

Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst & Sissinghurst Residents' Guide



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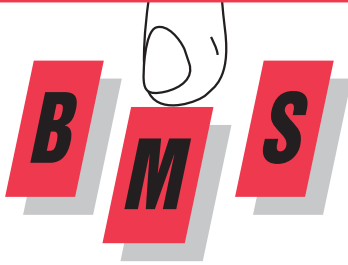
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FOREWORD

EVERY town of any size and importance invariably contains a considerable range and number of both public and private organisations which provide opportunities for all kinds of activities and cater for a wide diversity of interests. Together with the many services provided by local businesses, they play a major part in the life of the community.

Often, however, many people remain unaware of exactly what is available and lack the essential simple information to make an initial contact. Our guide aims to remedy this difficulty in some measure and looks to give a snapshot of the history, main facilities, businesses, clubs and societies, key features and attractions to assist both residents and visitors alike.

Distributed to residents for free and made available via local tourist information offices, libraries and estate agencies.

The listings and public service information included are as up-to-date as possible and will be re-verified for all subsequent editions.

Sharon Bell, Publisher



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WHEN THE QUEEN SAID 'YES' TO GREY

THE passage of time is represented on almost every thoroughfare when visiting the historically resplendent communities of Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Sissinghurst.

The market town of **Cranbrook** retains much of the medieval majesty of its past, with properties dating back to the 15th century neatly set out along the narrow, twisting roads that pass through this Wealden community. It is not difficult to believe that Queen Elizabeth 1 spent time resting at the 14th century George Hotel on Stone Street in 1573. At that time Cranbrook had a thriving cloth industry.

The following year the Queen signed a charter for the establishment of the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, now better known as Cranbrook School. St Dunstan's Church, the church built of golden sandstone in the heart of the old town, drew many worshippers from the cloth industry. It soon became known as the 'Cathedral of the Weald'. All the grand old buildings remain



Cranbrook – St Dunstan's Church

CRANBROOK, HAWKHURST, GOUDHURST & SISSINGHURST RESIDENTS' GUIDE

intact as superbly preserved shrines to the town's rich and golden heritage.

Hawkhurst can boast more than 1,000 years of recorded history. The oldest known settlement was the Saxon manor of Congehurst, burnt down by the Danes in 893 AD. Today, several buildings in the shopping centre carry the names of famous local benefactors who gifted buildings to the community in their name. The Moor, the oldest part of Hawkhurst, is a shrine to several notable buildings, including the parish church of St Laurence.

Goudhurst, believed to have started as a clearing in the wood of Anderida, is dominated by the parish church, built before 1119, its earliest recorded date.

And **Sissinghurst** is a Mecca for tourists keen to explore Sissinghurst Castle and its superb gardens.



Sissinghurst – The Castle

The communities themselves have played a significant part in preserving what is best, much of the generosity stimulated by the wealth of those associated with the cloth industry, the Wealden iron injury, agriculture and hop growing.

Trinity Church, Sissinghurst, built in 1838, is by far the youngest of the churches, but since its erection early in Queen Victoria's reign, it has become the focal point of much social activity in the village. The Wealden iron industry was at its peak between the 14th-18th centuries. Hawkhurst was the centre of the iron trade. The cloth industry flourished between the 14th-17th centuries. Cranbrook and Goudhurst were the foremost weaving centres south of London, with plentiful supplies of wool being transported from the Romney Marsh.

Edward III encouraged the home production of high quality cloth by granting passports to Flemish weavers in 1331. The cloth was famous for its vibrant colours. But it was a demure cloth, known as Cranbrook Grey, that was to catch the eye of Queen Elizabeth I when she visited the town in 1573.

A mile of Cranbrook Grey cloth was specially woven for the occasion. The Queen stayed at the George Hotel, Stone Street and the local community clubbed together to buy the monarch a silver cup to commemorate her visit. Although much of the cloth was trimmed and finished in the clothiers' large houses on the edge of Cranbrook, it was common practice in the 16th century to send undyed cloth to Flanders for finishing.

But an Act of Parliament, which made the export of undyed cloth illegal, saw the decline of

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the industry. By the 18th century it had vanished. The Flemish weavers left a lasting legacy. They preferred continental beer to English ale and brought with them several varieties of hops that were planted in and around Cranbrook and Hawkhurst. Oast houses, many converted into domestic homes, are a reminder of those times.

