

Cheshire, Merseyside & Lancashire - Rock Salt Mines, Open Pans and Refineries

In north Lancashire there was extensive salting around Morecambe Bay where sleet was probably the main method. So far as we know there was little medieval coastal salting south of the Ribble, probably due to the dominance of transported Cheshire salt. In Cheshire, the 'wich' towns can trace their salt heritage

back to before the Roman conquest. Middlewich and Northwich thrived on the transport advantages from the use of the Weaver Navigation and the Trent and Mersey Canal (1777) for carrying in coal and exporting white salt and rock salt.

The use of wild brine pumping and collapsed rock salt mines

have left legacies that now provide a diverse wildlife environment that is used for recreational purposes between Frodsham and Nantwich for instance at Ashton and Neumans Flash. The Anderton Lift links the river and canal, and other arts and heritage of the area can be found at the Weaver Hall Gallery, Northwich.



The Dungeon



www.btinternet.com/~m.royden/mrhp/local/salt/dungeon.htm
17th century salt refinery site near Speke on the River Mersey which operated until the mid 1840s. Underground brick storage tanks remain and the sandstone walls forming the quayside. Accessible from the coastal footpath linking Hale with Garston.

Hilbre Island



www.deeesuary.co.uk/hilbre/index.htm
Short lived 17th century salt refinery site located on Hilbre Island on the River Dee accessible during low tide. Rock cut features on beach for collecting sea water survive and earthworks on the island identify locations of pan house and storage cisterns. Consultation of tide tables and crossing times essential.



Wych House Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire

Fleetwood Museum



www.fleetwoodmuseum.co.uk/sites/museums/index.asp
The museum has a replica rock salt mine and descriptions of both brine pumping and rock salt mining. The more environmentally acceptable controlled brine pumping was developed at Preesall and led to the halting of wild brine pumping.

Northwich



www.lionsaltworks.org
The Lion Salt Works was a traditionally run family, open pan salt works until its closure in 1986. It is under restoration by Cheshire West and Chester Council. Northwich has a rich heritage linked to the salt and chemical industry.

Middlewich



www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk
Artefacts from Roman salt making sites are on display at the library. There are plans to establish a heritage centre featuring the electric brine pump at the former Murgatroyds Salt Works. Vacuum salt is made today in the modern multiple-effect evaporators of British Salt beside the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Lancaster Maritime Museum



www.lancashire.gov.uk/acs/sites/museums/index.asp
The museum, housed in an 18th century warehouse on the waterfront, includes a display on salt making around Morecambe Bay, where sleet survived later than in other areas and was described by 16th, 17th, and 18th century writers.

Winsford



www.winsfordrocksaltmine.co.uk/
Winsford is the location of the UK's main rock salt mine. The winding shafts can be seen either side of the river. There is no public access below ground but the web site has lots of information.

Nantwich



www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk
Nantwich Museum has salt making artefacts from the town's Roman and medieval past including a lead salt pan and a 'salt ship'. The town promotes local food and cheese at annual fairs. The local swimming pool has retained its outdoor, heated brine bath.