

**Inspiration** arts,  
**Aspiration** cultural organisations  
**Partnership** and schools  
working together

**'A River's Journey: The Axe and its tributaries'  
Axe Valley: Autumn 2010-Spring 2011**

**Evaluation Report**



Mural panel created by students from Seaton Primary School with artist Lucy Jackson, 2011

**Report written by Tricia Kings**

## **Inspiration Aspiration Partnership:**

### **Axe Valley: A River's Journey – The Axe and its tributaries**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A river walk with poetry, music and dance along the banks; poetry, songs and pictures about pond creatures; 'scwishy' clay tile making; willow-woven monsters on the marshes; bright murals of the beach and countryside; dinosaur puppets and a Fossil Box automaton model of an ichthyosaurus.

These are creative outputs in a community project, where young people from 11 schools in the Axe Valley were inspired by an exploration of their local environment to express and share what they had learned through art, writing, dance and music.

'**A River's Journey**' took place across the Axe Valley Learning Community from October 2010 to May 2011, involving over 700 young people, with their teachers, parents and families, artists, writers, museum and library staff, and local environmental organisations.

The project was coordinated by Daisy and funded by

- Jurassic Coast Arts Programme
- East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund
- East Devon Natural Environment Awareness Grant
- Axe Valley Learning Community

*This project allowed imagination to stretch further than there is normally the opportunity to do – the creative side of things is hugely important*

**Teacher, Axe Valley Community College**

*The children loved the visit to the marshes and it has generated a lot of ideas, and literacy and art work*

**Teacher, Kilmington Primary School**

'**A River's Journey**' is a further programme in Devon's 'Inspiration Aspiration Partnership'\* , which is about arts, cultural organisations and schools working together to inspire creativity and increase aspiration by developing young people's pride in their local surroundings and resources.

The process has involved bringing the young people into contact with inspirational, professional writers, artists and local cultural amenities – and of course vice versa. The project methodology was developed by Daisy and 4 Devon learning communities between 2006 and 2008 – and to date over 2,400 young people, teachers, artists and cultural organisation staff have taken part. The project has shown overwhelmingly positive impact for participants in learning and skills development and across the project partners' desired outcomes:

- Raising aspiration and broadening horizons
- Inspiring pride and awareness of locality and community
- Learning to work together
- Increasing creativity
- Increasing literacy

\* See <http://www.daisi.org.uk/index.php/artists/project-archive/112-inspiration-aspiration-partnership.html>

## 2. AIMS

For this phase of Inspiration Aspiration Partnership the Axe Valley Learning Community chose the title '**A River's Journey**', and, working closely together in planning this project, focused on the overall aims of

- inspiring **creativity**
- strengthening **joint working – schools working in parallel to a shared celebration**

-to be achieved through a shared exploration and understanding about the river, the marshes and the coast, with a focus on journeys – leading to a shared celebration at the end of the project

The following summary and examination of the activity, outputs and outcomes of the project show how these aims were reached. Pupils' learning covered an impressive range of subjects and skills, leading them to rich creative output, increased sense of community, and increased knowledge and appreciation of the locality and all it has to offer.



Students from Beer Primary School rock-pooling with the Beer Fine Foundation

## 3. THE PARTNERS

### **Schools**

Axe Valley Community College (85)  
Seaton Community Primary School (90)  
Beer Primary School (29)  
Shute Community Primary School (25)  
Membury Community school (9)  
St Andrews Church of England Primary School, Chardstock (23)  
Mrs Ethelston's Church of England Primary School (32)  
Dalwood Primary School (9)  
Kilmington Primary School (27)  
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Axminster (31)  
Colyton Primary School (30)  
Musbury Primary School (12)

### ***Local cultural/environmental community venues & organisations***

Seaton Marshes  
Dalwood village  
River Lym  
River Axe/Umbourne Brook & Kitt Brook  
Beer Coast  
Natural England - Lyme Undercliff  
Dorchester Museum  
Lyme Regis Museum  
Seaton Museum  
Southampton University  
Beer Fine Foundation Centre

### ***Artists and writers***

Karen Abadie – sculpture  
Tamsin Bone – dance  
Sarah Butterwort - puppets  
James Crowden – creative writing  
Jill Denton – felt making  
Aviva Halter-Hurn - clay  
Sara Hurley - storytelling  
Lucy Jackson - mural  
James Lake – sculpture  
Hugh Nankaville – songwriting  
Simon Pattenden - graphics  
Cara Patterson – mural and sculpture  
Clive Pig – performance poetry, writing  
Elise Ruffell - ceramics  
Chris Salisbury – environmental art

## **4. DESIRED OUTCOMES**

Working with the headline project aims of 'Creativity' and 'Joint working to a shared celebration', the partners identified this set of key outcomes which they wanted to achieve through the project:

### ***Creativity***

1. **To get the creative juices flowing**
2. **Practical creative experiences** – that lead to other things
3. Raise the profile with parents of **tactile learning experiences**

### ***Joint working to a shared celebration***

1. **Schools working in parallel on a common theme**, doing something big together – leading to a shared celebration at the end
2. **Focus on journeys** – the journey of the river Axe – historical, geographical journeys
3. Peer mentoring
4. Get out of the school environment
5. Appreciate being outdoors in all weathers

**Plus**

1. **Using Seaton Marshes** – towards a project with a beginning, a middle and an end, rather than a visit being a stand-alone experience
2. **Family learning** – involve parents



Students from St Andrew’s Primary School, Chardstock, making a representation of a river valley using found materials during a workshop with artist Chris Holland

**5. PROJECT ACTIVITY**

**5.1. Planning**

Planning began in autumn 2010, allowing good time for getting everything in place, and the project partners met several times to shake out and agree outcomes, and firm up ideas for activities and evidence collection.

**5.2. Inspiration Days**

These were held in February 2011 with the aim of providing ideas and inspiration for each school’s interpretation and exploration of the theme, through a programme of activities.

At each inspiration day schools experienced several ‘taster’ activities.

