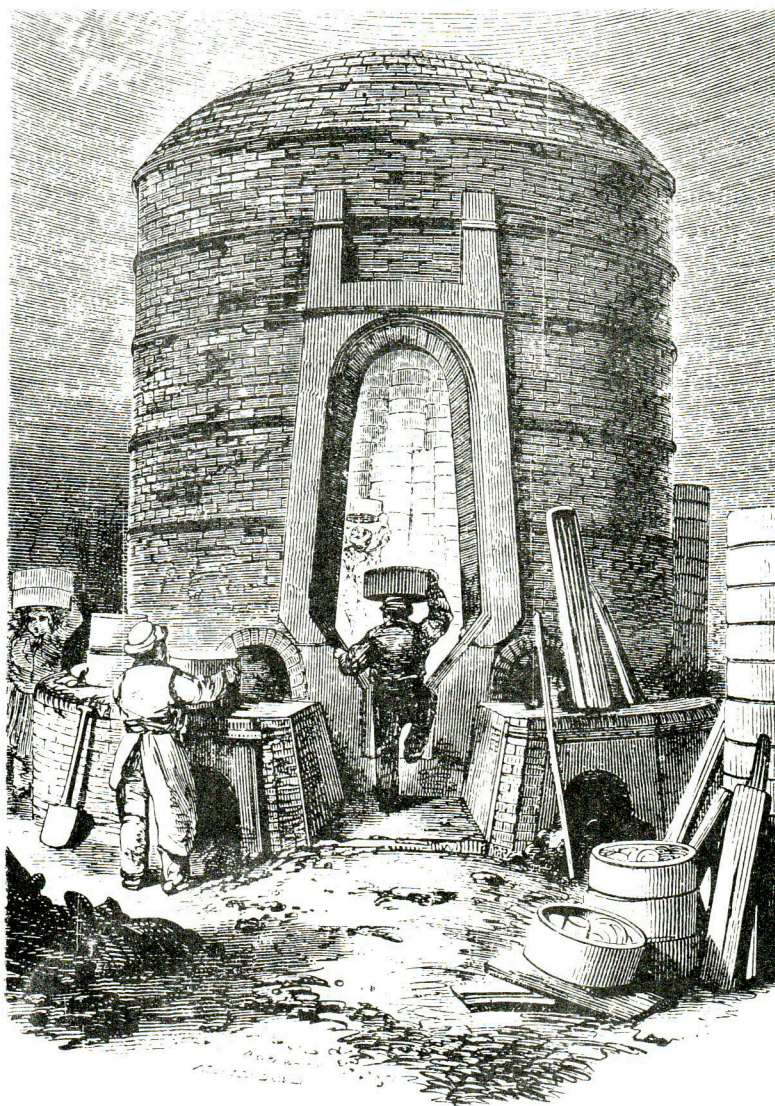


DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS' GUILD



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE N° 20. JUNE 1979

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Digby Stott "Broomfield",
36 Box Lane,
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HP3 0DJ

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Dear Readers,

Have you ever stopped to consider why I present the Newsletter in the form and order in which it appears. Perhaps you are not terribly interested in this matter. If you are, then read on.

The first part of the Newsletter is, of course, this column. Putting the Editor's Column at the front serves two purposes - first, it allows me to air my thoughts and, second, it allows you to get this bit of reading over with so that you may enjoy the rest. I did consider putting it elsewhere, but it seemed almost like serving the soup after the entree.

Having dispensed with my ramblings it seemed to me that the most important item should come next and by that I mean, of course, the reports on our various meetings which after all are the 'raison d'etre' of our Guild.

As the interest in potters is always in improving their craft it is obviously also of great import that our members are made aware of the various books and publications which are available and of the relative merits of those books. Hence, next in line I have positioned the Book Reviews.

Potters are, of course, people. There are those who doubt this; nevertheless, it is true. Having dealt with the pots it is only right that articles about the people who make them should feature in the body of the Newsletter. The pun is intended; the message still genuine.

