

43 AD	Roman invasion of Britain
48 AD	Temporary camp built in Middlewich by the Roman army
70 AD	Permanent fort built in Middlewich for an auxiliary regiment of the Roman Army
130 AD	Middlewich fort dismantled
150-250 AD	Middlewich salt works dominated by salt works
300 AD	Salt works have declined but Middlewich remains a major crossroads
313 AD	Christianity recognised as a religion in the Roman Empire
350 AD	Middlewich salt works under church control?
400-450 AD	End of Roman Britain

HOW SALT WAS PRODUCED AT MIDDLEWICH

1. Brine from spring is collected in holding-tank or well.
2. Brine is removed from holding-tank in wooden bucket.
3. Brine simmering in salt-pan.
4. Salt residue is removed from pan after brine has been boiled off.
5. Collecting salt prior to removal from site.
6. Transportation of salt in baskets and sacks.

Stages in the Roman salinaking process

Uncovering the timber lined Brine well at Jersey Fields. Dates to the late 1st / early 2nd century. part of Roman salt works.

A Roman Brine holding-tank, also found at Jersey Fields.

A reconstructed Salt Pan made by Andrew Fielding showing the salt simmering in the pans.

Follow the links to see the open pan process of the 17th - 20th centuries. What are the differences and similarities?

Also see the Canal and Salt schools resources pack and have a go at a virtual dig created by South Cheshire College. What can you find?

www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk/mnu-introduction-salt/mnu-open-pan-process.html

www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk/mnu-schools-pack.html

www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk/mnu-virtual-dig.html

FOLLOW THE TRAIL TO UNCOVER THE STORY OF ROMAN MIDDLEWICH

The information panels reveal the history and layout of the Roman town, and show how Middlewich might have looked in Roman times.

The trail is just over one mile (1.8km) long, and will take about an hour and a quarter to complete. It is firm underfoot, but stout footwear is advisable. Most of the trail is accessible to people with limited mobility, but where it is not, an alternative route is available. The trail passes by the Big Lock pub where refreshments are available. Please consider local residents by parking in designated car parks and not in residential areas.

Guided tours and an illustrated guidebook *Roman Middlewich – A Story of Roman and Briton in Mid Cheshire* are also available. Contact Middlewich Heritage Trust for further information. An exhibition of Roman discoveries from Middlewich may be seen in Middlewich Library during normal opening hours.

THE ROMAN MIDDLEWICH PROJECT

The Roman Middlewich Project was originally a partnership between Cheshire County Council, Congleton Borough Council, Gifford and Partners, Middlewich Heritage Society and Middlewich Town Council, and was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund with the assistance of Historic England.

For more information contact Middlewich Heritage Trust on 01606 833434 or email middlewich.heritage.trust@gmail.com

THE ROMAN MIDDLEWICH TRAIL

ROMAN DISCOVERIES

Roman discoveries have been made in Middlewich since the 18th Century. Early finds were mainly made by chance, but since the 1960s there has been a series of archaeological digs, surveys and watching-briefs in the town, as well as important finds made through metal detecting.

There was a settlement at Middlewich before the Romans arrived, as the local brine springs were important to local people in the Iron Age. At this date the region was in northern territory of the Celtic tribe of the Cornovii.

Roman settlement began around 48 AD, when the Roman army probably built a temporary camp to guard the crossing point of the future King Street and the Rivers Dane and Croco. Around 70 AD they built a more permanent fort at Harbutt's field, probably to bring the local brine springs under military control. In 2012 a large scale Roman Military Salt Works were discovered at Jersey Way.

By the end of the first century AD, the fort may have housed auxiliary regiments. Middlewich would have seen many troops passing through towards the Northern frontiers.

The fort was dismantled when the army moved out around 130 AD, but the town continued to thrive. A bustling settlement developed along King Street, where the natural brine springs were used for extracting salt – a valuable product at the time. Other crafts followed, such as metalworking, weaving and leather working, and these continued into the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

Middlewich is often identified with the Roman *Salinae* ('saltworks'), though it could also have been *Condate* ('place at the confluence of the rivers'). It stood amongst woodlands and farms, where cereals such as oats and wheat were grown, and weeds like elderberry, raspberries and hemlock grew nearby. *Coriander* was grown to flavour food and for medicinal use.

By the 4th century AD, saltworking had declined to a small-scale industry along King Street. At this time, salt was still prepared by the Roman method, using lead pans and may have been under the control of the local Christian community. The early 5th century AD saw the end of Roman control in Britain, and Cheshire became part of the Celtic British kingdom of Powys. It remained so until the early 7th century, when it fell within English territory due to a battle between Aethelfrith of Northumbria and Powys. A century later, the beginnings of modern Middlewich began to emerge with the formation of the new settlements of Kinderton and Newton.



