



# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



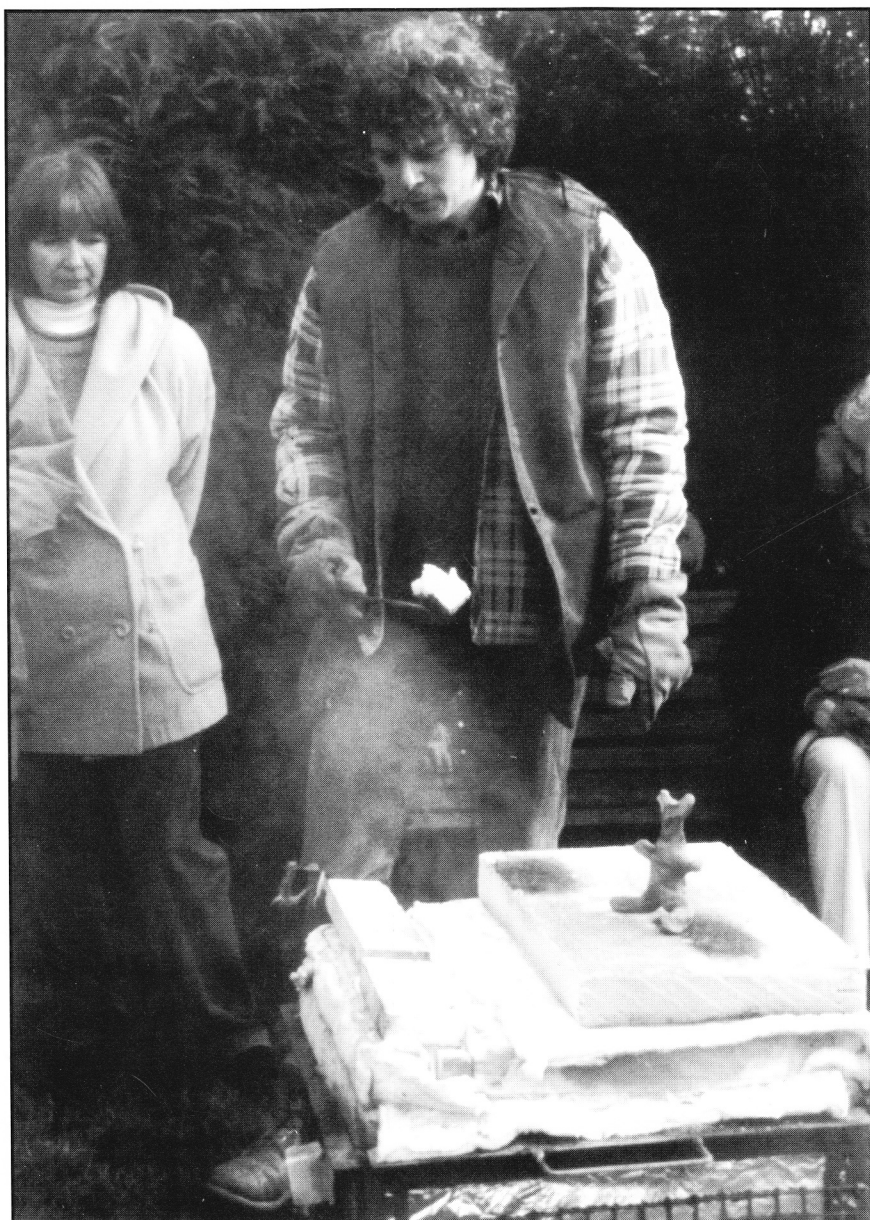
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\* SALT GLAZE WORKSHOPS

\* MARIGOLD AUSTIN - 50 YRS.

\* IF IT'S UGLY IT'S ART

\* POTTERS TIPS



**NEWSLETTER**  
**March/April**  
**1998**  
**£ 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 - £17.00  
Single - £14.50  
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Send your cheque, made payable to D.C.P.G., to Digby Stott (if joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate) "Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts. HP3 0DJ. tel: 01442 250540.

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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6th November

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Jonathan

*Switzman*

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**FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH** - Steve Harrison about to salt the kiln, watched by Marion Caton at our Salt Glazing Workshop.  
*Photograph by John Beckley*

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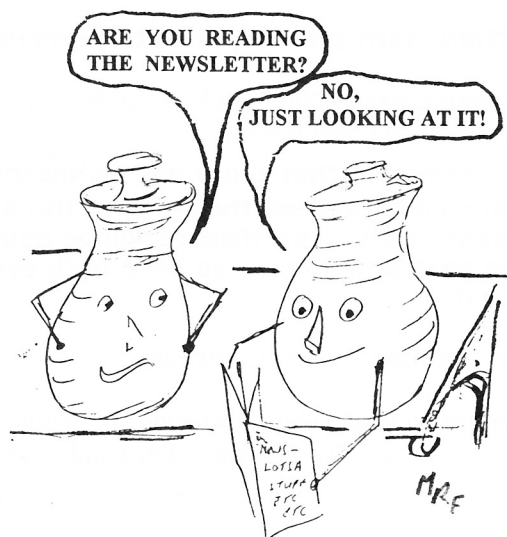
## EDITORIAL

Reading the Editorials in the newsletters from other pottery groups is guaranteed to bring on feelings of sympathy for Editors, with familiar stories of late articles, wasted time chasing people, no-one willing to write for the newsletter, etc. The other concern that Editors have is the sneaking feeling that perhaps no-one reads the newsletter anyway, or if they do they are too lazy to respond to any request for help or to reply to correspondence or competitions. Let me have some replies to Arthur Ball's request for suggestions about the use of an item in "Potters Tips", please.

On a much brighter note, my heart was gladdened by the recent articles from Margaret Aanonson, Linda Bryant and Veronica Powell and the serial from Marigold Austin. In this issue we have the write-up on Murray's recent talk, written by Geoff Parr. Geoff claims to be "a reporter of no experience" but his article is amusing and representative of the evening that we all enjoyed so much, what more could we ask? Write again for us Geoff.

**M.Fitzwilliam**

## THE CRACKPOTS



## FUTURE GUILD EVENTS

**2nd/3rd/4th May '98.-PLEASE NOTE CORRECTED DATE**

**CRAFT FAIR at the CHILTERN OPEN AIR MUSEUM,**  
**CHALFONT ST. GILES, BUCKS**

We are into our second year at this very memorable event, which was a great success last year. All who participated must be very satisfied and pleased at having contributed to its success, not least of all Linda Bryant, who performed such brilliant organising.

This year I have been asked to take over from Linda and now is the time for all of you to come forward to experience a really worthwhile and fun time.

This event gives you the opportunity to meet other members, as well as the public and bring the family to look around the museum and the rest of the show and for you to do so yourselves. It is also an excellent selling opportunity for everyone.

Come and share your skills and actively contribute towards our success. See the enclosed flier and send it to me as soon as possible indicating when you are available and what you prefer to do.