The virtue which distinguishes people from all the lower orders is the superior ability to communicate. "Letters to the Editor" at least gives you, dear readers, the opportunity to so do. It is quite natural, having enjoyed one event, that our members are then interested in what lies in store for them. Thus the details of Forthcoming Events concludes the list of principal headings which are of paramount interest to the members of the Guild.

Items of interest which do not fit into any of the categories above are dispensed in a package entitled "Potters Digest", an amalgam of two earlier titles.

Finally we have the Potters Diary which lists past and future events within the calendar year.

You may well ask at this juncture what on earth I am rambling about. I can just see you - sitting in your favourite armchair, glass of brandy at your elbow.

"What in Heaven's name is this chap rambling about?" you say to yourself. "Can he not find something better to write about?"

EDITOR'S COLUMN - contd.

Well, for those for whom the penny has not yet dropped, I am trying to communicate. What is more! I am trying to get you to communicate, in writing that is. Judging from the hubbub which I hear at any meeting I attend, you do not have much difficulty in communicating orally. Why not in writing? Is the action of writing too difficult in your armchair or are you afraid that your elbow might catch the brandy glass?

It may have escaped your notice, but a considerable time has elapsed since the last Newsletter was published - January 1979 no less. In that Newsletter, thanks to those excellent people who made the effort, we had some very worthwhile reading in the reports of the events at Pendley in November. Since then we have had six events and only one it appears has been committed to paper. I have hopes of a further one, but that is all at present.

Surely if the meetings, which your Committee have organised with so much effort, are worthy of the attendances they receive they are also worthy of a report or two. Pardon me if I labour the point, but have you yet got the message? We all appreciate the worthy efforts of Stan Romer with his Book Reviews. You may or may not enjoy my prattling. The few letters I receive are warmly appreciated. But all these things do not make a Newsletter.

So, kind friends, when next a Committee Member approaches you with a request to do a "write-up" think not of the effort entailed, think only of the service you will be doing to your fellow potters.

Now I commend you to this long delayed Newsletter.

DIGBY

PAST EVENTS

1. RUTH KARNAC : CHINA
JUNE SARENE : JAPAN
AT HARPENDEN : 28TH MARCH 1979

I was surprised that so many people turned up in such foul weather, and that so many people had come a long way.

June and Ruth both gave excellent lectures. Firstly, they discussed their experiences in each country, and how that country influenced them. Then they showed us a selection of lovely transparencies, showing the area and architectural features - and latter pots.

There was a magnificent selection of coloured photographs and information of China which people browsed over during the coffee break.

June Sarene - Japan Kyoto

June attended the first meeting of the World Craft Council, founded in 1964 by an American, which took place at Peru in 1968.

She and others went to Japan last September 1978 with the World Craft Council. She spent seven days at Kyoto. The weather was warm, 80°F, and humid. There were talks and lectures the whole time she was there. June took the liberty of missing some lectures in order to see the surroundings. The people of Kyoto were sophisticated and elegantly dressed and June was surprised by the orderly gardens and manicured trees. The transparencies showed the temples with fine architectural points on the roofs.

The slides of the pots were very interesting, showing a complete contrast to the scenery and buildings. There were a few slides of an "Iga" pot - one which was battered and all irregular - strange and certainly unusual!

The Japanese pottery is primitive yet exact in thought when it comes to tea bowls. Very deliberate in effect. They wanted rustic effects, so, ad lib, they threw the glaze into the kiln hoping it reaches the pots - with amazing results, so it seems! Though I wonder how they don't chip the pots getting them off the shelves. They must have 50% wastage at least!

Ruth Karnac - China

Ruth Karnac went with a party of 24 people from the Craftsmen Potters Association. It was spring time and the weather was misty, humid and hot. It also rained. She spent three days in Hongkong where great hospitality was shown. Most of the party found Hongkong, across the border in Mainland China, good for shopping. Ruth was attracted by the vividness of the emerald green rice fields, and the irregular shapes of the hills. Here the methods of agriculture were primitive, using water buffalo for ploughing the rice fields and using intensive manpower.

PAST EVENTS

1. RUTH KARNAC/JUNE SARENE (contd.)

The party's guides were Miss Fang and Mr. Chin, Miss Fang being the easier to understand. There was difficulty in expressing the wish to see natural everyday pottery being made rather than the reproduction factory type 'Stoke-on-Trent' ware. The language barrier was a problem, though they got the message eventually.

