



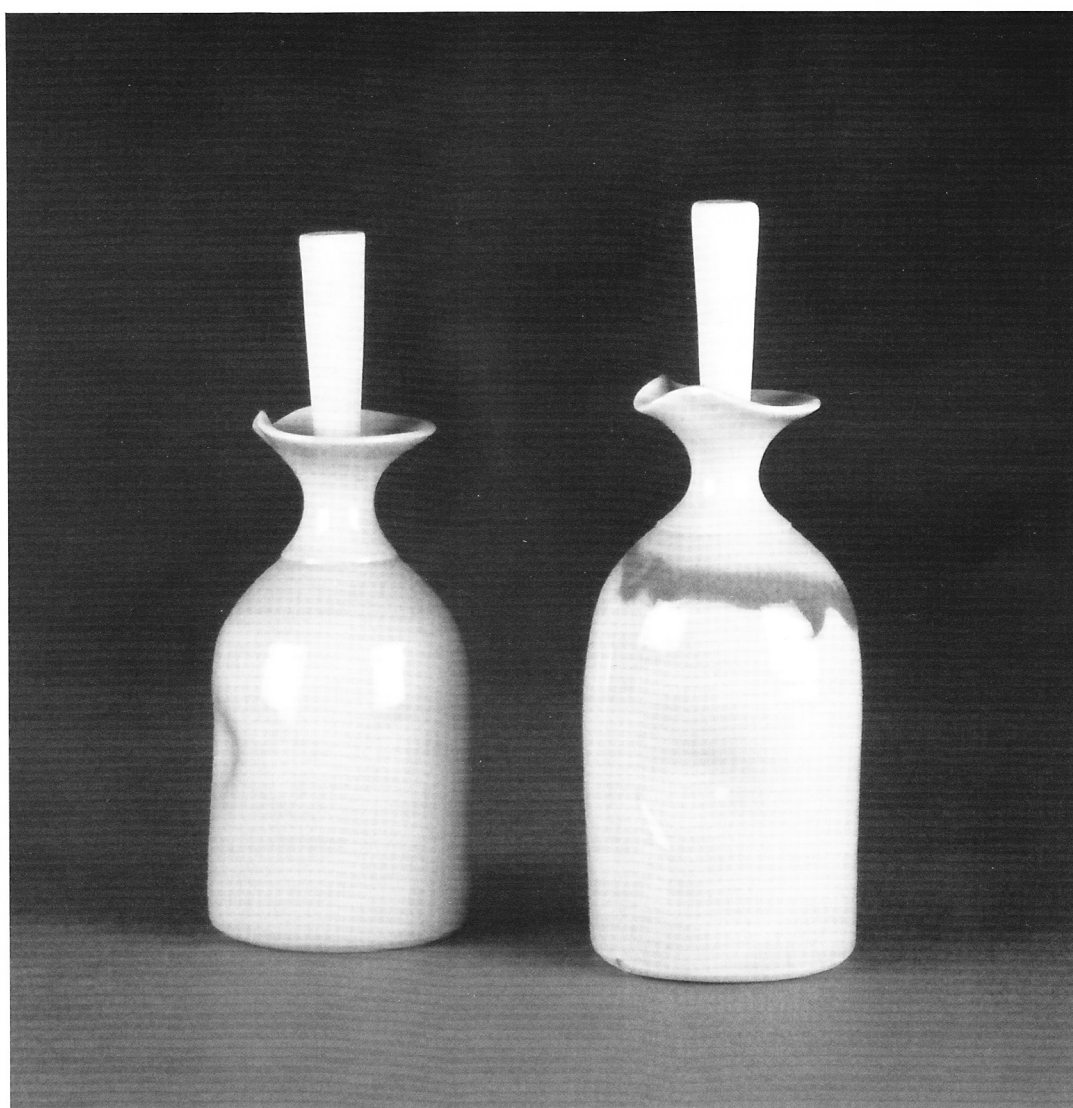
**DACORUM AND  
CHILTERN  
POTTERS GUILD**



**IN THIS ISSUE .....**  
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**JOHN DAWSON DEMONSTRATION**  
**NICK MEMBURY EVENING**



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**NEWSLETTER**  
**SUMMER 1999**  
**£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. Exhibitions, visits and workshops are also organised at various times.

Membership Rates:(as from Oct.1'98) Family - £18.50  
Single - £15.50  
Student - £ 7.50

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 quarterly in February, May, August and September, 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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*Also, now stockists of Earthstone Original at £12.50/25kg and 26 other clays, all at budget prices*

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## **FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH** Two porcelain bottles with stoppers by John Dawson

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### **EDITORIAL**

Currently there is much to look forward to, including the Chiltern Museum event on May 1st, 2nd, 3rd and our Pot Crawl on June 12th and 13th. The Pitstone activities and the Salt Kiln are projects to catch one's interest. Looking further ahead, the Hatfield Festival and our Open Day are already planned, and Val Barnes has our programme of evening meetings organised well into the future.

Your committee assiduously apply themselves to the tasks of arranging these events and meetings, plus support for other guild activities on behalf of you, our members. All we ask is that you support these activities that have been arranged, so come on, now is the time to get involved.

Editor

### **FUTURE GUILD EVENTS**

### **Pitstone Open Days 1999**

The Pitstone group will meet on the following Sundays: June 13th, July 11, August 8th, Sept.12th.

Do come and join us if you can, for a day of Raku any Guild members or visitors. Please phone Jan Kent on 01908 674051, or drop him a line (address in Committee list p.12).

One of the current projects at this site is to convert an electric kiln to gas firing. This is another opportunity to learn something worthwhile and to participate in an interesting project. Our Pitstone organiser, Jan Kent, will be delighted to hear from you, so do give him a ring.

Some time ago, we appealed for pots to support the Pitstone activities. Our thanks to those of you who followed up on this. Doug Jones supplied biscuit fired pots for the Raku firings and Ruth Karnac, Susan Busse, Rena Green and Geoff Parr gave us some pots to sell at the Pitstone Open Days, the object being to raise some money to help the Pitstone Museum and History Society.

Guild meetings are held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall unless otherwise stated.

**Fri. May 14th at 8 p.m.:** MARTA DONAGHEY of Contemporary Ceramics will talk about displaying and selling pots, including setting up an exhibition.

**Wed. June 16th at 8 p.m.:** Video showings and social evening (greatly enjoyed by those who came last year). An excellent opportunity for new and newish members to meet their fellow potters and committee members.

**Fri. Sept.10th at 8 p.m.:** PETER ILSLEY - Crystalline glazes on porcelain.

Some other important dates for your diaries !!!

**June 12th/13th: Pot Crawl** (form enclosed with this Newsletter). Brian Bicknell has now completed his programme and once again has set up an outstanding tour for us.

**Aug.6th/7th/8th: Art in Clay at Hatfield House** (form enclosed with this Newsletter). For those newcomers to pottery fairs, this is a very important one and attracts professional potters from all over the country. If you help at our stand, you get in free with the added opportunity of seeing the whole show. We need you for Chiltern too on the same terms, so come forward, be part of the larger craft community and have a great experience.

**Sept.26th: Paul Scott Workshop** (form enclosed with this Newsletter)

**Sat. Nov.13th: Our very own annual Open Day** Once more we will have a prestigious line-up of top demonstrators making this, as usual, day out not to be missed. This time you'll have to set your alarms a bit earlier - we're starting at 9 a.m.- well, you can always go straight to bed when you get home!

### **CRAFT FAIR AT THE CHILTERN OPEN AIR MUSEUM CHALFONT ST. GILES, BUCKS.**

Saturday 1st/Sunday 2nd/Monday 3rd May, 1999.



