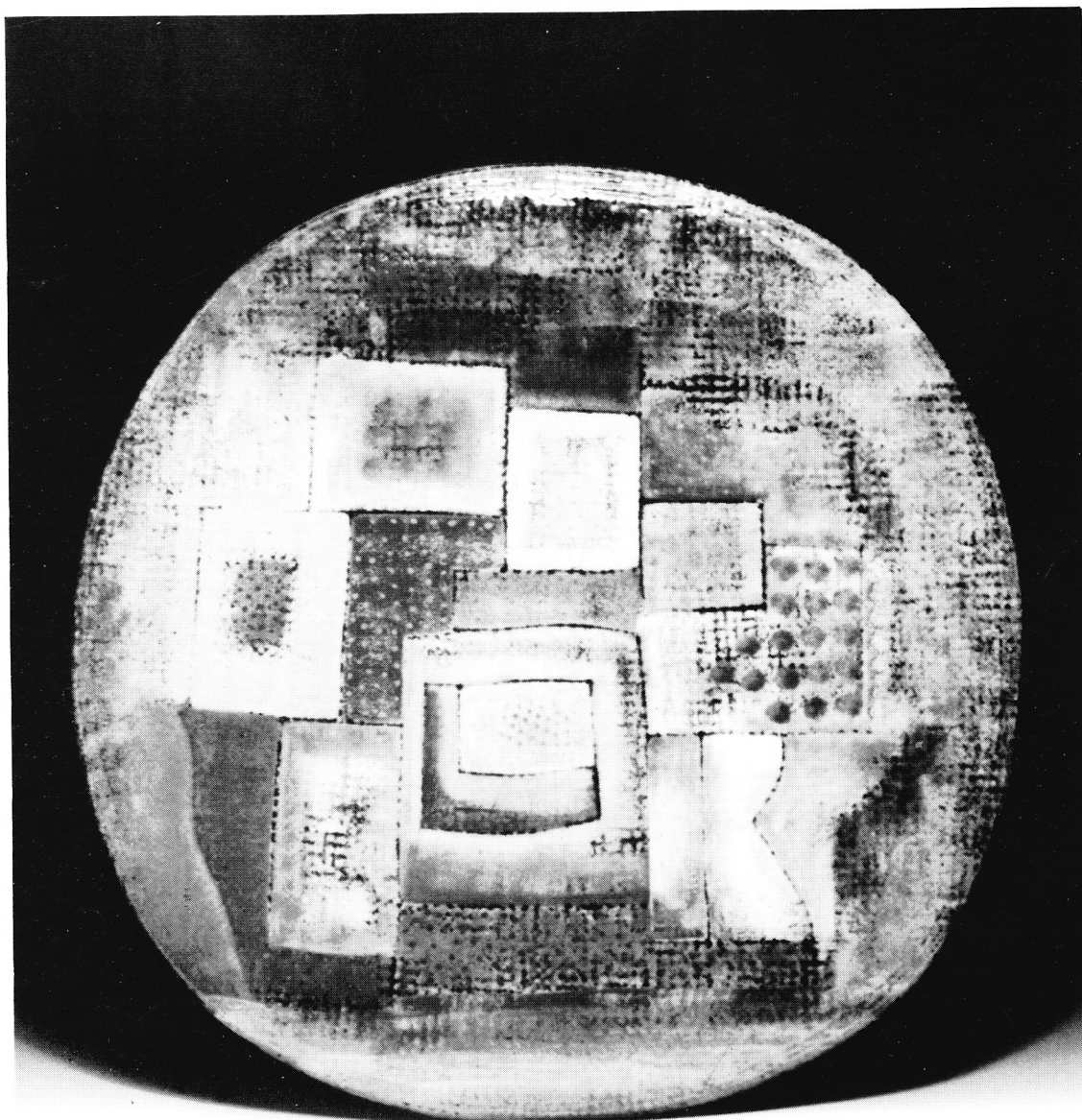




DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD



NEWSLETTER
JANUARY
1994



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Demonstration day
March 9th 1994

At Callowland Centre, Leavesden Rd
Watford, Herts. WD2 5EF.

Course fee £20. Full details from
David Pitcher. Tel: 0923-255533

FRONT PAGE PHOTOGRAPH: A plaque, 16.5" diameter, by John Pollex, entitled "A message from Buffalo", 1993.

CONTENTS.

Editorial	1
Letters	2
FUTURE GUILD EVENTS	3
OTHER EVENTS	3
Membership News	3/4
Profile: Dick Pope	4
Pottery & pre-Columbian S.America by Tony Stevens based on talk by Ruth Karnac	5/6
Open Day Demonstrations on Nov. 13th	
Chris Aston by Richard Pope	7/8
Janet Halligan by Elaine Hudson	9/10
John Pollex by Brian Bicknell	11/12
Postscript	12
Questionnaire	13
Glazes Part 4 by Tony Stevens	14/15
Art in Action by Rena Green	15
Committee List/Small Advertisements	16

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 the 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 Chilterns Potters Guild Newsletter is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September & November, being distributed to all members of the Guild, other craft groups & 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 full details. Closing date for items to go in the March issue is Feb.10th. Please mention DCPG when replying to advertisements in the Newsletter.

EDITORIAL

May I start by wishing you all a very happy & prosperous 1994. At the time of writing we still have places available at the Slab Building Workshop on Sat. 22nd Jan., so if you want to learn & practice some invaluable slab building tips, please apply immediately.

Our Membership continues to grow, with some new Members joining the Guild at our recent Open Day. We are naturally delighted to have new Members at any time, although I believe we still have quite a large group of Founder Members of the Guild. It is appropriate to mention this, since the Guild was established 21 years ago this year. To mark this occasion, it is proposed that we should have a special "souvenir" issue of the Newsletter, with appropriate articles included. If you have any suggestions on this please let me know.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Victor,

Thank you very much for your generous cheques for the Gondar Project. I have forwarded them on to the Charity and you will receive a receipt in due course.

At present, the site has been secured and the building materials for the buildings purchased and are on site. Several women have started doing very basic clay work on another site in Gondar while the buildings are put up.

The Charity is awaiting a donation (sizeable) from Comic Relief, and we are short-listing people for the job of overseeing on site for the first six months.

I'll keep you informed of progress as it develops. Again, please thank all your members on the charity's behalf.

