

VILLAGE GROUP REPORTS TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2010

COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DEBT ADVICE STAPLEHURST

The Community Centre for Debt Advice in Staplehurst opened its doors to the public at the beginning of March 2009, so this is our first official report to the Parish Council. We would like to begin by expressing our grateful thanks for the financial support that we have received over the last year.

The Debt Advice centre is a joint venture, set up by the three main churches in the village. All advisors are volunteers and all advice is free, confidential and non-judgmental. We are members of Community Money Advice and AdviceUK - two nationally recognised organisations. Through these memberships we are able to obtain indemnity insurance, a licence to give debt advice and access to further training. Our office base is in Room 2 of the Village Centre, above the Parish Office and we see clients in the other upstairs rooms, usually on a Tuesday evening. The office is also regularly busy during the daytime when the essential work of letter writing, making phone calls and updating records goes on.

In the last year we have had contact with 15 clients, just over half of which live in the Staplehurst area – the rest come from all over Kent. Some of these have simply been initial enquiries with advice given over the phone or the client being redirected to a closer debt advice centre. Others have attended a number of appointments and are now paying off their debts gradually by negotiated instalments, reassured by the knowledge that they are no longer being charged interest by their creditors. Of those whose cases are ongoing with us, there is a total debt of £168,650. The burden on each family is huge. We are privileged to be involved in helping to lighten that burden and so bring some peace and encouragement into the lives of the people we serve.

FREE CHURCH

Staplehurst Free Church's mission statement includes the strap line "Enabling everyone to experience Jesus". As such we aim to serve some of the many & diverse needs of the community of our village, striving to monitor the needs of the community, matching them to our resources, and identifying opportunities for extending God's love to those in need.

This year, the fortieth since being founded by three couples in 1969, our building plans have been reassessed by our architect and research team to include both labour and cost saving exercises. It was necessary to reapply for planning permission to Maidstone Borough Council and at the time of writing we still await an answer from them. We are grateful to the Lord that we have been able to raise £525,000 towards our target and we are hoping that commencement to build will not be far away. Because we have no building of our own we are involved in the community through the hire of a variety of buildings and currently use the following facilities.

Our weekly Toddler Club which this summer celebrates its tenth anniversary serving the community is currently held in the Village Hall and provides a safe place for small children to play whilst their parents and carers (both church members and non-members) are able to socialize. The new Debt Advice centre, a collaborative ministry with trained volunteers from the three main churches in the village began serving the local community this year and has its office in the Village Centre. Our fortnightly youth club, held in the village youth centre on Friday nights for Year 5 upwards, caters for, on average, 15-25 young people offering various activities such as craft work, listening to music and general chatting with friends, table tennis, snooker, and a "Wi" machine etc. We are pleased to be helped out in this ministry by "Weald Youth for Christ" workers who also support our church teen's Bible Class on Sundays together with a mid-week youth cell group and youth band who recently led worship for a youth service

in Cranbrook. Our puppet team, "Ps'arms Puppets", regularly take assemblies at some fifteen local schools in the Maidstone / Cranbrook area. One of the team has twice had the opportunity to take the ministry to share with schools in Ghana while involved in short term mission events. We are actively involved in Staplehurst Primary School which at present hosts our morning services and other outreach events. Our pastor is privileged to conduct assemblies, as does the Ps'arms Puppet team. One of our members is the Chair of Governors and two of our members serve on the teaching staff. Our evening services are held by kind permission at the URC in the High Street. An activity for Senior Citizens entitled "Cedars" takes place once a month in various homes. Activities include visiting speakers, lunches, flower arranging and outings to local places of interest such as Tea Pot Island or Sissinghurst Gardens. Between Easter and the end of October we man a stall at the local Sunday Market in the Station car park. Our vision is to be available as the Church in the market place and our volunteers talk to and pray with people, many of whom would not ordinarily step inside a church building. We cannot possibly hope to meet every need but our heart is to extend our capabilities for serving the community. One new area recently has been the very successful dance events hosted by SFC at the school and led by local dance teacher Jack Davidson and included this year "Strictly Staplehurst", a competition between 8 young ladies and was a superb evening.

