

# HOME FRONT IN THE GREAT WAR



God bless our splendid men

Send them home again

God bless our men

Send them victorious

Patient and Chivalrous

They are so dear to us

God save our men

Written by a child at Sidcup Hill School, Christmas 1917

- 5 LAMORBEY AND SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
- 7 FOREWORD BY RT HON. JAMES BROKENSHIRE, MP
- 8 SIDCUP AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR
- 13 THE BELGIAN REFUGEES
- 4 RATIONING
- 6 PROMINENT FAMILIES
- 21 THE CHANGING LIVES OF WOMEN IN SIDCUP
- 24 NURSES
- 26 CHILDREN
- 30 SOLDIERS AND MEMORIALS
- 36 THE QUEEN'S HOSPITAL
- 44 SIDCUP'S GREAT WAR: A LIVING PAGEANT
- 48 SUGGESTED READING
- 48 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



# LAMORBEY & SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society was established in 1952 by a group of local historians as an adjunct to their adult education history class at Lamorbey Park. It was known initially as Lamorbey Local History Society and the group met in the Art Room at Lamorbey Park, which according to legend leaked constantly on rainy days during meetings. Later the venue changed to the Adult Education Centre in Birkbeck Road, Sidcup. The society flourished with local historians Beverley Nunns, Pip Hayward, John Mercer and other interested members.

Now meeting at St Lawrence's Community Hall in Hamilton Road, the society continues to provide opportunities for its members to develop an interest in local and other areas of history. Books, leaflets, displays, lectures, talks and walks are all part of its activities together with an encouragement to research and study.



# FOREWORD

by Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP



It is fitting and appropriate that we should mark the role Sidcup played during the First World War and the impact that the horrors of the battlefield had on this community. The names of the people that walked our streets, lived in our houses and yet made the ultimate sacrifice are permanently etched on the war memorial, immortalising Sidcup's lost sons. But our town also had another role to play, at the vanguard of medical science with the opening of what was later to become Queen Mary's Hospital. The prefabricated buildings that first appeared on the site in 1917 pioneered facial reconstructive surgery for injured soldiers under the ground-breaking leadership of Sir Harold Gillies, the man widely recognised as the father of modern plastic surgery.

And yet the doctors and nurses at The Queen's Hospital went further, considering, perhaps for the first time, the long term psychological effects of those disfigured by warfare, in methods of treatment and care that precede and inform much of the work undertaken by medical professionals supporting members of our modern armed forces.

The Great War wrenched men and women from their families; fathers sent to the frontline to confront the enemy, mothers volunteering as nurses with Voluntary Aid Detachments at home and abroad and millions who never returned. The tragedy of the First World War has left a scar on virtually every village, town and city in the UK and across Europe, including here in Sidcup. It is therefore important that, through the work of organisations like the Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society and through other, varied acts of Remembrance, we commemorate the lives of those who gave theirs for our freedom and pay tribute to their courage and resilience.

As we look back on the events of the Great War and commemorate the life stories of those that endured them, we must remember not only the role that our town and countless others played in this terrible conflict, but also the utter devastation and human tragedy of war and conflict. As fighting continues around the world, we must remember those that still face suffering at the hands of others and the sacrifice so many people from Sidcup made and continue to make to protect the freedoms that we enjoy today.





# SIDCUP AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Top: Sidcup High Street, 1906. On the right is the Black Horse

Bottom: View of Sidcup High Street c1910 In the 18th century Edward Hasted, the renowned Kent historian and surveyor, described Sidcup as "a small street of houses, among which is an inn of much resort, and two or three gentlemen's houses". Sidcup is not mentioned in the Domesday book but its name is probably of Anglo-Saxon origin from two words 'sed' and 'copp' meaning broad top. The inn Hasted referred to was The Black Horse, a popular coaching stop on the road from Maidstone to London; the site is now occupied by Bexley Learning Centre and Travelodge hotel.

A map of 1860 shows clearly what a small place Sidcup was. The impact of the railway, which arrived in 1866, changed its fortunes and it began to eclipse what had originally been the more important village of Foots Cray. Sidcup's situation, close to London, made it a popular choice for house-building aided by the brick works in Foots Cray. According to Walsham's Directory of 1894, reaching Sidcup on the train was a unique experience. 'After emerging from the railway station and commencing to climb the hill leading to the commercial part of the community on the left and a rather large stretch of tenements on the right, one feels at once the clearness and briskness of the air as compared with that left behind in the Town: and also thinks it a blessing to be able to travel so short a distance and find oneself in this part of the "Garden of Kent" inhaling an atmosphere in summer soft and balmy as in winter it is clear and bright. When one then turns into the High Street, with its shops on each side of so clean and cheery appearance, he is struck with the idea that the inhabitants of Sidcup and neighbourhood are of an extremely respectable kind.'

By 1914 the population was over 8,000 and there was an abundance of amenities. The principal governing body was the Foots Cray Urban District Council which had jurisdiction over the Fire Brigade, Recreation Grounds, Allotments and Cemetery. Parts of 'lower' Sidcup were in Chislehurst Urban District Council. There was a large Public Hall in Hatherley Road which could seat over 300 people. There were many local societies, clubs and institutions including Sidcup Literary and Scientific Society, Sidcup Rifle Club, Sidcup Golf Club at Lamorbey Park, cricket and tennis clubs, Sidcup Horticultural Society, Sidcup Boy Scouts and the Liberal and Radical Association. At the onset of the First World War many of the sports clubs closed. Sidcup at this time would have had an advantage over local villages with its large number of good shops in

the High Street where 'all classes of trade are well represented'. They were serving a large number of wealthy customers, a rising middle and working class: a well-defined class system was in place.

# Shops

Around 1914 Sidcup High Street consisted of approximately one hundred shops including butchers, bakers, greengrocers, general grocers, drapers, milliners, ladies and gents' outfitters and cobblers; there were also tobacconists and confectioners, ironmongers, florist, hairdressers, saddler and stationers. Boots the chemist is the only shop that was there at the time of the First World War and is still there today.

Most of the shopkeepers lived above their shops in four to six rooms which would often have to accommodate family members, most of whom worked in the shop. If the shopkeeper's family consisted of young children, employees of the shop might also live there. A large proportion of the shopkeepers were not born in Sidcup but had moved to this expanding district from all over the country.

A large department store, Dawson, was situated at 24-34 High Street. It sold a variety of goods including clothes, haberdashery, bedding, curtains, carpets, rugs, linoleum, furniture, china and ironmongery. Above the shop lived the staff, mainly women shop assistants, dressmakers and milliners who were all single and mostly under the age of 25. In charge of these employees was the manager with a housekeeper to look after their domestic needs.