With best wishes,

Peter Fraser Beard

The following note was passed on to us by Murray:

Dear Murray,

I enjoyed reading your article *A Rough Guide to Raku & Slipware* in the guild newsletter. Please allow me to correct a small mistake in it. The palace Hideyoshi built was called Jurakutei (or Jurakudai, as some Japanese call it so because there are 2 different ways to read it).

聚楽第

Ju raku tei was completed in 1587. You can call it Juraku without confusing tei and dai as people at that time called it. After all, I'm impressed by your simple, clear and decisive writing.

Yours, etc.

Gas M. Kimishima

Dear Mervyn,

There was, of course, another mistake. It was Chojiro II not Chojiro I that was given the gold Raku seal, but one should never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

Murray Fieldhouse

Letters have been received from the demonstrators at Open day expressing their appreciation for the organisation of the event and for the enthusiasm shown by the audience.

Found on the benches after the Potters Open Day: a travelling rug, which is now reposing with the Treasurer. Would the owner 'phone him on 0442 865661 to arrange collection.

Victor Earl

FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

Friday 14th Jan.'94: Anthony Phillips will demonstrate throwing, assembly & using slip on earthenware. His methods include applying multiple layers of different coloured slips in order to produce soft textures and a subtle depth to the decoration.

Venue: Northchurch Social Centre at 8 p.m.

Saturday 22nd Jan.: There will be a slab-building workshop with Doug Jones at the Balmoral Centre, Watford (*please note change of venue*). It is not too late to join the "hands-on" workshop for all abilities, with instruction by Doug. You will have seen from the write-up in the last Newsletter how enjoyable and stimulating the participants found his previous workshop. Guests will be very welcome to attend, so do come along and bring interested friends. The charge is £15 members & £18 non-members. Please contact Brian Bicknell tel.0494 530 050 (lunchtime between 1.15 & 1.50 p.m. is the best time to catch him), or send cheque made payable to Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild to him at his address (see Committee List).

Friday 11th Feb.: Ashley Howard will demonstrate his work of brightly-coloured pieces, using throwing, assembling & distortion. Venue Northchurch Social Centre at 8 p.m.

Saturday 26th Feb.: As a result of popular demand, Doug Jones will be holding another sculpture workshop at the Balmoral Centre (change of venue). If you are interested in sculpture, whatever your ability or level of skill, you will find that this workshop is for you. To book your place, please apply to Brian Bicknell, 41 Coates Lane, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 5ET enclosing cheque made payable to Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild, £15 members & £18 non-members (guests are very welcome).

POT CRAWL

Brian Bicknell is organising our Pot Crawl in the Bath area this June. A coach is planned & the selection of visits may include Kiln building, Exhibitions & visits to Potters &/or Museums. Please contact Brian within the next 3 or 4 weeks if you have any particular preferences or to pledge support. (See committee list for address/phone no.)

OTHER EVENTS

Jan.18th-29th: Fireworks II - C.P.A. Professional Members Exhibition. Contemporary Ceramics, Crafts. Potters Shop & Gallery, 7 Marshall St., London, W.1.

Chelsea Crafts Fair- 1994: Application forms for 1994 will be sent out in late Dec./early Jan. As usual the submission date will be at the end of February. Any makers interested in exhibiting in 1994 should contact the Sales Development Section, Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Rd., Islington, London N1 9BY. Tel: 071 278 7700, and they will make sure they get the necessary forms and information.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Our membership has taken a positive leap in numbers recently and we are very pleased indeed to welcome the following new members to the Guild:-

Joan Buckley, Elizabeth Foster, Stephanie Frost, Eleanor Glaze, Ms G.Gwilliam, Jean Halsey, Ms J.Lennard, Ms B.Peacock, Dorothy Saxby, Mrs. R.Smith.

1993/94 SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Our Membership Secretary reports that according to our records ninety-three of our 1992/93 members have renewed their subscriptions for 1993/94 & approximately fifty have not! Those of you who have, should have received a copy of the current programme card. If you have not, please contact Victor Earl (see Committee list for address) or the Membership Sec., address below. If you have not paid your subscription for 1993/94, please note that this will be *three months overdue* by the end of Dec.'93.

In line with most voluntary organisations which are dependent on subscriptions, we have a cut-off point for renewal and hence continued membership. Also you should consider that failure to renew within a reasonable time creates extra work for your Committee members who do have other calls upon their time! At the middle of January, we shall be updating our membership list. If we have not received your subscriptions by that time, your name will be removed from the list.

Please remember that you are not entitled to free or reduced fee entry to monthly activities unless you have paid your current subscription.

If it is your intention not to rejoin, it would be kind if you could let us know. If you do wish to remain a member, please forward your subscription promptly to:

Digby Stott, Membership Secretary,
Broomfield, 36 Box Lane,
Boxmoor, Herts. HP3 0DJ.

PROFILE - Dick Pope.



Dick relaxing in the garden

My interest in ceramics & their production techniques began at an early age when my father was a brickworks manager in Dorset. For as far back as I can remember weekend visits to the brickyard were commonplace & enjoyed. In my teens, school holidays were often spent at the brickyard doing a variety of jobs from digging clay to operating pump engines.

Although the interest remained, training to be an accountant & establishing a career initially left little time to develop it. Eventually, making time to go to pottery classes, I joined a class in Bracknell. Throwing developed as the main interest (obsession, according to my wife), but it took a long time to acquire the necessary knack. Thereafter, the house gradually filled up with assorted vases and odd-shaped bottles, etc.

Moving to Hertfordshire, I joined another class in Stevenage & spent many years of happy Tuesday evenings there. Not being a natural handworker, pottery helped to improve my manual skills. It also provided a relaxing contrast to the world of facts & figures. A fellow-classmate provided an introduction to the Guild some 15-20 years ago & I have been a member ever since. My main contribution to the Guild has been occasional reports/articles for the Newsletter.

PRE-COLUMBIAN SOUTH AMERICA.

The early people of South America had no knowledge of the wheel, no domestic or farm animals and worshipped capricious gods who needed constant placating. Their religion infiltrated all aspects of their life from birth to death, and even then the dead were considered as go-betweens to the gods.

Mexico. Settled farming began about 4000 B.C. (4000 years later than in Europe). Initially, only beans, avocados, sweet potatoes, peppers, squash and cotton were grown. Maize was only added later but eventually became the staple diet. Meat was provided by wild turkeys, dogs, armadillos, other small animals and fish. Bees were kept, and all these creatures and plants were depicted on their pots. Eventually their farming became very intensive to support the large population throughout the very varied terrain and climate.