### **CHILTERN CRAFT FAIR**

*Support your Guild with practical help*

*More volunteers needed - **DO IT NOW***

*Phone Ruby on 01494 728 364 (evenings)*

**We are committed to this event, so we must carry it through; we need you to give a little of your time.**

## OTHER EVENTS

### **Bucks Pottery and Sculpture Society**

21st May - Mary Orrom - Sculpture at Little Kingshill Village Hall, Great Missenden.

11th June - Mark Fraser - Throwing Stoneware. Venue as above.

22nd Sept - Andrew Watts - Throwing at Chorley Wood Arts Centre.

### **West Country Potters Festival**

June 19th - 20th. Details from Mark Donaldson 01769 540 471.

### **Chinese Pots of the Yuan and Early Ming Dynasties**

Victoria & Albert Museum. June 3rd - Nov. 28th '99

Study day Wed. June 23rd 10 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

£40; Concessions £34;

Students on state funded courses £15.

(Incl. morning coffee, sandwich lunch and afternoon tea)

### **7th International Potters Festival**

July 2nd - 4th. Details from Int.Potters Festival, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DE. Phone 01970 622 882

### **Art in Action**

July 15th - 18th at Waterperry

The **EELES FAMILY** are having a series of exhibitions throughout the year until December to celebrate David Eeles' 50 years as a potter. The family pottery is at Mosterton, Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3HN. Tel 01308 868257 for more details.

**HARRY HORLOCK STRINGER** is moving house and has the following to give to members of our Guild:

Powdered North Devon ball clay; Moira; Onx fire clay; Leighton Buzzard sand; Red earthenware; a mixed selection of other clays. Anyone who would like any of these, please telephone Val Barnes (01494 716180), who will compile a list of names and telephone numbers to be passed on to Harry.

### **CAVEAT EMPTOR**

*The following extract has been reproduced from the February issue of the Westcountry Potters Association Newsletter, with the permission of the author, Michael Gaitskell. Michael had previously asked (through the pages of our own and other Newsletters) for potters to send details of problems arising from materials used, together with evidence of the difficulties.*

Many readers will remember my appeal to fellow-potters about a year ago to contact me if they had experienced problems with clay, and bloating in particular. I did

receive a response from potters all over the country and it is now time for a conclusive update on the situation.

First I must apologise that it has become such a protracted business. I must be honest and admit that, having identified and eliminated the cause of bloating I experienced, I was not sufficiently insistent with Potclays for some action. I had sent them samples for analysis some months ago and received no reply or any results from them at all. As we all know too well, it is always up to the customer to take any action.

However, the opportunity to take matters further presented itself when the CPA arranged an open forum discussion at their Bloxham Christmas market in December, to which I made a point of going. Some 70 potters were gathered to question directly our clay suppliers in public. For these suppliers, and Potclays in particular, it was presumed to be quite a grilling occasion, bearing in mind the considerable criticism voiced by several potters, Peter Beard especially. Here is a summary of the discussion with some conclusions.

Mick Casson chaired the meeting and introduced the clay suppliers. Peter Stokes of Commercial Clays, Allen Ault of Valentines, Reg Griggs of Clayman - all of whom advertise in *Ceramic Review* - and an understandably anxious Harry Fraser of Potclays, Ltd. As chief 'defendant', he was on his feet most of the time. With the use of slides, he explained the historical background (some 40 years) and technical production of Potclays clays. In particular, he described their fireclay mine, where they had recently won an unfortunate and expensive legal battle with the local authority to continue their rights of mineral extraction: a cause with which all potters have some sympathy. He then explained the difference between pan-mill and sliphouse clay production and then came a peculiar slide ... it was a diagrammatic illustration of the sliphouse process with the various stages from filtering to the storage tanks and eventual pugging, drawn in vertical sequence. However, to the right of this illustration was the word 'grog' with a question mark, linked with an arrow that completely bypassed the mixing and filtering system until pugging stage.

As many of you will know, I had identified problems of bloating with Potclays grog, so this illustration prompted an immediate question from me to Harry Fraser. What was the grog doing on its own and was not the question mark indicative of the whole doubt about the quality of fireclay grog?!

Without boring you too much with technical detail, Harry Fraser plausibly explained the difficulty of introducing grog simultaneously with the rest of the clays, because the heavier particles would settle out, producing an unblended body. However, the very fact that grog was treated separately, and was unwashed despite being potentially contaminated with lime from various sources, emphasised potters' suspicions that the cause of bloating and lime-spitting was grog.



The questions and ensuing discussion centred on lime-spitting and it became clear that it is a problem that is difficult to solve. There is no easy solution like washing with water, let alone sulphuric acid! The causes and cases of lime-spitting were varied and random: a clay would cause lime-spitting problems with one potter but not with another. Old kiln bricks had been used as a source of grog, but now clean new material as supplied to the refractory industry is used, but nevertheless some potters are still experiencing lime-spitting and bloating.

To cut a long story short, although Peter Stokes and Allen Ault both said their clays were free from any causes of lime-spitting, they could not guarantee that it would never occur.

One conclusion reached as a result of the form was Caveat Emptor - buyer beware. We potters all depend on good quality materials to make beautiful creations, but these materials whether grog or anything else may vary by nature or by circumstance. The former is inevitable - every care should be taken to avoid the latter. It is incumbent on all of us who use clay to test materials if we wish to avoid problems. Just to give an example. I was discussing potash feldspar with a potter well known for his technical knowledge and he told me that he had acquired samples of potash feldspar from three different sources, all showing the same typical analysis. His results, when including the feldspar in identical glaze recipes, were markedly different. In a recent WPA Newsletter under Potter's Tips, Mark Donaldson provides a very useful method for glaze calculation, based on typical analyses of materials. But before rushing to mix up all those wonderful glazes, how do you know that the feldspar that you may have bears much relation to the typical analysis? Theory is a valuable tool, but no substitute for testing and empirical evidence.

A second conclusion reached at the formal discussion is for the material suppliers to test frequently their materials and to provide their buyers with accurate and updated analyses. Reliable data of raw materials, in conjunction with accurate methods of measuring and mixing clay and glazes, would at least enable us to attempt some consistent results.

But what if we experience material problems even after using an accurate analysis and testing? Say for example, it transpired that transport used to convey clay had previously been used to carry limestone chippings and possibly contaminated materials being transported? Who is going to be responsible for liability? There was no conclusion on this issue at the meeting. Several potters complained that they had lost work worth thousands of pounds. We mostly work in small individual concerns and can scarcely bear such financial losses, let alone the cost of a legal dispute with an uncertain outcome. A clay company with a turnover many times greater than a potter's would be much better situated to bear the cost. Equipped with a good insurance policy, clay suppliers should either replace faulty materials or reimburse losses when presented with incontrovertible evidence. Failing

that it might be at least possible to achieve a 50/50 compromise in good British tradition, whereby maker and supplier recognise that they each bear half the cost. This is better than nothing at all which seems to be the present situation, and most companies are only too aware of maintaining customer loyalty in the face of competition.

In conclusion, I regret that I am not able to tell you that all losses will immediately be reimbursed or any such outcome! An Open Forum was useful but unlikely to produce a definite result, however I shall be pursuing personal compensation.

Well enough of all this now. Thank you to all those who did respond. Back to real potting with the perennial necessity to seek the most reliable material suppliers and to test regularly.

**Michael Gaitskell**  
Tel: 01643 841297

**SLIPWARE AND WOODFIRING COURSE**  
with Vicky and Michael Eden

**Sunday evening 18th July - Sat. morning 24th July**

The course is designed to introduce and develop slipware skills with the added attraction of a woodfiring. Both novices and experienced makers are welcome.

