

# SIDCUP

## TOWN TRAIL

A walk around Sidcup



**L**AMORBEY 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](http://www.lam-sid-lhs.co.uk)

## Sidcup

'Settecopp', first recorded in 1254, is probably of Anglo-Saxon origin meaning a sheepfold on a hilltop. Sidcup High Street follows the old road from London to Maidstone, improved by the New Cross Turnpike Trust in 1781. In the mid-19th century, Sidcup was still just a small street of houses with a coaching Inn, The Black Horse, surrounded by countryside and a few mansions like Frognaal, Sidcup Place and The Manor House. It was the arrival of the railway in 1866 which prompted the building of large detached or semi-detached houses aimed at middle-class professionals, and a bustling high street developed along with churches, sports clubs, societies and amenities. The First World War impacted Sidcup not only through the loss of men who had gone to fight but also with the opening in 1917 of The Queen's Hospital for facially injured soldiers which became world-renowned as the centre of the new art of plastic surgery.

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**LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP**  
Local History Society



Sir Harold Gillies, pioneer of modern plastic surgery



Dame Ethel Smyth, distinguished composer and Suffragette

## 1. Sidcup Police Station

Designed by architect John Dixon Butler, this red brick building with stone porch and balcony opened as Sidcup Police Station in 1902. The site had been acquired in 1896, and the shops of Hamilton Parade were built alongside in 1897. The 1921 census shows four police constables living there. The police station served the local community until its closure in 2012, after which it was converted into a restaurant. Sidcup did have an earlier police station, built in 1842, which was situated close to point 4 on this walk, and it housed two sergeants, ten constables and one horse.

## 2. Cinema

The King's Hall, popular for dances and pantomimes, was converted into a cinema in 1914. It was enlarged and given an Art Deco style in 1932, with its entrance at what is now Chaplin House. Changing names several times (Regal, ABC, Cannon), it closed in 2000 and the building was demolished. Now look across to the other side of the High Street where there is a red brick building with neo-classical scroll-headed columns and the letter 'B' on three railings; designed in 1936, this was Burton Menswear. The High Street at this time was a thriving shopping district with drapers, milliners, ladies and gents' outfitters, cobblers and a department store.

## 3. Wounded Soldiers' Rest Room

Look up while continuing along the High Street: the curving roofline has not changed since the 1870s. Just past the zebra crossing, look across to No 40. During the First World War this was the Wounded Soldiers' Rest Room where convalescing patients from The Queen's Hospital, wearing their blue uniforms with red neckties, could relax. Set up and run by volunteers, local schools were involved in fund-raising, and local shopkeepers, churches and individuals donated furniture and equipment. Hot drinks were provided for one farthing, but there was no food as many of the men could not chew due to their facial injuries.

## 4. The Black Horse

The imposing white building with black canopy is the site of The Black Horse, an old coaching inn dating back to at least 1690. With a forge nearby, this was a useful stopping point for horsemen passing through on the London to Maidstone road.

Later, day trippers from London would come by bus to what was then still 'the countryside'. At various times it had tea gardens, a cricket field and a bowling green. Assembly rooms were added where events could be held. The Black Horse was demolished in 2011, despite efforts to preserve the original façade.

## 5. Sidcup House

At St John's Road, look across to the opposite corner. Here stood Sidcup Place, the childhood home until 1867 of Dame Ethel Smyth, composer and suffragette. Unconventional and outspoken, she persuaded her father to let her go to Leipzig to study music - her first battle in asserting the rights of women in a male-dominated world. She composed the rousing anthem, March of the Women, and in her memoir she fondly described her childhood home in Sidcup. Sidcup Place, built in 1717, was renamed Sidcup House in 1884. It was demolished in 1929 and Market Parade was built in its place. *Cross at the zebra crossing; look back for a good view of 'The Black Horse' recreated façade.*

## 6. St John the Evangelist Church

Turn into Church Road, passing a terrace of cottages dating to 1852; this narrow lane was the original route from Sidcup to Chislehurst. Climb the steps by the flagpole and follow the path around the back of the church. There are six Commonwealth War Graves here. The early inhabitants of this part of Sidcup had to travel to the parish church of St Nicholas in Chislehurst, but in 1841 the foundation stone of a church was laid here, and a Romanesque structure with twin towers opened in 1844. The church was enlarged from 1882 and rebuilt in 1901 in an Early English style. A steeple was planned to top the bell tower but it was never built.

## 7. The Manor House

Take the right-hand footpath to The Green and onwards to reach the Manor House. Built c1788 on the site of an old farmhouse, Place Green House as it was first named was the home of Charles Minshaw. It was not known as Manor House until the 1860s. From 1911 it was used as a girls' school, and from the early 1930s it became a nursing home. It was converted to council offices in 1950 and served as Bexley Registry Office 1994-2016. It currently houses a Centrepieces mental health arts project pop-up.

## 8. Sidcup War Memorial

The First World War wrenched men from their families as they were sent to the front line. Some never returned home and made the ultimate sacrifice. This grey granite miniature cenotaph set amidst tall trees was unveiled at a ceremony in September 1921 attended by several thousand people including Sunday school children, Girl Guides and Scouts. Bronze panels listed 207 servicemen who died 1914-18. The names of the fallen 1939-45 were added after the Second World War. Each year poppy wreaths are laid here following a Remembrance Sunday Parade.

## 9. Sidcup Place

Passing the Red Lodge (c1896), take the footpath through the trees and turn left to Sidcup Place. The house was constructed in 1743 in the form of a star-shaped fort. From 1822 it was occupied by the Berens family who extended the house; they also contributed towards the building of St John's Church, almshouses and a school. Only adopting the name 'Sidcup Place' later in its history, from 1907 it was used as a boys' school until becoming council offices in 1934; it is now a restaurant.

Follow the path around the far side of the house, where the 'ha-ha' flint wall kept animals away from the house but allowed the occupants an unobstructed view across the Cray valley. Enter the old kitchen garden, now maintained by volunteers as the Sidcup Walled Garden.

*Turn right out of the walled garden and then cross the grass diagonally to reach Chislehurst Road. Turn left, passing Queensgate Apartments which are on the site of the Maternity Unit, until you reach the main car park of Queen Mary's Hospital.*

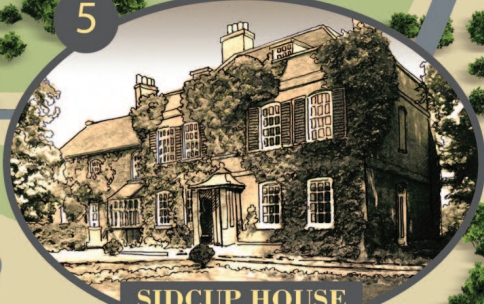
## 10. Blue Bench

The Queen's Hospital for facially injured soldiers opened here in 1917 under the leadership of Sir Harold Gillies, CBE, a pioneer of modern plastic surgery. Ground-breaking procedures were used to rebuild the faces of around 5000 injured soldiers, employing surgeons, artists and sculptors. Blue benches were provided around Sidcup for wounded soldiers to sit in peace, the colour warning local residents that they were likely to see something upsetting if they looked that way. To mark the centenary, this blue bench was installed as a reminder of the patients and surgeons who helped to create what is now Queen Mary's Hospital.





**THE BLACK HORSE**



**SIDCUP HOUSE**



**ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH**



**THE MANOR HOUSE**



**WOUNDED SOLDIERS' REST ROOM**



**CINEMA**



**SIDCUP POLICE STATION**



**BLUE BENCH**



**SIDCUP PLACE**



**SIDCUP WAR MEMORIAL**