



**- HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRIAL STROUD VALLEYS -**

*Industry has been a part of our local environment for a thousand years, but it is the Stroud Valleys' legacy as one of the country's earliest cloth-making areas that has made it unique. It is a legacy which can be traced back at least as far as the 14<sup>th</sup> century.*

*This industrial heritage has helped to shape almost every part of the local environment; its influence can be spotted in quite unexpected places. Many mills have since diversified to other industries, and textile manufacture has virtually disappeared in the locality. However, a rich built heritage of former mills, associated buildings and the transport infrastructure (canals, roads and railways) remains.*



## HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRIAL STROUD VALLEYS

- 4.1 Settlement in the Stroud valleys can be traced back thousands of years into pre-history: ancient sites such the Crackstone near Minchinhampton and Hetty Peglar's Tump at Uley are among the obvious visible signs of occupation, however less tangible survivals criss-cross the hills and valleys – many of the lanes and tracks used by Neolithic man are still in use today.
- 4.2 Having overcome resistance from the local Celtic tribe, the Dobunni, Romans settled in the area soon after the AD44 invasion. One of the Stroud District's claims to fame is the Orpheus mosaic pavement, discovered during excavations of a large Roman villa found in Woodchester in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Judging by the exceptional quality of the mosaic, the settlers brought great wealth.
- 4.3 Following the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Severn Plain and the upper Frome valley appear have become home to Anglo-Saxon settlers: villages such as Eastington, Frampton and Sapperton were probably established at this time, their origins given away by the 'ton' ending of their name.
- 4.4 Nailsworth was already established by this period. Its name is said to be derived from<sup>1</sup> 'Negel', meaning weight of wool, and 'Leag' meaning a pasture or clearing. This would indicate that the area may have been involved in the wool trade well before the Norman Conquest.
- 4.5 The Domesday Book of 1087 reveals that **waterpower** was already being harnessed in the district: the mill at Fromebridge is mentioned and is just one of many ancient mill sites that are still occupied today.
- 4.6 Throughout the Stroud valleys, small, compact communities grew up around **ancient river crossing points**. The names of Ryeford and Chalford indicate that the crossings were originally fords and Dudbridge, Wallbridge and Bowbridge reveal that they were later superseded by bridges.
- 4.7 In the narrow river valleys, the points at which the hillsides on either side could be negotiated by packhorses often dictated the placing of the crossings.
- 4.8 Stroud town itself is first referred to in 1221, when it was called '*la Strode*', taking its name from the marshy bit of land at the confluence of the Slad Brook and the Frome river<sup>2</sup>. The early expansion of the settlement, which became known as a '*vill*' in 1248, centred around what is now known as High Street, on the route between Bisley and Paganhill.
- 4.9 At this stage the town was an outlying part of the parish of Bisley. St Lawrence's church, built by 1279, was merely a chapel of ease for the people of Stroud who could not attend the parish church in Bisley. It was not until 1304, that Stroud was assigned parochial rights, making the church the ecclesiastical centre of the parish. The West tower of the church, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, still forms part of St Lawrence's today.

<sup>1</sup> *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 11: Bisley and Longtree Hundreds* (1976), pp. 207-211 'Nailsworth: Introduction'. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>

<sup>2</sup> *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 11: Bisley and Longtree Hundreds* (1976), pp. 99-104 'Stroud: Introduction'. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>

