IN THIS ISSUE

DACORUM AND

POTTERS GUII

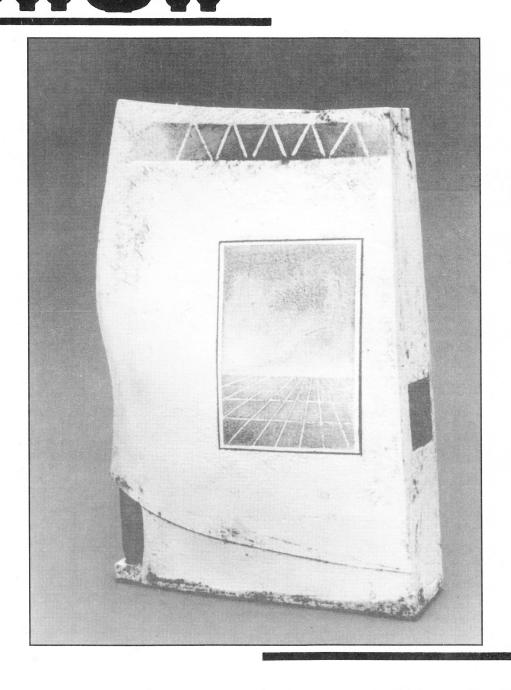
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*SUMMER EVENTS



NEWSLETTER
MARCH/APRIL
1997
£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:

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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.8)

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SUNDAY 23rd, MARCH

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The ceramics magazine for the 1990s



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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Slab built form, with "window" decoration, by John Higgins (see future guild events).

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EDITORIAL

Trying to put an armful of equipment on the bench, I swept my mug of tea into space and thence to the floor. Picking up the broken pieces of the mug, I found myself checking the thickness of the wall, was it even? Had the turned base been made to the same thickness?

Most people, I am sure, would just have chucked the pieces in the bin, but I had Mick Casson's voice ringing in my ears as I went through this ritual. Time and again we cut through our freshly thrown pots to see the wall thickness and whether we had allowed enough clay to turn the base. We were trying to be good students and perhaps, eventually, good potters.

The Tommy Cooper joke came to mind: "See this magic wand? - made 500 years ago, it was! Yes, it was! In China! 500 year old wood! Then (snapping the wand in two) look at the grain!!!".

The pot was well made, the wall was even, the glazing was good, I must go and buy some more mugs.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

Friday 14th March, 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre FENELLA MALLALIEU makes functional pots for special occasions to give eating a sense of ceremony. She will be showing how she makes her fat-bellied jugs, wide bowls, wide rimmed plates and oval platter. She uses white earthenware clay bisque fired to 1160°C and decorated with different coloured glazes.

Sat.March 22nd, Thurs.Apr.10th & Sat.Apr.26th RAKU AT PITSTONE - For details see article on page 4.

Friday April 11th, 8 p.m. at Northchurch Social Centre HARRY FRASER will talk about clay bodies, their mining and preparation. He will discuss the location, formation and extraction of clays and their various properties. He will tell us about some common clay body problems and will explore some possible solutions. For the second half of the evening Harry will talk about electric kilns. He will cover the advantages and disadvantages of front loading and top loading types, construction methods, and materials used. Elements, calculation of firing costs and temperature control methods will also be discussed. If you have any problems with clays or electric kilns, this is a good opportunity to gain some expert advice.

May 3rd, 4th,5th. Chiltern Open Air Museum

Linda Bryant must be one of our busiest people without a doubt! At the last minute, as we are going to press, she has arranged for the Guild to be represented at a Craft event on the above dates. This will be on similar lines to our activity at the Hatfield event in August, with 3 wheels to be used for people to try their hand. We are informed that this should be an excellent venue for selling pots. Please apply on the enclosed form, it should be an interesting event.

Sunday May 18th - A Workshop with John Higgins.

