

DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD



IN THIS ISSUE

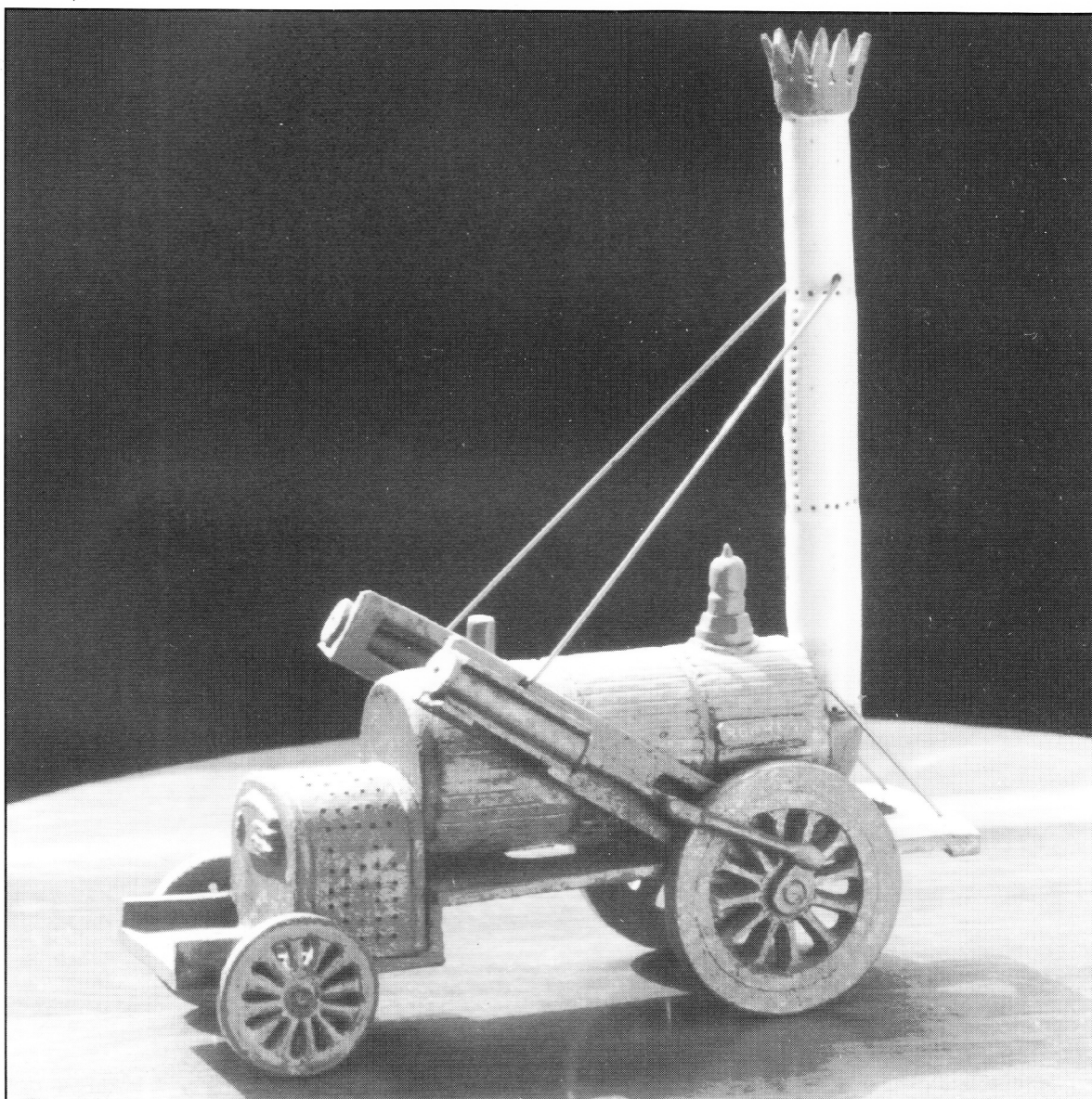
**A POTTERY LIFE*
Mildred Slatter

**POTTERS TIPS*
Arthur Ball

**GUILD DEMOGRAPHY*

**JOHN HIGGINS*

**THE AGM*



NEWSLETTER

NOV. /DECEMBER

1996

£1.50

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, made payable to D.C.P.G., to Victor Earl, Treasurer (if joining after March, please phone our treasurer for a reduced introductory rate; 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. (s.a.e. please with any items to be returned). Opinions expressed in items published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or Guild members as a whole.

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

George Stevenson's Rocket, interpreted in clay by Mildred Slatter.

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EDITORIAL

Well, here we are again. another Newsletter, filled with interesting items.

I realised when looking back through the Archive issues that I have now been editor since November 1991, thirty issues ago! Since that time, the Guild has grown considerably and a summary of our present membership numbers is included in this issue.

One thing has not changed and as I said in my first editorial in November 1991:

Frankly, I probably don't have enough time to do this job and I imagine that most people could say the same. However, I have enjoyed receiving the Newsletter over the years and want it to continue, so, hoping that Guild members feel the same way, I must ask that you all help by contributing to the Newsletter.

The articles that we put in the Newsletter depend on you. Let me know what is going on out there & we can all share it. Personally I would like to hear about your potting tips, ideas, successes, etc.-also you must let me know about exhibitions, demonstrations, sales, etc.

Enough said.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

Friday 6th Dec., 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre

TONY STEVENS - Photographing pots.

Tony will be showing us how to take better photos of our pots. This will be a practical session for amateurs without using special equipment, so bring your cameras and pots and have a go. Also bring photos with you and Tony will

tell you where you went wrong.

This is your chance to get expert tuition and tips to make your photographs of pots look more professional.

As this is our last meeting before Christmas, there will be punch and mince pies for all.

