

The MUNDLING STICK



the LION
Salt Works
TRUST

Newsletter of the Lion Salt Works Trust WINTER 2005

VOLUME II No.4

HERITAGE LOTTERY BID ASSESSMENT UNDERWAY



An application by the Lion Salt Works Trust, for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, is currently being assessed by a case officer from the Manchester office of the HLF. The Trust is seeking funds to enable the scheduled monument to be preserved, restored and rebuilt in order that it can be used as a working museum of our historic salt industry.

A Conservation Plan has been adopted, which lays down a blue print for the restoration of the buildings. Facilities will enable the site and the processes carried on there to be fully explained and for them to be put into historical contexts which relate to geology, history, and technology and relate Cheshire salt making to other areas of the UK and abroad. Above all the site will be preserved for future generations and will provide a lively mix of education in arts and sciences, which will be enjoyable and entertaining to all ages.

This newsletter will outline the plans we have for the site, the buildings and for the Lion Salt Works Trust.

Supporting our Bid

The Trust has been expertly supported by the Chester office of architects Donald Insall Associates who have developed and project managed other major HLF bids in our area such as at Ince Manor and the recently opened Staircase House in Stockport.

The work has been priced by Davis, Langdon and Everest, quantity surveyors, who have also worked on major HLF commissions across the country.

How Can you Help

A 'Friends of the Lion Salt Works' organisation will be formed in 2006 to help our volunteers support the work of the Trust. Our current team of dedicated volunteers will be recruiting more helpers from our local area for practical help on site in interpreting the site to visitors and at events. In addition a fund-raising programme will be organised to gather together the required match funding for a successful HLF grant award.



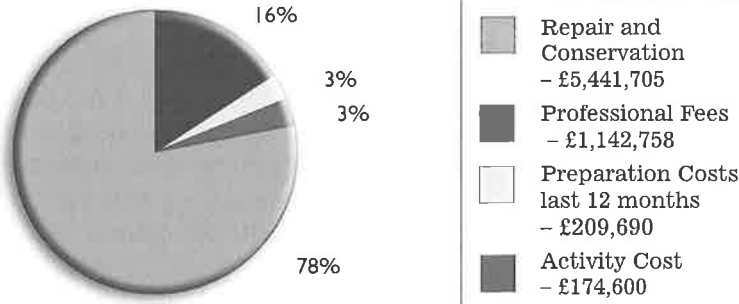
mundling stick *n.* - tool used to pack salt crystals into the wooden tubs when making lump salt. This newsletter will likewise try to cram in all the latest information about the conservation and restoration of the Lion Salt Works.

The Lion Salt Works Trust will -

- Restore a scheduled monument.
- Interpret how the site was owned, built and operated by the Thompson family.
- Tell the story of salt making.
- Research and demonstrate historic salt making processes.
- Use the site for events and functions.
- Be part of local, national and international programmes.
- Use and promote the site for sustainable energy through the adoption of bio-fuel.



Costs for the restoration of the Lion Salt Works: £7 million



FACILITIES,

The site will be restored so that visitors will enter a Victorian salt works, passing the Smithy and the timber framed Manger's Office. The iconic nodding donkey brine pump will be driven by the horizontal steam engine.

Modern facilities will be hidden within a rebuilt Stove House No.5 where there will be a themed gift shop and general information with introductory displays. Stairs or a lift will take you to the upper warehouse floor where a café area will enable visitors to relax beneath the magnificent timber framed roof and enjoy local Cheshire produce.

A walkway will take you back in time to the warehouse areas of Pan Houses 1, 2, 3 and 4 which will have individual zones for use as temporary exhibition spaces, an audio-visual presentation, hands-on activity area and multi-media gallery.

Each area of the pan houses, stove houses and warehouses will tell the story of how the salt was made, who worked there and what conditions were like.

Outside salt making displays will have working examples of archaeological salt pans from Iron Age, Roman and medieval periods which will show the evolution of open pan salt making

Much of the interpretation will be self-guided but booked parties may opt for a tour guide to accompany them.

Thematic events will be held to utilise the canal side and the grounds using historic, artistic, dramatic or scientific themes.

LINKS TO LOCAL INITIATIVES

The Lion Salt Works Trust is working with the other projects to interpret the heritage of Northwich and mid-Cheshire.

