



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER

1992

An Exhibition of CERAMICS
by GEORGE WILSON
and WATERCOLOURS
by PAT WILSON



WEEKDAYS 9:00am - 4:30pm
Monday 21st September - Friday 16th October 1992

THE ART GALLERY
THE JOHN MILTON BUILDING
ST PAUL'S SCHOOL,
LONSDALE ROAD,
BARNES
LONDON SW13 9JT

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FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPH

'Bright & Breezy' otherwise known as Linda Cannon (left) & Ruth Higgins, at Gadebridge Park. See article 'Larking about in the Park'

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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 November Newsletter is 15 October. Please mention DCPG when replying to Advertisements in the Newsletter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NORTHFIELD STUDIO TRING HERTFORDSHIRE HP23 5QW 044285229

CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS?

The vague and indiscriminate use of the word CONTEMPORARY is causing concern and aggravation in genuine crafts circles. One craftsman was heard to remark "It is a CON & TEMPORARY!"

Cavalier, excessive, variant, undefined use in Crafts Council communications have diminished the authority of that body, suggesting that its administration is confused and does not know what the CRAFTS are. They have only to ask their founder Lord Eccles, he knows!

CONTEMPORARY was first used in a way that distorted its proper meaning forty years ago as a marketing slang for "Contemporary Furniture" It was an invention. Some SLIPSHOD EXTENSION followed at the time. Institute of Contemporary Arts for example.

SLIPSHOD EXTENSION. "Likely to occur when some accident gives currency among the uneducated to misuse words" Fowler (Modern English Usage)

DEFINITIONS OF CONTEMPORARY.

CHAMBERS DICTIONARY. "Belonging to the same time (with) of the same age. (Present-day, especially up to date, fashionable: of a style of house and furnishing popular in the 1950s is an inaccurate use.)"

AMERICAN USAGE. DICTIONARY OF PROBLEM WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS (Shaw) "This word means existing, living or occurring at the same time. It is not a synonym for either present-day or modern"

MODERN ENGLISH USAGE (Fowler) "Living or existing or occurring together in time. To use the word in any other way is manifest nonsense. It should not be used as a needless synonym for present-day. If this misuse goes on CONTEMPORARY will lose its proper meaning altogether"

FOR ACCURACY AND CLARITY use one of the following words as appropriate:--

Present-day. Now. Up to date. Current. Modern. New. Vanguard. Arty. Chic. Avant-garde. Designedly. Fashionable. Latest. Trendy. Progressive. Stylish. Modish. Recent. Latest. etc.

MURRAY FIELDHOUSE

The Old Town Hall,
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts.

Dear Dacorum & Chiltern Potters,

A very big thank you for braving the elements on Sunday to be part of *Lark in the Park*. We hope you enjoyed the day, it was nice to have the participation of a local group for our Community Arts Day. You helped to make it a very big success.

Had the sun shone it would have been even better ! Best wishes for your continuing success.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Alexander, Sara Railson & Becci Bly.



EDITORIAL

From time to time, members of the Committee receive enquiries about the possibility of someone in the Guild being able to fulfil a commission. For example, a recent request for 100 commemorative mugs, closely followed by a similar request from another source & enquiries about a special design for a garden pot. A further Commission enquiry was placed with a Potter who is not connected with the Guild, due to uncertainty as to who could do the type of work required.

The Membership Survey form, distributed with the July Newsletter, was intended as a vehicle for you all to give, amongst other things, details of the type of work you do, so that commissions can be directed to willing recipients. Currently Ruth Karnac has received only a few completed forms.

Come on now! surely you can afford a stamp & envelope to let us know what type of work you do etc.? send your forms in as soon as you can please! If we get enough replies perhaps we can prepare a suitable "Guild Handout", with a list of Potters & their work, or at least publish the results in the Newsletter.

My thanks to Harry Karnac for his valiant typing efforts, also thanks to all other contributors for the Articles, photographs, helpful notes etc.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam August 1992



THE GARDEN PARTY

At nine in the morning the clouds were deep grey, unbroken from horizon to horizon. Not a day for a garden party. But the gods smiled. By twelve the clouds were waning. By two they had become wisps against a blue sky and the sun was laughing.

How strange, then, on such a heavenly day to walk up the winding track to Northfield Studio and come upon an infernal fire, venting smoke through a long mound of earth, like a minor Vesuvius on the point of eruption. It turned out to be Elsa Benatter's traditional Danish pit kiln. Why had the Danes of yore used pit kilns? Elsa didn't know. But she said the kilns had a long history and worked well. I wondered whether it was a shortage of wood that encouraged their development. After all, having earth at the sides and bottom of the kiln certainly kept the fuel's calories heating the pots, rather than the air. If you want to try one, here are the instructions.

Dig a pit three feet deep, six feet wide and as long as your digging power lasts and the number of pots demands. Line the sides of the trench with six to seven inches of wood. Give each pot a good overcoat of straw and place in the trench. When the trench is full, cover it over with turves, blocking gaps with earth. Just before you complete the kiln, light the straw. When it is well lit, complete the covering. The fire burns slowly, using the oxygen trapped in the straw. From time to time, a jet of smoke will burst through the general pall. The fire is trying to get out. Stop it immediately by applying a turf or a shovel of earth to the developing vent. When the kiln is burnt out, the pots are ready.

Elsa uses the kiln to biscuit and then glazes the pots for a conventional firing. But there's no reason why you shouldn't try for earthenware. The pots vary widely from firing to firing and within the kiln, according to the type and amount of wood and straw burnt and the nature of the earth around the kiln and in the lid. There's scope for experiment here. And if you are a potter who has a herring or salmon about you, why not improve the economics of the operation by hanging it in the smoke that oozes from the mound?

