

Editor's Note

Points of interest:

- A book about Atlantic salt sites
- Georgius Agricola
- Nantes meeting

Books about salt

For centuries past, the economic value of salt has motivated the writing of many publications addressing particular aspects of salt: its production, technology, uses, related legislation, taxation, etc. These have appeared as books, reports or articles, as well as in monographs giving specific accounts of salt production in certain regions or countries.

More recently the recognition of salt as a legacy, its history and considerations regarding its associated landscape and natural heritage, has inspired many other publications, some more specific, while others are more general in nature and it is possible to find excellent books from both perspectives. In fact, salt and salt pans are a fascinating topic which may be associated with beautiful and at times amazing images, because there is also a certain "alchemy" to salt, derived perhaps from the classical heritage which has considered it as the bringing together of Earth, Fire and Water.

As ECOSAL ATLANTIS is an integrated project involving partners from different areas (both geographical and with regard to their knowledge domains) it was acknowledged by all that there is no book which addresses salt working sites in their Atlantic geographical context completely.

Moreover, some of these partners have a collection of documents and other assets that in terms of global knowledge have been used only partially. After these have been collected and interpreted they will provide an array of hitherto unpublished data, which will amount to new approaches to the subject. All these reasons have motivated one of the products to be developed as part of Activity 3 of our project (i.e. dissemination and communication), namely the publication of a book about salt and its exploitation in the geographic area of the Atlantic.

The preparatory work done so far and the expectations regarding existing material lead us to regard this work as something more than an instrument for the dissemination of the project and the future Atlantic Salt Route. We are setting out with the aim of publishing a book as a reference on the subject, but also as a publication that will arouse public interest through the "mythical", and "alchemical" side of salt, a product that we continue to cultivate in the surviving "salt gardens" of the Atlantic using the same method described by Agricola 450 years ago.

Renato Neves

National coordinator of ECOSAL ATLANTIS in Portugal

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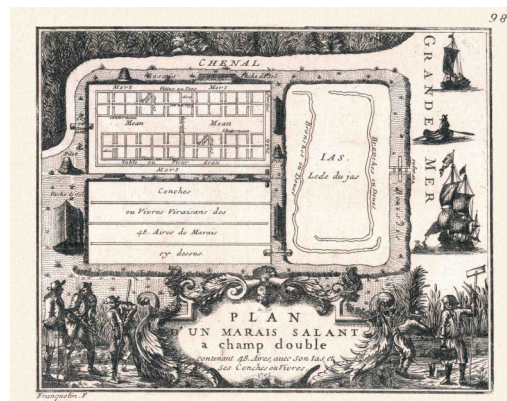
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A book on Atlantic salt sites



Salt worker in traditional working costume. Ria de Aveiro.
Municipality of Aveiro

The object of Activity 3.7, Communication (coordinated by the Écomusée du Marais Salant and Géolittomer, partners 2 & 3) is the edition of a book about Atlantic salt sites by the end of 2012. The purpose of the book is to acquaint the general public with Atlantic salt production in all its aspects – geographical, historical, technical, cultural or environmental and to provide a good presentation of the main results of the ECOSAL ATLANTIS project. The aim is to produce a well presented book of 150 pages, with numerous colour illustrations using a wide variety of documents, many of them not previously published, accompanied by original thematic maps produced by Géolittomer in agreement with the other partners. These maps will make it possible to summarise the information and provide the reader



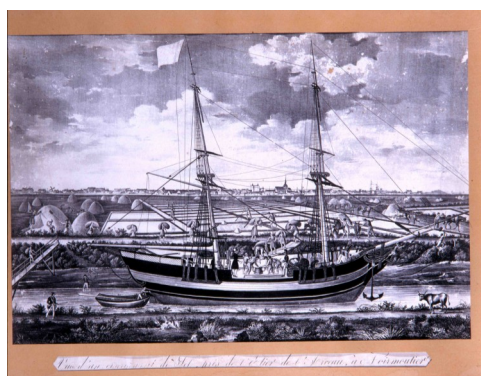
Plan of a saltpan of the type known as "à champ double".
F. Franquelin, 1705. Musée des Marais Salants - Cap Atlantique (Batz-sur-Mer)

with a clear and synoptic view. It should be stressed that the book will use and make the most of the documents collected in the framework of Activity 4, Heritage.

In order to ensure overall coherence while respecting the European spirit the book will not be a catalogue of sites. To this end it will include comparative summaries to introduce each subject followed by case studies with special attention being paid to the partners' salt sites. Certain specific subjects which do not require a whole article will be dealt with in text boxes included in the different chapters.