Recent tourism studies for the Mersey Forest, Northwich Community Woodlands and the Weaver Valley Regional Park have shown that though there is a long history of salt making in Cheshire, progress has removed most physical remains on the ground. The Lion Salt Works is perhaps the only major survivor in the built environment. The remaining heritage is difficult to access as it is below ground archaeology or merely scars on the landscape now accessible through country parks at Anderton, Marbury or Ashton's and Neuman's Flash.

Other sites can present salt heritage through evidence in the form of documents in libraries or photographs and artefacts in museums such as the Cheshire Record Office, The Salt Museum or local museums in Nantwich and Middlewich. But, to be able to visit a real open pan salt works we must preserve the Lion Salt Works

LINKS TO SALT SITES IN THE UK

It is claimed that the success of Cheshire salt makers was responsible for the closure of the widespread salt making sites around the country.

The Trust is seeking to take on a co-ordinating role to widen publicity for the UK salt heritage from the prehistoric to the present day.

There are fascinating sites to visit on the coast at St Monans, Fife; Crosscanonby, Cumbria; Port Eynon, Gower; Lymington, Hampshire and inland at Droitwich, Worcestershire.

The Lion Salt Works will tell its own story and fit it into an evolutionary story about changes in technology, taxation, transport and labour and fuel which has been important to the health and wealth of the country.

This story is evolving today. The last family salt business in Cheshire, the New Cheshire Salt Works closes in 2006 and with concerns over fuel costs and the related markets in caustic and chlorine products, influenced by world markets, our present day salt story is still fascinating.

LINKS TO SALT SITES OVERSEAS

The Lion Salt Works has made links with salt making sites overseas and will continue to extend these connections.

Saline-les-Bains is the best equivalent site in France and attracts over 50,000 visitors a year. The remote Colorado Salt Works is the only surviving open pan salt works in the USA and itself is still struggling to attract funds to restore the site.

Through our participation in the European Route of Industrial Heritage we have the opportunity to raise the profile of salt museums and salt heritage.

The Trust intends to develop further links with Salies du Bearn, France and Cardona, Spain where their municipal authorities are proposing a European wide linking of towns with a salt heritage for tourism and economic benefits.



EXPERIMENTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

The Lion Salt Works Trust will build on its experiences to enhance its academic research and presentation of historic salt making through practical experiments and demonstrations.

Science Week events over previous years have resulted in the presentation to the public of innovative displays, which have involved the participation of school children, students and academics in original research projects.

The making of lead salt pans has enabled us to understand the practice of Roman open pan salt making and has provided a major resource for public demonstrations. In 2003 this was enhanced through an HLF, Your Heritage Grant, which added replica clothing and artefacts to enable us to recreate a Roman atmosphere during our demonstration events.

There is much more to do to understand pre-lead salt making techniques. Our 2005 Iron Age salt making display was the result of extensive collaboration with Heritage Lincolnshire and Anvil Pottery to understand the practicalities of making ceramic salt pans based on examples found at Ingoldmells, Lincs. The experiment to construct a prototype salt oven will be extended in 2006 with an experiment on a salt mash at Wrangle, Lincs.

In 2006 we will also extend our European collaborations by building and using a replica 'thornbush tower' based on examples in Rheine, Germany.

With the creation of better facilities we look forward to repeating the demonstration of salt glazing techniques with artist/potter Steve Harrison and to provide demonstration days and educational events linked to salting and preserving meat, fish and vegetables as well as connections of salt and bleaching products in the fields of textiles and dyeing.

EDUCATION AND PUBLICATION

The Lion Salt Works Trust will extend its range of publications through its book shop, publishing its own Research Reports as well as stocking specialist and general books linked to salt and aspects to do with associated topics such as the canals, railways, food and local history.

To date the Trust has produced a guide-book about the Lion Salt Works as well as three research reports. Report No.4 will provide a synopsis of our Conservation Plan setting out the understanding of the site, its significance and describing the issues which have been addressed and what policies need to be put in place to restore the site.

Future reports will publish topics such as the experiments carried out through our recent Science Week experiments and the surviving title deeds and documents that comprise the Lion Salt Works archive.

On a more general level the Trust is working with a local illustrator and author to produce a series of books, which will follow the tales of a narrowboat on the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The Trust's Project Director has contributed to the English Heritage Monument Protection Programme report on the salt industry in England. He has jointly edited a CBA-NW conference entitled 'Brine in Britannia' and is currently working on a book with Annelise Fielding for Shire Publications, which will provide a simple background to the history of salt making in the UK.

