DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD

NEWSLETTER

JULY

1992

Brunel
THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY
SUMMER SCHOOLS IN CERAMICS & SCULPTURE

A Basic Introduction to Pottery
6-10 July *George Wilson*
Sculpture : Exploring Movement through form and space
6-10 July *Su Jameson*
Mouldmaking & Slipcasting
13-17 July *David Cowley*
Throwing
20-24 July *Brian Dewbury*
Sculpture : Terracotta Modelling from Life
20-24 July *Jo Miller*
Surface Pattern and Decorative Techniques
27-31 July *Paula Gray*
Understanding Glazes and Materials 'Taggs Yard' Method
27 July-1 Aug *Harry Horlock-Stringer*

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Further details from :
The Arts Centre, Brunel University, Uxbridge,
Middx. UB8 3PH. Tel : 0895-273482.
Nearest tube station : Uxbridge (Metropolitan & Picadilly lines)
Nearest B.R. station : West Drayton
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FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPH — Andy Turner Throwing "Patio Pots" at Bedford Pottery, June 1992

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Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome. Opinions expressed in items published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or the Guild Members as a whole. Advertising space is available for future issues, contact the Editor for details. Closing date for items to go in the September Newsletter is 14 August. Please mention the Guild when replying to Adverts. in the Newsletter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

32 Trevelyan Way.
Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 1JH.

5th May, 1992.

The Editor,
D. & C.P.G. Newsletter.

Dear Mervyn,

Never mind the dictionary - a guild is what its members want it to be. It seems that most of us want the bliss of sitting down to an event we haven't had to organise. This is not a moral matter - it is a matter of other demands on our time and energy.

When I was a founder committee member of the Guild, I remember spending most of a day looking at a fascinating building as a possible centre for the Guild. I couldn't afford so much time and so I retired. This early tradition of asking too much of our committee remained. A cycle of overload - few volunteers - more overload - fewer volunteers was established. Most sensible members, if asked to serve, hid under the table and kept very quiet. Those who did serve, sometimes became bitter about the "ingratitude" of the members.

The cycle has now been broken by the division of work into something more like bite-sized pieces and the members can now come out of their hiding places.

It is not helpful if the first to do so is attacked for doing what was asked - making sensible suggestions. The Guild must keep developing to suit its members. Ways must be found to keep the burden on the committee within reason while still keeping the excellent guild we've enjoyed for years - perhaps paid secretarial work, for example. New ideas, or old ones whose time has come, are needed. If the only permitted opinions are from past or present committee members we shan't get very far and if praise of the present is taken to be criticism of the past we shan't get anywhere at all.

Yours sincerely,
Freda Earl.

The Editor
D.C.P.G. Newsletter

G.A.Stevens
84 Kings Road
Berkhamsted
Herts.
HP4 3BP.
Date 8/5/92

Your ref.

Dear Mervyn,

I felt that I had to add another point of view to that expressed by your correspondent Mr./Mrs./Miss Chris Bull, sorry I don't know of which sex; is Chris a topher or a tine ?. I rather assume the feminine gender.

I, like the original correspondent am a newcomer to both the Guild and pottery, and as such am very diffident to put myself forward with my limited knowledge, I too felt that Mervyn was to be congratulated on the new magazine format but would never have dreamed of attempting to write a criticism of Judith Wottons' talk without Mervyns' urging. This was entirely due to my lack of experience and not wishing to appear 'pushy'. Incidentally less my words are misconstrued my dictionary gives the following :-

CRITICISM n. A discriminating judgement; an evaluation.

I will continue to play as full a part in the Guild as I feel I am capable. I am blessed with a very thick skin, but I can imagine other beginners not so endowed being very wary of expressing any opinions whatsoever

Yours Faithfully,
G.A.Stevens.

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63 Ebberns Rd.
Hemel Hempstead
Herts. HP3 9QR
9/5/92

Dear Mervyn,
With reference to Chris Bull's letter in May's Newsletter which followed my own letter to you in March Newsletter:-

Phew! What a stinging attack! What can I say? Sincere apologies Chris Bull for being enthusiastic & positive & bothering to praise someones obvious hard work & care! Guess what? I was potentially a willing volunteer. However if that's the sort of response one gets to stepping tentatively forward it's no wonder the majority of the members stand well back.

Don't worry, Chris, it won't happen again in a hurry!!!

Regards, Linda Bryant.

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41 Coates Lane
High Wycombe, Bucks

Dear Mervyn
As the person who reads the copy, for errors etc., before printing, may I suggest that we bring the broadsides to a halt, regarding the original letter from Linda Bryant. It is an error to go along a path that can cause lasting damage to the Guild & the feelings of members. I understand the reasons & how hard it is for Committee Members, but it is a sad fact that an innocent remark or a completely contrary opinion can ignite a problem waiting below the surface. Please step forward again, in the future, however tentatively,

Brian Bicknell

EDITORIAL

Most of you will have discovered the truth about the Harrow Ceramics event advertised in our May Newsletter, if not then I must explain that it will not be taking place. Not that it was cancelled, simply that the details of the event were erroneously obtained from a 1991 Private View card, which was still stuck to the notice board! My apologies, I really must try to force myself to throw away those pieces of Memorabilia that tend to accumulate in spite of good intentions!

You will find a Membership Survey form with this Newsletter. Do please take a few minutes to complete & return it, your Hardworking Committee really do need the information so that they can help you.

Most Members know Potters & Students who are interested in the activities of the Guild, but are not Members. A Membership Application Form is enclosed for you to give to just such a person, Please encourage the interested outsiders to join us, new blood is always a revitalising force.

I did follow up on the question of selling pots & you will find a brief article & letter on that subject in the following pages.