No pottery gathering in the open air seems to be complete without a raku firing and, sure enough, next to the fiery pit, Chris Bull and Paul Priest were worshipping (sorry, a Freudian slip!) a raku kiln, more rude than crude, as the photo shows. There seemed to be dispute among the cognoscenti on how you administer the sawdust to the pot, by total immersion or casting the stuff over them. Wars have started from such small beginnings, so you'll get no judgment from me. Before turning from the raku firing, though, I would, on behalf of the Guild, like to thank the Fieldhouses' ducks for their quiet tolerance of the raku works so close to their home. Only once, I think, did they let out a loud quacking. I hope they didn't hear someone comment: 'Keep the fire going - they're not done yet'.

The ducks were not the only animals present. A rabbit waited in its cage for the crowds to go, so that it could be let out for a lollipop round the garden. The cats vanished, leaving only a promise to return at feeding time. The calves and goats had nothing to say, perhaps because they were entranced listening to Ruby. Ruby? An eccentric member of the Guild given to conversation with the animals? No, Ruby was the fairground organ which serenaded us and a good stretch of the Chilterns. She got her name because Brian and Dilys James got her on approximately their ruby wedding. Having only 37 notes, she sometimes has to play her own version of the old favourites, which is why some of you may have found that she didn't always follow you closely when you hummed the tunes. But there was no doubt about her vigour. Thanks to Brian and Dilys for bringing her along.

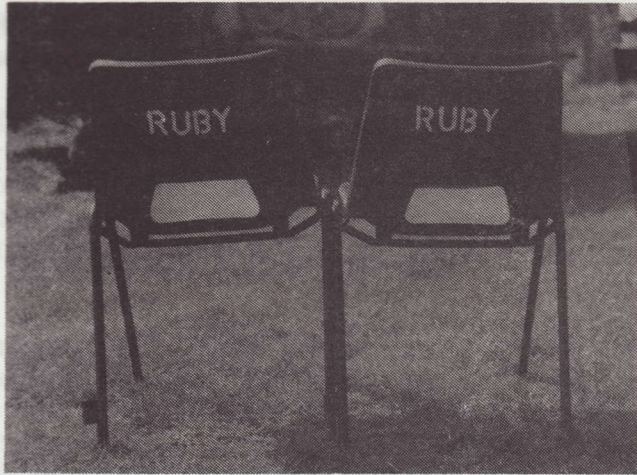
It was a pity no-one went in for the competition throwing. Only one of the three bags of clay the Guild bought was opened and much of that was untouched. Perhaps throwing was all too like the everyday life of pottery folk to be attractive on a holiday. Even so, a few keen potters did enjoy themselves throwing informally in the cool of the Northfield pottery. General interest was more obvious round Gas Kimashima's sales table, loaded with beautiful Japanese pottery. The deep brown glazes had an irresistible dark fire about them in the strong sunshine. No wonder people snapped them up, the more eagerly because they were all at half the marked prices. The proceeds will help pay for an anagama kiln.

At six, it must have been, (who was watching the time on such a day?) dinner began; a

varied cold buffet, provided by members, at the side of the house, a barbecue under Dorley's control at the front. Wine, spa-water and conversation flowed as the sun slipped towards the top of the trees, still strong enough to dazzle us with its oblique light. That is how we remember sunny days ending when we were young or, at least, younger than we are now.

The Guild must thank its President most warmly for being such an eager and welcoming host. It must also thank Dorley, who did so many things, from buying the army of barbecue sausages to inquiring about hired loos, so quietly and efficiently. Thank you both. It was a splendid day.

Victor Earl



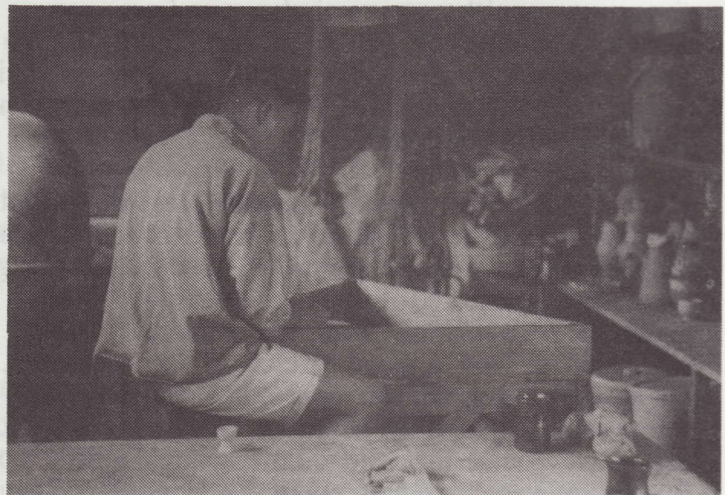
Who was Ruby ?



Who's for leapfrog ?



Rude Raku kiln



Where was the Competition ?

Further Comments on the Summer Event

This year's garden party at Murray and Dorley's "cabbage patch" was, by general consensus, the best that we have ever had. The weather was kind to us and there was a great variety of things happening.

One of them, the most unusual, was given by Doug Jones who demonstrated the art of Zen Archery. His was a most impressive figure in a long, black, elegant robe. With grace and great concentration, he showed us the ritual of shooting arrows. He "fired"

at a target set against straw bales about 50 feet away. Dorley hastily removed her lambs to a place of safety, showing a regrettable lack of trust in Doug's aim ! Needless to say, nothing untoward was skewered and the barbecue, attended to by Ed Broadbridge and son among others, remained lambless.

Before the archery, Doug was throwing on a very low wheel and I couldn't help thinking that anyone using it for long would certainly suffer severe back problems. He was wearing a most fetching straw hat which the goats were eyeing greedily, but they didn't have a chance.