Shops would show as much as possible of their wares in their windows in the hope of encouraging customers to come inside. Shop awnings protected the goods from sun and rain.



Left: Shop front of G. H. Godfrey Butchers, 65 High Street, Sidcup c1900

Opposite: Views of Sidcup High Street c1910





II

#### Churches

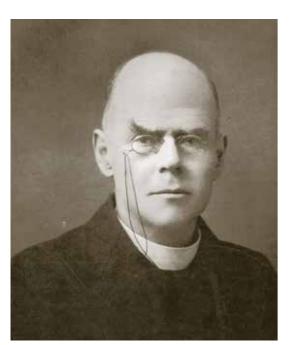
Sidcup had several churches covering a variety of denominations. The first to be built was the Church of St John the Evangelist in 1844 (rebuilt 1899). The Congregational Church in Station Road was built in 1888, a Baptist Chapel in Hatherley Road in 1890, a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Hadlow Road in 1884, the Foots Cray Baptist Chapel in Sidcup Hill, and the Catholic Church of St Lawrence in Main Road was built from 1905 but not completed until 1927 due to the short supply of building material.

Across Sidcup, the outbreak of the war saw the congregations of the churches involving themselves in work for the soldiers both at the Front and those returning home injured. Parcels were made up containing food and clothing. Many of the women knitted gloves, socks and scarves for men serving in the Navy and the new Air Force as well as the Army. The Congregational Church offered its hall to be used as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospital, and this was added to by the Wesleyan Hall, bringing the total number of beds to fifty.

With the building of Queen's Hospital in 1917 and more injured servicemen finding themselves in Sidcup the churches rallied round to help in any way they could. St John's Church became the focal point for the soldiers who could manage to walk into Sidcup, with two such soldiers eventually being ordained themselves. Soldiers attended the other local churches according to their personal denomination.

Below left: Rev. Canon Basil Spurgin, vicar of St John's, Sidcup 1902-38

Below right: A new
Methodist Church was
built in 1895 at the corner
of Hadlow and Granville
Roads and the original
church became the church
hall. A brass plaque in
the hall records that 403
soldiers were treated there
during the First World War.
The church is now named
Emmanuel Church.





# THE BELGIAN REFUGEES

The start of the war in 1914 had little impact on the people of Sidcup who like the rest of the nation thought that it would be over by Christmas.

However, in October 1914 over 250,000 Belgian refugees along with thousands of Belgian soldiers fled to ports in Kent to escape the ravages of war in their country. These refugees were helped and housed all over the country including Sidcup where 28 refugees plus 32 soldiers arrived. A local committee was set up and families were taken to various requisitioned houses in Main Road and Station Road; several families were taken to St Joseph's Convent run by French nuns in Hatherley Road. Appeals were made in the Kentish Times for money and clothing for the Belgian 'peasantry'.

Many of the refugees were Catholic and so Mass numbers at St Lawrence's Church increased considerably. Father Mulkerne SM, the parish priest, was able to inform his Archbishop that he had sufficient provision to provide services for the refugees and was happy with their accommodation. Many of the refugees spoke French and the nuns at the convent were a great help with translating.

Below: St Joseph's Convent, Hatherley Road, 1919



# RATIONING

We tend to associate food shortages and rationing with World War 2 but these also existed in World War I. By I9I4, two thirds of our food was being brought in by ships from overseas. The Germans had equipped themselves with a fleet of U-boats ready to blockade and sink allied merchant shipping aiming to deprive British civilians of food thus forcing the British government to capitulate.

By December 1916 the situation was already very serious. A voluntary rationing scheme was introduced to encourage people to reduce their consumption of staple foods, particularly bread, and to have days without meat. New 'war loaves' had potatoes in them or ground turnips but these were unpopular. Beer was watered down but increased in price. A new department, the Ministry of Food, put out leaflets with ideas for pastry, cakes and buns made with potatoes.

In the spring and summer of 1917 the German naval blockade was so successful that 46,000 tons of meat was lost at sea as well as 85,000 tons of sugar, and by the end of the year there was a real fear that essential foodstuffs were running out. Panic buying led to shortages and inflated prices. To combat this, the government quickly introduced fixed maximum prices for basic commodities such as sugar, butter, bread and tea. Sidcup's local newspapers wrote about the shortages, claiming that they were exaggerated and that 'there is absolutely enough if only people will not grab.' Residents were urged not to buy more than one week's supply of any food.

However, in January 1918 the Ministry of Food brought in compulsory rationing and the London Food Card Scheme was introduced whereby ration cards were exchanged for completed application forms. The Council Food Offices in Main Road, Sidcup offered help and advice filling in the applications.

Sugar was rationed first and by April meat, butter, cheese and margarine were added to the list. The scheme was not a means of reducing consumption, simply a way to share what there was. Not surprisingly, it was the poor who benefited most from rationing as they got a share of better food than they could have afforded before.

Along with food, fuel became the commodity most in short supply as the war went on, affecting heating and lighting. New regulations on domestic and public lighting were introduced. Blinds had to be up at windows and drawn at night; anyone caught flouting these regulations could be fined £100 or sent to prison for six months. The autumn and winter of 1914 saw all street lights being dimmed and no long lines of lights were permitted outside. These precautions to save fuel became an imperative when the Zeppelins started to drop their bombs on built-up areas.

By October 1916, coal was in such short supply that families were rationed by the number of rooms they had in their house. 1917 began as one of the coldest winters on record and this led to further coal shortages. Households had to register with a coal merchant for supplies. Shops began to close early to save on heating and light, and people were encouraged to go to bed earlier. Pub hours were curtailed by the government to keep the nation fit for the long hours of work each day. Churches were advised to have their winter services in the afternoons. By the end of 1917, gas and electricity were also rationed.

Below: The Sidcup Times carried messages regarding rationing.

# Buy National War Bonds.

Buy as many and as often as you can. The greater your purchases of National War Bonds, the greater the comfort of the armies fighting for you; the greater the power of the offensive; the sooner will come the battle which will force the Peace Terms that you want. You can purchase National War Bonds at any Money Order or Post Office from £5 upwards.

