



Evanton Community Wood

Education Projects

Report detailing school programmes and outcomes

January – December 2013

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Evanton Community Wood

Introduction:

The following report reviews 6 education projects run by the Education Coordinator during 2013 in Evanton Wood. In all sessions teaching staff have been closely involved; in most sessions the coordinator has been assisted by a committee member and sometimes more than one. These projects comprise some 560 pupil visits during the course of the year. The education programme culminated in a special 2-day Forestry Demonstration event at the end of November, one of which was for schools – with some 200 pupils in attendance.

In addition Evanton Wood has played host to other self-led educational activities which have benefitted from some initial and occasional ongoing support. Weekly visits to the wood by the two nursery groups based in Evanton have amounted to over 1800 pupil visits.

2014 will see a continuation of support for educational groups wishing to visit and the number of group visits is expected to grow further. These will tie in with the various infrastructure development planned, in particular the cabin and the pond.

Support from the funders has allowed this programme to operate free of charge to the schools, although in one case the school was keen to make a contribution.

Table of contents:

1. **Park Primary** – John Muir project
2. **Dingwall Academy** – Pond development and team building
3. **Coulhill Primary** - Woodland Numeracy project
4. **Kiltearn Primary** - Banner project
5. **Kiltearn Primary** – John Muir ‘Discover’ Award, Pond project
6. **Alness Academy** – Practical management: Pond
7. **Self-led Education Groups: Kiltearn Nursery and Kiltearn Toddlers**
8. **Forestry Practice Demonstration Day**
9. **Supporting material** – Photographs

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1. Park Primary - John Muir Project

Dates of visits:	Each Friday Jan – March 2013
Time of visit:	12.30pm – 2.30pm
Number of pupils per visit:	23 (approx.)
Pupil year:	P6 & P7
Number of pupil visits:	113

1.1 Summary of project:

Park Primary visited Evanton Wood to undertake and number of activities aimed at '*meeting the community links*' and '*environmental task*' elements of the John Muir Award. Initial visits to the school allowed the development of a project plan which both teaching staff and pupils fed into. Activities focused on developing team building and practical and communication skills. Hand tools were used under instruction along with various Bushcraft resources to add diversity to the programme.

1.2 Outcomes:

Specific outcomes were identified during the planning stage, these were:

- To meet certain criteria of the John Muir Award (Discovery)
- To design and develop an outdoor learning area
- To promote team working through specific tasks and activities
- To meet specific experiences and outcomes (see below) identified by teaching staff
- To gain a broad understanding of the management of a community wood

1.3 Equipment and resources used:

To instil responsibility and to achieve the stated aims, the use of a number of hand tools was deemed necessary. Best practice for use was paramount and instruction was given by experienced trainers. Tool use was supervised at all stages with more challenging tools only being used when appropriate. No issues arose from tool use. The tools used were:

- Loppers (anvil and bypass)
- Saws (bow saws and forester saws – peg tooth)
- Fixed blade knives (under 1:1 supervision)
- Bushcraft equipment (various including shelter sheets, Kelly kettles and fire steels)

Evanton Community Wood

Each session included the boiling of water using a Kelly kettle for hot drinks (hot chocolate / tea etc), biscuits were also provided for each session. Each week a different team was allocated to manage the boiling of water and management of refreshments.

1.4 Experiences and Outcomes (E's & O's) achieved:

To ensure that the sessions also supported work being carried out in school certain E's and O's were identified at the planning stage then linked with woodland activities, these are:

- Eng 2 – 30a
- Scn 2 – 01a
- HWB 2 – 17a
- Lit 2 – 06a
- Soc 2 – 08a

For a breakdown of these E's and O's please visit:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howisthecurriculumorganised/experiencesandoutcomes/>

1.5 Review process:

A review was conducted after each session which pupils contributed to. All feedback forms showed a positive outcome for the activities, session planning and for the general experience of a woodland visit.

Leader feedback with teaching staff concluded that the sessions were well directed and relevant to the learning outcomes of the pupils. Team working within the group was particularly positive as many individuals who found socialising with one another in school more challenging showed improved social skills within the woodland setting.

1.6 Recommendations:

In discussion with supervising teachers it was felt that more benefits could have been gained if each session were longer however the time allocated was dictated by the lesson timetable.

Transport was an issue as there needed to be two runs by the minibus which meant that the group was staggered for the beginning and end of the session. This could be addressed in future by setting the first group the task of making tea...

