

Strathalbyn Rug Exhibition Oct. 2008



Inside the Barn - Sat 11th Oct

The weekend of October 11th & 12th saw a collection of some 140 rugs, hooked, prodded and punch needled in many varied styles, by women from all parts of Australia.

The venue was a converted stone barn amongst a collection of historic farm buildings on the outskirts of Strathalbyn Township. The warm sunny weather allowed for demonstrations of rug making to take place on the lawn outside the barn.

A collection of antique rugs was also displayed outdoors and afternoon tea was available in a marquee set up on a grassy area between the barn and the old fieldstone kitchen and dining room.

We were fortunate to have Miriam Miller bid everyone welcome and open the Exhibition – that was prior to the arrival of Mrs Nicky Downer who was scheduled to do the official opening. There was a little bit of a mix-up there in times – which created much hilarity, with Mrs Downer taking it in stride and being a “good sport” about the whole thing and proceeding with her planned opening address.



Mrs Nicky Downer and Judy Ingram, after the official opening

Over an un-seasonally warm weekend, 240 visitors came to enjoy not only the viewing of the rugs, but also entertainment provided by the local Community choir and the Swing Band. Because of the fantastic response during the weekend, it was decided that future exhibitions will need to be held in a larger venue.



Miriam Miller and Maggie Lucas working on a knitted proggy mat

Apart from the rug hooking taking place outside, Miriam spent time demonstrating the knitted proggy mats featured in her book “Hooky & Proggy Rugs” – they were a big hit as many tried their hand and I’m sure there will soon be knitted proggy mats appearing in bathrooms all around Australia.



Joyce Emery and below two of her rugs

We were surprised on Saturday afternoon by the arrival of Joyce Emery. Joyce started rug hooking in the early 60's and was taught in the traditional North American style by a lady from Canada who had migrated to Australia. When she heard about the Exhibition Joyce rounded up, from family and friends, a dozen or so of her rugs she had given them, loaded up her car and drove down from her home a couple of hours north of Adelaide – she says she has made over 50 rugs and wall hangings.



It was interesting to hear the conversations regarding the different styles of rugs in the exhibit. Some were amazed that Joyce's rugs had been used on the floor for over 30 years and still looked so good. I was surprised to overhear a group of young women who were more impressed with the proggy(proddy) rag rugs – they said the fine shaded tight loop hooked rugs looked like they would have been purchased from a carpet shop and they preferred the handmade art/craft appearance of the proggy(proddy) rugs. After hearing so much about “my grandmother doing that” I thought the young ones might have been turned off the rag rug look but that didn't seem to be the case.



The trading table (pictured on the right above) held a selection of rug making items for sale, kits, hooks, Miriam's book and a selection of hooked bags and a basket of hooked flower brooches. Outside another table was set with a variety of lap frames on display, some imported from the USA and others being made here in Strathalbyn. These Strathalbyn lap frames come with and without gripper strips. They can be tilted up to enable the back of the rug to be viewed, they also turn 360 degrees on the base and come apart and pack flat for travelling.

The picture to the right is a wall hanging by Judith Brook. Many pictures were taken over the weekend – I believe a DVD with photos of all the exhibits is being compiled and will be available for \$10



With all the interstate rug makers gathered together for the first time, the opportunity was taken to hold a meeting and form an Australian Guild. The meeting was spirited and productive.



Carolyn Healeas
(pictured here at
the Exhibition)
is our Treasurer.



Marion Nefiodovas from South Australia –
winner of the Raffle, with the Rainbow Rug



Judith Brook (left) travelled from her home in Kingaroy, Queensland to spend the weekend with us. Judith comes originally from New Zealand and carries on the rug making tradition of her mother and grandmother. Judith is an avid rug maker, who sells her rugs and teaches all forms of rug making.

Now we are discovering there are more rugcrafters out there than we had thought – their names just keep popping up.

Since the Exhibition I have heard from the leader of a rug hooking group in Tasmania and another two ladies in country WA and

Miriam continues to receive from her Canadian friends the names of Aussies visiting Canada who are learning to hook or looking for hooking teachers when they return home.

The camaraderie and warmth generated by this event indicates that the future of rug making in Australia is looking good. We look forward to more of these exciting developments.

Late Sunday afternoon –

Three tired people getting ready to dismantle the exhibition.
Luckily not on our own !

A big “Thank you” from we three goes out to all the helpers, you know who you are.

Members of the new Board:
(Right to left)
Miriam Miller, President
Jo Franco, Secretary/Editor
Judy Ingram, V.President

