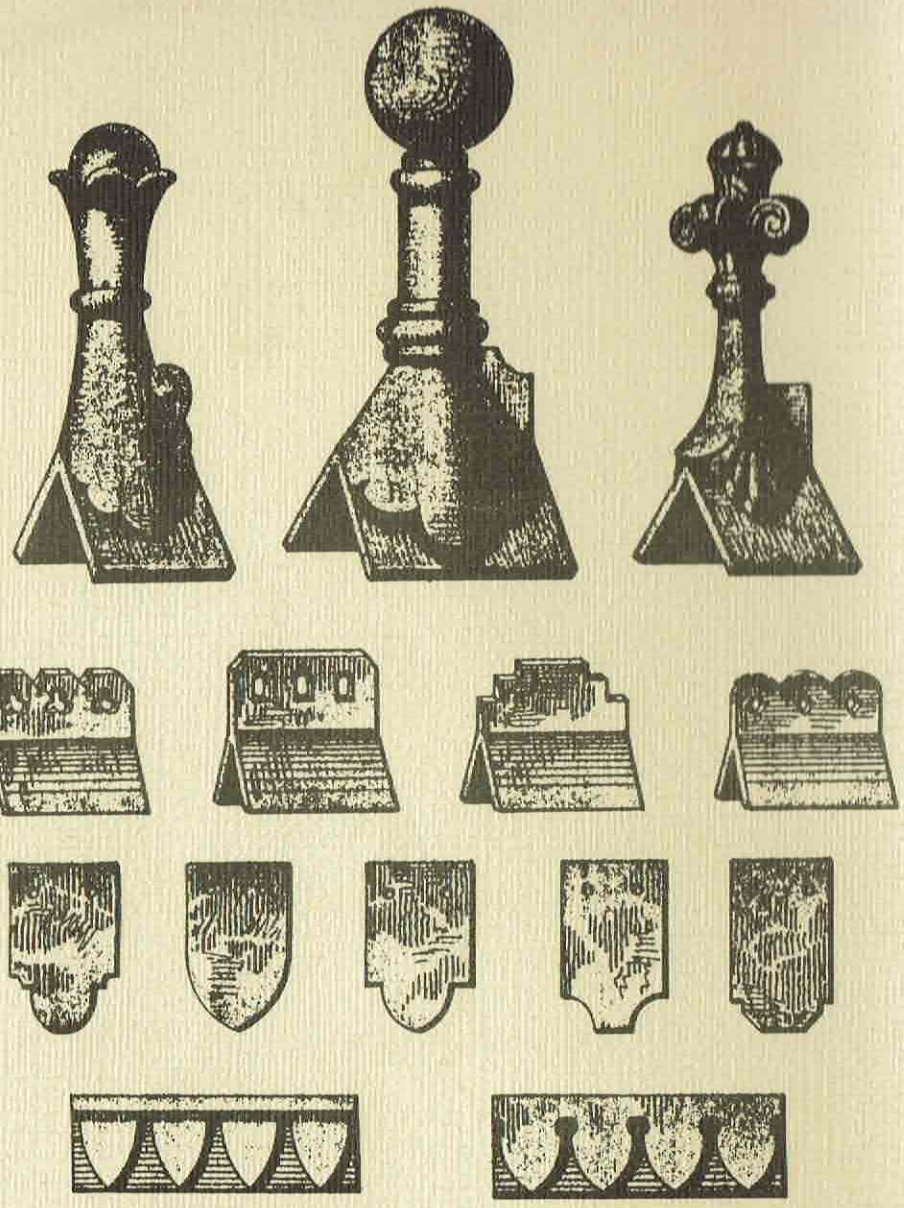
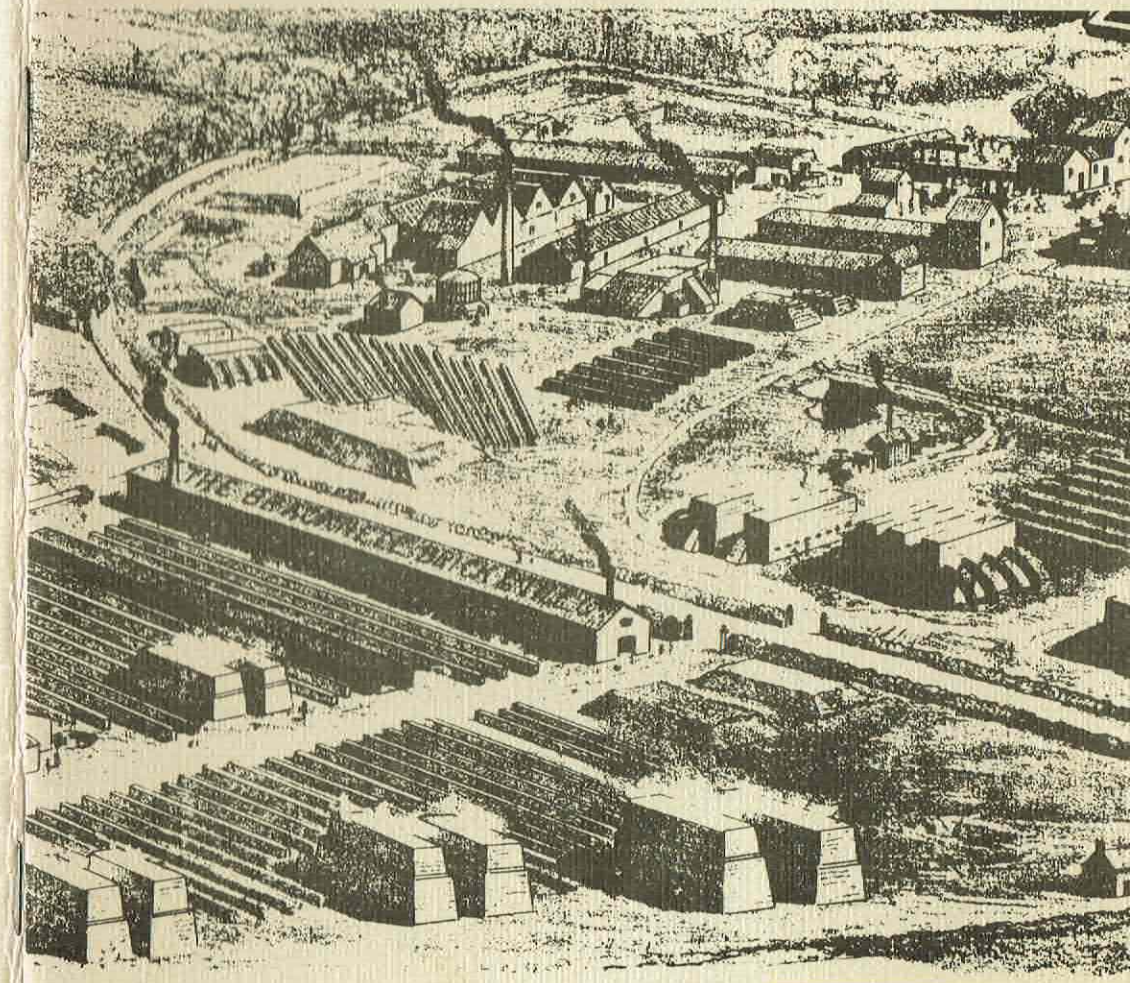


BRACKNELL
Leisure

BRICKMAKING: A LOCAL INDUSTRY



BRACKNELL
AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Bracknell Pottery Brick and Tile Co. about 1886; view of the works on either side of Folders Lane, Priestwood, Bracknell.

BACK COVER

Some of the many designs of bricks and tiles made by the company.
Source: Company promotional literature in the Berkshire Record Office.

First Edition 1978, Reprinted 1981, 1984 *(amended)*.
Second *(Revised)* Edition 1990.

