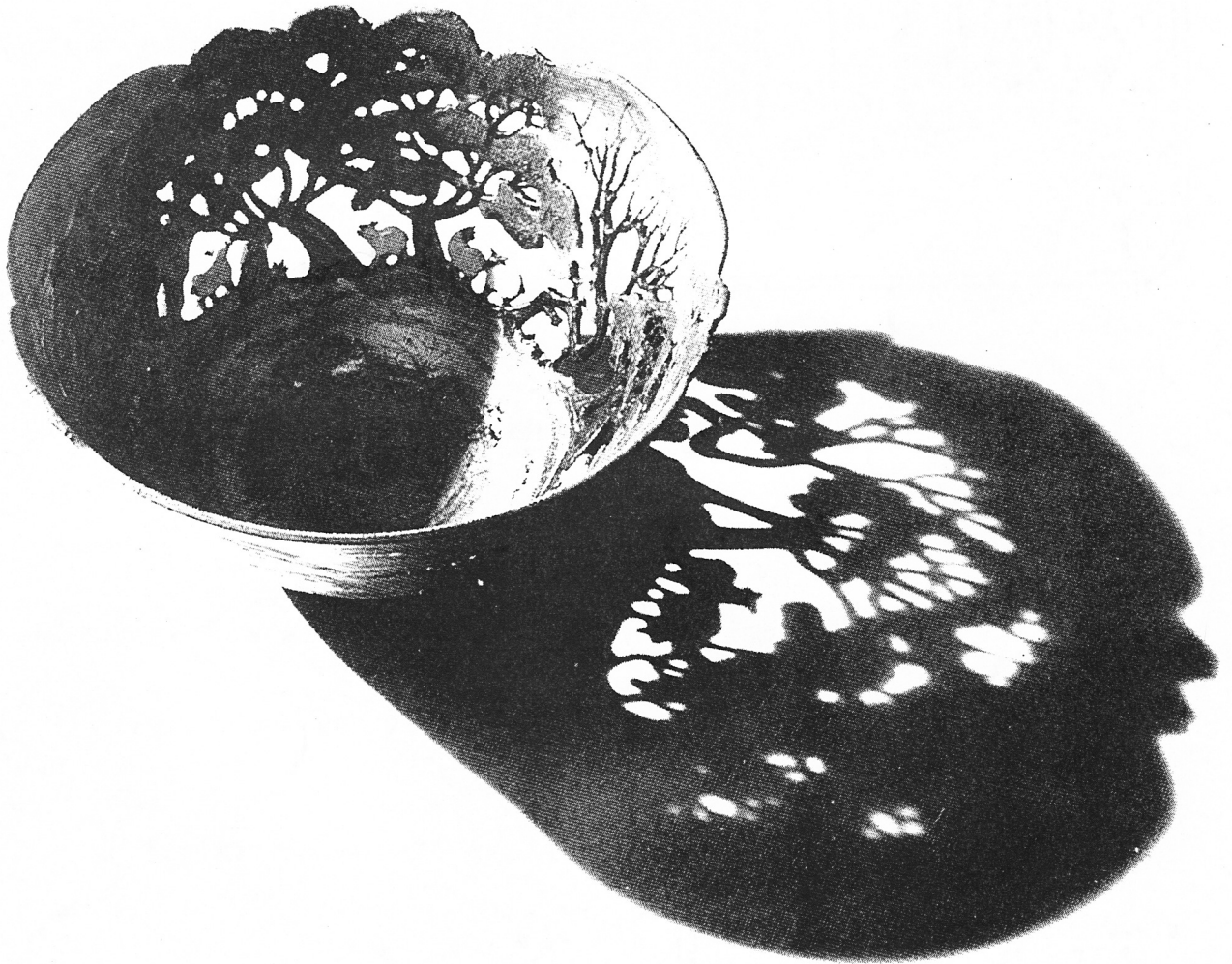




DACORUM AND  
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POTTERS GUILD



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NEWSLETTER  
NOVEMBER  
1993



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**FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPH:** Cut bowl, inspired by Chastleton Meadow, made in 1988 by Marigold Austin.

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## ABOUT THE GUILD

Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery and offers the members many opportunities each year to see top potters demonstrating their skills. In addition, an annual Open Day is held with demonstrations. A members' pottery exhibition, visits and workshops are organised at various times during the year. Family membership is £15/year, single £12.50, full-time student £6. Send your cheque to our Membership Secretary, D. Stott, "Broomfield", 36, Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts. HP3 0DJ.

The Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September and November, being distributed to all members of the Guild, other craft groups and organisations. 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, or a leaflet distribution service is offered. Please contact the Editor for details. Closing date for items to go in the January issue is December 10th. Please mention DCPG when replying to advertisements in the Newsletter.

## EDITORIAL

You will be pleased to know that our Membership is continuing to grow. This was brought home to me after printing the September Newsletter since, after ordering what I estimated to be sufficient for the members plus advertisers and prospective members, etc., we only just had enough. In fact our numbers have increased again this month and apparently the trend is a national one, with membership increasing in most pottery groups, according to a survey in the October issue of *Studio Pottery*.

Growing membership is good news of course, because increased numbers help to keep costs down and give us greater flexibility. It is also apparent that more members are participating in Guild activities and I am glad to say that the interest in our "workshops" is also increasing. Another very positive note is the greater willingness of members to contribute items for the Newsletter.

Encourage your friends and anyone with an interest in pottery to come along to Open Day and the Exhibition; remember that these people will only know about the Guild and its activities if you tell them.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Another Idea .....

In the light of the continuing success of Doug Jones' Sculpture courses and the obvious interest in the 'hands on' demonstration and the participation, may I put forward another idea?

Slab-building has been suggested as a possible exercise, but how about a teapot throwing demonstration or do I mean a 'throwing teapot demo....'!?

This is an area where a variety of skills come together and a number of pieces need to be made accurately, with aesthetic consideration to create the whole.

