

Fovant Lime Kiln

The use of lime (burnt chalk or calcified limestone) has been known for many centuries. All the early civilisations used it in building mortars.

Its use in agriculture as a fertiliser has also been known since the earliest time, because the transport of lime overland was difficult and expensive, most farms produced their own.

The common feature of early kilns was an egg-cup shaped burning chamber, with an air inlet at the base (the "eye"), constructed of brick. Limestone was crushed (often by hand) to fairly uniform 20–60 mm (1–2+½ in) lumps – fine stone was rejected. Successive dome-shaped layers of limestone and wood or coal were built up in the kiln on grate bars across the eye. When loading was complete, the kiln was kindled at the bottom, and the fire gradually spread upwards through the charge. When burnt through, the lime was cooled and raked out through the base. Fine ash dropped out and was rejected with the "riddlings".



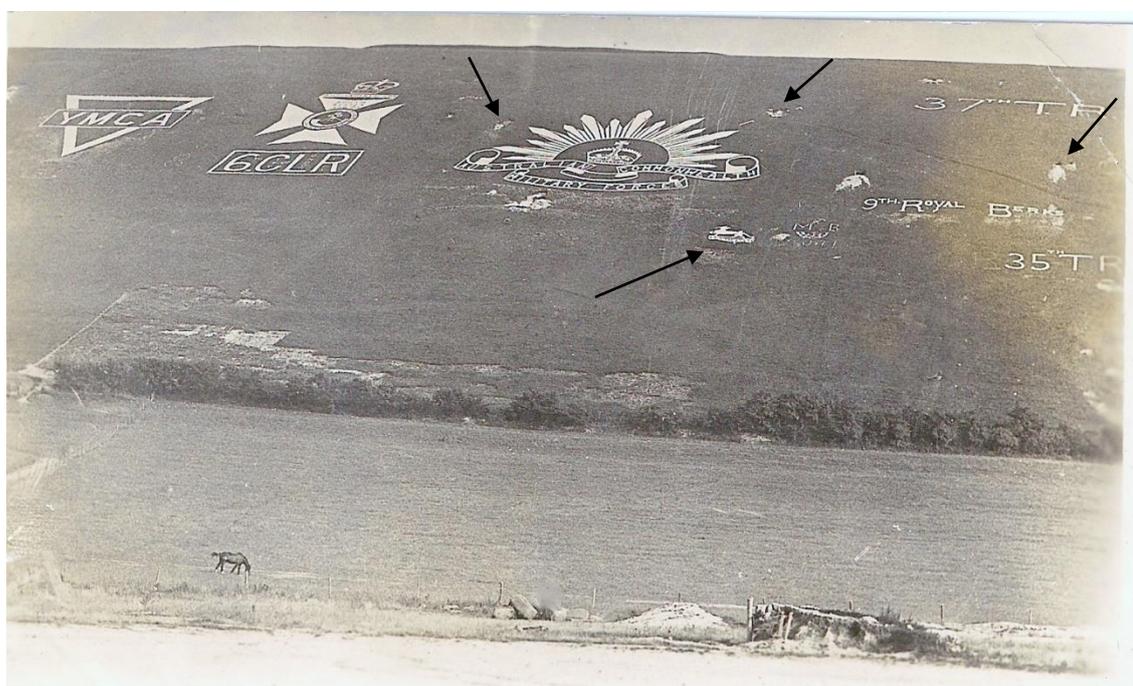
Fovant kiln still has some calcified chalk in it.