ISBN 0 9515825 0 X

Published by Bracknell and District Historical Society, 25 Warfield Road, Bracknell, Berks, RG12 2JY

Printed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

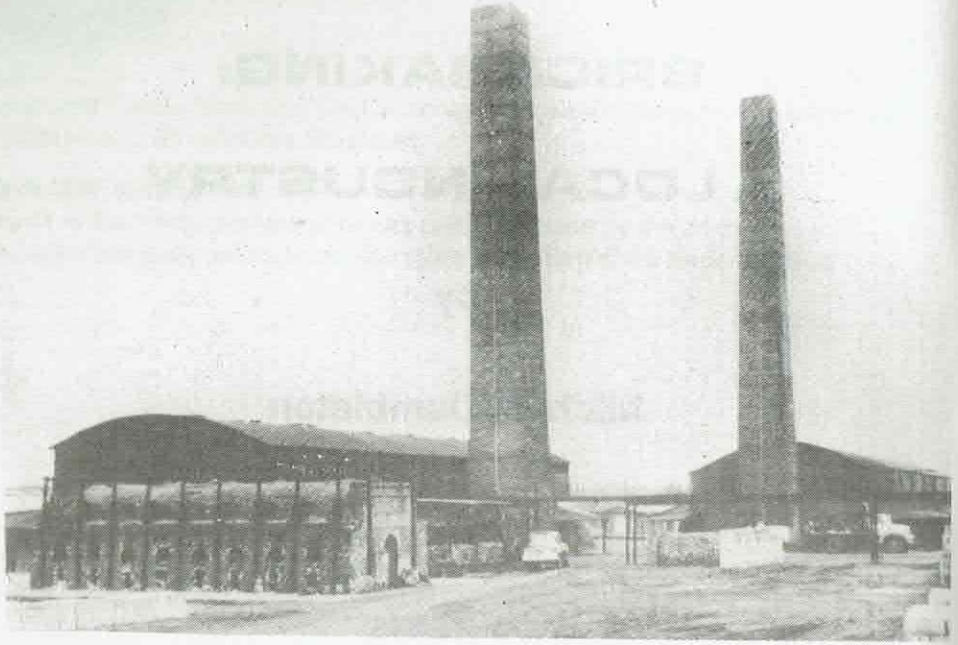
BRICKMAKING:

A LOCAL INDUSTRY

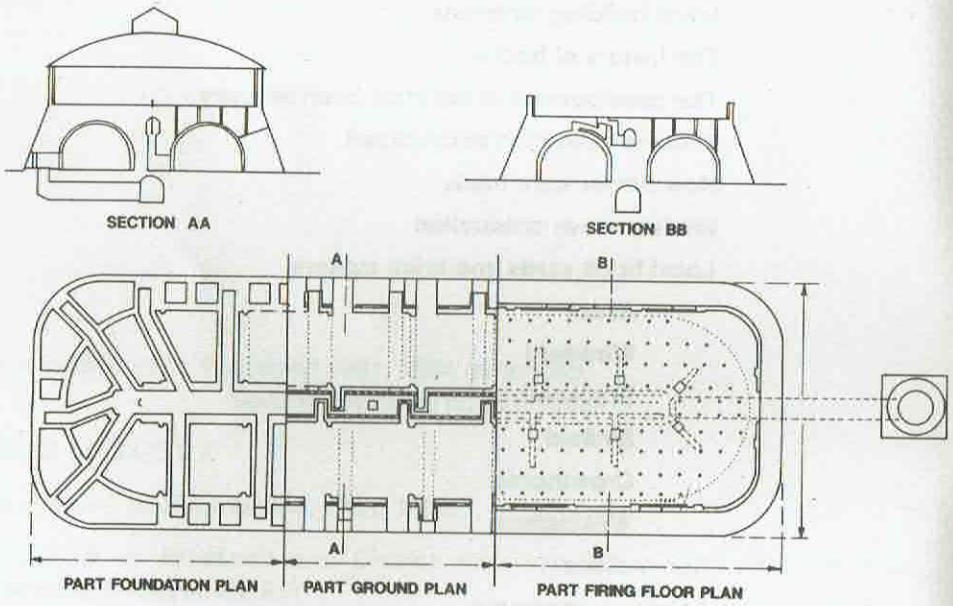
by

Michael Dumbleton

CONTENTS



A rectangular kiln and two large multi-chamber Hoffmann kilns with drying-chambers above. Binfield No. 1 Works, 1962



Plan, elevation and section of a sixteen-chamber Hoffmann kiln

INTRODUCTION

Traditional buildings in the Bracknell area, as elsewhere, get much of their character from the materials available locally for their construction, and these materials reflect the local geology. This booklet discusses the materials used for building in earlier times, before going on to deal with brickmaking for local needs, and then the big local brickworks that became a major industry supplying bricks for use far afield and in many famous buildings.

LOCAL BUILDING MATERIALS

A building needs a lot of material, and before the days of long-distance heavy transport it was necessary to use the materials that occurred locally. In Windsor Forest the most readily available material was wood. Windsor Castle when first built in 1070 consisted of wooden palisades surrounding the courtyards and the crest of the central mound., The first local churches must also have been of wood, and the houses were probably rather flimsy structures, with wattle and daub filling the spaces between the timbers and with thatch for the roofs.

Besides plant materials there are the materials available from the ground. *(Map 4).* Bracknell lies at the junction between the Bagshot Sand and the London Clay. To the south the Bagshot Sand and the overlying Bracklesham and Barton Beds of Ascot, Easthampstead and Crowthorne form sandy hills with pine trees. To the north the London Clay occupies much of Winkfield, Warfield and Binfield, with pasture and arable land, oaks and formerly elms. The underlying Chalk comes to the surface at White Waltham, as well as forming the small knoll on which Windsor Castle stands. The higher land in both the sandy and the clayey areas is capped by spread of Plateau Gravel formed of flints washed in at the end of the Ice Age from chalk areas further away.

No regular deposits of building stone occur hearabouts, but conglomerate and heath stone were used. The dark brown conglomerate, formed in the ground by the natural cementing of the Plateau Gravel by iron oxides, was used to build local churches: the walls at Warfield and Winkfield, the tower and south aisle at Binfield, and the tower and clerestory at Wokingham still remain.

Heath stone, similar to the sarsen-stone of the Berkshire Downs, consists of sand particles naturally cemented together, and is found near the surface of the Barton Sand. Heath stone from the Bagshot area was taken to Windsor Castle when the wooden palisades were replaced by stone from about 1170, and can still be seen facing most of the outer walls, whose interior consists of rammed chalk from the castle hill. More recently, heath stone from the Chobham Common area was found by sounding the sand with iron rods, and dug for making paving setts, coping stones and doorsteps. It was used for building the waterfall at Virgina Water.

Hard chalk was used as a stone for building the fifteenth century pillars of the nave at Wokingham. Wealthy builders could bring their materials from further afield. At Windsor Henry II used Portland Stone, and Caen stone was brought from Normandy in the late fifteenth century to build St. George's Chapel. Ordinary houses continued to be timber framed.

Walls can also be built of cob, a mixture of clay and straw, but in our damp climate it is not very durable. However, when clay is heated to a high enough temperature, the clay minerals are permanently altered by loss of water so that they no longer become soft again when wetted. Thus pottery, bricks and tiles can be made. Apart from its use by the Romans, clay burnt to form bricks and tiles was not much employed locally until about the 16th Century.

