

ELEMENTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL PAST IN ZORROTZA. In the early 20th century

In the late eighteenth century, Napoleonic troops took the Royal Shipyard and took control of the whole shipbuilding infrastructure. In the early nineteenth century the shipyard was put up for auction and its assets were liquidated, which meant it was closed for good. Nowadays, the north wall is still conserved, and some stone pillars that were part of the entrance to the site.

1. PORT ACTIVITY AND IRON ORE COAST LOADERS

Zorrotza's geographic location as a crossroads, its proximity to the mines in Kastrexana and the incipient industrialization of the late nineteenth century led to the urban transformation of the zone, which was a mainly rural area until then. The construction of the Bilbao-Santander railway line was a determining factor in shaping the urban construction and economic activity of Zorrotza, as it facilitated the exploitation of natural resources and the supply of materials for the industries that had been set up along the quays.

Currently, on the quays in Zorrotza the remains of three loaders used for loading and unloading iron ore can still be seen. The oldest of them, known as "the bucket" or the "primitive pine loader" was inaugurated in 1881 and was used exclusively to load iron ore from the mines in Kastrexana, which was transported by a 2,743 metre-long single-cable aerial tramway.

2. TAPIA BROS. SOAP COMPANY

The Tapia Brothers soap company was founded on the Ribera de Deusto riverside in 1863 and in around 1891 it was moved to one end of the old Royal Dockyard of Zorrotza, among other reasons, because of its proximity to the railway line, which made it easier to unload the raw materials and load the finished product directly. The company operated until 1988, and produced the popular brand of soap, Chimbo. In 1996, the factory was demolished.

3. ELÉCTRICA DEL NERVIÓN POWER STATION

In 1894 on the dockside in Zorrotza the Electra General Electric Company, known as Eléctrica del Nervión, was inaugurated. It provided electricity for the electric trams and various neighbourhoods of Bilbao, and was in business until 1940. Then in 1948 the company Canaries Chemical Industries used the site for the extraction and processing of raw materials of various kinds. In 1987 the company went out of business and now the site is occupied by SADER, a company in the decontamination and waste disposal business.

4. THE ROYAL SHIPYARD

In the 14th century, Zorrotza was one of the largest shipbuilding areas in Bizkaia. Its geographical location and proximity to raw materials made it the perfect place for the production of vessels and for many auxiliary or related industries. In 1615 we know that there were three shipyards; the Royal Shipyard and two privately owned ones. As the most important of the three, the Royal Shipyard stands out, created to meet the needs of the Navy with the construction of 500-ton ships. This shipyard would undergo several expansions over the years and in the 18th century, as well as several dry docks, it had a smithy, warehouses, kilns, a pitch factory and an arsenal.

5. THE RIGGING FACTORY OR ROPEWORKS

Among the old port facilities in Zorrotza in the eighteenth century was the Rigging Factory or Ropeworks in which the ropes for ships were produced by the process of spinning and braiding hemp. About 200 people worked in the original building, which was 400 metres long and 13 metres wide. The north end of the building still stands in Marino Archer street. It was a building with three floors with walls of varying width, made of stonework and with a gable roof.

6. GRANDES MOLINOS VASCOS S.A. FLOUR MILL

The Grandes Molinos Vascos flour mill building is one of the most monumental pieces of manufacturing architecture from Bilbao's industrial past. It was built between the years 1923 and 1924 by architect Federico Ugalde and was the second building built of reinforced concrete in the city, after the old Ceres factory on the La Merced quay.

Located at one end of the Zorrotza quay, the company made fine flour using the most advanced methods of the time. In 1929, the flour mill ceased trading because of a fall in prices. Later, the building was used as a goods store.

