

Village Update

SUMMER 2004

Welcome to the 2nd edition of Village Update

How lucky we were (eventually) to have such fine weather. What a good thing the Surrenden Field new play areas were ready for use at the beginning of the school holidays. Opened by retiring Headmaster Eric Spear, on the last day of the school term, the play equipment has been in constant use. The ideas were started by Anne Hanish and Lin Plant, both councillors on the previous parish council. On re-election Lin continued the project with Maureen Green and the Parish Clerk. They have all worked hard to achieve this wonderful facility. Enjoy and please look after it.

The Friends of Surrenden would, I am sure, be pleased to hear from you with offers of support.

Now for something a little different in that I would like to take this opportunity to start a debate on The Village Centre and what the future might be for this important resource. At their 2004 AGM the members of the management committee announced they were standing down in 2005. Unless sufficient replacement volunteers are found should we look at employing a caretaker, at Parish expense, to run the centre? Perhaps we should be really radical and look to a purpose build centre and if so where should it be. This is just the start of a consultation process so think about it and let us know.

May I commend your parish clerk and councillors for their hard work, and thank our Borough Councillors for their continuing efforts on our behalf.

Finally, I hope your summer was good.

Margaret Arger, Chairman

Memorial to Bert & Betty Seth

To commemorate the contribution of Bert and Betty Seth to the village of Staplehurst, the Parish Council have decided to install a new bench by the bus stop on Church Hill.

Bert and Betty came to Staplehurst in 1953 and over the subsequent decades were prominent figures in many areas of village life. Bert was a Parish Councillor for 24 years, including 4 years as Chairman. It was under his guidance that the village was able to secure the old school building as its Village Centre, replacing the old village hall. During his time as a Parish Councillor, Bert was also the area chairman of the Kent Association of Parish Councillors whilst Betty was the instigator of the annual Village clean-up.

Outside local government, they used their creative talents in many productions by the Dramatic Society. Bert combined this with his interest in religion to stage Passion Plays and a Son et Lumiere epic based around the history of All Saints Church. One of the last posts he held was as the first chairman of the Friends of All Saints Church.

It is planned to have the bench, in memory of them both, installed this Autumn.

Campaign for safer footpaths

As part of the improvements to life in Staplehurst suggested by the Community Appraisal and the Parish Council's Action Plan, a campaign has now been launched to encourage householders to take a greater responsibility for their immediate surroundings. Every parishioner is asked to keep the pathway passing their property clear for pedestrians.

This might mean the cutting back of trees, shrubs and hedges to within their boundary. Keeping the street lights clear of branches will aid night-time visibility and safety. Also it is important not to obstruct footpaths by the parking of vehicles on them. The Parish Council hope that all residents will take a pride in their part of our community to reflect our position as Kent Village of the Year.

