

# SCOTTISH SHALE OIL

Cracking plant, constructed in the 1930's, allowed more petrol and diesel fuel to be produced from shale.

Crude oil was transported to the refinery where it was purified and separated into various different grades of oil and wax. From the 1920's all crude shale oil was processed at Pumphreston refinery.

A large proportion of the shale remained after the oil had been released in the retorting process. This waste was tipped in huge bins adjacent to the oilworks.

Many shale mines had an inclined shaft along which wagons were hauled to the surface.

At the oilworks, shale was heated in brick-lined retorts where oil vapour and other chemicals were released.

Shale that lay deep underground, was reached by shale pits with vertical shafts.

Oil companies built rows of houses close to oilworks and mines to house their workforce.

Hot oil vapour was cooled in condensers to produce crude oil.

Crude oil was sent from oilworks to refinery by rail tanker.

Shale was transported from mine to oilworks by narrow-gauge railway.

Oil company villages shared a strong sense of community. Everyone enjoyed the annual gala day.

A group of oilworkers with the tools of their trade. c.1910.

At the pit bottom, miners wait in the cage to be wound up the shaft to the surface.

Oilshale was mined by drilling shot holes and setting off a series of explosive charges. Lumps of shale would then be broken up and loaded by hand into hutches.

A group of shale miners. c.1910.

Shale cutting machines and other mechanisation were introduced in the 1940's

A hutch full of shale, ready to be pushed into the cage and wound to the surface.

Safety lamps were used to test for dangerous gas. It was usually safe to use open-flame lamps in shale mines.



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**The National Lottery**  
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For more detailed information, see our website:  
 forgotten oilworks and long-abandoned villages.  
 the last evidence of mines and mineral railways,  
 hollows and other subtle traces in the landscape:  
 plains of Philipstoun, you'll encounter humps,  
 windswept moorlands of Tarbrax and the fertile  
 Travelling the twenty or so miles between the

homes.  
 built cottages still provide warm and welcoming  
 sense of community. The neat rows of brick-  
 companies continue to thrive and retain a strong  
 away. Many of the villages established by the oil  
 been landscaped or are slowly being quarred  
 monuments. Most other things that survive have  
 Sisters bing at Westwood, are now scheduled  
 immediately north of Broxburn, and the Five  
 still punctuate the skyline. The range of bings  
 The distinctive orange-pink bings of waste shale

landscape as reminder of the industry.  
 shale oilworks closed, yet much survives in the  
 It is almost half a century since the last Scottish

