Royal County of
BERKSHIRE

INDUSTRIAL BERKSHIRE

Babtie Public Services Division

PREFACE

For the last decade Berkshire County Council has been caring actively for the County's rich archaeological heritage. During this time the County Council has had a crucial role in advising others about the importance of archaeology, especially in the fields of mineral extraction and development control, working in partnership with the Borough and District Councils. To enable the best possible advice to be given, the County Council has also developed and maintained a computerised database record of all sites and monuments in the county. Technological advances have allowed the non-destructive investigation of archaeological remains below ground level, although archaeological excavations still have to be mounted when development and archaeology prove to be mutually incompatible.

As a result of this and other influences, new ideas about how our forebears lived their lives and how their cultures operated have emerged. In particular, evidence of continual changes in the countryside has emerged from multi-disciplinary studies about man's influence on past environments and, in turn, the environment's direct effect on man; lessons which we could all heed today.

Great changes have also taken place in public information about archaeology and the preservation of our heritage. Berkshire County Council has been a leading advocate of site and monument management coupled with increased access and understanding through information and on-site interpretation. This involves partnerships with district and borough councils, landowners and English Heritage. The County Council is grateful to many people for their willing co-operation.

***Front cover**: Huntley & Palmers in Reading. Print from the G.W.T. Collection of the Great Western Society, Didcot.*

INDUSTRIAL BERKSHIRE

INTRODUCTION

Much of the interest in the county's environment understandably is focused on the protection and enhancement of the existing environment. This includes, for example, the preparation and promotion by the County Council of planning policies which seek sustainable forms of development, as well as its support for a wide range of specific initiatives within the 'Greening Beautiful Berkshire' campaign. However, there is a historic dimension to the modern environment of the county which archaeology can illuminate by studying man's impact on the landscape in the past.

To help explain Berkshire's archaeological heritage the County Council has launched a series of publications on defensive and military sites in the county entitled Bastions of Berkshire. The Council has also decided to produce four booklets on the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and industrial archaeology of the county. Industrial Berkshire is the fourth of the series of these books. It is based on records held in the County Sites and Monument Record and the diligent recording and research of the last two decades by the Berkshire Industrial Archaeology Group which has collaborated in the production. The book charts the outstanding changes over the last 250 years of the industrial and service base of Berkshire.

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Background

Like many counties in Britain, Berkshire can boast of a rich and vibrant industrial history. Its industrial past can be traced back to at least Roman times with the manufacture of pottery, iron and woodcrafts. Throughout the early Medieval period, the economy of Berkshire was firmly based in agriculture although within the major towns, local craft-based industries flourished. A number of fine Medieval buildings can still be seen in Aldermaston, Hungerford, Lambourn, Newbury, Windsor and Wokingham which show evidence of some of this work. The industrial revolution during the latter part of the 18th century impacted strongly on parts of the county but left many areas untouched. Indeed, many of Berkshire's towns began to grow rapidly alongside the rapid changes to the industrial and economic base. Nevertheless, many of the original Medieval town layouts survived this period of rapid economic change. The industrial revolution marked a turning point not only in technology, but in the direction of a county that was to become a model of good local government and commerce.

Outside its main towns, until the Second World War, Berkshire was still essentially a rural area and industry very much reflected that situation. Agriculture was the major employer and industries were related either to serving an agricultural economy or processing the materials produced in the area. Malting, brewing, biscuit making, brick manufacturing, corn and seed vending and agricultural engineering vied with service industries and transport as the main industrial activities. Some became national suppliers of considerable importance.

The industrial revolution within Berkshire, however, penetrated along the developing transport network - roads, rivers, canals and railways. This transport system was essential to the mills, maltings, breweries, abattoirs, corn exchanges and seed merchants. In recent times, many manufacturing industries have disappeared without trace and have been replaced by service industries, large multinational companies and information technology specialists. This has caused fundamental changes in working patterns and housing development.

Natural Resources

The geology of Berkshire is split into two main types: solid and drift. The solid rock is predominantly chalk, whilst the drift (ground) deposits consist of clay, sand and gravel. Until the 20th century chalk and clay were the primary minerals used to meet the needs of local industry and agriculture. Chalk was used in agriculture for liming fields and also for making whitewash. There are some notable examples of chalk and flint used in building works in the County. Fine examples of flint decoration can be seen at St Mary's Church, Reading and the church at White Waltham.

Whitening Factory, Kintbury © NM.

The whiting, or whitening industry, which involves the preparation of chalk for decorating buildings, 'white washing' and plate cleaning, developed in Berkshire at Hurley and Kintbury where five manufacturers were producing 1,800 tons a year during the 1860s. At Kintbury this was shipped out on the Kennet and Avon Canal from Irish Hill. Other minerals were needed for small local industries such as Fuller's Earth quarried at Reading used in cloth making.