We had to leave about 7 p.m. (having arrived at 1.30) and so unable to tell you what exciting, Satanic events took place around the bonfire later that night. Over to you, Murray ?

Ruth Karnac



Evening with Kiln-smoke

FOOTNOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Summer Event was excellent, being both very enjoyable & also well attended. My thanks to everyone who worked so hard, Particularly the Raku Kiln attendants, Brian Bicknell, Christine Bull & Paul Priest, who worked tirelessly to make the day the great success that it so obviously was.

Alan O'Dell



LARKING ABOUT IN THE PARK:

(An account of DCPG participation at Hemel Hempstead's Festival 92 'Lark in the Park' in Gadebridge Park on Sunday July 5th)

What should have been a glorious Sunday in July was more reminiscent of any overcast and rainy day in March. Nevertheless, this did not deter the stalwart members of DCPG, Tony Clark, Ruth Higgins and Linda Cannon, from 'throwing' themselves into the event equipped with traditional British stiff upper lips and thoughts that 'at the very least it will be character building'.

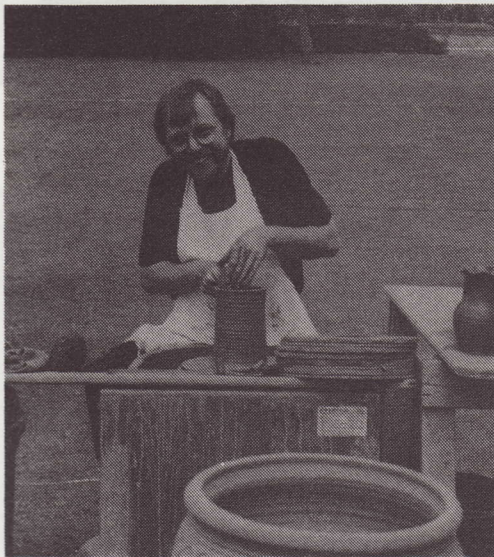
When we arrived, Tony was already setting up his area, against considerable odds of driving rain intermixed with a fierce breeze. We decided, after serious contemplation, that as it was still only 12 noon (the event was scheduled to begin at 2 p.m.) and having seen the sporadic scattering of tables and tents, much of which appeared still unattended, that a stirring pub lunch might provide the necessary impetus to carry on with what, at first, looked like being a miserable afternoon.

Lunch did the trick. We quickly assembled both our 'activity' and 'selling' areas from tables provided by the organisers and started to demonstrate pinch pot, coiling and general handbuilding skills to the children who had started to gather. Tony began to demonstrate 'throwing' skills on the wheel using terracotta clay to show how he makes his garden pots. The weather started to be kind to us remaining ominously grey but deciding not to rain for the time being. This change in the weather encouraged more people to turn out and before long we found ourselves hard pushed to provide working areas to the many keen children standing around observing.

It reconfirmed to us that there is something very appealing to children about the plastic nature of working with clay. The many children we worked with were quite happy to simply manipulate the clay mainly for its tactile interest with little regard to what it would look like at the end ! The 'process' was of infinitely more importance than thoughts about the end product. Throughout the afternoon more than 100 children worked with clay and were able to take with them what they had made.

With all this activity and interest we found that the afternoon almost vanished in no time. Forgotten were the frequent showers, gusting wind and rather loud varieties of music emanating from the different bands on stage opposite us. Instead, our thoughts were directed at teaching and providing as many children as possible with the opportunity of working with clay which was a thoroughly rewarding experience. During all this, we also managed to sell our own pottery ! Our one thought at 7p.m. when we were packing away- a well spent afternoon !

Linda Cannon and Ruth Higgins
July 1992.



Tony Clark (left) ready to show the crowd how it's done & Ruth Higgins (above centre) in the midst of it all!

The DCPG Exhibition 1992

Pots, or No Pots. That is the question. Winifred, Gill, Paul, Pauline and myself arrived at the Cow Byre Gallery loaded with bricks, paper, blocks and lots of coffee !!

To our relief, boxes of pots started to arrive and soon it was just like Christmas, opening the packages to see what was contained within. Now, surrounded by ceramics of all sorts, it was difficult to know where to start. But gradually the exhibition began to take shape.

Many coffees and rearrangements later, we felt we had done our best. It was also 11 pm and we were all worn out. So we left it at that.

Fingers crossed that folks would turn up for the Private View on Sunday, we went home to bed. (Well, not quite, for having listed the items, the catalogue still had to be typed out and printed, 50+ copies in time for the opening at 11 am next day !!)

If you didn't come to the exhibition, you missed a good opportunity to see fellow members' work. There were 176 pieces listed. Many thanks to those who showed their work.

We have some photographs to give you a taste of what you missed.

