

TOUR OF THE OKUNOSHIMA RUINS





①Poison gas museum

The poison gas plants were built on Okunoshima in 1929 and were used until the end of the war. The island was erased from maps of the area from around 1932 as it was made secret. The museum is open to the public in order to educate people with the harsh consequences of poison gas manufacture and the reality of war, so as to prevent repeating history.



②Remains of the automated switch board booth

The automated phone exchange booth was placed here in case of emergency. The space inside was just large enough to have 6 tatami mats (roughly 4x3 meters) and people only entered in emergencies. The booth was built to last and was camouflaged to blend into the background. Instead of painting on the camouflage, concrete with yellow and green directly mixed in was used to build the chamber. Because of this, the yellow and green colors are still visible to this day.



③Cenotaph for the victims of the Okunoshima poison gas plant

The names of the victims who suffered fatal injuries from dealing with the poison gas are inscribed on the memorial stone, which was erected in 1985.

A memorial service is held in every October to remind people not to repeat history. Statements dedicated to the victims can also be seen on the monuments.



④Okunoshima shrine

The shrine, which was originally located near the current Kyukamura residence, was moved to the present location in 1929 when the poison gas plant was opened. It was used for various events such as the C Band, Tenranji, etc, as well as new school year and graduation ceremonies for schools (See the picture in the middle). In 1937, a monument was placed to pay respect to the victims who lost their lives due to the production of the poison gas.

※Due to health and safety reasons, it is not permitted to go inside of the barrier.



⑤ Remains of the medical center

Originally just a clinic, it was expanded till it became a full-scale hospital in 1937. The hospital had many wards including a dentistry, an internal medicine ward, a surgery ward, an ophthalmology ward, an otolaryngology ward, an X-Ray room, and a poison gas treatment room, as well as a room with 30 beds for patients. Now a park, all that remains of the hospital is parts of the plumbing.



⑥ Remains of the stone pillars and the border fencing for the army

The barbed wire fencing was built to separate the lighthouse from the poison gas plants. The words, 'army jurisdiction' and 'Okunoshima lighthouse area' can still be seen on the stone pillars at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the lighthouse.



⑦ Remains of the southern searchlight

In the era of the Geiyo Fortress (circa 1904), the southern searchlight was used to light up the surface of the sea to monitor ships during the night. Only the electric light well and the bottom room can be seen today.

⑧ Remains of the air raid shelters

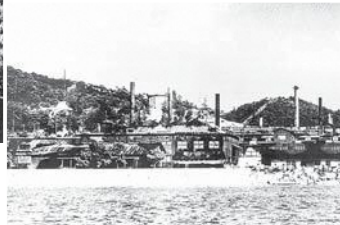
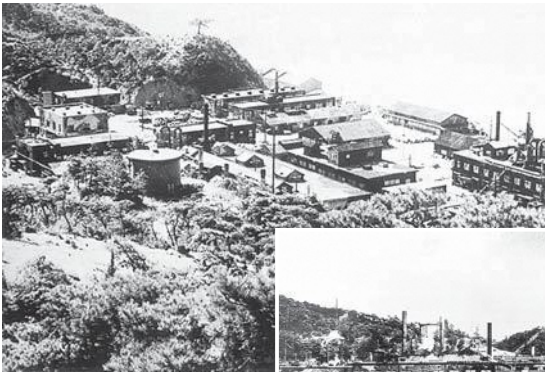
Around 50 air raid shelters were dug out in order to store supplies for the production of the poison gas. Many of the entrances to the air raid shelters can still be found around the island. The entrances are covered with stone blocks (as shown in the pictures). Some of the shelters are as deep as 100m and are connected with one another.



