

The MUNDLING STICK



the LION
Salt Works
TRUST

Newsletter of the Lion Salt Works Trust: **AUTUMN 1998**

VOLUME 4 No. 3

MUSEUM REGISTRATION

The Trust submitted an application to the Museums & Galleries Commission last year to be assessed under its museum registration scheme for museums and galleries in the United Kingdom. This September the Trust was accredited 'Provisional Registration' status.

The registration scheme was created as a 'good housekeeping' certificate for museums which guarantees that minimum standards of care, management and service are maintained. The Commission say that registration provides a recognised national minimum standard for museums, enabling them to demonstrate, whatever their size and nature, a shared ethical basis and a common framework of operation. It is not concerned with the scale of a museum's operation but whether the systems and services are appropriate to that particular museum.

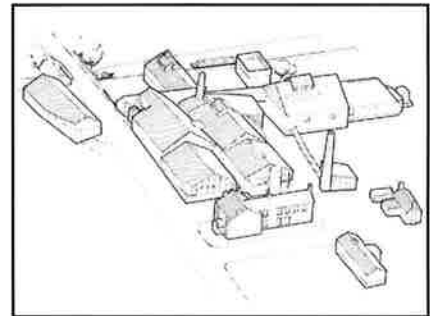
Provisional registration recognises that for its size the Trust has 'demonstrated willingness and intention to work towards what is required for full registration within a reasonable period'. The benefits of registration include 'public recognition of approved standards, fosters confidence amongst potential donors of objects or collections and general eligibility for MGC and Area Museum Council grant aid and subsidised services'. Registered status is also taken into account by bodies such as the National Heritage Memorial Fund which administers the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our extended newsletter this quarter demonstrates the importance placed on registration by the Carnegie UK Trust who this month released a £10,000 grant award to the Trust on confirmation that provisional registration status had been achieved (See pages 4 & 5).

Objectives

In our first newsletter produced in the summer of 1995 the objectives of the Trust were laid out. It seems appropriate to repeat them again.

The Trust will advance the education of the public by:

- the preservation of features and objects of historical and industrial interest which relate to the traditional practices of open pan salt production.
- the re-establishment of the said practices for presentation to the public by the provision of a working museum at the restored Lion Salt Works, Marston, Cheshire together with a reception centre to display related and associated material.
- the re-development, in association with other parties, of the derelict land surrounding the Museum for purposes appropriate to the objectives of the Trust.
- The organisation of meetings, exhibitions, displays, lectures, publications and other forms of instruction for promoting and developing the public knowledge of and interest in the practice of open pan salt production at the Lion Salt Works and its industrial heritage.



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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.

Recent Donations

Lead Salt Pans

Earlier in the year Mrs Hague of Bostock kindly donated three lead salt pans to the Trust. These had been found 12 years ago on her farm close to the River Dane. It is thought that they may have been hidden as scrap metal in anticipation of being melted down but were never recovered rather than being at a salt making site.

Mrs Hague was prompted to donate the salt pans after seeing local press reports about the construction of our replica lead salt pan. Two of the pans are similar in size being 78cm x 70cm x 10cm deep and 79cm x 67cm x 10cm, with the third being slightly larger at 80cm x 71cm x 11cm deep. The smaller pair have identical raised crosses on their under side and the larger pan has raised dots grouped in the shape of a circle.

Two more lead salt pans have been discovered this summer at Shavington close to the find spot of the pan on which our replica is based. These are now in the care of Cheshire County Council at 'The Salt Museum'. It is hoped to begin scientific analysis of the lead for all these pans. It may be possible to locate the origins of the mine from which some of the pans are derived.

Lead pans are often described as being used in groups of three, perhaps in time the Lion Salt Works Trust will be able to construct two more pans to replicate a complete working set.

Replica Lead Pan Makes Salt

The replica lead salt pan we manufactured earlier in the year has now been fired 6 times including twice for television programmes (See page 8). It is now growing a thin film of panscale as calcium carbonate from the unrefined brine is deposited over the surface of the lead.

