



# Ebor Ruggers

[www.eborruggers.com](http://www.eborruggers.com)

December 2013

## MEETING NEWS

**7<sup>th</sup> December** Christmas celebrations - a bring-and-share Yuletide feast. Please bring a plate of either sweet or savoury goodies to share with everyone. Father Christmas will be arriving early this year especially for Ebor Ruggers and has promised to leave us all a gift, so come and join the festive fun! Usual meeting time ie from 12.30 onwards.

**4<sup>th</sup> January 2014** Working meeting. Bring along any unwanted Christmas presents for our January "super-affle".



Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!

## Not to be missed...

If you feel like a break from the hurly-burly of Christmas preparations there are two major arts events in our area currently underway:

The first, entitled "Art and Life" at Leeds Art Gallery, is an international exhibition of the work of Ben and Winifred Nicholson, two of the UK's most important and influential 20<sup>th</sup> century painters.

The Nicholsons moved to Cumbria in 1923 and became fascinated by the rag rugs they saw in local farmhouses. Through a company called Foursquare Design set up by her son Jake, Winifred had her own designs made up by local men and women and also encouraged them to design and make their own hooky rugs. The company sold several hundred of these rugs up until the mid-1970s and the craft, which had increasingly declined, attracted new interest.

Thanks partly to enthusiasts such as Winifred Nicholson, our craft saw a resurgence of popularity in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ragrug making became viewed as an arts and crafts medium to be appreciated and celebrated, and groups like Ebor Ruggers were established and thrived.

Sadly there are no rag rugs on display in Leeds, but "Art and Life" will run there until 12<sup>th</sup> January 2014 when it transfers to Cambridge and then to London.

Read more here: [Art and Life exhibition](#)

Meanwhile at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park the exhibition "A Natural Line" features the work of Angie Lewin. This artist is celebrated for her striking prints of skeletal plant forms set against the sky, and for this solo exhibition has taken her inspiration from the Sculpture Park's 550 acre landscape to create a series of series of new prints and watercolours. The exhibition is on until 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

Find out more here [Angie Lewin exhibition](#)

While browsing through some Christmassy rugging images for the newsletter I came across a website with pictures from an exhibition called "Glad Rags" which was held in Pontefract in 2006 by West Yorkshire Ruggers and West Yorkshire Rug Makers. Perhaps some of our members attended this?

There are three "galleries" full of beautiful rugs and I recommend taking a look at these inspiring images.

One of my favourites is "The Twelve Days of Christmas" by Margaret Kenny - simply stunning!

Take a look: [Glad Rags exhibition](#)

Are you making a new rug for Christmas? It was traditionally the time when a new rug would be proudly placed in front of the hearth. Often one would be made for other times of celebration such as Easter or a wedding.

Recently I read about someone who made a beautiful hooked rug with images of her and her husband for their golden wedding anniversary. She confessed that afterwards when she was angry with him she would go and jump up and down on his (hooky) head! This gives a whole new perspective on the benefits of rugmaking...

## POETRY CORNER

As I sat stripping, stripping away,  
Making my carpet of rags, to-day,  
Shredding up garments all worn and old,  
Which once had sheltered from heat and cold  
The loves of the household, - in bygone time  
When they were new, and in their prime, -  
My thoughts were away with those vanished years,  
Their loves and their labours, their hopes and fears.

I touched not a garment but brought to mind  
Some pleasure, or pain, long left behind...

*Frances Dana Gage, Rag-carpet Rhymes, 1867*



## FOR SALE

Would you like to use a wooden frame in your rugging like the one shown in the picture above? Ebor Ruggers has been contacted by someone who has a freestanding (no supports included) wooden frame for sale. It was handmade especially for them several years ago and has never been used. The frame is made from pine, has all the fittings, and the dimensions are 48" x 32" (122cm x 80cm).

The seller is looking for offers in the region of £30 and can deliver. Please contact me for further details at the email address shown at the end of this newsletter or on 01904 612401.

## Not all pillaging and looting...

Rugging theorists (yes, there are some!) have suggested that the method of pulling up a loop through a base material to form a thick fabric was used as long ago as 2000BC in Ancient Egypt. Traces of cloth made in the same way have been found in Danish Bronze Age graves. The Vikings used a form of loop in some of their textiles, and this has led to the theory that they introduced the technique to the British Isles.

Ann Macbeth, head of needlework at the Glasgow School of Art before the First World War, lived in Patterdale in the 1920s at about the same time as the Nicholsons were in Cumbria (see first page) and she too became interested in the history of the many colourful rag rugs she saw in the cottages and farmhouses of her neighbours. She compared the scroll motifs commonly found on the rugs with those carved on old wooden furniture in the Lakes. The area was heavily settled by Scandinavians during the 8th and 9th centuries AD and she suggested that the designs used on this early furniture had their origins with these settlers.

She also knew of the ancient Scandinavian 'rya' rug making tradition where loops of wool were pulled through a woven backing, a craft which is still practised there today. She stated that the word comes from the Anglo-Saxon *rȳhe* - torn cloth, or in other words, rags. Ann Macbeth concluded that it was probably Scandinavian settlers who brought the rug making technique and motifs to Scotland and the north-west of England, perhaps via the Orkneys and Shetlands, islands which belonged to Norway until the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively.

## FOR SALE PART 2

There are several whole blankets in our cupboard at Dunnington Reading Rooms and Angela Gray also has 6 blankets looking for new homes. One is tangerine, four are white and one is white with coloured stripes at the edge. For sale at the bargain price of £3 each, the revenue to be donated to club funds.

## *"Rag Knitting" in Yorkshire, described in a magazine from 1865*

Supposing an old alpaca or mohair skirt to be the first thing to hand, it should be torn into strips. These strips are to be joined together slightly by needle and thread till a good length is obtained, said length to be folded down the centre...and the knitting commenced, the doubled strip of alpaca being used on the needles, precisely as a ply of wool or cotton would be. ..It is best to knit it in strips of the required length for carpet or cover...and join them together afterwards.

*Now where did I put that old alpaca skirt....?*

Newsletter editor: Anne Bush

[purplelupin@ymail.com](mailto:purplelupin@ymail.com)

01904 612401