

# About All Saints Parish Church In Staplehurst

Staplehurst All Saints Parish Church is thought to date from around 1150. It lies at the top of the hill within Staplehurst village, a bit back from the road and somewhat hidden from view by cottages on the road side.

The church was probably originally built to serve the remote dens or homesteads in the area which date back to Anglo Saxon time. The church attracted further settlement and Staplehurst grew into a small settlement or village. Staplehurst is not mentioned in the doomsday book but that is true for other settlements in the Weald whereby the only record is reference to dens which were part of manorial holdings above the Chart Hills. The earliest surviving tax record for Staplehurst is dated 1232 and is held at the National Archives in Kew (reference E179/123/2).

The church has been the pivot of village life for 750 years. It has not always been an easy relationship, there are many instances of discord between the church and the parishioners; ranging from disagreements on tithes to heresy trials and

martyrdom. Continental influence meant there was early discord between the pre Tutor Catholic church and the anti popish politics favoured by some. The Reformation resulted in religious, social and economic upheaval. By the end of the 16th century, the church was in a sorry state of repair and it wasn't until after the restoration of King Charles that major repairs took place.

Throughout the historical records there are references to the role of the church in both civil and religious capacity. The leading citizens of Staplehurst, acting as Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor, managed the parish affairs. In this way, the community took care of the poor, the old, the sick and the orphans. Highway surveyors were held responsible for the state of the roads and the Wealden roads were notorious for being impassable in poor weather.

The history of All Saints Parish Church and the history of Staplehurst are interwoven such as to be one and the same.