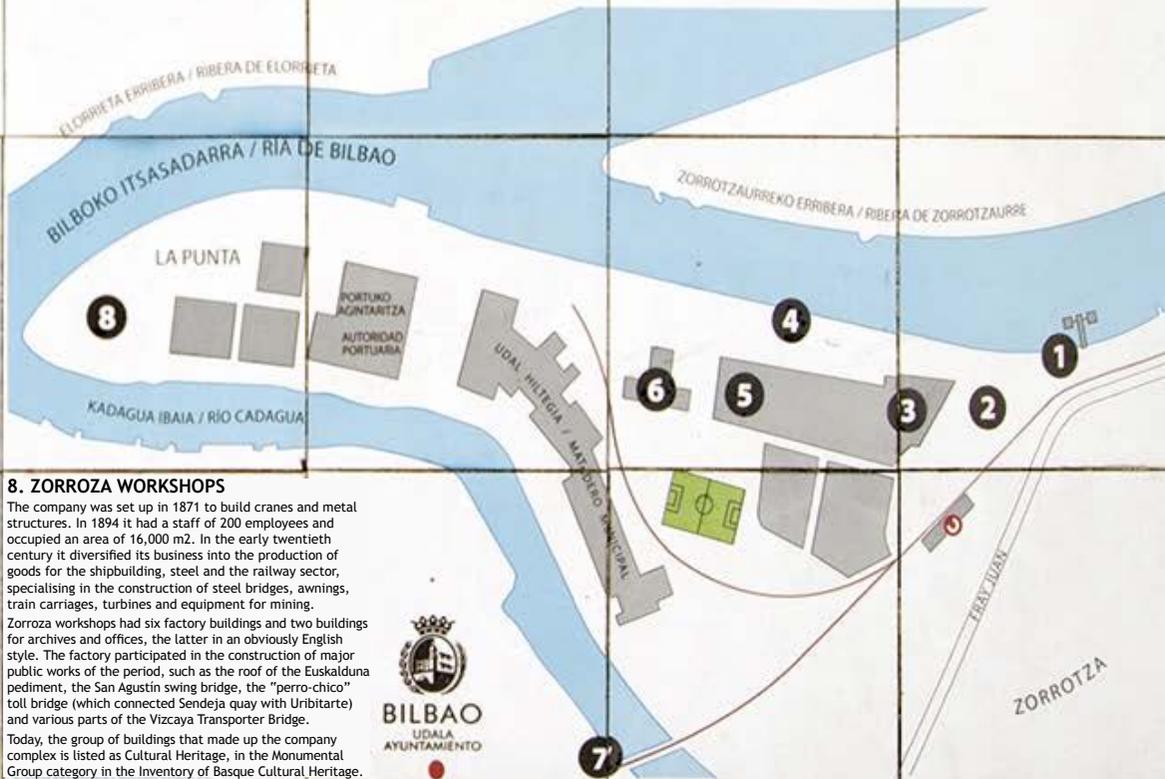
For the construction of the factory, various structures from the old Royal Shipyard of Zorrotza were reused, chief among them the Cordage factory, where the rigging for ships had been made since the eighteenth century.

The Grandes Molinos Vascos flour mill consists of two buildings at right-angles and occupies 1,000 m². The main facade faces the river and runs parallel to the loading/unloading quay and the old railway line. This connection with the river and the railway made bringing grain into the factory easier. The building has a neo-Basque style roof, with fifteen 22 metre-high silos, with the capacity to store up to 75 tons of grain.

In 2009 the Basque Government designated the Grandes Molinos Vascos building as of Cultural Interest, in the category of a Monument, because it is one of the most emblematic buildings of Bizkaia's industrial heritage.

7. THE ALZOLA BRIDGE

The bridge was built in 1878 over the river Kadagua for the Bilbao-Santurtzi railway line. The viaduct is 65 metres long and, in engineer Pablo Alzola's project, consisted of two parallel caissons (one in each direction), although now only one remains. Its metal structure rests on two stone supports located on either side of the river and initially it had no intermediate supports. The Alzola bridge is an excellent example of a metal construction built at the time of the industrial revolution and was declared a Protected Monument by the Basque Government in 2005.



8. ZORROZA WORKSHOPS

The company was set up in 1871 to build cranes and metal structures. In 1894 it had a staff of 200 employees and occupied an area of 16,000 m². In the early twentieth century it diversified its business into the production of goods for the shipbuilding, steel and the railway sector, specialising in the construction of steel bridges, awnings, train carriages, turbines and equipment for mining. Zorroza workshops had six factory buildings and two buildings for archives and offices, the latter in an obviously English style. The factory participated in the construction of major public works of the period, such as the roof of the Euskalduna pediment, the San Agustín swing bridge, the "perro-chico" toll bridge (which connected Sendeja quay with Uribitarte) and various parts of the Vizcaya Transporter Bridge.

Today, the group of buildings that made up the company complex is listed as Cultural Heritage, in the Monumental Group category in the Inventory of Basque Cultural Heritage.