I know of several potters, who I have either watched or have heard, have great skills in teapot production. To name but a few: Murray Fieldhouse, Ruth Karnac, Pauline Ashley, Chris Bull, Arthur Ball and Marigold Austin.

I have just realised what a lot of present and ex-committee members there are among these names and I am sure that there are likely to be others who would be prepared to help others gain these skills.

So, hands up for a 'hands on' session. (*No sooner requested than done! See 'Forthcoming Events' - Ed.*)

Ruth Brown

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliam,

Thank you for your letter of 12 September '93 and for sending me a copy of the Newsletter. I am very impressed by the copy and like the reproduction on the front cover. I enjoyed the write-up by Mr. Bicknell. I was very pleased with your visit to my studio that day and quite happy to demonstrate throwing a few pots.

Yours faithfully,

Gilles le Corre

I would like to thank everyone who came to my Open Studio on Oct. 3rd and helped make it such a pleasant and successful day. Special thanks must go to those who encouraged you to come down to our bit of river, to Brian Bicknell for bringing his Raku Yaki kiln so that you could have a go, to Sylvia Fitzwilliam and my family who appeared to be chained to the sink or cooker all day, and a thank you on a different level to the Almighty for the only sunny day this last month. The last minute idea of the earthquake lunch raised £50.30 for the Indian appeal and was passed on to Oxfam the following day. Again, thank you.

Doug Jones

## FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

### Friday meetings - change of Venue

Our Friday meetings during Winter and next Spring will be held at the Northchurch Social Centre. The reason for using Northchurch rather than the Balmoral Centre is that the Committee felt that during the dark evenings the Balmoral car park, being unlit, was not satisfactory. In addition, the Northchurch centre has quite good heating on cold evenings.

### OPEN DAY - SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13TH 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., AT THE RUDOLF STEINER SCHOOL, KINGS LANGLEY.

Application forms already sent out to members, but if you do not have a form just send £17 (members) or £20 (non-members) with your name and address to Victor Earl (treasurer), 32 Trevelyan Way, Berkhamsted, Herts. HP4 1JH. The above fees include hot toddy on arrival, lunch (bring wine if you wish) and coffee in the morning, tea in the afternoon. If you come on the day without booking, you will be very welcome but please bring your own picnic lunch.

### Summary of P.O.D. events

Janet Halligan will be showing us her methods of reproducing amazingly realistic effects by hand building, modelling and assembling the parts in interesting and unusual ways.

Chris Aston will show us his innovative method of using wooden moulds for clay forming. He will also demonstrate throwing and altering the pieces and tell us about his very special glazes.

**John Pollex's** previous work in earthenware slip-trailing, made with an amazing level of expertise, is well-known to most of us, but his new work is entirely different and equally attractive and accomplished.

**Aston Pottery** (Tony Southwell) will be selling ceramic materials at Open Day, this year. Guild members will be entitled to a 5% discount on their purchases. Advance orders to be collected on the day should be given to Aston Pottery in good time and clearly marked "to be collected at the Rudolf Steiner School on Nov.13th". Address and phone number are in the advert. in this Newsletter.

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

It has been pointed out that the map sent to you for Open Day is out of date. There is now a short section of the A.41 between Hemel Hempstead and the roundabout at the M.25 junction which bypasses Kings Langley.

The Rudolf Steiner (New) School is in the village itself and the road going through the village is now the A.4251, so remember to turn off the A.41 at the signpost indicating A.4251 to Kings Langley.

**THURSDAY 9TH DECEMBER - 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.** The Guild Exhibition Private View at the Watford Museum. ***PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A CHANGE OF DATE.*** (The Private View was originally set for the 10th Dec. at the request of the Museum Curator, but this conflicts with our meeting with Deborah Hopson-Wolpe. Fortunately, we have been able to re-arrange the date as above). There is a limited number of tickets available for the P.V. The Guild will have 80 to distribute and these will be available at Open Day (Nov.13th) **on request.** Any surplus ones can be obtained by sending a s.a.e. to Lesley Risby. Tickets for exhibitors will be reserved.

The exhibition will be open from 8th Dec. to 8th Jan. (incl.) from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. & 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sat. (Closed Sundays).

**FRIDAY 10TH DEC.** - Deborah Hopson-Wolpe will be giving us a demonstration of lettering applied to pots. Come along & learn the secrets at NORTHCHURCH SOCIAL CENTRE, corner of Westfield Rd. & Bell Lane (see map at back of Newsletter), 8.00 p.m. There will be mince pies and fruit punch for a mini-Christmas celebration.

**FRIDAY 14TH JAN. '94** - Anthony Phillips will be demonstrating the use of coloured slips at NORTHCHURCH SOCIAL CENTRE, 8.00 p.m.

**SATURDAY 22ND JAN. '94** - Slab building workshop at Rudolf Steiner School, Kings Langley. This is planned as a hands-on workshop for all abilities, with both formal and informal projects & instruction given by Doug Jones. Guests will be very welcome to attend this workshop, so if you have friends who would be interested then please let them know. Send your cheque for £15 (or £18 if not a guild member), made payable to Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild, addressed to BRIAN BICKNELL, 41 COATES LANE, HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKS. HP13 5ET, together with your name and address plus details of any guests attending.

**SATURDAY 26TH FEB. '94** - Sculpture workshop with Doug Jones at Rudolf Steiner School. If you even have a slight interest in sculpture, or if you are already an avid enthusiast, then this is for you! Whatever your ability or skill level, you will be welcome & if past experience is anything to go by, you will certainly enjoy this! To book a place please apply to Brian Bicknell, as above.

During March we are planning to have a Teapot workshop as requested. The outline idea is that participants would produce one or more teapots from the clay preparation through to the finished fired pot, probably being involved in the various stages over a period of 2 or 3 days, with a week in between for pots to dry. Murray Fieldhouse has agreed to consider the possibilities and give us some proposals in the January Newsletter.

Looking even further into the future, a Raku workshop is being considered for April and, at the other extreme, a porcelain workshop has been suggested. Please let the committee know your views, or drop a note in the post to the Newsletter Editor.

