

The MUNDLING STICK



the LION
Salt Works
TRUST

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

VOLUME 5 No. 2

Orchids Bloom in June

Environmental conditions at the Lion Works have been suitable for wild orchids to return and flower around the site. This reminds us that the conservation of the Lion Works includes the related natural environment as well as the surviving buildings and the processes of open pan salt making.

Orchids are very particular about where they grow. Though locally they may thrive they have suffered a great decline in numbers of the past two centuries due to two factors - the loss of suitable habitat and because of human interference and picking.

Many orchid in Vale Royal grow on abandoned salt making sites and lime waste dumps which have created suitable growing conditions of aspect, drainage and lime content in the soil. Our orchids have probably seeded from the large numbers of Purple and Fragrant Orchids which populate the adjacent lime waste lagoons of Ashton and Newmans Flashes.

The unusual Bee Orchids were photographed at a former salt making site in Winsford which is now a Country Park - but were all picked within one day of flowering. It takes up to eight years for Bee Orchids to build up their strength to flower, after which they seed and die.

It is contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act to disturb wild flowers. Please don't pick them or try to transplant them. Enjoy them and allow others to appreciate them in the natural environment.



*Orchids growing at the
Lion Salt Works*



*The unusual Bee Orchid growing on a
former salt working site in Winsford.*



*The picking of orchid flowers from the wild
means there are considerably less seeds to
germinate and flower in future years.*

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.

Work Experience for Matthew

In May local boy Mathew Burrage (15yrs) spent a week at the Lion Salt Works as part of his work experience placement from Hartford High School. Matthew is interested in studying archaeology and joined The Young Archaeology Club having visited one of our salt making demonstration days linked with National Archaeology Day. His week at the Lion Works was varied and made use of his artistic interests which were particularly useful in helping to complete our *Salt and Food* exhibition in time for the beginning of Museums Week.

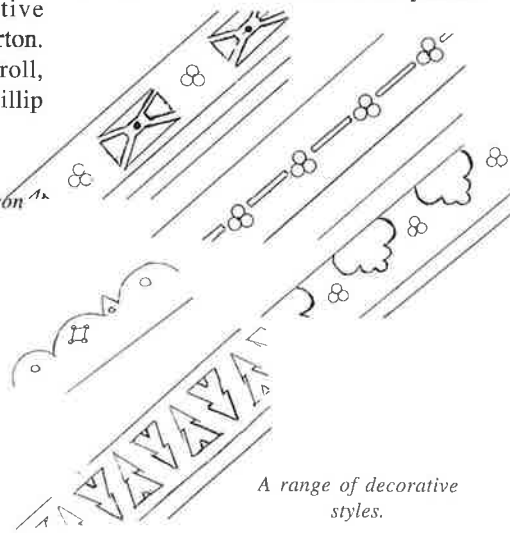
Mathew was also able to make some progress at completing a local project started by students at Verdin High School, Winsford who wanted to carry out a survey project but were unable to travel to Northwich to work at the Lion Works. The original field work was carried out in 1997 to record decorative bargeboards in Winsford and Wharton. The recorders were Samantha Carroll, Katie Rivett, Emma Slack and Phillip Cookson.



Apprentice salt boiler for a day.

Mathew was able to collate the record sketches and produce a draft layout for publication.

Features such as moulded brick were produced by Jabez Thompson in the nineteenth century from his works in Manchester Road. Decorative bargeboards were features of houses designed and built at the same period.



A range of decorative styles.

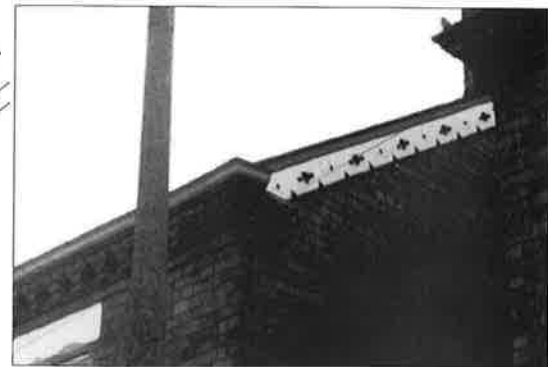
Terracotta date plaque by Jabez Thompson



