and refreshments. During the coldest months hot soup and rolls were also provided.
- A second multi-day 'Walk Through the Bible' educational event was organised in September following the success of the initial event last year.
- 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.
- We are continuing with 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 Christmas music event and a Christmas Day lunch. Further events are planned for the coming year.
- Finally in November of 2023 the church members elected a new Church Leader, Peter Brook who took up his role on 1st December.

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. In addition, the Church once again supported and acted as a "dropping off point" for shoeboxes filled with toys as part of Samaritan Purse's Operation Christmas Child Appeal. Rent-free office space and funding support was also provided to Staplehurst's Debt Advice Centre.

## Staplehurst Community Centre

At last, it seems the weather is improving, the sun is shining and the birds are singing!

Our volunteer / trustees are continuing the move forward to improve facilities at the Centre, moving forward with the plans to improve access between the 3 halls.

Its taking careful planning to ensure that making these improvements are done in a number of phases to ensure minimal disruption to our regular hires.

We continue to have our regular classes of Kick boxing, Adult Ed Art classes, dance classes, Yoga, Pilates and the ELS toddlers' group, as well as the monthly Market and Sarah's Sound therapy. We also have availability for conferences or parties.

Once again, a big thank you to our volunteers working hard, behind the scenes making things happen. If you have some spare to 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)

## Staplehurst Emergency Help Team

Staplehurst Emergency Help Team has recently been reformed. We are taking action to improve the community's ability to help itself and the Emergency Services in a crisis.

SEHT is a voluntary body working in partnership with the appropriate responders and supported by Staplehurst Parish Council.

Taking guidance from the Kent Resilience Forum and Communities Prepared we have a number of members trained in areas of interest to them i.e. Flood Wardens, Snow Wardens, Utilities Coordinators, Fire Marshals, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Welfare etc.

Since October 2023 SEHT has attended 12 incidents, some of which have been a direct call out from Kent Police. Our chainsaw operator has been especially busy with the number of storms of recent and our Welfare team with bottled water distribution.

SEHT needs volunteers, out at incidents, based at welfare centres, assisting the committee and/or fundraising – we have room for all.

[Chair@SEHT.org.uk](mailto:Chair@SEHT.org.uk)

<http://seht.org.uk>

or find us on Facebook

## Staplehurst Library User Group

Contact: Malcolm Buller

The Library User Group, which comprises local residents who use our Library, and Parish Councillors, has continued to meet regularly. Following the excitement of the Golden Jubilee celebrations for Staplehurst Library in 2022 and 2023, we have focused on ways to encourage increased use of the library and on liaison with Kent Libraries. The comment by the deputy leader of Kent County Council in January 2024 that Kent has more libraries than it needs raised a good deal of concern in Staplehurst. While we were assured that there were no immediate plans to dispose of Staplehurst Library, the need to demonstrate the value of the library to our community is more important than ever.

The Poetry Group continues to meet in the library, with a small but enthusiastic group reading poetry and writing their own verse.

## Staplehurst Scout Group

The highlight of the year for us has been the continuing growth of our youngest groups, Beavers and Squirrels. The Staplehurst Squirrel Drey opened just over a year ago and we have had lots of fun in our drey learning fun skills, making lots of new friends and learning how to be independent. We have enjoyed so many different exciting activities including den building, arts and craft, dancing and singing action songs and our favourite was learning about all the superheroes that we have in Staplehurst village from Doctors to Nurses, to vets and food shops, to the chemist and the churches.

We have been on a few trips over the past year, including trips to the Pantomime, Leeds castle, Lower Grange farm for the Go NUTS event. In March we took part in the Kent Squirrels get-together at Rare Breeds and we enjoyed a pirate day camp, dressing up and being pirates for the day which was so much fun! The Squirrels are looking forward to their very first squirrel sleepover this month. Over the past year the squirrels have earned over 300 Badges and been awarded 5 Chief Acorn awards. The highest award for a Squirrel Scout.