## THE ORIGINS OF INDUSTRY IN THE STROUD VALLEYS

- 4.10 Much of Gloucestershire’s historic wealth was derived from a thriving **wool trade**. The Cotswolds had been used for sheep rearing since ancient times – it was a major source of revenue for the monasteries, who were huge landowners, together with local lords of the manors. For centuries the region’s wool was internationally renowned and traded. It was particularly prized during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries – being in demand as far away as Flanders and Florence, both European cloth-producing centres.
- 4.11 The hill-top wool towns of Minchinhampton, Painswick and Bisley were commercial and administrative hubs for the surrounding areas, with ancient trade routes connecting to larger regional centres, such as Gloucester and Cirencester, and further afield to Bristol, and ultimately to London.
- 4.12 The historic prosperity of the Stroud area, however, owes much to the **production of cloth**, an industry that can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Fulling was probably the first cloth process to be mechanized. A cloth fuller was recorded in Woodchester in 1272 and, of the mill sites whose origins can be traced back that early, most have dabbled in cloth manufacturing processes at some point in their history.
- 4.13 The Stroud District had several natural aids to success in the cloth industry: its proximity to the sheep raised on the Wolds; the fast flowing rivers and streams that could power mills capable of processing raw wool and finishing the cloth, and the district’s geology, which provided an abundant supply of Fuller’s Earth.
- 4.14 Fuller’s Earth greatly facilitated the stripping of natural oils from the wool, making the cloth easier to dye. The consistent dye quality and fineness of **Stroud’s cloths** gained the area international fame.
- 4.15 But the fledgling medieval cloth industry was all but decimated by the Black Death in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Stroud valleys were quite sparsely populated. Its resurgence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the emergence of what we now think of as the archetypal ‘Cotswold style’ of building. Spurred on by land and wealth distribution following the dissolution of the monasteries, a series of massive building booms swept away much of what had previously existed, and the process of settling the steep valley sides began. The growing cloth industry influenced the appearance, form and siting of buildings to a very great extent over the following centuries.

Right:  
The earliest forms of industrial heritage are not always easily recognisable. At Churchend in Eastington, a 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century hall house has been converted into a pair of cottages. But its history goes back even earlier than that: the building is believed to include timbers from a miller’s house and mill which previously stood on the site and is known to have become ruinous by 1389.



## EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

### Eighteenth Century

- 4.16 The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a great expansion of the cloth trade in the Stroud valleys and by the middle of the century Stroud town was being described as ‘a sort of capital of the clothing villages’<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.17 Historically, though the raw wool had sometimes been prepared for spinning in mills (often it was prepared ‘at source’, in the agricultural districts), the spinning and weaving processes took place in nearby cottages. This was known as the ‘putting out’ system.
- 4.18 Until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, the valley bottom mills were predominantly concerned with refining and finishing the woven product: having been woven on the cottage broadlooms, the cloth was returned to the mills and subjected to a range of specialist processes. At fulling mills, the cloth was beaten by huge hammer-like water-powered ‘stocks’, to plump the fabric and tighten the weave. Gigg (or gig) mills housed machinery which used teasels to raise the fabric’s nap. Teasels (which were especially cultivated around Eastington) were also used early in the wool preparation process, to brush out impurities and ready it for spinning. Several mill sites in the conservation area include intriguing little buildings, known as “the old teasel store”. The raised nap could then be shaved off in shearing sheds.

- 4.19 Dyers mills or dye houses added colour to the cloth, which was then stretched out to dry on frames known as tenter racks (hence the phrase “on tenter hooks”, and the several incidences of the name Rack Hill locally). 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings of the Stroud area often show tenter racks on the hillsides, displaying Stroud’s most famous export: ‘Stroudwater Scarlet’, a felted cloth still used for guardsmens’ jackets (see illustration page 11).
- 4.20 Sometimes, the mill owners (known as clothiers) operated several mill sites – each one dealing with a particular process of the manufacture.
- 4.21 By the end of the 18th century, all aspects of the cloth industry started to become centred in the mills at the bottom of the valleys. The inhabitants of the villages now went to the mills to work, the broadlooms reluctantly being abandoned.



Top left:  
The distinctive roundhouse at Frogmarsh, Woodchester, is believed to have been used for storing teasels. It was also used as a wool drying stove.

Top right:  
An archetypal Stroud valleys weaver’s cottage – the distinctive tall gables were designed so that large broad looms would fit in the attic.

