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POTTERS GUILD**



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER

1992



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THE Potters CONNECTION

FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPH

Torso Sculptures by Doug Jones, see
"Inside-Out Sculpture"

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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, please contact the Editor for details. Closing date for items to go in the January Newsletter is 10 December. Please mention DCPG when replying to Advertisements in the Newsletter.

EDITORIAL

Unfortunately I will not be at the Open Day this year, since at that time I am expecting to be on the way to U.S.A. However, at this time the tickets for Open Day are selling rapidly & I am sure the event will be outstanding - your committee are working hard to ensure that everything goes smoothly. During the demonstrations 3 Guild Members will be taking notes & photographs, so that those of us who cannot be there can read about the details.

Members often tell me that they visited a pottery or class or exhibition or demonstration that was interesting, but are somewhat shy about writing for the Newsletter. I am always glad to receive any notes, letters, Humorous items, technical information, tips or whatever, don't be shy, if the item you send is not quite perfect it may simply add to the charm (just like pots!!). Having said that, I am very glad that some of our newest Members are writing for us now - how about you sending something?

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



INSIDE-OUT SCULPTURE: Doug Jones on September 11th.

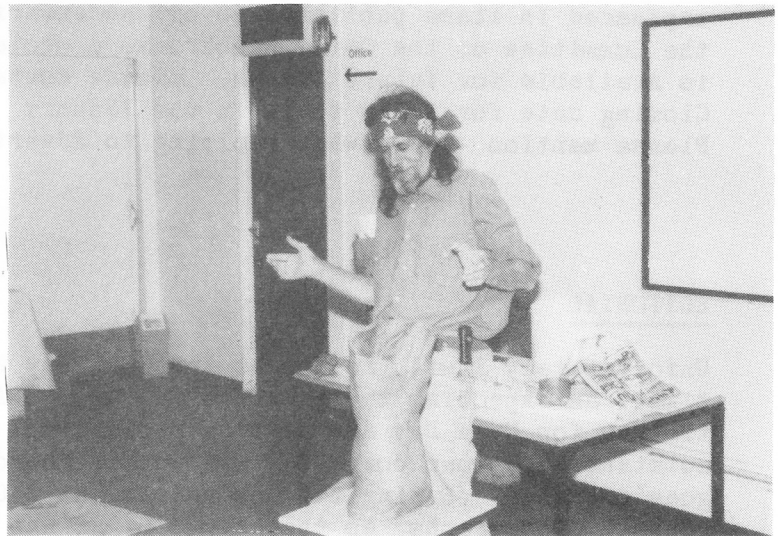
A torso, like the Venus de Milo but without the distraction of legs and head, a ceramic piece in its own right, a pot for the garden with a plant growing through it from the soil, a vase for dried flowers. And it started from some screwed-up newspaper. Doug Jones stuffed this into a tube of cottle, a stiff, waterproof plastic, about a foot across. Round this he wound some canvas, held in place by string. Round this he wrapped a sheet of clay, somewhere between an inch and two inches thick, rolled from a large block. What he now had was a pillar, say two feet high, of drying clay, held out by the newspaper stuffing and upright by the cottle.



Clay rolled out ready to start

The torso starts to take shape

Photographs by R. Moon



Jump forward in time! When the clay is stiff enough to stand without support but moist enough to be moulded, the stuffing and cottle are removed. The canvas is then peeled from the clay. The torso is made from the inside by pushing the clay out in the right place: the hips, chest, breasts. How easy it sounds! But, if you want to do this as easily and well as Doug Jones, know your anatomy - not in the sense of being able to name the parts, like a medical student, but in understanding how the human frame is constructed under the external shape. Until the feeling for shape, hand and eye are co-ordinated, expect aberrations. If the first attempt looks like a cross between a rabbit and a blighted oak, start again. Or you could glaze and fire the piece and sell it as an abstract.

As learning is likely to involve a lot of abandoned clay and hence reclamation, it would be better to start smaller and work your way up to the size Doug demonstrated. He used a crank and ball clay mixture but any clay will do, so long as it is comfortably plastic when strong enough to stand. Anyone think a torso workshop would be a good idea?

Victor Earl



TALK AND SLIDE SHOW BY RUTH BROWN ON HER RECENT VISIT TO JAPAN.

