

# **STAPLEHURST ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2023**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2023 7.30pm**

**Group Reports**



**Staplehurst Community Centre  
Illustratration by Ken Colins**

## Staplehurst Bridge Club

The Bridge Club has been active in Staplehurst for more than 30 years during which time it has held its meetings in a number of locations throughout the village. Currently we are happily occupying the Youth Hut next to the Community Centre in the middle of the Village at 6.45pm on Friday evenings. All are welcome to join us.

In common with many Bridge Clubs, and particularly as a result of the Covid lockdown, we are in need of new members to join our relaxed and friendly bridge evenings. At our recent AGM members were in favour of changing our meetings to Friday afternoons during the winter months in the hope that this would attract additional members who may be reluctant to venture out in the evenings when it is dark and cold and the weather is bad. We have secured the agreement of the Parish Council, and this change will be effective from 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

For those who wish to learn the fascinating game of bridge, one of our members, Liz, is an experienced English Bridge Union trained bridge teacher, and a qualified club director; she would be very happy to organise some lessons for those interested.

For further information about lessons or the Club, please contact Liz

07943 761573 [lizmitchell987@gmail.com](mailto:lizmitchell987@gmail.com)

## Community Centre for Debt Advice report

The Debt Advice Centre in Staplehurst has been quite busy in the last year. A number of factors have contributed to this:

- Things are now functioning more normally in the financial world after the quiet period that was created by Covid. Individuals have reached a point of needing to tackle their debt situations – dilemmas that could be ignored during the pandemic, as creditors were not taking action.
- Step Change – a major organisation for helping people in debt, have lost funding for their Debt Relief Order department. A DRO is a simple and cheap way of achieving insolvency, particularly suitable for those on low incomes whose circumstances are unlikely to change dramatically. We have had an influx of clients who have been recommended a DRO by Step Change but then told they will need to go elsewhere to apply for it. We are able to complete DROs with the support of Community Money Advice, our umbrella organization.
- The current financial crisis with high energy prices and general high inflation has put a lot of pressure on everyone. Some existing clients have needed to come back to us to reassess what they are able to pay towards their debts as they can no longer afford the pre-arranged payment plan.

The debt advice process is very much like detective work, trying to find out all the necessary information, using old paperwork, clues, credit reports and so on. It is inevitable that many people are in debt because they have a chaotic lifestyle and are not able to keep on top

of paperwork and payments. Sadly, this fact often means that we start working with someone and then they stop engaging with the service. We may put in hours of work but don't manage to reach a solution because we are at the mercy of an individual who doesn't keep appointments or doesn't present the paperwork necessary to work the case.

Financially, the last few years have been quite relaxing. In 2020 we were awarded a grant from the Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust to cover 3 years general running costs. Often grant making bodies specify that funds need to be used for start-ups, specialist equipment etc. CFCT did not make such specifications and we were free to use the funds for our annual indemnity insurance and affiliation fee to Community Money Advice. These are our highest costs each year. We have also been grateful for the ongoing support of Staplehurst Parish Council, topping up our funds and helping to keep us in paper, envelopes and stamps. We will be looking to apply for a further grant for CFCT as the money begins to run out later this year.

## Staplehurst Community Events Group



2022 was the Platinum Jubilee year to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's reign of 70 years so as an alternative to hosting our annual summer fete we decided to hold a **Party in the Park** instead.

Villagers with friends and family came to Surrenden Field on 4<sup>th</sup> June loaded with picnics, blankets, deck chairs and warm clothing as unfortunately it was rather overcast and quite breezy. They were treated to live music from six great bands with a patriotic finale of The National Anthem and Land of Hope and Glory. A funfair was enjoyed by the children and the tug of war for various age groups proved extremely competitive. It was a memorable day with lots of flag waving and probably one of the first events many of our new residents had experienced since moving to Staplehurst because of the Covid 19 Pandemic.

In June we hosted our **Annual Run** around the quiet lanes of Staplehurst and for the first time it included a 5K as well as the traditional 10K. A total of 252 runners participated.

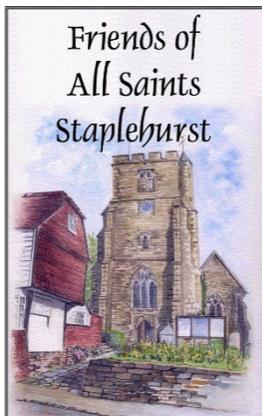
Christmas time was very busy for us – it started in November with a **Christmas Fair** at the village Centre, and it was lovely to have our French Traders back since before Covid 19. All the stall holders, Local and French said they had had a successful day and many have already re-booked for 2023.

