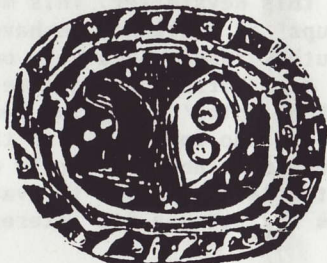




DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 1990

A Happy New Year to all our readers - even though you don't deserve it. Only three entries to the Christmas Limerick Competition (all from the same person!), and none for the 'Find the Potters' or 'My Favourite Pot' competitions. But you're not going to get away that easily: the closing dates for all competitions have been extended; Christmas is out of the way; there are still prizes to be won; so there is no reason why you shouldn't have a go.

Thanks to all contributors to this Newsletter. This month, in addition to the usual 'write-ups' of meetings, we have a review of the Harrow Exhibition by Ruth Karnac, and a note on Pottery Books (with a personal slant) from Murray. Perhaps we can persuade Murray to make his 'Book Notes' a regular feature. We are lucky to have several members who contribute to the Newsletter regularly, but it would be unfair to rely on them indefinitely, and it would not help to achieve the variety which is needed if the Newsletter is to increase its interest. Need I say more?

All contributions for the next issue should reach me by February 24th at the very latest.

PS There have been a few more competition entries since this was written. But keep them rolling in.



Picasso's
ceramics

GUILD EVENTS

Anthony Phillips

Friday 9th February at Northchurch Social Centre,
8-00pm Northchurch, Berkhamsted.

A demonstration of domestic
slipware.

Guild Exhibition

July 1st - July 7th at The Cow Byre, Ruislip

This is a first reminder of the
exhibition so that you can
prepare work in good time. There
is no theme this year, but 'crazy
teapots will be welcome. More
details later.

OTHER EVENTS

Surface manipulation in stoneware and porcelain

August 12th-18th

Missenden Abbey, Gt. Missenden,
Bucks HP16 0BD
(Tel. 0494 890295)

Gordon Cookes course at the
Missenden Summer School.
(details from above address)

A brush with clay

27th March - 7th April at Johnson Wax Kiln Gallery,
Mon-Fri 11.30am-5.30pm The Maltings, Farnham,
Saturday 10am-4.30pm Surrey

Exhibition of ceramics by Wey Ceramics (an
associate member group of the CPA),
paintings by Wendy Rapley and Jonathan
Minshull. (Information from 0252-716315)

NEW MEMBERS November 1989 -January 1990

Akemi Moriuchi,	101 Hutton Grove, Finchley, London, N12 8DS (01-445-3784)	Student
Lesley Reeves,	10 Bellerby Rise, Luton, Beds. LU4 9DU (0582-571096)	Handbuilding Mishima
Pippa Crowson,	Fiddlers Green, Dodds Lane, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks. HP8 4EL	
Doug Jones,	114 Norfolk Road, Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 1LA (0923-770913)	30 years a potter
Michael Swanborough,	6 Tenzing Drive, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 7RR (0494-24005)	

West Marshall, 118 White Hill,
Chesham, HP5 1AR
(0494-785969)

Teacher at Harrow

POTTERY BOOKS FOR THE NEUTRAL 90s

Murray Fieldhouse

With education directed towards conformity, what will become of CRAFTS as commitment and a sense of vocation become suspect? CRAFTS in the coming decade are likely to become over-compensatory (ART) or backward looking. This will be reflected in the books published.

There will be a nostalgia for the 50s and 60s and all who potted in them. Strictly the period began in 1940 with the publication of Bernard Leach's Potters Book. However, its impact was a post-war phenomenon. Tanya Harrod will write the definitive book on the subject, but also the four main auction houses will commission books slanted at the collector, and written in the joint authorship of dealer and museum lackey.

Now that Ceramic Science has taken off into the stratosphere, both actually and in its practitioners heads, the more down-to-earth works of the turn of the century will be slightly revised, updated and reprinted - books such as Bourry's Treatise of the Ceramic Industries, Searle's Encyclopaedia of the Ceramic Industries, Hainbach's Pottery Decoration, and Binn's Manual of Practical Potting. The Gladstone Pottery will print facsimile editions of the Notebooks of Albert Francis Wenger. Nigel Wood, recognising that the task he has set himself is endless, will publish the material he has researched todate on Oriental Materials and Methods.