My thanks to Ruth Karnac, Stan Romer & Tony Stevens for their Articles, also thanks to those of you who have sent letters or provided snippets of information or photographs.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam June 1992

HARROW COLLEGE CERAMICS COURSE

TALK BY WEST MARSHALL & 2 CURRENT STUDENTS:

HILARY ROBERTS & SOPHIE HADAWAY.

West began by giving us a brief history of the course. It was originally to be an N.D.D. course, but the application was refused. Michael Casson and Victor Margrie came to the rescue by initiating a 2-year Studio Pottery Course. It was the first ever such course aimed to equip its students to earn their living as practising potters working either alone or managing a small workshop. A far cry from the usual "art school pottery" of the past. Mick Casson was an inspiring teacher with great practical knowledge and an awareness of the history of pottery. Victor Margrie was a very able administrator and "politician" - a good man on committees and an excellent organiser. They made a great team and the course became a success, with many more applying for places than were available. It comprised repetition throwing, handbuilding (regarded then as a subsidiary), glaze chemistry - taught by Colin Pearson, kiln building by Wally Keeler and tool making.

There were visiting lecturers and regular ones, all of whom were practising potters, giving the whole thing a really practical basis. The first exhibition of work the college put on was by students and staff and was held in the Tea Centre in the Haymarket. Applicants for the course were chosen for their experience and dedication - some were so dedicated that they used to fix some windows so that they could break in to work on a Saturday morning and use the kilns over the week-end - even unpacking cooling kilns and re-packing them afterwards! ((sometimes with disastrous effects) - until someone caught on and stopped it.

West then showed us some slides of work made at Harrow in the sixties - domestic ware in brown, speckled glazes, very much in the Leach tradition. There were other glazes, but the brown/green reduction ones were predominant. After a few years, Victor Margrie left to join the Arts Council and after a brief unsuccessful successor, Mick Casson reluctantly took over for two years - he disliked administration work. After that, Jerome Abbo was appointed. People had begun to tire of the Leach tradition and the demand for change, especially for more colour and variety, was led by Richard Slee who also put new emphasis on design. Assessments became more formalised. Up till the end of the 70s, resources were prodigal and there was much waste; in the 80s, this was no longer so. In addition, student grants became discretionary and many aspiring students were unable to take the course. Increasing numbers came from abroad.

Danny Killick, a repetition thrower par excellence, took over from Jerome Abbo in '84. By 1990, the course had become a B.A. honours course and the Polytechnic of Central London had taken over, partly because their London site was cramped and Harrow has much land. Expansion is planned for the future. Recently they were forced to take many more students with fewer staff and so, regrettably, standards have fallen as individual attention is no longer the norm. For the tutors, the job is very demanding, but also rewarding. All students are over 18 and for most modules are worked in groups. The differing nationalities and cultural backgrounds make for some difficulties, but on the whole are very beneficial. The "music module" is an unusual one - students have to make a musical instrument, play it **and** compose a piece of music. After initial dismay, most of them find it very stimulating and some solutions are very inventive - for instance, a hole in the ground with strings stretched across and plucked. The varying results recorded at different times, "mixed" and played back.

Hilary, who is a first-year student, then described to us something of her life and career so far. She is 29 years old, has a degree in law and has worked in publishing. Meanwhile, she attended evening classes in pottery at Morley college A.E.C. She then knew what she wanted to do with her life and applied to Harrow and was accepted.

At first, students had to copy a set shape in their repetition throwing and only later, work out their own designs and shapes. Every so often they had group criticism and most students found this difficult.

Svend Bayer was one of the visiting tutors and he had them making very large pots, starting off with 15 kgs. of clay. She definitely did not wish to continue along this line. Other activities on the course are drawing, life drawing, printing, etching and outside visits to museums and there was also a successful week-end away in Stoke-on-Trent. There are casting projects, making plaster moulds and all the handbuilding techniques.

They all have to take part in a regular duty of reclaiming clay. A rather more exciting thing is doing their own firing - a very anxious and nail-biting way of gaining experience, as many of us must know. Once a week they have a lecture on history of pottery by Vic Bryant who also teaches glaze technology.

Sophie, who is a second-year student, was always keen on art but at school she hated the art teacher and so she changed to pottery which she pursued through 'O' and 'A' levels. She then took a year travelling in the U.S.A. and then applied to join the Harrow course. She will be in the first group to be doing a third year and the degree course. This course is built on the Modular System and they work in groups. They learn the theory and practice of kiln-building - of many different types of kilns and fuels, one updraught kiln being tall and cylindrical! The making modules include domestic repetition ware and one-off designs. They have to cope with computers and video equipment and photography. Each student has to keep a detailed journal during the second year, used in their assessments.

Some students became disheartened and confused in the second year, partly through not knowing where they were going in the third year. This was partly true of the tutors, also. However, it has stimulated much productive thinking. Students held pot sales and raised £500 which they used to pay for extra tuition and a trip to Stoke to investigate industrial production.

Hilary told us of the financial difficulties of student life in London, especially with regard to housing. She has a part-time job cleaning (in College) which helps, but on top of a 12 hour day for the course, is very tiring. She shares with other students a condemned house owned by the council. Sophie works shelving books in a library. She lives in Southwark so has quite a journey. Students work on various committees such as Health and Safety - e.g. checking that students wear masks in the glaze room. First year students like to socialise with second year ones to find out what's in store for them!