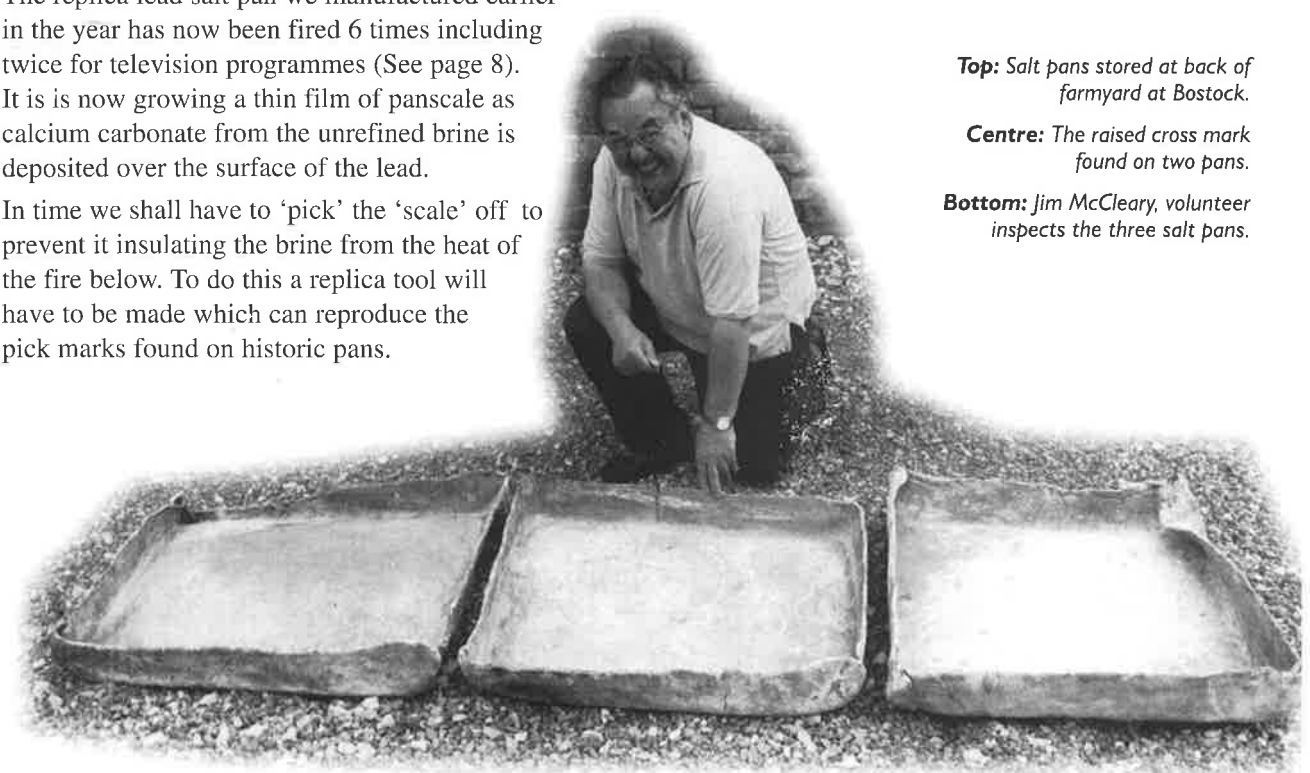
In time we shall have to 'pick' the 'scale' off to prevent it insulating the brine from the heat of the fire below. To do this a replica tool will have to be made which can reproduce the pick marks found on historic pans.



Top: Salt pans stored at back of farmyard at Bostock.

Centre: The raised cross mark found on two pans.

Bottom: Jim McCleary, volunteer inspects the three salt pans.



