

The MUNDLING STICK



the LION
Salt Works
TRUST

Newsletter of the Lion Salt Works Trust: **AUTUMN 1999**

VOLUME 5 No. 3

Extensions to Salt Making Demonstrations during Heritage Open Days '99

Further experiments into open pan salt making were made in September during Heritage Open Days.

In March 1998 we reported the manufacture of a replica lead salt pan made with the help of British Lead Mills and students from Manchester University. The dimensions were based on a Roman pan discovered at Shavington. Since then we have been learning how to use it, evaporating unrefined brine over a wood fire during our demonstration days. Each time we have used the pan a different aspect has been investigated, types of wood, depth of fire together with observations of how the fire draws under different wind and weather conditions.



Above: Bricklined hearth.

Right: Stainless steel and lead salt pans over a wood fire.



Even over the short length of time that the pan has been used a thin layer of pan scale has been laid down over the surface of the pan. The scale will gradually thicken over future firings and will eventually have to be chipped off the surface of the lead. When this is necessary we shall have to make a tool which replicates the peck marks which are observed on the surface of archaeologically recorded lead pans. Also part of the long term experiments will be an analysis of the salt crystals and scale deposits and the amount of lead take up will be recorded.

It is believed that lead pans were used in groups. Archaeological excavations of Anglo-Saxon hearths in Droitwich have been measured at 2.3m in length, and medieval accounts record owners having 2, 4 or 8 leads in use.

To base our trials on a more realistic reconstruction we spent the first day of HOD'99 extending our hearth and lining the base and sides. On the second day a stainless steel pan was used in conjunction with the lead pan providing a hearth length of 2.5m. The volume of brine evaporated during the day was increased to 45 gallons. The same amount of wood used on previous days was able to make more salt and the brine in the pan immediately over the fire boiled to make fine salt crystals, whilst the brine in the end pan was cooler and made coarser salt. Over future demonstration days the wear patterns on the pan will be recorded and observed against archaeological examples. In time it is intended to construct and use three lead salt pans.



Anglo-Saxon hearth excavated at Droitwich. Photo by permission JD Hurst. From: A Multi-Period Salt Production Site at Droitwich: Excavations at Upwich (1997) CBA Research Report 107.

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.

NEW DISCOVERIES OF JABEZ THOMPSON BRICKS

New connections have been made between the Thompson's brickworks in Northwich and the North West of England following a local discovery of Jabez Thompson bricks in Bridge House.

Bridge House in London Road is an interesting Northwich building. It was built to replace the Bridge Hotel, a brick building which was demolished due to subsidence. The design for the present building, submitted by Joseph Cawley, won second prize in an architectural competition to find a replacement Inn. Eventually the replacement building was itself considered to be in danger of subsiding into the River Dane. Mr Yarwood however believed the building was too good to be 'taken down' and he arranged to lift it and move it away from the river. A sequence of photographs shows the lifting and moving operation which took place in 1913. The 55 ton building was moved 'without a freckle of any description'. Following serious flooding the building was moved again this time vertically raising it above a 100 year flood level. The building has had a number of tenants including an architect and the CVS. It came into the ownership of Vale Royal Borough Council, who, unable to find new tenants or purchasers for such an unusual building, have now asked the Muir Group to convert it into sheltered accommodation.

Prior to work being carried out there were no known associations with Jabez Thompson however on removing internal partitioning complete walls constructed of JABEZ THOMPSONS PATENT BRICKWOOD, each individually stamped, were uncovered.



Bridge House, Northwich

An item about Bridge House appeared in the local paper and was read by John Everett of Weaverham. This led to another other unexpected discovery. John was restoring Croich Hey house at Hawkshaw, Bury and had uncovered an internal partition wall where each brick was also stamped, this time with the stamp THOMPSONS PATENT TERRAWODE FIXING BLOCK NORTHWICH.

The house was built in 1904 for Fred Howwell, then a Director of the Bleachers' Association, includes other terracotta features which may also be by Thompson.

