



Museo Etnográfico de Quirós





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RECEPTION BUILDING

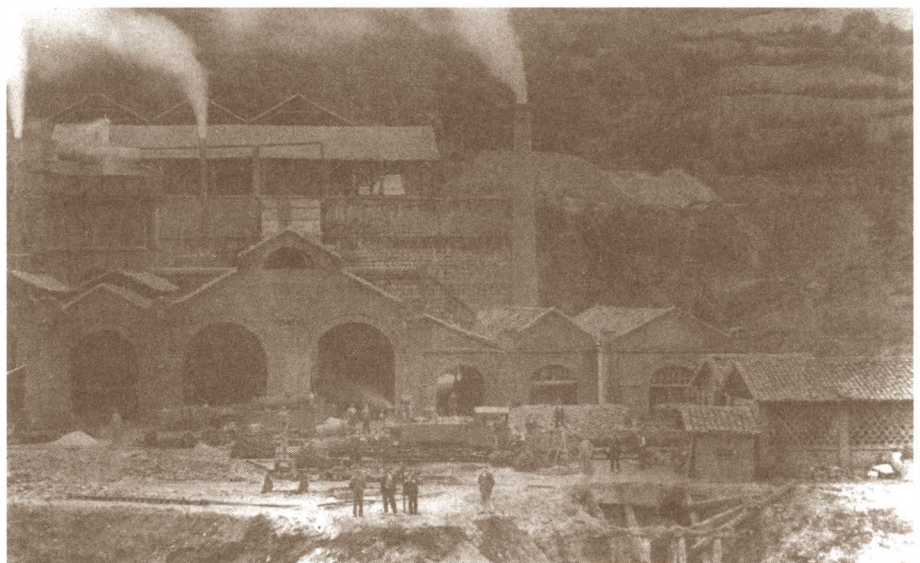
The Industrial Quirós

INTRODUCTION

The texts of the Museo Etnográfico de Quirós are written in *quirosán*, the Asturian language dialect spoken in the municipality. Its unquestionable cultural value has led to it being considered as another museum element, in the same conditions as the other ethnographical pieces on display.

The Museo Etnográfico de Quirós is situated on the same spot as some old smelting ovens, the symbol of the municipality's industrialisation, the result of the working of its coalmines in the 19th century. The museum shows the way in which its people lived before and after this discovery. It will give you the chance to get to know their peasant lifestyle, and the way in which it was transformed by mining, although even today it still preserves much of its agricultural nature.

A journey through the industrial history of the area can be divided into **six sections**.



1 BLACK GOLD

In 1860 the Société Houillère de Quirós Company was founded, under the direction of the engineer Gabriel Heim, to exploit the coal and iron from the area. The main problem faced by the company was establishing good communications to export the production, which led, in 1864, to the road between Bárzana (Quirós) and Trubia (Oviedo) being opened to traffic.

Heim drafted a project for a rail network in Asturias, which included a connection with Castile through the Valley of the Trubia; it required just two 1km tunnels and several factory works and low-bearing bridges. However, the option that was finally chosen was that of Pajares Pass, with two 5km tunnels and many large-scale works.

The Société Houillère de Quirós was a subsidiary of Minas y Fundiciones de la Provincia de Santander, which belonged to the Chauviteau Company. This French company owned 53 coalmines and 5 iron mines in Quirós.

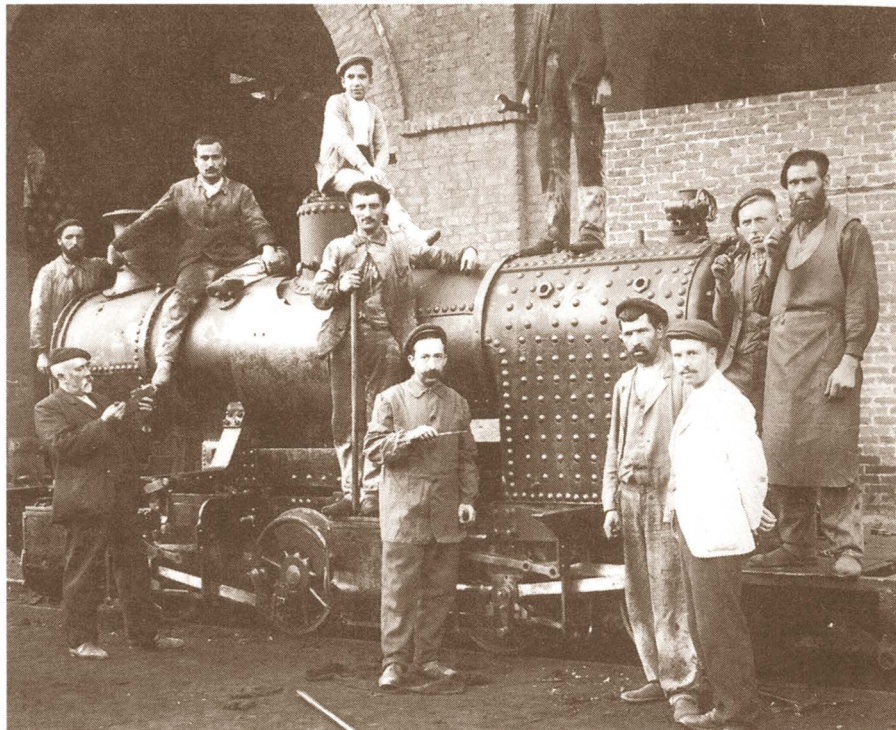
In 1866 the smelting ovens in the factory in Trubia were turned off, after having been the main purchaser of the iron and coal from Quirós. This, added to the company's debt, led to its collapse and dissolution.



