

# Clay in the Chilterns - Life in a Chiltern Brickyard



No matter where you are in the Chilterns you are never far from clay. Even clay dug from your garden can be used to make pots with a rich orange and red colour. Clay elsewhere in Buckinghamshire produces the famous 'Buckinghamshire Blues'. Clay can be used to make a wide range of products, for example, bricks, tiles (for floors and roofs), flowerpots, bread crocks, clay pipes, jugs and hot water bottles.

## Brickmaking in Victorian Brickyards

Bricks were made from clay which were fired in a kiln. A kiln is an oven made for burning, baking or drying. They are often very hot and used to make pottery and bricks or to dry wood.

Moulds were used to form 'green' bricks. These green bricks were then taken to a hot kiln which would dry them out. As the bricks were drying they become smaller and harder as the water evaporated, the colour of the bricks then changed because of the temperature of the kiln.

## Life of a Child working in a brickyard

During the 19th Century, children were the cheapest labourers in the brickyards and would begin working from as young as eight years old. Their working days were long and hard and they would often work twelve-hour days, six days a week. They did not experience very good working conditions - they worked outside in wet and cold weather and would often spend the whole day in wet clothes. This often made them quite ill with chest infections.

Children would have lots of jobs in a brickyard, they would:

- Carry clay to the adult brick maker
- Carry green wet bricks to the drying sheds and stack them to dry
- Put dried green bricks in the kiln
- Empty the kilns when the bricks had been baked.

Children had to work quickly and often had to run around the brickyard to keep up with the number of bricks made by the adult workers and would often cover as much as 8 miles a day!



## Home Learning

### Imagine

How many of Chiltern Open Air Museum's buildings are made from bricks – have a look at our other online resources and webpages to help you. How many 3D cuboid shapes can you find in your house? <https://www.education.com/activity/article/brick-making/>

### Create

Can you make a 3D model one of our Museum buildings from building blocks or bricks like Lego you have at home?

### Research

What other jobs would children in Victorian Britain do? Can you research three other jobs you would be expected to do as a Victorian child if you didn't go to school? Which job would you prefer? Can you write a job advert to make the work seem appealing - you'll need to use persuasive writing!

### Experiment

Have a go at making mud bricks and design your own construction <https://www.education.com/activity/article/brick-making/>