Right:  
This relatively small building was part of a 17<sup>th</sup>/ 18<sup>th</sup> century incarnation of St Marys Mill in Chalford. It is now dwarfed by a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century phase of expansion and rebuilding.

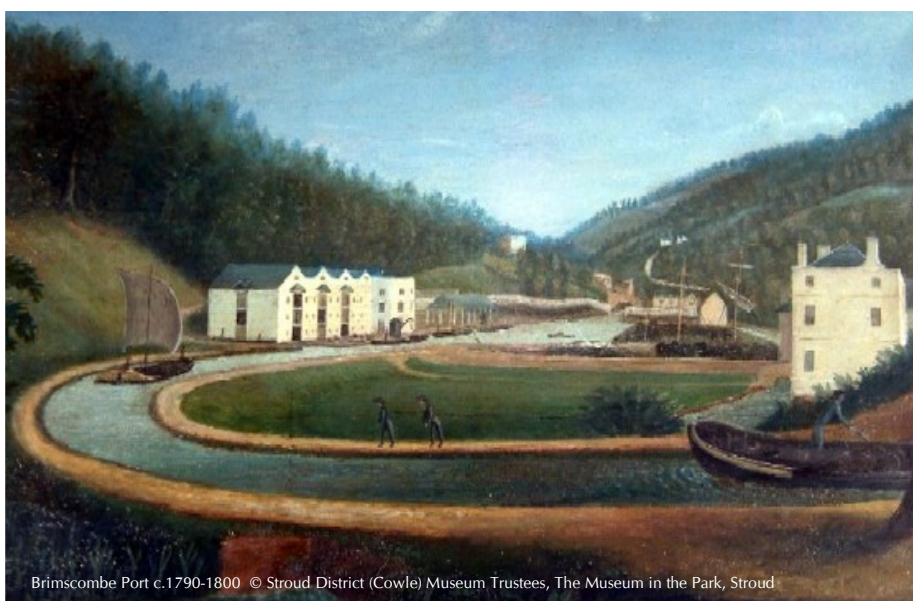


<sup>3</sup> Verey & Brooks *The Buildings of England – Gloucestershire Vol 1: The Cotswolds*, page 647.



- 4.22 Industrial progress was slowed, to a degree, by the terrible condition of the roads in the Stroud district. Despite being turnpiked in 1726, the clay of the Severn Vale meant that keeping the main roads to the west of Stroud in good order was very difficult: horses and coaches became bogged down in the mire and the road was frequently impassable.
- 4.23 There was no direct **infrastructure** linking the mills along the valley floors. The Chalford and Nailsworth valleys were particularly bad. Communication between mills, or between towns and villages, often involved lengthy and circuitous journeys. A cart travelling from Stroud to Chalford would have spent a day winding up and down the steep tracks that linked the various settlements on the valley sides and hilltops – a four-mile journey as the crow flies.
- 4.24 The river Frome became an unofficial transport route for local goods. However, its role as part of a national transport link was limited. The clothiers relied on **waterpower** to operate their machinery and so controlled the river and major tributaries with weirs and sluices, forming large **millponds** in the valley bottoms. The right to harness the rivers' power was fiercely guarded.
- 4.25 In spite of the commercial advantages that could be gained by having a navigable link to the River Severn and the port of Gloucester, plans to make the Frome passable were repeatedly vetoed by the mill owners who were keen to protect their mill races.
- 4.26 However, as the eighteenth century progressed, and industrial advancements brought more and more of the cloth making process into the mills, clothiers became aware that the transport of goods would be both easier and more cost effective if a link from Stroud to the Severn could be constructed.
- 4.27 The idea of a branch **canal** connecting the Severn at Framilode to Stroud at Wallbridge was proposed. The Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation, still in existence, was formed in 1730 and the mill owners became active campaigners for the branch canal project.
- 4.28 The proposed Stroudwater canal was not to be the first in the district. In the 1740s at Wheatenhurst, Richard Owen Cambridge built a man-made waterway for pleasure in the grounds of his home, Whitminster House – this was later the venue for a dinner on board a "Venetian barge", enjoyed by Frederick, Prince of Wales, on a visit to the area in 1750.
- 4.29 The Stroud area could also boast the nationally important Kemmett Canal, built between 1759 and 1763, from Framilode to Stonehouse. This became one of the country's earliest successful planned canal schemes.
- 4.30 In spite of the clothiers' enthusiasm for the Stroudwater canal link, it was to take nearly fifty years, three Acts of Parliament, four failed attempts and four years of construction before the canal was finally completed in 1779. It became a great success.
- 4.31 The beginning of the 1780s saw the construction of a second canal in the Stroud valleys. The Thames and Severn was designed to continue the Stroudwater canal, forming the first inland link between the two great rivers. This was a project of national importance, promoted not only by local clothiers, but also by London merchants, who wanted a link to the Midlands.
- 4.32 Although the two canals met in Wallbridge at the foot of Stroud town, the newly constructed port at Brimscombe, capable of holding 100 vessels, surpassed Wallbridge Basin and became the heart of the local canal trade. At Brimscombe Port, goods were transferred from the large sea-going Severn trows to Thames barges, which could navigate the narrower gauge canal east of Brimscombe.
- 4.33 Whilst the Stroudwater became a profitable success, the Thames and Severn canal was plagued from the outset by leaks and lack of water. A venture that should have been highly lucrative was often closed to long distance traffic whilst repairs were carried out. As a local service, however, the canals greatly aided the expansion and trade of the adjacent mills. The wave of reconstruction and extension of once relatively modest mills reflects this change in fortunes.

