

DACORUM AND  
CHILTERN  
POTTERS GUILD



IN THIS ISSUE

*\*FUTURE EVENTS*

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*\*OPEN DAY REPORTS*

*\*POTTERS TIPS*

*\*FREE BOOKS*

*\* & MUCH MORE*



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NEWSLETTER

JAN. / FEB.

1996

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### **ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER**

Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery & 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.

Membership Rates: Family - £16.50  
Single - £14.00  
Student - £ 7.50

Send your cheque to Membership Sec., Digby Stott (address & phone number on p.12)

The Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September & November, being distributed free 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 Guild Members as a whole.

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<u>Copy dates</u> (receipt of material for typing)	<u>Publication dates</u>
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12th December	5th January
15th February	6th March
14th April	3rd May
16th June	6th July
16th August	4th September
14th October	6th November

We can book space ahead of the copy date but, in general, need the final Artwork not later than **THREE** days after the copy date.

### **Advertising rates:**

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### **Advertisements**

The Guild is not responsible for the content of individual advertisements printed in the Newsletter.

## FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Stoneware Bottle by Elaine Coles decorated using a slip cast design, with gold leaf added. The inside and neck are raw glazed and the back is decorated with a clay roller, height 17 cm.

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## EDITORIAL

I was drowning in banknotes and cheques! It was coffee break at the Open Day, with so many people wanting to buy Mick and Sheila Casson's pots that a frightening pile of money and cheques was rapidly accumulating around me, and I felt the onset of a serious case of being out of control. Just as my grip of reality was slipping away, Ray Phipps appeared at my elbow and started sorting the cheques, notes and coins into co-ordinated heaps and helped to put everything back into perspective. I don't think I have ever been happier to see him!

It was a fantastic day in so many respects, with our three demonstrators lifting our spirits to new heights with their skill and wit. I believe that most of us had a wonderful time at, possibly, our best Open Day ever. Congratulations to our organisers and thanks to our demonstrators and our M.C., Murray - it will be a very hard act to follow.

The Newsletter circulation list continues to grow, since our membership is again increasing and we also send the Newsletter to more pottery groups on a reciprocal basis. In the next issue we will include a digest of items from newsletters of those other groups.

You will see that our advertising support has also grown. This has two functions - to help support the production of the Newsletter, but also to put appropriate information in front of our members. Please do always tell suppliers that you are a member of the Guild and where you saw their advertisement; also, do be aware that advertising in the Newsletter is a very effective way to promote your own exhibition or event. A very happy & prosperous New Year to you all.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

## CORRESPONDENCE

On reading Stan Romer's article about a Raku day at Pitstone, I was fired with enthusiasm. Yes, I would like to use the Raku facilities and would be happy to involve myself with the Raku days! On re-reading, a few questions come to my mind - if I state them now, it may help others.

I assume that all the necessary gear - fireproof gloves, tongs, Raku glazes, goggles, etc., would be on site.

Would the pots provided need to be made by the people in charge? How many would be needed?

Would part of the payment made by visitors for biscuited pots go towards time and costs of the makers?

If you are a 'novice' in Raku firing, would you be of any use? Would others be present? Apart from snacks, must we take packed lunches or is there a pub nearby?

Perhaps the answers might encourage others to offer their help.

**Ruth Brown**

## REPLY TO RUTH BROWN

### Easy questions first:

1. Tongs and goggles on site - not gloves - mouse nests and mildew.
2. A modern kitchen and loos are on site - no spidery huts.
3. There are pubs in the village of Pitstone - volunteer please for an Egon Ronay report (expenses not paid).
4. Certainly room for novices - this is for Guild members to learn - keep an eye on the Newsletter.
5. Once established, the site will be used by the Guild itself and by groups (see Newsletters) and individuals - by arrangement of course.

It is early days yet and things will grow and change with time and our members' requirements. Basically, there will be Guild-run events when you would expect to find materials, instructions, advice and, possibly, demonstrations. Help, where needed, would be asked for in the Newsletter and the format clearly explained in advance, including any materials charges which would depend on the type of event.

Then there are what I call Rent Days. To pay our rent to the Museum for the use of the site, we have promised to staff the site for the three main open days on Summer Sundays and as many of the smaller open days as we can. We shall be doing something to interest visitors to the Museum - whether this is a full two-kiln Raku firing or have-a-go with the wheels, or a paper or sawdust firing, will be decided for each event. These will be run on the same basis as all other Guild events, including the have-a-go throwing events and the stand at the National Ceramics Festival. Costs of materials will be paid for by the Guild (out of takings) including biscuit pots where needed. Participants are volunteers. It is hard and unpaid work, but great fun and very rewarding. There is nothing like explaining things to the public for improving your throwing and firing skills.



There is also the chance to sell your own pots and we are sowing seeds for the future, which is one of the things the Guild is about.

Groups (advertised in the Newsletter) and individuals will be able to fire the kilns and bring their own portable kilns and dustbins and there are plans for experimental kilns, as well. Unless the committee can be persuaded to sponsor a given project, the costs will usually be met by the people concerned - except that free wood will be available and the usual enthusiasm and 'buzz' should come as a matter of course!

The Guild will be taking part in Bucks. Art Week next June/July. Another selling venue and a chance to reach parts of Bucks. we have not yet reached; this will be based at Pitstone which is in Bucks., and fronted by Frances Levy, who has taken part in this event for many years.

