



- FIRING THE SALT GLAZE KILN -

DCPG NEWSLETTER

MAY 1990

Hello again. Thanks for all the contributions which have come in while I was away - in fact there are too many for this issue so some are having to be held over till later in the year. This surfeit of goodies also means that there is no space to report on the Christmas competitions in this Newsletter.

The problem is not only one of space, but also of the time it takes to put together a Newsletter, particularly if it is to be topical. So can I make some pleas to future contributors. Please check through what you have written (or better, get a friend to read it through) to make sure that it says what you intend it to say and can be easily read and understood. Please make any drawings suitable for inclusion as they are: it wastes a lot of time if they have to be traced. And, if you are including some topical references (for example, to exhibitions), please give relevant times and dates: not only is this useful to the reader, but it helps the editor to decide which issue it should go in. And finally, please don't let these words inhibit you from writing for the Newsletter.

Material for the next issue should be with me by Friday 1st June. Send it to:

Alan O'Dell, 35 Pondfield Crescent, St Albans, AL4 9PE.

GUILD EVENTS

A presentation by Ray Silverman

Friday 11th May at Northchurch Social Centre
8 pm Northchurch, Berkhamsted

Ray Silverman will demonstrate throwing porcelain, talk about glazes and glaze formulation, and show slides of his work (in stoneware as well as porcelain).

Annual Pot Crawl

Saturday 2nd June

Coach at 8 am

Visits to Michael and Sheila Casson, Jack and Joan Doherty and the Chestnut Gallery at Bourton on the Water.

See elsewhere in the Newsletter for details.

Guild exhibition

1st-7th July at the Cow Byre Gallery, Ruislip.

See elsewhere in the Newsletter for details.

OTHER EVENTS

Royal Forest of Dean College 1990 Summer School

9th - 14th July at Five Acres Campus, Coleford

A ceramics workshop with:
Jack Doherty (porcelain);
Alistair Young (rawglazed stoneware)
Ben Casson (kiln building / firing)
and demonstration by Mick Casson.

Details from:

Judy Harris, Royal Forest of Dean
College, Five Acres Campus, Berry
Hill, Coleford, Gloucs GL16 7JT.
(Telephone 0594-36953)

Lacock Pottery (Chippenham) Holiday Courses

from 22nd July onwards

Courses by David McDowell

Details from:

Lacock Pottery, The Tanyard,
Lacock, Chippenham, Wilts SN15 2LB
(Telephone: 024973-266)

Last year's exhibition was not well supported. The venue this year is the Cow Byre Gallery in Ruislip where we have previously had good results. Nevertheless, we have decided to change a few things to see if this better serves your needs.

- There will be no handling fee though the Guild will still take one third of the selling price. This is to cover advertising, payment to the gallery etc.

- We have booked only one week instead of the usual two. This is to overcome the difficulties of stewarding. We may decide to have one or two 'late nights' say till 7.30 pm.

- We will be asking those who submit pots - and we hope there will be many of you - to contact any committee member if you have difficulty about stewarding. We may be able to arrange a substitute for you if you can't arrange it yourself.

- I would like to ask members, whether as exhibitors or not, to offer themselves as available for stewarding and to contact me for this so that we have a pool of available substitutes.

- There will be no theme this year, but for those who would like a suggestion, how about making a teapot by any method, however wacky or crazy in idea or form, to make a fun display? I don't think art or craft need be solemn.

The exhibition will last from 1st to 7th July. The private view will be on Sunday 1st July, the times to be settled later. We will be repeating the successful feature of a 'take-away' sales table, so do remember this: it can be a good outlet for your 'not quite up to exhibition standard' pots.

I hope that as many members as possible will help to make the 1990 exhibition a great success and a showcase for the Guild. So if you have no pots available START MAKING NOW.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In reply to John Capes letter on the use of Northchurch Hall, from one very selfish Guild member:-

- I do like to know where the hall is. In the past I have wasted a lot of time looking for a new venue in a new area in the dark and rain, map reading not being my forte.
- Northchurch Hall is cheapest to hire in the area, which means my Guild fees are kept down and more of the money is used for interesting speakers.
- It must be a long time since meetings were not held on a Friday, although extra events have been on a weekday and our special events at the weekend. My situation is the exact opposite of John's: Friday evening is my only free evening, and I would have a very limited Guild life if it were changed.