Staplehurst

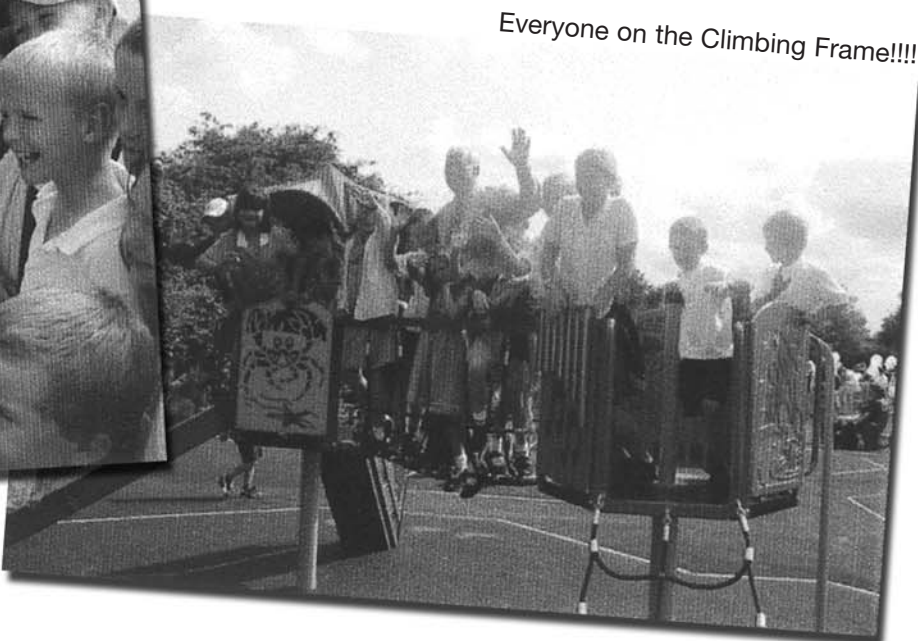
Parish Council

Surrenden Playing Field Project Opened

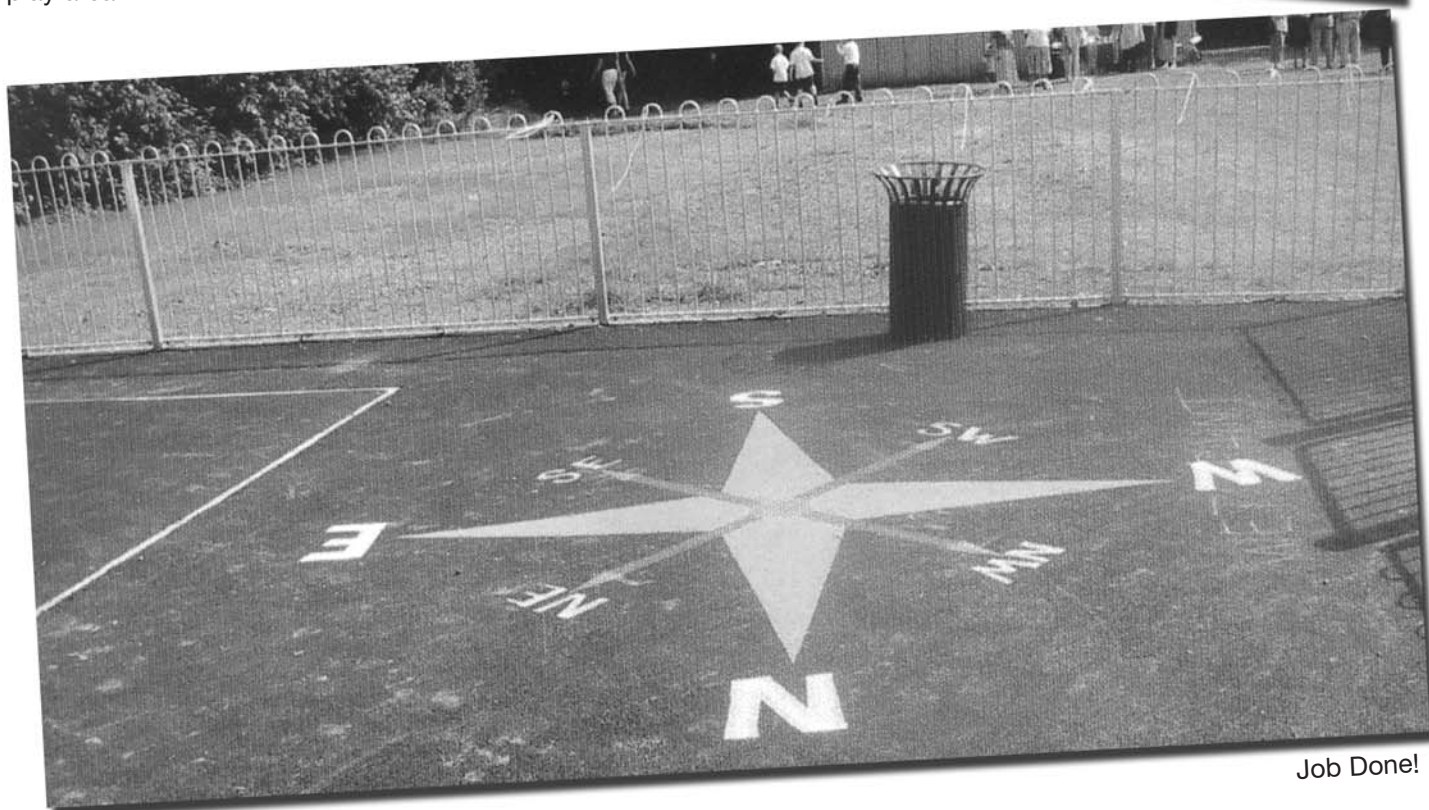


Former head teacher Eric Spear watched by parish councillor Lin Plant and children cuts the ribbon to officially open the new play area.

The new recreational facilities on the Surrenden Playing Field were officially opened by Eric Spear, on 21st July watched by a crowd of both young and old.



Everyone on the Climbing Frame!!!



Job Done!

STAPLEHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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Dear Staplehurst Resident

Friends of Surrenden Playing Field

As you may be aware, the refurbishment of the play equipment and installation of a teenage sports area has now been completed at Surrenden Playing Field. Matta pathways across the field have now been installed to enable year-round access to these recreational areas. All this has been made possible through generous grants from Living Spaces, KCC Rural Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council, Parish Council and others.

It is now hoped, when funding permits, to resurface and officially name the pathway from the High Street to Surrenden playing field as Nicholson Walk (in memory of the resident who gave the land to the parish for the walkway and playing field nearly 70 years ago).

