



The Lime Oven



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What we can see here is part of the structure of a modern lime oven, which demonstrates the self sufficiency of country folk. Lime ovens are filled with firewood and flammable material in the middle, and will keep being added to for the time it takes to produce the lime. A limestone dome is constructed above the firewood. The oven heats to temperatures of around 1000 degrees centigrade, producing a caustic material that, when mixed with water, turns into slaked lime.

Lime mortar has been found in excavations over 14,000 years old in Ancient Asia Minor. The beginning of the use of the lime oven, application of heat to limestone, has been the same since its beginnings right up until the current industrial ovens.

The production process of a batch of lime could last between a month and a month and a half. To make the lime, firewood was needed to burn, which was obtained from clearing the forest and from tree prunings.

The next step was the difficult task of excavating the stone with picks and mallets. After which, it was transported in carts to the oven's site. This was filled by placing the stones in a circular form depending on their size: the biggest at the bottom and the smallest at the top. In the lower part, an opening was left to insert the firewood with a kind of pitchfork.

When the fire started, it could no longer stop until the master/foreman* said that the stone was fully baked. During the cooking process, which could last, without interruption, for 10 to 15 days, the batch of limestone would have turned into quicklime. The stones were well cooked and they turned into lime when they had developed a whitish colour and when the joins between them had disappeared.

Lime was used for construction to make walls (to join together the stones), mixed with water and clay or sand, it was used to cover the facade and whiten the houses. It also served to waterproof cisterns and clothes-washing sinks, as well as to disinfect, and it also had an agricultural use in its application against pests.

Lime production had a certain importance until the end of the 20th century, shown by the existence of many (pots)* and ovens around the territory. From this old activity, so widely used across our mountain range, the only thing that remains is the unspoken testimony of those ovens, that are currently in a state of ruin and covered in vegetation. That's why we wanted to tidy up and place value on this site.

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