The next Brian Dickenson Workshops will take place on Dec.7th & 8th at the Making Place. Please send in the enclosed application form if you are interested. Brian seems to be in great demand so we cannot guarantee a place, but if the demand remains high, we will set up another workshop.

Future workshops planned are: Doug Jones - Sculpture:

1) heads 2) torso 3) to be announced. The venue will either be the Making Place or the Rudolph Steiner School, Kings Langley.

A 2-week Brian Dickenson Workshop is planned for 1997 and we have already had pledges of support, so we may plan more than one, depending on the response we get.

Friday 10th Jan, '97 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre
SEBASTIAN BLACKIE will be talking about his paper kilns and smoke firing. He will show a few slides and then demonstrate his methods of handbuilding, using gadgets he has made including a harp to cut slabs, making wavy slabs and his unique method of press moulding. This will be a very informative evening, showing lots of things we can try at home. Definitely not to be missed!

OTHER EVENTS

V. & A. FREE LECTURES

Nov. 1st at 2.30 (Cromwell Rd. entrance)

'European Ceramic Tiles'.

Nov. 8th 'The Arts and Crafts Legacy'

(Design since 1860).

Nov. 22nd 'Sculpture by the Della Robbia family'

(in Renaissance period).

Dec. 17th) Faience and French 18th

Dec. 18th) Century porcelain.

Buckinghamshire Pottery and Sculpture Society
November 23rd - 30th

Annual Exhibition at Amersham Market Hall.

Details from Joan Davies. Tel: 01494 864328

An Arts & Crafts Exhibition by "Pots and Pieces"

*Featuring pottery, award winning millinery,
textile art, water colours, silk painting,
embroidery and knitting.*

*at the 'Cow Byre' Bury Street, Ruislip
open daily 9th to 21st December 1996*

Weekdays 10am-4pm :: Sundays 2pm-4pm

Free Admission

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mervyn,

Royal Society Soirée Photographs - 19th June '96

Apologies for the delay in getting the enclosed photographs out of the 'system'. We remain very grateful to you and your members for providing the pots for this display - which was described by John Gummer (one of many high-level people attending the event) as the best at the Soirée. Thank you again.

With regards, your sincerely,

Roger Atkin, Marketing and PR Manager
I.A.C.R. Rothamstead.

[The above-mentioned photographs were too dark to reproduce in the Newsletter, but they will be on display at the Open Day, on Nov.16th - Ed.]

Dear Mervyn,

I am thinking about demonstrators for 1997/98. Could we ask our members who they would like to see? I am also thinking about asking one or two demonstrators to talk about a specific subject rather than their own work. We have Glen Ettienne talking about mould making in September 1997.

How about asking members to write for the Newsletter about any strange, different or interesting pots they have been asked to make? Or any large commissions or pots made for famous people or shops.

Val Barnes

[This letter was not included in the Sept/Oct Newsletter for some reason. Do give Val a ring or drop her a line about demonstrators you would like to see - Ed.]

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Since our last Newsletter, which contained a bumper number of new members, we now have five new people to welcome to the Guild:

Sarah Slough from Hertford, who is a verbatim reporter, (maybe a candidate for writing up the evening meetings for the Newsletter - how about it Sarah?) says she is interested in all aspects of pottery.

Heidi Tait, a teacher, is also interested in all aspects of pottery, particularly stoneware, glazing and raku.

Jacqueline Wareham from Hemel Hempstead is interested in everything.

Jojo Betancourt from London is particularly interested in throwing, handbuilding, decorating and raku.

And finally ... **Mrs. M.E. Astle** from Tring, who joined at the A.G.M.

In our last issue we incorrectly printed the name "Bevan" instead of BENNION; sorry about that, Carolyn.

Linda Bryant

FOOTNOTE

Digby Stott has informed me that another 3 members joined since the Membership News was submitted by Linda. As we go to press **Brenda Whiting** has joined us moving our Membership closer to 200. Brenda lives at Market Harborough in Leics. and plans to come to the Open Day and the next Brian Dickenson Workshop (ed).

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION DERIVED FROM MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

Membership Numbers for the subs. year Oct.95- Oct.96

	<u>Family</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Life</u>
Start of year	56	94	5	2
End of year	72	111	8	1
Lapsed	8	15	-	1
New members	24	32	3	-

Membership Oct.96 by County

Beds - 6	Berks - 5	Bucks - 35	Essex -3
Herts - 96	London- 8	Middx - 32	Oxf'd-2
Surrey- 3	Wilts - 1	Northants.-1	

Distant Country Cousins (as the crow flies)

	<u>miles</u>
To the East: Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex	60
Dunmow, Essex	40
To the North: Raunds, Northants	40
Bedford, Beds	30
To the South: Godalming, Surrey	40
Peaslake, Surrey	40
To the West: Marlborough, Wilts	70
Didcot, Oxford	40

To our far-flung family from the Membership Secretary:
"GREETINGS"

Distribution of Members

55% of members live in the central area, which is roughly a rectangle covered by four administrative districts, viz. Dacorum, 3 Rivers and Watford (all in Herts.), together with Chiltern in Bucks. Of the remaining members, 10% live to the North of the central area, 14% to the East, 6% to the West and 15% to the South.

It is of interest that the Guild was inaugurated as "the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild". The name was challenged at the first A.G.M., October 1975 by a group who proposed to change the name to "Watford and Chiltern Potters". One wonders how the "W.C.-P." would have fared!

Most of the members who have 'lapsed' were short-term members, i.e. one or two years membership.

The number of new members (59) was the largest intake since the 'Grand Inauguration' as it was called back in those balmy days* of 1974/75, when Ray Phipps declared a target of 'a thousand members by the end of 1975'- heavy stuff indeed! *Balmy days or barny days?

Digby Stott

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - OCT. 11th 96.