Cost: £145.00

For full details please write to Vicky & Michael Eden,  
Parkside, Hale, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7BL or 'phone  
0 1 5 3 9 5 6 2 3 4 2, or e-mail  
Mike@edenpottery.freemove.co.uk

**THROWN PORCELAIN WARE - JOHN DAWSON'S**  
**SLIDE SHOW AND DEMONSTRATION**

We were privileged to have a slide presentation and demonstration by John Dawson on our Friday evening meeting on 12th March.

John had done some ceramic work in New Zealand before he came to England in the 1970s with the intention of studying the harpsichord and organ at the Trinity College of Music. After completing his studies at Trinity College, his desire to return to working with clay was still very strong and he took a post-graduate diploma course in ceramics at Goldsmith's College.

After working as a ceramics technician and tutor and exhibiting at the Chelsea Craft Fair he was selected to become a professional member of the C.P.A.

John feels that his work in ceramics has strong parallels with his work as a professional musician. The Baroque music he favours has a relatively simple form where the theme of a few notes is embellished or decorated to enhance the music, and it was often up to the

performer to extemporise his ideas, emotions and feelings with embellishments. He has also used porcelain clay to express these feelings. For instance, a simple bowl is made and then altered to give the impression of movement.

### THE SLIDES

One of his first slides was of a grasshopper and he showed us how the profile of the body line of that grasshopper was used to make a bowl with the same profile.

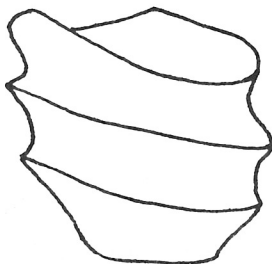
He had experimented with distortion and showed us slides of pots he had decorated with copper oxide and then fired to 1280°C in a saggar with reduction effects. He obtained distortion on some bowls by blow-torching the rims. He had made strong bases on these pots with thinner upper parts that he could distort.

In his early work he often used a high alumina matt glaze, sometimes with a fine spray of copper red glaze which produced some very nice subtle effects. In this work he used sprayed glaze because his porcelain was too thin for dipping.

He experimented with agate ware, and to get very thin walls on his work he biscuit fires the work to 900°C and then polishes it with coarse (say 600 grade) wet and dry sandpaper.

### CLAY

When he was at Goldsmith's College he used David Leach porcelain clay. After that he used Audrey Blackman clay which is very good for throwing, but he found could sometimes produce spiral cracking. He now uses a 50/50 mix of Audrey Blackman clay (very white) with Limoges clay (not pure white) and finds this mixture good for throwing. To make coloured clay he mixes 100 grams of pigment with one kilogram of clay. His pots are generally translucent.



### DISTORTION

He often throws a pot on the wheel and then, while it is still on the wheel, pulls it towards him to get distortion.

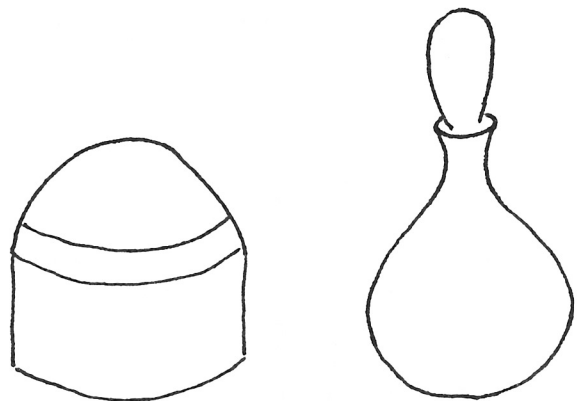
Sometimes after throwing a pot he squeezes it between his thumb and forefinger to get distortion.

### GLAZES

He often puts a blue Celadon glaze (a blue/green colour) on the inside of his pots. Sometimes he puts a design in wax resist on top of the glaze to get an interesting design.

### HIS DEMONSTRATIONS

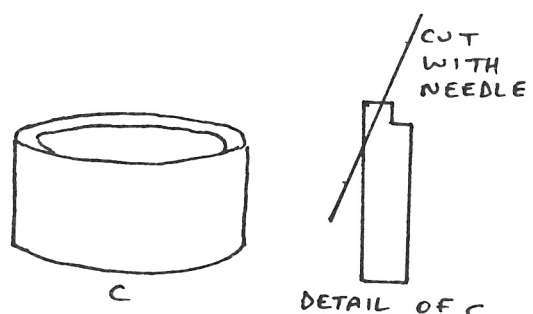
First demonstration: He demonstrated throwing a box with a lid. When throwing it, he compresses the clay as much as possible and initially raises it in a cone, and not vertically, to avoid losing the shape. The top of the box is then closed and he cuts in a groove (not right through the clay) to visually separate the lid from the base.



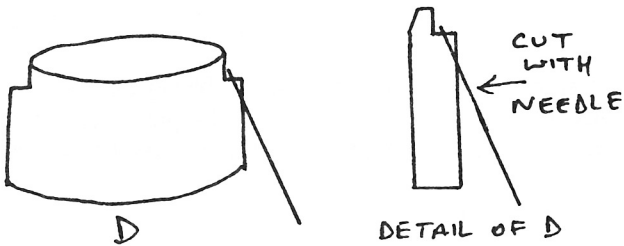
When the pot is leather-hard he cuts through the previous groove made in the pot to separate the pot and the lid. He then chamfers off the inner corner of the rim of the pot with a needle.



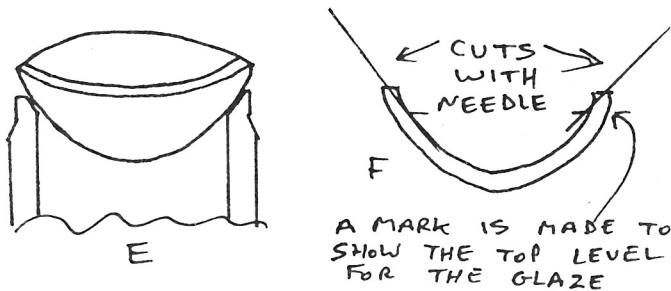
He also chamfers off the lower outer edge of the groove with a needle.



The lid is now put upside down on the base of the pot and levelled.

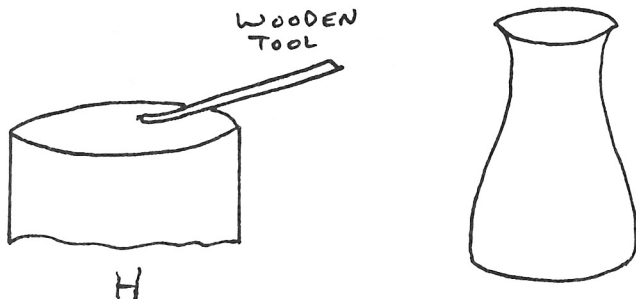


The glaze is put in the inside of the lid up to the above mark with a bulb dropper. It is then removed by sucking it up with a bulb dropper.

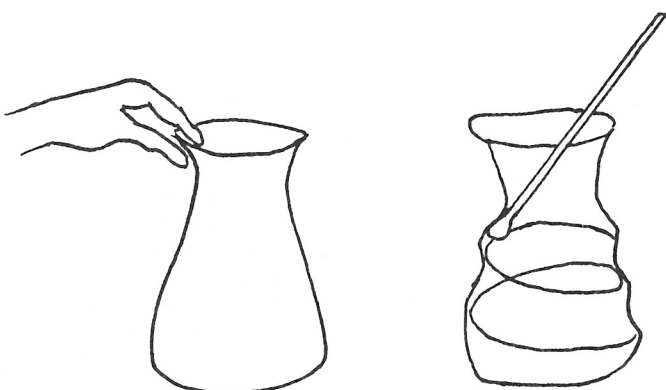


The base of the pot is compressed with a wooden tool while the pot is rotated on the wheel to avoid the base splitting as it dries. The pot is put on paper to dry.

