

# Saline "Gift of God" Saltworks in Bentlage

## The Saline "Gottesgabe" Saltworks – A short historical overview

The nearly 1,000-year history of salt production and its importance for Rheine can be seen in the use of the underground brine deposits in Bentlage and the development of the Saline "Gift of God".

The zenith of the saline came during the 18th and 19th Centuries. The preserved and rebuilt buildings and equipment of the Saline "Gift of God" are among the oldest technical cultural monuments in northern Westphalia which originated in pre-industrial times.

The saline in Rheine had unique significance for the salt supply of northern Westphalia and the southern Emsland region.

The historical development of salt production and salt use at Bentlage is shown in the following brief timeline:

### 1022 – 1032

The earliest mention of the "solthues" (brine boiling building), "Soltkoten" (dwellings for tenants or bonded workers) and "Soltkamp" (area surrounding buildings with brine wells) is found in the church foundation's archives. The "noble lady" Reinmod and her daughter Frederuna donate to the Bishop Siegfried of Münster a parsonage in Bentlage.

### 1437

Founding of the Bentlage monastery. Small-scale salt boiling for the supply of the owners and surrounding area.

### 1611

Alexander von Velen, feudal landowner, is the new operator of the salt brine wells. Lease of the grounds to the von Velen family by the monastery. Expansion of the facilities, christened with the hopeful name "Gottesgabe" ("Gift of God"), to two boiling houses, two salt evaporating pans, a filtering facility

for "graduation" (increasing the salt content of the salt brine to be evaporated) and introduction of coal-firing.

### 1735

Withdrawal of the salt fiefdom from the von Velen family by Prince-Bishop Clemens August von Bayern (1719 – 1761), Bishop of Münster.

### 1738

Examination of the Bentlage brine wells by Joachim Friedrich Freiherr von Beust (1697 – 1771, General Director of the Münster Salt Mining Industry).

### 1743

Founding of the corporation "Münsterische Salinen-Societät" by members of the Westphalian nobility and the bishopric administration, in order to raise capital.

### 1743 – 1751

Substantial expansion of the saline "Gottesgabe" by the Baroque master builder Johann Conrad Schlaun (1695 – 1773) as an enclosed unit. The ca. 300-meter-long and 13-meter-high graduation works is erected, together with four galleries, a wheelhouse with a waterwheel, a two-storey brine evaporation house with a number of evaporating pans, a salt storeroom, housing for inspectors and workers, and additional utility buildings.

### 1745

First salt boiling in the new facility.

### 1813

Expansion of the Salt Boiling House (construction of an additional evaporation pan).

### 1817

Construction of the first brine reservoir.

### 1889 – 1891

Construction of a one-storey bath house.



### 1907

Second storey addition to the bath house.

### 1909

Construction of a children's home with 100 places, and construction of a brine storage tower.

### 1917 – 1922

Salt production ends (damage to the wells).

### 1922

Assumption of the assets of the debt-ridden Salinen AG by the City of Rheine.

### 1940

Destruction of the central portion of the already rotten 140-meter-long graduation house by a tornado.

### 1945 – 1946

Damage to numerous buildings and wells, due to burial of the saline canal by bombing raids and flooding of Ems River.

### 1952

Closing of all facilities except those for bathing.

### 1975

Closing of the salt water baths.

### 2004

During the tourism development project REGIONALE 2004 the three tourist attractions, Bentlage Monastery, the Natural Zoo and the saline, are strongly supported. Simultaneously, the EmsRadweg bicycle trail is opened. As garden landscaping design elements, tree plantings with box-cut lindens today accentuate the missing central area of the graduation house. The Saline Park has been recognized by EGHN, the European Garden Network.

## Souvenirs, Souvenirs

The Association for the Support of the Saline Gottesgabe was founded in 2010 and is dedicated to preserving the saline facilities. Boiled salt from Rheine brine can be purchased at the Dreigiebelhaus.



## Bentlage



## Guided Tour Information

- Duration: ca. one and a half hours
- Group tours by registration (€ 55.00 group price, maximum 25 participants)
- During the season (April to October), guest tours are open to all and take place each Sunday and holiday at 3:00 pm
- Fee: € 3.00 per person, children up to 14 free
- Meeting place: Dreigiebelhaus Information Centre

