

# The MUNDLING STICK



the LION  
Salt Works  
TRUST

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

**VOLUME 4 No. 1**



## PHOTOGRAPHS OF SALT WORKS REVEAL DETAILS OF LOST PANHOUSE

THREE photographs of the Lion Salt Works have been lent to the Trust by local historian Colin Lynch. The photographs reveal interesting details of one of the earliest pan houses constructed on the site by John Thompson about 1898.

The photographs were taken about 1920 and look south down Ollershaw Lane and show repair work being carried out to the bridge crossing the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The photographs show features of the Lion Works which have since been altered or demolished. We may be able to rebuild some of them during our restoration work.

What we now call Pan House No.1 was originally constructed in the coal yard of the Red Lion Hotel. Because of the size and shape of the former coal yard the pan

house was built squarer than was usual and had a pyramidal roof with a central vent which provided for the escape of steam and heat. It was built facing the canal to facilitate the easy delivery of coal to the furnace. To the side of the pan can be seen a loading gantry which allowed salt to be loaded from the drying store (or warehouse) at second floor level, high above the tow path dropping it directly into the waiting narrowboats. A passage below the gantry provided access between the canal, Pan House No.1 and No.2 to the rear of the site.

The full height of the gantry is difficult to gauge today because of the general ground subsidence and the resultant raising of the towpath in relation to the side of the surviving buildings.

The roadside chimney was eventually demolished because it became unsafe.

It is our intention to rebuild this in order to restore the silhouette of the works.

You may also be able to see a flag pole attached to the southern gable of Pan House No.3.

To the west of the canal bridge three narrowboats are shown tied up to the tow path perhaps loading salt from the 'Coronation' Salt Store. At this time the salt store had a barrel vaulted roof. It was later replaced by a pitched roof.

Unfortunately the names of the narrowboats are not clear enough to read but at least one of them was owned by the North Staffordshire Canal Company.

The Trust would be pleased to see any old photographs of the Lion Works which it may be able to copy and add to its reference library showing the development of the site.

*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.*

## REPLICA ROMAN SALT PAN

As part of its commitment to restore open pan salt making at the Lion Salt Works the Trust has a direct interest in the origins of the industrial process. To help understand the developments, and the conservatism, in this industrial process we have already looked at sixteenth century salt making as described by Georgio Agricola in 1565 in small iron pans. The origins of open pan brine evaporation are however older than this and the Romans used lead salt pans.

With the help of archaeology students Bill Smith and Ewan Esserly from Manchester University we have constructed a life size salt pan based on measurements and dimensions of a lead pan discovered at Shavington.

Our pan is 1m x 1m x 15cm and is constructed from lead 8mm thick. The total weight of the pan is 150kg and takes at least four people to lift it off the ground.

We were kindly assisted by British Lead Mills of Welwyn Garden City who supplied the lead for the replica. Lead of this thickness is not generally available and BLM had to suspend their normal rolling process and reset their equipment in order to produce a billet specially for our project. Delivery was by lorry but to unload it we needed the help of a hiab lorry provided at a moments notice by Mr Vlies's Marston scrap yard. With help and encouragement from George and John Twigg the sheet of lead was quickly formed into a shallow tray. We attempted to replicate folded corners rather than soldered joints.

The basic shape was formed by folding the sides downwards over a former created from wooden blocks and then the first three corners were created by wrapping the snout of lead formed at



the corners sideways down the longer side of the pan.

A more complicated fold was attempted with the final corner where the snout was divided around the corner by creating wings of lead which were then flattened against the sides of the pan. This created a unique shape at the base of the corner where the stretching and compressing of the lead formed a bulbous rather than a sharp corner.

After a series of trial firings whilst we learn how to make salt the Roman way the pan will eventually be fired during one of our public demonstrations as part of Museum Week on Saturday, 16th May.

When not in use it will be on permanent display in our exhibition centre.

Bill Smith will be incorporating elements of the work into his undergraduate thesis and a full description of the work will be published by the Trust as part of a series of pamphlets which will report on other aspects of our historical research into salt making the Thompson's salt work.





