

## PICTURE SPECIAL: SILK RIVER ART TRAIL

# Indian-themed art trail brings borough to life

A FANTASTIC festival celebrating the region's links to India has come to a colourful conclusion.

Silk River was created by Kinetika, the company responsible for the art installations that led the athletes' parade at the London 2012 Olympics.

The ten-day art trail along the Thames Estuary featured 20 colourful hand-painted Bengal silk scrolls which explore the unique relationship between London and Kolkata, India.

The scrolls also reveal the stories of those who live and work on the river and the connections they have with parallel communities living alongside the Hooghly in West Bengal.

The trail arrived in

Tilbury by ferry from Gravesend on Friday.

Participants heard stories from people of how it used to be in the town when tea arrived from India in chests, cargo was unloaded in wheelbarrows and rum came in barrels.

The flag bearers visited Tilbury Fort as well as taking in some of the town's most recognisable landmarks, including the power station.

The trail then moved to East Tilbury which is partnered with Batanagar, Kolkata, and was home to the Bata shoe company, set up by Czechoslovak industrialist Tomas Bata.

Ali Pretty, Kinetika's Artistic Director said: "It was my first visit to India

in 1984 that inspired me to work in the arts, using them as a tool for social change and community development.

"Silk River will build on my experience over the last 30 years, bringing together communities from the UK and India for a meaningful exchange of stories and ideas.

"By sharing and celebrating the similar histories and narratives between the River Thames and India's Hooghly River; the Silk River Project hoped to encourage the celebration of rich local history, and engage the community along the journey of rediscovery."

The art trail ended in Southend on Saturday after making its way through Leigh.



■ Travels - on the march through Tilbury

Photos: Mike Johnstone



■ Education - school students take part in the art trail through Tilbury and learn about India



■ March on - the flag bearers arrive in Tilbury to continue the art trail



■ Historic - flag bearers assemble at Tilbury Fort



■ Learning - a representative from the Bata Heritage Centre speaks to kids