

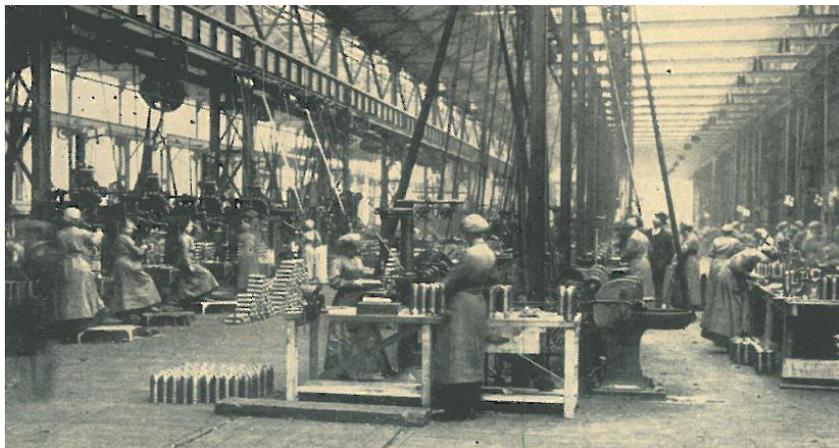
The National Shell Factory at Grimsby

In 1915 Grimsby's Town Clerk, John Jackson, approached the Government with a proposal to establish a shell factory in the town, with the twin objectives of helping the war effort and providing local employment. Jackson's scheme met with the approval of Whitehall and a newly-built complex of fish curing houses on Victoria Street was rented from the trawler magnate Sir Alec Black for conversion into a factory.

The new factory was administered by a board of management that was drawn from the Borough Council, with John Jackson acting as the secretary. The board purchased the required shell-making machinery on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions and the manufacture of 4.5 and 6 inch shells began in November 1915. The first consignment of Grimsby-made shells was despatched for the front on 10th February 1916 and the factory was soon operating throughout the day and night to meet demand.

At its peak the Grimsby shell factory employed over 600 people, of whom nearly 500 were women. The contribution that Grimsby was making to the war effort was recognised officially in 1918, when the factory was visited by King George V and Queen Mary. Shell production at Grimsby finally ceased in December 1918, by which time the factory had produced 309,074 6 inch high-explosive shells and 15,785 4.5 inch projectiles, making a grand total of 324,859. The total value of the shells manufactured in Grimsby was £1,091,757.

The operation of the Grimsby shell works was characterised by very good relations between the management and their employees and the plant was regarded as being one of the most efficient in Britain. By the standards of the day the pay rates for munitions workers were quite high and the total of £203,810 that was paid in wages and bonuses at the shell works provided a much needed boost to Grimsby's wartime economy.



View of a shell manufacturing workshop in Grantham. The workshops in the Grimsby shell factory would have been very similar. Document reference: MISC DON 1642/6/1.