



Open Public Art in Uphall and Broxburn

On this walk you will see a selection of the many public artworks that are embedded in the towns of Uphall and Broxburn.

There are a total of six sites where a series of multiple public artworks of different media, including, mural painting, photography, graphic design and metal sculpture. All the imagery and themes for the artworks were developed and designed with the input of local residents and artists working together. All of the artworks commemorate the Shale mining industrial past of the area due to the significant impact and loss of the industry, the effects of which is still being felt today.

Five of the artwork sites were part of the Grassroots Public Art project, the first grant project which gave funding for site specific community public art projects in West Lothian and was supported by Creative Scotland. The sixth public art site was initiated and developed by local residents of both towns and funded by West Lothian Council.

Uphall and Broxburn walk: 5.5km Approx. 1hr and 45 mins (slow to moderate pace).

The tour begins in Uphall at the Oatridge Hotel, 2-4 East Main Street, Broxburn, EH52 5DA. We arrive on site at the first artwork on the tour, the large traditional hand painted mural.

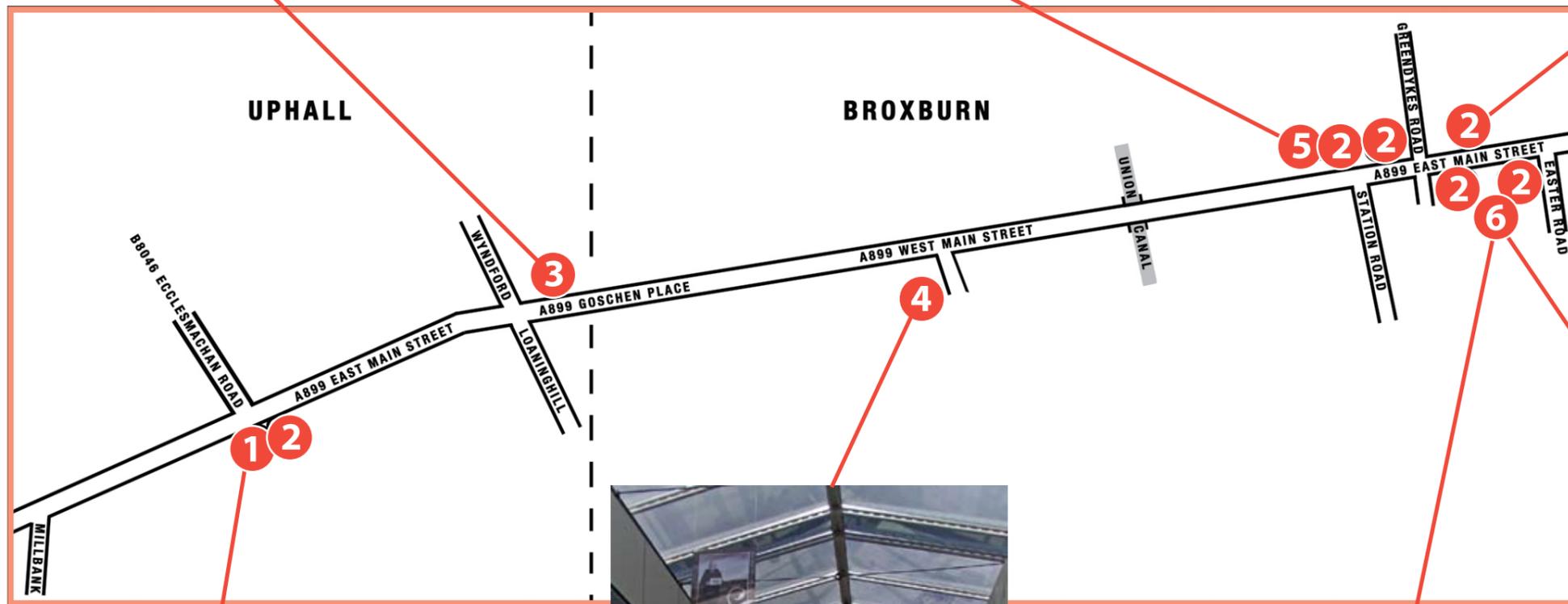
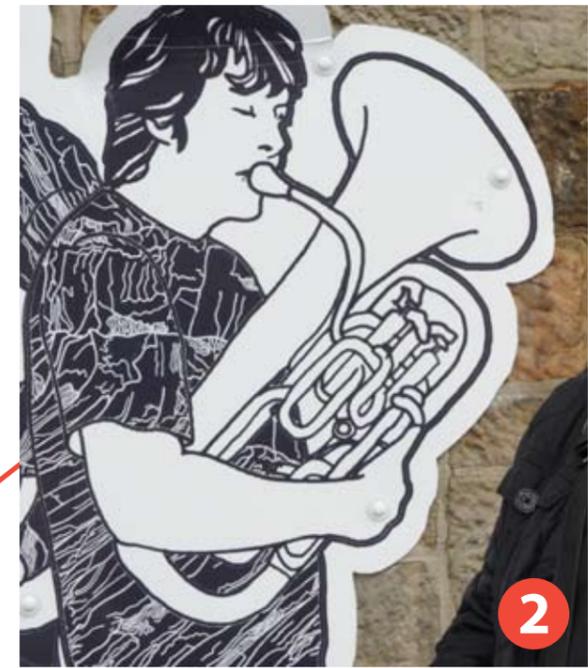
- 1. HOMAGE TO THE SHALE WORKERS** by Dr. Andrew Crummy (2010) www.smallandcrummy.co.uk
The striking 'Homage to the Shale Workers' Mural, positioned on a central gable-end in Uphall is by internationally renowned mural artist Andrew Crummy. Commissioned by Artichange as a result of his continuing works as lead mural artist for the Prestoun Grange Mural Trail in East Lothian, he has subsequently lead the creation of both 'The Battle of Prestounpans' tapestry and 'The Great Tapestry of Scotland'. The mural was visualized in 2010 and produced in early 2011. The artist wanted to pay homage to the 'backbone' of the local communities - the people who worked in the shale industry. From informative and lively creative workshops with the pupils of Broxburn Academy, the artist included three key aspects relating to the industry and lives of the shale workers - the family as community, local historical place names many of which have become embedded through still used street and estate names, and finally facts, products and dates associated with the shale industry. At the onset of production - the story becomes more interesting - as the artist worked on the developing mural day after day many locals stopped to chat. They relayed stories of their links to shale mining and many assisted by correcting facts and dates - and made suggestions for inclusions. The mural expanded in content over the three months that the artist worked in this key central position. The artist concluded that this was one of the most enjoyable projects he'd worked on "as a result of the content coming from the many aspects of the community, the colour palette devised from the ever-changing hues of the Bings as they hovered over the skyline, and the daily interaction from the locals".
Outside the hotel on the gable end wall of the building adjacent to the mural, we have the next artwork which is series of 'shale people' trail figures. This is a series that showcases a few figures based on the local 'Brass Band' members; only the uniforms represent designed earth, fossils and contain other mining references. As we continue the walk towards Broxburn will see a number of these metal figures installed in the 'hidden' alleyways (or 'closes') and gable ends just off the main street that link the towns.
- 2. SHALE HEARTS TRAIL** - site 1 of multiple metal life size figures by artist Mike Inglis (2010)
Artist Mike Inglis wanted to capture the very heart and spirit of the community. With narratives gathered from a lively series of 'Chewin' the Fat' sessions with many of Broxburn and Uphall's elderly residents he learned that music played a very big part their happiness - and that often involvement in award-winning community pipe and brass bands were a big part of this.
Using the younger musicians of Broxburn and Livingston Brass Band as models he developed a series of nine life-size figures which capture the need to express through music. Mike embedded both geo-mapping of the local area and fossilized creatures whose remains became shale itself into the clothes the figures wear. He also symbolically linked the outward looking nature of the community with that of the expressive and exotic Deguelo culture through trouser studs and embellishments.
All figures were drawn and then printed onto hand-cut dibond (aluminium) sheet before erecting throughout both Broxburn and Uphall's 'hidden' closes and vennels. In the original series, there were ten metal figures embedded throughout the towns. Unfortunately, two key figures have been stolen twice and have not been replaced, shortly after their installation in 2010. However, after a local appeal in the press some were rescued and reinstated. There are now eight available figures for you to find.
When you come to a set of traffic lights, cross the road on to the opposite side of the street and keep walking on East Main Street, until you arrive at the green spaces outside the cemetery green. There is a seating area embedded in the green space and you will arrive at the large metallic sculpture that has an additional role of marking, almost exactly, the town boundary between Uphall and Broxburn.