Second demonstration: Typical distortion of a pot.



In stage A above, the pot is thrown normally on a wheel. In stage B, he pinches the top of the pot to distort it.



At stage C while the pot is still on the wheel and the clay is wet, he uses a stick with a rounded end inside the pot to gently press out the spiral as the stick is pulled upwards and the wheel is rotated slowly.

### FIRING

All of John's work is fired in a gas fired reduction kiln. He biscuit fires the work to 900°C and his final firing is up to 1300°C.

John's advice on handling porcelain was useful and much appreciated. We all enjoyed his slide presentation and admired his skill in producing such fine porcelain ware. We are grateful to him for coming to talk and demonstrate to us.

John Beckley

### BOOK REVIEW

**The Potter's Questions and Answer Book - Gill Bliss.**  
A&C.Black, London £19.99 ISBN 0-7136-5104-0

A highly illustrated book with colour plates throughout, it is suitable for ceramic students and new potters. Tools and equipment, materials, handbuilding, throwing, decoration, glazing, firing, form, function and design are all included.

As the title suggests, questions are raised on every page, e.g. "I am learning to throw, can you suggest some tools to buy?" By half way through the book another question shows that the reader has progressed and asks "I tried to turn down the rim of a pot to form a gallery, without success. How do I make this sort of lid fitment?" Another question, "I have some powdered enamels, how do I prepare them?"

An interesting book to check on your own acquired skills. It is easy to read and, with the many illustrations, a helpful resource when things go wrong.

One observation I have made from reading the book is that Gill Bliss's hands are always clean except in two illustrations of how to apply glaze to a pot. My question would be "how do you keep them so clean?"

An informative and friendly book, well set out and handy to have around the studio. Yes, I will buy it.

Ronnie Powell

### NOTEBOOK

"The joke was on me"

On 12th March, we had a very enjoyable demonstration from John Dawson. Since it was 'Red Nose Day' I proposed that we should have a raffle, the proceeds to go to Comic Relief. The response was enthusiastically received, with John donating a jug for us. Val Barnes found the tickets and they were duly sold to anyone who could be persuaded to part with a suitable sum of money, including me.

Well, I am sure that you have guessed what happened; yes, that's right - to my acute embarrassment, I had the winning ticket. Having already told everyone, in jocular tone, that I had every intention of taking the prize if I was lucky enough to win, I received the jug with a rather red face.

However, the jug is a welcome addition to our collection and Comic Relief has now received the £30 that we raised from the raffle.

### Picasso, Hit or Miss?

Most people who visited the recent exhibition of pots decorated by Picasso were enthusiastic and full of praise. (I missed this event due to a range of other activities getting in the way, so cannot express an opinion). I did, however, receive one article entitled "Picasso at his pottiest", by Brian Sewell, which appeared in the *Evening Standard* during October '98. In the article Brian was less than flattering about this phase of work, summing up as follows: "When the old man's joke is told about 200 times we see how thin it is, his pots are not works of art but tedious, obsessive, self-admiring, stale, degraded, sad and humiliating banalities by an old goat who had long since lost the undeniable genius of his youth".

We have already published one article in the Newsletter praising the exhibition, what did you think?

Editor

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

At the time of writing (26/3/99) we have another new member, **Pam Bell**, who lives at Wingrave, Bucks. Pam is retired and her interests in pottery are very wide. She is particularly interested in making items inspired by nature.

Editor

Wanted for May/June Raku potters to exhibit their work with two other potters in thriving gallery in Chepstow, South Wales. I am also looking for a potter who makes birds/fish/organic forms, etc. for September/October. Any other potters who make other types of ware and would like a sales outlet in a new area for 2000, please send me details of their work.

E-mail [angie.sayer@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:angie.sayer@ukonline.co.uk) or write to Angie Sayer, Woodside, 26 The Kymin, Monmouth NP5 3SD.

### THE SALT GLAZE KILN (Northfields)

New members may not know that some Guild members have been engaged on building a gas fired salt glazing kiln at Northfields Studio.

Currently the kiln is in the final stages of construction and Paul Rowbottom, the team leader, needs a few more

volunteers to help with the last details. The planned dates are Saturday 24th April and Saturday 8th May, with a firing date to be announced soon after that.

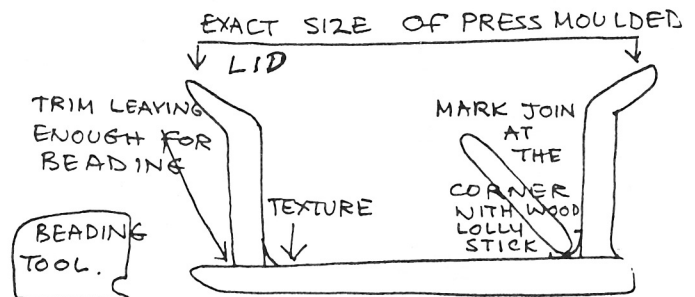
The Guild has been involved in many projects over the years and this will be the second salt kiln built at Northfields (the home of our President, Murray Fieldhouse). A major part of these activities is the learning process that the team goes through when helping with such a project, so if you have an interest, please phone Paul (01923 263 032) and 'Get involved'.

### NICK MEMBURY EVENING FEBRUARY 12th 1999

Freda Earl has sent us the following illustrated summary of the demonstrations Nick gave.

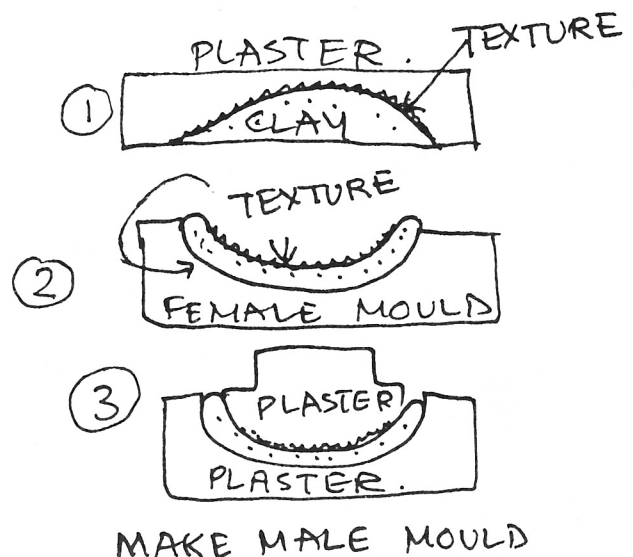
#### Butter dish

450 grams of Valentines HT clay for 250 gram butter dish. The basic shape was thrown without a base, throwing lines smoothed away and a line incised to accent the rim. Next, it was pulled into a rectangular form before becoming leather hard. A base was rolled out and joined to the body of the pot using slurry applied with a toothbrush. The base was cut generously, to leave sufficient clay to form a bead, using a suitable tool. When drying the pot, with a soft base, the base is made slightly concave.

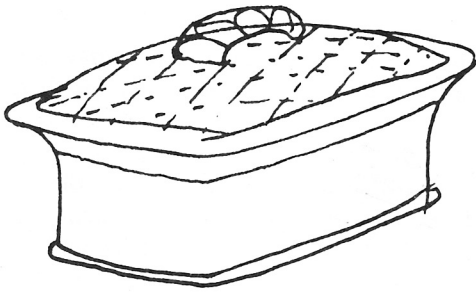


#### Lid

To use the mould, roll out clay on to a cloth and then lay it into the mould. Press in with fingers, paying attention to beading. Bang in the male mould to mark the inside of the lid with texture. Put handle on last.

