

About Staplehurst Baptisms.

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.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1538 – 1695

At this time period, 1538 to 1695, 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.

Initially, the baptisms included the name of the father only. It was not until 1634 that it the registers began to consistently show the mother's name as well. Be aware the spelling is erratic and changes over time and is really dependent on the clerk entering the data originally. In some instances, god parents are included.

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. However, by this time, the non conformist movement was taking place with both the Baptist at Spilshill and the Congregational, headed by Daniel Poyntell, were present in the village of Staplehurst. The volume of entry in the register reflects this.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1695 - 1792

During this period the data was recorded in the register freeform. Generally it would be entered such as:

'1792 Oct. 22nd Thomas son of Solomon Allen and Alice his wife.'

In most instances that is all the data that is recorded. Where there is additional information, this has been recorded in the last column under the heading 'Notes'.

Dates are recorded in this register in various formats including roman numerals, unusual spellings and abbreviations. These have all been standardised to current general practice (see also Julian / Gregorian Dates below).

Staplehurst Baptisms 1793 - 1812

Reference: P347 1/5.

In 1793, the baptisms are recorded in a standard form issued to all churches. The data also now includes the date of birth of the child which has been included in the column headed 'Notes'. Occasionally, particularly for illegitimate children, there is an additional note written and this is also included in the column headed 'Notes' on the far right hand side.

From 1793 to 1812, there is no reference to 'son' or 'daughter' in the register and the first name is the only means of identifying the sex of the child. Fortunately, except for the odd case, the sex of the child is fairly obvious.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1813 - 1843

Reference: P347 1/6

The new book utilises standard forms which have changed from the previous book. The date of birth is now only available in exceptional situations, however, we now have the occupation of the father (except for illegitimate children). This data is found in the column headed 'Notes'.

The spelling used has standardised in comparison to previous periods but there is still sufficient variation that you will need to view all possibilities. A search using a browser could overlook an unusual spelling. The data is sorted in surname order and then year.

Unless otherwise stated, the families are resident in Staplehurst at the time of the baptism. Any additional information in the register has been included in the notes column.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1844 - 1864

Reference: P347 1/7

The new book uses standard forms. There are about 800 entries in the book. Date of birth is no longer available. It is now not unusual to see a family baptising several children at one time; but there is no indication of age or other additional information besides that required by the form.

Unless otherwise stated, the register holds 'Staplehurst' in the column headed abode. This has not been included as almost all records have this entry. Where abode is specified as different, it has been included in the column headed 'Notes'. The notes column also holds the occupation of the father. This has been entered within brackets. Where the child is illegitimate, then the brackets hold the register entered reference which is generally 'baseborn' or 'single woman'.

It is now not uncommon for children to be given multiple forename's and all forenames have been entered.

The data has been sorted in surname order and then year.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1864 - 1882

Reference: P347 1/8

The new book uses standard forms. There are about 800 entries in the book. In November 1880, the clerk began writing the date of birth in the margin. This information has been included in the notes column. In all other respects, the book is in the same format as the previous book. As abode is almost always Staplehurst, only the exceptions are noted; again in the notes column along with the occupation of the father.

The data has been sorted in surname order and then year.

Staplehurst Baptisms 1882 - 1900

Reference: P347 1/9

This is the final book held in the archives at the Centre for Kentish studies. The register ends in September 1902 but in accordance with the agreement I made with

the parish church, I have transcribed only to the end of 1900.

The book holds 800 entries. Almost all the entries have a date of birth written in the margin which has been included in the Notes column. The abode of the family is almost always Staplehurst and if that is all that has been entered in the register, it has not been noted. However, in 1892, the clerk began to enter a fuller address (name of house or road) and I have recorded whatever is held. Frequently it gives the name of the house followed by 'Staplehurst' which is what is recorded in the Notes column. Occasionally, all that is recorded is the name of the house.

Whenever the residence is not Staplehurst, the name of the parish is entered in the register without further detail.

Occupation is also included in the notes column enclosed in brackets.

The data has been sorted in surname order and then year.

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, I 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

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