John gave us an interesting demonstration at Northchurch recently. He has agreed to give us a workshop, covering details of his slab built forms and creating optical illusions in clay. He will also cover details of his decorating methods. our Organiser for this event is Caroline Hughes. Please see the application form with this Newsletter.

7th & 8th June - The Pot Crawl

Brian Bicknell has been busy arranging our visit to the workshops of:

David, Ben & Simon Eeles, then Lawrence McGowan & possibly Julian Belmont.

The Sherbourne Hotel, Dorset, is our planned stopover & the accommodation & food come very highly recommended. The inclusive costs will be approximately £ 65 per person, with a supplement for a single room. Application forms will be in the next Newsletter.

OTHER EVENTS

Bucks Pottery & Sculpture Society

3th April - A.G.M. & Chris Bramble at Little Kingshill Village Hall, 7.30 pm.

Oxford Gallery Exhibitions 23 High St. Oxford

10th Feb. to 12th March - Grayson Perry, Steve Dixon & Martin Moor.

17th March - 16th April - Susan Halls

21st April to 21st May - Alan Caiger Smith.

West Forest Pottery Events

Programme Organisers: Jane Rivet 01628 824653 Jackie Constable 01753 869190.

Meetings commence at 7.45 p.m. at Polehampton Junior School, Kibblewhite Crescent, Twyford, Berks., RG10 9EJ unless otherwise indicated.

Wed. 12th March JACQUELINE NORRIS Eton Applied Arts.

Sat. April (date to be announced) TESSA FUCHS Potters Day.

Wed.14th May YOLA SPYTKOWSKA - her 'Junk Collection' (Raku)

1st-7th June: WFP EXHIBITION - Henley

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have six new members to introduce this time:-

- 1) **Fiona Beaumont** from Dunstable is relatively new to pottery, but has really been hooked which is not surprising as she attended a course at the Cardew pottery in Cornwall taken by Ara Cardew. She attends classes twice a week and is looking for weekend studio space to continue her work any offers? Her particular interest is throwing; she intends to experiment with altering shapes, sculpting thrown pots and also with glazes and colours.
- 2) **Mary Payne-Cook** from Tring has been going to pottery classes for the last 4 years. At present she's interested in coiling but intends to learn to throw. She's joined the group who are taking on the Pitstone site for Raku.
- 3) **Louise Stobbs** says she is a raw beginner having been involved in pottery for only one year at Tring, where she tends to make huge pots only just fitting into the kiln. Her pots are finished with texture and muted (not shiny) colours colours like those of Scotland. Like Mary, she has joined the Pitstone Raku group.
- 4) **Sarah O'Neill**, who is also a members of Bucks. Potters, joins us as a full-time professional potter. After taking a B.A. in Ceramics at Surrey College of Art & Design in Farnham, leaving in '92, she has set up her own studio at home, worked on a variety of projects with schoolchildren and ran a decorative paint techniques class for Adult Education. She produces non-functional decorative earthenware vessels that are tin-glazed, e.g. wall plaques, plate forms, boxes, vases, etc. Still building outlets for her work, she already sells through galleries at Goring and Woburn.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to speak with our two other new members, **Chris Cartmell** of Felden and **Kate Healey** of London. I look forward to meeting all new members at one of our meetings/events - do please introduce yourselves. Hopefully, those who are throwers, will join us at Hatfield in August and Chiltern Open Air Museum in May.

Linda Bryant

SUMMER EVENTS - 1997.

Time passes so quickly! It seems only yesterday that I asked you to volunteer for the summer events '96 and here I am asking again for '97.

We have had a lot of members volunteering in past years, so lets make this year a bumper one! The work is fun, hard work and really worthwhile. Above all it's good to meet with fellow-members and get to know them. We have over 150 members now so it is difficult to get to know all of them.