Schools.....	Taster Activities.....
Chardstock Primary School Dalwood Primary School Membury Primary School Mrs Ethelstan’s Primary School	<i>Walk down the river to Lyme Regis</i> Music/Hugh Nankaville Dance/Tamsin Bone Lyme Regis Museum Natural England – <i>on Lyme beach</i>
Kilmington Primary School Shute Community Primary School St Mary’s Roman Catholic Primary School	<i>Weycroft Hall</i> Poetry/Clive Pig Tudor Dance/Pip Jones Environmental Art/Chris Holland

Axe Valley Community College	<i>At Seaton Marshes</i> Sculpture/James Lake Drawing/Steve Hunton Environmental Art/Meg Knowles, Education Ranger, East Devon Countryside Service
Seaton Primary School Beer Primary School	<i>Beer and Seaton - Boat trip; rock-pooling on Beer beach; Seaton Library and Seaton beach</i> <i>Beer Beach: Beer Fine Foundation</i> Graphics/Simon Pattenden <i>Seaton Library: Storytelling/Sara Hurley</i> <i>Seaton Beach: Natural England;</i>

### 5.3. Evidence collection

Feedback about the project's activity was collected via the following:

- Teacher and artist feedback forms, completed for most events
- Young people's feedback forms, collected as far as possible for each event
- Photographs and videos of many of the activities
- Final summary questionnaires, completed by most schools – some of these via telephone interview
- Emails and phone interviews with some partner organisations
- Participation figures

The collection of this evidence was built into the project delivery

*See Appendix A for examples of forms used*

### 5.4. Project activity, Spring 2011 – by school

<i>School</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
Axe Valley Community College  Year 9	Sculpture at inspiration day Visit to Dorchester Museum Visit to Southampton University: watching scanning of a plesiosaur jawbone Puppet making Creating The Fossil Box automaton <i>I really enjoyed it all, I wish I could do it again</i> <i>Artist: Sara Butterworth</i>	3D bird sculptures Plesiosaur puppets The Fossil Box automaton
Beer Primary School	Inspiration day at Seaton and Beer: beach exploration; storytelling at the library <i>On the boat my group were holding large crabs – I was petrified but I held one!</i> Ceramics – creatures of the coast <i>Artist: Elise Ruffell</i>	Creative writing, designs of marine creatures, marine- themed clay tiles
Colyton Primary School	Seaton Marshes – looking at wildlife and plants Textiles – creating a felt banner <i>'a fantastic two days with Jill Denton. Following a really worthwhile and enjoyable trip to Seaton Marshes ... Wow! what a great week!'</i> <i>Artist: Jill Denton</i>	Felt Banner

Dalwood Primary School	Collage mural – features of the village and surrounding Writing poetry <i>Artist: Cara Patterson</i>	Collage mural
Kilmington Primary School	Seaton Marshes – pond-dipping & identifying creatures; drawing, collecting textures Ceramics <i>'I enjoyed finding what we found'</i> <i>'I enjoyed revealing what I had done'</i> <i>(Tile from mould)</i> <i>Artist: Karen Adabie</i>	Drawings Clay tiles
Membury Community school	River walk on inspiration day: music and dance, visit to Lyme Museum and work with Natural England Collage of herons in the reeds, inspired by Seaton Marshes Performance poetry inspired by creatures seen at Seaton Marshes <i>'Uncurling, whirling shell'</i> <i>'Slowly sliding mud lover'</i> <i>Performance poet: Clive Pig</i>	Artwork Collage Performance poetry
Musbury Primary School	Worked with Dalwood PS Collage mural – features of the village and the surrounding area Writing poetry <i>Artist: Cara Patterson</i>	Collage mural
Mrs Ethelston's Church of England Primary School	River walk on inspiration day: music and dance, visit to Lyme Museum and work with Natural England Creative writing: poetry day Music inspired by the river <i>'We did a brilliant dance by the end of the day'</i> <i>'You can get new big ideas by going on a walk'</i> <i>Writer: James Crowden</i> <i>Musician: Hugh Nankaville</i>	Poetry Dance Music
St Andrews Church of England Primary School, Chardstock	River walk on inspiration day: poetry and music, visit to Lyme Museum and work with Natural England Environmental arts: used natural materials for creating artwork/drawings <i>'These drawings were made out of mud and dock leaf!'</i> Music inspired by the river <i>Artist: Chris Holland</i> <i>Musician: Hugh Nankaville</i>	Artwork Music
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Axminster	Inspiration day: nature hunt on Seaton Marshes & pond-dipping Sculptures of water creatures Performance poetry day using creatures found on Seaton Marshes for inspiration <i>'Creativity blossomed in the writing and sculpture activities'</i> <i>Artist: Cara Patterson</i>	Sculpture Performance poetry

	<i>Performance poet: Clive Pig</i>	
Seaton Community Primary School	Inspiration day at Seaton and Beer: beach exploration; storytelling at the library Creating murals of Seaton Willow weaving on Seaton Marshes <i>'We really achieved something – the murals are brilliant, absolutely amazing'.</i> <i>Artists: Lucy Jackson, Isobel Coulton</i>	Large, multi-panelled mural of Seaton Marsh monsters sculptures on Black Hole Marsh
Shute Community Primary School	Clay Performance poetry <i>'The water smells of chives by the river bank'</i> <i>'The foam on the stream Flowing slowly getting pushed By the force of the ripples'</i> <i>Performance poet: James Crowden</i> <i>Artist: Aviva Halter-Hurn</i>	Pottery Performance poetry

### **5.5. Celebration, sharing and display**

A vital part of the project was providing opportunities for everyone to display and share what they had created and achieved, and what and how they had learned on the way.

This was done through

- **A celebration event and exhibition** held at the Axe Valley Community College on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 - young people from all the partner schools came together, with each school giving a presentation around their particular activity.
- **Displays and presentations to parents** at open evenings at individual schools.
- **CDs/DVDs** showing individual schools' activities, learning, and creative work.



