

# Village Update

WINTER 2009

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

## STATION IMPROVEMENTS FINALLY COMPLETED

Tuesday 17th November was the official opening by Ann Widdecombe MP for the new bridge at Staplehurst Station. Funded by the Department for Transport under the "Railways for All" programme at a cost of some £2.8 million, the bridge has wider stairways than the previous fifty-year-old concrete bridge, and lifts on both sides. The lifts will be freely available when the station is staffed. At other times, passengers wanting to use the lift can press a button to contact the Southeastern Railway control room. The person waiting will be checked by closed-circuit television; the lifts can then be unlocked remotely. The project has also included the provision of four disabled parking bays in the car park close to the station entrance, and replacement of the waiting shelter on the London-bound platform. The old concrete footbridge will be kept for the time being. The doors to the booking office have been converted to power operation with buttons at a convenient height for wheelchair users, and an accessible toilet (unlocked by a RADAR key) has been provided.



(l-r) Ann Widdecombe MP, Borough Councillor Richard Lusty, Trev Cross and Jon Hay-Campbell, Southeastern.

Assistance Points are installed on both platforms, so that passengers can get help or information when the station is not staffed.

## WHERE'S THE 'Q'?

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme provides a benchmark minimum standard. Staplehurst was due to apply for re-accreditation in 2009. Two-thirds of Councillors must be elected (not co-opted) at the time the application is submitted. Staplehurst Parish Council has 15 members, 9 of whom have been elected; the required minimum is 10 out of 15.

For this reason only, Staplehurst cannot at the moment be considered for re-accreditation and cannot use the Quality Council logo you have previously seen on the front page of the Village Update. The Kent Association of Local Councils acknowledges that Staplehurst remains "unquestionably a Quality Council".

# Staplehurst

*Parish Council*

## PAVEMENTS ARE FOR PEDESTRIANS

Pavements are not for cars, bicycles or hedges! Emma, Ian and Trev, wheelchair users from Sobell Lodge, recently demonstrated to some Parish Councillors the difficulties they experience when trying to venture out on Staplehurst pavements. They took information leaflets with them to leave on thoughtlessly-parked vehicles. The group was accompanied by PC Marc Pennicott, PCSO Pete Gardner and KCC Community Warden Chris Lomax, who took time to explain to motorists why it is anti-social to park so as to block the pavement.

Parking on the road, where it is allowed, helps to slow down traffic – which the police welcome as much as residents of



(l-r) Ian Thomas, a volunteer and PC Marc Pennicott

Staplehurst. Parking on the pavement causes an obstruction which can be in breach of the Highway Code rules 145 and 244. Cars are not more important than people. Wheelchair users, those with pushchairs, elderly people with walking aids and other vulnerable pedestrians need clear access. Cycling on the pavement is a danger to pedestrians. A person who is hard of hearing may not hear a bicycle bell. Hedges growing over the pavement make it hard to walk safely and easily. If you are a householder whose hedge overhangs the pavement, please cut it back. There will be no birds nesting in your hedge at this time of year.

## JUBILEE SPORTS FIELD

Runners, skateboarders, model aeroplane and kite flyers use the field as well as the Guides and the Football Club, although nobody representing these other users came to the first meeting of the new Management Committee on 22nd October. The next meeting is on 21st January at 8pm in the Kathie Lamb Guide Centre. Please do come with your ideas. There is now a tarmac surface on most of the parking area. Two disabled parking bays will be marked out. There are 40 keen young footballers between 5 and 7 years old in the Saturday morning Development Group, which has a waiting list. John Bowen has run this group for 30 years. Some members of the current Staplehurst and Monarchs United FC Veterans Men's Team were trained by John – what a splendid record. In addition to the Veterans, there are three men's teams.

### Staplehurst Monarchs FC

The Club is delighted to have twelve teams from Under 8 to Under 16 this year, plus the Development Group for the younger children. For the first time in the Club's history, we have a Girls' team at the U-12 level and a team playing in the Kent Youth League too. The 2008/2009 season was a magnificent one for the Monarchs both on and off the pitch, with the completion of the fabulous new facilities at the Jubilee Field, in addition to individual team successes. Last season's U-9s finished runners-up in the Premier Division, whilst the U-11s won the League and Cup Double for the third year in a row. Congratulations also to the U-11 Colts team who won their division and the U-12s who narrowly lost in their Cup Final. The 2009/2010 season is well under way. More information and contact details can be found at the Monarchs' website, [www.staplehurstmonarchs.co.uk](http://www.staplehurstmonarchs.co.uk) or from the Club Secretary, Stuart Tasker: Home **01580 891125** Mobile **0772 901 7211**

## STAPLEHURST CRICKET & TENNIS CLUB

There are over 120 junior cricketers ages 6-15. Teams at Under-11, U-13 and U-15 compete in the Weald league with teams at other age groups playing "friendlies". This year, the unbeaten U-13s won both league and cup competitions. The core of the 21-strong squad has been with the Club since the ages of 7 or 8 while at Staplehurst school. Under-11 captain, Oliver Henson, was recently selected for the Kent County squad and a number of others play district cricket, but the emphasis is on providing cricket for as many as want to play, irrespective of ability. The 14-week summer Sunday morning training programme is the main focus. There is also indoor winter training from the end of January.

