

# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS' GUILD

## Newsletter No. 4

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### PROGRESS REPORT

#### 1. Programme Sub-Committee

The Programme Sub-Committee have had one meeting on 18th March. They discussed recent events held by the Guild, and decided that in future they must cater for approximately 60 - 80 people and that venues should be spread over the area. As only one meeting is to be held before the July - August recess, their main concern was with the Autumn programme. We will notify you of this nearer the time.

#### 2. Newsletter Sub-Committee

The Newsletter Sub-Committee have met three times since its formation on 13th March. At the first meeting they discussed mainly the format of the previous Newsletters, and suggested various changes, some of which are being implemented in this issue. They also reviewed the aims of the Guild and these are set out below. At the subsequent meetings the committee got down to work and allotted themselves the various jobs necessary to produce a Newsletter. Rick Graves is Editor and Secretary of the Sub-Committee, and Jane Woodhams is in charge of circulation.

G.P.

### Aims of The Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild

1. To promote increasing awareness of the values of craft pottery in the area.
2. To hold lectures, discussions, practical demonstrations and other activities to further (1).
3. To represent within the area the interests of craft potters, pottery teachers and their students and to encourage the establishment of serious part time vocational courses.
4. To co-operate with other specialised and general crafts organisations to ensure that the need of the community for living work is not neglected by public lack of contact with crafts and craftsmen.
5. To make a regular survey of all pottery activity in the area and to issue a report to members, interested bodies and individuals.
6. To issue a Newsletter of the activities of the Guild.

### CALENDAR

Wednesday 21 May Illustrated Lecture - Roman Kilns. 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.



Sunday 27 April on The Site for the Roman Kiln Building at Wall Hall

A pleasantly secluded site has been found in the back-woods at Wall Hall. Kiln builders and bringers of suitably proportioned wood will be welcome on any Sunday between 2.30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Going south down A.41, turn left at the Busy Bee roundabout (Garage/restaurant complex). Take the B 462 Watford - Radlet Road. Turn into Aldenham Village - Gates of Wall Hall College opposite Church in Aldenham. Large car park. Site of kiln at rear of rural studies block. If in doubt ask a student.

MA.S.