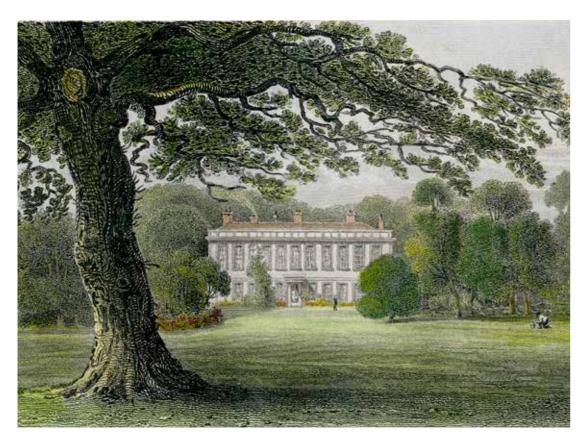
# Drink Coffee for Breakfast.

To alter your Breakfast "taste" for the time being is not a great sacrifice, but it will enable the Food Controller to more easily cope with the present shortage of Tea. You can purchase at the International

Delicious Pure Coffee 1/6 and 1/8

# Waste Paper?

If so, send us a Post Card. We will do the rest.





# PROMINENT FAMILIES

Top: Frognal House

Bottom: Maison Rouge, Main Road, Sidcup The coming of the railway to Sidcup brought great social changes to the town and not surprisingly, families and their homes reflected those changes. Already disappearing from the scene by 1914 were the landed gentry, although a number of their country mansions remained. Sidcup Place, Frognal, Foots Cray Place and Lamorbey House are good examples. Growing in number were the middle-class professionals - the architects, accountants and bankers - who travelled to their London offices by train and whose income provided for large detached or semi-detached houses. Living in the streets of artisan dwellings were those who serviced the middle classes, worked in the shops in the flourishing high street or provided the skilled labour of the building trades required by an expanding population.

# Frognal

A Jacobean mansion, Frognal had been in the Townshend family for three generations. Thomas Townshend, MP, later Lord Sydney, held roles in the 1780s including Home Secretary responsible for the colonies. The discovery of a harbour in New South Wales led to it being named Sydney after his title. Queen Victoria visited Frognal in 1872.

In 1914, the owner in residence was Hugh Marsham Townshend, grandnephew of Earl Sydney, the third generation of the family who had died without issue. Probably due to rising maintenance costs, Hugh tried unsuccessfully to sell the house which consisted of 13 bedrooms, 8 reception rooms, a billiard room, servants' rooms as well as extensive grounds with stabling for horses and coaches. He managed to dispose of all the contents, however, in a huge sale that lasted for eleven days.

Eventually the house was purchased by the government and it began its new life as The Queen's Hospital.

#### Foots Cray Place

During the war years, Samuel James Waring was living in a beautiful Palladian villa in what is now known as Foots Cray Meadows. Astute, hard-working and ambitious, he inherited Warings of Liverpool, a cabinet-making business, and expanded it into London. He bought Foots Cray Place and settled there with his family. By 1914, he had merged Warings of London with the historic Gillows of Lancaster and during the war years Waring and Gillow factories were turned over to war production. In 1922,

he was made Baron Waring of Foots Cray in recognition of his public service and generous support of charities.

Always very involved in community affairs, he financially supported several local projects including the Foots Cray War Memorial and gave some of his land to become Waring Park. He was very interested in the Scout Movement and his house became a regular venue for International Jamborees with Lord Baden-Powell himself attending on at least one occasion. Lord Waring died in 1940 and Foots Cray Place was destroyed by fire in 1949.

# Maison Rouge

The census of 1911 shows a Mrs Elizabeth Frances Thorne aged 57 living at Maison Rouge, a large detached house on Main Road opposite St Lawrence's Church. With her was her 11-year-old son Joseph, who along with his two older brothers Cornelius and Marlborough, had been born in Shanghai where their father, also Cornelius, had been a merchant. Cornelius senior had died in 1906.

At the outbreak of war, Marlborough had recently emigrated to Canada where he enlisted in 1914. Cornelius, at Clare College, Cambridge, put aside his planned career in the Sudanese civil service and joined up a week before his brother. The brothers' letters home to Sidcup describe daily routines at the front: bombardments, tear gas attacks, mine explosions, snipers and machine gun fire.

On 27 September 1915, 20-year-old 2nd Lieutenant Marlborough Thorne was sent out on patrol to bomb a crater, the location of a German sniper. Marlborough was shot and the Private with him returned to the British lines to report the incident. Two patrols were sent out but were unsuccessful in finding Marlborough.

Meanwhile, Cornelius was a machine gunner in the same regiment as his brother. Hearing that Marlborough was missing, Cornelius took out a third patrol and quickly found him. Marlborough was dead, shot in the head and Cornelius, under heavy fire, brought back the body of his younger brother. For 'Conspicuous Gallantry' Cornelius was awarded the MC. The tragic story was told by Cornelius in a letter to his mother at Maison Rouge and following the news, she became withdrawn and reclusive.

Cornelius was promoted to Captain but survived Marlborough by only a year. Aged 24, he was killed on the Somme in 1916 and has no known grave. He is remembered on the War Memorial at Thiepval. Marlborough was buried in France. Mrs Thorne was quite devastated by the loss of her sons and left Sidcup to settle in Norfolk. Young Joseph survived the war but he was to be a casualty at Dunkirk in 1940.

It is apt that part of the house is now home to the Sidcup branch of the Royal British Legion who strive to ensure that our nation remembers.

Top: Cornelius Thorne

Bottom: Marlborough
Thorne





The Crombie family

Dr James Crombie, born in Melrose, Scotland in 1857, had lived in Sidcup for 27 years and was a pillar of the community in the truest sense when he died on 30 March 1918. He was the senior partner in the practice of Crombie and Callender and his surgery was at his home at Highden, 20 Hatherley Road. (This later became the home and practice of Dr Barnard after whom Barnard Medical Centre in Granville Road is named).

Dr Crombie was professionally involved with the Cottage Hospitals of Sidcup and Cray Valley and with the local VAD hospitals. He was also a Justice of the Peace, Chairman of the Foots Cray Urban District Council and of its education committee, Chairman of the Managers at Longlands School, a founder and Secretary of Sidcup Golf Club, a Past President and Secretary of Sidcup Literary and Scientific Society and he was also involved with the work of the RSPCA.

Dr Crombie and his wife Mary Marshall Crombie (née Osborne) had four children, Mary Gladys (born 1891), William Maurice (1893), Ian Osborne (1895) and James Machattie (1897) all of whom were born in Sidcup. The boys attended Merton Court School and gained scholarships; William and James went to Epsom College and Ian to St Paul's School. Ian had spent one year at Wadham College, Oxford before enlisting in the 11th Battalion of the Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment). He held the rank of Captain when he was killed during the Battle of the Somme on 28 July 1916. He is buried in the Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery Extension.

