

## The Industrial Landscape of the Black Country

**Summary:** The Black Country in the British Midlands was a distinct industrial district. It was incredibly rich in mineral resources, including coal, iron and limestone, which were extensively mined. It developed as a manufacturing area before 1700, producing glass and iron goods, but it was not until the 18th century, partly through the influence of John Wilkinson, that large concerns began to forge the landscape. The Black Country provided the coal and iron that transformed Britain into the world's industrial furnace, but its image was not a positive one for the outside world. By the early 19th century, writers and artists portrayed it in prints and prose as a poisoned and desecrated area with few redeeming features. There were other sides to the history of the Black Country, but this introduction focuses on the nature and effects of mining and iron making in the 18th and 19th centuries. Sixteen illustrations from a remarkable collection of prints, published in 1878, record and represent these aspects of the region's history.