

The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture (1790)

C R A Y F O R D , KENT.

IS a small town in the high road from London to Dover, thirteen miles from London. Crayford was so denominated from its being the principal place of passage through the Cray, a river which gives its name also to four other parishes. It rises at Newel, in Orpington, from whence it takes its course by St. Mary-cray, St. Paul's-cray, Foot's-cray, North-cray, Bexley, and Crayford, and a little below this town it meets the river Darent. Lambard remarks, that "upon the Cray was lately builded a mill for the making of plates whereof armour is fashioned:" this was probably the same with the mill now used for slitting and flattening iron to make hoops, &c. In this river there is a great abundance of fine trout of an excellent quality. On this river, in the town, is a very large water-wheel, by which the whole of the extensive callico-printing works of Messrs. Gilling, Hilliard, and Rivers, are kept in motion. About a mile distant is a mill (in possession of Messrs. Jukes, Coulson, and Co.) for slitting iron, and rolling it into hoops. The Cray runs into Dartford Creek, which empties itself into the Thames. The Middle River is supplied with water from the Cray by means of holes bored through large oak planks, which are placed at different parts for that purpose. By this river two wheels are turned, which keep in action the works of Mr. Edward Vint, and also to those of Mr. Charles Davids, both callico-printers. This water, after a passage through the marshes, discharges itself into the creek before-mentioned. There is also another small river runs through the town; it has its source in the parish of Bexley, about a mile distant, and empties itself into Dartford Creek.

The principal inn is the Bell, where the Gravesend-stage stops to change horses. The church, burial-ground, and parsonage-house, are pleasantly situated on an eminence. The living is worth 500*l.* per annum.

In Crayford parish are many good farms, and in that part of it next Erith several acres of land have been purchased by Messrs. Scott and Pope, for making bricks. On the heath, about a mile from the town, is a wind corn-mill, the property and occupation of Mr. Richard Bennet.

Some judicious antiquarians have imagined the Roman station called Noviomagus, to have been situated very near the town of Crayford; nor can the arguments on which they have grounded this opinion be easily disproved. This place is also famous for a great battle fought here, in 457, between Hengist the Saxon, and Vortimer the British king, in which the latter lost 4000 men, and four of their chief commanders. The rout was so general and decisive, that they left Hengist from that time in quiet possession of his Kentish kingdom. In the open heath, near Crayford, as also in the woods and enclosures, in most of the adjoining parishes, are divers artificial caves or holes in the earth, whereof some, according to Lambard, are ten, fifteen, or twenty, fathom deep; the passage is narrow at the top, but wide and large at the bottom, with several rooms or partitions in some of them, and all strongly vaulted, and supported by pillars of chalk. Many learned writers have supposed, that these were dug by our

ancestors, to be used as receptacles for their goods, and as places of retreat and security for their families, in times of civil dissensions and foreign invasions. But the much more probable opinion is, that far the greater number of them were opened, in order to procure chalk for building, and for the amendment of lands.

In the 20th year of the reign of Richard II. William Courteney, archbishop of Canterbury, obtained from that king, the grant of a market to this place on Tuesday in every week; but this privilege has long been discontinued.

The following is a list of the principal residents of the town :