- 3. ABOVE AND BELOW** - metal sculpture by Michael Johnson (2013) <http://www.michaeljohnsonsculptor.co.uk>
The history of the shale Oil Industry dominates the local heritage of the area and this artwork makes reference to the importance of knowing the past but changing and growing in the future. The sculpture combines three plants which are among the first to re-colonise mined earth mounds. These are Rosebay willow herb, Wild Garlic and Hawthorn. All these plants grow on Greenlykes Bing and are represented here as symbols of regeneration and the future growth of the area.
The base of the sculpture is made out of reconstructed shale rock and within the base lies a collection of bronze castings of tools and objects related to the shale oil industry.
In the middle circling rim of the base, there are designs based on children's artwork about the towns, the Bings and their experiences living in the area today. The sculpture is full of imagery about valuing the past and also adapting and changing with life.
This project was funded and supported by the Uphall and Broxburn Town Centre Management Group, West Lothian Council, Broxburn Academy, Uphall Primary, Broxburn Primary and Kirkhill Primary schools.
Next there will be a long stretch of the walk towards the Strathrock Partnership Centre, 189a West Main Street, Broxburn, EH52 5LH, you will need to turn right and follow the street signs towards the main building entrance. Once you enter the foyer, you will see the next series of artworks which are suspended from the atrium ceiling directly above you
- 4. SHALE PEOPLE: THEN AND NOW**, by Shirley Anne Murdoch and Fin Macrae (2010)
This is a series of portrait photographs of local people and their ancestral stores and direct family connections with the mining industry. This series of seven double-sided banners hang from the atrium roof space at Strathrock Partnership Centre. A collaborative work by artists Shirley-Anne Murdoch (concept and production) and Fin Macrae (photography), it captures the passed-down memories that seven local residents have of their shale mining ancestors.
Each banner features photographs of the 'now' generation holding a 'then' generation family photograph on one side, and a memory or fact about the lives or work of their ancestors on the other. Images and text are positioned on a subtle background of historic wallpapers which, in most cases, shale mining families could not afford to adorn their walls, to symbolize the change in economic standing of the differing generations.
Once you leave Strathrock Partnership Centre you will need to walk back to the main street and turn right to continue further into Broxburn. Again cross the street twice at the Strathrock intersection. If you keep walking on West Main Street you will arrive at the next art pieces which are installed on the exterior walls of the Broxburn Library, West Main Street, Broxburn, EH52 5RH. This is a series of three banners created by local primary school students under the guidance of artist