The publication of secret recipes will be complemented by secret lives. If the life of Eric Gill by Fiona McCarthy can provide us with so much titillation, just imagine what the lives of the craftworkers from the 50s and 60s will reveal to stimulate the anodyne 'CV motivated' of the 90s. And in addition, the shocking deviation of integrity will be exposed!

***** POTTERS OPEN DAY 1989 *****

DEREK CLARKSON

Brian Bicknell

It is refreshing to have a demonstrator who is craftsman and personality, comic and wit all rolled into one person. That Derek Clarkson is such a person came over in the endless diversions and anecdotes that kept me laughing at the expense of taking notes. Therefore a blow by blow account of his talk is not possible, and I have to rely on the overall impression of this unique 'performance'.

Derek's enthusiasm for his pots and their shapes is apparent from his opinion that they should not be thin and mean, but should be like Dolly Parton, all curves and rounded and a pleasure to hold.

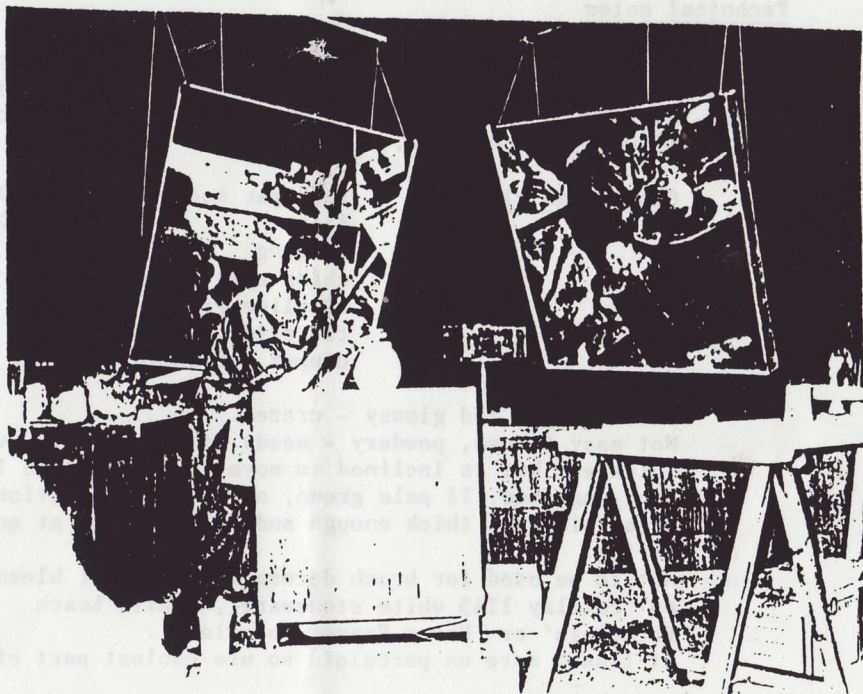
Porcelain is not an easy material to use, especially when the aim is produce a pot or bowl of great delicacy. Derek began by throwing a pot with a narrow neck and a wide flat, flange like rim. This seemed to have a will of its own, perhaps mindful of the attentive audience watching every movement. Like Peter Beard, Derek stressed that the inside of the pot, being difficult to alter, or in this case inaccessible, has to reflect the eventual exterior shape. To illustrate the point, a cracked unfired sample was passed around the theatre to show the fineness of the walls of the pot. Needless to say I broke it en route.

