



**T**he Organ - The first organ after the reformation was installed in the nave, now the choir vestry. The current organ shown here was built by Father Willis.

**T**he South Door - The South Door is the church's best known historical feature. It has been authoritatively dated to 1050, which means that it displays some of the oldest ironwork in England still in situ.

It tells the story of Ragnarok, the Norse Day of Judgement,

which starts with a cockerel crowing and waking Heimdall, the watchman, who blows his horn Gjallir to call the gods to battle. Nature is in confusion and the seals rush on to the land.



Jormungandr, the Midgard Serpent (who has grown until he encircles the world) and other monsters on the Ship of the Dead fight the gods.

The serpent is shown wriggling, and again, stretched in death, vanquished by Thor. Surt, the sunwheel, throws sheets of flame over the earth. The stars fall, while above flies Nithhoggr, who feeds on the slain. But above him is a cross, symbol of a new hope coming and a Christian conclusion to the Norse legend.

**T**he new kitchen and toilet - This is the latest addition to the church, completed in March 2006.

The facilities have become a fantastic asset to the church supporting a wide range of activities including concerts, "All Age Workshops" and Parish Breakfasts.



Many of these activities are part of the life of the village and some activities attract visitors from outside Staplehurst.

The kitchen facilities have also been made available for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.



## A Short Historical Description of the Parish Church of All Saints', Staplehurst



### Welcome

We hope you enjoy looking around this beautiful church which has stood here since the year 1100.

Web Site:

[www.allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk](http://www.allsaintsstaplehurst.co.uk)

**E**arly Church History - The Church stands on a hill that rises above the flat Weald once a dense forest. A post was put upon this ridge to mark the spot and was named Staplehurst- Post Wood. Staplehurst lies on the A229 an old Roman Road running from Rochester to Hastings. The Church's North Wall may be Saxon, having herringbone masonry made of local limestone and a few worn sandstone blocks. The Church had a chancel, a nave and probably a low south tower when the south door was fitted and from which the gargoyle, now on the windowsill in the south aisle, may have fallen.

**T**he West Tower - Construction started between 1400 and 1425. It has a stairway turret and a fine perpendicular doorway. The two coronetted heads on either side of the door probably depict King Henry V and his Queen, or Lord and Lady Bouchier who died in 1432. The centre coat of arms, is either Lord Bouchier's or that of John de Somery. On the north spandrel is an engrailed cross, the arms of the Haute family. Until 1673 the church tower



had a spire but was blown down in what was described as a "great wind". The evidence for this is still visible in the church belfry where the supporting beams are still in place.

**T**he Bells - Records show that between 1594 and 1748, bells were added piecemeal until Staplehurst grew to a ring of 5. In 1885 the treble, 2nd, 3rd and tenor were recast and 3 bells added to make 8 bells by Mears & Stainbank. In 1996 the wooden frame was replaced with a steel one and two new trebles added by Whitechapel foundry to make 10.



7 of the 8 bells from 1885 were retuned leaving the current ninth, cast in 1605 by Joseph Hatch, untouched.

**T**he Nave and Aisle - On the North wall of the nave are renewed windows decorated in the fourteenth century style. By the Victorian pulpit is a spiral staircase which led to the high cross above the roodscreen. The aisle roof is tiebeam and kingpost construction dating from the fourteenth century. By the south door is a fifteenth century water stoop whilst the arch in the width of the south wall may be a sacred heart sepulchre. The only fragment of the medieval stained glass windows to survive the reformation when Queen Elizabeth ordered all stained glass to be destroyed in 1559 is mounted on a window ledge next to the south door.



**T**he fonts - We have 2 fonts, the original dates back to 1100 and was found acting as a feeding trough on a local farm. It was carved from a single block of very hard Kentish Ragstone and was replaced by a new font in 1815 which now stands to the east of the porch. The original font is now located between the chancel and the chapel and is currently in use.



**T**he Anchorite's Cell - This was originally accessed from the church through the round opening in the north wall. The door of the cell was blocked up so that the occupant depended on alms left on the ledge in the church. The floor of the cell was excavated in 1936 and can be seen outside.



**T**he Chapel - Built in the fifteenth century with a private door that has its own holy water stoup. The altar tomb made of Bethersden marble is that of Walter Mayney of Spilsill and was originally located where the altar is now. After the first world war the chapel was redecorated and renamed St. George's Chapel and became the village War Memorial.