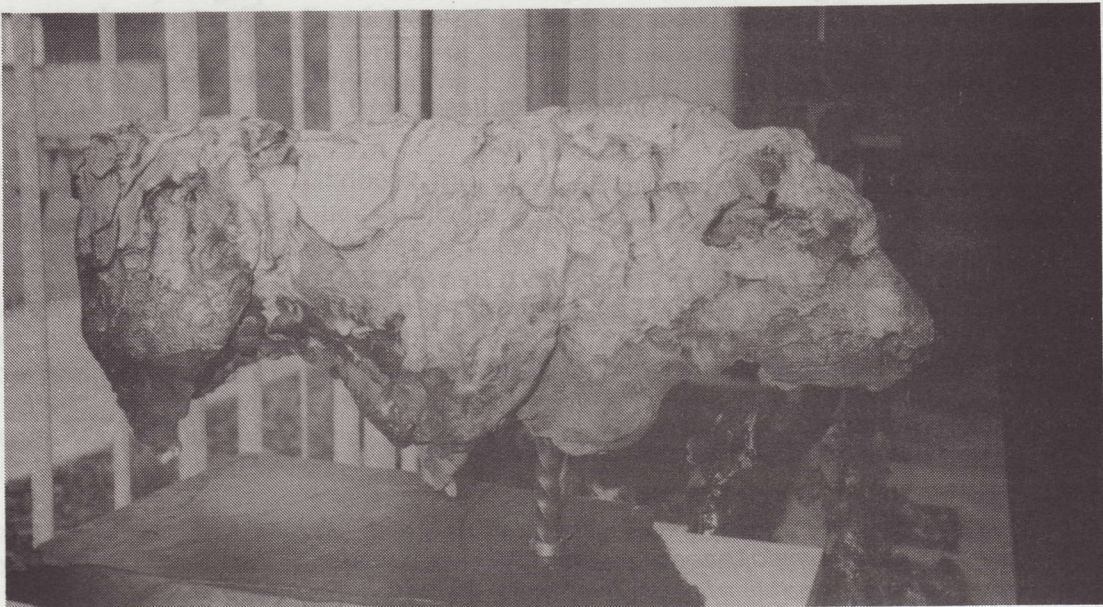
Happy Potting, and remember to keep some of your most interesting work for the next exhibition.



The Exhibition, a general view.



So, jugs with holes in could still hold water!



Much admired work, by Paul Priest.

BOOK REVIEW.

"Illustrated Dictionary of Practical Pottery", Robert Fournier, Paperback, 3rd edition, 1992. A. & C. Black; 314 pp; £19.99.

This edition of a book, already having shown its usefulness over recent years, has been improved by increasing the number of entries to well over 1200, and also by adding more illustrations and further information to earlier paragraphs.

The first two editions, published under the Van Nostrand-Reinhold imprint, used both American and British spellings, and for clarification only the American standard spellings are now used. Similarly, all the terms are modern, although the author still clings to the Centigrade (Celsius) temperature scale, which seems to be quite a reasonable thing to do.

The text is very clearly written, and the many descriptions are easily understandable to both the expert potter and the new student. The large number of photographs, including many new ones for this edition, all illustrate quite well the item or step-by-step method being described; and the many tables are laid out neatly for simplicity of comprehension.

The author, a renowned potter who has been practising for many years, has placed emphasis on the practical side of the craft, and this volume complements his other two Dictionaries (of Form, and Decoration). This present work evolved from a notebook arranged alphabetically for the author's use in his own workshop, a fact which explains its usefulness.

Unfortunately, the previous use of the few coloured photographs has been discontinued - but this must have helped to keep down publication costs. Nowadays, paperback editions are often of better quality than hardbacks, and of course much cheaper. This volume is of excellent quality, being able to withstand the considerable use to which it may often be subjected.

But the real values of the book, however, are the many items of practical information which it contains, these being the up-to-date techniques and advisory procedures, and the latest materials which can be used, which are very necessary features in a modern pottery workshop.

Many pertinent addresses (on both sides of the Atlantic)) are given, as well as a quite useful bibliography.

Money spent on the purchase of this book should be saved quite easily by using the advice and facts within it, in your pottery. It should help also with your desires to experiment, and facilitate trials for all aspects of the craft.

Stan Romer



We extend a warm welcome to the following New Members;

<i>Pamela Edkins</i>	<i>01 904 7574</i>
<i>93 Blockley Road, North Wembley, Middlesex HA0 3LW</i>	
<i>Gas Kmishima</i>	<i>071 272 7204</i>
<i>19d Bramshill Gardens, London NW5 1JJ</i>	
<i>Julie Putnam</i>	<i>0442 246219</i>
<i>4 Tannsfeld Drive, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 5LG</i>	
<i>Rod Sandy</i>	<i>0923 254024</i>
<i>54 Lower Paddock Road, Oxhey, Watford, Herts</i>	
<i>John Stanhope</i>	<i>0923 824931</i>
<i>68 Hillside Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 1QB</i>	

OBITUARY

We offer our sincere condolences to one of our former Guild Chairwomen, June Sarene, on the death of her husband, Ellis. When she feels ready, we will gladly welcome her back into our Guild activities.

Ruth Karnac

PROFILE

Marguerite Moon approached our President, Murray Fieldhouse, regarding a Profile for the Newsletter. The result was the following Potted Autobiography from Murray.

Photograph by Richard Moon.



Murray Fieldhouse at 17½ was called to the R.A.F. colours in the latter part of the war. Having destroyed the undercarriage of a Tiger Moth on his solo flight, he was posted to the Shetlands where his main contribution to the war effort was the tracking of a flight of gannets which he identified as approaching hostile aircraft.

Later, he was part of that vast company of returning ex-servicemen looking for a better and alternative world to that of commerce, industry or the professions. At that time the CRAFTS were still a movement and represented what many were seeking.

He sought employment with Bernard Leach and was sent to Harry Davis, an ex-principal of the Leach Pottery. Davis, having preceded Michael Cardew at Achimota on the Gold Coast, had just returned from the Bruderhof community in Paraguay and was setting up a pottery in Cornwall, generated from a watermill. Intellectual discourse was stimulating at Crowan but the work was punishing and the life-style one of severe simplicity. One day Harry remarked: "I believe you do not have the endurance to become a real potter; you had better take up pottery teaching".

The comfortable climate of the Home Counties beckoned at Kingswood Design and Craftsmanship near Haslemere, but many week-ends were spent in Tring visiting an ex-R.A.F. friend who was the art director at one of the pioneer community residential adult education centres that had sprung up after the war. Murray became increasingly involved in a variety of activities at the centre (Pendley Manor); he was regarded as an "*asset*" and in due course established a pottery workshop producing a range of standard ware with the help of three assistants. A few pretentious individual pieces were made, two of which were purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1958.