Our second Christmas event was the very popular **Santa Sleigh**. Because of the many new properties in the area, we had to extend the touring by another day so Santa, his motorised sleigh and helpful volunteer elves went out over 5 evenings and saw many happy children. Social media helped residents track his route so they weren't waiting outside in the cold for too long. From the money we collected in our buckets, we donated £1000 to the Staplehurst Winter Warm Rooms initiative.

Our third event was **Light Up Staplehurst** – basically we asked residents to display at least one small light in their front window and they could be lucky enough to win a random cash prize of £25. Imagine getting a knock on your front door on what was an exceptionally cold icy night and being presented with £25... we surprised 20 households, some of who were aware of our promotion, some who weren't and some new residents who hadn't even heard of us so at least it was a good public relations exercise!

The main ethos of our group is to host enjoyable events for the residents of Staplehurst but also, with the funds we raise we try to help, financially, other groups and charities in the village. During the past year we have donated almost £5000 towards good causes such as the local food bank, library users' group, horticultural society, village golf centre and luncheon clubs for the elderly and disabled.

## 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

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### **Ray Mann, Treasurer**

5 Weavers Close

Staplehurst, Kent TN12 0SF

The Friends of All Saints is a Charity set up over 25 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 last year we held a musical evening in All Saints church, "Sing for your Supper" led by Stephen Higgins. This was a really good evening with us listening to two superb soloists sing to us and then we sang out loud and strong to earn our supper.

In September we held a cream tea Trial when friends walked across the fields to find a cream tea. In December we held Christmas with Friends and evening of singing favorite Carols and enjoying supper together,

This year we have planned a musical event, a Cream tea trail, afternoon tea at London Beach, an Antiques evening finishing the year with a Christmas evening.

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

## **Staplehurst Footpath group**

The Staplehurst Footpath Group continued its programme of walks following its successful re-start in October 2021 after Covid restrictions were eased. For the time being, we are basing our walks on start points around Staplehurst or the surrounding villages.

The numbers on walks varied but usually about ten set out on the walks during 2022. The exceptionally hot weather during the summer was followed by a wet autumn and winter, with the Staplehurst mud making its presence very much felt on recent walks.

What has been pleasing in recent months is a flurry of new members, with numbers of walkers now in the high teens. It would be nice to attract in some younger walkers to build the group for the future.

One sad event was the loss of a recent member, Liz Davis, to illness in the latter part of last year.

Our walks take place on the second Sunday each month and are advertised in the Parish magazine, on local Facebook pages as well as our own page on there and on posters around the village. We would welcome new walkers of any age; most walks are four to five miles in length. However, we do not permit dogs as we often walk through fields with livestock.

## **Staplehurst Free Church**

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, Winter Warmer, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off

site)

- Wednesdays – Prayer Meeting, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off site)
- Thursdays – FreeBees, Community Fridge, Mixed Badminton
- Fridays – Interest Group, Ladies Badminton, Worship Group Rehearsals
- Saturdays – Community Fridge, Leadership Meetings, 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.
- A new 'Signing Group' started, being held periodically on Monday afternoons. These sessions help people develop their sign language skills in an informal and encouraging setting.
- The Community Fridge was launched as part of the Shepherd's Pantry portfolio a food-insecurity community support programme started during the Covid pandemic. to reclaim food from retailers and suppliers that would otherwise go to waste, or is surplus to their requirements, and make this available to the general public, particularly those in financial hardship at no cost. The Fridge is open at certain times over 4 days a week with a newly formed team now comprising over 20 volunteers collecting food, undertaking stock control and welcoming and informally supporting visitors.
- The Winter Warm Rooms were set up. This is a collaborative venture, coordinated by the Parish Council, facilitating several community organisations including SFC to open up their premises to local people and providing warmth and refreshments if they are having financial difficulty in maintaining heat in their own homes.
- A themed church service and community lunch were organised to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee and these were well attended.
- A multi-day 'Walk Through the Bible' educational event was organised in September and very well attended and received.
- The FreeBees support sessions for new parents has become increasingly popular such that two groups now operate on Thursday mornings and afternoons and a waiting list is having to operate; places do get freed up as parents return to work so over time, we are able to provide support to many who benefit from the help and encouragement given by the sessions hosts and other parents with shared experiences.
- A training programme called the 'Emmaus Project' being a new coordinated programme of community engagement events began and will continue over the next year.