**NOTE** - Our regular events are summarised on your new 1993/94 Membership Card.



## OTHER EVENTS

Founders of Modern Craft, a series of evening lectures profiling the pioneering makers and thinkers who shaped today's Crafts, including Bernard Leach, by Oliver Watson - Thursday 16th Dec. & William Staite Murray, by Malcolm Haslam - Thursday 24th March. £3.50 each; details of all 6 lectures from The Crafts Council Tel: 071 278 7700.

Following their successful show at the Wyllotyotts Gallery last year, the **BARNET COLLECTION** return with their 6th annual Christmas Exhibition & Sale. The group's 22 members will be presenting unique hand-made pieces, paintings, sculptures, etc., but mainly ceramics, at a wide range of prices. A percentage of sales will be donated to "Ravenswood" a charity which helps young mentally handicapped people. The Wyllotyotts Centre, Potters Bar, Herts., from 6th - 20th Dec. (For more details ring 0707 645005)

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We are happy to welcome the following new members and hope they will enjoy being part of the Guild: Claire Lake, Rachael Bucknill, Gordon Buist, Mrs. C.A. Hamilton-Stephens, Geof Harding and Wendy Fowler.

### The Sherlock's Home Mystery



(yes Sherlock's Home, not Sherlock Holmes).

The Committee is completely baffled: who is J. Sherlock and where does he/she live? We have a member called J. Sherlock who joined the Guild in late 1992 but failed to give an address when paying his/her membership subscription.

Consequently, J. Sherlock has not received the Newsletter or anything else from the Guild. We are always pleased to have new faces & are very unhappy that we cannot trace our lost Guild Member.

So far we have drawn blanks with every avenue of enquiry & finally we appeal to anyone who recognises the name to contact either Digby Stott or Victor Earl, so that the mystery can be resolved.

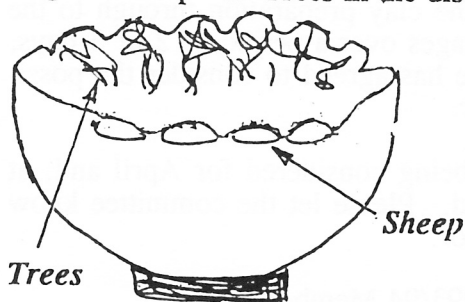
## AN EVENING WITH MARIGOLD AUSTIN

What enthusiasm! Her words tumbled out as Marigold took us through her career in pottery from Dartington to Cornwall and back to Hertfordshire via Scotland, working in various potteries and picking up new techniques and ideas as she went.

We heard how she began her own pottery near Hertford when a friend asked her to produce goblets for a birthday present.

Her early work moved away from the earthy tones of her teachers into brighter colours, depicting water and water-lilies on jugs. Marigold inherited her love of landscapes and trees from her parents who were naturalists. These have proved to be her main inspiration also encompassing water and, of course, sheep.

As trees have gaps between branches, Marigold cuts away parts of her pots so that landscapes in the far distance on the inside of the pots can be viewed through the branches. Often, in the near distance, she will have sheep either at the rim or the base, providing interesting shaped edges to the pots. Trees in the distance provide other interesting shapes along the rim.



Fascinatingly, Marigold's landscapes can be viewed from both inside and outside her bowls. From whichever direction you view them, you see a different perspective, and different shadows are cast by the cut-out designs.

To produce the colours on her pots, Marigold often uses two slips and two glazes alternately layering them on to produce different effects, both before and after biscuit firing.

Unfortunately, she suffers - as many potters do - from being unable to reproduce colours, as producers are inconsistent or halt production of certain items.

Having made her characteristic Chinese bowl shape, Marigold puts a band of slip on to produce a background colour. She uses a variety of brushes, both hair and grass ones (hakima-type) and, says Marigold, she has brushes that 'do' very specific things. She has a brush to produce leaf patterns on pine trees, another thin little brush with only about a dozen hairs to it to produce sheep legs, plus many others.

After applying background slip, Marigold adds a base line to provide the rhythm of the pot and, of course, something for sheep to walk along and trees to grow from. Trees tend to sit in the dips and sheep on the humps.

To draft out the basic design, Marigold uses ink and brush, marking out tree shapes and sheep positions, allowing her to consider which areas will be cut out and which left. Holes and edges need to be "nice, interesting" shapes. Having plotted the basic design, Marigold showed us how she cuts the rims to shape, using a very sharp, fine scalpel. Then, prior to cutting out the trees, she uses iron (a dense crocus martis blended with slip which won't burn away) to provide branches and leaf shapes. Finally, gaps between branches are removed. The interior landscaping follows.

The resulting bowls, jugs, teapots (including a beautiful miniature one), lamp-bases, etc. are extremely interesting, varied and beautiful - just like British landscapes.

Linda Bryant



The three mountain goats.  
Glazed stoneware.



Sheep by the Dark Oak Pool.  
Iron oxide decoration directly  
onto the clay.

Both of the above pots will be on show at Dartington from 8th October.

Photographs by Marigold Austin.

## PROGRESSING A-HEAD WITH DOUG

**Ann Cammack (right) with her daughter, Rona Smith, making progress at the workshop.**



This was to be my first experience of a day out with the Potters Guild and, like all amateurs, I arrived at Doug's third master-class with a box full of tools and a basket full of sandwiches, flasks and a camera (mostly unnecessary).

The day commenced with a reminder and demonstration on the importance of wedging and an introduction to some marvellous clay called T-material. This didn't seem to mind being prodded, pushed and squashed into the required shape. What one might call very "user friendly" in another environment.

A cylinder was then formed from a rolled slab and the real work of the day began with a lightning demonstration by Doug - just to show us how easy it was to form the skeletal shape on which to model the features!

Now it was our turn and this was an altogether different matter - most of us were still struggling with the basics at lunch time. Throughout this time we were encouraged, helped and jollied along by Doug, who would occasionally dive his capable hands into our misshapen cylinders and resurrect a more correct shape for us - always with the question "how long since you looked at a face?".