**THE WHOLE EVENT IS FUN AND AN EXPERIENCE FOR ALL THE FAMILY - ASK MY KIDS WHO USUALLY TELL ALL!!**

**RUBY SHARP, 20 PARKFIELD AVE. AMERSHAM, BUCKS HP6 6BE**

**☎ 01494 728364**

**13th March For fans of the Japanese and their supremacy in design and craftsmanship.**

**PETER REYNOLDS - "Hagi-ware: Tradition and Innovation in Modern Japan"**

*Peter will talk about the development of the Hagi style of tea ceremony wares from its origin in the early 17thC to the present day. He will show how contemporary potters respond to that tradition in a modern industrial society. Also of particular interest to members who like to add to their own practical knowledge, Peter will demonstrate some of the techniques he uses in the production of his own work. These include: throwing off "the hump"; making measuring sticks; making scroll handles; marbling and lustres.*

**17th April - CHRIS BARNES: Throwing in Colour**  
**Not to be missed; he makes lively and**  
**colourful domestic ware.**

Chris trained in sculpture and did not find his way to clay until 5 years after leaving college. He has been a potter since 1990 when he was making slipware and then progressed to reduction fired stoneware. He makes a living from pottery and part-time teaching in two North London schools. Chris will talk about the development of his work and his experiences renovating a derelict factory with Keith Ashley to provide them with workshops. He will demonstrate throwing and the use of extruded elements for handles, etc. He will also show his glaze decoration techniques.

**8th May - Change of programme - we now have**  
**JOHN NUTTGENS**

John makes Raku type pots using various decorating techniques with Terra Sgillata. The pots are removed from the hot kiln and placed in sawdust to obtain carbonisation of the Terra Sgillata. The different colours of black, grey, orange, red and pink are obtained by careful manipulation of the firing temperature and timing.

John will talk about his decorating techniques and will demonstrate his methods of throwing and altering his pots, including his thick hollow-walled bowls. He will bring some pots to sell.

**POTCRAWL WEEKEND TO CAMBRIDGE & NORFOLK**  
**JUNE 27th & 28th 1998**

Those of you who have joined in this event over the last few years will know how enjoyable it is. Brian Bicknell, who arranges it all by visiting the places in advance, goes to enormous trouble to ensure that the visits, the travel, the food and accommodation are all entirely satisfactory at an amazingly reasonable price.

A group outing with people of similar interests is always rewarding and potters are invariably welcoming to visitors to their studios. The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge is, of course, famous for its wonderful collections of ceramics and Kettles Yard too, especially for its domestic type interior and relaxed setting. Andrew and Joanna Young's saltglazed ware is made to a very high standard both practically and aesthetically. If you get tempted to buy one of their lasagne dishes or teapots, you'll never regret it.

Cars can be safely left (as far as anyone can tell) at the railway station overnight if you are driving yourself there. We would like to make an earlier start than in previous years - you can always doze off in the coach en route, so do make a note on your calendars and give yourself a midsummer break.

**GUILD LIBRARY:** Our librarian apologises for the delay in providing a list of titles, but hopes to be able to supply this with the next issue of the Newsletter.

**For your diary:**  
**Pitstone Green Farm Museum**

A group from the Guild will be on site to do Raku firing and other activities involving the public on the following dates. We need your help so do turn up on at least one of the occasions.

Sundays 11-5 p.m.

June 14th

July 12th

Aug. 9th? to be confirmed

Sep. 13th

The August day is a first and will have to be confirmed nearer the time. All members are welcome - bring your biscuit pots and enjoy a day out.

Tina Hall (01442 826 223)

**OTHER EVENTS**

*The Exhibition Team Ltd regret that the Art in Clay Show planned for the Royal Bath & West Showground on 18/19th April has had to be cancelled. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused. The Hatfield House Festival in August and the Farnham Maltings Show in November will both be going ahead as planned.*

**10th March:** Gallery talk at the V&A 2.30 p.m.  
 English soft paste porcelain.

**Bucks Pottery and Sculpture Society**  
**Fri.20th March - Richard Ballantyne**


8 p.m. at Little Kingshill Village Hall, Great Missenden, Bucks.

**Wed.22nd April - A.G.M. and Kevin Millward**  
 7.30 p.m. at Chorley Wood Arts Centre

**Crafts Council Gallery,** 44a Pentonville Rd.  
 Islington, London, N.1.  
 Until 29th March: **Bernard Leach - Artist and Potter**

**ART IN ACTION - 16th-19th July at Waterperry Ho.**

**7/8/9th August: Art in Clay** 4th National Pottery and Ceramics Festival. Hatfield House.

 **Just a reminder that there will be another chance for members to sell their pots at this Art in Clay event. Calls to participate will be going out in the next Newsletter - so keep both eyes open wide !!**

**13th-25th October:** Chelsea Crafts Fair

**26th November:** Studio Pottery Auction at Christie's,  
 85 Old Brompton Rd. London SW7



## **FIFTY YEARS OF POT MAKING: First pottery jobs and Farnham School of Art**

Holidays from 1936-1939 were spent in Cornwall; Father would drive us down towing a trailer or camping gear across Dartmoor. The granite land which was the mother of the Newton Abbot ball clays, Devon ball clays through St. Austell, where the great white pyramids of waste quartz and washings from the china clay pits were on all sides, to Portscatho, a small fishing village facing east. On arrival we would pitch our two tents in a newly-cut cornfield that sloped down to the top of the cliffs. Here, at an early age, my brothers and I learnt to drive Father's car between the rows of corn stooks. Anyone who knocked the sheaves down had to swap for someone else's turn.



**The wheat sheaves and me before 1939**

In our late teens, it was competition to borrow Father's car for use, so at college in London I bought my first motor bike. In the '50s BSA Bantams 125 c.c. were all the fashion, but one was not available for me at the time, so I had a maroon James 98 c.c., which I learned to drive up and down the back road outside Euston Station. It ran on oil and petrol which was four shillings & sixpence a gallon and I could drive 100 miles on that.

After my training at Poole, I set out on my motor bike to find a full time pottery job. I visited as many potteries as I could between Guildford, Surrey and Marianne de Trey at Shinnars Bridge, Dartington, South Devon. I finally got a job as a thrower at Kingwood Pottery, Witley in Surrey near Haslemere. This pottery was started by Michael Cardew after the second world war to give jobs to ex-servicemen. When I arrived in November 1954 there

was a foreman, Roy, a thrower, Barry Turk and Kay Bayfield, who fettled and finished off small cast dogs, part time. Roy had worked at Old Compton Pottery, owned then by David Dunhill of the B.B.C. It was at Compton that the film, used as an intermission of someone throwing a pot which was never finished, was made.

Kingwood was out in the country looking towards the Devil's Punchbowl at Hindhead, with fields and woods all around. It was typical of most small potteries at the time, wooden buildings and concrete floors. Several wheels, mine was an electric cone wheel to which I stood as the sharp corners of the metal tray round the wheelhead made my legs go numb. Long racks, on which boards of pots rested to dry, a clay room and a large round kiln with four fire mouths in typical Stoke-on-Trent style, fed with coal. Buff earthenware pots were made, clear glazed and fired in saggars. Roy did all the firing, Barry and I threw all day, turned and put simple blue or green slip on the outside of most wares, mugs, jugs, cups and saucers. The first things I threw in quantity were egg cups.

