

Context:

The name of Gabriola Island BC, Mendaro, Gipuzkoa.

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This file is a supplement to:

Doe, N.A., [The origin of Gabriola's name](#), *SHALE* 13, pp.7–38, June 2006.

It contains more information on the ancestral home of the Gabiola (Gaviola) family in the Kilimon valley near Mendaro in the province of Guipúzcoa in the Spanish Basque country.

Simón de Gaviola y Zabala, pagador de la Armada de la Guardia de Indias, y Cabellero de la Orden de Santiago, was likely after whom the Punta de Gaviola, and subsequently Gabriola Island BC, was named. Much of this information is from the book, *Historias de una Gipúzkoa desconocida (Misceláneas del Bajo Deba)*, by Juan José Goikoetxea, published by Mendaroko Udala—Ayuntamiento de Mendaro; DEBEGESA, Sociedad para el Desarrollo Económico del Bajo Deba; and the Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del Pais. ISBN: 84-607-5905-9.

Many of the photographs were generously submitted by Juan Garate in May 2006 as a result of my inquiries. There is a companion file about the Gabiola/Gaviola family history [here](#).

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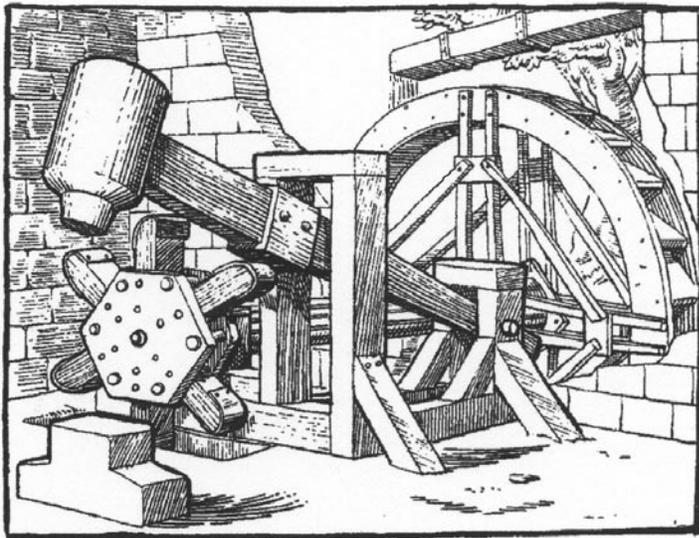
## The original Gabriola in the Spanish Basque country

Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada, was probably named by Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra,<sup>1</sup> the commandant of the Spanish naval establishment in San Blas, after Simón Gabiola y Zabala, a Spanish aristocrat, Knight of the Order of Santiago, and a prominent Spanish official responsible for naval affairs in the early-17th century. Although Simón Gabiola lived and worked in Seville, his ancestral home was in the Mendaró valley in the Spanish Basque country.<sup>2</sup>

“Gabiola”, which was commonly also spelt “Gaviola”, is a Basque word, dating back to the 14th century, meaning “small-hammer place”. In the past, I have taken this to mean “a place where small hammers were made” (cf. the English word “gavel”),<sup>3</sup> but it is more likely that it means “an iron works that used a small water-driven trip hammer”. If so, the iron works of Gabriola might have made any manner of wrought-iron objects including, or perhaps only, unfinished billets of iron.

To quote from the earlier article:

“Most medieval smelters could not reach high enough temperatures to melt iron, so it had to be ‘wrought’ (beat, bent, or twisted) into shape while still red-hot. Water power was widely used to rhythmically hammer lumps of iron free from the slag, and to drive the bellows for the furnace, so it was common for iron works to be situated, as was the one at *Gabiola*, near the banks of swiftly running streams where there was also a plentiful supply of wood.”



Water-powered trip hammer used for working wrought iron

After Aitchison (found on the web, full citation unknown)

Adding weight (so to speak) to the idea that the name of the Gabriola works derives from its use of a hammer, rather than suggesting it specialized in making hammers, is the fact that it and several similar small producers were known as *martinetes* (drop hammers).<sup>4</sup> The Basque word *gabi* (Spanish *mazo*) can mean a mallet, sledge hammer, drop hammer, and *-ola* is the Basque language suffix indicating a place where something is done.

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<sup>1</sup> Not, as is so often claimed with little evidence, by José María Narváez.

<sup>2</sup> Nick Doe, [The origin of Gabriola's name](#), *SHALE* 13, pp.7–38, June 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p34.