Several of us had collapsed heads by lunch time; before I could think of trying to repair mine, it was swept away by Doug, plunged into a sink of water and the clay quickly re-wedged and returned to me to start again!

By mid-afternoon, with varying degrees of help, we all had something on our tables that could be recognised as a head - some were more lifelike than others, some resembled church gargoyles.

Now we were in to noses, lips and eyeballs and it was amazing how these additions breathed life into these skeletal shapes. One began to have delusions of grandeur when one thought of God making man - until, of course, a crack developed on a part that had been carefully completed!

Next came closing the head; "bring it up into a knot and cut it off" was the advice. After this, for those who were skillful enough, came the ears. Seeing the problems of others, I had decided that my female face was going to have a lot of hair! It was during this process that I thought I had a latent talent for hairdressing, but rather enthusiastically piled too much on which gave my head a sad list to the side.

Those more skillful than I came into their own at this stage with fancy mediaeval headgear with much embellishment and finely modelled features, the finished products graceful enough for any piano top.

I must mention Sonia who has adapted so well to a life of darkness and was an example to us all, for she modelled two excellent heads feeling the shape with her very deft hands.

In amongst all the work in the very pleasant venue of the Rudolf Steiner School, we had good discussions and lots of fun, experiencing many new techniques and ways of coping with difficulties. All this due to attentive care that Doug took to provide us with just the right amount of help and encouragement as and when it was needed, which isn't easy when you have a group of such mixed ability.



I'm sure all members of the group would join me in thanking Doug for a most enjoyable day. What a lovely experience for me to keep in what I am sure will be a long association with the Guild.

**Ann Cammack**



**Doug explains to Tracie Heffernan how to proceed with the next stage**

**Sonia Waterton starts adding strips of clay to build up the hair**



**Pierrette Beckley adding some facial detail**

**Jan Parrott and Brian Bicknell with both sculptures nearing completion**



**All photographs were supplied by Ann Cammack**

## A ROUGH GUIDE TO RAKU AND SLIPWARE

Murray Fieldhouse has been tutoring a local group on Wood Fired Raku and Slipware Dishes recently. He prepared some notes on Raku and Slipware as handouts and we thought these could be of interest to many of our members, so they are reproduced here.

Some members have expressed an interest in a Raku Workshop and, when pressed, Murray did agree to consider giving us a workshop during 1994. Drop me a line if you have any comments or suggestions. We will keep you all informed via the Newsletter. (Ed.)

### A ROUGH GUIDE TO RAKU

Once upon a time in Japan, a War Lord had a palace called *Rakudai*. He was influenced by a Zen Buddhist monk who introduced him to the virtues of simplicity, humility and harmony with nature. He revised the rules of Tea Ceremony that had become ostentatious. The War Lord imposed the new values upon those he ruled.

A tile maker called Chojiro who specialised in sculptural finials used a coarse fabric and hand-formed some tea bowls to meet the new criteria. The coarse fabric was resistant to thermal shock and he was able to withdraw wares from the kiln still at red heat. One fell into a heap of sawdust! The result was much admired and Chojiro was given the official Raku seal with which to stamp his pots.

Many amateur aesthetes began to make similar wares in simple charcoal brazier kilns. An artist called Kenzan was one of the most distinguished. When Bernard Leach went to Japan, he became a student of the sixth Kenzan.

Leach set up in St. Ives in 1920. To help finance his good work he served cream teas together with powdery raw lead glazed pots for the trippers to decorate. (Environmental Health Officers had not yet been invented). The Raku was fired in the crown of the slipware bottle kiln. The trippers departed well fed on cream and raw lead. St. Ives has not yet found a better way of reducing its excess of summer visitors.

Raku making discontinued at St. Ives in 1937.

Leach published his *Potter's Book* in 1940 and included a section on Raku making. Potters of that time aimed to make work that was utilitarian and were conscious of practical/technical considerations. Neither they nor their consumers were attracted to a ware that was pulverous, porous and poisonous.

THE 50s: Raku was not taken seriously, it fell into the same category as the bonfire, sausages, baked potatoes and coupling in the woods that concluded potters' conferences and courses.

THE 60s: The half-baked Zen philosophy of the Dr. Spock generation was imported from the USA. Raku was treated as "an happening, man" together with undisciplined poetry and meandering prose in literature. John Chalke in Britain and Paul Soldner in the USA fired Raku with a soulful expression like ladies doing Yoga. College folk singers such as Bob Dylan, Jack Elliot and Guy Carawan attended Raku firings inaudible at rowdy events without their electronic devices.

From 1970 the Crafts converted into an amalgam of design and fine art. Raku fitted very well into current art education philosophy because it was useless, but in the hands of some of its better workers was very beautiful, fit for the glass case and Crafts Council exhibitions. Some work realised high prices in the fashionable auction houses.

### A ROUGH GUIDE TO SLIPWARE

Before Lycra the slip was the first garment of the body and gave smoothness and refinement to an otherwise coarse texture.

In the 16th-17th century, with the decline of the monastic monopoly of pottery making, wares became commercially decorative and piping and incising slip developed towards a crude sophistication which persisted in rural communities into the immediate post-war period.

Michael Cardew recognised the liveliness of the West Country wares and passed his enthusiasm on to Bernard Leach. Leach and Hamada introduced English slipware to the Japanese folk movement. Cardew and Leach inspired a revival of slipware in the West. Kenji Funaki established a slipware pottery in Japan and every Japanese potter of distinction has an English slipware dish (probably a fake) in his collection.

In the late 50s there was a bitter controversy in the potters' world as some workers deviated from traditional methods !

There are many exceptional slipware potters working today. They tend to sell from the workshop rather than galleries or exhibitions. Regulations about lead and higher firing have deprived the modern fabric of much of its richness. "Lead is born for clay" ( John Bew). A late 17th century slipware dish realised £93,500 at auction in 1990, slightly later wares fetched £33,000 to £50,000.

