

STAPLEHURST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025

15th May 2026 7.30pm

Group Reports



COMMUNITY HUB AFTERNOON TEA CLUB (MONDAY CHAT CLUB)

Our members currently meet Monday afternoons from 2pm to 4pm, although we changed the time from 1:30pm to 3:30pm when the clocks changed so that Members could take into account the night's drawing in and arrive back home safely in the light.

We are a self-funding Group whose members enjoy an afternoon of games, quizzes, tea/coffee, biscuits, cake and of course a raffle!

Over the past year we have been lucky enough to have enjoyed various forms of entertainment including Singers, Musicians and some interesting Speakers which included a visit from a Guide Dog Trainer, Jo, who brought her Guide Dog in training Orwell and Peter Benson who spoke about his life in the Film Industry to name a few.

Valentine's day was celebrated with a special afternoon tea and each Member took home a lovely red rose and Easter saw everyone going home with an Easter Egg.

Our members also enjoyed an Afternoon Tea on a visit to Hawkhurst Fish Farm and December we held our Christmas Lunch at the King's Head.

This year, 2026, the Group Celebrates our 15th Anniversary which was originally formed by Rita Game which has been going strong ever since and several events are already being planned.

COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DEBT ADVICE REPORT

The last year in the Debt Advice Centre has been fairly quiet. Despite the news being full of information about families struggling to pay bills, buy food or cover their debts, we have seen a decrease in the number of clients.

In 2025 we completed the move from being an independent centre, supported by the churches of Staplehurst, to being a ministry of Staplehurst Free Church. In practice this has meant very little change, the main one being that our bills are now paid by the church treasurer and we are watched over by the church trustees.

Although a small, local debt advice centre, we are part of a nationwide group of centres belonging to Community Money Advice. CMA have been operating for almost 30 years, helping churches and community organisations to give debt advice in a way that is efficient, compassionate and legal. Sadly, CMA have been struggling financially and after much prayer and discussion have taken the step to join forces with CAP – Christians Against Poverty – another charity that has been offering debt advice through churches for 30 years. This merge, whilst making a stronger foundation, has inevitably brought an amount of uncertainty about the future and how things may change. We are open to see what happens next as we continue as part of the 'CAP group'. Our manager is attending an online conference at the end of April where the matter will, no doubt, be discussed and reassurance given.



Over the past 12 months, the Staplehurst Emergency Help Team (SEHT) has continued to strengthen its role as a volunteer-led community resilience and emergency response group supporting Staplehurst and the surrounding rural area.

The year's most significant challenge came during the major water supply disruption affecting Kent and Sussex in January. SEHT volunteers quickly established and operated an emergency bottled water distribution point in Staplehurst to support local residents affected by the outage.

Within a very short period, volunteers coordinated supplies, organised deliveries, and supported vulnerable residents unable to leave their homes. Over the course of three days, approximately 54 pallets of bottled water — equating to more than 30,000 bottles — were sourced, handled, and distributed with the support of volunteers and partner organisations. The response demonstrated the importance of local community resilience and the value of having trained volunteers able to respond rapidly during emergencies.

Alongside emergency response work, SEHT has continued supporting community events and local activities throughout the year. In December, volunteers assisted with the successful "Light It Up!" Tractor Parade, helping provide traffic management, temporary road closures, public safety support, and operational communications during the event. The parade brought together local residents, businesses, and the farming community for a well-supported festive celebration, and SEHT was pleased to assist organisers in helping the evening run safely and smoothly.

The group has also continued running its popular community boot fairs, which have proved to be a successful fundraising opportunity for SEHT while also providing a valued local community event. Funds raised through the boot fairs help support the purchase of equipment, training, communications, and operational resources needed to maintain the group's emergency response capability.

SEHT has also been supporting the development of the local parish clustering initiative, working alongside neighbouring communities to strengthen mutual support, communication, and resilience arrangements across the wider area. The initiative aims to improve cooperation between parishes during emergencies and major incidents, helping ensure communities can better support one another when local resources are stretched.

During the year, SEHT was also proud to receive recognition through a KALC Community Award, highlighting the dedication, commitment, and hard work of the group's volunteers in supporting the local community and strengthening resilience within Staplehurst.

The group has continued developing its operational capability and preparedness through volunteer recruitment, training, planning, and partnership working. This has included improving emergency

communications, supporting first aid and responder training opportunities, and strengthening coordination arrangements for severe weather incidents, utility outages, flooding, and other emergencies that may affect the community.