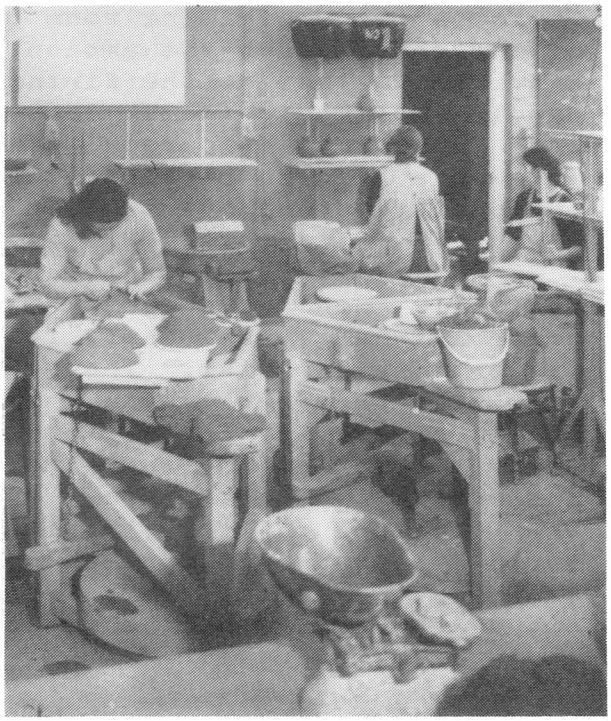
West then explained to us that the third year hopes to bring together the knowledge and experience gained in the previous two years. Third year students will have to propose and work out their own projects in 2 and 3 dimensional work in consultation with tutors. They will also have to write a 6-8000 word thesis on broader themes.

The degree show will be held round about Easter of the 3rd year so that the rest of the time will be available for business studies, workshop organisation studies, questions of insurance, tax, etc. There will also be a visit to the C.P.A. shop, galleries and general discussions on selling.

The Harrow college, from now on being part of the University of Westminster, will be involved in the future development of the campus site and there should be exciting changes ahead. West told us that, with ever-changing ideas in the course, the job is never boring and he finds it a rewarding kind of work.

I found this a most informative and interesting evening and, judging by the response, I'm sure that other members did, too. Our thanks to all three of them and our good wishes for their future careers which we will watch with great interest. I'm sure that if West lets us know where and when the degree show is next year, many of us would love to go and see it.

Ruth Karnac



A view of the Throwing room (above) & a kiln on the outdoor site (left) at Harrow College.

Circa 1965

Temperature Control of Electric Kilns

Historically, controlling the temperature of kilns, which would have been heated by combustible material of some sort, was a matter of great skill acquired after a long apprenticeship and many years of practice.

The advent of electric kilns coincided with more sophisticated means of measuring the temperature. Initially by such devices as the optical pyrometer that relied on the colour of the furnace to indicate the temperature.

The thermocouple has been in existence since 1822 and relies on the fact that if two wires of different materials are heated a voltage is generated at their junction. The thermocouple was not widely used until well into this century for a variety of practical reasons.

The voltage developed was very small, only a few thousandths of a volt. The metals used must be able to withstand the kiln temperatures, plus a safety margin. This restricted the metals available to Platinum and its' alloys, which were very expensive. Such alloys gave even lower output levels, and were not very linear with temperature. This meant that the already expensive very sensitive & delicate galvanometers had to have specially calibrated non linear scales.

Initially such instruments only indicated the temperature. A function complicated by the fact that a thermocouple does not measure absolute temperature. Its' output depends on the temperature difference between the hot and cold junction, which would be the prevailing room temperature. This required some means of offsetting for the ambient temperature, which would itself inevitably rise as the firing progressed. In later models the needle was periodically trapped by a solenoid actuated bar and its' position compared with that of a pre-set pointer. This allowed a kiln to be fired to a set maximum temperature and then optionally turned off or left on soak until manually turned off.

The control of the rate of temperature rise is still generally accomplished by some means of a "Simmerstat" type control. These use what is technically known as a "time proportional" system. There is usually a knob & dial calibrated 0-100%. When the dial is set to 100% the kiln is on continuously. If, for example, the dial is set to 25%, then over a sixty second period (say) the kiln will be turned on for 15 Secs. and off for 45 Secs. i.e. the elements are turned on for 25% of the time and off for 75%. Similarly if set to 10% the kiln is on for 6 Secs. and off for 54, and so on. The important thing is that at any given moment the kiln is either fully on or off. The power output over a fixed period depends on the on/off ratio, and not to any voltage reduction.

The ultimate temperature a kiln can attain is that at which the power input is balanced by the heat loss from the kiln. To a first approximation, the rate at which any hot body loses heat is proportional to the temperature difference between the body and the ambient temperature. This is why in the first hour of cooling a kiln may drop 400 Degrees, but when the kiln is at 100 Degrees it may take several hours to reach 50.

Theoretically how full the kiln is should not affect the final temperature attainable; although it will affect the rate of heating and cooling. Variations of the power supply voltage, however will drastically alter the maximum attainable temperature. Again, as an approximation, the power varies as the square of the supply voltage. If a kiln, rated at 10 KW at 240 Volts, has only 230 Volts input to it then the actual power developed is reduced to about 9.2 KW. If such a kiln could reach 1300 Degrees normally it could now only attain about 1200 Degrees. This effect would apply equally to kilns controlled by Simmerstat devices, making identical sequential firings a matter of luck. As the heating element ages it generates less power anyway, so that even with the firing conditions being identical the results will gradually change over extended periods of time.

For most firings absolute precision is not needed, and the above effects can be masked by the inherent tolerance of the process. Even for these, however, the gradual shift will eventually necessitate a change in the firing schedule, possibly put down to variations in the clay, or similar reasoning. Some firings are not so tolerant however. Crystalline glazes require very precise control of both time and temperature and any variation in either spells disaster to the firing.

As a halfway house pyrometric cones offer a reliable way of gauging a spot temperature.Obviously they cannot control rates of temperature rise.Neither is it practical to have a multiplicity of cones for the various set temperatures needed.Equally they can not be used to measure the temperature as it is dropped in the crystal forming stages after the maximum firing temperature is attained.

