



Five Kilns, Pant, Llanymynerch, Shropshire:  
archaeological survey

Huw Sherlock and P J Pikes  
2001



## archenfield archaeology ltd

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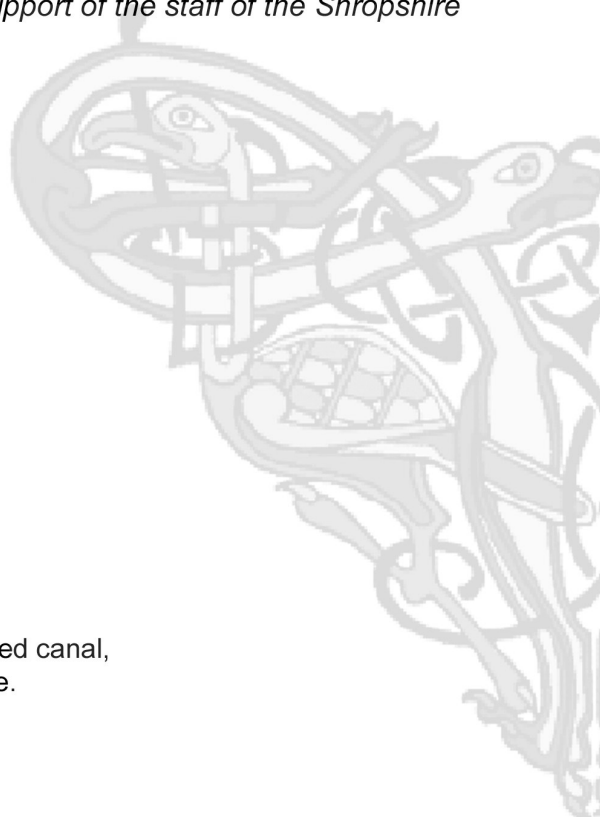
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County Record Office.*

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Cover Photograph: Looking west along the line of the disused canal,  
with the lime kilns on the right hand side.



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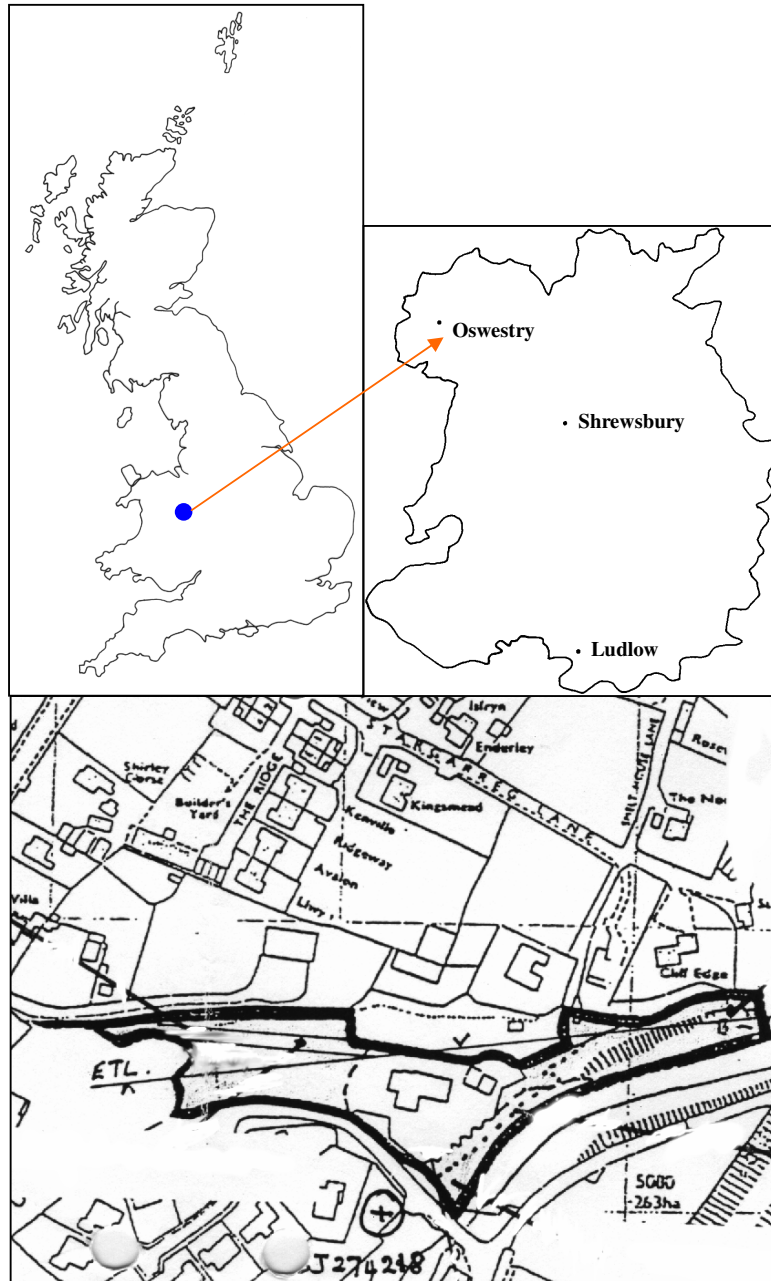
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**Figure 1: Location plan, site boundaries outlined in black.**