Freda Earl



The first pole is erected on the Pitstone site. L. to R. Linda Bryant, Victor Earl and Mark Wiggins.

Photograph by Freda Earl.

## **FUTURE GUILD EVENTS**

Friday Jan.12th, 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre

**SUE VARLEY** makes both earthenware and stoneware. Her ideas come from landscape, rock formation, stones and pebbles. Oxides and/or grog are mixed into the clay body. Earthenware pots are first kiln-fired and then smoked in sawdust, newspaper or grass. Sue will be talking about her work and projects at the North London Collegiate School, where she teaches.

Friday Feb.9th, 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre  
**DESMOND CLOVER** throws domestic stoneware and more individual pieces, decorated with his own unique designs. Some pots are changed by cutting and adding rims and handles. He decorates with his own coloured glazes, built up by painting, brushing, dipping and using wax resist. Desmond will be showing us his throwing and decorating techniques.

## **POT CRAWL - 1996**

**WILLY CARTER - DAVID FRITH  
BRIAN DICKENSON**

*have agreed to open their studios to us  
on the 15th / 16th June. The hotel and  
restaurant have also been provisionally  
booked for our visit to Chester.*

## **MEMBERSHIP CARD (CORRECTION)**

On the membership card, an event for Friday 12th May was incorrectly announced for the demonstration by Jonathan Keep. The correct date, of course, should be **FRIDAY, 10TH MAY.**

## **OTHER EVENTS**

Buckinghamshire Pottery and Sculpture Society's future events

Monday Jan.22nd at Chorley Wood Arts Centre at 8 p.m.- **RICHARD PHETHEAN.**

Monday Feb.19th at Little Kingshill Village Hall, High Wycombe at 8 p.m. - **SEBASTIAN BLACKIE.**

\*\*\*\*\*

On Friday Feb.2nd, A.& C.Black, the pottery book publishers will be holding the draw to decide who are the winners in the **FREE BOOK DRAW.** (For details, see page 11).

## **WINGATE SCHOLARSHIPS 1996**

Wingate Scholarships are awarded to individuals of great potential who need financial support to undertake original work of intellectual, scientific, artistic, social, or environmental value, & to outstandingly talented musicians for advanced training.

They are designed to help with the costs of a specific project which may last up to 3 years. The average **total** award is about £7500 & maximum in any one year is £1000.

The Committee may take the personal circumstances of a candidate into account as well as the exceptional nature of a project.

**The closing date for applications is 1 Feb. 1996.**

The Committee will conduct interviews of short-listed candidates in London in May & results will be announced in June.

For more detailed information & application forms, write to: The Administrator, Wingate Scholarships, 38 Curzon St., London W1Y 8EY., enclosing a stamped addressed A4 sized envelope.



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**Pauline Ashley** had some of her Raku pieces accepted for the auction of pottery and ceramics at Bonhams in London, held on 30th November. Naturally, she was very excited at this new venture and delighted that photographs of her work appeared in the catalogue. Pauline attended the auction and saw two of her pieces sold. It may take some time to get her back from cloud nine.

Another Guild member, **Christine Bull**, also had some work at the same auction. Christine has sold at Bonhams on two previous occasions.

**Neville Ferry** has recently joined the Guild; he has had a long career in Ceramics, inspired mostly by Maltese Megalithic remains. Neville also teaches and he has exhibited work in the Midsummer Art Show at Milton Keynes this year.

**Frank & Rosemary Murcell** have joined the Guild. Frank has been interested in pottery making for many years & Rosemary has an eye for pottery, having collected various pieces during exhibitions & meetings.

**Jann French** has joined us; she lives at Rickmansworth and has a wide interest in all aspects of pottery, with sculpture high on her list. Currently Jann is a student at Harrow Art School (sorry !! the University of Westminster - have you noticed how many potters still call it Harrow Art School ?).

We have again had a flood of new members joining the Guild, some at our Open Day. We extend a warm welcome to **Richard Ballantyne, Sheila Battat, Julie and Melissa Bryant, Sue Bull, Sharon Dowie, Patsy and Frances Geraghty, Jane Gilbert, S.Hickman, Dorothy Hughes, Frances Levy, Mark Newson, G.F. Parr, Heather Paul, Ruby Sharpe, David Tremayne and Ulrike Watson.**

We are delighted to welcome back **Cyril and Peggy Deering, John and Anne Hoy and Pam Tames** who have rejoined the Guild.

## PROFILE

Neville Ferry (born 1945) studied at the Malta Government School of Art, eventually winning a scholarship to study ceramics in the United Kingdom. In October 1971 he started his studies at Croydon College of Art and after a year there he proceeded to Loughborough College of Art and Design for a further course to specialise in ceramics. At the end of his three-year course he was awarded B.A. with first-class Honours in Art and Design. He was also awarded the Licentiate of the Society of Designer-Craftsmen.

Neville is a colourful individual with a streak of characteristic good humour and wit, often bordering on sarcasm.

His interest in Maltese megalithic remains and early civilisations in general have always been a source of rich inspiration for him. His main interest lies in the artefact as an icon of worship. Parallels with modern use of traditional religious images are sought and new meanings given, but these are left to be re-interpreted by the viewer.

