

BALLINCOLLIG HERITAGE ASSOCIATION



BALLINCOLLIG ROYAL GUNPOWDER MILLS

The Ballincollig Royal Gunpowder Mills, situated on the south bank of the River Lee just six miles west of Cork City, is an industrial archaeological site of enormous national and international importance. In its day it was the second largest gunpowder works in the whole of Britain and Ireland, and now ranks as Ireland's largest industrial archaeological site, covering over 130 acres.

A prominent Cork citizen Charles Henry Leslie first established it in 1794. Eleven years later when Napoleon's control of France posed a major threat, the British Board of Ordnance bought the mills and expanded the site, the layout of which is still visible today. Closed from 1815-1833, the mills were later sold to Thomas Tobin of Liverpool who transformed the mills into one of the most up to date industrial complexes in Ireland, employing over 500 people. The mills closed in 1903 after smokeless explosives such as nitro-glycerine superseded black powder.

Cork County Council developed the site into Ballincollig Regional Park in the 1980's and it is a popular recreational area for the region comprising woodland, meadows, sports fields, river and canal-side walks. Sadly the Gunpowder Mills Visitors Centre, which opened in the 1990s to interpret the site, closed down.

Although the incorporating mills area is closed to the public, the ruins of over sixty buildings associated with gunpowder manufacture are scattered throughout the park along the main arterial canal which runs the length of the complex, a distance of approximately 3 kilometers. The biggest concentration of buildings is at the eastern end.

Ballincollig Heritage Association gives tours of the park to historical societies on request.

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