Clive Jones (Pastor)

FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH STAPLEHURST

Fund raising activity continued throughout 2009, in accordance with our objective of supporting the PCC in maintaining and improving the fabric of the Church. Although the events we put on are primarily intended to raise funds, they are also highly enjoyable social events, open to all and not just churchgoers. Indeed the Proms Night in September and the Shepherds Market in December were enjoyed by many people from the village and beyond. Membership numbers remained steady during the year. Over the year, the Friends provided £1,062.05 for general maintenance in the Church. During the year the Friends have raised around £2,750 from social activities, with further income from contributions from our Members, and from supporting the Bell Lane recycling site. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee, and all of the many other people who have helped us to run the events. The Committee and I hope you have enjoyed your involvement and look forward to your continued support

Caroline Highwood
Chairman, Friends of All Saints Church

GIRLGUIDING IN STAPLEHURST

This year is the Centenary of The Girl Guide Association and there have already been several special celebrations, with many more to come. The girls have been set 100 challenges with the aim of achieving as many as possible within a year called Adventure 100.

The 1st Guides are trying to give something up for 100 hours – like Not using mobile phones, Not eating crisps, Not biting nails!! One kind guide offered to Not annoy her younger sister for 100 hours! 3rd Guides had a brilliant trip to Prague for the start of the celebrations, they were surprised not to see snow but enjoyed visiting the town hall, Jewish area and the huge clock. They also tasted Czech beer and bread. Then they went to the O2 arena for the Big Gig, a pop event for Guides where pink was the order of the day! 2½ hours of solid pop was enjoyed by the girls (not so sure about the adults!).

The Brownies are all working on their Adventure 100 challenges, but also some went to London and visited I Can Do and 10 Downing Street. The Brownies work hard on getting badges, some having achieved their designer, circus, entertainer, musician all at the same time! There was also a performance at Staplehurst carnival in aid of Water Aid by 1st Brownies. Recently some Brownies went to Butlins at Bognor for a weekend "Funtenary", here they met up with several hundred other Brownies and a good time was had by all!

Sadly the village lost one Rainbow unit last year due to lack of adult support. The remaining Rainbow unit now has 15 girls (the maximum allowed) and a long waiting list. It is possible this unit may have to close before too long as the leaders approach retirement. They are also doing Adventure 100 challenges, and visited the village pantomime which they enjoyed. The Rainbows are now getting excited about a planned sleepover at Easter.

The Trefoil Guild thrives in this area. Their monthly general meeting regularly has 35+ members, recently entertained by Frank Page, and trying Tai Chi ! There is also a monthly craft meeting, also well attended, and a monthly knitting group both of which are open to non-members. There is also a small group who regularly go to Tunbridge Wells to the theatre. We are proud that our Trefoil Guild is the largest and the most active in the county! In October there will be a huge gathering of all members of Girlguidinguk at Detling to celebrate our centenary, culminating in links to other gatherings round the UK at 20.10pm, on 20/10/2010!

Needless to say, we are suffering from lack of adult help as every other group. We have several group leaders who will have to retire shortly and can foresee problems in the future! Any volunteers whether in uniform or not would be welcomed with open arms!
Staplehurstguidingpr@yahoo.co.uk or ring Sally 892424

MCCABE ANNUAL REPORT

A good working relationship has been developed with our landlords, Maidstone Housing Trust, ensuring that issues of upkeep and maintenance are resolved within reasonable timescales. The AGM in September 2009 was well attended, with good representation from the village. The Speaker was Councillor Marion Ring of Maidstone Borough Council, who spoke on "My Experiences as a Cabinet Member", she placed particular emphasis on the work of the Older Persons Forum. Some lunch dates were lost due to the severe weather during the winter, but otherwise numbers for lunches have held up well. A fire safety talk was held on 18 March. We are very grateful to all of the volunteers who have helped throughout the year with preparing, serving and clearing away meals, as well as providing transport for those less mobile members of the lunch club. We are also grateful to the Parish Council for agreeing a grant to assist us in paying for transport, in the coming year.

Caroline Highwood, Honorary Secretary
McCabe Close Management Committee

SPEEDWATCH

Volunteers have been out and about in Staplehurst with the Speed Watch equipment throughout the year. The police have agreed five sites along the A229, two in Marden Road along with one each in Headcorn Road and Pinnock Lane. For the year from April '08 we recorded just 49 vehicles above the speed thresholds during 24 deployments. The fastest recorded in the 40mph areas was 57mph. In June on the 30mph Headcorn Road a car went past at 47mph. With the lowered speed thresholds we expected a higher incidence on our roads. For this year from April '09, 12 volunteers have deployed in teams of three on 22 occasions (two volunteers 21 times each) recording the registration numbers of 187 vehicles. Four cars were seen at 45mph or above at the site in the High Street approaching the traffic lights. Registered owners were sent a very firm Police letter and PC Pennicott informed of their details. Another owner received a warning letter as they had been recorded for a second time within a twelve month period. We welcome three new volunteers who have been trained by the Police. All members of our scheme receive regular newsletters about our parish and the Mid-Kent Area. Anyone interested in training should contact the Parish Office. The network of parishes investing time and money in the scheme is growing. The majority of drivers in Staplehurst are keeping to the speed limits, which is encouraging as this is the prime purpose of Speed Watch. We hope that all parishioners will set a good example and help slow down the speed of the inconsiderate, dangerous minority.