Below: Highden, Hatherley Road, Sidcup



Just under a year later, on 2nd July 1917, James died from his wounds in Belgium. He was a Second Lieutenant in the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), 10th Battalion. James had been in his final year at Epsom College and had been due to go up to Christ Church, Oxford. He is buried in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

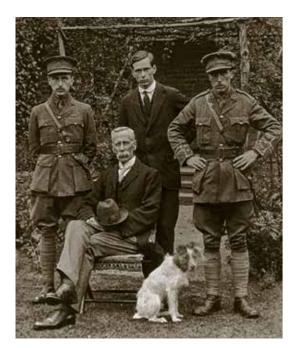
The death of two of his sons, in 1916 and 1917, was seen by some as contributory to Dr Crombie's early death at the age of 61. However, this was not the end of the tragedy. Having lost two sons and her husband in successive years, Mary also lost her eldest son William on 17 February 1919. He had studied medicine at St Thomas' Hospital and qualified in 1916. After a short spell working at the hospital he took up a temporary commission as a lieutenant in the RAMC. In January 1917 he joined the Indian Medical Service in Karachi until he was transferred to Baghdad as a captain with the 48th Pioneers. There he contracted a fever called *Kala Azar*. He was transferred to London and had almost recovered when he succumbed in the flu pandemic.

William had married Grace Almora Franks on 20 January 1917 and they had a son, Ian MacHattie Crombie, who was born on 26 October that year. Ian married and became the father of five children.

Dr Crombie, his wife Mary who died in 1942 aged 80, and William are buried in Sidcup Cemetery.

Below left:
Dr James Crombie (seated)
with his sons (left to right)
Ian, James and William.

Below right:
William Crombie's son
Ian with his mother
Grace (William's widow)
and grandmother Mary
(Dr Crombie's widow).





# THE CHANGING LIVES OF WOMEN IN SIDCUP

Prior to the war many single women worked but generally married women stayed at home to care for their children. Women could not vote nor stand for Parliament. But as men went to serve their country and the subsequent shortage of labour became a problem, women's lives were to change. With the main breadwinner absent, many married women went out to work to supplement their separation allowance and new areas of employment opened up for single women. For some, working was arduous and for others it was seen as a chance to raise their horizons, especially when there were opportunities to train and develop a variety of skills.

As the war progressed the demand for the production of guns and munitions at Vickers Armament Factory in Crayford increased. However, the traditional pool of male skilled and non-skilled workers had decreased and this situation escalated when conscription was introduced in 1916. Therefore, after some reluctance, it was deemed necessary to recruit women to fill these posts. Regulated by the Ministry of Munitions and the Trade Unions, it was decided that the women should leave their posts once the war ended, making way for the returning men. While the women's wages were often more than they earned in peacetime they were usually less than the men's.

Men and women came from far and wide to work in Vickers and so needed to be housed within an easy train ride to the factory. Therefore, many of the grand houses in Sidcup became hostels for these workers, known as 'Vickers Hostels'. One such hostel was a large house called Lavender Bank in Hatherley Road, Sidcup. It is likely that beds were crammed together with no privacy, poor sanitation and no cooking facilities. To brighten their lives, the boarders organised a social evening for St Patrick's Day in 1915 which included music from a piano and a gramophone. The Housekeeper, Mrs Floyd, provided refreshments.

The local weekly newspaper, *The Sidcup Times*, ran pages of adverts for job vacancies. At the beginning of the war in 1914 most of the vacancies for women were as domestic servants in the large houses of Sidcup, such as Cook, Scullery Maid, Housekeeper, Parlour Maid and Kitchen Maid. This started to change and by 1916 many of the domestic posts advertised were more generic, for example 'Housekeeper Needed', suggesting that the various domestic roles had collapsed into one, thus requiring less staff per household, perhaps because fewer women were available for domestic

work as the demand for women to work in other spheres grew. New types of vacancies included: Clerical staff, Shorthand Typists, Shop Assistants, Dressmakers, Drapers and Lady Chauffeurs.

By 1918 the labour shortage was considered a serious threat to the economy. Consequently, the demand for women to fill posts in traditional male roles grew markedly. Job vacancies advertised in *The Sideup Times* during 1918 include:

- ~ 3000 woman clerks needed for the civil service
- ~ 300 women needed for Ladies Land Army
- ~ Wanted: young women for machine work
- ~ Wanted: strong girl for Bakewise Furnishing Store
- ~ Wanted: young ladies machinist
- ~ Young girl in office needed
- Drapery and Suits: young lady required to take entire management

To support the change in employment opportunities, training courses were put on for women, such as Sidcup Shorthand Classes under the auspices of Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, and Practical Dressmaking given by Miss M. Hare at Longlands School, Sidcup.

As the number of working women working grew so did their awareness of the difference between men's and women's wages. Many joined trade unions and became active in the cause of equality within the workplace. Once conscription came in from 1916, Bexley Council employed women as Clippies (tram conductors) but they were not allowed to drive the tram. In 1918 there was a strike of conductors and drivers.

Being a relatively prosperous area, many women in Sidcup lived in large houses with a servant or two and were not accustomed to manual work. These ladies were often instrumental in setting up working parties

Below left: Vickers hostel, 22–24 Hatherley Road, Sidcup

Below right:
Bexley Conductress c1916





to make food and clothing parcels for the troops at the Front, to aid the Belgian refugees who were flooding into Sidcup or to raise funds for First Aid supplies for the wounded soldiers in Sidcup's VAD hospitals. Emma G. Meade of Twyford, Hadlow Road wrote to the Editor of *The Sidcup Times* saying that in response to an appeal for the men of the Ist Battalion Royal West Kent Regiment she had received quantities amounting to 2cwt, 24lbs in weight. The Ladies Clothing Sub-Committee was formed to raise funds for the troops; the Hon Secretary was Mrs Davidson and a Floral Concert was held at the hall of St John's in 1916.

Queen Alexandra was patron of the National Egg Collection, an initiative to supply fresh eggs to wounded soldiers in France. The collection in Sidcup began at the end of June 1915 with over 1000 eggs collected, organised locally by Mrs James Craig of Melrose, Hatherley Crescent. Readers of *The Sidcup Times* were requested to send one egg, with their name written on it so that Sidcup was represented. Mrs Craig dispatched the eggs to Harrods where they were repacked and distributed to the Army Medical Council.