## The Background

Five Kilns is a property in the township of Pant in the parish of Llanymynech. It consists of a house with a garden and associated woodland. The house stands on a terrace formed by a row of lime-burning kilns, which face east onto the old Ellesmere Canal. The house stands partly on an old mineral tram-line which curved around the face of a scarp to the north of the property to meet the canal.

The woodland at Five Kilns occupies two strips of steeply sloping land, one to the west and one to the north-east of the house.

Llanymynech Hill was the main source of limestone for north-west Shropshire and had been described as *'the Magazine of Limestone for a vast track of country in 1773'* (Trinder, 1996, p 28). The opening of the Llanymynech branch of the Ellesmere Canal in 1796 (Morriss, 1991, p36) meant that the transportation of this limestone became much easier.

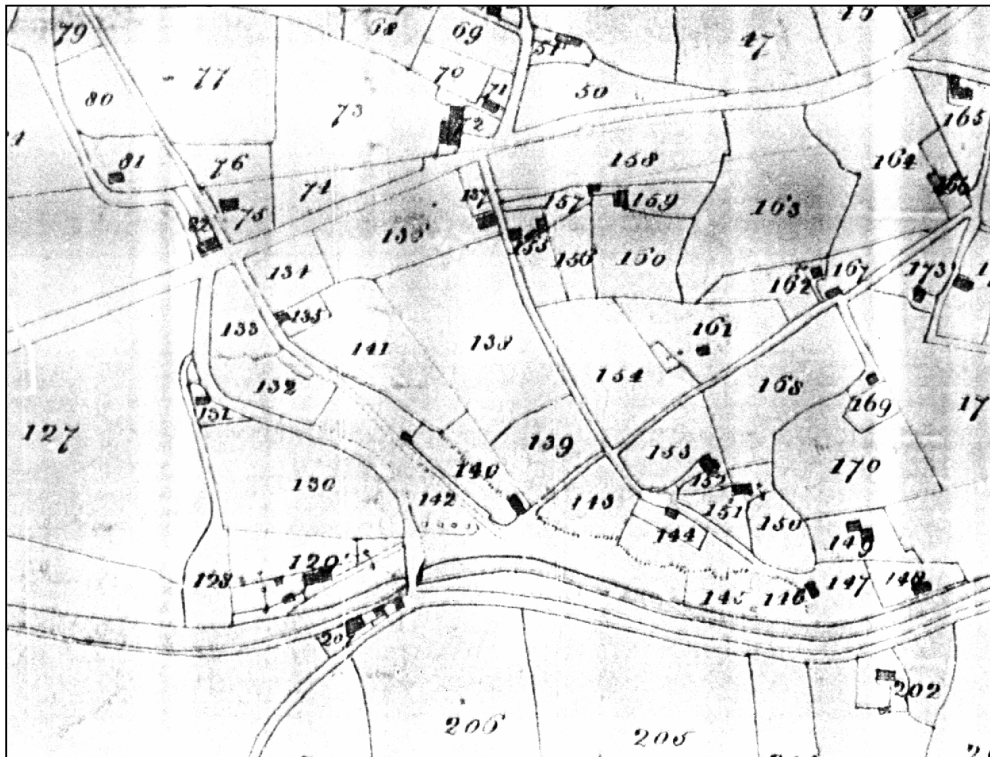


Figure 2: Extract from the 1838 tithe map

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there were four wharves in the parish used for loading the stone onto barges, one of which was at Pant in what are now the grounds of Five Kilns. Another wharf was on the northern edge of the parish and there were two at Llanymynech itself (Sherlock and Pikes, 2001).