⑨ Experiment rooms/ examining rooms

This white building was used to develop and experiment with poison gas, and also to store necessary supplies, samples and chemicals. The gray building next to the white building was used to examine the effect of the poison gas. (The picture on the left showcases both of these buildings)

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⑩ Remains of Sanwa poison gas plant

This is the main plant area where gases such as mustard gas, Lewisite, hydrogen cyanide and sneezing gas were manufactured. The area consists of a production room and a repair shop. It was demolished after the war and made into a park. Tall chimneys were used, not to release smoke, but instead used to exhaust the poisonous gasses. (As seen in the photos to the left)

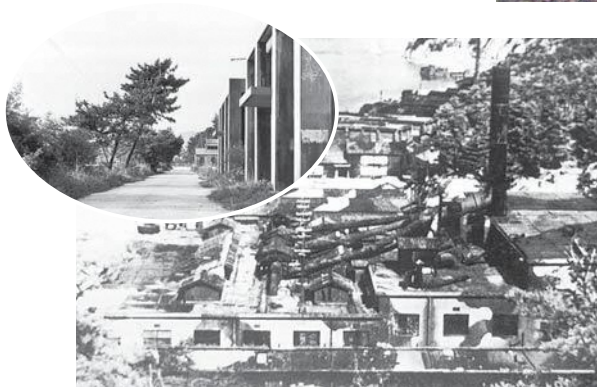


⑪ Remains of the poison gas storage area (west side of the Kyukamura main building)

There were two areas where mustard gas was stored. In each area, a tank containing 10 tons of gas was placed on a concrete foundation. The gas was delivered, through pipes, directly from the poisonous gas plant. Liquid gasses such as Lewisite and mustard gas were stored in iron tanks layered with lead on the inside.

⑫ Remains of the outdoor storage tank foundation

The remains of 32 foundations where the poison gas tanks were placed can be seen here. Although the area is surrounded by forest today, it was at a higher ground at the time of usage. There was a wooden structure with a simple roof to cover the storage area.



⑬ Nagaura plants

This area is called Nagaura and was used for farming before being the site of a poison gas plant where sulphate tanks were stored and tear gas was manufactured. The photo on the right shows the German mustard gas manufacturing plant and the photo on the left was the smoke candle manufacturing sector. The area now is used as a sports park and tennis courts.

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⑭Remains of the Nagaura poison gas storage area

This is the biggest poisonous gas storage area on the island where the concrete foundations that supported the huge tanks still remain. Six tanks which could each store up to 100 tons of gas used to be placed here. After the war, storage areas were burnt with fire in order to remove the poison, resulting in the black burn marks you can see on the wall. The remaining gases were dumped in the Pacific Ocean just off Tosa.



⑮Remains of the smoke hole used to release the poison gas

⑮Remains of the ignition test area

The rocky area on the northern coast was used to as an ignition test for the poison gas. The photo on the left shows smoke from the incineration of the poison gas after the war. The waste incinerator was beside the northern beach road. The photo on the right shows where the smoke was sent to and led all the way up to the top of the mountain to be released.



⑰Remains of the northern battery

Okunoshima became fortified in 1902 when 8 gate cannons were placed in preparation for the Russo-Japanese War. The foundations were used to place the poison gas tanks during the poison gas-manufacturing period. In 1996, it was found that during the clean-up operation of the island after the war the soil around this area had been contaminated with arsenic. This resulted in soil cleaning treatment in 1999.



⑱Remains of the northern battery observatory

This observatory was used to target enemy ships in order to calculate the directions, angles and the timings of the cannon, as well as reporting back the results. In order to communicate the results from the observatory to the turrets, people either walked between the two or used a voice communication tube. The gun was placed in this area during the poisonous gas manufacturing period; however, it was never used as it would have revealed to the enemy the position of the gun.



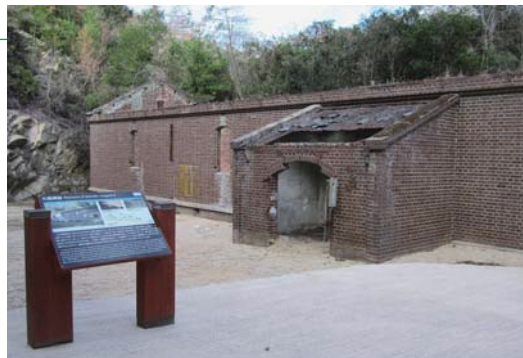
⑲Remains of the middle battery

Six 28cm heavy guns were placed at the middle battery. Two out of the six heavy guns were moved to the Korean Peninsula to be used for travelling attacks. The battery also accommodated an area where the soldiers could have naps when needed, and also used to store the poison gas products during the poison gas manufacturing period.