Students taking part in 'Inspiration days' at Weycroft Hall with artist Pip Jones (left) and on Lyme Regis beach with Natural England (right)

## 6. 'A RIVER'S JOURNEY': WHAT IT ACHIEVED

### OUTCOMES FOR THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

As described above, the project was working to the over-arching outcomes

#### ***Creativity, and Joint working to a shared celebration***

Here now are the desired outcomes for the project as identified at the outset by the Axe Valley Learning Community – grouped under the headings 'creativity', 'joint working to a shared celebration' and 'other desired outcomes', with an examination of the project achievements for each outcome.

As well as the above agreed outcomes specified by the learning community, 'A River's Journey' clearly achieved a number of key learning outcomes for the young people and adults taking part. These too are examined in detail below.

### **6.1.CREATIVITY**

#### **6.1.1. Practical creative experiences - to get the creative juices flowing & leading to other things:**

This primary outcome was very clearly achieved, as was demonstrated at the celebration event, in the pictures of the activities, in the feedback from children and teachers – and in the wealth of creative work produced through this project:

- Creative writing
- Poetry
- Performance poetry
- Dance
- Music
- Drawing
- Collage
- Design
- Large scale murals
- Ceramics
- Pottery
- Sculpture
- Willow-weaving
- Puppets
- Fossil Box automaton

*This project stretched the imagination further than we normally have the opportunity to experience* **Teacher**

*The creative side of all this was hugely important* **Teacher**

This creative activity was especially inspired by strong elements contained in the programme:

- Experiencing the local environment along the river's journey to the sea: the river, the beach, the sea, the marshes, ponds
- Space and time outside the classroom, and encouragement to explore and see things in new ways, using all senses
- Learning new skills
- Working with professionals bringing their knowledge and skills: artists and writers; museum staff; countryside rangers; staff in environmental organisations; university academics
- Follow-up work in the classroom and in preparation for the celebration event: crafting and shaping creative work for sharing and display
- Enjoyment

## Teachers

*The children have done some inspiring poems and writing to follow it up. (Day outside.) They were particularly inspired by the walk down the river and the music session.*

*Some excellent activities to inspire some outstanding writing about the river life*

*The children enjoyed making the tiles and were proud of the finished product*

*Children were encouraged to be really imaginative and expressive with the vocabulary and ideas in their poem*

*The children wrote poetry of a very high standard*

*Many discussed where the river was flowing in an imaginative way, especially as a pencil was dropped in....what stories will it write as it floats downstream?*

## Pupils

*I enjoyed finding what we found*

*I really enjoyed the challenge of creating rhyming poems*

*We got inspiration from the countryside*

*I learned how to look and listen out for inspiration*

*Making the pots was a lot of fun but it was quite hard and fiddly*

*We learnt about dance. We did a brilliant dance by the end of the day*

*'A River's Journey' also inspired and developed teachers' own creativity – plus ideas, perceptions and skills for encouraging pupils' creativity*

*We had new experiences, plus through working with an artist we were getting more out of normal experiences*

*I can't believe you can just push [willow] into the ground and it'll just grow*

*We (school art staff) were working with new techniques – this will be very useful*

*We already knew a lot about the Jurassic Coast but now, via the artist, we looked at it with different eyes*

*We learned methods to gain inspiration for poetry and group poetry writing*

*We got fresh teaching ideas to develop literacy skills*



Students from Axe Valley Community College drawing with artist Stephen Hunton at Seaton Marshes

### 6.1.2. Raise the profile with parents of **tactile learning experiences**

Included in this project were a range of tactile learning experiences for the children, particularly:

- Pond-dipping
- Making clay pots
- Making tiles
- Creating 3D bird sculptures
- Willow-weaving
- Making puppets from different materials: latex, plastic, paper
- Creating murals using collage; and pictures using natural materials such as mud and leaves
- Making music with different instruments

*They drew designs into the clay and were encouraged to use textures and make their pictures 3D*

*I liked the clay, it was cool and squidgy*

*Really fun and messy*

*I liked the clay modelling because when you put your fingers on it it felt smooth*

*...you need a fair amount of strength to push the willow into the ground*

*I liked feeling the clay and smoothing it out*

*'The moss is green*

*It lives on logs*

*It's sort of fluffy and squishy...' (excerpt from poem)*

*I liked the accordion best*

This evaluation does not include feedback from parents and so it's not possible to assess the full impact of this outcome.

They would certainly gain awareness of children's tactile experiences from their writing and artwork, from their presentations at the celebration – and of course from the children themselves.

## **6.2. JOINT WORKING TO A SHARED CELEBRATION**

### **6.2.1. Schools working independently on a common theme, doing something big together – leading to a shared celebration at the end**

In their planning the schools agreed on a headline theme, 'A River's Journey' and the shared experience of taster 'Inspiration' days, to provide lots of ideas for interpreting the theme. They would then work independently on individual programmes of activity and produce creative work which would feed into a joint exhibition and celebration event as a finale for this 'Inspiration, Aspiration, Partnership' experience.

Rather like tributaries flowing into a single river...

This meant that the main collaboration in this programme across the learning community happened at the beginning and end, in the planning and the inspiration days, and then the celebration.

The main community linkage occurred in the delivery of the programme, in the activities involving local cultural and environmental organisations.

*The early meetings did some building of links*

*Links with other schools are not usually about art, so this was new*

*Meeting other schools at the initial day at Weycroft was interesting – a chance to socialise in other groups*

*Working with other schools was more of an incidental thing*

*There is good collaboration for setting up the celebration – it's a focused task and all care that it works as a joint activity  
We would be happy to combine with the other groups again  
We're looking forward to the celebration as an opportunity to share work with parents, friends and the wider community  
For the learning community this has brought schools together, especially through the celebration: 'This is what we've been able to put together as a programme – plus this display and celebration'*

### **6.2.2. Get out of the school environment; Appreciate being outdoors in all weathers**

This desired outcome is an interesting take on the more usually expressed aim in IAP programmes around 'developing young people's awareness of their local area and environment.'

