



The Royal Quays Art Walk



North Tyneside Council

The Royal Quays

Art in public places enhances a community's enjoyment of their immediate environment and, as the artworks weather and blend into the landscape, they become a familiar part of that landscape. They entice curiosity, from both within and outside that community, creating not only an interest in the artworks themselves but also in the surrounding locality. Artworks can also contribute to the regeneration of an urban landscape and there is no better way of discovering how successfully this can be carried out than to take a journey around the Royal Quays development at North Shields, on the northern banks of the River Tyne. This is an area in which art and the environment co-exist in perfect harmony. Here tranquillity pervades.

ys Art Walk



- 9 Continue straight ahead across the roundabout, keeping to the left hand pavement, passing the 'blu Quays' luxury apartments on your way to the nearby road bridge. From here there are superb views down to Chirton Dene on the one side and the marina on the other. At the next roundabout turn left along Prince Consort Way, which then merges into George Stephenson Way. Not only do some of the street names on the Royal Quays development make reference to world-renowned local man George Stephenson and his inventions, but there are also six street names dedicated to the memory of North Shields born writer Robert Westall, whose first home was less than one mile away. About half way along this road, where the street becomes Lion Way, watch carefully for the two extremely decorative garden features which act as a division between the front and back landscaped areas of a number of bungalows. These are little gems and could easily be missed. On reaching the next roundabout cross back over the road to the Parks Sports Centre and the end of an illuminating and refreshing walk.

Art and Major Environmental Works

- (1) Figure of a Striding Child - Richard Broderick/Graham Robinson
- (2) Water Landscape (3) The Tide is Turning - Linda France/Alec Peever
- (4) Kin - Linda France/Alec Peever (5) Sea Dreamer's Rest - Gilly Rogers
- (6) Tyne Anew - Mark di Suvero (7) Rugged Landscape (8) Dudes - Permindar Kaur
- (9) Lightning Clock - Andy Plant (10) Prophecy Monolith - Alec Peever



A pond in Chirton Dene

Devised and Written: Geoff Holland and Jonathan Barrant - 2005
Photographs: Geoff and Ellie Holland



The Brogues - Part of Sea Dreamer's Rest

- 1 On the western edge of North Shields, the Royal Quays development lies to the south of Howdon Road, as it makes its way to the Tyne Tunnel. Officially opened in 1998, the energy charged Parks Sports Centre marks the start of this walk. Turning right into Howdon Road, walk the short distance to the footpath signposted Riverside Centre, following this over the small footbridge and then under the road bridge to enter, at the other end, Chirton Dene. You are now within the boundaries of the Royal Quays development, an 80 hectare mix of housing, offices, open spaces, a marina, a retail park, a restaurant, a water theme park and a soccer dome. By the 1980's this area, centred around the Tyne Commissioners Quay, had largely become disused and derelict. The now disbanded Tyne & Wear Development Corporation were given the task of reclaiming the land, and, in partnership with the local council and the private sector, created the Royal Quays. Follow the main footpath straight down into the dene and, where the path bends to the left, look for the Figure of a Striding Child (1) pointing directly towards the sea between the piers, at the mouth of the River Tyne. The figure stands on top of a long, silver coloured column, on a small mound to your left, and forms part of the play area to the north of the dene created by artists Richard Broderick and Graham Robinson.
- 2 Continue to follow the curving footpath, turning across the fourth footbridge on your left and then right, just before the wide footbridge, to start a short downhill stretch. Before doing so take time to look around. As with its neighbour Redburn Dene, Chirton Dene follows the natural watercourse. Both were created out of former dock areas. The dene has water as its central theme and the aptly titled Water Landscape (2) appears first as a mountain stream, followed by reed beds, a central pool, a cadence, and a boggy area before culminating in a series of cascades which tumble down to the Albert Edward Dock. The retaining wall, just below the pond and the wooden bridge, carries a number of soft stone tablets along its length close to the water, each with a word from the quote, "If water were words what would the Tyne say?", whilst metal lettering glinting in the pond below retort, "The tide is turning". This is the artwork known as The Tide is Turning (3) and was carved by Alec Peever. Where the bridge crosses over the central part of the dene, below the surface of the water, lies a stone sculpture, carrying the words "What is stronger than stone?/Deeper than river?/Each other/Kin". This work, known simply as Kin (4), is not always visible due to the natural discolouration of the water. Both works are based on a collaboration, between the poet Linda France and local women, which produced texts based on life in North Shields. The two phrases have obvious connections with their location, its former use and its current reinvigorated state.