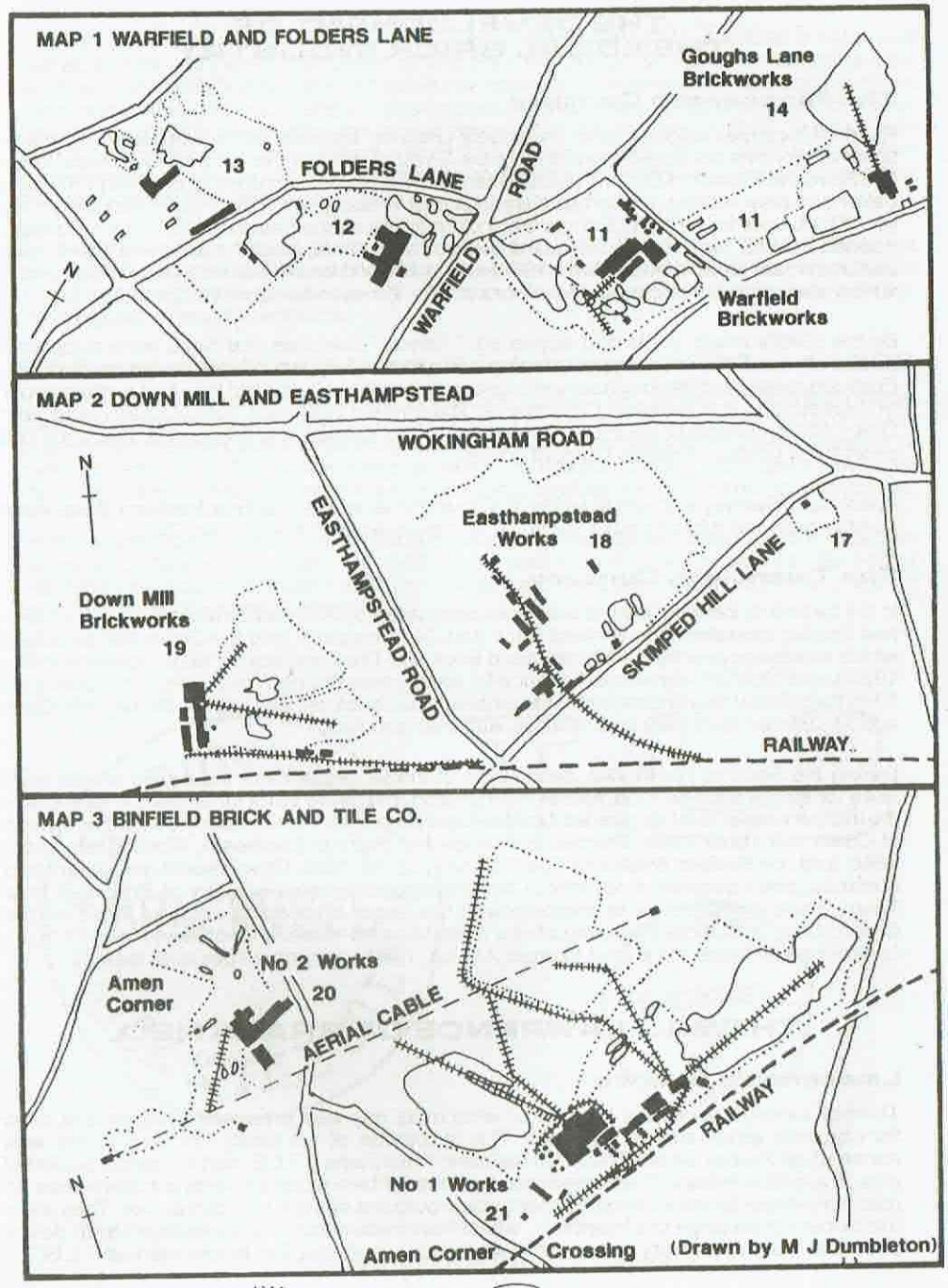
THE HISTORY OF BRICKS

Bricks made of clay have an ancient history. The walls of Jericho 10,000 years ago were made of unfired sun-dried clay bricks. The palace of the Persian King Darius of 500 BC contained bricks with their surface sculptured, coloured and glazed before firing to produce a fine quality bas relief of armed men. Roman bricks were large and flat like tiles, and enormous brick buildings still stand in Rome. Locally, in the Roman villa at Cox Green, Maidenhead, bricks were used to support the floor over the hypocaust and tiles were used to line the flues. Bricks and tiles are also found at the sub-Roman settlement at Wickham Bushes near Caesar's Camp, Easthampstead.

After the Romans left Britain, the first house made mainly of bricks was not built until about 1300 AD. The kiln for the bricks for Eton College was built at Slough in 1442 and was fired with thorns, although some 'sea coal' was used. Timber for the building was brought from many places including Easthampstead.

At first, bricks tended to be used timidly in houses, with stone where available, or as nogging between the timbers of framed buildings as at Horseshoe Cloister, Windsor Castle (1480). Gradually the confidence of local craftsmen grew and houses were built entirely in brick, with clay tiles for their roofs. Brick building came into its own in Tudor times, and Hampton Court Palace is a fine example from the early 16th Century.

The Old Manor in Bracknell High Street is a timber-framed building of the 16th Century with brick nogging, as can be seen from the rear, but the front was refaced with brick in the 17th Century to bring it into fashion. Wynscar nearby is of the early 18th Century. Winkfeld parish church has a brick tower bearing the date 1629, and the lower part of Easthampstead Church tower is of old brick bearing the date 1664, although a wooden belfry above was replaced by brick in 1866.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL BRICK INDUSTRY

The Nineteenth Century

As in all localities where bricks are widely used for building, there were formerly many small brickyards scattered around the area. If you wanted bricks for a house a local tailor like Rowland Fielder of Binfield (1852), a farmer like James Lawrence of Binfield (1863) or a baker and beer retailer like James Kennington of Wokingham (1863) might make them for you. The bricks for larger buildings were often made on their estates. Wellington College, opened in 1859, had its own brickyard, and John Walter III, chief Proprietor of The Times, built his house Bear Wood (1865 - 1874) with 4,465,000 bricks from his kilns at California, which also supplied bricks for the offices of The Times in London (1872 - 1883).

By the 1890's larger yards had appeared. Thomas Lawrence and Sons were supplying bricks all over the country, producing 12 million per year. Their works at Swinley, Easthampstead and Wokingham were connected to the railway and they had further works at Warfield and at Pinewood, Crowthorne. The Binfield Brick and Tile Company (and later Down Mill brickworks) were also connected to the railway, and there were two large but short-lived yards in Folders Lane, Bracknell.

Apart from Swinley and small yards at Crowthorne, where the Bracklesham Beds were used to produce rubber bricks, most yards mainly worked the London Clay.

The Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century the industry was dominated by Thomas Lawrence and Sons and two smaller operators, the Binfield Brick and Tile Company, and the Down Mill brickfield which was taken over by the Maidenhead Brick and Tile Company by 1920. However, in the 1920's and 1930's there was still a place for small yards drying their bricks in the open and firing them in a single scotch kiln. Enterprising small brickmakers, like Mr. Sarney, Mr. Crisp and Mr. Barker, built their own houses with their product.

During the Second World War, production of bricks ceased and the drying sheds were used for stores such as food, timber, ammunition and spare parts for aircraft. After the war the industry never fully recovered. Maidenhead Brick and Tile Company ceased operation at Down Mill about 1950, Thomas Lawrence and Sons at Eastheath, Wokingham about 1960, and the Binfield Brick and Tile Company about 1964. Obsolescent machinery and methods, and competition for labour by the expanding local industry of Bracknell New Town, made it impossible to compete with the larger brickworks such as those on the Oxford Clay, with more economical raw materials and modern machinery. Only Thomas Lawrence and Sons continued to work into the 1980s, serving a specialist market.

THOMAS LAWRENCE OF BRACKNELL

Lawrence's Stores

Thomas Lawrence was the founder of what in its day was Bracknell's largest and most thriving and wide-ranging business. The reputation of his family firm and stores was summed up thus by an old Bracknell resident: "You name it T.L.B. had it - from a packet of pins to a million bricks. These premises had nine different departments and there was no road anywhere for miles around where you would not see a T.L.B. cart or van. They were the owners of six large brickyards .... where hundreds of men were employed and I do not think that there is any city in the world where you could not find bricks marked T.L.B."

