

Albert Gallagher

I left school at 14 and went to work at what they call the Wheelwrights shop and that was where they made all the various types of salt tubs. They did all the repairs on the wagons that they used to take the salt to the railway station on, the wheels and they also made the skimmers that they used on the pans and the rakes extra. Anyway they used to more or less make everything that was required on the works themselves, the Blacksmith used to repair the wheel trims that were on the horse and carts and repair the iron wheels and weld them by hand, they didn't have a welding machine then, he used to weld them by hand and then he would fit them back on to the wheels ready for off. The painter, painted all the pumps, all the Seddon's signs on the railway wagons and the railway vans that they had at the station. The brine tanks that were on top of some of the pans, they used to have Seddon's wrote on them, he used to do all that. They more or less maintained and made everything themselves, they didn't have companies coming in.

On the works they used to start at 4 o'clock on a Monday morning, the pans were left with salt on through the weekend and the blokes used to go in 4 o'clock, drag the salt off that was left in the pans and then they de scale the bottom of the pans. If there was any leaks after they had de scaled them, they used to get the pan smiths to come in and do the repairs. The pan smiths used to have lads with them that have just left school, what they called rivet runners and they used to warm the rivets up until more or less white hot then they would run underneath the pan which was then up on wooden stilts; they used to lift them up and go underneath, put the rivet through the hole that had been punched out and then they had blokes what they called holder-uppers and they used to have a hammer on the end of a big long pole and as the rivet went in the pan smiths on the top would knock it down, that kept the plates in place. The pans were then ready to go back on work, it was a long drawn out process really with salt.



There used to be a bloke named Charlie Capper, they had two Shire Horses up at Chadwick Fields where Mr Roland Seddon lived and they used to come down every day to pick the cart up at Pepper Street. They used to load this common salt, as they called it, in to the truck and they used to run it up to the railway station. They had railway wagons which were for the lump salt and the open trucks were for this common salt, they used to run it up to the station, then there would be two or three blokes at the railway yard that would chuck it out in to the railway wagons and this is how they got rid of all this common salt. With the lump salt they used to have what they called a grinding shed, it used to be women that worked in the grinding room and they worked harder than any of the blokes. They used to put the salt in the mill at the top, grind it down and it

used to come out at the bottom, there was two blokes with Hessian bags, they used to fill them and put them to one side and these women used to sew them up with big needles and string and then they used to put them on a cart, four wheeled cart and run them down the bank to the canal side. From there they put them in boats to take to the docks; they used to go down to Anderton boat lift. Those women used to work harder than people ever do now.

People worked at various times, I recollect some used to start about 3 o'clock in a morning and I think they used to work twelve hours and you would perhaps get some working through the night. The process was there all the time it was a 24 hour process until they finished on a Friday night and then these people would just keep the pans warm over the weekend. The Wallers they would be in at 4 o'clock and the Lofters, they would go in at more or less the same time. They were very early hours and they used to work right through the night. On a Monday morning when all the pans had been emptied, it's hard to describe how it was in Middlewich, they used to de scale the pans and it was one continuous bang, bang, bang, bang when they were breaking all the scale off. When they started the pans up again, the smoke would start, for the people that lived in King Street, it must have been awful for them, because there were huge pieces of soot dropping down, it was thick smoke coming out and it used to blow over that road; to think back now, it was another world really.

Everything on the old salt works was hard work, everything involved shoulder work you know; everything was done with a shovel and by hand, there was none of this button pressing. It was a sight to see the blokes, all they used to have on were trousers like these cut off at the knees and just a shirt, big clogs on; it was hard work there was no two ways about it.

**It was terrible...especially when you were washing
white shirts, the smog left marks everywhere,
Not very nice.**

