

4 The ponds appear

This pond below you and other ponds around the nature reserve were created by the brick workers.

They would have the hard task of digging out the clay with a shovel. Over time, the holes filled with water and then wild-life moved in, including the rare Great Crested Newt.



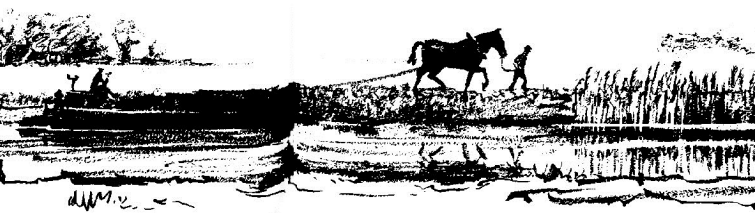
Great Crested Newt

5 Horses pulling boats

A hundred years ago quite large boats could use this drain. Rather than using engines, the boats were moved by horses pulling along the bank.

Horse-drawn barges would have carried fuel for the kiln fires—coal from a hundred miles north, and blocks of peat called turves from nearby Woodwalton Fen.

The same barges would then transport the fired bricks all across the country. Bricks from Ramsey Heights have even ended up as far away as Australia.



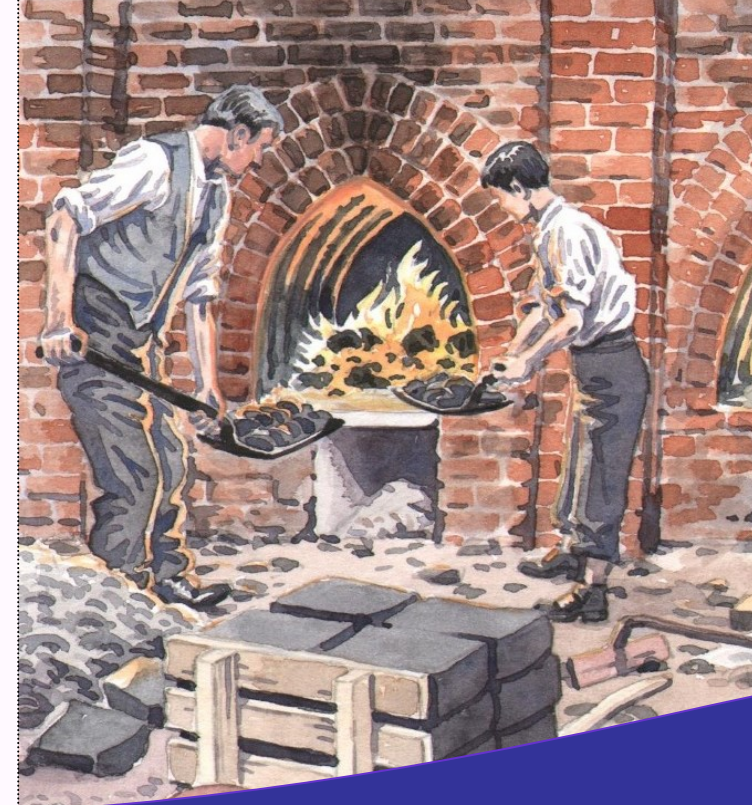
6 The burning boat

Here you can see what looks like a pond. It is hard to believe that this was once a harbour for the boats. Here, the brick workers would have loaded hundreds of bricks onto barges. Once, the bricks were so hot after firing, that one of the barges actually caught fire!

7 See brick-making tools and the kiln

If the staff are here when you visit, please do ask to take a look round the classroom and centre, or come along to one of our many events.

Discover more trails, history, photos and film on the Great Fen website, www.greatfen.org.uk



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Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights, PE26 2RS.
(usually staffed 9am-4pm Mon-Fri).

This trail guide is also available in large print from the Great Fen team.

Large Print

Discovery Trail: Burning Bricks and the Hidden Harbour Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre

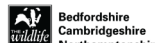
Distance: 800m

Time: 20-30 mins



This trail is Heritage Lottery Funded

The Great Fen is delivered by:



www.greatfen.org.uk

The Wildlife Trust Countryside Centre has a secret past—this was not always a nature reserve.

1 Fires for fourteen days

Take a look through the windows of the wooden building. If you were this close 100 years ago, it would be extremely hot where you are standing!

The trenches you can see would have had roaring fires inside, which would have burnt for fourteen days at a time. In this kiln, bricks and tiles were baked.

Try to imagine what life was like as a brick worker back then in Victorian times. Some of the workers were as young as twelve.

You might have had the hot and dangerous task of loading coal and peat into the trenches to keep the fire going.

Or you might have carefully stacked up the bricks in arches over the firing trenches. There were sheds around the kiln, some of which housed the benches for brick and tile making, and some which were drying sheds. The building that is now the classroom was the fuel store.



Colour illustration of brickworks (R Allen)



A brick worker feeding the fire

2 The lost houses

As you walk along here, look out for piles of bricks to the sides of the paths.

Ahead and to the right of you, you would have seen the brick workers' houses, and a cattle shed.

There were other animals here too, including horses. They powered a pugmill to grind the clay, making it ready for brickmaking.



Ramsey Heights brick workers



A horse-powered pugmill

3 Fruit in the garden

At this point there was a cottage garden linked to the brick workers' houses. You may be able to spot the apple tree and the plum trees, particularly if they have fruit.

You did not have to travel far for your food.

There were vegetables in the garden, hens laid eggs and cows provided milk, butter and cheese. Your family favourites may have been apple or plum pie, or perhaps even eel pie, with fresh fish caught along the drain.