The Olmec Culture mysteriously appeared about 1000 B.C. and was the first known Pre-Columbian culture. Later peoples believed them to be a race of giants and their colossal temples of the Sun and Moon to have been built by the gods, though the actual date of construction is thought to be c.150 A.D. Anthropologists now believe the Olmecs came from Asia via the Behring Straits and North America. Baked clay objects were known from about 1500-1200 B.C., but a wide variety of hollow white clay artifacts have been found dating from about 1000 B.C. These were often of people, jaguars (the Rain god), priests and asexual babies. Women were often depicted, which caused anthropologists to speculate that theirs was a matriarchal society. Little is known of them as they appeared to have no written language. Clay objects, being robust, tended to survive, and are an important source of our information on the Olmecs. The building of vast Pyramid Temples implies a sophisticated government, particularly so since they were built without the benefit of metal tools or wheeled transport. Most people lived in villages, only coming to the cities for religious festivals and the markets. The dead were buried initially in simple covered pits, but later in more elaborate tombs or, for some priests, deep under the pyramids. The dead were buried with various pots and artifacts. In addition to those mentioned above, clay dogs were included both to act as guides to the after-life, but also as a food supply. c.2000 B.C., the Olmec civilisation appears to have ended suddenly and violently.

Their religious beliefs were, in some ways, similar to other early civilisations, particularly that of Ancient Egypt, but in other aspects they were unique. Animal and human sacrifice were commonplace. Hunchbacks, being identified with a mythical Fire King reputed to have built the temples of the Sun and Moon, were regularly sacrificed by burning during solar eclipses. This was to ensure that the Sun/Fire god would restore the sun to the people. Captured warriors were sacrificed by removing their hearts and then skinned, the skins being worn by the priests during other religious ceremonies. A ball game, held on specially-constructed pitches near the temple, took a prominent place in their religious ceremonies. It was not a game as we today understand it. The captain of the winning side decapitated his opposite number, the rest of the losing team then being ritually sacrificed. These events were frequently depicted on paintings and carvings, as well as on pots. At about 800 B.C. the Olmec civilisation totally collapsed and it was only early this century that some of the great carved stone heads were discovered.

The Mayans were probably the most advanced of the ancient American peoples, and inhabited the areas where previously the Olmecs and Zapotecs had lived. A carved stone calendar has been found, but its meaning is still not fully understood. When the burial sites were excavated, thousands of jade baby-faced figurines were found, but only in sites reserved for priests and other important people. Such ritual objects were traditionally only made by men, using very hard obsidian knives, metal knives still being unknown. The ritual ceramics were made in the style known as Monte Alban.

Making domestic pottery was relegated to women, and in the absence of any form of the wheel, extensive use was made of biscuit moulds with freely-modelled parts added on, then elaborately slip-decorated and burnished. With such limitations one can only be amazed by the skill of these ancient craftsmen. The Aztecs were in the ascendant when the Spanish conquerors came in c.1520.

The Incas of Peru and Chile. The origins of the Incas are lost in myth. Pre-Inca pottery has been found dating from about 1800 B.C., but it is only from Trujillo. Buildings were of stone or adobe brick. Their religion still demanded frequent animal and human sacrifices ranging from llamas to defeated warriors, babies and young women. The coastal people worshipped the moon, symbolised by the owl and the fox (creatures of the night). The highland people worshipped the sun, depicted by the condor. The dead were wrapped in many layers of beautifully-woven cloth, together with food offerings and a variety of pots. Their everyday life is depicted on their pots - fishing, deer hunting, plants, animals, insects and birds, as well as scenes showing religious ceremonies; these were often found on the well-known 'stirrup' pots. Pots were usually slip-painted, burnished, and fired in wood and dried dung fuelled kilns.

Apart from pottery, many other arts flourished. Fine cloth was produced for clothing and furnishing homes. In addition, the goldsmiths were reputedly of a very high standard. Unfortunately, nearly all metalwork was lost when the Spanish Conquistadores melted it down prior to shipping it back to Spain. The great buildings were constructed from huge blocks of stone fitted together without mortar, so closely that it was impossible to insert a knife blade between them. All this came to an end in 1533 when the last of the Inca rulers, believed by their subjects to be divine and descended from the Sun god, died in Machu Pichu, where he had taken refuge from the Spanish invaders. The Spanish considered the native Incas as heathens practising human sacrifice and therefore sub-human and, as such, deserving of any treatment their conquerors saw fit to mete out. Their capital city was razed to the ground; their artifacts, if gold or silver, were looted, the rest destroyed and the people who resisted were slaughtered. For those that survived this, the diseases brought by the invaders did their deadly work.

Tony Stevens

(Based on talk given by Ruth Karnac)

FROM THE RIO GRANDE TO EL SALVADOR - STYLES AND CULTURES

Time	Periods	Central Highland	Oaxaca	Northwest Mexico	Northern Gulf Coast	Central Gulf Coast	Southern Gulf Coast
1521			Beginning of the Spanish Conquest	Aztec conquest Tarascans	Aztec conquest Pánuco VI	Aztec conquest	
1400	Post-classic	Aztecs Chichimec Culture	Monte Albán V (Mixtecs)				
1200		Toltecs at Tula c. 900-1168	Monte Albán IV (Zapotecs)	Toltec influence	Pánuco V	Cempoala (Totonacs)	
900			Monte Albán III B Tilantongo (Mixtecs)				
600	Classic	Teotihuacán IV	Monte Albán III A (Zapotecs)		Pánuco IV		Comalcalco (Maya)
300		Teotihuacán III			Pánuco III	El Tajin	
A.D.		Teotihuacán II	Monte Albán II	Nayarit Jalisco			San Lorenzo
B.C.		Teotihuacán I	(Zapotecs) I	Colima	Pánuco II		Cerro de las Mesas Tres Zapotes
200	Experimental Age	Ticomán					
600			Monte Albán I (La Venta influence)	Early Michoacán Chupicuaro	Pánuco I (Huastecs)		
900		Cuicuilco Tlapacoya Zacatenco Tlatilco El Arbolillo	Monte Negro I (Mixtecs?)			Las Remojadas	La Venta (Olmecs)
1500					Pavón		La Venta Culture
5000	Early planters Hunters and gatherers	Chalco					
10000		Tepexpan Man					

POTTERS OPEN DAY - NOVEMBER 1993.