- 4.34 Although the **Nailsworth** valley was not connected with the canal, its importance as a through route from Gloucester and Cheltenham to the fashionable city of Bath prompted the building of the Bath Road (now the A46) in 1782. However, it actually bypassed the town of Stroud entirely (at Lightpill it veered off to Dudbridge and looped back to join the northbound routes via Cainscross and Paganhill) until the building of a link from Lightpill in 1800 (through Wallbridge, King Street and Gloucester Street).
- 4.35 This improved road link was instrumental in advancing industrial growth in the Nailsworth valley during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and many mills were enlarged, remodelled or constructed at the time. However, without the navigable waterway link enjoyed by the mills in the canal corridor, coal was more difficult to obtain. This was an obvious disadvantage as steam power began to revolutionise manufacturing processes in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.36 There were cycles of boom and bust within the **cloth industry**, and trade was prey to fluctuations in the foreign markets, wars and competition from elsewhere in Britain, notably Yorkshire. The **clothiers** who owned the mills weathered the storms, often much better than their employees, and became increasingly rich and powerful. Over the centuries, names such as Clutterbuck, Webb, Paul and Marling crop up time and again in relation to mills, property and the cloth industry – some have become immortalised in local place names.
- 4.37 Some clothier families (Playne, Clutterbuck, Paul and Webb among them) are said to have arrived as Huguenot immigrants in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, bringing their weaving, fulling and dyeing skills from Flanders.
- 4.38 The Pauls of Woodchester were a particular success story. Having arrived from Flanders in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were soon living a genteel life. Along with Lord Ducie of neighbouring Spring Park, Onesephorous Paul played host to the Royal party during the Prince of Wales' 1750 visit to the area. The Prince toured Paul's mill, Southfield Mill, and was received at Southfield House, which was elaborately re-modelled to honour the royal visit. Onesephorous Paul was later made a baronet, becoming Sir Onesephorous Paul.



Brimscombe Port c.1790-1800 © Stroud District (Cowle) Museum Trustees, The Museum in the Park, Stroud

Left: Brimscombe Port in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Goods were transhipped here from the broad Severn trows to the narrow gauge Thames barges.

below: A canal warehouse, built by the Thames & Severn Canal Company at Wallbridge Wharf in Stroud.