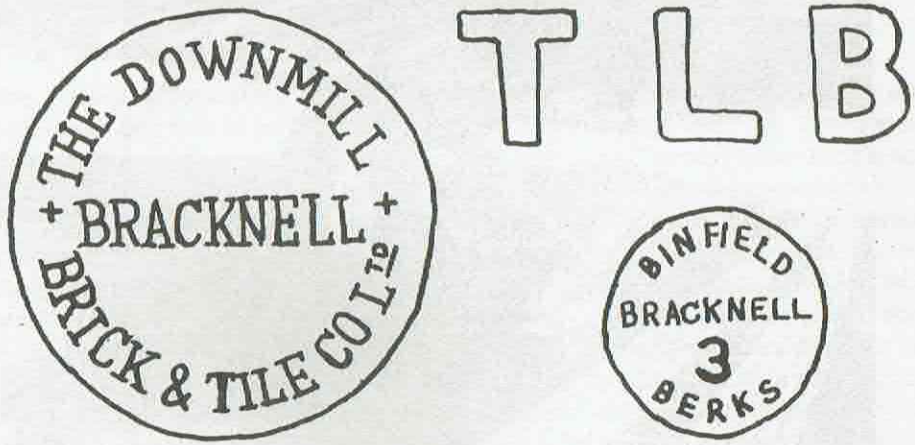
Thomas Lawrence was a draper at The Terrace, Binfield by 1847, and later a tailor and hatter, and by 1861 was in Bracknell as a grocer and draper. by 1877 he was agent for a bank and for W & A Gilbey, wine and spirits merchant, and successively added printing and fancy stationers, home furnishers, ironmongers, earthernware, china and glass, builders' merchants, timber merchants and steam sawmills to his empire. In 1887 Thomas was principal contributor to the building of the Victoria Hall and in 1891 he laid the foundation stone for the Baptist Church. His pink granite obelisk in Bracknell Burial Ground shows that he was born in 1824 and died in 1901.

In 1907 Lawrence's Stores Limited, with premises in Bracknell High Street built about 1885-1888, advertised 200 assistants and three acres of floor space and had branches in Ascot and York Town, Camberley. By 1911 there were further branches in Peach Street, Wokingham, and at Crowthorne.

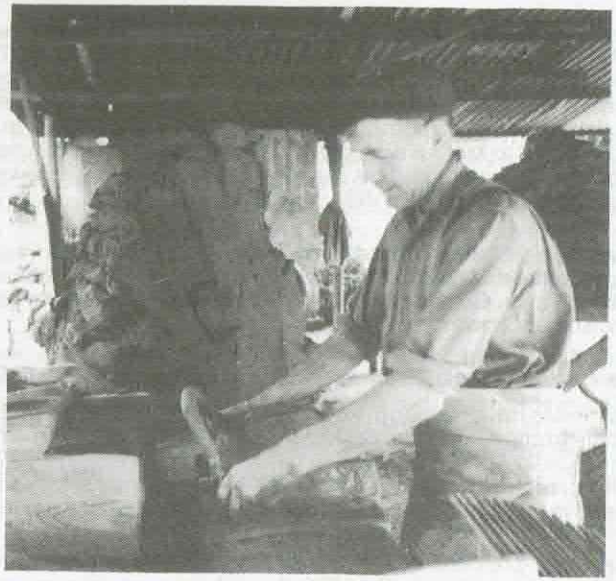
Thomas Lawrence & Sons, Brickmakers, 1893 and 1899

The firm claimed to have made bricks since 1860, and in 1886 gained the only gold medal for bricks at the Architectural and Building Trades Exhibition. Their circular of 1893 shows that by then they had works at Swinley, Easthampstead, Warfield and Pinewood making 12 million bricks a year. During the previous twelve months their bricks, with trade mark T.L.B., had been used in three hundred towns in England, besides several in Ireland and abroad.

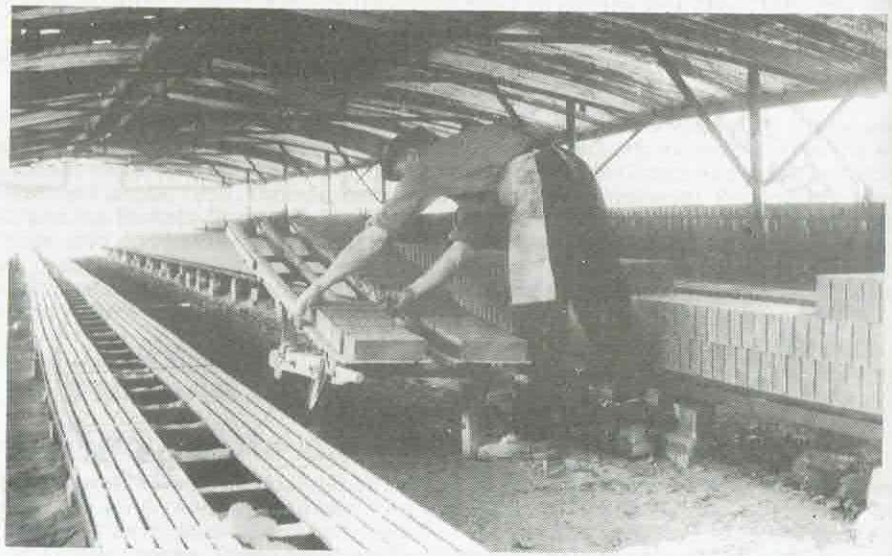
Hand-made, hand-pressed, red facing bricks from Swinley had been used for Madam Tussauds, Marylebone Road. (By 1899 these bricks could also be seen in Sir Arthur Hayter's new house at South Hill Park.) The same bricks, unpressed, had been used for new buildings at Harrow College.



Three tile and special brick stamps



A brickmaker has thrown a clot of clay into the mould and is cutting off the excess with a wire bow



Transferring newly-moulded bricks from the off-bearing barrow to the slotted wooden hacks to dry

T.L.B. Red Rubber bricks had been made at Swinley for twenty years. They were soft when made so that they could be rubbed to shape or cut with joiner's tools, but they hardened on exposure to the weather. They were used for arches and window heads at Dublin barracks.

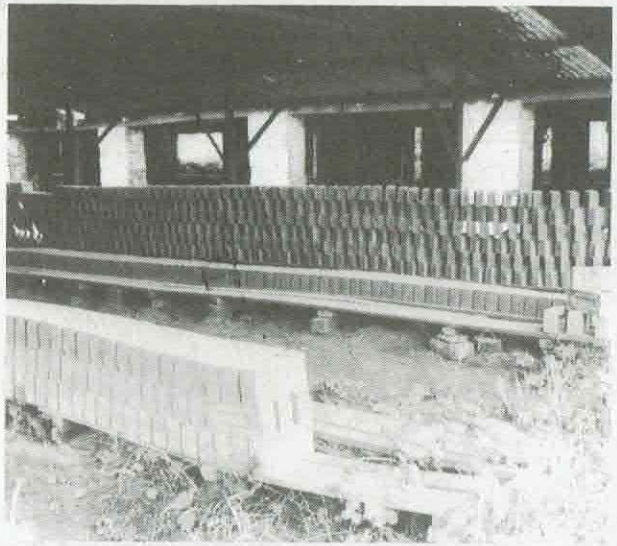
The hardness of the cheaper machine-made wire-cut red facing bricks made them admirable for 'Board Schools and other buildings likely to be defaced by mischievous boys' and they had been used for large additions to Eton College, and for the whole of Royal Holloway College, Egham (1879-1886), inside and out.

Fancy sand-faced moulded bricks were made to over 200 patterms, as well as plain house and fancy wall tiles.

By 1899 the New Works at Wokingham was supplying all the hand-made,, hand-pressed bricks, of a special two-inch thickness, for facing Westminster Cathedral (1895 - 1903).

The last years

The business flourished in the 1920's but in the 1930's the Stores got into difficulties and had to be supported by the brickworks. In 1936 the Stores were sold and the brickworks became a private company. Thomas Lawrence's son Herbert, who was in charge of the brickworks side of the business, was by then 74 and of failing powers, but continued to run the firm, refusing all help or advice, almost until his death at 88 in 1950. A new management tried to revive the business, but the Wokingham works was closed after a serious flood in 1964. Work continued at Warfield, which still supplied hand-made facing and rubber bricks for what had become specialist applications. Bricks were supplied for the restoration of No 10 Downing Street, Eton College, Windsor Castle, and Hampton Court, where T.L.B. rubber bricks were used in the restoration of Tudor chimney stacks and a niche in a garden wall that won a Brick Development Association certificate of merit for craftsmanship in 1981. Annual production in 1978 was about 250,000 bricks and 25,000 rubbers, many of them made up into gauged window heads and arches, but production ceased in the later 1980s, drawing to a close the history of brickmaking in the area.