Ruth delighted us with her enthusiastic and informative commentary throughout the slide show. Her visit lasted six weeks, in which time she doesn't appear to have wasted a minute. She travelled extensively, usually by train and staying at youth hostels. Keeping mainly to the countryside, her slides showed us some of the beautiful pottery made in these rural areas. Most villages have at least one pottery, and in some cases production was prolific, with shops and warehouses full. These pots are sold locally for functional rather than ornamental use. The sizes of these pots ranged from thrown pots of a few cms., to coiled pots almost waist high. Some shown were very intricate and looked like woven baskets, but most depicted the fabulous traditional shapes and glazes that one would expect to find.

Mostly ash glazed, the pots are fired in wood kilns and there was a wonderful picture of a traditional climbing kiln with a thatched roof. On the other hand, Ruth told us of a potter who very proudly showed her his latest acquisition - an electric/gas kiln. First stage firing is with electricity and when ready to reduce, electric off and gas on. Surely the ultimate in firing technology !

Ruth told us how very welcome she was made to feel and there was usually someone who could speak English and therefore she had little problem communicating.

Her travels took her to the pottery centre at Kyoto and to Shoji Hamada's home and museum at Mashiko; Ruth spoke of this with due reverence. Gardens at the Imperial Palace and a sculpture park were also visited. Ruth also met a very skilled man who made the most beautiful and vibrant lacquer work she had seen. He explained that without an exhibition in the West and subsequent recognition, his work will not be appreciated in Japan. Ruth hopes to remedy this by trying to arrange an exhibition of his work in this country, and we all wish her success with that project.

The slide show ended as it had begun, with a picture of a temple at Osaka which, to Ruth epitomised the feel and sights of Japan and to which she is determined to return.

Julie Putnam



The Temple at Osaka

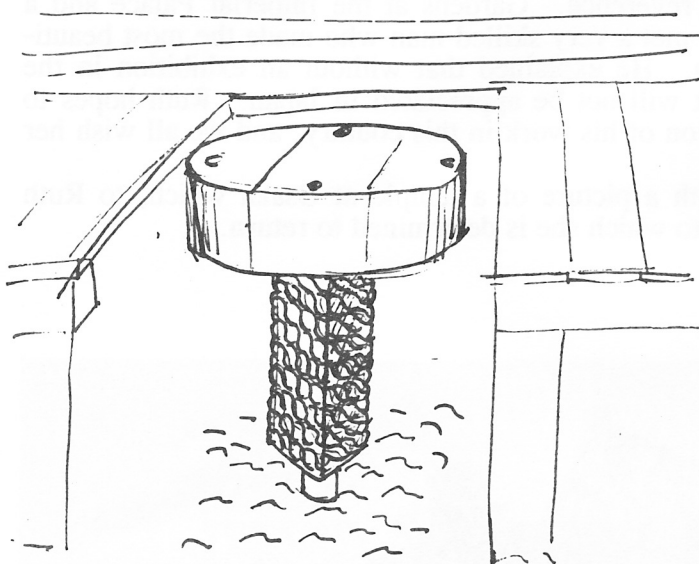


THAT "VERY LOW WHEEL"

The "very low wheel" which Ruth Karnac noticed I was using to make pots on at this year's party is my version of a 'te rokuro' or hand wheel as used in Japan. (See Newsletter Sept. 1992). The Japanese version, which originated in China, is well described in "A Potter's Book" but in spite of this fact I will attempt to give you my explanation of the most simple of potter's wheels.

Basically all you need for a wheel is a heavy disc, well balanced and controllable. Control comes with experience so you could manage with a very heavy fly wheel and take pots off while the wheel is in motion, or fit a brake. In India, wide wheels set close to the ground, often turned by an assistant, are still in use to make large quantities of vessels, whereas in Japan, the hand wheel is raised to bench height by means of a hard wood spindle or axle set firmly in the ground. The wheel is then balanced on this using a purpose made porcelain cup. To prevent the whole thing rocking, an outer box runs down from under the wheel head to hold a porcelain sleeve in place around the base of the axle.

The wheel head is made of *Zelcova serrata* (Keaki in Japanese), a hard reddish type of elm, and has a diameter of about 20 inches (the same length as a shaku hachi) or one shaku and eight sun. The Korean type kick wheels cost about £600 at the time of going to press and the hand wheel appears to have about the same amount of work in it so I assume it would cost something similar.



Hand wheel (*te rokuro*)



The author at a kick wheel (*ke rokuro*)

Pots are usually made from a large lump of clay, not only for convenience, but also to avoid tools wearing away the wood. Apart from four indentations around the circumference of the head into which one places a stick to propel the wheel, the surface is treated with the greatest respect and touched with tools as little as possible. The surface of the wheel which Hamada used for many years shows less wear than a steel one of the same age, as do the Korean type kick wheels alongside in his workshop.

