

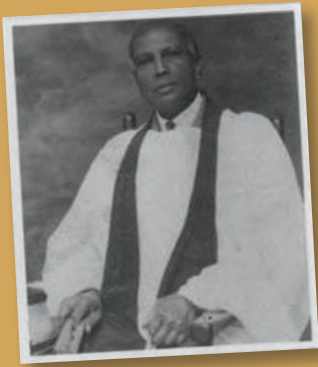
# Bexley's Great WAR

1914-1918

BEXLEY LOCAL STUDIES & ARCHIVES CENTRE

## A Guide to Sources





*Rev. Pitt Bonarjaree, Bexley  
Refugee Committee*



*Belgian soldiers, Crayford*



*The Catlett Brothers  
of Erith*



*Sergeant WW Printer the first Bexleyheath  
man to win a decoration in this war*



*Officer Training at Sidcup*



*Bernard Batsford  
of Foots Cray*

# BEXLEY'S GREAT WAR: 1914-1918

## A Guide to Sources

*To mark centenary of the First World War Bexley's Local Studies & Archives Centre has compiled this guide to sources to help you discover more about the area that we know today as the London Borough of Bexley, during the Great War.*

A hundred years ago, Bexley was a very different place to the area we know today. Coal and horse power were still very much in use. Much of the area was still rural farmland, and while places like Erith and Crayford were important industrial centres, they still had a 'small town' atmosphere about them. The Great War was to change all this – and for our area, and all its citizens, life was never to be the same again.

Belgian refugees settled here, and thousands of new workers moved to the area, to find employment in munitions factories. New estates and 'Vickers Hostels' were built to house them, and women were employed on a vast array of new types of work.

Transport was revolutionised, as Britain – and Bexley – was put onto a war footing.

Arms, explosives and aeroplanes poured out from local factories on a massive scale: Zeppelins and bomber planes flew overhead. Food became scarce, schools closed, and the war wounded flooded home. The Queen's Hospital in Sidcup became the foremost specialist military hospital in Britain.

Over 1500 men with Bexley connections were killed.

## Published Sources

You can discover books, maps, pamphlets and newspaper articles relating to the First World War from Bexley Libraries book catalogue <https://arena.yourlondonlibrary.net/web/bexley/home>

## Books

Bexley Local Studies & Archives Centre and Bexley branch libraries have some excellent selections of books on the First World War, which cover a range of subjects – military history, the home front, wartime biographies, and family history research. There is an extensive collection of books recording the history of the armaments manufacture Vickers.

- Kent's care for the wounded (1915),
- Royal Artillery war commemoration book (1920),
- The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, 1914-1919.
- East Wickham and Welling; Dairy of the First World War



## Local newspapers

The microfilm collection of local newspapers cover the 1914-18 period. The newspapers are a valuable source of information on local servicemen, the war at home, the role of women, and domestic life in Bexley during the First World War.

- Bexleyheath Observer
- Bexleyheath, Bexley & District Times
- Sidcup Times
- Erith Times
- Erith Observer
- Kentish Independent

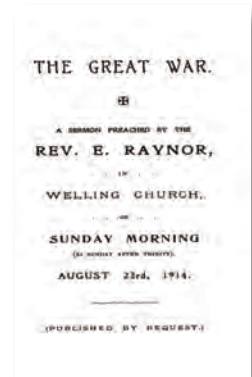


## Pamphlet collections:

An extensive collection of pamphlet resources, covering subjects such as local businesses, education, buildings, and biographical notes feature information on the First World War in Bexley.

**PAM 940.4** contains an assortment of First World War items; it includes Welling's 'Great War Sermon', Erith's 'Call to Arms', a Cory & Sons Ltd Company Roll of Honour, assorted postcards, leaflets.

**PAM 940.3** Driver Lewis Staddon's diary transcript describes his wartime experiences at Gallipoli and the Middle East



## Directories:

Local directories covering the years before and after the war can help trace local families, addresses and businesses etc. They also contain interesting local information, advertisements and town guides.

Local directories for all of Bexley's districts are held at the Centre.

Information from local Kelly's directories for the Bexley area for the period 1870 onwards are also available online.