Saturday 28th - Sunday 29th June Packing and firing of the Roman kiln

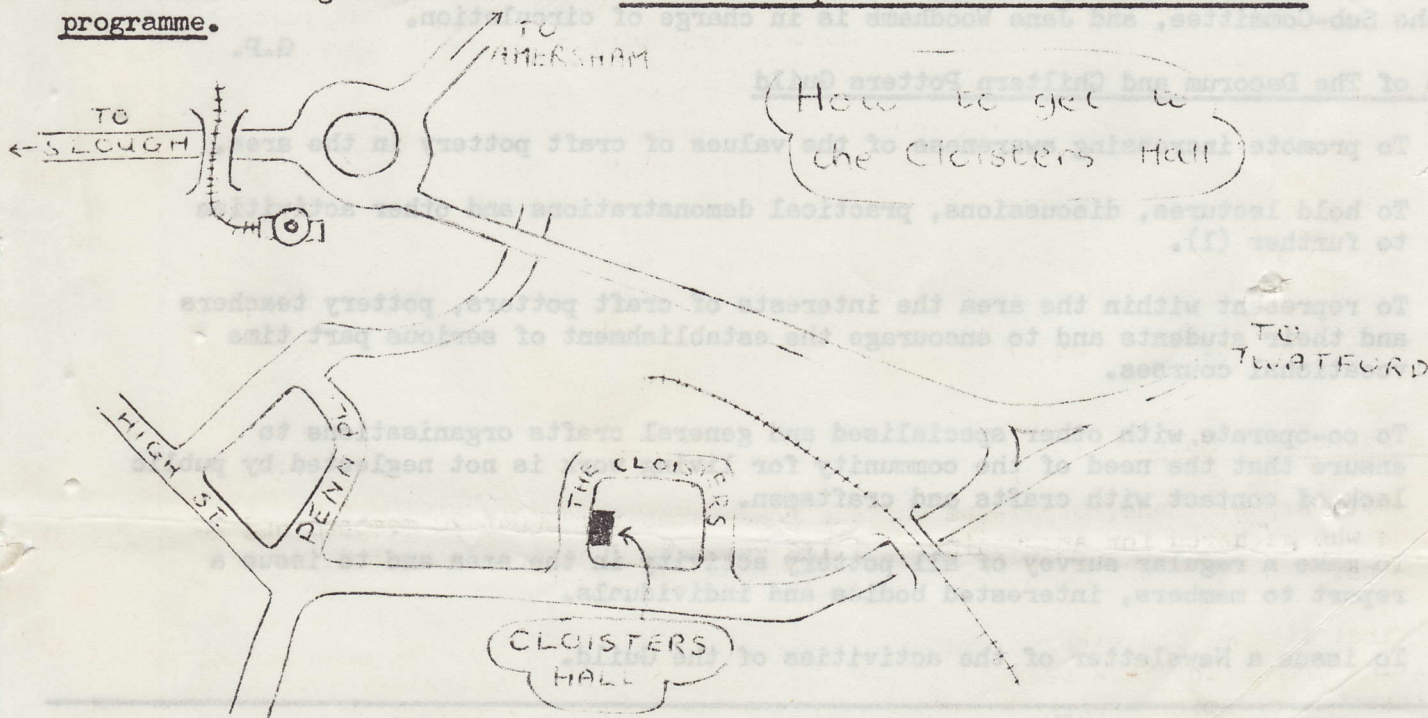
The stokers will accept drinks from visitors!!

Saturday 5th - Sunday 6th July. Opening of the Roman kiln

When the proof of the potting will be in the heating!!

Thursday 19th June Critique (Final Session of the season) 7.30 p.m. at The Cloisters Hall, (off Rickmansworth High Street) Rickmansworth

Members are invited to bring along examples of their work firstly to be exhibited for general interest and then it is hoped that they will submit a piece for critical analysis by our guest speaker. Also any other pieces that might be of interest, made by an established potter, will be gladly received. There will be light refreshments. All members please attend to discuss Autumn programme.



SPECIAL EVENTS

23 - 26 May Amersham Town Hall

An exhibition of the work of four potters together with other craftsmen using media such as batik, silk-screen, painting etc.



### Kimpton Crafts and Art Centre

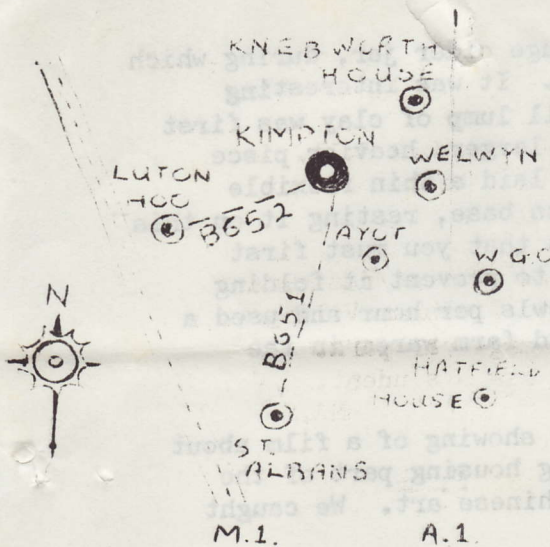
Housed in an ancient timbered building, this centre handles the work of over 100 artists and craftsmen of all sorts. In addition to their usual displays are the following events:

May - from 6th: **STRAW PLAITING AND STRAW CRAFTS**  
Traditional locally.

June - from 3rd 'GLASS' will include several unique examples from Saxon times to present day 'forms'.