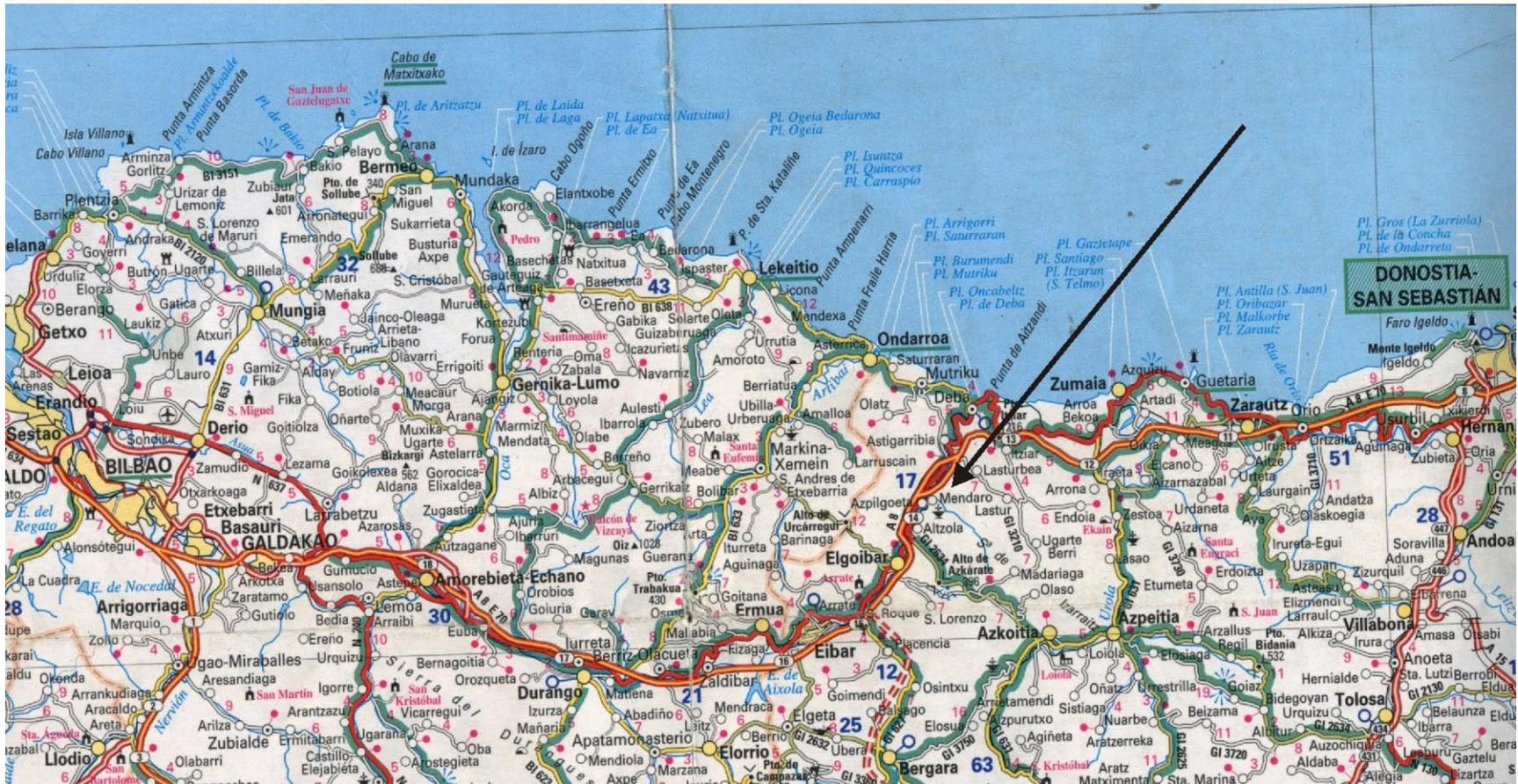
<sup>4</sup> Juan Javier Pescador, *The new world inside a Basque village...*, University of Nevada Press, p.3, 2003.

