
DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD
NEWSLETTER NUMBER 3

PROGRESS REPORT

Your Steering Committee met on 3 March and discussion centred on formation of sub-committees. A meeting point was arranged for those who had offered to serve on the Newsletter and the Programme sub-committees. The rest of the discussion was of a planning nature for the Roman Project.

MEETINGS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Film Night

Friday 21 March 7.30 p.m. at The Goat, Sopwell Lane, St. Albans.
Entrance for non-members 25p but we would prefer that they join the Guild. From The Peahen in St. Albans, go down Holywell Hill, turn first left and take U-turn into Sopwell Lane which is a one-way street.

So that members can have a good opportunity to meet, we have arranged for an extension of the bar until 11.30 p.m.

There are no recent films on pottery but we are showing a few old favourites, such as Isaac Button, one of the last of the traditional English potters, and the films on Ladi Kwali. Also, the latest from the Fournier Anderson stable on Geoffrey Whiting. We are expecting John Anderson, the maker of the film, to be with us to chat about pottery film and slide-making during intervals.

We shall be giving the premier showing in Britain of the film on the King of Sweden's collection of Chinese pottery, obtained from Sweden through the Diplomatic Bag. We are also attempting to obtain from Washington through the Diplomatic Bag the film on the Indian potters of San Ildefonso which was shown in Dusseldorf last October.

Roman Pottery

Thursday 17 April 7.30 p.m. at The Winston Churchill, Church Street, Dunstable town centre.

A lecture demonstration with slides and examples from excavations in the Dunstable area. Mr. C. Matthews, Field Director of the Manshead Archaeological Society. This will be a unique opportunity to actually handle and examine some fine pieces in a way that is rarely possible with museum collections.

Pot Crawl

Sunday 20 April Commencing at 11 a.m. at Claycutters, Winslow, Bucks, the pottery of Bill and Vicky Read.

Building Roman Kilns

Wednesday 21 May 7.30 p.m. at St. Michael's Hall, Grenville Road, Beaconsfield. A lecture with slides and exchange of information, discussion of any fabric trials members may have made. Coming from Old Town take first turn past station - Warwick Road. St. Michael's church can be seen at end of the road.

Gladstone Pottery Visit

We have received only 10 applications for this to date. We need 20 more to pay for the coach. Would those members who wish to join us but have not yet sent the £2 booking fee please do so as

soon as possible, otherwise we may have to cancel the trip.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Apart from the Garden Party and the Roman Project, of which you will be receiving the venues later, there will be one more meeting of a technical, practical nature this season. The meetings of the Guild will then commence again in September. In the meantime, the newly formed Programme Sub-Committee will be busy organising the Autumn programme. Send your suggestions for subject matter and venues as soon as possible to the Secretary to pass on to the Committee.

Saltglaze has been mooted for the practical project Spring/Summer 1976. We would like to know if members like the idea of focus and saturation on a particular type of ware each year.

PAST MEETINGS

The Inaugural Meeting

What an inauguration! Members of the founding committee had been worried in case too few people came to make the hall look full, so you can imagine their delight when the first 100 were in. That 370 (give or take a few) should crowd the Heath Barn Theatre until it overflowed was breathtaking. There were certainly some happy faces among the organisers.

A crowded hall is good for generating enthusiasm, and you certainly need that to make any voluntary association go. But enthusiasm is volatile. It can drift away never to be recaptured. Victor Margrie was right to pour cold water on us. He has seen many associations decay and die as the initial momentum ran out.

How do we keep the momentum going? Michael Casson had some good advice for us when he told us to let our tastes be catholic. Potters, we must admit, are as ready as any artists to let their own tastes dominate their judgment of others' work. If we once let one school of taste dominate us, we shall lose momentum and so members.

As Victor Margrie said, a government grant cannot itself bring success; it can even provoke failure by removing from people the incentive to succeed. Paul Barron called us revolutionaries. If that is what we are in rejecting the machine made, the automatic, and wanting to use our own hands as they were meant to be used, to serve out individual talents, then we must let that spirit enter our running of the Guild.

We had a good meeting to start our public life. The press was clearly impressed by the number of potters ready to leave their firesides on a winter evening and we were given good coverage. I hope I can keep this interest going as successive meetings are held in the very big catchment area we have given ourselves. At least I shall not be trying to monopolise one paper and so make its editor likely to bite a potter on sight! So far all is going well, and the mentions we are getting encourage new members to join and keep pottery in the general public's view as something alive and thriving.