There is also space for new members (60p p.a.) to exhibit work on their own or in conjunction with others. An expanding venture with room in many 'groups' for more members (lace-making, photography, painting etc.) If there is not a 'group' to suit your requirements, you are welcome to start one.

Times: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.  
2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday  
Closed Monday



### REPORTS OF PAST MEETINGS.

#### Planning Meeting for the Roman Project

On Sunday 16th March a large gathering collected at Murray Fieldhouse's home in Tring for the purpose of studying the problems of the Roman Project.

Reports were first received from the clay diggers. Diggings had been carried out as far afield as Peterborough through to Chesham and even into Barnet. Some doubt was expressed as to whether clay could be found of the same make-up as that which the Romans used for samian, especially as most of that ware appeared to have been made on the continent.

All round introductions were the next item. Each member of the gathering expressed his or her particular interest in pottery. Three reports were received of the slowness of Terra Sigillata to settle and one report of its success.

Discussion and demonstration of the preparation of biscuit moulds ensued together with a demonstration of the throwing properties of dug clay.

Altogether a profitable and successful afternoon.

R.W.

#### Film Night 21st March

The Goat, Sepwell Lane, St Albans was the rendezvous for about 70 members and 10 guests who gathered for an evening of films shown by John Anderson of Slide Loan Ceramics.

The first film of the evening was about an ancient and laborious Japanese method of smelting iron. The work seemed endless but one point we potters might like to note is that these Japanese workers used a sacred flame to ignite their furnace, and offered up food in sacrifice to the gods. Maybe this is the vital step we omit when our own kilns fail to give us the results we hope for.

We have many talents in our membership; this was shown by Maureen Benjamin who sang folk songs while she played the dulcimer or guitar. Members joined in choruses while the films were changed and we filled our glasses at the bar.

The second film, about 'Isaac Button, Country Potter' who worked the Soil Hill Pottery single handed until a decade ago, was a rare experience of industrial documentation



and showed all stages of the process, beginning with his winning clay on the hill behind the workshop. (Red for throwing, cream or buff for slip, and a grogged refractory mixture for placing in and bricking up the kiln).

There followed an absorbing sequence of him throwing a huge cider jar, during which the accumulated skill of years of such work was apparent. It was interesting to note that in order to fix the clay to the wheel a small lump of clay was first thrown on, flattened and centred (all in one go) and the larger, heavier piece thrown on top of that; and that in order to remove it he laid a thin flexible slat of wood across his forearms and lifted the jar by its base, resting it on this slat. A vital precaution for those who would try this is that you must first trap the air inside the pot with a knob of clay in order to prevent it folding up in your arms! Mr Button is said to have thrown 200 bowls per hour and used a ton of clay a day. The film then showed his household and farm wares in the capacious coal burning kiln.

'A Royal Collection' was the title of the British premier showing of a film about the restoration of 'China Palace' an 18th Century building housing part of the late King of Sweden, Gustav Adolphus VI's collection of Chinese art. We caught but an all too brief glimpse of porcelaines and bronzes.

Next we moved to Nigeria, and the film of Ladi Kwali coiling a large pot by walking round it rather than staying put and turning the pot on a whirler. The film was made in 1959 when Michael Cardew was introducing glaze to the region. Guild members Derek Tattersall and Audrey Jackson told of their own experiences there while trying to explain the African approach. Derek was there for a year and met Michael Cardew, Audrey for a stay of four years with a young family. Later back home in England she had the good fortune to rescue Michael Cardew after he had broken his ankle on the Cornish cliffs and they became good friends - thank you Audrey for your services to pottery!

You could have heard a pin drop whilst the film of Geoffrey Whiting at Avoncroft Pottery, Worcestershire was being shown. The concentration of members as he threw and 'stuck up' teapots was evident by the lack of interest in the contents of their glasses. The silence was finally broken by gasps, when a pot being turned accidentally spun off the wheelhead! An honest and amusing touch in an absorbing film.

