

FLOORING

From medieval times, rushes and rush matting was the stalwart for country floors, bringing warmth to hard brick, tiles or stone. The Norfolk Broads has been the centre of a revival in rush-weaving since the Second World War and, at The Waveney Rush Industry, six weavers start each morning by putting enough rushes for their day's work to soak for an hour in cold water. Christine Crisp, whose mother was also a rush weaver, describes the process which has changed little in 500 years: 'Each weaver



stands at her station (above) and works a nine-strand braid, inserting new rushes as she works, taking care to keep the braid a consistent 3in wide. The lengths of braid are cut to size and sewn together with hemp yarn to the width required. Then all cut edges are bound with a fine plaited binding worked from the thinnest rushes from each.'

The matting has its own maintenance requirements as

Christine explains: 'It can be vacuumed with a gentle nozzle and spills can be washed off with warm soapy water, the matting must be sprayed with a fine misting of water every four to six weeks to keep it supple and retain its colour.'

■ *Rush matting is made to order in the size required, £149.21 a sq m, Waveney Rush Industry, 01502 538777, www.waveneyrush.co.uk*