His work can be sculptural, but it can be a vessel. It may be small and meant to be held in the hand, or large enough to stand in a garden or hang on a wall. However, it always holds a mystery and it is up to the spectator to discover the hidden meanings; meanings that relate best to his or her mood.

Neville's palette includes various forming and decorative techniques. Both tactile and visual qualities are explored and applied to bring out the specific qualities. His work is found in a number of private collections and he has had 5 one-man exhibitions to date, besides taking part in numerous collective shows. Neville also works to commission.



Marker Stone by Neville Ferry - 1995.

### OPEN DAYS WITH DOUG JONES IN 1996

Spring Equinox - 24th March

Summer Solstice - 30th June

Autumn Equinox - 22nd September

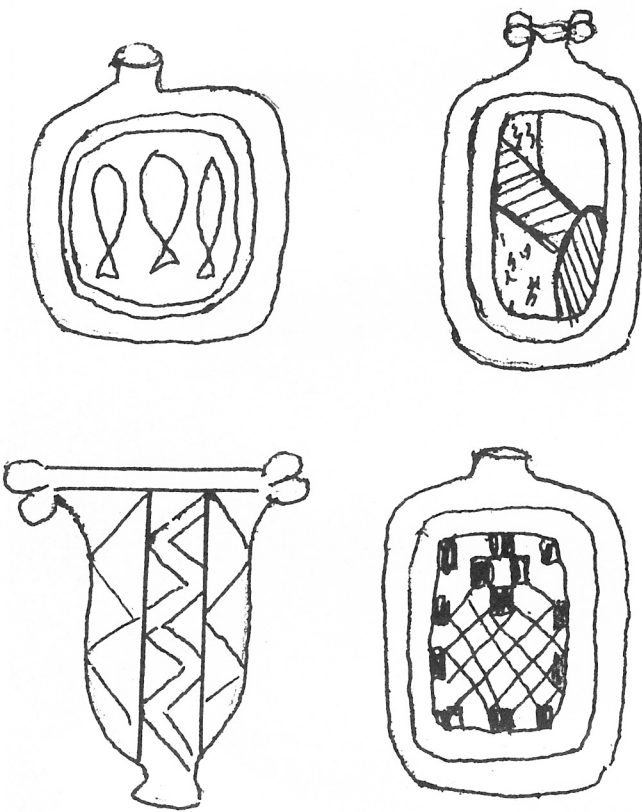
11 A.M. START AT 114 Norfolk Road,  
Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 1LA.

FURTHER INFORMATION: 01923 770913

## **ELAINE COLES - SLIP-CAST PATTERNS. 13.10.1995.**

Elaine experimented with this technique and devised her present methods whilst training at Goldsmith's. She uses lidded plastic pots and basins each containing one litre of casting slip stained with under-glaze colours from W.D. Ball and Scarba colours from Ireland (usually uses porcelain casting slip because its whiteness produces brighter colours).

Elaine is inspired by designs from textiles, carpets and Celtic patterns. When working, if she does not like any pieces of her decoration, she simply peels them away as the work proceeds. Basically, she is working backwards (decorating first).



### Method.

1. Slip trail pattern onto plaster of Paris slab. Let dry.
2. Now paint over this with big patches of coloured slips (different thicknesses do not matter).
3. Pour over a layer (about 1/8") of white casting slip and leave to dry.
4. Peel off when shine just goes off slip. Run metal kidney under edges to release slab.
5. Use a rolling-pin to roll this thin, patterned slab onto a slab of clay.
6. Cut out two required bottle shapes (or can use a template).
7. Can make impressions on uncoloured back slab of bottle. Leave to stiffen.

8. When stiff enough, score, apply slurry and take the two bottle shapes, stand onto spare piece of clay slab and cut round the base.
9. Join well to prevent splitting. Blow air into the bottle to help acquire shape.
10. Can add coils up sides of bottle to strengthen joins and also give additional decoration.

### Other methods of decoration

#### Stripes

1. Put stripes of masking tape across p-of-P. slab.
2. Paint stripes of coloured slip across.
3. Can also take a ruler and, with a wooden tool, scratch straight, narrow stripes. The stripes can then be coloured with more slip.

#### Marbling (done in reverse).

1. Pour (approx. 1/8") white casting slip onto p-of-P.
2. Drop colours onto this white slab (black is particularly effective). Could also have paper resist underneath.
3. Joggle the slab to gain a marbling effect.

Firing - once fired, heavy reduction 1260°-1280° to give the clay a toasty look. May raw-glaze neck of bottle.

Gold Decoration - transfer gold leaf bought from Cornelius (artists' *olde worlde* shop near British Museum). Starter pack of 5 sheets costs £8.

1. Paint desired pattern onto fired pot with Roberson Japan Gold size (60 ml. bottle costs £3.50).
2. After about 5 minutes, simply press onto the size the sheet of transfer gold leaf. No further firing required.

Elaine said she sometimes "cheats", and uses a gold or silver pencil.

**Pam Tames**

## **POTTERY HINTS AND TIPS**

### **(i) THE SMOOTHEST CLAY EVER**

Mixing one's own clay from the powder usually requires a period of several weeks for the clay to mature to achieve adequate plasticity. We all know that and potters have various tricks to overcome this problem.

The basic need is for water to permeate every particle of clay, giving a good plastic medium. Now, I quite like some of the characteristics of short clay as it gives rather exciting stretch marks, but most times plastic qualities are required.