IRON AND STEEL

In 1868, the business complex of the Chauviteau Company in Spain was reorganised, leading to the creation of the *Compañía de Minas y Fundiciones de la Provincia de Santander y Quirós*. Three smelting ovens were built in Torales, near Bárzana, an iron factory in Quintana, next to Trubia (Oviedo), and coal-working facilities were established in Santa Marina.

The neighbourhoods of La Fábrica and San Salvaor grew alongside the new Quirós industry.



Other villages, such as Santa Marina, grew at an extraordinary rate.

The new company brought to life Gabriel Heilm's dream: a narrow railway which was founded in 1884, with a length of 29km and a width of 0.75m, which made it possible for it to make tight turns; in this way, Santa Marina was linked to the smelting ovens of Torales and the iron factory in Quintana, Trubia, (Oviedo). It was the longest industrial railway in Asturias and the first to use that special width.

The competence and better quality of Basque steel caused the company to collapse, once again. Numa Guilhou, the owner of the *Fábrica de Mieres*, purchased the mining and steel complex in Quirós in 1889, turning it into an ancillary element to his main premises in Ablaña (Mieres). In this way, the supply of affordable coal and iron was guaranteed until the company closed in 1963.

The main ironworks in Quirós was the Mine of L.lamargones, which had the advantage of being an open mine, where the mineral was extracted with gunpowder, a cheaper system than gallery mines. When this mine was exhausted, the works were moved to La Reguerona, one kilometre further down.

In the late 19th century, Jerónimo Ibrán built an aerial tramway to connect this mine with the complex of Torales, which was in operation between 1888 and 1960, when the mine of La Reguerona was closed.

Apart from the Chaviteau Company, the mineral wealth of Quirós allowed many other companies to be established.

② WORKERS AT QUIRÓS

THE MIXED LABOURER

At the start of industrialisation, work was not very specialised, and workers were peasants who combined their agricultural activities with their work in the mine. They were known as *mixed labourers*, and they were a source of great frustration for businessmen, as during the harvest time, for example, many miners would “happen” to be sick.

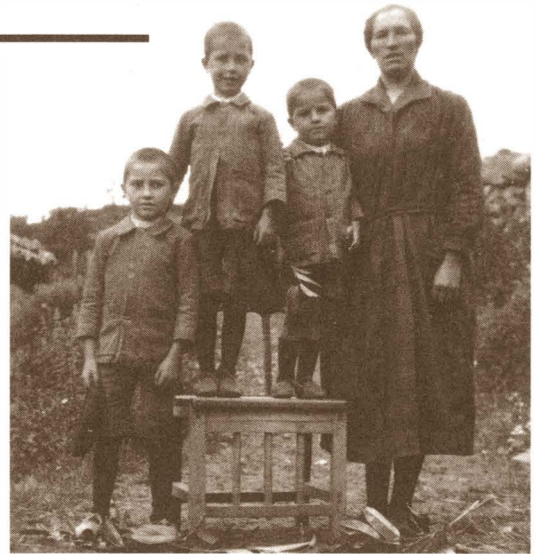
Steel workers were specialised labourers. Most came from the central part of the region and some from abroad.

Some traditional jobs, such as that of ironmonger, were adapted to the new times. At La Fábrica four ironmongers worked on the repair to the railway machines.



③ THE STRONG WOMAN

Some women worked for mining companies, and were appreciated because they “did not ask for wages, and didn’t fight or drink.” They dug out and classified the coal outside the mine. Others worked as cleaners or cooks for the engineers, foremen and guards. They were also in charge of collecting the coal ticket, a set amount of coal that each worker was entitled to for domestic use.



The women of Quirós practiced *vecería* (shifts to take their husbands food at themouth of the mine). They carried the rations in baskets on the heads, and in their hands they carried the *porzolanas* [small pot] from each house.

When the men went to work in the mines, women took on more roles in their smallholdings. They also suffered in silence when their husbands and children died in the mines.

It was not unusual for women to work in washhouses, which were damp and cold, separating coal from clay.

THE GUAJES OF THE MINE

Guajes [children] started to work as errand boys and topographers’ assistants, as well as taking food to the mine bosses. At 11 or 12, they were already working as *rampleros* (pulling the coal baskets along the *rampla*) and wagoners (pushing the wagons outside the mine).



WORK, WORK, WORK...

The usual day's work lasted between 11 and 12 hours. The harshness of the work and the poor diet of miners caused them to fall prey to many illnesses, especially silicosis. This was the reason behind several conflict periods, such as the *huelgona* [strike] of 1906. In 1930 the working day was reduced to 7 hours inside the mine, and a weekly rest was established.

Miners were paid monthly at the mine itself, or at the offices. The miners of Las Pepas were paid at Casa Campollo, a shop and bar in Ricao, where the mine manager ate and slept. Several mines went straight from the pay desk to the bar, so sometimes they took no money home.

In Quirós there were some miners' cooperatives and associations. The Equitativa Quirosana was set up in 1893 by the employees of the Fábrica de Mieres. It made it easier for workers to make purchases, by taking whatever they spent straight out of their wages.

