

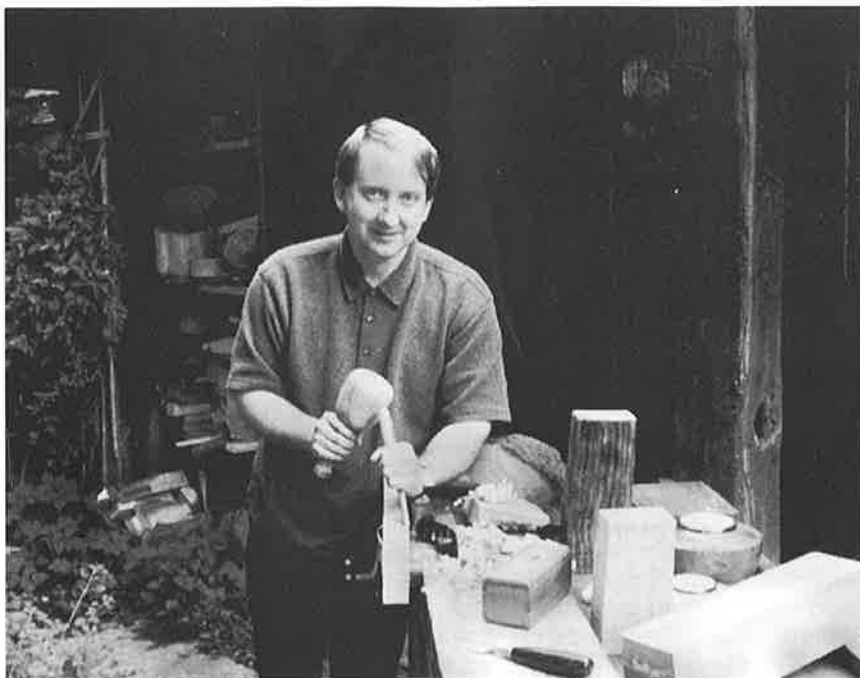
# The MUNDLING STICK



the LION  
Salt Works  
TRUST

Newsletter of the Lion Salt Works Trust: **AUTUMN 1996**

**VOLUME 2 No. 3**



## **SALT BOXES: an exhibition** **Sept 11th to November 30th**

**J**OHN Chalmers-Brown is a local craftsman designing and constructing furniture and decorative objects from locally sourced wood at his workshop located on the Arley Estate.

The Lion Salt Works asked John if he would like to construct a variety of salt boxes for exhibition at the Salt Works this autumn. He was delighted to be able to contribute as linking local sites and businesses together in this way is one of the objectives of the Vale Royal of England Tourist Association of which at one time John was treasurer and the Lion Salt Works Project Officer was chairman. Each box is individually de-

signed and hand made. Many are made from wood sourced from the Arley estate or other local British timber often seasoned from windfallen or storm damaged trees.

There are a variety of sizes and types of boxes, some can be hung on the wall beside your cooker, others are formed as table decorations which might also be used for a variety of other purposes.

The exhibited salt boxes will be for sale and may be taken away after the exhibition closes. If you like a particular box or would like to incorporate a special shape or design discuss your requirements for that special Christmas present.

### **GOOD NEWS FOR SITE INVESTIGATIONS**

THERE was good news for the project this summer as work continued into investigating the ground conditions within the Marston area.

The Project has always been concerned about the potential for serious subsidences especially relating to the adjacent Adelaide Rock Salt Mine.

Subsidences around the Lion Works have been widespread over the historic past. Marston Hall Mine collapsed in 1907, the Thompson's Alliance Shaft collapsed about 1910 and 'Old' Marston Top Mine fell in shortly after the construction of a new section of canal in the 1950's. The Adelaide Mine flooded and collapsed in 1928 and the extent of the mine is to be seen today by the extent of the 'flash' which has formed in the shallow depression created in the fields above the mine.

Part of the mine is known to have been extended under the canal and could have had serious consequences for the future of the Lion Works.