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②① Remains of the gunpowder storage

This area was used to store gunpowder and bullets. The walls were made of bricks but the roof was made with a weaker material in order to release the force of the blast in case the gunpowder ignited. It was also used to store poison gas products during the poison gas-manufacturing period. It was later used to store gunpowder for the US military during the Korean War. The letters, 'MAG 1' were written during this period. The coast side bank of the storage was made higher in order to hide the storage.



②② Remains of the power plant

The power plant was built to supply power to the poison gas plants. It produced power through the use of diesel generators. Initially, in 1933 there were three 240V generators, however, two more were added in 1934. In addition, they also started to supply power, from Tadanoumi town, by using 22kV undersea cables in 1941. Before the end of the war, the female mobilising students also used the power plant to experiment balloon bomb tests.



②③ Remains of the oil tank and seawater tank

This cylindrical tank was used to store oil to power the diesel generator. Further up the hill, the seawater tank was installed to be used at the power station. There were several seawater tanks on the island to store seawater to be used for both domestic use and for cooling water for the poison gas plants.



Seawater tank remains



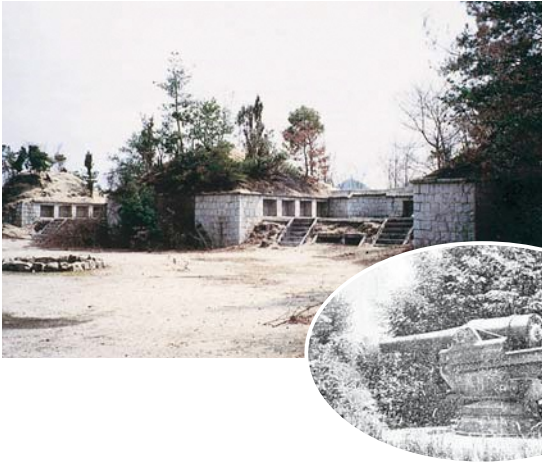
Oil tank remains



②④ The power station front pier

The stone pier was constructed in the Meiji era. The black and white photo was taken in 1929 when the poison gas plants were first opened and governors and army sergeants were invited. However, as it was facing Tadanoumi town, it was not used often to keep the plants a secret from the public.

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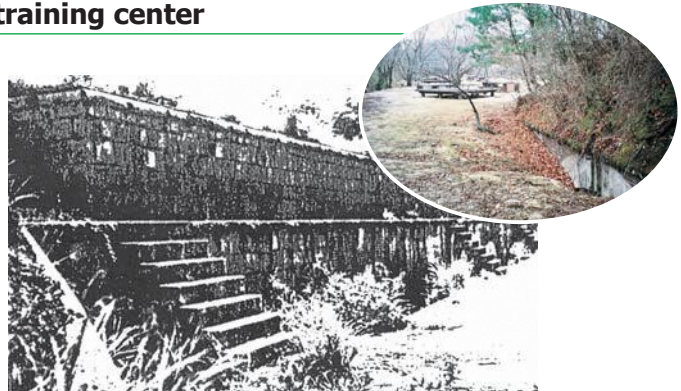


②④Remains of the southern battery

This battery was built to attack enemy ships in the Meiji era. Today's remaining foundations used to hold four (9cm guns). On the other side of the road, four 24cm guns were placed. It was also used to accommodate soldiers as well as storing the poison gas during the poison gas production period. The bottom picture shows the 24cm gun, based in Kanmurizaki in Tadanoumi Town, which was also used on the island.

②⑤Remains of the technical staff training center

The photos to the right show the remains of the accommodation for the soldiers, which was also used to store poison gas products. The rooms for training technical staff and the trainer's room were built above the storage rooms. The graduates from higher elementary school were trained for 3 years and hired to work at the plants. Only a part of the building can be seen today as the majority of the area was land filled.