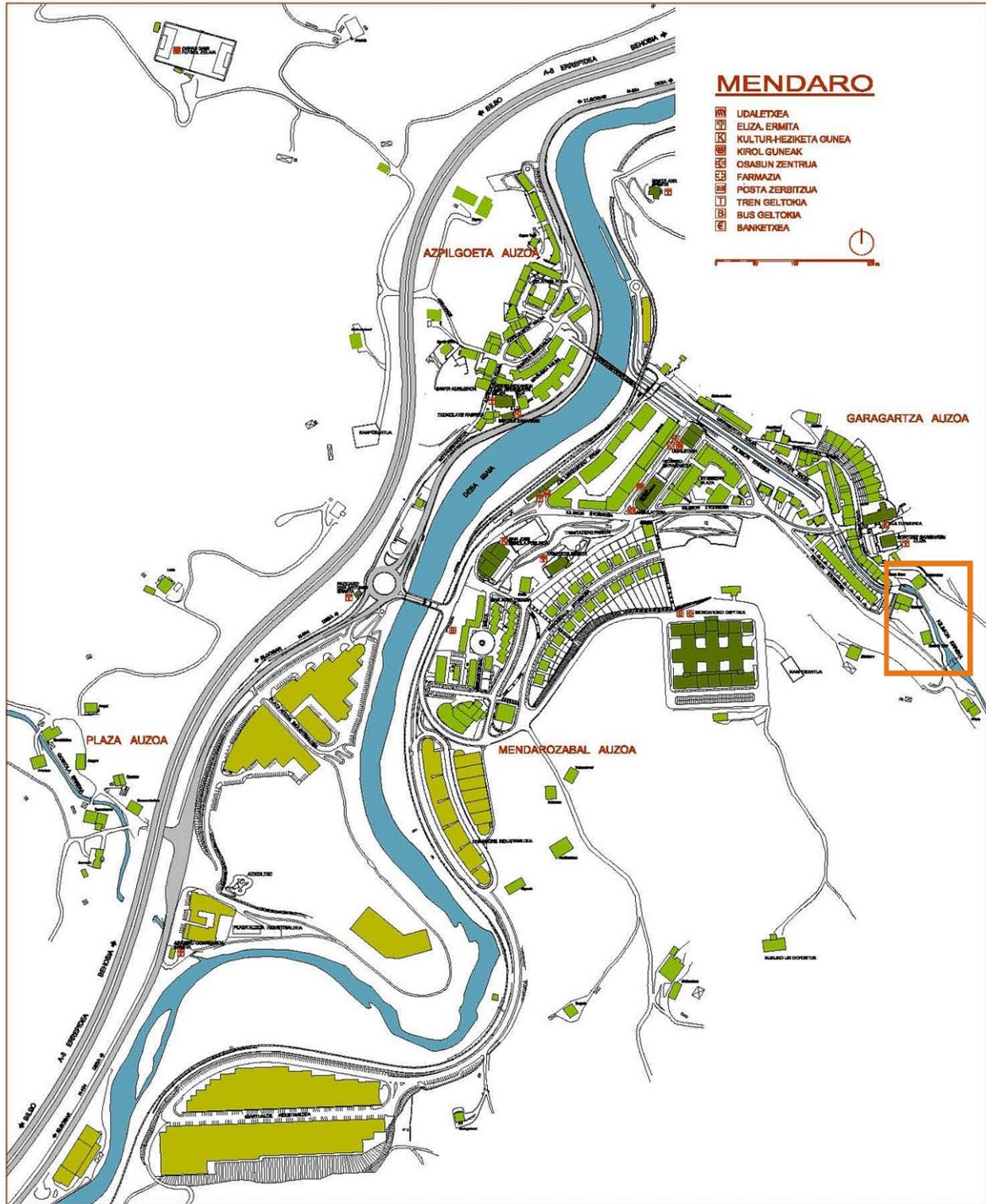
The stately home (*casa torre*) of the Gabiola family still exists,<sup>5</sup> as do the nearby ruins of the old iron works (*ferrería*) and mill (*molino*). It is on the banks of Kilimon Creek (*Kilimon Erreka*), a tributary of the River Deva (*Deba Ibaia*), on the outskirts of Mendaro in the province of Guipúzcoa.

