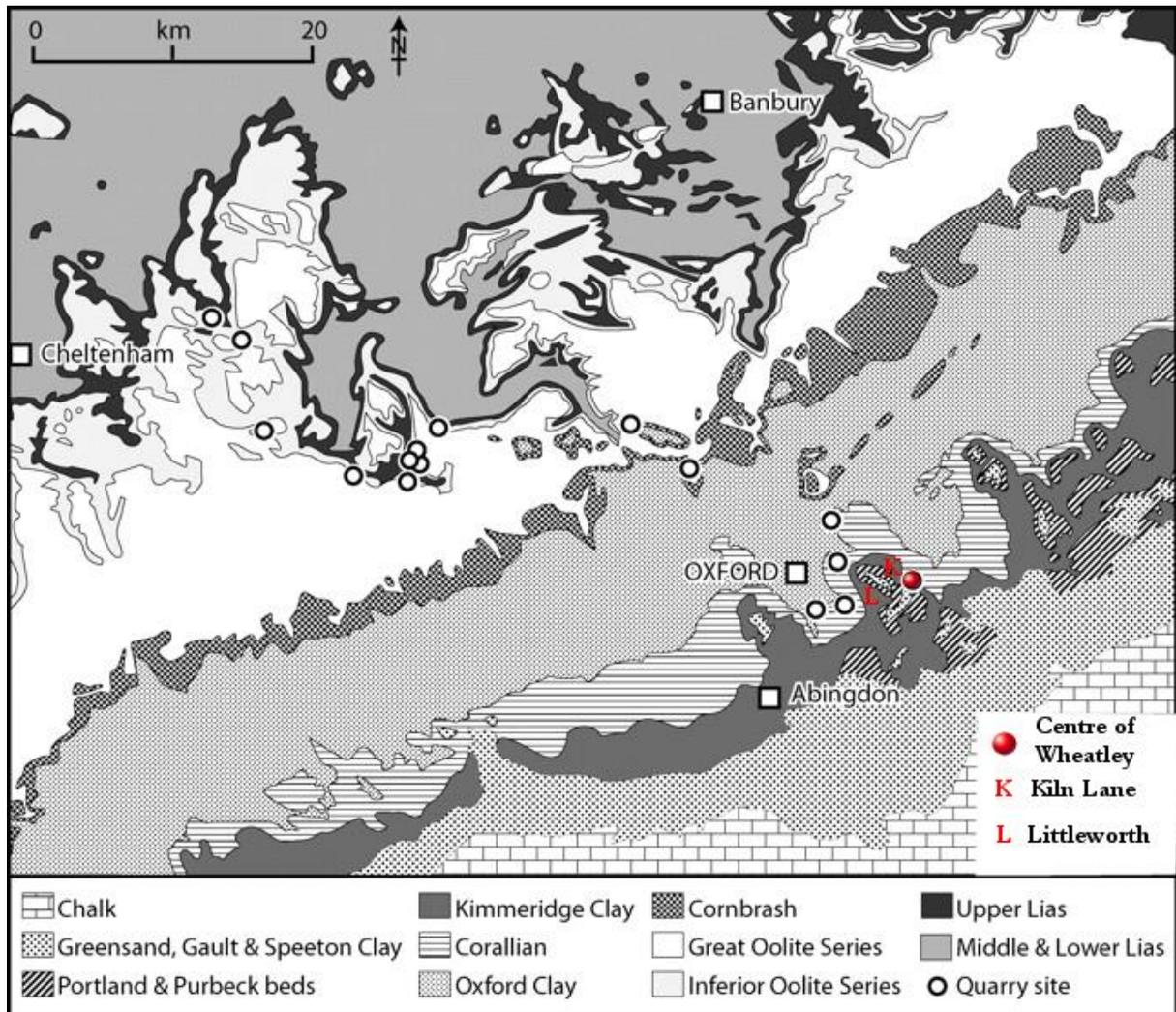


## Brick-making in Wheatley

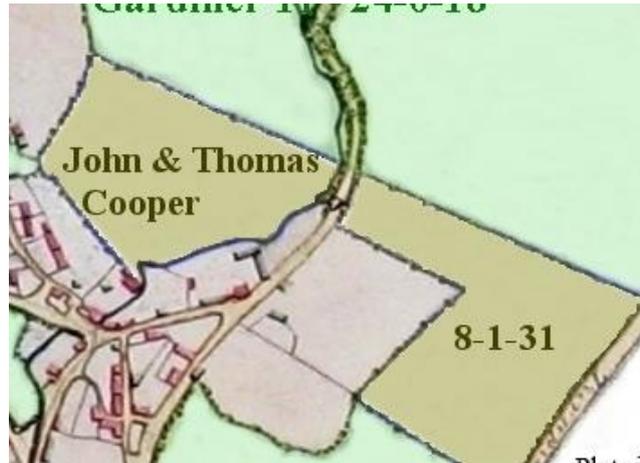
Any brickworks needed to be on, or very close to, a good source of clay. As the geological map reproduced below, with the centre of Wheatley, Kiln Lane (K) and Littleworth (L) areas superimposed, shows that both our two brick-making areas sat atop Kimmeridge clay.<sup>1</sup> Wheatley has been identified as one of the larger Oxfordshire brick-making regions which used Kimmeridge clay.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Kimmeridge clay is a sedimentary deposit of fossiliferous material laid down in the late Jurassic period.

<sup>2</sup> J. Bond et al., *The Clay Industries of Oxfordshire: Oxfordshire Brickmakers*. (Woodstock, 1980), p. 22.

The Cooper family, it is believed, started a brickworks in 1742 in the grounds of what is now the Old House in Kiln Lane, with a reference to Cooper's bricks in 1793.<sup>3</sup> The Enclosure Award map of 1813 shows the holding which they were awarded (8 plus acres), but it is almost certain that they owned part of the 'ancient' enclosure shown in grey adjacent to this. The Old House was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Cooper Family using the clay from their own property, and this is shown on the 1813 map. But Rock House was not