SEHT continues to work closely with partner organisations including Maidstone Borough Council Emergency Planning, the Kent & Medway Resilience Forum, the Kent Voluntary Sector Emergency Group, and SE Kent RAYNET to improve local resilience and emergency response arrangements.

SEHT would like to thank all volunteers, partner organisations, Staplehurst Parish Council, local businesses, and residents for their continued support over the last year.

STAPLEHURST FOOTPATH GROUP REPORT 2025-2026

Staplehurst Footpath Group has seen steady growth over the past year, with membership up to over thirty members.

In total, forty-five individuals managed to walk a total of 728 miles over fourteen walks. These comprised our regular monthly walk on the second Sunday plus an evening walk in June for the longest day and a morning walk before Christmas for the shortest day, with appropriate refreshment afterwards!

The weather has been kinder for walking in the past year, although the shortest day and February walks saw their fair share of the notorious Staplehurst mud.

The committee is currently working on plans for our Golden Jubilee in 2027, including recreating the original walk in February and a few special activities.

New members or casual walkers are always welcome, although we do not permit dogs on our walks as we often pass through farmland with animals.

Peter Ashby

Chairman, Staplehurst Footpath Group

STAPLEHURST FREE CHURCH – THE YEAR IN REVIEW - 2025

In 2025 we celebrated 56th year as Staplehurst's community church.

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 with optional table tennis, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off site)
- Wednesdays – Prayer Meeting, Community Fridge, Home Groups (on site)
- Thursdays – Free Bees, 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 120 regular attendees and several new families attending. Online broadcasting has also been maintained with over 2000 views in the year.
- The Community Fridge is now open 4 times per week and has seen almost 6000 visits in 2025. The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact people locally. As well as providing food we have started making school uniform available. We have also donated lots of clothes, blankets and shoes to the Salvation Army and other homelessness charities. Our busiest month of the year was August which we believe is related to the school holidays.
- Our Tuesday afternoon Warm Room has gone from strength to strength. We see up to 40 people each week for warmth, company and refreshments. During the coldest months free hot soup and rolls are also provided. Several people are now playing table tennis each week during this activity.
- The Free Bees 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 can 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 one time we have up to 66 children registered with us.
- Our Youth24 sessions provide an interactive fun evening for young people of secondary school age. We have had four new joiners in the year. The Young people also led two services during the year.
- Our Church Leader, Peter Brook has increased his hours and will now work full time hours in the coming year.
- Our solar panels and back up batteries are proving to be very beneficial. Last year our energy bill was less than a quarter of the cost that it was during the high prices following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We are using the savings to reinvest in our community activities.

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 Church are a fund-body who raise funds for the maintenance restoration and improvements to the Church building. We hold several fund-raising events throughout the year.

We usually start the year with a very popular Brain Game. This is tremendous fun; we are normally at full compacity with 10 teams of six members testing their knowledge on a wide variety of topics. Our events usually have an element of food and often drink, and in the summer, we did a Pimm's and croquet afternoon and then a cream tea, watching gauge one engines run.

In September we held a Lego Festival and invited people to display their Lego builds. Whether it be their own creation or a Lego kit, all were welcomed. The ages of exhibitors went from 4 to over 70. It seems once hooked by Lego you never grow out of it

Throw in coffee, cakes and lunch and you have a very enjoyable occasion. So good in fact we will do it again this year.

To end the year, we did a Christmas Carol afternoon with mulled wine and mince pies. We sang a good number of Carols and had a couple of light hearted Christmas themed quizzes.

This year's program is looking good with a croquet afternoon, a concert, and a Lego Festival already in the planning. If you would like to know more about do look at our web page.