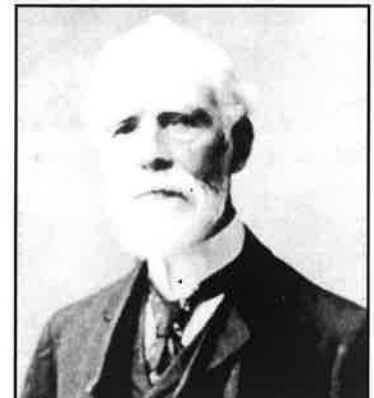
An advert for 'terrawode' panels describes the uses and benefits from using the lightweight, slab partition. Thompson's letterhead advertises 'Brickwood' which were to be used for fireproofing and soundproofing internal walls.

The 'brickwood' found at Bridge House was obviously used for such a purpose, incorporated between wood partitions. At Croich Hey the 'terrawode' created

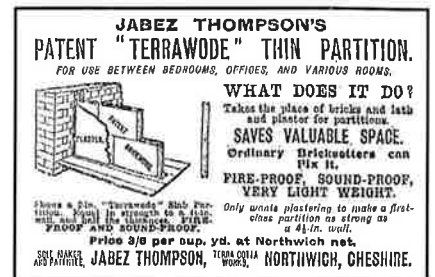


Croich Hey, Hawkshaw

an internal wall separating the master bedroom from the servants' wing. The Trust would be pleased to hear from anyone who has Jabez Thompson brick in their house and will also be investigating the patent claimed in the letterhead and advert.



Portrait of Jabez Thompson kindly supplied by his youngest grandson Charles Thompson of Edmonton, Canada.



The Red Lion Yard, Marston

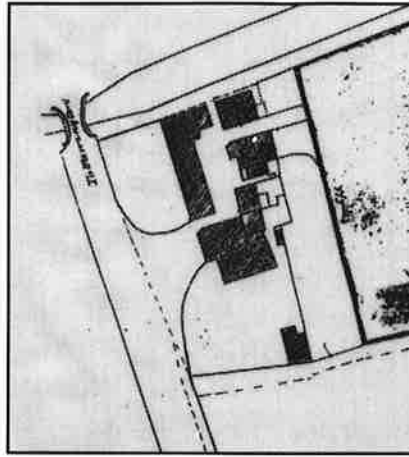
An enquiry by Edward Down has prompted us to report on cottages which stood alongside the canal before the Lion Salt Works were constructed. Mr Down enquired if any documents survived regarding the Red Lion Yard which might include information regarding Samuel Higgins recorded in the 1841 census as living in the Red Lion Yard.

The Lion Works took its name from the Red Lion Hotel which formerly stood in the centre of the site. John Thompson Jnr had constructed a salt pan in the coal yard of the hotel with a brine shaft close to adjacent cottages. The Tythe Map and other plans show the location of the cottages clustered together behind the hotel.

Among the deeds of the site is included a mortgage from Mrs Elizabeth Buckley and others to Mr Thomas Rigby, dated October 1856, lists families who were tenants at the time.

'All that Public House called the Red Lion situate in Marston aforesaid on the High Road leading from Northwich to Warrington together with the yard stabling gighouse and other appurtenances coal yard weighing machine office cottage and shop bakehouse and the two cottages thereunto adjoining now or late in the occupation of Mr Edwards and his undertenants Susan Dickens John Dickens and George Platt And also all those seven cottages with the yards gardens and other appurtenances situate in Marston aforesaid and adjoining the first mentioned premises six whereof are now or lately where in the occupation of James Littler James Yarwood Samuel Yarwood Samuel Higgins Samuel Littler and Joseph Johnson and the other whereof is or lately was untenanted.'

The document confirms the census return that the Higgins family did reside in the Red Lion Yard. Samuel Higgins parents came from Wybunbury though he was born at Acton by Nantwich in



Plan of cottages behind Red Lion Hotel.

1796. In the 1850 he was 54 years old and described as a salt boiler. Samuel and his wife Ann had six children, Mary, Jane, Samuel, Peter, James and George. James Higgins born in Marston in 1837 was working as a salt boiler in 1881 at which time his own eldest son, born 1859, was working as a salt miner.