And feedback shows that the children's experiences outside the classroom and in the open air were indeed powerful and inspirational.

*This project had the enhancement of doing the workshops outside of school, giving an excellent outdoor experience, multisensory too*

*I listened to the water go crashing against the rocks  
I liked when the sun shone through the trees, creating a beautiful light on the river  
I liked going on the walk, writing what I liked about the river and the things around the river  
It was nice to be outside  
Hmm – I know I can hear the boat's sails hitting against the mast. Oh, I can hear the waves lapping the shore too. It is amazing sitting and listening to all the sounds of the beach  
On the boat it was fun listening to Kim and holding the amazing crabs and listening to the waves though I felt a bit sea sick. It was a great day  
I liked going on the walk because it got us out of a stuffy old classroom and out into nature  
It is easier to write about the world when you are in it*

At the same time the children's work and comments shows an increased awareness of their locality and its history, geography, present day activity, nature and wildlife.

*The moss is green  
It's relative to frogs  
It lives in bogs...*

*She (the storyteller) talked to us about the old river Axe and how people used to live there and what little children did for money*

*The children gained greater understanding of farming practice which benefits both their access to land and the farming community*

*I learned that we have amazing wild-life in Lyme Regis and Uplyme  
I learned what a haiku is  
... that you get red admiral butterflies at this time of year  
I learned where a badger and fox sleeps  
... where Middle Mill is  
There are footpaths to Lyme Regis near me  
You can go pond-dipping wherever you want but not in the snow  
Pond animals can be on, in, above, or in the margin of the fresh-water pond  
I learned Seaton Marshes existed*

*...the river was called Axe mouth*

*There's a pond, and a TESCO, the train station and a rainbow and a bog.*

### **6.2.3. Using Seaton Marshes – towards a project with a beginning, a middle and an end, rather than a visit being a stand-alone experience**

In fact each school's activities, whether focused on the marshes, farmland, ponds, the river, the sea, the cliffs, or the beach, combined to make well-formed projects for the children.

While in some cases the inspiration days did not always feed directly into a school's activities, they instead triggered new ideas and lateral thinking – see Axe Valley CC's work with Dorchester Museum and Southampton University.

For none of the schools was a visit a stand-alone experience; connections were always made.

Ironically Seaton Marshes was the venue for Axe Valley CC's inspiration day but was not then the focus for the project's main activity – though it did spark off some sculpture work which linked into later puppet-making.

But several schools did choose the Marshes as their focus venue: Kilmington (pond-dipping), Membury (exploration as inspiration for artwork), St Mary's (pond-dipping) and Seaton (willow-weaving, making clay marsh spirits, plus inspiration for the school's mural).

They worked with East Devon Education Ranger Meg Knowles.

*Our visit to Seaton Marshes gave the children a new understanding of the purpose of a nature reserve*

*We visited the Misty Marshes of Seaton - our lovely guide Meg showed us round and took us on an exciting treasure hunt*

*Inspired by the creatures in the pond at Seaton Marshes we sculpted the minibeasts that we discovered, with the help of artist Cara*

*Our area is much smaller than Seaton Marshes*

*I enjoyed finding the animals hiding in the mud at the bottom....and putting them and finding them in the tray*

*We learnt that screech beetle makes a funny sound*

*There is a lesser water boatman and a greater water boatman*

*Only leeches in America suck your blood*

*I found out when I was exploring after a pond-dipping there was a path witch (sic) led round Seaton Marshes. I went round it and saw lots of things like thistles*

From this work around Seaton Marshes there are two tangible legacies: Seaton school's mural panels with scenes of the marshes and their wildlife, and their spiral willow structure on Black Hole Marsh.

### **6.2.4. Peer mentoring**

This was a specified outcome at the start of the project: there is a small amount of feedback in the evidence collected showing some activity towards achieving this. The celebration event was an exemplar of peer learning with Axe Valley Community College students including the primary pupils in their presentation and passing on their learning and enthusiasm.

#### **Shute**

*It was worth going because it was interesting to know how the other children felt about the river.*

*Both staff and children have fed their experiences and learning into the wider school community*

*The class inspired other classes with their poetry*

## St Mary's

*The children taking part were able to share the skills learned through the activities  
We orally shared our experiences and photos from our trip with a younger class, who  
were studying a poem about marsh lands*

## Seaton

*Three days, three classes, all working together, all contributing*



Students from Membury Primary working with performance poet Clive Pig

### **6.3. OTHER SPECIFIED DESIRED OUTCOMES**

#### **6.3.1. Family learning**

While this was initially specified as an outcome, there was no direct family learning activity in the project.

However at several schools parents were involved in the activities, as helpers and participants. Most schools ran special events with presentations about the project and displays for parents.

At the end of the project parents were able to join in the celebration around what the children had achieved.

*The children were excited to say to parents 'Look what we've done.'*

#### **6.3.2. Focus on journeys**

This is another desired outcome which was not directly picked up, though Seaton's mural shows a journey through the town and the neighbouring countryside, and along the estuary and beach.

And the Lym river walk followed the river's journey to the sea, with the children interpreting this through music, dance and poetry.

*Strolling down the river bank  
Excited at the start of it all  
Grey rain, a dreary day,  
Going down to Lyme Bay – Hey!*

## **6.4. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

That young people learned, and enjoyed learning, comes across strongly in their work, and in their presentations and witness statements at the celebration event.