In 1901, the socialist association of Quirós was created. First with the weekly *La Aurora Social* and later with the *El Socialista* newspaper, the workers offered a critical and sometimes caustic, yet always revealing view of social conflicts.



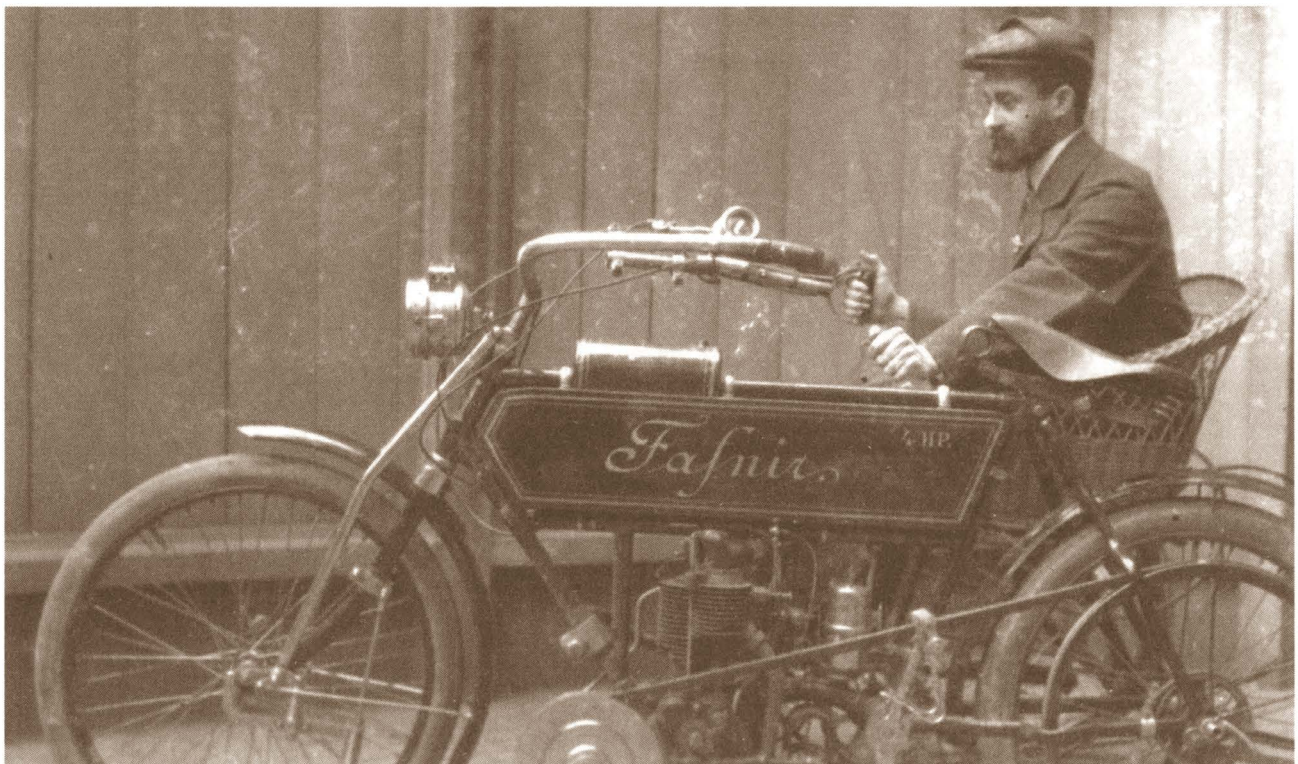
Mining accidents were numerous, sometimes as a result of landslides, others because of firedamp explosions. There were also railway accidents, such as one in 1918 when the mining train fell into the river; forty years later, that same engine derailed onto the road in Caranga (Proaza).

The miners' festivity was Saint Bárbara. In the early 20th century, the Fábrica de Mieres paid for a wineskin and a mass for the miners of Llamargones. After the 1940s several mining companies began to fund the festivity with a solemn mass, a procession and a dance in Bárzana.

④ A NEW SOCIETY, NEW CUSTOMS

Engineers, office workers and salesmen benefited from the wealth created by the new industrial economy. They imported the ways of life that characterised urban society.