- 3 At the bottom of the cascade cross left over the footbridge, then turning right to follow the shared use path alongside the boatyard until you reach the end of the high fence. This path is part of two major lung-bursting cross-country cycling trails, the Coast to Coast (C2C) and the Reivers Cycling Route. Turn right where the fence ends and cross over the lock gates which serve the adjoining picturesque marina. At either end of the harbour island between the two water inlets, examine at close hand the white feathers and the clay pipes set within the two capstans and, on the ground, look out for the bronze brogues and the ladies stilettos. These pieces make up Sea Dreamer's Rest (5), a work by local artist Gilly Rogers which reflects the romance of returning seamen as they reach for home or dream of open water. The white feathers symbolise the floating dreams of the people who pass through, their aspirations for the present and the creation of a confident future. The clay pipes reflect the passage of time, the encapsulation of dreams and the quiet contemplation of all who have gone before. The natural viewpoints have been recognised by the shoes; the brogues marking the seaward end and the ladies stilettos marking the marina end, suggesting the changing lifestyles during the long history of the harbour island and the community which thrives around it.
- 4 Once across the lock-gates, beside the marina buildings, turn left to the corner where the floating restaurant, the Earl of Zetland, is moored. To your left, at the river's edge, stands the 71 feet high orange steel structure entitled, Tyne Anew (6) by the renowned American sculptor, Mark di Suvero. The work, the artist's first UK commission, is a monument to artistic engineering and balancing skill, with the three huge tripod style legs supporting a top piece that gently twists and dips in the wind. It took three years to construct in the artist's New York studio before being dismantled and shipped to England. Sandblasting, priming and painting preceded final transportation by road to the Royal Quays. The three day installation of the work was carried out over the last weekend in July 1999. Of the work, the artist said, "The North East is rich in history and the legacy of heavy industry is visible everywhere you look. I wanted to add to this feeling of the past impacting on the present and Tyne Anew will be a constant reminder of the industrial foundations the North East is built on".



*Tyne Anew
by Mark di Suvero*

- 5 Walk around the next two sides of the marina until you reach the footpath that climbs gently between the adjacent housing. Follow this footpath past the large vertical timbers which signify that you are now entering Redburn Dene, once one of the main rail routes from the Northumberland coalfields to the staithe on the River Tyne. The redundant wooden staithe were reclaimed and used, along with a substantial number of large boulders, throughout the dene to form the environmental work, Rugged Landscape (7). Cross the roadway and follow the path as it passes to the right of the small but prominent green hill. This has a set of six tall timbers on top. Just beyond the hill, on your left, take the footpath with the long, shallow steps to the top of the hill. Laid out on the ground is a pebble mosaic depicting the British Isles and Europe and, together with the stainless steel directional markers to five European countries, this makes a very fine vantage point.
- 6 Continue left off the hill, along the footpath curving to the right, until you reach the cut-steel entrance way, designed by children from the local St. Bernadette's Primary School, which leads you out of the dene to a large roundabout. Cross straight over the road and pass through the large vehicular entrance to the International Ferry Terminal from where there are regular sailings to Norway, Sweden and Holland. Cross over to the pavement on the right hand side of the access road and walk forwards for 100 metres. On reaching the green mound on your left you will see, just beyond the trees, the art installation entitled, (8) by Perminda Kaur. Thirteen brightly coloured figures march towards the passenger terminal building. With their shiny helmets and boots, are they warriors retreating or attacking? Or are they more playful, like toys searching for new playmates from another country or continent? Friend or foe? Where have they come from...why are they here...where are they going? Powdered in bright blue and red, the figures represent what a port is about - moving, travelling. Seeking out the new. If you happen to be sailing from here you will be able to see that a further two Dudes, nearer to achieving their goal, have made it to the terminal building and are heading for the departure gates.



*The Weatherman
Detail from Lightning Clock*

- 7 Retrace your steps back to the roundabout and head straight ahead towards the Royal Quays Outlet Shopping Centre, passing en route the Royal Quays public house. Enter the shopping centre and head towards the wonderful sculpture, Lightning Clock (9) by Sheffield born Andy Plant. The sculpture, commissioned to form the centrepiece of this popular retail complex, is as much performance as visual art, combining mechanics and engineering, a sense of place and a sense of humour. The clock is 30 feet high, consisting of two beaten copper spheres fixed to a stainless steel column resting on a cast iron base, with a fibre glass weatherman figure. As the hour approaches, all comes to life. The weatherman pulls a lever. The sound of thunder is heard. The face of the North Wind rotates, eyes rolling, and blows out smoke to knock the weatherman off his feet. Gradually, the storm dies down, all is quiet again...until the next hour strikes. The shopping centre is an ideal place to take a break and to have some refreshments.
- 8 Leave the complex by either exit and head towards the large roundabout immediately outside the car parks. Cross over the main road, which heads away from the roundabout to your left, re-entering Redburn Dene through the cut-steel gateway marked with a National Cycle Network Route 72 sign. Take the path heading off to your right, which is signposted 'Hadrian's Cycleway - Shields Ferry, North Shields (Fish Quay) and Tynemouth', and continue downhill through the reclaimed timber staithe which are each carved with the word 'Groyne'. Once you are adjacent to the green hill you visited earlier in the walk, climb the stairs on your left to reach the large piece of sandstone enclosed by timber walling. This is Prophecy Monolith(10) and contains the words, "Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed". These words from Isaiah, which were carved by Alec Peever, refer to the care required to maintain the environment. Return down the steps and turn left to leave Redburn Dene through the timber-staithe gateway.



*The Dudes
by Perminda Kaur*