4.39 Southfield is an example of the many grand houses built by the clothiers during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Few very large houses were built within the town of Stroud itself. Yet the surrounding area (in particular the valleys) are richly stocked with grand former clothiers homes. Often, they provide little case-studies in how mill owners’ and clothiers’ houses evolved over the centuries, reflecting economic boom and bust and social attitudes to manufacture, money, status and the cloth industry.

4.40 Some, such as Lodgemore in Stroud and St Mary’s in Chalford, were built adjacent to the mill. But from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the fashion amongst mill owners was increasingly to build their homes at some little distance from their businesses (in the Valleys, they were commonly sited on the valley sides, overlooking the mill, as at Dunkirk House and Wallbridge House) – thus setting themselves apart from their workers.

4.41 The 18<sup>th</sup> century clothiers’ legacy extends beyond their houses and mills to the extraordinary tombs and monuments that can be found in churchyards throughout the area, many of which are now considered to be of such architectural and historic importance that they are listed in their own right.

4.42 The Prince of Wales twice bypassed Stroud during his visit to the region in 1750 (first on his travels to Wheatenhurst, then on his trip to Woodchester) – this was taken as a great snub by the townspeople and perhaps highlights the town’s unfashionable ‘upstart’ status in comparison with some of the older, more genteel Cotswold towns or, indeed, the aristocratic estates and manors scattered in the surrounding countryside. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Stroud clothing district was commonly known to Cotswoldians, rather disparagingly, as *The Bottoms*.<sup>4</sup>

Below:  
Southfield House, Woodchester, belonged to successive generations of the Paul family, who ranked among the most wealthy and powerful of the local clothiers. One of several refurbishments and extensions was carried out in 1750, in honour of the Prince of Wales’ visit.

Right:  
St Marys mill house in Chalford. From relatively humble beginnings, the house was progressively refronted and extended to reflect its successive owners’ growing wealth and status.



left:  
An example of a clothier’s mark. This one belonged to Daniel Fowler of Dudbridge.



<sup>4</sup> Paul Hawkins Fisher *Notes and Recollections of Old Stroud*, page 1.



- 4.43 However, King George III (son of Prince Frederick) did pay the town a special visit in 1788: the King was fascinated to see the junction of the two brand new canals. The Royal party stopped off at Wallbridge to watch a barge pass through the locks. Again, the main focus of the excursion was a visit to Woodchester: after dining with Lord Ducie, the King visited the clothing manufactory at Woodchester Mill, owned by Obdiah Paul.
- 4.44 Stroud's cloth industry was at its peak at this time (c.1790-1830) and it seems the industrial wealth – and the technological innovation and investment in quality architecture that accompanied it – brought the booming area greater status and respect. At the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Stroud's improving road system was also, literally, putting it on the map.

### **Nineteenth Century**

- 4.45 In spite of the introduction of better road building techniques and hardier materials, the condition of the **Stroud District's roads** had not improved much over the years. Some progress came when a number of the steeper routes out of the valleys were circumvented by creating bends in the roads: perhaps the most famous example is the 'W', which climbs out of Nailsworth up to Minchinhampton Common. Many original packhorse tracks can still be seen, such as at Christchurch in Chalford and at the base of Butterow Hill.

- 4.46 As trade increased, the need for a reliable road connecting Stroud to London became pressing. Whilst Stroud had been connected to the capital by a regular stagecoach service since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the journey was difficult and often dependent on road conditions.
- 4.47 In 1814 an Act was obtained for the building of a new road through Bowbridge and Brimscombe, past the Bourne and on to Chalford. This allowed better access to the mills along the valley floor, and provided an easier route for both passengers and goods from Stroud to the main route to London.
- 4.48 The majority of the mills in the Stroud valleys no longer had to depend on their historic hillside access roads for the transport of their goods but many of the steep packhorse routes remained in use as footpaths for the mill workers.
- 4.49 In order to take full advantage of the new transport route, mills, such as Ham Mill at Thrupp, expanded their buildings towards the road whilst others such as St Mary's and Iles Mills, sited well below the road in Chalford, used access roads bridging the river and canal.

