

ROMAN MIDDLEWICH TRAIL - A4 VERSION



LOTTERY FUNDED



SALTscape





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 the 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. This was the period when 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, raspberry 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.



FOLLOW THE TRAIL TO UNCOVER THE STORY OF ROMAN MIDDLEWICH

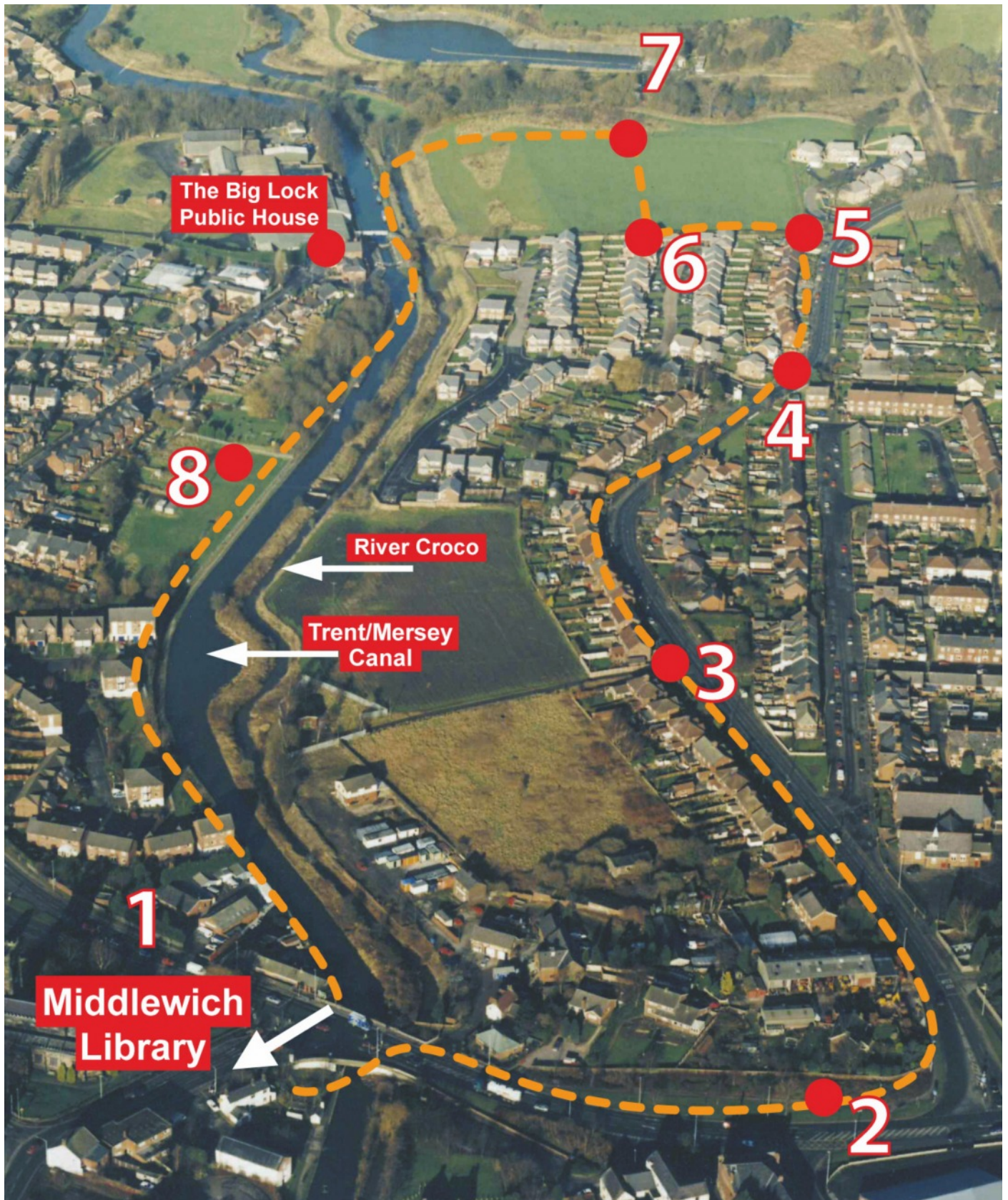
The information panels reveal the history and layout of the Roman town, and show how Middlewich might have looked in Roman times.

