

Famous People of SIDCUP



'Famous People of Sidcup'
is a celebration of the national achievements and local contributions of a selection of individuals in the Lamorbey and Sidcup district. We hope that learning about them will encourage a greater understanding of our local history and pride in our town.

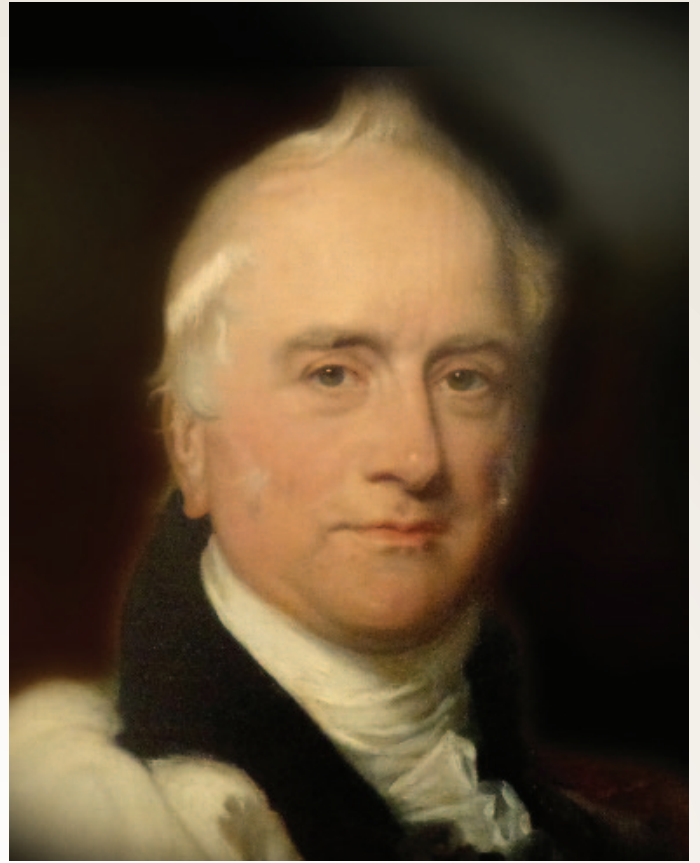


Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955),

actor, teacher and originator of the Alexander Technique

Born in Wynard, Tasmania, Frederick Matthias Alexander later moved to Melbourne where he became involved in amateur dramatics. A hoarse throat led him to self-observation to solve the problem and he made his living as a reciter and teacher in voice training. In 1904 he moved to England, working as a 'breathing expert' in London. He chose Penhill House as his rural home and commuted by train from Sidcup station.

A modest man, his books include 'Conscious Control' and 'The Use of the Self'. Known to students and friends as 'FM', he developed a method which teaches individuals to release muscular tension through awareness of physical posture and mental habits, now known throughout the world as 'the Alexander Technique'.



1st Baron Bexley (1766-1851),

politician and Chancellor of the Exchequer

Nicholas Vansittart was the youngest son of Henry Vansittart, governor of Bengal. Educated at Cheam in Surrey and at Christ Church, Oxford, he qualified as a barrister and entered politics as MP for Hastings in 1796. He held several high offices including Chief Secretary for Ireland and Chancellor of the Exchequer, a post he held from 1812 until 1823 during a period of economic difficulty caused by the Napoleonic wars.

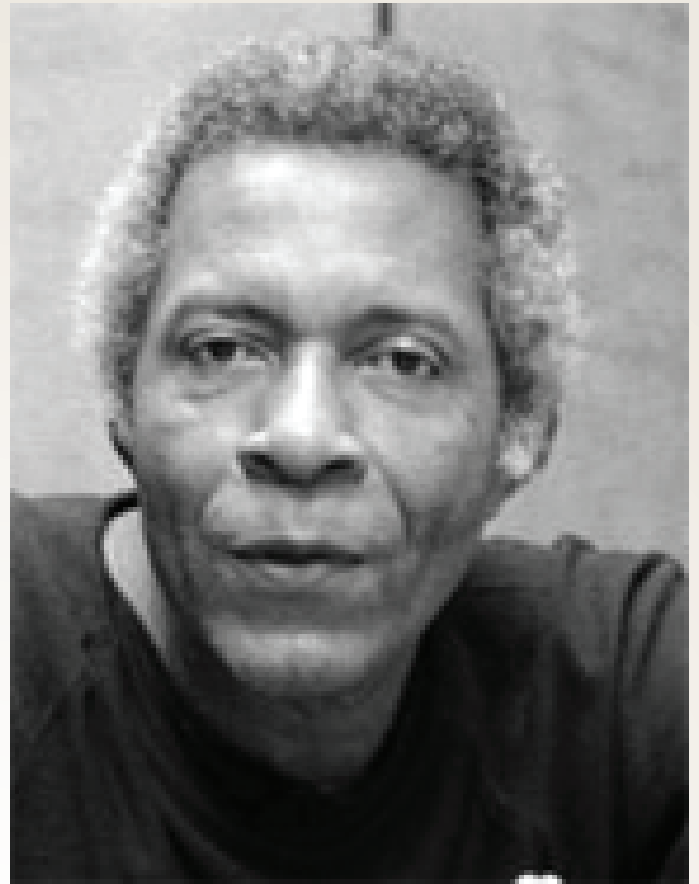
Created Baron Bexley in 1823, he later devoted himself to charitable and religious works, including an endowment to the Church of St John the Evangelist in Sidcup. He had married Catherine in 1806 but she died in 1810. Lord Bexley died at Foots Cray House, his country residence, and his peerage became extinct.