The Staplehurst Beavers is growing in numbers fast and we have now got back up to 20! We run lots of amazing activities that help our Beavers grow, learn new skills and most of all, have lots of fun! Over the past 12 months the Beavers have taken part in lots of fun challenges that help the Beavers step out of their comfort zones. We had a visit from Su from U CAN TOO. Su taught us about different types of technology and how to do coding. We learned how to programme LED lights and make different light patterns. We all got to use a laptop each which was amazing for such a big group of Beavers.

The Beavers have been on a few trips over the past year – Trip to Buttercups Goat sanitary, The Pantomime and to the Free Church and Community Fridge. We took our Beavers to the Lower Grange Farm Spooky Halloween Event where we got to do archery, rock climbing, circus skills and the cave bus. This time, Lower Grange had a special visitor who brought along snakes, spiders, lizards, and other creepy crawlies. Some of us were brave and held some of them!

Over the past year, Beavers have been awarded around 400 activity and Staged badges plus 15 Remembrance parade badges, 14 St. George's day parade badges and 12 Bronze award badges! This is the highest award a Beaver can get. Very impressive!

What a busy year the Cubs have had with all the adventures they have been on, the new friendships that have been formed and the skills for life that they have learnt. This would not have been possible without the hard work of all the leaders and other volunteers that support the Cubs. Over the last year Cubs in Staplehurst have taken part in a camp with the Scouts, learnt how to play many new games, built creations out of junk and even exploded volcanoes. They've also written letters to a Cub pack in New Zealand and enjoyed making Christmas crafts and enjoying a Christmas party. We have had lots more cubs, awarded with their Chief Scout Silver Award as they moved up to Scouts this is the highest award that can be gained whilst in the Cubs. Thank you to all the Cubs who continue to join us week after week, learning new skills and making new memories.

Our oldest age group, the Scouts joined Eagle Cubs at Camp last summer, cooking on fires and had great fun building Trebuchets and thoroughly enjoyed quad biking. The Troop is working

together to extend the skills we want to learn and have enjoyed busy evenings of activities and guests to our troop meetings. We are busy planning activities for our summer camp and have been well represented at both the Village's Remembrance Day parade & the District St Georges' parade.

The Scout Group is entirely dependent on the money we receive from 'Subs' from our members and other fund-raising activities that we undertake. We are very proud that right through these times of high inflation and cost of living pressures, we have frozen 'subs' and in fact I can't remember the last time we raised them! In addition to the fund raising, we do to keep 'subs' as low as we can, we are also immensely proud that we have supported other charities and made donations to the KSS air Ambulance, the community fridge, Young Minds and Make a Wish UK and Porchlight in the past year. We were very excited to be awarded a donation of £5,000 from the Post Code Lottery Millionaire Street funding programme. All of this we intend to use on events, trips, camps and ensuring more fun for all our members.

We like to help and support events in the village whenever we can and this year, we will again be providing facilities and tea and coffees and bacon and sausage rolls for those attending and watching the Whites Landscaping Staplehurst 5 & 10k run. It has been our honour to play host to the Men's Shed whilst the Youth Centre building has been undergoing refurbishment.

And to finish, we are always in need of finding new leaders and helpers so if you would like to get involved in any of our sections, even on a part-time basis, please get in touch by calling 07956 202120 anytime. One constant theme for us at Staplehurst Scouts is that the demand to join scouting never diminishes - so please come and help and get involved in local scouting. Children can join Cubs and Scouts without having been a Beaver so it's never too late for children to come and join us. We do need more adult helpers and leaders though. Being involved in Scouting doesn't have to be a weekly commitment, we have various roles within the Scout Group that people can get involved with from hands-on roles within the sections, to administration roles. We are looking for a new Chair and Treasurer so if you think this is something you can help us with, please get in touch. To find out more please feel free to come along to our own AGM on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July starting at 7:30pm in the Scout Centre in Nicholson Walk, off Crowther Close.

Bill Best

Chair, Staplehurst Scout Group. [chair@staplehurstscouts.org.uk](mailto:chair@staplehurstscouts.org.uk)

[www.staplehurstscouts.org.uk](http://www.staplehurstscouts.org.uk)

## Staplehurst Trefoil Guild

Our Walking Group has been to Mote Park, Leeds Castle, Sissinghurst Castle and footpaths around the village.