<p style="text-align: center;">GENTRY.</p> <p>Calvert Felix, Esq. (F.)</p> <p>Davies Mrs. Catherine</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLERGY.</p> <p>Walter Philip, (F.) <i>Rector</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PHYSIC.</p> <p>Vaywell ———, <i>Surgeon and Apothecary</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">TRADERS, &c.</p> <p>Allen William, <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Arthur John, (F.) <i>Cutter</i></p> <p>Butler James, <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Bennet Richard, (F.) <i>Miller</i></p> <p>Berryman John, <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Booker William, <i>Farmer, Wheelwright, and Victualler</i></p> <p>Burras John, <i>Bricklayer</i></p> <p>Budd George, (F.) <i>Shopkeeper</i></p> <p>Brown Thomas, <i>Peruke-maker</i></p> <p>Caps Thomas, (F.) <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Colyer John, (F.) <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Cook Richard, <i>Collar-maker</i></p> <p>Collins Samuel, <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Dauids Charles, (F.) <i>Callico-printer</i></p> <p>Dwelley John, <i>Blacksmith</i></p> <p>Elliott James, <i>Carpenter</i></p> <p>Fry William, (F.) <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Gibbons William, <i>School-master</i></p>	<p>Gilling Thomas, Hilliard Isaac, and Rivers John, <i>Callico-printers</i></p> <p>Hemman Ann, <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Kirkham Major, (F.) <i>Shopkeeper</i></p> <p>Lockwood Thomas, <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Miles Thomas, <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Marriott Daniel, (F.) <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Mitchell John, <i>Gardener</i></p> <p>Manclark Richard, <i>Supervisor</i></p> <p>Pine James, <i>Print-cutter & Shopkeeper</i></p> <p>Pratt Peter, <i>Shopkeeper</i></p> <p>Pummell William, (F.) <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Reed Francis, <i>Shoemaker</i></p> <p>Redsell Thomas, <i>Shoemaker</i></p> <p>Swasland Amos, <i>Butcher</i></p> <p>Sevenoaks Richard, <i>Plumber</i></p> <p>Shorter Thomas, <i>Carpenter</i></p> <p>Suthernwood William, <i>Victualler</i></p> <p>Stoneham Catherine, (F.) <i>Farmer</i></p> <p>Story John, <i>Baker</i></p> <p>Townsend Moses, <i>Seedsman</i></p> <p>Vint Edward, <i>Callico-printer</i></p> <p>Wilks Thomas, <i>School-master</i></p> <p>Wall Nicholas, <i>Taylor</i></p> <p>Woodmancy Thomas, <i>Shopkeeper</i></p> <p>Whinch John, <i>Shopkeeper</i></p>
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About half a mile from Crayford-church is May-place, a seat still venerable for its antique structure, but which has sustained a prejudice from an attempt made to give a more modern appearance to some part of the building. Sir Cloudesly Shovel was once the owner of this mansion, and of other considerable possessions in this parish. At present a moiety of the estate is vested in Miles Barnes, Esq. of Suffolk, and the house inhabited by Felix Calvert, Esq. Very little of May-place is to be seen from the main road: the smart sashed building, which is visible from the top of the hill leading down into Crayford, is a farmhouse belonging to Mr. Barne's estate, and now in the occupation of Mr. Munn, a great callico-printer. The gallant sea-officer just mentioned, who was in the manner of his death only unfortunate, presented a fine

altar-piece to the church of Crayford; and, in the window of the North aisle of this neat edifice, there was preserved, not long since, and may still be remaining, a good piece of painting on glass — the subject, Abraham offering up his son Isaac. — About a mile from Crayford is Bexley; in which parish is the seat of James Templar, Esq. The village, from whence Bexley-heath has its name, stands below, at a little distance from the South-east quarter of it; and the white steeple of the church is to be seen from the road. Bexley manor was in the possession of the celebrated Camden, who bequeathed it for the endowing of a professor of history in the university of Oxford. This is a very extensive parish, containing divers hamlets, and many persons of fortune are inhabitants of it. Several small but elegant houses have been erected here within a very few years; and it is highly probable, that the salubrity of the air, with the convenience of its being only thirteen miles from the metropolis, will be a strong inducement to other opulent people to fix their country retreat upon this delightful spot. About midway between Bexley and Crayford, but in the former parish, is Hall-place, an ancient seat, once belonging to the family of the Champneys, and afterwards to that of Austen. Lord Le Despencer is the present proprietor, but Richard Calvert, Esq. resides in it. — The distance between Crayford and Dartford is two miles, and some part of the road being upon an eminence, there is from it a distinct view of the magazine at Purfleet. Near the summit of Dartford-hill, on the south side of the road, is a wide lane, called Shepherd's-lane, leading to Dartford-heath, which is supposed to be the largest tract of land in Kent that is so denominated. On the South-west extremity of the heath, Baldwins is situated, the elegant seat of Richard Hulse, Esq. and by his garden-wall runs the road to Bexley, to the Crays, To Chislehurst, and to Bromley.

Transcribed by Mervyn King
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All spellings, punctuation and style have been preserved as far as possible. The major concession to the modern reader has been the replacement of the 'long s' or 'f' which closely resembles an 'f' and was used for the lower case 's' when it occurred anywhere in a word aside from the final letter. I believe the (F.) in the list of inhabitants indicates a Freeman or Freeholder.