Hawkhurst was a dominant centre for the iron industry until the industrial revolution of the late 18th century. William Penn ran an ironworks in the parish that gave full employment for most of the 17th century. He became a Quaker in 1664 and in 1681 established an American colony that eventually became the State of Pennsylvania. The great man is enshrined in local history by the Hawkhurst Heritage Trail, launched in 2009 to celebrate the village's rich past.



Oak & Ivy pub, Hawkhurst

The passing of the Kentish Wealden iron industry turned the locality into the 'Garden of England', famous for its orchards, hopfields, vineyards and mills. At one stage the area had 17 watermills – built on the banks of the River Beult – and four windmills. Cranbrook's most famous landmark, the Union Windmill, is a smock mill. Built for Henry Dobell in 1814 and fully operational until 1958, the 72ft high windmill is the tallest of its type in the country. Mr Dobell did his best to make a decent living, but the economic depression that struck the Weald after the Battle of Waterloo led to a dramatic drop in demand for flour, with the mill owner made bankrupt in 1819. The windmill was taken over by Union creditors, hence its name.

Work on St Dunstan parish church, Cranbrook was completed in 1425. It took 200 years. Many of the workmen employed on the project never saw the fruits of their efforts. Nor would they have ever believed that the clock, encased in the tower, would one day become the prototype for Big Ben. Wealth generated by the cloth industry enabled the church council to complete several successive enlargements of the medieval church in the 15th and 16th centuries.

On a clear day, some say it is possible to see the towers of 50 churches from the top of St Mary's, Goudhurst. The panoramic views embrace Canary Wharf, the North Downs and the Romney Marsh, where most of the wool was shorn from the backs of sheep for the weaving industry that flourished in Goudhurst and surrounding villages for 300 years.

St Mary's has suffered a turbulent past. Restoration work was taking place inside the church in 2011 but you need to track back to 1637 for the start of the drama. In that year, the tower was struck by lightning, causing the bells to melt and the tall spire to disintegrate. The tower was re-built the following year and acclaimed architect Richard Carpenter influenced important restoration work in Victorian times. In 1940, two landmines, dropped by parachute, destroyed the church windows. Fortunately, a memorial to Sir Alexander Culpeper remained untouched inside the church. It pays tribute to a remarkable man, who owned the forge at Bedgebury, where a local workforce made cannons to defeat the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The lovely old church of St Laurence, built somewhere around the 13th century in the oldest part of Hawkhurst, known as The Moor, has also suffered a dramatic past. In 1944, a German flying bomb caused so much damage when it crashed into the churchyard that the church was closed until 1957. The first mention of this church is made in the charter of 1285. Its first rector was Richard de Clyne. The great East window, built in 1350, has been declared one of England's finest pieces of architecture.

Another absorbing period of history has been celebrated by the launch in 2011 of the

'Smugglers Trail', which highlights one of the darkest chapters in Hawkhurst's history. The Oak and Ivy pub on the Rye road was once the headquarters of a band of smugglers, known as the Hawkhurst Gang. The gang's ruthless methods have been obscured by romantic sentiment for the revenue cheats of those days. Thomas Carswell, a Revenue Officer, was shot and killed by the gang in 1740 and seven years later the gang tortured and killed Daniel Chater, believing him to be an informant. The gang members included John Diamond, Jeremiah Curtis, Arthur Gray and Thomas Kingsmill. Their reign of fear and illegal trading in contraband was to last for 12 years from 1735. The gang's downfall was masterminded and executed by William Stuart, a former army corporal, recruited by local men for the specific purpose of destroying the gang. On hearing the threat, the smugglers threatened to burn down all the houses in Goudhurst, but this was the village in which Diamond and his men were to meet their match. The ringleaders were captured and executed. Their bodies were hung on gibbets at Horsmonden and Hurst Green. Today, the management of four Hawkhurst pubs associated with smuggling, The Oak and Ivy; The Queen's Inn; The Royal Oak; and the Great House, have been given plaques commemorating their part in this colourful period of history. The plaques are encribed 'Hawkhurst Gang – Smugglers Trail'.

Hawkhurst's history has been ennobled also by its new Heritage Trail, which pays tribute to several heroic figures of its past. The aforementioned William Penn is honoured. Charles Gunther, breeder of prime beef cattle and founder of the Oxo cube gains honourable mention. He lost two sons killed in the First World War, a tragic family loss that encouraged him to bequeath the old fire station to the village as a memorial.