In 1952, he wrote a pottery handbook for Foyles and a booklet on throwing for Dryad. At the 1952 Dartington Conference, he patronisingly presented signed copies to Hamada who seemed lacking in knowledge of some aspects of pottery !

At this time, potters' merchants were in the habit of making gifts of materials and equipment to those whom they thought influential in the potters' world. The gift was usually accompanied by being taken out to an expensive lunch; this led to a consultancy, first with Podmore and Son and then Wengers, Ltd. Both Henry Podmore and George Wenger told Murray that he was an "*asset*" but that if they took his advice, they would soon be out of business - and they did go out of business !

Murray was invited to Chair the working party that founded the C.P.A. because they thought he would be an "*asset*". He was soon replaced by Rosemary Wren who was more forceful. After some years on the Committee of the C.P.A., he was asked by the Hon. Secretary to resign, after expressing subversive views at an A.G.M. He remained loyal to the Association until the death of David Canter brought about greater changes of policy.

In 1954, he started the *Pottery Quarterly*. The informal gatherings of potters at Pendley Manor indicated that there was a need for a regular forum. Within a few years - because little else was available - it obtained a world-wide circulation. This encouraged the founding of a second magazine *Crafts Review* which ran for only six numbers, the victim of '60s printing union greed. *Pottery Quarterly* struggled on in a reduced state.

As Pendley, from economic necessity, began to function more as a Conference than a Cultural centre, he moved his Pottery to Northfield Studio. Having heard that he had left Pendley, he was approached by a number of Colleges, asking if he would spend a paid day a week with them. When asked what they wanted him to do, they said they did not know but thought he would be an "asset". Danny Killick ran the pottery at Northfields until Customs and Excise persuaded him to register for V.A.T.

Having experienced complete freedom of action at Pendley, Murray found that he was continually frustrated by practices inherent in State education. On a lecture tour of New Zealand, he had observed that potters were better educated as a result of forming associations rather than being dependent on state instruction. He gave up all his teaching, founded the Chiltern and Dacorum Potters Guild and bought a small offset outfit to print the *Pottery Quarterly* at home, resulting in it coming out even less often and eventually coming to near vanishing point.

He is presently working to eliminate the misuse and abuse of the words **CONTEMPORARY**, **CRAFTSPERSON**, **CERAMICS** AND **APPLIED ART** from CRAFTS literature. So be cautious if you are writing a pottery book because a publisher who regards Murray as an "asset" may send him the Mss. for an opinion !



FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

September 11th - The next meeting of the guild will be on this date at 8 p.m. as usual at the Northchurch Social Centre, Berkhamsted, when Doug. Jones will be showing us his method of making sculptural figures from thrown forms. Doug. is a great character and this should be an informative and entertaining evening.

October 9th at 7.30 p.m. - Your committee has received a very generous offer for the use of the Balmoral Centre, Clive Way, Watford as a venue for our future monthly events at a very low cost. This excellent building is used in the daytime as a day centre for handicapped adults and, at present, is unused in the evenings. We thought it would be a good idea to let you try it out at the next A.G.M. on October 9th to help us make a decision about using it as our future "home". To that end, a map is included in the newsletter. It is situated at the far end of a small industrial estate near the centre of Watford.

Ruth Brown, a longtime guild member who works there, and who many of you will know, has recently returned from a visit to Japan and will describe it to us and show us her slides as soon as the business part of the meeting is over. We hope to see you all there for what will be, without doubt, a really interesting evening.

As a foretaste of 'goodies' to come, we have three top names for open day on **November 14th** this year - Carol McNicoll

Felicity Aylieff

Takeshi Yasuda

More details in due course.

Also for **November 14th** - "Ceramatec" will be coming to display and sell their pottery materials. Guild members may send them advance orders to be collected on the day. Please contact them direct using their address etc. as in their advert on the back page of this newsletter.

This is a request to anyone who has taken interesting photographs of any guild events since last autumn to generously send copies (returnable), for display on Open Day, to Ruth Karnac - or even more generously, mount them yourself on black card or paper and bring them along to the Rudolph Steiner School on Nov. 14th. Make a note !

OTHER EVENTS

Until 25 Sept; an exhibition of pottery & Sculpture at Brunel Gallery, Cleveland Rd. Uxbridge. This is the private & public work of tutors at Brunel Arts Centre. Phone 0895 273482 for details.

19 Sept for 1 Wk. at C.R.A. Gallery; Herts. Arts Forum are holding an Exhibition of Sculpture, Arts, Pottery & Painting. 9 A.M - 5.30 P.M. all week & 9 - 5 on Sat.

'The Barnett Collection' have a demonstration by Caroline Whyman, on Oct 17. £15 inc. lunch, phone 081449 4314, or 5288, or 0904, for details.

The Terrace Gallery, 17 Liverpool Terrace, Worthing, (phone 0903 212926) 8 Sep. to 3 Oct. Handbuilt Ceramics by Tina Vlassopoulos & New ceramics by Alan Wallwork, plus Watercolours, Glass, Jewellery. At the same venue, 13 Oct to 7 Nov., 'Fantastic Bestiary' Ceramics by Millie Swanepoel, with Stoneware by Mick Arnup, plus other works.

1st Oct to 18 Dec. an Exhibition of material excavated from the Fulham Pottery site in the 1970's. Over 150 items will be on view. 'John Dwight, the Master Potter of Fulham 1672 - 1703 & his contemporaries,' is the title of this Exhibition, at 'Jonathan Horne', 66 Kensington Church St., London W84BY. Phone 071 2215658.

THE FESTIVAL OF EUROPEAN CERAMICS

The Festival of European Ceramics was held over a weekend from the 10th through to the 12th of July. The venue was Claysmore School, at Iwerne Minster, Blandford Forum, Dorset.