Demonstration Days

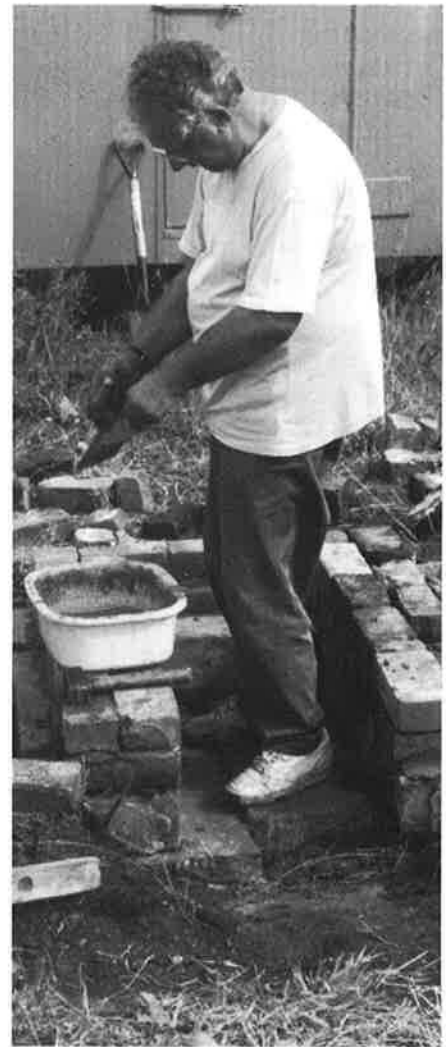
Salt making at the salt works was extended this year with the construction of a scale replica of a sixteenth century salt pan based on the illustrations of Agricola published in 1556.

The design for this salt pan was first tried out at the Cheshire Show in 1995 as part of a travelling exhibit fabricated by apprentices at Brunner Mond.

Following the successful construction of our replica lead salt pan earlier in the year it was decided to build a scale version of the brick hearth which is described by Agricola.

The hearth was constructed by volunteer Malcom Sargeant during National Archaeology Day in July. The weather was hot and dry and provided an excellent day for hearth building whilst we made salt alongside in the replica lead pan.

The replica pans are an ideal way of demonstrating the art of open pan salt making, the evolution of salt pans and the changes in size and materials through time. They will be a regular part of our future demonstration days.



SALT BLOCKS & PHOTOGRAPHS

Mrs Abbott, from Dorset, found a 1 1/2lb block of Thompson salt at home which her mother had bought near Dorchester in the 1970s. She knew the salt was old because it was wrapped in greaseproof paper rather than a plastic bag and the price ticket on the bag was for 14p. The Trust is grateful to Mrs Abbott for donating the salt block to the Trust to add to its collection.

A second block of salt was given to the Trust this summer during the 'Heritage Open Day' week-end in September. Mr Tideswell drove down from Sunderland to see the salt boiling event and bring the salt block back to the village where he was brought up. He hopes to lend us photographs of Marston taken during his childhood in the 1950's.

Mr and Mrs Allen from Wrexham have kindly sent the Trust negatives which they took at the Lion Salt Works during a visit in 1980's. The photograph shows one of our pans making salt with salt tubs sitting on the fire dogs. It gives us encouragement to move forward with our plans to restore the salt pans to working condition. The photographs will feature in our next newsletter.

Carnegie UK Trust Supports 'VR Northwich'

In a newsletter last year (1987, Vol.3, No.2) the Trust described how it wished to utilise part of its collection of photographs to create a 'Virtual Reality World' of Northwich reproducing the appearance of the town in 1891. This project can now begin thanks to the achievement of gaining Provisional Museum Registration and the subsequent awarding of a £10,000 grant from the Carnegie UK Trust.

The Carnegie UK Trust has been very patient in waiting for our registration application to be processed and the Trust was pleased to receive congratulations from Carnegie secretary and treasurer John Naylor who expressed his delight in making the award for what he described as "a visionary project".

The computer graphics project is based on photographs taken by Thomas Birtles to record the condition of buildings at the passing of the Brine Subsidence Compensation Act in 1891. A set of the 261 photographs was donated to the Trust by the Brine Board when they moved their offices from Northwich to Chester. The Lion Salt Works Trust has an interest in the development of the unique Northwich subsidence resistant framed buildings, not only because the process of brine pumping at open pan salt works was partly responsible for the subsidences experienced by the town, but also because there is evidence that John Thompson was involved in the raising of framed buildings from the earliest days. One photograph also shows the premises in Witton Street used by AJ Thompson as his offices.