Kentish Flag Day was held on 14 September 1915 in aid of Prisoners of War. Young ladies who were willing to help sell flags were asked to send their names to Mrs Cochrane, Hon. Secretary, Sidcup Depot, Norway Lodge by 4 September. The flags were then displayed by residents to show their support. It was reported that a large number of lady flag sellers patrolled the streets of Sidcup and did a brisk business.

It was considered essential to have a good supply of cigarettes for the Troops to lift their morale. Sidcup ladies organised the collection of funds to buy cigarettes to send to the troops. Three individual contributions were recorded in October 1916: Miss Verrell raised 10s 6d, Mrs Harding raised 6d and Miss Wickes raised 2s 6d. In total the amount raised was £211. This was sent to the West Kent Regiment. The War Office waived the customs duties and forwarded the parcels free of charge.

Below: Munition workers at Vickers, 1916









# NURSES

Top: Sidcup Cottage
Hospital with nursing
staff in the garden, c1907.
The Cottage Hospital was
built in 1890 and was
on the corner of Birkbeck
and Granville Roads.

Bottom left: VAD recruitment poster

Below right: Miss E. Newman Many women worked as nurses. Sister Marjorie Hale, daughter of Mr and Mrs R. H. Hale of Gresham Lodge, 52 Station Road, Sidcup served at No 2 Stationary Hospital, British Expeditionary Force. Having trained at St Thomas' Hospital, London she joined the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. Miss E. Newman of Wrens, Church Avenue, Sidcup was a voluntary worker at Southwood Auxiliary Hospital and a VAD Staff Nurse. Miss M. Finch of Ticehurst, Church Road, Sidcup was honoured by her work being brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for War in 1917. She received her training at Charing Cross Hospital and was Lady Superintendent to Kent 62 VAD hospital, Sidcup from its formation in 1912.

Miss Nora Easby, daughter of Mrs Easby of the Yorkshire Dairy,
Longlands Parade, Sidcup was awarded the Military Medal for
Gallantry in 1916. She was serving in France as a nurse with the British
Expeditionary Force and rescued wounded soldiers while the hospital was
being shelled, herself being wounded. Her three brothers also served in
the war. Nora had previously won two medals for her services during the
Balkan War when she went to Montenegro.

Sister Kerr, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs W. T. Kerr of Branksome, Victoria Road, Sidcup was sent to the continent with the first contingent of nurses. *The Sidcup Times* of August 1914 reports that in writing home Nurse Kerr said: "Many friends in Sidcup were saying they would like to help our dear Tommies. If they saw them as I do they would want to help them a thousand times more. Tell them from me that if they will send tins of cigarettes, small quantities of note paper, and milk and chocolate, the Tommies will bless them".





# CHILDREN

Top: Sidcup Hill School

Bottom: Scouts at Foots Cray Place with Baden Powell As war broke out in August 1914 the children of Sidcup carried on with their lives, attending school and taking part in their leisure activities. As the war progressed however, their lives gradually began to change and their school days were often interrupted by closures. In November 1915 Burnt Oak School was closed due to the fear of bombing and to save light; in 1916, there was a diphtheria outbreak; and in June 1917, the children were sent home for their own safety due to air raids in the surrounding area.

Concern about how the war should be dealt with in schools led to an article in the Times Educational Supplement of October 1914 suggesting that teachers not excite their pupils but make real the Christian lessons — not to hate the Germans and help the Belgians — and that war is self-sacrifice and is serious. The children of Sidcup certainly seemed to take these teachings on board. Apart from becoming involved in the local war effort, children saw members of their families and their community volunteer for the Army: the children of Burnt Oak School arrived in September 1914 to find that their teacher Mr Hissock and the school keeper Mr Small had joined up.

The pupils of Sidcup Hill School raised money for various war efforts which included: 15s 9d to provide 'smokes' for sailors and soldiers, £1 for the VAD hospital, £14 Is 10d for the blinded soldiers' children fund and £1 2s 0d for The Queen's Hospital. The children received letters of thanks from the organisations they supported including Bromley Isolation Hospital, where gifts had been sent to the children who spent Christmas there. Boys from Sidcup Hill School sent Christmas presents to the gallant West Kent Regiment serving in France which included woollen mufflers, socks and sleeping helmets; they also started the Old Sidcuponians Fund: a gift was sent every week to an Old Sidcuponian serving on the Front.

School children saw the names of former pupils added to the Rolls of Honour in their schools. In December 1914, the Victoria Cross was won by Private Sidney Frank Godley of the 4th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers City of London Regiment. He was a former pupil of Sidcup National School. In September 1916, the children of Burnt Oak School commemorated the award of the Military Medal to Victor



Froide and later to Arthur Lloyd and C. Neville. The Honours board in Sidcup Hill School bore over thirty names including four wounded and one killed. Lieutenant C. H. Pillman of the 4th Dragoon Guards was awarded the Military Cross; he lived at The Cottage in Foots Cray and was educated at Merton Court School.

At the beginning of the war, Baden-Powell requested that Commander Garrett of Kent Boy Scouts should supply if required I,000 Scouts to guard culverts, telegraphs, run dispatches and billet troops as long as they were exempted from school and communicated with the chief constable. The Boy Scouts became very active in Sidcup and joined the Eltham Scouts and other local associations to carry out their war duties. In September 1914 the Acting District Commissioner, Mr Arthur Hace, appealed for rations and warm clothing for the Scouts while undertaking their duties. Near the end of the war in 1918, the Scouts held a Patrol Leader's conference in the Public Hall in Sidcup. They were delighted that Princess Helena Victoria attended.

In September 1914, a concert was held at The Black Horse in Sidcup in aid of the National Relief Fund. It was here that Dr Pollen urged parents to encourage their sons to join the Colours to aid their country in the hour of grave national emergency. A recruiting march was held by the 1st Cadet Battalion, The Queen's Own, to recruit for local companies. Bands and drums led the march. Lads between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, minimum height of 5ft, were encouraged to join the cadets. Meetings were held on Thursday evenings at Longlands School.

The end of the war saw celebrations throughout Sidcup on II November 1918, but some children had witnessed the receiving of telegrams with information of a family member's death; this would change their lives forever when they realised their fathers and brothers would not be coming home.