We had beer, wine, films of pots, folk music and even poetry! Composed and read by Stan Romer entitled 'Rate is a Four-Letter Word'; it told of Murray Fieldhouse's plight in his reluctance to pay his rates.

The final film was about an Egyptian Pottery and showed us an unusual way of throwing pots (literally) into the kilns. The potter used a primitive wheel and made useful household items without the aid of Heineken lager!

The meeting, which was both instructive and entertaining, came to a close with a vote of thanks given by Roger Wynn to the many contributors.

B.G.

### Clayglaze Seminar

Clayglaze of Rickmansworth held their first Craft Pottery Seminar on 18th March with Lectures from Harry Frazer L.I. Ceram A.I Ref. Eng and Laurie Primmer - Local Pottery Author and Schoolmaster.

Throughout the day the general theme was basic clay glaze technology in its many aspects, in an effort to substantiate an intermediate standard.

A great many facts were presented in logical progression which were enthusiastically absorbed by the students and even those more advanced potters amongst us, promoted further discussion which only served to enhance and inform to a greater extent, the already formidable curriculum.



The practical demonstrations by Laurie Primmer, served as a most useful starting point for future seminars, as information was gained by the organisers as to the requirements of students. Indeed, during these sessions there was much general discussion instigated by Laurie, concerning teaching methods and ideas.

With the pleasant venue, splendid home cooked lunch and technical information, the seminar was justly successful, with much appreciation voiced by the 40 people present.

Future seminars are planned throughout the year and will be to a more advanced technical content concerning glaze technology, kilns and kiln firing and on the basis of their first success I would fully recommend them.

P.C.K.

#### Lecture on Roman Pottery 17th April

Mr C. Matthews, Field Director of the Manshead Archaeological Society gave a very informative and entertaining discourse on 'finds' of Belgic and Roman Pottery which have taken place in the Dunstable area. Unfortunately the best exhibits of his Society were not available as the Museum was in a transitional period. Nevertheless the hundred or so individual pieces gave a clear insight into domestic Roman ware in use from approximately 1st - 3rd Century A.D. (Sample sherds were free!)

Appropos of the Guild's present search for a suitable local mixture for terra sigillata, Mr Matthews thought that pots made at Colchester in imitation of Samian (Sames - Green island) were proved very inferior and that most of the identifiable ware was from the Continent. The key to the fine finish is the illite content of a red clay with soda ash added being used as a slip and then polished in the leather hard state. We were able to handle all the pottery on show, amongst which were some beautifully designed folded and poppy head beakers. The latter had a coarse sandy texture probably for gripping when the hand was greasy with food).

Kitchen ware, pie or dog pots and platters were finished in a jet black or dark brown and those on show came from the Oxford and Colchester kilns.

A lengthy informal chat-in developed after the lecture and conversation ranged over a multitude of allied topics, kilns, coins, clays and Caddington bricks. A delightful evening!

R.D.

#### Pot Crawl April 20th

On a glorious Spring morning approximately 50 potters gathered in Winslow at Vicky and Bill Read's Pottery which, we were told, was a farm 15 years ago with a ton of manure in the lounge when they took it over! Domestic stoneware is divided between husband and wife, Bill making the larger pieces, jugs, and casseroles, and Vicky the tea and coffee sets and large platters. Bill was justly proud of his Winslow wheel, made to his design, saying it was still the cheapest on the market. The kiln is fired every 5 - 6 weeks; the shelves were Carborundum and still in good condition after years of hard work. Cups of tea are taken hourly - no wonder they are behind with their orders! 85 per cent of their work is commissioned. The 'Sang de Boeuf' glaze was much admired.

Deciding we all looked hungry, Ray Phipps directed us to the Unicorn at Deddington. Jo Carson's Pottery was so tiny we split into two groups, one of which repaired to the said hostelry, while the rest followed Ray through an ancient archway. The workshop was very compact, with a delightful courtyard and useful stables for storage. Jo makes slipware using mainly blue, black and white slips. She is very busy, firing the kiln twice a week, and says she can hardly keep up with the orders - good news for potters! The showroom was minute, but Jo says the previous tenants brought up a family of 4 children in the cottage.