Ruth and party were taken to see a group of villages that made domestic ware, roof tiles and drain pipes. There was no throwing. The village had three electric tunnel kilns and 24 dragon kilns fired by reeds and wood. The transparencies showed huge storage jars and a dragon kiln, which had many chambers and climbed uphill. (Is that what they are called? - what is the origin of the word 'dragon'?)

The party had difficulty in being allowed to take photographs in museums, though it was overcome at Peking. The hotels are huge, being built by the Russians. There are also no private cars, only taxis, buses and bicycles.

Ruth found the balustrade work surrounding the Forbidden City intricately carved and fascinating. She showed us some lovely slides of the Great Wall of China going around a hill, and another hill, and another, to infinity.

WENDY PARRY

2. DESMOND EYLES : POTTERY THROUGHOUT THE AGES AT ABBOTS LANGLEY : 25TH MAY 1979

Desmond Eyles restricted the scope of his first ever lecture to a potters' guild to the use of clay from around 7,000 BC until its use for components in engines for Concord.

There is much speculation about when who discovered what in the continuing story of clay and although we can never know all of the details, the latest Guild event helped to put a lot of things into perspective. Pottery is a very human craft.

If children of all ages in all countries enjoy playing with clay and water, sand or snow, why not the children who grew up to be the cavemen?

Who made the unfired clay models of animals found intact after centuries of survival in those silent caves? And why?

Why should not the pigments used for painting the walls of caves be used for painting the first pots?

PAST EVENTS

2. DESMOND EYLES (contd.)

The process of observation and discovery, trial and error, was profoundly changed by the development of settled communities. Shared experiences and communal use of knowledge gained over generations differed greatly from a nomadic existence with its different needs and skills.

The advent of writing on tablets of water cleaned clay from the Tigris and Euphrates was surely the first age of the silicon chip.

As learning spread we referred to Greece and China, Africa and Europe, Fulham, Stoke, and back to China or Mesopotamia. There was no dull catalogue of events, we saw how differing social and political influences played their part with different aspects of progress.

The searches for 'whiter than white' pottery or for a translucent ware to match the porcelain of ancient China inevitably produce stories of failures and near misses.

This makes a fascinating story, and when the speaker shares such a wealth of personal knowledge and experience with his audience, history is an adventure.

It is not possible to convey all the excitement and interest raised by accounts of man's efforts and triumphs however trivial they may seem. Consider porous pottery used for separating curds and whey 5,000 years ago and the widespread use of ceramic filters in industry today. Follow that with the different means employed to make pottery waterproof with resin, pitch, gum, the accidental discovery of sand fusing with wood ash, lead based 'glazes', salt and brine. Doulton's salt glazed stoneware drain pipes seem a natural development in the sequence, but how easy it is to overlook that with the improved vitrified body the glaze is unnecessary as Doulton proved.

Although Desmond Eyles happens to be an authority on Doultons and the London scene, his talk was fascinating throughout. He showed us a variety of pots, old and more recent, including several by Anita Hoy, some by Arthur Barlow, an old Rhineland Pot, a Bellarmine of 1660, pots for Spruce Beer to keep the Navy free from scurvy, and an early 19 century hip flask and an ink pot of the type brought into big demand by the introduction of the Penny Post.

The coffee interval was unusually absorbing as we were given other firsthand accounts of pottery and sculpture in London in the 1920's. A gentleman in the audience who had pioneered the "Greene King" panels now well known in East Anglia had fascinating stories to tell.

DEREK TATTERSALL

BOOK REVIEW

1. "SHINO AND ORIBE CERAMICS"
by R. Fujioka

Phaidon Press Ltd. 177pp £8.50

This is a book for the specialist, whether collector or student of Japanese pottery, or aesthetic reader. In common with most Japanese Art publications, the standard of printing and binding is high. Considering the present value of Japanese currency and the well printed photographs (248 of them - several in colour) on good quality paper, the price is reasonably moderate.

