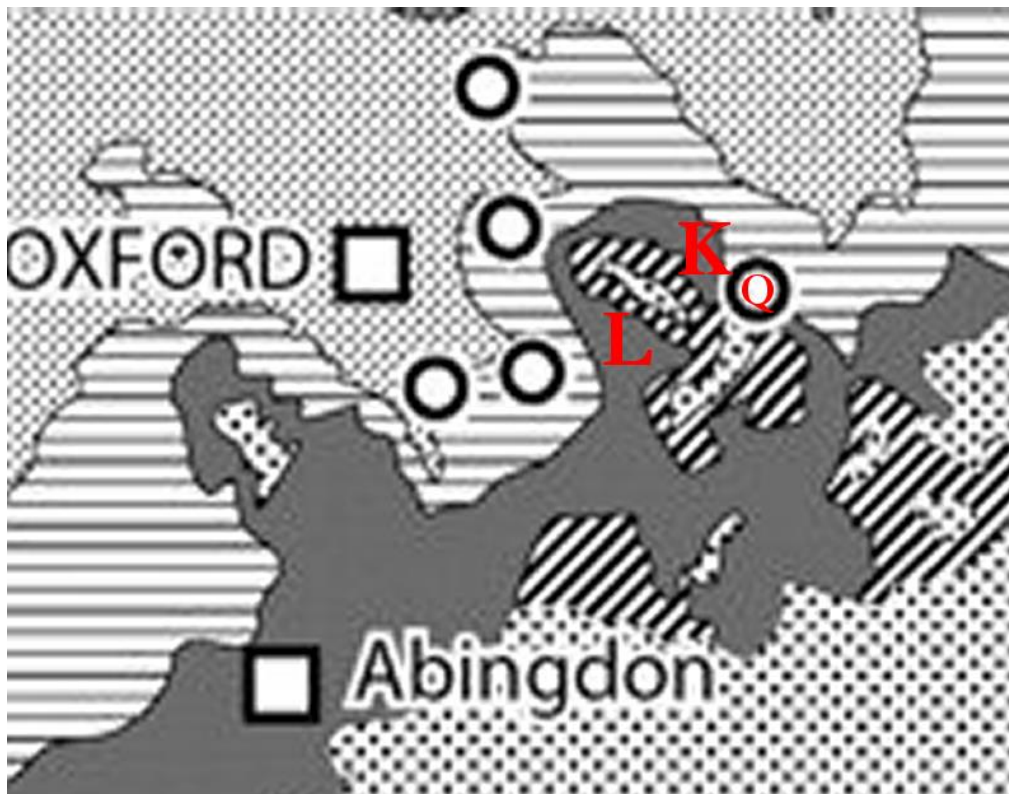
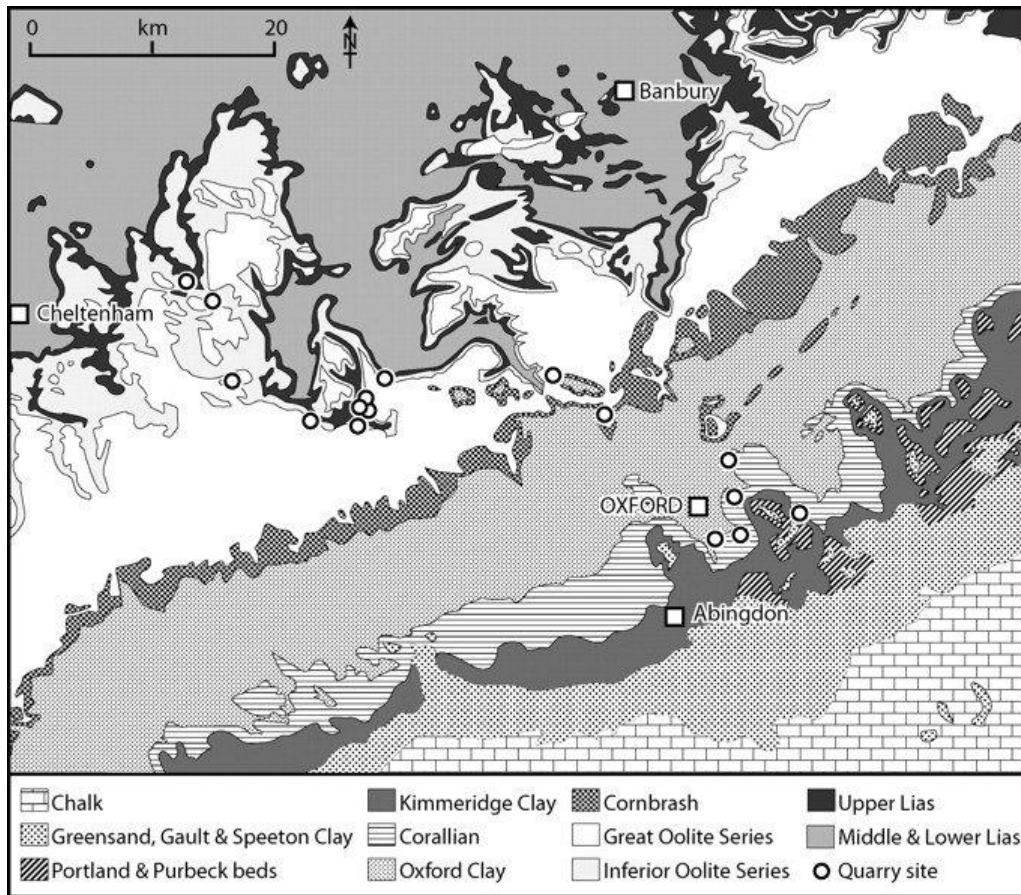