It is often claimed that cones are more accurate in that they operate on a "work function" dependent on both time & temperature,I remain to be convinced in this matter however.I believe that the variations of temperature using heating ramps controlled by such Simmerstat devices as detailed above can give rise to errors.To achieve the precision needed however any temperature controller must be able to accurately produce a heating ramp independent of voltage variations and kiln loading.

A cone is a clay compound, and as such behaves in a similar manner to any clay body during biscuit firing. On a microscopic level each consists of minute grains of the constituents in intimate contact with each other.

As the temperature gradually rises each granule gets hotter from the outside of the body in.There is a time delay for the inner layers to attain the temperature of the surface; which will itself be increasing in temperature with time.There are therefore two time constants operating.That from the surface to inner layers of the clay; and the rate of rise in temperature of the inside of the kiln.If the latter is of much longer duration than the former, then the inside of the cone/pot is not always trying to 'catch up' with the outside and the body will behave as a homogeneous whole.

Eventually the temperature throughout the body reaches the melting point of the lowest melting component of the clay mix.As this happens the other components start to dissolve in the individual micro-globules of the first component.The solution of one component in another almost invariably has a lower melting point than either, so it becomes more fluid and starts to spread further through the body.This process accelerates resulting in the cone rapidly becoming plastic and bending over. A biscuit firing is a similar process,except that the higher temperature components do not attain their melting point.Instead the individual grains are 'glued' together by the liquid fluxing components,a process continued during the glaze firing.The same process applies equally to the individual elements in a glaze. It can be seen therefore that providing the temperature rise is slow enough,and accurately controlled, there is nothing to be gained using cones over kiln control by an electronic pyrometer.

The modern electronic controller was made possible, particularly for the individual user with limited resources, by the advent of cheap electronic integrated circuits making possible the mass manufacture of such precision instruments at affordable prices.

A controller can be broken down into several standard blocks, the more sophisticated the controller, the more blocks it will have.For safety reasons it is essential that,in the event of the delicate wires in the thermocouple breaking (or not being plugged in), the instrument turns the kiln off. The output from the sensor, about 0.015 Volts maximum must be amplified to a usable level of a few volts or so. This amplified voltage then has to be linearised. That is, if an output voltage of 13 Volts corresponds to a temperature of,say, 1300 Degrees then 500 degrees will generate an output of 5 Volts;100 Degrees gives 1 Volt,and so on.

The above elements are common to all instruments. Thereafter the circuitry will vary widely according to the complexity of the design.The output voltage may merely drive a display device,indicating only the temperature, without any control functions.Usually,however,a second voltage is generated corresponding to a desired set temperature.These two voltages are then compared,or otherwise manipulated turning the kiln on & off as required.

The Author, an electronic design engineer,became interested in pottery,and particularly in glazes.Of these,crystalline glazes were most attractive.They were also the most difficult to reproduce.The glaze firing schedule involves multiple set points, accurately holding temperatures for a fixed period of time, and controlling the rate of fall of temperature during the crystal growing period.

For a variety of reasons all of the current instruments fell short of the Authors requirements in one aspect or another, and so it was decided to design a controller to ones' own specification, with a view to the Authors company ultimately producing a range of three instruments for commercial sale.

Initially the first unit was built,a simple low cost device, and put into the test phase.It soon became apparent that to test the unit accurately it would be necessary to monitor several points in the unit at regular time intervals. It proved only marginally more difficult to make a new instrument controlled by a computer (a BBC microcomputer) in which all measurements could be stored for future use.This was initially only intended as a temporary test bed to acquire data for use in future designs. As it transpired the combination of interface module and computer proved so powerful that the Author currently uses it exclusively.

The simplified interface module consists of an input amplifier to increase the thermocouple voltage to a level sufficiently high to be fed to the computers' input.In addition it contains a computer driven relay to turn on the kilns' contactor.All other main functions are performed under software control within the computer.

This approach brings many benefits.The circuits to linearise the thermocouple output are a source of error in the normal type of controller.The linearising amplifier has to have a curved input/output characteristic, opposite to that of the thermocouple so that overall they cancel.It is very difficult to attain a perfect match. Even if an initial match is achieved this can drift with time & temperature.A computer programme however can contain a table of standard thermocouple voltages that can be accessed to obtain a very accurate measurement of kiln temperature. Also with self calibration techniques any controller could be used with different kilns, or use firing programmes derived on other units. Care should be taken, when looking at claims by controller manufacturers, to differentiate between resolution and accuracy.
A resolution of one degree means that if the kiln temperature rises by a degree the indicated temperature will also rise by a degree.However the actual temperature may not be that shown on the display,this depends on the inherent accuracy.This may not be of too great importance,once an initial successful firing has been achieved, since repeatability is not affected.It does affect the use of 'imported' firing programmes however when the absolute temperature could be different from the values set.

When a kiln is on soak,i.e. it is being maintained at a fixed temperature, it does not in fact remain exactly at the reference temperature.As the kiln temperature reaches the set temperature the kiln element is turned off.The temperature still continues to rise for a time however.The duration of this rise depends on several factors, the kiln size, its' loading, the reference temperature,and the setting of the Simmerstat, if any. Having reached the peak temperature it starts to fall.When the temperature falls below the reference point,the elements are turned on again.The reverse now occurs,the temperature falls to a minimum,starts to rise,and,on reaching the set temperature once again, the cycle is repeated.This cycle is illustrated in Fig.1a for a lightly loaded Hobbytech 40 kiln with a reference temperature set to 1140 Degrees.As can be seen the actual temperature varies from about 1124 to 1144 Degrees over a three minute cycle.The reason for the variation of temperature is that,during the time the kiln elements are turned on, the thermal inertia of the kiln precludes instantaneous sensing of the temperature.This is analogous to applying the brakes on a car. The inertia of the car prevents instantaneous stopping.If the car travels more slowly it would be able to pull up in a shorter distance.The equivalent in a kiln would be to reduce the effective voltage applied to the heating elements. This could be effected by use of a Simmerstat, but the previous observations still apply, and if the input is reduced excessively the controller is ineffective and the temperature falls. Up to this point, however, the average temperature is maintained, and the cyclical variations of maximum and minimum temperature get progressively smaller.