CHRIS ASTON

Chris Aston lives and works with his wife Phillipa in the village of Elkesley, just off the A1 south of Retford. Until the Open Day he was just a name and, to me, an unknown quantity. His display of pots set out on the stage tables were to quickly alter my perceptions.

The immediate impact was of immense range. Sizes ran from mugs through to tall vases and containers. There were flat dishes of all descriptions ranging up to casseroles and bowls. Glazes were similarly diverse from lush black termonus to the palest celadons. Quiet leafy decoration contrasted with bright copper spots and bands. This was no token display for the day but a serious display of his work requiring an extra table to accommodate it. Here was revealed a man possessed of great talent and fecundity.

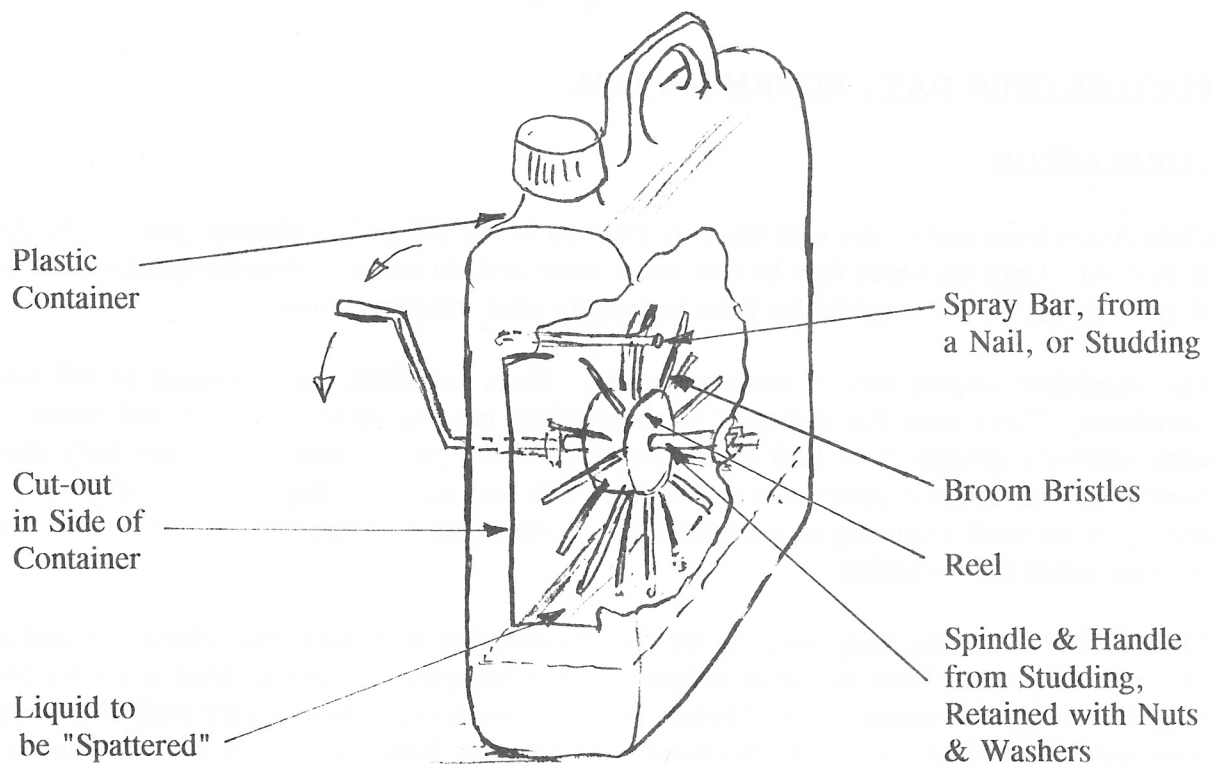
Chris uses a stoneware body made to his own formulation from ball clay, china clay and additive 'A', a waste product from the paper industry. After blunging, the mix is dried in a filter press and pugged through a de-airing pug mill before use. This process produces a very malleable body which does not require wedging before throwing. As with the body, the glazes are his own recipes of which he has seven books. Each glaze has a relevant number made up from the book and page numbers. The combination of glaze and body results in chip-resistant pots with bright finishes which do not dull with age. Some 10,000 pots are made each year and Chris's mission is to make people appreciate good pots.

It is the execution of that mission that showed the multi-faceted nature of the talent before us. Not for Chris the well-rutted track of ancient Japanese techniques. Here was a man prepared to find his own modern paths and his talk revealed that within the potter there lurked a very competent toolmaker/ production engineer. Firstly there was the Clay Gauge, a calibrated trough which accepts clay direct from the pug mill. The calibrations allow pieces of any weight to be cut from the emerging extrusion and the elimination of individual weighings. A series of wooden moulds for the production of rectangular flat dishes and a home-made press to take these moulds. All designed from first principles and made from materials readily available at the D.I.Y. store.

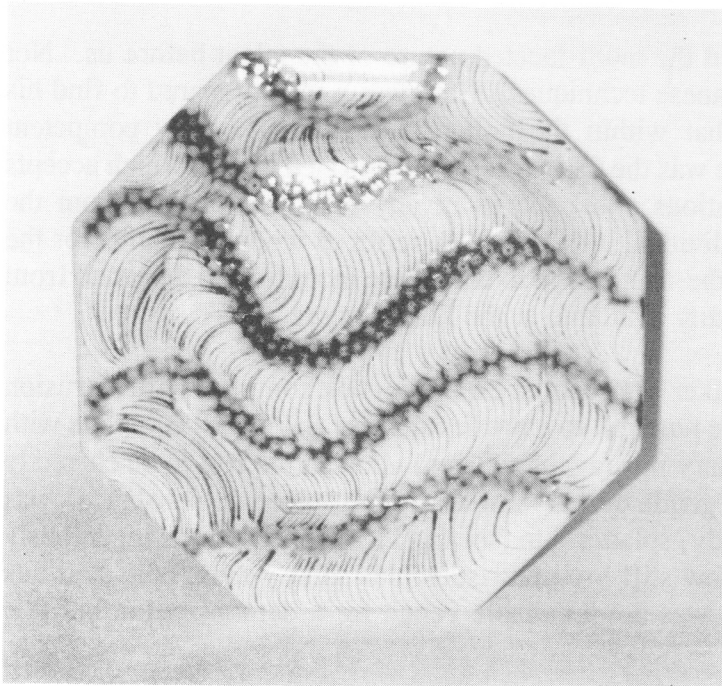
A more sophisticated expression of the toolmaker's art was an expansion box complete with extrusion profile. This could be bolted directly onto the pug mill to extrude Japanese flat dishes complete with both longitudinal feet. A pair of complementary jigs (again wooden) allowed the feet to be correctly trimmed and the flat extrusion bowed into a gentle curve. For many the "pièce de resistance" was a home-made spray - or perhaps more correctly, splatter gun (see fig.1). This device, is ingeniously made from a plastic container, a reel and a few stiff broom bristles plus sundry nuts, bolts and bits of metal. Unfortunately, Potters Open Day was not a suitable venue for a demonstration but few would doubt that it would work well.