**Murray Fieldhouse**

## **PROFILES**

Pottery has fascinated me for years, but it was only three years ago that I was able to go to classes. It then took me a year to throw my first, half presentable pot. Pottery, like photography, another of my interests, attracted me because of the combination of art and technology. I am fascinated by glazes and, whilst working on my throwing technique, I cast various pots as 'test beds' to try experimental glazes. One of my problems is that my college only keeps two types of clay, vase clay and bowl clay. Unfortunately, the lab steward tends to mix them up, and I only know which clay I have when I try them on the wheel! Perhaps, one day, I will know beforehand what shape will emerge.

Having chosen pottery as a complete change from my profession as an electronic engineer, I soon became involved in the design of a computer-driven kiln controller. This arose from my interest in crystalline glazes, one of the most difficult glazes I could have chosen, even if I had deliberately tried to. I had decided that the currently available controllers were not accurate enough for the exacting firing schedules required for crystalline firings.

I could never make my living as a production potter. I would get tired turning out the same items time after time, but my throwing is gradually improving. My understanding of glazes is getting better. I am even occasionally producing pleasing crystalline effects, and I enjoy what I do. Short of making a living, what more can anyone ask ?

**Tony Stevens**

**Tony at Art-in-Action**

**Photograph by Linda Bryant**





*Winifred Mitchell has literally potted from Kent to Caithness..*

I was introduced to an ancient kick-wheel in the cellar of the college in Bromley during the war, when I was doing a teacher training diploma --- I got completely hooked!

Unfortunately, no school I taught in had heard of clay and it was many years later with husband and two small children that work took us to Thurso in Caithness. Not much to do up there? ... don't you believe it. A brand new High School and Technical College provided a wealth of courses - and pottery was on the menu. At last I was able to really start working with clay.

Two years later and back to Derby saw the opportunity to do a course at the Art College under an excellent teacher whose father had been a potter in Stoke. I longed to get my own studio but .... another move and this time to Bucks. and thence to High Wycombe with Dot Pennicot. Now I had a serious introduction to hand-building and soon I was able to achieve my ambition and get my studio organised. There I met many new friends, joined Bucks. Potters and really began to experiment.

Having retired from teaching, I was persuaded to take an adult evening class and, with the help of Christine Bull, tutored at Missenden Abbey for three years. Roger Leyshon's class at Langley was another step and the joining of Dacorum. Now having been chairman of Buckinghamshire Pottery and Sculpture Society, and past Planning Secretary for Dacorum, my horizons have widened. I am grateful to all the excellent teachers I have had and I have made so many new friends in the pottery and gardening world, that the long wait was well worthwhile. I hope for many more happy years.

### GLAZES - Part 3

This article is entirely devoted to glaze suspenders. These are often scarcely given a mention in glaze discussions, but their use can vitally effect the ultimate effect of a glaze, so justifying their lengthy treatment below.

#### SUSPENDERS

A glaze consists, in the main, of powdered rock and, as such, if left standing, would settle at the bottom of the container in layers of different particle size. This settling out is particularly noticeable with such substances as the colourant copper oxide and lead frits. These, due to their weight, and often coarser particle size, tend to sink to the bottom of the glaze "slop" often unnoticed until when pouring the glaze back into its storage container, too late, the black copper oxide layer is seen at the bottom of the glazing container. The inclusion of clays in the glaze (for other reasons) has the additional benefit of thickening it and slowing down the rate at which the individual components separate out.

Some types of glaze, notably Chun and crystalline glazes need to have a low viscosity ('runny' to you and me) at firing temperature. This means a low clay content, and consequent settling out in the wet state, and will often form a rock-like mass when next needed.

The inclusion of Bentonite is often advocated to glaze recipes to increase the viscosity, and reduce the settling out problem. Bentonite is a clay-like substance with very special properties. It can absorb about 30 times its own weight in water, swelling up in the process to a slimy viscous mass. It is often included in clay bodies for this property, greatly improving the plasticity of an otherwise stiff clay body. It is also often advocated in glaze formulae to improve the suspension characteristics. Up to 5% is sometimes used, particularly if heavy lead frits are present. For a variety of reasons, I do not like the use of Bentonite in glazes.

To maintain the original glaze characteristics, the proportion of other clays would need to be reduced to compensate for the added Bentonite.

The thickening action of any clay is due to electrical charges between its molecules, these charges are themselves greatly influenced by the acidity and mineral content of the glaze slop. Consequently, even the hardness of the local water can change the viscosity. Calcium chloride is often added to improve and stabilise the action of all clays, but exposure to

the atmosphere can, over a period, reduce the viscosity. The thickening action (Flocculation) of calcium chloride is, in any case, reversed if too much is added. Finally, the great shrinkage of Bentonite as it dries can cause the layer of glaze to craze or even fall off the unfired pot, particularly if the glaze had to be applied thickly.

There is a group of cellulose compounds - sorry about this - Carboxy Methyl Cellulose (CMC) that swell up in contact with water; this is how some 'Limmit' slimming products give the impression of a full stomach but with no calories. These are available from pottery suppliers (**NO ... Not 'Limmits'**) under such names as Suspendit (Reward-Clayglaze R1120) or Glaze Binder (Pottery crafts P3381).

Care should be taken if using a proprietary product, particularly if it is later replaced by a 'New Improved' version. The cellulose molecule is like a chain, and in CMC the Carboxy Methyl radicals as the attached charms. Now just as one can start off with a single charm and build up to a multiplicity of them, so more and more CM radicals can be added along the cellulose molecule chain. As the number increases, so does the viscosity as shown in Fig.1. This shows the viscosity vs. concentration of various grades of CMC. Since, inevitably, the higher viscosity variants are more expensive, there is pressure on pottery suppliers to sell the lower viscosity products, and it is unlikely that various stockists would keep identical grades anyway.

Using such products brings several benefits:-

- Being completely organic, they burn out before the glaze melts, so no adjustment to the formula is needed.
- Since the viscosity is virtually controlled by the CMC, the amount of water required for different glazes does not vary appreciably with the clay content.
- The cellulose derivatives are much less prone to moulds and bacterial attack than many other thickening agents.