It is very heartening to report that we had a very good turn-out this year for this event and nearly everyone remembered that it was at the earlier time of 7.30.

The variety of events on offer to members this year has been increased and the take-up has been good. In that time we had many interesting demonstrators: Sue Varley gave us the secondary school teaching aspect of ceramics, as well as that of her own hand-built pots; Desmond Clover with decorated tableware; Dimitri Grivellis with complex designs using sand-blasting and porcelain; Clive Davies with multi-coloured sponge decoration; Steve Woodhead who made large-scale domestic pots with trailed decoration.

In June we had a most successful packed 2-day pot crawl led and organised by Brian Bicknell with his usual unstinting enthusiasm.

In June and also in July, we had kiln building and raku firing at Pitstone Farm Museum, well organised in an informal way by Freda Earl and others.

In September we had Andy Cordy and during the year, at intervals, we had practical workshops and public craft events like Hemel Hempstead 'Lark in the Park'. There was also the 'Leisure and Hobbies' show organised by Linda Bryant and helped by the Beckleys and other committee members who put in a lot of hard work.

These events helped recruiting for the Guild as did the big Hatfield House fair, which also sold members' pots and raised funds by the 'have-a-go' device for the public to experience throwing on an electric (Fitzwilliam) wheel.

Last, but certainly not least, is our Newsletter which makes such an excellent job of keeping members in touch with what is going on even if they can't attend the events, and which is there to air their news and views - more of which are always welcome.

Our thanks to Mervyn and to Harry Karnac who ably does the word-processing job which gives such a professional look to the finished article.

I am very pleased to say that Tina Hall and her friend have agreed to take over, after Christmas, the job of interval refreshments. In addition, John Humby has agreed to co-ordinate applications for workshop attendances to ease the load on Victor Earl. We extend a warm welcome to Pam Bishop, our new Committee member.

Lastly, thanks to Hanna Christianson who is retiring after doing the programme arranging for the Friday night events with unflinching success for more than five years.

The committee is very grateful for this help and for all those other members who I have omitted to mention and who have helped during the year.

I hope to see you all on Open Day, Nov. 16th which promises to live up to its reputation of being a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

Ruth Karnac

TALK AND DEMONSTRATION BY JOHN HIGGINS AT NORTHCHURCH, 11th OCTOBER, 1996.

Following the A.G.M. there was an excellent turn out for the talk and demonstration by John Higgins. Many of those present knew John from the beginning of the Guild or as past students when he taught in Welwyn.

John is not a full-time potter but has ceramics as the thread that runs through the three aspects of his life:

1. as a City and Guilds verifier and scheme consultant for Ceramics
2. as a teacher of Ceramics at a Tertiary College with overall responsibility for the Ceramics Department
3. as a professional potter - he is a Fellow of the Craftsman Potters Association

John's contact with pottery started at an early age being born near to the bottle kilns and canal near Stoke-on-Trent, playing on the mounds of broken moulds and helping to apply transfers at Burleigh Ware.

John's gift is to use what he sees around him, whether it is colours from pots in Hanley Museum, boulders on a beach, paintings by William Scott or a Minoan pot in Crete (to name just a few) and to develop these ideas into ceramic work.

John's work falls into two distinct areas -

1. Slab built forms - these are intensely personal and he can only make them in private when he can be at one with the clay. They are angular and full of illusions. The surfaces are decorated with oxides, slips and on-glaze colours (he is addicted to yellow) often to give the appearance of a change in shape or form by the use of tone and texture.

2. Thrown and altered forms - as with the slab forms, these are a response to a visual experience or series of experiences (e.g. buildings seen on holiday or pots in a museum or exhibition). The parts of the pot are thrown and then assembled with additions of coils, slabs, etc. then the surfaces are treated in a similar way to the slab forms - the textures and marks being of great importance.

John used to draw his ideas for his work in great detail (he enjoys drawing) but now finds little time for this and likes to let the ideas develop in his head. He showed slides of his work, with many examples of his fascination with optical illusions.

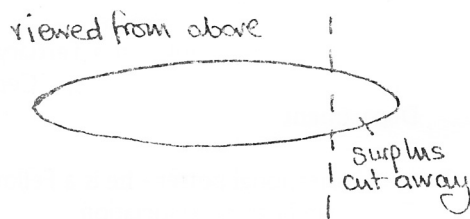
DEMONSTRATION

After a short break to allow John to set up his demonstration we were taken through the steps needed to make

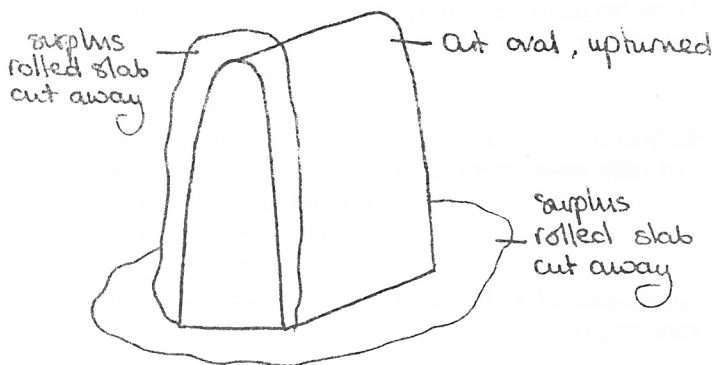
a thrown and altered form. John uses 'T' material now, despite the cost, after finding continual problems with lime pitting with Craft Crank.

He throws a cylinder, using as little water as possible (water brings the grog to the surface and hurts the hands) then after some hardening pushes the cylinder into a flat oval. This is the stage the piece John had brought was at.