To show the possibilities of the concept an area of the town was chosen to reproduce the buildings which formerly stood at Crum Hill, now the site of the indoor market. Initial artwork was prepared by Ian Gleave, Robert Acton, Nigel Vernon and Jon Astbury, Technical Illustration students at Mid-Cheshire College and later developed into a short animated 3-d video by Computer graphics student James Owen, also at Mid Cheshire College.

The project will provide live projects and work experience for HND computer graphics students under the direction of Alex Ellis at Mid-Cheshire College and has the technical support from Professor Stone and his team at *Virtual Presence*. Based in Sale *Virtual Presence* are one of the country's leading virtual reality companies.

It will probably take two years for the project to be completed and further sponsorship will be required as the project is expanded. Alongside the buildings it is also intended to recreate a salt-works and rocksalt mine of the period linking the industrial processes which were the root cause for the commissioning of the photographs. This is an exciting opportunity to bring history into the modern day and allow anyone to walk through Northwich exactly as it appeared to Thomas Birtles when he took his photographs in 1891.

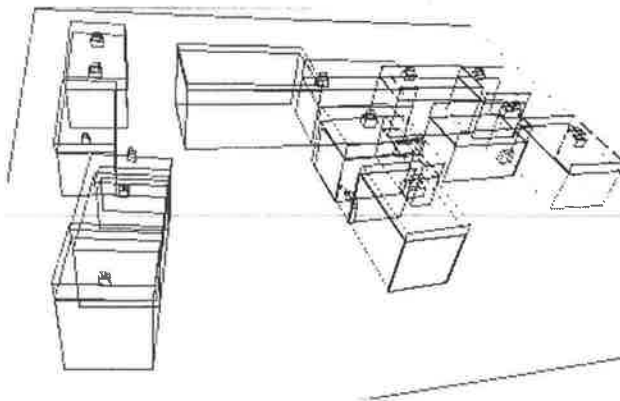
Opportunities to view the development of VR Northwich will be made available as the 'world' is created. Don't miss the chance to watch history being recreated.



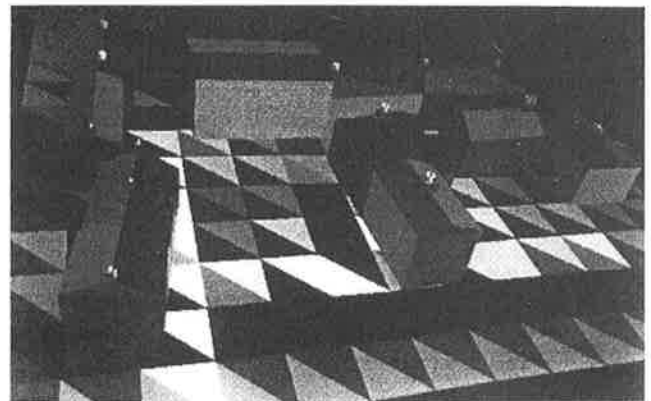
Birtles' original photograph of Crum Hill.



New artistic compilation of Birtles' photograph produced by Jon Astbury



Wire frame model created by James Owen based on the size and shape of the buildings in Crum Hill.



Each Building is rendered before its individual texture is applied to the surface.

AJ THOMPSON'S OFFICE

One direct link to the Thompson's involvement with the local salt trade is provided by a Birtles' photograph which shows. AJ Thompson had his own salt works located alongside Henry Ingram Thompson's Sunbeam Works on the Trent and Mersey Canal at Wincham. Though the salt works and pumping site have now been demolished the former office in Witton Street continues in use as a shop.

There will be many opportunities for local shops and offices in Northwich to participate in the creation of our "Virtual Reality Northwich" and to discover the history of their own premises.

