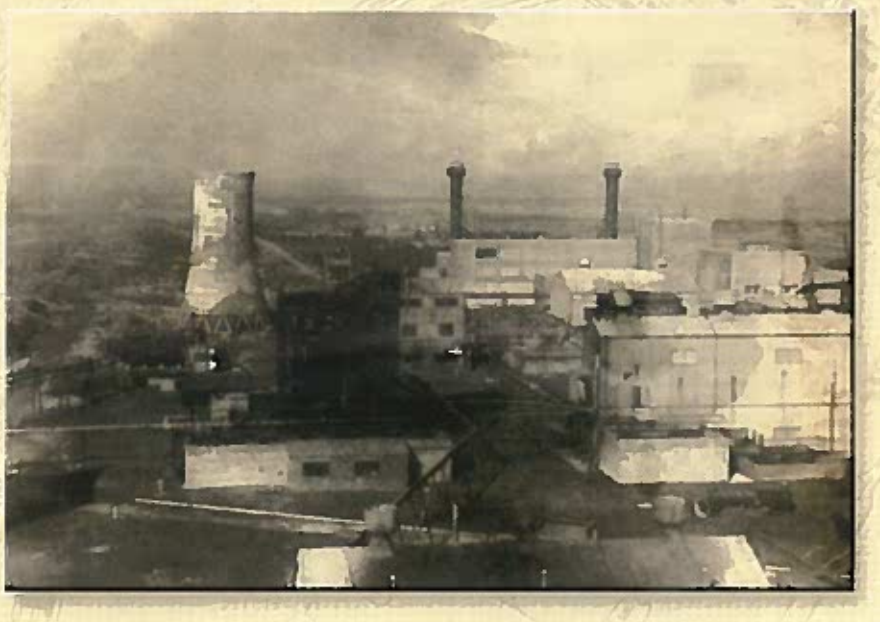
The Pembrey Royal Ordnance Factory



The "Explosive" History of Pembrey Burrows!

Parc Gwledig Pen-bre
Pembrey Country Park

The History of the Royal Ordnance Factory, Pembrey

The isolated sand dunes of Pembrey Burrows provided the ideal conditions for the dangerous occupation of the manufacture of explosives. The sand dunes not only provided an effective screen but also minimised any possible damage in the event of an explosion. It is hardly surprising therefore, that the area attracted the producers of gun powder and dynamite as early as 1881. It was however, 1914 before the Royal Ordnance Factory became developed on a large scale.

By 1914 the Noel Explosive Company Ltd. of Glasgow, who originally intended to produce explosives agreed with the Secretary of State for War to erect and manage a Trinitrotoluene (T.N.T.) factory at Pembrey. It was agreed that the State should bear the entire cost of the plant, which would then remain Government property after the War, with Messers. Nobel being retained as agents for administration.

