

## About Staplehurst Marriages

### Source of Data

The source of the data is the All Saints Parish registers. The registers are held at the Kent History and Library Centre (reference P347) in Maidstone and are available to view on microfilm. The records begin in 1538, and except for the period during the civil war, there is a full set of records.

### General Notes on the Transcription

I have tried to copy the data as it is recorded although it has been formatted to allow consistent style and relatively easy searching.

Not included in the transcription are notes regularly entered by the vicar indicating when he had copied the data for the Archbishop's meeting.

Surnames have been capitalised as is the general convention.

I have copied the spellings of surnames and forenames as they are entered in the register. Spellings differ greatly dependent on the scribe. Most people could not read or write and the scribe spelt the name as he heard it. This is the primary reason for sorting the file into alphabetical order as a search on surname would be very hit or miss.

Where there is a '?' entered, it indicates the information was illegible, while a blank indicates there was no data entered.

### Julian / Gregorian Dates

Until 1752, the Julian calendar was used in England and the new year began on Lady Day (25 March) rather than on 1 January as we know it today. This can lead to confusion on dates. I have recorded the year as per the register and, for the period

1 January to the 24 March, have included the Gregorian year after the character '/'.  
For instance: ' 1693/94 15 Jan'

### Abbreviations

A few abbreviations have been used to save space.

wid.	Widow or Widower
Lic.	Married by licence
B	Married after Banns
OTP	Of this Parish
S of	Son of
D of	Daughter of
f/a	of full age
Ba	Bachelor
Sp	Spinster
W	Widow / Widower

b. (followed by a date) Date of birth.

## **Staplehurst Marriages 1538 – 1695**

At this time period, 1538 to 1596, the registers were written in freeform with no separation of baptism, marriages or burials. To enable searching and to be consistent with accepted standards, I have separated the baptisms, burials and marriages. The data has been entered in tabular format but with as much detail as realistic to reflect the information held in the register. Spelling is as per the register while dates have all been standardised. I have used the notes column to add any additional information found.

These first years of the registers give basic details of the parties marrying. Entries are usually no more than 'William Acton married Mary Luck'. Occasionally they mention if one of the party is widowed or from another parish. The spelling of names varies greatly.

Pages 17 & 18 of the original register, covering end of March to 15 July 1541, have been torn out and the data is missing.

There are several periods when significant political and religious upheaval had a major impact on the register.

During the reign of Queen Mary (1553 – 1558), The Rector of Staplehurst, Richard Beseley, was forced into exile as a married minister. There is a period immediately in 1553 when the register is suspect. By 1557, the registers appear mostly in Latin. Mary's death is noted in November 1558 and immediately afterwards there is a backlash by the parishioners of Staplehurst. There are instances of burials taking place in the middle of the night and being refused burial rights. In 1559, there are very few entries in the register but 1560 sees an improvement.

In 1640 Cromwell is elected to parliament for the second time and is openly critical of King Charles. By 1642, there is widespread unrest, and in April 1642 following parliament taking control of the militia, we see major changes taking place in the register of Staplehurst. From April of 1642, the register becomes very confused. Detail becomes vague, spelling becomes worse and then at the end of June 1643, the entries are out of sequence and dates are either missing or suspect. This is partially explained by the following comment entered in the register.

“Anno 1642

*Johannis Browne olim Rector et egregie doctus sed oppidanorum injuriis et temporum infoelicitate sequestratur ab Ecclesia suum infortunium deplorans inimicorum malitiam condonans Staplehursti quamvis indigao pacem ac salutem exoptans mortem obit Jan. 6. 1645.”*

"In the year 1642

"John Brown once Rector and eminently learned, but who was deprived of the church of Staplehurst by the injuries of the townspeople and the infelicity of

the times, despairing of his misfortune and forgiving the malice of his enemies, [and] although unworthy, hoping for peace and salvation, died on the 6th of January 1645."

*Translation kindly provided by Mark Harris.*

Until 1664, the entries are few and erratic. From 1664, we see an improvement in the quality of the entries in the register.

### **Marriages 1695 to 1792**

**Reference: P347 1/4** includes marriages from the beginning of 1695 until the end of Feb 1754.

**Reference: P347 1/10** includes marriages from July 1754 with the last entry 1 Nov 1809.

**Reference: P347 1/11** includes marriages from 24 Nov 1809 until 25 Dec 1812.

For consistency with Baptisms and Burials, I have created 2 pages covering 1695 to 1792 and 1793 to 1812.

I have copied the spellings of surnames and forenames as they are entered in the register. Spellings differ greatly dependent on the scribe. Most people could not read or write and the scribe spelt the name as he heard it. This is the primary reason for sorting the file into alphabetical order as a search on surname would be very hit or miss. The marriages can be viewed sorted by Grooms' surname or by Brides' surname..

Before 1754, marriages were entered in freeform. They would generally take the form:

**" Oct 5 Married Benjamin Wilding of the Parish of East Sutton & Elisabeth Watcherst of this Parish. "**

In the column headed Notes, where the couple were married by licence, this is indicated with 'by Lic.' an abbreviation of Licence.

The Notes column also contains information about the place of abode.

I have tried to save space by combining bride and groom notes and indicating which is applicable by adding a B or G to the beginning of the note.

From 1754, the register includes the names of witnesses. I have not included this information but there is the potential to do so in the future. I would be interested in your comments.

It is worth noting here that many residents of Staplehurst married elsewhere. Sometimes it is a situation where the bride or groom is from another parish and they marry there. But there are many other instances where there is not a known reason.

I have a collection of marriages of Staplehurst residents who married in other parishes but it is far from complete. If you have any you would like to contribute, I would be delighted to hear from you. I shall include my collection in the next update of the site.

### **About Marriages 1793 to 1812**

From 1754 the marriage registers are standardised forms. The forms include witnesses to the marriage but these have not been included in the transcription as of yet.

The marriages are sorted by Groom's surname or by Bride's surname. To save space across the page, I have combined bride and groom notes, indicating with a B or G whom the note refers to. Generally these notes hold the parish the couple are from and occasionally indicate a status of widow or widower. OTP is an abbreviation for 'of this parish'. The Notes column also identifies if they were married by license.

It is worth noting here (again) that many residents of Staplehurst married elsewhere. Sometimes it is a situation where the bride or groom is from another parish and they marry there. But there are many other instances where there is not a known reason.

I have a collection of marriages of Staplehurst residents who married in other parishes but it is far from complete. If you have any you would like to contribute, I would be delighted to hear from you.

### **About Marriage 1813 to 1837**

A new book begins in 1813 (Reference P347 1/12) ending May 1837. This book begins to record the status of the bride and groom from 1828 regularly and occasionally before. Ba stands for Bachelor, Sp for Spinster and W for Widow or Widower.

The Notes column indicates if they were married by license (Lic.) or banns. OTP indicates they were 'of this parish'.

### **About Marriages 1837 to 1883**

Another new book with 500 marriages covering August 1837 to August 1883. Reference P347 1/12. It is the last marriage register held at the archives; all the later marriages are still held by the parish church.

In 1837, it became necessary for all marriages, baptism and burials to be reported to the Register General. Therefore, all the marriages recorded within this register should be found in the Records Office with a possible exception of the first few.

This register holds much more detail than earlier ones and includes age (often shown as 'f/a' meaning of full age), marital status (Ba - Bachelor, Sp - Spinster, or

W - widow of widower), occupation, father of the groom and bride and their occupation.