

The Cray Riverway is a 16km (10 mile) path following the River Cray to the Thames from Foots Cray Meadows in the south to Erith in the north. **The route is signposted throughout, but much of it is along un-surfaced paths and may present some difficulties for pushchairs, wheelchairs or those with less mobility.**

### All Saints Church to Water Lane

The Riverway starts as you enter **Foots Cray Meadows** from Rectory Lane, just south of **All Saints Church**.

### All Saints Church and Foots Cray Meadows

All Saints Church marks the entrance to Foots Cray Meadows, and the start of the Cray Riverway. Thought to have been a site of worship since Norman times, Foots Cray takes its name from Godwin Fot, a local Saxon landowner recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, and from the River Cray that flowed through his land. Foots Cray Meadows were laid out as the grounds to two 18th century estates, Foots Cray Place and North Cray Place. The open grasslands of Foots Cray Meadows are managed to support a wide variety of wildflowers and grasses. This has been vital in conserving the biodiversity we can see today.

Continue along the waymarked rough track, crossing the river at Penny Farthing Bridge. The route follows the southern bank of the river past **Five Arch Bridge**.

### Five Arch Bridge

Five Arch Bridge was once in the grounds of North Cray Place, in a parkland setting designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Formal geometric gardens favoured in the earlier Jacobean period were swept away and replaced with the 'naturalistic' gardens in fashion at the time. These new 'Arcadian' landscapes were designed to evoke a classical idea of perfection; with grand sweeping lawns, tree lined vistas and lakes. The River Cray was dammed to create the meandering lake lying at the end of the park, where Five Arch Bridge still stands.

Continue walking past 'The Alders', a block of woodland on the northern bank, until the route divides into two separate routes (A & B) at a sign-posted footbridge at the end of Water Lane.

### Water Lane to Hall Place

Route A avoids built up areas, and Route B passes through the historic centre of Old Bexley.

### Route A

Turn right at the footbridge and continue along Water Lane to meet North Cray Road at Loring Hall. Turn left along North Cray Road following signs. At the roundabout follow the metal signs back along the south side of North Cray Road and after the Garden Centre, turn left uphill on the rough track, and follow waymarkers, passing Mount Mascall Stables, and beautiful views



of Joyden's Wood. Continue along the path and cross Vicarage Road entering Churchfield Wood. The waymarked path follows the perimeter of Churchfield Wood passing beneath the A2 and entering into Hall Place Recreation Ground. Keep following waymarkers and cross over the footbridge on the River Cray, where Routes A & B meet.

### Route B

Turn left over the footbridge and walk along the path until you meet Riverside Road. Turn right and follow the finger posts for the Cray Riverway, across farmland. Following the waymarked track past Bexley Cricket Club, pass under the railway and continue along Tanyard Lane into Bexley High Street, (Bexley Station 2 mins walk). Turn right along the High Street and cross at the crossing. Turn left into Bourne Road, and cross that at the crossing. Follow Bourne Road, passing the Recreation Ground on your right. Cross over the A2 as signed and follow the road past the roundabout (look for the view of Hall Place) to the entrance of Hall Place. Follow signs and waymarkers to the River Cray.

### Hall Place

The present Hall Place Mansion was first built during the reign of Henry VIII, in about 1540 for Sir John Champneys, a merchant and former Lord Mayor of London. The gardens date from the early 20th Century featuring a rose garden, a topiary, a grass maze, herb garden, a formal sunken garden, a walled kitchen garden, and sub tropical plant houses. There is a café near the car park which serves light refreshments. The house and its gardens were extensively restored by Bexley Council and are open to the public. Hall Place is now managed by Bexley Heritage Trust.

### Hall Place to Thames Road

Continue beside the river until the northern end of the recreation ground and follow the boundary of the ground to join Bourne Road. The route follows Bourne Road passing Bourne Industrial Park on the right side to join London Road. Continue along London Road following signs and cross over Crayford Bridge, continuing along Crayford Way, past Waterside Gardens.

### Crayford

Calico bleaching and printing industry came to the town in the 1820's, followed by carpet making and a tannery. The Maxim, later Vickers factories were established in 1896, making machine guns, shells, fuses and cartridge cases. During the First World War aircraft, including the Vickers Gun bus and parts for the Vimy bomber were made here. 14,000 people worked in the factories by the end of the war. The houses along Crayford Way were built to house workers. The Princess Theatre was built by the company, opening in July 1916, but was burnt down in December, reopening as a cinema in July 1919. The building was demolished in the late 1950's and is now the site of the 1960's housing block opposite Waterside Gardens. The Vicker's factory closed in the 1950's, being converted into the sites of industrial estates and the Retail Park.

At the end of Waterside Gardens, cross Crayford Way and continue along waymarked track beside the River Cray where it meets Barnes Cray Road. Continue along Barnes Cray Road and turn right onto Maiden Lane. Walk along Maiden Lane and join the path along the south side of the river. Continue along the path beside the River Cray and at the end of the path turn left onto **Thames Road**.

