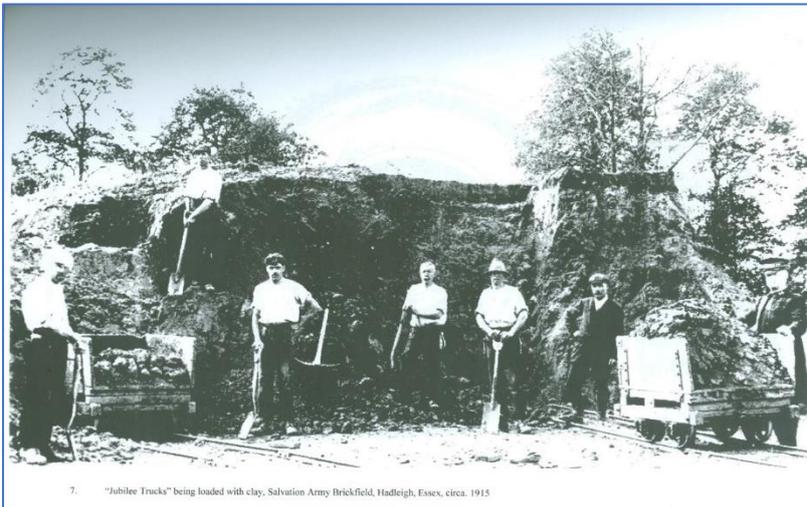


# Brickmaking and waste disposal in Pittville Park

## FOLLY LANE BRICKWORKS

Much of the footprint of the old Folly Lane brickworks and clay pit can still be seen in the park today. Where the clay pit has been filled in the ground is uneven due to settlement and is planted with wild flowers. The clay pit included the west end of the west side of the park, the adjacent section of Tommy Taylors Lane, the wildlife area and a section of the Honeybourne railway line. The date the brickworks started is not known but initially bricks were handmade on the site.

The geology in the Cheltenham area includes Lower Lias clay, often referred to as 'marl' which is suitable for brickmaking. Tiles for paving, for roofs or for drainage can also be made from the clay. Transport was difficult and expensive and therefore most of the bricks would have been used for building houses or commercial buildings in and around Cheltenham.



7. "Jubilee Trucks" being loaded with clay, Salvation Army Brickfield, Hadleigh, Essex, circa. 1915

The clay was dug by hand (the first excavator, a steam shovel was not available until 1874) then mixed with water, kneaded and forced into a wooden mould. The bricks would be left to dry for a few days and then fired in a kiln formed from the bricks themselves.

By the 1880s, second-hand machinery and a kiln to fire the bricks had been installed and a lime kiln built (The lime would be used for the lime mortar to lay the bricks.) At this time, Folly Lane brickworks was one of the four largest brickworks in Cheltenham. However, the strong blue clay was difficult to work because it was full of limestone nodules. Folly Lane brickworks could not compete with the nearby Battledown brickworks, which had more efficient machinery and could supply the demand for bricks in Cheltenham at that time. Part of the site

was sold to the Great Western Railway for the Cheltenham to Honeybourne Line and the brickworks was closed in 1894.

## WASTE DISPOSAL

Cheltenham Borough Council purchased the site of the old clay pit in 1945 and used it as a tip, or as it would be called today, a landfill site. By 1969 the tip was full and the borough council closed it and placed a clay cap on top. Over the last fifty years, the rubbish below the clay cap has settled, decomposed and produced methane gas (often called a greenhouse gas) which had had to be burnt off. The site is very uneven and is not suitable for housing. It is therefore being planted with trees and has been turned into a wildlife area as part of Pittville Park.

### Can you answer or research the following questions associated with brickmaking and waste disposal?

1. Who introduced brickmaking to England when they invaded and who re-introduced the skills in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Why were bricks cheap to make but expensive to transport in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
3. Why will we no longer use landfill and how will we dispose of waste in the future?
4. We will still have holes in the ground due to the abstraction of minerals. Can you think of some good uses for large holes in the ground?
5. Why are so called 'greenhouse gases' harmful to our atmosphere?

### References

1. 'The Battledown Brickworks' – an article by David A. O'Connor in the *Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology Journal* 2000 pp. 4 - 18.
2. 'Brickearths, pottery and brickmaking in Gloucestershire' – an article by L. Richardson & R. J. Webb in the *Proceedings of the Cheltenham Natural Science Society* 1909 – 1911.

### Useful websites

[www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com)

[www.ubbgloucestershire.co.uk](http://www.ubbgloucestershire.co.uk) (Energy from waste facility)

[www.edenproject.com](http://www.edenproject.com)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotswold\\_Water\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotswold_Water_Park)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse\\_gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_gas)

<https://climatekids.nasa.gov>