Glowing from the sun and sustenance we arrived at Hook Norton to visit Russell Collins. His light, airy studio was full of large drying pots. Russell told us he had two full-time assistants and they all throw for a month, then glaze, some of which is raw glazed. All the work is stoneware. The wheels were built at Harrow to Mervyn Fitz-William's design, and the plastic strips on the side were for clearing the hands of clay. A new building in the garden housed the showroom. Russell supplies various restaurants with tableware, one of which has 200 mugs stolen a month!

Leaving Russell worrying about his reduction firing in the garage, we journeyed on to Evenlode where Dieter Kunzemann, a German following the tradition of English slipware, told us he has two full-time potters and some part-time, all who decorate their own work. Feathers in jars and rows of slip-trailers helped to produce the wheatsheaf, goat, feathering and wheel designs. Some of the large plates had Titanium Iron glaze and wax resist, which were very attractive. Many moulds were used as well as thrown ware. Most of the pots are sold from the premises, only a third going elsewhere.

We would like to thank all the Potters for allowing us to visit them in their studios, and also Ray for playing shepherd. It was a most enjoyable day.

J.W.

#### The Building of the Roman Kiln

The kiln building commenced at Wall Hall on 27 April and will continue each Sunday at 2.30 p.m. On the first afternoon the foundations were completed and some wood chopped. Next time more wood will be corded and shelters put up for it and the clay pan prepared. The week after the kiln builders meet at The Swan at Ley Hill and will win clay for the dome and lining of the kiln. Stan Romer has produced research documentation for the kiln builders which will be duplicated. Derek Tattersall is keeping a photographic record and Jenifer Bourne is writing the project report. The kiln builders are interested in offers of corrugated iron sheets, timber, fire bricks and a site hut. Workers bring axes, shovels, saws etc.

M.F.

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#### Gladstone Industrial Pottery Museum

This trip was cancelled because of under subscription. This is generally thought to be most unfortunate, because the Museum is a bold and noteworthy innovation as well as a fascinating place to visit. It is a 19th Century factory which has been restored to full working order (including the bottle-ovens) by modern potters who demonstrate contemporary techniques and styles. Any equipment not actually in use is on display and there is a good exhibition of typical wares produced by factories of this sort. Another visit will be mooted later in the year. We had hoped to be more ambitious and have a three day field study in Stoke-on-Trent next year but the response to the Gladstone Pottery visit is not encouraging.

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#### APPEAL FOR SPEAKERS

The programme sub-committee have appealed for speakers for seminars/coffee evenings where people could gather informally and hear about the particular interests of others (and see their pots). Therefore we would be very pleased to hear about anyone with specialised knowledge of any aspect of pottery. Please contact Pat Kerney - Telephone Hemel Hempstead 58940.

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## LOCAL CLAYS

Mr Ludman of Leighton Buzzard has been carrying out research into local clays and their properties, primarily for reference by those involved in the Roman Project. This is trojan work but why does he always address Murray Fieldhouse as 'Dear Madam'?

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## MURRAY'S RATES

About half a dozen members of the Guild and a few friends attended Murray's Summons to 'give cause for non payment of rates' at Hemel Hempstead Courthouse on April 4. The Clerk of the Court did not put the same commonsense interpretation on the wording of the Summons as Murray and the Magistrates did not give very much opportunity for an explanation commenting that there was little they could do in law but issue a Warrant for payment thus confirming Murray's view that justice and democracy are being eroded in Britain by a Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy. Murray believes there is a widening gulf between the interests of Central and Local Government officials and the needs and will of the people, and that Politicians of all parties lack sufficiently the spirit of William Cobbett to serve as ombudsmen of the people in their most need. Murray's case got a good press and he believes that the press is the last bastion of freedom in Britain, but not for long. 1984 is nearer than most people realise.