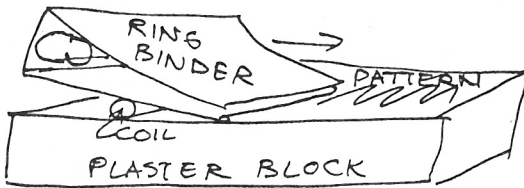






#### Handles

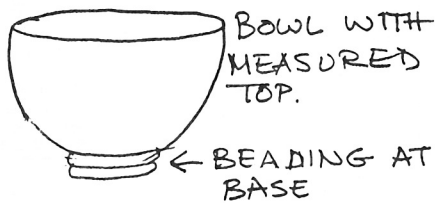
Roll coils: Nick uses plain handles on texture surfaces and vice versa. He used a spare ring binder to transfer the pattern by rolling as shown (the ring binder is not essential but was found to give good results). Push the ends of the handle together to emphasis the pattern.



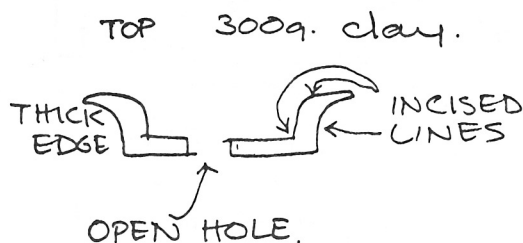
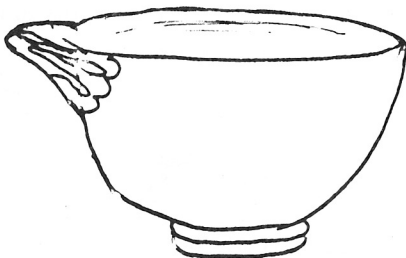
#### Lemon squeezer

420 grams clay.

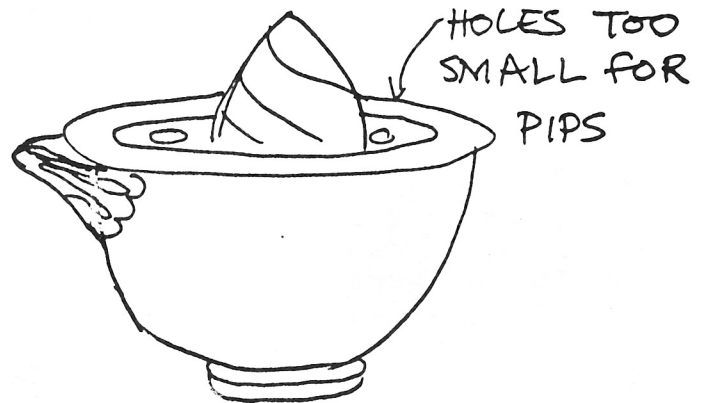
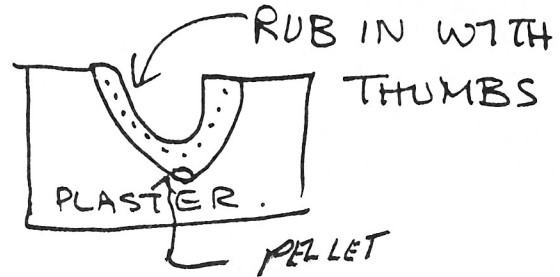
Make bowl with measured top, beading at base



Make a decorative lip by pressing it into a mould after pulling.



The centre is made by pressing a small pinch pot into a mould. A tiny pellet of clay is put in first to avoid an airlock at the pointed base. The centre section is then added to the top and holes are cut to allow the juice, but not the pips, through.



Glaze:

Potash Felspar	5
Whiting	1
China clay	3
Talc	1

Plus cobalt to colour blue

Freda Earl

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## **CORRESPONDENCE**

(Letter to the Editor from the Potters Guild of Nizhni Novgorod dated March 11th '99)

Dear Mervyn,

Thank you very much for your letter with kindly given for us your Newsletter and information about Fairs and Festivals. But most important for us that you kindly have responded to our letter. It is very touching.

Certainly our Guild hasn't so much members as your Guild (we have about 20 members). We have some feature for membership in Guild, all of us are potters only and everyone works by pottery wheel only. The majority of members make earthenware in folk traditions of our Nizhni Novgorod Region (population is about 5 million, 1.6 million citizens live in Nizhni Novgorod City), but during 70 years with communists, all traditions are destroyed and now it is very difficult to find information about ones.

And we haven't any experience on creation Organisation for craftsmen. I hope very much for your prompt the systems of the organisation and the activity of your Guild. Would you like to inform me how and whence do you take money for your Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild (payments, sponsors....?) Unfortunately we haven't an economic basis for making a printing information about us and our work in contrast to us, but we want to do one's utmost for prosperity our Guild.

Some potters of them teach ceramics for children and students. Many potters in our region use a technique "black wood-fired" for firing, because I'm sending you a copy of the article of 19<sup>th</sup> century about this technique and ancient Pottery Handicraft of Nizhni Novgorod Region. Maybe it will be interesting for you. What would you say for my offer to change photos the work of our members.

Yours sincerely,  
(Andrew Karmanov).

The following translation was sent to us by Andrew Karmanov who thought this document, with the fascinating social word picture it paints, would be of interest to our members. We are very grateful to Andrew for this work and have reproduced it here substantially as we received it, with corrections only added for clarity.

Editor.

## **CERAMICS IN THE VILLAGE OF BOLSHOYE KAZARINOVO.**

Reprinted from "NIZHEGORODSKKY SBORNIK" vol.X 1890

### Situation and population

Bolshoye Kazarinovo is situated in rural district Apraksinskaya at 57.6 km from the town of Sergach. It is near the border between Sergach and Lukyanov Areas and no more than 3.2 km from the big merchant village Boldino, in which our poet Alexander Pushkin lived for

some time .

On one side Kazarinovo borders on the left bank of the Azanka river that flows into a somewhat wider one, the Cheka river. The latter runs at a distance of 1 km on the opposite side of Kazarinovo. The described village Kazarinovo is relatively small, it consists of 120 houses only with 110 houseowners; the available population is 325 males and 302 females.

### General Characteristic of the Craft

Bolshoye Kazarinovo is known all through the neighbourhood to be a centre of pottery. All the earthenware necessary for the local people in their housekeeping is manufactured here. Indeed, in Kazarinovo almost all the peasants are potters and only few are not occupied with the craft. The potters in the village number 107 families, where 159 men and 72 juniors are engaged in the job, all of them working independently. They begin their work differently: some start in September, others in October, so on the average the beginning of the work falls in the middle of September. In April the job begins to be interrupted for field work and to the close of June it is ended. (From June it continues in some 3 to 5 houses, one potter working in each). So, the summer season lasting a month and a half we have 8 working months or 176 days a year. Other than pottery and certain secondary, agricultural jobs, the inhabitants have no other occupation or employment.

### History of the Craft

The appearance of pottery in this region is nowhere mentioned or referred to. So, it has supposedly existed here from time out of record or, as the local peasants put it, "from time beyond memory and out of mind". The causes for its appearance were quite probably the diligent character of the local peasants and the abundance of raw material necessary for pottery. Besides, the permanent need of the local population for earthenware was also quite a contributory factor. Hence, the manufactured crockery met a ready and profitable sale which in its turn urged the peasants of Kazarinovo to have a greater number of potters in their village. All this sounds quite convincing because there is not a single village in the vicinity or even in the whole of Sergach area where this craft is or has been practiced. Apparently and up to now, this craft it seems, has neither changed nor been hindered and has proceeded free of any unexpected turn, or influence.

