

## **Murgatroyd's Brine Pump – Scheduled Ancient Monument Number 34588**

### **Goodbye Murgatroyd's**

The demolition of Brenntag situated in Elworth, just outside of Middlewich brings to an end an historic and innovative site. Opened in 1949 as the new Murgatroyd's Salt and Chemical Co. Ltd, the 18 acre site produced Vacuum Salt, Chlorine, Caustic Soda, Hydrogen, Hydrochloric Acid and Sodium Hypochlorite. The site of the original Murgatroyd's, an open pan works at Middlewich, has long gone. All that remains is the original brine shaft and pump house, the last monument not only of open pan salt-working but of the chemical industry in Middlewich.

**Murgatroyd's Brine Pump is on a historic industrial site, the only intact pump over an original shaft left in Britain.**

**It has historical significance within the country as one of the last remains of Cheshire's large Salt Industry.**



### **Background**

In March 1889, five months after the formation of the Salt Union, George Murgatroyd secretly negotiated the purchase of the 42-acre Newton Farm at Middlewich. The search for brine began soon after the successful acquisition of the land on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1889. We know little of Murgatroyd's reasons for his choice of land or his decision to sink the first brine shaft at the very edge of the property. Local legend claims that he was partially guided by the line of the Roman Road which runs across the property, and the surface brine springs that were certainly known in Roman times.

The shaft was sunk to a total depth of 330ft; two rock salt beds were discovered, separated by a belt of Keuper marl. The brine was hard to encounter, the tops of each rock salt bed were completely dry. The next stage was the driving of a tunnel or 'adit' along the upper salt bed beneath the railway. Still, no brine was discovered. Another 'adit' was driven in the opposite direction and after 25 yards, brine was finally discovered.

The driving of an adit was a hazardous procedure for the workmen involved, for the discovery of a brine stream could mean a hasty retreat in the face of the incoming and rapidly rising brine.

Murgatroyd's discovery of brine gave hope of employment and a renewal of the town's prosperity. Flags were flown and the townspeople celebrated their new fortune in grand style.

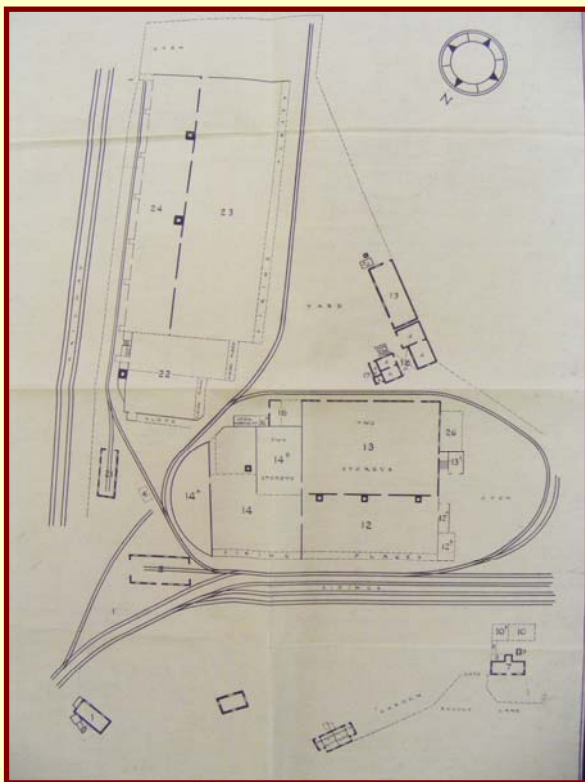
The Murgatroyd 'find' was the most remarkable and successful to be made during the extensive search for brine following the formation of the Salt Union, and was moreover the first discovery of rock salt at Middlewich.

### The Future of the Brine Pump

A Conservation Plan is critical to assess the full scope of works and provide solid data for a restoration project. The Plan will help to reduce further risk to the structure and set out a maintenance plan, with the intention of preserving the structure preserved as a monument to all those who worked in the Salt and Chemical Industries.

Due to the specialist nature of this monument we need to assess the vulnerability of the site.

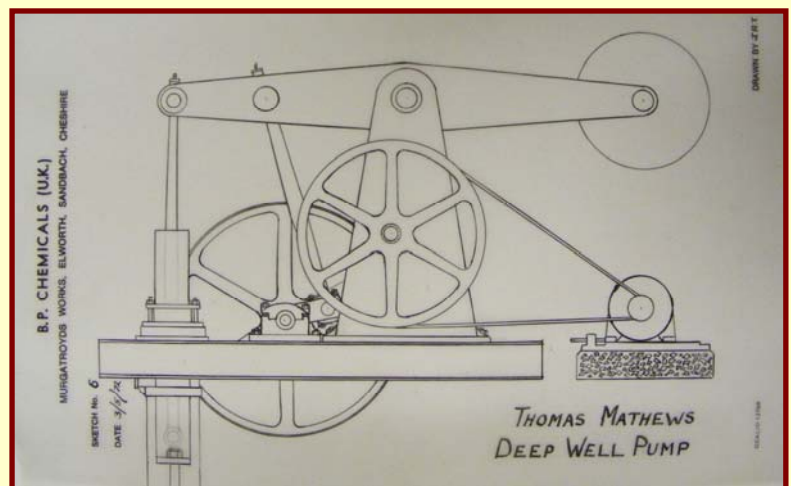
Understanding and interpreting the structure is an essential first step in future heritage work and educational use.