To identify the learning outcomes achieved through 'A River's Journey', all the feedback collected through the project was examined and analysed using the learning and evaluation framework '**Inspiring Learning for All**' ([www.inspiringlearning.org.uk](http://www.inspiringlearning.org.uk)) and its five generic learning outcomes (GLOs) focusing on the following learning areas:

- Knowledge & Understanding
- Skills
- Enjoyment/Creativity
- Attitudes & Values
- Behaviour & Progression

Feedback analysis shows that '**A River's Journey**' achieved learning across all five outcomes:

### **Knowledge & Understanding**

Young people learned about:

- Wildlife and habitats (including plants, animals, insects, fresh-water creatures, trees)
- Local countryside environments (including the river Lym, Seaton Marshes)
- The Jurassic Coast, particularly Beer, Lyme and Seaton beaches
- Different forms of art, including painting, collage, murals, willow weaving, sculpture, ceramics, pottery, writing, poetry, performance poetry, dance, music
- The history of the area, particularly on the inspiration day at Seaton
- Dorchester, Seaton and Lyme museums, Seaton library, Seaton Marshes – where they are, what they offer, how to make the most of them
- Land use
- For Axe Valley CC pupils – Southampton University campus

In feedback forms children reported that:

- they had learned something new  
*There are more than 25 different instruments*  
*A pigeon gives 5 coos like the points on a W*  
*The annoying fluffy things are called catkins*  
*There are fox holes*  
*Not all poems have a rhythm*  
*Leeches change size when they move*  
*Water spiders have eight legs*  
*Clay is very sticky; clay is challenging*  
*Pots are fired in a kiln*  
*Rivers can be dangerous*

- and they had learned something new about their locality

- There are lots of creatures in our area*  
*They are building a new TESCO*  
*I learned about the Umborne Brook*  
*...how quiet the countryside is*  
*Clay comes from the ground around us*  
*There are lots of badger sets in the glen*  
*There is a river going all the way from the village hall to the old water mill*  
*You can really smell garlic*

## **Skills**

Young people learned new skills in at least one, and often more, of the following activities:

- Collage
- Creating a mural
- Creating a mechanical model (The Fossil Box)
- Working with clay
- Working with plaster of paris
- Making clay pots
- Making and painting tiles
- Willow-weaving sculpture
- Drawing, painting; observational drawing
- Writing poetry & performance poetry
- Song writing
- Composing music
- Playing musical instruments
- Working with tools and materials
- Turning ideas into dance movements
- Pond-dipping
- Observation
- Listening
- Researching
- Computer programme use
- Map reading
- Putting together a display, presentation, performance
- Speaking/performing to an audience
- Social skills – relating and collaborating with peers and with adults

In their feedback forms they reported new skills:

*Writing a poem*

*How to write a proper cinquain*

*How to listen to nature and all the sounds around us*

*About feedback – that you talk to them back*

*I learned to play notes on instruments*

*How to echo back the music*

*How to use/control a net*

*How you get the water creatures into your net*

*How to recognise the water creatures*

*How to draw animals*

*How to use descriptive language in a rhyming poem*

*How to make a detailed plan for my pot*

## **Enjoyment/Creativity**

See section 6.1. for detail. Creativity was the main desired outcome for this project.

The children's feedback also showed much enjoyment:

*The children enjoyed making the tiles and were proud of the finished product*

*I enjoyed finding lots of leeches and sticklebacks*

*I enjoyed clay modelling because I had never done it before*

*Really fun and messy*

*I liked it when I finally got my pot upright and got it to work*

*I liked it when we all played an instrument*

*The walk was the best because it was fun*

### **Attitudes & Values: New understandings and new ways of seeing things**

Young people weren't asked specifically about this, except in relation to their local environment (see 6.2.2.above) but many of their other comments also showed their learning around attitudes and understanding, including in the following ways:

- Understanding that they all had a part to play in the finished product
- Appreciating animals' lives and habitats
- Exploring their local area and turning it into art
- Turning ideas into dance and 2D form
- For Axe Valley CC students: getting an idea of what it might be like to go to university

*I can write poetry when I thought I couldn't*

*Poems can be fun when you actually get into them*

*Those instruments were hard to play*

*I liked how much of a challenge building the clay was*

*Some children commented on having seen the river from a train track and now 'seeing it from a different perspective'*

*You can always learn something new if you're quiet*

### **Behaviour & Progression: new ways of doing things**

Teachers fed back on pupils' development in the following areas:

- Listening
- Working in groups, and in whole class
- Respect for wild-life
- How to consider and collect/return natural items
- (Axe Valley CC) – seeing them walk through the university, a wonderful campus, seeing the quality of the buildings, meeting a professor, having the guts to ask a question – embedding all this at quite an early age

And young people themselves gave these examples of changes in how they do things:

*How to be careful in public places and not be silly*

*Don't fall in the river!*

*It is not hard if you get your head down*



Students from Axminster Community College showing their work to primary school students at the project celebration event

## 7. 'A RIVER'S JOURNEY: WHAT IT ACHIEVED

### 7.1. OUTCOMES FOR MUSEUM, LIBRARY, & LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The library service and local museums were less embedded here than in previous IAP programmes. Only Seaton Museum had any involvement in the initial planning and working out of theme, content and desired outcomes.

Seaton Library and Lyme Museum were built into inspiration days, but the use of Seaton Museum was tangential. Axe Valley CC made good use of a visit to Dorchester Museum which worked well in their Jurassic Coast/dinosaur themed project.

As the Jurassic Coast Arts Programme (JCAP) gave funding support to '**A River's Journey**' they were involved in the planning, and offered support through the programme, particularly through linked organisations, so that there could be Jurassic Coast strands in the activity.

#### 7.1.1. Museums

Dorchester Museum: Following the opportunity to visit Southampton University and watch a cat scanner reveal the huge detail of a plesiosaur's jawbone, Axe Valley CC arranged a visit to Dorchester Museum to enable students to set the plesiosaur in context and get an understanding and perspective on the Jurassic Coast.

Lyme Regis Museum: The Museum provided a talk on fossils, as part of one of the inspiration days. *The children enjoyed finding out about dinosaurs.*

Seaton Museum: The storyteller at the Seaton inspiration day used Seaton Museum to research local history for stories to share with the children.