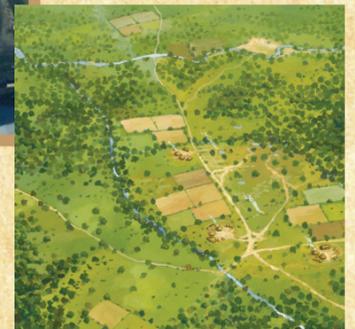
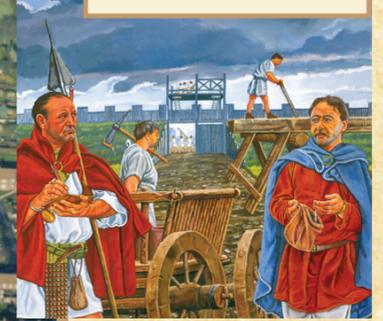
MIDDLEWICH SALT AND THE ROMAN LEGACY



- 1** You are standing just outside the Roman settlement, south of where King Street crosses the River Croco. Roman troops would have passed this way to and from the northern frontier between 48 and 130 AD.
- 2** This is the southern edge of the Roman settlement, around the point where the King Street crossed the River Croco. Middlewich was at the busy junction of six important Roman roads. Here lies evidence of round houses belonging to the Cornovii tribe.
- 3** Modern King Street (and New King Street) follows the line of the Roman road north to Wilderspool, near Warrington, the lowest crossing point of the Mersey. By 150 AD King Street was lined on both sides by salt works and associated trades.
- 4** Between 48 and 68 AD, the Roman Army was active in the Middlewich area and a temporary fort was built at Harbutt's field. At this point a side road branched off King Street towards the front gate of the fort on the South side.
- 5** During the Roman campaigns against the Brigantes in the early 70s AD, King Street became a major military route to the North. Its course is marked by the line of trees to your right. A fort was built at Harbutt's field to command the river crossing and control the local brine springs. You are standing at its south east corner.
- 6** You are facing the front gates of the Roman fort. In plan it was like a playing card, and covered about 3.5 acres (1.4 hectares). It contained a timber headquarters building, commanding officer's house, granaries and barrack-blocks. These were enclosed by a turf rampart, timber palisade fence and defensive ditch. It housed a unit of auxiliary (non-Roman) troops, as well as the administrators.
- 7** You are now standing at the North gate, facing south across the fort towards the Vicus, (the smallest unit of ancient Roman municipal administration, consisting of a village or part of a town). If you look to your right you can see that the fort stood on raised ground above the River Croco. There is sustained building activity in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries and the settlement continued to grow along King Street. Evidence suggests that field boundaries were still aligned to the fort into the third and fourth centuries.
- 8** The Roman Army had left the fort at Middlewich by about 130 AD, and a large settlement developed alongside King Street. You are looking across the River Croco towards the civilian salt works. Although saltworking was the main activity, there is evidence of both leatherworking and iron-smithing. King Street's importance is emphasised by the fact that it was re-aligned in the time of Emperor Hadrian (119 to 138 AD). This was a well-used and well maintained road from Wroxeter to Wilderspool.



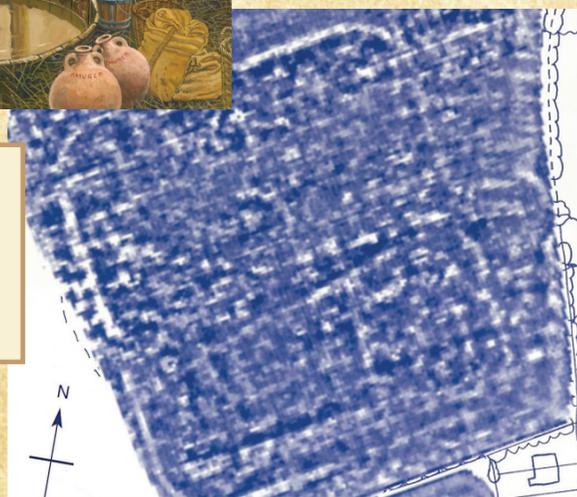
A Roman quartermaster barter with a local Cornovian tribesman for salt to be supplied to the soldiers. A fort is under construction at Harbutt's field in the background.



By the middle of the 2nd century, large salt works had developed along King Street, (King Street Industrial estate today). Here, brine is being lifted from a timber-lined holding tank, and on the right a brine kiln is being used. Jars for storing brine waste are scattered around the yard. A military officer is keeping records.



The picture of the fort illustrates the type of buildings that would have been built within its walls. The geophysical survey of 1993 highlights the defensive ditches (where the path now lies), the gateways and the internal roads which are aligned to a principal building in the centre which is why the roads are off-set.



A group of Roman soldiers upgrades King Street, under the watchful eye of a cavalry patrol. In the background are the ditches, turf ramparts and timber defences of the Roman fort.