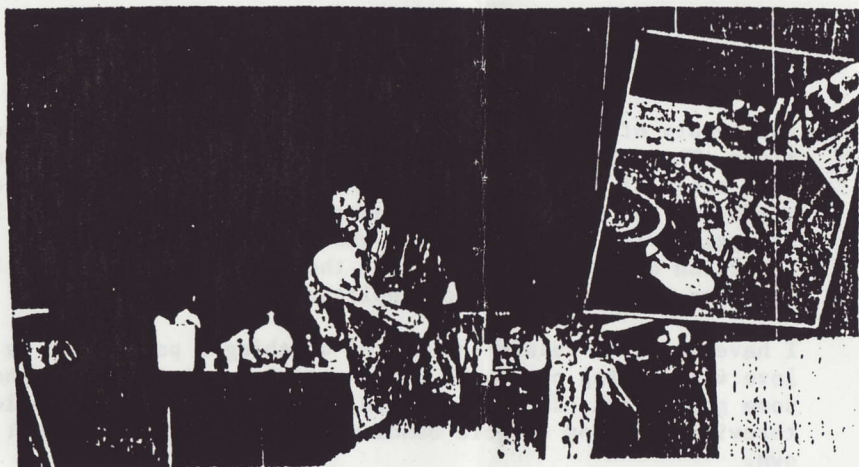
Derek throws pots fairly thick and finishes them by turning. A pot is made as thin walled as practical, without warp or distortion and allowed to dry to leather hard. This is centred and a foot ring is cut. Bearing in mind the shape of the inner surface of the pot, he turns the outer surface to fine limits, managing to avoid cutting through the walls. As Derek said, "It is an amazing fact, that when the turning is completed, the amount of material returned for reuse appears to be more than the original clay". (Three weeks of settling is allowed before recycled clay is wedged and reused).

Those who saw Derek's Sales Table will recognise that the finesse

and beauty of the pots do not rely on balance and proportion alone. The other side of his art is in his use of glazes and his wide range of colours. He kindly handed around his glaze recipe cards for our use. These are reproduced below. Many times I have struggled with decisions as to what clay or temperature, reduction or oxidation will suit the glaze. Here we have it all, together with the method of application.

I have tried to relate the joy of watching a potter who is in love with making pots, who listens to Bruckner's 8th Symphony or some great work of literature on the Third Programme, while throwing, glazing or gold banding yet one more work of art of his own.





Technical notes

All parts by weight. Comments on glazes relate to their use:- in a 12 cubic feet gas kiln; with a firing cycle of 0-900°C approx 5 hours, 900-1300°C approx 5.5 hours; with quite heavy reduction from 960-1300°C; and no soak.

<u>Copper red glaze:</u>	feldspar soda	27
	flint	12
	whiting	9
	china clay	3
	alkaline frit	9
	tin oxide	3
	copper carbonate	1

Red - bright and glossy - crazes.

Not easy to use, powdery - needs to be of above average thickness but is inclined to move. Leave 1/4" to 1/2" at foot unglazed. If pale green, not enough reduction. If clear pink not thick enough and/or oxidation at end of firing.

Not to be used for brush decoration, pigment bleeds when on 'Potclay 1145 white stoneware', 'David Leach Porcelain' or 'Harry Fraser Porcelain'.

It fluxes more on porcelain so use coolest part of kiln.

<u>Khaki glaze:</u>	feldspar potash	30
	china clay	20
	quartz	35
	dolomite	6
	whiting	1.5
	titanium oxide	1
	red iron oxide	6.5

Lively rust - waxy sheen.

Used over or under other glazes with wax resist, (over Celadon, Wood ash and Tenmoku; under Celadon).

Apply average thickness. It 'stays put'.

<u>Titanium glaze:</u>	feldspar potash	32
(speckle, mattish)	whiting	20
	china clay	28
	flint	11
	titanium oxide	6
	talc	3

Pink/grey/green on light bodies, tan/cream on irony bodies.

If applied thinly, soft off white with no speckle.

Pinholes if on too thick. Will mark if scratched with a coin. Not used for brush decoration - pigments bleed.

Good on porcelain. Often used in two (less than average thickness) layers to give two tone decoration, using trailing, wax, pouring. Coolish part of kiln.

<u>Dolomite glaze:</u>	feldspar potash	49
	china clay	25
	whiting	3.5
	dolomite	22.5

Used almost exclusively on a smooth warm toasted body ('Potclay 1117') for sgraffito decoration (cut through when the glaze is dry). Or for wax decoration (painted on to bisque body) because this combination of glaze and

unglazed body contrasts well. Not used for brush decoration - pigments bleed. Coolish part of kiln.

<u>Tenmoku glaze:</u>	feldspar potash	69
	china clay	6.5
	quartz	16
	whiting	12.5
	red iron oxide	7

Bright blue black - glossy - breaks to rust on edges. Tends to craze. Used almost exclusively on a smooth, slightly irony body, 'Potclays 1118 Special Soneware'. If too much rust then apply more thickly and/or put in a cooler part of the kiln. If all black, then apply more thinly and/or use a hotter spot in the kiln. Refire an all black pot in the coldest part of the kiln. Ilmenite gives lighter and brighter brush decoration - also try titanium oxide in hottest part of the kiln.