One of the cornerstone activities of the Church is providing financial support for a variety of third-party charitable organisation 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 Horticultural Society**

2022 represented a return to “normality” post-Covid for the Society. We were able to enjoy our full range of events from our monthly evening meetings and talks to a range of other events.

The year's highlight was probably our coach trip to RHS Hyde Hall in Essex. The site is outstanding, the weather was magnificent and even the coach trip was trouble-free, with no M25 issues!

Fund raising activities included our annual plant sale, again conducted around the village at a few members' gardens. This 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 Christmas Dinner at Newnham Court was rather poorly supported, unlike our summer members' barbecue which proves very popular, with over 40 guests having a splendid time.

Our membership is rising slightly and has more than recovered the slight dip resulting from the interruption of Covid 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 April 2023

### **Interest Group**

Members have warmed to the welcoming atmosphere in the Free Church where we now meet on Friday mornings from 10am. We have been delighted to be treated to illustrated talks on a fabulous mix of subjects from the Preservation of the Weald or Local History of the village and the railway's impact, given by regulars and new speakers. With them, we've travelled to the Grand Canyon, Falklands, Colombia, Switzerland, Alaska, Burma and deepest jungle to walk with gorillas, all without leaving our seats. We've tackled carpet bowls upstairs and various games on the tables down in the café area. Our brains have been stretched by examining sayings, word meanings and through writing our own short stories. We've been entertained by a live swing band and with poetry and CD tracks. We made journeys to Darwin's home, Downe House, along to Lainey's Farm on the edge of Staplehurst and enjoyed a social garden party. We've marvelled at the skill of both the wood turner producing such tactile treats and the florist creating delight before our eyes, and even painted clay pots to give as gifts. We've recommended good books to read, holiday destinations to enjoy or avoid and welcomed other clubs and societies to advertise their activities.

What interests us? Everything. We have been especially pleased to welcome new members who are joining in and making lasting friendships. Everyone helps plan our programme for the months ahead and we hope you can see from the above, they've done a brilliant job this year!

**Joan and Malcolm Buller**

## **McCabe Day Centre Report on Lunch Clubs**

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 like the Queen's Jubilee and are planning one for the Coronation. We are extremely grateful to the Staplehurst Community Events Group for their contribution towards these extra social 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 Monarchs FC Report**

This season was the second in the Southern Counties East Football League for the Men's First Team, and saw a new management team take over. Results have been mixed (not just for us, but across the whole league!) but we had some fantastic wins, including a 5-0 win over Premier Division Canterbury, 3 wins against Lydd who have since been promoted to the SCEFL Prem, and a good run in the SCEFL Challenge Cup. We also were chosen to be part of the inaugural SCEFL Groundhop Weekend, which saw over 330 people visit the Jubilee to see us beat Rochester 1-0.

We also entered the SCEFL Development League, a brand new league for this season, which aims to bridge the gap between senior and junior football. The standard was incredibly high, with teams from Sheppey Utd, Tunbridge Wells and Erith & Belvedere to name a few. Using a mix of experienced and new players, and drawing from the incredible talent of the junior section, we have competed well and currently sit 9<sup>th</sup> in the league with 5 games to go.

Our attendances have grown, with us averaging over 100 per game. We strive to become a community club, working closely with local businesses, charities and people. We attended the Remembrance Parade to lay a wreath on behalf of the whole club, and have made several donations to the Shepherd's Pantry. We have also been able to support a local lad, Owen West, with his charity fundraising and look forward to continuing this next season.

Excitingly, we are thrilled to have the first ever Women's team at Staplehurst Monarchs. A small group of women met for fitness training last summer, and have worked hard through the winter months, being joined by some of our junior girls who are ready for the challenge of senior football. The SCEG kindly sponsored their training shirts, and Frankie's Farm shop their kit, and we are now looking forward to pre-season friendlies before they enter the South East Counties Women's Football League next season.

The Parish Council and JFMC kindly allowed us to use the kitchen at the Nigel Best Pavilion after several break ins resulted in us losing our catering van. This has helped us immensely and we serve matchday food for both senior and junior matchdays which is all locally sourced.

Our aspirations for next season are high. We know there are challenges ahead but we are excited by what the season will bring. We would like to thank everyone who has been part of our journey this season – all the supporters, the local businesses who sponsor us, the Parish Council and JFMC for all their help, the committee and volunteers who work tirelessly for free, and all the players. We look forward to welcoming everyone back soon!