built by then, so where the Coopers lived before they built the Old House is not known. The holding from the 1881 map shows the brick and tile works with many outbuildings. The brick and tile works may have also extended over to the other side (north-east) of the road, as this was the case in 1910, see below. Note that many of the Kiln Lane houses were not there then.



Another brickworks was set up in Littleworth in 1892, almost certainly because the supply of clay in Kiln Lane was becoming exhausted. But, as the chimney in Kiln Lane was not demolished until 1903, the brickworks here may have carried on for a few more years.

<sup>3</sup> Bond, *Oxfordshire Brickmakers*, p. 14.

## Old House

The Old House and its secondary building both have one brick façade.



Note the two chimneys and also the circular bricks and blown bricks on the left of the house.

Lime in bricks can cause them to blow.<sup>4</sup> This might well have happened as a result of an experiment of adding lime.

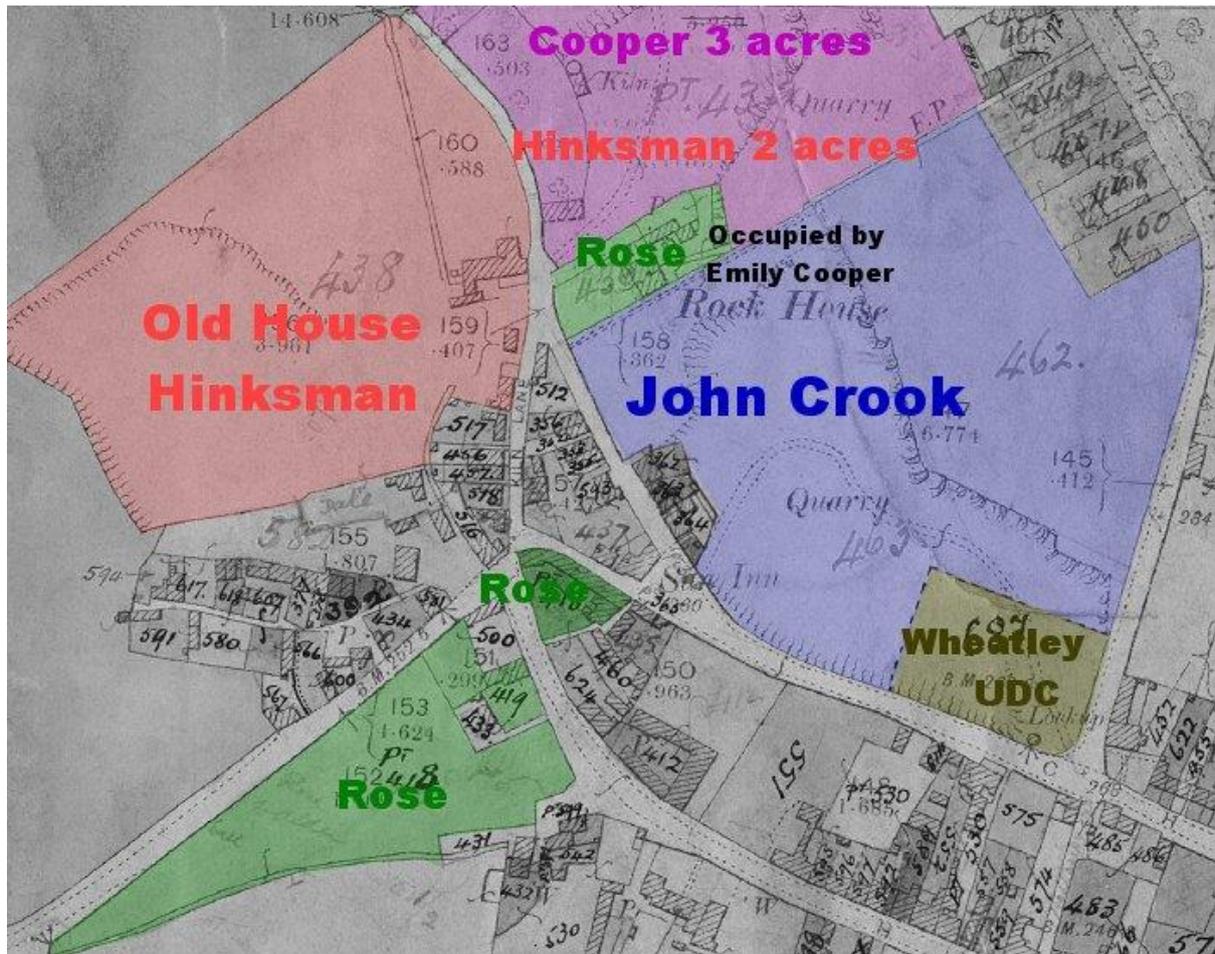
*This is caused when clay bricks contain small amounts of lime. When the bricks are fired, the lime is converted to calcium oxide (quicklime). When the bricks become wet the calcium oxide begins to slake. The process of slaking is vigorous and can cause an eruption on the face of the brick.*