A long and detailed study of the area has been carried out by Cheshire County Council and ICI to determine the factors which are influencing the stability of the area. This work includes a precise levelling survey monitoring any surface ground movement and

*Continued on page 2*

*mundling stick n. ~tool used to pack salt crystals into the wooden tubs when making lump salt. This newsletter will likewise try to cram in all the latest information about the conservation and restoration of the Lion Salt Works.*

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more recently below ground instrumentation has been inserted into bore-holes to determine where ground movement might be taking place.

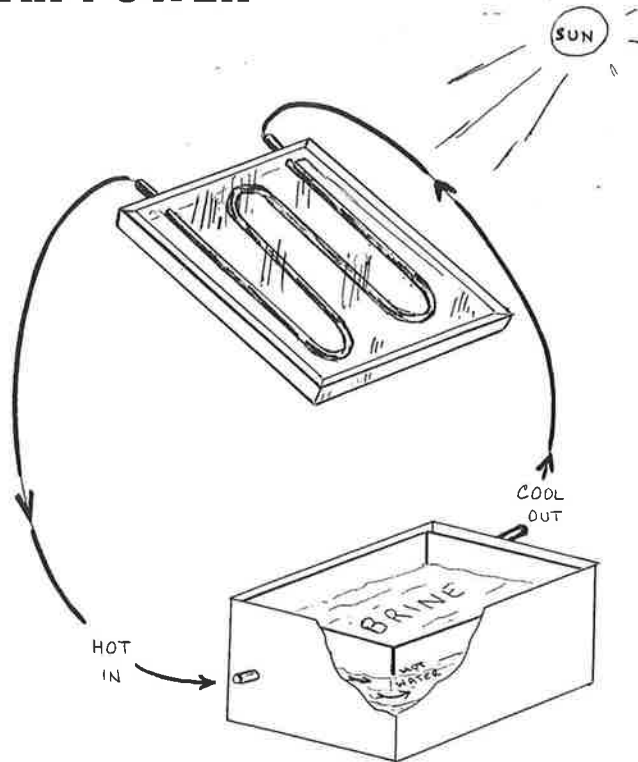
Current indications now suggest that all serious collapses associated with the Adelaide Mine have already occurred and that the Trust should only have to consider the effects of wild brine pumping in the same manner as any other building in the area.

This is a considerable step forward as it now allows the trust to discount expensive options for deep grouting of the ground below the salt works. It also vindicates the project decision taken some years ago not to demolish the older buildings alongside the canal.

Henry Thompson will also be pleased to hear that the Adelaide Mine is no longer considered likely to collapse further as he had worked alongside the threat from the mine all his working life.

The site will continue to be monitored for some time and further tests are planned, however the good indications will now allow the Trust to plan ahead and seek consultant advice on how the buildings can best be restored to form a working salt museum.

## GREENPEACE PRAISE SALT WORKS SOLAR POWER



**G**REENPEACE are beginning a general campaign to promote the environmental benefits of solar energy for both solar water heating and electrical generation. The Northwich Branch of Greenpeace gave out leaflets over the August Bank Holiday whilst visitors viewed three solar panels integrated into a salt pan constructed by Brunner-Mond apprentices under the direction of North Trafford College. The titanium pan by TIMET UK produced some excellent white crystals.

Greenpeace leaflets will be distributed during the salt boiling weekends on 14-15th September and the 12-13th October. Visitors will be able to see the solar panels and the more traditional iron pan evaporating brine.

### FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE

THE ROLE of the Lion Salt Works Trust in preserving the ancient methods of salt production is recognised in a French Ministry of Culture publication which lists the preservation of ancient technical processes.

The publication is titled *Connaitre, Conserver, Transmettre. Les Techniques et les savoirs des metiers. Répertoire des organismes de conservation active des techniques en Europe.*

The entry says "La region du Cheshire pratique l'exploitation du sel depuis l'epoque romaine. Cette entreprise perpetue les techniques traditionnelles de fabrication du sel par evaporation. Installations anciennes conservees en etat de marche : pompe a vapeur, forge, systeme d'evaporation."