From Fig. 1a it can be seen that whilst the maximum temperature is 1144 Degrees i.e. 4 Degrees above the set temperature of 1140 Degrees, the minimum is 16 Degrees below. This ratio depends on the relative rates of heat input from the heating elements (which is fixed for a given Simmerstat setting),and the rate of loss of heat from the kiln by radiation (which is dependant on the kiln temperature).In the above case the average temperature is 1134 degrees and not 1140 as set.This effect increases with set temperature.

At low temperatures, when the rate of cooling is much lower, the reverse happens and the average temperature is above the set value,as illustrated by Fig.1b, when the set temperature is 200 degrees . Here the temperature varies between 197 to 228 Degrees with the average temperature being 212 Degrees.A larger kiln with a greater time constant could exaggerate these effects. This can be serious when biscuit firing damp greenware, when a slow temperature rise is desired to dry out the clay without damage and a sudden rise in temperature could cause the trapped water to boil and the pots to explode.

The effect of this is that at 1140 Degrees the average temperature is six degrees below nominal, whilst at 200 Degrees the average is twelve Degrees above that set.Thus giving a temperature skew of 18 Degrees over the above temperature range.

These examples are rather extreme.The bulk of the kilns' contents will ensure that they will not reach the cyclical extremes that the smaller thermocouple experiences ,instead they will be centred around the above average values.The amplitude of these variations can be easily controlled by manually adjusting the Simmerstat throughout the firing. All controllers will suffer from these phenomena, and currently there is no great outcry from dissatisfied users with exploding kilns !. However it is only by eliminating each contributory error that the overall system can be 'tuned' to be as accurate as possible. I for one find enough scope for skill & technique in pottery without delving into the more arcane aspects of electronic instruments.

Currently I adjust the Simmerstat on my kiln three or four times during a firing.However I consider this to be an admission of defeat,and I am starting to think of ways of incorporating a form a electronic Simmerstat controlled automatically by the computer.The current software stores the kiln temperature and the percentage kiln usage continuously over six minute periods.This was originally incorporated to determine the optimum time to initiate the kiln firing (using cheap rate night time electricity),but the data could also be used to reduce the effective power input to the heating elements (in addition to the existing control),in order to eliminate,or at least reduce, the cyclical see-sawing of the soak temperature.

As stated above the generation of temperature ramps,positive or negative by controlling the rate of power input is inadequate in that it depends on the kiln and its' loading.The computer does this by comparing the kiln temperature via the interface module, to the desired set kiln temperature.If the kiln temperature is below the set temperature the kiln is turned on, otherwise the kiln is turned off.If this latter set voltage is fixed the kiln soaks at the set temperature.If,however the set temperature varies with time, then the kiln will itself follow the set temperature, regardless of kiln type or loading, and so providing an accurate means of generating precise temperature ramps.

Computer software, like painting the Fourth Bridge, is never finished,and I am constantly updating and,hopefully, improving it as new requirements present themselves.Nevertheless I use it for all firings ,and for the more complicated firing schedules, which may have nine or more discrete phases with crystalline glazes, I find the consistency of firings removes one unnecessary variable from what is undoubtedly a complicated process.It has also relieved me from many early morning vigils slaving over a hot kiln.

