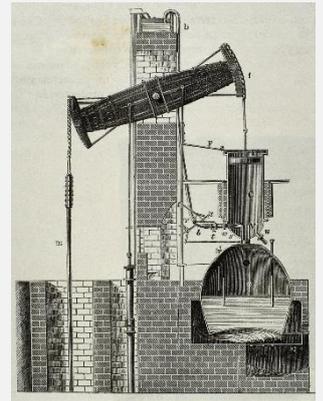


# Industrial Revolution

One of the main developments of the post-medieval salt industry was the use of mining for rock salt. Salt extraction at Middlewich, was different, the accessibility of the upper wet rock salt made it unnecessary to mine. It was not until 1889 that Middlewich exploited the lower rock salt, which was better quality when the Murgatroyd's shaft was sunk.

Textiles were the dominant industry of the Industrial Revolution, the first to use modern production methods. The revolution was the transition from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing, and increasing the use of steam and waterpower.



Thomas Newcomen steam engine 1712



William Seaman, Gentleman. Middlewich

In 1721 the river Weaver was made navigable and Winsford became the main port for Middlewich salt distribution, which still meant a journey overland.

A petition was raised by Middlewich salt manufacturers led by William Seaman, a principal sponsor of the Trent and Mersey canal and friend of Josiah Wedgwood, to bring James Brindley's proposed canal through Middlewich. This went through an Act of Parliament in 1766, and the first sod of earth was cut by Josiah Wedgwood in July 1766 at Middleport.

In 1777 the Trent and Mersey canal was opened, Middlewich salt could at last be taken by boat to the ports of the Mersey. This complex integrated transport system served many industries who benefited from a vastly superior method of distribution, and importation of materials including coal. The impact that this had on the town, and the later connection to the Shropshire Union, was of major importance for the economic development of Middlewich.



The expanded British Empire saw Middlewich salt shipped around the world, as markets in Africa, India, Australia, and New Zealand opened up on top of those established in Europe and North America. Above: Picture of Runcorn docks.

Salt from Middlewich was shipped to the pottery industries in Staffordshire to be used in salt-glazed vessels and this was one of the commercial reasons behind construction of the canal, providing easy transport between the potteries, and access to world markets via the Mersey. The growth in urban populations led to an increased demand for salt in preserving foodstuffs, between 1750 – 1850 the British population grew from 6.5 million to 21 million.

