

JOPPA SALT PANS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

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Headland Archaeology Ltd is carrying out an excavation on the site of Joppa Salt Works. A section of the sea wall has collapsed due to storm damage and it has exposed archaeology related to the salt works. The work will excavate and record the archaeology of the collapsed section before a new wall is built.

The collapsed wall has shown that walls and floors of buildings survive in this part of the site closest to the sea. We also dug trenches across the site to look for traces of other buildings further inland. We found wall foundations buried under a metre or so of rubble, ash and cinders from the demolition of the salt works.

The walls and floors exposed during the excavation will be drawn and plotted on to maps and compared to early maps of the site and other salt pan sites. Finds from the site may tell us more about the people who worked in the salt industry.



Trench showing walls of the Salt Works



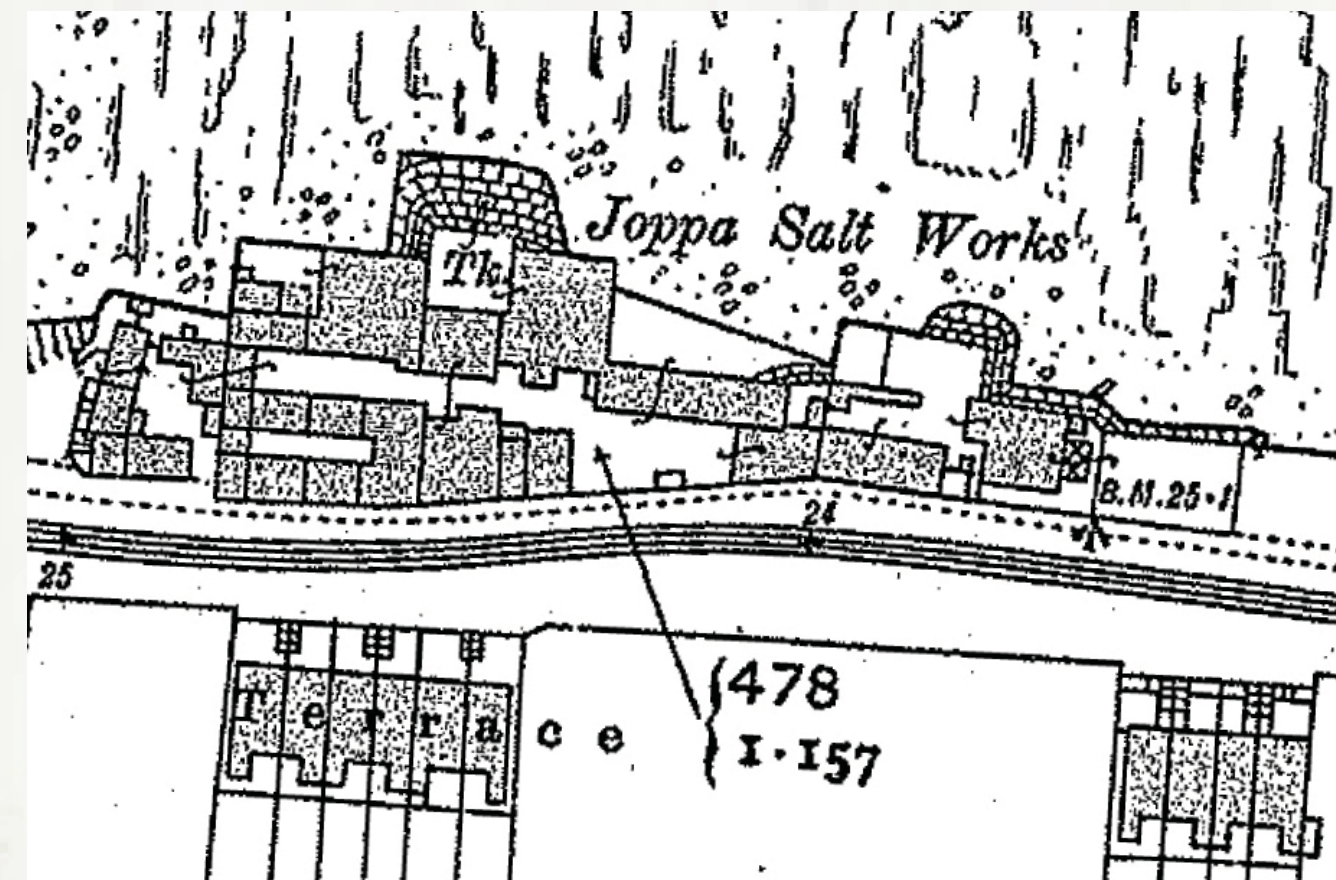
View of the site after Sea Wall collapse