## **Staplehurst Monarchs Youth FC – Progress Report Season 2022/23**

During the current season we have had 20 teams ranging from U8s to U18s. These included 5 girls' teams at U9s/U10s/U12s/U14s and U16s. We have also continued to run a player development group 'Mini Monarchs' for younger children (U6s and U7s). We have approximately 300 young people registered to play for us which is consistent with the previous season, something we are extremely proud of.

The 'icing on the cake' has been the on-field achievements of some of our teams in the past season, notably:

- Cup finals for the U8s, U9 Royals, U11s and U13s
- U13s Kent Plate semi-finalists up against teams from Folkestone, Orpington and Maidstone (all with huge catchment areas for players)
- U17s league winners
- U18s 6v6 league winners (Another new venture for us)

During the spring and summer, we have operated 'Wildcats' for girls between the ages of 5 and 11 to try football in a fun environment. A development for last summer was 'Squad Girls' which is aimed at older girls. Both groups have been successful and has led, particularly with the younger ones, to girls registering to play for our teams. Both groups have restarted this April.

We added to our bank of referees by helping a number of players (Both boys and girls) to undertake the necessary training and nurturing their development thereafter. We currently have 4 girls who have trained with us.

We have also helped managers and coaches with their training and development. This is something we hope to continue with in coming seasons.

During the season we improved links with the senior club. Members of our hard-working management committee helped them in various ways on 'home' match days. We have also provided a number of players to both their U23s and even 1<sup>st</sup> team. We thank the U23s manager Jay Fuller (previously Lee Mackelden) for their encouragement of younger players.

Due to the large number of teams, we have continued to use an additional pitch at Staplehurst School. We believe this has generally worked well and we would like to use their pitch next season. Hiring the pitch helps to provide much needed additional income for the school. We would like to thank groundsmen Dean Fuller (Jubilee) and Bill Totterdell (Staplehurst School) who maintain all of our pitches, they've done a great job in extremely difficult circumstances during a very wet winter.

With the ongoing drainage problems at Jubilee Sports Field, we often need to source additional pitches during the winter months. As in previous years, we mainly hired pitches at The YMCA (Maidstone) and both South Park and Senacre.

Winter training for our teams is a real issue due to the aforementioned drainage problems at Jubilee. Our teams have to travel 'far and wide' to such places as Maidstone, Loose and Tenterden to find suitable facilities at some expense. The proposed 3G artificial surface at Jubilee would make a massive difference to us and help boost the local economy

## **The Monday Afternoon Chat Club**

The Monday afternoon chat club continues to meet each week from 2 to 4pm at the McCabe Centre for local residents over 60 years of age.

The members, which number around 22 and 4 helpers enjoy games, quizzes, tea, biscuits, cake and occasionally a visit from a local group to entertain them.

Over the last year the group held an Easter bonnet competition with prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Each member took home a lovely easter egg.

In June they celebrated the late Queens platinum jubilee with afternoon tea at the McCabe centre. A raffle of Royal themed prizes was held, with one member winning a hand knitted Queen.

We enjoyed a trip to the Weald of Kent for afternoon tea.

Sadly, the planned Christmas party was postponed due to the heavy snow that arrived very suddenly. The party eventually took place in January with each member taking home several gifts.

We have enjoyed visits from the Headcorn Ukulele band and also a local hand bell ringing group. The members were able to have a go at the hand bells, harder than it looks. One of our group members brought along his keyboard one afternoon and we enjoyed a singalong. We are always grateful for any local group to come along for a while to entertain our members.

Before Christmas the original committee made the difficult decision to stand down. Rita Game has been leading the club for over 10 years with help from Joan Buller, Ann Stephenson, Margaret Donnelly and Barbara Keel. They are now enjoying being members of the group. They certainly left big shoes to fill. A new committee has since been formed and we hope to continue the good work that Rita and her team started.

We are also grateful to Julie Franklin and Richard Swain who assist us with transport.

For further information please contact:

Jean Osler Treasurer 07917 335607

Julie Grice Chairman 07549 012657

## **Paddock Wood & District Lions Club**

Paddock Wood & District Lions Club is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> 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 the community as we continue to receive more requests for assistance. Recent 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, the Easter Egg Raffle, Big Band Night and are in the final planning stages for the summer. Rockin' in the Rec, our free live music event, the 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 & 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 from 28 to 75 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.