The first part will deal with salt production and how this developed throughout the historic period in the Atlantic regions of the European Union, from Scotland to the bay of Algeciras in southern Spain. The geographic distribution of salt sites, former and current, coastal and inland will be analysed and a typology drawn up. The different salt production structures and techniques will be studied. These points are very important as there are major differences between British sites and those found on the continent from southern Brittany to the Strait of Gibraltar: in the former salt is mostly produced through heating while the latter use solar evaporation. The same applies to coastal and inland salt sites.

The second part will be devoted to cultural and heritage aspects as well as the salt trade, with special attention to heritage elements and objects directly linked to salt and its uses. The different methods of storing and transporting salt will also be reviewed. The part played by Atlantic salt in developing maritime relations between the different European regions will also be stressed. Indeed, we should show how the salt of our Atlantic Space regions was once the driving force behind exchanges between Northern and Southern Europe. The transatlantic dimension will also be taken into account as part of the production was destined for salting cod in Newfoundland, particularly important for Portugal, or for beef in the *saladeros* of the River Plate basin (Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil). As an example: in 1912, almost 64% of the total production of the most extensive traditional salt pans in Europe, those of the Bay of Cadiz, was exported to these South American countries!



Loading salt onto a sailing ship. View taken from the Arceau tidal creek on the island of Noirmoutier.
Print c. 1840. Musée des Marais Salants - Cap Atlantique (Batz-sur-Mer)



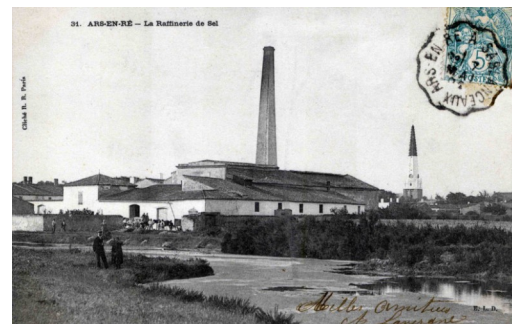
Traditional boat used for salt transport in the Bay of Cadiz. Col. L. Col. L. Ménanteau

The part played by salt sites in the maintenance of biodiversity (Activity 6, Biodiversity and eco-tourism) will be dealt with in the third part. It will begin with a presentation of the environmental assets of the studied sites using the analysis carried out in action 6.1. Two aspects will be analysed in detail: vegetation and its dynamics in relation to the types of milieus and the existence, or absence, of salt production, bird life and the “saline” habitat (relations among Atlantic sites for reproduction and migration). Problems posed by the abandonment, reconversion or destruction of salt sites will also be tackled. Conclusions will also be reached on the specific management models to be applied to these types of “artificial” areas often included in natural protected areas.

Finally, the last part will broach the question of the tourist potential of salt sites and will present Action 5.3 “The Traditional Salt Atlantic Route” of Activity 5, Sustainable Development. The enhancement and tourist management of the various sites taking part in the project will be presented and the need for good practice in terms of production (Action 5.3) and visitor information (Action 5.4) geared to sustainable tourism will be stressed. The book will end with a map of the Route established by the ECOSAL ATLANTIS project and will open up possibilities for its extension to other geographic areas (the Mediterranean countries and Atlantic Morocco).

A detailed plan will be sent to all partners by the end of September 2010 in order to have their opinions and possible alterations before the Annual General Meeting due to be held in the islands of Ré and Oléron (France) in November 2010 which must approve the contents.

Loïc Ménanteau (Géolittomer)



Salt refinery in Ars-en-Ré (isle of Ré).
Col. G. Buron



Loading salt onto traditional boats in Figueira da Foz.
Municipality of Figueira da Foz



Salt storage and transport in the salt pans of San Fernando (Bay of Cadiz). Stereoscopic view, USA, 1903. Col. L. Ménanteau

Character

Who was Agricola?



In almost every museum, exhibition and book about salt and its techniques one will invariably find an illustration depicting the layout of a salt pan derived from the work *De Re Metallica* (On the Nature of Metals), written by Georgius Agricola. This illustration and the detailed description

of the process that accompany it are the first objective and precise references to this production method, which is why the work and its author are frequently cited. With such a profusion of references, the question that begs asking is - who was Agricola?

Georgius Agricola was born in 1494 in Glauchau, in Saxony, and was christened George Bauer. The fact that the term *bauer* means farmer in the Germanic language explains the Latinization of his surname to *agricola*, which must have occurred even during his university education in Saxony.