Five Kilns occupies a parcel of land which was described in the tithe apportionment of 1838 as part of a series of plots being jointly *'limestone quarry, spoil banks, railway and lime kilns'*. The owner of the property, and much other property in Pant, was Edward, Viscount Clive, and the occupier was William Hazledine.

The boundaries of the property in 1838 were much as they are now. The southern side was formed by a lane, and the south-eastern by the canal.

The western part of the northern boundary was formed by a cliff which appears to have been an old quarry. At the top of this cliff was an *encroachment*, used as arable (141 on the tithe map), and occupied by Richard Lloyd, and a house and another encroachment used as pasture (140 and 139) which were occupied by William Llewellyn. Both these properties were also owned by Viscount Clive.

To the east, beside the canal, the northern boundary was formed by a stone-quarry occupied by David Price (number 145 on the tithe). His other tenancies were the adjacent house and garden (144) and an encroachment in use as pasture (143). Again the landowner was Viscount Clive.

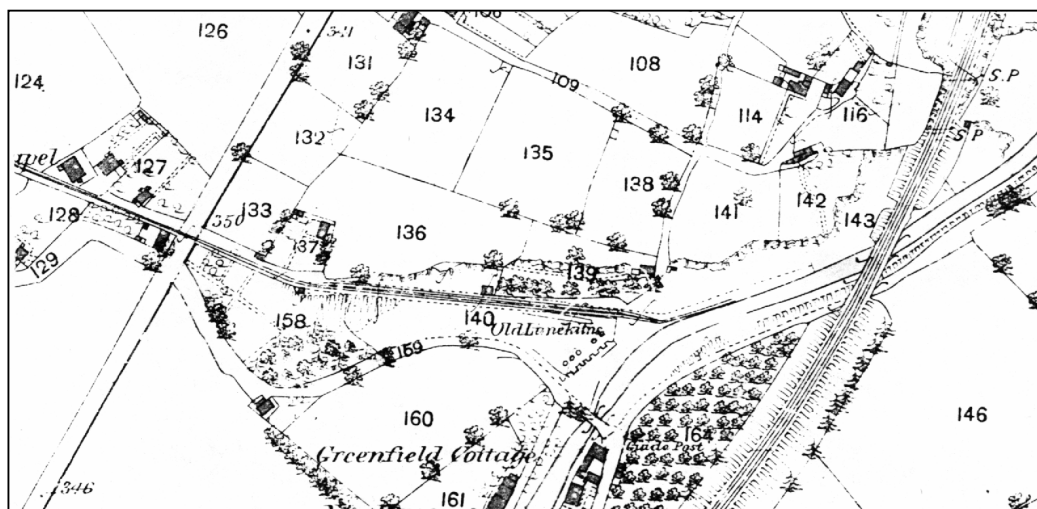


Figure 3: Extract from the 1880 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS 1:2500 plan

To the west, the property narrowed to the width of the railway which then extended across the turnpike road between Oswestry and Welshpool and up to quarries on Llanymynech Hill.