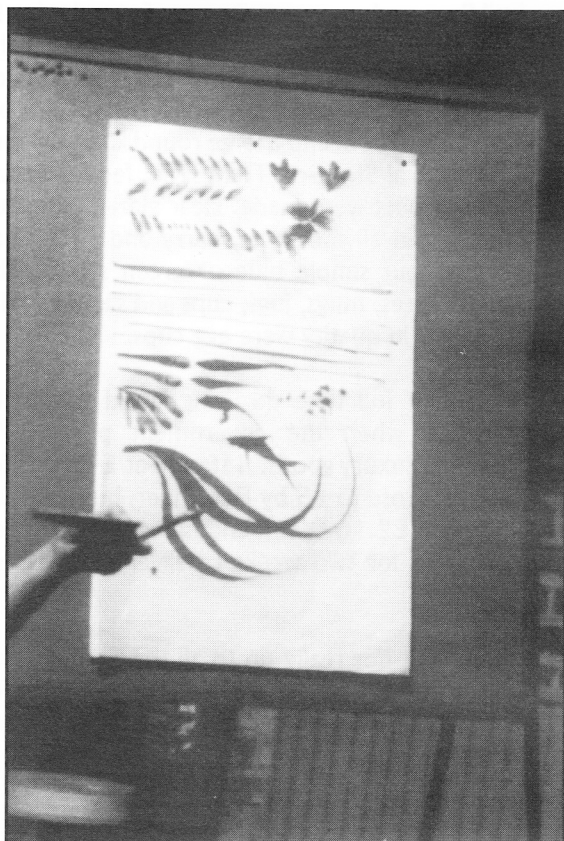
This experience of full time throwing lasted a year to December 1955 when the government put 100% purchase tax on all luxury goods. I started at £4.10.0 for a 5-day week that rose to £5 by December, but was then put on half time at £2.10.0, not enough to live on - even in those days. So for two weeks I delivered Christmas mail in Haslemere.

My little James was not really up to all the driving I was doing at this time, so I changed it for an Italian Motor Gussi, a large type of scooter with 17" wheels, with tremendous suspension and a tough bike altogether.

During my work at Kingwood, I rented a small room at Shottermill near Haslemere which was only a few miles from Farnham. One evening a week I would ride over to Farnham School of Art where Henry Hammond and Paul Barron were teaching pottery. Paul's wife Penny also taught there, but they were expecting their first baby at Easter, her post became vacant so I was offered two days and two evenings a week as pottery assistant and kiln packer to Paul and Henry to start in April 1956. To fill in from January, I worked in the kitchens of a Plastic Surgery Hospital in Basingstoke. At the same time, Hampshire gave me four classes to teach in Andover and Basingstoke.

Farnham took diploma students and had many part time classes of mixed age groups. I had one day each with Henry and Paul. Henry soon got me to teach different groups. They were very different people. Paul was kind, rather solid and very methodical, he had a small bud mouth. We used buff and red clays and a sandy-white stoneware clay which was mixed by Mr. Perrit, our clay assistant. There were many taboos. Colour was limited to natural slips, buff, black, red, white and a little blue. Paul was a 'brown man' and only approved of traditional slip colours. He mixed Triaxial blends for glazes and they were usually rather dull. It took me four years to get coloured underglaze colours used to decorate pots.

Henry, on the other hand, was an artist potter but he could be very temperamental. He taught me a great deal. "One had to learn by watching". He showed me how to paint with Chinese brushes and we evolved a system to teach the students with simple brush strokes, using a goat-hair brush and red iron oxide as pigment, painting on sheets of newspaper or plain newsprint. I demonstrated this at the Potters Open Day at Pendley in 1980.



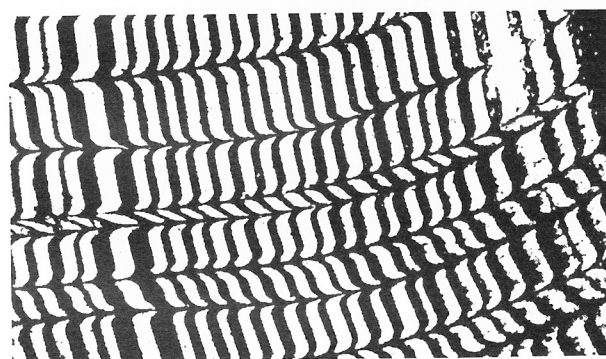
**Brush demonstration at Pendley, 1980**

He was very intuitive when it came to evolving glazes. He knew the principles but would try different blends which usually came out very well. Bernard Leach's *Potter's BOOK* was the solid textbook of the day, later came Rhodes, etc. We would discuss Confucius and Zen Buddhism, Art Nouveau, etc., and often took students to exhibitions at Primavera, other galleries and museums in London.

We had a row of kick wheels with a triangular Leach wheel that I could never get on with. A clay room with a low slate wedging table that Henry always had people round for a wedging lesson. "Cutting the clay with a wire, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 parts, etc." There was a long room, wide and with tables and racks to dry work. Two gas kilns, the largest a Davis Revergen kiln - a horrendous thing, built with its own kiln room which was too small. There were about six gas taps going into the kiln on each side and a great lever that changed the gas from one side to the other with a terrible noise. To start it you had to light each gas jet with a gas poker all down one side, and there was only a foot or so between the kiln and the wall.

When the kiln was hot, it reversed quite easily with the lever and would light on its own. In spite of having an extractor fan when we came to reducing to 900°C or so, my neck would go quite red and sore - carbon monoxide I suppose, not allowed these days.

Students learned to throw, but there was a great deal of coiling and slab work done by all people. Dishes made on hump or hollow moulds were slip trailed and feathered in traditional Staffordshire style. Red clay was rolled out on canvas cloth on a board, then black slip was poured all over it. White or buff slip was trailed in lines or dots, or blown from a baby's bottle with a glass nozzle in wave-type patterns that went under the black slip. These were then feathered with a bristle from a broom. After allowing to stiffen for a couple of days, they were pressed onto mushroom type moulds, cut off, and when finished a rope edge was pressed into the rim with a round tool.



**A close-up of a 19th C. trailed dish which has been feathered back and forth in parallel lines**

Tenmoku glazes were popular and black glazes were evolved using different red clays from local brickworks for the clay part of the glaze, with exciting results. The Bouverie basic recipe of 40 ash, 40 feldspar and 20 clay was used. The clay could be split 10 Ball clay and 10 China clay, different woods or straw ash produced soft or hard results and then oxides were added for colours. Matt glazes used for insides of pots or to paint decorations on.

Wrecklesham, an old traditional country pottery, just to the west of Farnham, produced flower pots, cider jars and large garden pots, etc. These were fired in an upright bottle kiln, fired with wood and coal and finished off with bundles of wood (hazel cuttings like old pea sticks). I seem to remember the lead oxide for simple glazes was made by burning old lead pipes. The old potter from Wrecklesham used to come into the pottery and teach students how to throw big pots and we also used to go to Wrecklesham to watch throwing flower pots.

Working at Farnham taught me so much because they were at the forefront of pottery development after the war. They were in contact with all the leading craft potters of the day, Leach, Cardew and so many others - more on that later.

**Marigold Austin**

*[To be continued]*

## **MURRAY FIELDHOUSE - 12th DEC.'97.**

### **If it's ugly it's art**

As a comparative newcomer to the Guild, I had not heard Murray Fieldhouse speak about pottery before. I, nevertheless, had a feeling that we were in for a lively and perhaps controversial evening.

Murray's talk was entitled 'If it's ugly it's art' and based on a remark by William Morris - 'I should say that the making of ugly pottery was one of the most remarkable inventions of civilisation'. The topic was dealt with in a philosophic manner tinged, I thought, with sadness rather than anger. He thought his talk a lampoon of sorts but one with serious intent.