Tony Stevens

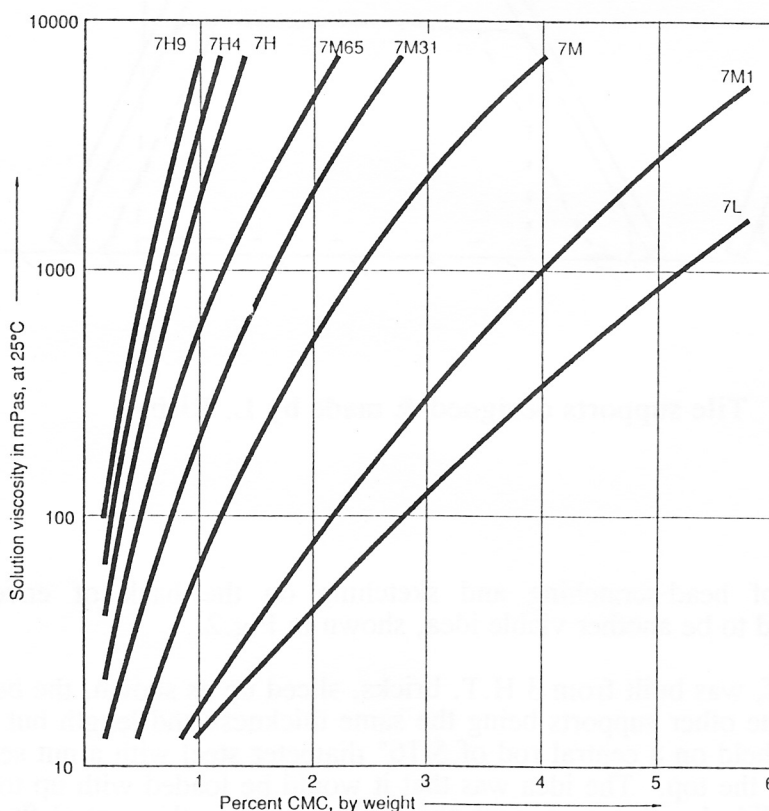


Fig.1 Concentration vs. Viscosity of various grades of CMC.

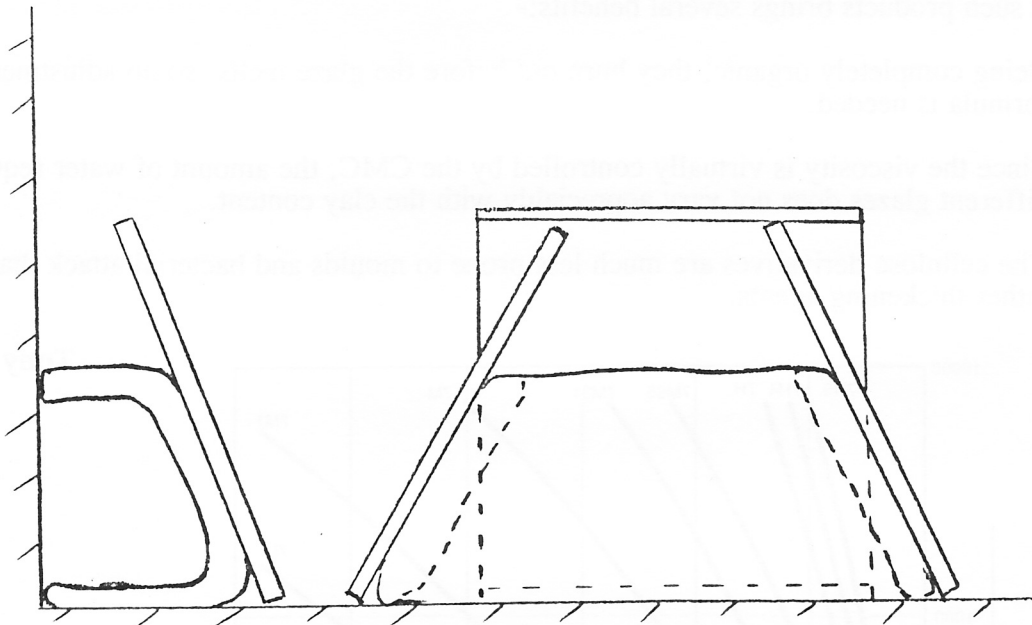
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## FIRING THE TILES AT THE SUMMER EVENT

The committee met at our Summer Event venue on 24th July, to discuss what we were to do & committee duties at the Event. Part of this meeting was a test firing of the kiln loaned by Brian Bicknel, mostly to determine the success of the glazes. During this activity, it became apparent that firing a large number of tiles would be quite difficult unless we had some way of supporting several in this and, probably, the other kilns, so that the packing density was improved.

Two lines of approach were followed. Firstly, Lesley Risby suggested that a number of supports could be made, using clay biscuit-fired prior to use on the day. The supports are shown in Fig.1. They were made by Lesley from Potclay's Crank, fired to 960 C. and used very successfully, to support the tiles on edge at the bottom of the kiln being fired by Shirley & Hanna.

**A rectangular central support held 4 tiles up on edge. The other side supports were placed round the wall of the kiln & supported one tile each**

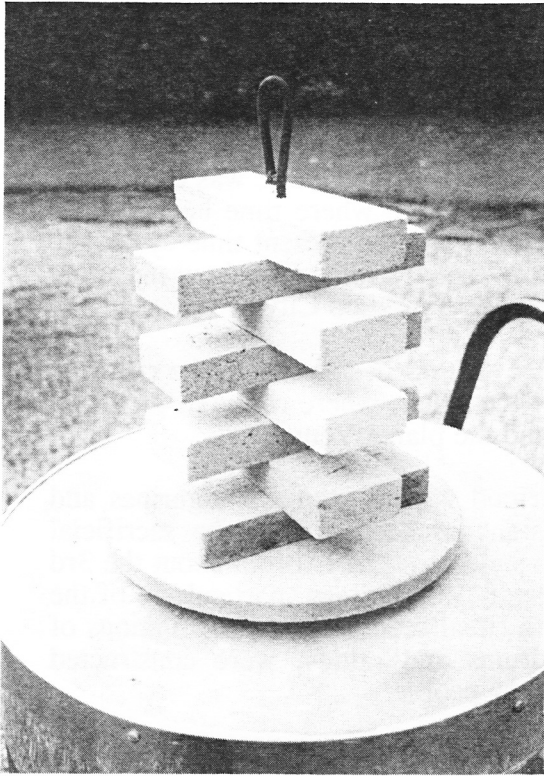


**Fig.1 Tile supports designed & made by L. Risby**

After a certain amount of head-scratching and sketching on the back of envelopes, I came up with what appeared to be another viable idea, shown in Fig.2.