It is encouraging to see how many residents are now enjoying the new facilities at Surrenden playing field and it is hoped that this will be a positive experience for all. A fledgling group of local residents is keen to progress the Parish Council's idea of establishing a "Friends of Surrenden Playing Field" group to act as an interface between it and users of the field. Such a group may like to consider future improvements for the field or create opportunities to ensure the field is used to optimum benefit for all residents. Towards this end a public meeting to discuss the formation of a Friends group has been set for:-

Wednesday 8th September 2004
8pm
North Hall, Staplehurst Village Centre

Together with some Parish Councillors, PC Tim Stanley will be attending to assist and answer questions regarding resident's rights. Whether or not you wish to join the friends group, the information that PC Tim Stanley proposes to offer will be of interest and use to any resident. All residents are welcome to attend, without obligation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs JS Bassett
Parish Clerk

The Parish Office is open to the public 9-11 a.m.
Mondays to Fridays (except Thursdays)



**The Staplehurst Parish
Council Web Site**

<http://www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk>

E-mail: clerk@staplehurstvillage.org.uk

Rail Users' Forum

The Strategic Rail Authority has deferred any decision on the Kent Franchise until the autumn; supposedly because of the weight of responses they received to their consultation. Cynics might think this more to do with the government's announcement of the SRA's demise next year than the 'unexpected' burden of local opposition to the prospect of reduced services.

Staplehurst's Rail Users' Forum meets again on September 28 when there will be firm news on the Franchise and we are fortunate that Tim Nicholson, Chairman of the Rail Passengers' Council (South-East), has agreed to speak. Tim is not only well qualified to explain the implications of proposed changes, but also a regular user of Staplehurst station. The meeting will start at 7.30pm in the South Hall at the Village Centre. All with an interest in the future of Staplehurst rail services are encouraged to attend. For further information call Cllr John Swannick on 01580 890750 or e-mail john@swannick1.fsnet.co.uk.

Tackling anti-social behaviour in Staplehurst

The Maidstone and Malling police anti-social behaviour team have been targeting Staplehurst over the summer. The parade has been designated a Dispersal Area, until the end of the school holidays, where any group of 2 or more persons found causing alarm or distress may be dispersed under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and banned from returning within 24 hours. If you have any incidents of anti-social behaviour to report there has been a confidential hotline to ring, which is 07732 764357.



Youth Forum Video

The Staplehurst Youth Forum recently made a video about how the young people felt about living here, what they would like to have in the village, and how people viewed them. We will be showing this video in the Youth Club Building during the Exhibition run by the Staplehurst Society in October. Please come along and see the video. We hope the video will encourage more people to become involved in working with the young people and enable us to make more use of the club building, giving the youngsters somewhere to go other than on the streets.

Life as a Parish Councillor - Lin Plant

Full Council, Amenities and Finance committee meetings are held monthly; Planning meetings take place twice a month. Various sub-committees are formed as necessary – current ones include Newsletter Group, Action Plan and Surrenden Field Project. This means that the work of a Parish Councillor can be as varied and time-consuming as the individual wishes. I spend (on average) anything from two to ten hours a week on various parish work; as I only work part-time, I have lots of spare time. I attend meetings on issues such as police and community warden matters, highways issues, street cleaning and Surrenden Field. Some meetings are during the day, often at the Parish Office, and the others in the evenings. There is always a lot of paperwork to read, and often written submissions to be put in to various bodies. I have been a councillor for over three years now, and my main interest is the young people of the village. I was very involved in the re-forming of the youth club, and set up the Staplehurst Youth Forum to help with this. I am one of the councillors who have been working on the Surrenden Field refurbishment, and am delighted to see that it is finally finished and being used. I am also on the newsletter, website and action plan sub-committees, so life is never dull.

I joined the Parish Council to give something back to the village, and to become involved in how things happen here. I hope I have achieved this, and will continue for as long as I am able.

Parish Council Website

The Parish Council has its own website – www.staplehurstvillage.org.uk - which contains information about both the Council and village life generally.

It has Visitor Information, Latest News, Parish Council information, and a Local Directory. It also contains links to the Staplehurst Society's website, and to websites of other local villages.

The website has a Village Forum section (monitored regularly for content), which allows villagers to air their views on any topics or publicise local events. This has been heavily used recently, with comments regarding the SRA proposals put forward to change the amount and timing of trains to Staplehurst.

For villagers who wish to be updated regarding developments in the village, the Clerk has set up email groups, whereby villagers can have their names added to an email group to receive information about any specific subject/s they wish. Please contact the Clerk for further details.