He began by saying that corrupting influences on the craft from the fine arts and design encouraged by official education policies had been largely responsible for the escalating appearance of ugly pots during the last 20 years. In the past, British potters had a shared philosophy which did not exist today, indeed even the CPA itself seems to have lost the visionary intent it had when originally formed.

Murray considered the making of pottery to be a craft and considered the crafts as identified by their usefulness. He quoted Soetsu Yanagi - 'The crafts are identified by use. They are born for the intimacy of use in which there is an indivisibility of spirit and matter'. David Eccles - 'Those products that in common use make the heart beat faster, the longer you use them, the more loveable they become'. Towards his main theme Murray quoted Harry Davis - 'There is no real outrage any more. The crafts today exhibit very little vision, only novelty and a sense that we are not going anywhere'.

Murray stressed the difficulty of criticising the work of fellow potters, whatever their styles. He quoted Michael Cardew - 'We potters are a fraternity' but said that he would try and overcome this difficulty '....just for tonight'. Murray made clear that it would be the song and not the singer that would be under scrutiny.

He then explained what he felt fell under the heading of ugly pottery. This included pots with meaningless or inappropriate decoration, square and misshapen pots, pointless and useless objects, 'distorted staggering pots', 'pile it up high pots', pots with spikes, flattened cats and pots with glazes resembling very mouldy cheese. He made it very clear however that many of these ugly features could be redeemed by the presence of wit, irreverence or talented virtuosity. The last point being a useful fall-back when Murray meets potter friends who suspect their pots might fall into the general category under discussion!

These descriptions of ugly pottery were accompanied by a number of slides which showed an apparently unending variety of objects made of fired clay to which the adjective 'ugly' (under Murray's definition) could be applied. I must say, from my point of view, I saw very little wit or

beauty in the objects, but a great deal of wasted, talented virtuosity, which was very sad. Terms such as 'pile it high' and 'pat-a-cake' were clearly illustrated.

Murray quoted authorities who would include mass-produced commercial pottery; Michael Cardew said 'Commercial pots are not joyful' and Varnham Poor said 'Pots covered with a slick commercial glaze and fired in an electric kiln are certainly the sick products of a sick civilisation - their permanence is horrible to think of. Imagine them unearthed by future archaeologists as characteristic of the artistic impulse of our time'.

Worrying, in view of the apparently large number of ugly pots around these days, was the opinion of Herbert Read - 'Show me the pottery of a culture and I will show you its ethos. It is a sure touchstone'. Worrying, but interesting, that he should give pottery this status.

Murray continued by asking 'Why do people make ugly pottery?' On this topic he seemed to be less restrained in his criticism as it related less to individuals and more to institutions and their buying and educational policies. Certainly he blamed the policies of educational establishments where he believed ideas of originality and novelty had replaced the acquisition of a sound craft basis. Even Michael Casson has said that it took him many years to shed the influence of his art training and even now he is not sure that he is entirely cleansed.

Gallery owners and museum curators were also criticised for their promotion of 'posh kitsch' pottery and their inability to distinguish between sound craftsmanship and the inanities of the ugly pot. Murray entitled it 'lapdog pottery'. Their search for the 'artist potter' had done nothing to discourage the making of ugly pots.

Murray claimed that another source of ugly pots was when painters and sculptors took up pottery. They had not got their hearts in it and did not understand the medium in which they worked. They never forgot that they were painters and sculptors, in many cases simply decorating the fired clay objects made by others - witness Picasso's efforts in this direction.

Murray considered that many potters had started off making excellent pottery but had later changed to making things that came within his definition of ugly pots. Was boredom the cause? If it was, why not take a break for a while?

He finished by asking 'Does it matter if much of ceramics today is on the edge of kitsch or over the top with meaningless decoration? Does it matter if work is bloodless, useless or violently blue for commercial exploitation? Does it matter if the bulk of ceramics today does not meet the predominant criteria that define the crafts? After all, the so-called CRAFTS COUNCIL do not know what the crafts are. They have had to sub-title their publication *The Decorative and Applied Arts Magazine*.



I hope you will appreciate that it has been difficult for me, as an inexperienced potter and a reporter of no experience, to adequately convey to you the craft philosophy of a distinguished potter who has devoted a lifetime to the craft. I hope I have been able to give you a brief but accurate report of what was a very enjoyable and entertaining evening, one that ended too early for me and related to a subject that I would like to hear discussed further. Unfortunately Murray did not have time to comment on the ugly pots brought by members attending the meeting, nor to quote us some of the statements prepared by successful potters and relating to their work.

I cannot resist including such a statement made by a lady from California; I think the statement might have some relevance to Murray's talk. 'Clay is by its very nature (not only in terms of what is material) non-hierarchical. That position promotes it..... You paint, you do sculpture, you draw, you do functional things, you make a mess and it is all part of the clay. Also I think if you use the word "ceramic" you are denying that there is sculpture or painting or architecture involved. It's all clay - it's all one. Further, you can say "clay is art" and that becomes a battleground for breaking down art- historical designations. No-one ever said what clay is. It just became what it needed to be.....Blimey!

**Geoff Parr**

#### Footnote

During the last few minutes, Murray was prevailed upon to throw a pot. Making the weak excuse that he had dried out his clay on the Aga only that morning, he struggled somewhat and, with difficulty, finally produced an easy shape. In fairness, I should explain that we had run out of time by a wide margin and the caretaker was jangling his keys in the background!

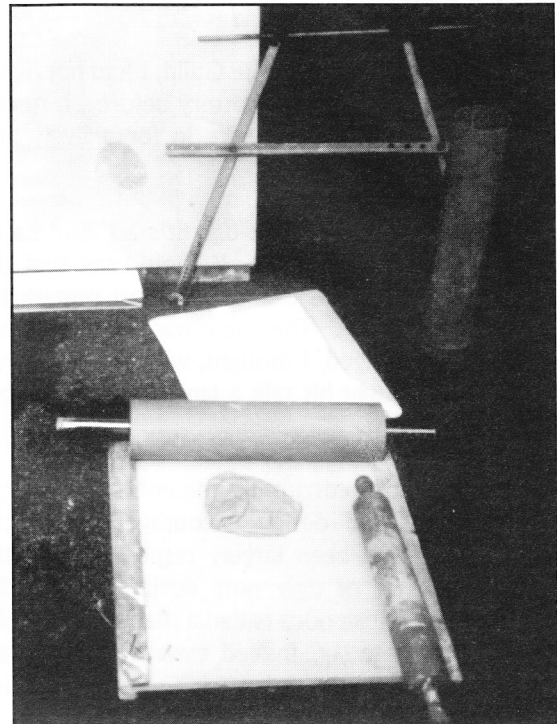
**Editor**

#### POTTERY TIPS - 1.

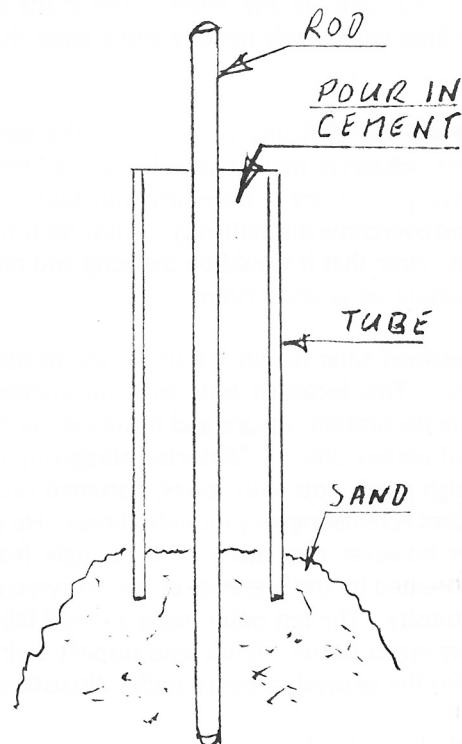
It has been my experience that potters are very generous with information about glazes, firing cycles and the body they use. When, however, it comes to 'tips' they show you the old knives, bits of bamboo, teaspoons and needles or sticks with which they make the most beautiful pots. Perhaps because I am not a real potter, I get as much fun out of making tools for a job which will never be done again or I forget what I made the tools for.