<u>Celadon glaze:</u>	cornish stone	80
	ball clay AT	5
	molochite (fine)	5
	woolastonite	10
	talc	6
	red iron oxide	1

Light 'copper carbonate' green on white bodies - glossy. Does not craze on porcelain bodies (use of 'David Leach or Harry Fraser Porcelain') not on 'Potclay 1145'. Not easy to use, powdery. Scrape down any thick overlaps. 'Stays put'. Painted pigments stay crisp. Put through finest lawn - better still if ball milled.

<u>Wood ash glaze:</u>	cornish stone	80
	ball clay	36
	china clay	8
	whiting	4
	talc	8
	wood ash	20

Works well on all bodies, particularly light bodies like 'Potclay 1145' and porcelains.

Ashes vary! Try the glaze without the ash. Colour and working properties will vary with the ash.

The ash is shaken through 60's lawn, dry, then added to a wet mix of the other ingredients (which have already been put through 100's), and all together through 80's. Use plenty of water, and draw off the blackish water the following day. Add more water, stir, and repeat over next few days till the head of water is clear.

Pigments for brush decoration:

Blue: cobalt carbonate - 8; red iron oxide - 3; china clay - 0.5.

Rust: red iron oxide - 10; china clay - 0.5.

Rust (on tenmoku): illmenite - 3; china clay - 0.5.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A few years ago our Guild meetings were held at various locations and on different nights of the week, which meant that all members could attend on at least some occasions during the year. But since meetings have been restricted to Fridays, members who are not free on that evening find that they are left with, at most, two events a year - the Open Day and the Pot Crawl.

This has led to a feeling of isolation from the Guild, which is increased by the fact, that without a membership list (the last list was published in July 1978), we do not even know who our fellow members are.

The one encouraging move in this otherwise bleak situation is that Alan O'Dell is trying to revitalise the Newsletter into what he describes as " a thick package of fascinating reading". [Did I?? - AO]. This is very encouraging news for those for whom the Guild had become utterly remote, as it should help us keep in touch with both the Guild and its members. Thanks should go to Alan for his initiative in a project which should succeed, given the vast amount of pottery knowledge which must exist in a membership of over one hundred potters.

If all those who could contribute (ie nearly everybody) sent in just one small item a year, the result should be an interesting multipage newsletter. Even if certain information may already be known by 50% of members, this does not matter as long as some of the other 50% find it interesting: and those who feel that they have no information worth imparting should remember that they can ask for help in a newsletter item.

I do really hope that members are going to respond, and I am one of those who are optimistic enough to be looking forward to some 'fascinating reading'. We are not going to be disappointed - are we?

John Capes

[John has made a new year's resolution - to submit regular items to the Newsletter. Why don't you do the same?]

THE HARROW CONNECTION

Ruth Karnac

Exhibition at the Crafts Council Gallery, 1989

It is difficult for me to imagine how this exhibition would strike someone unfamiliar with the work of Harrow ex-students over the last 25 years, but for me the work of most of the contributors represented there gave an enormous thrill. It struck me as fresh, vital and amazingly new. This effect was very much enhanced, I think, by the unfussy method of display, which enabled most items to be seen in the round, and did not in any way intrude on or compete with the objects themselves. The great variety of styles must have made the task very difficult, but this variety, I'm sure, is the mark of successful teaching.

The creative talent and the generosity of the tutors had a direct beneficial effect on the students. Wally Keeler seemed to know what effects he himself wanted to achieve in clay and he then invented simple tools, elegantly made, to achieve those ends. The resulting pots can be seen to be original, creative works, but I believe that the unseen means to the end were, and are, an integral part of the whole process. Harrow students were expected to make their own stamps and tools etc. to their individual requirements, which may seem commonplace now but was by no means so then.

Patrick Nuttgens writes about this sort of approach in the excellent and very informative catalogue of the exhibition. Another aspect of the Harrow influence is in confirming the validity of making a living and being accepted as an artist in the role of Studio Potter.