This was an appeal for exemption from a rise in the rates of 223.36% in a period of 7% inflation, for a house with no paved drive (the road is 100 yards or more away), no running water and no other mains facilities except telephone. Murray's appeal was not heard in full and he was ordered to pay up like everyone else.

M.F.

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## MOCHA - WARE

To my knowledge there is only one potter in the country today who produces Mocha ware. Roger Irving Little of Boscastle, Cornwall closely guards its secrets.

Mocha ware was so called after Mocha stone or moss agate (from Mocha /Arabia) which the decoration is said to resemble. The ware originated at the factory of William Adams at Cobridge in the eighteenth century.

He used it on cream coloured earthenware. Nineteenth century Mocha ware was cheap, thick, white earthenware and was mainly made for use in public houses.

The secret mixture used by the potters was generally called 'tea' and was said to consist of tobacco juice, turpentine, manganese and urine. Mr Pottery Quarterly has assured me that a 'tea' can be produced simply by boiling in water the contents of an ash tray, sieving and then adding either manganese oxide or black underglaze colour. I would like to hear from anyone who has tried this. Designs are usually based on a broad band of blue, grey or coffee coloured slip. While this was still damp, the potter dropped or painted with a brush a small quantity of the curious mixture on to the slip, which then spread out tree-like frends.

To watch the decoration being 'performed' is fascinating. The finished work creates the impression that it is a painstaking business. Nothing could be further from the truth.

E.B.

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THE JOBS OF PRODUCING A NEWSLETTER AND PLANNING THE PROGRAMME HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE RANKS AND WE SHOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES TO YOU:

#### NEWSLETTER SUB COMMITTEE

Ed. C. Broadbridge

Pot maker by appointment.

Studied under Keith Harding and Richard Cheshire before spending three years at the Central School of Art and Design doing Dip A.D. Ceramics. At present he is working as part-time 'instructor' for Bedfordshire County Council.

Ed. revels in the material and is in his element when throwing and turning - of course the end products are fantastic, though he is modest about it.

Jane Woodhams

Jane studied as a teacher in Bristol but discovered, when she found herself with a full time job, that teaching pottery was a question of learning as she went along.

Since moving to Tring three years ago she has taught both Art and Geography between producing children! Her pottery evening classes have been the only continuous occupation she has had but she does a certain amount of her own pottery at home between bouts of concentrated domesticity.

The following ode by a long serving evening class member gives you some insight into her classes.

#### An Ode to Jane

This clay's too soft,  
This clay's too hard,  
Why can't you get it right Jane?  
My pot has cracked,  
This glaze is wrong,  
Why can't you get it right Jane?  
This pugmilled clay is full of sponge,  
The kiln has gone too high again,  
Why can't you get it right Jane?  
Now this shape's different,  
This glaze is really good,  
I'm glad I got it right Jane!

Rick Graves (Editor)

Rick trained on the Craft Course at Sheffield College of Education where he accidentally discovered a tacky substance called clay and on getting a book out of the library, found out how to make things with it. He now teaches pottery full-time at Quarrenden School in Aylesbury, though plans to move to the North in the Summer.

Gilly Peel

Gilly met Rick at Quarrenden, love blossomed, and she was drawn into the ceramic whirlpool. Not much experience of the craft yet but she knows what she likes.

#### PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE

Brian Dewsbury

There was a piece about Brian in Newsletter No. 3.



Pat Caulfield - Kerney

After working in an industrial environment for several years Pat has decided that life can offer considerably more satisfaction and personal achievement working in the field of fine Arts.

Since early schooldays a strong inclination to the artistic side asserted itself and has now manifested in a complete preoccupation with clay in its varied form and expression.

Working and studying from home in Hemel Hempstead he already finds participation in Guild activities most worthwhile, opening up all kinds of avenues and cannot, he says, wait until the next Meeting.

