

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 2023-24 we hope to further encourage an interest in our district's history.

[www.lam-sid-lhs.co.uk](http://www.lam-sid-lhs.co.uk)

## Foots Cray

The village of Foots Cray takes its name from Godwin Fot, a Saxon chieftain who had a farmstead near the River Cray. The Domesday Book refers to a watermill, probably used for the grinding of corn. The turnpiking of the London to Maidstone Road in the mid-18th century brought trade to coaching inns which provided stabling for horses and refreshments for travellers.

The area was mainly agricultural with dairy farms as well as fruit orchards, hops and watercress beds. The coming of the railway to Sidcup in 1866 allowed produce like raspberries to be transported to the London markets but also caused a decline to the coaching trade. A papermill provided employment for a large number of workers. Nearby was Foots Cray Place, the owners of which played an important role in village life.

As farmland was sold off and the Sidcup Bypass was cut in 1923, industrial and commercial premises were established. Many of the buildings in Foots Cray are Grade II listed.

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**LAMORBEY**  
**& SIDCUP**  
**Local History**  
**Society**

# FOOTS CRAY

## TOWN TRAIL

A walk around Foots Cray



The Barley Mow and Catt Brothers Grocers' shop at 'Catts Corner', c 1910  
(Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre)



Foots Cray village from the bridge, c 1910  
(Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre)

**LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP**  
**LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

## 1. Foots Cray Mill

We begin our walk at the bridge. A factor in the development of Foots Cray was that the London to Maidstone road forded the River Cray here. A timber bridge was built in 1767. A bridge of brick and stone was built in 1814 and widened in 1909.

A mill for papermaking was established in 1767 on the north side of the road, astride the river. An influx of labour caused overcrowding in the village. The 1851 census shows that paper maker Henry Woodfull employed 30 men, 80 women, 30 boys and 30 girls. From 1878 it was used for fabric printing. The mill later had various industrial purposes including a laundry and the manufacture of photographic film, radio sets and silk. It was demolished in 1929.

## 2. Seven Stars

The original timber-framed weatherboarded range at right angles to the road is 16th century and is an indicator of how narrow the road once was. It was said that a red lantern hung to guide travellers across the ford. In the early 18th century this public house was named The Plough after the seven-starred constellation. The range parallel to the road was added around 1930.

## 3. Tudor Cottages

A timber-framed four-bay hall-house of the late 15th century, it was later converted into four cottages. Only the façade is preserved, as it was virtually rebuilt at the rear in 1974. The inhabitants in 1841 included a fishmonger, butcher, laundress and agricultural labourers.

Opposite the cottages once stood the Tiger's Head coaching inn. Destroyed by fire in 1792, it was rebuilt and had accommodation for travellers and stabling for 50 horses.

In 1875 it became a temperance hotel called Albany Lodge and later became Albany Nursery selling plants and flowers. Nearby was a blacksmith's forge and a wheelwright. Other coaching inns in the village included the Red Lion and Barley Mow.

## 4. Belgrave Place

Turn right into Rectory Lane, which has also been known as Foots Cray Lane, Church Road and Back Lane. The tall red brick terrace named Belgrave Place has a plaque dated 1737. In 1841 the inhabitants included paper mill workers as well as a plumber, gardener, baker and coal merchant.

Next along is The Old House, built c 1820 incorporating the original Tudor structure. Naval officer Frederick George Loring, a writer and early expert in wireless telegraphy, lived here from around 1920 until his death in 1951.

## 5. War Memorial

Erected in 1920 with a stone cross, the names include Lt Frederick William Corke who worked as an estate agent and was a member of Foots Cray Baptist Church. Married with four children, he was killed in action in Belgium on 10 April 1918.

## 6. Foots Cray National School

In 1815 Benjamin Harenc of Foots Cray Place founded the Foots Cray National School. At first the children were taught in the church until the school was built in 1816 on land donated by Harenc. Extended in 1818 and rebuilt in 1882 with a tall clock tower, the school closed in 1982 and it became the independent Harenc School for Boys. Hope Community School opened in 2013, a Free School managed by the New Generation Schools Trust.