<https://allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk>friends>

Val Wallis Chair Friends of All Saints



Since taking over as District Commissioner for Staplehurst just before the last parish meeting I have got to know the dedicated team of 25 volunteers who run and support Girlguiding Staplehurst giving 75 girls and young women the chance to grow in confidence and new develop skills, all whilst having fun and making new friends. We currently have a thriving rainbow unit, 2 Brownie units and a combined Guide and Rainger units with most units being at capacity and offering a wide range of activities at their weekly meetings

Highlights of the year include a trip to Mayhem an event organised by London and South East Region when 2000 girls and their leaders descended on the showground at Ardingly for an amazing day of activities fortunately the sun shone. Closer to home we held a Lilo and Stitch film afternoon. In September we celebrated our members and volunteers at our AGM. One Sunday morning the Rainbows and Brownies caught the train to Headcorn and then hiked back to Staplehurst. Not to be out done in the walking stakes the Guides went on a much longer hike and took part in Invicta challenge a county event where groups of girls hike between incidents, they may not have won but they rose to the challenge

We once again paraded on Remembrance Sunday. Just before Christmas Doreen Braganza and myself attended an afternoon tea laid on by region for those who had gained awards within the last year – Doreen having achieved 60 years of service, myself only half that amount. We joined with units from Cranbrook and Hawkhurst had a not quite New Year Eve party on the 30th December toasting the new year with fizzy drinks. We joined with Teise and Hawkhurst units again in February to celebrate the centenary of World Thinking Day. The Rainbows had a fun "winter wonderland" day with other local Rainbows

As well as the units for girls we have a thriving trefoil guild who meet in Staplehurst offering friendship. The Kathie Lamb Centre management committee are central to Girlguiding in Staplehurst working hard keeping the centre up to standard for the units that meet there and external hires. We are looking forwards to having some dedicated outdoor space once the new lease is finalised. As all voluntary organisations are we new volunteers would be most welcome. In particular we are in search of a bookings secretary for the Kathie Lamb Centre. For further information of what this predominately admin role entails please contact

district.commissioner@staplehurstguiding.org.uk

HI KENT – SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, HAVE HEARING LOSS OR TINNITUS IN KENT

HI Kent's main aim is to help people to live well with Deafness, Hearing Loss or Tinnitus. The impact of these issues is greatly underestimated and can be extremely isolating. Age related hearing loss, if not corrected, contributes to cognitive decline and can cause or worsen dementia. We encourage people to get their hearing tested and point them in the right direction to get the help and support they need either from ourselves or other organisations.

Kent County Council underpin all of our work by providing around 40% of our funding. Specifically this funds our information, advice and guidance service as well as assessments of need and free provision of assistive equipment. Equipment not available for free provision can be purchased privately and can be demonstrated at our centres in Maidstone and Canterbury.

Other free services include:

Hearing Aid Maintenance service which is part funded by the NHS providing clinics across Kent. These clinics are run by our trained volunteers and we see around 30,000 people each year and help them to get the most out of their NHS hearing aids.

Technical Support service to help people get the best out of today's technology. We advise on accessories that work with different types of hearing aids and can help people download Apps and connect the aids to their mobile phone to stream audio and calls.

Support is provided via our groups – Tinnitus Groups to bring people together who are struggling to cope with persistent tinnitus so they can meet other people, learn coping skills and hear useful advice. Social Groups for people who have hearing loss to meet others and find mutual support and understanding. We also teach Lipreading skills so people learn to follow conversation by studying lip patterns and gain the confidence to speak up about their hearing loss.

Chargeable services include:

British Sign Language courses – Taster courses and Signature Levels 1 and 2 in partnership with Kent Adult Education.

Deaf Awareness Training – for organisations to give them a better of understanding of how best to help their customers/clients/employees with Deafness, Hearing Loss or Tinnitus.

Ear Care Services – ear checks, advice and microsuction provided by our trained member of staff based at our Canterbury centre.

Fundraising:

We were very grateful to Abigail Reader from Staplehurst for running the London Marathon for us and raising £3,334 last year. Without the help of people like Abigail, grant making organisations and supporters we would struggle to deliver the services that are not covered by our contracts with Kent County Council and the NHS.

Hi Kent was started in 1986 so in 2026 we mark our 40th birthday! We have a series of events to celebrate this:

Fundraising Meal at Frederics in Maidstone on 12th May

Brissenden Family Vineyard, East Sutton Wine Tasting Tour on 27th June

Golf Day at The London Beach Golf Club, St Michaels, Tenterden on 12th July

And more yet to be announced!

Please come along to an event if you can help us or get in touch if we can help you!

STAPLEHURST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

REPORT TO STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL 2026

The Society goes from strength to strength!

Membership continues to grow, to the point where our monthly meetings have been so well attended that we have had to move to the North Hall of the Community Centre, having outgrown the South!