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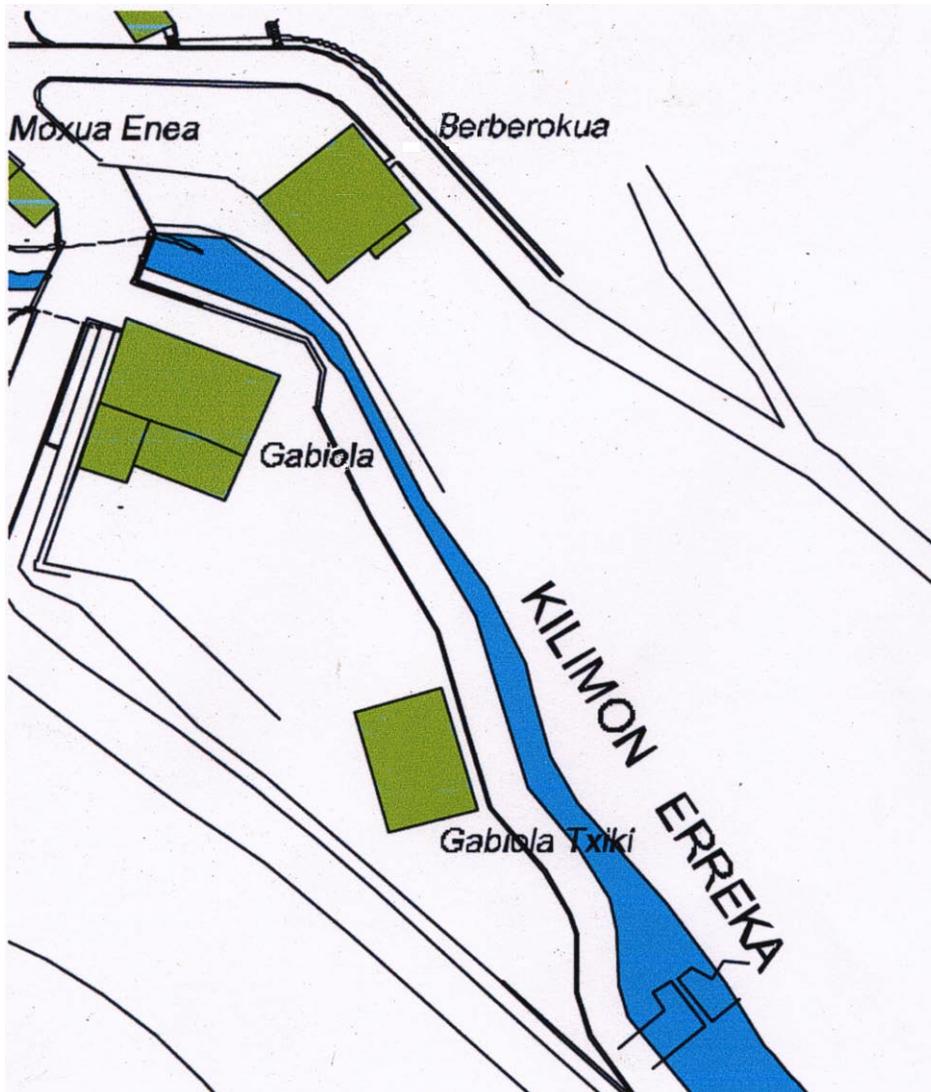
<sup>5</sup> [\*Mendaro en Canada\*](#), *SHALE* 21, pp.34–35, July 2009.

Mendaro is a small town with a population of around two thousand, situated roughly half-way between Bilbao (*Bilbo*) and San Sebastián (*Donostia*) at the eastern end of Spain's north coast. It is between five and six kilometres inland between Deba on the coast and Elgoiba.





An old town map of Mendaro. Kilimon Creek runs into the *Río Deva* from the east—the orange rectangle indicates the site of the old Gabriola estate, shown in detail on the next page.



The three surviving buildings of the old Gabriola estate (orange rectangle in the previous map).

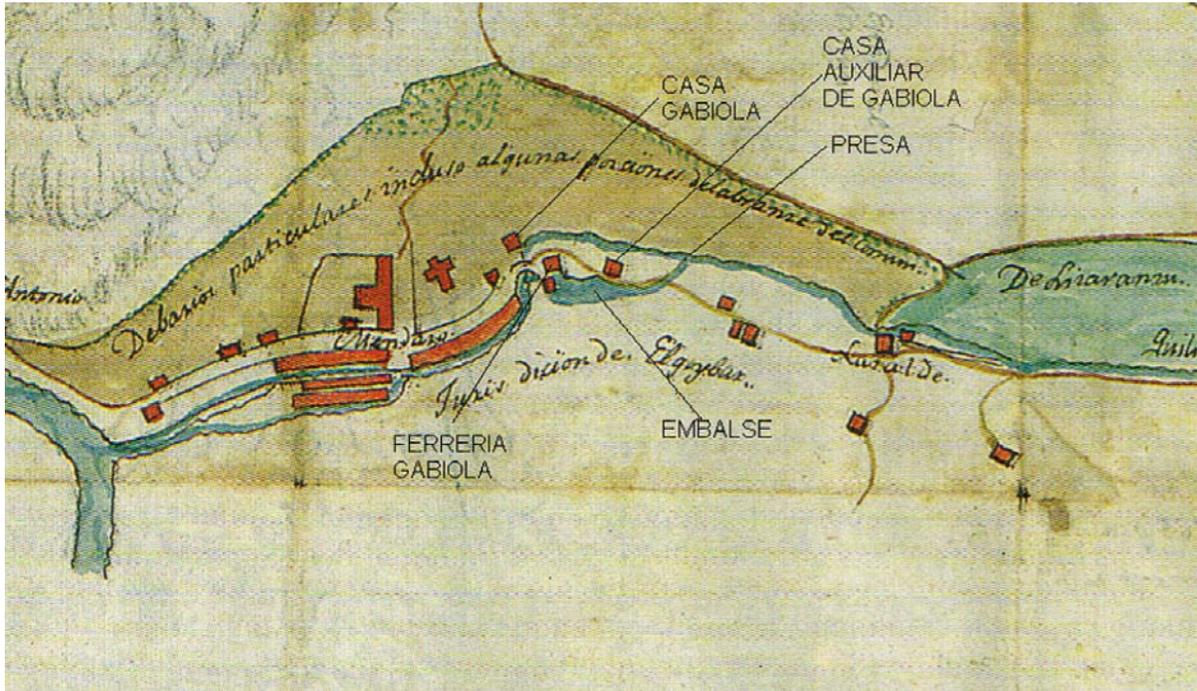
*Barberokua Etxea* is the former *Casa de Gabiola*, the *solar* (ancestral dwelling) of the Gabiola family. Its geographic location on Google Earth is 43°15.068'N, 2°22.919'W.