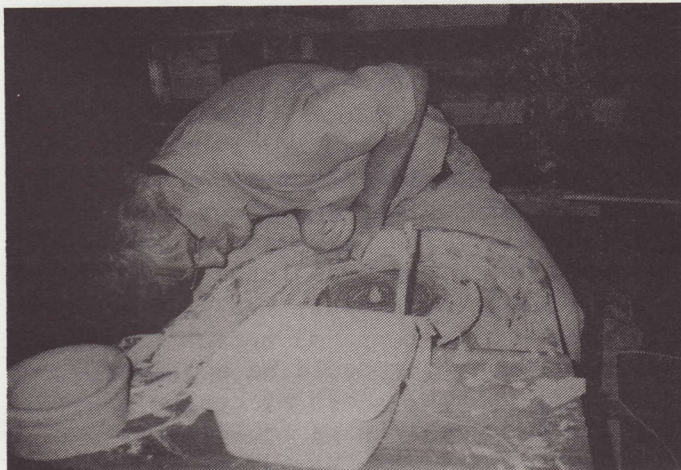
The main house at Claysmore was built in 1878 for the second Earl of Wolverton, a member of Gladstone's Cabinet & is a fine example of Victorian Gothic Architecture. The school is extensive, with many buildings, set in 62 acres of countryside.

Organisation of the event was co-ordinated by Marya Fforde, with support from some familiar names, Peter Beard, Ruthanne Tudball, Phil Rogers, to mention only a few. Our M.C. was the Irrepressible Jim Robison, a man with humour built into his personality & ready to flow out at any opportunity, be it a success or disaster. In fact he had quite a few problems to cope with, including microphone failure & feedback, plus some performances that did not quite fit the pattern intended!

I did greatly enjoy Wally Keeler's Demonstration & talk & it was nice to meet so many friends again. The Guild was in evidence, with Marigold Austin & Lesley Reeves present.

I applied for a copy of the video being made of the weekend & will talk to Digby about the possibility of showing it to members one evening.

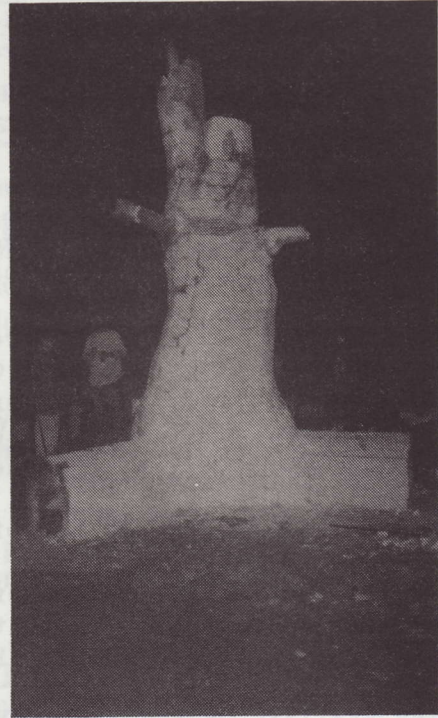
Mervyn Fitzwilliam



Is Wally Keeler throwing the smallest pot in the World???
No, it is actually a small part of one of his 'Oilcan Pots'.



There was Quite a lot to see at the kiln site, (above) preferably when it was not raining!



The FIRE TREE (right) designed & built by Wali Hawes & his helpers. This was spectacular during the evening, being as he told me "a living sculpture".



AN EVENING WITH ALAN CAIGER-SMITH
Thursday 13th May 1992

ENGLISH TINWARE AND THE CONTINENTAL CONNECTION

The evening was somewhat disrupted by being supplied the old Council Chamber with huge windows, instead of a more suitable room for the talk and slide show. For once the evening sunshine lit up the old red bricks of the Victorian Town Hall into a soft warm glow. In doing so, the seats and screen had to be turned around to find the shadow.

Alan Caiger-Smith is very well known for his outstanding Tin Glaze wares at Aldermaston. However, the subject was not his work, but the history of tin glazing and the collection bequeathed by the late William Blatch of Theale, to the Reading Museum.

Tin glazed ware was very undervalued at the turn of the century and regarded as little more than amusing pieces. He visited homes of friends and anyone who would part with pieces of his choice. Each was catalogued with the name of the donor on the back. Now, these names are of historical interest locally.

To appreciate just what tin glazed ware meant in Stuart times, one has to remember that the standard pot would be either brown, black or grey with a lead glaze or none at all. The poor used wood for plates and bowls that were turned on an old type lathe in the woods.

The great attraction of tin glaze was not that colour could be applied with great effect, but for a more practical reason. Most pieces were not decorated in any way, just white and cleanliness could be assured. How little we have changed.

Tin glazing moved north from Spain, Italy and France to Antwerp. However, the Spanish overlords of the Netherlands were ruthless, causing many to flee to England and Norwich in particular in 1567. Queen Elizabeth was petitioned for a temporary monopoly of 20 years. Unfortunately they did not get it. They made tiles and pots similar to the imported articles that came in from Antwerp. The term Galleyware or Gallware for tin glazed ware came from the ships that brought them here. In the 18th century Delftware was used after the successful productions there.

The slides showed English, Dutch and Italian pieces.

English A naive simplicity, usually of monarchs without much regard to correctness or the human figure. Plates of Charles the Second or William and Mary bears witness to this.

Dutch Tends to be precise, balanced and well drawn. Just the opposite to the English ware and without the humour.

Italian The Italian ware derived from the Moorish Spanish work became very sophisticated and colourful. Surfaces became substitutes for canvasses and copies of the great Masters such as Raphael were recreated by new artists in tin glaze colours. The work produced at Deruta shows this to perfection.