Further feedback discussions raised the opportunity for EW leaders to offer additional training to teaching staff so that the activities run would not be new to the teaching staff, thus allowing them assist in the delivery of certain aspects.

"The team building element of the sessions proved very positive" – L.Bews, teacher

"I've really enjoyed my time in the woods, it was great" – P7 pupil

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2. Dingwall Academy – Pond development and team building

Dates of visits: Each Wednesday. Sept – Dec 2013

Time of visit: 10am – 12.30pm

Number of pupils per visit: 10 (average)

Pupil year: S4 – S5

Number of pupil visits: 93

2.1 Summary of programme:

Dingwall Academy visited Evanton Wood with a group having a wide range of academic abilities many of whom found class based learning challenging. The sessions were to offer outdoor experiences, practical environmental work and team building all of which was aimed at facilitating better communication skills, interdependence and to offer advice and guidance in working in the environmental field. Some of the pupils already had a background in working outdoors and were involved in the management of the school garden at Dingwall Academy.

2.2 Outcomes:

- To assist with the practical management of the woodland
- To assist with the design and development of the new pond area.
- To encourage team working through specific tasks.
- To engage in Bushcraft activities
- To gain an awareness of employment opportunities in the outdoor environment.

2.3 Equipment and Resources

As group numbers varied each session, equipment used was sometimes allocated between groups of individuals, this meant each having a specific time using individual tools. Due to the ability of the group we were able to achieve much in the time spent within the wood; this resulted in much clearing being done at the pond area.

- Loppers (anvil and bypass)
- Saws (bow saws and forester saws – peg tooth)
- High Pruning saw (under supervision)
- Fixed blade knives (under 1:1 supervision)
- Silky saws (under 1:1 supervision)
- Folding saws
- Bushcraft equipment (various including shelter sheets, Kelly kettles and fire steels)

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2.4 Review:

Susan Swallow, teacher at Dingwall Academy, was the point of contact. Ms Swallow is a L2 Forest school Leader and keen to integrate outdoor learning into the timetable of her pupils where applicable. Initial meetings led to the development of a programme plan for weekly visits over a 10 week period.

Simon visited the group at school to discuss the programme and to provide background to Evanton Wood and the overall management outcomes and how the group could be involved in these.

Initially the group took some time to engage with the planned activities which is some part was due to the alien nature of woodland management and practical elements for many within the group. This was soon overcome and each week the group played an active role in the work plan. Although the work was at times quite physical each and every one contributed positively (with a little encouragement). Due to the age and ability of the group much was achieved in terms of clearing the designated pond area.

The group was made up of individuals who attended different classes within school and many were not acquainted socially. As many of the tasks required a high degree of team working and communication within the group, all bonded well and supported each other – this was noted by the teaching staff present

The group also took part in bushcraft activities including *shelter building* and *fire lighting* both of which appealed to all within the group.

A verbal review with individuals within the group was conducted after each session, feedback forms were completed all of which showed a positive outcome for the activities and session planning. Teaching staff were met at Dingwall Academy to review the sessions late in December 2013. On the basis of the success of this first programme, the academy has requested an additional project in 2014 with a different group - pupils with special educational needs (S.E.N - all are part of the autistic unit at the school). Start date is January 2014.

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3. Coulhill Primary – Woodland Numeracy project.

Dates of visits: Each Wednesday. May – June 2013

Time of visit: 12.30pm – 2.30pm

Number of pupils per visit: 19 (average)

Pupil year: P5-7

Number of pupil visits: 97

3.1 Summary of programme.

In partnership with Highland Numeracy coordinator Julie Brewer, a programme of four sessions was planned to promote numeracy in the outdoors. Specific elements were drawn out of the numeracy curriculum then woodland activities were used to achieve the stated outcomes of each element. Coulhill Primary were asked to take part in the pilot and to provide feedback on its efficacy.

3.2 Outcomes:

- To demonstrate the diverse nature of woodlands for teaching.
- To provide skills sharing for local primary teachers
- To provide a unique and enjoyable numeracy lesson for pupils
- To support the ongoing development of Evanton Wood as an outdoor learning resource.

3.3 Equipment and resources:

Part of the initial development process for the programme focused on the need for schools to use minimal equipment and to take advantage of the natural resources within the wood. To this end very little equipment was used which allowed teaching staff to appreciate the wealth of materials available within the forest. This also allowed preparation time to be minimised in relation to production of supporting material.