They continue to come in their thousands to celebrate the memory of poet and novelist Vita Sackville-West, and her writer husband, Harold Nicolson. In 1930 the couple bought the remains of Sissinghurst Castle, restored the buildings and planned and planted the magnificent gardens. Vita's writing room overlooks the grounds. The popularity of the gardens



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is a living memorial to the loving care with which the Nicolsons turned the area into one of the best public gardens in England. The six acres of gardens, opened to the public in 1938 and still a must-see visit for all aspiring gardeners, are now owned by the National Trust. Sissinghurst has become world famous for the Garden and Estate.

With its long history, literary connections, farm and beautiful garden, a visit to Sissinghurst Castle is an essential part of any visit to the south-east. A visit to Vita's study and library is recommended also. In 2008, the castle embarked on a project to bring back a modern version of the mixed Wealden Farm it used to represent. A wide range of produce is now grown here for the restaurant.

Much of the history of this Wealden area is lovingly preserved and presented at the Cranbrook Museum. Today, the old market town of Cranbrook and its distinguished neighbouring villages is a busy, prosperous, thriving region. As Vita Sackville-West said memorably: "It has the air of busy peace."

Five Things To Know

- 1 An Apple Festival is held annually in Cranbrook town centre.
- 2 Cranbrook Farmers Market is held on the fourth Saturday of every month in the Vestry Hall.
- 3 Goudhurst attracted worldwide attention in 2007 when television showed Tour de France cyclists tackling the famous hill.
- 4 A new £1.5m community centre is earmarked for the King George V Playing Field, The Moor, Hawkhurst.
- 5 Cranbrook hopes to unveil a new Community Centre in 2012.

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LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

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Bowl Water – Near Lamberhurst, off the main A21 London-Hastings road, Bowl Water is perfect for families. Fishing and boating are popular with other activities guaranteed to make this a perfect day out. Dragon Boat Racing is a popular annual event held every September.

Biddenden Vineyard – Kent's oldest commercial vineyard. The vineyards in Gribble Bridge Lane, Biddenden are set in 22 acres of south facing slopes in a shallow sheltered valley just over a mile from the village centre. Visitors welcome to stroll through the vineyards; inspect the presses in action; study the bottling system; and visit the tasting room for wine samples. Kentish Cider and farm pressed apple juice are made on a site which has flourished for more than 40 years.

Bodiam Castle – One of Britain's most popular castles, with medieval battlements, ramparts and moat to explore. Visitors to the 14th century castle are encouraged to wear some of the armour during school holidays. Used by education groups in term time.

Chapel Down Winery, Tenterden – Winery, vineyard and top restaurant. Tastings of many award winning wines.

C.M. Booth Motor Museum, Rolvenden – Historic vehicles, including Morgan three-



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wheeled cars; 1904 Humber; 1929 Morris van; motorbikes; 1936 Brampton caravan; displays of toys and model cars.

Cranbrook Museum – Wealth of local history at the museum in Carriers Road. Paintings by local artists show local life 200 years ago. 19th century collection of rare birds. Reminder of industrial life of a bygone age, including rope making; hop pressing; and valuable information on the Weald's iron-making past.

Cranbrook Union Windmill – Working smock mill on six floors. One of the tallest mills in the country. Built 1814. Corn is still ground at the mill. Working models for children to operate. Guides on each floor. Admission free, donations welcome.



Union Windmill, Cranbrook

Finchcocks Musical Museum, Goudhurst – Georgian manor contains magnificent collection of keyboard instruments, chamber organs, harpsichords, spinets and early pianos. Many have been restored to full concert condition. The house is open to the public. Many music events are held here, including music evenings; recitals; concerts; and celebrity piano recitals.

Great Dixter House, Northiam – Magnificent Tudor house with gardens that attract hundreds of visitors. There is a yew topiary, meadow flowers, dazzling, colourful mixed borders, natural ponds, and an exotic garden.

Kent and East Sussex Railway – The 100 year-old carriages are pulled by light railway engines on a 10 mile journey through unspoiled countryside from Rolvenden-Tenterden-Newenden, near Bodiam Castle. The service includes a specially designed disabled coach, fitted with wheelchair access. Special 'Thomas Tank' days are held during the year.