Chris provided a versatile instructive, dissertation which covered many subjects during its course. We should be grateful to him for his efforts on our behalf and mindful of his basic tenet: **to use our hands and ingenuity.** Pottery has a long and honourable past on which to build a future. To achieve it follow his thoughtful, iconoclastic and practical lead. **AND -- MAKE THINGS -- WITH YOUR HANDS !**

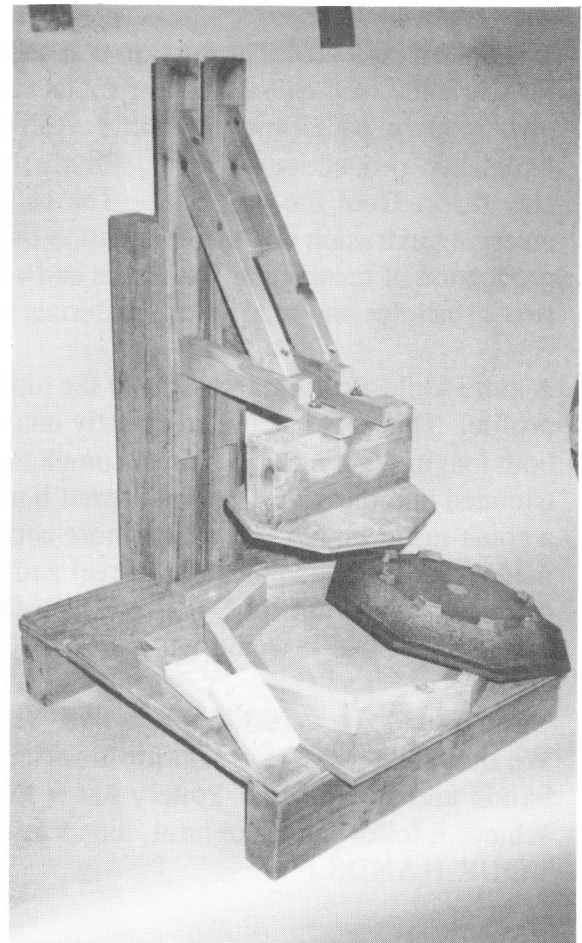
Dick Pope



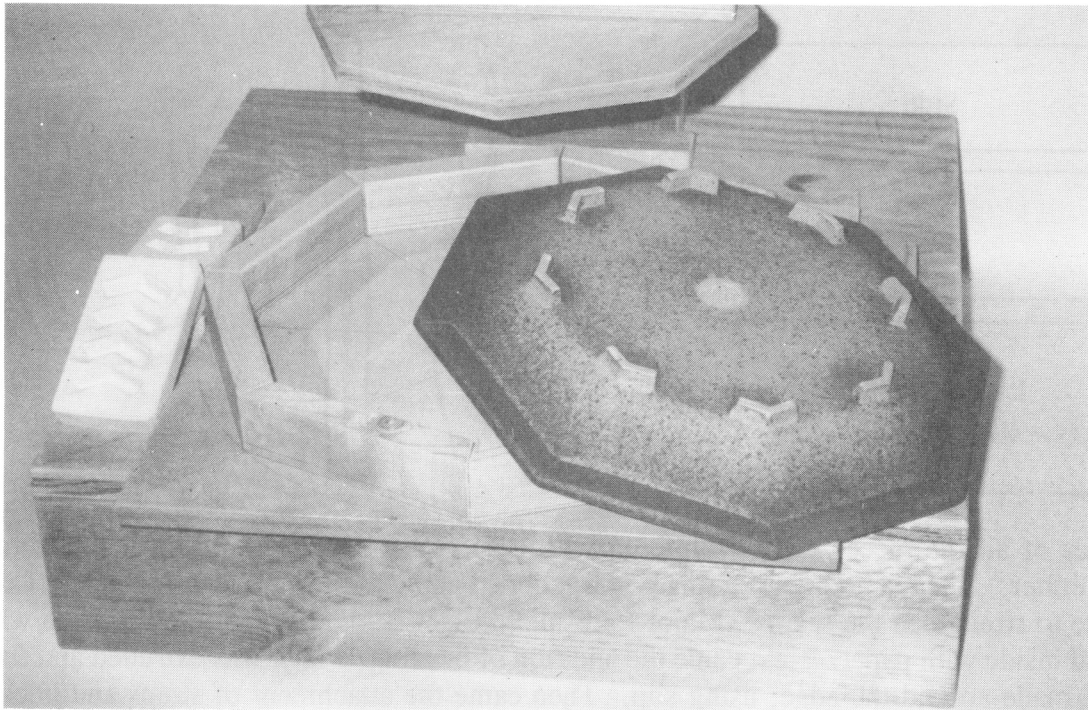
CHRIS ASTON'S "SPLATTER GUN" Fig.1.



Above:
 Pressed octagonal dish 12" across
 Iron oxide/titanium spray with Chun
 glaze-trailed dots and fine line
 brushwork on to biscuit. Magnesia
 glaze over. Reduction fired to 1280°C.



Right - Octagonal dish press, designed and made by Chris Aston in 1993.



Enlarged view of the dish press, showing the biscuit press moulds for the feet on the left & the base of a dish, with the feet added on the right. The press mould is made of wood.