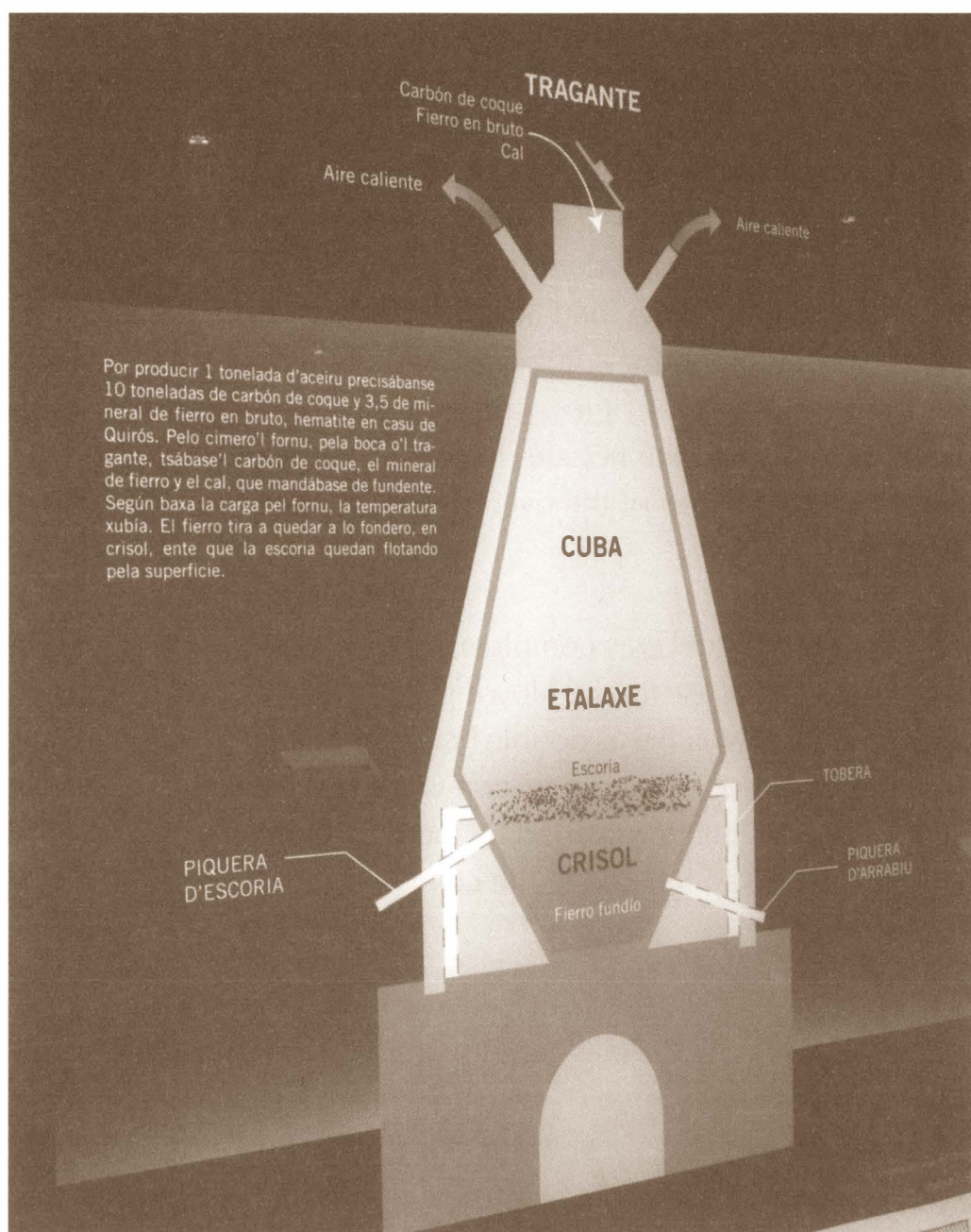
Schooling brought about an important change in the society of Quirós. The sons and daughters of miners had the chance to study and even go to university in Oviedo, the capital of the Principality of Asturias, which led many young people to gradually emigrate to the cities.



⑤ THE SMELTING OVENS IN QUIRÓS

The Compañía de Minas y Fundiciones de la Provincia de Santander y Quirós inaugurated, in 1870, the first smelting oven, in the Torales complex, in the exact spot where the Museo Etnográfico de Quirós now stands. In 1875 the second oven was lit.

The first oven produced 10 tonnes of iron per day, melted into basic pig irons; the second produced 14 tonnes. Some of the irons were used in the moulding workshop that formed part of the industrial complex in Torales. The rest were sold to the Hullera y Metalúrgica de Mieres.



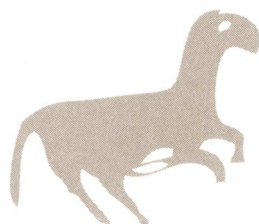
The first two ovens were turned off in 1877. The second was fully refurbished and put back into service between 1883 and 1908. In 1916 it was briefly re-lit as a result of the demand for steel during the First World War, the time when it was most productive. This last oven produced laminated iron that was transported by rail to Quintana, in Trubia (Oviedo), where it was transformed into commercial products such as pipes and tools.

Why Quirós?

The complex of Torales followed the “English model” for steel companies: a comprehensive industrial complex where the smelting ovens were set next to the source of raw materials (coal and iron) and workshops to turn the iron into commercial products, and were close to workers’ villages, all of which were well-communicated by rail and road.

In order to produce 1 tonne of steel it was necessary to process 10 tonnes of coke coal and 3.5 tonnes of raw iron (hematite in the case of Quirós). The coke coal, iron mineral and lime were poured into the mouth of the oven, at the top. The lime acted as a melting agent. As the load travelled into the oven, the temperature rose. Iron tended to stay at the bottom of the melting pot, while the slag floated on the surface. A complex network of pipes, connected to blowing machines heated by stoves, injected hot air into the nozzles to reach the necessary temperature. Other tubes collected gas at the top of the oven to include it in the air circuit and pump it into the oven.

Once the production of steel was complete, the installations of La Fábrica adapted to new needs. The warehouse for the blowing machine was turned into a storeroom. The central warehouse, which was double height, was transformed into a workshop. The annex warehouse was used as a wagon workshop, with an attached workshop for carpenters. Another space was used by the electrician. The two workshops had rails and a transmission system along the ceiling to move machines and wagons.



⑥ OUTSIDE. ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Base of oven No. 1. 1870

The metal melting pot of the smelting oven was supported by stone. The solid brick walls held the nozzles that injected hot air into the melting pot.

Underground Galleries

The smelting oven required several subterranean galleries to function. They accessed the base of the oven, as well as containing a network of pipes that conveyed hot air toward the melting pot from the boilers and blowing machines, and water to cool the oven.