Between 1524 and 1526 he studied in Italy, reading Philosophy, Medicine and Natural Sciences. In 1527 he takes on the charge of doctor in Joachimsthal in Bohemia, a region of intensive mining. His scientific and deeply humanistic spirit won him the friendship of Erasmus; he published several books, including a *Dialogue* on the figure of a miner, and a treatise on Greek and Roman weights and measures. But his greatest work is undoubtedly the *De Re Metallica* which is made up of a number of profusely illustrated chapters (books) on geology, mineralogy and mining engineering, on which he worked for over 20 years, visiting exploitation sites of minerals and rocks and extensively consulting authors who had preceded him.

Book XII describes the various ways of obtaining materials by evaporation, one of which is salt and the techniques relating to it; the famous engraving depicting coastal salt marshes is included here.

De Re Metallica was published one year following the death of the author (1556.) For nearly 200 years, in fact, almost until the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, this work remained the absolute reference for Geology and Mining Engineering and is now a valuable resource to document the history of the earth sciences and of the technologies relating to them.

Renato Neves

National coordinator of ECOSAL ATLANTIS in Portugal

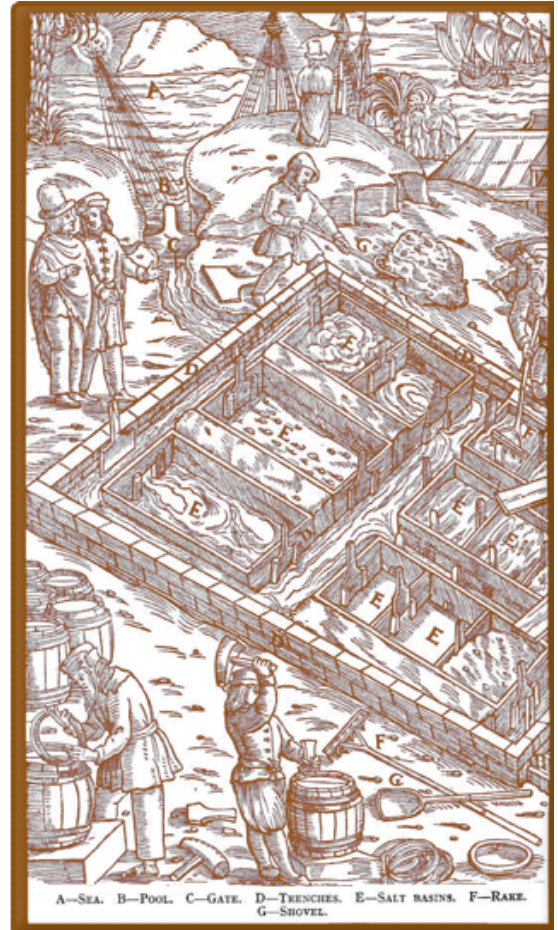


Illustration depicting the layout of a saltpan, *De Re Metallica*, Georgius Agricola 1556

Events

Activity 6 meeting in Nantes

On Thursday 27th May 2010, the first meeting of Activity 6, Biodiversity and Eco-Tourism, was held at Géolittomer in Nantes.

Some twenty people, from 7 of the 13 project partners (Bournemouth University, Universidade de Aveiro, Asociación de Amigos de las Salinas de Interior and the four French partners) attended the meeting, also present were Renato Neves as the Portuguese coordinator, and the Curator of the Parc Naturel Régional de Brière, Bernard Guihéneuf.

The different presentations by Jesús Carrasco, Renato Neves, David Cranstone, Roger Herbert, Jean-Guy Robin provided a greater understanding of the various salt sites.

Anne Bonis presented the general issues of Activity 6 leading to a fruitful discussion in which all those present took part.

The following day, Friday 28th May, a trip to the Marais Vendéen, organised by the Communauté de communes Océan Marais de Monts (partner n° 4), allowed participants to continue the discussion and to discover the biodiversity of the salt pans, both active and abandoned.

The visit was led by Jan-Bernard Bouzillé and Jean-Guy Robin.

Sophie Jeannenot led a visit to the Ecomusée Le Daviaud where a reception was offered by the Chairman of the Communauté de Communes and the Mayor of La Barre-de-Monts.

Loïc Ménanteau (Géolittomer)



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Calendar activities

Translation - University of Aveiro

Past activities:

- **July, 2010**
V International Salt Fair (Aveiro, Portugal)
Activity 4 "Heritage" meeting (Aveiro, Portugal)
Project Leader and Portuguese partners meeting (Fig. da Foz, Portugal)

Future activities:

- **September, 2010**
Onion National Fair (Rio Maior, Portugal)
- **November, 2010**
Culinary workshop (Aveiro, Portugal)
Partners' assembly (La Rochelle, France)