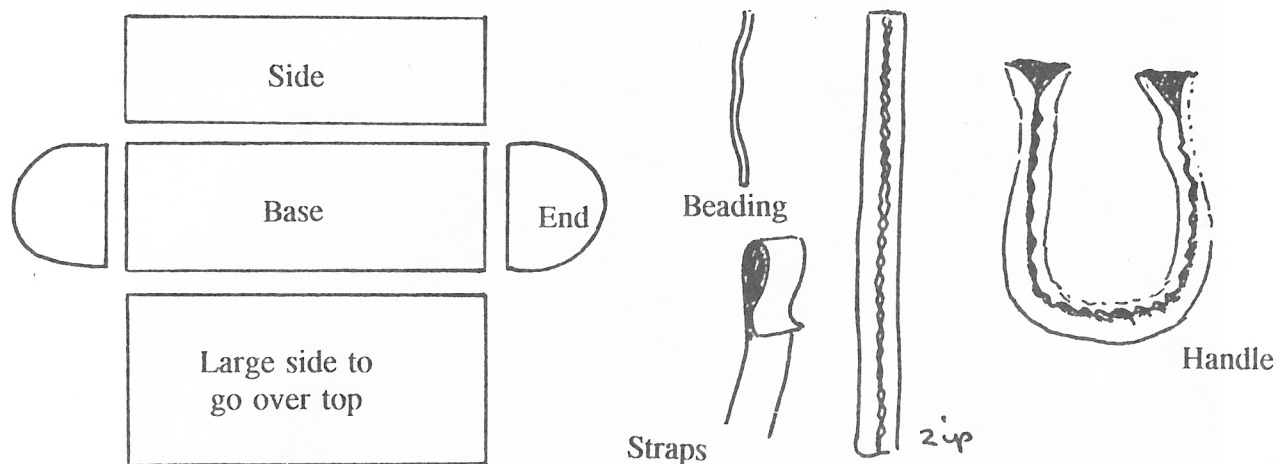
JANET HALLIGAN

What a treat we had on Potters' Open Day this year - a mix of pottery styles to suit all tastes with each style demonstrating its individual making skills. Our chosen medium - CLAY - has such versatility, and never more so than in the hands of Janet Halligan. What other substance could be used in the way she uses it to imitate other materials and make realistic objects? Her aim is to translate the forms of everyday life that we see about us rather than inventing forms. Many of us search beyond what we see every day in our artistic endeavours so it was very refreshing and, as the audience showed, amusing to have our attention turned back to the more mundane, but shown in such elevated context.

It was invaluable to hear Janet talk about the background to her work which was so obviously influenced by her surroundings. She mentions "industrial revolution architecture, power stations and Victorian warehouses". After studying Ceramics and Glass at Stourbridge College in the late '60s, she continued to make machine-based sculptural forms with hard edges. She explored the use of mixed media producing memorable large pieces made of glass sheets warped in the kiln and then bolted on to metal or wood. Her giant "stained glass" pieces were particularly stunning. Janet's observations and drawings of children's playgrounds, fairgrounds and level crossings all led to individual and exciting pieces incorporating wood.

Then came a slight change in direction to make more commercial "pots", many based on details of dress which she replicated in minute detail - fabric textures, polo necks, duffel coats, denims, ties, belts, buckles, bras and old shoes, to name but a few. She has also spent some time working on the torso as well as its clothing and has made a series of "anonymous heads". Recent work includes reproducing well-used bags of all types in minutest detail. Now, Janet's work is centred around pots - especially teapots - based on machinery.

In the afternoon, Janet showed us her technique for making a well-used sports bag plus towel. The clay was St. Thomas's rolled into slabs less than 1 cm. thick. She likes to work with the actual object in front of her so that the materials' folds and creases can be replicated. The slabs are left to dry overnight but must still be flexible. The pieces are cut accurately, sometimes using a paper pattern, and then smoothed. The bag pieces consisted of :-



The edges of all the pieces were chamfered with a special tool (apparently available through the London Potters), then scored with a dog comb, slipped and carefully pressed together. Coils were put inside to strengthen the seams. Major folds and creases were knocked into the form which was supported inside with paper. Next came the addition of beading, which was extruded and fixed, into a groove made around the edge, using slip. Then came the attachment of straps and buckles and, finally, the zip which was made very simply by rolling out a real zip onto a thin strip of clay, subsequently sunk into a pre-dug groove 1/8" deep along the top of the bag. An open zip was made by rolling an open zipper on to clay, cutting along the teeth edge (with the zip still in place), transferring the clay half-zip to the bag, and finally refining the teeth with a knife.



Some of Janet's work on display at the Open Day

Last came the handles which were made from sheets of clay wrapped around dowelling - the seams were pinched to represent realistically the sports bag handles. All additions were made by scoring and slipping (except the beading - just slipped). Janet explained that the very realistic qualities of her work were achieved by careful attention to all the details - metal studs, etc. and to final finishing with a metal kidney. The towel was made by rolling the clay on a real towel, quickly folding it and draping it in the bag. After bisque firing, glazes from various sources were sprayed on. After glaze firing, buckles and metal fastenings are painted with metallic lustres and fired to 750° C.

JOHN POLLEX

Modern painters such as Howard Hodgkin and David Hockney have a strong influence on John's present work. Gone are the dark colours and plain backgrounds on plates, etc. that have been in vogue since the days of Bernard Leach. Currently, the juxtaposition of colours, either complementary or contrasting, have made ceramic surfaces into substitute canvasses, for John.

The mugs and jugs are thrown in a conventional manner and, when leather hard, they are distorted by tapping the bottoms onto a hard surface causing the walls to bulge. Alternatively, the sides are struck with a piece of wood in four places at right angles to each other at various heights. (see fig.1.)

The handles are different and totally different from the conventional pulled type. A coil is rolled out or extruded and rolled with a pin to about 4 mm. thick. Two strips are cut and pressed together as in fig.2. The handle is fixed onto the mug so that it extends above the rim. Fixing is done by pressing a piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ " dowel on each side of the handle (see fig.3.), which is sprung so as to be held easily. The mug is somewhat depressed to allow greater finger room. Below the handle, the fixing is down to the base. This is decorated by radiating depressions, using a dowel or straight edge (see fig.4.). The top of the handle which projected above the rim was tapped down to anchor around the rim by pressure of the same dowel, as described previously, sometimes using its end rather than its side.

Alternatively, handle decoration was achieved by using a polyfiller application tool to draw straight or curved parallel lines.