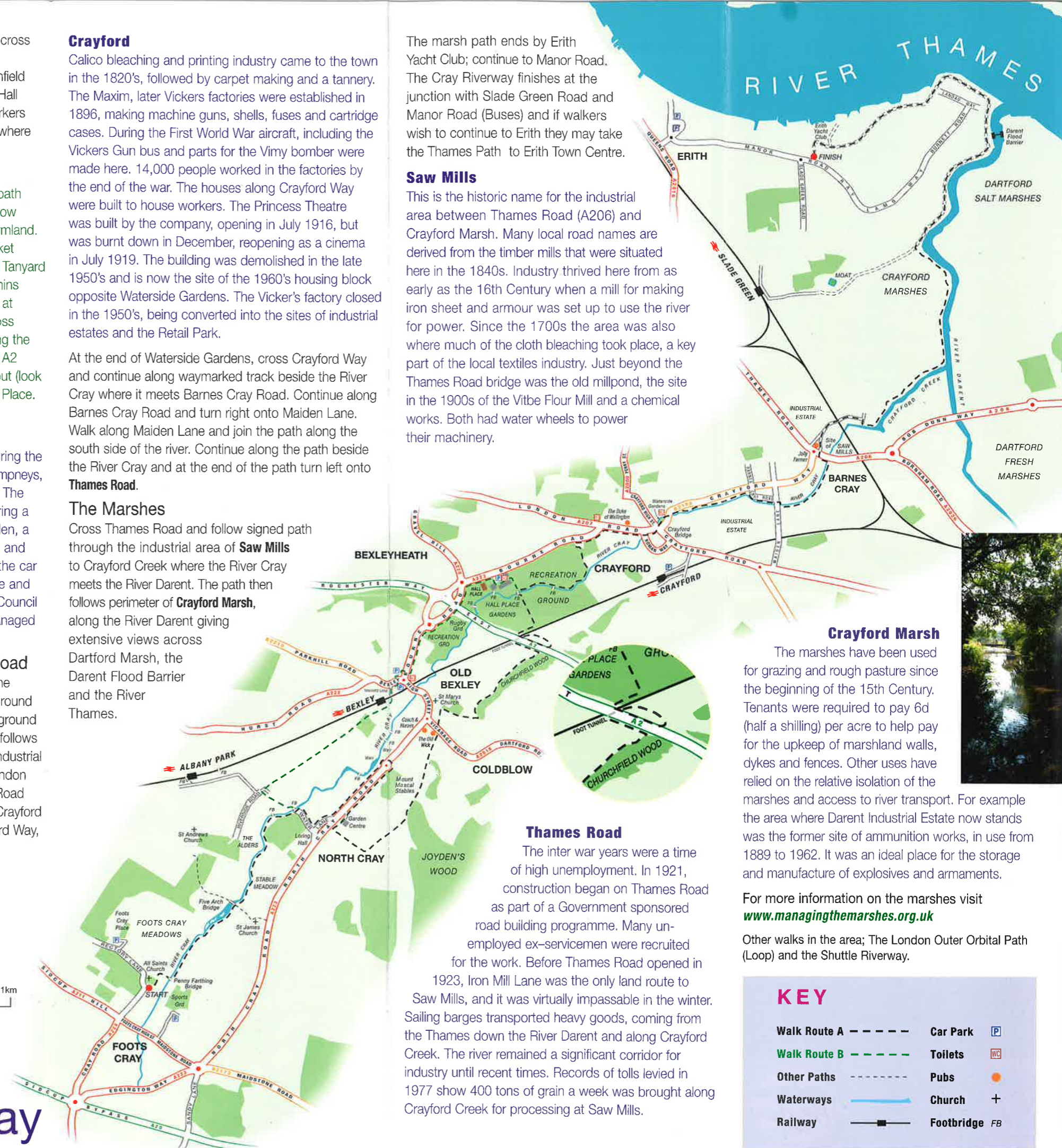
### The Marshes

Cross Thames Road and follow signed path through the industrial area of **Saw Mills** to Crayford Creek where the River Cray meets the River Darent. The path then follows perimeter of **Crayford Marsh**, along the River Darent giving extensive views across Dartford Marsh, the Darent Flood Barrier and the River Thames.

The marsh path ends by Erith Yacht Club; continue to Manor Road. The Cray Riverway finishes at the junction with Slade Green Road and Manor Road (Buses) and if walkers wish to continue to Erith they may take the Thames Path to Erith Town Centre.

### Saw Mills

This is the historic name for the industrial area between Thames Road (A206) and Crayford Marsh. Many local road names are derived from the timber mills that were situated here in the 1840s. Industry thrived here from as early as the 16th Century when a mill for making iron sheet and armour was set up to use the river for power. Since the 1700s the area was also where much of the cloth bleaching took place, a key part of the local textiles industry. Just beyond the Thames Road bridge was the old millpond, the site in the 1900s of the Vitbe Flour Mill and a chemical works. Both had water wheels to power their machinery.



# Cray Riverway

### Crayford Marsh

The marshes have been used for grazing and rough pasture since the beginning of the 15th Century. Tenants were required to pay 6d (half a shilling) per acre to help pay for the upkeep of marshland walls, dykes and fences. Other uses have relied on the relative isolation of the marshes and access to river transport. For example the area where Darent Industrial Estate now stands was the former site of ammunition works, in use from 1889 to 1962. It was an ideal place for the storage and manufacture of explosives and armaments.

For more information on the marshes visit [www.managingthemarshes.org.uk](http://www.managingthemarshes.org.uk)

Other walks in the area; The London Outer Orbital Path (Loop) and the Shuttle Riverway.

KEY	
Walk Route A	-----
Walk Route B	-----
Other Paths	-----
Waterways	—————
Railway	—————
Car Park	P
Toilets	WC
Pubs	●
Church	+
Footbridge	FB