When dry enough the closely-stacked bricks are skintled, or re-stacked in open formation, to complete drying

Taking the dried bricks to the kiln on a crowding barrow

HOW BRICKS WERE MADE

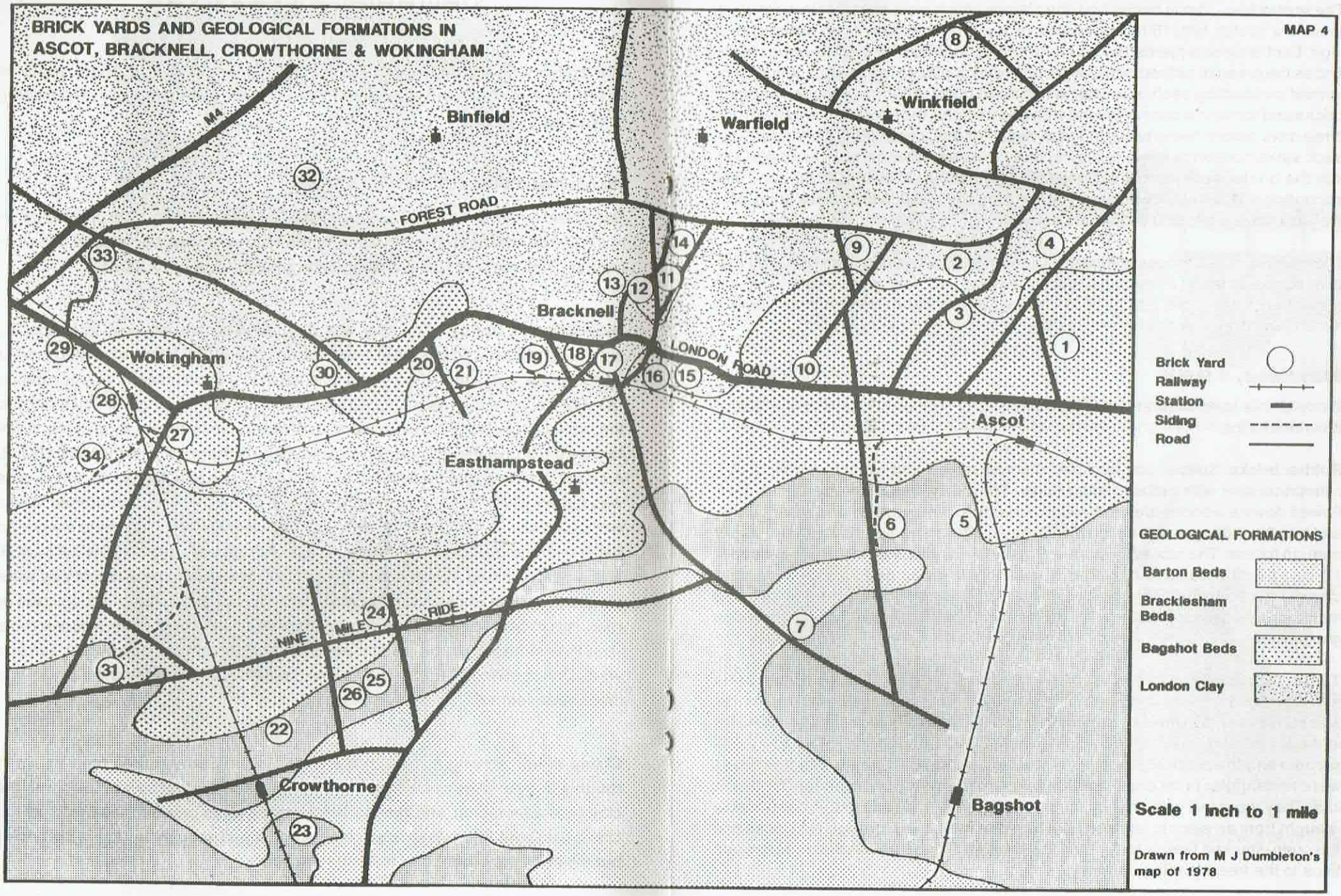
The equipment and methods described below were seen in local yards or described to me by those who worked there. The photographs show brickmaking at Warfield in 1965.

Winkfield Row 1926 - 1936

Harry Sarney worked in Chavey Down Road with his son from 1928 until his death in 1935. His son ceased production in the following year because of the poor market. Their methods were typical of the smaller local brick yards.

Moulding and Drying. The clay was dug in the winter, allowed to temper by weather and frost, and prepared in a home-made pug mill. Brick-moulding started about the second week of April and finished in late September. A wooden mould -a rectangular frame - was sanded and placed over a rectangular stock fitted to the table at which the moulder worked. A raised block on the face of the stock formed the frog or depressioon on the underside of the brick, with the letters H.S.B. A clot of clay was formed with the hands and thrown into the mould, the excess was cut off with a wire bow, and the surface of the brick was smoothed with a wooden strike, previously wetted. The brick was then turned out onto a wooden pallet board and placed on a single-wheeled off-bearing barrow. The full barrow was wheeled along iron wheel plates to the hack yard, where the bricks were placed in double rows on long boards called hacks. When about six courses or rounds had been built up they were covered by hack caps - little wooden roofs -and their sides were protected by lew boards, to prevent damage by rain, sun and wind. Drying took 10 - 20 days, and was hastened by re-stacking the bricks in a more open formation, known as skintling.

Clamp firing. Having no kiln, in the first year the Sarneys fired their bricks in roughly circular piles or clamps. Ten per cent of coke breeze was mixed with the clay before moulding, and breeze was also scattered between the bricks as the clamp was built. When the clamp was lit it contained enough fuel to fire the bricks, but those on the ouside had to be fired again.


BRICK YARDS AND GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS IN
ASCOT, BRACKNELL, CROWTHORNE & WOKINGHAM
MAP 4
M4
Binfield
Warfield
Winkfield
FOREST ROAD
Bracknell
LONDON ROAD
Wokingham
Easthampstead
Ascot
Crowthorne
Bagshot
NINE MILE RIDE
Brick Yard
Railway
Station
Siding
Road
GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS
Barton Beds
Bracklesham Beds
Bagshot Beds
London Clay
Scale 1 inch to 1 mile
Drawn from M J Dumbleton's map of 1978

The scotch kiln. Those bricks from the clamps which were unsaleable were used to build a scotch kiln, 16 feet wide and 18 feet long internally, with walls 12 feet high. Each side was pierced by six stoke holes 9 inches wide and 30 inches high, and as the green or unfired bricks were crowded or placed in the kiln, a tunnel was formed connecting each opposite pair of stoke holes. After covering the unburnt bricks and forming a door or wicket with burnt bricks, the kiln was fired slowly for three days before being brought to full heat. For this, coal had to be thrown into each stoke hole once every twenty to thirty minutes. After careful cooling of the kiln the bricks were removed, sorted and sold at £2.12.6d. to £3.2.6d per 1000 according to quality (1936 prices). The kiln produced 32,000 bricks at a firing, and the yard made up to 250,000 bricks per year.