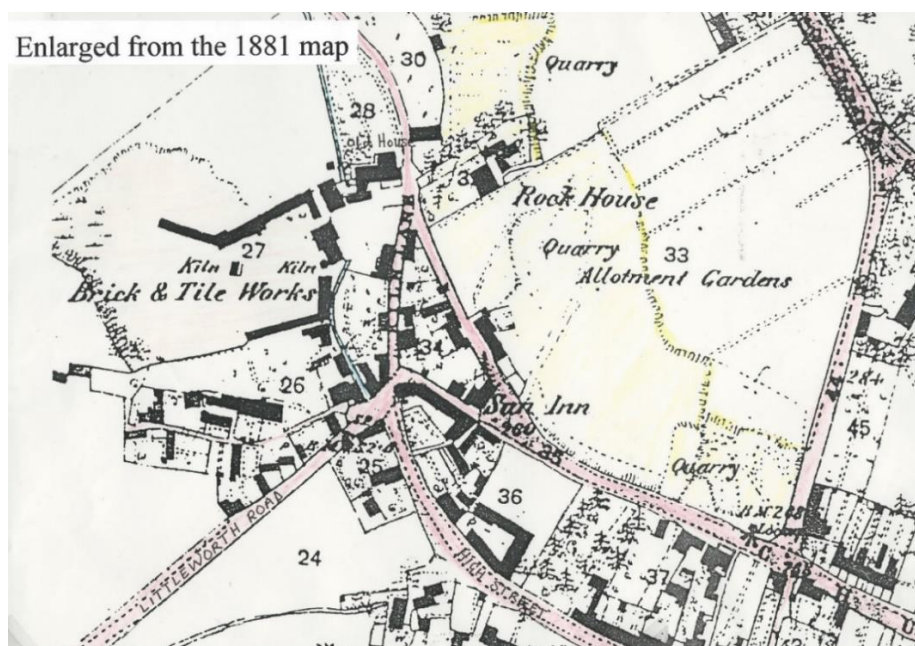