For the two areas of numeracy that were taught (angles and degrees) the following resources were used:

- Compasses (x5)
- Pen and paper
- Pre made prompt cards (for angles)
- String
- Camera (for recording)
- Hot chocolate and biscuits.

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One website proved a great resource for supporting material and ideas; this was passed onto the teaching staff at Coulhill:

<http://creativestarning.blogspot.co.uk/>

3.4 Review

An Initial meeting with Julie highlighted the need to ensure that any pilot would meet specific outcomes of the numeracy curriculum. In addition to this it was also agreed that the programme should be accessible for all teaching staff, easily assimilated into work carried out in the classroom and be fun for the pupils.

It was also key that the woodland environment be promoted as a diverse resource that can support many forms of education and outdoor learning. Each session lasted 2hrs, longer than numeracy lessons within primary school and covered two specific topics, angles and degrees

Following on from the end of the session, the pupils were asked to complete a feedback form to assess how the session went overall, how much they enjoyed the session and how much they took away from the session. Pupils were also asked during the session to recall information and specific facts relating to what had been taught – all did this easily.

Teaching staff were also questioned as to the relevance of the session to both their classroom teaching and lesson planning. Each of the teaching staff were very positive as to the benefits of using the outdoors to support class based teaching and also of the simplicity in which the complicated aspects of the numeracy could be taught. Staff also commented on the attention span that all the pupils had during the session; they noted that this was greater than in class.

Finally, staff also discussed the possibility of other elements of the numeracy curriculum that could be supported by using the woodland environment – this will be followed up in spring 2014 when staff will be asked to produce another session plan to be delivered at Evanton Wood.

Evanton Community Wood

4. Kiltearn Primary – Autumn banner project

Dates of visits:	Thurs / Fri. Nov 12 - March 2013
Time of visit:	10am – 2pm (various times for each class)
Number of pupils per visit:	23 (average)
Pupil year:	P2 – P7
Number of pupil visits:	118

4.1 Summary of Project:

Funding was available to employ local artist Lizzie MacDougal to work with all the classes at Kiltearn Primary. The project was to focus on the autumn season within Evanton Wood and to develop a themed banner for display. The school visited the wood on numerous occasions to collect material to be used in the banner design.

4.2 Outcomes

- To produce a display banner highlighting the community ownership of the woods
- To produce a banner highlighting the flora and fauna found in Evanton Wood.
- To engage with as many pupils from Kiltearn primary as possible
- To provide a woodland visit to each pupil within the school year.
- To establish ongoing links with the Primary school to promote further use of the woods.

4.3 Equipment and resources

As artist Lizzie MacDougal was contracted to deliver the banner project with the education coordinator providing an overview and direction to the required aims and outputs, all the material and resources used were supplied by Lizzie. Visits to the wood to collect materials such as cones, leaves, thoughts and impressions were undertaken but these were natural resources / materials found on the forest floor.

4.4 Review

The education coordinator visited the school prior to the visits and spoke to each class to highlight the project. In total 118 pupils visited the wood over five visits, this gave many their first opportunity to visit the woodland. Each session was planned with the stated outcomes of engagement with the environment and to collect materials for the banner, each of these was met fully. Feedback from the pupils was very positive with the weather conditions (cold –very cold) being the only negative highlighted.

Lizzie paid a further five visits to the school to help design and complete the banner. These visits gave as many pupils as possible the chance to input into the banner and many did.

The banner was a great success and received coverage in the local papers and is now proudly on display at the *Cornerstone café* in Evanton.

Evanton Community Wood

5. Kiltearn Primary – John Muir Project (Pond area planning and development)

Dates of visits: Wed. April - June 2013

Time of visit: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Number of pupils per visit: 19 (average)

Pupil year: P7

Number of pupil visits: 118

5.1 Summary of project:

Teacher Jackie Robertson contacted the education coordinator to enquire about running a project to support a 'boy heavy' P7 class. As the pond project had recently been discussed it was felt this would be an ideal project for the group to contribute to. A programme plan was developed and this was then matched to the outcomes of the John Muir award (*Discover*) which the class was aiming to achieve.

Six visits were planned with associated practical activities. Key to the project was recording of the work undertaken. The class used fixed point photography and each session individuals were tasked with keeping a written record of the session. These were then taken back to class where a mural was produced for display in the school.