One of the jobs some of our members will be doing after the Jim Robison show, will be the flattening of clay for slab work. Jim uses his famous mangle to great effect but most of us have neither a mangle nor the space to put one.

Our great seats of learning teach us to use a rolling pin which may be flat on one side or so splintered as to be dangerous; additionally, they are about 15" long and so light as to be useless, as Grandma found when they were dumped. You will have noticed the lengths of plastic tubing being threaded under the footpaths - goodness knows what for - and occasionally there is a piece left to rot when the men leave the site.



From the picture you will see that a piece about 20"/24" long will make a beautiful roller. Simply cut a length, stand it on a heap of sand, push a piece of rod or brush handle through it, fill it with concrete and there you have it - a wonderfully smooth roller and, like all good cooks, I use flour or talc if the roller sticks, and it weighs enough to really roll clay flat.



In the picture you will also see a piece of tube which is used for a very important job in the pottery. I will give a small prize for the member who guesses its use or has a better idea for it than I have. (Very rude answers have



already been made and I'm only a very tiny bloke). If anyone wants to come to my workshop, I will show them the bits.

**Arthur Ball**

### **POTTERY TIPS - 2.**

*Reprinted from West Country Potters Assoc. Newsletter with permission of Roger Harris*

I snagged my finger on a nail the other day. Just a minor thing, a bit of skin missing, bleeding a little; a sticking plaster job.

Now I have to admit being a bit basic on such occasions and smearing some clay over the cut and carrying on. I don't suppose it's wise but there you are. However this is no good if I am doing something with wet hands. The trouble is I have yet to find any make of sticking plaster that allows me to carry on, say throwing, without it peeling off in no time. My wife Marion has come up with the answer. It is a product made by 'Germolene' called "New Skin". Perhaps you have seen it and not tried it. It comes in a small bottle with a simple applicator and both looks and smells like clear nail varnish. All you do is wash the cut, dry it and apply two coats of "New Skin" which dries in a few minutes.

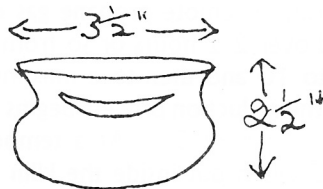
I have found that once dry, I can forget all about it and do a whole day's throwing with my hands in clay and water without any trouble at all. It simply does not come off and is completely waterproof. At the end of the day I add another application that lasts until the following evening. The cut heals beautifully if you just keep the "New Skin" topped up. In fact I think it heals much better than plasters ever did ..... Happy potting.

**Roger Harris**

*[Caution, it does sting. - Ed.]*

### **POTTERY TIPS - 3**

Egg Separator - Make a small jar and when leather hard, cut a small slit as shown.



**Ruth Karnac**

### **COMPETITION WINNERS**

Winners of our "Free Book Competition" are Caroline Hughes and Linda Bryant having each won a copy of "The Potters Dictionary" by Frank & Janet Hamer (Retail price £39.99).

My thanks to Charlotte Burrows of A & C Black for so generously donating the books and running the competition for us.

For a free listing of recent books on pottery, write to Charlotte Burrows, A & C Black (Publishers) Ltd., 35 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4JH.

**Editor**

## **SALT GLAZING WORKSHOP WITH STEVE HARRISON -**

**13th December 1997**



**Guild pots from the first salt glaze workshop (Saturday) with those of the Master, Steve Harrison, in the background**

Some twelve members of the Guild gathered expectantly at Mervyn Fitzwilliam's workshop in the garden of his house early in the morning of Saturday 13th December.

We were fortunate to have Steve Harrison running the workshop for the day. Steve studied at Middlesex Polytechnic and at the Royal College of Art where he took his degree. He has specialised in salt glazed firing and has produced much excellent work, some of which he brought to the workshop.

We all brought with us small articles we had made, mostly from low iron-bearing clay, such as white St. Thomas's, which had been biscuit fired beforehand. Steve Harrison uses TS Stoneware clay supplied by Commercial Clays of Stoke-on-Trent. (Approx. Ball clay 60, China clay 20, Quartz 15, Nepheline Syenite 5).

### **APPLYING SLIPS AND GLAZES**

Steve advised us that the salt glazing process glazes the outside surfaces of the work but not the insides of the pots, which have to have a suitable salt glazing glaze applied before they are fired.

Two of Bernard Leach's saturated iron glazes used by Steve are as follows:-

<u>Celadon Glaze</u>		<u>Yellow Glaze</u>	
Soda Feldspar	40	Potash Feldspar	1
Quartz	30	Ball clay	1
Whiting	20	Quartz	1
China clay	10	Whiting	1/2
Talc	5	Black iron oxide	1/2
Black iron oxide	1		
Bentonite	1		

To get the best salt glazing effects it is best to apply one or more appropriate salt glazing slips to the outside of the pots. Slips can be applied to the pots by brush to make a pattern on the pot and several slips can be applied to a single pot if required. These are some of Steve Harrison's salt glazing recipes:-

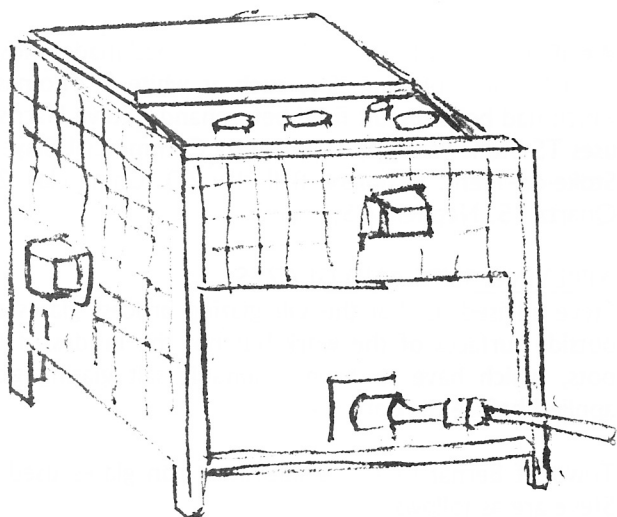
<u>Blue slip</u>		<u>Iron Green slip</u>	
Soda Feldspar	50	Soda Feldspar	53
Flint	20	Flint	24
Woolastonite	10	Whiting	12
Colmenite	5	China clay	6
Ball clay	5	Porcelain clay	3
Red iron oxide	4	Zinc oxide	3
Cobalt	1	Red iron oxide	5

<u>Yellow slip</u>		<u>Orange/Tan slip</u>	
Soda Feldspar	45	HVAR Ball clay	50
Flint	23	China clay	50
Whiting	17		
China clay	13		
Zinc oxide	2		
Red iron oxide	7		

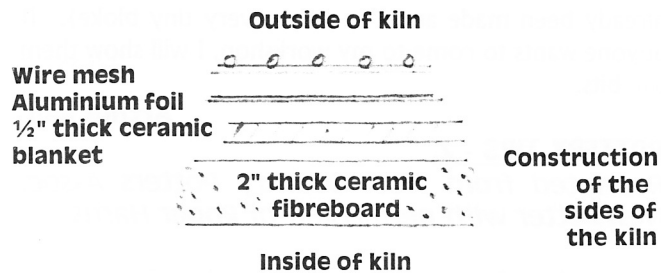
<u>Brown/Orange slip</u>		<u>Bright Orange slip</u>	
HVAR Ball clay	4	AT Ball clay	50
Petalite	1	Potash Feldspar	50

### THE KILN

We generally associate salt glaze firing with large brick built kilns, so it was a pleasant surprise to find that Steve had brought with him a small, lightweight, portable salt glaze kiln.