Lashenden Air Warfare Museum – One of the largest established aviation museums in the country at Headcorn. The museum was launched by the local branch of the RAFA more than 40 years ago. It contains aircraft and relics from aviation history, but chiefly the Second World War. A V1 flying bomb is among the exhibits.

Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst – Scotney is two houses, the new house at the top of the hill built in 1837 for Edward Hussey, and the romantic ruins of a moated medieval castle at the bottom of the valley. Open all year, visitors take a variety of well chosen walks

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through parkland, woodland and farmland.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden – One of the best Garden's in the country, created by writer Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson. There is a shop and restaurant, sourced by fresh

EDUCATION

Cranbrook School governors have considered the possibility of converting the school to academy status. This followed an outstanding Ofsted report in 2011.

The governors believe the voluntary aided boarding and day co-educational grammar school for pupils aged between 13 and 18 could benefit from the greater freedoms and more generous funding available when adopting academy status.

A decision was due to be taken in autumn 2011. Cranbrook School has more than 700 pupils, 400 are boys, 320 girls, with 240 pupils attending the school as boarders.

Pupils joining the school are expected to participate in a five-year course, leading to nine or more GCSE passes at grades A, B or C, followed by four or five AS courses and three at A Level.

As a school within the state maintained sector, no tuition fees are payable and day pupils attend free, as in any local authority school. Boarding fees are charged by the Governors of the School.

Dulwich Preparatory School, Cranbrook is a boarding and day school with a school roll of more than 500 pupils, aged between three and 13. The campus is set in 50 acres of lovely countryside.

The school has a broad curriculum with art, music and sport given much prominence. Paul David, former headmaster of Eaton Square School, London, was appointed the new head teacher from September 2010.

Angley School, Cranbrook is a mixed non-selective secondary school, It has an excellent record of academic and sporting achievement. An Ofsted report on the school said: "The head and governors have created a culture of achievement for all students."



Cranbrook School

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A specialist college in sport and mathematics with ICT and vocational education. A school uniform is compulsory attire for all students. The school believes in absorbing itself in community projects. It has impressive sports facilities, set in an attractive, wooded area on the edge of town. The Addison arena, opened five years ago, is used for football, basketball, netball and hockey. The school's Swattenden Hall (seating capacity 250) hosts award functions, conferences, seminars and theme nights. The local community is encouraged to use the facility.

Bell Bedgebury International School, Goudhurst is set in 220 acres of parkland. The school offers numerous places for students to study in a range of different environments. It has a well-equipped resource centre containing thousands of books and multi-media DVDs and CD-Roms, and a sophisticated language laboratory.

All students are encouraged to enjoy a wide range of sports and recreational activities at the end of the school day, and at weekends. The National Pinetum and Bewl Water are close at hand for school visits. Run by the Bell Education Trust, the school promotes international understanding through education. English language training and teacher development is a priority. All students are encouraged to play an active life in the community.

The Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Sissinghurst area has a number of nursery schools and playgroups, and a large network of excellent primary and junior schools.

Hawkhurst has three schools, a local primary, and two independent prep schools,

SPORT AND LEISURE

THERE is every encouragement to play competitive sport in the area. Cranbrook's sports clubs cover all the traditional sports, including rugby, cricket, football, tennis, bowls and golf.

Angle School's specialist sports status is supported by the nearby **Weald Sports Centre**. Based in Angle Road, the centre has an outdoor swimming pool, well equipped sports hall, four badminton courts, fitness studio, dance studio and crèche facilities. It opens seven days a week.



Cranbrook Bowls Club

Cranbrook Rugby Club, soon to share part of its land with the new town ambulance station, runs an RFU approved junior development programme. Formed just before the start of the last War by Bill Jaeger, the founder was killed during the conflict. No-one would have been more proud of the club's achievements than he in these days of highly competitive leagues.

Cranbrook Cricket Club has a delightful tree-lined ground with a comfortable and inviting pavilion. The club runs senior sides and junior development teams.

Cranbrook Bowls Club, one of the oldest sports clubs in the region, was founded in the 1870s. It has a steady membership roll of some 60 players. Fixtures are played on a friendly basis at the club's headquarters in Jockey Lane.

Cranbrook Football Club play in the East Sussex Football League. Their home ground is Angle School. New players are welcome always, especially those moving into the area. The football club also runs a junior section, playing in the Weald Friendly League and Crowborough Junior League.