To work at the hand wheel, one sits cross-legged on the work bench and by pushing at the wheel with the aid of a stick in a clockwise direction, enough momentum is achieved to rapidly centre a small portion of clay on top of the "hump". For making objects of the same size the potter quickly learns to gauge the amount of clay required for each piece.

With short clay it is better to use slip, rather than water, as a lubricant. Although time consuming when removing the excess at the end of the operation, this has the added advantage of clinging to the pot. Frequent dips into the "water container" are thus minimised and very little, if any, watery slip reaches the edge of the wheel (hence no drip tray). This method is so tidy that it appears, from my limited experience of Japan, to be the norm and pots dry more evenly.

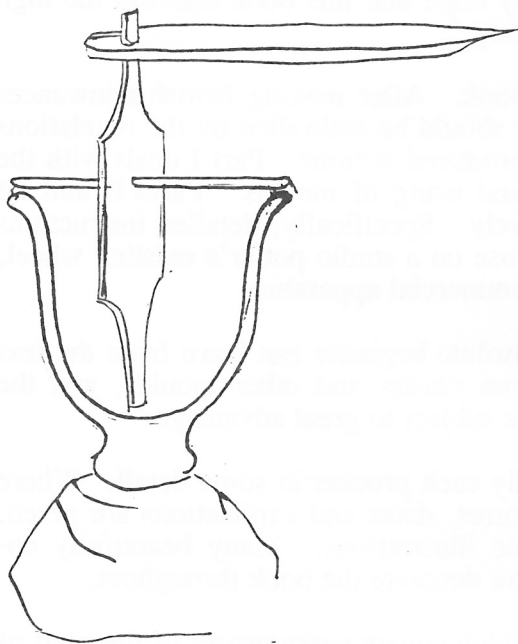
Larger pots are made by first beating a depression in the clay, so that one centres a collar which is easier than a lump. On the whole, clay is always used in a softer state than one would use on an electric wheel.

Height and width are gauged using a bamboo device called a "dragonfly" or "tombo" which is used to measure the inside dimensions of each pot. Turning is done on a chuck but with the wheel moving anti-clockwise which gives the potter's body a chance to stay fit and balanced.

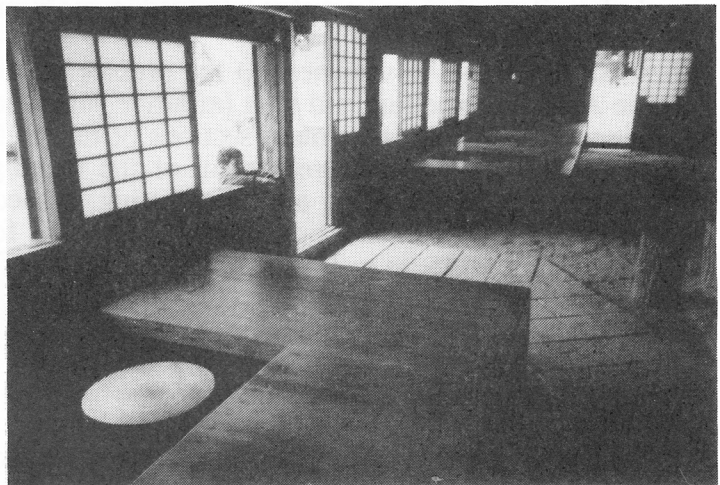
I first made a pot in this way around 1965 on an old heavy and well-balanced plaster maker's turntable that would have been driven by a belt from the factory power take-off system. This piece of equipment had been hanging around Goldsmith's College, where I worked for many years, and just for fun I tried to make a pot on it in the way described. I still have one of the bowls I made that day and am hard pressed to better it.

When I ceased teaching, about ten years ago, I had no potter's wheel nor access to one, so I made a three-foot wide turntable out of two discs of ply with 60 lbs. of ball bearings, the size of boule balls, trapped between the planes. My son had made a simple bearing at school which he donated for the axle and with one piece bolted to the wheel and the other to a base board, I could make any kind of pot I wanted. Unfortunately, my daughters discovered that if the "potter's wheel" was turned upside-down, the base board could be sat upon and two children could experience the G force most people have to pay a lot of money for.