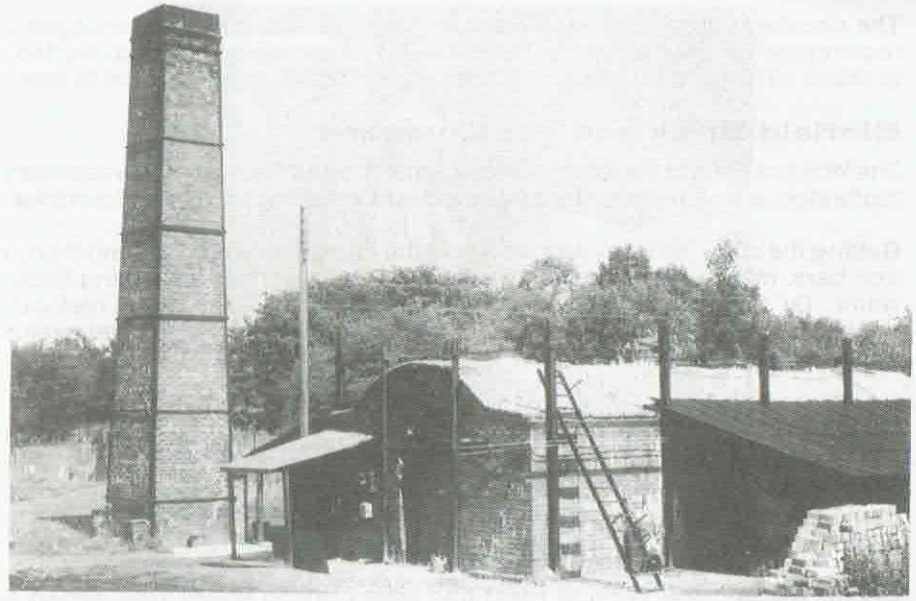
Tile making. The Sarneys made tiles for one season. The clay was extruded in a continuous strip by a machine, cut into individual tiles with wires, dried on stackable coved racks that gave the required curve, and fired on their sides in handfuls of five in niches formed between the green bricks in the kiln.

Warfield, 1965

Work at this yard illustrates the manufacture of rubber bricks and the use of downdraft kilns.

Rubber bricks. Special clay from Swinley was mixed with water in a wash mill, a cylindrical tank with radial rotating rakes. The slurry, free from any stones, then flowed down a wooden sluice, through screens to remove roots and other debris, and into the settling ponds called rubber bays. After some months the clay was dry enough for use. The rubber bricks were made like ordinary bricks, in steel-lined 9, 12, or 14 inch moulds, but had no frogs and were stamped T.L.B. with a hand stamp. After firing the bricks, gauged work, cut with a mechanical slit wheel, was made to order using card templates, and mouldings were rubbed using a wooden gauge box.

The rectangular down-draught kiln. Down-draught kilns are more economical in fuel than scotch kilns, and produce a more uniform product. A rectangular kiln was still in use at Warfield in the 1980s. It was permanently roofed and had a door at each end and two chambers, one taking 20,000 ordinary bricks and 12,000 rubbers and the other 30,000 ordinary bricks and 15,000 rubbers. The fire-boxes were rectangular brick chambers, three on each side, open at the top inside the kiln. They were fed with coal by mechanical screw-type stokers. A controllable draught from an electric fan took heat from the fire-boxes through the bricks and the open-stacked firebricks forming the floor, and then through the underground flues to the free-standing chimney.



A small rectangular down-draft kiln holding 75,000 bricks. It was mechanically stoked, and underground flues led to the free-standing chimney. Warfield, 1965

A circular down-draft or beehive kiln with ten stoke-holes and underground flues to a separate chimney. Warfield, 1965

The circular or beehive kiln. This down-draught kiln, similar in principle to the rectangular kiln, had ten stoke-holes around its perimeter. It was converted to oil in about 1970 but increasing oil prices soon made it uneconomical to use.

Binfield Brick and Tile Company

The Wirecut Plant at the No. 1 Works at Amen Corner Crossing (now replaced by a footbridge) is an example of the more industrialised organisation of a brickworks.

Getting the clay. The clay was won from the pit by undercutting it and then, using iron bars, making holes behind the face from the surface and filling them with water. By the following day the face had usually fallen. This method was dangerous, and one man was killed here and two at Down Mill. Later explosives were used, and then machines.

Machine made wirecut bricks. The clay passed through rollers to crush claystones and gypsum, as well as pug mills, before being extruded as a continuous rectangular bar. This could be blasted with sand to give a facing on three sides and was then cut into bricks, ten at a time, with piano wires held in a frame. The machine could produce 120,000 bricks per week. The wirecut bricks could be pressed before drying, when they fetched a higher price.

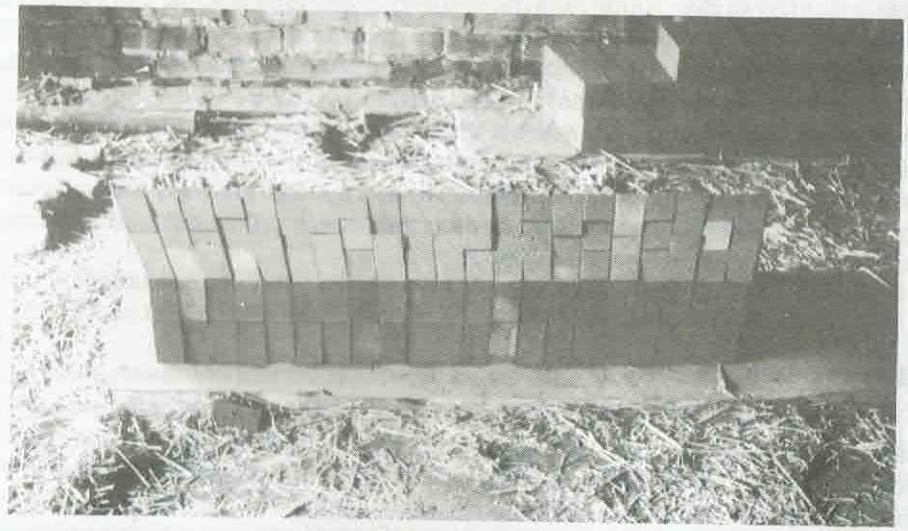
Drying sheds. The Wirecut Plant had seven drying sheds with slatted floors heated from below by one-inch steam pipes, later replaced by a system of metal trunking with side-branches, carrying hot air. The bricks were stacked on the floor in four layers.

Continuous kilns. These kilns, of the Hoffmann type, needed only about a third as much fuel as down-draught kilns. There were two, each with two parallel rows of chambers connected by openings so that heat from a chamber being fired could be used first to dry and then to heat up the bricks in the next chamber. Crushed coal was then added through holes in the roof to bring about full firing. The fires went out only three times between 1928 and 1963. One kiln had twelve chambers and a 120 ft high chimney dated 1902, and the other had fourteen chambers.

MODERN MASS PRODUCTION

A consideration of modern brickmaking methods helps to explain why the local industry has vanished. For example, Fletton bricks are made from Oxford Clay which possesses two important properties. Firstly it occurs dry enough for brickmaking by the semi-dry process in which the clay is ground and pressed into bricks which can then be placed in the kiln without further pre-drying. Secondly it contains natural carbonaceous matter giving it a fuel value equal to one tenth that of coal, enough to bring the bricks to firing temperature in the continuous kilns without added fuel. One kiln exists which contains 80 chambers each holding 80,000 bricks, with five separate fires moving round the system and an output of 3.5 million bricks per week. The scale of the operations and the small amount of fuel required result in large economies, but unfaced flettons are of a pinkish colour, lacking the full red tones of our local bricks.

Preparing gauged work by cutting rubber bricks with a slitting wheel; quicker than the old way by rubbing down



Gauged work ready for delivery: a window head

LOCAL BRICKYARDS AND BRICKMAKERS

Information on the yards (numbered 1 - 34 in text and maps) comes mainly from old maps, back to 1870, and that on the brick makers from old directories. Often only first and last dates are quoted. Maps 1 to 3 show the fullest development of some of the yards. Not all features shown were present at the same time, and most of the excavations are now filled in.

Ascot

In 1870 Ascot Farm was known as Brick Kiln Farm[1] and there was an old kiln at High Chimneys, south of Forest Road[2]. In New Road there was a works and kiln at Burleigh[3], gone by 1898.

Ascot Brick Works, Kiln Lane, Woodend[4]. The kilns were to the south of the lane in 1870 and 1898, but to the north in 1910. William Watson, builder and contractor from 1883, made bricks and pipes here at least from 1900 to his death in about 1926, with Harry Sarney as manager. Mr. Sarney then worked south of the lane for two years.

Hagthorn Hill Brick Yard[5]. There were at least three kilns here in 1870, gone by 1898.