Below:

A typical 18<sup>th</sup> century Thames & Severn canal bridge provides access to Iles Mill. The lane crosses the canal and slopes up to the later London road, which sits a little above the valley floor here.



Far left:

At nearby St Mary's Mill, a similar brick accommodation bridge exists, but the lane leading up to the London road was also bisected by the railway in 1845. There is a manned level crossing, with attractive wooden gates, signal box and former railwayman's cottage. A great illustration of the impact that evolving transport infrastructure had on the built environment and character of the conservation area.



- 4.50 Unfortunately the new turnpikes were poorly maintained in spite of the revenue collected at the many tollbooths. Complaints about the condition of the roads in the area continued.
- 4.51 In **1845 the Great Western Railway line** running to Cheltenham arrived in Stroud from Swindon. For the first time, Stroud had a reliable and fast link to the capital.
- 4.52 The new railway had an immediate effect on Stroud's previous transport communications. The stagecoach ceased to run soon after the opening and the Thames and Severn Canal's receipts dropped by a third in 4 years. But, because the railway ran too high above the Chalford valley floor to be of use to the mills, which still used canal wharves for the delivery of their coal, local trade on the Thames and Severn continued. Long distance trade was harder hit.
- 4.53 The **Midland Railway Company** arrived in the Stroud district with the opening in 1867 of a line between Stonehouse and Nailsworth. This was strongly supported by the clothiers.
- 4.54 The new railway line had great consequences for the mills to the south and west of Stroud. Sidings from the main line led directly to the mills, allowing a far cheaper and easier method of transporting goods and coal. The Stroudwater canal, much of which ran parallel to the railway between Dudbridge and Stonehouse, was badly hit by the resulting loss of local trade.
- 4.55 Bucking the downward turn in the cloth industry, the Midland railway brought prosperity to the mills along its length. Another wave of rebuilding and expansion began.
- 4.56 In 1883, a branch line between Dudbridge to Stroud was begun and in 1885 it was opened to goods traffic. The line terminated in a goods yard on the opposite site of the canal to that of the Great Western at Cheapside (now Fromeside industrial estate).
- 4.57 The railways greatly changed the appearance of the area. Their haulage capabilities meant an **influx of red brick and Welsh slate**, building materials that were far cheaper than the district's traditional stone. This allowed some Victorian industrialists, such as the philanthropic George Holloway, to build affordable housing for workers. Stroud town and its immediate surroundings gained red brick terraces, unheard of in the villages cut off from the railway at that point.
- 4.58 By the end of the century the Stroud valleys' cloth trade was in terminal decline, having finally been beaten by competition from Yorkshire. Many of the mills closed or were adapted to other industries. The manufacture of needles, pins, machine parts, bobbins, reels, umbrella handles and walking sticks came to the area, as did the manufacture of ready-made clothing. The Hill Paul building in Cheapside was custom built for this new trade at the turn of the century.
- 4.59 The mills around Stroud are notable for their history of adaptability and diversification. The Stroud Valleys' mills have also supported other agricultural and manufacturing processes for hundreds of years – from cider pressing and corn grinding, to wire and pin making, ironworks, engineering and walking stick production.
- 4.60 The Stroud valleys' knack for commercial diversification and specialisation is evident from its rich and varied built environment. Layers of history are written in the building stock. The historic wool wealth of the area is evident in the quality 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture of Minchinhampton, Painswick and Bisley. But evidence of their hard times is equally clear: after the boom, decreased demand for wool (the raw material of the area) meant these ancient settlements were eclipsed by the more dynamic and flexible Stroud valleys. Much of the picturesque character and architectural cohesiveness of the hilltop towns and villages is due to their economic stagnation. The Stroud valleys continued to grow and evolve, with new buildings designed to accommodate specialist and up-to-date manufacturing, and 'foreign' building materials all making their mark.