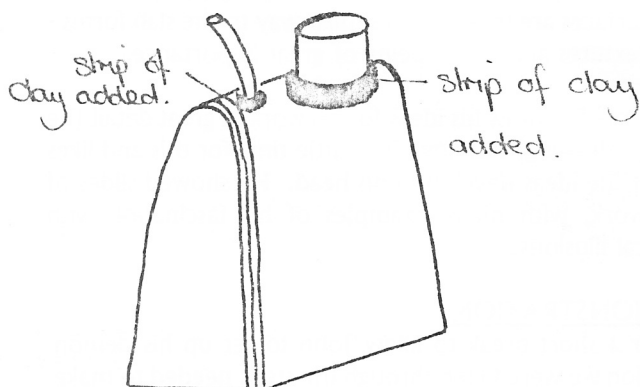
A piece is then cut off one end and the form is up-ended and placed on a rolled out slab. This is then cut to size and joined using slip (there is no need to score this clay). Another slab is then placed at the end and cut and joined in a similar way.



A piece of spare clay is then rolled out and wrapped around a tube to form a funnel shape. A spout is made in a similar way around a wire. Both are then cut to size, a hole made in the body of the pot, and joined together.



John then added a small strip of clay around the base of the spout and funnel - he tries not to embellish but allows himself this.



No more is done to the pot at this stage - it is wrapped to allow the moisture content in the parts to even out and then carefully dried and biscuit fired at 1000°C. Once biscuit fired oxide may be rubbed into the body and a slip applied.

The slip is made from powdered white earthenware with a lump of Calcium Chloride added. This is watered down until it is thin enough to be sprayed. The vessel is then fired at 1120°C - 1160°C (the body is almost vitrified at this temperature). Any on-glaze decoration and colour would now be applied and the vessel completed.

John likes to leave all the decoration until after the biscuit firing as the pot is no longer likely to collapse with the addition of so much liquid in form of slip and it is easier to handle. He also showed us how he uses pieces of wood to create an interesting surface on a slab of clay to build from.

John has given us a great insight into his work. He has shown us how he uses visual stimuli and personal experiences to create a response to the challenges both he and others set.

Caroline Hughes

A POTTERY LIFE



I was 42 years old before my pottery life began. I had been to Reading University School of Art on a scholarship for 3 years, obtaining a Distinction Diploma in Art, some crafts (not pottery) and Teaching. I moved to the Central School of Art in London to concentrate on jewellery and did a little weaving as a liberal study. Three-quarters of the way through this, Heal's the furniture store in Tottenham Court Road asked the Central School to supply someone to run a weaving studio for them, and I was chosen. The principal insisted that I took it ("a weekly wage my girl!") and I therefore changed directions. It was fun in a studio on the roof of Heal's, weaving rugs and panels. There were embroiderers and lampshade makers up there too. We were quite a community. I stayed there for some years.

In the early 1930s, I decided to set up my own studio in High Wycombe. I had already made a large loom at evening classes; this was a yardage loom with 8 heddle-shafts, taking at least 30 yards of warp. I set this up and used it quite a lot, but was also able to concentrate on jewellery.

A few years later I got married and then the war broke out, so full stop to everything.

Well - after the war there was a problem. Jewellery was out of the question, as raw materials were almost non-existent and there was no market for weaving. A friend suggested I learn pottery, so for 2 afternoons a week I learned at the Art School in Easton Street, High Wycombe. It was a newly set up department so equipment was a little lacking, but we were all keen and got some good results.

A little later I asked the Principal about obtaining some further qualifications in order to teach pottery and was told that my present qualifications were sufficient and I would be considered when a vacancy occurred.

Then came the great move to the new College of Further Education at the bottom of Harlow Hill. Here we had plenty of shelves, 2 kilns, damp cupboards, space, the lot, but we were still only making earthenware. Adult student numbers increased and I began teaching. Now, there is nothing like teaching to educate the teacher and I learnt a great deal very rapidly. With my earnings I began to collect equipment and worked at home.

The next step was joining the Craftsmen Potters Association. They were newly formed and had just opened their first shop in Lowndes Court. All the known potters were there and eager to share their expertise and knowledge. We had evening meetings in the shop, where every aspect of potting was demonstrated and my education went on. I certainly owe a debt to the C.P.A. It was certainly an outlet for my work. I had another outlet with a showcase at our local theatre.

A little later, 2 students and myself were talking and decided we ought to arrange an exhibition. The Town Council agreed to let us have 2 rooms at the Castle Hill Museum at no cost, and we were away. None of us had done such a thing before, but we managed to cover everything necessary and filled two rooms quite comfortably.

We had a Private View and the Mayor agreed to open it. We were about to begin when a rather grand lady appeared, expecting to do the opening. We had asked the Buckinghamshire Art Association to help us with advice and had been turned down. Now, here was the Chairwoman expecting to officiate. With the help of a little diplomacy and the Mayor's sense of humour we got it settled - I think she did the vote of thanks.

With the success of the exhibition, we decided to form a society. Most of the senior students from our classes joined us and the Buckinghamshire Potters and Sculptors

Association came into being. I think this was the first regional society for pottery ever started and, of course, they are flourishing still.

Things went along very smoothly for some time until a lot of changes came about for the family and we decided to move house. We found the place (where I still live) very soon. There was a flat upstairs and, below, stabling for four horses, and other rooms. Ideal for a pottery.

Soon after, I had a gas kiln built and could change to stoneware and develop reduction glazes. Having bought the appropriate machinery I developed my own mix of stoneware body. It worked well and I still use it. I also began to use porcelain, using a David Leach body. The porcelain lent itself to piercing and after much experimenting I arrived at a "Hole and Triangle" style. This was quite quickly done and, with slight variations, works well.

For some time, I had been making cockerels from thrown units mostly in earthenware, so now I began making the porcelain cockerels with pierced decoration and found myself very busy for months. The fishes developed later and I added coloured fish in white stoneware.

