

[ENG]

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Concello de Cee



Opening of the Caneliñas factory on the 14th of November 1924  
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## Working conditions, environmentalism and Caneliñas memory

### A pioneering strike

Caneliñas factory, both during the Norwegian period (1924-1929) and the IBSA period (1951-1985), was a true economic catalyst in the region, employing many men and women from the surrounding villages, who traditionally worked in agriculture and inshore fishing.

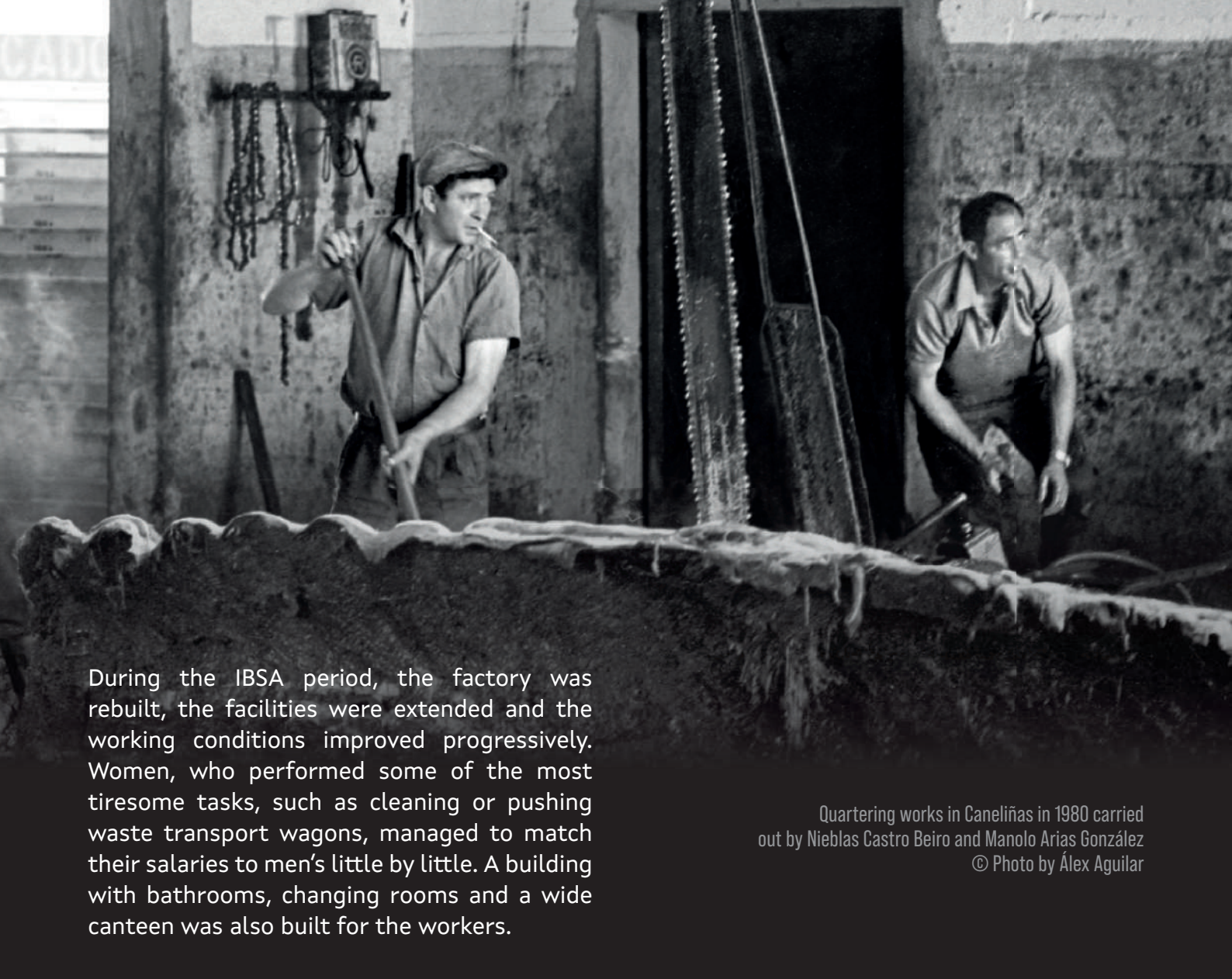
Nonetheless, the working conditions were poor, especially in the 1920s. The whale processing was physically demanding; the workers had to endure the stinking process and the high heat from the boilers, they had to work in shifts of up to twelve hours and could only collect their pay just when there was work to do. All these factors led, in July 1925, to seventy labourers abandoning the factory for several days. This action was the first workers' strike documented in the Costa da Morte.



Ramps for hoisting the whales to the quartering platform in 1925  
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Whale in the hoisting ramp in 1925  
© Álex Aguilar's archive



During the IBSA period, the factory was rebuilt, the facilities were extended and the working conditions improved progressively. Women, who performed some of the most tiresome tasks, such as cleaning or pushing waste transport wagons, managed to match their salaries to men's little by little. A building with bathrooms, changing rooms and a wide canteen was also built for the workers.

Quartermen works in Caneliñas in 1980 carried out by Nieblas Castro Beiro and Manolo Arias González  
© Photo by Álex Aguilar

## The environmental awareness in the 1970s and the 1980s

The commercial whale overhunting in the 20th century triggered an environmental awareness movement against such commercial activity, which intensified by the end of the 1970s. The most active organisation in this struggle was Greenpeace which, in one of its first actions in August 1978, blocked the way of the Carrumeiro whaler with several rubber dinghies preventing a whale specimen from being hunted. Other organisations involved in whale conservation at the time were the Sociedade Galega de Historia Natural (Galician Society of Natural History), ADEGA, ADENA or Amigos da Terra.

IBSA TRES prow with harpooner Miguel López following a whale  
© Photo by Álex Aguilar





Greenpeace activists preventing the IBSA III from hunting a whale. © Greenpeace. Photo by Pierre Gleizes

Apart from those pacific actions, two magnetic bomb attacks against IBSA whalers occurred in 1978 and 1980. The last attack sank the IBSA I and IBSA II boats, which were docked at the Marín harbour, leaving the company with just one available vessel. This action was later claimed by Paul Watson, one of Greenpeace's founders, who had been expelled from the

organisation and had founded a new group, Sea Shepherd, supporting direct, convincing and –even– violent actions.

This event limited decisively the processing capacity of the Caneliñas factory, which closed down only five years later due to the international moratorium on commercial whaling imposed by the *International Whaling Commission*.



Whalers sunk after the attack at Marín's harbour  
© Greenpeace. Photo by Pierre Gleizes



Quarterming area in 2024

## The recovery of a memory

After the closure of the factory in 1985, IBSA's management decided to keep a few workers and company director Julio Arias at the facilities in the hope that the activity could be resumed. Even so, the company went bankrupt in 1994. Caneliñas was sold to the creditor banks and was therefore abandoned and ultimately dismantled.

Despite its abandonment, Caneliñas is still the best preserved factory of the sort in the Iberian Peninsula and its walls are a silent memory of a time long gone. Most of that memory was restored in 2014 thanks to the publication of the monograph entitled "Chimán: modern whaling in the Iberian Peninsula", written by Animal Biology professor at the University of Barcelona Álex Aguilar.



Aguilar worked as a biologist at the Galician whaling factories between 1978 and 1985; hence, he was a privileged witness of the final stage of the whaling activity in Europe. In his work, not only he shows the knowledge derived from his personal experience, but he also provides plenty of graphic and documentary information of the whaling companies' archives and the accounts of the former Caneliñas workers.