### Economic Conditions

The Emancipation from Serfdom left the community of Bolshoye Kazarinovo with a deed of land allotment. This allotment consists of 271.07 hectares of arable land and of 10.9 ha of meadow land. An allotment *per capita* is to consist of 0.182 ha in each field, to that under the three-field system it equals 0.546 ha. At the age of 18 the peasant is levied a tax and at 20 he is levied another one. Until the age of 60, each peasant has 2 allotments *per capita*, i.e. 1.09 ha. At the age of 60 the second tax is removed and till death only one tax remains (0.546 ha). Some 12 years ago [1878] the former local landowner offered the peasants the land for perpetual

tenure at 32.1 roubles a ha, on an instalment plan. For some reason the Community did not accept the offer and preferred to take 3271 ha on lease for 12 years at 6.19 roubles per ha a year. At present on expiry of lease, the owner to whom the land has passed does not agree to lease it at the old price. Now the peasants well realise their mistake for the price has increased more than twice and they can neither afford to buy the land nor are they disposed to continue paying the rent. The livestock in the village consist of up to 70 cows, 130 horses, 209 sheep, 80 pigs and 5 goats.

Speaking about the quality of the land in Bolshoye Kazarinovo one should note that the prevailing soil here is black earth (*chernozem* in Russian). And that is why the crops here are usually more bounteous than in many other local villages. But on the whole, the economic conditions of Bolshoye Kazarinovo leave much to be desired and the village should be not regarded as rich.

### External Situation and the methods of the craft

#### Premises

In Bolshoye Kazarinovo, in contrast to many other villages where pottery is practised, no special premises for the job are arranged. A potter usually works in a cottage (an *izbu* in Russian). In summer, to avoid the heat, he takes his few tools and changes for the corridor (*seniy* in Russian) where it is cool and fresh. In its structure the cottage the potter works in, differs from a usual one only in its somewhat greater height and in the presence of shelves and a comparatively big stove. The shelves (squared timber beams), used to dry the earthenware on, are situated on the walls and close to the ceiling. To build such a cottage of usual dimensions cost a peasant 200 roubles; it will serve for about 20 years with about 3 roubles a year for repairs. The number of these premises corresponds to the number of potters in the village and is equal to 107. None of the cottages has any ventilation, and it is not necessary, indeed, for the earthenware is dried in heat and heat is sensitive to any ventilation. Each cottage makes room for 3 to 5 workers.

#### Devices

The basic device in pottery is a kiln used for baking earthenware. In Bolshoye Kazarinovo kilns are built in a manner far simpler than in some other villages, therefore follows below a description of their construction. To begin constructing a kiln, a pit is dug about 2.13m deep and 1.78m in diameter (usually the pit is dug in a hillock that has deliberately been spread over so that its height will be equal to that of the kiln). At the bottom of the pit a small round stove is built of brick 45cm high and about 0.71m in diameter. This stove slightly widens upwards and its surface (ceiling) is a brick gate with square orifices, each side of the orifices reaching 13.35cm. Over the grate a (one row-) cylinder is bricked about 1.5 to 1.7m high and 1.0 to 1.2m. in diameter.

The space between the cylinder's walls and the pit is filled up with clay that is thoroughly trampled down and thus makes a dense layer. In one side of the stove a hole is made to put firewood through. To build a kiln takes about 400 to 500 bricks usually bought in the

neighbouring village of Kistenyovo (5.34km away) at 70 kopecks a hundred.

To protect the kiln from the wind it is fenced, while some potters prefer to surround it by poles onto which a tent is fastened when it is windy. As a rule, homeowners build kilns themselves in their kitchen gardens. To build a kiln costs them 3 to 4 roubles and it usually serves for an indefinitely long time (sometimes 40 to 50 years). Yearly repairs (usually it is mending the grate that is damaged 4 to 7 times a year) costs them 40 to 60 kopecks. In Bolshoye Kazarinova there are 10 kilns, each owned by 10 or 11 homeowners. They attend and look after their kiln collectively but heat it individually, each with his own firewood.

#### Tools and Instruments

Tools and instruments used in pottery are wheels, wooden knives, polishers and a wet cloth. They are described by many authors (e.g. I.P.Yagodinsky in his article "Domestic Crafts in Balakhna Area", q.v. 'Trudy Komissii' [Proceedings of the Committee] PartIX, p.2490), therefore it will suffice here to note that they are made by the potters themselves, costing them no more than 1 rouble and serve indefinitely.

#### Material

The described manufacture uses the so-called dark-blue clay. The hill situated on the right bank of the Azanka river at a distance of no more 1.07km from Bolshoye Kazarinovo abounds in this sort of clay lying here at a depth of 2.84m. The clay is dug all the year round but mostly in winter because in summer earth falls easily that prevents from digging from the side, while in winter the digging face is 2.84 to 3.56m wide. The dug clay is carried home in horse-carts and is piled by the shed or barn. Then the clay is fenced to keep the poultry off. To avoid drying, the clay is watered from time to time (which certainly takes place in summer only). A year's store of clay for one worker is 25 to 30 cartfuls.

#### Methods

Before the beginning of the work it is necessary to prepare some clay. This is done in the following way. A certain amount (about 26.4 l.) of the clay is taken from the general pile and is put onto a stone plate 0.71m in diameter. (These plates are purchased in the neighbouring Lukyanov area at a price of 3 to 5 roubles a plate and they serve for 5 to 10 years). Then the clay is watered a little. After this comes kneading, usually done by an axe head. Then the clay is rolled up into a piece and is kneaded once more. This operation is repeated 2 to 3 times till the clay is free from clots and resembles thick dough. Then the dressed clay is taken to the working place. In winter to avoid freezing, before kneading the clay is taken into the cottage and is put on the stove in a trough made of boards. After thawing, the clay is kneaded in the same cottage where the plate has also been taken to for the winter season. All this work does not require any special skill and is therefore done mostly by the juniors. The clay ready and prepared, the main part of the job is proceeded to. For this the worker separates

a certain portion of the clay, the quantity depending on the size of the dish he is going to make and rolls it in to a cylinder, one end of which he taps by his fist to the centre of the wheel that is powdered with some ash. Thus the base of the dish is made. Now, using the clay left in his hand, the worker directs the brim, at the same time turning the wheel with his left hand, so that on the wheel appears a low little cap of clay. Then the worker rolls up another cylinder, joins the end to the above mentioned cap and starts turning the wheel. The cylinder is meanwhile being flattened by his hand into a plate that is then stuck onto the brim. With the help of his hands, the potter now raises the brim and thus gives the dish the desired shape. The shape of the dish achieved, the worker starts scraping (smoothing) the dish from the outside using a wooden knife. After this, the wheel turning on, he touches the walls of the dish with the sharp edge of the knife. The dish is being turned and hence is becoming appreciably thinner. Then, touching the dish's walls from inside and outside with a wet cloth, he obtains their absolute smoothness. Now he proceeds to working on the brim: one hand with some wet cloth in it holds the brim, while the other turns the wheel. The hand with the cloth presses the brim little by little towards the outside. This makes the brim bend and finally stick to the outside wall of the dish so that its upper part is already down (like bent brims of felt galoshes, etc.). If the dish is to have a handle (e.g. a jug), the potter takes a little piece of clay and puts it onto the suitable place from the inside, so that on the outside there appears a prominence. Then by his finger he works on it and sticks it to the wall, and now the handle is ready. Then the potter takes the dish carefully and places it on one of the squared timber shelves, called beams, to dry out there for 4 to 5 days. After this, on the outside of the dish light stripes are marked by a small polished stone (a polisher). Then the dish is put on the stove where it dries completely for 4 to 5 days (to quicken the process of drying, the cottage is heated with no ventilation at all, so that the heat in the upper part of the cottage is very high). The dish completely dried is taken to the kiln. When a lot of about 100 to 150 dishes (of middle size) is collected they place the dishes into the kiln and little by little begin to kindle the stove. When the dishes are heated quite enough they make the fire greater. Mixed with the smoke the flame passes through the grate and its tongues embrace the dishes in curls thus vitrifying them by the firing process. The firemouth is closed off and, with the kiln and dishes inside, is heaped with a mixture of earth and shards. This condition of the kiln lasts for about 6 to 8 hours. Then the kiln is dug up, the dishes are pulled out (using a stick with a nail on one end) and are taken home. During the process of firing the light brown colour of the dishes turns into a dark-ashy, bluish one, the stripes marked by the polisher remain and become darker, shinier. A yearly stock of firewood an average family needs for kilning is about 15 cartfuls that at a price of 60 kopecks a cartful comes to 9 roubles. Firewood is usually bought in the vicinity of Yaza (Boldino) that is situated in Lukoyanov area, at a distance of about 16 km from Kazarinovo. Losses during firing are 20 to 30 per cent.