Julie Weekes (Secretary to Programme Sub-Committee)

Julie will be asserting her administrative ability to ensure that the forthcoming 1975/76 Guild session is both informative and sociable and she will be using her guile to persuade members to support their committee whenever possible.

Like so many people Julie has always interested herself in pottery and as a newcomer to the actual craft, likes to get her hands into clay whenever she can.

June Waite

June began her potting with Murray at Dacorum College some ten or eleven years ago. Her interest is particularly hand built pottery of the coil variety, although she has a wheel of her own. At present she is working part-time for The Save the Children Fund and hopes to save enough to purchase a new kiln. She is a keen participator in the Roman project but she also has a good working knowledge of Raku.

There will also be a sub Committee for the Survey of Pottery Activity in the area. More about that one later.

J.W.

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**HELP!!!**

We have received the following appeals for help.

Philippa Stower and friend urgently need somewhere to make and possibly sell pots. Anything considered. (They are even prepared to re-roof etc.) Will pay if required. Contact: Mrs P. Stower, Coachman's House, Troutstream Way, Loudwater, Rickmansworth, Herts. Tel: Rickmansworth 78065.

Dave and Kittie Guiver (remember the trip to Danny Killick's - Dave is one of Danny's helpers) are rather desperate for somewhere to live. At present they pay £8 for a basement room near a main road, miles away from their work. There must be someone who can either offer them or help them to get better accommodation than this. They can provide their own furnishings and would prefer to cook their own (vegetarian) meals. Please contact Dave & Kittie Guiver, c/o School House, Mentmore, Leighton Buzzard, Beds.

**FREE ADVERTISING FOR POTTERS**

Miss June Lewis is working on a book on handicrafts in Britain today, to 'give as comprehensive a picture as possible on the whole state of the craftsman's situation in this automated age'.

Practicing professional or semi-professional potters wishing to be included in the book, which will also carry an account of the artist's work, should write to Miss June R. Lewis, 'Hartwell', Park Corner, Fairford, Glos. GL7 4JJ.



# THANKS

Thanks are due to all those who provided material for this our first Newsletter, but especially to Barrie Gabbot, Jean Wiedmann, Roger Wynn and Ralph Downing, who have reported meetings of the Guild, and to Murray Fieldhouse for his invaluable and considerable help in getting us off the ground.

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PLEASE ENROL A NEW MEMBER FOR US

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

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I enclose remittance of £1.

MURRAY FIELDHOUSE

NORTHFIELD STUDIO

TRING

HERTFORDSHIRE

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## STOP PRESS:

The Steering Committee - at the suggestion of Roger Vinn - went on Saturday 3rd May to visit "The Nodes" Drivers End Lane Codicote. They discussed possible mutual arrangements between the Guild and this potential Crafts Centre.

"The Node" is a prestigious unused dairy farm built on a circular plan ideally suited for workshops which would open out on a central court with upper galleries that could serve as exhibition area and a refectory. There is a great deal of cleaning up to do and it is hoped members of the Guild will volunteer to help and could make use of the pottery. Barrie Musgrave, a potter for eight years in Japan at Hamada's Mashiko, has just arrived at the Centre.

Members who wish to visit "The Nodes" may also wish to support a fund raising concert, 70p a head, leading performers, during the Spring holiday. Get details nearer the time from Kate Lawrence 01 794 9156.

## STOP PRESS - LAST MINUTE EVENT:

Saturday 31st May: "The Node Dairy" Codicote.

A whole afternoon and evening devoted to an informal party/workshop. Barrie Musgrave will demonstrate some of the Japanese skills and show slides from his eight years in Korea and South Japan. There are, however, three wheels, kilns, some clay, and lots of space for a large gathering, so why not bring your own clay and do your own thing?

This can be a really great occasion if a lot of people turn up and make it swing. There will be no meals provided, so please bring what you need to eat and drink.