



Its a nerve racking job, editing your Newsletter. At the completion of each issue, I inspect the material left over, and wonder where on earth the next issue will come from. But - up to now at least - the contributions have rolled in, and we have lived to fight another day.

But have you noticed - I know you have - how the same names keep appearing, month after month? We need those names and we are all very grateful to them - but its not really fair; not fair to the individuals who carry the burden of the work; and not fair to the Newsletter which needs more variety in its writing styles and in the viewpoints expressed if it is to keep interest alive.

So, if you've never written for the Newsletter, how about having a go. For a start you could relieve our most regular correspondent, Brian Bicknell, of the task of reporting on one of our monthly meetings: Brian could then perhaps turn his pen to other subjects - and the ball would be rolling.

Thanks to this month's contributors. Material for the September issue should reach me by August 30th. There will be no issue next month.

GUILD EVENTS

Guild exhibition

2nd-7th July at The Cow Byre Gallery, Ruislip
10.30am-4.30pm

Private view Sunday 1st July 11.00am-2.00pm

Summer surprise

Sat. July 14th at Margaret (and Arthur) Ball's
from 4.30pm 4 Selwyn Avenue, Hatfield.
(telephone 0707-260471)

Our Summer garden party, with a practical tool making workshop. (See Arthur's letter). Please bring food and drink to share.

OTHER EVENTS

Clay and fire

1st-15th July, 2-6pm
closed mon. and tues.

at Chiltern Open Air Museum
Newland Park,
Chalfont St Giles, Bucks
(02407-71117)

An exhibition of pottery by Doug Jones

ARTHUR BALL EXPLAINS

For the benefit of good relations in my home perhaps I ought to point out that the garden party is being held at Margaret Ball's house.

The 'Summer Surprise' is anxiously awaited by both of us; what has the Guild in mind?

It is also worth saying that the 'Tool Making' bit came about because I volunteered (my time in the Navy ought to have taught me never to volunteer) to help someone on a tool making session. Tools so far as I can see are very simple in the pottery craft but nevertheless some good ideas can be filched from other potters. May I suggest that everybody brings along a favourite tool; we will supply a wheel, clay and other simple needs.

I suppose what is being said amounts to this. "Don't expect to go home with an armoury of tools but between Guild members you may get some good ideas". Murray could bring his toolbox for instance and Digby his files.

Arthur.

NEW MEMBERS February - May 1990

Wendy Beech
'Killarn'

"Evening classes - and wish to
learn more"

Old Daswood Hill
Studley Green
High Wycombe HP14 3XD (telephone 0494-482187)

Michelle Butler "I have a hand in Ceramics and wish
118 White Hill to carry on with my own work"
Chesham, Bucks HP5 1AR (telephone 4269-461)

Victoria Hayes
The Lodge
Bayford Hall
Bayford
Hertford Sg1 38PR

Sue Bull
Oak Tree House
Bushfield Road
Bovingdon HP3 6DR

POT CRAWL 1990

Pauline O'Dell

Not the sunniest of days, which was unusual for a Pot Crawl - its usually blazing hot. We had a packed coach for the star turn, Mick Casson, the visit being a bit of a pilgrimage for some of us. The journey was lovely, and as we escaped the 'South East' the surroundings became greener and more rural and the coach squeezed down tiny lanes originally meant for for sheep flocks and horse vehicles.

My group went to Jack Doherty's pottery first. I'd never seen any of his work before. He and his family welcomed us to a small attractive pottery in an old converted barn whilst outside a Raku kiln simmered, and all around were hills and fields.

Jack demonstrated his unusual system of adding strips and blobs of coloured clay on to a partly thrown pot and then finishing the throwing, thus spreading the shapes and colours around the pot. His inspiration comes from the landscape and the stones of local buildings; and the work ranges from flexible looking bowls and large dishes to teapots and plates. I bought a beautiful white and pink splashed cup and saucer. The cup has a cleverly turned foot,

and the handle is rolled not pulled - which makes a change. Jack's colours are, on the whole, very delicate and subtle, but not in the least predictable. (His sweater echoed his pot patterns, but that was thrown by his mum.)

In the garden Joan Doherty was firing her multi clay, multi colour cats in the Raku kiln. She unloaded it before we left and the garden became full of glowing, coppery creatures.

We then had a big swop over and blocked up the lane again as we left for the Casson pottery. Wobage Farm is surrounded by solid, stone outbuildings, including two Hereford barns. The Elizabethan farmhouse has been restored and the shippens turned into workshops.

There was a lot going on in the pottery. The Cassons (mainly Sheila) are experimenting with a range of domestic ware which they are hoping to produce and sell at a reasonable price only from Wobage Farm. The prototypes were striking, again showing the influence of the landscape in their decoration. Mick's side of the workshop was full of huge round bellied jugs and slimmer more sinuous ones. He explained that the pots decorated with swimming figures were a result of his paying too much attention to the visual effects created by other swimmers in the pool when really he was supposed to be swimming himself to cure his back injury. The figures seemed to submerge and reappear in and out of the surface of the pots.

On the way out we saw a ceramic fibre kiln - only 15 firings and disintegrating! We drew sharp breath - Alan's just built one and we thought it would last forever!