My present wheel is made of slabs of English elm with some lead to give it extra weight so that instead of being six inches thick as in the Japanese model, I manage with three inches and 40 lbs. weight. The axle had been improved recently and is simply a banding wheel bolted on to a piece of inch ply 2 feet by 4. The unromantic reason for this allows me to transport it around the country with ease and at the same time carry most of my stock. As anyone who



Dragon fly gauge (*tombo*)



Studio of Hamada Shoji, his hand wheel is in the farthest corner.

has had to shift a potter's wheel from A to B will know, there is little room for anything else in the average estate car.

The beauty of this primitive wheel is that even the smallest child can see what the potter is doing and the general public have a chance to see the process with which some of the most exquisite pots in the world were made.

Although I throw my pots using an anti-clockwise motion and sit astride a box, the battle to make an object using a rhythm of turning with a stick and the decreasing speed of the wheel are the same.

Ironically, this Eastern wheel is rarely used in Japan now as the Korean type and increasingly electric are seen as more efficient. I found on my recent visit that I was one of the few people left who regularly worked on such a traditional piece of potter's equipment. The word 'work' should be replaced by the word 'demonstrate' as I rarely save anything I make on this wheel, being reluctant to carry damp work back to the studio.

My own work has changed quite dramatically over the past thirty years so that it is now almost at the point where most other potters were in the 60s. I think the hand wheel has been a catalyst in this but it does have so many associations with Japan and the wonderful dancing pots made on it that it would be too easy to go in that direction (apart from the amazingly tidy studios which would drive me round the bend after three days). Consequently, I make a few tea bowls and tea pots each year on the hand wheel, large medieval inspired jugs on a very old Leach type wheel and most of my production on the best electric wheel money can buy. A wheel which behaves in a similar way to the Leach and the hand wheel; that has a superb slow speed with no need to stop work while listening to Radio 4.

Doug Jones



BOOK REVIEW

MOLD MAKING FOR CERAMICS Donald E. Frith: A.& C. Black, 1992 £35.00
Hardback, 228 pp.

"The goal of this book is to demonstrate the art of producing pottery forms from molds. At base, it is a "how-to-do-it" book, intended to enable eager and searching ceramists to successfully use molds in the fulfillment of their most inventive ideas or in the creation of beautifully designed products for the market. Beyond that, it is my hope that this book conveys the high level of craftsmanship and artistry involved in mold making."

These are the opening sentences to the preface of the book. After making British allowances for the American spelling and split infinitive, the reader should be enthralled by the revelations contained in the three large main sections of this well-produced volume. Part I deals with the world-wide History and Development of the making and using of moulds. Parts II and III explain fully Press-moulding and Slip-casting, respectively. Specifically, detailed instructions are given also how to make jiggers and jolly heads for use on a studio potter's existing wheel, and other equipment, as well as explaining the use of commercial apparatus.

It would appear that nothing has been omitted. The absolute beginner can learn from the text and pictures enough to produce well-made pottery from plaster and other moulds, and the experienced potter can advance his/her knowledge of the subject to great advantage.

The text is agreeably readable, and explains quite lucidly each process in some detail. Where references are made to personalities, countries and cultures, dates and explications are given, accompanied where necessary by clear black and white illustrations. Many beautifully coloured photographs of modern examples of moulded ware decorate the book throughout.

This is a reference book as well as a practice manual, which covers every aspect of the craft of moulding ceramics using all the various suitable materials. The advantages and disadvantages of each material are itemized, and there are several examples given for each medium. Two robust calculators are supplied, in envelopes inside the covers, for Clay Shrinkage and Plaster mixing. With a list of American suppliers, there are also addresses of British stockists, and a detailed and useful index.

After a very careful search, the only criticism I can make was that of the mention of the use of a sharp metal knife to cut clay in plaster moulds or over cloth. I think this may cause damage to the plaster or to the cloth, and I would prefer to use a wooden knife-tool. And there are a few spelling mistakes or printers' errors. But these are possible minor facts, and do not by any means preclude this book from being a very desirable and useful tome for any aspiring or practising potter wishing to make excellent moulded ware. The greatest impediment, however, may be the price: all book prices seem to have risen recently. But this one is really worth the money, and it could save you quite a lot!

Stan Romer



WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Alrun & Colin Davies 42 Hobletts Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 5LR

John Squires 11 Totternhoe Close, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex. MA7 OHS

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Several Members have already paid their Subscriptions, which are now due. If you are coming to the Open Day you can pay whilst you are there, or alternatively send your cheque to Digby Stott. "Broomfield" 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts. HP3 0DJ. Membership Rates are; Family - £15, Single - £12.50, Full time Student - £6.00



SURVEY 1992 - 19 filled in and returned out of (approx.) 120

Membership Singles - 16; Full-time students - 0
Family - 3: 2 x 2 & 1 x 4

Status - 8 teachers - 10 active amateurs
3 collectors (some in 2 categories)
3 professionals (more are known, but didn't respond)

Help wanted in selling work Marigold Austen- 'At home' selling days wanted
M. Moon- " " " " "

The following members are interested in joint selling via market stalls, exhibitions, etc. Ruth has put them all in touch with each other.