### Finished articles

In the village of Bolshoye Kazarinovo they manufacture only blue pottery, with no glaze, while at the neighbouring markets there is usually a rich choice of glazed pottery offered by merchants from other areas. A few years ago in an attempt to raise the quality of the goods and to make them less monotonous the local peasants tried to glaze their pottery too. For this a master was at once sent for from the village of Bogorodskoye, Gorbatov area, where pottery is one of a number of other prospering crafts there. To begin with the master decided to glaze a few dishes of local make. He did his best, but alas! During the firing the glaze burnt away and, to the great disappointment of the public, the dishes left the kiln as dark-blue as before. So, the attempt proved unsuccessful and the peasants came to the conclusion that their pottery could neither be glazed nor, moreover, be competitive.

Articles manufactured in Bolshoye Kazarinovo are of various types and sizes and hence of various prices. They are as follows: a pitcher for pickles costs 8 to 10 kopecks; a bear, (three-pail pitcher) 25 to 30 kpk; a smaller bear pitcher 15 to 20 kpk; a basin 4 to 5 kpk; a milk pail 4 to 6 kpk; an ordinary jug 2 to 5 kpk; a pot 1 to 5 kpk; a milk pot 2 to 4 kpk; a saucer 1 to 3 kpk; a lid 1 to 3 kpk; a butterdish 1 to 2 kpk; a small saucer 1 to 2 kpk; a flower-pot 1 to 5 kpk; a saucer for a flower-pot 1 to 2 kpk; a chimney (2 sections and a cowl) 50 to 80 kpk. It should be noted that large-size articles do not sell well here, and hence they are manufactured in small numbers. In Bolshoi Kazarinovo the potters manufacture mainly small-size crockery such as pots, lids, jugs, milkpots, saucers, small saucers, etc. Taking all this into consideration and in accordance with the opinion of the craftsmen themselves, it is necessary to assume an average cost of a manufactured dish to be equal to no more than 3 kpk an item. An average family (in every family mostly two men are engaged in pottery, an adult and a junior) makes 40 such dishes a day. Losses during firing are 25 per cent, so there remain 30 items, i.e. 90 kpk. To find how many dishes are manufactured in the village and their cost, it is necessary to take into consideration the following.

The potters manufacture dishes not every day of the 176 days set for the job. 30 days are spared for firing and taking the dishes from the cottage to the kiln and back to the cottage, about 30 days are spent for going to the markets and to the neighbouring villages for selling the goods, and about 15 to 16 days in digging clay. Thus the process of manufacturing proper lasts no more than 100 days. This means that every family manufactures an average number of average dishes equal to 3000 items a year, in money it totals 90 roubles; for the whole village (107 families) these figures are 321000 dishes - 9630 roubles. It is seldom that the craftsmen themselves reject articles as defective, this perhaps takes place when the potter prefers to keep a defective dish for himself instead of taking it to the market. More often the whole lot is taken to the market and it is the purchasers who will reject a spoilt dish. The main shortcomings of the local pottery are underfiring and too great a thickness and therefore the



quality of the local dishes is lower than that of the same articles manufactured, say, in the neighbouring Arzamas area and presented at the local markets in great number.

#### Handicraftsmen and their Requirements

In Bolshoye Kazarinovo houseowners only are engaged in pottery. They have neither workers nor apprentices as they have time enough to manufacture dishes in quantities quite sufficient to meet their demands, as well as to make them feel well provided for. Boys usually begin work at about 10, at which age they are occupied only in operations requiring no special skills at all. They carry pots (from the kiln to the cottage, for example), prepare and knead the clay, mark light stripes on the walls of a dish, and so on. Having got accustomed to the job, they start to be engaged in the process proper. This happens when they are 12 or 13. To begin with, they make dishes that are easier in manufacturing such as saucers for flower pots, small lids, small saucers and so on. That is dishes without rounded shapes; thus a saucer for a flower pot is a low cylinder, a small saucer is a truncated cone, and so on. In due course, when the boy's hands get accustomed to working the above mentioned types of dishes, he proceeds to making pots; pots are of a rounded shape and therefore are more difficult to make. Then he progresses to a milk pot, a jug, i.e. to various types of dishes. When he is 15 or 16, the boy is already a fairly good potter, his already sure hand and considerable skills go on developing as his practice is now frequent.

Now let's proceed to studying the requirements of the local potters. Yearly, an average family, as stated above, sells dishes for 90 roubles. 9 roubles are paid for firewood. So, there remains a sum of 81 roubles to cover all the family's expenses. These expenses are the following. The majority of foodstuffs are natural and are produced here, on the peasant's land. Thus when the crop is normal, the family is provided with bread and vegetables (except cabbage, not cultivated in this place) all the year round. The land on lease is taken into account here, each houseowner rents about 3 ha. The family buys only side products such as cabbage (4 roubles), salt (1.5 roubles), vegetable oil (3 roubles), meat and fish (10 roubles), kerosene (2 roubles), matches (0.5 roubles) and vodka for holidays (5 roubles), all in all making 26 roubles. In addition, the rent for the land is about 18 roubles, and taxes and duties listed in the table below are 6.5 roubles.

28.20r. - Land tax; 168.00r. - Insurance;  
Territory tax: 13.68r (province) + 64.26r (area)  
Industrial tax: 1.50r (province) + 7.02r (area)  
District tax: 109.08r Community tax: 306.02r  
Totals: 715.76r(whole population)=65r (each h'hold)

The total sum is thus 40.5r. the balance, 81r. minus 40.5r. is also 40.5r., which sum is quite sufficient for repairs of premises, clothes and other small and sometimes even unexpected expenses. So, the family both satisfies its first and essential requirements and can afford to lead a more or less decent mode of living.

#### Capital

The local potters have, more or less, equal fixed capital. Thus every houseowner needs about 200 roubles to build the premises and no more than 1.5 roubles to buy a kiln (as is said in Bolshoye Kazarinovo, each kiln is owned by 10 to 11 houseowners) and tools and instruments. All in all it makes about 201.5 roubles. As to the working capital, one can't say anything definite about it, for goods are sold every week but "there are no two weeks alike" and "weeks differ" as the local craftsmen put it and therefore a week's gain is difficult to determine.