Opposite: Scouts at
Foots Cray Place with
Baden Powell



# SOLDIERS & MEMORIALS

Opposite: Sidcup War Memorial In January 1915, first-hand experiences of life on the war-torn continent could be heard directly from a young woman, Miss B. Fleury of Longlands Road, Sidcup, whose adventurous journey across Europe from Warsaw to Kent was reported in a number of newspapers. Reports of deaths and serious injuries amongst the young men who signed up in Sidcup soon began to filter home. Some of these incidents in themselves became sadly newsworthy: Mrs Stringman of Sidcup, upon hearing that her son had lost an arm at the front, 'was taken ill herself and died within a few hours' (Hull Daily Mail 18 May 1915).

Newspaper reports also provided information about eligible men who, for one reason or another, did not participate in the military action. Reports of the West Kent Appeal Tribunal meetings gave the decisions regarding conscientious objectors, such as a 23-year-old science teacher at Sidcup Hall College in 1917 whose 'exemption was granted, conditional upon his continuing his educational work and on his placing at the disposal of the Tribunal for some object to be settled later a sum of money at the rate of £50 a year' (Cambridge Daily News 4 May 1917). Others were granted more temporary exemption to undertake critical agricultural work, such as Edward Crowhurst who managed a straw and hay depot in Sidcup (Kent and Sussex Courier 4 May 1917).

Sidcup honoured its war dead in a number of ways. In the Church of St John the Evangelist, a chapel was added in memory of the men connected with the parish who fell in the Great War. In September 1921, the Sidcup war memorial was unveiled. *The Sidcup Times* reported that 'of the 207 names we recall 207 sad memories... there were 207 sad days when blinds were drawn... 207 names are now engraved on plates—long columns of names, not of strangers but of those Sidcup once knew'.

#### Frederick William Corke, 1883-1918

Frederick William Corke was born in Wrotham, Kent and moved to North Cray at the age of 18 when he joined his uncle, David Corke, as an estate agent. In 1912 he married Mabel Mary Creasey of the Dyer, Son and Creasey estate agent family. He was a member of the Foots Cray Baptist Church, Sidcup Hill, becoming a deacon and then treasurer. He also taught in the Sunday school.

Fred had just transferred to the Lincolnshire Regiment in Belgium as a Second Lieutenant when he was caught up in the great German offensive and was killed by machine gun fire. His is the only memorial in the Baptist Church and it is maintained in pristine condition. His widow continued to worship in the Baptist church and lived to the grand age of 94.

Fred and Mabel had four children, Lucy, Joan, Margery and Frederick, the last named being born on 2 February 1918, just a few months before his father died. Fred's third daughter, Margery, founded The Kindergarten School in 1940 at 44, and later 42, Station Road, Sidcup for children who had not been evacuated. In 1942 she purchased West Lodge, 36 Station Road, with the help of her uncle, John Rogers Creasey, and West Lodge School was born. She retired as Principal in 1981 and the school is now run as a charitable trust.



Above: Fred Corke

Below: Foots Cray Baptist
Chapel, Sidcup Hill, 1908



Below left: Arthur Roope

Below right: Horace Roope

# The Roope Family

Absolom and Elizabeth Roope came to Sidcup in about 1894 and lived at I Sunnyside (now 52) Birkbeck Road with their children Blanche, Harry and Florence, Arthur, Horace and Nellie. They later moved to 15 and then 34 Clarence Road by the time that war broke out. Absolom worked for H. Gower removals company in Alma Road for 38 years until his retirement in 1932.

All three sons served in the Great War but only Harry survived. Arthur, born in 1894, was shown as a butcher's assistant on the 1911 census but his enlistment papers show his trade as baker. He served in the Army Service Corps as a baker and had been to Gallipoli in 1915 and then to Basra in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) the following year. He died on 29 June 1916 aged 22 after contracting cholera.

Horace, who was born in 1899, was serving with the King's Royal Rifle Corps when he was caught up in the last-ditch German offensive on 29 March 1918. He was reported missing but by November he was assumed to have been killed. Presumably due to an oversight, Horace's name was left off the Sidcup War Memorial when it was first erected. His great nephew, Michael Chivers, drew it to the attention of the authorities and it was subsequently added, albeit in the wrong place — it appears on the list of Second World War casualties.







# Henry Cochrane Cooper, 1864-1918

Henry was born in Melbourne, Australia of British parents and they moved back to the UK when he was young. He lived with his wife Ada and daughters Olive and Esme at 21 Carlton Road, Sidcup until around 1912 when they moved to Norway Lodge in Station Road, next door to the old Congregational Church. (Norway Lodge was demolished in the 1960s to make way for modern houses).

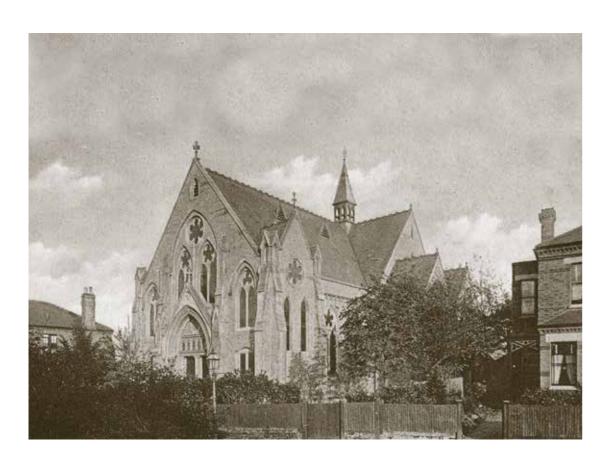
On 31 August 1914, at the age of 50, Henry went to the Tower of London and enlisted in the 7th Battalion of The London Regiment, a Territorial unit that was used to guard docks and prisons so that younger men could be released for active service. In 1916 his unit became The Royal Protection Corps, 112 Company.

His record shows that by 1917 he was already suffering from joint pain, diagnosed as rheumatism. In January 1918, when "endeavouring to capture an escaped prisoner when acting as escort, he overstrained his heart". Following treatment and an army medical he was discharged with a pension in May. However, he later suffered a heart attack and died on 15 October 1918. Henry's name appears on the Congregational Church tablet, which is now in Emmanuel Church.



Above: Henry Cochrane Cooper in his younger days

Below: Congregational Church, Station Road, with Norway Lodge to its left, c1910.





Above: Henry with his wife Ada on their 25th wedding anniversary in 1917. They are with their two daughters, Olive Isobel and Esme Dorothea in the garden of Norway Lodge. The Congregational Church can be seen in the background to the left.

Right: Poem by Hazel
Buckingham of Urban
Foods on hearing the
story of Thomas Highgate
who is included on the
Sidcup War Memorial.
[On 8th September 1914,
he became the first soldier
of the war to be executed
for desertion. He was
pardoned in 2006.]