Victor Earl

Harrow Students Demonstration

On Friday, 21 February, we were guests of Danny Killick at his studio in the disused school house at Mentmore, a little village on Lord Roseberry's estate. All schools smell the same, as do churches, hospitals and swimming baths, and although this one had not seen pupils for some time it nevertheless brought back ancient and unpleasant memories. It was, moreover, characteristically stark and cold.

Suzanne Winter, perched on a kick wheel, put several pounds of clay on the wheel head and very neatly and charmingly threw a succession of pots "from the lump". She has a great economy of movement - a few splashes of water, the brief use of a small bamboo rib, a spear for the foot, then the pot neatly cut off with a Japanese string. By this technique, no excess clay is left on the pot and consequently no need for turning. Suzanne also showed us her method of throwing pots and lids from the same lump of clay.

Roger Cochrane used a rather squat electric wheel. Carefully and meticulously he threw a number of larger pots, slightly hampered by a somewhat "short" clay which did not stand up so well to his more contemplative style. His careful attention to line was impressive. Each pot was worked over until he had it just right. He uses a variety of profiles which he makes from boxwood school-room rules.

David Guive had a row of brushes in front of him, ranging from the big, floppy Chinese ones down to tiny squirrel pencils. He was painting with oxides on biscuit-fired pots dipped in glaze. When you make a brush stroke here you cannot rub it out or go over it again. With quick, nervous strokes, he fitted designs of insects, reeds, foliage, fishes to the shape of the pots. There is good observation of the natural models in his work and also some of the sophistication of commercial art.

Danny Killick was, at one point, throwing spouts for his very attractive tea pots. I am afraid I could not see exactly what was going on, being of small stature, but the rows of leather-hard pots on the shelves showed that he is a master of form and repetitive throwing.

There was a good deal of moving about, with questions, answers and informed comment bandied around. But before the creeping cold of Danny's ancient school house totally paralysed us, we made a dash for the local pub and took that most necessary of remedies, alcohol. There the chat continued but distinctly louder, perhaps less informed and certainly less inhibited until the management turned us out.

Peter Bradley

Visit to Verulamium Museum, Thursday 6th March

A group of about 30 members of the Guild met at the Verulamium Museum at St. Albans to hear a talk on Roman Pottery by one of the Curators. Murray was disappointed with the turnout and muttered that he would not organise another daytime meeting in the week.

The Curator gave us an interesting account of excavations carried out in the area which show that pottery was being made here before the Romans came - mainly Belgic Terra Nigra.

Much coarseware was made in this area during the Roman period, but the Samian Ware was imported into this country.

He also described the experiments made by building and firing Roman Kilns. (See "Archaeology by Experiment" by John Coles. Hutchinson). The Boston Oven Experiment 1961 which apparently

indicated that the kilns could be built by two men in three days (Guild please note!!)

An interesting selection of slides was shown, mostly of Samian ware, used as tableware and coarseware, used in the kitchen.

There were also slides of the Castor Ware made in the Neane Valley, based on the Belgic shapes and many influenced by Celtic patterns. They were natural looking forms, sometimes squashed and slip trailed.

We were unable to establish where the clay was obtained for the imitation Samian Ware, but we learnt that there was a Roman Kiln at Sandy so that may be worth investigating.

After the slides, we looked at the pottery on show and at the model of the Roman Kiln, and the Roman Pots in the museum.

The stragglers who stayed on had the privilege of going into the basement to see wares that have been excavated from a Roman Kiln at Bricket Wood the previous weekend. We were also shown the latest acquisition of the museum, a very finely potted neolithic burial urn from South Germany with delicate and sensitive impressed decoration.

June Waite

ROMAN PROJECT

The Principal of Wall Hall College, through the good offices of our member, Mike Hardy, has offered us a site for the kiln building. The weekend dates for the packing and firing and opening of the kilns has been put forward one week in order not to clash with open day at the college on June 21 and to allow Wall Hall students to participate when their assessment is over. The two weekends for the packing, firing and opening of the kiln will now be June 28/29 and July 5/6.

Some people we know are already testing clays for samian and coarse wares, Barry Gabbott's group at Barnet, and Mary Ann Spilman and June Waite.

Mr. Tattersall, who is taking part in the practical work, has a colleague who has offered to keep a photographic record of the event and Mr. Romer is taking responsibility for the library research.

NEWSLETTER

This is the last one-man issue and from Thursday evening March 22 it will pass into the responsible hands of its sub-committee who will tell you about themselves in number 4.