The next project was the summer schools. These would last one week with a weekend later for glazing. I ran 2 or 3 of these each summer for a few years and thoroughly enjoyed them. One was for children, and a young Jane O'Conner came. She worked at the Aldermaston Pottery afterwards until she married, and has since become an exceedingly good potter.

In 1967 I had the opportunity to go with the C.P.A. to a World Conference of Ceramists held in Istanbul. We stayed at a hotel in Taksim Square and the conference and exhibition were held at l'École des Beaux Arts, down by the Bosphorus.

Great Britain was the only country not sponsored by its government. Our 2 official delegates were sent by the C.P.A. At the last moment, Henry Rothschild collected a few pots from his own and friends' mantelpieces, or we should have had no exhibits. The trouble was that Great Britain had an Arts Council but this covered painters and sculptors, not craftsmen. We were invited to the British Consulate in Istanbul and while there, a message was sent to London about this and thus began the road towards establishing the Crafts Council. Very interesting!

We had a Turkish tourist guide attached to us, who took us to many places of interest to potters - the Topkapi Museum was one of the most exciting. We were invited to the opening of a new gallery there and were right royally entertained. We made many friends and I have since been back to visit Professor Oygur at l'École des Beaux Arts and Filiz Ozgiiven, one of the students.

At the time, the Society of Designer-Craftsmen was at a very low ebb and about to cease activities, but Audrey Blackman decided to revive it. She enlisted quite a few

potters, including myself, and many other craftpeople, and had the whole thing viable again. As it was founded by William Morris and company under the title of "The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society", it was an excellent thing for Audrey to do. I served on the council for many years, but now am one of the 'oldies'.

The next step was teaching at Langley College. I had originally decided not to teach any more, but after much persuasion I gave in. This, I never regretted. A few of my past students were there and many new ones. It was one of the happiest periods of my pottery life.

I had taken part in many exhibitions and had a few solos and had organised one or two. In 1989 Tessa Buckley and I set out on a joint exhibition in the courtyard at my house. It was very hard going but with help from both our husbands we got it going. The private view was exciting and we had a great success. While it was on, the B.B.C. came to make a short training video of the pottery. The young trainee operator has since gone on to greater things.

At the age of 86 I am more or less retired, but the pottery is still in working order and I work when I feel like it and make what I want. It has been a good 44 years of potting. Tessa ferries me to many meetings, so I see lots of potting friends and I generally enjoy life.

Mildred Slatter

P.S. Mildred joined the DCPG at the inaugural meeting and was a member for many years - Ed.

RENA CERAMICS

**AT
THE STABLES GALLERY,
GLADSTONE PARK,
DOLLIS HILL LANE,
LONDON, N.W.2.
(0181 452 8655)**

**PLAIN &
FANCY**

THURSDAYS TO SUNDAYS
11.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.
21ST NOVEMBER - 15TH DECEMBER

POTS & PIECES 1996

Pots & Pieces now has 17 members and now, even after 5 years, manages to have a very lively exhibition twice a year. Our membership fluctuates and changes as members move on and new members join. This year we are losing our wood-turner to the environs of Chichester. The potter members, of whom we have 6, stay fairly constant - although only 5 are showing at the Cow Byre; they are Marguerite Moon, Shirley Bell, Chris Spellin, Elaine Hudson and Rachel Bucknill. Textile artists change most frequently but we're always pleased to have them, since their work looks good on the walls. It adds interest to other work, though they find their work more difficult to sell. Our milliner recently won the Bridal Award at Harrogate for 1997 and will be showing some felts from her Winter Collection, as well as a range of casual hats. Pots & Pieces, as a group, strives to get away from the craft fair image and to show work of a high quality. The potters, in particular, show only new work, the inspiration for which is constantly changing and developing.

Marguerite Moon

ART IN ACTION 1996

I thought, this year, there were a lot of potters showing raku or smoke fired work and quite a few demonstrating throwing. It was therefore very refreshing to see Mike Dodd and Clive Bowen's practical, useful pots.

The demonstration that most attracted my attention was the pit firing done by Ray Rogers from Australia. He had dug a hole about the size of three graves (sorry to be morbid but that is what it looked like). In the bottom was a layer of wood shavings on which the biscuit fired pots were put. Around each pot Ray sprinkled copper carbonate and also added some dried seaweed. Shavings were put on top and then firewood.

When lit, the kiln was at times very smoky and also very hot. The pit was covered with corrugated tin sheets between each stoking. I asked Ray what temperature the kiln reached and he said that he didn't know. He wasn't too concerned with the temperature, but was more interested in the final effect on the pots. The kiln would be unpacked the following day.

Val Barnes

ANDY CORDY AT NORTHCHURCH ON SEPT.13th

Andy thought he might become a chef but actually went in for furniture design for a time. He then attended pottery day classes in London for a time before doing a Ceramics B.A. at Harrow. He now shares a studio with a sculptor for whom he makes bowls on 3 (whipped cream walnut) legs, which the sculptor then decorates with realistic human figures.

At present Andy is concentrating on throwing bowls to which he adds spikes - he likes the idea of things which

might break on their feet. He makes silly pinched sheep's heads to go on the wall, inspired by a flock of sheep he sees every Sunday when he takes someone's dog for a walk.

He has made a one metre high mould into which to press moulded heads which he would then like to mount on tall, brick columns.

Clays he uses

- 1) Porcelain for throwing pots because he likes the colour responses. He then uses 'wet and dry' to smooth and shine the porcelain.
 - 2) Commercial STR (reduction body) for small, dark objects.
 - 3) Potclays' raku which is cheap and good for building big things.
 - 4) Commercial ST material which he finds difficult to use, but it is white and he has lots of sacks of it!
- He sometimes uses a hot glue gun for sticking ceramics.

