

# Great Archaeological Sites in Swansea



## 7. HAFOD-MORFA COPPERWORKS, SWANSEA



There are no deposits of metal or metal ores anywhere near Swansea, but what the region has in abundance is coal, which was needed in vast quantities to smelt it. In the 18th century the Bristol Channel was seen as an opportunity for transport rather than a barrier, and this made Swansea with its sheltered harbour an attractive place to bring copper ore from Cornwall for processing. The first works were opened in the Tawe valley in 1717 and were followed by another eight during the course of the 18th century.

It therefore made sense for the Vivian family to join them in 1808 to found the Hafod copperworks (SS 6620 9518). The site chosen lay between the River Tawe, up which came the ships laden with ore, and the Swansea Canal, down which came coal from further up the valley. None of the original structures early 19th century structures now survive, but the site still retains its two engine houses that provided steam power for the rolling mills, along with of the two tall chimneys that were such a feature of the industrial landscape in the Swansea valley. The older of the two engine houses, a handsome stone building, was constructed in 1842 and was enlarged twice. The other was built in brick in 1920 to house a more up-to-date

Musgrave engine. There is also the locomotive shed for the trains that moved materials around the site.

The Morfa works opened in 1835 on a site right next to the Hafod works, and at first was just a rolling mill. However it soon started to smelt its own copper, and the two concerns became deadly rivals. Here the original rolling mill does survive, along with the laboratory where samples were tested, and the power house built in the late 19th century when the Morfa works started to go over to electricity. The two works eventually amalgamated in 1924, and continued to produce copper until 1980.



There is free entry to view the outsides of the buildings. Entrance to the archaeology park is from the A4217 at the Morfa Park and Ride car junction (SA1 2JT), and there is a small car park. Access from Sustrans cycle route no.43 via the bridge on the A4217. The nearest station is Swansea. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 159, Explorer Series sheet 165.

**Timeline** (the asterisks indicate the time-span)



You can learn more about this site, and other similar archaeological sites in Wales, by going to <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>. Please read and observe the Conditions of Use. The Morfa works has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00841w, and the Hafod works is 00842w. You can search for other similar sites here too. You can contact us via social media or through the methods given at the bottom of the page.