Linda Cannon	0923 829659
Linda Bryant	0442 233521
Rosalind Taylor	0895 638669
Lesley Risby	081 907 5600
Elaine Hudson	0753 885740
Hanna Christianson	0707 327346
Sally Routh	0296 738207
Mary Beerbohm	0727 56160
Freda Earl	0442 865661

Carol Crawley would like use of a kiln (Harpenden area) 05826 5102

Offers of help to the Guild

Two possible future contributors to give us a talk: Jackie Wilshire & Elaine Hudson

One occasional help: Lesley Risby, who might possibly like to come on to the committee.

Other John Lomas' suggestion in one of the recent newsletters about having a group sale in someone's garden - seems a good one.

One request for workshops (hands-on sessions) - difficulty of premises/timing/expense, but we are looking into it.

On the whole, people were appreciative of the Guild.



FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

Saturday 14 November The Open Day - at the Rudolph Steiner School, Kings Langley - an event not to be missed, with demonstrations from Felicity Aylieff, Carol McNicoll, Takeshi Yasuda. Tickets are £17 to Members of the Guild & £20 to non-members, excellent value for such a superb programme, with our traditional "Hot Toddy" on arrival & including a jolly good lunch. Don't just come on your own, bring your friends with you & show them how exciting life can be if you are a Potter!!!! Tickets from; Victor Earl 32 Trevelyan Way, Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 1JH.

Friday 11th December OUR CHRISTMAS MEETING - Ruth Karnac intends to arrange for the appearance of some mince pies & Alan talked of a Fruit Punch To add to the excitement Chris Bramble will be giving us a demonstration of thrown, cut & joined figures. Northchurch Social Centre, at 8.00 P.M. Chris is a popular figure & we anticipate a good attendance.

Friday 8th January 93 Jon Churchill will be showing slides of his work made in Kenya & giving us a demonstration of decorated burnished earthenware. **NOTE** this meeting & future meetings will be at our new venue, the Balmoral Centre in Watford, please see the map at the back of the September Newsletter, or collect a map from Ruth Karnac at Open Day.

Details of most of our future evening meetings are given on your new membership card as usual. You will see that Hanna Christianson has been busy organising an exciting programme for us, with well known potters such as Carolyn Genders, Kate Byrne & Len Stevens coming along to show us their pottery techniques.

All evening meetings are free to Guild members, but please bring some friends with you. A nominal charge is made for guests to join us for the evening & we are always pleased to have visitors.

Saturday 23 January 93 Proposed all-day Sculpture Workshop with Doug Jones. Doug will be teaching his "inside - out" techniques for making torso & other forms, including faceting methods on thrown pots. This will be a "hands-on" activity. Venue will be the Rudolph Steiner School. Send your cheque for £15, (£18 non members) **WITHOUT DELAY** to Brian Bicknell 41 Coates Lane, High Wycombe Bucks. **CLOSING DATE IS 30 NOVEMBER & WE CAN ONLY PROCEED IF WE HAVE SUFFICIENT STUDENTS.**

OTHER EVENTS

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.

1st Nov. - 16th Dec. (By appointment only) Exhibition of Ceramics by David, Benjamin & Simon Beles, at Lancaster Arts Centre Gallery Wycombe Abbey High School, High Wycombe Bucks.

2nd Nov. - 2 Dec. Ceramics by Michael & Sheila Casson Oxford Gallery 23 High St., Oxford OX1 4AH. phone 0865 242731

3rd - 13th Nov. "Clay for today" Exhibition at Bloomsbury Gallery, Inst. of Education 20 Bedford Way WC1 9.30a.m. - 8.30p.m. M-Fri. 12.30p.m.Sat.

To 30th Nov. "Variations in clay" Exhibition by Glenn Ettienne, Chris Bramble, Nicola Tomlin, Natsuko Tamba & Jaqueline Norris. There will also be Workshops on 8th & 15 Nov. Phone 0494 464800 for details.