**No 1 and 2 pumps operated until 1977, supplying brine to the Elworth Plant**

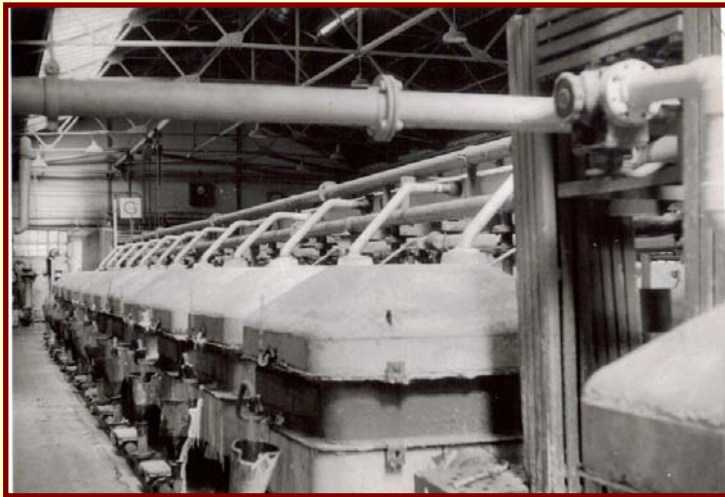
**Location of pump houses in relation to the main works site**

**Technical Drawings survive, illustrating how the pumps worked**

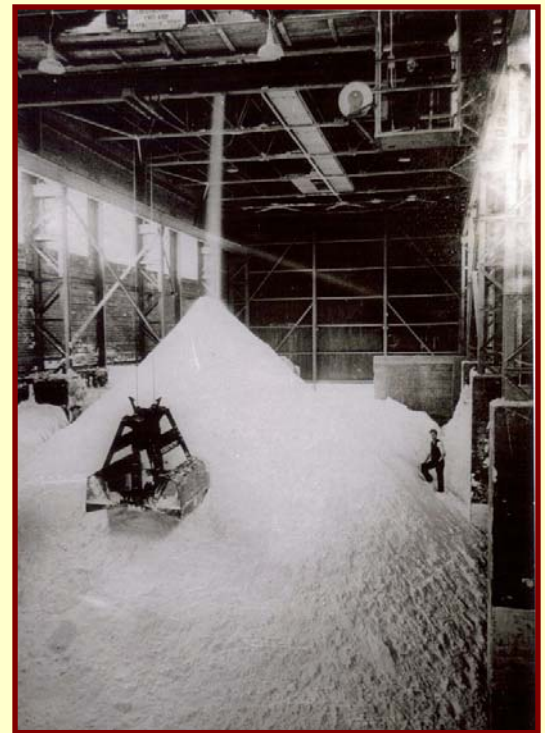




# Going, going, gone...?



**Murgatroyd's Salt and Chemical Co. Ltd  
The Hooker Cell room 1960**



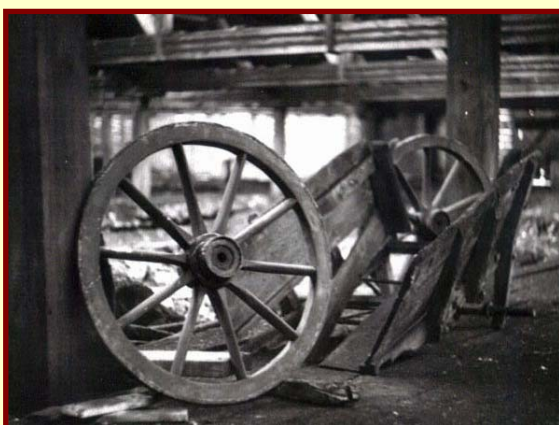
**Vacuum Salt Warehouse, 1954**



**Demolition of no. 8 & 9 Salt  
Pans Chimney, April 1968**



**The last shift at Murgatroyd's Open Pan  
Works, December 1966.**



**Murgatroyd's abandoned works awaiting  
demolition.  
The brine pump was to continue service  
for another eleven years and was saved  
from demolition by the employees as a  
monument to the salt-works.**



**Elworth Works awaiting demolition**