*Gabiola* is the former iron works (*ferrería*). Its geographic location on Google Earth is 43°15.055'N, 2°22.934'W.

*Gabiola Txiki* (*Txikia*) is an old smaller building (*pequeño caserío*), probably a former workplace. Its geographic location on Google Earth is 43°15.028'N, 2°22.912'W.

The watercourse is Kilimon Creek (*Kilimon Erreka*).

The weir at the bottom of the map is the remnants of the old sluice gate that used to dam the creek and create the iron works/mill reservoir, now filled in, between *Gabiola Txiki* and *Gabiola*. Its geographic location on Google Earth is 43°15.012'N, 2°22.890'W.



An old map (unknown date) showing the Gabiola estate at a time when the iron works or mill was still in use. Another medieval ironworks belonging to the *Lasalde* family is shown here a short distance upstream of Gabiola.

Annotations are:

*Casa Gabiola*

*Ferrería Gabiola*, the old ironworks, in the late-19th-century up until 1924 a flourmill

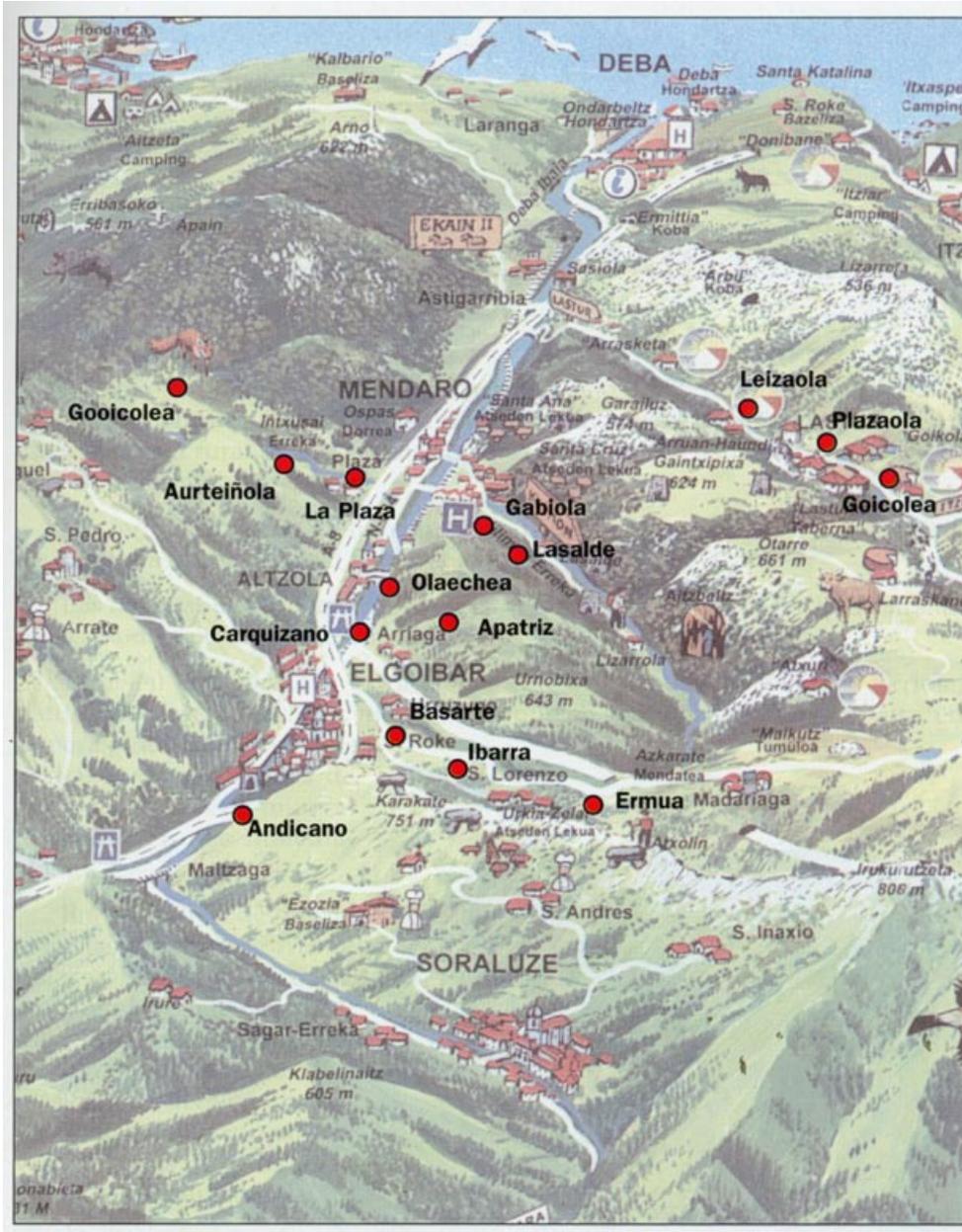
*Embalse*, the ironworks/mill's reservoir, now filled in