Chris Bull (after prompting by other members)

POT CRAWL 1990

Saturday 2 June

We will be visiting:

Michael and Sheila Casson at Upton Bishop, Ross-on-Wye;
Jack and Joan Doherty at Lea Bailey, Ross-on-Wye;
Chestnut Gallery, Bourton-on-the-Water.

Travel arrangements:

OUTWARD:	Coach leaves	
	St Albans (St Peters St taxi rank)	8.00
	Old Amersham (Bus Station)	8.30 approx
RETURN:	Coach leaves	
	Bourton-on-the-Water	17.45 approx
	Coach arrives	
	Old Amersham	19.30 approx
	St Albans	20.00 approx

Food Please bring your own food and drink for the day.
Bourton-on-the-Water has many teashops but they may be very busy.

Cost £7 per person

Reservations NUMBERS LIMITED

Complete the tear-off strip and return as soon as possible (and in any case by Friday 18 May) to:-
Jenny Templeton, 26 St Leonard's Road, Chesham Bois,
Amersham, Bucks HP6 6DS.
Telephone enquiries to 0494-727243

I wish to reserve places on the Pot Crawl (2nd June) and enclose a cheque for £.... (payable to 'Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild').

I/we will be boarding the coach at St Albans / Old Amersham.

Contact name, address, and telephone number:-

.....

PAM TAMES DOES THE MUSEUMS

Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork of 6th-9th Century British Museum

This was a much larger exhibition than I expected and needed far more than the hour I had allowed. In 1980 a fabulous hoard of magnificent church vessels was discovered at Derrynaflan, County Tipperary (evocative names like this occur throughout the exhibition).

The exhibition was spaciouly arranged, with many of the exhibits displayed so they could be viewed from many angles, important since a completely different design could be on the back of an object. From a potter's point of view it would be the variety of patterns which could prove useful.

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

This is a really gorgeous, small, free museum right next door to Bethnal Green Underground Station, only 15 minutes from Oxford Circus.

It contains a very fine collection of porcelain dolls from various parts of the world. In a couple of cases the whole process of making the dolls is shown via different types of moulds etc.

This summer at Missenden Abbey a whole week (12th-18th August) will be devoted to making porcelain dolls. In the week last year most students made 2 dolls and the end results were really beautiful.

Exhibition of Scandinavian Ceramics and Glass V&A Museum

It was indeed interesting to see that sometimes one needed to look quite closely to decide whether a bowl, plate or decorative object had been made of clay or glass. It came as a personal shock to realize that what had seemed very new in the 50's or 60's now looked quite old hat!

Italian painting before 1400 National Gallery

This is a small, free, well organized exhibition. It shows all the pigments and tools used to produce these very golden paintings, and includes photographs of a modern craftsman reproducing similar work. The exhibition was made possible because of the survival of a manual from that period describing in detail how such works of art were produced.

One could also sit quietly and watch a video on the subject - if not interrupted, as I was by some maniac dashing through to slash a painting to pieces!

Once the introductions were completed we settled down to watch a short slide show on the construction of an oil fired kiln used for salt glazing. The kiln (based on one used in the yard at Loughborough College) had an interesting plan form using a cross-draught arrangement. The main chamber was built of fire bricks for the chamber while more traditional bricks were used for exterior surfaces: the whole was held together by a strong angle iron frame structure. Between the two brick walls Gus had built a thermal barrier of ceramic fibre. The Loughborough kiln is of catenary arch design. This one was constructed with an arch of square and tapered bricks springing from a soffit built into the walls. The wooden supporting structure was removed by sliding it forward when the vault was completed.

To reduce the weight on the arch, ceramic fibre was used as a covering; this varied in thickness from 4" to 8" according to the position over the arch. What went on top of this I am not sure.