How to make repeat moulds

A tiny amount of modelling wax
Micro - wax

Heated in a pan and poured into cold, wet P.O.P. moulds. Can use the resulting wax shells to make a multiple press mould. Used mostly as a quick way of making feet for pots.

BTBP (Beautiful Thin Blue/Pink) glaze recipe

Potash Feldspar	46
Dolomite	24
China Clay	22
Whiting	4
Cornish Stone	4
Cobalt Carbonate	2

Fired to cone 8 in moderate reduction from about 1150°C.

Andy's lecture will be remembered by me for its demonstration with boiling wax which proved difficult to demonstrate and its gay anecdotes about teaching pottery in Brixton Prison!

Pam Tames

DAVID FRITH'S POTTERY COURSE

When we visited David and Margaret Frith in June on the Pot Crawl, I was really taken with their home/garden/workshop/gallery/pots as well as the surrounding countryside and not least the Tile Factory.

Whilst there I discovered that David runs a fortnight pottery course three times a year and they still had places on the September course. What an opportunity! Having learnt to throw at evening classes (2 hours a week), the opportunity of participating in a fortnight long course run by David Frith was one not to be missed - although at £600 I had to think hard for a while. It was most definitely £600 very well spent!

Luckily, there were only 4 people on the course at the start - a fifth person joined us midway through the first week. This means we all had a lot of individual attention. The course began an introduction to the workshop - a model of organisation. Everything put away in specific slots, labelled, clear and ready to use with masses of wonderfully prepared clay, straight from the de-airing pugmill just waiting for us to get started.

David demonstrated the making of plates - an easy start, he said! Having never previously thrown plates, this came as a rather tough beginning. However with lots of help, extra demos and encouragement, plates began to proliferate. Unfortunately I wasn't adept enough to produce faceted plates or plates with ornate rims - next time maybe.

We moved onto bowls, learning how to start off with a mushroom shape to avoid a too wide base, opening out into a trumpet shape then finally creating the curved bowl shape.

David has a technique for opening out which intrigued me - I just had to learn to use it. For more experienced potters it may not be new - its wonderful for ensuring that the pot is well centred or can be re-centred if knocked off. He holds his right hand, palm upwards, bent back at the wrist to 90° and with the thumb on top he creates the hole and squeezes the sides between thumb and the edge of the hand/index finger ready for pulling up in one motion. Its a very strong but economic method.

Cylinders, bellied pots and their lids followed. All this on the first day! Luckily, I've taken lots of notes to guide me in future.

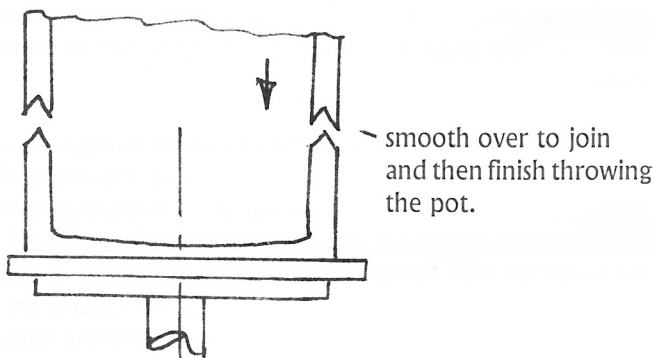
I've always wanted to make teapots - and David provided the opportunity. In fact I made two, one with a side handle and the other with an over the top handle. I learned that side-handled ones need to be taller than they are wide as the handle creates the impression of width. The over the top type needs to be wider than it is tall, also to balance the effect of the handle. I also learned to produce the spout, flatten and then indent the area it is attached to, cut the holes, and finally attach it, giving it a jaunty angle and ensuring that the top is higher than the highest level of tea. Finally, cutting the spout end at a 45° angle which 'unwinds' when the pot is fired. By comparison to the rest, making the lid was a doddle!

The next step - sheer purgatory - was to produce handles and attach them. Handles have never been my forté and proved difficult yet again, although I think I've cracked it now! I really needed a shelf at an appropriate height to rest my hand on, whilst holding the pot. So, mugs gained and lost handles several times over until they looked reasonable - David doesn't accept anything that he feels is not up to scratch. Jugs took on character along with their handles, and teapots were completed. David introduced us to numerous 'finishing' touches to make it more comfortable or easier to hold and attractive to look at.

The day of the handles was a long and arduous one - not the best by far! Luckily the day was saved for me when David showed us how to 'throw on'. He demonstrated this on the Potcrawl visit - those who went will be able to remember his amazing approach.

First the base is thrown. The top edges finished with a pointed ridge and, whilst still attached to the board, it is put aside to stiffen. The top section is thrown also on a board ensuring that the top edge is exactly the same width at the bottom and finished with a 'V'-shape impressed into the rim. Both sections were left on the board - this is essential.

The bottom section is replaced on the wheel, ensuring it is centred. The top section is turned over and placed on top of the lower section, carefully fitting the rims together.



Really tall pots are now possible. In fact, I made what I thought was a 'big' pot using this method, which turned out to be one of my best, but not very big at all, unfortunately. However, it saved the day for me.

Turning followed - again not the easiest of tasks for me. Much more fun - adding thrown foot rings and bases to bowls to create wonderfully elegant bowls on stands.

All that in the first week - pretty exhausting, but exhilarating. I've never thrown for so long nor produced so many satisfactory pots - and it wasn't over yet!

Monday saw us finishing off pots ready for biscuit firing and decorating. Again this was not a good day for me - nothing seemed to work. Luckily David has a vast store of patience and spent quite some time with me, helping me to throw again, virtually from scratch. All I can say is "thank goodness". I learnt how to make those wonderful flip-over lip bowls that David produces - much smaller and without his finesse, but most pleasing to me. Later I added the footing and cut it into interestingly shaped feet. So another day that started badly for me ended on a real high.