## Maps

We hold nearly 800 Ordnance Survey maps covering the area ranging in scale from 1:1250 to 1:25000 and dating from 1860 to the present day. (All areas currently within the London Borough of Bexley are included).

Maps of the area drawn up before and after the war show the rapid urbanization and expansion of the area, as factories, transport links and houses were all built as part of the war effort.



## Archives

The archives are arranged by their creator: parishes, schools, local authorities, trade unions businesses and people. To discover the Centre's archive collection you can access the online archive catalogue

**[www.bexleyarchives.org.uk/Calmview/](http://www.bexleyarchives.org.uk/Calmview/)**

### Parish records

Parish records covering the period 1914-1918 are available for the following areas of Bexley. They can help you trace births, marriages and deaths of local residents (and some servicemen) from 1914 to 1918.

**PA23** St Mary's, Bexley

**PA23B** Holy Trinity, Lamorbey

**PA23D** St John's, Bexley

**PA23F** St John's, Welling

**PA101** All Saints, Foots Cray

**PA101B** St John's, Sidcup

**PA101C** Christ Church, Sidcup

**PA102** St James', North Cray

**PA105** St Paulinus, Crayford

**PA105** All Saints, Barnes Cray (from 1918-)

**PA105B** St Augustine's, Slade Green

**PA23C** Christchurch, Bexleyheath

**PA137** St John's, Erith

**PA137B** Christ Church Erith

**PA137C** All Saints', Belvedere

**PA137D** St Augustine's, Belvedere

**PA137E** St Paul's, Northumberland Heath

**PA137F** St Andrew's, Bostall Heath

**PA290B** St Michael's, East Wickham

**NCBFC** Foots Cray Baptist Church

**NCMBH** Bexleyheath Methodist Church

**NCMCR** Crayford Methodist Church

**NCMEW** Erith Methodist Church

**NCMSD** Sidcup Methodist Church

**NCRGP** Geddes Place United Reformed Church (formerly Bexleyheath Congregational Church)

**NCRSD** Sidcup United Reformed Church

**NCRWL** Welling United Reformed Church

**NCSEP** Providence Strict Baptist Church, Erith

**NCUBH** Bethany Hall, Bexleyheath

Other parish archives contain Rolls of Honour, records of religious services and commemorations of national events – e.g. **PA23/6/E/1** lists a Roll of Honour for Bexley parishioners in the Great War.

**PA290B/24** - The East Wickham War Memorial Provisional Committee minute book 1920-1921 lists names to be included (and excluded) on the local memorial.

## School records

School log books were compiled by the head teacher and give first-hand accounts of the school day. They include references to teacher shortages, absenteeism from school, declining resources, illness and fear of air raids, as well as more practical day-to-day details.

Log books are held for the following primary schools covering the war years:

**LAXBDG/1** Bridgen Primary School

**LAXBED/1** Bedonwell Primary School

**LAXCNS/1** Crossness Primary School

**LAXCSR/1** Crescent Road Primary School

**LAXLGL/2** Longlands Primary School

**LAXNCP/2** North Cray Primary School

**LAXNHH/1** Northumberland Heath Primary School

**LAXSHI/1** Sidcup Hill Primary School

**LAXSTP/2** St Paulinus Primary School

**LAXTRI/2** Trinity School

**LAXUPL/1** Upland Primary School

**LAXSWT/1** Belvedere Primary School

**PA101/25/B/10-17** Foots Cray Primary School

## Local authority records

The Council Minute books record the decisions that were made by the four local authorities that preceded the London Borough of Bexley. They cover a range of subjects on the Home Front – refugees, industries, transport, Defence of the Realm legislation, schools, rationing, housing, air raid precautions.

## Council minutes

**LABX/CA/1/1/25-30** Bexley UDC Minutes 1913-1919, (included Welling, East Wickham, Bexleyheath, Blackfen)

**LACR/CA/1/1** Crayford Parish Council Minutes 1894-1919 (included Barnehurst and Slade Green)

**LAER/CA/1/2/6-10** Erith UDC Minutes 1914-1919 (included Belvedere Bostall Heath and Northumberland Heath)

**LASF/CA/1/1/8-9** Foots Cray UDC Minutes 1912-1921 (included Sidcup)

**LASN/CA/1/1/2-3** North Cray Parish Council, 1908-1924

## Rate books

Rate books provide information on the ownership, occupation and rental value of properties. They can be a useful source of information for researching the addresses of servicemen, their families, munitions workers and refugees etc, which can otherwise be hard to verify.