The rest of the slides showed various pots with their characteristic salt glazes. The glazing process involves the introduction of salt into the kiln where the intense heat causes it to volatilize, and to coat every part of the pots and kiln walls. The salt is contained in small wrapped packets of newspaper so that the quantity and rate of introduction can be controlled.

Every mark on a pot, whether scratched, applied or dotted with slip shows up to a remarkable degree by the salt glaze. Colours are obtained by the use of varying clays and slips containing cobalt or other oxides. Sometimes oranges and blushes of colour are obtained by controlling the position of the pot within the kiln and the density of packing.

Gus biscuit fires all his pots using Economy-7 electricity as this reduces the cost of oil firing, and saves on some breakages.

After the coffee break Gus demonstrated some making techniques.

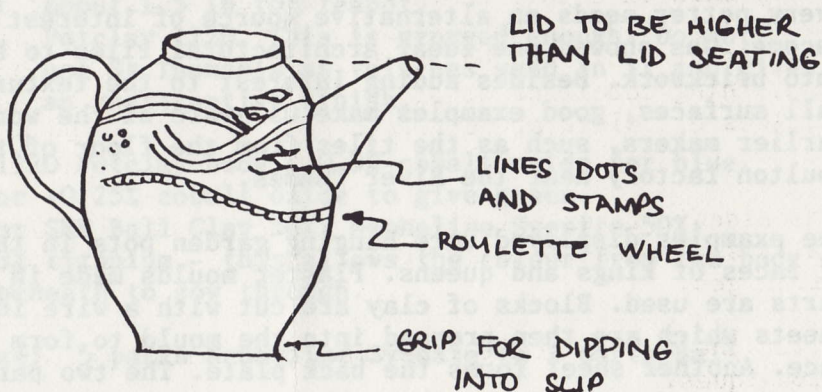
(a) The Nottingham mug

These are simple mugs with Nottingham Castle and City Logo impressed on the side. It is not easy to impress a stamp on a leather hard surface. Gus's method is to dampen the surface a little, to apply a little clay to the site, to dip the stamp in water and to create the impression. By wetting the stamp, the release from the clay is clean and no clay is picked up.

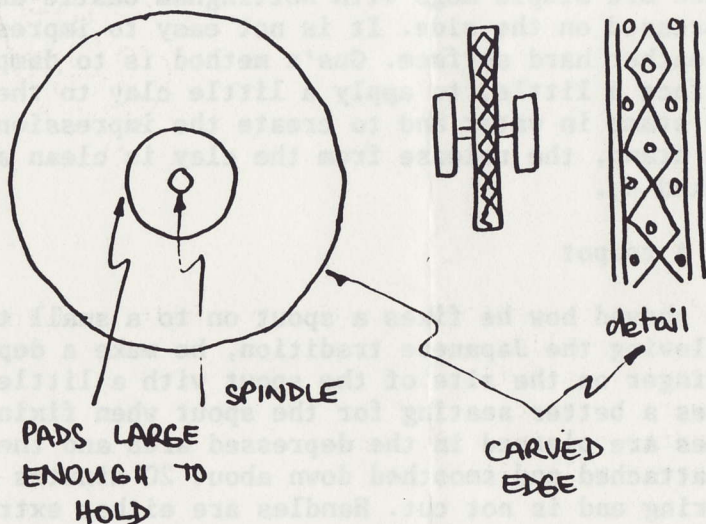
(b) A teapot

Gus showed how he fixes a spout on to a small teapot. Following the Japanese tradition, he make a depression with a finger on the site of the spout with a little water. This gives a better seating for the spout when fixing. About 24 holes are pierced in the depressed area and the shaped spout is attached and smoothed down about 20 minutes later. The pouring end is not cut. Handles are either extruded or pulled according to need.

Decorating is a personal thing which can vary from nothing to excess. Gus maintains that the design should incorporate the handle and the spout. By using simple tools, he draws double and triple parallel lines on the surface. Roulette wheels wheeled across the surface complement the drawn lines enrich the effect. Stamps, as applied on the Nottingham mug, are used to tie the whole together.



