

## TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH CECIL CORFIELD

*June 1979 at his home*

Interviewed by Kerry Knapper, The then Headteacher of Llanymynech Primary School.

Cecil Corfield – Hoffman's Patent.

Kerry Knapper – Mr Higginson of Bradford Estate doesn't even know that! How does it work?

CC – It's oval in shape and there is a centre of brickwork which keeps it hot I think. And each side, there's archways. I think there was five each side, and one in each end, and by the side of the small archways there's a smaller one, which was for the draught. Inside it was quite a hollow, but it was known as chambers. On the top, there were little feedholes, they'd be about five inches square in rows of about six, near as I can remember. And that was where the cobbles - coal, ... they were washed cobbles the size of a walnut.

KK- And they were put in from the top, were they?

CC – From the top, yes. But those holes were also used to put rods straight down, so that when the men put the stone in the bottom.

KK – How did they put it in at the bottom?

CC – Well, they used to build a dry wall.

KK – Inside?

CC - Yes, but these rods - they got to leave about six inches square around each rod, so that when they put the coal down from the top, it went to the bottom

KK - Through the roof – I see

CC –Yes

KK – Oh, I see so you had cobbles of coal or coke or whatever it was.

CC – Yes, small cobbles of coal, they were.

KK – Amongst all the limestone?

CC – Yes, it went down amongst the limestone, you see. Because it was built up like a dry wall. And where those arches were, there was just sufficient room, to push a little quarry wagon in, with a stone on. And inside that was what they called a chamber, and when that chamber between the two arches. When it was filled up with stone...

KK – Yes...

CC – There was steel sheets that were put against the stone and kept the fire back. And as that was completed, the fire would move into the next one – as it went around

KK- Was the coal joined up then?

CC- Yes, it was continuous. The fire never went out. They worked around.

KK – Oh, I see, and they parted it off, did they?

CC- Yes, with these steel sheets.

KK- And when one part had burnt...?

CC- No, no. When one part was complete with stones you see, they moved the sheets on to the next one.

KK – Yes.

CC - And they'd keep the fire back. Then the burner on the top, and he'd know then that he could take his fire another one forward.

KK – What did the burner do to the kiln? He operated from the top, did he?

CC- The top, yes.

KK – And how did he light the various compartments then?

CC – Well, it just kept on. The stone would be blood red before they started to put the coal down because heat was so intense.

KK – Oh, I see... And they wheeled limestone in trucks into the compartments?

CC – No, the trucks would come straight from the quarry, down the incline, and then outside each archway there was a little turntable.

KK – Yes.

CC – And you'd put the wagon on the turntable, turn it and push it in.

KK – Just push the stone in?

CC – Push the truck into the side of the kiln, and then they build it all up.

KK – Oh, so there would be people working inside?

CC – Oh, yes – Packers they used to call them. They'd be about five packers.

KK – And these packers would build the dry-stone wall and leaving enough room to put ...

CC – the steel rods yes – they were guide rods; they had got to be a square about six inches.

KK – Now, where they were working was cool was it?

CC – Yes, it would be cool yes.

KK – Now then, after they'd made the dry-stone wall, what happened then. How did the fire .... the coal or make the lime ...

CC – Well, when they'd finished that chamber, they'd remove those shields, if you like.

KK – Yes, to keep them cool, I see yes.

CC – they'd move them to the next one. And then the fire itself would be two chambers back again.

KK- Further on?

CC – Yes, and the heat from there would creep along.

KK – I see, and so they were constantly moving around the chambers.

CC- Yes, and after the fire had gone around for so long, perhaps there may be three chambers that would be lime. The lime-drawers would be loading the lime out of there and take it and put it in the other waggons.

KK – Oh, I see.

CC – And after the lime-drawers there'd perhaps be a couple of chaps – tinkers-cleaning up.

KK – And then they'd start all over again?

CC – Yes. They'd keep on going around.

KK – And how many did you say there were. 10 all they way round? it? Five each side?

CC – I think there were five each side.

KK – It was a solid floor, was it at the bottom?

CC- Well it was fire clay, but it wasn't level...

KK – Up and down?

CC –Yes.

KK – Was it a better way of making lime then, than the old type of kiln that we've seen at Pant?

CC – Oh, yes. The Hoffman Kiln yes.

KK – Did it make more lime then?

CC – Oh, yes.

KK – And what was the lime used for?