The principal series are:

**LABX/DB/2/1**, Bexley Urban District Council

**LACR/DB/2/2**, Crayford Parish Council

**LAER/DB/2/6**, Erith Urban District Council

**LASF/DB/2/4**, Foots Cray Urban District Council



*Volunteer soldiers, Vickers Crayford*

## Business records

During the First World War the main centres of industry in the borough were located in Erith and Crayford. The armaments manufacturers Vickers had factories in both towns and Erith was home to the large engineering firm Fraser and Chalmers. In other parts of the Borough farms and nurseries were still major employers.

**BUFRA**, Records of Fraser and Chalmers (incorporating GEC), Engineers, 1890-1987. The business's administrative records such as Board Minute Book and Order books span the period 1890 to 1919, which record the factory adapted to war work.

**BUBCL**, Records of Borax Consolidated Limited, 1899-1960. Collection includes, Ledgers 1899-1922 and laboratory registers 1906-1947.

**BUBIC**, Records of British Insulated Callender's Cables Limited, 1906-1999. Books, magazines, photographs, files and papers, and ephemera

**BUWF**, Records of East Wickham Farm, 1910-1938. These records cover the period when the farm was in the ownership of Bruce L. Gibson. The collections include the details of people who worked on the farm; their wages, hours and days worked. It also contains entries recording the work undertaken by the farm and weather conditions.



## Trade Union Records

The First World War saw a dramatic rise in Trade Union membership along with massive growth in war industries such as munitions.

**CSAEU**, Erith Branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union includes registration books which record the employment of munitions workers and their membership of the union.

**CSNUT**, Bexley and Erith branches of the National Union of Teachers covers the war years

## Personal Papers

The Centre holds collection of personal paper which record people's experience of the War.

**PEHAN**, The papers of William Hand of Bexleyheath cover his Trade Union membership and work at Vickers from 1917 onwards.

**PEMAB**, The correspondence of Major James Allen Bean, while he was on active service with a Bombay Infantry Regiment from 1907-1915 and 1921-1923. Major Bean served in East Africa and the Middle East during the War.

**PEJWW**, The papers of Reverend John Wells Wilkinson of Erith cover schools, local politics and transport.

**PECRO/4/9**, Papers regarding the First World War including identity cards of John Mills Richardson and Rebecca Richardson (1915) and a Daily News Diary of the War (1919) 1915-1919

**ANBAM**, - Dr Bamji, was the former 'archivist' at Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup and is an expert on medicine and surgery during the First World War. Pioneering work on plastic surgery was undertaken at the hospital by Dr Harold Gilles at the hospital in Sidcup. This collection includes Dr Bamji's research papers, extracts, transcripts and photographs relating to the history of Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup and Frognal Mansion from 1915 onwards. The collections also includes photographs from the New Zealand Army Unit Military Hospital at Frognal, which contain graphic images of facial wounds and treatments

## Image Collections

The Centre holds a unique selection of images of the people and places during the war years.

**PCD**, Postcard collection includes images of Belgium refugees in Crayford, VAD hospitals, and postcards sent for the Western Front.

**PHBOS**, the A.H.T. Boswell photo collection includes local scenes from the early and mid-century

**PHDEW**, the Alfred Dewey archive has images from Sidcup and the surrounding area just before the outbreak of War.

We are also building a unique photo archive of local servicemen killed in the Great War – so far, we have over 500 images on our database. These can be seen at the Centre.



