

Welcome to Murgatroyd's Brine Works.



The last in situ brine pumps over an original hand-dug shaft left in the United Kingdom, as such this is a Scheduled Monument, a nationally important historic building.

George Lomas Murgatroyd (1850 – 1894)

George Lomas Murgatroyd was born on 11th July 1850. He belonged to a wealthy Stockport Family. His father Joshua Murgatroyd was founder of the engineering firm, Emerson, Murgatroyd & Co. George followed in his father's footsteps and became an engineer, in 1875, he was working on the famous Anderton Boat Lift. This may well have been his first encounter with the salt and chemical world.

George lived and worked during the Industrial revolution. This took place between 1750 - 1900, a period of profound change in Britain. There were huge technological advances which had an impact on every aspect of life. George aspired to make use of these advances by building a salt and chemical works.

The land here at Newton Farm was bought in 1889 and works soon began on sinking the brine shaft and construction of the salt works. In 1891 he expanded his business building an ammonia soda works creating Murgatroyd's Ammonia Soda and Salt Syndicate.

Unfortunately, in 1894 George died suddenly and therefore never saw the results of what he created and the impact he made on Middlewich. His find of rock salt and the brine stream changed Middlewich's fortunes, seeing many influential businesses set up here creating jobs and housing, and an expanding population.

1850 George Lomas Murgatroyd born on 11th July.

1858 Joshua Murgatroyd enters partnership with J.T. Emerson – Emerson, Murgatroyd Co Ltd, Millwrights and Iron founders, Heaton Foundry, Lancashire Hill Stockport. Connected with important engineering works in England and on continent.

1875 Emerson, Murgatroyd's, contractors to Weaver Navigation Trust for the construction of Anderton Boat Lift. Joshua Murgatroyd dies, George takes over his father's firm.

1876 George Lomas Murgatroyd marries Frances Hollingdrake, daughter of Henry Hollingdrake, Stockport ironmonger.

1889 Abel Grundy purchases Newton Farm and adjacent plots of land, obtaining most of the land between canal and railway and between Brooks Lane and Cledford Lane, Middlewich.

1889 Brine shaft sunk and salt works started during the latter part of the year. The first salt lump made on New Year's Eve.

1890 Formal transfer of Newton Farm estate from Abel Grundy to George Lomas Murgatroyd, 15th January.

1890 Private and confidential report dated 29th March 1890 from Ralph Oakes of Winsford to G.L. Murgatroyd, refers to the brine shaft. "This was the first discovery of rock salt beds under Middlewich." The brine standing in the shaft to a height of 230 ft is pumped from the top bed of rock salt and is fully saturated.

1891 30th July – Incorporation of Murgatroyd's Ammonia Soda and Salt Syndicate. Construction of railway sidings began in July. George came to live at Newton Farm at end of year. Construction of tower building and chimneys well under way by November.

1891 Murgatroyd's commission a brick making plant taking clay from the now canal basin and the site of the first lime sludge reservoir. The brick works operated under contract by Arthur Chamberlain.

1892 28th April – Agreement with Aman's Salt Co Ltd to supply brine by metered pipeline over the fence. Aman's had built the adjacent Brooks Lane Salt Works, but their brine shaft failed to discover brine. Aman's Works became Seddon's Brooks Lane Works.

1893 Ammonia soda works commissioned the first soda ash made 17th January. Construction of new laboratory and offices for foremen and plant manager.

1894 Plant for manufacture of pure sodium bicarbonate commissioned. Brunner Mond claim this infringes their patents.

1893 - 4 Brunner Mond drop market price for soda ash from about £7 per ton to £3/10s per ton.

1894 G.L. Murgatroyd dies from an overdose of belladonna – Coroner recorded open verdict – 26th November. Ivan Levinstein becomes director and chair of the Murgatroyd Syndicate.

1895 July – Private agreement between Ivan Levinstein and Ludwig Mond for Brunner Mond to purchase the Murgatroyd Ammonia Soda Works while Ivan Levinstein was to purchase the Murgatroyd Salt Works.

“A most remarkable find...”