Amber Small  
President  
Paddock Wood & District Lions Club

## **Poppy's Day Nursery & Poppy's Baby Care Unit 2023**

Poppy's Day Nursery is OUTSTANDING

On 23rd February 2023 our Nursery at Headcorn Road was inspected by Ofsted and we have been graded as Outstanding in all areas with no recommendations. As we approach 15 years of providing "full day" childcare for Staplehurst and the surrounding area we are very proud of this grading, our achievements over the years, the staff teams both here and at our Baby Unit in the High Street.

To celebrate our 15 years and the Ofsted report we shall hold a garden party in the summer for staff, parents and the children.

The Baby Unit holds a "Good" Ofsted rating and will be due an inspection next year. For more info - view online at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Following our successful planning application last year our New Builds opened October 2022

- Our Staff training room and the children's new Sunflower Room.

Currently we have 27 members of staff, we employ Apprentices under the "Apprentice Scheme in Childcare" supported via Parenta. We have one volunteer who has been with us for over 10 years.

Last September 23 children moved to Primary Schools and we held a Graduation Ceremony at The Free Church for those children leaving, their parents and staff. This year 17 children will leave for Primary Schools.

We currently have 85 children registered mainly from Staplehurst and surrounding area. We have waiting lists for new children till 2024.

We continue to access KCC courses to develop staff in all areas of nursery care; this includes Safeguarding and SENCO Courses. We now have our own "in house" Paediatric

first aid trainer. All staff are trained in Paediatric First Aid and we can offer training to other settings.

We maintain links with the local Primary Schools, Pre-Schools, and Village Library. For our fundraising during the year we collected Xmas presents and delivered them to the Children's Ward at Pembury Hospital. We managed to raise £100 for Red Nose Day.

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>



## Staplehurst Scout Group

Staplehurst Scout Group is celebrating its 80th Birthday this year, and we wouldn't be able to do this without the support of the community. We will be opening the Scout Centre to support the Staplehurst Community Events Coronation Celebration, 7th May, at which we are also holding a crockery smash so come along and see how many cups and saucers you can hit. Giving back to our community is important to us. On the 11th June, the Scout Group will also be supporting the Whites Landscaping Staplehurst 5 & 10k run. Why not pop in and see us and enjoy some refreshments, a nice cup of tea or coffee and perhaps treat yourself to a bacon butty.

The Scout Association have created a new group for even younger children to get involved in Scouting. We are delighted to announce that Squirrels have come to Staplehurst. In February we welcomed 10 very excited children to have a trial session at the new 1st Staplehurst Squirrels. They had two weeks of fun taster sessions then on the 3rd week all 10 children took their Squirrel promise and became Staplehurst's first every squirrel scouts! We are all so excited getting to know each other and making new friends. We have had so much fun so far learning about animals and where they live. We all made a home for our animal toys using Duplo bricks. We love listening to Nutkin reading stories. Each story goes with the activities. We have been learning new games, cat and mouse and using the very big parachute POPCORN! In the coming weeks we will be having fun with experiments and storytelling activities and then joining Beavers at the family Easter Egg hunt!

The Beavers have been very busy over the past 12 months! We have had three indoor sleep overs at the scout centre and we went on our first Beaver camp last September! We have covered many different badge work and handed out 175 badges at Christmas and 4 Bronze awards! We have had great fun exploring science activities including ice painting, making colourful rain clouds, and flying rockets! For our Money skills badge the Beavers raised lots of money doing chores at home and then using this money we all went shopping to Sainsburys to buy food to then donate to the Staplehurst Fridge (food bank).

Over the last year the Cubs have been busy learning Skills for life, completing challenges, badge work. In the Summer we held our first full Cub camp since 2019, camping at Hope Hill Meopham which included an outing to Hemsley conservation centre. We have tried new games, and activities and continued taking advantage of the beautiful countryside we live in and encouraging the Cubs to explore our local area with hikes. Throughout the year we have welcomed two young leaders and a parent through the 4-week challenge, who have all brought ideas and different skills with them and we thank them for their help. Eagle Cubs meet on Thursday 5:15-7pm term times and take both boys and girls aged 8-10.5 years of age.

It is a time of change at Scouts with our long-standing leader, Martin stepping back and we have two new joint leaders. The Scout troop suffered badly during lock down and is now in a period of its own post-covid recovery and starting the road back to full meetings and devising challenging and interesting pursuits for our scouts. One constant for Scouts is our annual Christmas Post service which raised over £500 to be donated to Hospice in The Weald

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 our waiting list of children wanting to join never gets any smaller - so please come and help and get involved in local scouting. 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 to supporting our fundraising events and from gardening to general maintenance.