1894 Cholera Outbreak, Marston

Northwich historian, Colin Lynch is able to provide further information about the cottages behind the Lion Inn. His study of the local newspapers has extracted details of a cholera outbreak which began in February, 1894, 150 yards away from the Red Lion properties.

By this date the Higgins family were no longer living in the Red Lion yard which possibly had come down in the world. In a letter, dated 29th August, to the Northwich Rural Sanitary Authority, Henry Ingram Thompson, son of John Thompson Jnr, was keen to point out that urgent measures were necessary to stay the epidemic and that the properties in the Red Lion yard were not, by any means, the worst in Marston. He reported that notices had recently been served on eight tenants and that he himself was quite aware that not all of his tenants were clean, and he had given notice to those of dirty habits to leave.

There had been 23 reported cases at Marston six of these had been moved for treatment to the Hospital. Out of the 23 cases, there had been five deaths.

On Going Feasibility Studies

Work has resumed this autumn by the Brian Clancy Partnership to survey the structural condition of the Pan Houses. Having previously looked at Pan Houses No 1 and 3 attention has now turned to Pan Houses 4 and 5.

No 4 Pan was constructed in 1937 by Alan Thompson and remained in use until the works closed in 1986. It had been converted to use fuel oil and is unusual in having been built with a metal framed drying room.

The Trust is investigating the use of a stoker-burner designed to use biomass heating with a modern heat recovery system. Using timber would link the heating method with the historic salt pans also demonstrated on the site. It would be non-polluting and source its fuel from local coppice woodlands.

As the structural conditions become clear discussions will begin with English Heritage and consultants to develop the optimum restoration plan and define the costs involved.



The Trust is benefiting from a Placement Scheme supported by *Business in the Arts North West*. Janet McBurney from Percy Hughes & Roberts of Birkenhead is providing specialist legal advice to the Trust. The Trust is grateful to *BIA:NW* Manager, Viv Tyler for her help and support in placing Janet with us. We hope to give you more good news about successful grant applications in our next newsletter.

DATES for your Diary

Autumn '99

SALT AND FOOD

The continuing exhibition at the Lion Inn features recipes display uses of salt in the preserving food.

We still want to hear from you. Send in recipes of how you use salt, your special recipes and uses for crystal or lump salt. They may be family recipes, local to your area or from a book.

25th - 31st October TRENT AND MERSEY CANAL CONSERVATION AREA

Display for the designation of a Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area in Vale Royal. Maps and descriptions of the proposed designation. One of a number of venues for you to find out details of the proposals and feed back your comments to Vale Royal Borough Council.

Friday, 15th October Lion Salt Works : Past, Present and Future — A talk by Andrew Fielding

The first lecture in a new season of talks organised by the Northwich and District Heritage Society. 8.00pm at Mid-Cheshire College, Hartford.

Please note that the site and exhibitions will be closed over Christmas and New Year to enable our volunteers to be with their families.

SALT KITS by JOHN HUDSON

We were introduced to John Hudson's work through the *Pots and Crocks Exhibition* at Grosvenor Museum in the summer where we loaned some of our salt glazed pots produced for us by Steve Harrison.

John produces a variety of salts based on historical examples. The Trust currently has two examples in stock but will establish a selection over the coming months. The large salt kit is a West Yorkshire example with a slip decoration. The figure is based on a table salt which would have been used to designate your place at the table, above or below the salt. It is based on a sixteenth century example in Cardiff Museum.



OPENING TIMES

The Lion Salt Works exhibition is opened each afternoon 1.30pm to 4.30pm. Donations : £1 per adult, 50p per child. For further information call 01606-41823.

Web site address - <http://lion-saltworkstrust.co.uk>

The Trust is seeking new volunteers to join the team who enable its exhibition building to open on a regular basis. Regular commitment required for minimum of up to 4 hours during opening times.

Contact Project Director Andrew Fielding.

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 are currently 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.

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