This year we have two main events to 'man':

- 1). LARK IN THE PARK Hemel Hempstead, Sunday June 29th
- 2). ART IN CLAY Hatfield House, 8/9/10th August

1). LARK IN THE PARK - SUNDAY JUNE 29TH

This is mainly a fun family event where we get swamped with parents and children desperately wanting to have a go at the wheel. We have had to be really tough the last couple of years and switch off the generator and hide the clay at past 6 p.m. to be able to get away! Its a good fund raiser for the Guild.

We normally have two wheels on the go all the time, so I'll need 3 teams of 4 people to work 2/3 hours each between 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. (this covers setting up and clearing up), please.

2). ART IN CLAY '97 - HATFIELD HOUSE AUG.8,9,10th

This is the B-I-G-G-Y!!

I'll need something like 30/35 volunteers please, to cover selling, have a go, talking to interested visitors, setting up and clearing up.

We set up on the 7th, which involves taking wheels, other equipment and possibly clay to the venue and putting it into position. Those who wish to exhibit and sell their pots need to bring them along on the 7th and I need 2 or 3 people to take on organising the display and sales area, please.

The work on the 8,9,10th involves taking 10-15 minutes per person to 'teach' them to have a go on the wheel producing one pot which they'll need to take away with them. You don't have to be an expert thrower, but you do need to have some patience!

It's hard work but great fun - I've found I have learnt new ways from fellow Guild members and understand more about throwing from having to teach visitors. Aside from this, it's a marvellous opportunity to visit the event and meet all sorts of other potters.

On the 10th we'll need to pack up and take everything away - so volunteers who are 'fresh' will be very welcome. Some of us will be there for the four days and will be very tired and jaded by the end - help us, please!

If you are volunteering for Lark in the Park and/or Art in Clay, please, p-l-e-a-s-e, PLEASE put the dates in your diary NOW to avoid double booking yourself. I work full time and long hours - having to chase volunteers and constantly re-arrange hours to cover dropouts makes my life really difficult. So volunteer now, please, (form enclosed) and give me lots of time to arrange everything.

Many thanks to those who've joined us in the past - I look forward to seeing many of you again, this year. I also look forward to meeting new members who can help us this year - especially those who have joined the Guild at previous events.

Linda Bryant

ATTENDING AN AUCTION

I recently attended an auction of studio ceramics in Exeter. For £40 I purchased an 18" shallow bowl by Douglas Phillips, 4 delicate bowls by Alan Wallwork, one an absolute beauty, a 9" Clive Bowen slipware jug, and two further celadon jugs from Lakes Pottery, Truro. Incredibly, the auctioneers failed to attribute all but the Phillips bowl! Beyond my reach were two lots of mediocre Pleydell-Bouverie bowls at £200 and £300; a jar and two vases by William Marshall at £200 each, all excellent; and two wonderful bowls by Richard Batterham at £230 and £270. Also selling well were Bernard Forrester, David Leach, Helen Pincombe and Michael Cardew, whose 14" shallow bowl decorated with lines and chevrons under a tenmoko glaze made £480.

Sitting next to me during the sale was an elderly man in what can only be described as 'well worn' clothes, ancient metal-framed spectacles, and worn but well-polished shoes. The whole shouted 'retired clerk, of limited means' - I'm not being unkind, merely setting the scene. For each of the first 22 lots he closely followed the bidding before, at the fall of the hammer, carefully noting the realised price on his catalogue. As the 23rd lot came up I noticed the elderly hands began to shake and a marked tension set his features. Lot 23 was 'a porcelain vase of lobed form with short neck, the whole covered in a thick white glaze'. A pot one could easily dismiss at first glance, but whose attraction lay in its simplicity and, of course, the name of its creator - BERNARD LEACH.

Starting at £50 the bidding raced to £250 where it hesitated as a bidder dropped out. Twice the auctioneer called for further bids, then, as he looked to us against the back wall, an urgent flutter of hand and catalogue suddenly came from my neighbour. But the auctioneer had looked away! Consternation on the time-worn face! Vainly the catalogue fluttered like the wing of a shot wounded bird. As the hammer rose I was about to shout to the auctioneer when a new bidder made a desultory bid which was taken. The opening bidder came again; another pause.