But why for the specialist? This is easy to answer but difficult to explain fully. It is the understanding of the aesthetic feelings of artist and the reader, which can only develop through considerable deep study and practice in making the ceramic type. The casual reader will not gain the value of this well written volume, originally composed in Japanese but translated into clear purposeful English (as far as the aesthetically untranslatable Japanese words will allow).

The common bond of both wares is the Tea Ceremony, the history of which is given (not the ceremonial procedure). These wares were produced in the Mino area, near Nagoya, in central Honshu, the Japanese mainland, from the 16th century, principally for the Tea Ceremony as it changed from using fine, delicate Chinese porcelain to the soft, gentle, rustic Korean ware. Herein lies the sensitivity of Oribe and Shino pottery, and the book goes a long way in transposing this feeling to the heart of the reader.

The many photographs show the spontaneous brushwork on the bold shapes of the various bowls, ewers, serving tables and dishes, leaving the text to describe methods, history and the meanings of many Japanese names of the utensils.

This is a book to be owned with pride by the 'Specialist', since, although it should be in all comprehensive libraries, it is one that needs to be studied constantly.

If this review appears to be somewhat insufficient to the present reader I can only suggest a thorough examination of the book would help to elucidate matters, since there is so much contained therein that one could write reams and still omit main characteristics.

S. R. ROMER

BOOK REVIEW

2. "PETER VOULKOS"

by Rose Slivka

Patrick Stephens Ltd.

142pp + xiii

£19.95

At first sight this book may seem to be expensive for its objective in describing the life and work of one artist in America. But, after reading through its immaculately printed pages of text and studying the many black and white photographic illustrations interspersed with beautifully coloured examples of his art, one can see the book-value behind his story.

Let me now state, straight away, that Voulkos's work may easily be frowned upon by many observers as being 'avant-garde', non-realistic, or anything else one can say to be derogatory about it.

Here, however, is a man, born in 1924 of Greek parents, in the U.S.A., who served in the U.S. Forces and, after the war, was advised to "Take up Art". Which he did. After two years, in 1948, he had to work with clay in order to major. At first he rebelled but then capitulated. And this latter was the best thing he ever did. He 'lived' clay! He crawled back through windows at night to work after the college was closed. Using primitive tools, raw dug local clay and a minimum of slip glazes and colouring oxides, he made beautiful bottles in all shapes. Later, his jars and sculptures showed his rebellion against the 'ordinary' in art. Several potters have protested indeed against his new style.

What is this contribution of Voulkos to modern ceramics? It is called 'non-technique' technique. Basing his work upon the cylinder, the dome or sphere, the disc or plate, and the slab, he lets the clay dictate as he throws - and when he throws he says, "The whole thing is yourself and the clay in balance". Simplicity - and the easiest way to make pots - are the keywords.

He is called a dynamic innovator. This is very true, and this first book about him explains in very great detail how he innovates. Already he has a considerable following, and his work and style are spreading over increasingly vast areas.

Rose Slivka, who knows him well, is the editor of 'Craft Horizons' and has written a truly remarkable book, which fully deserves to be on every possible library shelf. As stated at the outset, it is a fairly expensive book, but one that will be worth its money (mere money!) many, many times over.

S. R. ROMER

BOOK REVIEW

3. "PORTRAIT OF THE POTTERIES"
by W. A. Morland

Robert Hale Ltd. 192pp £4.80

This is one of the large series of "Portrait" books, mainly about Counties, Islands and unified areas of Britain. So what kind of book is it? Historical? Geographical? Sociological? a Travelogue? Or about the craft of Pottery? It easily could be all of these.

It is written in a pleasant chatty style and is packed full of interesting stories, each verified from court records, as in the case of the Adams brothers who dug clay from the road in 1448, or from Acts of Parliament, or local written statistics.

All the coal, clay, marl; and the roads for easy transport, were there in the Potteries and, when new, white clays were brought in from afar, the towns and their potteries expanded. Many of the names on local tombstones can show the extent to which the families gathered to work in the ever increasing potteries.

The book is divided into seven chapters; one for each of the 'Five Towns' - plus the two which were not considered to be members - Newcastle-under-Lyme and Fenton with its modern vehicle registration of VT (five towns).