# Images of Bexley's Great War



*Wounded Belgians, Crayford*



*Hannah Spash, a Belvedere munitions worker*



*Welling's hutments for war workers*



*Vickers workers, Crayford*



*William Barton Young, Erith's Librarian*



*The Queen's Hospital, Sidcup*



*Bexleyheath's Victory Tram*



*Crayford workers, Armistice Day*



*Bexley Village War Memorial*

## Online Resources

Bexley Local Studies and Archives have undertaken a number of First World War themed projects with a number of primary schools in the Borough. The websites and resources contain a fascinating array of archives sources, lesson plans and suggested classroom activities

**[www.crayfordhistory.co.uk/index/](http://www.crayfordhistory.co.uk/index/)** Two projects can be accessed from this site: Crayford: A Magnificent Town and its Flying Machines and Private William White: Crayford's Unknown Warrior from WW1

The Not Forgotten project was designed for KS2 children and funded as part of Their Past Your Future 2, to raise awareness of the meaning of Remembrance Day On the 90th anniversary of the Armistice. This education pack available from this website contains sources relating to Private Thomas Highgate, who was the first British soldier to be shot at dawn for desertion, remembered at Sidcup War Memorial

**[www.bexley.gov.uk/firstworldwar](http://www.bexley.gov.uk/firstworldwar)** This website gives information about Bexley's war memorials, First World War burials in local cemeteries, annual Rolls of Honour, and many more local features and commemorations including material on Gallipoli and the Somme.

**[bexley.boroughphotos.org/bexley/](http://bexley.boroughphotos.org/bexley/)** Thousands of images of the London Borough of Bexley dating from the 1890s

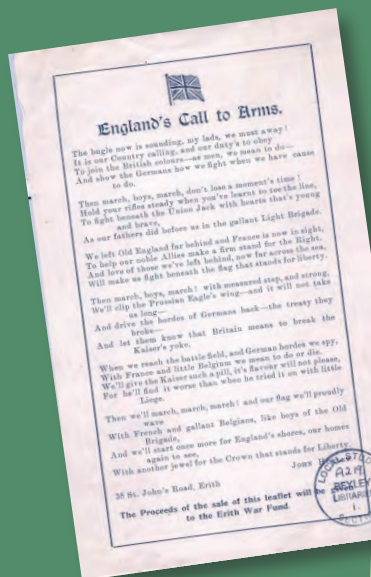
**[www.ewt.org.uk/](http://www.ewt.org.uk/)** East Wickham & Welling War Memorial Trust

**Ancestry.com** You can use the Ancestry website, free of charge, at the Centre or any Bexley branch library. Ancestry includes access to some military records, as well as the invaluable "Soldiers Died in the Great War" database.





*Vickers Vimy in production at Crayford*



*Erith's call to arms (P940.4)*



*"Fed up" from Nurse  
Rayment's Sidcup  
scrapbook (ANBAM)*

*Vickers Co welcomes  
Belgians to Bexley*



*Queen's Hospital, Sidcup*



*Vickers factory, Erith*

# Community history projects

We have worked closely with various local community organizations and societies to produce a range of publications for schools, history groups, and the wider community.

**The East Wickham & Welling WW1 Diary** is available at the Centre.

Community history publications include “The Story of William White: Crayford’s unknown Warrior”, “Not Forgotten; Remembering the First World War”, and “Crayford: a Magnificent Town and its Flying Machines”.

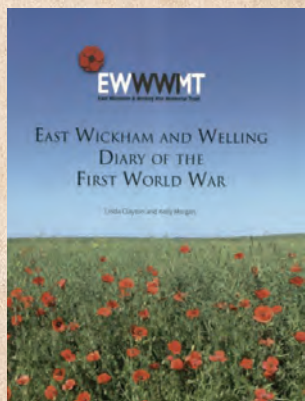
Contact us for further details.



*Crayford: a Magnificent Town and its Flying Machines*



*The Story of William White:  
Crayford's unknown Warrior*



*East Wickham & Welling's  
WW1 Diary*



*Not Forgotten; Remembering the  
First World War*



## Contact details

**Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre  
1st Floor, Central Library, Townley Road,  
Bexleyheath DA6 7HJ**

**020 3045 3369**

Email: **archives@bexley.gov.uk**

Website: **www.bexley.gov.uk/archives**

Archive catalogue:

**<http://www.bexleyarchives.org.uk/Calmview/>**

Book Catalogue:

**<https://arena.yourlondonlibrary.net/web/bexley/home>**



Twitter: **@BexleyArchives**



Facebook: **Bexley Archives**



*Reg Dimond – a boy from Bexleyheath who emigrated to Canada. Reg, and two of his brothers, are remembered on Bexleyheath's War Memorial)*