For 9 months of the year, we have interesting guest speakers covering a range of topics and for two months in the summer we have a summer BBQ and a members' garden safari ending with a social get together and the inevitable tea and cakes, ending the year with our AGM and Christmas party. We have an annual outing to a garden of interest and have just piloted a social coffee morning which proved very successful. We have also negotiated a Spring discount day with a local garden centre, the benefit of which can easily compensate for the annual subscription!

Of particular note is that our guest speakers have commented that they find our society is warm and welcoming and that they are delighted to have such a large audience whilst a number of other societies that they have visited have poor attendances or have actually closed. New members have commented that they feel welcome from the beginning and are enjoying their membership. We are so delighted with that.

The Society is in a healthy position financially. This is thanks to the various fund-raising activities which we promote but which depend upon lots of volunteers, whether it be plants for and the manning of stalls for our plant sale, the cakes etc for the catering at our shows, coupled with the staffing of the counter, the quiz and many other things as well. This all means that our subs remain minimal and we have great speakers at our talks and can subsidise our trips out.

Committee members have enthusiasm and come up with new ideas which makes for a progressive society which I believe is why more people are joining and staying!

Alan Pett, Chairman

April 2026

INTEREST GROUP

We have been delighted to welcome new residents during this year to join in our varied programme of activities. We meet in the café area of Staplehurst Free Church for a 10am start each Friday. Because we make a contribution to the church and provide free refreshments and entertainment, we ask for just a £1 contribution when attending. Could you find new friends, get coffee or tea and biscuits for less anywhere else, let alone be stimulated with fun and laughter, excellent speakers or things to discuss and puzzle over? Members suggest ideas for each programme and fresh thoughts are particularly welcome as we have been in existence for twenty-four years now. Come and join us if you have a free Friday morning.

STAPLEHURST LIBRARY USER GROUP

There are eight members of SLUG who meet five or six times each year to ensure the views of readers in our parish are represented. We have fostered good relationships with the area librarian who also attends our Saturday morning meetings. Our aim is to support our excellent staff and encourage the greater use of the wonderful resources a modern library can offer. It is great to see very young children eager to explore the range of picture books and grow into having a lifelong interest in the printed word. For adults too there is the weekly Knit and Natter Group or monthly Reading Club and Poetry Group. Do ask the helpful staff for more details. We would like to see a Lego Club operating here as it does in other venues so if you are an adult who could volunteer to help play and supervise one, the staff would be very pleased to hear from you.

STAPLEHURST MEN'S SHED REPORT FOR THE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT SPRING 2026.

The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Martin Round, visited us in January. He had met some of our members while they were promoting the Men's Shed at a special Health & Wellbeing theme event running alongside a Repair Café meeting in Maidstone.

Martin is very interested in social groups, especially those involving men and had chosen to spotlight mental health as part of his chosen charities and initiatives as mayor.

We explained how Men's Sheds began as community-based workshop spaces designed to improve mental health, reduce loneliness, and combat isolation in men, particularly post-retirement. They're about social connections and friendship building, sharing skills and knowledge.

For some Sheds that means solely on the practical aspect, at Staplehurst it is much more about the social side. 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. This ethos was established by Don Elliot, who died in 2025, founder of the Shed with Stan Twort in 2017, and then strongly embraced by Nigel Sheeran as the first leader.

The Staplehurst Men's Shed welcomes men of all ages from 18 years onwards. We are open every Thursday morning between 10am and noon in the Youth Club building.

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

Again, we have only carried out a few projects in the past year in part due to the fitness (age) 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.

STAPLEHURST MONARCHS' YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB

This season we have 22 teams ranging in age from U8s to a Saturday Men's team which includes 6 girls' teams at U8s, U10s, U11s (x2), U12s and U15s. We are also running 2 age groups of development football for U6s and U7s who are known as 'Mini Monarchs' via our partner 'Football Five Star'.

We are pleased to say that a number of our older players are playing for the senior club's U23s this season, a continuation on previous seasons. We also have a large number of girls who have progressed to this season's Women's team.

We have also won a number of trophies in the year and are well placed for more in the current season. The 'icing on the cake' for a club who's policy is to provide 'sports for all'.

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.

Jubilee Sports Field still suffers from drainage problems and we have been unable to play there in January and February of this year. The installation of a floodlit 3G pitch will make a huge difference to our club as we have to travel far and wide to find suitable training facilities during the winter months and should enable weekend matches to be played in the village throughout the season.

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 Committee.