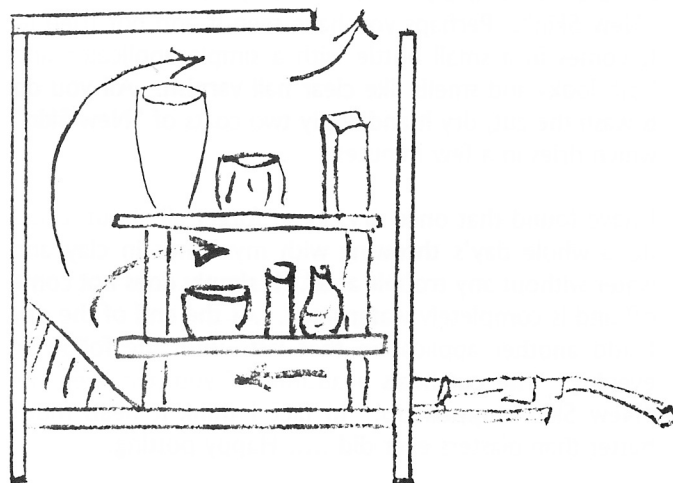
This was built with a standard angle-iron and iron mesh frame and lined with ceramic fibreboard, ceramic fibre blanket and aluminium foil on the sides. High alumina bricks were used on the base of the kiln. The exterior dimensions of the kiln, excluding the legs, are 20" x 20" x 20".



Furnace coat was applied thinly to the inside of the kiln before it was first used.

### LOADING THE KILN

Pots were put on two levels in the kiln and at least three small wads with a putty-like consistency (5 parts alumina and 1 part china clay) were put under each pot to ensure that it did not stick to the kiln shelf during the firing.



Side view of interior of kiln

### FIRING THE KILN

The firing technique used by Steve take about 8 - 9 hours. The gas pressure from a remote propane gas cylinder is gradually increased over 2½ hours or so from 5 lb. per square inch (PSI) to 10 and then to a maximum of 15 p.s.i. At 1000°C the reduction process begins by closing the flue except for a gap of 3". At a temperature of 1240° to 1260°C salt is put inside the kiln on a long steel salt holder through one of the two bung holes either side of the kiln



Salt holder

At each insertion, the salt holder releases its contents (2-3 heaped tablespoons of salt). One salt holder full of salt is inserted into the kiln on alternate sides every two minutes. To use all the 3 lbs. of salt required takes about 35 minutes. The gloss can be seen building up on the pots inside the kiln as the process continues.

### CRASH COOLING

After the last charge of salt, the dampers are removed and the kiln temperature is maintained for 15 minutes. The gas is then turned off and all three bungs (in the front and sides of the kiln) are removed. The crash cooling reduces potential damage to the kiln from prolonged high temperatures.

### REMOVING FIRED WORK

After turning the gas off, the kiln took about 5-6 hours to cool sufficiently before the glazed work could be removed. Pots coated with blue slip were particularly successful, but all of our pots were well glazed by the process.

### SLIDES

While our pots were cooling down in the kiln, Steve gave us a slide show, showing us the way his work has developed over the years. It was interesting to hear that with some of his work he makes the pots in the normal way and then presses part of the work (say a pulled spout) into a press mould to get a special effect.

We are indebted to Steve Harrison for an excellent workshop where we all learnt much more about salt glazing than we knew before, and most of us went away enthused and determined to do more salt glazing ourselves. We are also very grateful to Mervyn and Sylvia for generously allowing us to use their workshop and garden for the event.

**John Beckley**

### SALT GLAZING WORKSHOP 2 - DECEMBER 14TH

It seemed like a good idea when we originally signed up for this workshop back in the middle of September. At 8 a.m. on a Sunday in mid-December, more than one of us doubted our sanity.

The dawn was beautiful and a fantastic start to a really superb day. Steve Harrison has such amazing and infectious enthusiasm and energy that we very quickly forgot the early hour and the cold and got stuck into painting and dipping liner glaze and exterior slips and pots.

Suffice to say that the rest of the day passed in convivial company, and in eager anticipation of 'opening the kiln' - not to mention the spectacular glowing interior of the kiln and the billowing clouds of white 'steam' given off at each dose of salt.

We were all delighted with the results - although I was heard to wail "But they're all blue!". Even Steve seemed delighted with the pots and even happier that he'd

introduced us all to a wonderful new game - salt glazing.

We parted company with the words "same time, next year?". Many thanks Steve for a really enjoyable day and thanks to Mervyn and Sylvia for hosting the day. A veritable success.

**Linda Bryant**

### BOOK REVIEW

**Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques** - by Frank and Janet Hamer. 4th edition. A & C Black £39.99

This is not the cheapest encyclopædia I have read, but it is probably the best. It was originally published in 1975 and this, the fourth edition, was printed last year. I possess a copy of the previous edition published six years earlier in 1991. First of all, what's new? Well at 406 pages it's 22 pages longer. This is due to many new entries, most of the existing items are reprinted virtually unchanged. An exception to this general rule is in the chemical names used, for example the name 'soda' is replaced by the scientific term 'sodium oxide'. This avoids any confusion with the substance sodium carbonate (washing soda or soda ash). This change extends over a whole range of chemical substances.

For those who are unfamiliar with this work, there is information for anyone interested in pottery whether in production, collecting or just the history of ceramics. The subjects are presented alphabetically, making the need for an index superfluous. For me a great strength of this book lies in the extensive cross-referencing within each article. This makes it very easy to pursue any particular theme into allied areas. As an example, within the article on Frits there are cross references to Alkali, Poisoning, lead poisoning, Lead frit, Grain Size, Low Sol and Double Fritting. All such references are printed in bold type for easy recognition.

Each article is thorough, clearly written and, above all, interesting. At the end of the book there are no less than 42 individual tables ranging from the melting points of pyrometric cones to mesh sizes of sieves! There is also a collection of recipes by well-known potters. This is in addition to various formulæ printed within various articles. Useful names and addresses are also given as is a list of various health and safety addresses. There are extensive line drawings, black and white photographs and 69 colour plates. I purchased my copy of this book about five years ago and I would be lost without it. I can recommend it wholeheartedly and without reservation.

**Tony Stevens**

### NOTEBOOK

We now exchange Newsletters with most of the well-known pottery groups in the U.K., including Scottish Potters, Midland Potters, London, North and South Wales, West Country, East Anglia and also Ireland. These Newsletters are circulated to the committee and then passed to Pam Bishop, so that she can have them available for members via our library.