Collapsed Sea Wall showing stone wall associated with the Salt Works and modern brick wall above



Joppa Pans house



Joppa Salt Pans, 1896
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Joppa Salt Pans

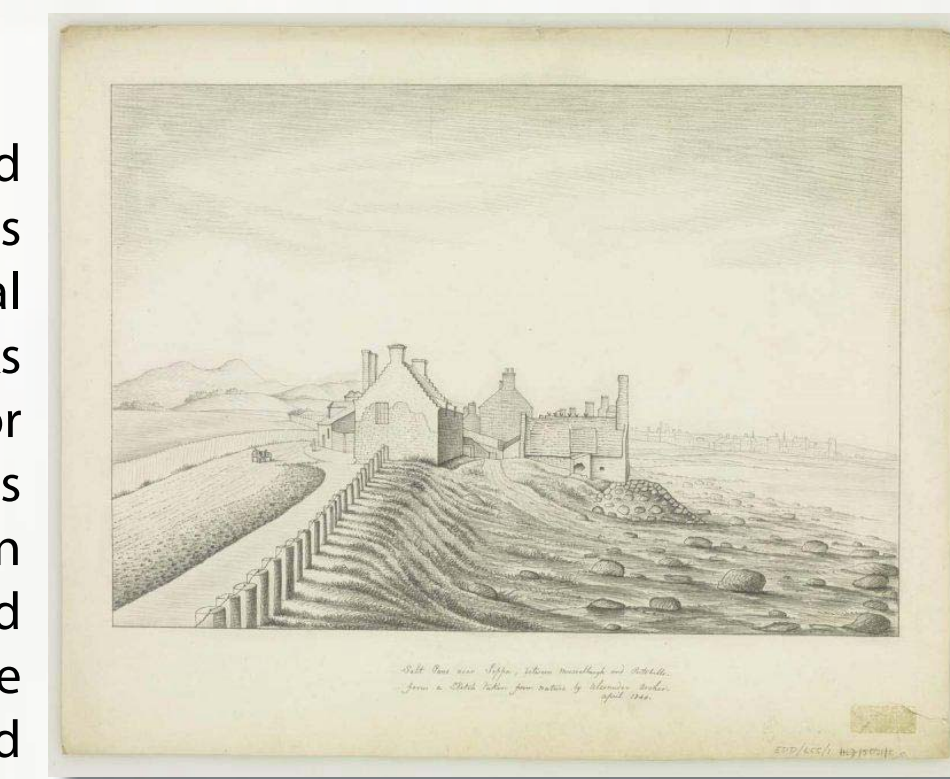
JOPPA SALT WORKS

Joppa grew up around the salt working and coal mining industry. These two industries were closely related as it took 16 tons of coal to produce one ton of salt. Joppa Salt Works were built by David Preston of Craigmillar or his son George around 1630. The salt pans here were one of the longest surviving on the Lothian coast and salt was produced continuously on site until 1953, when the last salter retired because production had become uneconomical. The buildings were demolished around 1960. Rock Cottage was originally part of the salt works, while the hotel next door was the house of the owner of the salt works.

THE SALT PAN INDUSTRY

Salt boiling was a relatively simple process. Tanks or reservoirs were built above the tideline to collect the seawater and were called 'bucket pans'. The water was then pumped or carried into the 'panhouse' and placed in large shallow iron pans supported on stone or brick pillars. A fire was set on the floor or a grate beneath the pans. The remains of the fires, clinkers and ashes are commonly found on salt pan sites.

When the correct concentration of salt was reached a bucket of bullock's blood or egg white was thrown in to separate off the organic matter. A thick brown scum formed on the surface, which was skimmed off by hand to leave salt and related products. The salt was then placed in wicker baskets to drain and stored in the 'girnel' or storehouse.