*I liked choosing which topics I could bring to life for the children in a fun, thought-provoking way, which increased insight into social history and their place.*

#### 7.1.2. Library

Seaton Library provided the setting for Sara's storytelling. The library manager there has given this feedback:

*We hosted workshops at Seaton Library, with storytelling, but it was quite self-contained. It was obvious the children were absorbed in the project, and there may have been some who hadn't been to libraries before, so at least they know where we are now.*

*The local schools do a lot of work on local topics, so we get a lot in for homework anyway.*

*We're certainly willing to provide space for future projects, but as with all local government at the moment we can't promise any staff time due to cuts.*

*We can exhibit limited amounts of work but need to know in advance to arrange space.*

#### 7.1.3. Seaton Marshes (see 6.2.3.)

As described earlier Seaton Marshes was a key venue in this programme, both for one of the inspiration days, and for activities with Kilmington, Membury, St Mary's, and Seaton schools.

Meg Knowles, Education Ranger with East Devon Rangers provided these activities. Below is her feedback:

*'Several schools came to the wetlands; it was very beneficial to get them visiting the site and learning what's available for them in the natural world, and what the wetlands can offer.*

*Their visits fitted well with their curriculum classwork, providing background, creative ideas and hands-on activity to reinforce science learning.*

*It gave them out-of-classroom time and space to be creative, and the opportunity to meet different adults/professionals, as role models – eg. real-life artist, and education ranger – and for boys the chance to meet male role models.*

*I was particularly impressed with how Axe Valley CC have developed their Jurassic Coast themed project.*

*Seaton school's Willow spirals will be on the marsh for ever.*

*For some of the artists working outside on the marshes with school children was a new experience. I was able to support them, including covering the health and safety aspects, and discussing with them in advance aspects of running the session.'*

#### **7.1.4. JCAP and linked Local organisations**

JCAP contributed funding to this programme in order to enable artists, communities, and project leaders to develop relationships with scientific experts to explore the science of the coast.

JCAP therefore fed into the initial planning sessions, describing the support and education opportunities JCAP could offer.

It also put the programme in touch with local organisations linked to JCAP – specifically Lyme Regis Museum (see above), Natural England, and the Beer Fine Foundation.

Natural England provided a walk on the Undercliff at Lyme, and Beer Fine Foundation a beach study session at the Beer/Seaton inspiration day.

However in the schools' individual activity only Axe Valley CC worked with the Jurassic Coast theme.

Some schools made reference to it and some – eg. Shute – already have annual JC activity built into their curriculum.

Overall this programme has set up with schools a basic awareness about the Jurassic Coast, especially around fossils and dinosaurs, and there is a need now to build on this.



Detail from a mural created by students from Seaton Primary during a workshop with artist Lucy Jackson

#### **7.2. OUTCOMES FOR ARTISTS & WRITERS**

The input of artists and writers to 'A River's Journey' was a vital dynamic in this programme, enabling both pupils and teachers to explore and experience their local environment in creative and imaginative ways, and then to express their learning and develop new skills through a range of artistic activities.

For the artists and writers too, this has been a learning experience – finding new ways to work with new environments and new partners.

*Storyteller: In a short hour I liked the fact that they had an enlivening, experiential experience that imaginatively awakened the place and people for them, and that they had some text and images to take back to school*

*Artist/Willow-weaving: The students...really enjoyed their day, and had a fulfilling experience of creating art in a completely new environment*

*Poet/workshop along the Umborne Brook: it worked very well indeed, lots of good work and illustration*

*Pupil: I loved walking on a nature walk with my friends, listening to the sounds, writing the poems*

## 8. WHAT NEXT?

### 8.1. Summary

As shown above 'A River's Journey' provided rich and new experiences to all taking part, including an enhanced appreciation of the local area and environment, physical and creative activity inspiring imaginative work and learning, the development of many new skills - and individual schools' projects feeding into a joint celebration event show-casing to the community the wealth of experiences in this learning journey.

### 8.2. For the future

There are particular factors to note, which affected impact in some cases, or which point to further refinement or development of similar projects in the future.

#### 8.2.1. Key project elements: Planning; INSET/Awareness; linking in to mainstream work; evaluation

**Planning:** Good time was allowed for planning and preparation, and for schools to come together to check out and agree desired outcomes so that at the centre of the project could be a sharing and ownership by all the schools taking part.

However it took the planning group a long time to pin down agreed outcomes for the programme and how the programme would work. One reason for this is that in several cases different school representatives came to meetings, resulting in lack of continuity and direction.

*The group was too fluid, there were different people at the meeting, no consistency  
There were far too many meetings beforehand which didn't achieve: the real planning was condensed into a very small space of time at the end of term  
I couldn't see where it was going in the initial planning*

This also meant that once a theme and outcomes were agreed, time was tight for putting together the programme.

This was further disadvantaged by the need to run the activity in the spring term which was already busy with preparation for SATs, and, for some schools, special arts activity which was already in place. *Some of the work for this project has had to be fitted in...*

**Linking to mainstream work:** A programme like this will achieve most if outcomes and themes are agreed and owned by participants, and not imposed. However it was suggested by some teachers that it would be helpful to have some elements set in advance, to give a shape/target to work with: eg. the age and number of children; a specific amount of funding for each school to manage. In fact it is likely that this approach would probably complicate rather than simplify – and schools might then divert further from any joint aims and outcomes.

Schools themselves need to identify how such a programme as this will support and enhance their mainstream work – and 'Inspiration Aspiration Partnership' is a flexible programme which can work across and feed into an enormous range of curriculum activity.

Once this is appreciated and built in, schools can plan thoroughly and with focus, and make the most of opportunities offered. Previous IAP programmes have shown that

the result of this is rich output and outcomes, and good potential for continuing and building on the IAP activity and the partnerships made.

***INSET/Awareness:*** This is an important element in a successful programme. This time round it was decided to run inspiration days which would serve to offer ideas for schools' activities and interpretation of the theme, build awareness of how the activities could actually work, and provide real and special experiences for pupils. In this programme these days worked fairly well – they were certainly great experiences in themselves and they did inspire further activity, particularly around Seaton Marshes.