The old gentleman half rose from his seat, frantically semaphoring his catalogue he had to be spotted, surely? Yes! The bid was seen and taken. He half collapsed back onto his chair, only to rise again as he topped a counter bid. The two fought it out - £300, £400, £500. I became uneasy. Could the old chap really afford this much, or was he being carried out of his depth by the excitement?

£520 - 540 - 560 - going at £560. Down came the hammer. My neighbour collapsed onto his seat, drained. The pot was gone - but he had got it!

I was almost as delighted as he was. "Well done" I congratulated him. He shook my hand. "Thank you, thank you". Then almost in disbelief, half-whispered "Bernard Leach! I've got a Bernard Leach! you know, I probably would never have had another chance to own one. But I've got it now. A Bernard Leach." Then rising, he tiptoed, for he was that sort of man, out of the hall to pay his dues. I missed the next two lots. I was thinking. "Bernard Leach, if there is a heaven and you're looking down, know from that old man's face, your time on earth was worthwhile!".

John Jeffs.

Reprinted, with permission, from Feb.'97 Newsletter of the West Country Potter's Association. - Ed.

The preceding article brings tears to my eyes. Many years ago, I am not sure, perhaps 1963, Sylvia and I visited the St. Ives Pottery. We purchased a small jug (broken many years ago), I cannot be exactly sure of the price, but less than £1.00.

What I REALLY WANTED was a cut stemmed bowl, plain white glaze, at £7.00 by Bernard Leach. If we had spent that amount we would have been very short of money for the remaining few days of our holiday.

To put this into perspective, during our holiday we stayed with a lady called Mrs. Cornish, who offered bed and breakfast (excellent accommodation and food) at a cost of 10 shillings per night (50 pence in today's money). Memories, just memories!!!

Editor

POTTERS' TIPS

The following is a recipe (originally from Canada, printed in 'Ceramic Review' and reproduced here with their permission). I have not tried it yet but it is well recommended:

"SPOOZE": One third part your clay body; One third part vinegar; One third part corn syrup

Mix well. Add a few drops of peroxide to keep Spooze from fermenting. Wash tools and brushes immediately after use, as the glue dries hard and is very tough to clean. Use for putting clay parts together, great for filling greenware cracks, atttaching parts, even for filling cracks in biscuitware.

Rena Green

INVITATION FOR POTTERS WITH PYROMANIC TENDENCIES

The first meeting of the new Pitstone group took place at Barbara Meekings' house on February 6th. There were nine of these enterprising pioneers -Barbara of course, Graham Williams, Jan Kent, Paul Rowbottom, Maureen Astle, Louisa Stobbs, Mary Paynes-Cook, Victoria North and Tina Hall. This meeting was held to introduce ourselves and to work out dates for going to the site, also to work out ways and means of getting the necessary 'gear' together needed to make a ceramic fibre kiln.

It was arranged to buy the burners, gas cylinder, glaze materials, etc. To cope with ongoing funding, it was suggested that each person should pay a sum per firing of £2 (members) and £5 (non-members). The frequency of this has yet to be worked out, perhaps depending on the number of firings and number of participants.

There are some people who are completely new to Raku techniques and others more experienced to help things along.

The wood-fired kiln is already there and the wood plentiful and ready chopped. Just in case anyone is wondering what other conditions are like at Pitstone, take heart, because there are very civilised loos and access to a kitchen to make tea. Our Raku site is under the cover of a corrugated iron roof- all cleared and erected last year by Freda Earl and her band of merry helpers.

Any Guild member is welcome to join in - just turn up with fairly small, biscuited pots made with 30 - 50% grog or silver sand in the clay.

There will probably be a firing using the existing wood-fired kiln, but the ceramic fibre one has yet to be constructed. This may be started at the March meeting, so if you want to get in there at the beginning and see how it is done, make sure you are there. Go along anyway and you can, at least, help feed the other kiln with wood.

