



CHILTERN

OPEN AIR

MUSEUM

*Where buildings come
alive through history*

Rag rug making

Location:

- Thame Vicarage Room.

Practical Notes:

- Rag Rug Making is an indoor activity.
- There are photo opportunities throughout these activities.

Purpose and content of the activity session:

- During this session your group members will see and compare several types of rag rugs, concentrating on the most common type of rag rug.
- The Museum teacher will touch upon the use of materials (suitable and non-suitable, warp and weft and open weave).
- They will discover why people used to and still do make them.
- The group members will be told a brief history of such rugs and their importance in history, with particular reference to the Vicarage Room, the Prefab and the Toll House at the Museum.
- After a brief demonstration by the Museum teacher of the simple technique required, the group will be given the items needed to make a sample piece.
- The rag rug made by members of your group can be taken home or back to school as a keepsake.

The explanation will vary in emphasis having regard to the age, ability and current or recent schoolwork (e.g. Houses and homes or Materials) or interest if known beforehand.

Access Statement:

Thame Vicarage Room: Fully Accessible to all users.

Rag rug making:

- Some dyspraxic and CP children have motor control problems that may reflect in the finished result, but this activity is accessible to all.
- Hypoallergenic gloves are available if required.
- The prodders used are quite wide for ease of holding for all children but have a pointed end. Supervision by group leaders and adult helpers is therefore required, especially for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Rag Rug Making – Historical Background

Ragwork is a traditional craft that is creative and economically and environmentally friendly. There are six different techniques – hooking,

prodding, plaiting, knitting, crocheting and wrapping. Here are instructions for trying two simple techniques, prodding and plaiting.

Different patterns, colours and materials can be used with these techniques.

Prodding

Traditionally wool clippings from old worn clothing and blankets were used to make these rugs. Names include clippy rugs, rag rugs or memory rugs.

You will need:

- A piece of Hessian cut to the required size allowing 5cm for hemming (optional 2nd piece for backing).
- Fabric strips of old clothing, curtains etc. with fastening and seams cut off.
- A prodder (a blunt ended wooden tool, for example a blunt pencil).
- Needle and thread for hemming.

Method:

- Prepare the fabric strips by cutting them into 'clippings' approximately 7 x 1½cm.
- Cut a piece of Hessian to the shape and size you want.
- Mark out the pattern using a marker pen.
- Working from the underside make a hole with the prodder and taking a clipping, prod it ½ way through.
- Make another hole 1cm or 4/5 warp threads away and prod the other end of the clipping through this hole.
- Using your other hand on the right side, pull both ends until they are of even length.
- Continue by prodding the next clipping through in the same way as the first.
- When you have completed one row begin another about 1cm or 4/5 warp threads from the first row.

- When you have completed the rug you can turn in the edges and hem them securely (a backing can be stitched to the rug if desired).

Plaiting to make a circular or oval rug.

You will need:

- Fabric.
- Scissors, needle and thread.
- Safety pins and a hook

Method:

- Prepare the fabric into strips approximately 1m x 5cm/
- Fasten the ends of three strips together with a safety pin and hang the pin over a hook screwed into a flat surface about eye level.
- Start plaiting near the safety pin and continue until approximately 8cm of fabric is left unplaited.
- Secure the loose ends with a pin.
- Unhook the plait and remove the safety pin, stitching the ends together into a tapered shape.
- Using the tapered point as the centre start winding the plait around it in a spiral. Stitch through the plaits to attach the fabric firmly together.
- When you get near the end of the plait add more strips by sewing them to the ends of the previous ones and continue plaiting. As plaits are completed sew them to the growing rug. From now on it may be easier to lay the growing rug flat to plait.
- Continue until you have a rug the size you wish and secure the ends of the last plait, adding a backing if required.