CRANBROOK, HAWKHURST, GOUDHURST & SISSINGHURST RESIDENTS' GUIDE

Hemsted Forest Golf Club, Golford Road, Cranbrook is situated in a designated area of outstanding natural beauty. The course lies adjacent to Hemsted Forest. The course is maintained to high standards. PGA Professional Henry Law offers group or individual instruction to senior players or juniors. The course is demanding, with greens as challenging as any in the region.

The coaching skills of Golf Professional Peter Chandler are much in demand at **Hawkhurst Golf and Squash Club**. The nine-hole course is kept in excellent condition.

Full club membership embraces both golf and use of the two SRA standard squash courts, and entry to the squash section competitions.

The **Weald Table Tennis Club** uses Angley Sports College, Cranbrook as its headquarters. Matches are played on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The club is ETTA accredited with premier clubmark status.

Cranbrook and District Angling Club offers excellent angling at a wide range of venues in the Weald. More than 50 years old, it has a membership of more than 500. Senior citizens have a special membership rate. Juniors are encouraged to join also. The Hartleylands Farm Fisheries near Cranbrook is a popular haunt for some members. The waters at **Hawkhurst Fish Farm** are heaving with fresh water fish. It has become a paradise for anglers a couple of miles out of the town.

What could be more intriguing than pushing open a little red door in a brick wall to discover **Goudhurst Tennis Club**? It has two floodlit hard courts; well equipped clubhouse; social and competitive tennis; and is affiliated to the LTA and British Tennis.