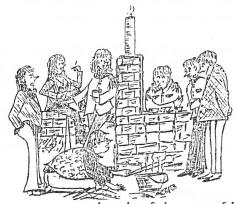
If there are any other queries, ring Barbara on 01442 822 277. The dates, so far, are:

10 a.m. Sat. March 22nd 10 a.m. Thurs. April 10th 10 a.m. Sat. April 26th

If you just want to have a look at the place yourself, you can go along any Sunday morning. New map herewith.

Ruth Karnac

PAST EVENTS - PRACTICAL FIRING SESSION John Dickerson at Pitstone Green Farm, April 1980



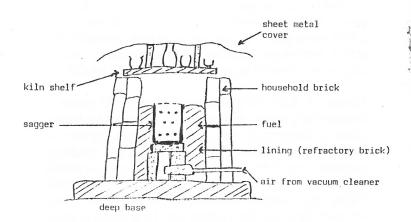
After a concentrated study of the map of Pitstone, we finally arrived at our destination. I was surprised at the number of people on such a cold day but, despite the weather, everybody seemed to enjoy themselves.

The firing of the kiln had been started at 2.00 p.m. and by the time we got there the kiln was billowing great clouds of thick white smoke, enveloping anyone who came too close. The kiln was the updraught type with coalite and charcoal for fuel. It was constructed of refractory brick and household brick, the former being the lining. Air from a vacuum cleaner was passed through tubes to the furnace. This is how the high temperature was obtained (1200°C). As the sagger was already in the kiln, another one was warming on the bricks about this; unfortunately this broke during the warming-up period.

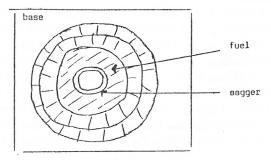
The session was continued with a talk by John Dickerson on the history of Raku. It was given in a storeroom where sacks of fertilizer were kept. The lecture dealt with the Raku family and the tea ceremony in which Raku plays a large part. Slides were also shown providing us with a comprehensive look into the world of Raku. We returned to the firing where the kiln was burning merrily and the smoke was reduced to small whispers.

Below are diagrams of the kiln used in the firing:

Side view



Top view



Pots were already being warmed on a kiln shelf which acted as a cover to the kiln. I was told that the temperature was guessed by the colour, as cones or other means of temperature gauge would give the firing a mechanical nature. The pots were placed in the sagger when it was orange-red. They were left in for 5 or 10 minutes until the glazes glistened. A barrow, full of fine sawdust, was nearby with a bucket of cold water. There is a combination of cooling and reducing methods; some pots were left to cool slightly and either placed in the water or completely immersed in sawdust, depending on the texture and colour required. They were reduced by the sawdust to obtain the 'black effect'. The pots had black and silver and sometimes white markings, showing the range in colours for this type of Raku.

The enthusiasm of those present seemed to match the definition of Raku "Enjoyment of freedom".

Felix Byrne

FLYING KILNS AND OTHER EXPERIMENTS



On a cold wintry evening Sebastian Blackie treated a select group to a wealth of new ideas and handy tips when he came to speak to the Guild recently. Sebastian's approach was refreshingly different from our usual speakers; where we normally see a range of beautifully finished items and then learn the techniques used to produce them, Sebastian did not show us any finished items. Instead, he concentrated in the techniques themselves and placed great emphasis on the need to experiment and push forward the boundaries of knowledge and have fun.

He also placed great emphasis on community involvement; one project involved making a sculpture for the Fire Brigade, he involved local community groups to make the paper kiln and then used one of the Fire Brigade's thermal imaging cameras to see what was going on inside the kiln it didn't work out but was a good experiment.

Three main techniques which had arisen out of experiments were demonstrated to us: Paper Kilns, Quick Lidded Pots and soft clay moulds.