Retaining Wall

The construction of this wall allowed for the building of two platforms, set at different heights. The top one was used to pour fuel into the oven, using horizontal loading ramps that were supported by the wall's pillars and reached the mouth of the oven. The lower platform was used to install the smelting ovens, the industrial warehouses with their ancillary elements and the railway station.



PEASANT HOUSE

The Peasant Quirós

This section of the Museum shows what peasant life was like before and after the industrialisation process that took place in the 19th century, as well as the economic and social aspects of the society and its mind-set.

This building, which we describe as the *peasant house*, is divided into two storeys, each with its own features.



1 GROUND FLOOR

SHOEING FRAME

The only animals that were shod were those used for transportation. Their owners paid the farrier for his work and also for the use of the shoeing frame, although in some villages it could be used by the residents for free.



PIGSTY

The pigs were put away at nighttime, or when the weather was bad, but the rest of the time they wandered around the village, the paths and farmyards. To stop them from ruining crops, they had a ring in their snout.

The pigs ate chestnuts, corn, food leftovers, rotten fruit and a range of roots when they went to the mountain.

HEN HOUSE

The walls of the hen house had boards or poles for the hens to perch on, as, like most birds, they prefer to sleep off the ground.

BARN

The barn was usually below or next to the sleeping quarters, to take advantage of the animals' heat.

The livestock on Quirós was made up of cows, goats and sheep. Only wealthy households had horses for transport.

Three-year-old cows could get pregnant, and it was ensured that they remained with calf for most of their useful life, to guarantee milk production.

LAGAR [Cider press]



The families in the municipality that produced cider to sell had a specific area where they placed the cider press, the pipes and the apple sieves.

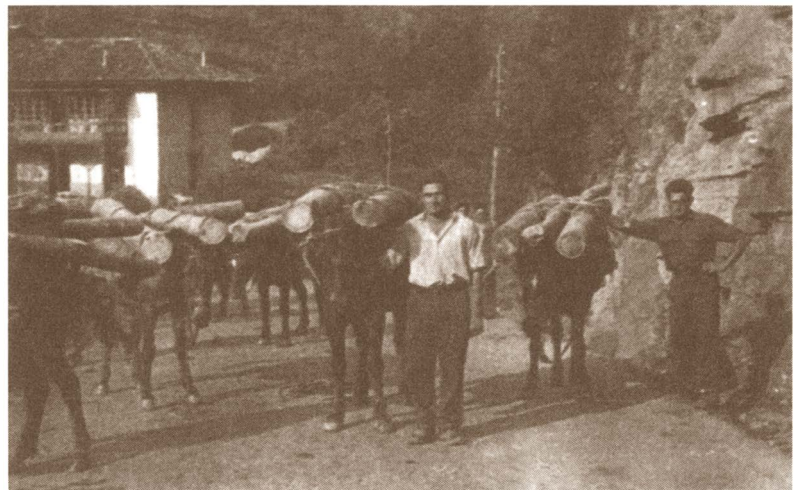
The drink obtained, cider, was enjoyed on special occasions.

The parts of the cider press that come into contact with the apples do not have nails because iron spoils apple juice. Because of this, all the pieces are joined together with wooden splints called *pinas*.

MALE CRAFTS

CARPENTERS

This was an important craft in traditional society. They built the *hórreos* and *paneras*, the carts and other forms of transport, furniture and tools. The customers had to provide



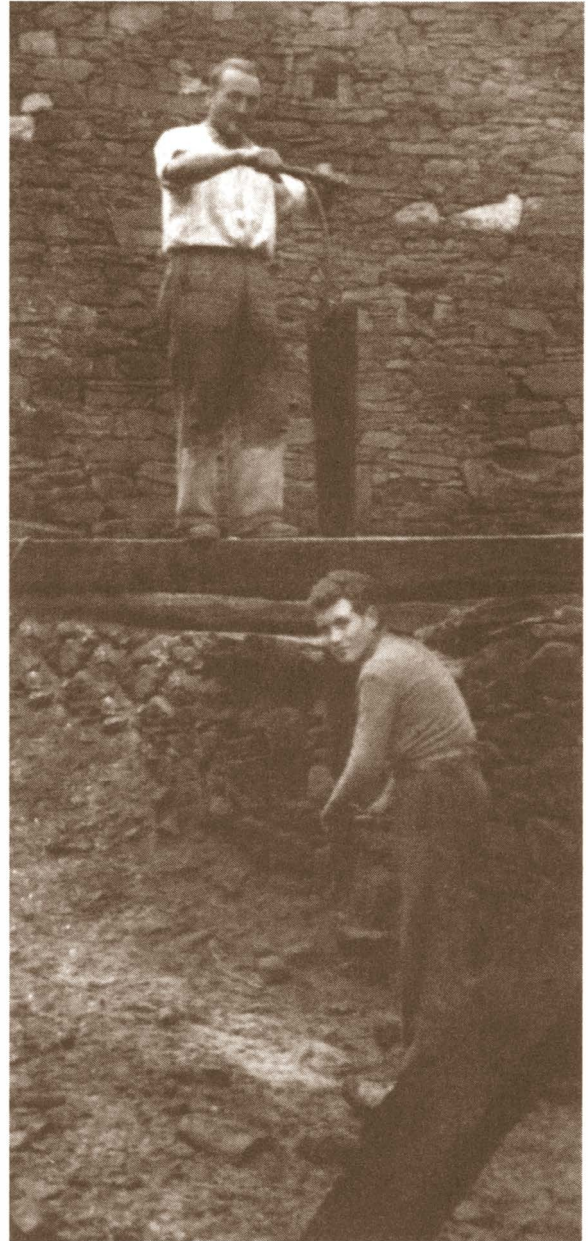
the wood, and if the work was difficult and made it necessary to move, they also provided food and accommodation to the carpenter and his assistants.