11th Nov. - 20th Nov. "Pots & Pieces" Exhibition of ceramics & embroidery at Watford Central Library. The ceramics are by Guild Members Marguerite Moon, Ruth Brown, Hanna Christianson & Elaine Hudson, so do go along if you can.

18th Nov. - 11 Dec. London Potters 6th Annual Exhibition, Morley Gallery, 61 Westminster Bridge Road SE1.

For pots with a different theme, the work of Su Lupasco could be very interesting. Su includes items such as car components, stone & stained glass in her pieces. Temple's Orchard, 4 Crown Dale, London SE19 3NQ. please phone before you visit - 081 761 5513



PROFILE

Marguerite Moon

Marguerite has had a career as a physiotherapist working, mainly, with spastic children, where she may have been regarded as an 'asset', but after redundancy she decided on a change of direction, after some years taking evening classes in pottery, and is now more probably more accurately described as a 'liability'. She did the City and Guilds part I in 1990 and is now embarked on part II. First exhibited with the Guild this year and soon to be doing so again with a small group of potters and embroiderers called Pots and Pieces. Marguerite was elected to the Committee in 1991.



Marguerite



Brian

Brian Bicknell

Photograph by R. Moon

Educated in Tiverton, Devon; moved to London for further study. Printer, trained at Central School of Art and London College of Printing. Pottery, 5 years - 'A' level at Langley College, Slough. Took up pottery as a dare as I thought I would do better and found it took a long time to reach the standard I imposed upon myself. Taught, initially, by Chris Bull at Wellesbourne School. Committee member for 5 years.



CHORLTON POTTERY.

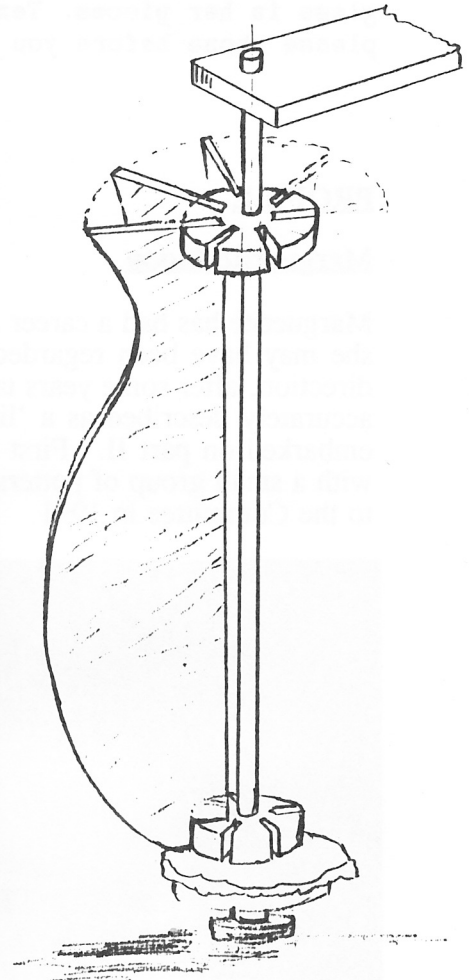
During a recent trip, I visited the Chorlton Pottery, near Manchester, which is managed by Ian Ramsey. The pottery spills out in all directions, with people walking between the pots on the pavement, a shop full of a great variety of work, a large workshop and a yard at the back.