Fig. 1

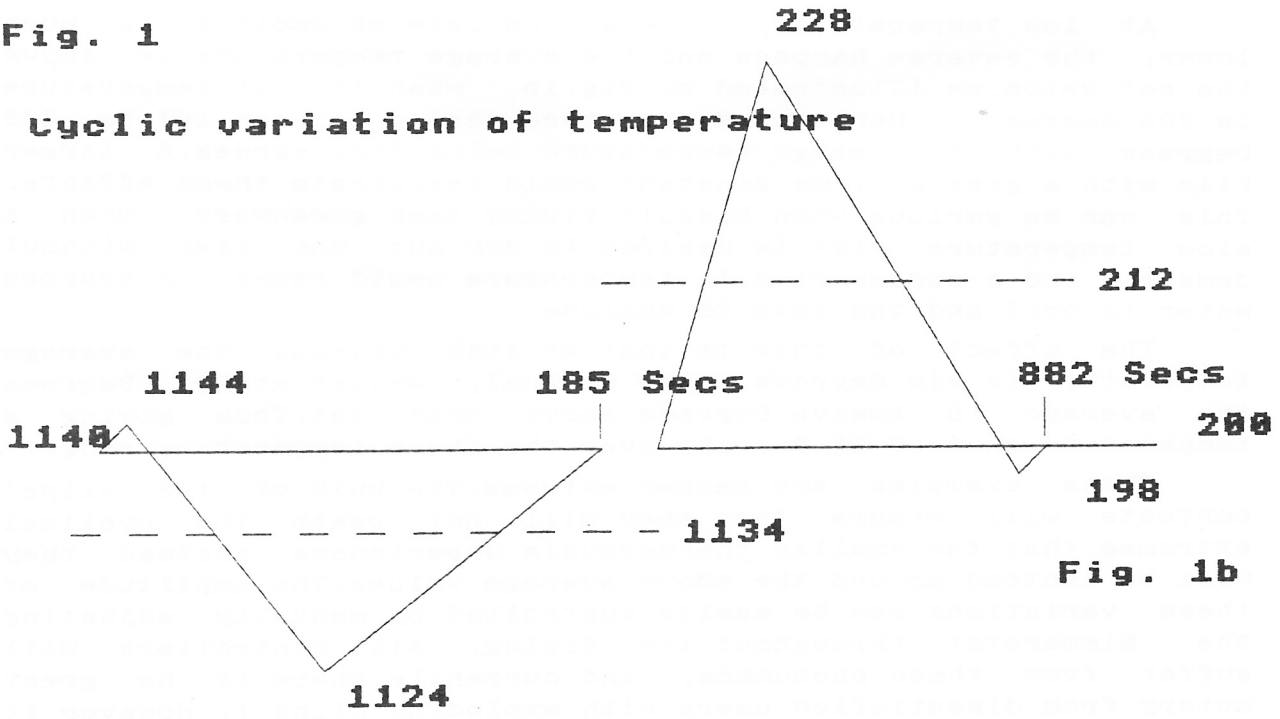


Fig. 1a

Fig. 1b

Tony Stevens

15/5/92

SELLING YOUR WORK

I have had some interesting discussions on this subject, mostly with Guild members, although some other Potters have talked this over with me. The general picture that emerges is that most Potters seem to be favouring a direct approach to their Customers.

Reports about Craft Fairs are varied. Some Potters seem to do well at these events, but not with unwavering consistency. Several factors affect the sales, ie; type of event / type of work / the weather / the location etc.

Galleries seem to be out of favour due to the fact that the price of a pot is increased by a large percentage, in some cases by 100%, to cover the overhead. Gallery Exhibitions seem to give mixed results.

Selling direct to the public, together with any known followers of your work seems an attractive proposition. The usual approach is to send an invitation to your followers to attend an open day. Place an advertisement in the local paper, &/or hand out leaflets, purchase a quantity of wine & soft drinks, Cheese etc., put the pots out & have a party with a commmercial bias. Reports of successful sales topping four figures are not uncommon.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam. 12/6/92

The following letter has been received from John Lomas;

12 The Green
Jordans
Nr. Beaconsfield
Bucks HP9 2SU

Dear Mervyn, 16/6/92

Thank you for your letter & information about the Guild.

Further to our discussion about selling pots.... I have had several very successful Exhibitions / Sales in my garden & partially in the house. My daughter who is also a potter shared these Exhibitions. I think sharing is a good idea, it does not necessarily have to be a potter, could be a painter etc. The advantage of pots is that it does not matter if it rains when they are outside. Sunday seems to be the best day. I think that one day exhibitions at your home can be held quite legally for a number of times each year. (I have never investigated the law on this matter.)
As for publicity, I duplicated handouts & posted them personally in my immediate locality. Also I phoned previous customers further afield. Publicity could be as far reaching as you want it to be.
I usually serve coffee & biscuits at these occasions, wine could also be served.
These Exhibitions have been very successful, my daughter & I selling most of the pots we had in stock. With a little thought, the type of pots for the occasion & the time of year to hold it could be planned.
As for prestige, which is the main reason to exhibit in Galleries, I think the same exposure of your work can be obtained with plenty of publicity. The advantage of this type of selling is obvious. Cutting out the commission etc., which the Galleries have to charge.
Unfortunately galleries have to charge high rates of commission because of their overheads & profit.
I have always been annoyed that the producer of pots etc, only receives a small amount of the selling price.

I hope this is helpful, please ring me if you need more information.

Regards John.

Book Review.

"Salt-Glaze Ceramics" - An International Perspective. Janet Mansfield; A & C Black, 1992, £25.00, Hardback, 134 pp.

This lavishly-produced book has been written by a potter, very well known for many years in Australia, and deserving equal great praise also in Britain, and indeed internationally. Her principal work is in salt-glaze, but she also has made many pieces in porcelain and raku.

In this volume, one of several which she has written on pottery, she has brought together many excellent examples of salt-glaze ware from potters around the world, and these wares are illustrated very expressively in some 120 clear, coloured photographs. A short history of the craft precedes brief biographical details and backgrounds of the potters, who are some of the topmost quality salt-glazers alive today.

Whilst the technical aspects are given of this singularly interesting glazing method, the main emphasis rests upon the motivation of individual potters to celebrate the results of using the technique. The word 'celebrate' is used here because of the special mentions of the importance of enjoying the making of these wares by the potters whose work thus is so beautifully illustrated. They stress the excitement aroused by the continual discovery of new decorations produced in the glaze.

The unknown qualities resulting from the salt-firing process often can be a great challenge to potters when attempting experimentation. Here the author emphasises the full understanding of traditional salt-glazing, such as that of the German Rhineland and French La Borne wares, in order to exert some control over the unpredictability of modern salt-glazing. She devotes many pages to the appreciation of texture, and debates the mutual effects of form and surface to produce a unity.

These experiments tend to show the great sensibility and environmental artistry expressed by the many potters, of whom more than sixty are mentioned in the book.

There is an index/glossary and also a list of further reading, but it must be stated that this book is in itself a wonderful 'eye-opener' to the world of salt-glazing - and how to devote oneself to making it - or just to wallow in the delights of reading through these highly interesting and absorbing pages.

An exceedingly useful book for the modern potter who wishes to specialize in salt-glazing.

Stan Romer.

WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Marion Franses 3 Bittacy Rise, London NW7 2HH. 081 3464512

Ruth & Peter Williamson St. Crispin, Mill Lane, Monks Risborough HP17 9LG. 084 445616

Nikki Lidstone 7 Coronation St. Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex CM0 8HW

Ineke Stevenson The Courtyard, 32 High St. Belbroughton, Worcester DY9 9SU

David Small 23 Hadley Rd. New Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 5HG

Christopher Brewis 8 Nelson Close, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 7NS. 0494 384865

Julie Putnam 4 Tannsfield Drive, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 5LG 0442 246219

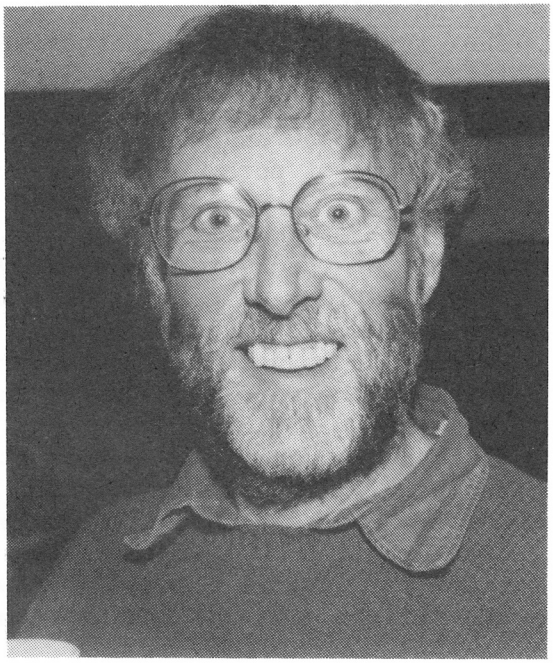
PROFILES

ALAN O'DELL

Alan is our Chairman & a Government Scientist, working at the Building Research Station, he has a degree in physics & has been potting for 15 years. Starting at St. Albans evening classes with George Stevens, he has not been able to do much potting lately due to lack of time but has built a gas fired kiln & had two disasterous firings! He has also joined a painting class but his thoughts are turning back towards pots once again. Alan's ambition is to find more time to develop in all directions.

Marguerite Moon.

Photograph by Richard Moon.



NEXT YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION RATES

The Guild looks set to have a deficit this year of about £500, which means it will have to draw down its cash reserves. Although these reserves are strong enough to take the loss, they will soon run out unless something is done to put the income and expenditure account into the black. Hence your committee has decided that membership subscriptions, unchanged for three years, must be increased for 1992/93. The new rates will be :-

Standard	£12. 50
Joint	£15. 00
Full-time Student	£ 6. 00

For many years, subscription income has fallen well below the cost of the basic service: monthly meetings, newsletter and administration. What has kept the Guild out of the red has been the surplus made by the Potters' Open Day. But this source of finance is not secure. Last November's P.O.D. made only £214, well under half the previous year's surplus. This has proved to be not enough to cover the costs of the annual exhibition and the pot crawl. the other two special events of the Guild's calendar.

The Guild cannot, for long, bear deficits on both its basic service and its special events. At the present level of membership. the cost of the former will not be covered even after the increase of subscription rates. The P.O.D. will have to make up for the shortfall, as far as it can. So, unless there is a big increase in the number of members, the new subscription rates cannot continue unchanged for three years, in line with past custom.

There is always an outcry whenever subscription rates are raised. It should be borne in mind, though, that the new standard subscription will be no more, after allowing for inflation, than the £8 charged in 1987/88. And it is much less than is already being charged by other potters' associations.

Victor Earl.

FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

- The 10th Anniversary Exhibition running from June 28th through to July 11th, is being held in Cow Byre, Ruislip. Do go along if you can.

- 1st July to 30 Aug. Ruth Karnac has some of her silver jewellery in an exhibition of pots, painting, sculpture & jewellery at Brunel University Art Gallery, next to the Campus Library at Uxbridge.

- As part of the Herts "Festival 92", Members of the Guild will be giving Demonstrations of pottery skills in Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead, during the afternoon of 5th. of July. This demonstration was arranged at very short notice & it is fortunate that Tony Clark, Linda Cannon & Ruth Higgins were able to say"Yes"! We hope for good weather on the day.

- The Summer Event - To be held at Northfield Studio, Tring. A map is included in this Newsletter for the benefit of New Members, or other Members who have forgotten where it is!
  Saturday 18th July is the date, with 2.30 P.M. the designated starting time, for what is planned as a wonderful day of fascinating activities for all who come. (demonstrators earlier to prepare activities).

  This Event is open to all members of the Guild, their children & friends & can be regarded as a Garden / House Party, at which you can meet old / new friends, in an informal social gathering. Two Raku Kilns will be fired on the day & Elsa Benatter will be unpacking the Danish pit Kiln, which she will have fired prior to the event. Pots for the Danish Kiln firing must be biscuited & burnished & delivered to Northfield Studio by the evening of Tuesday 14 July . Anyone interested can supply some pots for this activity &/or the raku kilns.

  The entertainment will include music from a very special fairground organ, demonstrations of throwing pots on a Japanese wheel, by Doug Jones & Arthur Ball will give a demonstration on one of Murray's Kick Wheels. Various light hearted competitions are planned, such as making the tallest pot with 1 lb. of clay. Novices are invited to have a go at making a pot, results to be judged by Murray! A small obstacle course will be constructed for anyone to attempt - using an antique wrought iron hoop!

  An Exhibition of pots will be supplied by Doug Jones & Gas Kimashima. Gas also plans to supply the Mashiko Plates for you to eat from. Dorley will provide baked potatoes with a bean & sausage filling. You are invited to bring something for the communal table & a barbecue will be available for cooking any meat or fish that you bring. Bring wine beer or soft drinks to quench your thirst, glasses will be provided & plastic cutlery will be available, although you may bring your own if you wish. The bonfire will be lit during the evening & the festivities will continue until a suitably late hour, if you have the stamina!! Straw bales will be available to sit on, or you can bring folding chairs if you prefer.

  A working party is planned for the morning of the 4th of July, to prepare tables, cut bushes back, cut grass, oil the wheels, etc. If you are able to help please ring Murray on 0442 85229.