Junior tennis coaching, at ages 5+, takes place five evenings per week during term time throughout the year for a small additional cost – currently around £5 per hour. There is an annual junior tennis tournament in August and the Club hopes shortly to launch a series of LTA-ranking mini-tournaments. For further information, see the Club websites at [www.staplehurstcricket.com](http://www.staplehurstcricket.com) and [www.staplehursttennis.com](http://www.staplehursttennis.com). Club Chairman John Swannick

If you would like news of your local organisation to be included in the Village Update, please contact the Parish Office

# COLD CALLING CONTROL ZONES

On 14th October Staplehurst joined other parishes in having a COLD CALLING CONTROL ZONE. The Maidstone Neighbourhood Watch Officer, Lorraine Hemphrey, and Jason Riley from Trading Standards gave excellent advice at the launch. We hope that you have noticed that signs have been placed around the parish. This scheme is to help protect our residents and legitimate traders from bogus callers and rogue traders.

Guidance includes:-

- lock your back door before answering the front door;
- ask to see identification;
- if no ID, do not let them in;
- if not a pre-arranged visit, ask them to return when it suits you;
- contact their organisation to check.

A very useful leaflet is available from your local Neighbourhood Watch and the Parish Office.

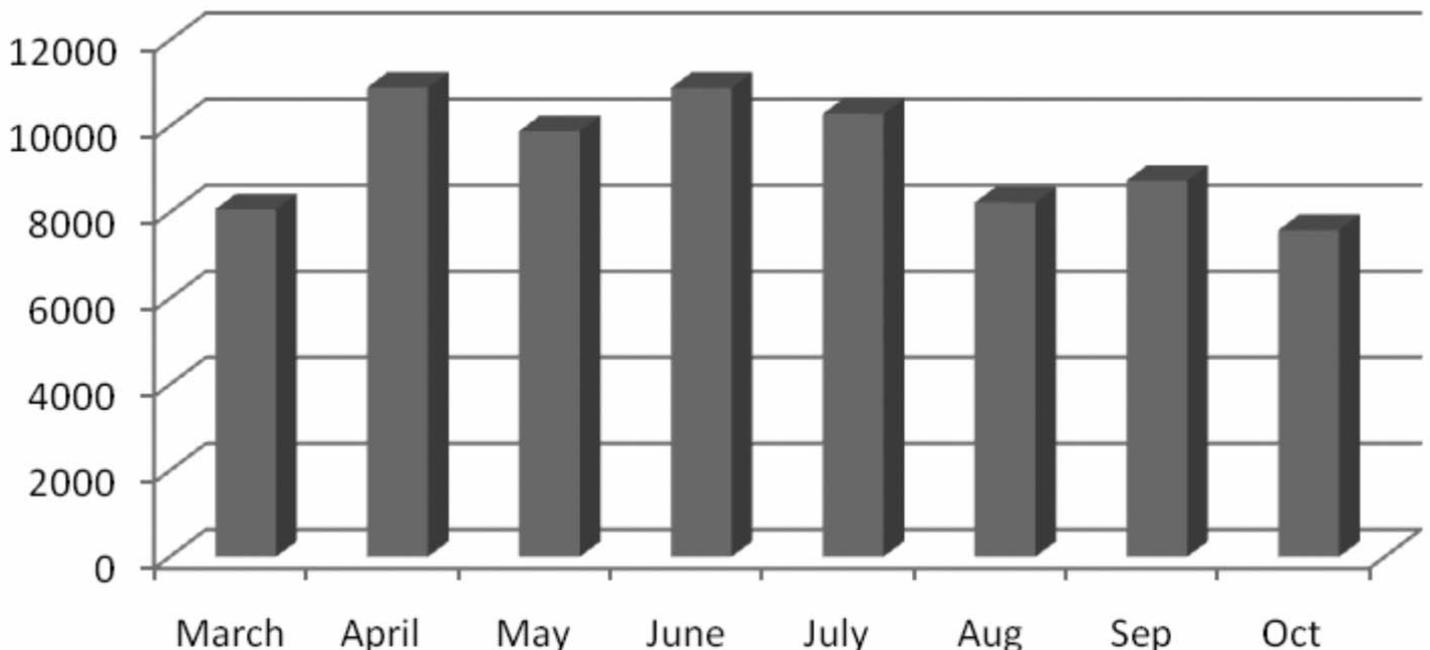
# WEB SPOTTING

The new version of the village website and the restyled Forum have been live for just over six months now, so we thought we'd do a trawl of the stats to see what they tell us. On average each month the website gets 8,500 'hits' – that's the total number of viewings, and comes from 1,800 unique visitors. This could mean that 25% of the population of the village visit the website each month, or nearly half the adult population.