To find out more please feel free to come along to our own AGM on Tuesday 4th July 2023. starting at 7:30pm in the Scout Centre in Nicolson Walk, off Crowther Close.

Bill Best

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

## **The Staplehurst Society**

The Staplehurst Society is concerned mainly with the history of our parish. Our most recent event, on 9th of March, was a "slide show" - a display of historic photographs. This was open to the public and attracted a large audience.

The Society's Archive Group meets regularly to maintain our photographic and documentary history, but it also responds to enquiries from individuals and their families - some overseas - as well as from the Parish Council. We are also custodians of the large W.I. collection.

We have recently been in contact with historians from Hoare's Bank as well as local people investigating the history of their homes. We recorded photographically the sites of new developments, including Sainsbury's, and we made a record of Staplehurst during the quietness of the Covid pandemic.

We need to watch in future to ensure that our reserved space in the Village Centre is assured.

## **Staplehurst Under 5 Playgroup**

Staplehurst Under 5 Playgroup have enjoyed a busy year, welcoming many new families to our group as we head ever closer to our 60th year. We were delighted to get a Good in our recent Ofsted inspection, which has been well deserved by very dedicated staff and committee. We enjoyed exploring topics which have encourage the children to think about themselves and the world around them, such as the environment and recycling, themselves and their place in the community, and the seasons. We have been regularly cooking healthy food with the children and teaching them how to be healthy both inside and out. Looking forward, we are hoping to make the most of the better weather with more trips - we are fortunate to be close to Sobell Lodge, whose garden the children love to walk around, and are also planning outings to support our transport theme as well as a trip to the library. Plus, we will be holding our summer picnic for all the children and families at the end of the summer term. We have developed bags for our families to borrow - story sacks and also sharing bags, which contain resources which each support one particular area of learning and development, such as fine motor skills. Our committee continue to be enthusiastic fundraisers and we are pleased that our very popular garage sale safari will be returning in August, so start saving your sellables!

## **The Village Golf Course**

The Village Golf Course, 'one of Staplehurst's best kept secrets' has continued to go from strength to strength over the last year. The significant work that John, our Groundsman, has done on the greens has brought about huge improvements and the 3 new holes are well and truly embedded. Thanks to the generosity of the Staplehurst firework fund we are able to embark on some significant and vital drainage work alongside the railway line which will help us to keep the course open during the wet seasons.

Membership continues to be high and as a consequence we have managed to maintain membership fees at an affordable level for all, which is a key aim of our volunteer committee. Applications from new members are always welcome and a free trial is offered to all prospective members.

Finally, we could not conclude this report without taking this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions that Mick Collins and Jon Grimwood have made to the club via their enthusiasm and commitment. They will be sadly missed.

To find out more go to [www.villagegolf.org.uk](http://www.villagegolf.org.uk) or contact Jane Annetts on 07746623292

## **WI**

We felt that 2022 was the year when life at last began to feel that it had gone back to normal, after the pandemic. But more than that we had even more reason to celebrate in the WI – we were 100 years old!

A Centenary is a pretty important milestone, and so we spent some time considering how we would do this. It was important to us that the celebrations should be both for our own members, but also for the village. As a result, we put on a number of celebrations over the course of the year, to encompass both aspects. In May, we planted a birch tree by the Library, and placed a bench opposite Cornforth Close. These were our gifts to the village, and the handover took place on a beautifully sunny day, followed by coffee and cake in the Youth Club.

Then on 14 June, 100 years to the day since our first meeting, as many members as possible came together for a celebratory dinner in a lovely festive evening. Finally, in October, we put on a craft show. This allowed us to show off our skills, and also to display some of our history: we have some terrific scrap books with the history of the village and WI since 1960's. We invited some other craft makers so there was a good range of craft on sale (as well as our own) and with tea and cakes to oil the wheels, it was a lovely event.

During the year we had a fascinating range of meetings, ranging as widely as the history of Egyptian dance; why is crime fiction so popular, and from farm to jungle in Colombia. We also had our regular events, such as the Garden Party and the craft social both meetings being lovely opportunities just to socialise with friends, and also the Produce Show, where we were able to display our skill (or otherwise!) at cookery, gardening or craft; quite inspirational to see what colleagues can achieve, and most members managed to enter at least one class. Sadly, we had to cancel the Christmas Party, as the snow and ice during that week meant that pavements were lethal, and no one fancied risking themselves after dark.

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 (we are very competitive, if not always successful!) 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 for our next century?