

Prehistoric, Roman and Dark Age Middlewich was an important producer of salt. In earlier times this was an industry located on the east bank of the River Croco; part of the Anglo-Saxon manor of Kinderton. Middlewich was probably called *Salinae*, the “place where salt is made”, by the Romans.

1086

Domesday survey of Middlewich divided one-third of salt production rights to the Earl of Chester and two-thirds to the King (William). This ownership arrangement remained until the conquest when Earl Morcar and King Edward divided the rights between them. Laws and customs governing production of salt in the late Anglo-Saxon Cheshire Wych towns is described in Domesday. The salt-making areas were confined as industrial estates, with workers probably coming in from the adjacent manors (Newton at Middlewich).

13th Century

Middlewich had 100 6-lead Wych houses on both sides of River Croco, the “walling” land existed as an enclave between settlements of Newton & Kinderton.

1200-1450

4 – 8 lead Wych houses were common, but 6-lead became the standard, (“leads” were the name given to the vats in which the brine was boiled)

1507

48 salt owners listed for Middlewich; includes 100 Wych houses of 6-leads each.

1605

Two wells or salt pits exist in Middlewich, 107 salt houses with 6 leads each with 22 “lords and owners of salt houses”.

1675

Five salt works are listed for Middlewich: The Town Works (with 12 pans), Baron of Kinderton (7 pans), Mr Oldfield, Mr George Cronton, Mr Charles Mainwaring (with 1 pan each). They produced 107.5 tons of salt a week, (5590 tons in the year)

1746

Thomas Lowndes of Middlewich published a pamphlet “*For improving the making of salt from brine*” for the Lords of the Admiralty and College of Physicians.

1778

Six salt works, the Trent & Mersey Canal survey mapped the names and locations of 5 canal-side salt works: Chesworth’s, Cook’s, Lord Vernon’s, Henshall’s, Lowe’s. In addition Seaman’s was at Ravenscroft, on North bank of the Dane near the bridge.

1840-1869

Bagshaw’s 1850 Directory lists four salt works: Arden, Thos. Kinderton Works (King Street), Ellerker, John, Middlewich & Newton Works, (Brooks Lane & Wych House Lane). Henshall Wm; & Sutton & Co, Newton Works (Wych House Lane)

1870 –1881

In 1873 the deepest pit at Middlewich was 90 yards, but brine might be found at varying depths from 25 – 70 yards in different pits. Only 13 pans worked each year (1878 records output as 14,000 tons).

Morris & Co.’s 1874 Directory lists four references to salt works:

Joule's Celebrated Cheese Salt Works, est. 1756 at Pepper St, Kinderton Salt Works at King Street. Verdin, Joseph & Sons; white & rock salt at Newton Works, Wych House Lane. Richard Yeoman, Middlewich Salt Works also called Dairy Salt Works.

1887

Cheshire Alkali Co formed, Kinderton Street

1888

Salt Union formed.

1889

Murgatroyd found rock salt by sinking a shaft on east side of Brooks Lane.

1891

17 brine shafts and boreholes recorded, amongst them are:

Yeoman's working, Wych House Lane; Pepper Street (Seddon's) not working; Milk Factory closed; Dairy & Domestic Salt Co, working, Finney's Lane; Cheshire Alkali Co, working, Wych House Lane; Amans Co, working, Brooks Lane; Murgatroyds, working, Brooks Lane.

1899

Electrolytic Alkali Co. formed: two brine pits, first British vacuum plant.

1903

Verdin-Cooke established, Bowfields open-pan salt works, Booth Lane.

1908

Middlewich Salt Co. (later Cerebos) at Bowfields, Booth Lane.

1914

Kelly's Directory states that in Middlewich, "The salt works here are on a large scale, and there are extensive chemical works and a condensed milk factory". The salt works listed are: Brunner-Mond & Co, Brooks Lane. Murgatroyd's Salt Works Co, Brooks Lane. Seddon, Henry, & Sons Ltd, Pepper Street and Simpson L. A. & Co, salt merchants, Brooks Lane.

1919

Electrolytic Alkali Co taken over by Brunner-Mond, closed by 1929.

1937

Salt Union taken over by ICI

1939

Kelly's Directory lists four salt works and one salt merchant:

ICI (Alkali) Ltd

Murgatroyd's Salt Works, (closed 1966), Brooks Lane.

Seddon, Henry, & Sons Ltd Salt Works, Pepper Street.

Simpson L.A. & Co, salt merchants, Brooks Lane

Verdin Cooke & Co, Bowfields Salt Works

In the 1930s Cerebos took over the Middlewich Salt Company (Booth Lane Works) and in 1959 merged with Seddon & Sons, Pepper Street Works (closed 1968 - 70).

1969

A purpose-built plant was constructed by British Salt on a green field site at Booth Lane, Cledford, and this remains open today. It produces up to 860,000 tonnes of salt annually. Brine is pumped from Warmingham.

Henry Seddon's Wych House Lane works closed.