Other local museums included in the gazetteer include the Paradise Silk Mill, Macclesfield; Gladstone Pottery Museum, Stoke-on-Trent; Quarry Bank Mill, Style and Ellesmere Port Boat Museum.



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE NO. 3

### The Salt Box

**T**HOUGH not really a tool it was felt appropriate to say something about salt boxes to coincide with our salt box craft exhibition. The following account of how to make your own salt box is taken from an illustrated dictionary of about 1900:

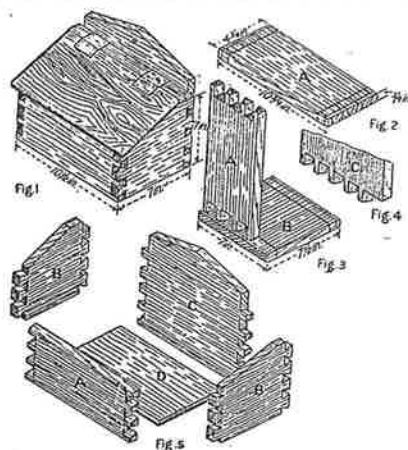
“Owing to the corrosive effect of salt, the use of nails and metal fastenings is avoided as far as possible in making a salt box, which is usually of wood; because of the damp nature of the material the wood should be fairly thick and close grained. Beech is well suited for the work, but ash is often used, and American whitewood can be utilised. A convenient shape, illustrated measures 10½ in. by 7 in. at the base, 4½ in. front, and 7 in. at the back up to the lid. The wood is ¾ in. thick, the corners dovetailed.

Commence by planing up the front, A, to 4¾ in. by ¾ in., and cut to 10¾ in. The sides, B, are the same thickness, and 7 in. wide, with a length of 7½ in. The back, C, is 10¾ in. by 9½ in. by ¾ in. and the bottom, D, is 9½ in. by 6 in. by ¾ in. The pieces are set out as in Figs. 2, 3, and 4; the dovetailed pins are cut on the ends of the front piece, A, the distance between the shoulders being 9 in., and then placed on the sides in turn to mark out the exact shape of the sockets, as in Fig. 3.

The same is done with the back, C, as in Fig. 4 and then a 1/8 in. wide and 1/4 in. deep groove is ploughed 3/8 in. up from the bottom edge of each piece to take the bottom piece, D. On the latter plane a rebate to correspond with the grooves, 3/8 in. up the edge and ¼ in. deep, and complete the sides, B, by sawing off the front corner and planing smooth. Mark 1½ in. down at the top of the back each side, saw off the waste, and plane down smooth, and then bore a ¼ in. hole 1 in. down in the centre. The parts are now ready to fit together, as in Fig. 5, and if the joints are true they can be glued up and left to dry.

In the meantime the lid is prepared, one piece being 11¼ in. by 6½ in. by ¼ in., and the other 11¼ in. by 1 in. by ¾ in. The front edge of the large piece and both ends of both pieces should be rounded and finished smooth with glass paper. The glued box can now be trimmed at the ends and cleaned up with a sharp smoothing plane, the top edge of the front being planed to the slope of the sides, and the narrow portion of the lid screwed on from the back. Its lower edge in front must be planed down 1/8 in., so that the sloping lid can be fitted. The top edge of the latter is now bevelled sufficiently to fit, and then attached with stout leather hinges, 2 in. long and 1 5/8 in. wide. A neater job is made by cutting recesses 1½ in. from the ends to take the leather, which should be secured with ½ in. round headed screws.

The outside of the box should be sized and varnished; the inside is left plain, so that it can be washed out when necessary. On account of the action of salt on metal it is not advisable to use plain but joints or to nail or screw the box together. The work can be simplified by screwing on a plain base, which can be fitted from the outside and screwed from the bottom, or fitted from the sides.”