Paper Kilns: Sebastian Blackie is well known for his paper kilns which can reach temperatures of 1000°C or more for several hours, though more usually they reach 900°C. Some of his best results have been gained from paper twists woven onto a beehive shaped basket, or from a tower of cardboard box strips, built up like the logs in a log cabin. More recent kilns have used willow to define the basket shape or have been lined with clay. The clay from these lined kilns produces a beautifully patterned pot. His top tips for a successful kiln firing are:

Light it from the bottom

Once lit, don't touch it till it is cold (most of the heatwork happens when it is glowing red

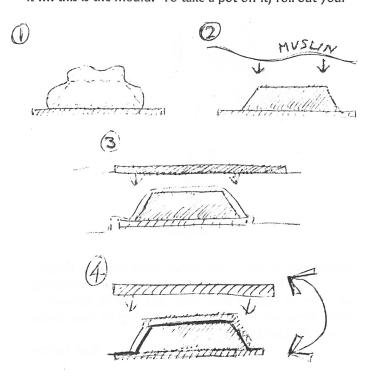
Tight coils

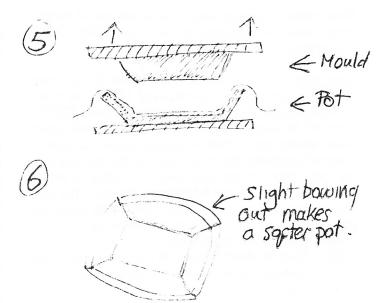
Watching all this heat rise is spurring him on to his next experiment, a flying kiln, kept aloft by a hot air balloon watch out below.

Quick Lidded Pots: A brilliant idea for new students - take one ball of clay, force a stick/post into its middle to make a hole, dust the top with sand to stop the lid sticking. Then roll out out a disc of clay 1/4"-1/2" thick and drop this firmly on top. Next, cut away the sides with a harp and leave to dry. The resulting pot, while chunky, has a perfectly fitting lid, and the technique can be refined to produce more delicate items.

Sebastian's use of the harp was a revelation, he used it to cut lids, handles, feet and to produce beautiful ripple patterns on the cut edges of pots by rocking the harp from side to side as he cut down.

Soft Clay Mould: Mould making can be tedious and frustrating; Sebastian's method was quick, simple and effective. First attach a block of clay to a batt, then cut it to the desired shape, next place a sheet of muslin over it this is the mould. To take a pot off it, roll out your

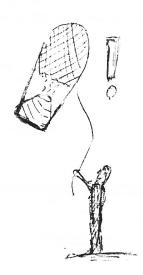




clay, place on another sheet of muslin, carry carefully to the mould and firmly drop it on. Cut away any surplus clay and allow to stiffen a little; place another batt on the base of the pot and turn the whole lot - batts and all upside down. The last stage is to carefully remove the batt on top with the mould still attached to it to leave the pot behind (see diagram). The resulting pot as it is still damp sags a little to produce a softer shape than conventional moulds.

Sebastian mixes his own red clay which has a high percentage of fine grog to give it the strength needed in building and firing. A similar clay in texture is Camberwell Buff Clay from Potclays.

Sagger Firing: As a bonus, we were also introduced to sagger firing; using a form of paper clay, Sebastian makes a slip from fire clay and liberally coats paper with it and uses this like [papier maché to build up a sagger. The result is very light and thermally efficient and, if you are



careful, can be used again several times before it breaks.

By the time Sebastian had finished demonstrating, we were all buzzing with ideas and looking forward to trying them out. I look forward to when he next comes to visit the Guild.

Sue Taylor

NOTEBOOK

As a result of the late Stan Romer's careful husbandry of information, I have received from John Romer a complete Archive set of the Guild Newsletters. This gives me the opportunity to delve into the past and give you details of how it all was in days gone by. The article on Raku, by Felix Byrne is reproduced in this issue, from Issue No.24 in 1980. I thought this would be relevant in view of the formation of our new Pitstone group. The illustration that heads the article is from the front cover of Issue 24. Who was the artist? Does anyone know?