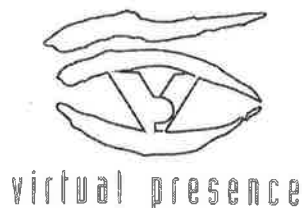


AJ Thompson's office as it was in 1891

11 Witton Street as it appears today



Each photograph provides a direct link with the past. After we had produced the model of Crum Hill we discovered that two girls shown outside one of the buildings were ancestors of the local Northwich historian Colin Lynch. Colin already knew his great grandmother Anne Murphy and great aunt Julia Murphy were included in Birtles photographs but was delighted to see that they had been included in our pilot project. Anne Murphy was 10 years old when the photograph was taken.



Building Survey Continues

Work has continued over the summer to collect information about the condition of the salt works. Foundations have been investigated, and timber and brickwork sampled to look at the construction and the physical condition of the building.

Only when the initial results of this £20,000 survey have been studied can we begin to calculate the costs of restoration and begin to prepare applications for grant aid. The current investigations are being made by Brian Clancy Partnership with Hutton and Rostron Environmental Investigations Ltd looking at the specific problems associated with the timber work and the bricks and mortar. 50% of this study is being funded by Vale Royal Borough Council.



Peter Bannister collects wood samples from roof trusses in Pan House No.3

ENTRUST Grants Fund Building Survey

As a registered environmental body with ENTRUST The Lion Salt Works Trust can apply for grants from landfill operators and companies with landfill tax obligations who can pass on a percentage of their tax liabilities to approved organisations. Two local companies, British Salt and Brunner Mond, have made significant contributions to help fund specific investigations into the structural condition of the salt works buildings, work which will help to develop the restoration plans.

British Salt have this year pledged £4,000 of their landfill allocation to the Trust whilst we have received £5,000 from Brunner Mond this year with commitments of £2,500 promised for each of the following two years.

British Salt also continues to support the Trust through supplies of brine and scientific analysis of the salt we produce during our experiments and demonstration days. Brunner Mond apprentices and North Trafford College have also continued to incorporate a practical project within their NVQ and BTec courses which has a benefit to the Trust.

Trust News

Movement of jobs continues to affect individual membership of the Trust. At its AGM held in August the Trust said farewell to its second company secretary Caroline Ellwood who left Vale Royal Borough Council for a new post in Preston.

Caroline is replaced by the new Vale Royal Borough Council solicitor Fiona Crane. The AGM was also the time to welcome John Kerrigan of Brunner Mond and Cllr Lloyd of Vale Royal Borough Council as new Trustees.

FOUNDER SPONSORS

As this edition of *The Mundling Stick* shows significant progress is now being made on a broad front to move forward the objectives of a working industrial museum. The Trust has created a Founding Sponsors Scheme to recognise the support of companies during these early days and now acknowledges six members of the scheme. The Worshipful Company of Salters, Brunner Mond, Interactive Development, British Salt, Vale Royal Borough Council and Atlas Copco. If you would like details of the scheme please contact Andrew Fielding, Project Director.



BRUNNER MOND

BRITISH SALT



VR VALE ROYAL
The heart of Cheshire
VALE ROYAL BOROUGH COUNCIL



Atlas Copco

VREN Grant for lawn-mower

A grant of £100 from the Vale Royal Environment Network has helped the Trust to purchase a battery powered lawn-mower. The new machine replaces a small eight year old petrol mower which had been virtually worn out by breaking in the rough, brick strewn ground around the visitor centre.

The rechargeable battery can cut an area the size of 3 tennis courts and has proven its worth over its first summer. One of the benefits is that we no longer have to store petrol on site, it is always ready for use and is much lighter, cleaner and quieter than the old machine.

The VR Environment committee had not received an application for a battery powered machine before but obviously appreciated the advantages of a rechargeable battery as well as the time and dedication put in to create and maintain a herb garden and flower beds around the salt works.