Joan and Malcolm Buller

STAPLEHURST BRIDGE CLUB

The Staplehurst Bridge Club meets at Staplehurst Manor Nursing Home at 7.15 pm on Friday evenings (even on Good Friday). We are a very friendly, low key club, and have a policy that whoever turns up to play will always have a game, irrespective of the total numbers present. We have various methods of coping when there are uneven numbers. We play duplicate bridge and aim to play only 18-21 boards during the evening so that we finish normally between 10.15 and 10.30 pm. Most members play basic Acol with very few conventions, so that the Club is an ideal stepping stone for those who have completed basic lessons and now want to progress to Club bridge. For complete beginners, or those with only a little experience, lessons can be arranged through our committee member, Liz Mitchell who can be contacted on 01580 893150 or by email to elizabeth.ann.mitchell@googlemail.com.

The joining fee is £5 per person after you have spent a few evenings with us, after which the table money is £1 per person per evening. The table money for guests is £1.50. So, if you feel like giving us a try, either contact Liz or just turn up on a Friday evening - you are guaranteed a warm welcome.

STAPLEHURST CALENDAR 2010

The Total Sales, plus donations and Sponsor advertising this year realised £1,925.45. Expenditure for printing and stall hire was £815.00. A Cheque for £1110.45 was presented at Staplehurst School for the P.T.A Swimming Pool Fund. Thanks are due to The Hop Press Printing Company, Advertisers and all businesses who sold Calendars from their premises.

Ken Collins

STAPLEHURST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

The Society had a successful year with varied and interesting illustrated monthly talks covering a wide range of horticultural matters. Membership increased slightly to 90 and meetings were well attended by about 50 people each month. Our guest speaker for our October meeting was Mr. Tom Hart Dyke whose garden in Lullingstone in Kent was featured in a series on television. His talk about "A World Garden of Plants" was interesting, amusing and lively and the Society was pleased to welcome 35 visitors and more than 50 members for the evening. Spring and Autumn shows were again well attended and praised by judges and public alike. Despite the unpredictable weather the quality and number of entries was encouraging. The Plant sale in May raised a good sum of money for the Society through the sale of a mixture of members grown and bought in plants. The June meeting was the members Rose Show followed by a quiz. This was a popular and colourful evening. Also in June was the Staplehurst Carnival. The Society had a stand which included "Feeling the Fruit". For this we had 8 boxes. A hole was cut in each box for those taking part to plunge their hand. They then had to describe and decide what they were feeling. This proved so popular that we had to reprint the entry forms on three occasions. In October our annual quiz evening held in the Primary School saw a large number of people have an enjoyable evening. As in previous years some of our members gave their time and advice in helping at the School gardening club. Monthly trips were organised on weekday mornings to gardens in Mid Kent and East Sussex which gave members a chance to visit or revisit new or old favourite places. We also organised a pre Christmas outing to a garden centre followed by a dinner in a restaurant. Our Chairman Gordon Temme has stepped down after 17 years and the Society is greatly indebted to him for his hard work during this time. We are delighted and grateful that our sponsors Rumwood Nurseries of Langley and Highgrove of Staplehurst kindly continue to support us. Despite rising costs our finances remain steady and we look forward with confidence to the coming year as a thriving and friendly society. Our Annual General Meeting takes place on the first Friday in December which is followed by cheese and wine and a short quiz, and always turns out to be a fun evening. Our other meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month in the Village Centre South Hall at 8pm and all are welcome.

STAPLEHURST INTEREST GROUP

STAPLEHURST INTEREST GROUP has now been meeting for a programme of activities chosen by the members for eight years. We meet in the Schoolroom behind the United Reformed Church every Thursday morning from 10 until noon. We enjoy a varied diet of speakers, games, participation activities and occasional trips out. We aim to ensure everyone laughs a lot, makes new friends and widens their interests. We have a group of regulars who come every week and a lot of members who come whenever they can. (It may, of course, be for the refreshments and chat.) We thank Councillor Lusty for his support and a grant to aid visual presentations. Of course, if YOU have a desire to talk to our group about anything that interests you, you would be guaranteed a welcome from STAPLEHURST INTEREST GROUP.