Lee Seal (Staplehurst Monarchs Youth FC – Club Secretary)

March 2026

PADDOCK WOOD & DISTRICT LIONS CLUB – ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



We are part of Lions Clubs International, a global network of volunteers working to support communities around the world. The Paddock Wood & District Lions Club is a volunteer led charity that has been supporting local communities since 1982. While our name reflects our origins, our work has always extended far beyond Paddock Wood. Today, we actively serve a wide rural area including Brenchley, Collier Street, East Peckham, Five Oak Green, Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Marden, Matfield, Staplehurst and Yalding, with members living across these communities.

A Year of Supporting Our Communities

Over the past year, our focus has remained simple. We bring people together, raise funds, and provide practical support across our district.

Our events continue to act as a cornerstone for community life. From the Carnival Weekend and Rockin' in the Rec, to the East Peckham 10K and our Santa's Sleigh runs through villages such as Marden, and East Peckham, these moments are about far more than fundraising. They create connection, shared experiences, and a sense of community across our villages.

Alongside this, much of our work happens more quietly. We have supported foodbanks in Marden and

Staplehurst, contributed to the East Peckham Community Fridge, provided grants to Staplehurst Emergency Help Team, and helped families across the district with essentials such as school uniforms and household items. We have also supported local youth initiatives, including Laddingford Primary School Challenger Troop. This breadth of support reflects something we are keen to emphasise. Our work is not centred on one town, but spread across many communities throughout the district, responding wherever the need arises.

Who We Are

We are a group of local people who give what time we can. Some of us are long standing members, others are newer, but we all share a common aim to help others and contribute positively to the communities we live in.

We meet monthly to discuss local needs and plan activities, and we balance our volunteering with social events that help keep the club welcoming and sustainable.

Looking Forward: Working Together

One of our ongoing challenges is awareness. Despite working across a wide area, there is still a common perception that we are primarily a Paddock Wood organisation. This can make it harder to reach people and communities who may benefit from support, or who may wish to get involved.

We see local councils as key partners in helping to change this perception and improve awareness across all our communities. By working together and sharing information, we can ensure that residents across all our villages are aware of the support available and the opportunities to be part of it.

We are also always looking to grow our membership so that it better reflects the communities we serve.

In Closing

We are proud of what has been achieved over the past year, but equally aware that there is more we can do, particularly by strengthening connections across the whole district.

We welcome continued dialogue with local councils, community groups and residents, and we are always open to hearing where support may be needed.

For more information, please visit:

<https://paddockwoodlions.co.uk/> or contact:

enquiries@paddockwoodlions.co.uk



Staplehurst Community Events Group (SCEG) continues to work to promote inclusive events and activities that enhance village life and bring people together across the Staplehurst community.

Over the past year, SCEG has faced several challenges which have affected our ability to deliver some of our usual events. We were unable to arrange certain longstanding activities, including the Summer Fair in 2025 due to circumstances beyond our control. Instead, we collaborated and supported the Scouts with their 'pop up' museum 10th/11th May, helped celebrate VE day and volunteered our help at the School's Summer Fete – thus ensuring we remained actively involved in our community even though we were not in a position to have lead events directly ourselves.

The 2025 5k/10k run was a great success, and we are pleased that it remains in the calendar and will return on Sunday 7th June 2026. This event is organised and promoted with NE Timing, a local company.

Sadly, as our committee no longer have a Lions member amongst our group and as we, ourselves couldn't insure the event, we were sadly unable to take the Santa Sleigh around the village at Christmas. We were therefore delighted to attend the Artisan Food and Craft Market at Staplehurst Community Centre on Sunday 14 December 2025 and Father Christmas was, instead, in his Grotto to greet many local children. We were glad to make this a free to activity although donations were warmly welcomed to help support future events.

Looking ahead for the remainder of 2026, we are excited to be preparing for the Summer Fair at Surrenden Field on 27 June, in collaboration with Staplehurst School PTA. We have been really pleased with the response from local groups and look forward to delivering an enjoyable afternoon

for residents while also supporting the school and other local organisations. We invite any local groups, organisations and businesses interested in having a stall to please get in touch.

As last year proved very popular, we will again be at the Village Centre on the 13th December 2026 at the Artisan Market with Santa, his elves and a Christmas Grotto.

A continuing challenge for SCEG is the shortage of volunteers. We are in real need of additional support, both from people willing to help at events and from those able to join the committee and assist with planning. The time commitment can be flexible, and any contribution is greatly appreciated. Without more volunteers, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain key events for the village.