Swinley Brick Works[6]. Here Thomas Lawrence made rubber bricks as well as ordinary bricks. A small yard was here by 1870, and by 1898 a mile-long siding ran from the numerous kilns to Ascot West Station. Up to 70 moulders are said to have been employed and there were 14 cottages. Drying sheds allowed work to continue in the winter when men would walk from the Warfield works where production ceased. A foreman sold beer to the men and the cost was deducted from their wages. Work ceased in about 1939.

Winkfield

In 1870 there was an old kiln at Kiln Covert opposite Rapley's Farm on the Bracknell-Bagshot Road[7]. In the same year there was a brickworks with kiln in Crouch Lane next to the Tally-Ho public house[8]. Samuel Head was here in 1877 and 1891, but only an old pit remained in 1898. James Kelly worked in Winkfield Row in 1887 when he was also Postmaster at the sub-office, and in ChaveyDown Road, Winkfield Row, there was a brickworks in 1898 disused by 1910[9]. Harry Sarney worked an adjacent plot from 1928, his son finishing there in 1936.

Bracknell

There was a brick kiln opposite Martin's Heron in 1822[10]. In Warfield, Francis Gardner was a farmer and brickmaker in 1854, and Robert West was at the Brick Kilns, apparently a public house, in 1876.

Warfield Brick Works. The lane joining Gough's Lane and Priory Lane was called Brick-kiln Lane in 1817, and there were brick and tile works with kilns and claymills on its south side in 1870[11]. Kiln Cottages, a terrace of four, were built by Lawrence's in Gough's Lane in 1890. Ten million tiles per year are said to have been produced here, the strong plastic blue clay required coming from a depth of 20 - 30 feet. Four scotch kilns were replaced by three circular tile kilns in the 1920's when both open and heated drying sheds were built. In about 1950 the circular tile kilns and two of the three heated sheds were demolished and the automatically stoked rectangular down-draught kiln was built. A beehive kiln was converted to oil-firing in about 1970.

Folder's Lane. There were large brick and tile works on either side of the lane, [12, 13] opened and abandoned some time between 1870 and 1898. The Bracknell Pottery Brick and Tile Co. was active in 1883 and 1895, and its works at this site were auctioned at bankruptcy in 1886. It may have by been succeeded by the Bracknell Brick and Tile Co. (1899, 1903).

Gough's Lane Brick Works Ltd[14]. This worked from about 1926 to 1939, and had a Hoffmann kiln of about 16 chambers, three scotch kilns and two beehive kilns. The site was acquired by Lawrence's in about 1948.

Bullbrook[15]. A small yard was established here by 1878 and disused by 1909, but by 1932 there was a new kiln with chimney. Thomas Crocker, farmer, made bricks here in 1895, followed by his son Charles to 1915. Charles R. Collins Ltd., tilers, started here in the 1920's and seem to have continued to as late as 1960.

Mount Pleasant[16]. Alfred Fielder made bricks here in 1877 and Kiln Cottages were built in 1880.

Easthampstead. In 1810 the Manor imposed a fine of 20s per load on bricks fired on heather and sold out of the Parish. Loughlin Webb farmed and made bricks here in 1861, and James Butler made bricks and sold beer in 1887. In 1870 there were small brickyards south of Skimped Hill lane[17]. The area north of the lane was formerly Priestwood Common, and in 1827 was the site of Great and Little Brick Field Ponds. The tenant, Oliver Goddard, took sand from the Parish pit for his 'brick etc manufactury' in 1824. William Miller paid 6d a load for the sand in 1839, for his brick kiln, had a kiln and sheds here in 1841, and still manufactured in 1851.

Thomas Lawrence's Easthampstead Works[18] was here by 1893, and by 1898 a siding connected it to the railway. The works had gone by 1909, but Joseph Crisp again made bricks here in 1928 and 1935.

Down Mill brickfield[19]. By 1909 there were large buildings and a tramway to the workings and connecting with the railway. The Down Mill (Bracknell) Brick Co. Ltd., was here in 1903 and 1915. By 1920 the Maidenhead Brick and Tile Co. Ltd., had taken over, and was still active until about 1950. A flag was flown when a production of 100,000 bricks was achieved in a week.

Binfield

Bricks were made here by farmer William Butler in 1847 and 1854, Charles Booker in 1859, James Lawrence (farmer) in 1863, Mary Ann Butler in 1867 and 1869, Edward Butler in 1868, and George Hayden in 1887 and 1895. George Butler made tiles in 1851. Rowland Thomas Fielder made bricks when he was a tailor in 1852, a victualler at the Royal Oak in 1854, at the Royal Standard in 1863, and a tailor at the Royal Standard in 1867. In 1870 there was a brickworks and kilns at Amen Corner[20], where Thomas Fielder made bricks in 1883 and 1887.

Binfield Brick and Tile Co. Daniel Sharp, brickmaker in 1895, was managing director of this company in 1899 and 1903, and the company worked until about 1964. Its No.2 Works at Amen Corner[20] made hand made roofing tiles, facing bricks and special shaped bricks, and machine made roofing tiles. A Hoffmann kiln was replaced by twelve beehive kilns in 1920, and there was an extensive range of drying sheds. In the mid-twenties an overhead cableway was installed connecting the works with No.1 Works.

No.1 Works was against the railway at Amen Corner Crossing[21]. Here a works was connected to the railway by 1898. By 1932 a flooded pit formed a lake a fifth of a mile long. There were two brickmaking plants here each with a machine having a capacity of 120,000 bricks per week. The Wirecut Plant to the east has already been described. The new unit, to the west, was built from about the mid-1920's and had machine-made brick, machine-made tile, and hand-made brick and tile houses, with four brick-drying and six tile-drying sheds. Hack drying in the open ceased about 1930. The clay preparation plant was raised to first floor level here in 1946, and at the Wirecut Plant in about 1953, Besides the two Hoffmann kilns there was a down-draught kiln and six beehive kilns.

Before the war, fifty to sixty men were employed at Binfield. Production fell from say about 200,000 bricks per week to about 100,000 bricks per week when production was concentrated to one kiln in 1963, and ceased in 1964.

Crowthorne

Ravenswood. There was a brick kiln and clay pit[22] in the grounds to the south-east of this house in 1870.

Wellington College. The school is of local red bricks and purple bricks from Reading, relieved by Box Stone masonry. The foundation stone was laid by Queen Victoria in 1856. When the first Master arrived in 1858 he was not recognised by the college night-watchman 'who had a cottage not far from the brickfield', and was greeted by the words 'If you come a step further I'll set the dog on you and stick the pitchfork in you'. In 1870 there was still a brickfield in the college grounds, against the southern boundary[23].

Pinewood Works[24]. Thomas Lawrence had this yard on the north-west corner of the crossroads by Pinewood Hospital by 1891, but it was gone by 1910. The manager was David Barker and apparently rubber bricks were made in a scotch kiln.

Heather Hill Brick Works[25]. This was on the south side of Oaklands Lane, east of New Wokingham Road. Here W.D. Barker, a carpenter and son of David Barker, made ordinary and rubber bricks for a few years before 1905. He built his house, Heather Hill, using his own bricks. There was one scotch kiln and four or five men were employed. Horses were used to turn the pug mill.

Crowthorne Brick Works[26]. This was on the next plot in the lane, where bricks can still be seen marked CROWTHORNE. Charles and James Readings made bricks here in 1907, and Charles Readings and Sons in 1911, but by 1915 they were hauliers. They had at least two scotch kilns and delivered their bricks with a steam traction engine and trucks. A team from the Warfield yard, where they had relatives, used to come to play cricket with the Crowthorne brickmakers.

Wokingham

Kiln Green was around Keephatch Lane in 1809. In 1854 bricks were made by Robert Jones May of Barkham Road (and in 1869), Thomas May of Bean Oak, and Thomas May Jnr. of Binfield Road (and in 1863). In the same year James Kennington was a brickmaker, baker and beer retailer at Brickfield Tavern, Spring Cottage. Thomas Martin of the Market Place was a builder and brickmaker in 1863.

In Carey Road there was a brickfield and kilns[27] in 1870, gone by 1898. In Oxford Road nearly opposite the station there was a brick works[28] in 1870 and 1898, gone by 1910. Thomas Manley Wescott was making bricks in 1877 and gave the railway station as his address in 1883.