Nevil Shute Norway (1899-1960),
novelist and aeronautical engineer

During the 1950s and 60s, Nevil Shute (his pen name) was one of the world's best-selling novelists with many of his works being adapted for cinema and television. Less well-known is that he had graduated from Oxford and became an aeronautical engineer, taking a position with Vickers in 1924. He lived at 43 Hatherley Road, Sidcup where he continued writing regularly in his spare time.

He worked in the development of airships and in 1929 he was promoted to Deputy Chief Engineer under the inventor Barnes Wallis; later he was Chief Engineer. With the outbreak of the Second World War he became a head of engineering in projects developing secret weapons. In 1950 he emigrated to Australia.



Trevor Rhone (1940-2009),
author, playwright and film maker

Trevor Rhone won a scholarship to study drama at Rose Bruford College between 1960 and 1963. He became an award-winning Jamaican playwright, director and actor. Rhone cowrote the ground-breaking film *The Harder They Come* (1972) about a country boy forced into a life of crime, starring Jimmy Cliff and with a reggae soundtrack featuring Desmond Dekker.

Rhone named the influential theatre he established with others in Jamaica after Rose Bruford College's Barn Theatre, and one of his plays, *Bellas Gate Boy* (2008) partly depicts his time at the College in Sidcup. Rhone was awarded a fellowship of the College in 2007. In 1980, he was made a Commander of the Order of Distinction by the Jamaican government.



**Helen Grace Culverwell
Marsh-Lambert (1888-1981),**

*writer and illustrator of
children's books and postcards*

Helen Grace Culverwell Marsh, known as Gracie by her family, was born in Bristol. Her artistic talent developed at an early age and she became a children's book illustrator. In 1913 she married Charles Lambert, a bank clerk, and she chose H. G. C. Marsh-Lambert as her professional name. They moved to White Cottage, Halfway Street at the beginning of the First World War and by 1930 they were living at Alfriston, 20 Crescent Road. Charles helped with some writing and musical content and her children were an inspiration for her drawings. Her simple, uncluttered style appealed to publishers and her work was used for advertisements, books, postcards and greeting cards. After over 25 years in Sidcup, she moved to Paignton, Devon.



**Tasman Millington, OBE
(1896-1963),**

*soldier and official of the
Commonwealth War Graves Commission*

Tasman Millington was born in Hobart, Tasmania and enlisted in the Australian Army in 1915. Posted to Gallipoli, he then served on the Western Front. After the war he studied in London and in 1919 he joined the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission working to identify and re-bury soldiers who perished during the Gallipoli campaign. From 1930 he had responsibility for the maintenance of 36 cemeteries and memorials on Gallipoli which commemorated over 30,000 soldiers and sailors, and in 1934 he was awarded the OBE for his work. During the Second World War he worked for British Intelligence in Greece, posing as a fisherman, while also ferrying many Greek Jews to safety. In 1919 he married Ruth, daughter of Thomas Martin, monumental sculptor of Adelaide House, 138 Main Road, Sidcup. They retired to Surrey, but when his wife died in 1956 she was buried at Sidcup Cemetery and after his death he was buried alongside her.

1. Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance at Lamorbey Park, where Trevor Rhone studied.
2. Site of Penhill House, home of Frederick Matthias Alexander.
3. Sidcup Cemetery, burial place of Tasman Millington.
4. Site of Foots Cray Place, home of 1st Baron Bexley.
5. Site of 43 Hatherley Road, home of Nevil Shute Norway.
6. Site of Adelaide House, 138 Main Road, home and stonemason's yard of Thomas Martin, father-in-law of Tasman Millington.
7. Alfriston, 20 Crescent Road, home of H. Grace C. Marsh Lambert.
8. Site of White Cottage, Halfway Street, home of H. Grace C. Marsh-Lambert.



Burial place of Tasman Millington and his wife Ruth at Sidcup Cemetery

Thomas Martin, monumental sculptor, Adelaide House, Main Road





Holy Trinity Church, 1914 (Bexley Archives)



Ornamental lake in the grounds of Lamorbey House while a hotel, 1910.
It is now the home of Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance.
(Bexley Archives)

Lamorbey

Lamorbey has more claim to antiquity than Sidcup. The hamlet of Halfway Street, surrounded by farmland, adjoined a large estate which derived its name from the family known as Lamienby, alias Sparrow. Around 1515 a 'good house' was constructed which was re-built in 1745 and transformed into the Jacobean style in 1837. The nearby Holy Trinity Church of 1849 is in the Victorian Gothic style and was rebuilt after damage in the Second World War. Along Halfway Street are some fine old houses including a timber-framed house dating from 1450. The decorative Ye Olde Black Horse was built in 1892 on the site of an earlier inn. The arrival of the railway in 1866 and subsequent housing development meant Lamorbey and Halfway Street were absorbed into suburban Sidcup, but some buildings and parkland remain as a reminder of the past.

To find out more visit:

Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society: www.lam-sid-lhs.co.uk

Bexley Archives: www.bexley.gov.uk

Produced by
LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP
Local History Society
in partnership with
Sidcup Partners Ltd



View of Halfway Street, with the Post Office and Ye Olde Black Horse public house, 1903 (Bexley Archives)