Joan and Malcolm Buller

STAPLEHURST NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Thanks to a small team of dedicated supporters, Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch is still active for the good of the village. Peering through bedroom curtains at the dead of night is not our main activity although one member helped secure the arrest of 8 vandals who were committing criminal damage in the High Street. Our 23 co-ordinators, spread fairly evenly throughout the village, are supported by Maidstone Police Headquarters. Their regular reports are circulated within our group with the intention of further distribution to their neighbours. Alerts relating to suspect callers, rogue traders, instances of local crimes, phone call and other scams have all been reported in this way in the hope that our actions alert at least some villagers and thereby help our local police. We hold open meetings every other month at the McCabe Centre at 5.30 pm, such meetings being advertised in the Parish Magazine and the Kent Messenger. Whenever their work commitments permit either PC Pennicott or PCSO Gardner or Parish Warden Chris Lomax attend to give us a brief summary of local security issues. We hold open meetings every other month at the McCabe Centre. We started by holding them at 7.30 pm in order to attract commuters but even that time was too early for them so we switched to meeting at 5.30 in order to help our more regular attendees. When he is not on actively on patrol PC Pennicott comes along to give us a report covering recent events in the area. PCSO Peter Gardner also attends some of our meetings. The main purpose of these meetings is to up-date each other and discuss local home security issues. More recently we have been updating the NhW page on the village website but Intend is to make more efficient use of it.

David Ralph
Chairman, Staplehurst Neighbourhood Watch

STAPLEHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL & PTA

The academic school year 2009/2010 has once again been one of huge team effort and significant success both for the school itself and its PTA. The school was delighted to achieve a consistently improving Ofsted Report in May 2009. Log onto [www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/\(id\)/108990](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/(id)/108990) for full independent details. The PTA, working closely with the school to establish where its fundraising efforts can be best utilised, have earmarked substantial amounts of their resources both for the new 'Children's Kitchen' and towards the refurbishment of the school swimming pool, together with lesser, but significantly useful amounts, to the school's Gardening Club and towards 'wet play' equipment. Additional new books have been ordered for one of the school's libraries and an interactive whiteboard is to be purchased for use by the Early Years children thus ensuring that every Staplehurst School pupil has access to and education in the 'technological age' that we now live in. The PTA would like to thank all the parents and carers of its pupils for their magnificent support again this year without whom the Christmas Fair, school discos and many other extra curricula activities could not take place. Similarly, we would like to extend a massive 'thank you' to Ken Collins who this year chose to support the school 'Swimming Pool' fund with the sale of his hand drawn calendars and to all those people that bought one! Thank you. Further details regarding the school itself or the PTA can be obtained from the school's head teacher, Mrs Annemarie Bolt. The school's telephone number is 01580 891765.

Stuart Tasker Staplehurst School PTA Chairman 2009/2010

STAPLEHURST WI

2009 was marred by the protracted illness and death of a long-time member, Shirley Jackson. Over the years, Shirley held just about every position in the WI – all of them with great enthusiasm. She is still missed by her many friends.

Our many interesting and varied programs started off with 'Despatches from the Home Front'; war diaries of a lady who lived on the south coast during WW2. The annual craft show in Brighton was enjoyed, as always, by the many crafters in our group. A lady from M&S talking about bra fitting was a revelation to us all, but I'm not sure how many ladies took up her invitation to get a personal fitting. 'Style for the ever 40 Woman' encouraged everyone to keep their wardrobe up dated. The young lady arrived with a very small suitcase that she said held all her summer wardrobe including, a pair of 6" heels that we decided were a little too up-to-date for us! In the spring we had a rainy day at Yalding Organic Gardens and held a very successful Clay Pigeon Shoot. Our other meetings included a wonderful quilt display and a bee keeper who talked about the worldwide problem of the decimation of the bee population. We had our own Bastille Day at our July meeting with a little skit about the revolution and, in August held our annual Garden when the sun actually shone after two years of rain and wind. The Produce Show in September was a great success. During the year many members attended programs at other WIs in the area and there have been quiz shows and beetle drives, as well.

THE WEALD CLUB FOR THE DISABLED

The Club is a Branch of the Kent Association for Disabled People a registered charity. The Club meets regularly on Fridays at The McCabe Centre for social activities and a cooked lunch. The 20 members, some local and others from Marden, Loose, Sutton Valence and Maidstone are transported in our specially adapted mini-bus. We have 20 Volunteer workers, including 4 drivers. Summer outings have been arranged to Whitstable, Tankerton, Drusillas Zoo and Lathe Barn Romney Marsh. The Vehicle is also used for other Clubs in the Community including The Thursday Lunch Club and Good Companions, and monthly by Staplehurst Manor Nursing Home. Donations are received from these organisations towards running costs. All other costs are met by the members and volunteers.

Ken Collins