Locations With the advent of modern transport, it is forgotten just how heavy clay in bulk is. All the potteries have to be near rivers or ports. Good clays were found in Kent, Suffolk and Norfolk. The markets were in towns, hence the riverbank potteries in Rotherhythe, Lambeth, Bristol, Liverpool, Dublin, Belfast and Glasgow. Much tin ware was exported to the American colonies, hence the importance of the later names.

In 1620 a great deal of white and blue ware was made in North Holland. This has been influenced by the capture of 13 tons of Chinese porcelain from a Portugese ship in 1602. The blue and white became fashionable and the taste of the 17th century set a long lasting trend.

In the 18th century the Chinese influence held sway with blue and white after the Ming imports. Polychrome colours from Italy gradually accompanied the blue and white with often strange results.

In England so called Tulip bowls became popular. These were geometric in design and bear little relationship to a true tulip. The thick and thin brushes used with sweeping curves gives the impression of tulip heads in a style more akin to calligraphy.

I have stated that the English tin ware was somewhat rustic. The glass maker recognised this and petitioned that the monopoly held by the potters should be broken. This was self interest. They claimed that the foreign wares were better in all respects. Of course there was an element of truth in this, but the real reason was that they wanted to import and make a great deal of money at the potters expense.

The end of tin ware came quicker in England than elsewhere. Such was the demand for good white ware and decorated pieces the trade could not cope. Demand outstripped supply both at home and abroad. Tin glazing cannot be mechanised in the same way as developed by Josiah Wedgwood in Burslem. Wedgwood's famous Creamware and transfer printing spelt the end of the process.


In less developed countries, such as Bohemia, tin glazing still flourished and work of great beauty was made. In England, De Morgan used tin and lustres to great effect. Picasso used it and finally Alan Caiger-Smith since 1955 has and still does use tin glazes with an élan that perhaps has breathed fresh life into a tradition that started as an Islamic answer to Chinese porcelain so many centuries ago.

This is only an outline of a most interesting talk. The modesty of our speaker when referring to his own work and his praise for the earlier styles and techniques, made the evening well worth the effort of travelling to Reading.

May I recommend to anyone who has an interest in tin glazing in England in the last three centuries, to go to the Reading Tourist Office at the Town Hall. When the museum has been refurbished the collection will be moved back.

Also visit Alan Craiger-Smith at Aldermaston to see what modern artists are doing with tin glazes and lustres.

Brian Bicknell
May 1992



ART IN ACTION

Art in Action Was held at Waterperry House, Wheatley, Oxford, from 16 -19 July inclusive. This Annual event is quite outstanding & organisation, by The School of Economic Science, is always impeccable, with an army of dedicated volunteers supporting all aspects of the activity.

Having been involved with the 'Practical Classes' for several years, I have seen this side of Art in Action expand considerably during this time. For those of you who have not been, I should explain that the Practical classes are staffed by teachers of various subjects, such as Water Colour Painting, Pyrography, Knitting, Spinning, Clay Modelling & Pottery Throwing, (which is where I devote my time & why I did not get along to the D.C.P.G. Garden Party).

With nine teachers in throwing last year, we were permanently sold-out for the whole four days. This year we expanded to twelve teachers, each with a wheel & were still sold-out!!

In the Throwing class we give basic instruction in the stages of throwing a simple pot. The first day is usually the most exhausting & whilst tutoring my last two students for the day, with a very uneven & lumpy pot, I suddenly found myself surrounded by a camera crew, a fuzzy microphone up my nose & a bright & inquisitive Jan Leeming asking questions. There is a vague threat that some footage of this incident could be on T.V. soon.

Strong support was given by the D.C.P.G., with Rena Green & Christopher Brewis teaching for the whole four days & the ubiquitous Doug Jones coming along on Sunday afternoon to help.

The satisfaction of helping students both young & old to enjoy an introduction to one aspect of pottery & possibly widening the horizon in some cases, is supplemented by meeting many Artists & of course, Potters. Since there were so many Potters I suggested an informal Potters / Teachers / Organisers Dinner, which was enjoyable & attended by nearly 40 people.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



Rena Green gives close attention to getting things right.



The Author, instructing a mature student.



Chris Brewis dives to the rescue.

THE LEAST SUCCESSFUL DEFROSTING DEVICE

The all-time record here is held by Mr Peter Rowlands of Lancaster whose lips became frozen to his lock in 1979 while blowing warm air on it.

'I got down on my knees to breathe into the lock. Somehow my lips got stuck fast.'

While he was in the posture, an old lady passed and inquired if he was all right. 'Alra? Igmm!ptk', he replied at which point she ran away.

'I tried to tell her what had happened, but it came out sort of . . . muffled,' explained Mr Rowlands, a pottery designer.

He was trapped for twenty minutes ('I felt a bit foolish') until constant hot breathing brought freedom. He was subsequently nicknamed 'Hot Lips'.



We are pleased to announce that as of the 23rd July, 1992, Reward-Clayglaze have purchased Fulham Pottery's pottery materials and equipment supply business. This does not include the Fulham Pottery name or their selling of sculpture and artists materials which will continue to be run by the Fulham Pottery as an entirely separate business.

Reward-Clayglaze and The Fulham Pottery will both trade from the existing premises in Ingate Place, Battersea. Fulham Pottery's pottery materials and equipment will also now be available by order from both Rickmansworth and Cheadle branches of Reward-Clayglaze. Sculptors and artists materials will continue to be available from the Fulham Pottery shop at 555, Kings Road and Ingate Place which are not affected by the sale.

With this change, Reward-Clayglaze will consolidate their distribution facilities in the South East, enabling them to continue to improve the service to the benefit of all our customers.