I am the man you
will never see
Though I see you as
you pass my door,
I am the man who
will never be
a part of your life
a never more
I am the man who
suffered scorn
When the sun was
about to rise
For I am the man
shot at dawn
A traitor in many's eyes

# THE QUEEN'S HOSPITAL







Opposite: The Queen's Hospital

Above: Sir Harold Delf Gillies, CBE, FRCS (1882-1960)

Overleaf: The Queen's Hospital The Government had realised that new facilities were desperately needed for some of the many facially injured men fighting in the Great War. So Frognal was purchased in 1916. Frognal House itself was converted into nursing accommodation and offices, and a hospital was built in the grounds. Huts connected by covered wooden walkways contained accommodation for junior doctors, operating theatres, x-ray and medical illustration studios, laundry and kitchen facilities, chapel, cinema and canteen. The main wards were laid out in the shape of a horseshoe. The Queen's Hospital opened on 18 August 1917 with 320 beds. More huts were built later giving 600 beds in total, and local cottage hospitals and private houses in the area were brought into service, providing over 1000 beds in total. In the grounds was an old oak tree under which picnics were had in summer. Queen Mary visited in November 1917 and described the place as 'charming'.

It became the biggest and most important hospital for facial and plastic surgery in the world, and it attracted the best surgeons and anaesthetists. Around 5000 soldiers were treated and surgeons attempted ground-breaking procedures using grafted flaps of skins and transplanted rib bones to repair the injuries. Artists like Henry Tonks drew portraits to record the injuries. Sculptors took plaster casts of the men's faces - one of these was Kathleen Scott, wife of Antarctic explorer Captain Robert Scott. Dr Gillies' team of surgeons, nurses and artists had to constantly devise experimental techniques to rebuild the solders' faces. Recuperating patients had beds wheeled onto verandas to benefit from the fresh air, peace and quiet of the countryside. Some patients obtained work while they recovered but only where their facial disfigurement could not cause alarm, such as in the hospital as night watchmen. Blue benches were provided around Sidcup for patients with facial injuries to sit on, the colour warning local residents that they were likely to see something upsetting if they looked that way. A special Soldiers' Rest Room was provided at 40 High Street, supported by volunteers and open to all convalescent soldiers in hospital uniform.



# Sydney Whyberd

From 1917 young men found themselves coming into the town of Sidcup in the most distressing of circumstances. One such young man was Sydney Charles Whyberd and he was here because at the age of 27 he had received terrible gunshot wounds to his face whilst in France.

Sydney was born in Leytonstone, Essex and before the war was an assistant in a stationer's shop. On 21 August 1917 he was one of the first patients at the new Queen's Hospital having been transferred from Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot. Sydney's left upper jawbone had been fractured and his left eye had been damaged. Under Major Gillies' pioneering surgery, Sydney underwent three operations to rebuild his face. The various stages of the operations were recorded personally by Gillies and photographed to be included in a textbook for other surgeons, *Plastic Surgery of the Face*. These records have been kept by his family.

Like many other soldiers being treated at Queen's Hospital, Sydney may well have sat on the blue benches along the road from the hospital to the high street. One can only imagine the courage and apprehension men like Sydney and his fellow comrades must have felt venturing into Sidcup to face the stares and reactions of curious or shocked passers-by.

Sydney's last operation was in January 1918 and he was discharged, but he did not return to Leytonstone. He and his wife Florence settled in Sidcup and brought up his daughter and son there. His wounds, although remarkably healed, left emotional as well as physical scars. His granddaughters remember him removing small pieces of shrapnel from his nose on a regular basis and they recall him being always anxious when fires were being lit in the house, sometimes having to leave the room.



Below left: Sydney Whyberd on the occasion of his wedding

Below: Photographic record of Sydney Whyberd's operations









## Joseph Kirtland

Another patient at Queen's Hospital who remained in the town after treatment was Joseph Kirtland, a Lancashire man who was serving with the Lancashire Fusiliers in France when he was wounded. Prior to the war, he had been a theology student after studying at Selwyn College, Cambridge but life as a priest was not for him. He went quickly from Private to Captain. Then in October 1916, he was wounded on the Somme and lay in No Man's Land for several hours before being rescued by his batman. Joseph received gunshot wounds that caused serious eye and facial injuries.

He was transferred to Sidcup for facial reconstruction to provide a sufficient socket for a false eye but despite several operations, this was unsuccessful and he wore an eyepatch for the rest of his life. In 1915 he married a VAD nurse, Marion Spedding, and he continued as a regular patient at Queen's until around 1920 when he was living in Knoll Road. He later moved to Priestlands Park Road and set up in business with the batman who had saved his life. During the Second World War, Joseph was very active in the Home Guard. He died in 1957 and is buried in St John's churchyard.

Right: Joseph Kirtland



# Albert Haines

Albert Francis Haines, from Tilehurst, Berkshire, found himself in Sidcup at the end of the war. He had been wounded at the Somme and much of his left jaw had been shot off. He had been left lying in No Man's Land, then taken as a Prisoner of War to Germany, and in later life he had no memory of the incident which had left him with such an awful facial injury.

After being repatriated, he was sent to The Queen's Hospital in September 1918 and under the care of Major Gillies and perhaps William Kelsey Fry, the Chief Dental Surgeon who specialised in oral surgery, a series of operations rebuilt his jawbone. Photographs show the progress of the surgery and Albert must have been impressed with the care he received because while he was recovering, he studied to become a nurse, remaining in the profession until his retirement in 1961.

In 1923 he married Lillian, a VAD nurse from Foots Cray. They remained in the area, bringing up their three children. Albert became known for keeping pigeons.







Above: Albert Haines after his operations

Right: Albert Haines in later life

# The Queen's Hospital after the war

After 1920 the number of facial injuries fell and the hospital closed in 1929. It re-opened as a convalescent hospital in 1930 and was renamed Queen Mary's Hospital. After a new hospital was built adjacent in 1974, the old huts were demolished and the site became overgrown. Frognal House was sold in 1980 after modern nursing accommodation was built. The house became derelict but was converted into a residential care home in 1999, although the stable block and coach house had to be demolished.

Right: Ann Gerike is an American poet who came to Sidcup in 2008. She researched the history of The Queen's Hospital and visited the Gillies Archives. Stay of Execution is one of her poems from the book, About Face: World War I Facial Injury and Reconstruction.

In hospital, they hid mirrors from me but I saw the shields they raised to block their vision, how their eyes met only my eyes and censored out the rest. I hid from mirrors too until they made me my old face again, to cover up the other.