The Craft Group made 400 "Friendship Bags" for the LaSER (London and South East Region) annual meeting at Tonbridge School. Also a quilt has been sewn for Project LINUS UK, a charity for children with long term illnesses. Individual members were motivated to make goods for sale in the Making Miracles shop in the Chequers Mall to raise funds for families who have lost a baby, so that they can have quality counselling.

Our monthly meetings have embraced hearing about the projects of the Greener Staplehurst Group and the amazing work of Hypo Hounds who are trained to support children with Type 1 Brittle Diabetes. Naturally we had a Coronation celebration tea.

We have packed Christmas boxes for Poland, played Scrabble, assembled as many Christmas goods as we could for the Marden Food Bank and had a time when we could explain what good books we had read.

This year's outing was to an eclectic garden at Goddards Green in Cranbrook.

The Unicorn hosted our delicious Christmas Lunch. We celebrated 80 years of Trefoil by a giant event on Folkestone Leas called "Red Around the Coast".

This is a guild of ladies who have all had some connection with Brownies, Guides, Rangers and Girl Guiding. We meet once a month at the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre.

What an active and busy group we are. If you are new to the village you might like to join us.

Pam Payne

## Village Golf Club

Village Golf Club has had another very successful year and has made significant improvements to the infrastructure of the club. We finished the year with a record number of members, which is an amazing achievement. As the overriding aim of the club is to make golf affordable to all we were delighted that we were able to avoid increasing membership fees again this year and a full adult membership for unlimited golf is still less than £2.50 per week.

Our groundsman John Gower, continues to do a fantastic job and the course, despite the dreadfully wet spring, is in amazing condition.

Many thanks must go to the parish council who supported us with Section 106 monies which enabled us to install a new toilet container and a cesspit which were so very much needed. We are also very grateful to Maidstone Leisure Trust who not only supported us with a contribution towards the drainage work that we undertook in the autumn but they also made a donation, alongside The Playing Fields Association and KCC Capital Grant for Sport to help us to replace the machinery storage container which was beyond repair. These three projects have really helped to secure the clubs long term future as the infrastructure of the club is something we cannot improve by volunteer labour alone.

Village Golf is an outstanding example of how voluntary work can support a community and my sincere thanks go to the committee members, all the members who support the club's working parties and to the Community Payback teams who help to make such a difference to the sporting opportunities of local people.

We are always looking to attract new committee members so if you think you could help us, please do get in touch - [admin@villagegolf.org.uk](mailto:admin@villagegolf.org.uk)

Annette Scott



## Staplehurst United Reformed Church

Staplehurst United Reformed Church continues to hold worship services at 10.30 on a Sunday morning and these are now live streamed enabling people who are unwell or on holiday to continue to worship with us. We share our minister, 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 held monthly evening zoom communion services during the winter – one positive development that came from the Covid epidemic.

We have held 3 coffee and gift mornings during the year, supporting various charities including Maidstone Homeless Care, HiKent and Dandelion Time 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'.

During the year we had some remedial work done on our windows and this was made possible due to support from Southern Synod, Newlyn Trust, The Staplehurst Community Events Group and Kent Association of Churches.

Our carer and toddler group on a Tuesday morning continues to thrive. We have again been part of the village initiative for 'Warm Welcome Space' and our building has been open on a Thursday for soup, games and company.

We are active participants in Churches Together in Staplehurst and the World Day of Prayer service was held at our church in March.

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

We welcome anyone to come along and join us.

Alison Alderson

Church Secretary

## Weald of Kent Rotary Club

Rotary is a world-wide organisation with 1.4 million members. The Rotary Foundation helps Rotary members to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace by improving health, providing quality education, improving the environment, and alleviating poverty.

Locally the Weald of Kent Rotary is a mixed group of people who meet every 2 weeks at the Who'd a Thought It pub at Grafty Green and enjoy a meal together.

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the Month Meal + Business Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month Meal + Speaker

5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month Guest Night (Meal + Speaker)

Over the years we have become firm friends, we enjoy each other's company and we are all committed to putting something back into our own Community in the Weald of Kent.

