

## Background to Bursledon Brickworks Museum

Bursledon Brickworks was founded in 1897 by the Ashby family. The Ashbys were brickmakers in Chandlers Ford until the clay deposits there were exhausted. There was abundant clay at the new Bursledon site.

Initially the clay was extracted close to the buildings. As time passed, the clay was worked out further and further away, finally being brought to the works on an overhead cable system from the clay pits - now to be seen as lakes on the Swanwick Nature Reserve.

The original 1887 works (the southern complex) was extended in 1903 with the addition of the northern complex. With the extra capacity, the brickworks was producing in excess of 20 million bricks a year.

But it wasn't just the size which enabled this enormous production. The Ashbys were innovators and inventors. New kilns were developed which enabled all year round production of fired bricks. New machinery was invented to automate many of the hand processes. New processes were introduced to produce different surface finishes on the bricks.

### The middle years

The brickworks were a family run concern until after WWII when it was amalgamated with the Sussex and Dorking Brick Company and became Redlands Limited in 1959.

As time passed, and clay used in making the bricks had to be brought in from further afield and labour costs were increasingly becoming too expensive. With the disruption caused by the construction of the M27, the brickworks became unviable and were closed in 1974.

Twenty years passed and the old brickworks fell into a state of dereliction and were in danger of disappearing altogether, when it was saved and given listed status.

### A new beginning

In the early 1990s, the brickworks was sold to Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust for a token sum as a result of an agreement with Redland plc which included a small endowment to provide some of the funds needed for the restoration of the buildings.

The restoration is an ongoing process. The surviving buildings are the main part of the southern complex. The northern complex, dating from 1903, was demolished in the 1980s as it was becoming a dangerous structure. The northern site has now been developed for the NATS (Swanwick Air Traffic Control) Centre.

The Brickworks receives no external funding. It costs in the region of £20,000 each year to keep the site open.

This project received an Institution of Mechanical Engineers Heritage Award

### **IMechE Award Citation**

#### **Bursledon Brickworks**

**The steam driven extrusion plant was installed in 1897 and operated for over 70 years. Restored by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, this is thought to be the only working example in the country.**

**Brick making machinery such as this was key to the expansion of our towns and cities.**

**12 April 2011**