But summer came, and sun shone hot on tin. Unmasked, I moved deep into woods where no one saw me, I saw no one, and no one heard me when I awakened screaming.

Always my pistol with me.

I'd passed a meadow once, and walked there early after such a night, thinking to die out in the open air.

And then I saw the lark. She saw me too.
And sang.











# SIDCUP'S GREAT WAR: A LIVING PAGEANT

Moments from Sidcup's Great War: A Living Pageant On Saturday 18 June 2016 Sidcup High Street was crowded with people of all ages who had come to take part in Sidcup's Great War: A Living Pageant. Organised by Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society to commemorate life on the Home Front in Sidcup during the First World War, this living history event provided an exciting opportunity for the whole community to get involved.

The event was officially opened by Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP and the Mayor of Bexley Cllr Eileen Pallen. As the Belvedere Concert Band began playing, the atmosphere was buzzing as people looked round at the wide range of activities and displays in and around the high street. Music throughout the day was provided by Ist Greenhithe Highlanders Piping Club, Old Bexley Primary School Choir, Serenade Singers, Bird College Choirs and Youth Band, and 4+I Wind Quintet. Street theatre came from students of Rose Bruford College who performed excerpts from Oh! What a Lovely War, and from BOATE theatre group who had written a playlet The Home Front.

Meanwhile, a Family Poppy Trail encouraged visitors to walk around the town and discover the story of Sidcup's Home Front during the Great War. Many of the shop windows showed photographs of their premises from 100 years ago, courtesy of Bexley Archives, and some even had displays of old pharmacy equipment (at Boots), old barbers' tools (at The Sidcup Barber) and old spectacles (at Burnett Hodd & Jenkins Opticians). The parish church of St John the Evangelist, a Grade II listed building in the Early English style, was open for tours of the bell tower. Its memorial chapel commemorates many well-known local families. At New Community Church, High Tea and songs from the era were provided by the Gladys & Nippy Waitresses and NC3 Choir.

While there were lots of things to enjoy, we were also there to remember the sacrifice made by men who fought at the Front. Dr Andrew Bamji, curator of the Gillies Archive, gave a talk on Faces From the Front, about the work of The Queen's Hospital 1917-25 where Sir Harold Gillies developed his world-renowned facial reconstruction surgery on injured soldiers. Ian Houghton, a re-enactor, was portraying an injured soldier who was a patient at The Queen's Hospital, wearing the blue uniform and a facial mask typical of those soldiers staying in Sidcup while they underwent a series of operations. A selection of readings and poetry











Moments from Sidcup's Great War: A Living Pageant by Joanna Friel, Olive Mercer and Nicole Whitehead told the story of *The Woman's War*. In a series of short talks, Will Cooban spoke of *Sidcup's Memorial Men*, Ryan Turner of *The US Army in the Trenches*, and Dr Andrew Walker of *Sidcup in World War I*.

Stalls provided lots to see and do for all ages, including Rotary, SSAFA, 265 Battery Royal Artillery, St John Ambulance, Scouts and Guides, Sidcup Ladies Luncheon Club (Cancer Research UK), Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre and North West Kent Family History Society. Visitors could discover the story of Private 'Chalky' White with Crayford Town Archive and ask questions about the battlefields at Steve Hookins' Legacy Historical Services. Children could try on a soldier's or nurse's uniform at Young Archaeologists' Club, or join up at Peter Frost's Recruitment Station. Explore Learning provided First World War workshops, and there were prizes to win at East Wickham and Welling War Memorial Trust's Quiz. The Pageant was an opportunity to learn about the Great War and also to learn more about the work that groups do in the local area, such as the Sidcup Philatelic Society, Sidcup U3A, Friends of Red House, Bexley Civic Society, Friends of Foots Cray Meadows and Bexley Archaeological Group.

The Portrait pub joined in with a WWI-themed weekend and speciality ales. Outside on Elm Parade, the 'portrait' theme continued with the artists of Sidcup Art Club doing child portraits. Queen Mary's Hospital had a stall, showing the history of The Queen's Hospital, where Henry Tonks worked as an artist to record soldiers' facial surgery. At W. Uden & Sons, funeral directors, which was occupied in 1916 by funeral director Frederick Wright, a carriage drawn by beautiful horses reminded us that horses would have been a familiar sight in the high street at the beginning of the 20th century. The café Urban Food provided a menu of food from the time: split pea and ham soup, corned beef hash, followed by marmalade sponge and custard!

At 4pm the Pageant was concluded by a Ceremony of Remembrance at Sidcup's War Memorial, led by the Royal British Legion. The Last Post was sounded, followed by a two-minute silence.

Faces from the Front: Harold Gillies, The Queen's Hospital, Sidcup and the Origins of Modern Plastic Surgery, by Andrew Bamji (Helion, 2017). Curated by Dr Andrew Bamji, the clinical notes, diagrams, watercolours and photographs of the early hospital's work have been catalogued and can be seen at www.gilliesarchives.org.uk.

About Face: World War I Facial Injury and Reconstruction, by Anne Gerike (Floating Bridge Press, Seattle, WA, USA, 2013).

Bringing the work done at Sidcup's hospital to life, Louisa Young, granddaughter of Kathleen Scott, has written a compelling novel, My Dear I Wanted to Tell You, revealing the heartbreaking effect that terrible facial injuries had on young men and their families. Pat Barker has written a novel, Toby's Room, describing how the intersection of surgery and art at the hospital helped disfigured soldiers.

Writing: Denise Baldwin, Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP, Hazel Buckingham (Urban Foods), Janet Cooper, Penny Duggan, Katherine Harding, Shirley McKeon, Toby Parker (Archivist, Haileybury Archives), June Rowswell, Sue Sauter, Caroline Sekulowic-Barclay, Sue Tyler, Andrew Walker (Vice-Principal, Rose Bruford College), Phil Willson.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Images: Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre, Gillies Archives, Haileybury Archives, Jill Barklamb and Joy Kirkness (Whyberd family), Michael Chivers (Roope family), James and Charles Corke (Corke family), Mike Corley, Clare Crombie (Crombie family), David Gillham, Lynn Johnson (Haines family), Jane McBride and Isabel Burke (Cooper family), Margaret Willard (Kirtland family).

Design: Glenn Howard.







The centenary of the Great
War has been commemorated
in a project by Lamorbey &
Sidcup Local History Society.
With a foreword by Rt Hon.
James Brokenshire, MP, this
illustrated booklet looks at life
on the Home Front in Sidcup
and the impact of the war on
soldiers and their families.