I found myself short of clay of this quality and needed it desperately for the following day, so bearing in mind the all-important permeation rule, I kneaded up 10k. of a day-old mix, wrapped it tight in polythene, wrapped that in aluminium foil and shoved it in the cool bottom oven of the Aga overnight.

Next morning, I had a hot steaming pudding which had to cool for a couple of hours before kneading and proceeded to throw beakers with, possibly, the most plastic clay I have ever used. NO AGA ???? NO COMMENT !!!!

Doug Jones

### **(ii) ON BUBBLE WRAP**

With the D.C.P.G. Exhibition in progress at the time of writing, I am reminded of a suggestion that was recently talked about by one of the Guild members.

Bubble wrap is great stuff for protecting pots in transit and if you frequently transport pots, it can be a good idea to make up some 'pockets' or envelopes' of bubble wrap, using 2" packing tape to join the edges. Wrap the edges over, to avoid thin areas, when you put the tape on.

The advantages are a neat stack of "Pot pockets" and you just slip each pot into a pocket as you pack them. Obviously, this is best for pots of medium dimensions but, with ingenuity, you could ring the changes on this idea.

Editor

### **(iii) GLAZE PARTICLE SUSPENSION**

A new organic compound, originally developed for the atomic industry, was described in a recent issue of *New Scientist*. The radioactive materials used to make nuclear fuels are very fine powders, only a few molecules in diameter, and present a severe respiratory hazard. The new compound when added to an aqueous suspension of the above (heavy) substances, forms a gel that keeps the mixture in suspension. Then, as it dries, the gel thickens and binds the drying mixture together. The use of this compound to keep glazes in suspension is an obvious alternative application, particularly so since it burns away completely during firing. One of several pottery suppliers actively developing new glaze formulations using this substance is Portmeirion Potteries, Stoke-on-Trent. During test firings they found that the firing time of a pot was reduced from 48 to below 10 hours! This was a direct result of the very small particle size, which are much more reactive the smaller they get. It also allowed a 1200°C firing to be reduced to 1000°C.

Tony Stevens

## **1995 MEMBERS' EXHIBITION**

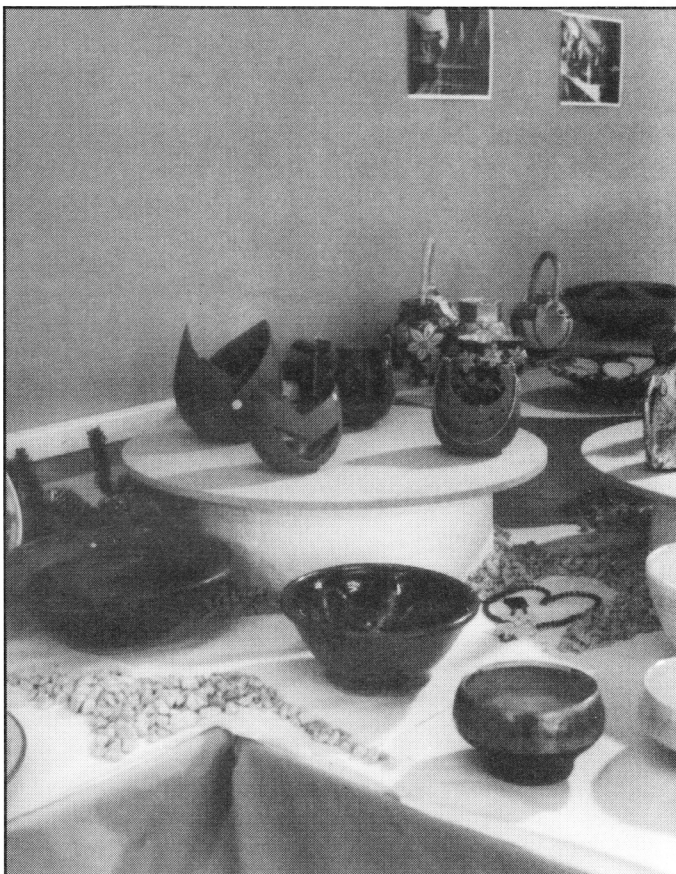
**AT THE COW BYRE, RUISLIP**

Seventeen Guild members took part in this year's exhibition. We had enough pots, but not a surplus. The system of letting purchases be taken away immediately seems to be very successful, though it might have been more advantageous to be able to replace exhibits from spare stocks. It was a pity that we had no large pots or handbuilt pieces.

With next year already in mind, how about meeting a challenge? - pots with lids, planters with drainage holes and matching saucers, handbuilt pots and perhaps someone could have a go at a birdbath.

The general standard of throwing and glazing is good with plenty of variety and I'm sure this showed in the increased sales over last year - more than £1300 in all during the two weeks.

Victor and Freda Earl made a great job of organisation and display (with some help from yours truly).