Now to the exhibits themselves. John Nuttgens' rounded, robust pitchers, russet coloured with toasting from the flames, were a delight - the best of the Harrow traditional country style. His stencilled teapot was not quite so much to my taste, but demonstrated an interesting technique of decoration.

Wally Keeler's saltglaze seems to me to show the best possible combination of control and chance, using slips both to colour and

give texture to the saltglaze. His lines and stamps of definition give a lesson in restraint and elegance. What a shock those shapes gave us when we first saw them, and how soon we absorbed and accepted them.

Janice Tchalenko's Dart designs have both flamboyance and functional surface and shape, though the all-over squiggle design I find too busy and irritating. There again, the shape of those tall flared jugs was disconcerting at first and then their charm and character won me over.

Daphne Carnegie's shapes and floral decoration are luscious but quieter in colour, and are reminiscent of textile patterns. They work very well, managing to avoid breaking up the forms.

Christie Brown's smoked porcelain torsos I saw as pure sculpture, but using clay gave them a warm, tactile quality. In spite of this I preferred Mo Jupp's figures. They somehow had a more astringent quality and a more powerful impact - unforgettable I thought.

On a different, more decorative level, Suzy Atkin's 'wall hanging' of a jug and background gave promise of many more variations on a theme, but could easily tip over into kitsch.

Brian Newman's London Bridge I found immediately and strongly attractive, and I think it should find its rightful place in the Guildhall or other important civic building in the capital.

Michael Casson's pots were, as usual, consistently satisfying in their combination of simple, strong shapes with subtle decoration part and parcel of the whole.

Colin Pearson's winged pots manage, by some miracle, to have infinite variations, the pink tinges on his great 'chalice' giving it an unexpected touch of grace.

Eileen Nesbitt's abstract constructions are clever but leave me cold. I can admire, but not like them.

It seemed to me that the outstanding achievements in general of the Harrow School are in the combination of innovative techniques with high artistic attainment. I haven't enjoyed an exhibition so much for a very long time. I feel sure the reputation of studio potters in this country can only be enhanced by this show.

MORE PG TIPS

Cut out clay weighing

Brian Bicknell

Winifred Mitchell has passed on this suggestion for those who use a pugmill and do a lot of repetition throwing.

Weigh out a given amount of clay (say 8 oz) directly from the pugmill and use this as a measure to mark a board at regular intervals. Drive in nails accurately at these intervals. When required, mark clay from the pugmill with the spaced nails and use the marks to cut. This will give true amounts of clay without the need to weigh each lump.

FOR SALE

5 round kiln shelves; 21" x 5/8". Unused - surplus to requirements.

£60.00 the 5, or £13.00 each.

Rena Green (01 866 8308)

Soil Hill Pottery began to be better known after Sheila and Robert Fournier spent their honeymoon there in 1963. Soil Hill had been a thriving country pottery with thirteen employees, during the 30s, but by 1963 only one, Isaac Button, remained.

Following the Fourniers' working holiday, John Anderson became involved. He began by taking a series of still photographs, and then in association with Robert Fournier, he made a ten minute film called 'Isaac Button throwing'. When he and Robert realised that Isaac was shortly to retire, they decided to extend this film to show more of Isaac the man, his working day, and the processes of the pottery. Soil Hill is a stark, wind battered place above Halifax, not an easy place to work let alone to film - but what a good thing for us that the film was made.

A slight, smiley looking man, Isaac undertook all the processes himself. He dug the clay, wetted it down, dried it off, loaded it, pugged it, piled it, pugged it again, and finally threw it - to produce some vast pots. He handled lumps of clay which must have weighed 20 kilos as if they were tennis balls, but he never seemed to prepare himself for an exertion or to pause to recover afterwards. His secret was that everything was done at a wonderful, slow, rhythmic pace - or apparently slow, because Isaac could throw a ton of clay in a day! And then there was the firing. Imagine stoking a kiln that takes 48 hours to fire and devours 50 cwt of coal.

Isaac Button's pottery died when he retired, and he himself died in 1969. A group of interested people are now trying to restore the ancient machinery and to make pots there again. It is to become a working museum, a wonderful memorial to Isaac Button. John Anderson's film is a lovely memorial too, and we were privileged to have John at our Film Night to introduce it himself.