When looking very briefly through the past Newsletters, it became apparent that most Newsletter editors claim to be "short of time" - i.e. to produce the Newsletter. Well, I am not going to expand on that - much, but where are all those "Potters' Tips"? Where are the "Profiles"? We can only print them if YOU send them in.

I spoke to Eric Yates-Owen about the book he is producing in conjunction with Robert Fournier on 20th century British studio pottery marks. Eric is keen to include the marks of amateur potters in the book and there is still time for you to send him details of yourself and the marks you have used:

(a) Date of birth (optional but useful)

(b) Your name and present studio address, plus brief list of previous workshops

(c) A general but short description of techniques: (earthenware, stoneware, porcelain, raku, etc); types of ware (domestic, individual, sculptural, etc; decoration (slip, brushwork, sgraffito, agate, relief, silk-screen, etc); finishes and glazes (burnished, unglazed, tenmoko or other style of glaze, lustre, etc) plus any further information which would help to identify your work in the event of similar or barely decipherable marks.

(d) Details of all marks, previous and current, by description, drawing or photograph. Marks suitable for reproduction in black and white would be appreciated.

There is no charge for entries, since the book is intended to be as complete as possible. Please send to:- Eric Yates-Owen, The Knowle, 7 Little Knowle, Budleigh Salterton, Devon, EX9 6QS. Telephone: 01395 444 108.

Ruth Brown "buttonholed" me at our evening meeting with Tessa Wolfe Murray. to tell me about the Queens Park Centre, Aylesbury. In spite of several approaches to them and half promises, we have not had a definitive advertisement from them, to set out their programme. Telephone: 01296 24332 and 431272.

The Methodist Church Hall was found to be very satisfactory for the February meeting and your Committee are considering using it for future meetings. A big plus is the possibility of running our Library from those premises.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

THE STAN ROMER LEGACY

Stan Romer, who died last year, was a founder member of the Guild. He has very generously left us a legacy. This consists of virtually all that is needed to set up a workshop with the exception of a kiln and plastic clay; There is an electric wheel, Leachtype kick wheel, a pugmill, large amounts of raw materials, many jars of enamels, underglaze colours, lustres, oxides etc., and small tools of all sorts. There are also some glazes and many containers. In addition, most fortunately, there are stacks of bricks suitable for kiln building - both H.T. bricks and house bricks. In addition, there are about 650 books mostly on ceramics, with shelving.

John Romer, Stan's son, has most generously donated all this to the Guild with the possibility of some money to go with it.

The value of this depends entirely on you, the Guild members. There are all the constituents for setting up a workshop, but what is needed are volunteers to set up and to run it. The only available site at present is at Pitstone Farm, which is not ideal as a permanent situation, being somewhat far from any built up area. However, if any Guild member can find us suitable premises or suggest another more convenient site on which to build or on which to set up a pre-fab building, the project can take off and be of use to all members. Having our own premises would be a great boost to the Guild. Of course, a large room in an existing building would be even more acceptable, if within our means.

The purpose of this article is to find out if there are any individuals willing and able to form a group in order to carry out this objective. It calls for enthusiasm, drive and commitment.

John Romer needs to clear his father's former premises of the contents, which we have already sorted out to the best of our ability. If we wish, he will very kindly transport them for us, to where we can store them short term.

Do you know of any suitable premises which might be used for a Guild workshop?

Do you know anyone who might be contacted for this on the Guild's behalf?

Would you be willing to help set up such a project?

If the answer is 'yes' to any one of these questions, please phone or write to me as soon as possible. My address and telephone number are on the committee list (see p.8.)

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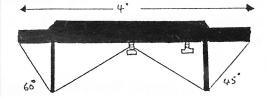
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I want to have a go!!! Young George Macdonald watches his mother, Tracey, making a pot - with help from Jenny Templeton - Hatfield, Aug. '96 Photograph by M.Fitzwilliam

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