The following potters took part, for which, many thanks and we hope they are happy with their results:

Marilyn Andreeti	Pauline Ashley
Pam Bishop	Rachel Bucknill
Freda Earl	Pamel Edkins
Wendy Fowler	Gerald Gladstone
Rena Green	Elaine Hudson
Win Mitchell	Marguerite Moon
Anne Ringsted	Beryl Singh
Chris Spellén	John Stanhope
Katkin Tremayne	

Ruth Karnac



# OPEN DAY - 11.11.1995

## THE SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE TIGER



There was a young lady  
from Riga,  
Who rode, with a smile,  
on a tiger  
They returned from the  
ride  
With the lady inside,  
And the smile on the  
face of the tiger.  
*The Limerick Book -  
ed. LReed*

## TESSA FUCHS AT OPEN DAY

A tree with a woman riding a tiger in the branches, one with birds instead of leaves, bowls full of colour and deer with wonderful antlers - the smile was on the face of the audience and Tessa herself, who said she made pots based on what happened in her life. She then showed us how she made one of her loving couples.



Loving Couple





#### Technical Details

Clay from Valentine's - standard red earthenware - open but not grogged.

Fire bisc. to 1000°C. Glaze 1080° - soak below 1080° 1-2 hours.

#### Glaze

Dora Billington lead sesquisilicate 47, whiting 10, felspar 25, China clay 16.

Thin drip - line drawing, paint on glaze and stains mixed thickly with water. Blob on more glaze with a brush - the thicker, the whiter - but it bubbles, if too thick.

Freda Earl

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Paul Rowbottom,

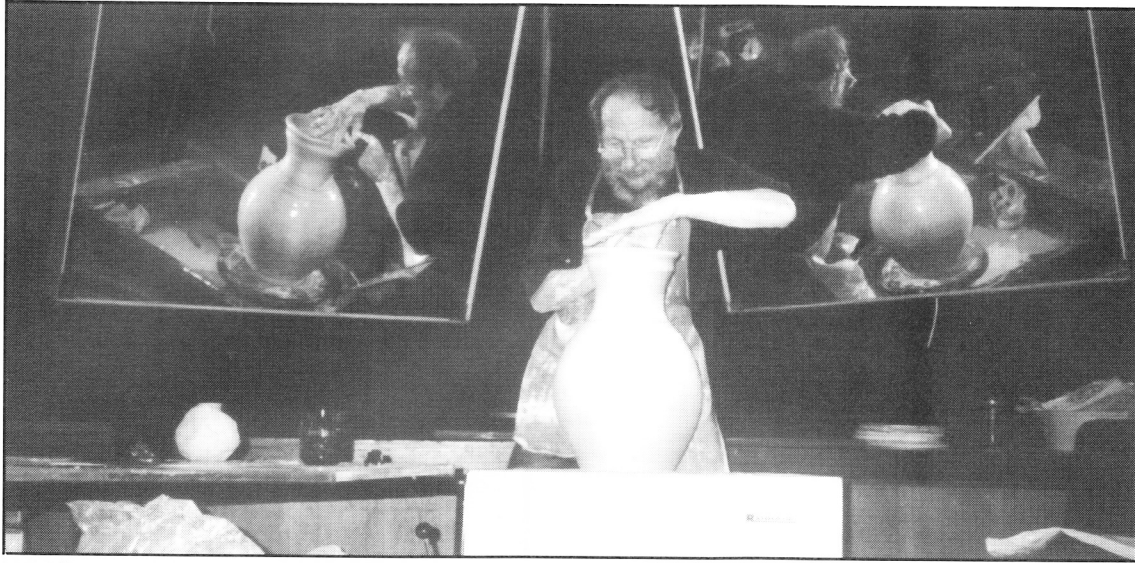
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**MICHAEL CASSON**

**Mick pulls the lip on one of his jugs.**

When Mervyn asked for a write-up on Mick's demonstration on P.O.D., I had lots of excuses: "I can't do shorthand - I won't remember what he said - I won't get the technical details correct - I shall forget - I haven't time".!! But he twisted my arm and so the biggest excuse of all: "It's a big responsibility" still didn't get through. *[What Dorley says is quite true, so I must say thank you Dorley for taking that responsibility, writing the article and I hope your arm is better now - Ed.]*

Our Open Day was very special this year. Two old friends of the Guild and one very inspiring and heartening new potter fired the imagination and admiration of us all.

Although Mick moved to Ross-on-Wye 10 years ago, I still think of him as local, just round the corner, and for all potters this is so. His enthusiasm for his work and continued experimentation, together with his generosity when sharing information and discovery have reached far into the potters' world.

When Mick showed us his slides, we saw how his work had evolved in stages, starting in 1945. For the first 15 years he was very confused. At Hornsey College of Art, design came first, not making. Bernard Leach was not considered to be anyone to take notice of, reasons for making pots were very hazy.

In 1950, he met Michael Cardew, saw the Picasso exhibition and in 1951 the Festival of Britain & making for Mick became all important. Lots of trials and ideas; book-ends went well and it didn't matter that the potting was heavy! In 1959 he had his first exhibition at Heal's and in it were his tin glaze teapots & casseroles with figured knobs and the Mediterranean characteristics of pedestal & chalice forms.

At the end of the '50s, function & finding the best materials & processes for producing a range of domestic stoneware became the pre-dominant features of Mick's work. He moved to Prestwood in Bucks. & lived there for 18 years, throwing in the shop, bringing up a family, selling to customers & putting up with patronizing comments from bank managers & their like

who imagined that making pots was all very well, but their job demanded greater concentration!

In 1963, the Harrow course was started by Vic Margrie, Colin Pearson & Mick. Colin, with his amazing skill & economy in making domestic ware, the many other influences brought into the course, the experiments of the students & the general dynamic of the era gave Mick a very wide experience & range from which to select his own particular way of working.