<sup>4</sup> [https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Defects\\_in\\_brickwork](https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Defects_in_brickwork)

### Ownership of the quarry and quarry area in 1910 and later

Extract from the 1910 valuation survey map, when the house and garden (438 on plan) was owned and occupied by Miss Hinksman, show that there were no outbuildings or kilns in the grounds. Of the 5-acre site on the other side of the road to the north-east (shown as 439, but would have included 440 which is detailed in the schedule) 3 acres was still owned by the Coopers and described as lime kilns and quarry, while the remaining 2 acres was now owned by Miss Hinksman and described as the old brickyard. Presumably the latter was land closer to Westfield Road, with the lime kilns and quarry further towards Park Hill. Emily Cooper, presumably the widow, was living at Rock House (436) renting this from John Rose



John Crook's sister, Edith Sarah, married Arthur Cullum and lived at 2 Westfield Road

Miss Dale bought The Old House in the 1920s, and she allowed the annexe to be used as a chapel for the local Roman Catholic Congregation, until the Second World War when a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes was opened in the new military hospital at Holton Park.

Early in the 1960s The Old House was used by the Born Family. Mr Born was the Bailiff for the Shotover estate. The wall bounding the Shotover Estate had a door in it.

Then the property was bought by Lt.Col. John Ashton, and his wife, Joan, who was a very keen gardener, and he created the lake. In the 1980s it was owned by the Minty Family, Norman and Daphne with their three sons, Christopher, Jeffrey and Richard. They remained

living at the separate stone building, now 11 Kiln Lane, for some time, selling off the major part of the property.

The quarry, which had been in the ownership of the Cooper family for many years, fell into disuse in the early 1950s. It was bought by Fred Smith, who dealt in wood, sand and ballast. He obtained planning permission to build three bungalows on the site - for himself, his brother and his son. The brother and son built their houses on the sites of Nos 20 and 24 Westfield Road, but Fred died before his house which was to be built on the site of 22 Westfield Road. Instead it was inherited by Myrtle Smith who married Robin Slatter and they built the existing 22 Westfield Road c.1969. Later, in 1983 they built 28 Westfield Road and moved there.

Not far to the north of the Old House on a site which is now 28 Westfield Road, were the lime kilns. The lime produced from these was used only for agricultural use and for lime mortar. It is known that the stone here was of poorer quality (and not suitable for building) than further to the east, this may have been a separate operation not connected with the brick business. There is evidence of other lime kilns in the village, these almost certainly being used for agricultural use.