A ROULETTE WHEEL



THREE TOOLED TOOL

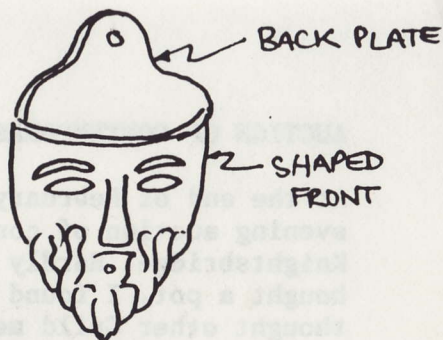


(c) Press moulds.

Every potter needs an alternative source of interest and income. Gus showed one idea, architectural tiles to be built into brickwork. Besides adding interest to the texture of wall surfaces, good examples make us aware of the work of earlier makers, such as the tiles from the floor of the Doulton factory near the River Thames.

The examples displayed were hanging garden pots in the shape of faces of kings and queens. Plaster moulds made in three parts are used. Blocks of clay are cut with a wire into sheets which are then pressed into the mould to form the face. Another sheet forms the back plate. The two parts are slurried and pressed together when leather hard.

PRESS MOULDED
HANGING POT



Technical notes

Wads: Used to stand pots on in the salt kiln, and to separate pots from lids.

- 2 parts plain flour
- 1 part china clay
- 2 parts calcined alumina
- 2 parts molochite

Batt wash: Not used in the salt glaze kiln as the salt gets under the batt wash, attacks the shelves and eventually destroys the shelves.

Kiln walls: Coated with a glaze, in this case Celadon, to stop the salt being absorbed by the walls.

Plaster: The stamps are made of British Gypsum Cristicial Moulds are made from High Density Potters Plaster from British Gypsum.

Clay body: About 1.5 lb for teapot.

Potclay 1120. This is grogged enough. Do not use St Thomas's as this has sand in it and gives an unattractive finish.

Slips: 1120 Potclay body + 0.5% cobalt oxide for blue.
or +0.25% cobalt oxide to give green.
or SMB Ball Clay 50%; Nepheline Syenite 50%;
8% titanium - this allows the colour from the body beneath to show through.

Shino glaze: 5 parts Nepheline Syenite to 2 parts Ball clay.

AUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS

Pam Tames

At the end of February I had the opportunity to attend an evening auction of contemporary ceramics at Bonham's in Knightsbridge. Hardly daring to breathe for fear of having bought a pot, I found it an interesting experience and thought other Guild members might like to know what some of the pots in their collections might be worth.

An interesting glazed vase by Dora Billington fetched £130, and a 6" stoneware bowl by Ruth Duckworth made £100.

An elderly Japanese man, to whom money seemed no object, bought several Bernard Leach and Hamada pots. A small powder pot of 1960 by Bernard Leach, with a very loosely fitting lid and unusually colourful decoration in blue, white and orange, fetched double its estimate at £850. One of his standard large pilgrim bottles fetched £3800. An ordinary brown lidded coffee pot fetched £240 (please note this, the Guild member who bought one in Oxfam for £1). His framed brush drawing of a fish fetched £2000, whilst his view of Lake Shinju raised £3200.

Picasso had the cheek to decorate flat dishes with painted birds. Somebody paid £10000 for one which was said to be from an edition of 500. Various other painters such as Quentin Bell and John Piper have also used flat plates like painting canvases.

Mary Rogers had a lot of delicate porcelain pots in the auction which all fetched above their estimates of £200 each.

A splendid 2 pint jug by Mick Casson fetched £180, whilst two beautifully painted and lustred bowls by Alan Caiger-Smith fetched £220 each (actually below their estimates). One was on a white background but the one I particularly liked was on black.

There were a lot of Lucie Rie bowls ranging in price from £1800 to £4500, and a few Hans Coper pots which sold for between £7000 and £14000.