*Presa*, dam

*Casa Auxiliar de Gabiola*, in Basque *Gabiola Txiki(a)* (lesser Gabiola).

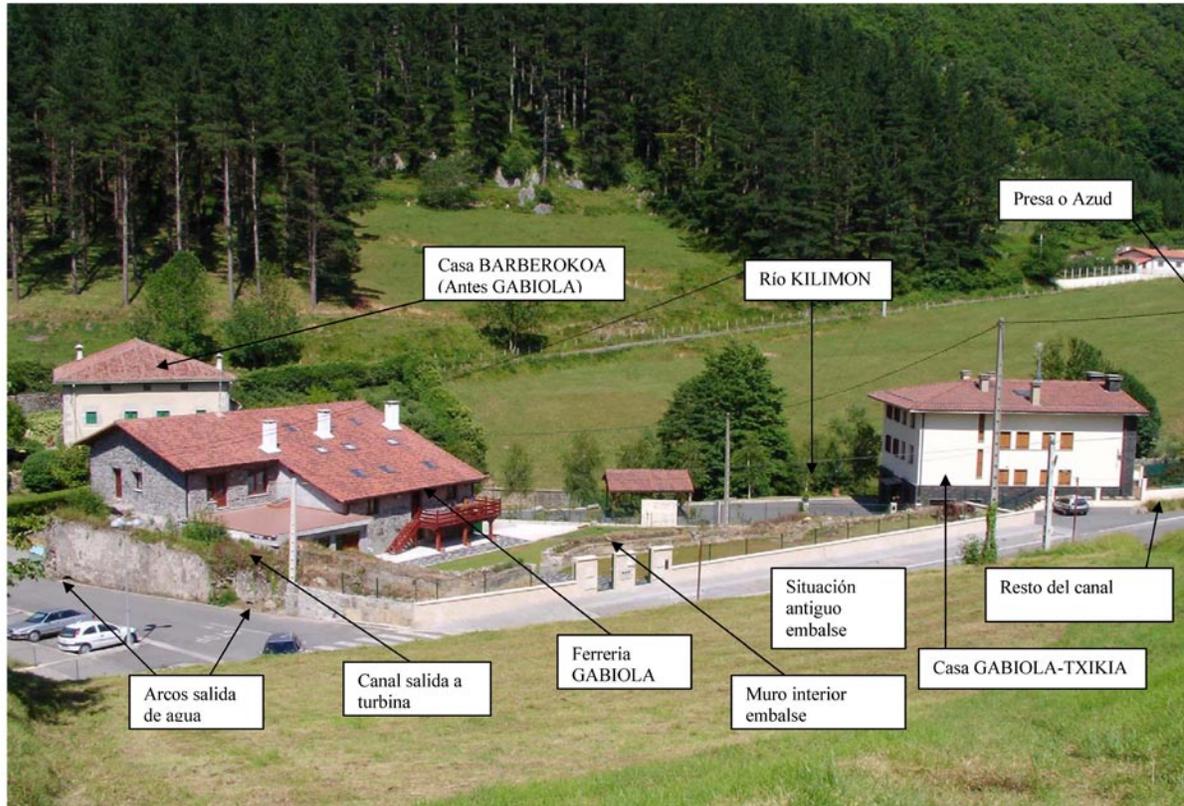
The Charter of the Ironworks (*fuero de las ferrerías*) at Gabiola and Lasalde in the Kilimon Valley was granted by King Alfonso XI in 1335. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Juan José Goikoetxea, *Historias de una Gipuzkoa desconocida*, p.214.