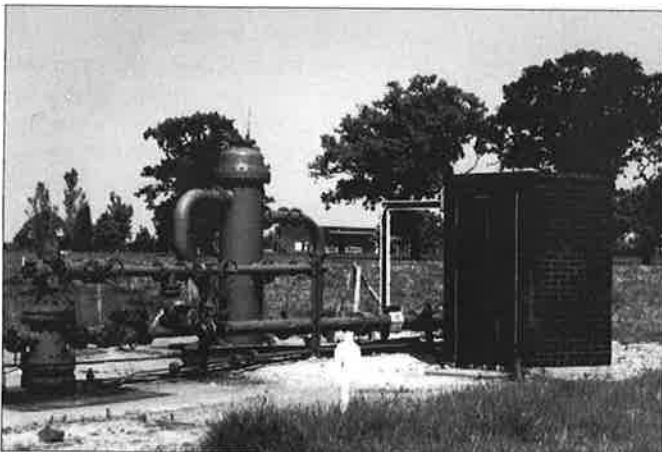
Mathew was able to help with the *Museums Week* salt making demonstration held on Sunday 23rd May. Matthew's father, who works for Cheshire Fire Brigade, joined us and spent the whole day trying to keep a fire alight rather than putting it out.

The preparatory work for our salt making demonstrations starts with collecting brine from British Salt's controlled brine field at Warmingham, deep in the Cheshire countryside. We use brine straight from the wells themselves so it is unrefined and contains all the natural minerals which are removed for modern salt production in vacuum evaporators. The well heads are laid out in a chequer board arrangement and monitored for size as fresh water is pumped down, and the rock salt dissolved, to produce saturated brine. The brine is sent to the pumphouse for delivery by pipe to their works alongside the Trent and Mersey Canal at Middlewich.

For one of our demonstration days we use about 25 gallons of brine. The brine pumps are capable of delivering 1.75 million gallons per day from the brine field to Middlewich.



A mix of eaves and barge boards.



Christmas tree well head.



Pumps send raw brine to Middlewich.



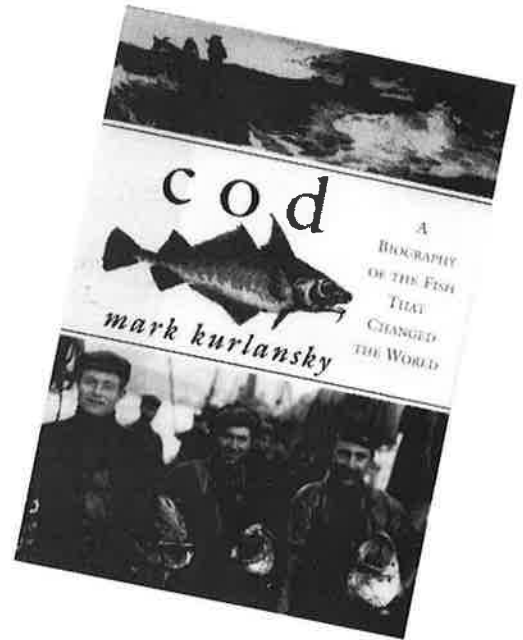
Sarah Hill with the Potts family from Bristol and the Robinsons from Chester who kindly entered and re-entered the pump house under the direction of Sarah Hill.

Community Partnerships Briefing Video

Two families visiting the site earlier in the year became involved in the making of a short video for Vale Royal Borough Council.

Sarah Hill is employed as the Borough Council's Film and Media Development Officer and needed to film a short piece about the Lion Salt Works to include in a presentation on the Community Partnerships section of the Borough's Community Services Directorship.

The Lion Salt Works piece also included an extract from the video record we made of our Science Week event, held in March, which focused on biomass technology and its potential use to heat the restored salt pans.



RESEARCH FOR NEW SALT BOOK

Peter Sherratt, Secretary of the Salt Manufacturers Association brought American journalist Mark Kurlansky to the Lion Works as part of a fact finding trip for a new book on salt.

Mark writes for the *International Herald Tribune* and contributes a food history column to the *Food & Wine* magazine.