The rest of the second week passed, for me, in agony - I am not a natural decorator and it was one of the reasons I went to David Frith. I put off decorating for as long as I could, until David literally took the first plate from me and firmly suggested how to decorate it, initially with wax. After a slow and decidedly dodgy start, I went on to decorate all the many pots I had made. I managed to get

away with two teapots, a ginger jar and a square dish glazed in Tenmoku with minimal decoration, but all the rest are highly decorated and mainly blue and shiny - all things I have fought against in the past, so some taboos blown away.

Opening the kiln on Saturday was a nail-biting event - what would the pots look like? Luckily they all came out really well, what a relief. I came away with lots of lovely pots and, as added bonus, several tools that I had made whilst there.

You may be able to tell from my writing that I had a wonderful time on this course. I learned a lot of new techniques, some of which I have already put into practice. I would certainly recommend it to anyone who would like to improve their skills, broaden their range of techniques and re-kindle their enthusiasm. Both Margaret and David were immensely helpful, patient and encouraging, although David did ask me if I had ever thought of taking up weaving instead.

We were welcomed to their home and fed stupendously with 4-course lunches every day. The effects of the course and the food will last for a long while to come. Next year, maybe another visit - who'll join me?

Linda Bryant

BOOK REVIEW

Resist and Masking Techniques - Peter Beard.

A. & C. Black. p/bk. £9.99

This book is another in the excellent Ceramics Handbooks series. Initially, Peter covers the history of resists and of masking techniques, from the use of vellum masks in 1750 through to the use of lithography and sandblasting techniques today.

He then goes on to details of water based and oil based waxes, including details of his own techniques when using water based waxes. The chapter on oil based waxes includes useful tips on the use of wax crayons, slip trailing with hot wax and precautions when this is being done. The chapter on Latex wax and rubber solutions includes details of work by Caroline Genders and John Wheeldon.

Extensive details of spraying and air brushing precede the chapter on uses of paper, adhesive tapes, adhesive paper and films. In this section there are several illustrations, with a step-by-step guide to a striking piece of resist work by Gary Bish (Australia) amongst others.

In chapter 7, Peter covers exercises in producing an image using two colours, going on to more complex examples, with work from well known potters included. More intriguing techniques are covered, such as the use of colloidal slips, with descriptions of methods which can be used to make these materials.

Acid etching is briefly covered and lustre is also described with masking methods. The use of raw clay masks smoking, raku and allied techniques will certainly excite some members of the Guild particularly the Pitstone enthusiasts. The concluding chapter has several illustrations, giving details about grit blasting.

In general, the book is well endowed with excellent illustrations and I am sure it will prove to be a source of inspiration to those seeking more knowledge of masking techniques.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



POTTERS TIPS

Dear Mervyn,

You will see from the two pictures of chimney pots and teapots I had though to write something about my interest in them. Chimney pots because my grandfather was amongst the last of the sweeping boys and also because I am always amazed at their quality of design and workmanship. The Harris family at Farnham made chimney pots before 1800.

Teapot making because I have always understood them to be difficult to make (and still think they are). Then I remembered that the Guild had recently had a teapot making session and also that Murray is by way of being an expert in the art; Pauline Ashley invented a pottery mechanical teapot some years ago.

However, you will see from the picture that my teapot making transposes gauges from engineering practices the frustration of trapping inside and outside calipers (not knowing whether they have moved) when making galleries and lids. I take a piece of 'Formica' stuff about 5" x 4" and cut out a piece, say 2" x 1 1/2", which gives you a permanent set of gauges with a lifetime guarantee.

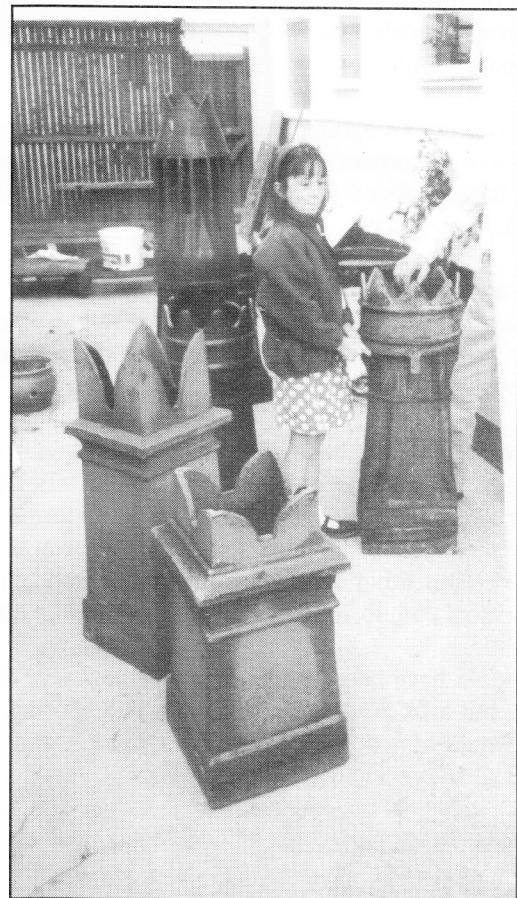
Mark each gauge with a waterproof pen. I found 10 sets gives me most of the sizes I need and are made in 30 minutes; then throw away your calipers for teapot galleries.

All this to say I'm not writing about chimney pots or teapots, but about a tip I fell upon recently. Take a piece of common or garden cane about 3/8" diameter and cut a length of about 4", splitting it into 4 pieces. With a sharp knife or chisel, sharpen one end to a cutting edge or point. Sandpaper the whole thing for comfortable handling and dip the non-sharp end into red paint for identification amongst your tools. School lecturers could make 50 in a couple of hours so ending the danger of needles and steel-pointed tools in friendly looking clay.