There was some feedback that for some activities time was rushed as a lot was contained in the day – eg. the Beer/Seaton day. It was also felt that some activities were ones which teachers themselves could have done – eg. drawing on the beach, and the Undercliff walk. Most importantly, more planning in advance with schools, venue and artist agreeing aims for the day and making preparations together would have made the days even more useful and valuable.

*It was good knowing I was part of a fantastic day for the pupils, even if I had little idea what else was going on. (Storyteller)*

This same point goes for the planning for the individual schools' activities following on from the inspiration days.

***Evaluation:*** Probably because of the eventual tight time-scale not all the schools spent time with their pupils gathering feedback about what they had gained from the activities. Daisi provides simple forms for this which, completed, provide rich and pertinent comments – and a class session filling these in makes a valuable round-up session.

### **8.2.2. The value of partnerships**

In 'A River's Journey' several partnerships were initiated – with artists, writers, and cultural, environmental and academic organisations.

There is more building to do with some of these links, and in straitened times it is even more important to persevere with them despite any capacity difficulties – connection and joint working could sometimes help to address these difficulties. It is important now that schools not only continue these connections but that they do see the organisations as partners as well as a valuable service – this will strengthen the quality and sustainability of any activity done together.

### **8.2.3. Coordination**

The project was coordinated by Daisi, an organisation which brings professional artists and creative practitioners to work alongside young people. Daisi's vision is for artistic and cultural experience to be at the heart of young people's lives and learning. Daisi's experience of managing 'Inspiration Aspiration Partnership' (IAP), and wide knowledge of local artists and writers, contributed significantly to the success of '**A River's Journey: The Axe and its Tributaries**'. Daisi was also able to raise funding, using the experience and success of previous IAP activity.

For a project of this scale, involving a learning community of 13 schools, and with a strong developmental aspect (eg. making new partnerships, building professional skills) central coordination of some kind is a necessity. At the same time however, it is important to inspire a culture of initiative with schools. As a result of the project individual schools will now be able to link up with other organisations, writers, and artists, and fundraise for and set up similar activity independently for their schools.

*Daisi was very supportive* – several artists and teachers

### **8.2.4. Working with artists and writers**

### **See 8.2.1. above**

For a number of schools working with artists and writers in this way was a new experience. Their input was not a special, stand-alone event but integral to the project, encouraging young people to use the learning and sense of place experienced in their exploration of their local environment, in creative expression – and giving them the skills, tools, and confidence, to do this.

It is therefore important that schools appreciate this input – and that artists and writers are involved as early as possible in the project planning, especially in getting together with a school in advance of their visit and working out the activity so that it really meets the project aims, and involves as many young people as possible.

*It was great to have the involvement of artists with the children, firing their imagination to do new things*

### **9. Conclusion**

'A River's Journey' has enabled a host of learning journeys for everyone taking part in it – around new knowledge, new skills, new awareness of their locality, new ways of working together. The final celebration event and display demonstrated strongly both the children's experiences, learning and creativity, and the shared activity and focus across the learning community toward achieving their main aims: ***Creativity, and Joint working to a shared celebration***

*It was very very fun*

*You can get new big ideas by going on a walk*

*The world has more stuff in it than I thought it did*

*There is music in the glen*

### **APPENDICES**

- A.** Questionnaires used
- B.** Detail of feedback from Shute PS and St Mary's PS

**APPENDIX A**

**FEEDBACK FORM B**

**Name:**

**School:**

**Age:**

**What did you like best about the activity today?**

**Did you learn how to do anything new?**

**What was it?**

**Did you learn a new fact today?**

**What was it?**

**Did you find out anything new about the area where you live and go to school?**

**What do you think about the area where you live and go to school?**

## Appendix B

### Inspiration Aspiration Partnership: Axe Valley Learning Community with Daisi

Autumn Spring 2011

Your school name: Shute Community Primary School

**1. What outcomes was your school hoping to achieve as a result of your participation in the Axe Valley Learning Community's 'Inspiration, Aspiration, Partnership' programme?**

- a. For pupils: Inspiration for Literacy using their local environment, practical Geography and History experience, putting work on settlements and maps into practice; more experience working with clay.
- b. For teachers: As above!
- c. For the school: As above, both staff and children feed into the wider school community
- d. For the community: Involving community in arranging the trip and including some guidance for children and staff about farming land use.

**2. Do you think these outcomes have been achieved?**

**Please give detail for each outcome.**

- a) Children wrote poetry of a very high standard, the History and Geography work was put into context and all gained more experience working with clay.
- b) Staff gained teaching ideas which will be shared.
- c) Class inspired other classes with their poetry.
- e) Community, involved in facilitating trip, gaining access to land and thereby raising profile of school and forging links. Link forged with Axe Valley re firing pots.

**3. Activities with artists, museum, countryside, other:**

**please can you give a description of the activities your school took part in for this project?**

1) Aviva Halter-Hurn came and worked with Class 3 making clay containers, using coil technique.

2) James Crowden gave a poetry workshop involving a walk along a stretch of the Umborne Brook, on the spot group poetry writing followed by focussed writing in the classroom

3) Discussions on land use, safety and good countryside practice when accessing farmland: "Grass is a crop, not to be trampled, gates must be shut, if found shut etc"

**4. What follow-up activity took place in the classroom afterwards?**

Discussion of clay work skills, linked to History  
 Finishing of Poetry for display  
 History and Geography settlement work conclusions discussion...the trip came at the end of the work module and the follow up was a Plenary putting into context the landscape and settlements the children saw and have studied in the classroom.

