

ONCE UPON A TIME, BETH BRAIDED A RUG...



photo by Claire Hess

Beth Bolster having a great time at the 2011 "Braid-In"

Beth Bolster has always been widely involved in crafts of all sorts, and among others she got interested in rug braiding. She started on her own, learning from books and just generally winging it, but when the opportunity arose in 2007 to go to a Rug Braiders' weekend at Gig Harbor in Washington State, she leapt at the chance. (She had childhood memories of fishing from the pier there, but that's another story!) She hoped to learn how to do it "properly" - and she certainly did. Her home now displays several large and lovely braided rugs.

But while she was at Gig Harbor, several of the other women noticed her name badge, and the fact that she was from Thetis. Of course, they had never heard of it, so they asked, and Beth waxed enthusiastic. Her



photo by Claire Hess

Diane Tobias shows an example of mixed hooking and braiding

listeners caught her enthusiasm and started to lobby for having a braiding weekend here next time. Beth thought of Capernwray, who had an available time slot for their big room, and the first Thetis Island Braid-In was born in the Spring of 2008. It was attended from the start by a number of very experienced crafters from both the US and Canada who were very generous with sharing their skills, which greatly enriched the experience and gave it impetus to continue.

The next year, Beth got Jane LeBaron interested, but only if she could come as a rug hooker, that being her particular interest. So the expansion started. Several of the crafters experimented with mixing hooking and braiding in rugs and other pieces. A couple of the American crafters were working on a book of examples and techniques using both braiding and hooking, and used one of Jane's pieces as illustration.

Since then there have been lots of hooking projects going on as well as the braiding. But that's not all - Molly Kelly and Mary Forbes have both come and demonstrated some of their art work, and one year several people attended a concurrent event - wood-



photo by Claire Hess



photo by Jane LeBaron

Above right: Jane LeBaron and the Dyeing workshop.

Directly above: a selection of braided and hooked pieces from the 2011 weekend.

Left: Jane's hooked tea cozy which inspired 2012's "Tea Cozy Challenge"!



photo by Jane LeBaron

carving - which was being taught by the husband of one of the braiders. Mary Forbes' work involves hand-dyed raw wool. Dyeing? That sounded interesting - so Jane LeBaron offered her kitchen for an impromptu dyeing workshop. This is the great thing about these crafting weekends - ideas are constantly expanding and finding new expressions.

This year the Braiders and Hookers and ... will be meeting again, **April 13th to 16th**. If you think you would like to join us, get in touch with Claire (246-9445), Jane (516-5710) or Veronica (246-1509) - we haven't reached our limit yet. This year we will be meeting at Overbury. Capernwray was a wonderful host for those first four years, but we were outgrowing the space, and after 2008 Capernwray too was having more demands on its available space, and couldn't offer us the larger room anymore. So we will be at the Pavilion at Overbury, and most of the off-islanders (as well as some islanders) will be staying there as well. It promises to be another wonderful, creative, happy, friendly time.

All islanders are more than welcome to drop by any time to see what we are doing, and especially there will be an "Open House" on Monday April 16th (watch espokes for the time - the details haven't been decided yet.) There will be wonderful examples of both braiding and hooking, you can watch people doing their projects, and if the past is any guide, there will be other fibre arts and crafts as well. You'll be very welcome!

This article was reproduced with permission from the Spring 2012 issue of the Thetis Island Quarterly. The images on the home page of this website (www.thetisland.net/woolgathering/) came from the 4 day retreat in April, 2012. It was at this event that we decided to change the name from "Braid-in" to "Woolgathering", to include in the name some of the wider range of wool-based arts that were represented there. The next scheduled Woolgathering will be April 12 - 16, 2013.