- Friday 11th September; Russell O'Conner will be giving a talk & slide show on his work with Tiles & Pressmoulding Techniques. He will also talk about Lustre Decoration. This will be at Northchurch at 8.00 p.m.

Doug Jones (left) & the Hoop, minus the young lady! (above), will both be at the Summer Event.

OTHER EVENTS

- Garden Festival Wales at Ebbw Vale, supported by the South Wales Potters display in their own "Quiet Garden". On until Oct 4 Phone 0495 305545.
- Tessa Fuchs Ceramics & Paintings, Open Day & Exhibition, Sunday July 5th 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 24 Cross Rd. Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey, 081 549 6906
- The Festival of European Ceramics. Held over a weekend it runs from the 10th through to the 12th of July. The venue is Clayesmore School, Iwerne Minster, Blandford Forum, Dorset. For more information Tel. 0874 730 266.
- Not Pots! but a Summer Art Exhibition at Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newlands Park, Gorelands Lane, Chalfont St. Giles. Theme; in and around the Chilterns. 8 to 16 Aug. 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Closed 10th & 11th.
- 16 June to 31st July "Summer Images" at Contemporary Art, 7 Liverpool Terrace, Worthing. - 0903 212926 Includes Pottery by Jack Doherty, Daphne Carnegie, Clive Davies. Also paintings, prints & jewellery.

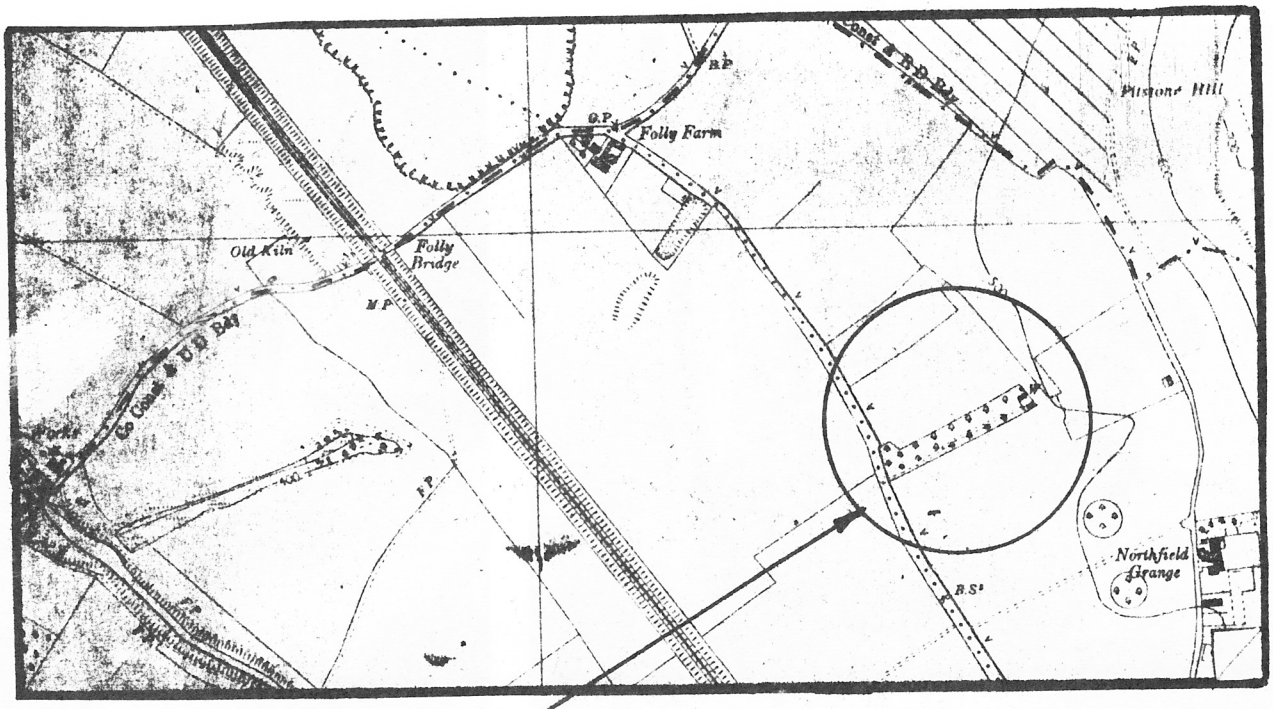
Life's Like That

BROWSING in an antique shop one day, I found some blue and yellow jars that were perfect for my kitchen. The proprietor told me they had been made on a pottery wheel in 1930 by an old lady who had never left the farm. Pleased, I picked up a jar to look at it more closely and was shocked to find "Made in Japan" stamped on the bottom.

"Well," the flustered antique dealer said, "maybe she *did* leave the farm once."

—Sharon Price

From The Readers digest, May 1985, found in the doctors waiting room!



NORTHFIELD STUDIO

TO LEIGHTON BUZZARD

A4146

TO DUNSTABLE

TO LINSLADE

B488

B489

A4146

TO HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

B488

B489

NORTHFIELD STUDIO

B488

B4506

UPPER ICKNIELD WAY

B488

TRING STATION

PENDLEY MANOR

A41 (T)

TRING

TO AYLESBURY

A41 (BYPASS)

A41

A41 (T)

BERKHAMSTED

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

WANTED
A single phase Kiln of up to 5 cubic feet is wanted by a Potter just starting up Type that will work from 30 Amp Cooker Socket preferred, but anything considered. Phone Debbie Bell - 071 7324496

WANTED
One or more large kilns needed, 16 Cu.Ft. top loader preferred, but anything considered. Contact David Small. Phone 081 4407849

DCPG COMMITTEE LIST

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"Broomfield" 36 Box Lane Boxmoor Herts HP3 0DJ

Jenny Templeton (Pot crawl) — *Tel: 0494 727 243*
26 St.Leonards Road Chesham Bois Amersham Bucks