Three of the brick kilns in the grounds of 28 Westfield Road, taken in 2018



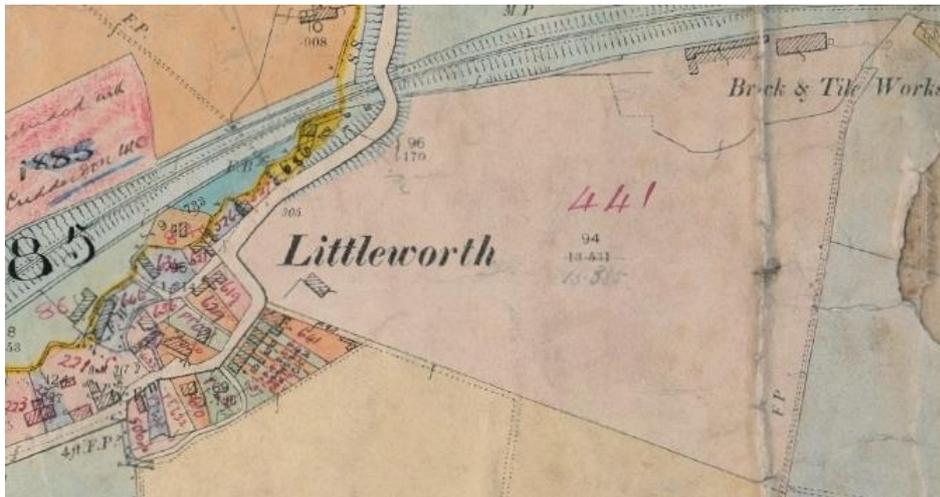
The poor quality limestone here was not suitable for building. Instead, it was burnt in large kilns. The process takes place at between 900-1000°C.<sup>5</sup> As the earlier kilns burnt out, new ones were built, and the last three survive. The stone was transported from the quarry face in trucks which ran along tracks, a short distance to the top of the kilns.

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<sup>5</sup>[https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwj\\_6rPU6srhAhWxWhUIHSdaCHkQFjABegQICxAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fudyamimitra.in%2FDefault%2FDownloadFile%2FLime\\_Klin.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2QeM\\_rqNO8nbA9rzFyBcLx](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwj_6rPU6srhAhWxWhUIHSdaCHkQFjABegQICxAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fudyamimitra.in%2FDefault%2FDownloadFile%2FLime_Klin.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2QeM_rqNO8nbA9rzFyBcLx)

There were rods at the bottom of the lime kiln, on which the stone was layered with coal. A fire was lit through the stoke hole at the base. It was left to burn slowly, and the resulting lime fell to the bottom for removal and bagging.

After the move of the brick business to Littleworth, this was taking place on 2 acres of a 13-acre site (441), described as brickyard and buildings and in the north-east corner of the site, with the balance of the 13-acre site described as pasture land, but probably being the future source of Kimmeridge clay.



Brick-making in Wheatley and Littleworth has been described in three articles.<sup>6</sup> One of these, by Anthony Steven in 1936, which was published in one of the Oxford newspapers. In it the reporter saw men busy working raw clay with their hands and putting it in moulds. The brickworks was then in Littleworth employing some 67 men and turning out 150,000-160,000 bricks per week. The business may, by then, have become part of the London Brick Company, but it closed in 1939 at the onset of war.

An un-dated photograph shows the men involved in this brick business.



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<sup>6</sup> WVA, accession number 492

Lautrec, in Littleworth Road opposite the end of High Street, is known to have been built in the early 1900s from Littleworth bricks, and close inspection of these bricks (particularly the front) shows a fingerprint pattern on many of the bricks.

There are a number of other buildings in Wheatley of mainly stone construction but with one façade in brick and it is probable that the bricks for these came from the Cooper brickworks. There is clear evidence that the façade of 4 High Street was re-built or re-modelled in brick in 1847.



Chillingworth House in High Street was originally the Bell Inn and, as such, was built at the turn of the 16/17 century, almost certainly entirely of stone. This building pre-dates the Cooper brickworks. It is speculated that the Bell Lane façade was changed to brick by the wealthy Chillingworth after 1862 when he acquired this property in satisfaction of a loan default. However, the brick was painted over in the 1960s when it was a betting office, but is now revealed in its original colouring.



The brick style is Flemish bond, which only became popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Other part brick buildings are Fairholme, 4 High Street, where it is known that substantial changes to this were made in 1847 when the stone elevation was changed to Wheatley brick and the roof tiles to slate, as '1847' on a window frame indicates this as a likely date.

However, it is more speculative as to whether other buildings with a single brick facade were built like this or were re-modelled later on. One obvious candidate is the back part of Jessamine Cottage (the original house was the front stone part). There are also many dwellings in Westfield Road and Kiln Lane, probably built with these local bricks, but these are relatively modern having probably been built c. 1900.

Other candidates are 75/77 and 83 High Street where the side façade is stone but it seems more likely, in these cases, that they were built like this in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

83 High Street



75/77 High Street



There are many other all-brick buildings including the Merry bells built in 1888, but these are not covered in this paper.