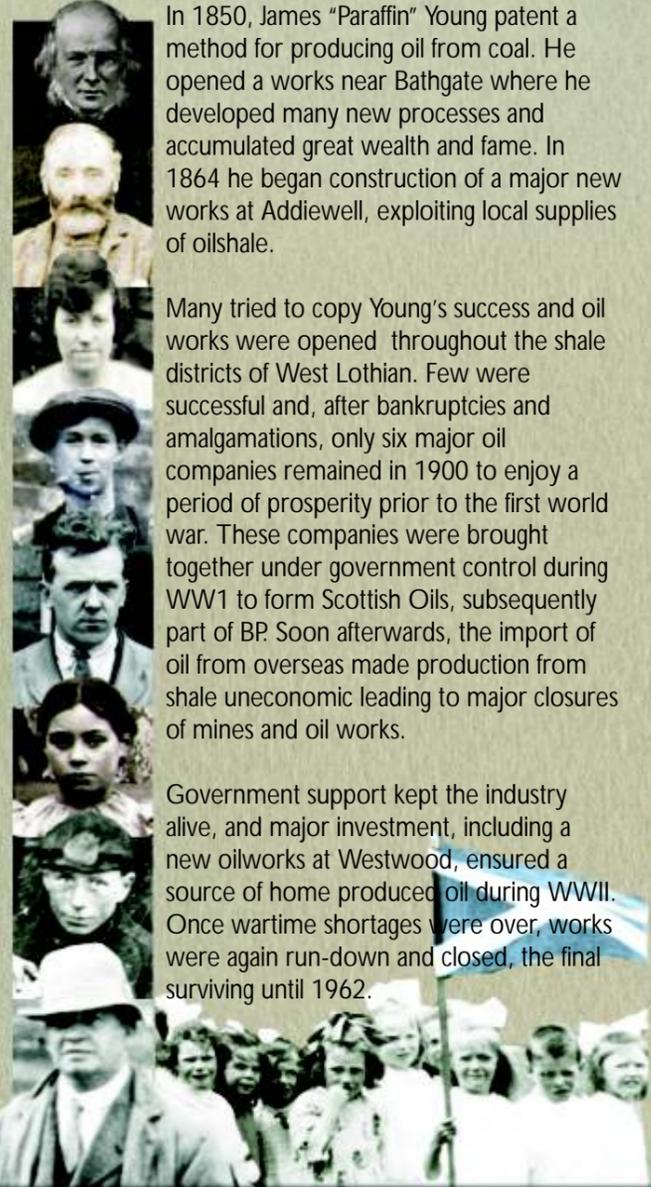


A journey of discovery through rural West Lothian

# The Shale Trail



## A Brief History



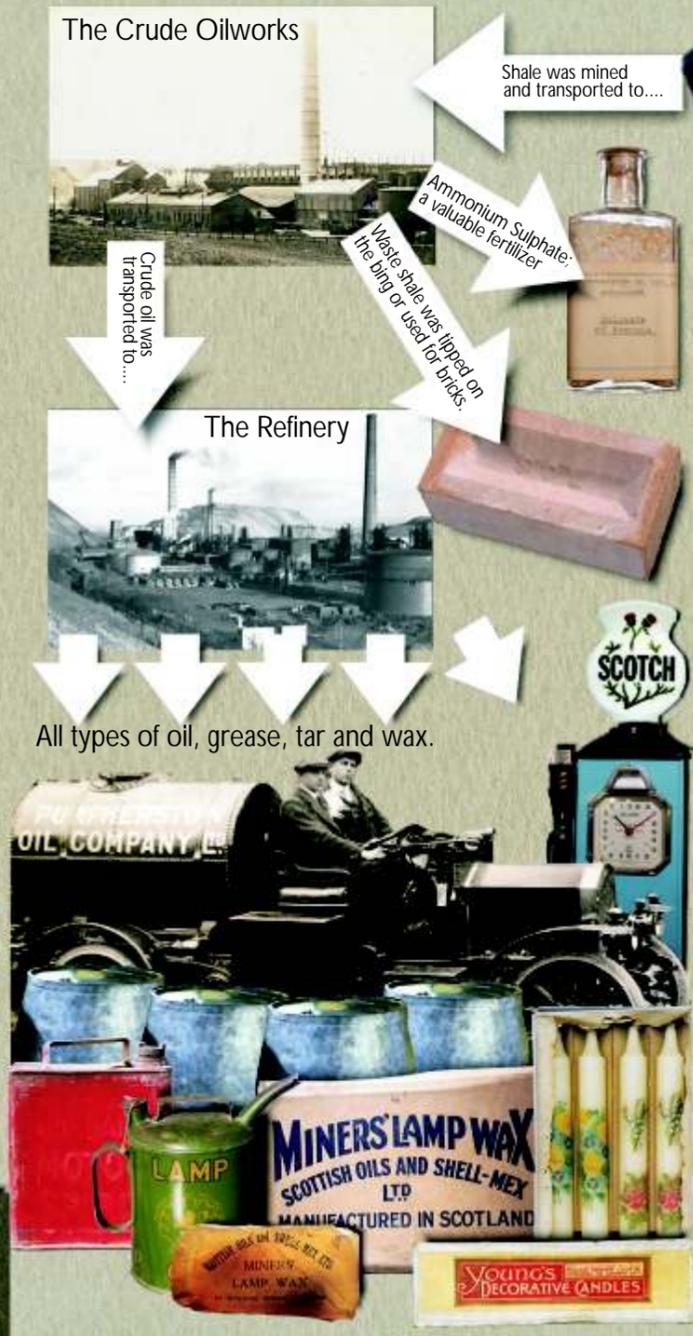
In 1850, James "Paraffin" Young patent a method for producing oil from coal. He opened a works near Bathgate where he developed many new processes and accumulated great wealth and fame. In 1864 he began construction of a major new works at Addiewell, exploiting local supplies of oilshale.

Many tried to copy Young's success and oil works were opened throughout the shale districts of West Lothian. Few were successful and, after bankruptcies and amalgamations, only six major oil companies remained in 1900 to enjoy a period of prosperity prior to the first world war. These companies were brought together under government control during WW1 to form Scottish Oils, subsequently part of BP. Soon afterwards, the import of oil from overseas made production from shale uneconomic leading to major closures of mines and oil works.

Government support kept the industry alive, and major investment, including a new oilworks at Westwood, ensured a source of home produced oil during WWII. Once wartime shortages were over, works were again run-down and closed, the final surviving until 1962.

To find out more about shale oil, visit our museum:  
**Almond Valley Heritage Trust.**  
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## Made From Shale



## The Scottish Shale Oil Industry



A beginner's guide



Almond Valley Heritage Trust