Out into the grassy yard between the barns where the kilns stand. Mick explained his latest finding, how to use less salt by changing the pattern of firing, something all the experts could reproduce but none could explain. He also told us of his planned experiments to use, instead of common salt, sodium compounds which do not contain the corrosive chlorine. How could you not feel sympathy for the environment living in these surroundings.

We were loth to leave; Michael and Sheila Casson were so friendly and entertaining. "Wherever have you been?"

complained the other group, just as we had complained to them when they came to pick us up!

Bourton on the Water was next - notable for the great relief of coffee. The Chestnut Gallery was small but beautifully packed with wonderful Maltbys - amongst other things. We hadn't much time here, but after our intensive sessions earlier I don't suppose we could have taken in much more.

The Pot Crawl Queen, Jenny again did a wonderful job of organisation and deserves a ceramic medal from us all. The driver was jolly good too and joined in all the visits, which was nice. Roll on Pot Crawl 1991 (did I hear a sigh Jenny?)

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE POT CRAWL

Brian Bicknell

Once again the weather held fair, though it was cooler than the previous days. The coach passed through some of most beautiful countryside in Southern England to within a few miles of the Welsh border. In front of us rose the Black Mountains and to the north the Malverns could be clearly seen.

With such a large party, we were split according to pick-up points. The St Albans potters called at Jack Doherty's pottery first and alternated with the second group who went off to the Cassons at Wobage Farm.

We were greeted very cordially by Michael and Sheila Casson. Here we saw work at various stages of completion and decoration.

We discussed the throwing of large pots and the joins in a pot made in two parts. Apparently no attempt is made to disguise the join at the neck. This makes a feature of necessity, much in the way a dressmaker might handle a seam: if you cannot lose it, display it!

Decorating is done in many ways. The pots with swimmers were finished with paper resist, using greens, blues, white and black slips. Others were slip trailed, or wiped off with a sponge or combed in a circular motion or in wavy lines while

the slip was still wet.

Sheila's work was different; she concentrates on cups and saucers, teapots and jugs. It is her intention to design and produce tableware that is within the reach of ordinary folk who enjoy hand made quality and yet will use the pots daily rather than putting them away as treasured pieces.

My main interest rested in the kilns housed under the farm sheds. Such was the heat that sections of the wooden roof supports had burnt away and been replaced with steel joists. One particular kiln proved to be a back-to-back affair with a central chimney. The kilns are wood-fired with locally produced off-cuts and thinnings from the tree plantations on the hills.

Salt glaze has a quality of its own, but it is not environmentally friendly. Experiments with salt glazing at Cardiff may change this. If salt is made into a saline solution and sprayed into the kiln under pressure the ensuing steam laden with the salt will glaze the pots and not pump out chlorine. Each pot has to be used in the same manner as previously. If this proves to be practical, salt glazing could become popular again.

Jack Doherty's small establishment was entirely different. It was in a converted barn attached to the house.

Everything was immediate - from the wheel, to the drying shelves and kiln. Taking about 4 kilos of porcelain, Jack wedged sufficient for a deep bowl. At this stage decoration is not a consideration. The bowl is thrown with thick walls and a heavy base: this helps to support the pot in its initial stages. When this is complete, thin strips of coloured porcelain are added to the walls. These are draped over the rim and worked into the main body. Little pellets of strong colour can be added to highlight the design. I found the simpler bowls, with just 2 or 3 colours the best, although some bowls had up to 6 colours. The colours are prepared using the same porcelain as the body material, with either body stains or oxides wedged in. Manganese is on some occasions problematical due to blistering.

Pieces of clay about the size of a walnut were rolled out

thinly and cut into strips. Great care has to be taken when placing the strips on the pot so as to avoid pockets of air. The edges of each strip or pellet are rounded so that the fingers do not detach them from the pot when throwing recommences.

The thinning of the walls spreads the colour into flame-like shapes and softens the once straight edges.

As soon as the bowl is able to be reversed on its rim without too much distortion, the foot is turned down to reduce the thickness and to produce a footring. Care has to be taken in turning since the added colour is very thin. The rim may be distorted to add interest, or the shape changed completely by compressing the sides into squares or ovals.

All Jack's pots are once fired to 1250-1260°C in a propane reducing kiln. Colours need to be used carefully. The really successful pots offset the colour against a fair proportion of white body. Cobalt is generally restricted to just pellets which take on a comet-like effect when thrown.

The second party missed out on the Raku firing so I cannot comment on this, though I did see some fine lidded boxes being raked out of the sawdust and washed.

I have been on three such outings, each enjoyable as an opportunity to renew friendships and see first class potters in action.

MY FAVOURITE POT

- MORE ENTRIES FROM THE CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

From Stan Romer:

The daylight hours had been spent in a battle between the strong rainy winds and the thin watery sunshine. But as the early evening began to arrive the sun became more powerful and eventually threw its wide, low beams of orange-red light across the room.

Like fingers searching every nook and cranny the colourful rays moved gradually across the table. A bright, reflected,

blood-red glow appeared as if by magic! It grew stronger until quite soon the whole bowl in the centre of the table glistened in the evening sunshine.

