

## Cadbury's Factory, Frampton-on-Severn - Gloucestershire's chocolate capital

Stephen Mills

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Tucked away in this quiet backwater, this once-major industrial facility kept the local economy alive and provided employment for many people in the area. During the early years of the First World War, Cadbury Brothers Ltd acquired land under the Defence of the Realm Act to build a milk processing factory alongside an existing wharf on the Gloucester-Sharpsness Canal, just north of Fretherne bridge. Construction started in 1915, and by mid 1916, the factory was fully operational. This was to become the county's milk chocolate mecca.

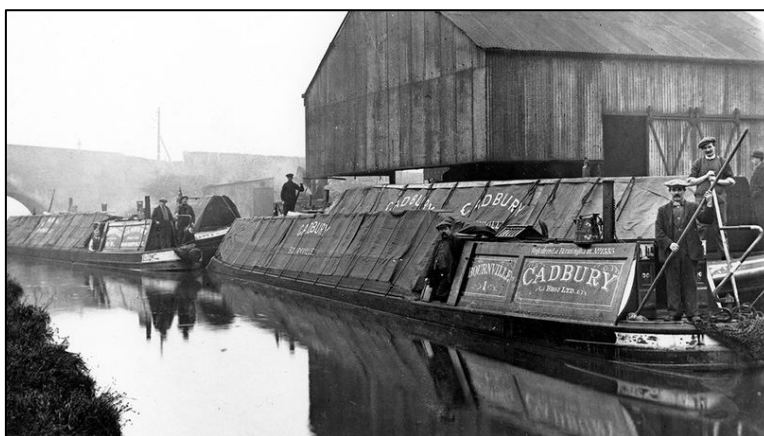
Easy access to the canal was clearly an important factor in the plant's location. The Berkeley Vale was prime dairy country with rich pasture, and milk was sourced from numerous small farms in the area and delivered to the plant in churns carried by horse and cart, lorry, or canal boat.

Once in the factory, milk was pasteurised and although initially used in chocolate production, by 1917 the government had ordered Cadbury's to produce condensed milk and cheese, although operations later reverted to chocolate processing.



Cadbury's main speciality was milk chocolate, a blend of milk, sugar, and cocoa. In the days before large scale mobile refrigeration, Frampton was ideally placed to rapidly process the milk. Cocoa beans arrived in the UK at various ports along the Bristol Channel, then were transferred to lighters or barges and brought up the canal to Frampton. Milk, sugar, and prepared cocoa were combined to make what was referred to as 'chocolate crumb', a preliminary stage in the production of fully refined chocolate.

The crumb was then loaded into hired narrow boats or Cadbury's own to be taken up the canal to Gloucester, then onto the River Severn. Boats then made their way onto the Staffs and Worcs. Canal, finally arriving at Cadbury's massive Bournville factory. Cadbury's created its own canal carrying fleet in 1912 to transport chocolate crumb, ground and dry cocoa, sugar, and evaporated milk mixture between their various factories and Bournville. At its height, the fleet numbered seventeen, all painted in company colours of chocolate and maroon. Some were long-distance motorboats that took chocolate to London or



brought sugar from Liverpool, with many of the others transporting milk. Cadbury's abandoned their carrying fleet in 1930, with their products then carried by the Severn & Canal Carrying Company, and later by Fellows, Morton & Clayton, British Waterways, and Charles Ballinger. Between them, they transported most of the company's chocolate crumb. Operations finally ended at the Frampton factory in 1982, although much of the site survives now housing a number of separate businesses.



### ***Postscript***

I recall that as a small boy growing up in the 1950s, my Dad would occasionally come home with a brown paper bag of chocolate crumb. I never found out where it came from, but I think it was a case of someone who knew someone who knew someone etc. Clearly, not all of Frampton's output made it to Bournville!