\*\*\*\*\*

## IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT REFRACTORY CERAMIC FIBRE

Information received from the Health and Safety Commission explains that it has been decided to classify RCF as a carcinogen and this classification will come into effect in 12 months time. This does not mean an immediate ban on the use of this material, but it is important to understand the dangers to yourself and others. For more information and explanatory notes, contact the Ceramics Industry Advisory Committee, The Marches House, The Midway, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. ST5 1DT.

☎ 01782 602300 Fax 01782 602400

\*\*\*\*\*

With upwards of 30 professional and many aspiring potters within the Guild, some interest has been expressed in having a Guild shop or gallery. The precedent was set long ago by other Guilds, the question is one of enough support and enthusiasm. At this stage, the committee has not discussed the subject in detail, but Wendy Fowler is prepared to act as a contact for any initial offers of support. 35, The Quadrant, High Wycombe, Bucks.

HP13 6TU. ☎ 01494 524351

\*\*\*\*\*

Doug Jones has been appointed advisor to the Hatfield House Festival. He has written to tell us that bookings are coming in thick & fast with the following being only a few of those already due to be there: Mary Wanderaus, Mary Rich, Nic Collins, Elaine Peto, Tessa Oates, Kate Weaver, Anthony Theakston, Toff Milway, Bridget Drakeford, plus many more. Michael Casson will be giving a talk each day of the Festival.

\*\*\*\*\*

POTTERY INDUSTRY CLOSE TO CRACKING was the front page news of the Sunday Times on 18th Jan. The article went on to report that up to 10,000 jobs could be lost from the present workforce of 20,000 within 2 years, partly due to the strong pound and troubled Asian markets. Peter Mills, managing director of Poole Pottery has apparently predicted that many smaller Staffordshire pottery firms could close. It is believed that more than 30,000 jobs have been lost over recent years, with all of the larger potteries affected. Some of the Staffordshire firms have made investments in the Far East and cheap Chinese imports are making deep inroads into the British market.

\*\*\*\*\*

As a contrast to the above note, Doug Jones writes: "I went to the ART 98 show at the Business Design Centre last month (Jan.) and was very pleased to see that many galleries were showing the work of potters and sculptors in ceramic. This would have been unheard of 30 years ago, but pots are rapidly becoming big business, which is just as well as each year more and more artists are out there working in clay and trying to make a living."

\*\*\*\*\*

Rosemary Cooke is the new Treasurer for East Anglian Potters Association. On starting her new post, Rosemarie was immediately confronted with a tax enquiry regarding the earnings of members from sales at recent exhibitions. Taxation has been talked about quite a lot recently, with the introduction of the self-assessment fiasco, causing much whingeing and unhappiness on several media programmes. Whatever we do it won't go away, so perhaps the lesson to be gained is to keep good records and be prepared.

## THE CRACKPOTS



\*\*\*\*\*

ADVERTISEMENTS - We have some new advertisements in this edition of the Newsletter. The policy is to have advertisements that we believe will be of use & interest to our members. The advertising income we receive does help towards the cost of the Newsletter, but it is essential that you tell suppliers where you saw the advertisement, since they have no other way of measuring the success of their advert. Another reason for telling suppliers you are a guild member is the fact that some do give our members a discount.

\*\*\*\*\*

WORKSHOPS - Caroline Hughes was thinking of arranging a throwing workshop at Callowland, Watford but just like the rest of us has had little time to move forward on this front. If you want to attend a throwing workshop, or have any ideas about the type of workshop that would interest you, please give Caroline a call or drop her a line. (Address in Committee list).

\*\*\*\*\*



## SALT GLAZING - How & When???

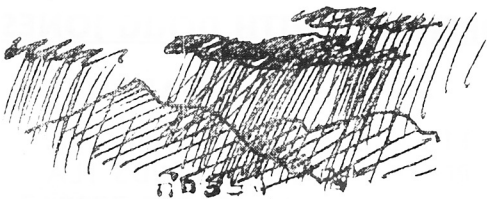
Thanks to Tina Hall, Paul Rowbottom & Caroline Hughes, we now have approximately 800 bricks to build a salt glazing kiln at Northfield Studio. We also have bricks, kiln furniture & shelves from the Stan Romer legacy waiting to be used at Pitstone. Tina Hall is very keen that we should build a small salt glazing kiln at Pitstone, but admits that she has no knowledge of the techniques needed. What is needed is someone to come forward to act as a team leader or technician to help build an experimental kiln. Phone Tina on 01442 826 223. Please also note that Pitstone is available to members on most days, just call Tina to make arrangements.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## LETTER FROM SPAIN - Sagra Nov. 57

Dear Relatives and Friends,

The weather is a favourite topic of conversation amongst the Spanish, as it is amongst the expatriate English - especially in recent weeks following the dreaded 'gota fria'. Early one Monday evening in October after dropping Jean off in Orba (a village about 4 km. up the valley) for her weekly tap dancing class, I turned in the direction of home to see the whole landscape - the valley, the mountains and the villages nestling in their shadows - completely blacked out. It was as if a giant hand had scribbled it out with a dense layer of charcoal. We had just finished a three day craft fair and it had rained off and on all weekend. This, I thought, was going to be a real Niagara of a downpour and I still had most of our craft work and stall in the back of the van, added to which I wasn't sure if I would be able to get back safely to collect Jean in an hour; cars have been known to be swept off the road in heavy storms.

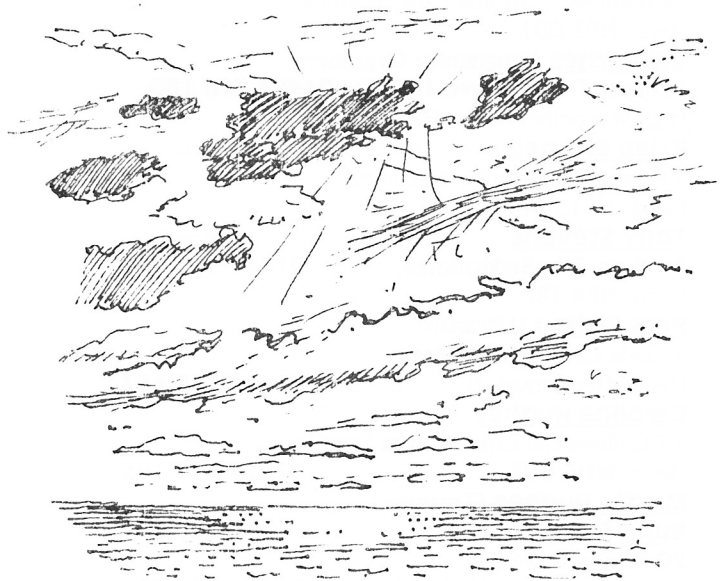


As it happened there was very little rain that night and the following morning was cloudy with bright patches of blue. I was glad as the little art group I am teaching was due to restart after the summer break, a 40 minute journey away near the coast. But in the afternoon the storm broke with a vengeance and very soon the street outside our front door was like a river and washing over the footpaths. The news next day was melancholy. Tragically, several people had lost their lives in Alicante; and in Pego, just across the mountain from us, a retired Englishman had been swept away and his car found 3 km. off, washed up against a bridge. Then, after a period of fine summery weather more storms throughout Spain, early this month, forced hundreds of people out of their homes in Cordoba,

Andalucia and caused more loss of life in Badajoz near the Portuguese border. This was serious enough to be prominently reported on the BBC World Service.

