

Interdisciplinary survey of Marsden Lime Kilns

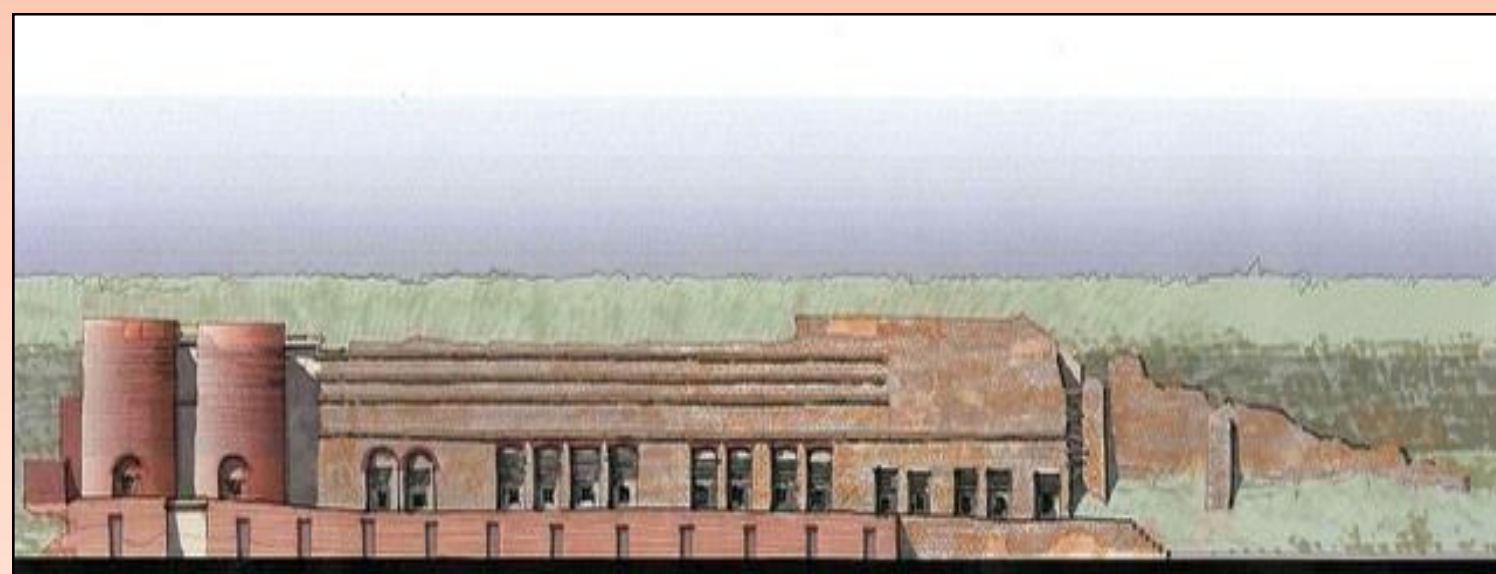
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Introduction

Marsden lime kilns are located in South Shields, North East of England. They are a nationally important scheduled monument currently at risk of subsiding. The lime kilns were built and operated during the 1870s in order to produce large quantities of quick lime, created by burning limestone at an extreme temperature. Quick lime was widely used in agriculture, steel production and in mortar for the construction of houses. In 1960 the lime kilns at Marsden stopped operating and have since stood as a monument of the North East's industrial heritage.



