



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



IN THIS ISSUE –

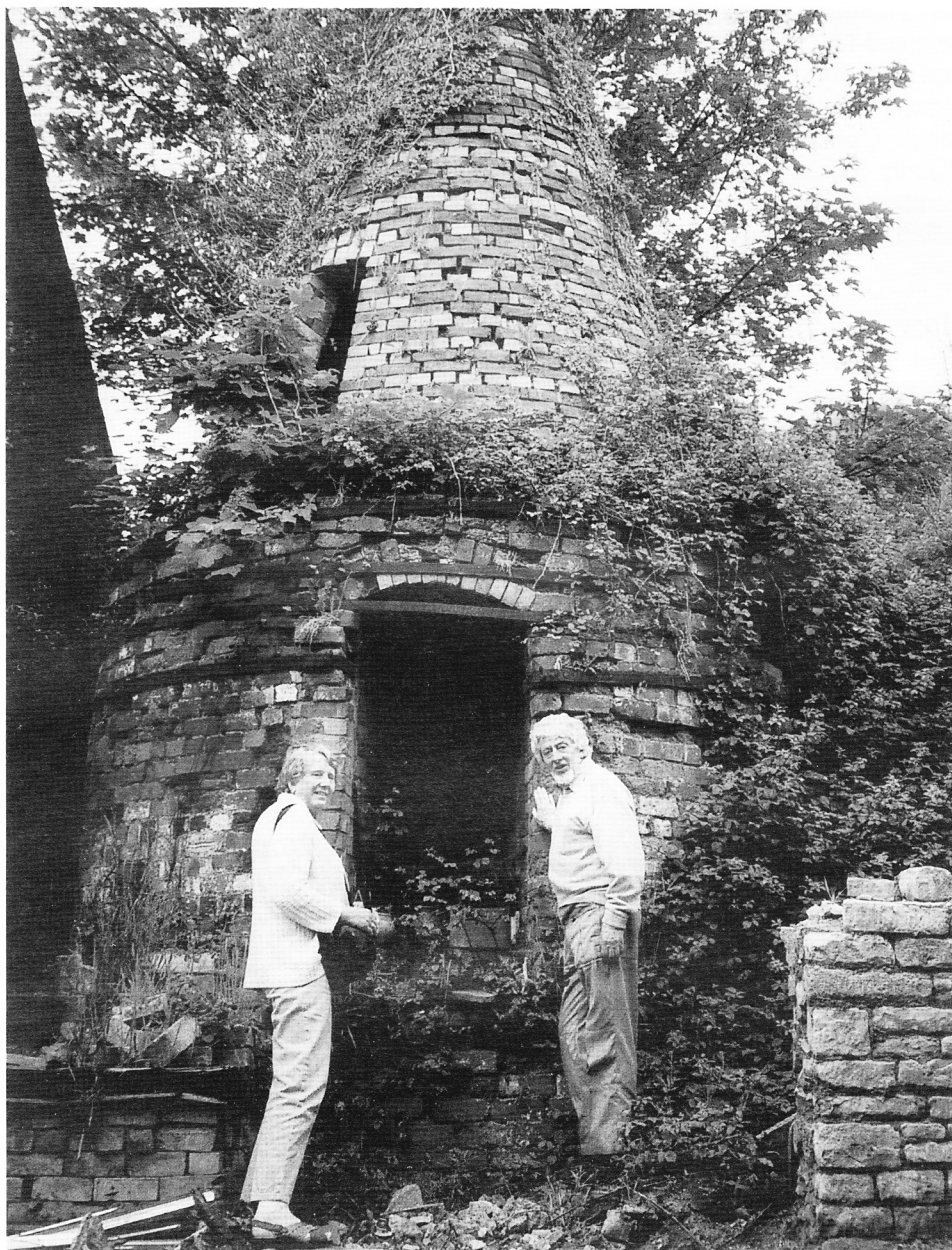
THE GREAT PRICING DEBATE

JONATHAN GARRATT DEMONSTRATION

POTCRAWL 2000

SODA FIRING REPORT

PITSTONE OPEN DAY



NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2000
£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
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The Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and 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; nor is the Guild responsible for the content of individual advertisements printed in the Newsletter.

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Copy dates

(latest receipt of material for typing)

6th January

6th April

6th July

5th October

Publication dates

February

May

August

November

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

ADVERTISING RATES:

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Murray Fieldhouse and Sylvia Fitzwilliam standing in front of the old bottle kiln at Winchcombe Pottery

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EDITORIAL

Just the same as always, last minute panic, trying to drag the notes out of contributors' hands, so that we can put the Newsletter together. I am an optimist and hope that it will be different and easier next time, but it never is. The phone line between myself and our sub-editor, Harry Karnac, is in use every day at this stage, as we try to push the contributions – or lack of them – into some sort of shape.

This time round we have an added complication since our long-suffering printer really does need to receive our artwork in a form that is compatible with his current computer technology. The need to meet this challenge puts another burden on the Newsletter team (me, Ruth and Harry Karnac), and on committee activity.

You all know that we need some help at committee level, particularly since Val Barnes is standing down and Ruby Sharp has already left. Are you able to help? Or can you suggest the name of anyone who may be interested in helping? Please phone me if you have any ideas.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

GUILD EVENTS

Guild meetings are held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall.

Friday 8th Sept. at 8 p.m. **STEVE WOODHEAD**

After a short slide show Steve will show how he throws his "Polo" teapot. He will also throw some tall thin pots and explain techniques he has learned to enable him to move the clay from the bottom of the pot. Glazes will be discussed and Steve will finish by assembling one of

his "Polo" teapots. Steve will be at Hatfield in August, showing his complete range of work and will be pleased to see any Guild members.

