Tytherington lime kiln

Stephen Mills October 2024

Lime kilns were once relatively common, having first been developed several millennia ago by either the Greeks or Romans. The process is based on heating limestone (calcium carbonate) usually at around 900-1000°C to produce quicklime (calcium oxide). The Romans were particularly active in this area, using quicklime for making mortars, concretes, plasters, renders, and washes. In later years it was also applied to agricultural land to improve the soil, as a flux in iron and steel-making, as a bleach in paper-making, and for treating hides in leather-making.

Demand for quicklime rose substantially during the Middle Ages as towns and cities developed and building in general increased. Kilns of this period were often known as flare, intermittent, or periodic kilns, unlike later variants that could be operated continually. In a flare kiln, a layer of wood, peat, or coal was built up in the base of the kiln, then the space above filled with pieces of limestone. The fire was maintained for several days before the kiln was allowed to cool and the quicklime formed removed.

Limestone was readily available in several parts of Gloucestershire that included the Cotswolds and the western edge of the Forest of Dean. Such kilns were common in the 18th and 19th centuries, running into the hundreds in the country, although most have since disappeared without trace – only a few survive in anything like their original form. The small-scale production of lime in rural areas continued into the 19th and 20th centuries. Which brings us to this now-rare survivor just outside the village of Tytherington in the south of the county, an area where limestone was quarried and worked for many years.

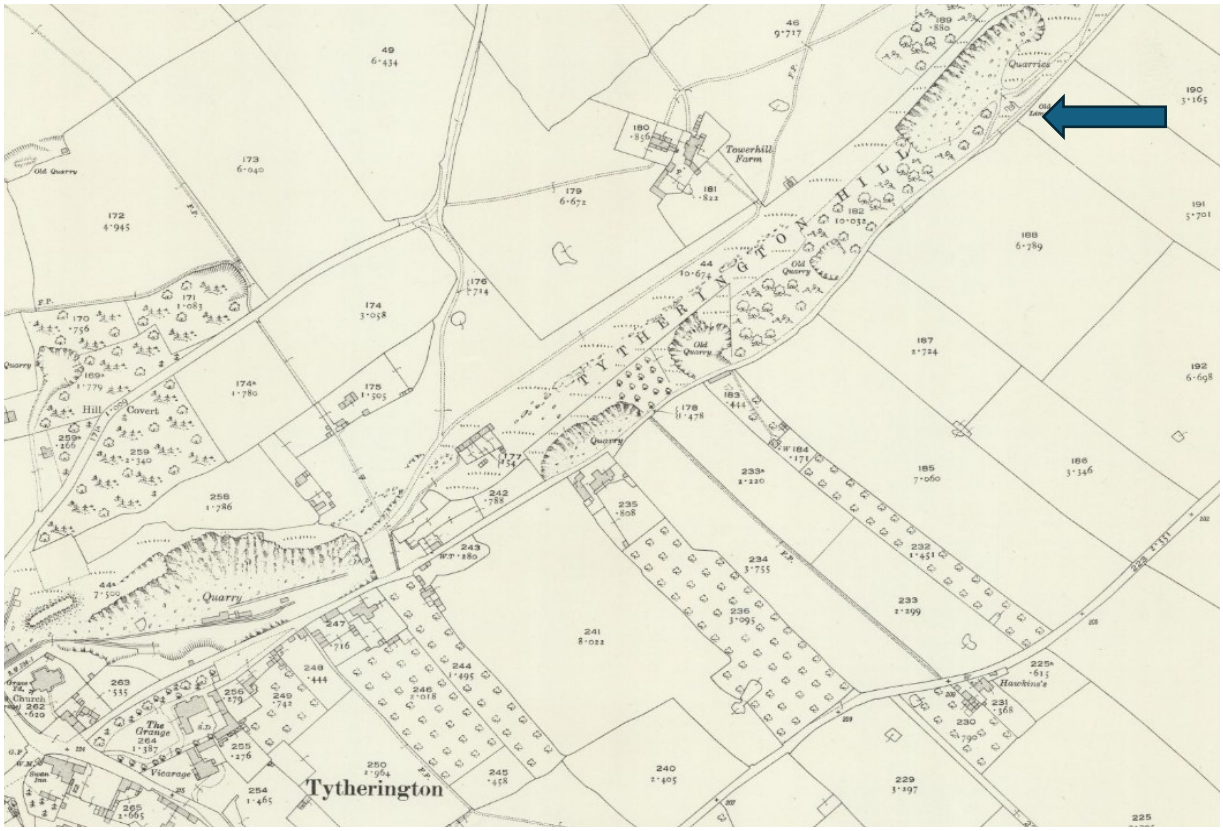
Back from the brink

The Tytherington lime kiln is a lucky survivor, the last of at least seven in the area. It was built about 1845 by Isaac Drew who lived at Stidcote. It takes a bit of finding (it's at Grid Reference SO 6765 8890) but is located along Baden Hill Road. It has three draw tunnels and was saved thanks to the efforts of villagers working with outside contractors in the 1980s.

Initial restoration was prompted by the formation of the Tytherington Local History Group, with work beginning in 1987. It was completed in August 1988 and included the addition of two new retaining walls and stone steps from the roadway to the top of the kiln. Fittingly, some stone used in the restoration was obtained from the ARC quarry still operating locally.

In March 2017, it was cleaned up and overgrowth removed.

It is an interesting site, one that I hadn't previously known about.
More information can be found at: https://www.tytheringtonroots.co.uk/lime_kilns.htm and https://www.tytheringtonroots.co.uk/lime_kiln_makeover.htm



From the OS Map of 1921. It shows the series of abandoned quarries stretching up Tytherington Hill, with the lime kiln at the top RHS. This had clearly once been a busy productive area.