**Chorlton Pottery from
the customers' view**



**Matthew Ramsey putting the
new wheel to immediate use**

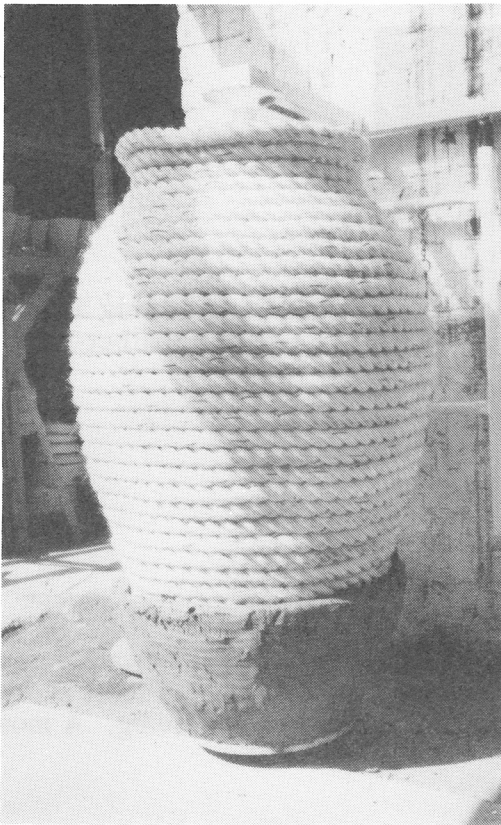


**Sketch showing the formers
before the rope is positioned**

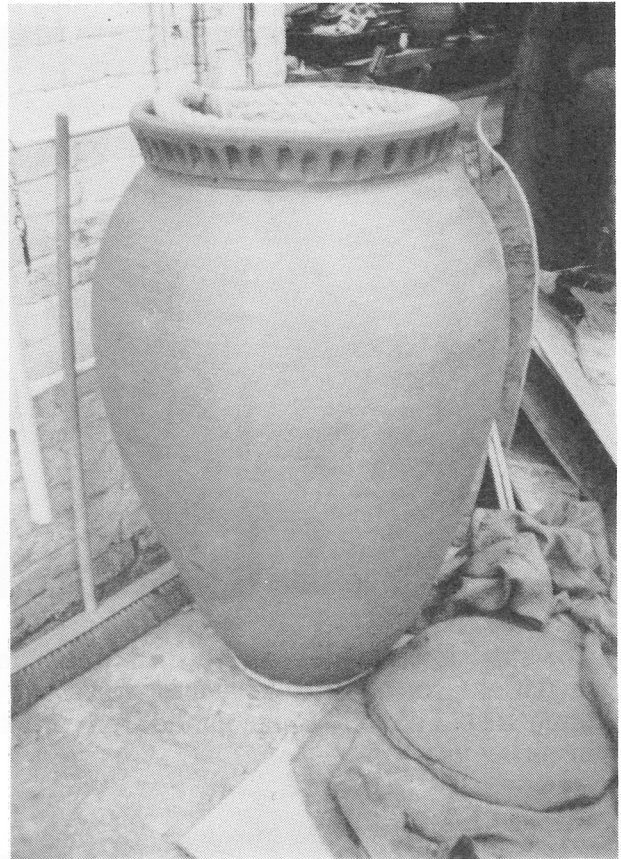
Ian is a man who is in love with making pots, his philosophy being to make what he likes --- and he likes everything. This attitude results in a happy and busy atmosphere with most of the pots being the result of co-operative efforts between Ian, his son Matthew, Pan Gang (an accomplished sculptor) and Danny Corley. Joanne Donaldson and Angela Westland alternately take care of the shop.

The new wheel that I delivered was immediately put to use, with Matthew starting on some bowls. Most throwing is on bats on a studded wheelhead.

I was intrigued by a technique for making enormous terracotta pots, shown in the accompanying photographs and sketch. Wooden formers are assembled on a spindle over a clay base which is on a heavy-duty banding wheel. Rope is wrapped around the formers to give a smooth circular shape. The pot is built up around the outside of the rope and allowed to partially dry. When the spindle is withdrawn, the formers can be removed and, finally, after rope is removed from the inside of the pot, leaving the pot ready to fire.



Rope in place and construction by coiling is started



The completed pot



Ian Ramsey removes the rope

Earthenware and stoneware are both biscuit fired in a 30 cu.ft. "walk-in" gas kiln and glost firing is in a 50 cu.ft. Trolley kiln, also gas fired. Both kilns are the products of Ian's own ingenuity.

Having had difficulties with various suppliers, Ian could not praise Potters Connections highly enough for the supply of most materials. He buys kiln furniture directly from the manufacturers.



Pan Gang adding a sprigged figure to a leather-hard pot

The shop is constantly replenished with domestic ware, which jostles with stoneware vases, unglazed terracotta, wall plaques, figurines, humorous sculptured pieces, etc. Almost everything is sold directly to the public from the shop and business is constantly improving. A most inspiring visit.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