Sketch of Joppa Salt Pans

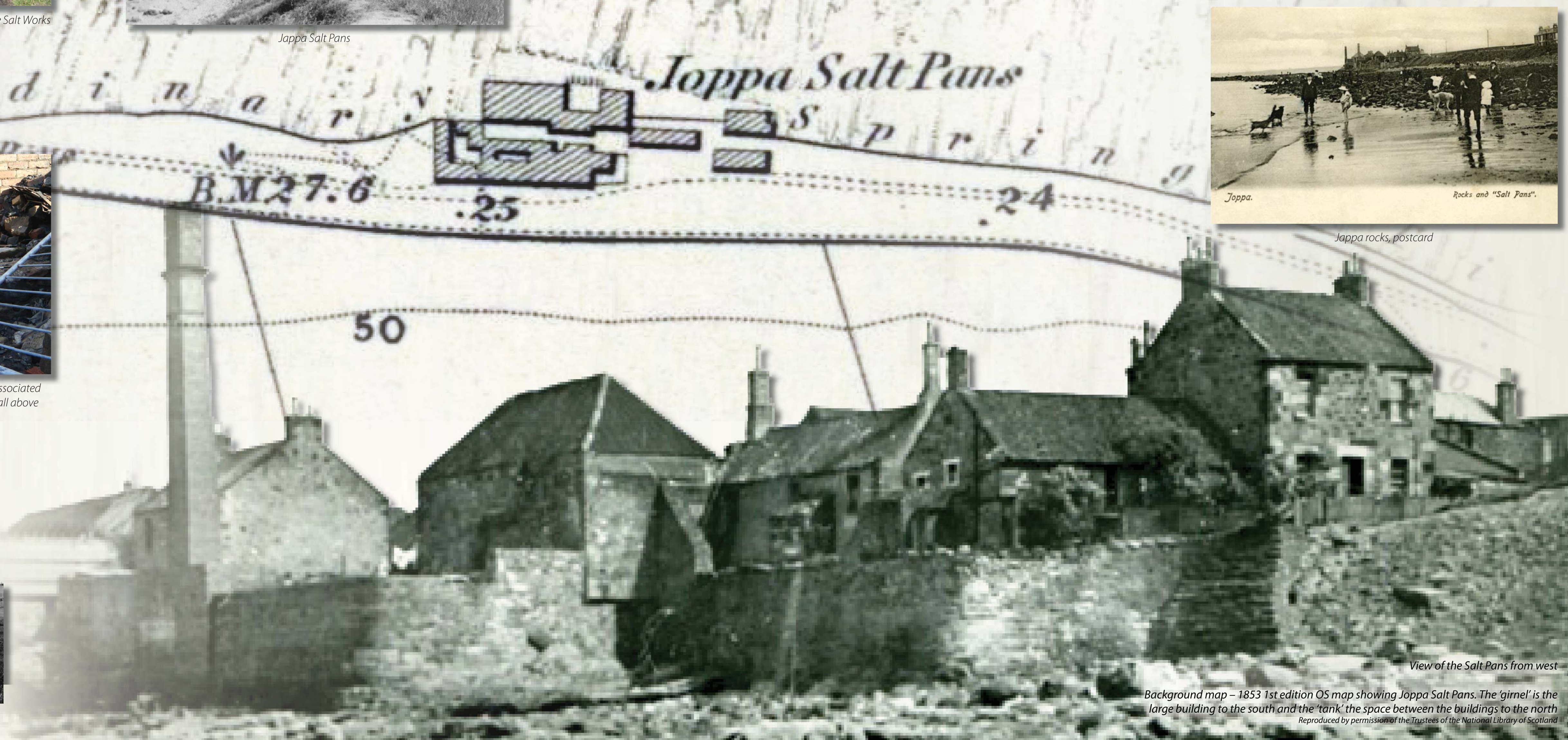
The work was commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council (City Development Flood Prevention & City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service).



Joppa rocks and paddling, postcard



Joppa rocks, postcard



View of the Salt Pans from west

Background map – 1853 1st edition OS map showing Joppa Salt Pans. The 'girnel' is the large building to the south and the 'tank' the space between the buildings to the north
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