In 1970, Vic Margrie left Harrow & Mick took over. He soon decided that the ever-increasing demands of paperwork was not his metier, & after working for 10 years with gas & oil fired kilns, he left Harrow & moved to Ross-on-Wye where he began wood-firing.

In Prestwood, he had been making a range of domestic ware, drop-in lids, pulled handles, big dishes, casseroles & jugs - always jugs. Now in Ross, he started making painted porcelain individual pots as well as a more limited range, wood-fired, salt glazed, & jugs because he liked them.

He started making a variety of pots with swimmers in a silhouette decoration experimenting & working in this new & very demanding way. He has 5 clays in the workshop & there are 6 independent potters working there. Mick uses salt on top of his glazes - his glaze tests are beautiful. He thinks the swimmers have been worked out & in his exhibition this summer, one felt that Mick is now making shapes that he has always loved & admired in a material that he has great skill at controlling & yet learns from all the time. The forms echo the chalice & pedestal pots that first drew him to the world of potters.

In his demonstration Mick was very precise. 'Always weigh your clay'; this gives you tacit knowledge, valuable in that you know what to expect from a given amount. 'Always pin through the base'; know what you have got - knowing the base tells you the next stage in the making.

'Don't turn because you think you should, turn because you want to & plan for it accordingly'. 'Make 10 or 20 of one type at a time'; from each you learn.



During his potting life, Mick has encountered many dogmas about making pots. At first, he was intimidated but gradually learned that it doesn't really matter what others think about the right or wrong way to make a particular shape - 'make it the way that works for you. What matters is the end result'. He learned that centering is not what it seems. 'Don't con yourself, it's hardly ever perfect'; he used the raised edge at the rim to pinch out a lip for his jug, carefully shaping it up & out from the form.

While he demonstrated, Mick talked about potters he had known & admired, & passed on hints that that he found had helped him. He threw the cylinder to start off his jug with his thumb held out, making maximum contact with the pot all round to support the drawing up.

On Sept. 4th 1963 he started using a rib when Colin Pearson remarked that it would give him more selection! He used bats & didn't wire through. He compressed the base at the start; specially in the wider shapes, he felt it probably stopped cracking. He stressed that the consistency of the clay is all important - if it is too stiff it makes throwing large forms very difficult. He remembered once when he was demonstrating at Pendley how Henry Hammond insisted on emphasizing that 'kneading clay needs energy', gave up in exasperation & took over Mick's demonstration to show what he meant.

Mick threw four jugs, making the very large one in 2 parts, throwing 2 lbs. of clay on top of a leather-hard form made with 4 lbs. of clay. One of his forms collapsed. Unlike the bank managers, we all know that throwing requires concentration; it's hard to talk, answer questions & make at the same time; as Mick said, 'you need to throw from bottom to top and don't stop'.

When he first started potting he was worried by theory. He admired the free throwing of John Reeve, the technical skills of Harry Davis & the wonderful shapes of mediæval jugs. He discovered it isn't possible to make what you admire in ways laid down by others & ended by emphasizing the message he has learned over the years.

'Know what you think is good & you like, decide what you want to make & work out your own way to achieve it'.

#### Recipe for the body Mick was using.

He called it 'Harry Davis classic salt glaze body'.

Hyplas 71 ball clay	75%
Porcelain powdered china clay	
(from Whitfield Minerals, Stoke-on-Trent)	24%
Cornish stone	1%
(put it in with the water that mixes the clay)	
Sand	12%

#### **Dorley Fieldhouse**

#### **\*Footnote**

Dorley informed me that Mick Casson had been unwell recently, I am sure that all Guild Members will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery (Editor).

#### **BRIAN DICKENSON, M.A.**

One of the highlights of November is the Open Day at Rudolph Steiner School. I have been to perhaps ten events so far, so I may be an old hand by now, yet I am hard-pressed to name a better one than this. It was fortunate that the weather was kind and the hall was full. Just small things added together make a day.

I agreed to write up a few lines on Brian Dickenson, knowing it would be difficult. To describe how a pot is made is easier than going into detail about decoration, as it is a purely visual thing. The technique has to be seen, to be appreciated in full (to 'the norm'). The decoration used by Brian is different in many ways. If the average potter, should there be one, uses a banding wheel and a series of brushes for effect, Brian used a potter's wheel rotated either at very slow speeds or, alternatively, with very delicate touches on the foot pedal. He moved it round in very precise steps of half a turn down to a few millimetres at a time. I was amazed by the control and Mervyn was equally impressed by the use of his wheel.

I have applied oxides and pigments using the wheel, with a certain amount of skill, but Brian's skill is in a different league, requiring absolute control at all times, making it an art form in its own right.

The plate was glazed the day previously so as to avoid delay. Using a spray of water, the plate was prepared for decorating. Brian uses a couple of bent steel prongs to hold the plate in the glaze and to tip to the left and right to pour away any excess liquid glaze. Should any drips remain, these are dampened and eased away.

So as to protect the rim, the plate is placed face down onto a bat on a plain wheelhead. To centre the plate, the bat is tapped into position (not the plate), bringing the plate into the centre.

Brian believes that we all work hard and spend our money carefully. Therefore, he wants a well-finished product, decorated on both sides to the same degree of excellence, to invite a client to buy with pleasure.