Everything's going swimmingly



Shortly before leaving his temporary post at the Salt Works Nick Davies encouraged the Project Director to join him in a field trip to Nantwich. More of a 'dip' into history than is usually involved in any normal field trip as the afternoon was spent swimming in the Nantwich outdoor brine pool. The pool is a unique feature operated by Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council. It is one of the last remaining brine baths of its kind in the country and deserves to be better known.

Brine is pumped from an underground natural spring along a pipeline and delivered into the fresh water giving a salty solution which is reputed to have certain beneficial effects towards ailments. The pool is open every day from May until September. There is nothing like getting fully immersed in the subject. For further information contact the Nantwich Swimming Pool Manager on 01270-610606

Fidlers Fancy -

21st Anniversary Tour



In 1977 a Stockport women's morris dancing team reformed a local dance team begun by Mr Fidler in 1886. As part of their 21st year the team organised a special one day (200 mile) tour of the North West to take dances back to their roots. So, on Saturday 5th September, Fidlers Fancy called in at Marston to perform 'The Marston Dance'.

Having completed their objective at Marston the team had to be in Knutsford for their next dance at 5pm and so a swift exit was called for, but we expect that the team will return and perform at greater leisure in the future. Many thanks to Sheila Anderson, Squire for resurrecting this local traditional dance.

DATES for your Diary

Autumn—Winter '98

Saturday 31st October 1998

Cheshire Local History Day



Cheshire Local History Association

“A Pinch of Salt” at Northwich Memorial Hall

Speakers, Andrew Fielding, Stephen Perney, Tony Hirst and Chris Mahon £10 per person. Enquiries Bruce Thompson

Tel 01270 760810

December '98 - February '99

Experiments in Salt Glazed Pottery

This exhibition continues our work with salt glazed pottery in collaboration with Steve Harrison, one of the country's leading salt glazing potters. The displays include trial pieces manufactured in March as part of Science Week and new exhibition pieces commissioned by the Trust with the support of a grant from the North West Arts Board.

A supporting video will show Steve Harrison at work and the firing of his special portable kiln demonstrating the salt glazing process.

There will be a variety of pieces for sale.

Come and find that extra-special Christmas present.



Spring '99

March 1999 Science Week

An exhibition of biomass technology.

A look at the use of wood as a modern fuel source.

The Lion Salt Works anticipates using wood fuel technology to heat its restored salt pans providing CO2 neutral heating from a renewable energy source which encourages the planting of coppice woodland and benefits wild life and the environment.

Compare Roman, medieval and modern uses of managed timber with coal burning nineteenth century salt pans.

Demonstrations of forestry processing equipment.

Advice and information from The Mersey Forest Trust and Vale Royal Environment Network.

Funded by a Vale Royal Sustainability Grant.



TV and Radio Guide

Watch out for schools programme 'Scientific Eye' on Channel 4 to be broadcast in January, 1999 which features the Lion Salt Works as part of a 20 minutes look at topics with a salty theme. Also early in the New Year the salt works will appear in the BBC 2 afternoon programme 'The History Hour'.

Listen out for a series of short 15 minute programmes on Radio 4 about 'Commodities' with Dinah Lammaman. The section on salt will feature the Lion Salt Works.

OPENING TIMES

The Lion Salt Works exhibition is opened each afternoon 1.30pm to 4.30pm by our volunteer site stewards.

We ask for a donation of £1 per adult, 50p per child.

For further information call 01606-41823 or discover our web site [http://](http://www.lionsaltworkstrust.co.uk)

www.lionsaltworkstrust.co.uk

TRUSTEES

Richard Hamlett, (Chairman);
Lady Rochester; John Kerrigan, Terry Cresswell, Dr Sandy Todd, Dr Tom Farthing; Cllr Mrs V Frame; Cllr Brian Lloyd; Cllr Ron Carey.

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 The Lion Salt Works Trust, Ollershaw Lane, Marston, Northwich CW9 6ES or telephone/fax 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. The Lion Salt Works Trust a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity No. 1020258. Vat registration no 628998076

The Mundling Stick is written by the Lion Salt Work Project Director and kindly designed and printed by Vale Royal Borough Council.