I found this book as gripping as any thriller or romance which is difficult to put down once the reader has begun to read it. Ask for it from your library - in college or school; use it for one of the subjects mentioned earlier - but do read it!

S. R. ROMER

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

O B I T U A R Y

DON BYRNE

I was very sad to hear the news of Don's sudden death recently. I first met him some years ago in connection with his work for gypsy families.

His interest in pottery was stimulated by his son Felix, who is hoping to become a potter one day. He joined the Guild last year and took a keen interest in all the activities.

He was a talented and inventive person with a fresh and practical approach, and was soon involved in building a wheel and wood fired kiln in the garden of his home, and helped Felix build his own wheel.

I learnt a great deal from him and will miss him, both as a friend and fellow pottery enthusiast.

Felix is continuing his interest in pottery and is very keen to attend our meetings. He is working at the weekends at the pottery in St. Albans.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathy to Don's family.

JUNE WAITE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

As a member of the Guild I would like to donate this poem which I hope you may print in a future Newsletter.

Saddened I received the news,
In that hour I recall my feelings,
As though a rock had been removed,
As though a part of this body
Had been cut off, a limb,
A voice, a light gone out.
No judgement here a viewpoint
Is as a prism, each facet
Through contact made clearer
Still - I recall that rainy day
We came with a battered umbrella
Running through the torrent;
He sat alone atop the stairs,
And gave in lucid terms
The content of his life.
One thing remained embedded,
One phrase impressed forever in
My mind, as after we sat in that
Fine old tea house overlooking
The Cathedral Square:-

"When the light comes flooding in
we know that we are changing the world",

I squeezed the lemon, it was sharp,
And good, clear and true.

The poem is called "A Tribute to Bernard Leach"

ANON

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

URGENT MEMO FROM THE CHINA PAINTER TO
THE POTTER AND POTTER'S SUPPLIER

Even if most of you will not acknowledge the fact - we do exist! Among our ever increasing numbers we have great craftsmen and artists - we also have extremely bad examples, but then so do you.

We have recently formed the British Association of Porcelain Artists. One reason being to inform Ceramists, Potters, Artists and manufacturers that we will have our finest work recognized for what it is: years of work and learning for the traditional methods; exciting and creative as in contemporary pieces.

In order to produce our best work we must know as much about glass, the body of the ware and firing as the Potter. Your first objection is that we do not produce the plate. We could, given the necessary equipment, but we choose to spend our precious time mastering the many problems in on-glaze techniques.

A little research will show that great painters of the past at Spode, Crown Derby, Minton, etc., were not expected to produce their ware. They are recognized today as being great artists and craftsmen.

Please give us a fresh look. We admire and appreciate your work - could you break the voodoo and admire ours?

For further information contact either:

BASIA WATSON-GANDY,
(CONTEMPORARY),
SQUIRREL COURT,
HARE LANE,
LITTLE KINGSHILL,
GREAT MISSENDEN,
BUCKS.
HP1 6OE

MARIE RICHARDS,
(TRADITIONAL),
SOUTH VIEW HOUSE,
4 WHACKHOUSE,
YEADON,
NR. LEEDS,
YORKS.

TEL: GREAT MISSENDEN 3784

TEL: RAWDON 503580

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Digby Stott,

I have recently moved to Tring and have become a member of the Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild.

At present I work at a one-man pottery workshop near Borehamwood, which has not been very satisfactory over the last year, particularly during this winter. All my work was fired in a catenary arch wood fired kiln to stoneware temperature, and I would like to build another with about 50-60 cubic foot packing spaces, and would like to be able to continue working on a full time basis if possible.

Do you know of any Guild member who knows of suitable premises or preferably has room on their own property to set up and share a workshop and would like to fire pots in a wood fired kiln?

I would welcome any idea and much appreciate any help with this matter.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul McCarthy,

16 Adams Way,
Tring, Herts.
HP23 5DY

Tel: Tring 6331

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1. RAKU FIRING

On: Saturday, 7th July 1979 : 11.00 a.m.
At: Mildred Slatter's
The White Cottage, Framewood Road, Fulmer, Bucks.