left:  
Bourne Mill near Brimscombe is one of many historic mill sites that display the physical impact of changes to the local transport infrastructure. In 1845 the Great Western Railway sliced through the site, producing a striking juxtaposition between the mill and railway structures – an important part of the character of this site.

below:  
Bath Place at Cheapside, Stroud, in the late 1960s (the Hill Paul factory is visible beyond). Today, only two cottages survive of what was once a much more extensive complex of artisan cottages dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which led off Russell St. The arrival of the railway sliced through the terrace and stranded the remaining cottages south of the line. The GWR agreed to build a new road (Cheapside) to provide access off Wallbridge instead.



Left:  
Kimmins Mill at Dudbridge capitalised on its location close to the Nailsworth branch line of the Midland railway. A gantry ran directly from the station at Dudbridge to loading doors on the main mill building. The Dudbridge station has now disappeared, and the Ebley Bypass now sits on top of the old railway line route.

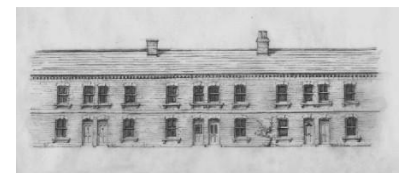


Right: a toll cottage survives at the end of the Cainscross turnpike road.



Left:  
With its red and yellow brick and its towering presence, the Hill Paul building is a major local landmark. Constructed at the close of the C19<sup>th</sup>, it was an early example of a purpose-built clothing factory – an example of the diversification that Stroud valleys industry was forced into with the decline of the cloth trade. Recent conversion to flats and a bold modern extension have given the redundant factory a new lease of life for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Right:  
Red brick was typically used for much late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion and redevelopment, whether Victorian and Edwardian residential suburbs, new mills or ancillary industrial buildings.





## **Twentieth century and today**

- 4.61 The 20th century has seen great change throughout the Stroud valleys' industrial landscape, reflecting the **constant evolution of the industrial heritage and infrastructure over the centuries**.
- 4.62 Despite many attempts to keep the Thames and Severn canal open, the water shortages that had plagued the scheme from its beginning finally forced its closure in 1933. Although the Stroudwater had always been more commercially successful, it too, was closed in 1952.
- 4.63 Since the canals were abandoned, many sections have been **lost to infilling** and culverting. In places, they have been covered by the expansion of development and modern industry whilst 18<sup>th</sup> century canal bridges have been lost to highway strengthening measures.
- 4.64 The main **roads** running through the IHCA have been **widened and straightened**; their original course can be seen from time to time in lay-bys, or in linear 19<sup>th</sup> century roadside development stranded well away from the new routes.
- 4.65 The ruthless Beeching rail cuts ended the popular stopping valley rail service, which had transported people between work and town since the beginning of the century. By the conclusion of the 1960s, all the local stations and halts along the Great Western line, except Stroud and Stonehouse, were demolished.
- 4.66 1966 saw the final closure of the local Midland Railway network. Its legacy can be seen in the form of the Nailsworth station, the platform that survives at the foot of Selsley Hill, a stretch of viaduct at Wallbridge and the miles of cycle track that follow the original course of the line.
- 4.67 The historic mill buildings have met mixed fortunes. Several, such as Capel Mill, have been completely demolished; others have been reduced to one or two original buildings, their former status lost.
- 4.68 Many mills, such as Bond's Mill in Stonehouse, Merrett's Mill at Inchbrook and Stafford Mill in Thrupp, have continued to survive through industrial diversification. Often, utilitarian modern units housing new businesses and light industry have been established around them.
- 4.69 Some mills have undergone conversion for more varied uses, including residential and office accommodation – Dunkirk and Ebley mills being among the most notable examples. However mills such as Ham Mill in Thrupp have less certain futures, with their potential for re-use being limited.
- 4.70 Only Lodgemore Mill in Stroud remains in cloth manufacture, still producing Stroudwater Scarlet as well as high quality tennis ball felt and green baize for snooker tables.