Opposite were twelve back-to-back houses named 'School Cottages'. Many of the inhabitants worked in the brickfield behind. Most of the old dwellings in the village were demolished from the 1920s, particularly after extensive bomb damage during the Second World War.

## 7. Parish Church of All Saints

The earliest part of the church dates to 1330, but there was most likely an earlier wooden Saxon church on the site, and the font is late 12th century. Substantially altered in 1863, the spire was added by Lord Waring to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII. The memorials in the graveyard include one for Sir John Pender, pioneer of undersea cabling who lived at Foots Cray Place and died in 1896.

## 8. Foots Cray Meadows

The parkland known as the Meadows formed the estate of Foots Cray Place, a Palladian mansion for Bouchier Cleeve built in 1754 which superseded the medieval manor house, Pike Place. The house was acquired by Sir Nicholas Vansittart (Chancellor of the Exchequer and 1st Baron Bexley) in 1822, and it was occupied by industrialist Lord Waring from 1898. The owners of Foots Cray Place opened the grounds for all kinds of entertainment for local people such as fetes, ice-skating and concerts. The house was damaged by fire in 1949 and demolished.

Now retrace your steps to the main crossroads, known for some years as Catts Corner after Catt Brothers Grocers' shop which stood at 1 Cray Road. Turn right into Sidcup Hill and continue up past Holly Tree Shopping Parade.

## 9. Walnut Tree Cottage

A pair of cottages at Nos 170-172 Sidcup Hill have a plaque engraved 'RAV 1891' for Robert Arnold Vansittart who owned Foots Cray Place at the time. Next along are Ivy Cottages, also built in 1891.

At No 164 is the timber-framed Walnut Tree Cottage, built c 1600 but refaced c 1930. The toll gate for the London to Maidstone road was located nearby. Living here in 1891 was the coachman for The Elms, a large house adjacent which was demolished in the 1930s for the building of Sidcup Hill Gardens.

## 10. Foots Cray Baptist Church

A Baptist fellowship was established in 1812 by William Hardiman Colyer in his own house when he moved to Foots Cray from Eynsford. Once a burial ground became essential, land was purchased and a chapel was built here in 1836. It was enlarged with a new frontage in 1885.

The largest monument to the left of the pathway is for John Rogers, the Sunday School Superintendent who had a grocery and drapery shop in the High Street. While lighting an oil lamp in the school room in 1852 an explosion occurred and he suffered severe burns, dying nine days later. On the day of his funeral all the shops in the village were closed as a mark of respect.



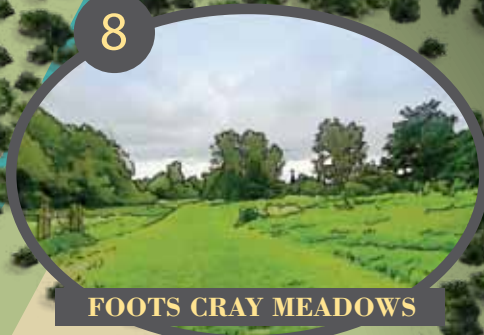
**WAR MEMORIAL**



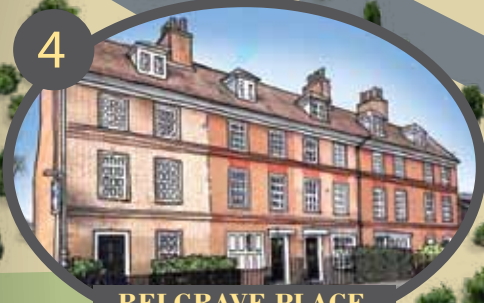
**FOOTS CRAY NATIONAL SCHOOL**



**PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS**



**FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS**



**BELGRAVE PLACE**



**WALNUT TREE COTTAGE**



**TUDOR COTTAGES**



**SEVEN STARS**



**FOOTS CRAY MILL**



**FOOTS CRAY BAPTIST CHURCH**