In the past 12 months you could have seen us at May Day, Apple Day (Headcorn & Lenham), organising a Christmas Concert, putting up the Christmas tree lights on 115 trees in Headcorn, carrying out the weekly Food Bank delivery on behalf of the church, organising Recycle and collecting for Tools with a Mission at Headcorn and Staplehurst as well as litter picking in Headcorn and Harrietsham.

Our flagship event is the **North Downs Walk**. Last year 400 walkers and 60 volunteers raised a total of £27,000 - £17,000 for Cancer Research and £10,000 spread across 25 local charities selected by the walkers. You could join us this year on 9<sup>th</sup> June starting out at Harrietsham Village Hall. It is not just another walk; it is a family day out with a free ploughman's lunch and Strawberries and cream to follow plus two bands to keep you entertained.

All of this is achieved by a small team of 17 members. I am pleased to report that this year our female membership is up by 50%. As we move into 2025 (our 50<sup>th</sup> year) our president will be Jean Shrubbs and she has challenged us to achieve 50 community projects during the year – watch this space. For a small team we achieve a lot, raising some £35,000 for various charities. Think what it could be if you were to join us.

As well as raising money, we have our own charity the **Mike Collingwood Memorial Fund** which provides financial support to individuals under 25 setting out to develop themselves. Recent funding has included:

- Supporting 9 scouts attending the World Scout Jamboree in South Korea.
- A gymnast and two trampolinists in their quest to become members of the UK team.
- A potential junior Kent Cricketer on a cricketing tour to Sri Lanka
- A talented computer scientist building a quadcopter
- A veterinary graduate gaining 2 months experience in South Africa
- Camping equipment for a D of E Gold Award expedition
- Numerous world expeditions to Botswana, Ghana, Eswatini, Morocco and South Africa.

If you would like to join us on any of our activities, submitting an application to MCMF or thinking of becoming a member information can be found at [www.wealdofKent.rotary.org.uk](http://www.wealdofKent.rotary.org.uk)

## WI report

After our Centenary year in 2022, 2023 was a year when we were able to consolidate into a normal programme of events (whatever that may be!). We are a friendly and sociable WI, and love to take up whatever opportunities may offer, on top of attending our regular evening meetings.

We had an eclectic series of talks over the year. These encompassed Victims' Voice by the Police and Crime Commissioner: Matthew Scott (pictured with us below); Sloe Seduction (with samples of delicious sloe chocolates); Staplehurst's own Ladies Choir, giving us a delightful programme of music and Buttercups and Goats, all about the goat sanctuary in Boughton Monchelsea to name just a few.

Additionally we had some really good social events with our Christmas party, and our Christmas lunch, our garden party, in a member's beautiful garden and a craft and social tea in August. In September we put on our regular Produce Show, where members were able to display the results of their skills (or otherwise!) at cooking, gardening and crafts. This was well supported and the majority of us felt able to enter at least one class, so there was a wonderful collective display.

We have started a regular walking group, taking in some fresh air – and generally ending the walk with a coffee. We also arranged a Walk the World event in April, where (in concert with many other WI's across the country) we arranged a sponsored walk in aid of the WI charity (Associated Country Women of the World). We ended this with coffee and cake, served in the West Hall, by a couple of Members' husbands. Well you do need to replenish energy levels after a walk!

We have also joined with 6 other local WIs (we call ourselves the Magnificent Seven) to explore options of undertaking outings or talks which can be too expensive for a single WI. This also gives us the opportunity of joining with like-minded women from other communities, picking up new ideas, and widening our social circle.

In March a group of us attended the West Kent Federation AGM in the Assembly Hall in Tunbridge Wells. The two invited speakers were absolutely first class: Dr Annie Grey (regular on the Kitchen Cabinet on Radio 4, food adviser to Call the Midwife and Downton Abbey) spoke as a food historian, with great gusto and humour. Then we had Linsey Barrell aka Ms Cherry Bombe on burlesque. She was well dressed for the part, giving a hilarious talk, and getting the whole audience to its feet at the end to join her in performing a session of bump and grind.

Apart from our own meetings we got involved in other community activity, like serving teas and coffees at the Village Clean Up in October, taking part in fund-raising quizzes (not always successfully, but that doesn't dim our enthusiasm!) and collecting foodstuffs and toiletries for local foodbanks.

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)