This support, or multi-shelf, was built from 3 H.T. bricks, sliced up as shown, the base measuring 4" x 9" x 1½" and the other supports being the same thickness and length but 3" wide; these slices of bricks were held on a central rod of 5/16" diameter steel with a nut set into the base and a welded eyelet at the top. The idea was that it would be loaded with up to 16 tiles, lifted into the kiln and the lid placed over it, with the lifting eyelet in the central flue. When the tiles were fired, the support would be lifted out, being unloaded, reloaded and lifted back as quickly as possible.





**Fig.2 The multi-shelf from slices of H.T. brick**

**Mervyn & Chris Brewis remove the support and tiles from the kiln, watched by an interested onlooker**



On the day, all went more or less according to plan, but it is worth noting a few points:

- 1) The kiln did not achieve temperature at the top since we were short of a second burner. This meant that we could not really use the multi-shelf to its full potential, loading only the lower section.
- 2) Removing and unloading has to be a well co-ordinated and practised effort, since it is necessary to get the tiles into the sawdust really quickly to get a good reduction.
- 3) Reloading - the tiles to be fired should be loaded quickly and the support put back into the kiln quickly to reduce heat loss.
- 4) The construction is somewhat fragile and was even weaker after firing, care in handling was essential.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**TEOTIHUACAN: Art from the City of the Gods.** Kathleen Berrin & Esther Pasztory.  
Thames & Hudson. Hardback. 288 pp. 1993. £28.00

Teotihuacan, the city, whose Aztec (Nahuatl) name means 'Place of the Gods', was considered by the 'Teotihuacanos' to be the centre of the earth and the place where time began. The Aztecs, who came much later than the Teotihuacanos, believed that the present time-cycle, the Fifth Sun, began when the sun and the moon were created in the city some five thousand years ago. This unique city lies some forty kilometres north of modern Mexico City.

Human blood was the Food of the Gods, and heart sacrifice was needed to ensure the rising of the sun on the morrow. "Star Wars" formed the basis of the ritual, where captured prisoners were sacrificed to the Feathered Serpent, the Storm God and the planet Venus.

All art was centred around these rituals: earthenware tripod vessels, censers, figurines and sculptures were made and decorated with religious designs or scenes from the sacrificial ceremonies. 'Thin Orange Ware' is just one very notable style of pottery. From about the 3rd century A.D., for over one hundred years, the stone walls of the buildings, particularly of the 'upper classes', were covered with plaster and painted with ritual scenes and representations of deities. Many musical instruments, flutes, ocarinas, drums and rattles, were constructed showing signs of great musical influence upon the lives of the people.

Here then is the background of this immense work: the description and illustration of an exhibition in San Francisco, which will last well into the autumn of this year, being the first comprehensive showing of this important early civilisation. It has taken a multitude of archaeologists, historians, museum curators and other specialists of all relevant studies eight years to produce such an extensive collection of artifacts and compendium of a culture which only recently has been greatly revealed in its glory and mystery.

The two authors, curator and art historian, have written and edited this liberally-illustrated volume, which appears far more graphic than the mere name of 'museum exhibition catalogue' would be envisaged. The photographs, almost all in colour, and the text are portrayed lucidly. Full details for each exhibit are given, and the delicate colours, particularly of the ceramic wares, are delightful to behold, almost as if the reader were present at the exhibition itself.

The categorised sections of the book show the great care and labour taken for the results which have been accomplished. The very spirit of the creation of this huge city, the daily life of its varied inhabitants, the well-defined areas of circulation, the drainage system and water supplies dating back some 2000 years, and the ritual ceremonies controlling life itself are interpreted and discussed most impressively.

We can learn about many modern fruits and vegetables that also were grown far back in those days as foods and medicines. There are pictorial representations of mostly tomb artifacts, and scientific ascertainties of actual samples of many local plant and animal species have been described.

The greatest part of the book is reserved for ceramics and stone carvings. From specific ceramic formation and decoration much can be determined by comparison with the products of cultures of other sites. Pottery ware can withstand the ravages of time in a somewhat similar manner to stone artifacts, but shows greater detail in the change of the ceramic styles. And funerary wares are further protected by their entombment.

Hence this well-produced volume with its neatly classified descriptions and revealing photographs will prove to be of great value to the students of ceramics, art, archaeology, history and sociology, as well as to anyone who is intrigued just in reading about fellow-beings from a civilisation of long ago.

For extended study, references to other works and a bibliography of several pages are printed, showing the great interest and intensive degree of research underlying this treatise. The cost of the production has been subsidised by a charitable trust.

**Stan Romer**

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**THE POTTER'S COMPLETE BOOK OF CLAYS AND GLAZES** (Revised Edition) James Chappell. Watson Guptill/Phaidon Press, 1991. Hardback, 416 pp. £29.95

As its title points out, this is a new edition of the earlier impression published in 1977. Then it had no illustrations except on the dust cover. Now it contains a dozen coloured pictures clearly showing examples of raku, earthenware & stoneware with various types of decoration.

But the main advantage of this edition lies with the vast amount of information lucidly portrayed about the constitution of the many clays and glazes, and the methods used in mixing, applying, drying and firing of each different ware.