*Las ferrerías del bajo Deba*—the iron works (smelters) of the lower Deba valley. Gabiola and neighbouring Lasalde and La Plaza were among the most important of these.

Juan José Goikoetxea, *Historias de una Gipúzkoa desconocida (Misceláneas del Bajo Deba)*, p.81, Michelena Artes Gráficas, Astigarraga, Gipuzkoa, Spain.



The Gaviola estate as it was in the year 2006.

Annotations are:

*BARBEROKO[U]A etxea (ante GABIOLA)*—formerly *Casa de Gabiola*

*Arcos salida de agua*—the tops of the arches where the water left the works, now at street level

*Canal salida a turbina*—the channel of the water after leaving the turbines

*Ferrería GABIOLA*—the original ironworks

*Muro interior embalse*—the retaining wall of the reservoir

*Situación antiguo embalse*—site of the old reservoir shown on the map on the previous page

*Casa GABIOLA-TXIKIA*—lesser Gabiola house

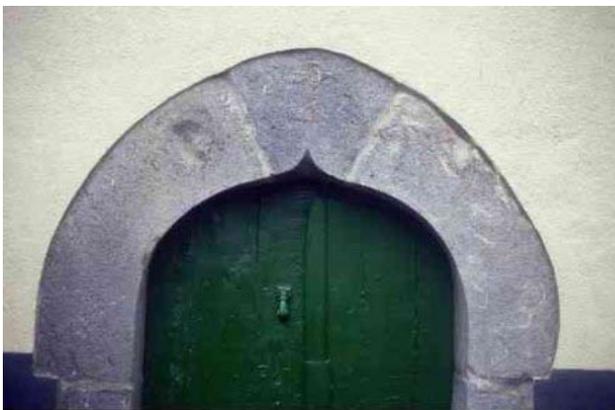
*Resto del canal*—existing remains of the channel leading to the old reservoir

*Río KILIMON*—the course of the creek as it bypasses the works

*Presa o Azud*—the dam or sluice gate.

***The casa torre (storied house, mansion, and ancestral home) of the Gabiola family***

Although still known as the *Casa de Gabiola*, it has somewhere along the line acquired the Basque name *Barberokua etxea*. Why, when, and what *Barberokua* means I have not been able to discover. There is an old farm building in the vicinity known as the *Hórreo de Barberokua* (the Barberokua's granery), but that doesn't help much. The house ended up in the 19th century being inherited by the Count of Peñaforida [Conde de Peñaforida](#).



### *The caserío of the Gabiola family*

The *caseríos* of the Basque country typically had two levels: the upper one a place to store wheat, corn, beans, apples, grass, etc. where they were protected from moisture for faster drying. The lower one would have been used for cooking, bread making, clothes-making, and other domestic activities requiring heating and shelter. The history of this particular building is however largely unknown to me beyond the fact that it is old.



### ***The Gabriola ferrería***

Iron working in the Mendaro valley has a long history going as far back as 1100 BC. The use of hydraulic power in small iron works like that at Gabriola however began around 1300 AD and continued until larger coke-fired blast furnaces came into use early in the Industrial Revolution.

Smaller deposits of iron ore in the valley<sup>7</sup> have long since been exhausted but the still-existing major deposit in the Somorrostro valley just west of Bilbao was used. This valley in the Spanish Basque province of Vizcaya is the ancestral home of the extended family of Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra, the naval officer who named *Punta de Gaviola* on Gabriola Island BC in late 1791.<sup>8</sup>

The ore was transported by sea in barges to Deba and then up the river to the confluence of the Deba and Kilimon at Errekabarren (Recabarren)

for use at Gabriola and Lasalde. The Somorrostro ore body is particularly rich in iron consisting mostly of *hematite*, iron III (ferric) oxide  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ , and unusually high amounts of *siderite* iron II (ferrous) carbonate  $\text{FeCO}_3$ , a soft mineral that is easy to crush.

The reduction process, called “smelting”, was to mix the ore with charcoal and heat it. Charcoal was used because it burns at a higher temperature than wood, and it is relative free of impurities unlike coal.