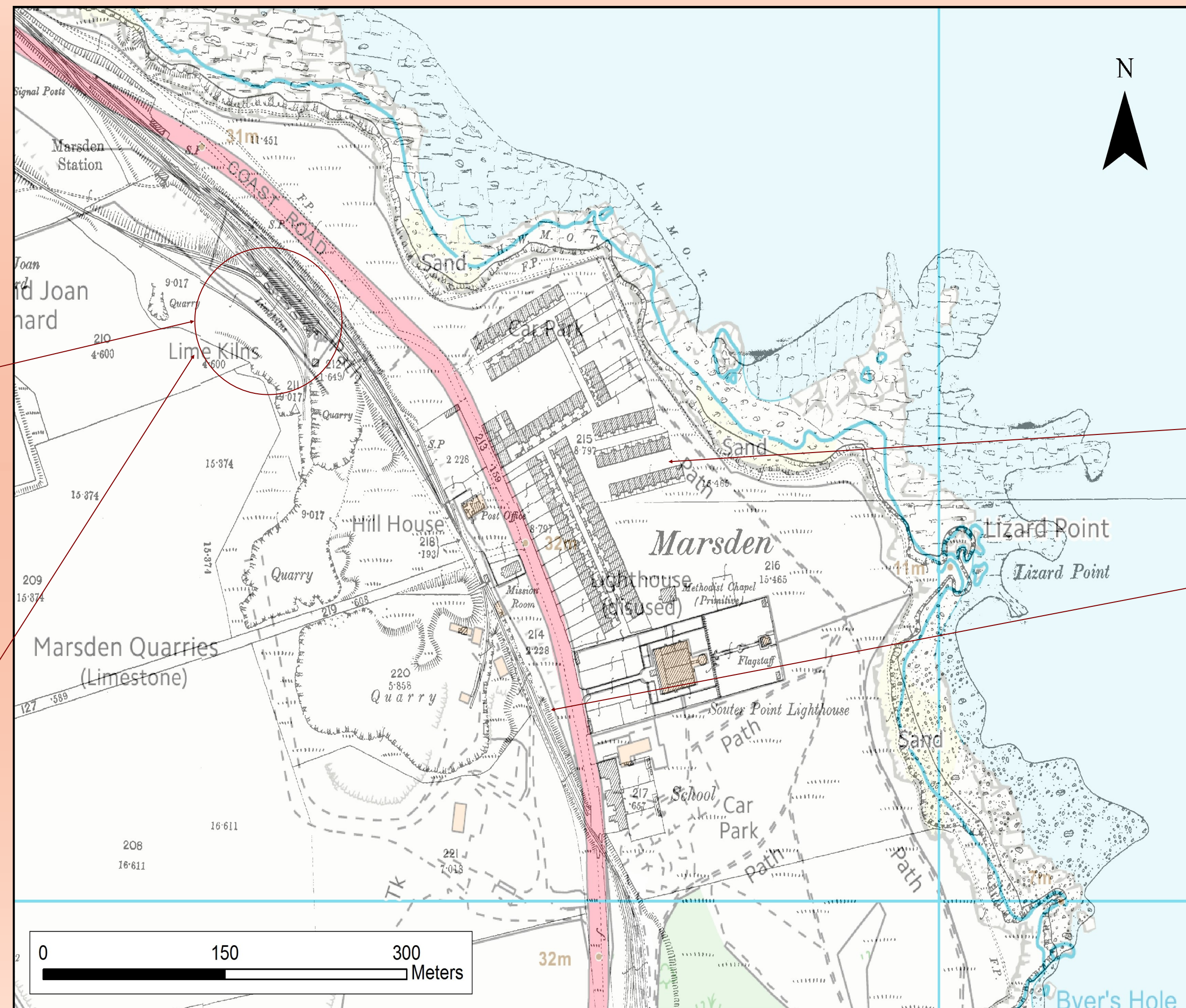
Marsden Lime Kilns. Photo Credit: Image collection online



Survey of Marsden Lime Kilns. Photo Credit: Tyne and Wear Archives

Aims and Objectives

- To understand the significance of the lime kilns within the archaeological record and their historic character within the North East of England, using historical archaeology techniques such as buildings archaeology, documentary research, map analysis and a Geographical Information System (GIS).
- To communicate to others how important the kilns are within the archaeological record and how they stand apart from other lime kilns across the North East of England.
- To explore the impacts of coastal erosion on the kilns and the associated workers' housing which was demolished in the 1960s.



ArcGIS map created using series of maps from 1800s to present day, created from Edina Maps.



Whitburn Colliery, created to supply the lime kilns (date unknown) Photo Credit: Marsden Banner Group 2015

The village was built to house workers who had moved to the area from the south and other countries. It was demolished in the 1960s as part of housing clearance schemes across County Durham.

The mineral railway built to serve the kilns has gone, and earthworks are the only evidence of its position. It took quick lime from the lime kilns and brought coal supplies to fuel the kilns.

Conclusion

Marsden lime kilns are unique in their design. They were the only lime kilns operating in South Shields, and they promoted the construction of new industries such as Whitburn Colliery, a multitude of railways, and housing for new workers; creating an industrial landscape that still dominates the historical character of South Shields.

It can be argued that Marsden, compared to other lime kilns in the Tyne and Wear area, such as Monkwearmouth in Sunderland, was the most important in the region. I believe the kilns and the associated industrial infrastructure had a significant impact on the North East's culture and way of life. The lime kilns were still operating within the living memory of workers and their families. Online groups such as the Marsden Banner Group relive stories of the nearby village (located on the ArcGIS map, left), the colliery that supplied the kilns and the railway used to transport lime from and coal to the kilns. This in itself signifies the importance of the kilns to the communities around and in South Shields. The lime kilns ceased to operate in the 1960s, partly because the demand for quick lime decreased and new techniques to produce quick lime had been discovered.

References

- Mitchinson, J.B. (1977) *Report on the Condition of Disused Lime Kilns, Coast Road, Marsden*, unpublished client report.
- Sanders, J. Addyman, T. And Unglow, N. (2013) *Marsden Lime Kilns, Options, Appraisal and Feasibility Study*, Edinburgh: Simpson and Brown Architects.
- Williams, A. (2000) *Marsden Limekilns, Whitburn, South Shields Archaeological Survey and Assessment*, Newcastle: Newcastle University. The Archaeological Practice.

Revision of aims

The intention to create an ArcGIS map to show the extent of coastal erosion had to be changed, as analysis of historic Ordnance Survey maps revealed that stories describing loss of land to the sea were untrue.

Instead a map was created to show the impact the lime industry had on the surrounding landscape and how this monument became part of the industrial coastal landscape of the North East.

The map shown was created by overlaying maps from the late 1800s to the present day. This map elucidates the location of the lime kilns and where surrounding industries and housing were located to service the lime kilns.