

BULLETIN
FEBRUARY
1989

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday 10th February at 8 pm at Northchurch Social Centre,
Bell Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamsted:

EMMANUEL COOPER has been a potter since 1963 and has reached a state of eminence which makes further comment here superfluous. He will talk about his main line of work which is the formulation of glazes for high temperature electric firing.

Friday 10th March at 8 pm at Northchurch.

DEIRDRE BURNETT - Demonstration of porcelain work.

Correction Please note that on the Membership Programme Card, April 4th should read April 14th.

COMMITTEE

The following are at present serving on the organizing committee:-

Brian Bicknell
Gill Brown
Christine Bull (Chairperson)
Murray Fieldhouse (President)
Ruth Karnac
Gillian Longland (Deputy Treasurer)
Winifred Mitchell
Alan O'Dell (Vice Chairperson)
Ray Phipps
Tony Plessner (Treasurer)
Frances Reynolds
Jean Sedgley
Digby Stott
Roger Winn
Valerie Williams (Secretary)

NORTHCHURCH FESTIVAL

To mark their 25th Anniversary, the Northchurch and District Association, whose hall we use for our meetings, are holding a Craft Exhibition over the weekend April 29th - May 1st. The Guild has been invited to take part. Further details in the next Bulletin, but this seems an opportunity to mount a small Guild Show.

RUSSELL COLLINS

Thrower of Big Pots - 13th January 1989

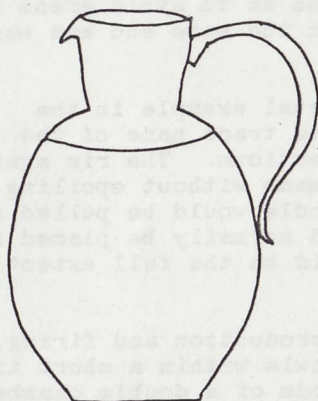
Whether it was the mild, dry evening, or word got around that throwing of big pots was going to be entertaining and instructive at the same time, I do not know, but there was a large attendance.

Russell was a teacher in woodwork etc at a school and decided to learn pottery at Harrow. It appears that it was the period of the Workshop Ethic when throwing was the centre of learning and how your work was judged.

Murray opened the evening with anecdotes about persons of common acquaintance. In response, Russell related an experience he had with the Oxfordshire W.I. Apparently they placed him on a stage, completely out of sight of the ladies. He was then placed in front of an arc of seated ladies, all of whom sat in eager anticipation. Unfortunately the water and slurry sprayed the front row. Not to be deterred an efficient person devised newspaper masks with eye holes cut out in the appropriate places. This presented Russell with the amazing sight of newspaper masks and aprons like a Greek tragedy. I wonder what our previous speaker Jed Hoile would have made of this role of audience participation.

I still see demonstrations of potting skill as wonders to behold, as I am still a novice of limited experience. The thought of handling up to 20 lbs of clay in one or even two sections impressed me greatly. It was unfortunate that Russell distorted a few of his prepared pots while applying the car brakes. This did not matter greatly as he demonstrated how to centre his bat upon a pad of clay and make a perfectly fitting lid, completing a cider jar and a water jug within 20 minutes. The leading or top edge is first heavily scored and wetted. A collar of previously thrown clay is then placed firmly upon this prepared edge, tapped down and thumbed down to expel any trapped air. It is interesting that the bottom section of the cider jar and the water jug had common shapes and height. The throwing of the top decided the eventual use.

SAME SHAPED BASE USED FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

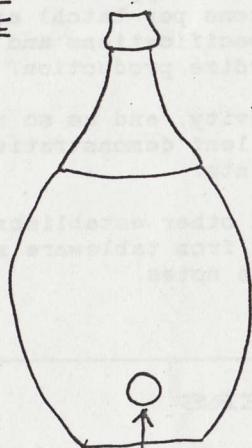


JUG



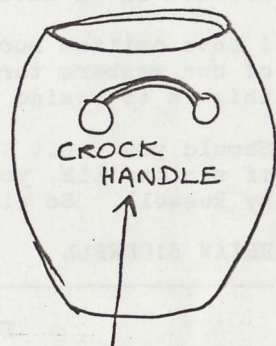
PULLED HANDLE
WITH THUMB
Moulding
DOWN THE CENTRE

SAME
SHAPE



CIDER
JAR

SMALL THROWN
COLLAR



THUMBED ONTO
POT AND THEN
ROUNDED

All rims are boldly made by turning the rim edge back on itself to give strength physically and aesthetically. This was developed into the throwing of a gallery for a lid.

He showed four methods (one of which was by Michael Cardew), used for pots, bread crocks and casseroles. He likes to have the smooth glazed edge inside so as to avoid areas of possible dirt. Each method achieved the same end and was selected for its eventual use.

The tall jug was based on the mediaeval example in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, hence its trade name of the 'Oxford'. This was thrown in two sections. The rim again was strong and the pouring lip was made without spoiling the line of moulding. A substantial handle would be pulled and fixed and a bread crock handle would normally be placed near the base below the spout. This would be the full extent of the decoration.

Much was said about the methods of production and firing. As he had to produce 2000 or 3000 bowls within a short time, it goes without saying the old methods of a double chamber kiln for gloss firing and bisque are now too slow. This needed a firing time of a week. The new way, using a trolley kiln takes about 12 hours, so technically two firings a day are possible, though in practice it is once a day and is fully automatic. The reduction appearance is now added with a little oxide. Clay (20 tons per batch) and glazes are now made in Stoke to his specifications and trucked in to save time and to standardize production.

I have omitted much in the name of brevity, and as so many of our members turned up for the excellent demonstration, this is to remind them of the main points.

Should you visit Trust House Forte and other establishments of similar ilk, you will possibly dine from tableware made by Russell. So please look and compare notes.

BRIAN BICKNELL

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Libby Keeling would like to hear from anyone who took successful photos of Jed Hoile and his masks, as her camera failed.