2743 Brickworks history

The geological map of the area, below, shows the Kimmeridge clay and, in the enlarged section, Kiln Lane as a 'K', the later Littleworth brickyard as an 'L', and 'Q' (in the centre of the village) the quarried areas.



The Cooper family, it is believed, started a brickworks in 1742 in the grounds of what is now the Old House in Kiln Lane. There is a printed reference to Cooper's bricks in 1793. The holding on 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.



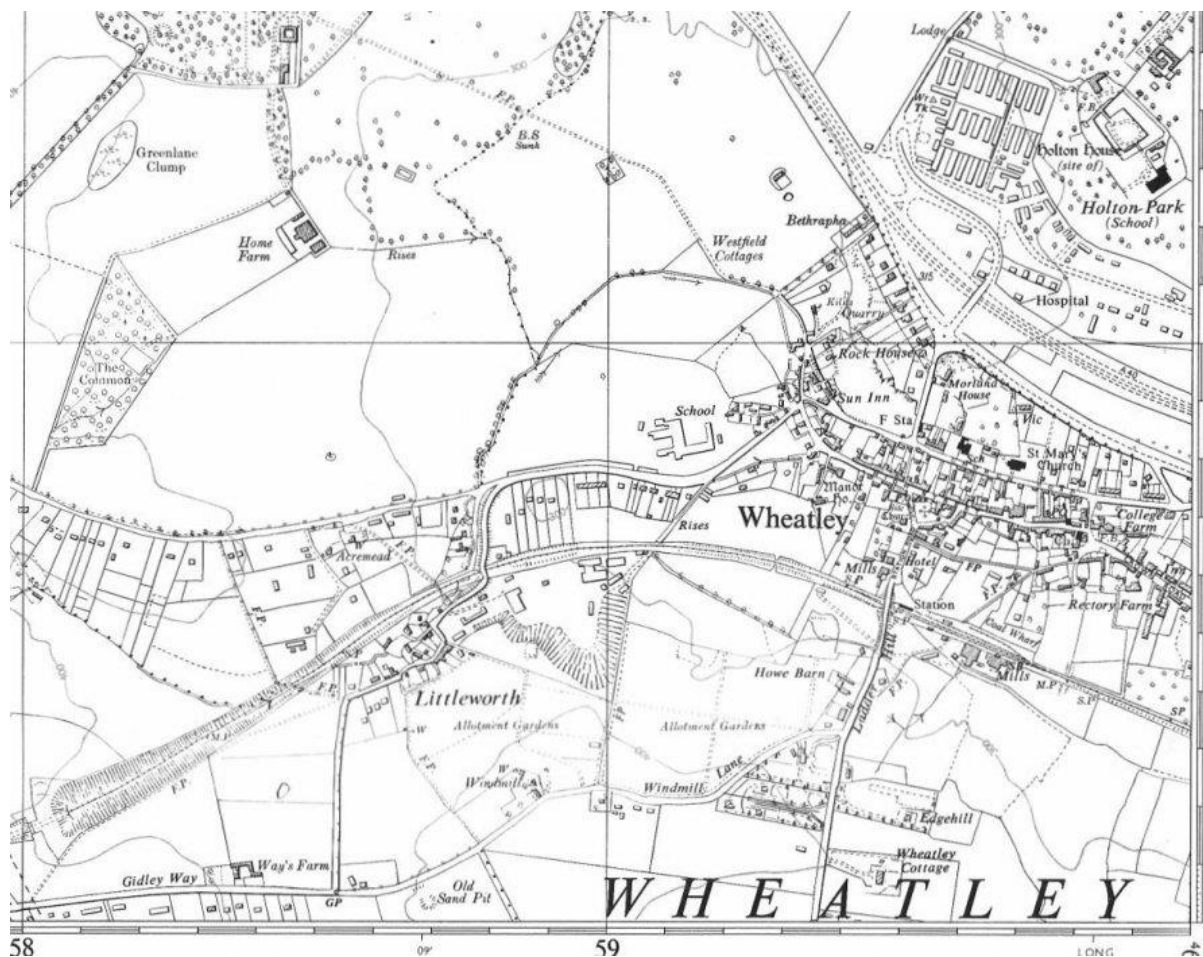
An extract from the 1910 valuation survey map when the house and garden (438 on plan) was owned and occupied by Miss Hinksman, shows that there were no outbuildings or kilns in the grounds. The accompanying schedule to the 5-acre site on the other side of the road to the north-east (shown as 439, but which would have included plot 440) showed that 3 acres was still owned by the Coopers and described as lime kilns and quarry, while the remaining 2 acres, now owned by Miss Hinksman, was 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

Another brickworks was set up in Littleworth in 1892, almost certainly because the supply of clay in Kiln Lane was running out. But the brickworks in Wheatley may have carried on for a few more years as the chimney at the Old House site was not demolished until 1903.

This brick business took place on 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 later used for industrial and residential development.



However, the extent of the clay excavation is shown by the V-shaped area around the east and south of this site.