5.2 Outcomes:

- To meet the aims of the John Muir award (*Discover*)
- To involve pupils in the planning of an educational project
- To provide experience of practical woodland management tasks.
- To record each session using a number of different techniques.
- To enjoy each session in the woodland.

5.3 Equipment and resources:

As the group would be the first to start clearing the area, existing brush piles from previous chainsaw operations needed to be cleared first. Demonstrations were given on hand tool used which highlighted best practice. Once the initial brush was dragged and piled (off site) hand tools were then used, these were:

- Loppers (anvil and bypass)
- Saws (bow saws and forester saws – peg tooth)
- High Pruning saw (under supervision)
- Silky saws (under 1:1 supervision)
- Folding saws
- Lump hammer
- Bushcraft equipment (various including shelter sheets, Kelly kettles)
- PPE (gloves and goggles)
- Cameras; diary and pens

Evanton Community Wood

5.4 review

Verbal reviews were conducted during the session and at the end, further discussions on the programme were also conducted at school by the teaching staff. Diaries were kept to support the photography and these were then used for the mural produced back at school.

It was felt that due to the focused nature of the tasks provided the group worked well and seemingly enjoyed the project overall. Teaching staff commented on the team working aspects of the activities and on how involved the pupils were with the tasks.

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6. Alness Academy – Practical Management project (Pond development)

Dates of visits: Friday. May & Sept 2013

Time of visit: 9.30am – 1pm

Number of pupils per visit: 11 (average)

Pupil year: S5

Number of pupil visits: 22

6.1 Summary of programme:

Although only two sessions were run, these were to support class based work on environmental management. The group specifically requested practical management tasks that had achievable and identifiable outcomes. Work on the development of the new pond area was chosen as this was supporting the work previously undertaken by Kiltearn Primary.

6.2 Outcomes:

- To engage in practical conservation and woodland management work
- To highlight the need for volunteer support in managing a woodland environment
- To record work undertaken to assess impact by the group
- To discuss community management of the woodland
- To have an identifiable impact on the pond area through targeted work.

6.3 Equipment and resources:

As the session were all about practical management, tool instruction was given prior to the groups visit at school to maximise the time spent within the wood. Clearing the pond required the use of the following equipment:

- Loppers (anvil and bypass)
- Saws (bow saws and forester saws – peg tooth)
- High Pruning saw (under supervision)
- Folding saws
- PPE (gloves and glasses)
- Kelly kettles
- Cameras for recording

6.4 review:

A verbal review was conducted at the end of each session. Pupils noted that the work was physically hard but enjoyable. As a specific area of the pond was chosen for clearance, it was easily seen that the two sessions had a dramatic effect on the shape and appearance of the area. As the group completed all of the required work, additional areas were cleared above and beyond what was originally planned.



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For 2014 Alness Academy have requested further visits to the wood hopefully to continue with the pond development which is planned for late winter / early spring.

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7. Self – Led groups: Kiltearn and Evanton Nursery.

Summary:

In Early 2012 contact was made with both nursery groups in Evanton – the playgroup that meets in the Diamond Jubilee Hall and the Kiltearn School Nursery. Training in aspects of outdoor learning was offered to both groups. A training plan was developed and dates set for hands on, practical training within the wood. The training session was aimed at instilling confidence, breaking down perceived barriers and supporting the early year's curriculum.

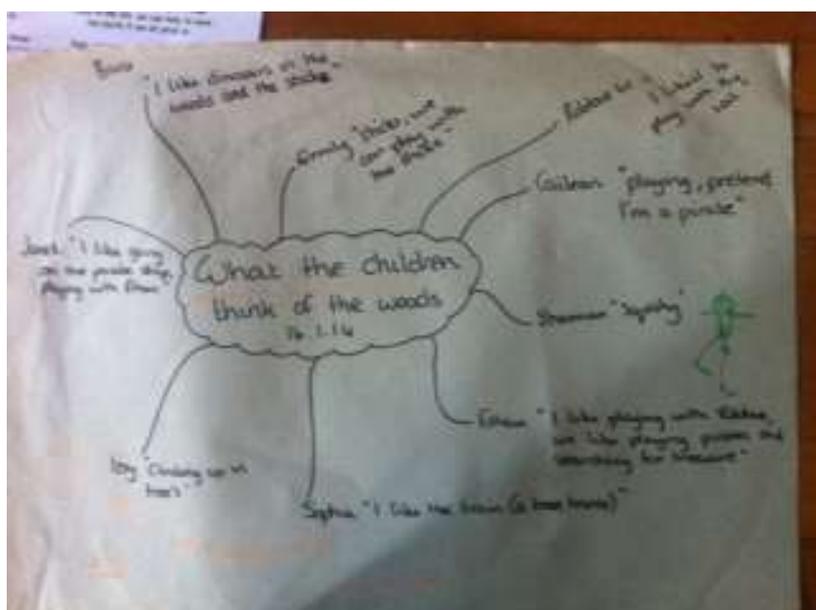
Prior to the delivery of the training, an area which has become known as 'The Dell' was cleared by volunteer work parties and log seating and a fire pit put in place by the Education coordinator and board members. The area is bounded by tracks on either side which makes for a contained, safe space within a natural setting.