However, you may be surprised to discover that visits to the village website come from all over the world. Nearly 10% of the hits come from outside the UK. The USA lead the way with 143 visits in August, followed by France with 53, Puerto Rico 37, Canada 22, Australia

12, whilst Ukraine and Brazil both score 10. There were visits to the website from 36 other countries, including Nigeria, Malaysia and Argentina. The most popular destination on the website is the Forum topics page, accounting for 40% of all hits. Forum activity remains high with 80% of visitors going on to read a posting. Each visitor views over 3 other pages on average and spends just over 4 minutes on the site per visit. Last month 17% of visitors were people viewing the website for the first time. Looking at how people use the website, the pages they visit and how long they spend on each page, will help us to improve the website for users.

## Visits per Month



# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

We would like to take this opportunity of wishing everyone in the Parish Merry Christmas and very best wishes for 2010. In previous years, the Parish Council has put up eight Christmas trees with lights at the Parade. During 2009, the owners of the Parade have made it clear that the Parade is in private ownership. The Parish Council has therefore written to the owners to ask for permission to put up decorations and for a contribution towards the cost. There has been no response. The Parish Council will not this year provide at parish expense Christmas decorations, trees or lights

above the shops at the Parade. The budget will be used instead to extend Christmas Lights along Station Road to link Market Street to the High Street.

The Parish Council is pleased to welcome Helen Warmington as assistant to Sue Bassett, the parish clerk. We hope Helen finds her role of interest and an enjoyable experience.

We also report as of Monday 2nd November Margaret Arger is the new Chairman of Planning.

*Margaret Arger*

# PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Maidstone Borough Council has decided it will no longer fully fund the cost of the toilet facilities at Bell Lane or near the Library. This allows MBC to show a reduction in spending in MBC's budget. A few vandals have made the toilets near the Library almost unusable. When MBC decided to replace a simple manual lock-up system with remotely operated electronic locks, the Parish Council warned that it would cause problems. It has; rather than saving MBC money, it has made the facilities near the Library particularly costly for MBC to maintain due to malicious damage. Unless the Parish takes on the cost of providing public conveniences, they will close, despite the large sum the Parish has itself spent on their provision. If a local business makes its own toilets available for public use, or the Parish takes over control of the facilities, MBC would give a small amount of money towards the maintenance, provided its requirements are met. Cllr. Hotson has

offered to apply his devolved budget to assist with the cost of improving the Bell Lane site and he considers this is the facility to keep open. Consultation with MBC continues, as the Parish Council believes that at least one, if not both, public conveniences should be kept open.

# HIGHWAYS

Cllr. Eric Hotson has a Kent Highways Fund. The Parish Council has asked for his support to provide a sign to the Health Centre; dropped kerbs in Station Approach; and for the 30 mph sign in Marden Road to be moved.

## Parish Council Information

### COUNCILLORS

Margaret Arger (Chairman and Chairman of Planning)

John Perry (Vice Chairman)

Bill Best

Joan Buller

Tom Burnham

Paul Butcher

Jenny Fairfax

Barry Franks

Paul Kelly

Angela Knowlden (Chairman of Amenities)

Roger Munn

John Reardon

Matt Sankey

Steve Smith

Peter Spearink

### CLERK

Mrs Sue Bassett

### ASSISTANT to CLERK

Mrs Helen Warmington

### Address:

The Parish Office

Village Centre

High Street

Staplehurst TN12 0BJ

Email: [staplehurst1@btconnect.com](mailto:staplehurst1@btconnect.com)

Tel/fax: 01580 891761

**Opening hours:** 9am to 1pm Mondays to Fridays, except on Thursdays when it is by appointment.

Borough Councillor Lusty holds a Council Surgery at the Library on the last Saturday of each month from 10am to 12pm. This is supported by a Parish Councillor and one of the community policing team; Community Warden Chris Lomax, PC Marc Pennicott or PCSO Pete Gardner.

You are welcome to talk through any local problems or ask questions about local issues with any or all of these Councillors and officers.