



Heritage Newsletter



Issue 27

The Story of Long Gilbert (by John Moore)

The Long Gilbert Quarry sits above the White Rocks at the eastern end of the East (or Curran) Strand. It is a limestone quarry from which stone was taken for many hundreds of years but which has not been worked for at least 75 years.



Long Gilbert Limestone Quarry

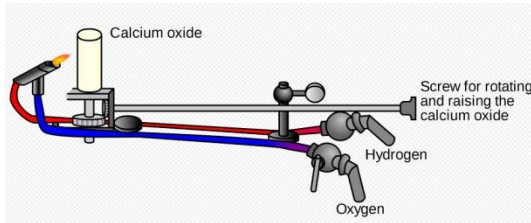


Lime Kilns at Long Gilbert

Some of the infrastructure is still evident including the two lime kilns where limestone (Calcium Carbonate) would have been burned to produce *quicklime* (Calcium Oxide) which has been used since the earliest times in building mortars and Roman concrete, as a stabiliser in mud renders and floors and a soil conditioner in agriculture. The addition of water to *quicklime* produces *slaked lime*

(Calcium Hydroxide) which has a significant application as a flocculant, in water and sewage treatment forming a fluffy charged solid that aids in the removal of smaller particles from water, resulting in a clearer product. *Quicklime* is also used today in steelmaking, the manufacture of cement and aerated concrete blocks, glass making, petroleum distillation and paper making.

In the 19th century before the invention of electric lighting theatrical productions used a form of spotlight known as a *Limelight*. This utilised the fact that when a cylinder of *quicklime* is heated



Above: Mechanism for producing Limelight

to 2,400°C by an oxyhydrogen flame it emits an intense glow which could be controlled by an operator and focused onto the stage using a system of glass lenses. The term *Limelight* is still used today and refers to someone in the public eye who is said to be "*in the limelight*".

Legend:

The name of the quarry is said to come from a tall, gangly native of North Antrim who was Jester to Lord Antrim at Ballymagarry many hundreds of years ago. Believed to be called Gilbert MacLaughlin but known as Long Gilbert due to his height and long legs he was said to run with the hounds during fox or deer hunts. Legend claims that he was swifter than the hounds and could run all day without tiring. On one occasion it is said that the hunted animal lead the pack of hounds and Long Gilbert towards the cliff edge above the White Rocks at great speed; and being unable to stop all plunged over the edge to their deaths. The place where they fell is now the site of Long Gilbert Quarry.

Our thanks to John for this excellent contribution to our Heritage Newsletters.

5th December 2020