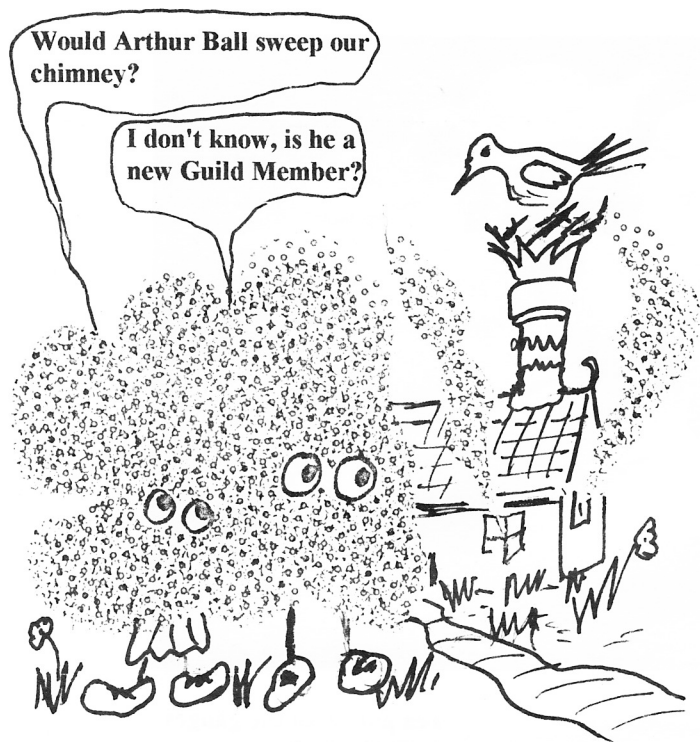
**Tea pots with the gauges
made by Arthur.**

The Guild, and especially Linda, are to be congratulated on the very happy time we had in Hatfield Park recently.

Arthur Ball



**Hannah, Arthur's Grand daughter,
Surrounded by chimneys.**



(Arthur has been potting since 1932 & is a founder member of the Guild).

NOTEBOOK

Exchange of Newsletter Articles

Your Committee have agreed to allow the exchange of Newsletter articles between our Guild and other participating Guilds and Associations.

It is a part of that agreement that the author's name and the source document would always be stated when an article is reproduced (except for such things as dates of events).

If you are sending an article to the Editor for publication, it will automatically become available for re-publication in other Newsletters, unless you specifically request otherwise.

One reservation we have about this arrangement is our long-term intention to publish a book of Potters Tips, to benefit Guild funds. Harry Karnac stores all Potters Tips that are received for the Newsletter on a disc towards this end. Perhaps other groups would care to send in their own potters tips, so we can make this a national activity.

Such books have been produced by Ceramic Review and others, but a DCPG Potters Tips (or a U.K. Potters Tips) book would almost certainly have a market and be of benefit to the recipients.

Overdue Subscriptions

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS WERE DUE ON OCTOBER 1st. If you have not paid your subscription, your name will be entered on the record of lapsed members and removed from the Newsletter distribution list. Send your subscription to Victor Earl right away.

STOLEN !

A van containing pots for an exhibition in Slovenia was stolen in Essex recently. Please keep an eye open for any "bargain pots" or pots available in unusual circumstances. The lost work was from the following potters:

Svend Bayer Mo Jupp Clive Bowen Joanna Constandinidis
Walter Keeler Colin Pearson Takeshi Yasuda Nicholas Homoky
Michael Casson Gillian Lowndes Ewan Henderson Lawson Oyekan
Jill Crowley Susan Halls Mike Flynn Christie Brown Christy Keeney
Rosa Nguyen Ian Gregory Richard Slee.

Workshop Co-ordinator

John Humby has volunteered to be our Workshop Co-ordinator. We are delighted to have John's help, since our Treasurer, Victor Earl is becoming snowed under with the subscriptions for membership + Open Day + Pot Crawl + general enquiries.

Supplies delivered free

Potclays have closed their Potclays South branch and are offering a free or very low cost delivery service to our area by co-ordinating orders at Stoke. To participate, phone Sharon Carter on 01782 219817

Pots to Evening Meetings

Shirley Bell suggested that we could supplement our evening meetings by having a "discussion time". This would be about members' pots/pottery problems/ideas, etc. Please bring along one or two of your pots to each evening at Northchurch and we will display them for others to see during the evening.

If you have any thoughts on this, please write to Shirley at 1 Robin Mead, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL7 1PP.

Ceramic Review No.161

This issue has an illustrated article about making your own portable raku kiln by Phil and Maggie Cooke.

Beading Tools and Throwing Ribs

As promised, I have produced some tools based on those used at Brian Dickenson's workshop. Please give me a ring if you are interested -

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

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PROFILE



I was born and bred on a dairy farm and spent most of my time helping my father. After leaving school, I spent two years at agricultural college where I met my husband, who was a farmer's son.

I have worked in several different jobs in agriculture, the most interesting one being pig A.I. (artificial insemination). My husband and I now run a farm and an agricultural contracting business.

I discovered pottery about ten years ago when I was looking for an adult education class to do while the children were at play group. I had not done pottery at school and knew nothing about it, but thought I would give it a try. As I made my first pinch pot, I became hooked on clay and have not been able to stop making pots since that time.

I make mostly domestic stoneware and I love making garden pots - the bigger the better. My biggest thrill comes from throwing. I also get great satisfaction from using the pots I make.

Pottery for me is only a hobby, but I often wonder what would have happened if I had been taught it at school. Would I have taken it up as a profession or would school lessons have put me off for the rest of my life as my cookery lessons did !

Val Barnes

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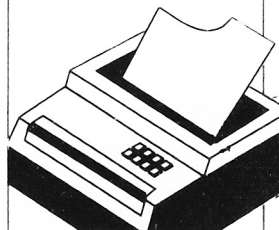
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