Smelting iron ore in a medieval iron works was a difficult process because the furnace temperature was not high enough to melt the iron. Instead a molten spongy mass of slag<sup>9</sup> containing droplet-sized particles of solid iron was produced, and this had to be hammered vigorously while still hot to extract the iron. Iron produced this way (wrought iron) is malleable but too soft for tool making, though it could be used for making hammers. Turning the iron into steel—an iron-carbon alloy—requires careful control of the carbon content. Whether the Gabriola *ferrería* was a “finery forge” making tool- or weapons-grade



Embarcadero de Rekabarren, donde se descargaban el mineral para las ferrerías de Lasalde y Gabriola

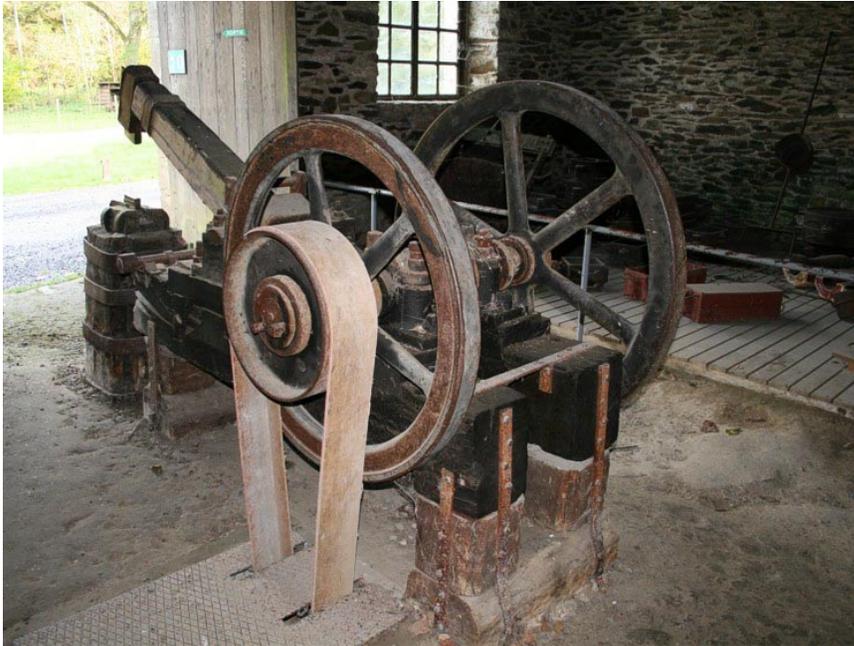
Junction of the River Deba and Kilimon creek. Ore was unloaded here from barges and these were then re-loaded with the iron or iron products from the Gabriola and Lasalde iron works.

Goikoetxea, p.73

<sup>7</sup> At Itxasueta, Arriola, Lopaitz, and other places near Mendaro.

<sup>8</sup> The *origin of Gabriola's name* (ibid), p.29.

<sup>9</sup> Mainly iron silicate (*fayalite*) which has a relatively low melting point. Called *agoa* or “bloom” in English.



Unfortunately not the trip hammer or “gabi” of the Gabriola *ferrería* but it might have looked like this one with a water wheel to drive the pulley.

From the St. Michael's iron works– Museum of Iron, Saint-Hubert, Belgium.

steel is not known, but it would have been theoretically possible, even though difficult, and would have provided a second use for their hammer.<sup>10</sup>



The old *ferrería*, and later flour mill. The inside was torn out in 1985.

<sup>10</sup> Making high-carbon-content iron (pig iron) suitable for casting, as in a “foundry”, would certainly not have been done because of the high temperature required.

***The dam of the old Gabriola ferrería and molino***

Although the reservoir (*embalse*) of the old iron works and mill have now been filled in, remnants of the retaining wall of the dam (*presa*), sluice gate (*azud*), and overflow portal (*aliviadero*) still exist.



Presa y aliviadero en el Kilimon, cerca del solar de Gabriola

Patxi Aldabaldetrecu, EL VALLE DE MENDARO, Deba-Uda 93, p.21



The remains of the *aliviadero* on the Kilimon Creek just above Gabiola-Txikia. The channel into the old reservoir of the iron works has gone, but in the past this portal controlled the height of the dammed water. Nowadays it is an open weir and footbridge across the creek.



*Above left:* Walls of the old reservoir.

*Above right:* The channel from reservoir to the *ferrería*.

*Left:* The now nearly-buried exit for water from the *ferrería*.

Like Gabriola Island, a now mainly rural community, but with an industrial past that includes coal-fired kilns for making [bricks from crushed shale](#), the Kilimon valley has reverted to a place of rural tranquility as revealed in this delightful photograph of the old Gabiola estate by Juan Garate.



Site of the old Gabiola iron works in the Kilimon valley, Guipúzcoa, Spain



Site of the old brick-making factory on Gabriola Island BC, Canada.

THIS PAGE ADDED May 2018, not in the original article.



The Casa-Torre at Lasalde, just upstream of the Gabriola estate, looking here probably much as the Casa-Torre at Gabriola used to look where Simón de Gabriola y Zabala was born (p.9). During the Middle Ages, these towered houses served as family mansions and when needed as places of refuge for the workers on the estate.

Source: *Historia de Mendaro*, p.142, Ayuntamiento de Mendaro, 1993.