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“Limekilns – still a burning issue”

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The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, *Sheetlines*, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.

Limekilns – still a burning issue

Doug Mitchell and Paul Bishop

The mapping of limekilns in Scotland, on which we have reported before in *Sheetlines*,¹ is now part of Doug Mitchell's PhD project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through Historic Environment Scotland (HES). HES was formed recently by the merger of Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). We continue to find more symbols for limekilns, which yield interesting insights into the technology of lime burning, and the *Sheetlines* editor has encouraged us to provide this update so as to keep the record of OS mapping of limekilns in Scotland complete.

The symbols we report here are intriguing and have not hitherto been encountered in our working on the complete six-inch first edition coverage of Scotland. Figure 1 shows the six-inch mapping of Whitefield Quarry and limekilns, the latter's function being unclear except for the associated labelling. Our initial thought was that the reasonably common mapping of some U-shaped clamp kilns as closed rectangles (e.g., symbol 3a in Bishop and Thomson's figure 3; see also their figures 5B and 5C)² meant that the symbol might represent very narrow U-shaped clamp kilns. However, the wall shading confirms that the symbols represent narrow upstanding rectangular structures, as confirmed by the ridges that are clear in figure 2.

We have concluded that these kilns are a form of the common U-shaped clamp kiln pit, as described and illustrated in the earlier *Sheetlines* pieces on limekilns,³ but open at both ends. The limestone was apparently quarried at the quarry faces to the east of the kilns (the scarp in the upper part of figure 2) and would have presumably been loaded with coal into the kiln 'troughs' from the troughs' most accessible ends (from the east in the case of the four northern troughs in figure 1). Unloading of those four kilns would have been from the west, where the tracks that led out of the lime works are located (*figs 1 and 2*). This ease of loading and unloading probably explains the open-ended morphology.

On the basis of the lime works and limekilns not being described as 'Old' or 'Disused' we conclude that they were operating in the mid-nineteenth century when surveying for the first edition was undertaken. More kilns of this kind were found on the ground than were recorded on the first edition six-inch or 25-inch maps (compare figures 1 and 2). This difference might suggest that clamp burning continued to expand at the site following OS survey for the first edition, before eventually ceasing, but it must also be remembered that, as elsewhere, OS surveyors might have mapped fewer kilns than were actually operating.⁴ There are no kilns or lime works mapped or labelled at this spot on the second edition 25-inch maps, with the locality being simply labelled as 'Whitfield [sic] Quarry'. About 700 m to the north of this quarry, the Whitfield Lime Works is mapped on the 25-inch second

¹ *Sheetlines* 98,19-31, 101,42-47, 106,32-33.

² *Sheetlines* 98,19-31.

³ e.g., *Sheetlines* 98,19-31 figure 1.

⁴ Bishop and Thomson, *Sheetlines* 98,19-31.

edition (*figure 3*). Here the limestone, from adjacent quarries, was being burned in two draw kilns (*figure 4*) that are mapped with the symbol that represents the footprint of the kiln masonry enclosing two circular kiln pots (labelled “Kilns” in *figure 3*), along with the narrow ridge (track) leading to the loading area at the top of the pots (*figure 3*). The 1908 edition of the 25-inch mapping (revised 1906; published 1908) shows that the lime works had by then become defunct (‘Disused’).



Figure 1.

OS first edition six-inch mapping of limekilns at the Whitefield Limestone Quarry and lime works (Peebles-shire Sheet 5; surveyed 1856; published 1858). Wall shading confirms that the rectangular structures labelled ‘Limekilns’ are small upstanding ridges. The much more common U-symbol for a clamp limekiln is given in the lower centre of the extract. The 25-inch first edition mapping of the kilns does not include wall-shading, representing the ridges as narrow rectangles.

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Figure 2.

Part of the Canmore oblique aerial view of the Whitefield Quarry and lime works from the west, showing, at centre, the four northernmost linear ridges, mapped as narrow wall-shaded rectangles in figure 1. The southernmost (right-hand) of the four ridges at centre has apparently been consolidated into adjacent spoil material. At upper right, in front of the steep scarp, are the two linear ridges at upper centre of figure 1. Note the unmapped ridge at upper centre, to the east of the four mapped ridges.

(Canmore ID 159789; Crown Copyright: Historic Environment Scotland)

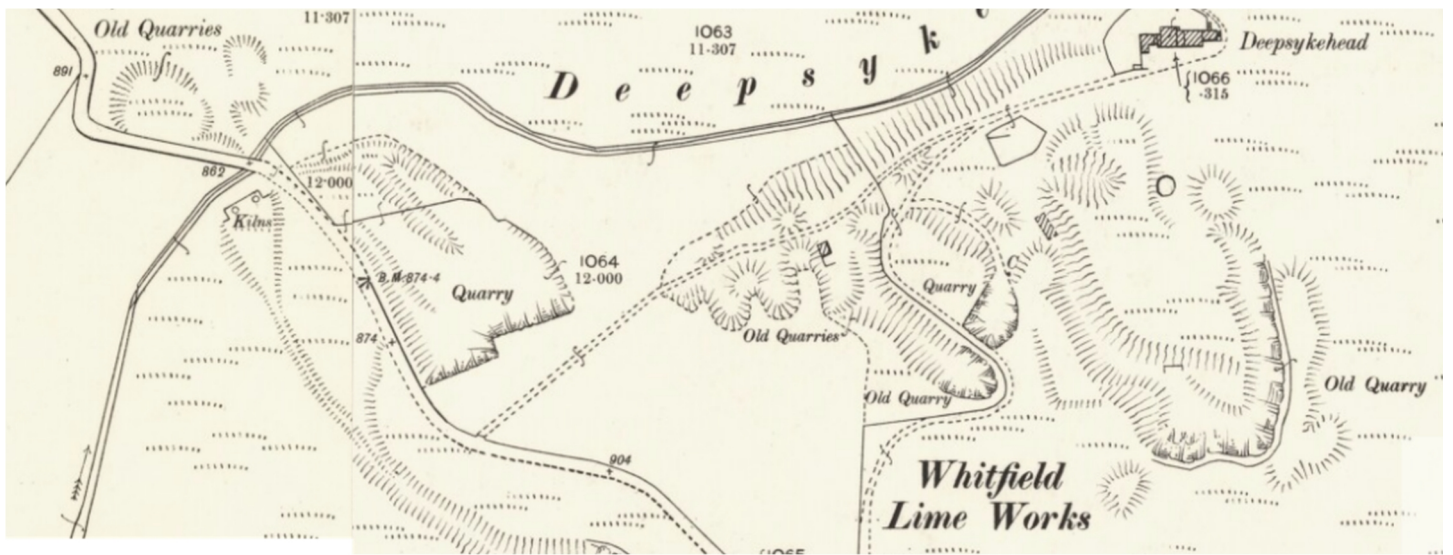


Figure 3.

OS second edition 25-inch mapping of limekilns at the Whitfield Lime Works (Peebles-shire Sheets 5.02 [left part; revised 1897/98; published 1898] and 5.03 [right part; revised 1898; published 1898]).

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Figure 4.

The draw kilns at the Whitfield Lime Works from the north, showing the draw holes at the bases of the two kilns pots. An earlier image of these kilns in the Historic Environment Scotland (formerly RCAHMS) Canmore database (Rutherford Mains, Limekilns; Canmore site ID 50215) shows that there was a draw hole on the eastern (left-hand) face of the kiln (now collapsed) and there could equally have been a fourth draw-hole on the western (right-hand) face, of which there now appears to be no evidence.