In our appeal for duplicating paper (we have not received any yet!), we mentioned that the cost was £9.00, but that was only for the duplicating paper. With postages and envelopes to bring out 8 Newsletter a year would deplete our small fund by £160.

Nevertheless, communication is the lifeblood of the Guild. There is nothing more off-putting than joining a society and not hearing regularly what its committees are up to. For few of us can attend all meetings. A society may be doing good work but if its membership do not know the whole of it, they can hardly identify themselves and engage in that participation and support that gives a Guild strength.

It is reality that the majority of us do not put dates in our diaries, or if we do we never refer to them. Therefore, a

Newsletter must appear fairly frequently as a last minute reminder of events that its members would have wanted to attend if they had remembered to do so.

OURSELVES

Many members have said that the part of the Newsletter they like best is the gossip. Those little personal notes about members, not especially serious, that contribute to our sense of fraternity and the feeling that we know each other and can readily and comfortably seek mutual aid in our difficult craft.

One of the first jobs of the next sub-committee to be formed, that responsible for the survey of pottery activity in the area, will be to get out a list of members with informal information about each for distribution within the Guild. Any offers for this committee? So far we have only got Ruth Karnac. In the meantime

Brian Dewbury

He is responsible for potting at the P.E. College in Bedford. He can see all demonstrations without raising himself to his full height. We have asked him to throw anyone out of meetings who causes a disturbance! He has also offered to serve on the Programme Sub-Committee despite the fact that he is on the fringe of our area which may mean a little travelling for him. He has just returned from a year in America as a visiting professor at the University of New Hampshire and remembers pleasurably his membership of the New Hampshire Guild of Craftsmen, the lengthy discussions and good fellowship and the community kiln building and firing. He was trained at Loughborough by Arthur Griffiths and David Leach. He is a prolific worker and sold £2,000 worth of work in two exhibitions in the USA last year.

Roger and Louise Winn are both dancers. Louise was at the Royal Ballet School but became disenchanted with the hard life of the corps. Now she does a little teaching and Roger is full-time teaching but is eclectic and likes teaching general subjects as well as dance. They are fortunate in being among the privileged few part-time adult students at Harrow and are very productive potters with a propane and oil-fired kiln. They are moving to Chesham shortly where they will have space and facilities to build a wood-fired kiln and have invited members of the Guild to make use of it by arrangement. Roger is Chairman of the Inter-varsity Pottery Club whose members will be attending some of our meetings.

EVENTS

Two Raku Courses

Tutored by Barry J. M. Gabbott

1. Raku Weekend residential July 4, 5 & 6, Friday evening to Sunday lunch £8.50 inclusive including materials at Theobalds Park College, Bulls Cross Ride, Waltham Cross, Herts.
2. Raku Short Course. 3 nights per week for 6 weeks and one weekend firing. Commencing April 9 at 7.15, Barnet College Pottery Centre, Victoria Road, New Barnet. Fee £2.00 plus materials.

Living Crafts 1975

11 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily at the Old Palace Stables, Hatfield House, Hatfield. 8th - 11th May inclusive. 50 crafts demonstrated by professionals.

RAW GLAZING

At the Mentmore meeting, someone asked about raw glazing. Lucy Rie does it, Peter Dick does it, Japanese country potters do it and the Chinese Celadon potters did it at the peak of their work. Don't do it in a school or college or you may spoil other people's work in the kiln when your pot bursts because someone packed it before it was BONE dry.

To be safe, glaze the inside and outside of the pot separately so that it does not disintegrate from over-saturation. Try any existing glaze, adding bentonite from 4 - 20% until the glaze does not fall off the pot as it shrinks or substitute ball clay for any other clay that is in the recipe.

A definitive paper on the subject by Suzi Curtis is in Pottery Quarterly 43 which will be published when the Guild gives its editor breathing space.

BOOKS ON GLAZES

Text books on glazes have not been available for some months. Glazes for the Craft Potter, by Harry Fraser is now reprinted but at a higher price of £3.50. An importation of Clay and Glazes for the Potter, by Daniel Rhodes came into the country two weeks ago but only in sufficient quantities to meet existing booksellers orders. So if you see one, don't hesitate. There is a new little book just published on glazes by William Ruscoe, the author of the well-known manual, which is the cheapest of the text books on glazes at £1.95 in paperback.

PLEASE ENROLL A NEW MEMBER FOR US

NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
.....

I enclose remittance of £1.

NORTHFIELD STUDIO TRING HERTFORDSHIRE