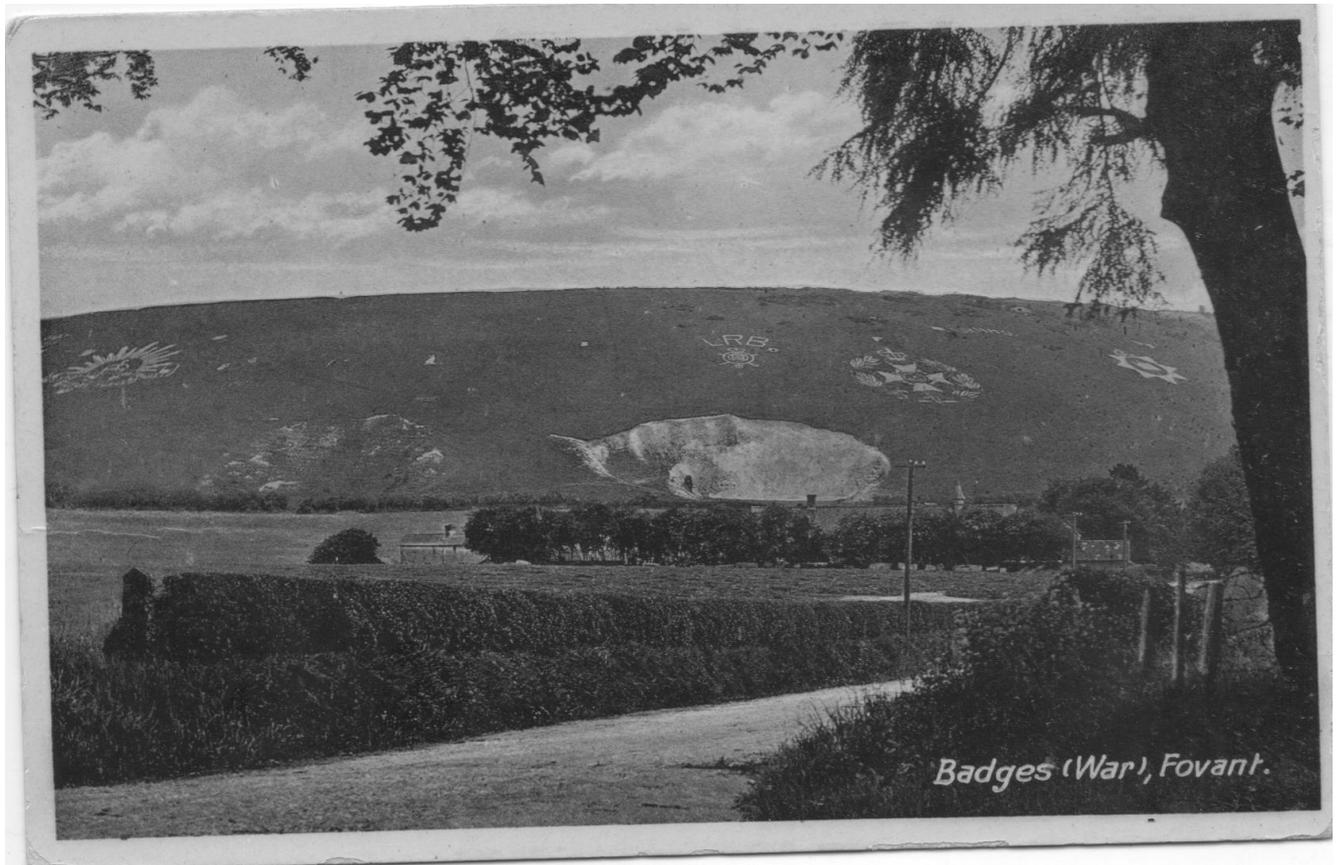
Like charcoal burning, making lime was a skilled job, requiring constant supervision of the process. If the temperature is allowed to become too high the chalk becomes hard and unusable. Chalk is added at the top and lime is removed from the bottom in a continuous cycle as the man in charge judges it is ready. This is probably why there is a small (? One- roomed) cottage on the site of Fovant's Lime kiln.





The large chalk quarries in Fovant were made long before WW1. The soldiers may have used some chalk from there as they made their regimental badges but they probably used sites much closer to their work. Some of the early photos of the badges show odd pits close to the badge,





Shown above is one of the two large chalk quarries in Fovant. The kiln and cottage can be found to the (R) of this feature. Not all farms were lucky enough to have such deep deposits of chalk and had to dig many small pits.



Shallow pits dug on the top of Buxbury Hill, Sutton Manderville.
Did they bring the chalk to Fovant for firing?