



moment is great, but we are just getting too big. It's too many children, and I am struggling to find a venue that will allow me to be there permanently. I'd like to see a place that the children can call their own. It's not just about me and the dancing, it's about the kids. You could have music lessons there, you could have karate, you can have anything you can imagine. A dedicated space with the right flooring, mirrors, storage, music system — just for the kids. That's what I dream, that's my dream, my goal in life.



ABOVE: BRONTE, PIPPI AND MOLLY. BELOW: THE POPPY FIELD AND MICE SCENE FROM GROOVE ON DOWN THE ROAD.



on for them, and I think it's important to keep them active and out of trouble.

It's mostly girls but I am getting more boys. The boys come and go, they don't stay around as long as the girls. I've got about 12 boys at the moment who've been with me from the start. They are into their break-dancing thing and, yes, they will be messing around in the back when I am teaching, and I'll go, "excuse me boys, can you please show me what we have just been doing?" And they will do it, the little beggars. So even though they look like they are not listening, they are actually really clued on.

They are really dedicated these boys I have at the moment. I do try and cater for the boys a lot, with the break-dancing stuff, because they all want to be like Justice Crew, an Australian dance crew who have now turned into pop stars as well. They were on 'Australia's got talent' and that's what all the young boys want to dance like, because they are the cool thing at the moment.

I'd like to have a permanent headquarters. My dream is to have somewhere that is big enough for us to hold permanent classes. A place where we don't have to pack everything away every week. If we could leave it out, it could be used for other activities for children, and adults, as well. Like a building that is big enough for everyone to use, and everyone to benefit from. I mean, where we are at the

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LIS NILSSON, PAT GRANT AND GUDRUN JENEÈ COMPARING KNITTING TECHNIQUES.

## Friends with fibre

Maggie Hickey tells a story about the pleasures of just sitting around spinning a yarn or two.

**B**raidwood boasts an array of clubs and special interest groups. Some, like the Show Society, BRAG, SES and most of the sporting organizations feature often in the local news via the *Braidwood Times* and the Community Radio. But what about those unofficial groups — the book clubs, walkers, discussion groups and others you don't hear so much about. Drill down a bit and you'll find there's a whole lot going on under the radar.

Once a month in sleepy Mongarlowe, craftswomen from the local area and beyond gather at the home of Sandra von Sneidern. They start arriving early and by midday Sandra's house is full of enthusiastic fibre workers. They bring their latest woven pieces, spinning, embroidery, rugs and knitting to show off and to work on. Between them are years of experience in textile arts and crafts and there are few problems they can't resolve between them. Over a delicious shared lunch they sort out the problems of the world. It's a shame they are not in charge!

This group started back in the early nineties by which time acclaimed weaver, Solvig Bass Becking had

moved from Canberra to Mongarlowe. Originally trained as a production weaver at Ekeby on the Norwegian border, Solvig became highly skilled and knowledgeable in all aspects of weaving and design. She emigrated from her native Holland to Australia in 1974, settling in Canberra with her husband and bringing up her three children there. For over 40 years, she pursued an active art practice, weaving, teaching and mentoring. She was one of the founding members and later President of Crafts ACT and was on the Board of the Australia Council Crafts Board for five years.

Sandra von Sneidern and Solvig first met in 1988. They were both weavers and came from countries steeped in the tradition of professionally produced textile crafts, Solvig from Holland and Sandra from Sweden. They clicked immediately. Solvig subsequently sold a portion of her Mongarlowe property to Sandra to build a home there.

Solvig's reputation was as an excellent teacher who brought her ethical views and philosophy to bear on her art practice. People in the Braidwood area were keen to learn from her so Solvig

began giving workshops at her home. These were highly enjoyable sessions and it was decided to form a weaving group, meeting regularly. Some of the early participants included local residents Sandra Hand, Jenny Tozer and Jo Gordon. They would bring along their looms and textiles and share lunch and their ideas. Jenny told me of the fun they all had along with learning from a leader in her field. Solvig was a perfectionist and brought a professional approach that was appreciated greatly by her students — but she was also a great companion and friend.

By 2005 it became difficult for Solvig to host the group at her house so the monthly meetings moved to Sandra's — first in her original home and more recently, to her new, smaller house on the same property.

There was less space at Sandra's than at Solvig's so people no longer brought their table looms with them but smaller projects — knitting, spinning and latterly, rag rugging. Sandra's new home is even smaller but she has managed to accommodate her large floor loom and despite a tight squeeze, everyone finds a comfortable spot to sit. The camaraderie, the sharing of skills and the enjoyment in good company continues to this day.

Jocelyn Sussman who was one of Solvig's original Braidwood students, moved some years ago to Bawley Point on the coast but she continues to travel to Mongarlowe each month to join the group. It's a similar story with a long time member who comes from Goulburn. One or two come along from Canberra nearly every month. Most months, around a dozen women attend.

Eventually Solvig had to give up her Mongarlowe home due to failing health. She was first in Narbethong before being moved to Canberra where she died in 2011.

These days, along with many of the original band of fibre workers, there are new members who never knew Solvig but her memory is kept very much alive. Few are the meetings when her name does not come up. She left a legacy for those of us involved today to enjoy. We don't keep minutes and have no rules except, "bring something to share for lunch, your latest craft project and stories and news to share". Sandra sends around an email to remind us when the next session is to take place. That's as formal as it gets.

Marvellous! Thank you Sandra for hosting it all these years. Long may it and all the other informal interest groups around our region, endure.