WOODWORKERS

The arrival of the mines to Quirós in the 19th century increased the demand for wood for the galleries and the railways. Woodworkers bought the wood from the mountains and cut it, planed it and transported it with mules or a couple of cows. Most of the groups were made up of people from the municipality, although there were also *santanderinos* (people from the neighbouring province of Santander, now Cantabria), who offered their services around the villages and slept in huts they built in the mountains.

MADREÑEROS [CLOG MAKERS]

A *madreña* is a wooden clog made to walk on flooded terrain. It was used daily and during festivities. The *madreñeros* worked by commission and sold their wares in fairs and markets. Most of the most celebrated ones lived in the villages of Cortes and Ricao.



Beech wood is the best to make *madreñas*, because it is light and strong.

The *madreñeros* from Quirós exchanged their *madreñas* in Babia (León) for chickpeas and other legumes and also sold them in Oviedo.

BASKET WEAVERS

Agricultural work required the use of baskets, in a range of size and shapes. Basket weavers made them to sell them in fairs and markets, but also travelled around the villages repairing old baskets. When they worked on commission, the customer had to provide the wood, general hazelnut rods. The *cestos* had one handle and the *cestas* had two.

② FIRST FLOOR

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen was the main room of the house and the place where family life went on. There they ate and there, in some, the family slept on the floor, on a mattress filled with corn leaves. Kitchens like this were used in Quirós until the beginning of the 20th century.



THE LIVING ROOM

Only well-off families had a sitting room in their house and it was the most esteemed room and the one with the best furniture, but even so it was only used for parties and other social celebrations. On occasions, when the family was very large, it also had beds for sleeping.



LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

Villages were governed by rules whose principle was that of solidarity between neighbours. Part of the space they used was common to all and they themselves managed it, in an open council meeting or by electing different public offices. At council meetings they also settled disputes between neighbours and offences against village rules.

In 1587 the inhabitants of Quirós bought the jurisdiction of their district from Philip II. Each person paid 12,000 maravedis. Thus they freed themselves from the rule of the Cathedral of Oviedo and became their own masters.

The inhabitants drew up bylaws in which they stipulated the use of the public properties of the village.

Braña: high pasture used in summer, where the villagers had their cabins.

Mortera: divided property, for which lots were drawn among the inhabitants, who then grazed their cattle there.

Guariza: pasture for the oxen, where each inhabitant was allowed to graze just two animals.

Estaferia: compulsory work to repair roads and local infrastructures.

Vecera: shift for looking after the village flocks of goats, sheep and pigs.

Andecha: reciprocal help to tackle agricultural work.

FARMING

The household carried out a diversified agriculture in order to be self-sufficient. Some fields were sown with spelt, corn, beans and potatoes and others were left for pasture or to cultivate textile plants like flax. Vegetables and garden produce were planted in the kitchen garden that was near the house.

Dried grass was the basic food for the cattle in winter. This grass, cut in summer with the help of the whole family and some neighbours, was transported and stored in the straw lofts and when they were full, in *varas de hierba* [traditional conical stacks of dried grass around a long pole].

Chestnuts were very important, as much in the diet of the peasants as in that of their animals. They could be eaten raw, cooked or roasted. From the 19th century onwards the potato replaced the chestnut in stews, but in Quirós a stew continues to be made with them, *el pote castañas*.

The pig provided the greater part of the meat eaten by the family. Towards the 11th of November, Saint Martin's Day, relatives and close friends got together to carry out the slaughtering. Their help was rewarded with a good meal and they all celebrated that the larder was full again.

Spelt bread was the main sustenance of the family, so the greater part of the land was devoted to growing it. Nowadays it goes by the name of *espelta*, and is suitable for coeliac disease sufferers.

THE FAMILY

The family was made up of several generations living under the same roof. It was normally very numerous and tasks were shared out by its members according to age and sex. Generally, the firstborn son inherited the house in exchange for looking after his parents in their old age and keeping it intact for future generations.