At Embrook,, opposite the Rifle Volunteer, there was a brickfield and kilns[29] in 1870, gone by 1898. Joseph George Ford of Winnersh Farm (1891, 1899) made tiles marked J. G. Ford Wokingham around an acorn between oak leaves.

By 1910 there was a brick works[30] in Plough Lane south of Bean Oak Farm, and the Victoria Brick and Tile Company is mentioned for this area in 1915.

California. Henry Read, civil engineer and surveyor, was making bricks here in 1854. By 1870 there was a large brickworks at the point where Kiln Ride joins Nine Mile Ride[31], with at least five circular kilns and two clay mills, and the California Tramway ran one and an eight miles to join the Farnborough-Wokingham railway line at California Junction. It was referred to as Mr. Walter's Brickyards in 1885, and there were two kilns in 1912, although the tramway had gone.

Further west at the corner at the end of Nine Mile Ride there was a brickworks in 1898, disused by 1910. Frederick J. Barker made bricks at Barkham in 1903.

Billingbear. In 1870 Kiln Copse was at the north of the estate, and there was a kiln on the south side of the road skirting its southern perimeter[32]. J Coombs and Sons were here in 1939 and 1957.

Toutley[33]. A works was here, where Toutley Road joins Forest Road, in 1898, and Edmund W. Collis and Company made bricks and tiles here in 1907 and 1915. William Charles James Hissey had taken over by 1920 (and 1931), and William Davis by 1935. Toutley Brick Works Ltd. succeeded, founded in 1936 by the proprietors of Gough's Lane Brick Works Ltd., with Thomas Lawrence and Sons holding 50 per cent of the capital. The works were requisitioned in 1940 for the Static Condenser Company to which they were sold by Lawrences after the war.

East Heath[34]. This site west of Molly Millar's Lane became Lawrence's New Yard between 1893 and 1899, and a tramway crossed the lane to connect it to the railway some half a mile away. By 1910 the works, ultimately covering 58 acres, had spread to East Heath where the Blue Pool had been started. This 60-foot-deep pit was filled in the 1970s. This was Lawrence's biggest yard, production reaching 10 million bricks per year. Hand-made bricks were marked T.L.B., and machine-made pressed bricks were being marked *WK* by 1933. There were ten cottages for employees. The two Hoffmann kilns, of 26 and 28 chambers each holding 30-35,000 bricks, had chimneys some 180 and 220 feet high, and by 1931 there were also two circular kilns. During the Second World War production ceased and one of the chimneys fell and severely damaged its kiln. The other kiln was used after the war, as well as three beehive kilns, to produce wirecuts and a few hand-made bricks, but the works was closed after a flood caused extensive damage in 1960. Thomas Lawrence and Sons gave the address as Fishponds (1911-1935), Eastheath Brickworks (1931-1948) and Molly Millar's Lane (1957).

CONCLUSIONS

Our local brick industry, which achieved national fame, has had to give way to bricks that can be produced elsewhere using more economical raw materials and manufacturing methods. However, local residents can be thankful that they do not have the sour smell from forests of chimneys and large areas of land laid waste by clay pits. They can take pride in the fact that, until recently when production ceased, the famous T.L.B. facing bricks, rubber bricks and gauged work produced by our last-remaining yard were still valued by architects for fine building and high-quality restoration work. A pleasant reminder of the industry is the pond in Braybrook Recreation Ground, Priestwood, formerly a brickpit and now providing sport for anglers and a haunt for ducks, dragonflies and other wildlife.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is given to Mr C T Barker, Mr J Maycock, Mr A Probert, Mr E S Sarney, Mr L D Sears and Mr J K Major for giving personal recollections and information, and to the Bracknell Forest Borough Council for generous assistance in printing this second addition.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Maps: eg Inclosure 1817, 1827; Tithe 1841; OS c1870 1898 1910 1932

Kelley's Directories: 1847 1877 1883 1887 1891 1895 1899 1903 1907 1911 1915 1920 1924 1928 1931 1935 1939

Other Directories: 1842 1852 1854 1861 1863 1957

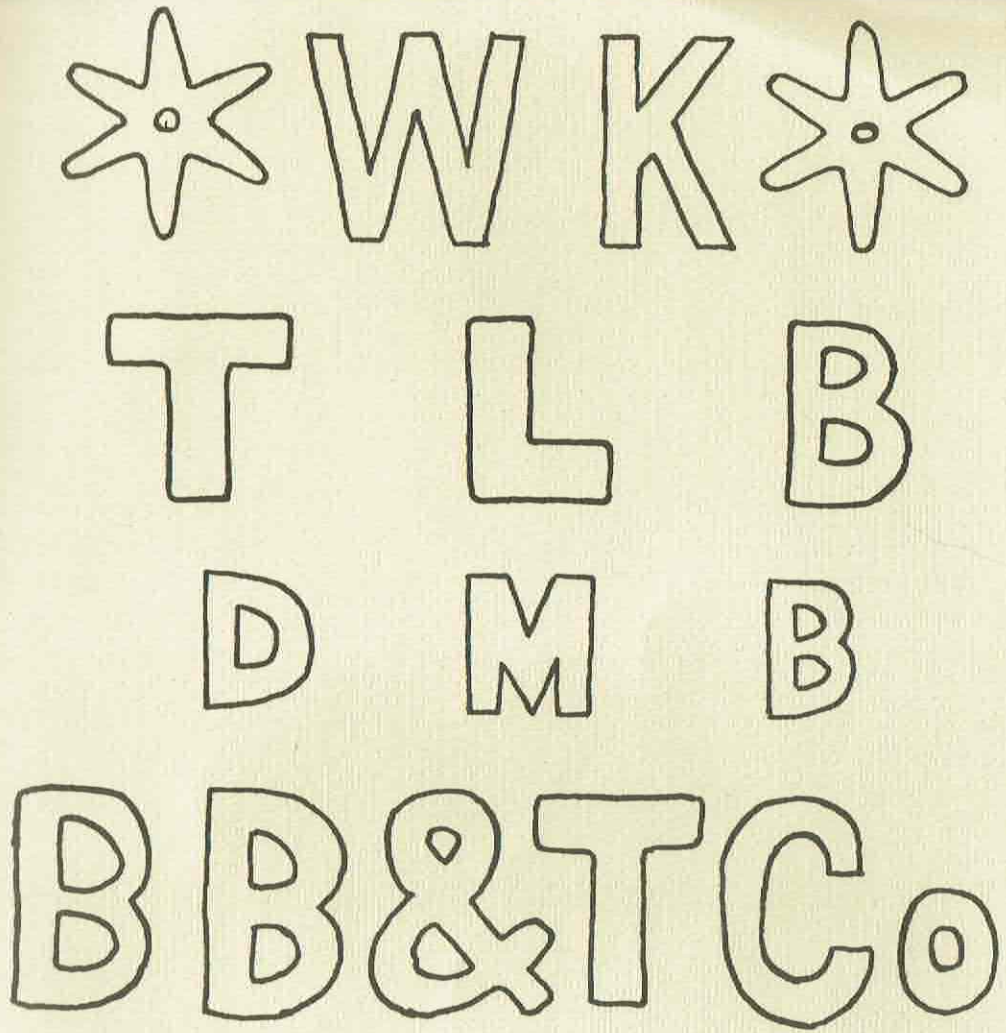
One-inch Geological Survey Map, Sheet 269, Windsor

The geology of the country around Windsor and Chertsey
H Dewey and C E N Bromehead, 1915 (Memoir to Sheet 269)

FURTHER READING

Bricks to build a house: John Woodford, 1976. How bricks were made and used. Fascinating text, beautiful illustrations and good bibliography

English brickwork. Ronald Brunskill and Alec Clifton-Taylor, 1977. How to look at, appreciate and record old brickwork



BRICK FROG MARKS

Thomas Lawrence:
machine-made bricks made in Wokingham.
Thomas Lawrence Bracknell:
hand-made bricks
Down Mill Bracknell
Binfield Brick and Tile Co.

(All brick and tile marks in this booklet are actual size)