Clay has been used over many centuries for making bricks and tiles. The brick industry was established in Berkshire due to the various types of clay deposit found throughout the county. The Reading Beds were utilised by the brickworks at Newbury, Hermitage, Chieveley and Reading. 'London Clay' was the raw material for important brick and tile works at Maidenhead, Knowl Hill, Bracknell, Twyford and a small brick company at Frilsham. The Berkshire brick making industry flourished until World War II but declined during the 1950s.

Gravel was not used extensively until the 20th century although there are examples of gravel being used in poured concrete for house construction in 1875 at Burghfield Common. Sand and gravel have been increasingly used in the 20th century as aggregates for the construction of houses, schools and roads. The subsequent use of exhausted gravel pits as land-fill sites for refuse disposal is another essential major industry.

The Development of a Transport Infrastructure

An essential requirement for evolving industries in Berkshire was the development of an efficient transport system. Since Roman times, roads have played an important role in communication between settlements, although the River Thames was the main thoroughfare. By the end of the 18th century, however, roads had become an essential mechanism for the transportation of goods and people. About the same time, the canal system was beginning to cut its way into Berkshire. The improvement of the Thames and the Kennet river systems enabled the successful navigation of large barges during the late 18th century and was an important precursor to the construction of lock controlled canals. Railway 'mania' hit Berkshire in the first half of the 19th century and eventually led to the construction of three main lines and numerous branch lines. At the close of the 20th century, the transport infrastructure of Berkshire is based mainly on an integrated road network, with motorways dissecting the county.

The Roads

The oldest road in Berkshire is the prehistoric Ridgeway which crossed the Thames at Streatley/Goring to join the Icknield Way which continued eastwards to reach the Grimes Graves flint mines in East Anglia. Today it survives as a trackway used extensively for recreation as a National Trail. Later, the Romans built a network of roads developing out of the capital town (civitas) of Silchester. The road system passed into disuse and eventual decay after the collapse of Roman authority during the mid 5th century. Throughout the early Saxon period many local trackways were constructed, with some conforming to Roman standards. However, it was not until the later medieval period that the 'King's Highway' (also known as the Bath Road) was built as a major link between London and Bristol.

The Bath Road was the first road in Berkshire that charged tolls along its whole length. The money raised paid for road maintenance. The Turnpike Act for the Reading to Puntfield (Theale) road was passed in 1714. Many more Turnpike Trusts

were set-up during the peak years 1750 to 1780. The Turnpike Acts required Trusts to set up guideposts and mileposts and although the guideposts have now gone, many mileposts survive on former turnpike roads. A survey carried out between 1966 and 1968 recorded 126 milestones, most made of stone but some of cast iron. Between 1939 and 1940, a large number were removed in order to confuse any potential invading German troops during the Second World War! Survivors of both types are still visible on some of Berkshire's roads.

Former toll house on the Bath Road at Speenhamland, Newbury photographed in 1950. © NM/FC Strutt

Toll houses were erected next to turnpikes. A few have survived but, during the recent past, many have been converted for modern uses - an example of which was to be seen on the Hatfield Road at Bisham. In Newbury the toll house was converted into a shop but has since been demolished.

Another relic from the old road system of Berkshire is a series of cast iron pumps along the Bath Road which were erected in order to supply water for wagons which sprinkled the road when it was dry and dusty. There are restored examples at Charvil and Twyford.

Water pump, Charvil. © BG

Construction of 'Bypasses' in the 1920s was started, in part, to relieve unemployment. The Bath Road was straightened and diverted around Twyford at this time: one of the first examples of such modernisation in the County. By the 1930s, the traffic jam had arrived, with Maidenhead being particularly affected during holiday periods. Plans for a bypass were drawn up to include a new bridge over the Thames. Land was acquired and construction began, only to be halted in 1940 by wartime shortages. By the time work could be resumed, motorways were being constructed, thus the Maidenhead bypass became the Slough and Maidenhead bypass which was later incorporated into the M4.

MAJOR TURNPIKES IN BERKSHIRE & DATE ENACTED

Reading to Puntfield (Theale)	1714
Maidenhead to Twyford	1718
Maidenhead to Henley Bridge	1718
Reading to Basingstoke	1718
Reading to Wallingford	1763
Newbury to Oxford (via Abingdon)	1770
Hungerford to Wantage and Fyfield	ca 1795
Windsor to Hurst	1823

Thames barge below Caversham Bridge, Reading, with sawmills in the background. © PP

Garston Lock during refurbishment in January 1997. The profile of the sloping turf sides can be seen behind the slate sheathing boards retained by redundant broad gauge tracks from the Great Western Railway. © WA.

The turf sided lock at Aldermaston before restoration with a scalloped brick chamber and old railway tracks to prevent barges floating out of the main chamber. ©BCC.