The deep 'sang-de-boeuf', 'Chi hung', Lang-yao', 'sacrificial red' or 'rouge flambe', on the Bernard Moore bowl with the reduced copper glaze, call it what you will, is still my favourite pot - in any light.

From Pam Tames:

My Ian Godfrey pot at 4" x 3" fits comfortably into the palm of the hand - a pleasurable necessity in an object which is decorated on every surface including the base.

There is a central barrel shape ending in a funnel-like chimney at one end. At the other end sits a small building, open on all four sides, but with a curving, oriental style roof. Yet it is the donkey in the centre which attracts one's attention; he looks sad and downcast. Perhaps he is weary, after all he is attached to the building - perhaps he has had to drag it along for years!

On each side an over-size flower reaches sideways almost like wheels. But underneath unglazed and toasted brown in the heat, snuggles another more intimate flower.

The matt, white dolomite glaze has sunk deep into the clay and broken away from any sharp edges or impressed patterns, so that the surface, though dipped into one glaze, is broken by many subtle variations in colour, including a very yellowish tinge at the top of the funnel.

It is my favourite pot because of its intricacies and sense of mystery.

And finally from Pauline O'Dell:

A few years ago, a punkish figure sat on the stage at a Guild Open Day discussing Early English ceramic decoration. As he spoke the pots in his hands became alive with vast

pigs and cows, sly cats and wild winged creatures. - This was Andrew McGarva. Inevitably, at the end of the day I staggered away under the weight of a pig, or rather two pigs.

The heavy broad rimmed bowl is blue, grey and ochre, and the largest pig peers curiously out from under one triangular ear whilst snuffling for acorns under feathery trees. It's a solid, reassuring pig and one which smiles, for it can never be bacon. The smile is also because he knows something that most people cannot know - that on the other side of the pot, flat against the pine of the dresser, is another pig of quite a different stripe. This one glances saucily over one shoulder with a 'come and get me air'. It is flexible, flirtatious and definitely not dependable. My fond hope is that one day these two will get together and I shall have a whole row of little piglet pots along my dresser shelf.

AN EVENING WITH RAY SILVERMAN

Brian Bicknell

The evening was divided into two parts of equal interest. Firstly a slide show of pots and a pottery in Israel: secondly a demonstration of throwing a bowl in porcelain, and turning a foot ring.

A collection of Ray's bowls and bottles was assembled for our inspection. This is always a pleasure, as we have that innate desire to handle beautiful objects, to turn them over and inspect the shape and glaze from all angles.

This leads me into the first part of the evening. We viewed a collection of pots which showed a progression of shapes and glazes from the very simplest of bowls to bottles reminiscent of birds eggs in colour and shape. Each slide evoked a memory or an anecdotal aside that kept us amused for an hour or so. One such took Ray back to his formative years. It so happened that the educational powers to be decided to educate the young students in their charge in a skill or art that would make them into useful citizens. Ray drew lines and shapes on paper and silk for screen printing, but liked it little. Silk screen printing and all its mess of inks, frames and paper is an art form that is little

appreciated even today. On one particular day, a little lady came into the classroom and enquired if any person would like to join the pottery department. Just one hand went up, and so started an experience that would last up to now and beyond. The lady was Lucy Rie, and the place was Camberwell School of Art.

To return to the slides. Among them were shots of of the pottery and its products in Israel that employed Ray for 3 years as a technical designer of plates, bowls, casseroles and a host of other things. A long way from Lucy Rie. Simple bands of iron oxide or a double dipping, designed for mass production with an eye on the conservative American market. It appears that ovens in America were small or a dying breed. The casseroles had to be specially made for them.

Ray came back to England and started to to look again at shape, form and colour from nature. Birds eggs provided one of the inspirations. Soft colours with speckles pervade the pots of this period. One particular piece - described by Ray as a bowl with a soft buff/yellow glaze - was almost translucent porcelain, made use of calcined iron oxide passed through a 200 mesh screen. The courser particles were used in suspension in the glaze to give random speckles. The result was soft and pleasing. I cannot describe each pot as I have not got the knowledge or technical ability. Half a lifetime of observance, trial glazes and thought have been merged in the making.

After the coffee break, with the chairs rearranged, we were shown how the pots were made on the wheel. Porcelain appears to have a memory in its platelets. Minute cracks or distortions can appear later in the finished pot, so great care should be taken in preparation of the clay in the first place.

A substantial amount of clay is left in the base so as to support the finely made bowl. When nearly leather hard, the pot is reversed on to the rim. The shape of the bowl is refined and the stem reduced in width by turning. The foot ring is then cut with special care. Using a shaped blade the stem is hollowed out, so that the line of the bowl is continued down across the top of the stem and then up to the body of the bowl again (see drawing). The pot is then stood

upon the footring and the rim which may have been distorted by the clay pads used to hold the pot in place is made true and flaired a little to improve the upward flowing arc. The line and balance of the pot is important as the stem and bowl should appear to grow one into the other without a visual break. Over cutting can lead to warping and distortion when gloss firing, so take care and good luck.