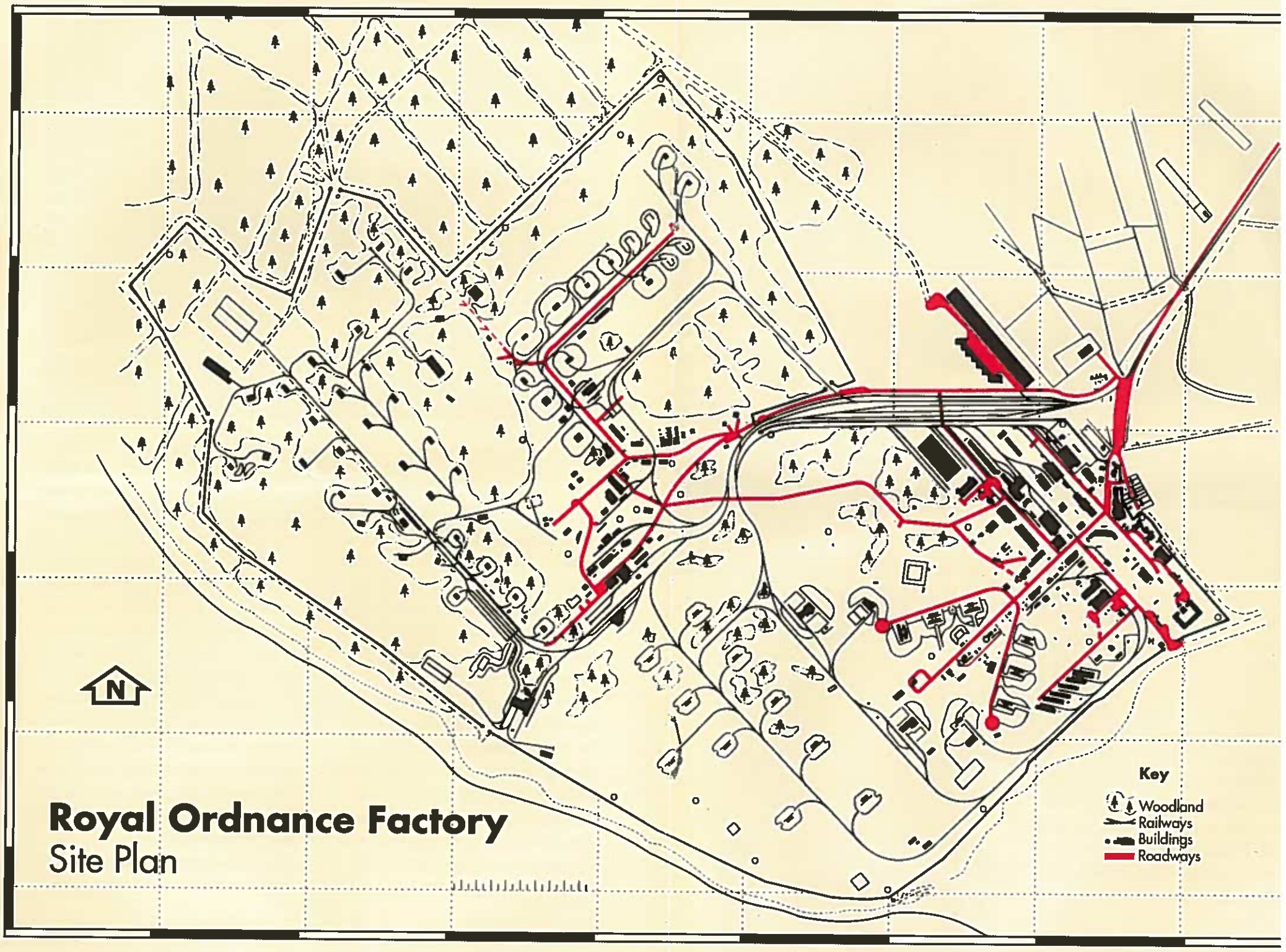
WWI Inspectors

Pembrey was in fact one of over 200 factories producing munitions which sprang up during the First World War. In common with most it was run down rapidly as soon as the War ended, eventually closing in the early 1920's.

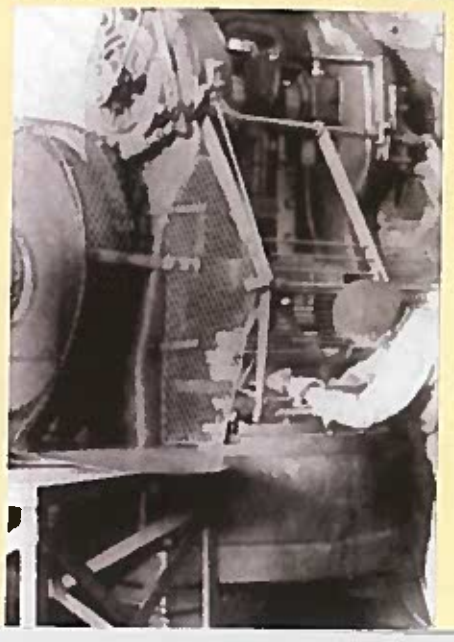
During the 1930's the Central Administration building was used as a convalescent home and rehabilitation centre for the children of unemployed miners to produce 'carbon black' which is used in the manufacture of printers ink.

As the second World War approached the factory was re-opened and largely rebuilt under the name of the Royal Ordnance Factory. The factory buildings were carefully laid out over some 200 hectares of sand dunes with the central office, police barracks, canteen, surgery, library and administrative building being grouped together near the entrance of the factory. The nitration buildings, magazines and other danger spots were scattered among sand dunes a safe distance away. Only a few of these structures now remain. The site's coastal location meant that there was an economical building material readily available in the form of sand.

In addition to the area's natural dune large quantities of sand were used to for artificial mounds and underground bunker These not only provided a degree of camouflage but also protection against attack of explosion within the factory. Ma of these remain and have been incorporate into the landform during the reclamatio of site. The layout of the site had been given careful consideration with raw material stores, acid plants and nitratio buildings laid out in a progressive order enabling an efficient flow of materials alo the factory's railway system. Traces of t tracks are still visible today, particularly front of the Adventure Play Area. The facto was entirely self-sufficient in terms of services, having its own plant and machinery to produce electricity.



Royal Ordnance Factory
Site Plan



Water was obtained from two small rivers five miles away. Intake ponds were constructed, from which water was carried in a fifteen inch main to a low level pond in the factory where it was chemically treated, filtered and pumped to high level storage tanks, to be carried by mains throughout the site. Later a number of well points were sunk within the factory. Steam was generated at four boiler stations having 33 boilers, capable of producing 5,000,000 lbs. of steam per day. Electric light and power were generated at the factory's power station where seven generators with a total capacity of 4,300 kw were installed.

Access to the site was from the main A484 Carmarthen to Swansea Trunk Road along a private road. Most of the materials and labour came in by train, with the site connected to the main Paddington - Fishguard line, some two kilometers, away by two branch lines.

The product of the processes carried out at the Factory were, not surprisingly put to war-like uses. Royal Ordnance Factory Pembrey was in fact the Country's largest producer of T.N.T., Ammonium Nitrate and Tetryl. During 1942 when peak production was reached some 700 tons of T.N.T., 1,000 tons of ammonium nitrate and 40 tons of tetryl were produced every week. In more peaceful time T.N.T. was carefully removed from superfluous ammunitions, while Ammonium Nitrate was produced for use as an agricultural fertiliser.

Waste T.N.T. was burnt on isolated patches of sand, although some underwe controlled burning. Production continuec after the Second World War at a low leve except for a sharp upturn in the early 195(at the time of the Korean War. The factor was largely concerned in the late fifties w the breaking down of obsolete or superfluo bombs and shells. Gradually the work for was allowed to run down from a peak of 3,000 in 1942 to under 400 in 1961.

The closure of the factory was formal announced in the House of Commons in Ap 1962, upon recommendation of the Roya Ordnance Factory Review

THE FACTORY WAS FINALLY CLOSED IN MARCH 1965

Pembrey Country Park
Pembrey, Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA16 0EJ
Tel: 01554 742424
Fax: 01554 835498
Email: leisure@carmarthenshire.gov.uk