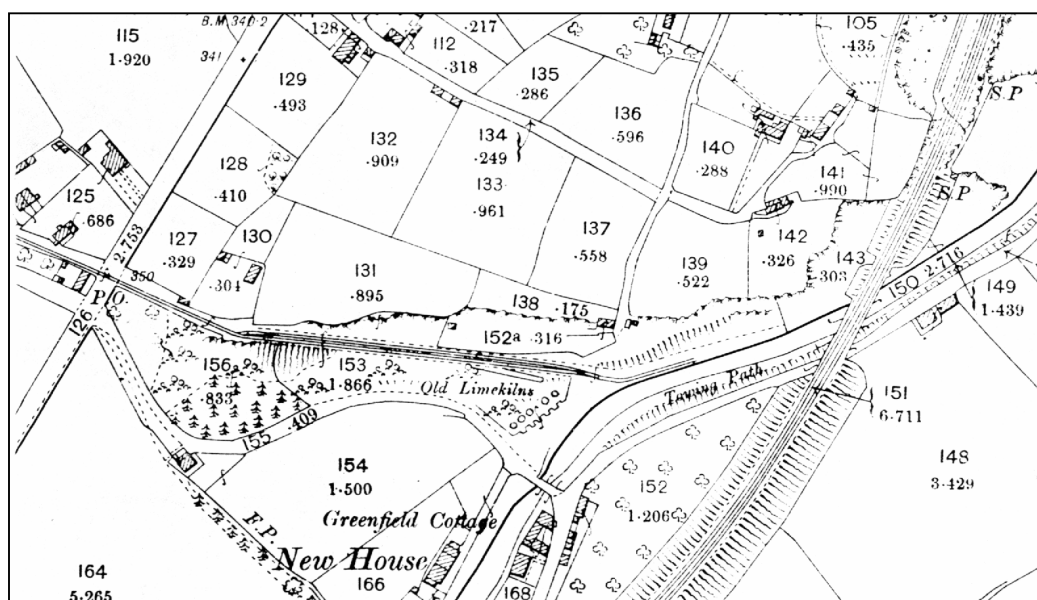


Figure 4: Extract from the 1901 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS 1:2500 plan



This railway crossed the property as an inclined plane aligned approximately west to east. At the western extremity of the present property was a winding drum (restored *in situ* in the 1970s). On the eastern, downhill, side of the drum was a length of double track to permit two-way working. The course of this length has been obliterated at the lower end by the construction of the Five Kilns house in the 1980s (Trinder, 1996, p29).

The bottom end of the railway curved to run beside the canal where there were facilities for loading the limestone onto barges.



**Plate 1: The 'Five Kilns'. There are in fact six - one on the extreme left is blocked up**

Uphill, the slope of the inclined plane is still clearly visible to the west of the house. It is not clearly identifiable to the east.

The quarrying operation uphill fed both the wharf and the five kilns, which give the property its name, and which are such striking features in a high stone revetment to the south of the house. The bowl of one of them is still open in the garden. There are in fact six kilns, the entrance of the westernmost one now being blocked. Behind the stone façade, the firing chambers are interconnected.

Surprising little is known about the history of lime kilns. The use of lime in mortar has its origins in the Bronze Age Middle East and Mediterranean. In Britain the Romans used lime both for building and for agricultural purposes.

The demand for lime for agricultural purposes increased dramatically in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century (Cleasby, 1995, p10). This coincided with the building of the canal, and the kilns certainly would not pre-date the construction of the canal in 1796.

While most of the limestone would have been rolled down to the canal, that which was destined for the production of lime would have been unloaded at the point where the house now stands. It would then have been poured into the kilns from above. Vertical kilns of this type could be used continuously, with more fuel and

limestone being added from the top while the burnt lime was extracted from the bottom.

The configuration of the kilns at Five Kilns, all six being inter-connected, suggests that continuous lime production was practised on the site, as one or more could be taken out of production for re-lining or other maintenance without halting the production. The lime would then be loaded onto barges for transportation around the country.

Lime production on the site had ceased by 1880, when the lime-kilns are marked '*Old Limekilns*' on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey plan, although the railway tracks to carry stone down to the canal are still marked on the 1901 edition.

## **The Woodlands**

Clearly the woodlands are comparatively recently evolved on land which was too steep to utilise for any other purpose. The site would have been entirely industrial as long as lime burning took place and the parts occupied by the mineral railway line could not have become overgrown until much later.

The 1901 OS plan shows some evidence that the southern part of the lime kiln area was beginning to be overgrown at that date, but that is now in the garden of Five Kilns House. The area which is now woodland was still railway at that time (see above).

Both area of woodland at Five Kilns, then, date from not earlier than the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The coppicing, evidenced by clear re-growth in both areas, cannot therefore be any earlier than that time.

## **Conclusions**

The archaeological impact of any future woodland management programme is likely to be minimal. In western area of woodland, the embankment which carried the old inclined plane is still a clearly defined major feature which should be preserved, and any removal of unwanted species (e.g. Sycamore) should be sensitive to its presence.

In the eastern part of the site, a visual survey of the steep slope revealed no unambiguous evidence of the line which once carried stone down to the canal. It is difficult to imagine that any program of management is likely to have an archaeological impact here.

As it must have been the reason for their construction, the projected re-opening of the Montgomery Canal raises some possibilities for the presentation of the kilns themselves. A display board at this point, explaining the history of the local extraction and lime production industries, and the part the canal took in their development, would be of interest to many people travelling along it.

Such a display need have minimal implications for the privacy of Five Kilns house.



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