

# **The Growth of British Industrial Estates to 1939: User Guide**

## **Introduction**

During the last two decades research on industrial districts, flexible specialisation, and high-tech regions has highlighted the importance of the local business environment to successful industrial development.<sup>i</sup> Nineteenth century Britain developed a series of specialised industrial districts, providing pools of skilled labour, highly developed ancillary trades and market services, networks of cooperative subcontracting relationships, and (in some cases) rented factory accommodation including power and utilities. However, the 'new' industries of the 'second industrial revolution', tended to locate outside such districts, in new industrial areas developed on 'green field' sites. These often involved a new, more formally constituted, form of industrial agglomeration - the industrial or 'trading' estate. Closely associated with the rise of electric power and the internal combustion engine, and highly concentrated in the South East, industrial estates rapidly expanded to accommodate plants employing around 285,000 people by 1939, including some of Britain's best known companies such as Ford, HMV, Hoover, Lever Brothers, Mars, and Metropolitan Vickers.

Despite considerable contemporary interest in their development, there has been little academic analysis of the general growth of pre-1939 industrial estates since Allen's pioneering 1951 article,<sup>ii</sup> despite some recent studies of individual estates.<sup>iii</sup> This may be due, at least in part, to the paucity of quantitative and other evidence regarding their early development. There is virtually no survey evidence of industrial estates and their occupants prior to 1945, other than brief descriptive listings of the

largest estates, their principal industries and (in some cases) their estimated employment. Meanwhile, with the exception of the government-financed companies, what archival evidence of estate developers that is available is largely limited to promotional material.

This dataset provides estimates of the number of industrial estates established in Britain, their locations, the companies or other institutions that developed them, and their numbers of firms and employees - at several 'benchmark' dates. Evidence is drawn from contemporary published and unpublished studies, company, government, and local archives, and other sources.

### **The data**

Each estate is given a reference number and information is provided on its name and location, including classification by UK Standard Economic Region - with the South East being further divided into Greater London (GL) and the rest of the South East (SE). The next columns show the name of the estate's developer and the type of developer involved (P = private company; GC = garden city development company; L = local authority; GVT = government-financed 'Special Areas' trading estate development company). The area of each estate (in acres) is then shown, followed by the date of its foundation. The next 12 columns show available estimates of each estate's employment and number of firms at six 'benchmark' dates - 1900, 1910, 1920, 1927, 1932, and 1939. Notes to the data are then provided, mainly regarding employment or firm number estimates that were derived from data involving years other than the benchmark dates. Finally, the sources of the data for each estate are shown. These are coded as follows: SB (books and occasional papers);

SA (articles); ST (theses and dissertations) and SR (archival and privately published sources). The sources in question are listed on Sheets 1-4 of the dataset.

### **Publications arising from the project**

Peter Scott, 'Industrial estates and British industrial development: 1897-1939,' Business History, **43**, No. 2 (2001), 73-98.

Peter Scott, Triumph of the South: a regional economic history of Britain during the early twentieth century (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

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1. See, for example, M. J. Piore and C. F. Sabel, The Second Industrial Divide (New York, 1984); F. Pyke and W. Sengenberger (eds) Industrial Districts and Local Economic Regeneration (Geneva, 1992); A.L. Saxenian, 'The Cheshire Cat's Grin: Innovation, Regional Development and the Cambridge Case', Economy and Society, Vol. 18 (1989), pp. 448-77; D. B. Audretsch, 'Agglomeration and the Location of Innovative Activity', Oxford Review of Economic Policy, Vol. 14 (1998), pp. 18-29.

2. G. R. Allen, 'The Growth of Industry on Trading Estates, 1920-39, With Special Reference to Slough Trading Estate', Oxford Economic Papers, new. ser., Vol. 3 (1951), pp. 272-300.

3. D. A. Farnie, The Manchester Ship Canal and the Rise of the Port of Manchester 1894-1975 (Manchester, 1980), Chapter 6; M. Cassell, Long lease: the Story of Slough Estates 1920-1991 (1991); J. Armstrong, 'The Development of the Park Royal

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Industrial Estate in the Inter-war Period: a Re-examination of the Aldcroft/Richardson Thesis', London Journal, Vol. 21 (1996), pp. 64-79.