

## Prestow Wood Limekilns and Quarries

Visit Record for attn. North Somerset HER Vince Russett 2023-05-25

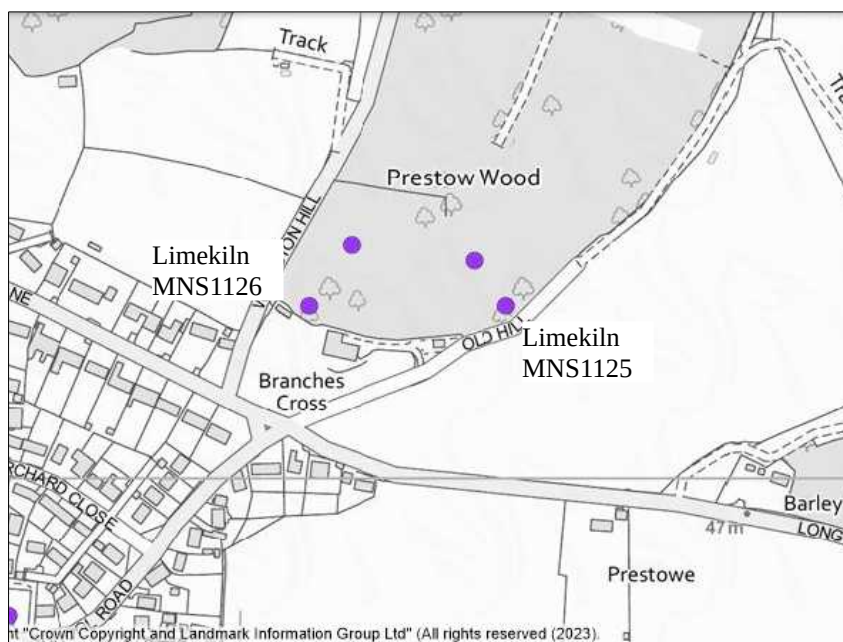


Fig 1: Limekilns at Prestow Wood, Wrington  
MNS1125 ST 4761363131  
MNS1126 ST 4745963131

Both limekilns have associated quarry workings which are very overgrown but are laid out on the Epoch 2 OS 1:2500 plan (Fig 2).

The setting is at the south end of the knoll on which Prestow Wood is situated (Prestow Wood 'clumps of oaks worth 40s when cut') in 1516).

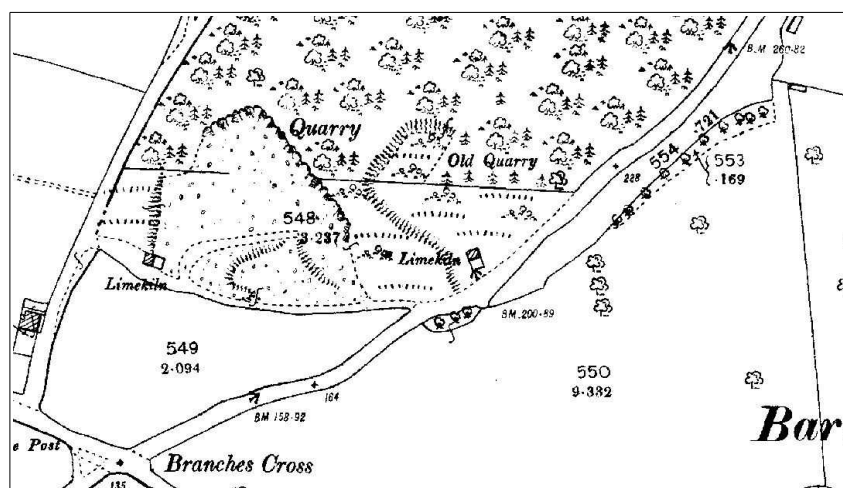


Fig 2: Kilns in c1885

The eastern quarry is potentially older than the western (it is recorded on the Wrington TM of 1840, whereas the western is not), but both are relatively close to roads for importing of fuel (probably coal) and export of lime.

### MNS1126 Western kiln (accessed from Wrington Hill)

This kiln is very similar to many recorded in agricultural contexts on Mendip (noticeably larger than the typical Broadfield Down kilns, such as those at Goblin Combe).

The majority of the structure (Fig 3 below) is intact, although a section above the 'vestibule' (front delivery area) has collapsed, revealing the severely heat affected interior. The southern side of the vestibule has also begun to collapse and some emergency attention should be given to this ASAP.

Otherwise, the kiln, consisting of the kiln, with its combustion chamber substantially intact, and a few corners lost, is in reasonable condition. The rear ramp for access by wheelbarrows to the combustion chamber is very worn down but still visible (a good example surviving on Mendip is at Fig 4), and the low bases of the walls to the working area in front of the kiln (oddly shown at its rear on the OS plan) are still be seen, as are some protruding stones from the kiln that once tied them in.



*Fig 3: Front view of MNS1126*



*Fig 4: Left: earthwork of ramp, MNS1126 Right: Surviving ramp at Charterhouse-on-Mendip*

A few more photographs of MNS1126 on next page. This sort of kiln is not very datable: the earliest cubic kilns on Mendip seem to post-date c1820, and they are repaired up to about 1880. Previously, bottle-shaped kilns were most common (one survives at Mascalls Wood, Cheddar), and later in the century, kilns became more recognisably 'industrial'.



*Fig 5: The walls on the south (right) side of the kiln, with keying stones for the walls of the working area attached (now gone, but footings visible)*

Note that the front wall of the kiln, however, is not well-keyed into the front, and they have split apart.

The left side of the kiln has a better-preserved section of the working area walls (see Fig 6 below).

It would be useful to do two very small evaluations to see how well the ramp and the working area walls survive, and if there is any future in replacing at least part of them as an educational feature.

*Fig 6: MNS1126: Left cheek wall of working area and front face of kiln*



**MNS1125 Eastern limekiln** Accessed from Old Hill

This kiln is far bigger (standing on two levels of quarry), but heavily overgrown so much harder to assess in the springtime.



*Fig 7: Left side and wall of working area, eastern kiln*

The kiln is built against the rock, with entrance for charging the kiln at a high level, and exit for unloading at a lower level, hence the 'double-height' of the kiln and presumably its deeper combustion chamber and higher capacity.



*Fig 8: Front of kiln, heavily overgrown*

These kilns, much larger than the earlier field kilns are feeling their way towards industrial structures: kilns like this built 1880-say 1920 are very large, and sometimes multiple (see the kilns on the A38 roundabout on the Bristol Southern Ring Road)

They had a fairly short working life and were quickly superseded by gas-fired kilns.

This kiln appears to be also quite well-preserved, but it requires a structural engineers assessment before any work begins.