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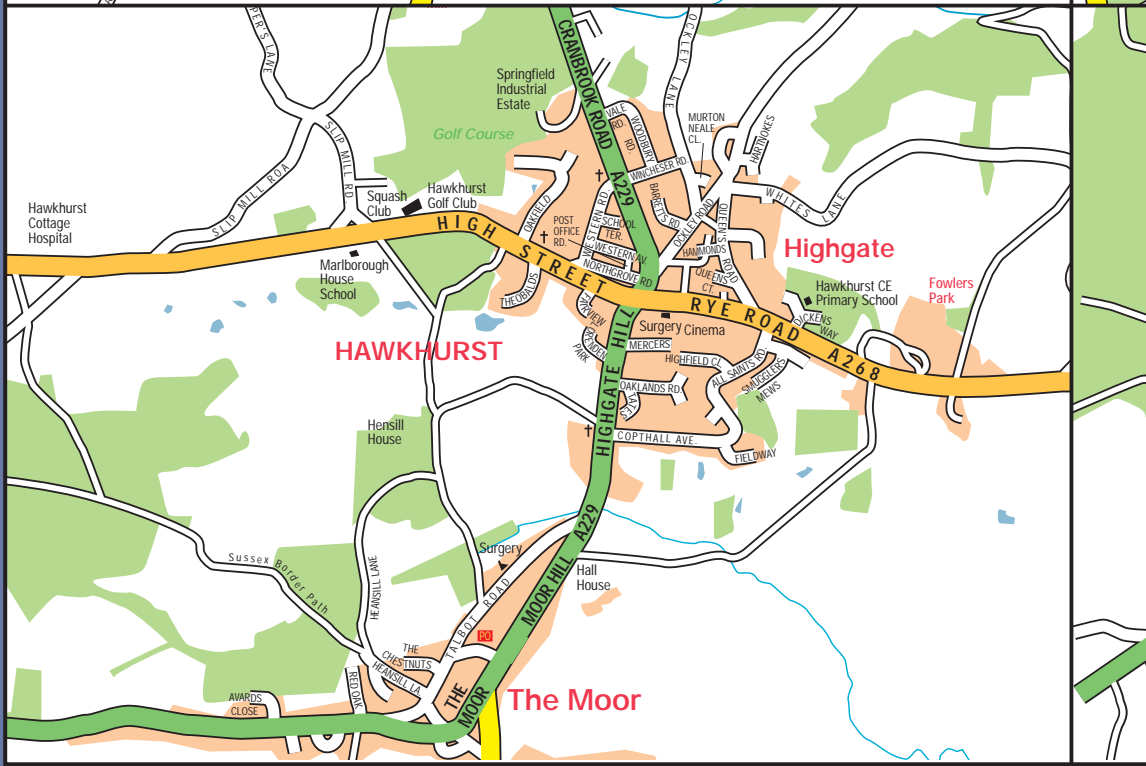
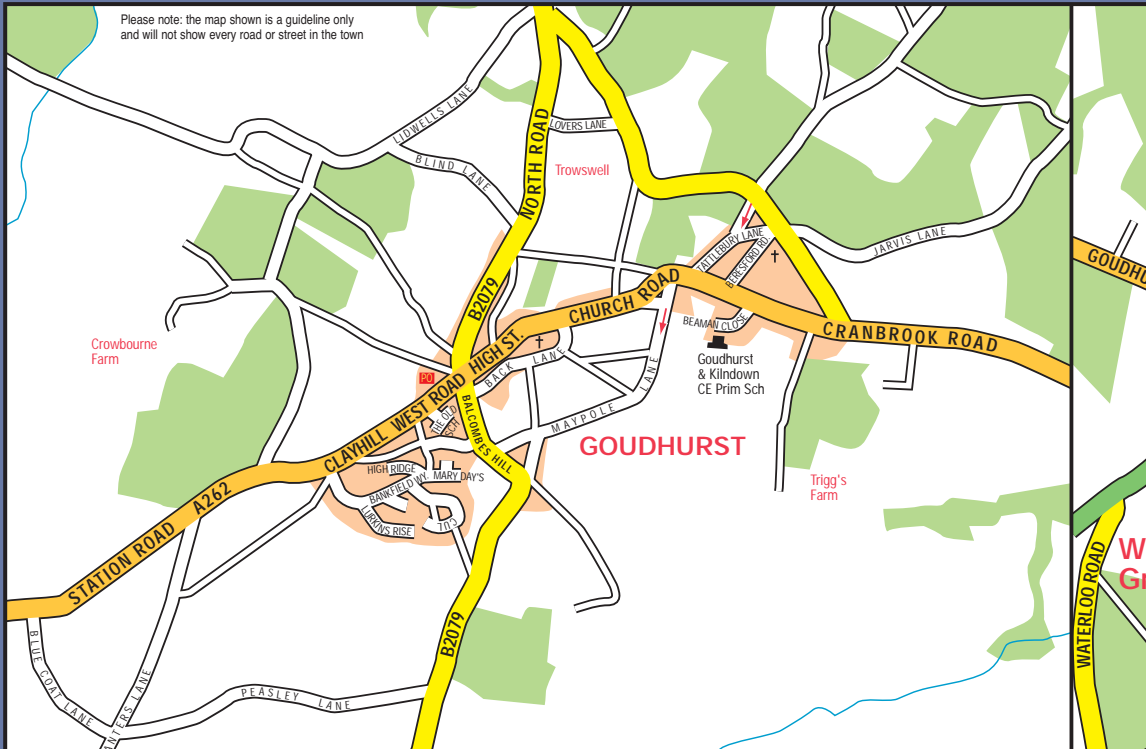
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The first inpatients moved into the new building in January 2011. The new 512-bed hospital, described as 'unique' by the NHS, is expected to become fully operational in 2012. It is the only entirely single bedded major general hospital in the country with a full admitting A&E service.



New Pembury Hospital

The project began with the demolition of the old Pembury Hospital in 2008. The new hospital has 512 beds, offering a full range of services, including planned and emergency surgery, orthopaedics, a women and children's centre with maternity and inpatient children's services, day case theatres and outpatient services.

A new ambulance station is scheduled to be built in Cranbrook to improve emergency response times. Community leaders say the new 24-hour service will mean more lives could be saved.

The new plans will mean a bigger coverage area, which includes Goudhurst. The new ambulance station is to be built on the Tomlin rugby ground, Angley Road.

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TRANSPORT AND LOCATION

THE best thing about living in the Weald of Kent is the tranquility of residing in an area far away from the madding crowds and traffic fumes. However, the Cranbrook area is anything but cut-off from Britain's road network, given the rural charm of this location and the slightly longer time it takes to reach a motorway by vehicular transport.

Joining either at Maidstone or Ashford, the M20 is within a half-hour striking distance by car; the nearest railway station, offering commuter rail travel to London, is Staplehurst; and buses run frequently from Maidstone, Hastings, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford, all with stops in the surrounding villages.

Three main international airports serving the area at London Gatwick; London Heathrow and London Stansted.

