

# Victorian Salt Pans

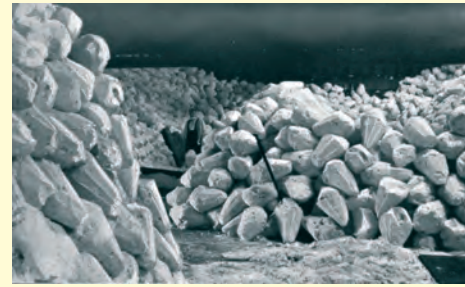
Cheshire became dominant in salt making because of its easy access to strong natural brine and rock salt and good communications. But this came at a cost to the environment until the change to controlled brine pumping and vacuum evaporation.



A fine pan described in the Illustrated London News 1850. Fishery pans could be much larger and made coarser crystals in pans set up outdoors to replicate 'Bay Salt'.



Salt was skimmed into salt moulds - originally baskets, later cooper made cones, then wooden boxes.

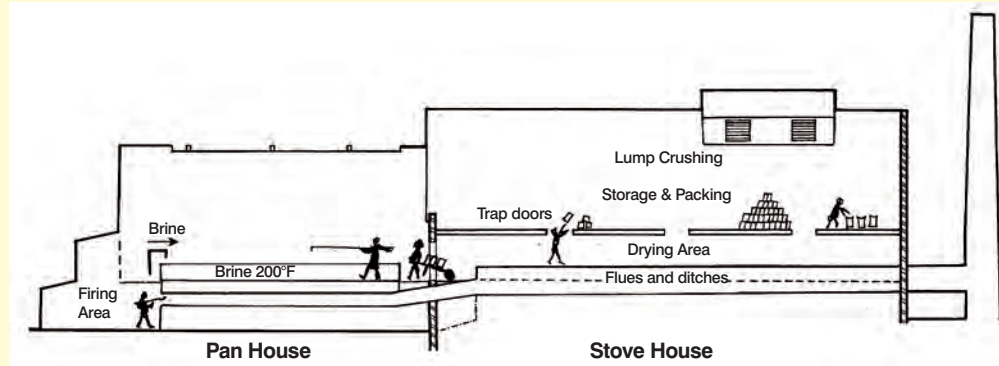


Salt blocks were sold complete, or crushed to make fine salt.

*Images from AF Calvert - Salt in Cheshire, London, 1913*



Brine was pumped to a brine tank ready to be gravity fed to the salt pans.



Open pan salt works made fine salt and block salt in a Pan House with an attached Stove House. Coal was burnt under the iron pan. Salt was skimmed into boxes and barrowed into the Stove House.

Flues carried heat and fumes from the furnace underneath the Stove House to a chimney. Rising heat dried the salt when it was 'lofted' to the warehouse floor above.



The surviving brine pump at Murgatroyd's Salt Works, Middlewich.

# Rock Salt Mining

Rock salt itself was not found until 1670, when William Jackson discovered it whilst prospecting for coal.



Early 'Top Bed Mines' began to collapse. 'Bottom Bed Mines' were adopted from 1781, mining from 300 feet below ground.

*Images from The Illustrated London News August 24, 1850. Photographs by Roy Forshaw and Andrew Fielding*

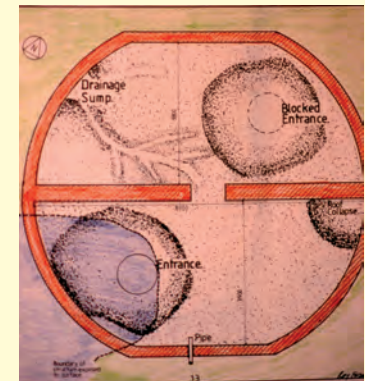


The Meadowbank Mine at Winsford, Cheshire is a source for the majority of the UK's de-icing salt for roads.

The worked out sections are now used as secure document stores for archives and books.

# Refineries

'There was a growth in rock salt refineries after 1670 but Acts of Parliament restricted their construction.'



The Dungeon, on the banks of the River Mersey, has the best preserved cisterns for dissolving rock salt in sea water.