

Craftswomen gather to celebrate their art

By Tracy Little

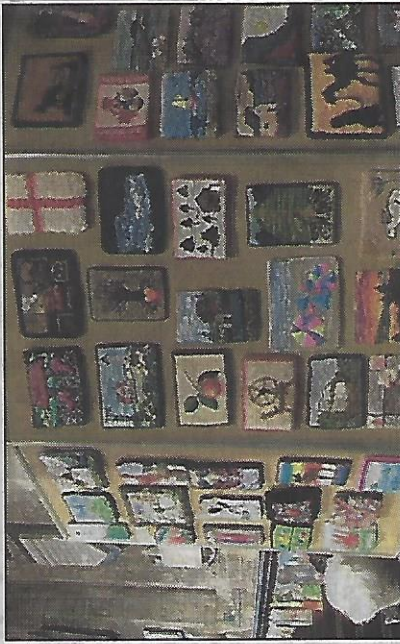
News Correspondent

LAST month Reeth and neighbouring Swaledale villages hosted a unique gathering of craftswomen from around the world.

For the past three years local resident Heather Ritchie has been president of TIGHR (The International Guild of Handhooking Rugmakers) and her times in office concluded with the triennial international convention. Rather than opting for an anonymous inner city conference centre or hotel, Heather and her team of helpers chose to bring the convention to the heart of the Yorkshire dales, building on the theme of 'back to your roots'.

One hundred and fifty delegates from the UK, Australia, USA, Canada, Japan and Dubai came together to enjoy four days of workshops and lectures as well as exhibitions of work and trips out to local places of interest, culminating in their AGM in the banqueting hall of Bolton Castle, with many staying on for additional classes and events after the main conference had ended.

Keen to involve the whole community Heather arranged for the delegates to use the Buck Hotel as their base while holding events in venues all



Each delegate brought with them a small handhooked mat with a message on the back to exchange with others



Some of the international delegates

warmth of the welcome they found in the dales. The hospitality was outstanding with many businesses and individuals going out of their way to make sure everything ran smoothly and that the visitors felt at home. From local pubs to the craft group and the planning team everyone went the extra mile to make the convention such a memorable occasion."

over the village and beyond, ranging from the local church to the ice cream parlour, using every hall available as well as several local craft businesses and the Swaledale Museum. As well as classes in different types of traditional rug making and other crafts, there were plenty of other activities arranged to help the visitors, some accompanied by their partners, to enjoy the area – a trip to Bearmish was a great success, as well as walking and cycling excursions, photography sessions, an astronomy evening and a visit to Tan Hill in the teeth of a howling gale.

Alongside the convention two exhibitions of work were running in the Buck and at St Andrew's church, Grinton, the latter attracting over 1000 visitors in three days and raising more than £2,600 in donations, to be divided between the church and Heather's charity Rug Aid c/c.

Local schoolchildren were also involved, enjoying rug making lessons with local textile artist Kathryn Guy. They were taught the history of 'hooky' and 'proddy' rugmaking in the dales and all created their own pieces of artwork to hang in the exhibition.

At the end of an exhausting but thrilling week Heather said: "The delegates were blown away by the unexpected



Hooked angels decorating the pews