The trail is just over one mile (1.8km) long - see map on next page- 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.

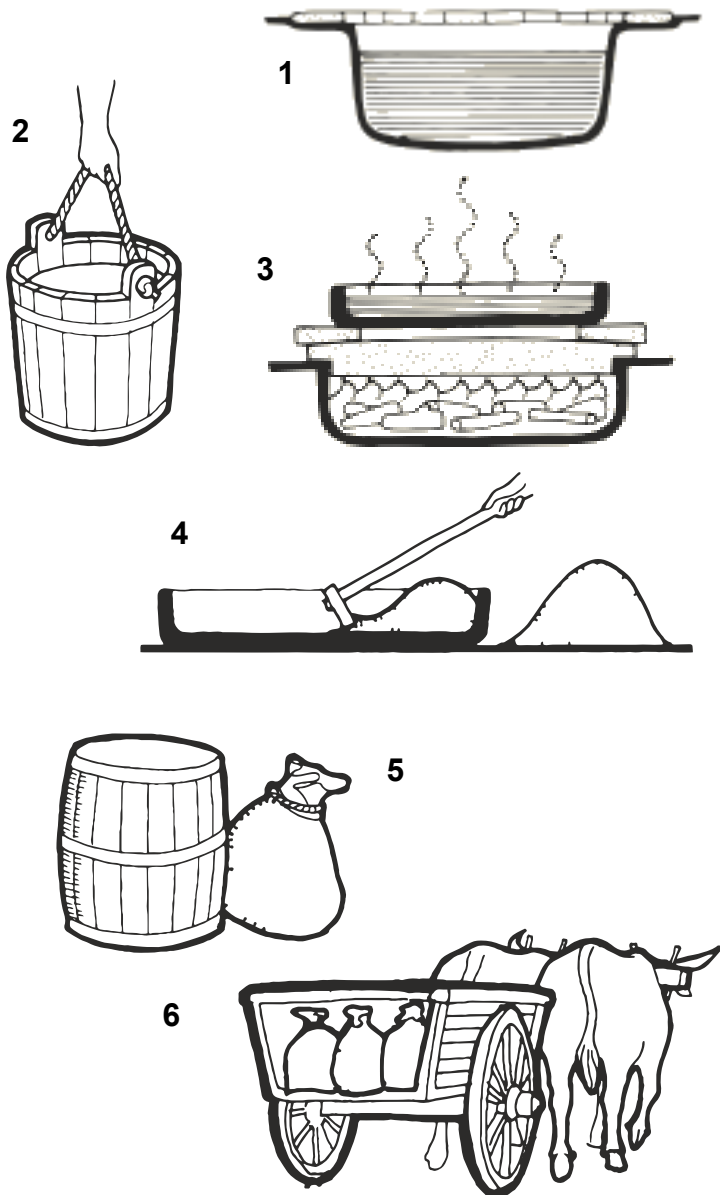
- 1 Start at the board at the library.
2. Walk left down Lewin Street past St Michael's Church and cross Kinderton Street at the traffic lights.
- 3 Turn right and walk up Kinderton Street to board number 2
- 4 Continue up Kinderton Street and turn left along King Street to the fort reading boards 3, 4, and 5 in passing.
- 5 Enter the fort and read boards 6 and 7
- 6 Return to the tarmac footpath outside the hedge near board 6.
- 7 Walk down the footpath and cross the canal. There is a steep, uneven bridge here which may cause a problem for people with limited mobility and particularly for wheelchair users who may need to retrace their steps along King Street
- 8 Turn left to walk along the canal and pass board 8.
- 9 Continue along the canal, under the bridge and turn right towards the Church.
- 10 Turn left at the road and walk back to the library.

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 (01606 833 434 - middlewich.heritage.trust@gmail.com). An exhibition of Roman discoveries from Middlewich may be seen in Middlewich Library during normal opening hours.

MIDDLEWICH SALT AND THE ROMAN LEGACY



HOW SALT WAS PRODUCED AT MIDDLEWICH



Stages in the Roman salt making process

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.



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.