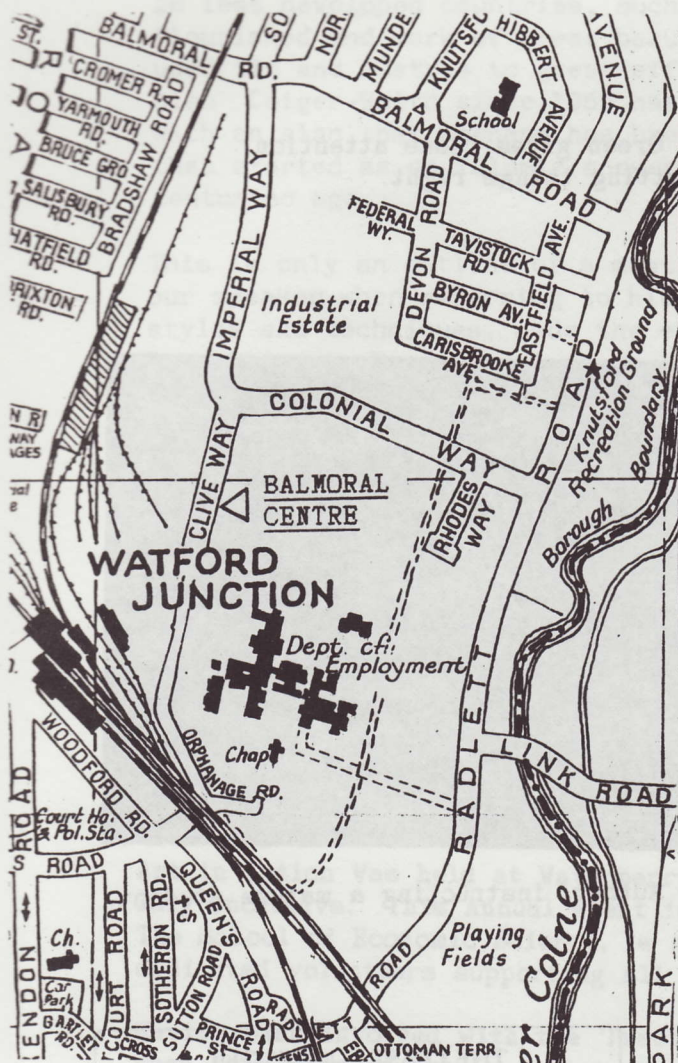
If you have any queries relating to this change, for instance regarding the continuity of supply, please do not hesitate to contact either Reward at Tel. No. 071-720 0050, or the Fulham Pottery for artists and sculptors materials at Tel. No. 071-498 2676.

With effect from the date of this notice, all transactions with regard to pottery materials and equipment will be the responsibility of Reward-Clayglaze Ltd., and subject to their conditions of sale.

Reward-Clayglaze take this opportunity to welcome you as customers and assure you that we will take the greatest of care to provide you with the very best of both products, and look forward to your continuing custom in their long established business.

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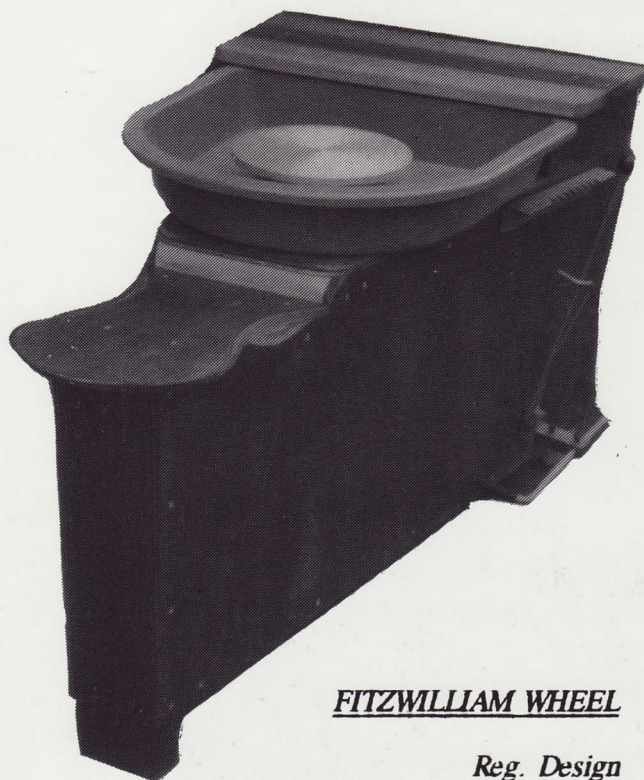
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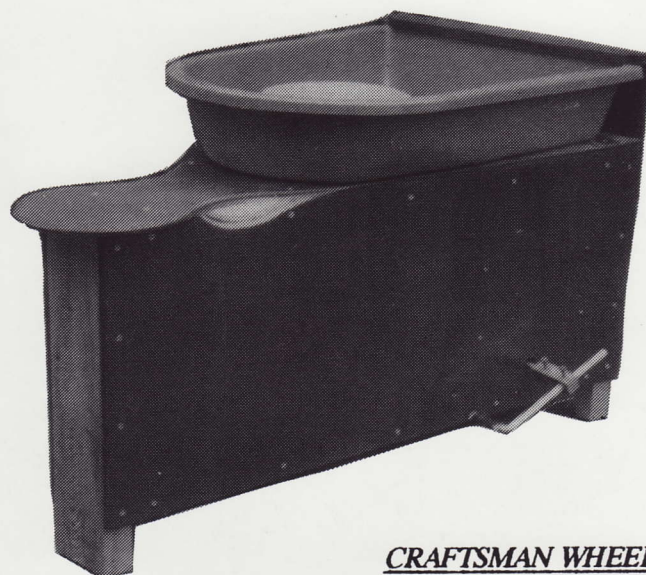
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A new price list will be available from 1 st. Sept. if you are not on the mailing list, ring 081 8854492 or write to them & they will send one.

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lesley Reeves



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