

About Staplehurst Burials

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

BURIALS

Staplehurst Burials 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 are rich with notes added to the entry by the cleric and gives far more data generally than future registers about who the person was. For instance it may read 'wife of', or 'son of' . Occasionally there is extra details; a few being in Latin.

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.

Burials 1695 - 1792

Reference P347 1/4

During this period the burial data was recorded in the register freeform. The amount of detail entered is dependent on the scribe. Generally it would be entered such as:

" May 1 Buried Sarah Daughter of John Simmons and Ann his wife"

Other times it is very simple with just:

" April 21 Buried George Chittenden "

Until 1781 it is rare that an age is entered and, when it is, it is usually because the person had lived to an exceptionally old age for the time period. Children can be identified as generally they are entered as sons or daughters with at least the father's name given. Women are sometimes described in terms of their husband and often it is noted if they are widows.

" Feb 20 Buried ye wife of John Usborne"

" May 28 Buried Widdow Smith"

Whenever there is additional information above the name and date, I have included it in the column headed 'Notes'.

From March 1700 until October 1702, there was written against most entries the words 'not qualified'. This was written in a different hand and at a later date to the original entry. It appears to be referring to the cleric not being qualified to undertake the burial, but that is only a assumption.

On the inside of the back cover of this register there is a note entered by the rector, Michael Burton, in 1755 which he thought worthy of note because of the exceptional age of 5 men.

"Buried July 3 1757 at Staplehurst John Webb Senior aged 90 odd
Feb 1755 Brown dyed above 92 years buried at Sutton.
John Knight Feb 16 above 90
Solomon Chexfield the same day – 87
Tolhurst - 90 odd

The above amount of the age of these five people was delivered to me & I believe the ? & I thought to enter it here as a note worthy of observation on account of their ages.

J.M Burton
Rector 1755"

"NB Brown was a scotchman but had lived here a great many years & was buried at

T . Sutton.

Tolhurst was buried at Cranbrook

Webb	90
Brown	92
Knight or Knightly	90
Tollhurst	90
Chexfield	87

449 years "

Burials 1793 to 1812

Reference P347 1/5

From 1793, the burials are entered on standard forms, with 10 entries per page and each page numbered. The age of the person buried is now also recorded and the parish the person is from. OTP is an abbreviation for "of this parish". Each entry is signed by the officiating cleric. In a small number of cases, additional information is entered and this is included in the column headed 'Notes'. In the very rare instance, it includes a reference to cause of death such as "small pox" or reference to the person being from the poor house. I think poor house references are there more to identify who is to pay for the burial than any other reason and most references are included between 1804 and 1806.

Burials 1813 - 1873

Reference P347 1/15

The new pre formatted book now contains ages for all entries. Place of abode is recorded in the register but I have only included entries which are not Staplehurst so that in all cases where an abode is not entered it is understood to be Staplehurst.

The spelling is much more standardised but there are still variations particularly when the scribe changes.

Each entry in the register is signed by the officiating cleric but this information has not been transcribed.

Burials after 1873 are not yet available in the archives.