**5. From your observations were any of the following learning outcomes achieved by your pupils ?**

**Please give reasons for your answers**

- **New knowledge** land use, descriptive language, local area knowledge, (many of our children do not live in the Shute area.)
- **New skills** Methods to gain inspiration for poetry, group poetry writing, coil pot method, greater understanding of how maps detail physical landscape.
- **New ideas/creativity** using environment to inspire; using senses, linking with visual and aural; not being restricted to cylindrical pots.
- **New ways of seeing things/understanding** We had access to a stretch of the Brook which is not on a footpath so although some of the children are local and walk on nearby footpaths all children were new to the fields we went on. Some children commented on having seen the river from the train track which runs above and seeing it from a 'different perspective' quote from 9 year old! Many discussed where the river was flowing in an imaginative way, especially as a pencil was dropped in...what stories will it write as it floats downstream?
- **New ways of doing things/behaviour** Enriched view of the area local to the school. Greater understanding of farming practice which benefits both their access to land and farming community

**6. Do you think this project has made a difference to community links, partnership and cohesion?**

**If Yes, please give your reasons and examples.**

Greater understanding of farming practice which benefits both their access to land and farming community

<b>7. What understanding and awareness around living on the Jurassic Coast do your pupils and school staff have as a result of this project?</b>
<b>8. What have you and your school gained from this project?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New knowledge about the community?</b></li> <li>• <b>New ideas for working?</b> Fresh teaching ideas to develop Literacy skills</li> <li>• <b>New partnerships?</b></li> <li>• <b>Other?</b></li> </ul>
<b>9. Does your school have plans for further IAP type activity and/or further working with IAP partners? If Yes, please give details.</b>
<b>10. Stories, comments, feedback from children/teachers/parents – we should like to gather as much qualitative information as possible. Please could you detail this here – or attach as separate document/s.</b>
Some children commented on having seen the river from the train track which runs above and seeing it from a 'different perspective' quote from 9 year old! Many discussed where the river was flowing in an imaginative way, especially as a pencil was dropped in...what stories will it write as it floats downstream? Please see poetry in exhibition.
<b>11. Please give any other comments you have about this project</b>
Thank You
<b>Please email this feedback sheet to Tricia Kings, Evaluator for Daisi IAP Axe Valley, at <a href="mailto:tk113@hotmail.com">tk113@hotmail.com</a></b>
<b>Many thanks for your time in completing this</b>

**Inspiration Aspiration Partnership:  
Axe Valley Learning Community with Daisi**

**Autumn Spring 2011**

Your school name: St. Mary's Catholic Primary School Axminster.
<b>1. What outcomes was your school hoping to achieve as a result of your participation in the Axe Valley Learning Community's 'Inspiration, Aspiration, Partnership' programme?</b>
<p>a. For pupils</p> <p>Some excellent activities to inspire some outstanding writing about the river life.</p> <p>b. For teachers</p> <p>Possible to gain some new skills shared by the various experts</p>

- c. For the school  
To shared the skills learnt through the activities
- d. For families
- e. For the community
- f. Other

**2. Do you think these outcomes have been achieved?  
Please give detail for each outcome.**

The activities were fun and engaging. I was felt that whilst the poet and storyteller was excellent, it did not quite fulfil the original brief.

**3. Activities with artists, museum, countryside, other: please can you give a description of the activities your school took part in for this project?**

A morning exploring Seaton Marshes, pond dipping in the nature reserve and sketching viewpoints on the landscape.

A day with an artist making large 3D willow Sculptures of the various creatures we had found whilst pond dipping.

A day workshop with a performance poet, writing creative poems about the creatures found on the marshes and river life.

**4. What follow-up activity took place in the classroom afterwards?**

We recounted what we did and learnt at Seaton Marshes. Detailed research and sketches of the creatures found in pond dipping exercise. We orally shared our experiences and photos from our trip with a younger class, who were studying a poem about marsh lands.

After our day making 3D willow sculptures, we spent some time decorating the models.

We redrafted material written in the performance poetry workshop and word processed this, ready for display.

**5. From your observations were any of the following learning outcomes achieved by your pupils ?  
Please give reasons for your answers**

- **New knowledge; of the Seaton marshes and creatures found in pond dipping. Also new understanding of the purpose of a nature reserve.**
- **New skills; how to pond dip successful, bend willow and fashion in to a**

sculpture.

- **New ideas/creativity; creativity blossomed in writing and sculpture activities as children used their imagination for shape and decoration in sculpture workshop. Furthermore, children were encouraged to be really imaginative and expressive with the vocabulary and ideas in their poem.**
- **New ways of seeing things/understanding; consider possible life under the surface of the pond.**
- **New ways of doing things/behaviour; use of willow as a material for sculpture. A new respect for wildlife perhaps?**

**6. Do you think this project has made a difference to community links, partnership and cohesion?**

**If Yes, please give your reasons and examples.**

Meeting with the other schools at the initial day at Weycroft was interesting and gave the children to socialise in other groups.

Other than working with the artists and experts, and the forthcoming celebration at Axe Valley, the project has been isolated in school.

I understand that the Celebration event is intended to be an opportunity to share our work with parents, friends and the wider community. We are looking forward to this.

**7. What understanding and awareness around living on the Jurassic Coast do your pupils and school staff have as a result of this project?**

Our project did not involve the Jurassic Coast. Instead we studying river Life and Seaton Marshes.

**8. What have you and your school gained from this project?**

Considered in previous responses.

- **New knowledge about the community?**
- **New ideas for working?**
- **New partnerships?**
- **Other?**

**9. Does your school have plans for further IAP type activity and/or further working with IAP partners?**

**If Yes, please give details.**

<b>Not at the moment.</b>
<b>10. Stories, comments, feedback from children/teachers/parents – we should like to gather as much qualitative information as possible. Please could you detail this here – or attach as separate document/s.</b>
<b>The activities were engaging and worthwhile. The children really enjoyed them and as a class teacher I learnt some new and interesting skills and knowledge from the experts. However, I must admit that the project has been fairly time consuming during an already extremely busy term. Perhaps an alternative would be to hold similar projects later in the year in the Summer term, when the work load of SATs and Easter preparations are out of the way.</b>
<b>11. Please give any other comments you have about this project</b>
<b>Please email this feedback sheet to Tricia Kings, Evaluator for Daisi IAP Axe Valley, at <a href="mailto:tk113@hotmail.com">tk113@hotmail.com</a></b>
<b>Many thanks for your time in completing this</b>