Entrance of air raid shelter for executives



Remains of air raid shelter for plant workers

②⑥Remains of air raid shelters for executives and plant workers

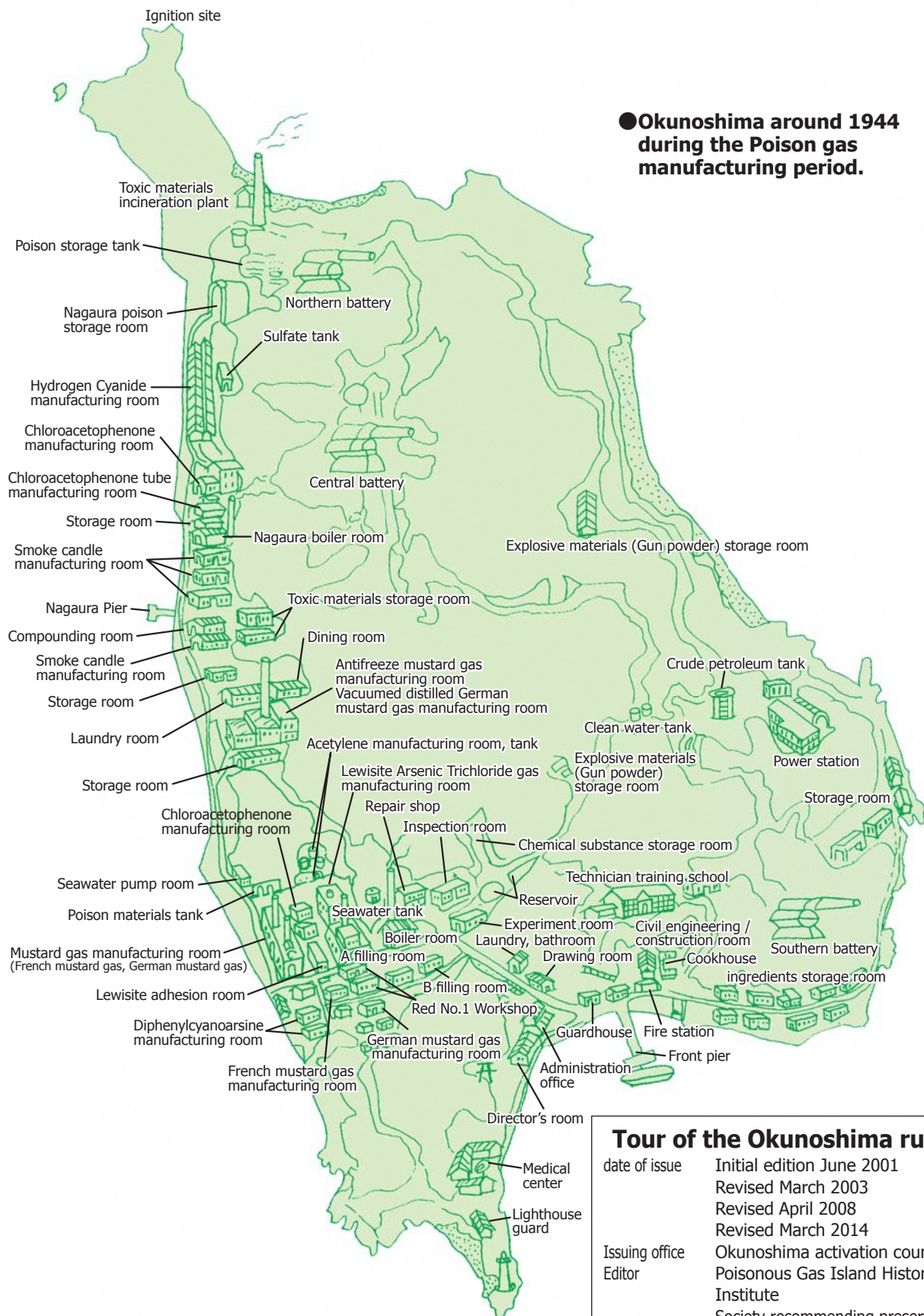
The air raid shelters for executives was built with concrete, covered with earth and guarded with a stone fence. In comparison, the air raid shelters for plant workers were just approximately 1m depth holes dug out on the side of the mountain.



②⑦The number one pier

This pier was used by the plant workers to come onto the island. There was a strict security system in place which required all the workers to be lined up and be checked every time they left the island.

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