We remain committed to serving the community and would welcome support from anyone who would like to help ensure these valued events can continue.

Funds raised at previous events have supported local groups and have included contributions to the winter warm hubs, football strips for one of the Monarchs teams, Christmas events for local groups etc.



The Staplehurst Scout Group creates adventure and learning for boys and girls in the village between 4 and 14 years old. The group has continued to grow and we are welcoming new scouters from families new to the village which we really enjoy doing. Our volunteer leaders do an incredible job in putting on a varied programme including learning new skills and educational field trips. We now have 80 young children enjoying everything we do, and it's impossible to fit everything we do into this report, so here is just a sample.

This year the Squirrel Scouts turn 5, the Beavers are 40 and Scout Cubs are 110 years old and still thriving. To celebrate the Squirrels will be set 5 challenges and the Beavers have already started their 40 challenges. They have just posted 40 birthday postcards to 40 different Beaver groups around the UK. We will end with a massive party!

Our Squirrels have been super busy over the past 12 months. Some of our Squirrels took part in our Jungle sleepover which is an early taste of camp life for a scout. Squirrels helped to prepare dinner, learnt how to set up the tents and how to make a bed for the night. So many new skills learnt. Mums and Dads will be proud! Squirrels have enjoyed lots of day trips, too many to them all here! Earning badges is an important part of scouting and our Squirrels highlight this year was the Circus Skills badge. Squirrels learnt how to spin plates, twirling, the Ring of Fire, and juggling. The Squirrels put all their new skills together and with the Beavers, put on a fantastic circus show for our parents and families.

During the spring of 2026 Squirrels took part in the Ruby Robin award. We learnt about different bird calls, how to attract birds to our garden and we made mug bird feeders and bird cakes to hang in our garden and the scout garden. We then spent an hour bird watching and kept a count of how many different birds we all spotted. Over the past 12 months we have handed out 6 Acorn awards, our top award!

The Beavers planned their own Community project for the year and built a bug hotel in the area the Scout Group use in the Wimpy Fields. The Beavers have learnt about cultivating wild life and how to encourage indigenous animals and plants to thrive. The Beavers summer camp had a Space theme this year. Beavers made flying rockets, rode Space buggies and chased an alien! The traditional summer campfire included singing Christmas songs! Beavers have also enjoyed a number of trips out including the 'Stickman Trail' at Bedgebury.

The Beavers took part in the Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award. This is the first time any section at Staplehurst Scout group has taken part to complete this very important badge. We had a visit from the Staplehurst Help and Emergency team who explained where the emergency meeting points are in our village and how they help our community in different types of situations. We ended this with a trip to the fire station and earned a very important new badge.

Eagle Cubs continue to grow, with 2 new adult leaders who previously were young leaders and one being a former Cub. Eagle cubs continue to provide a varied programme throughout the year and with the warmer weather coming the Cubs favourite activities are ready to make a comeback. The planning for summer camp continues with a theme we have never used before. Our Scout Troop is growing again nicely with a mix of boys and girls and learning craft skills and practising all the traditional scouting skills.

The Staplehurst Scout group is funded entirely by our members and the funds that we can raise in our community. Our costs never seem to stop rising but notwithstanding this the Group raised £3,750 for charitable causes and to help subsidise our own running costs. Most noteworthy is the £2,200 raised by the very many things that the Squirrels and Beavers did in the last 12 months. In the coming year the Beavers are planning a fancy-dress Walkathon to raise money for a local charity that the Beavers themselves will choose. Their aim is to beat the £1,400 raised in 2024 for Make A Wish UK!

If there is one thing we don't like, it's a waiting list for new joiners. To fix that we need 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. Try our 4-week challenge and get a taste for what it is all about.

I would like to thank parents and carers for continuing to send their children each week and for supporting us as a Scout Group in all that we try to do. My thanks also to my fellow trustees who do a lot of work behind the scenes and to all the adults who support us during the year and at our camps.

Bill Best

Trustee and Chair, 1st Staplehurst Scout Group.

THE STAPLEHURST SOCIETY

The Staplehurst Society continues to check the content and the indexing of both documents and photographs held by the Society. We have, for example, over 1000 photographs in the topographical collection alone. We have had displays at the library and at our AGM May 28, 2026 at the United Reformed Church will have a display of postcards. We can be found most Mondays at the Village Community Centre 9.30am to mid-day. Visitors are welcome.