So it is not all sun and sand on the Spanish Costas, and many of our Spanish friends and neighbours have commented on the unseasonably warm weather and the consequent 'payment' in the form of heavy rains. In fact there have generally been more rainy days this year and, flash floods apart, we have been very glad of this. The countryside has never looked greener and more attractive during the normally baked summer months, and the usual 'crop' of fires on the wooded hillsides has been much less.

Still on the subject of the weather: as I drove over one Tuesday morning to teach my art group, the 'landscape' of the sky was astonishingly varied and beautiful. The house where I teach is high on the coastal hills and has a terrace overlooking the sea and a distant view of the Balearics. Fluffy hills of white and silvery-grey cloud, shot through with the deepest blues towered in front of us. Brilliant mares' tails, scudding wisps of white and banks of grey rain cloud in drifting patches; with lower down still some traces of dawn orange/pink streaking the pale turquoise sky low over the horizon.



As we gazed at these delightful shimmering, ephemeral effects I suggested we do some studies of the sky as our morning's work. This was greeted by some moans but they are a willing group and all struggled hard to capture some little bit of the passing show. With some useful work done, I set some 'homework' to produce a painting based on the studies - perhaps rather hastily as I reflected on the way home that I had better do one myself. I often gaze at the variegated patterns of clouds and think that I ought to 'do something about it' (paintwise) but, apart from the occasional pencil notes and oil sketches, I never have. So the crunch has come and I have now been attempting to recreate something of the fleeting moment in an oil painting, but to reduce that immense grandeur to a few square inches of canvas is perhaps an impossible task.

To be continued.

Bob & Jean Sedgley

## SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

**Wanted** - an inexpensive reversible electric wheel in full working order. Phone Marion Franses 0181 346 4512.

**For Sale** - Avery Scales to weigh 5 cwt £150 O.N.O. plus various items of kiln furniture, 40 fire bricks, 5 sheets corrugated iron, all at nominal prices.  
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### DCPG COMMITTEE LIST

**Murray Fieldhouse** (President) 01442-851 229

Northfields Studio, Tring, Herts. HP23 5QW

**Ruth Karnac** (Chair) 01895-631 738

35 Kingsend, Ruislip, Mdx. HA4 7DD

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam** (Vice-Chair & Newsletter)

"Longfield", Bulstrode Lane, 01442-242 332

Felden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 0BP

**John Beckley** (Secretary) 01923-822 659

44 Wolsey Rd., Northwood, Mdx. HA6 2EN

**Digby Stott** (Advertising/Membership) 01442-250 540

"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor,

Herts. HP3 0DJ

**Val Barnes** (Programme Organiser)

"Copper Trees", Cryers Hill Lane, 01494-716 180

High Wycombe, Bucks. HP15 6AA.

**Brian Bicknell** (Pot Crawl) 01494-530 050

41 Coates Lane, High Wycombe,

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**Tony Stevens**

84 Kings Rd., Berkhamsted, 01442-384 861

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**Pam Bishop** (Librarian)

4 Gade Close, Gadebridge,

Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP1 3LH 01442-395 667

**Caroline Hughes**

17 Gallows Hill Lane, Abbots Langley,

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**Martin Hughes** (Treasurer)

**Ruby Sharp**

20 Parkfield Ave.,

Amersham, Bucks. HP3 6BE 01494-728 364

**Shirley Bell**

1 Robin Mead, Welwyn Garden City,

Herts. AL7 1PP. 01707-332 176

**Harry Karnac** (Newsletter sub-ed.) 01895-631 738

\*\*\*\*\*

At the last meeting the committee was delighted to hear that Martin Hughes had agreed to a request to be our treasurer. He and Caroline will do the job between them; Caroline doing the 'hands-on' part and Martin doing the book-keeping. This is sure to be a really satisfactory arrangement and we thank them in advance.

\*\*\*\*\*

### STOP PRESS

The Guild Exhibition will be held at Radlett Library 5th to 17th October.

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All types of insurance for artists and crafts- people, including cover for studios, public liability, exhibitions. Personal cover, i.e. sickness, accident, life and pensions, household, etc. Please call 0171-790 1963. Fax 0171-790 4100.

Phillippa Levy, 19 Louisa St., London, E1 4NF

### OPEN DAY WITH DOUG JONES

### SUNDAY 22nd. MARCH

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14/15 **Throwing** with George Wilson  
21/22 **Pattern & decorative technique** with Paula Gray

*April*

- 25/26 **Porcelain: Colour & Fashion accessories** with Paula Gray

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ceramics : Derek Northfield

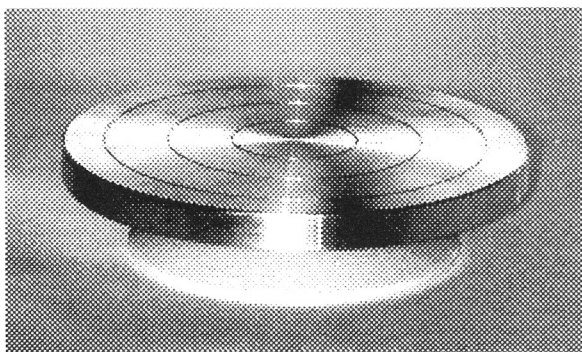
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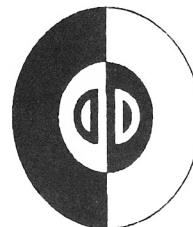
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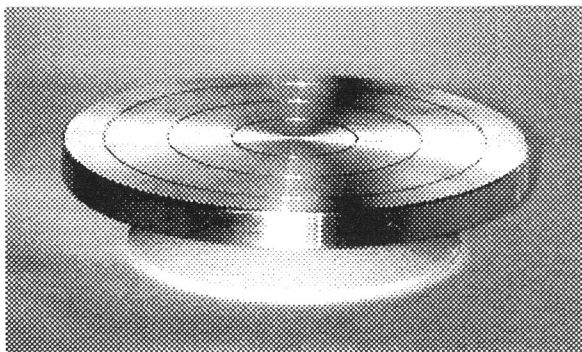
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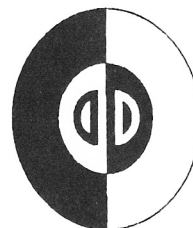
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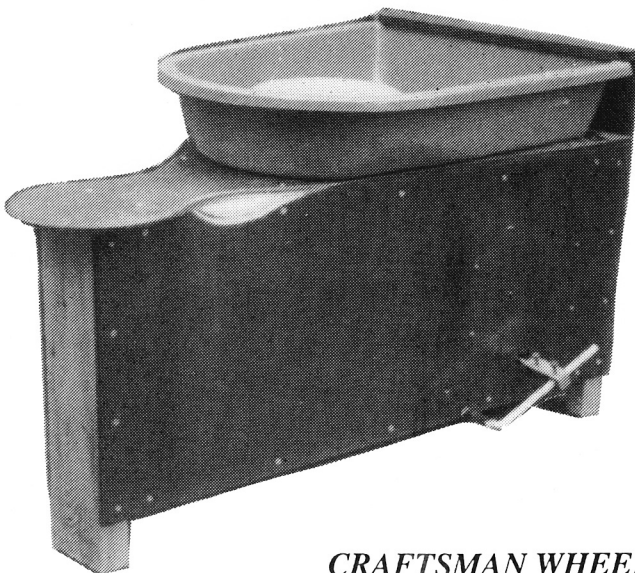
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