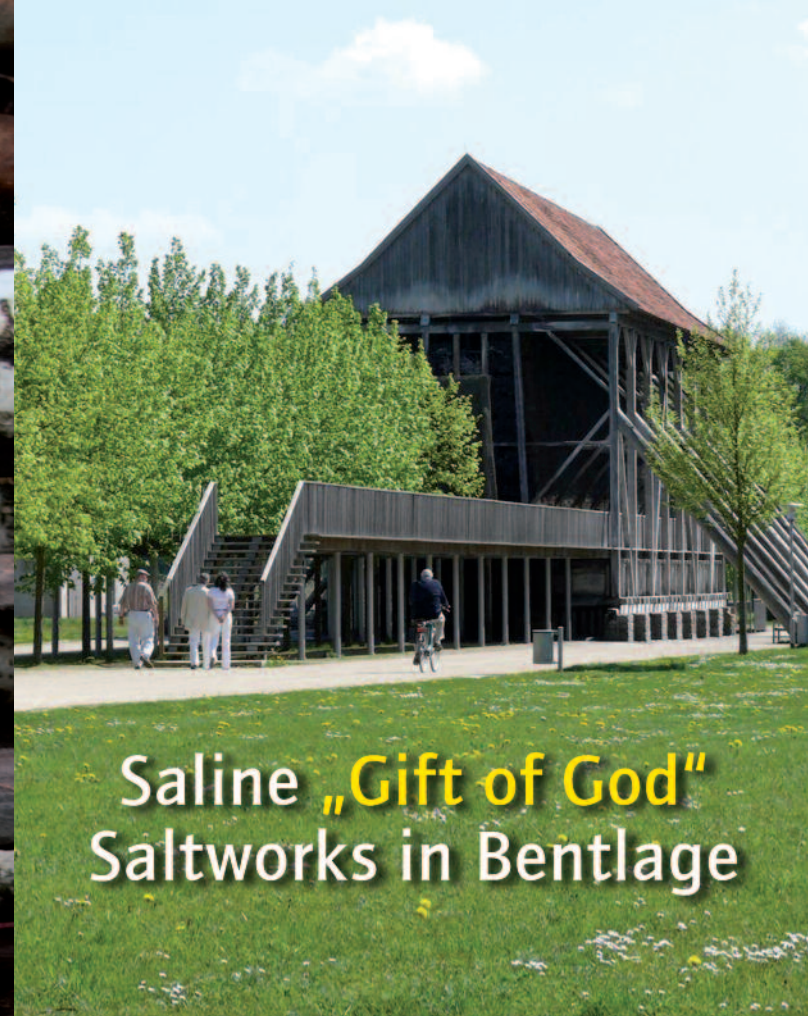
Verkehrsverein *Rheine*  
Leben an der Ems

Information Centre Dreigiebelhaus:  
Salinenstr. 105 \*  
48432 Rheine  
Tel.: 05971 / 9127894  
e-mail: dreigiebelhaus@tourismus.rheine.de  
\* (for GPS please enter "Weihbischof- Alhaus- Straße")

Hours:  
April 1st or Easter – October 3rd:  
Tues. – Sat. 2 pm – 6 pm  
Sun. & Holidays 11 am – 6 pm

Rheine Tourism Office e.V.:  
Bahnhofstraße 14  
48431 Rheine  
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www.verkehrsverein-rheine.de

Hours:  
Mon. – Fri. 9 am – 5.30 pm  
Sat. 10 am – 2 pm



## Saline „Gift of God“ Saltworks in Bentlage



Verkehrsverein *Rheine*  
Leben an der Ems



# What is a saline?

A saline is a saltworks.  
The salt production takes place in four work stages:



- 1 Extracting the brine
- 2 Cleaning the brine
- 3 Increasing the salt content of the brine
- 4 Boiling and evaporating the brine

Brine is the specialist term for salt water. Brine exists naturally in the ground and must be brought to the surface with wells.

## These buildings/facilities were used in salt production:

### 1 Turbine House

In the Turbine House was located the equipment which provided the energy for brine extraction (water wheel/ steam engine/ turbine). The saline canal flows alongside the house. It was built in order to use the water power from the Ems River to produce energy.