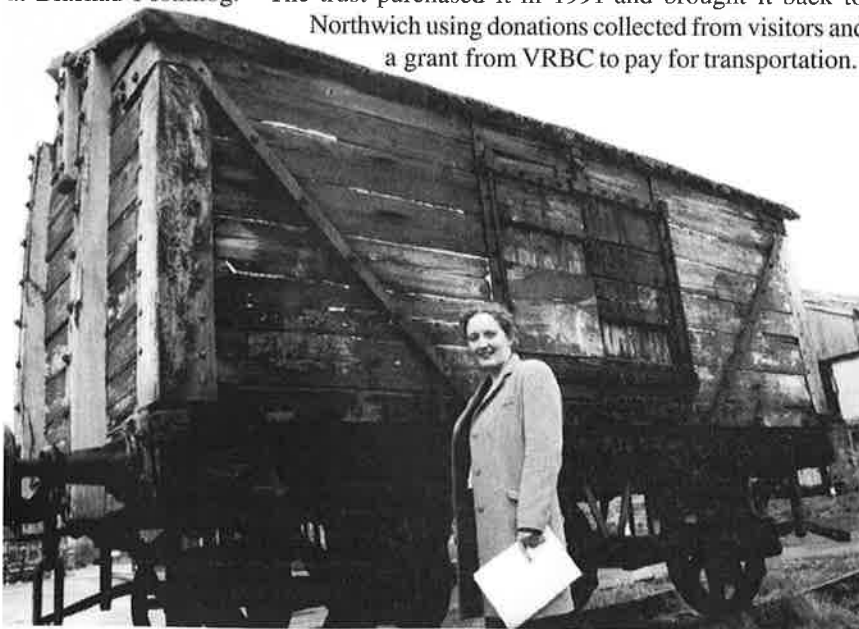
His last book 'Cod : a biography of the fish that changed the world' (Jonathan Cape, 1998) encouraged his interest in salt because of the links with salt fish recipes which are featured at the end of the book.

PRISM Fund

Catherine Halcrow, from The Science Museum in London, has visited the works to give advise on how the Trust could apply for grant aid from the Prism Fund. Prism is a special grant which directs money towards the restoration of industrial machinery.

Many of the machines which remain on site may be eligible for grant aid as they are the only examples within a surviving salt works. Those within the pan houses themselves will only become eligible when the Trust has acquired a lease from Vale Royal Borough Council, but others such as the rare pitched roof salt van may benefit this year.

It is thought the salt van is now one of only four in the country. Built about 1900 surviving sign writing suggest it was used by Chance and Hunt Ltd then the Salt Union before being incorporated into the ICI wagon fleet. It was given away by ICI from their Lostock site in 1977 and ended up in the ownership of a private collector at Blaenau Festiniog. The trust purchased it in 1991 and brought it back to Northwich using donations collected from visitors and a grant from VRBC to pay for transportation.



SALT & FOOD

Our current exhibition looks at the uses of salt in cooking and we would like to hear from you if you used to cook with Thompsons' salt. Did you use traditional recipes to salt or brine vegetables, fish or meat? Please drop us a line.

DATES for your Diary

Summer '99

SALT AND FOOD from 15th May continuing all summer

This exhibition looks at the uses of salt in the kitchen with many extracts from Mrs Beaton, but also recipes sent in by former customers.

The great cookery writer Elizabeth David was a user of Thompson salt. Did you use Thompson block salt for drying, preserving or general cookery?

Visit the exhibition, telephone, write to us or send us an email.

Perhaps your recipes could be used for a Lion Salt Works Cookery Book.

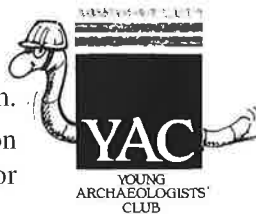
National Archaeology Day

Sunday 25th July

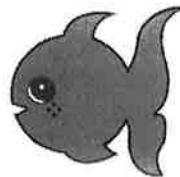
Salt making demonstrations - 10.00am to 5.00pm.

Part of the Young Archaeology Club promotion of archaeology, supported by the Council for British Archaeology.

Come along for information about archaeology.



Fidlers Fancy Morris Dancing Team will be on site to perform traditional dances which include The Marston Dance. The Stockport based women's dancing team was started in 1886 and resurrected this local dance during last year's tour which took dances back to their original villages.



Heritage Open Day '99

11th -12th September

Salt making demonstrations.

First chance to view the development of a virtual reality world being developed in collaboration with students at Mid-Cheshire College. The project aims to reconstruct Northwich as depicted in the photographs taken of the town in 1891 by Thomas Birtles.

Visit other buildings in the area also open as part of this national event organised by the Civic Trust. Also this year a part of the 1999 Northwich River Festival.

Further details later in the year.

SALT POTS ON LOAN

You can see some of our Lion Salt Works salt glazed pots, made by Steve Harrison, at the current exhibition held at The Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

Old Crocks — New Pots runs until 25th July.



Julie Edwards and Moya O'Mullane select pots for their display at The Grosvenor 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.

The Lion Salt Works Trust is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity No. 1020258. VAT registration No. 628998076. The Mundling Stick is written by the Lion Salt Works Project Director and is kindly designed and printed by Vale Royal Borough Council.