Sea-travel ports are available at Dover, Folkestone, Ramsgate, and Newhaven, all reached in less than two hours from the Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Sissinghurst area.

High speed rail travel by Eurostar is available from Ashford International and Ebbsfleet terminals. The cross-channel shuttle terminal at Cheriton, Folkestone is located just off Junction 12 of the M20, a journey by road of less than an hour from the Weald. Some London commuters prefer using the new high-speed passenger trains from Ashford International to St Pancras with the 40 minute journey time more attractive than slower travel from the more local Staplehurst station.



HARTLEY HOUSE CARE HOME



Hartley House Care Home is a family owned care home that has served Cranbrook and surrounding areas for over 20 years. The home supports 47 residents in a lovely residential setting. The home is divided into four wings to ensure personal service for every resident. Each wing has its own lounge and kitchen facilities



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PROMINENT PEOPLE

Cranbrook School's notable former pupils dominates the list of well known people connected to the area. Cranbrook's alumni includes:-

Barry Davies, former BBC television sports commentator.

Phil Edmonds, former England and Middlesex spin bowler.

Harry Hill, popular television comedian.

Hammond Innes, famous author.

Wing Cdr Hugh Kennard, World War 2 fighter ace.

Kevin Lygo, director of Channel 4 television and content.

Peter West, pioneering television sports commentator.

Other prominent people connected to the area are:-

H.E. Bates, the novelist, visited Cranbrook regularly after the last War.

Gerald Charles Dickens, great great grandson of novelist Charles Dickens, has lived in Goudhurst.

Queen Elizabeth I stayed at the grand manor house at Sissinghurst in 1573. She spent time also at the George Hotel, Cranbrook.

Sir John Herschel, the 19th century astronomer, who named Uranus, lived at Collingwood House, Hawkhurst.

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Ian Hislop, editor of Private Eye and team captain on topical television quiz programme Have I Got News for You, lived in Sissinghurst.

W.H. Hopper Levett, the former Kent wicket-keeper, who played one Test for England, lived in Goudhurst.

Alex Mitchell, television actor and comedian, best known for roles in Turkey Shoot and Radio Flyer, was born in Hawkhurst.

William Rootes, founder of the Rootes Group, was born in Goudhurst.

Vita Sackville-West, English poet, novelist and master gardener, created England's most influential garden at Sissinghurst.

LISTINGS

RELEVANT WEBSITES

www.cranbrook.org

www.goudhurst.co.uk

www.sissinghurst.com

PLACES FOR WORSHIP

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Tel: 01580 715861

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Goudhurst

St Mary's Church, Goudhurst
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Tel: 01580 211739

Hawkhurst

Hawkhurst Baptist Church
Cranbrook Road
Hawkhurst TN18 4AU
Tel: 01580 752910

Hawkhurst Methodist Church

All Saints Lodge
Hawkhurst
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Tel: 01580 753769
Minister: Steve Mann
Tel: 01892 526967
Email: minmann@aol.com

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Email: stlaurenceoffice@onetel.com

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Cub Leader: Alison Mitham

Tel: 01580 753018

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hawkhurst.beavers@btinternet.com

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www.oxfam.org.uk

USEFUL NUMBERS

Kent Police

For all non-urgent incidents or enquiries
Tel: 01622 690690
If a crime is in progress or life is in danger
Tel: 999
If you are deaf or speech impaired, text
'Police' and your message to 60066
For news, advice or details of your
neighbourhood officer, visit
www.kent.police.uk

Cranbrook Library

Carriers Road
Cranbrook TN17 3JT
Tel: 01580 712463
www.kent.gov.uk/libraries

Cranbrook Museum

Carriers Road
Cranbrook TN17 3JX
Contact: Curator
Tel: 01580 712475
www.cranbrookmuseum.org

Cranbrook Windmill

Mill Hill, Cranbrook
Tel: 01580 712256
www.unionmill.org.uk

Hawkhurst Library

Rye Road, Highgate
Hawkhurst
Tel: 01580 752064
www.kent.gov.uk/libraries

South East Water

General Enquiries
Tel: 0333 000 0002
Out of hours emergency
Tel: 0333 00 00 365
www.southeastwater.co.uk

Tourist Information Centre

The Old Fish Market
The Pantiles
Royal Tunbridge Wells TN2 5TN
Tel: 01892 515675
www.visitunbridgewells.com
www.visitheartofkent.com

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