

LAMORBEY

TOWN TRAIL

A walk around Lamorbey



LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society was formed in 1952 as an off-shoot from a local history class that met at Lamorbey Park Adult Education Centre. We shared Lamorbey Park with other Adult Education classes in the evening and during the day Rose Bruford College used the premises. In time the College expanded so much that it took over Lamorbey Park completely and we moved, along with other classes, to Alma Road Centre. The Society now meets monthly from January to December, with the exception of August, at St Lawrence's Church Hall, Main Road.

Our geographical area of interest is the southern region of the London Borough of Bexley, comprising Sidcup, Blackfen, Foots Cray and North Cray. Our interest in local history extends beyond the boundaries of Sidcup into Kent, London and the surrounding areas. This is reflected in the variety of our meetings. We also organise guided walks and visits, and we encourage members to get involved with research projects. Our 'Famous People of Sidcup' banners were hung from lamp posts from 2019, and with this series of Town Trails in 2023 we hope to further encourage an interest in Lamorbey and Sidcup's history.

www.lam-sid-lhs.co.uk

Lamorbey

Lamorbey is the area north of Sidcup Station including the old hamlet of Halfway Street, The Hollies and Lamorbey Park. A rural scene of fields and orchards remained until the 1930s when farmland was sold off for housing development.

The largest estate was that of Lamorbey House which gave the area its name. Originally spelled Lamienby, it was sometimes corrupted to Lamb Abbey and Lamaby. The Malcolm family who lived there owned sugar plantations in Jamaica and were heavily involved in the Atlantic slave trade. The church and early schools were created by the Malcolm family who remain patrons today. The house is occupied by Rose Bruford College, and the 'The Glade' is a public park.

Another significant estate was The Hollies, formerly Marrowbone Hall, home of the Lewin family. It later became a children's home.

Both The Hollies and Halfway Street are designated Conservation Areas, and Lamorbey House is Grade II listed.

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LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP
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Halfway Street Farm, 1931
(Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre)



Station Hotel, 1924
(Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre)

1. Sidcup Railway Station

Sidcup Station opened in 1866 and was much closer to the hamlet of Halfway Street than to Sidcup up the hill. Just under 12 miles from Charing Cross, it was always known as the Dartford Loop Line because it was built as an alternative to the existing North Kent Line. Steam trains ran until it was electrified in 1922, although they were still occasionally used even into the 1950s. The railway stimulated the rapid growth of Sidcup, and it still provides the lifeline from Sidcup to central London where many residents travel for business and pleasure.

From the ticket office, head down the station approach and turn right through the pedestrian subway under the railway bridge.

2. Holy Trinity Church Hall

Ahead, the Iron Horse pub replaced the Station Hotel, built in 1879 and demolished in 1976. Carry on past the late Victorian shops on the right; on the other side of Station Road are 1930s shopping parades. At the corner of Hurst Road is the Holy Trinity Church Hall with its steep tiled roof incorporating bands of fish scale tiles. This was originally built as the second Holy Trinity National School in 1880 by John Malcolm of Lamorbey House.

3. Holy Trinity Church

Cross Hurst Road to Holy Trinity Church, a Victorian Gothic ragstone building designed by Ewan Christian in 1879. The first Church of England chapel was built near this site in 1840, endowed by the Malcolms, but after the Holy Trinity parish was created, the present church was opened in 1880.

Originally designed with a tower that was never built, its bell is located on the outside wall. The church was damaged by a V2 rocket in 1945 and had to be partly rebuilt.

Across the road is the Urban Picturehouse apartment block, built on the site of the Art Deco style Odeon cinema (1935-61), later converted into the Lamorbey Baths (1964-2008). Until 1931 it was occupied by Halfway Street Farm.

4. 27 Halfway Street

Walking towards Burnt Oak Lane we pass the park entrance on our right; opposite, the Royal Mail Sorting Office with its plaque dating it to 1935 replaced a row of five cottages. Across Halfway Street from the corner of Burnt Oak Lane is a white painted timber-framed house. A medieval yeoman's house dated to around 1450, it is the oldest building in the area. The cottages in this stretch were the heart of the ancient Halfway Street hamlet and are listed either nationally or locally.

5. Workers' Cottages

Turning into Burnt Oak Lane, on the right is a block of three cottages. These replaced the tiny original Holy Trinity School built in 1841, and the middle property has a plaque saying 'Built 2009 on the site of Mrs Malcolm's School'. Next is a block of four cottages, built in 1874 by John Malcolm to house workers on the Lamorbey Estate. Further along on the right is the current Holy Trinity Lamorbey Church of England School which opened in 1968.

6. Burnt Oak Junior School

Cross the road to Burnt Oak Junior School, established in 1903 as the school for the children's home at The Hollies. Boys were educated in boot making, tailoring, gardening, plumbing and bakery, while girls were trained in laundry-work and needlecraft. The school was transferred to Kent County Council in 1936 but still had 85% of its pupils from The Hollies. From 1965 it came under the London Borough of Bexley in 1965 and is now part of the Pioneer Academy Trust.

7. The Hollies

Where Burnt Oak Lane turns to the right, a lodge stands at the entrance to The Hollies, built in 1854 to replace an earlier house called Marrowbone Hall, owned by the Lewin family. In 1899 it became the administrative HQ of the Greenwich Poor Law Union, and in its grounds the Greenwich and Deptford Children's Home opened in 1902. With accommodation for 500 children and 60 staff, three-storey houses were built to house boys, and cottages were built for girls. It was a self-contained village with its own school, hospital, laundry, gym, swimming pool, stables and farm. The home officially closed in 1989. Many of the original buildings remain alongside newer housing.

8. Rose Bruford College

Along Burnt Oak Lane, we pass the New Ideal Homesteads semi-detached houses which were built extensively in this area in the 1930s. Continue straight ahead towards the Rose Bruford College entrance (not open to the public). Established in 1950 by Rose Bruford as a drama school, the college now has over 600 students studying for degrees in acting, musicianship, directing, theatre arts and stagecraft. Graduates include Trevor Rhone, Gary Oldman, Lake Bell, Stephen Graham, Tom Hopper, Anthony Daniels, Tom Baker, Sam Palladio and Freddie Jones.

9. Lamorbey House

Continue towards Lamorbey Park and around the lake. Lamorbey House can be seen, although the quality of the view across the lake depends on the time of year and the thickness of the greenery. A medieval house was built here by Thomas Sparrow, alias Lamienby, and replaced in 1515 by a house called Lamienby Goldwell, built by James Goldwell. It was rebuilt from 1744 by William Steele, a director of the East India Company, then altered by Scottish doctor David Orme in 1784. Orme's grandson John Malcolm lived in the house until 1857 when he succeeded his brother as laird of Potalloch in Argyllshire and moved to Scotland. From then the house was tenanted until it became the Lamorbey Park Residential Hotel (1910-46) after which it was acquired by the Kent Education Authority for its Adult Education Centre. Rose Bruford College is now the sole occupant.

10. The Glade

The wooded area alongside the lake, The Glade, was designed and laid out by Greenwich businessman H. J. Shepperd whose consortium took over the hotel in 1926. A plan of 1761 shows three lakes which were made by diverting a tributary of the River Shuttle. By 1844 they had been replaced by two lakes, one here and the other in the golf club. Managed by the Lamorbey Angling Society, the lake is well stocked with fish. Follow the looping path around The Dell, past the surviving wall of the Lamorbey estate's kitchen garden and along Pine Tree Walk.

From the exit on Halfway Street, turn left to return to the station.

Lamorbey Town Trail