#### Market

Pottery manufactured in Bolshoye Kazarinovo is sold in three ways: a) retail to various small private purchasers at the neighbouring markets, b) wholesale to dealers at the same markets and c) wholesale and retail delivery to various villages and on various days of the week. The first of these three ways, retail to various small private purchasers at the neighbouring markets and fairs, is the main and mostly used. Potters from Kazarinovo bring their goods to the following markets:

In Adashevo village of Sergach area 16 km from Kazarinovo - on Fridays

In Gagino village of the same area 27.8 km from Kazarinovo - on Thursdays

In Bolshoye Boldino village of Lukoyanove area 3.2 km from Kazarinovo - on Wednesdays

In Bolshoye Maresevo village of the same area 26.7 km from Kazarinovo - on Saturdays

In Talasino village of Alatyr area of Simbirsk province 26.7 km from Kazarinovo - on Tuesdays

All these markets function mainly in autumn, winter and spring. In summer the trade almost ceases and is carried out only in a very inconsiderable degree as the peasants are occupied with the field work and seldom go to the market. It is in the autumn that the markets come to life from a standstill and the trade again flourishes and prospers. The usual purchasers at these markets are the peasants of the neighbouring villages. Earthenware dishes are the most necessary items in their housekeeping and therefore the trade in dishes is very brisk and it is very seldom that the supply exceeds the demand to any considerable extent. If this nevertheless happens, the potter leaves the unsold dishes in this village until the next market day. Potters do not like to take home the unsold goods and do their best to sell all the dishes they have brought. Hence, nearer to the close of the market day, the potter will sometimes announce the so-called "sell off". Prices do not change all the year round and are exactly the same as listed above. Defective dishes are rejected by purchasers in the process of buying and the rejected articles are thereupon sold at reduced prices. Besides the above-named markets, dishes are also on sale at the following neighbouring fairs:

In Talysino, on All Saints' Day

In the same place, on the 6th August

In the same place as well as in Vetoshkino village of Sergach area, 32 km. from Kazarinovo, on the 26th June

In Subbotino of the same area, 26.7 km. from Kazarinovo, on the 8th July.

At all these markets and fairs there are on sale dishes not from Kazarinovo only. Glazed earthenware manufactured in Arzamas area is also presented here and is highly competitive as compared to the dark blue Kazarinovo pottery. It is certainly sold at higher prices.

The second way the Kazarinovo pottery is sold is as follows. All the cartful of dishes the potters have taken to the market are sold wholesale to dealers, who will thereupon sell these dishes by retail at the same market. The potter always knows perfectly well the value of the dishes in his cart and therefore having reduced the price by no more than 10 to 20%, he will never be at a loss when selling goods wholesale. This way of sale is not popular and is practiced very seldom.

The third way the Kazarinovo pottery is sold "by delivery". The potter loads dishes on his cart, provides himself and his horse with food and starts travelling from village to village, in each loudly announcing his arrival. The peasants go out to him and buy his dishes, some of them for money, others in exchange for bread. For the potter, the latter variant is by far more advantageous, sometimes even twice as much. The third way of sale is quite popular and yields to the first way only slightly. It is practiced mostly in winter when the potter travels from his village for about 32 to 42.7 km. in various directions. Selling to order is only occasional here and usually takes place at markets or in villages visited by the travelling potter. Only large size articles are ordered such as chimneys, pitchers for pickles and bear pitchers.

#### Health Conditions

Usually the potter begins his work at 5 o'clock in the morning and finishes at 9 o'clock in the evening, his rest is supposed to last about 4 hours. In a health aspect this work is not quite favourable because in winter when the potter works perforce inside his house, the latter fills up with dampness and rotten odours that the clay and damp dishes exhale. This badly tells upon the health of both the adults and, especially, the children. Besides, the potter's work is chiefly sedentary and entails considerable effort of hand and arm muscles. This leads to an early weakening and a premature senility, and an old man aged 75 is a rarity here. In case of any illness, peasants take advice in the *Zemstvo* (an elective district) Hospital situated in Chernovskoye village (10.7 km off). They noticeably prefer a medical aid to sorceresses or quacks.

#### Cultural Conditions

The population of Bolshoye Kazarinovo belongs to a pure rural type. In spite of all the frequent business visits to the markets and neighbouring villages, the local peasants are not a bit infected by the spirit of depravity. Up to now simplicity, frankness, honesty and cordiality remain their distinguishing features. At the same time it is necessary to note that the comparatively high moral standards of the potter from Bolshoye Kazarinovo go together with his intellectual narrow-mindedness.

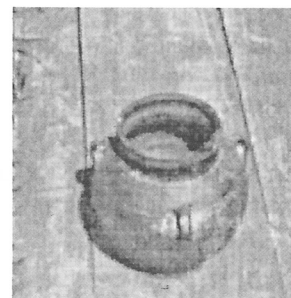
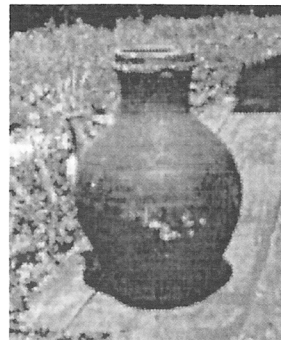
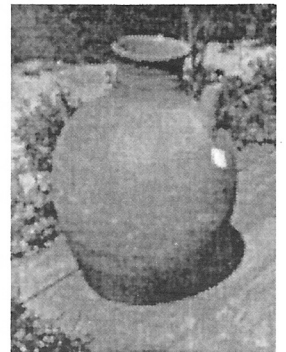
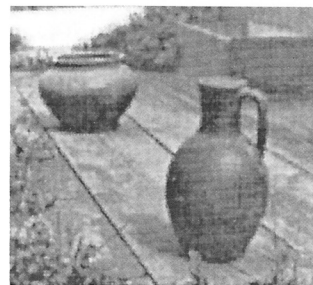
From their earliest years, the boys of the village get to work in pottery and are not taught the three Rs thus remaining unable to read and write. The grown-up peasants often have no idea about very simple and necessary notions. There is neither school nor any other

establishment in the village. Hard drinking is not quite developed here, a few years ago the community even closed down the local public house and to all appearances nobody deplors the fact.

#### Conclusion

It is most probable that the described craft will exist for years. The abundance and cheapness of raw material as well as the diligence and attachment of the population and the quite great and permanent demand for the Kazarinovo pottery, comparatively considerable earnings and, at last, the insignificance of the allotments, on the one hand serve as a solid and stable base for the craft, and on the other hand urge the local peasants to go on with their craft in the future. Till at least all the above circumstances remain.

N.I. Rounovsky



Photos of Bolshoye Kazarinovo potters' work from end of 19th century to beginning of the 20th century.

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### July

5-9 Acrylics and Mixed Media (5 Days)

Kimm Stevens

12-16 Mouldmaking and Slipcasting (5 Days)

David Cowley

12-16 Collagraph and Drypoint (5 Days)

Sue Andreae

18-23 Animal Sculpture (6 Days)

Jo Miller

19-23 Decorative & Functional Thrownware

Paula Gray

26-30 Understanding & Developing Ceramic Glazes (5 Days)

Jonathan Swiitzman

27-30 Exploring Drawing : Still Life (4 days)

Gisli Bergmann

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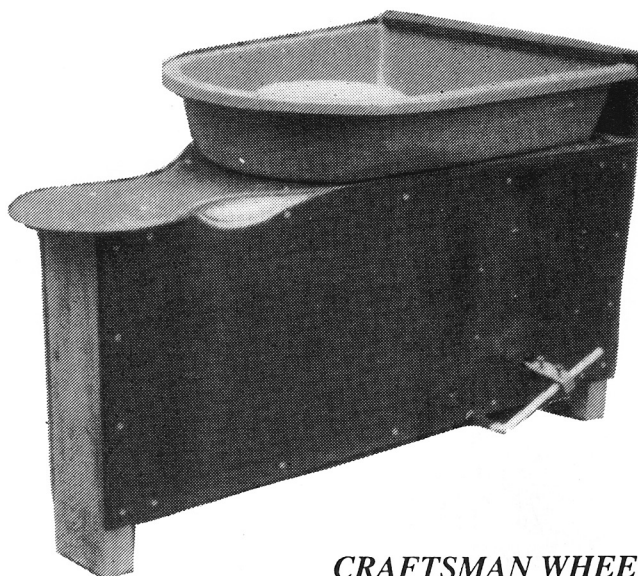
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