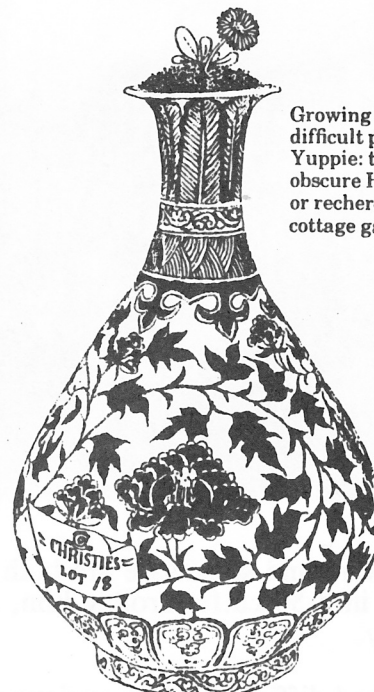
DCPG COMMITTEE LIST

<u>Murray Fieldhouse</u> (President)	0442-85 229
Northfields Studio, Tring, Herts.	
<u>Ray Phipps</u> (Vice-President)	0442-774 138
23 Hall Park, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2NL	
<u>Alan O'Dell</u> (Chair)	0727-869 383
35 Pondfield Crescent, St. Albans, Herts AL4 9PE	
<u>Ruth Karnac</u> (Vice-Chair & Sec.)	0895-631 738
35 Kingsend, Ruislip, Middx HA4 7DD	
<u>Victor Earl</u> (Treasurer)	0442-865 661
32 Trevelyan Way, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 1JH	
<u>Digby Stott</u> (Membership Sec.)	0442-250 540
"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts HP3 0DJ	
<u>Hanna Christianson</u> (Programme Organiser)	0707-327 346
14 The Croft, Welwyn Garden City. Herts AL7 4JY	
<u>Lesley Reeves</u> (Open Day)	0582-571 096
10 Bellerby Rise, Luton, Beds LU4 9DU	
<u>Mervyn Fitzwilliam</u> (Newsletter)	0442-242 332
"Longfield", Bulstrode Lane, Felton,	
Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 0BP	
<u>Brian Bicknell</u> (Proof Reading)	0494-530 050
41 Coates Lane, High Wycombe, Bucks	
<u>Marquerite Moon</u>	0727-823 801
"The Willows", Church Lane, Colney Heath, St. Albans,	
Herts AL4 0NH	
<u>Lesley Risby</u>	081 907-5600
113 Draycott Avenue, Kenton, Harrow HA3 0DA	
<u>Linda Bryant</u>	0442-252755
63 Ebberns Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 9QR.	



SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

For Sale - Saviac Kick Wheel,
£75 o.n.o. phone 061 860 4570
(Manchester)



Growing really rare and difficult plants is 100% Yuppie: try orchids, obscure Himalayan ferns or recherche English cottage garden flowers.

From the Official British Yuppie Handbook 1984. (I wonder if there are any Yuppies left now? Ed.)



BRUNEL UNIVERSITY
SPECIALIST WEEKEND WORKSHOPS IN CERAMICS & SCULPTURE
October 1992 - June 1993

- CERAMICS** Glazing - Taggs Yard Method
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Vessels - Form & Decoration
Garden pottery
- SCULPTURE** Portraiture
Terracotta Modelling - Hands & Feet
Finishing Techniques & Colouring Sculpture
Relief
- TUTORS :** *George Wilson, Harry Horlock-Stringer,
Brian Dewbury, Paula Gray, David Cowley,
Neil Ions, Jo Miller, Felicity Aylieff,
Sue Andreae.*

Further details from:

The Arts Centre, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middx. UB8 3PH
Tel : 0895-273482 (or 0895-274000 extn 2053).

Nearest tube station : Uxbridge (Metropolitan & Picadilly lines)

Nearest BR station : West Drayton

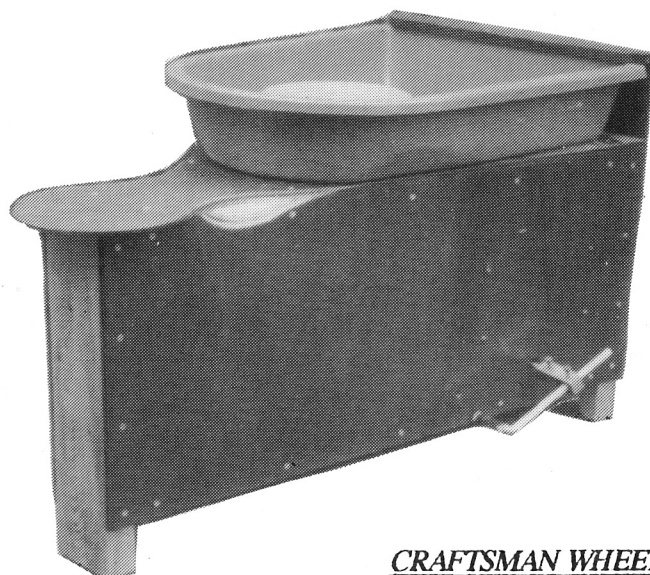
RAYEFCO LTD

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HERTFORDSHIRE HP3 0BP 0442 242332



FITZWILLIAM WHEEL

Reg. Design



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