The plates that John makes are very shallow, being mostly areas to decorate. Discs are plates that are further rolled out flat. These are not circular but are the result of rolling in two directions. These, too, are painting surfaces.

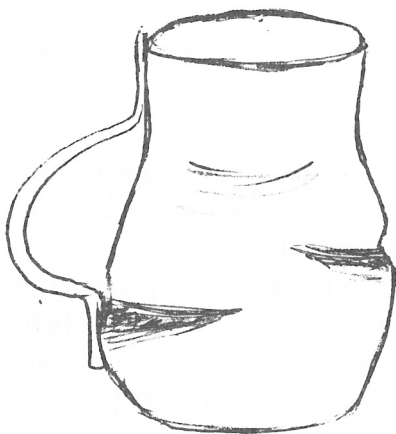


Fig.1 Showing depressions made, using squared edge



Fig.2 Handle from 2 strips of clay

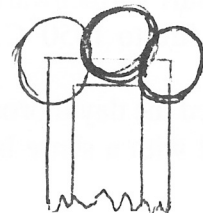


Fig.3 Dowel impressions at top of handle

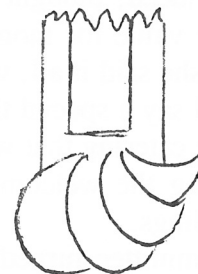


Fig.4 Bottom of Handle

Decorating: John has, over the years, studied modern American & European artists for the pleasure of colour, composition & balance. David Hockney's book "That's the way I see it" was used as a reference book during the demonstration, though only one picture was found. None of the artists are slavishly copied, only the essence of their work found its way onto the plates or mugs, etc.

Application: Black slip was painted onto the leather-hard surfaces to give a dense colour; this may be up to three coats. If decorating the inside of mugs, slip was poured first and allowed to dry before decorating the exterior. The black slip acts as a negative round the edges of other, subsequent colours. Colours burn out if applied too thinly. A variety of brushes from wide to a pared-down nylon one of only a few hairs were used as liners.

Slip Recipes:

White slip - Feldspar 2 lbs.
China Clay 3½ lbs.
Blue ball clay 10½ lbs. - Medcol
Black slip - Red throwing body 8 lbs.
Pot feldspar 1 lb.
China clay 8 ozs.
Manganese 8 ozs.
Red iron oxide 24 ozs.

Clear glaze from Medcol 2414928
Medcol (Cornwall), Ltd.,
Unit 17,
Woods Browning Industrial Estate,
Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 1DQ.
Tel: 0208 72260



Above: Jug by John Pollex
Height approximately 5.5"

To make the coloured slips put 20 grams of body stain in a 16 oz./454 gram yoghurt pot and gradually add water until ¼ full, then add the white slip. More intense colours can be obtained by increasing the body stain.

Clay: Buff earthenware clay from Medcol
Biscuit fire to 1050°C. Glaze fire to 1120°C.

I enjoyed the day thoroughly as there was something for everyone. Three contrasting demonstrations handled with a sense humour throughout the day.

Brian Bicknell

OPEN DAY - (Postscript)

As one "Brand New" Member was leaving the hall, she told me : "I have really enjoyed the day very much indeed, thought it was excellent, wonderful food, super demonstrations and so interesting ! Terrific value for money". (*Unsolicited memo. from Murray Fieldhouse*).

In fact she said it all, well very nearly. I must add that we all thank Ruth Karnac for organising the day and say a special thank you to Pauline O'Dell for putting in so much effort to arrange probably the best catering that we have ever had. We must also express our thanks to Murray for, yet again, providing the welcoming hot toddy and for doing his usual splendid job of M.C.-ing the day's proceedings.

Our committee turned out in force to tidy up after the event and I must say that Murray's book stands took a lot longer to put up than they took to take apart.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

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QUESTIONNAIRE: P.O.D. 1993.

A total of 63 questionnaire forms were completed and analysed. Of these, no fewer than 50 were satisfied with the demonstrations, albeit some with reservations. Comments varied from "very good" to "excellent", "splendid", "first-class" and one which said "well worth the journey from Gloucester". Many expressed their appreciation of the organisational arrangements and this was particularly noticeable in three or four returns which came from first-time visitors. Whereas most people were very enthusiastic in their comments about Chris Aston and John Pollex, there were some remarks about Janet Halligan to the effect that it might have been better had she demonstrated with several smaller objects rather than make one large one. There was a noticeable body of feeling that the time spent on the slide talks was too long, indeed over-running the programme's stated duration. This, of course, meant that everything else ran late which, according to their reports, caused a number of people to leave before the close of proceedings. It was suggested that for future Open Days the organisers should stress to demonstrators the importance of adhering to programme timetable. Some felt, too, that more time might be allowed for questions and answers and that questions from the floor should be repeated by the M.C.

There were a number of complaints about the cold, particularly, in the dining-hall. Some of the newer visitors found that the many hours spent sitting was uncomfortable - perhaps future Open Day announcements could incorporate a suggestion that bringing a cushion along might alleviate this problem (as "old sweats" already know).

On the subject of catering arrangements and the lunch: by far the largest number completing the form were approving ranging from "content" to "delighted". One, however, was disappointed by the "lack of choice for vegetarians who didn't like cheese"(!); another would have preferred "more of Murray's morning mesmeriser" as an alternative to lunch and 5 others expressed a preference for a hot meal rather than that provided, which most others thoroughly enjoyed. A large number, however, did express regret at the absence of coffee after the meal. (Nobody suggested liqueurs and petit-fours !).

In response to the question "how many potters should we have...", all save 7 or 8 were content with three, the others suggested two or four. Names suggested were Svend Bayer, Morgan Hall, Nick Chapman, David Roberts, Richard Phethean, Brian Dewsbury (of Brunel University), John Leach, Colin Pearson, Daphne Carnegie, Monica Young, Jane Hamlyn, Archie McCall and Seth Cardew.

There was a mixed response to next Open Day, or indeed future ones, being held in July. There were some who thought it would be good in May or June (the school is not available then) and who would like hands-on activities, though it was realised that this would be difficult with the numbers involved and might be better carried out at the normal summer event in June. Some expressed interest in the "sit back and watch" idea. One member objected to November as being prime craft fair-selling time and quite a few said that July was holiday time. (The only summer date available at the school is July 16th and this has been fixed for 1994 as an experiment). The committee does not know of any other venue with both raked seating in the main hall and a dining-room, kitchen and equipment.