### 2 Brine Storage Basin

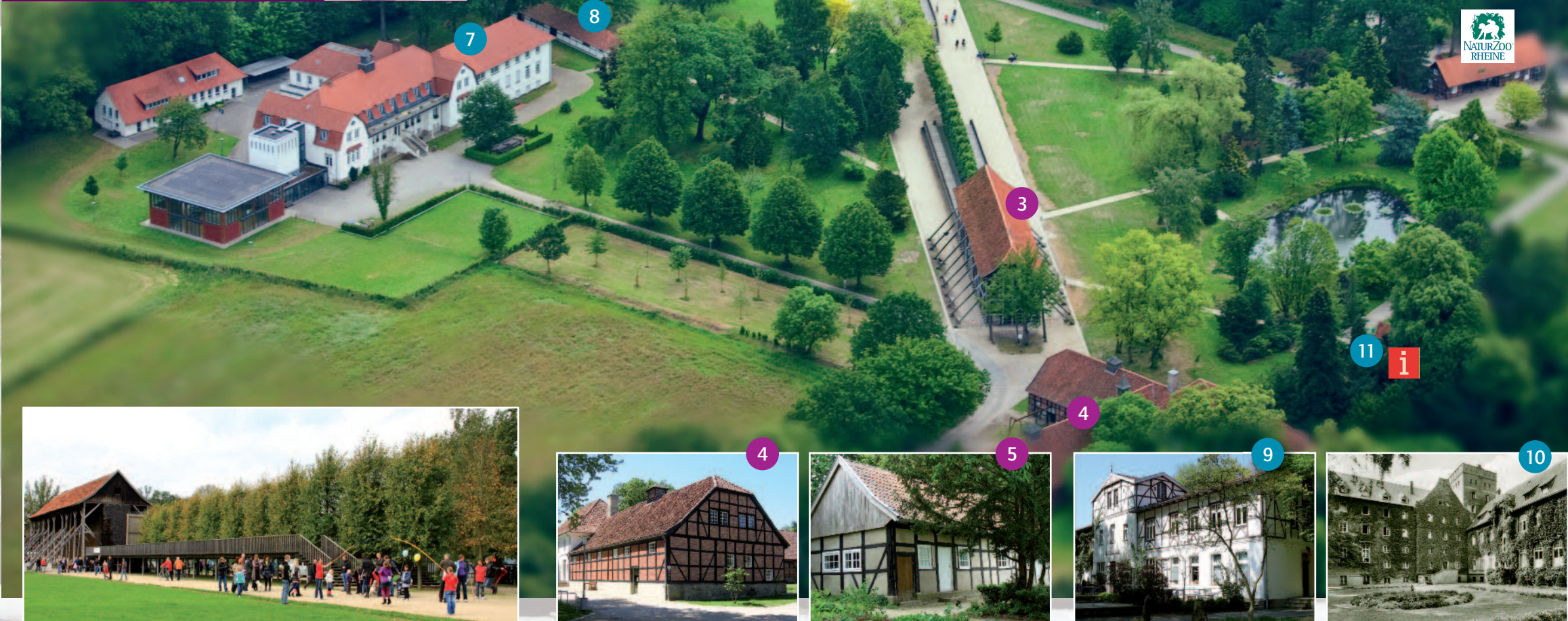
Here the brine for processing was collected with the aid of pumps. The brine stood in this seven-meter-deep wood basin. Soil and other impurities gradually sank to the bottom. Of the original four containers, only one remains today.

### 3 Graduation Works

The graduation works was used to increase the brine's salt content. By evaporating freshwater during the "drip graduation" process (the brine trickles through bundles of blackthorn brushwood and is thereby finely atomised), brine of 5–9% salt was upgraded to a 20–24% content. The graduation enabled the saving of much energy in the boiling process. The brine was subsequently brought through wood pipes to the salt boiling pans in the boiling house. The graduation house is still active today, and those seeking relaxation come to enjoy the invigorating salty air.

### The Salters

The Rheine Local Heritage Society ("Heimatverein") has placed a monument to the Bentlage Salters. The bronze statue by sculptor Werner Bruning of Mesum stands across from the Dreigiebelhaus Information Centre.



### 4 Salt Boiling House

In the boiling house, salt was produced by heating the brine. For this purpose four large boiling pans were once used here, originally made with thin stone slabs and later replaced by pans of riveted sheet iron. The firing sites and historic salt storage rooms have also been preserved. The Saline Inspector, the director of the saline operation, lived in the



west wing of the house. The Inspector's Residence today houses the Josef Winckler Museum, where the life and work of the Westphalian writer of that name is commemorated. In the salt production facility, visitors can produce salt themselves and may participate in a museum educational program.



### 5 House of the Master of Art

This was the residence of the "Master of Art", who was the saline's person responsible for the construction and maintenance of the extraction wells, the underground tunnels and other technical structures. Today the Master's House is used by the group "Arts Spectrum 88 Rheine e. V." as a summer gallery and by the group "NABU Association of Steinfurt e. V." as office space and meeting place.



## These buildings were used as spa and bathing facilities:

### 6 Brine Storage Tower

Purified brine was pumped up into the brine storage tower in order to provide salt water for the salt water baths in the children's home.

### 7 Children's Rest Home

In the rest home, sick children from poor homes received therapy. Today the building houses the Josef Pieper School, the bishopric technical school for social pedagogy.

### 8 Solarium

Here the children rested in the healing, salty air. Through the atomisation of the brine in the graduation house, the air in the immediate area was enriched with the finest salt particles.

### 9 Bath House

The initiation of the spa- and bath operation was intended to improve the economic position of the Saline. Spa guests and daily visitors could enjoy brine baths in the bath house. Today the restaurant "Gottesgabe" is located here.

### 10 Old Gertrude Foundation

In the Gertrude Foundation both daily visitors and the longer-term lodgers received healing treatments. The building was torn down in 2003. The current Gertrude Foundation building is used by the Bishopric of Münster as a meditation facility.

### 11 Dreigiebelhaus (Three Gabled House) i

Historically a workshop building for the maintenance of the saline facility, today it is an information centre for all visitors to Bentlage.