The groups:

The Dell is used by each nursery group on one morning a week throughout the school year. They make use of brush and poles to make shelters and engage in their own exploration.

Evanton Nursery is managed by CALA (Caring and Learning Alliance) and provided early years schooling to young children in Evanton. Kiltearn Nursery is part of Kiltearn Primary and again provides early year's curriculum for Evanton children.

Both groups use the wood whatever the weather and have structured outdoor learning programmes for the young people. Feedback is done verbally following each session and notes are made to record their experiences and thoughts, an example of which can be seen below:



CALA also have uploaded a short video about the groups time in the woods, this can be seen here:

<http://calachildhoodpractice.com/2013/10/24/evanton-nursery-go-up-to-the-woods>

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8. Forestry Practice Demonstration Day (30th-31st November 2013)

Summary:

A two day event was organised to offer local schools and the wider community the opportunity to view various forestry practices and techniques within Evanton wood. Working with partner organisation *Forestry Commission Scotland* we were able to meet specific outcomes for community engagement and the promotion of the career opportunities within the forest sector.

The event:

As part of the on-going management of the wood and to support the development of a woodland cabin, timber was extracted from the wood by the traditional technique of using horses to pull logs. Visiting groups had the opportunity to meet the horse Tarzan and his handler Brian and discuss the ways in which the logs are hauled out by the horse under the control of its handler.

In addition to horse extraction, experienced chainsaw operators were onsite to fell specific trees to demonstrate felling techniques. The trees were chosen due to the need to remove them for safety reason with the timber will be used to clad the ongoing site cabin project. There was also a local wood carver Iain Chalmers who was demonstrating his art by producing sculptures designed and drawn by one of the local primary schools. Some pupils also took part in planting of native trees.

The visitors:

The event was split into two days, Friday – schools, Saturday – community.

3 local schools (the whole of Kiltearn Primary plus Nursery and selected pupils from Coulhill and Obsdale primaries) plus the Evanton Nursery visited the wood on the Friday, a total of some 203 children. The Saturday was an 'open' day whereby anyone wishing to visit could be guided around the wood viewing the various operations that were taking place. A total of 112 visitors attended from the community – including some young people from the previous day.

The event was very successful and demonstrated well that partnership working does yield success. There are additional days planned to bring back both the wood carver and tree fellers late in spring 2014.



Tarzan in action



Iain Chalmers – wood carver

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Deep in the woods youngsters find Tarzan pulling his weight

MORE than 150 local primary school children had a swinging good time in Evanton Wood on Friday when they went to watch Tarzan the tigger in action, extracting timber from the forest. The pupils were from Kilsbarn primary and nursery in Evanton, as well as Obisdale and Coullhill primaries in Alnwick. They were invited to the open day by the Evanton Community Wood Group,

which bought over the forest from the local estate in August 2012. The children were wide-eyed watching a big tree being felled, then seeing it pulled out of the wood by Tarzan, a Comorb brand of draft horse, handled by his owner, Brian Green from Rogart. The youngsters also helped to plant trees and were treated to a demonstration by champion chainsaw carver

Iain Chalmers from Culbovie. On Saturday it was the turn of the community to visit the wood, when over 100 folk turned out to see traditional timber extraction methods, plant trees and enjoy a walk in the 65-hectare forest. Children from (above) Kilsbarn primary and Coullhill primary enjoying their day in Evanton Wood. Photos: Andrew Smith Inghip No. 024129



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7. Supporting evidence – Photographic.



Fire lighting skills



woodland cookery course



Shelter building



woodland maths session



Team work in action



How many angles can you see?