The story of salt is relevant to a wide audience and age groups and can cater for the general visitor or specialist student. We will develop a broad range of entry points and levels, whether students or visitors are interested in architecture, technology, chemistry, social history, food or need direction on salt making in the UK or overseas. We should be your first point of contact.

DRAMA, ART AND DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

The Lion Salt Works Trust will expand the use of the site and the story of salt in the field of art and design, drama and music.

The success of the HLF funded community play 'Salt Tellers' has shown how the site can be used for open-air events. A follow up play based on rock salt mining and subsidences is currently being developed for performance in 2007. The salt works may not be restored by then but there is a dedicated area called the 'salt plaza' between Pan House No.5 and the brine pump which will eventually cater for events such as this.

Our back page records the outcome from 2005's Big Draw held at Lion and plans are being prepared for 2006, when you can again take advantage of free tuition by local artists.

Our shop currently stocks earthenware, salt glazed and soda glazed ceramics from fourteen potters. We have commissioned several special pieces over the years including our own limited edition salt glazed pieces, glazed with our own salt. With a larger retail area we plan to specialise in salt glazed or soda glazed ceramics.

The shop should also be a source for local artists to display their impressions of local scenes through watercolours, acrylics, oil or prints.

Our temporary display space will allow the access by the cultural sector and the local environment. There is tremendous opportunity to inter-link the story of salt and the effects on the landscape. Cheshire salt influenced the construction of the Weaver Navigation, the canal network and railways and through subsidences and pollution has influenced the flora and fauna in the local area.

The Trust will extend its out-reach with organisations such as DAN, Action Weaver Valley, The Salt Museum and the Weaver Valley Regional Park in all these areas.



Dates for Your Diary



Sunday 14th March

Demonstration Day

Lion Salt Works - 10am-5pm

Building and Operating a Thornbush Tower - or 'How to strengthen brine by cascading it over twigs'.

Tuesday 16th March

Public Lecture

Northwich Memorial Hall - 7.30pm

Adults £3 Children £1

Guest Speaker- Jules Vleugels, Town Guide, Rheine, Germany.

'The Heritage of Thornbush Towers in Rheine, Westphalia, Germany'- Jules Vleugels

'Science Week Projects based on Thornbush Towers'- students from St Nicholas RC High School, Hartford

'Building a working model of a Thornbush Tower at the Lion Salt Works'- Andrew Fielding & Tony Leonard

School Visits

(Monday-Thursday 14th-17th March)

Book your school or social club to visit the Lion Salt Works during Science Week to learn about how Thornbush Towers used to be used to increase the concentration of brine in Northern Europe.

Morris Dancing Day

Saturday, 13th May

Morris Dancing Teams will be performing at the Lion Salt Works and the Anderton Lift. Watch out for this colourful and noisy event.

Briquetage Conference

Saturday. Date to be announced.

Boston, Lincolnshire.

Specialist conference on ceramic salt making hearths, ovens and salt containers. Lecturers from Heritage Lincolnshire, Southampton University, Lion Salt Works Trust and Belgium.

Saxons are Coming

Saturday 1st July, 2006

The Salt Museum, London Rd Northwich

Salt making by the Lion Salt Works Trust with demonstrations by a Saxon re-enactment group.

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 Gift Aid form.

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BIG DRAW 2005

Participants of all ages were able to get hands on experience of sketching, painting, portraiture, wire-work and sgraffito decoration in this years' Big Draw.

Two collaborative pieces were completed. For the first, shading tissue paper and gluing pieces to a board produced a pair of life-sized portraits of salt workers.

For the second, a photograph of workers loading salt onto a Thompson narrow boat was sketched onto a canvas and participants used acrylics to complete the painting. All the pieces went on display at VRBC reception area at Wyvern House, Winsford and are now on display at the Lion Salt Works, where they will remain.



OPENING TIMES

The Lion Salt Works is open each afternoon 1.30pm to 4.30pm. May be closed Friday and Saturday. Donations welcomed : £1 per adult, 50p per child. Booked parties by arrangement. For further information call 01606-41823. Web site address - <http://lionsaltworkstrust.co.uk>

Help interpret your local heritage to others. The Trust still requires additional volunteers to assist with maintenance and to open the exhibition centre especially on Saturday afternoons.