The depth of this excavation can be seen in the following photo

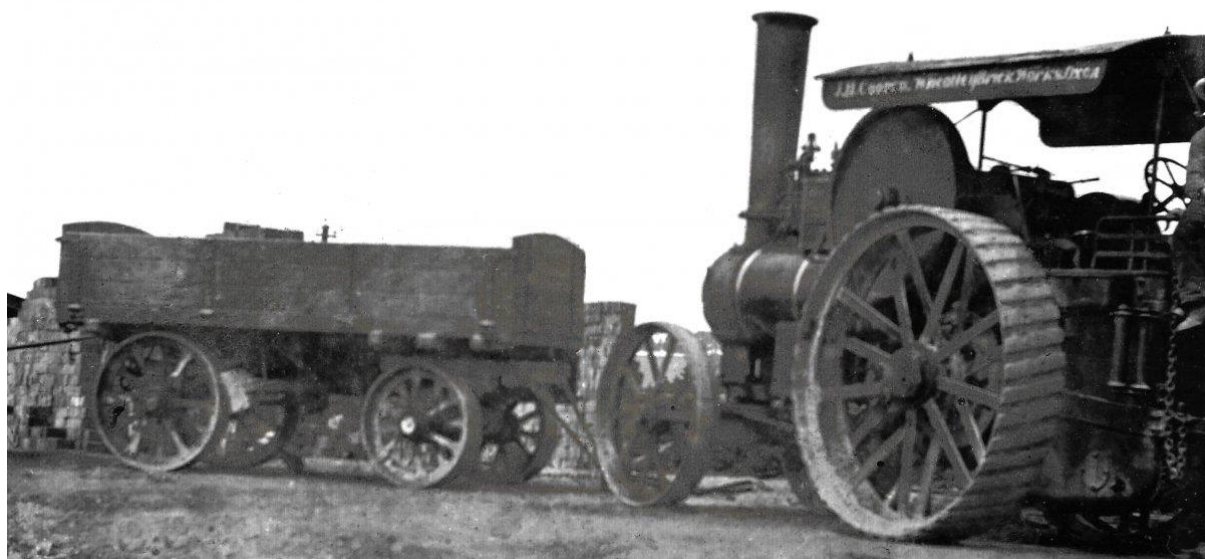


Brick-making in Wheatley and Littleworth has been described in three local newspaper articles, Archive reference 492. In one of these, by Anthony Steven in 1936, the reporter saw men busy working raw clay with their hands and putting it in moulds. The Littleworth brickworks then employed some 67 men and it was 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 undated photograph shows the men involved in this brick business.



Back row: L to R: Fred Smith, Bill Edwards, Cecil Marsh, unknown, Jack Stevens, Percy Fonge, Bert Merriman, unknown, John Hinton
Second row: L to R: Tom East, unknown, unknown, Jack Howe, Fred Knight, Jim Mole, Cyril Slatter, unknown
Third row: L to R: George Belcher, Edgar Munt, Ralph Capstick, The Manager, unknown, Mr Hall, Freddie Green, unknown
Front Row: L to R: Joe Sullivan, Fred Knight Jnr., Len Payne?, Ted Knight

Another photo shows some of the brickwork machinery and wagons. Below this is a photo of some of the workers involved in the clay digging.



After the closure of the Littleworth brickworks in 1939, the area was used for a variety of purposes. In the early 1950s, there was a grass-drying factory which, on one occasion, caught fire. Tom Hassall remembers that the Wheatley Voluntary fire brigade was summoned by a siren so 'we all also used to rush to the station to see them arrive, find out where the fire was and, if it was close by, go to see the fun – it was a very popular entertainment for young and old'. The dried grass was turned into animal feed and chlorophyll products. At the end of the 1950s part of the factory was used, for a short while, by an animal waste recycling plant which included bone-grinding, to manufacture glue. It was notorious for the smell which used to waft over the village on the south west wind. Both these previous uses were replaced by a Rover spare parts business called Cohen and Windsor, then G R Nixey's plant hire business which may have also sold building supplies. In 1970, the industrial unit was as shown in the

map, with another business there being a packing unit, Metal Box at one stage and I-Pack at another. This also shows, to the right of the factory, the car collection depot which appears to have been used to store surplus production from Cowley when the selling market dried up. Similar storage of excess vehicles took place at Worminghall aerodrome and in the quarry at Forest Hill, now used by Walters coaches and others.

The site of the old Littleworth Brickworks is now occupied by Coopers Close (previously known as Balmoral Drive), mobile homes in Littleworth Park, and light industrial units. It had moved here in the mid to late 1990s.

Photo showing the Littleworth area after the closure of the brickworks in 1939.

