

## Hobbs Nature Reserve lime kiln project, Longhope

Stephen Mills February 2025

A few months ago, we were contacted by the trustees of the Hobbs Nature Reserve Trust who had recently taken ownership of a wildlife reserve from the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. The reserve near Longhope includes an SSSI associated with a unique rock formation exposed during quarrying operations. As part of these, a lime kiln was constructed – the remains survive at the site. However, it has fallen into disrepair and the group hope to preserve the feature and restore the parts that have become degraded. After some discussions, GSIA provided the group with suggestions for funding the proposed work, and some contacts who could provide further advice on the best way to proceed. We subsequently provided a letter of support.

The group's application for a grant to conserve the kiln was successful. So far, they have had a preliminary site meeting with the contractor who will undertake the work - it is anticipated that this will start in early April. GSIA have been thanked by the Trust's committee and trustees for our support and advice and have been invited to visit the site once conservation work has been completed.



**The area in 1884 (courtesy Ordnance Survey)**

The photos show the remains of the kiln with preliminary removal of vegetation, exposing the walls and inner structure. There is a long history of lime burning in Gloucestershire, dating back to at least the 1600s if not before. It was a particularly productive period during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with lime kilns in the Forest of Dean and elsewhere in the county. Many were of a similar design; however, this particular kiln has a number of unique features and is also part of the industrial heritage of the whole site, where it is still possible to see where quarrying was undertaken and the limestone processed. The adjacent quarry was worked from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has had a significant impact on the surrounding area.

Once work on the kiln has been completed, it will be a valuable feature, enabling visitors to understand the history and the processing of limestone in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, used for a variety of purposes.



## Update - June 2025

Members may recall that in the March 2025 newsletter, we described the start of the Hobbs Nature Reserve Trust's efforts to conserve and stabilise this interesting, ruined structure. Trustee Tony Butler had kindly provided an update of progress so far.

Preliminary work has concentrated on excavating soil and debris from in front of the kiln walls and between two of its buttresses. Conservation work has concentrated so far on the wall between two of the buttresses and a third on the left-hand side. Stones have been replaced and those *in situ*, reinforced with new mortar. Excavation on the right-hand buttress has taken it down to what may be the foundation.

Work is now exposing the full length of the wall on the kiln's left-hand side, and this has revealed an archway. Initial removal of soil beyond the archway revealed what appeared to be an opening into a void. This has since been excavated further revealing the complete arch, beyond which was a large 'room' with walls covered with soot deposits. There is a lintel on the left-hand wall, and this appears to be where the lime was removed from the kiln.

As Tony has noted: *This conservation work is bringing a whole new dimension to the scale of the kiln and again underlines the value of conserving it for the future.*

The project team would be grateful for any information about the kiln and its surroundings that GSIA members might come across. They would also appreciate hands-on help with the excavation, and members would be welcome to contribute. If anyone would like to follow this up, please let me know and I will put you in contact with Tony.