Salt Box. Fig. 1. Salt box made from close-grained wood. Figs. 2-4. Showing how front, back and sides are dovetailed into each other to avoid use of nails. Fig. 5. The parts ready for gluing together.

### THREE DIFFERENT SEA SALT PROJECTS

#### Archaeology at Poole and Lymington and local produce at Anglesey Sea Zoo

**T**HE Lion Salt Works Trust has spoken with a number of salt related research projects over recent months which might be of interest to readers of The Mundling Stick. Locally in Cheshire we frequently think that salt is unique to Cheshire, however, there has been an equally long history of salt production in other areas particularly around the coast. Two new projects are interpreting the historic production of sea salt on the south coast.

At the **St Barbes Museum**, Hampshire on the edge of the New Forest the Lymington salterns are being investigated and form a major part of the new local museum. At **Upton Country Park**, Dorset the archaeologists at Poole Museum have been involved in reconstructing a Romano-British farm building associated with sea salt

production. The reconstruction used Roman technology and crafts and is to be used as an activity centre where traditional historic processes can be demonstrated. It is hoped to reconstruct the production of sea salt as the Romans would have manufactured it. Also involved in experiments to produce sea salt is the **Anglesey Sea Zoo** at Brynsciencyn on the south side of the island. Experiments have been taking place here this summer on the practicalities of manufacturing crystal salt from sea water drawn from the Menai Strait. There is a natural disadvantage in producing sea salt due to the weak nature of sea water as compared to Cheshire brine. We wish all three project success.

## OPENING TIMES

THE Lion Salt Works exhibition is opened each afternoon between 1.30pm and 4.30pm by our site stewards.

New stewards are required to help at the site, not just to receive visitors but also to help with maintenance of the building and grounds.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



### SALT BOXES

Exhibition - Sept 14th to  
November 30th

A variety of traditional and salt boxes and modern interpretations made by John Chalmers-Brown.



This event coincides with the publication of this newsletter. Linked with National Archaeology Day the Lion Salt Works will demonstrate its salt boiling pans. Also open for this special day will be seven other sites around Northwich. Northwich Victoria Football Ground, Dock Road Pumping Station, Winnington Hall, Anderton Lift, Little Leigh and Witton Churches and Vale Royal Abbey. Why not make a tour of the area by visiting all seven.

A leaflet describing these buildings and sites has been prepared by the Project Officer as part of his role within Vale Royal Borough Council's Environmental Planning Department and has been published through the Councils Marketing and Print Unit. If own or occupy a building in Vale Royal which you think could become part of *Heritage Open Days '97* contact Andrew Fielding at the Lion Salt Works and help contribute to the presentation of the borough's attractive and interesting built environment.

### MERSEY BASIN ENVIRONMENT WEEK-END

12th-13th October  
10.30am to 4.00pm

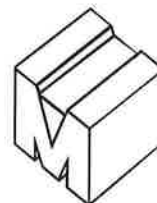
Autumn tidy up and salt  
boiling

Your chance to come and  
get dirty.

Help us fill a skip with rubbish, clear out the vegetation fronting the Trent and Mersey Canal and dig out the buried railway siding. Tools provided or bring your own. Tea and coffee for all participants.

This will be our last salt boiling demonstration for 1996 if you can't give a hand in the site activities come and see white salt crystals being formed through the evaporation of brine in an open pan. If the sun shines our solar salt pan will be in operation.

This event forms part of a region wide environmental programme. Thank you to the Mersey Basin Trust for sponsorship and funding the hire of the skip.



Mersey Basin Campaign

### THE MUNDLING STICK *by post*

If you would like to have a regular copy of The Mundling Stick sent to you by post please send your name and address to Nick Davies, Project Assistant, Lion Salt Works Trust, Ollershaw Lane, Marston, Northwich CW9 6ES or telephone 01606-41823. Newsletters will be sent free of charge.

Cheques for donations should be made out to THE LION SALT WORKS TRUST. If you would like to provide long term support for the trust please ask for a covenant form.