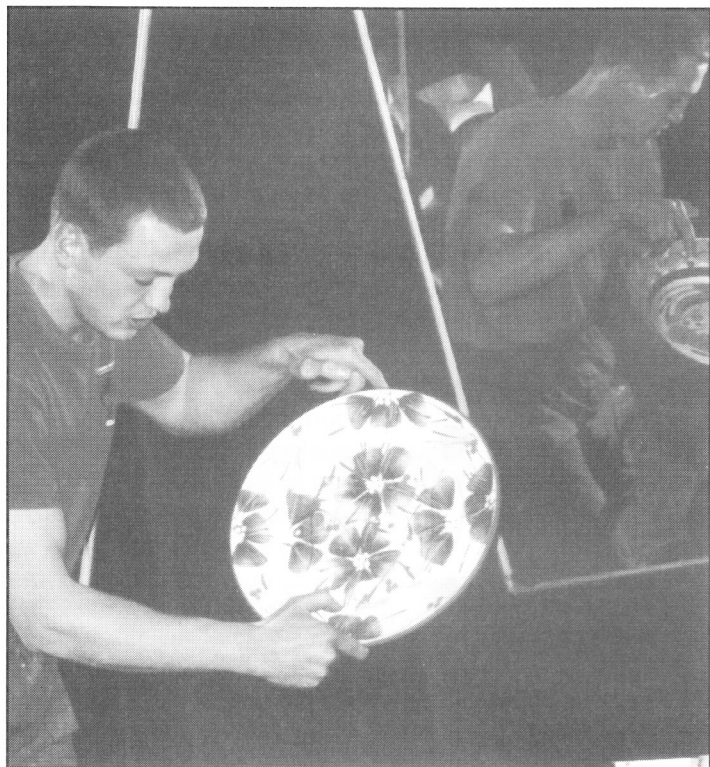
The plate was decorated with waving bands of pigment, with additional fine lines that turned back on themselves in circles and extended loops, supplemented by touches of coloured glaze to add interest. The backs of the trout are in fact part of a broken circle. This defines the shape and places the decoration in the centre. The fish are painted on quite freely and quickly. No hesitation or afterthoughts, just spontaneous brushwork. The scales are obtained by using a scalpel and lightly scraping away the surface of the various pigments. The trout as drawn are not exact, they do not need to be. They are the essence, and they live because they are quickly applied without labouring the finish. I am not going to attempt to describe the actual painting, as I cannot do justice to it.

Please be content to read the notes Brian has prepared for this issue of the Newsletter on recipes,

etc., as more can be gleaned from these than I can give. I can say, however, that the care taken with the brushes and surfaces contributes to the finished plate.

It has been a pleasure to write this, even though it is not a full description; Brian is a remarkable young artist. I saw him two years ago at Birmingham N.E.C. and I am sure that we see a major potter in the making. We are planning to visit him at his studio on the Pot Crawl, next June.

**Brian Bicknell**



**Brian Dickenson shows the upper surface of the decorated plate**

### **SOME TECHNICAL NOTES**

With regards to mixing coloured glazes, I would recommend that you begin by using your own base glaze and adding basic amounts of stains/oxides to achieve the desired effect. Also, remember that different bodies and firing atmospheres will induce very different results, so don't worry if your results are poles apart from what you might be expecting. Other potters' recipes are fine, but should only be used as a starting point to find your own voice.

In addition, it keeps things cheaper and simpler if all glazes are centred around a given base. Also, remember the joy of the happy accident and try as many permutations of overlapping as you can, since sometimes the most amazing results can be obtained from playing around. (However, always document everything or you might get a great result but not have a clue how you achieved it). A few glazes to try:-

1). Cornish stone -	80
S.P.P. China clay -	10
Whiting -	10
Talc -	6
Tin oxide -	2
2). Cornish stone -	28.38
Potash feldspar -	25.97
Hyplas 71 Bl. -	22.73
Monastonite -	15.32
Whiting -	2.53
Zircon or tin -	6.02
or bit of both -	2.00
3) Cornish stone -	90.3
Monastonite -	14.5
Whiting -	6.45
Talc -	3.22
Bentonite -	1.075
Tin oxide -	2.0

My coloured glazes change all the time, so I would recommend the following oxides to be a good place to start:

To base glaze, add between 10-15% coloured high-fired stains - between 1-5% Copper carbonate, Iron oxide, Rubite, Titanium dioxide, Illmenite, Chrome oxide, Cobalt carb + oxide.

All of these can be line blended or triaxially blended to find out what is possible. Layering is good and also remember to allow your pieces to dry for 24 hours after dipping, to prevent lifting when building up successive layers of wet brushed glaze. (Bitter experience proves the point). However, a light spray before starting holds the dust and stops brushes dragging.

CO<sub>2</sub> analyser available from :-

Glendale Controls (contact Len Dale),  
10 Derwent Crescent, Whitehill, Kidgrove,  
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Coloured stains from: W.G. Ball, Stoke-on-Trent.  
Brushes- cut/script liners from Pottery Crafts/Potclays.  
Chinese & 'Big Petal' brushes from Bob Park,  
Culloden Pottery.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you want to visit or need further information.