The book is divided into two main parts: Clays and Glazes; and further detailed into 34 chapters with a useful appendix enumerating clay & feldspar analyses and oxide percentages for all the various colour effects. It is rather unfortunate for British readers that most of the mineral analyses refer to American clays & feldspars. More English equivalents would have been useful here, although a general idea of specific analyses can be estimated from the details given. A commercial frit chart is listed at length, but here, also, is directed at mainly the U.S. market, although the use for each mineral is described.

Whilst it is important for the student (and indeed also the experienced potter) to experiment extensively and dauntlessly, it is most advisable that a basic knowledge should be available of the composition of the materials which are available to be used. In this sentiment lies the purpose of the book. The author's "... intention is to give aspiring potters the immediate tools with which to have some measure of success ...", & the book certainly does this.

In part one: Clay - after detailing clay body types, how to dig & test local clays, & the preparation of clay for working, the early chapters deal with the formulae for all the various earthenware throwing and casting bodies, leading through soft & hard throwing & sculpting stonewares, to the several porcelain bodies. There is also quite an amount of information on raku ware, vitreous clays, Egyptian pastes & ovenwares. In addition to the colour advice in the appendix, measures & charts are given for the various colour effects which are expected to be achieved. Particulars of engobes & stains are expounded.

This leads on to part two: Glazes - as for clays, each chapter details every precise glaze, giving mixing, application and firing with individual cone numbers, together with expected results.

Several of the previous formulae delineated have been revised where previously toxic materials were included. In the interests of potters' health and safety the author has substituted satisfactory alternatives.

The one or two printer's errors from the 1977 edition have been corrected, but unfortunately the melting point of kaolin, given as 3200 F, is still stated to be 1260 C. However, this should be 1760 C.

But make no mistake, this is an excellent book for the serious potter, experienced or otherwise, especially where a measure of experimentation is desired. It is a book which should be kept permanently in the studio vicinity for instant and easy reckoning of all types of clay and glaze formulae. And with the original price being £17.50 in 1977, the cost has been held quite reasonably.

**Stan Romer**



## FOOTNOTES

### THE CRAFTWORKERS' YEARBOOK - 1993

Members might like to know that I have a copy of the Craftworkers' Yearbook 1993 which lists craft fairs all over the country with names and addresses of organisers. Most of these will be valid for next year. It also lists suppliers of craft materials. The book can be borrowed by any member for a limited period. Phone 0895 631738.

### STUDIO POTTERY

There is a fairly new and very interesting magazine called *Studio Pottery* which has commentaries on pottery Guilds and information on them, in response to a survey. Members of the DCPG. will be chuffed (I hope!) to note that we have one of the lowest subscription rates and, probably, the best newsletter. Editor Mervyn - take a bow.

Ruth Karnac

### SMALL AD.

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Nov 27/28	Throwing - <i>Brian Dewbury</i>
Dec 4/5	Surface Pattern & Decorative Techniques - <i>Paula Gray</i>
Feb 5/6	Mouldmaking & Slipcasting - <i>David Cowley</i>
Feb 12/13	Lettering in Ceramic Design - <i>George Wilson</i>
Feb 19/20	Vessels - Form & Function - <i>Felicity Aylieff</i>
Feb 26/27	Surface Pattern & Decorative Techniques - <i>Paula Gray</i>

### Sculpture

Dec 4/5	Terracotta Modelling : Hands/Feet - <i>Jo Miller</i>
Jan 22	Finishing Techniques & Colouring Sculpture - <i>Jo Miller</i>

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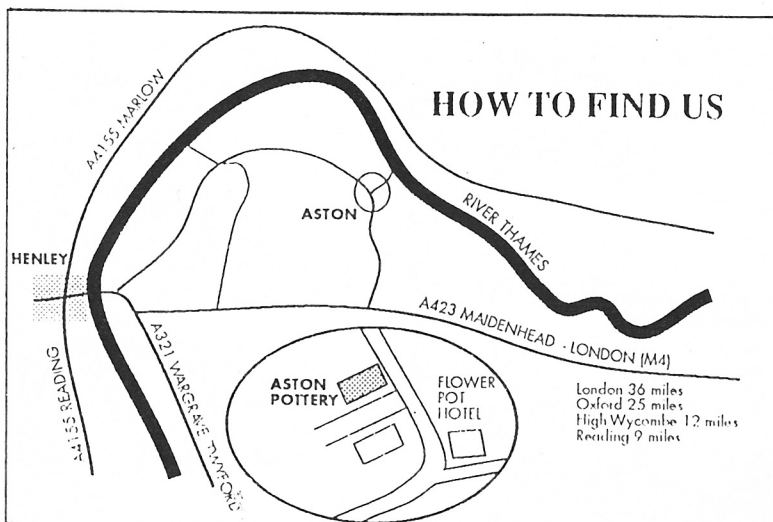
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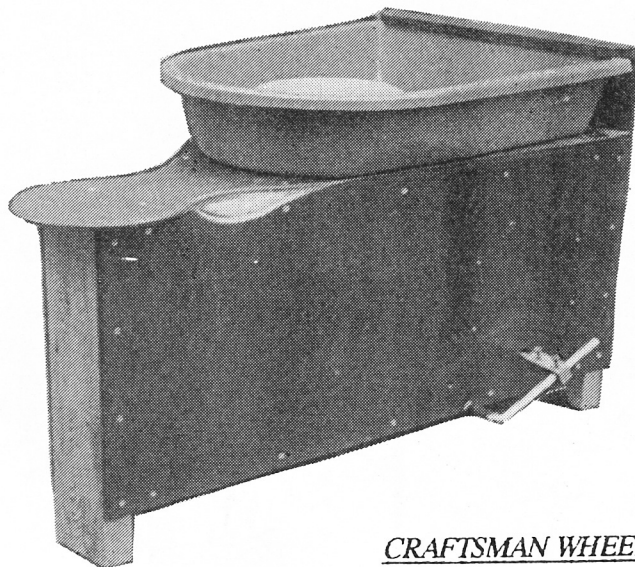
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