



EXPLORE THE HERITAGE OF THE HOP PICKERS LINE

Between 1892 and 1961 a single-line steam railway, developed by the talented young engineer Holman Fred Stephens, linked the rural communities of Paddock Wood, Horsmonden, Goudhurst, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst.

It also brought thousands of residents from the East End of London to the area every summer for their annual hop-picking 'holiday' in this area of Kent, the Garden of England, thus earning this iconic little railway the proud nickname of the 'Hop Pickers Line'.

The two coach pull-and-push set drawn by a Wainwright H Class in the line's latter years used a short bay platform on the 'up' side here at Paddock Wood, the track bed now forming part of the supermarket car park.

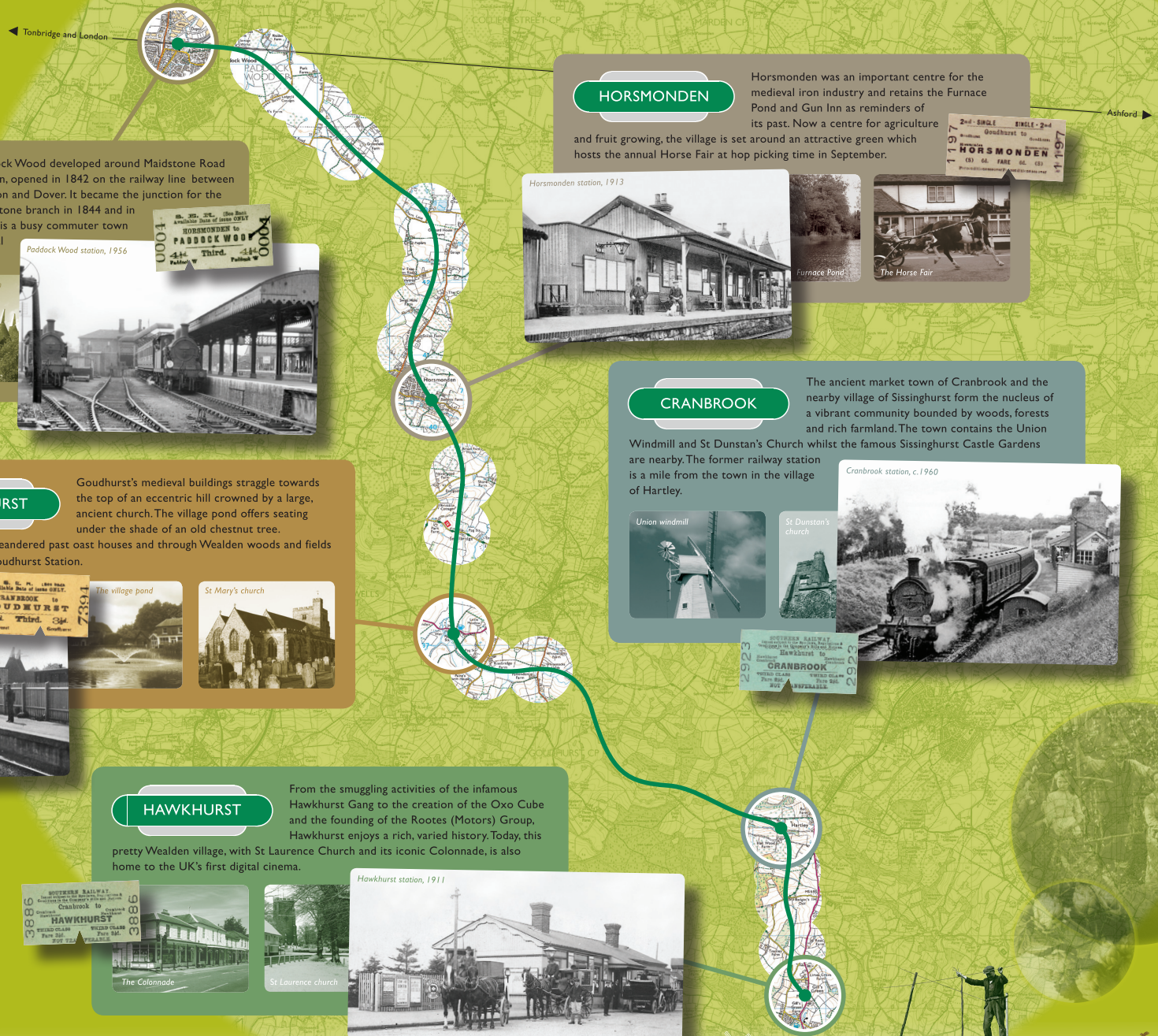
The bustling town of Paddock Wood, which owes its existence to the arrival of the main line railway from London, became the centre for the hop-picking industry and today is still an important distribution centre for fruit and vegetables.

Once outside the town, visitors can enjoy stunning scenery and tranquil landscapes by using the many public rights of way to explore the communities once served by the Hop Pickers Line.

In certain places where the line is still accessible or visible, the Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group is progressing an innovative waymarking interpretation scheme featuring fingerposts, marker posts and information panels, which it launched in November 2016.



KEY
The white circles on the map highlight where you can reach the site of the Hop Pickers Line from public footpaths, byways or roads.



PADDOCK WOOD

Paddock Wood developed around Maidstone Road Station, opened in 1842 on the railway line between London and Dover. It became the junction for the Maidstone branch in 1844 and in

1892 for the Hawkhurst branch. Today it is a busy commuter town and retail centre with extensive industrial and distribution areas.



Railway Hotel, 1915



The Hop Farm



Paddock Wood station, 1956



HORSMONDEN

Horsmonden was an important centre for the medieval iron industry and retains the Furnace Pond and Gun Inn as reminders of its past. Now a centre for agriculture and fruit growing, the village is set around an attractive green which hosts the annual Horse Fair at hop picking time in September.



Horsmonden station, 1913



Furnace Pond



The Horse Fair



CRANBROOK

The ancient market town of Cranbrook and the nearby village of Sissinghurst form the nucleus of a vibrant community bounded by woods, forests and rich farmland. The town contains the Union Windmill and St Dunstan's Church whilst the famous Sissinghurst Castle Gardens are nearby. The former railway station is a mile from the town in the village of Hartley.



Union windmill



St Dunstan's church



Cranbrook station, c.1960



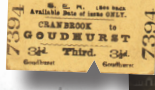
GOUDHURST

Goudhurst's medieval buildings straggle towards the top of an eccentric hill crowned by a large, ancient church. The village pond offers seating under the shade of an old chestnut tree.

The railway once meandered past oast houses and through Wealden woods and fields of hops to reach Goudhurst Station.



Goudhurst station, c.1905



The village pond



St Mary's church

HAWKHURST

From the smuggling activities of the infamous Hawkhurst Gang to the creation of the Oxo Cube and the founding of the Rootes (Motors) Group, Hawkhurst enjoys a rich, varied history. Today, this pretty Wealden village, with St Laurence Church and its iconic Colonnade, is also home to the UK's first digital cinema.



The Colonnade



St Laurence church



Hawkhurst station, 1911



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