**Brian Dickenson**

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## AFTERTHOUGHTS

Everyone that I have spoken to agrees that this year's Open Day was a tremendous success, with an outstanding trio of demonstrators and good organisation for which we can thank the whole committee and especially Elaine Hudson who carried most of the responsibility.

The one fly in the ointment was the lunch, which was catered by some of the pupils of the Rudolf Steiner School, supervised by a teacher. We thought this would be a good option after last year's near fiasco when the caterer's van broke down on the motorway and we nearly didn't get anything! However, their lack of experience clearly showed. Instead of the usual amateur cook's mistake of providing too much, the opposite was the case. Also, the food supplied bore no relation to the menu we had agreed with them. The committee jointly apologises for this, though I must say the teatime cakes went part of the way to make up the lack and helped to fill up those half-empty tums.

**URGENT APPEAL** - can anyone out there recommend a good reliable caterer? Alternatively suggest some other solution to the problem. We have always had difficulty with the food and would welcome suggestions. We have thought of asking everyone to bring something and we would lower the ticket price, but this also has great difficulties and rather spoils the social side of things in being able to sit down round a table and be served with a meal. There is also the matter of meals for the demonstrators and their wives.

Do please **inundate** us with suggestions - we would be delighted. Write to me, Mervyn or Elaine, while it is still fresh in your mind. **PLEASE.**

Ruth Karnac

## BOOK REVIEW

'Soda Glazing'. Ruthanne Tudball. Paperback. 96 pp. A. & C. Black. 1995, £9.99

The use of salt-glazing has been known for quite a long time, and there are many potters who produce some excellent wares by this method.

However, recently most of us have been aware of conservation and pollution and the discharge from salt-glaze kilns has been criticised as being harmful to the environment. Various ideas of different gases and vapours which have been discharged have often been expressed.

This book expresses very clearly that there are other sodium compounds which can be used instead of salt quite successfully to bring about much less harmful effects.

I feel it is rather unfortunate that this information given only about half-way through the book, because it is to be seen in the second chapter that some wonderful effects can be achieved using sodium carbonate (washing soda) - as well as sodium bicarbonate and borax - in lieu of sodium chloride (salt).

Thus, having emphasised (later) the environmental importance of soda/salt-glazing, the introduction does stress the use of soda to get virtually

identical results as would salt-glazing, but without the various disadvantages to kiln, kiln ware and the surrounds. Then the author goes straight on to detail the history of sodium glazing, leading to the beautiful colour results achieved recently.

Different kiln designs are shown, and the works of several potters are amply displayed; useful slip and glaze recipes are enumerated, and plenty of colour samples of tests are shown for comparison.

Ruthanne, Los Angeles born, lives in England and is an excellent artist, judging from the photographs of her work. She has produced this most useful book which, no doubt, will act as a staging point leading towards first class (salt) soda glaze ware produced by a satisfactory non-polluting method.

There is a lot to study in this book; and for anyone interested in any form of salt-glazing it is a 'must'. It will probably be a 'Soda-glazer's bible' - until maybe a larger volume is produced, perhaps by the same author, in years to come.

© Stan Romer

## NOTE

*Recent tests were carried out at Wobage Farm, on the salt glaze kiln used by Mick & Sheila Casson. The tests were run by Peter Meanly, who is Head of Ceramic Research at Belfast University, with the express object of discovering the levels of polluting chemicals produced from such a kiln. In brief outline, the results were surprising in that the levels of acidic pollutants were found to be negligible, with very minute quantities of neutral materials being emitted. The final report is awaited, but the preliminary conclusion was that no harmful agents were being emitted as a result of salting in this particular case.*

Editor - 6.11.95.

## FREE BOOKS !!!

A. & C. Black, the well-known publishers of books on pottery, have generously offered **THREE FREE COPIES** of Ruthanne Tudball's book on Soda Glazing, to be won in a Guild draw.

The books will be given away **ABSOLUTELY FREE** to the winners of a simple draw; just send a postcard with your name and address to:-

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The rules of the competition are very simple; your entry will only be accepted if you are a paid-up member or family member living at the same address, of the Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild. Only one post-card per person is allowed. Your post-card must be received at the offices of A. & C. Black by not later than 5.30 p.m. on 1st February 1995. The names of the winners will be announced in the March Newsletter.



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 3/4 Feb In-Service : An Introduction to Claywork in the Primary School.  
*Brian Dewbury*  
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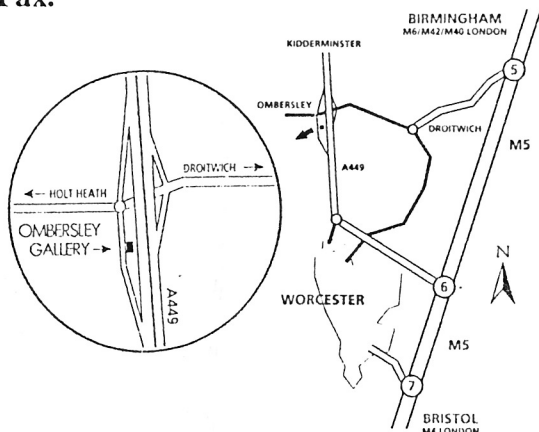
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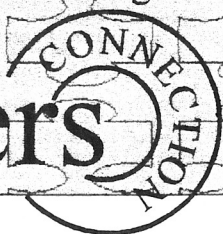
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