

The Salt Journey ... by those involved

Aaron Appleton

Facing the Trent and Mersey Canal at Canal Terrace there were houses, for boating families really and we had the biggest one. There's an entry leading onto the towpath and we used to bring the horse through there, down to canal and to Seddons. Once they were loaded we'd pull the boats to Anderton about 10 mile, 40 ton in two boats. We used to go down Anderton lift and discharge the cargo into a river craft, them belonged to Seddons, they had two boats; one was Weaver Belle and the other Gowanburn. They used to take the salt to Liverpool and discharge it into a ship going to Africa, in 40lb white bags. I think they used them chutes when the river was too high to operate the lift, if they got a lot of floods in the river they couldn't operate the lift, so we dropped it so far down and they had a chute to reach the barges.



Aaron and his cousin waiting at Seddon's for the boat to be loaded. (photo supplied by Aaron Appleton)

Used to take loose salt as well to Anderton and there was a chute right at the top, a big long chute, they didn't go in the lifts at all with that. It was common salt, they used to unload it with a handcart and shovel, pushed it along the stage and tip it down the chute about 50 ft or something like that.

There wasn't a lot of that going on in my day, it was mainly salt in white bags; Seddon's must have shifted about 500 ton a week, the barges would hold 300 ton, some 250 you see. It varies, its when they get the orders in, sometimes you were busy and sometimes you were a bit slack. It was pretty regular work really, you had to wait for the ships to come into Liverpool before they could start, wait for the order to come, they'll get an order for about 1000 tons say and that's when we'd start. They used to lay off I believe for a few days while waiting for orders, when we were there it was pretty regular really, nearly every week we were going to Anderton Boat Lift but then you had to wait for the barge to come back from Liverpool empty then he's ready to load again.

We went school when we could, normally when the boats were loading at Seddons, sometimes we'd have to go to Anderton at night even at 5 o'clock at night it could be 10 o'clock when you got to Anderton, I've been known to be taken out of school in the afternoon, the boats ready for going and you've got to go and get on the boat. Eventually when it got busier at the works but the boats weren't doing anything we used to work on the salt works, there was a big demand for salt.

They used to load the boats with hand carts, two women on every cart coming down to the boat from the works. They had blocks of salt you see, they put it in the crushing mill and ground it up into powder, then they would fill up the bags, stitch them then load them onto these carts and take them down to be loaded. It was about 1 ton per cart, it was hard work, they had four wheel blow up tyres on the cart, that made it a little bit easier for the women.

The horses used to eat their food while pulling the boat, in what they called a horse tin, like a bucket with a strap over his head. He used to eat his corn while pulling the boat at the same time, the only time he stopped was at night and we put him in the stable. So that wasn't very pleasant was it? Really was hard work for the horse pulling 20 tons in a boat.

Firms like Fellows, Moreton and Clayton supplied the horses and the food as well, they were a better firm actually than Seddons was. Horses had to be shod with steel tips on, they had to be done every fortnight because there was a lot of walking, pulling and all them locks to climb.



Loading the boats
(Photo supplied by Aaron
Appleton)