Other suggestions to appear were a request for more raffle prizes, Newsletter to include recipes for the demonstrators' clays and glazes. Another suggestion was that there might be two or three people dispensing beverages at break times. There was also a request for a facility for Guild members to sell at Open Day.

GLAZES - Part 4.

Glaze Binders: Binders are substances that 'glue' the dried powdered glaze to the surface of the pot prior to firing. They are usually gums of some type, Gum Arabic is often used. They are often stored in the form of a ready-mixed aqueous solution which is added to the glaze slop. They have several disadvantages:

- The stock solution is inconvenient to make-up due to the low solubility of Gum Arabic
- The solution tends to 'go off' due to moulds
- If multiple layers of glazes are required, the dried gum tends to make the under layers water- proof, and so inhibit the top layers drying
- Having to add a liquid to an otherwise all dry glaze mixture is very inconvenient

Due to the above considerations I use Dextrin, a powdered starch derivative (this is the adhesive used on postage stamps). About 1% by weight gives a tough glaze coating, and ready-mixed glaze mixtures seem much more resistant to mould and bacterial attack.

Fluxes: Fluxes are the most difficult substances to calculate in a glaze formulation. The problem is to reconcile conflicting sets of requirements. A brief overview of their characteristics will illustrate the problems.

Fluxing Power - Some elements are more powerful than others as fluxes. The following list gives some of the fluxing elements in descending order of activity:

Potassium, Sodium, Lithium, Lead, Boron, Zinc, Strontium, Calcium, Magnesium.

Temperature Range: Any flux has a limited range of temperatures over which it can be used. For example, below about 800° C the only practical fluxing agent is lead. but if a lead glaze is fired at stoneware temperature, it boils away. Similarly, zinc has no effect at low temperatures, but becomes progressively more active as the temperature is increased.

Expansion: If the expansion rate of the glaze does not match that of the underlying clay body then, as the pot cools, the tin glaze will either craze or flake off (shiver). Sodium glazes are notoriously prone to crazing due to their high expansion rate and will reduce the effect.

Colour Modification: Some fluxes interact with some colourants to produce alternative colours, Copper, which usually produces a light green will, in a high alkaline glaze (i.e. sodium), give a beautiful turquoise colour; lead has a somewhat similar effect. Chromium, which is known for dark green colours will, in the presence of a very high lead content, at low temperatures, produce a beautiful crimson colour.

Multi-flux Glazes: For the above reasons, a single fluxing agent is rarely used, but care must be exercised when combining fluxes. The combination is rarely simply an average of their individual characteristics.

Health: Some fluxes such as lead are intensely poisonous and are rarely used in the 'Raw' state but in the form of a *frit* (see below). Since fritting reduces the amount of flux that can be incorporated in a glaze, it may not always be possible to use a frit (viz. the lead/chromium glaze above). Also an otherwise safe 'Low Release' lead frit may in the presence of copper be unsafe to use on culinary utensils.

It can be seen that the choice of a fluxing agent is rarely a simple matter, but at least an awareness of the problems involved is half-way to solving them. And, since most 'new' glazes often start off by modifying an existing glaze, a knowledge of the basic problems can cut out a lot of trial and error.

I have purposely only referred to the various fluxing agents by their relevant active element. It is of little consequence in what form it takes, e.g. lead may be introduced into a glaze in the form of red lead, white lead, lead carbonate or a lead silicate variant. Each of these is a different compound, but when heated decompose to the basic lead oxide, the other non-lead constituents are driven off as a gas, and take no part in fluxing. For this reason, whilst any of the above compounds may be used to provide lead, the quantity needed will vary from substance to substance, depending on the proportion of lead in it.

A frit is formed by adding the basic flux to molten silica, then grinding the resulting cooled mass to a fine powder. This 'seals' any poisonous substance in a non-soluble glass matrix and, at the same time, allows the use of otherwise soluble fluxing agents.

Tony Stevens

PRACTICAL CLASSES AT "ART IN ACTION", WATERPERRY - 15-18 JULY 1993.

Once again, I was heading towards Waterperry to take part in "Art in Action" and wondering what the next few days would bring. Having experienced last year's Practical Classes, I told myself I should have known better !

"Art in Action" run thirteen Practical Classes aimed primarily at children and range from Copper Enamelling to Pyrography; I was one of twelve potters who were going to introduce children to the joys of throwing on the wheel. The classes are held each day from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and we each get two children every 45 minutes. At first sight it would seem impossible to get anything across in the time, but miraculously each child does take home a precious pot, most of it made by his or her own efforts.

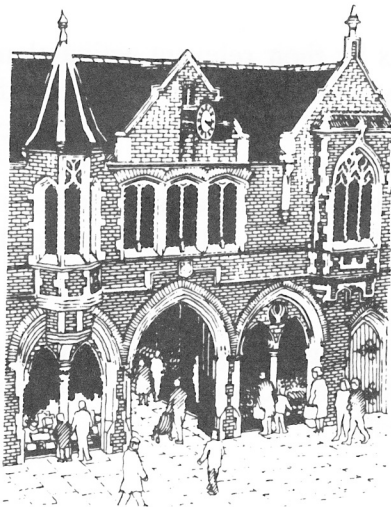
By the end of the fourth day, a grand total of 576 children had experienced the delightful slitheriness of spinning clay. Their excitement at having produced a pot in 20 minutes was well worth our aching backs. It is very hard work, but this opportunity is so valuable now that schools are cutting back and few children can work with clay and fewer still can work on the wheel.

Although the classes were mainly meant for children from 7 years upwards, I had quite a few adults eager to try, including one glamorous young lady, beautifully dressed & with very long red nails ! We both did our best and made something of a pot, but I don't think she will be making it a serious interest - unlike many of the children who loved it and wanted much more.

Those who have visited "Art in Action" will know what an inspiring and absorbing event this is. "There is so much to see" is a well-worn phrase, but here it is absolutely true. It is held annually in July in the grounds of Waterperry House, east of Oxford off Junction 8 of the M40 - a very straightforward journey and well signposted. Waterperry House is owned by the School of Economic Science (their Art Department organises "Art in Action") and is used to provide accommodation for residential courses. They have maintained and improved the extensive gardens, which are a delight. The gardens are open all year and well worth a visit, but don't combine seeing the gardens with "Art in Action" - you won't see enough of either.

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