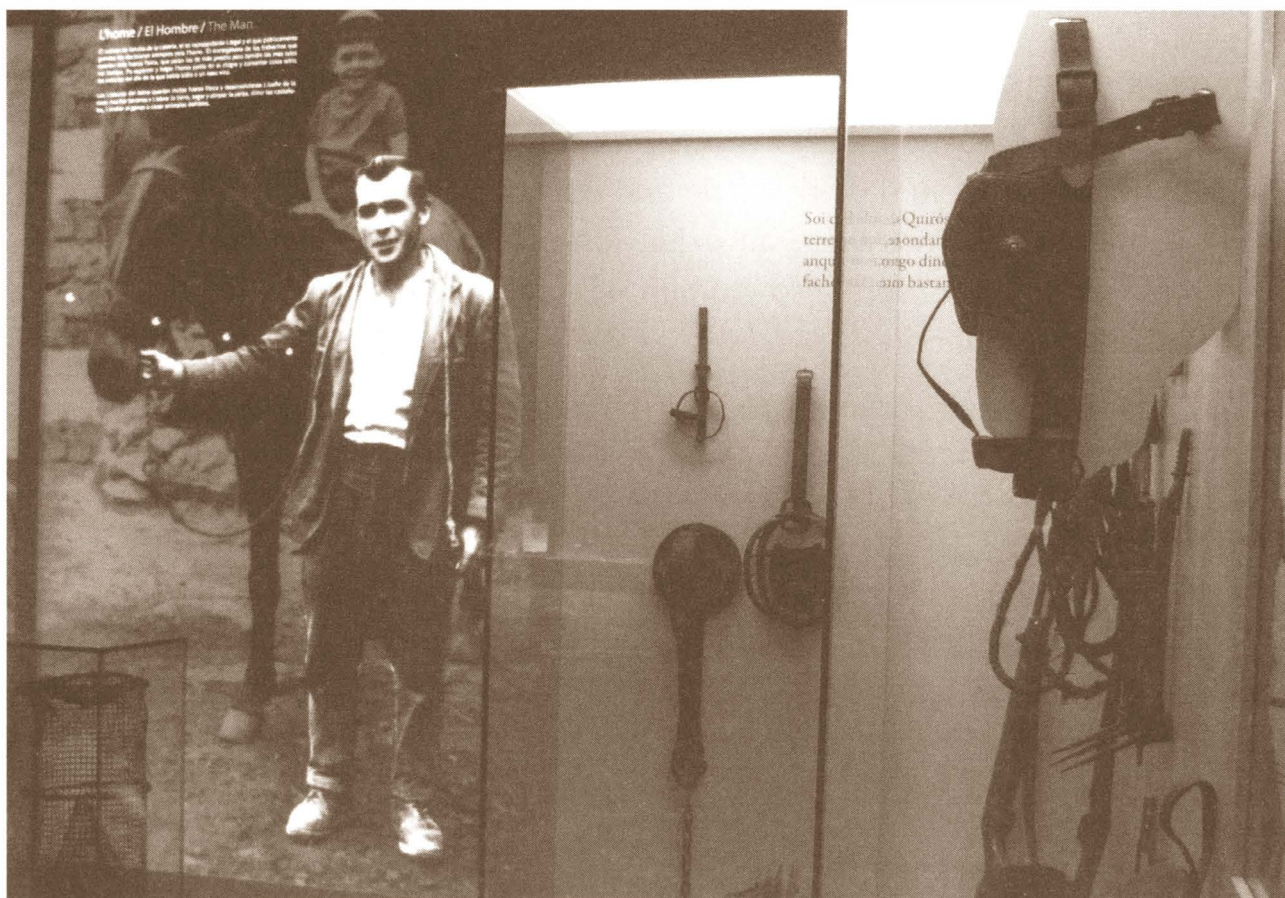
THE WIFE

The wife was responsible for the care of the house and the family members. But the wife also took part in all the husband's jobs, although as his assistant.

Clothes and household linen was made with the flax sown on their land and the wool of their sheep. The spinning of these fibres was done by the women of the house with the distaff and spindle, and their warp on local looms. But in the middle of the 19th century, industrially made cotton cloth replaced these traditional materials.

THE MAN

The man was the head of the family, its legal representative and the one who publicly took decisions. He was in charge of work calling for more physical strength and that which was carried out far from home: moving and ploughing the soil, cutting and storing the grass, knocking down the chestnuts, keeping watch on the livestock and hunting animals.



THE CHILDREN

The children ensured the future and continuation of the house and they learned all they needed to be able to take responsibility for them when they became adults.

THE ELDERLY

Old people were the memory of the family and their village. On them also devolved the household property and the choice of its inheritor. All this made them key figures in the social framework and led them to be highly respected and valued.



WOMEN'S DUTIES

The peasant woman could work inside and outside the house in order to help the family economy. Her jobs were an extension outside the house of the tasks that she did at home. There were also women who acted as doctors, midwives or wet nurses in well-to-do families.

THE DRESSMAKERS AND SEAMSTRESSES

If, at the beginning, the making of clothes was a man's job, in the hands of tailors who offered their services in the villages, with the spread of the sewing machine many women were encouraged to learn dressmaking and worked in workshops or independently.

WASHERWOMEN

The arrival of mining in the 19th century meant that many women worked for the engineers and technical teams as washerwomen. It was hard work which called for the clothes to be washed in the river, even in winter when the coldness of the water almost paralysed the hands. Afterwards the clothes had to be ironed with heavy irons which were heated on the fire or filled with hot coals to give off a lot of heat.

THE COOKS

The cooks were women with recognised experience at the stove and a great knowledge of local recipes. When a party was being held the services of these expert cooks were called upon to help the woman of the house or to ensure the success of the meal. Also, many Quirós taverns and inns employed them in their kitchens.

Del corazón de una pulga, si la sabes guisar, tienes para la comida, para la cena y todavía te queda para desayunar.

[From the heart of a flea, if you know how to cook, you will have enough for lunch and for dinner, and you will still have enough for breakfast]

THE MARKET

Household surpluses were sold in the market. Some women made this their profession and bought different products from their neighbours so as to trade with them. The *ol.leras* sold eggs and butter; the *avellaneras*, nuts and dried fruit and the *dulceras*, small doughnuts and other sweets.

Many Quirós women went through the Pass of Ventana on their mules, to sell their eggs, fruit or butter in Babia (León). Others went to Grado to sell the wool socks that they knitted with three needles at home.

