Industry and Defence at Cocklawburn

Cocklawburn was exploited for limestone, coal, clay and sand from the late 1700s. The prime activity was the production of lime, beginning with two flare kilns - one of which is still visible built into the cliffs above Far Skerr.

As demand for lime increased, a battery of three kilns was constructed. These kilns would have been fired continuously and produced lime at an industrial scale. Still prominent in the landscape today, is the large ramp up which wagons loaded with limestone and coal were hauled by steam to feed the kiln battery.

The kilns were supported by ancillary buildings: a grinder, a smithy, a weighing bridge, stables and housing for workers and their families. Quarries, worked out and active, pockmarked the dune grasslands that were crisscrossed with horse-drawn light railways.

In the 1870s, when the lime works were at their zenith, over 190 people lived on this narrow coastal strip at three settlements - Saltpan How, Philadelphia, Sand Banks - now either lost to the sea, demolished or standing as ruins.

Lime production ceased in the early 1900s and with the outbreak of World War II, the derelict site of the kiln battery provided a camouflaged, elevated position for the Scremerston Gun Emplacement. In the event of invasion, this gun emplacement would have provided enfilading fire across Cheswick and Goswick beaches to Holy Island and inland to the A1 and railway line.

The kilns were gradually infilled, apparently with the barbed wire that protected the beaches during World War II, and then partially removed in the 1980s.

Getting to Cocklawburn

Cocklawburn is located 2km east of the village of Scremerston, off the A1 and to the south of Berwick-upon-Tweed. The beach is signposted from the village.

The trail starts below the gun emplacement at the small car park at the end of the track from Seahouse.
A short walk around Cocklawburn

1. From the small car park adjacent to Scremerston Gun Emplacement, climb the steep bank of the former kiln battery to the gun emplacement to appreciate its strategic vantage point with sweeping views southwards.

2. Walk down the ramp that was built to fuel the kiln battery. The south-facing slope of the incline now provides the perfect habitat for Bloody Cranesbill, Viper's Bugloss and Common Spotted Orchid.

3. At the base of the ramp, cross the dune grasslands towards the remains of the Far Skerr flare kiln. Built on the cliff edge, the top of the bowl of the kiln is still visible and the kiln would have been loaded from here.

4. Double back towards the base of the ramp. Continue straight over the dune grasslands to the former small settlement of Sand Banks. Each cottage had two rooms and a small garden at the back.

5. Walk along the track from Sandbanks to where it meets the road. Turn left towards the beach through the limestone quarries.

6. At the beach, depending on the tide, either turn left and walk around the headland of Far Skerr or, if the tide is in, walk back to the car park on the footpath that leads from the quarry.

Cocklawburn's Natural Heritage

Cocklawburn forms part of the Lindisfarne Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and bounds the northern limit of the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve. In addition to the wide range of coastal habitats for internationally important wintering populations of waders and wildfowl, the Lindisfarne SSSI has been designated for the special interest of its flora and geology.

The varied geology of Cocklawburn and its industrial past has created species-rich grasslands. Plants that can be found here include Quaking Grass, Autumn Gentian, Wild Thyme, Bloody Cranesbill, Viper’s Bugloss, Common Spotted Orchid, Spear-leaved Orache, Cowslip and Thrift.

Protecting Cocklawburn's Heritage

We all have a role to play in making sure this landscape is preserved for future generations. Responsible dog owners are welcome but please keep dogs on a lead or at heel all times (even on the beach) to avoid disturbance to birds and grazing livestock.