

Pembrey Country Park

Discover hidden history



Welcome to Pembrey Country Park This wonderfully tranquil site has not always been so peaceful. Since the late 19th century this site has been used to manufacture explosives, first for mining and industrial purposes, then in the First and Second World Wars to make munitions. This leaflet will help you explore the park and find traces of its fascinating history.



An explosive history

When the first explosives factory opened in 1882 it was making dynamite, not for munitions but for mining and quarrying. After only a few months an appalling explosion resulted in the deaths of 7 workers, aged between 13 and 24 years old. There is no trace of this factory now but old maps show where it used to be.

A new factory was built at the start of the First World War, manufacturing high explosives and propellants. In less than two years 1,143,000 shells left Pembrey by railway and then ship to go to the battlefronts of Europe and the Middle East. The factories covered a huge area, 760 acres, and employed over 6000 people from Llanelli, Carmarthen and Swansea, most of them women (bottom left). Some of the earthworks, built as blast banks around the 'danger buildings' where explosives were made, still survive today.

After the war the factory closed and in 1926 was sold for scrap for £30,000. During the 1930s the office buildings were used as a camp for children. Construction began in 1938 on a new government factory (above) which led to almost complete demolition of the earlier buildings. The Royal Ordnance Factory Pembrey was one of only four producers of TNT during the Second World War and it was the largest supplier. Though the site was smaller it was more efficient and employed 3000 men and women.



1882
Stowmarket Explosives Company begin to manufacture dynamite amongst the sand dunes of Pembrey Burrows, however it is short lived - a terrible explosion killing 7 young people ends production at the site which is then used only for warehousing and storage.

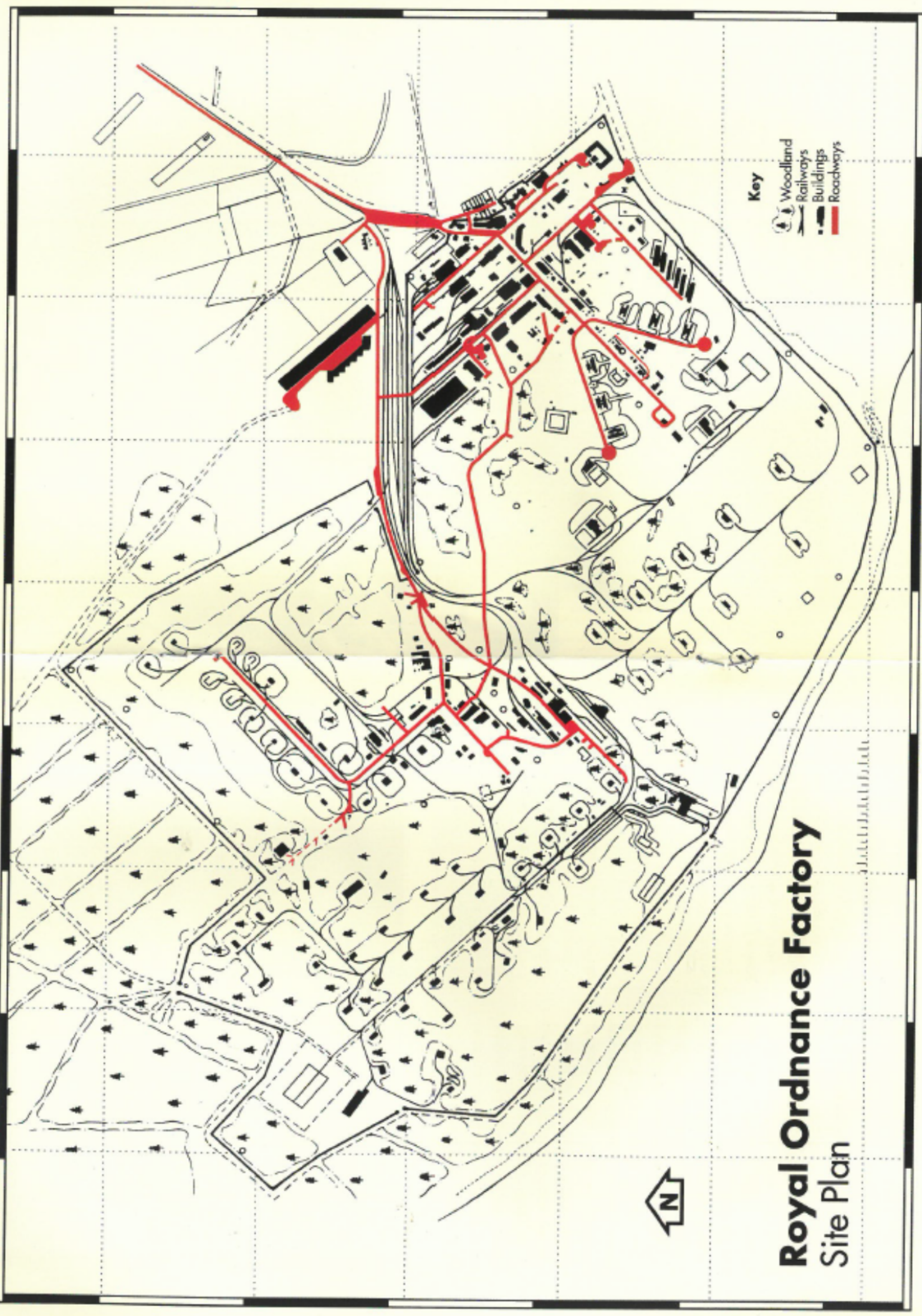
1914
Nobel's Explosives Manufacturing Co. build a factory at Pembrey to manufacture high explosives, and a separate factory for filling shells is built next to it. In 1917 both factories are nationalised. Following the end of the First World War the factory closes and is sold in 1926.

1935
The administration buildings are used as a school camp for the children of unemployed miners of South Wales.

1938
With war looming again, construction starts on a new Government factory, this time called the Royal Ordnance Factory Pembrey. After the war the plant winds down until in 1964 it closes.

1980
Pembrey Country Park opens.





- Key**
- Woodland
 - Railways
 - Buildings
 - Roadways

Royal Ordnance Factory

Site Plan



Use this map to learn more about the history of the site and discover the remains for yourself. Take care as you explore!

1 As you enter the country park you will see a 'pillbox' looking out over the main access road into the factory. This was built in the Second World War for defence against attack. This type of pillbox (type 23) has an open well in the back where a light anti-aircraft gun was mounted. In July 1940, at the outset of the Battle of Britain, the factory was bombed and eleven workers were killed and fifteen more injured.

2 Explore the brick lined tunnels in the trees behind the visitor centre and café, here are numerous enclosures – accessed by tunnels, inside each were buildings manufacturing cordite during the First World War – a powerful explosive used in making munitions. Can you find the tunnel which was converted into an Air Raid Shelter in the Second World War?

3 High up on this bank you will find three tunnels where nitroglycerine was made. It was too dangerous to pump or carry so it would flow by gravity to the next process.

4 These lookout posts were a unique design to Royal Ordnance Factories of the Second World War.

5 Pembrey is well known for these massive concrete 'bunkers', they are actually magazines built in the Second World War to store explosive material. Three central rooms were for storage with a railway to transport materials in and out.

6 Railways were important in the factory for transporting materials around the site. Both standard gauge and narrow-gauge railways were used. In lots of places you will be able to see the remains of tracks. Special trains were also laid on to bring factory workers in to work

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