THE STAPLEHURST BRIDGE CLUB REPORT

The Staplehurst Bridge Club has enjoyed another successful year at the Cricket & Tennis Club in Frittenden Road, and we are indebted to Joy Henson, the Chairman, and the rest of her team for providing such a warm and comfortable space for us to play bridge on Friday afternoons.

As with most small village organisations we are always on the look out for new members, and anyone who would like to join us will be most welcome.

We are a friendly, low key club and we always cut for partners at the beginning of the afternoon, so that we are always able to provide a game for everyone who comes even if they have no partner.

So please do join us at 1.50pm for a 2pm start on a Friday afternoon, or if you would like some more information, please phone Liz on 07943

761573

Cricket & Tennis Club, Frittenden Road, Staplehurst, TN12 ODH

MCCABE DAY CENTRE REPORT ON LUNCH CLUBS

The Lunch Clubs at McCabe Day Centre regularly provide lunches for McCabe Close and Kirkman Court residents and Staplehurst residents over the age of 60, and we also try to add in other events to make an occasional treat for our members.

Every year, the list of events includes a subsidised trip to Eastbourne in July. This is very popular and allows members and volunteers to indulge in seaside pursuits, like fish and chips, ice creams and a stroll along the prom.

We are generally closed for the whole month of August, but this past year we experimented by putting on an old-fashioned tea party (sandwiches, cake and jellies), just by way of a change. This was hugely popular with our members, and so we have agreed to make it a fixture for future years.

In November, and in combination with the CHAT club, we took another coach trip. This time to Dobby's Garden Centre in Ashford. It was enjoyed by members, and proved an opportunity to undertake some early Christmas shopping.

Speaking of Christmas we provide 2 Christmas lunches, with all the trimmings. The Thursday one is a full party, for which we generally engage an entertainer, and last Christmas was no exception: we had a joyous hour hearing our vocalist giving us the modern Christmas classics. The Sunday lunch generally has no entertainment, other than the meal; but this year one of our volunteers brought her choir along to sing some wonderful Christmas music for us. It was such a treat, we hope we may persuade them to come back to us this year.

In regular times the Thursday Lunch Club meets at the McCabe Day Centre every week, except for short breaks at Christmas, and during the summer. We offer a freshly cooked two-course meal with tea and coffee for £4.50 (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 £2.50, 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 £5.50 (again including raffle ticket). Sadly we are unable to provide transport for these meals.

We are 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. Once again the Newlyn Trust charity has funded first aid training for our volunteers, to make sure we keep our members safe. Finally, we have received an unsolicited donation from a village company (Southern Care Maintenance Ltd). We aim to use this for a coffee morning for our members at the Kings Head in June. 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 Caroline Highwood, April 2026



Trefoil Guild

Staplehurst

It has been a very full programme last year with Dorril returning to talk to us about Japan and the cherry blossom. Margaret Cramp regaled us with memories of Staplehurst and Mel Alesi gave us an insight into ourselves with her talk on Neuro Linguistic programming. Mary won the Great Apple Bake off in her Master Chef apron and Marion won our Scrabble Challenge.

Staplehurst Ladies Choir entertained us and we had a singalong and on a more serious note Ruth came to talk about the Commonwealth War Graves. Janette attempted to prevent us from poisoning ourselves by talking about the various fungi she had encountered on her walks. We all survived. Scams face us on a daily basis and a wonderful young lady came to explain the different types of scams and how to cope with them and report them.

Keeping active, we took part in a Kurling Day and we had an eye-opening outing to Great Comp Gardens, organised by Sheila, where we could see how the plants were struggling to cope with the heat and the hosepipe ban.

We were all also so proud of Sheila for representing Trefoil by walking with the lead Colour Party for the Remembrance Day Parade.

Our generous ladies knitted little yellow ducks last Easter for sale in the local Hospice Shop, produced 2 Project Linus Quilts for sick children and a bed foot quilt is on its way to be raffled. Then, last Christmas they excelled again by making a tremendous contribution to the Marden Food Bank.

2026 celebrates 100 years of Thinking Day, themed on Friendship and Support. We will all continue to do as much as we can for each other, for Girl Guiding and for others in the wider community.