③ SECOND FLOOR

THE FIESTA

The fiesta is a periodical celebration associated with music, dancing and drinking... and which, in turn, strengthens social order.

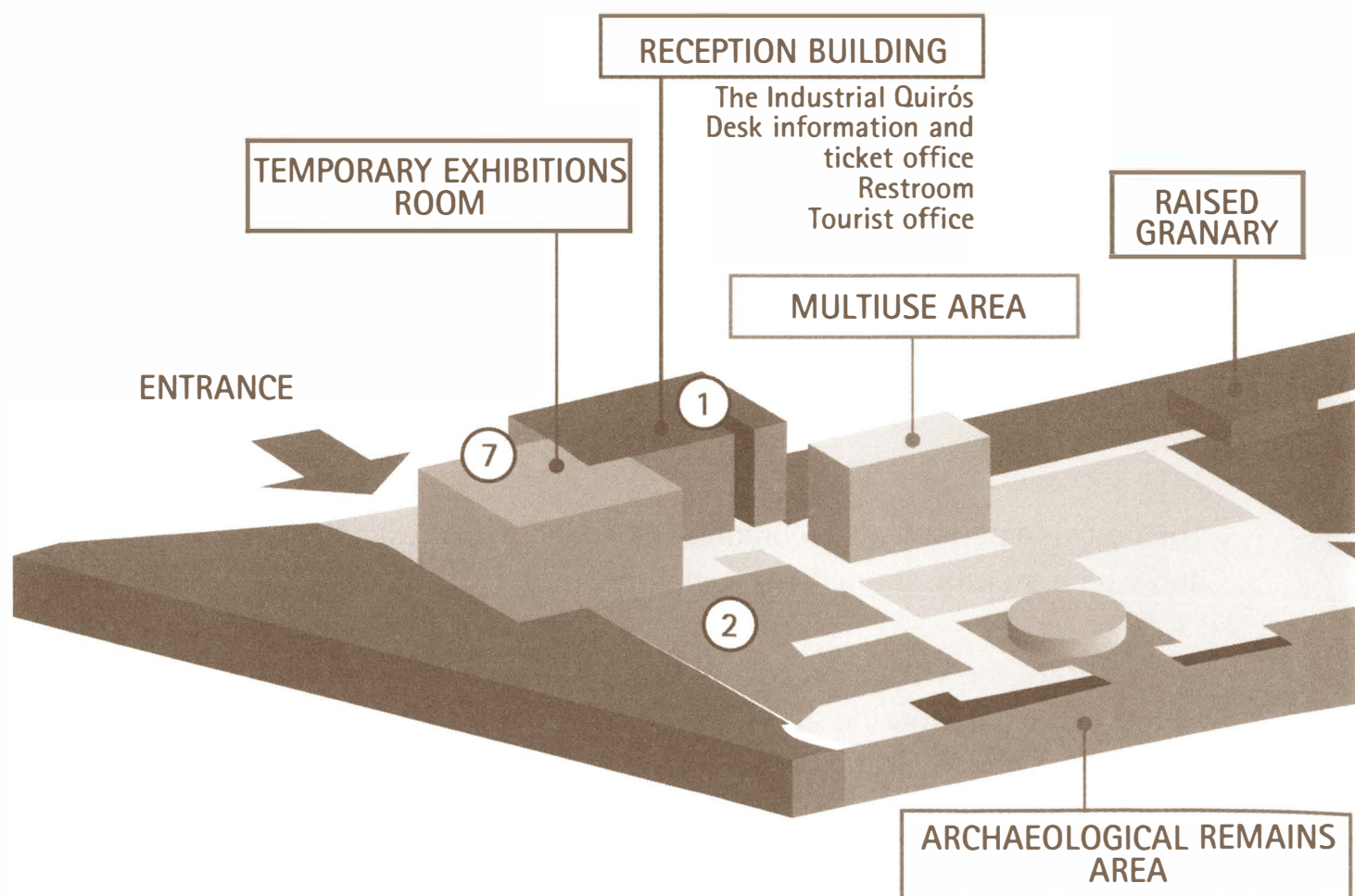
The youth of the village organized dances whenever they could, normally to the sound of the tambourine and beneath the *hórreo* (raised granary). Around 1930 they met to dance at any house which had a gramophone, and in the following decade orchestras appeared.

On the day of the fiesta, plaited loaves were auctioned among the spectators. The money obtained was used to finance the dance and to satisfy the needs of the church or the village chapel.

OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE

THE RAISED GRANARY

The raised granary is one of the storage spaces of Asturian houses. With the exception of the roof, all its parts are made of wood and can be taken apart and transported. This structure is raised from the ground by means of *pegollos* [pillars]. It is a multi-purpose space. It is used as a granary, to store different foodstuffs, and even as a bedroom. The *so'l horro*, the space between the pillars, is used as a store for wood, as a shed for carts, or for neighbours' meetings, dances and fiestas.



The town council of Quirós has some impressive examples of granaries, 10 of which are outstanding for their decorative richness. This is provided by especially harmonious, stylized and elegant paintings which are on the *lliños* [horizontal beams that run across the upper part of the granary framework] and on the *colondras* or *corondias* [walls].



THE PEASANT QUIRÓS

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6

ADMINISTRATIVE
BUILDING

SCHOOL AND PLAY AREA

WASH-PLACE

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