This is a happening run by David Burns. Members should bring along their pots for firing.

A lot of literature has been produced on the subject of Raku. Potters usually love it or hate it. If you are not sure how you feel about Raku come along and find out.

Bring along some food and wine. If you don't like the Raku firing you can always eat, drink and be merry.

2. SUMMER GARDEN PARTY

On: Saturday, 14th July 1979 : 8.30 p.m.
At: Your Editor's Cabbage Patch
"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts.

(On the road from Hemel Hempstead to Chesham,
opposite the Boxmoor Golf Course)

Usual arrangements prevail - please bring food and wine suitable for a party, savoury and sweet, and sufficient for two. If you wish to bring a friend please do.

3. PITSTONE OPEN DAY

On: Sunday, 15th July 1979
At: Pitstone Museum of Rural Bygones
Pitstone Green Farm, Tring.

Come and help the Guild members to demonstrate. See the collection of old farm implements and country crafts.

4. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

16th September 1979 : Coach trip to Cambridge

12th October 1979 : A.G.M. (provisional booking)

4th November 1979 : Pendley Day Conference

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Guest Speakers : | Mick Casson | : Throwing |
| | Bennet Cooper | : Slipware |
| | Mildred Slatter | : Pierced Ware |
| | Geoffrey Stone | : Sculptural Saltglaze |

Booking form etc. will be available early July

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5. PLANNED MEETINGS

Late November : Glaze Meeting

December : Christmas Party

--oOo--

ANOTHER POT CRAWL!

Last year's trip to Wrecclesham Pottery and Nigel Wood at Meon Pottery was a great success.

This year we are planning to visit the Cambridge area.

As well as visiting two potteries we are planning to have lunch in Cambridge with time available for a visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum with its superb collection of English Slipware and majolica and to call at Kettles Yard.

There will be one coach seating 52 people and the cost for the day, excluding lunch, will be £3.00 per head.

Book now for Sunday, 16th September.

Full details of time and coach boarding arrangements will be sent during August.

I wish to book a place for the Pot Crawl -

Saturday, 16th September 1979 - and enclose £3.00

Signed

POTTERS DIGEST

Letter from Beds & Bucks Observer, 24th April 1979

BRICKS MAKE HISTORY

Sir - Buckinghamshire County Museum is again appealing for information on a local industry.

A survey is being undertaken on small local brickyards in the county between 1850 and 1950. Most of these small yards had closed down by the Second World War but were once very numerous, as old trade directories show.

Detailed lists have been compiled of all brickyards known to have been in existence during this period. The museum would now like to hear from anyone who actually worked at such a yard, or from anyone who possesses photographs or documents relating to brickmaking in Buckinghamshire.

Social history research assistant, Mr. Philip Chaundy, would be most grateful for any help the public were able to give. Letters to The County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, (tel: 82158).

R. EWLES (MISS)
Keeper of History and
Archaeology,
Bucks County Museum.

A S T O N P O T T E R Y

"DECORATION"

1st and 2nd September 1979.

Mick Casson demonstrating domestic ware with special emphasis on decoration techniques.

Booking Code D.

Cost for this course = £20

"CLAY AND GLAZES"

5th October 1979

Special one day seminar by Harry Fraser.

Booking Code E.

Cost for this course = £10.

"DOMESTIC WARE"

6th and 7th October 1979

Ray Finch of Winchcombe Pottery will demonstrate throwing and finishing techniques of large pots and domestic ware.

Booking Code F.

Cost for this course = £20

Only light refreshments are included in the cost of each course. Students are requested to supply their own lunches and a seat of some description.

Board is not included but should you require accommodation we can advise you.

Each course starts at 10.00 a.m. and finishes around 5.00 p.m. with an hour off for lunch.

To secure a place please fill in the booking form below and send it to Dorothy Pennicott, Aston Pottery, Remenham Lane, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon.

The balance to be paid one week in advance of the course starting.

For further information please contact Dorothy Pennicott : Henley 2603

BOOKING FORM

I wish to attend Course No. ... and enclosed you will find a deposit of £5.00 only.

Name

Address

.....

.....