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 in Staplehurst and on the other Sundays we have a variety of visiting preachers and members of our congregation leading the service. We continue to use zoom for occasional evening services and for study groups. Junior Church can be made available if required.

We held 2 coffee and gift mornings during 2025 supporting 'The Maidstone Winter Night Shelter' and 'Growing Concern' and these have been enhanced by performances by the Staplehurst Ladies Choir. 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 funds for our church and 'The Friends of Kent Churches'.

On Monday mornings from 10.00 a.m. – Noon we opened our doors for 'Book swap and Beverages', everyone is welcome to join us for coffee and a chat and maybe to choose a new book.

Noah's Ark, our time for babies and toddlers and their carers continued on a Tuesday morning during term time and last October celebrated 25 years! Naturally we enjoyed cake and candles to mark the occasion.

We had a very interesting talk on 'Israel Palestine – the story of two people in one land'. This was followed by a question-and-answer session and some lively debate. We learned a lot about the current problems in this troubled part of our world.

We held a Sunday afternoon 'Songs of Praise', followed by tea and cake and in 2026 we are also holding 'assembly bangers' when we hope people will come along to sing some of those popular songs and hymns from schooldays

We are active participants in Churches Together in Staplehurst and the World Day of Prayer service is held at our church in March. In 2025 a lovely service was prepared by the women of The Cook Islands.

We opened our doors during the 'Tractorfest' and served hot drinks and the use of toilet facilities. We intend to do this again this year so do pop in and say hello.

In addition we have enjoyed various social events including sharing lunches and a ramble

Whether you are new to Staplehurst or have been resident all of your life you are very welcome to come and participate in any of our events and services.

Alison Alderson

secretary@staplehursturc.org.uk

WEALD CLUB FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

We are a small friendly group run by volunteers who meet on alternate Fridays starting at 10.30 am starting with tea/coffee and biscuits and a time to chat. This is followed by a 2-course lunch after which we enjoy a game of bingo and a raffle.

Anyone with a physical disability is welcomed at the group and transport can be arranged in our bespoke minibus.

We also enjoy outings from time to time and are currently planning a trip to Tenterden Garden Centre in June 2026 for lunch and shopping.

New members are always welcome, for more information to join the group or volunteer please call Dee 07884 431047

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE 2025/26

I am pleased to report that Staplehurst Women's Institute has had another successful year from May 25 to April 26. Our speakers have entertained us with subjects as wide and varied as Fashion and Colour to Bespoke Model Homes.

We started our year in June hearing how the "Colour" for the year is decided by the Fashion Industry who ensure that all of us were wearing shades of brown for 26, not sure it happened but when you looked in stores there were definitely more brown tones than others. Our July meeting was as usual our lovely Garden Meeting at Kathie Lamb Centre, where the tables were groaning under the weight of lovely food provided by the committee, and I can confirm they were only crumbs left by the time we were ready to go home, we had a quiz and a wonderful raffle and silly games and of course the chatter was continuous. We had visitors from other W.I. to join us and a special performance by our youngest member Holly Winter who delighted us by singing a selection of show tunes. A super afternoon.

In August we had a lovely afternoon tea at Staplehurst Manor where we were welcomed by staff and some of the residents who joined us. September brought us to The Free Church where we held our produce show and once again, I was amazed at how talented our members are. I know from experience that they can bake (I have tasted it as often as possible) but the crafting skills shown are brilliant. Yet another wonderful show.

October was breast cancer awareness month and we started it with a talk from two members who had trained and completed the walking marathon, the overnight Moonwalk in London, making us laugh with their tales of training to bursting in to tears when they completed the Walk itself in Hyde Park raising money for the breast cancer charity. We completed the month with a coffee morning and were pleased to raise over £300 to send to Breast Cancer Now charity.

November gave us Creating Theatre Costumes and what a wonderful career our speaker had so far, she brought us the backstage magic you don't usually see. December is our Christmas supper evening, and our members all bring food and we have a party, well more like a get together but lovely as always.

January was Wildlife from the Marden Wildlife Group who confirmed what a wonderful part of Kent we live in with the varied plants and insects special to our part of the Weald. In February we learnt what to recycle, where to recycle and what happens to it after we wave it goodbye.

March was colour again, but it was the colour that suited us rather than what we were told to wear. An interesting concept. April was the wonderful Kelly who makes Bespoke Model Homes, which were incredible.

Now back to May when we vote in our committee and President for another year.