- 5. SHALE PEOPLE- DIBOND BANNER SERIES, , Shirley Anne Murdoch (2010)** www.shirleyannemurdoch.com www.artichange.com
This series of three dibond (aluminium) printed banners are to be found on the front wall of Broxburn Library and Local History Museum in East Main Street, Broxburn. It features over 180 images of products processed by the community working in the shale industry- including a variety of oils, the world's first petrol, ammonia, soap, candles, ceramics, bitumen, bricks and paraffin.
Artist Shirley-Anne Murdoch aimed to inform the 'new generation' of the areas rich shale mining heritage and the lives led by those who established the local towns and villages.
She encouraged pupils from all four local primary schools to create colourful mixed media images during intensive creative workshops before using them to create the banner series. If you look closely you will see the words 'made by shale people' featured in each individual banner.
At the lights just below the Library, cross the street once again and then you will see in the more of the Shale People Trail figures, the 'Laughing Boys'. You will also be in sight of the final two art works on the tour, two contemporary Graffiti style murals. The tour ends here at the exterior of the leisure centre 'Xcite Broxburn' Sports Centre in Broxburn, EH52 5EL.
- 6. CLOCKING OFF- GALA DAY AND QUOITS MURAL** by guerrilla artists DUFU (Al McInnes and Fin Macrae (2010))
This two-piece artwork captures the spirit of two popular forms of leisure, as the miners and the town's residents would have experienced them when the Shale mines were operational.
The game of **Quoits** (koits, kwoits, kwaits), a traditional game which involves the throwing of metal, rope or rubber rings over a set distance, usually to land over or near a spike (sometimes called a hob, mott or pin). It is a game of accuracy rather than distance throwing. This was an extremely popular sport for 'only the strongest' Broxburn shale workers throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its inclusion signifies both the positive impact of sport in strengthening communities and the 'boomtime' of the early shale industry.
The Gala Day is a one day festival held in many towns over the world, especially Scotland. Annual **gala days** bring these areas together in celebration of history, culture and community life. Often the day is organised by residents who form part of a voluntary committee. Historically, galas days took place in mining communities. Gala days were and still remain to be, a chance to dress up. Bands turn out to play music for a procession of children, which ends in a park where the rest of the day's events take place. There are over 30 gala days in West Lothian including galas in Bathgate, Armadale and the Deans Gala in Livingston. Many gala days remain aimed at children such as the children's gala in Linlithgow & Linlithgow Bridge. Sometimes gala days are linked to particular aspects of communities' past histories. This can trace its history back to 1933 and was established to lift the spirits of children during the days of the depression. Some local authorities offer particular assistance to gala day committees, reflecting the particular traditions in their area. As part of the cultural practice since the early 16th century, Queens of May have been recorded in Scotland. The practice of crowning a summer Queen is still widespread and basically the proceedings followed are similar with the ceremonious arrival of the Queen and her attendants, crowning on a decorated dais, a procession, sports and games. Some people date it back to 1140 while others suggest 1488. By the 1950s the shale industry was struggling to survive. The use of an image of Broxburn's second Gala Day Queen in 1953 is used here to signify the end of the industry alongside the glorification of community celebrations which continue today.
<http://spaceboy1966.blogspot.co.uk> <http://dufi-art.blogspot.co.uk>

Thank you for taking part in a public art walk
For more information or to share any comments about your experiences on the walk, contact us:
tel: 01506 773871 email: arts@westlothian.gov.uk





Out in the Open

Public Art in Uphall and Broxburn

1. *Homage to the Shale Workers*
2. *Shale Hearts Trail*
3. *Above and Below*
4. *Shale People: Then and Now*
5. *Made by Shale People- Dibond Banner Series*
6. *Clocking Off- Gala Day and Quoits Mural*

