

## **Notes for Editors:**

The Museum is the only remaining Victorian brick factory left in the country. It is a very rare survivor and has all of its original building and machinery complex in place. It is considered of national significance by English Heritage and has been given Grade II\* listing.

The factory was built by the Ashby family. It started work in 1897 and at the peak of its productivity the factory produced 20 million bricks a year. The Brickworks was a prominent local employer rivalled only by the local strawberry industry in scale.

The factory closed in the 1970s, shortly after the building of the M27 motorway and in almost direct response to the introduction of the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974). The owners of the brickworks, already struggling with the competition from more efficient rivals, could not make the site safe by 20th century standards and the site closed its doors.

The buildings were rescued from demolition and handed over to Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust. A large restoration project made the buildings water-tight and restored the working machinery. In 2012 the site was granted a Heritage Lottery Fund award to turn the site into a museum, which opened to the public in 2014.

The whole of the brickmaking process is included in a tour around the factory complex. There is also a collection of over 4,000 bricks from manufacturers across Britain and other ceramic building materials including chimney pots, roof tiles and land drains. This important survivor of the Victorian age of innovation strives now to tell the story not only of the Bursledon Brick Company in whose factory it is based, but also the wider story of brickmaking in Britain from the Roman period to the present day.

With an extensive event programme, dedicated education programme and a range of interactive, accessible and hands-on exhibits, the museum has a wide appeal but suffers burgeoning maintenance costs. The vast majority of the work on site is undertaken by volunteers and the museum operates with a 'men's shed' mentality, providing routine, opportunity and companionship to a demographic that statistically is shown to suffer from isolation and loneliness.