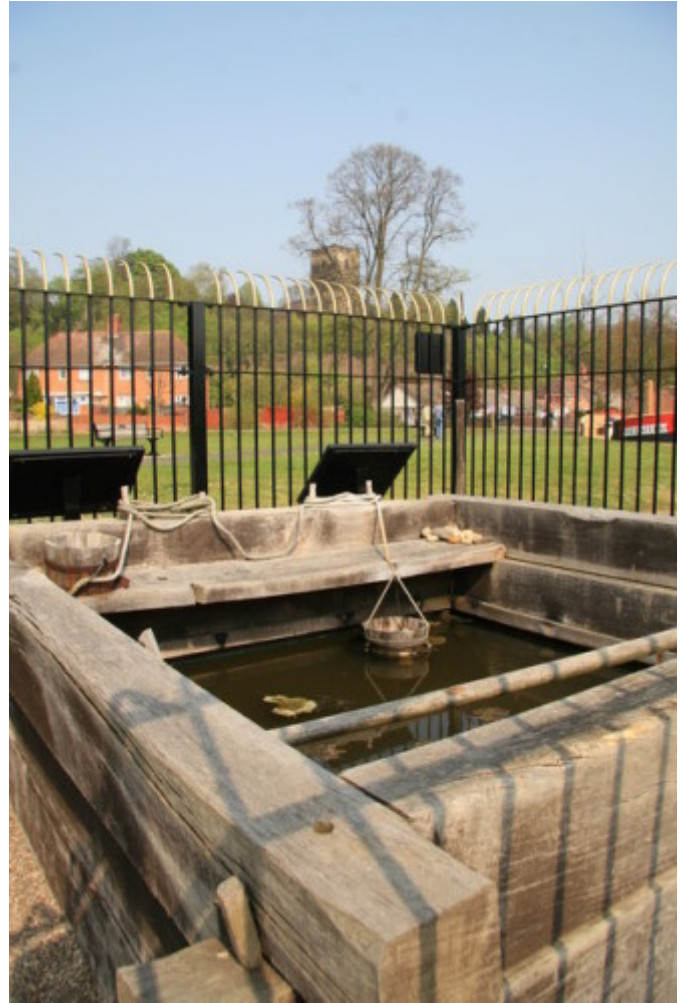


DROITWICH BRINE SPRINGS

July 26, 2013 Beatrice Hopkinson Bronze Age, Community Archaeology, Historical Archaeology, Post Medieval, Prehistory, Roman

We went to live in a salt town in Britain that was famous in antiquity, but in the 1950's there was nothing to show for it. I began to write about it for local journals and take photographs of the Changing Face of Droitwich from glass negatives taken at the turn of the century, paintings and lithographs that historically documented the history of the town. I discovered that the brine springs (source of the salt) there was exceptional, often compared to the Dead Sea. But they are only the same as far as density of the brine is concerned, they are not the same in their mineral composition. The Dead Sea contains a number of minerals, some undesirable – whereas Droitwich brine is virtually saturated with sodium chloride. The yield of pure salt was so high the brine was divided into shares that were valued much like land. One share 6912 gallons yielding 8 tons of salt.

The town was changing in the 1960's and an old Brindley Canal excavated in 1756, had been filled in during the war. It was now being re-dug but on a slightly different line and the Brine Pit was now threatened. I stepped in and persuaded authorities to save the pit and got involved in Archaeology.



Upwich brine pit, Droitwich. © Copyright Chris Allen

The only evidence we have worldwide of a prehistoric salt industry takes the form of 'briquetage', massive deposits of these ceramics are found at salt sites worldwide. In 1973 I visited a number of continental salt sites, one still behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Germany and returned with samples that I showed to archaeologists at Birmingham University who were unfamiliar with them. I asked them to look out for these ceramics at the site of the three brine springs at Droitwich, and six months later they found these deposits dated to the Late Bronze Age. I predicted there were much larger deposits at the main pit – and these also were found in the late 1980's when I founded a Charitable Trust to safeguard the site. I am now working on a paper regarding similar ceramics found in Mesopotamia in the 4th mbc and am working with the local community at Droitwich as well as government authorities in Worcestershire to establish a salt museum at the site – for which we hope to raise money so that we can put that site on the map universally.

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