## TV NEWS REPORT FROM SALT WORKS

A flurry of news items about potential subsidence problems related to old rock salt mines in Northwich town centre resulted in a number of visits by the media in January. Reporters from Radio 4, Channel 5, Sky News, BBC and ITV were all in the area perhaps disappointed not to see gaping holes in the ground. A piece to camera by local historian Colin Lynch was recorded by BBC reporter Kevin Bouquet and was transmitted on national BBC 1 Breakfast News.

## THANKS TO TRUSTEE

At its last meeting in February the Trust had to say farewell to one of its Trustees.

John Szostek has been a committed supporter of the Trust and with reluctance has resigned after taking a new job with Brunner Mond which will take him to Durban, South Africa.

Chairman Richard Hamlett thanked John for the contribution he had made in a short time in particular with the creation of the Trust's Founder Sponsor Scheme. We all send our best wishes to him for his new job.

## ENTRUST REGISTRATION

The Lion Salt Works Trust is now registered with ENTRUST as an environmental body.

This allows the Trust to receive grants from landfill operators out of their taxable obligations.

Brunner Mond and British Salt have already promised to make grants to the Trust in this way.

Details in later newsletters.



## PRIVATE SIDING UNCOVERED

Following the Christmas gales work was required to repair the corrugated roof covering the horizontal steam engine within the pump house.

Alan Plumley of Winsford carried out the work and also completed general landscaping work between the Lion Inn, Manager's Office and Pump House uncovering the private railway siding laid in to the site about 1900.

Over 40 tons of ash and cinders were gently removed to reveal the rails.

Many of the sleeper beams have rotted away but sleepers laid between the lines to form a crossing are still in good condition. Also revealed was a set of points which would have allowed salt vans and coal wagons to pass each other.

# DATES for your Diary

Summer—Autumn '97

**Saturday 21st March 1998**

## Science Week - Salt making and Salt Glazing

The display will show the whole process from salt making, pot throwing through to dramatic process of salt-glazing.

This is a rare opportunity to see Steve Harrison one of this country's leading salt-glaze potters at work.

Under graduate students from the department will support the event with demonstrations of pottery making.

Funded through a COPUS grant.

Displays of Steven Harrison's work. Pieces will be available for sale at a variety of prices.



**Saturday 16th May 1998**

## MUSEUMS WEEK Roman Salt Pan Display

A new display featuring our replica Roman lead salt pan.

See the first public firing of a lead Roman salt pan during Museums Week.

Part of a national promotion of museums with support from Vauxhall Motors.

Information and comprehensive listing on <http://www.museumsworld.co.uk>

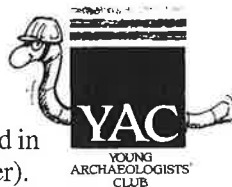
**Saturday 25th July 1998**

## National Archaeology Day

Promotion of archaeology for families and children.

Activities and practical demonstrations. A new month for this event (In previous year has been held in conjunction with Heritage Open Days in September).

More details in our summer newsletter.



## 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://www.lionsaltworkstrust.co.uk>

### TRUSTEES

Richard Hamlett, (Chairman); Lady Rochester; John Szostek, Terry Cresswell, Dr Sandy Todd, Dr Tom Farthing; Cllr Mrs V Frame; Cllr Tony Hooton; 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 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.

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

## FOUNDING SPONSOR SCHEME

There has been a good initial response to our invitations to local salt related companies to join a founding sponsorship scheme.

So far Brunner Mond (UK) Ltd, British Salt, Atlas Copco, Interactive Developments and The Worshipful Company of Salter have all agreed to join and help the Trust in its work to restore the site as a working industrial museum. More details in next newsletter.

## COSTINGS FOR RESTORATION

Investigations into the concepts of restoring the site have been completed whilst we awaited the results of geological investigations, however, as full feasibility costings are not eligible for lottery funding we must now find the funds to cost the restoration scheme. These costs may be calculated into the eventual matching funding which will be required in the event of a successful lottery bid.

Vale Royal Borough Council have generously agreed to support this element of the work in its support of our lottery bid. It has been decided to ask the Clancy Partnership to carry out the survey due to the working knowledge they have already acquired of the buildings and the special problems they present.

Work is expected to take a number of months, and though further funding is needed to complete all the required work we anticipate preparing a bid for submission to the lottery fund within twelve months. Further details as work proceeds.