PAUL PRIEST WORKSHOP:

Paul will be giving a sculpture workshop on Sat. Sep 30th & Sun. Oct 1st. Details from Jane Kilvington on 01727 853 156

Friday 13th Oct. at 7.30 p.m. (please note earlier time)

A.G.M. & ELAINE PETO. Also the **STAN ROMER AWARD** exhibition & prizes. Elaine Peto will be judging the competition and selecting the winners. Prizes will be awarded by John Romer.

Elaine's animal sculpture is hand-built using stoneware clay and coloured oxides. Each animal, whether it be goat, sheep, pig, bull or hare has its own individual cheeky, intelligent or aggressive-looking character and is very realistic. Elaine will demonstrate the making of one of her pieces using slabs and will talk about clay, glazing, making, etc. as she works.

OTHER EVENTS

BUCKS. POTTERY & SCULPTURE SOCIETY

6th Sept. 8.00 p.m. **KEITH BOOTH** at Chorley Wood Arts Centre

4th Oct. 8.00 p.m. **KATRINA PECHAL** at Chorley Wood Arts Centre

18th-25th Nov. **ANNUAL EXHIBITION** at Old Amersham Market Hall.

EXHIBITION AT THE COW BYRE – June 11th-24th '00

Ruby Sharp and Ruth Karnac are to be congratulated on arranging a very attractive Guild Exhibition this summer. A dozen potters contributed, each with twelve pieces – 144 items in all. Every pot was carefully placed in its own space.

One of the nice things about the Cow Byre is the tradition of local people to "drop in", so stewarding is never dull. There was a great deal of interest shown and many nice comments. So there should have been. It was an exhibition full of contrasts and variation. There were masculine-looking tankards and jugs made by Geoff Parr and, opposite these, Pauline Ashley's delicate porcelain raku. Not far away were Rena Green's amphoræ, carefully carved and decorated with that metallic-looking glaze made of copper and manganese. There were precision pots of Paul Tierney and Jerry Seaborn set against Ruby's freely decorated pieces. Much interest was shown in Sue Varley's smoked dishes and Linda Bryant's smooth oval boxes. To act as foil to all these objects, was a case of Ruth Karnac's jewellery which the visitors loved.

And so on and so on. It seems that the DCPG can hold its head high and be proud of its display. Thank you Ruby and Ruth. It was a pleasure to take part.

Jane Kilvington

JONATHAN GARRATT DEMONSTRATION APRIL 14TH

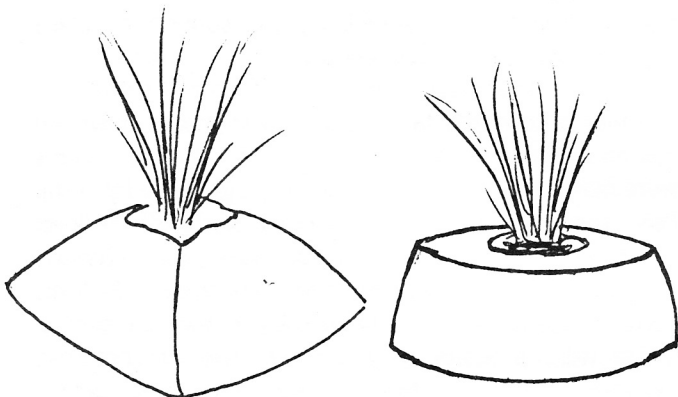
A heartening number of members and two visitors turned up to enjoy a most interesting and instructive evening.

Jonathan's interest in ceramics was first aroused when he was very young, living in Shanghai and seeing his father's collection of Chinese Sung porcelain. His background included time with both Gordon Baldwin and with Michael Cardew. He made a plate which was decorated by Cardew and which we saw in the slide show in the first half of the evening.

Other influences were from France, such as some lovely reduction fired, honey glazed pots and Sven Bayer with whom he has often worked and exhibited, as well as African pottery with textile-type decoration. Another potter whose work we saw was Michael O'Brien who put Chinese Chun glaze onto Japanese-type dishes to great effect. Archaeology has also made its mark on him and we saw a graceful amphora shape he made in high fired earthenware.

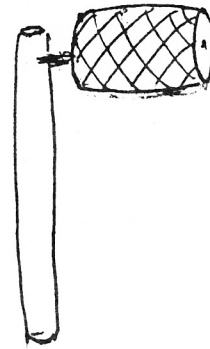
He started a studio in the New Forest using a petrol driven brickmaker's pugmill. The clay was kept for 6 months. His kiln there took 3-4 days to pack and 18 hours to fire. It was a down-draught kiln with a very high chimney.

When he moved to Dorset, he built a new one in similar style, which had a 7'6" inside diameter and an even bigger chimney, beautifully built. There are 4 fireboxes partly below ground and a temperature of 1180-1200°C is reached, depending on which part of the kiln is measured.



Pots without bases placed over grass clumps

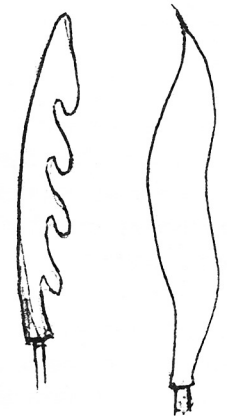
He uses a local frost-proof clay dug for him by the pig farmer who owns the nearby land. It is of the highest quality and he blunges it, sieves it (it contains much in the way of sticks and stones) and, when in thick slip state, it is spread out in long drying beds. When ready (several weeks), it is stacked up and twice pugged through the 6" pugmill and kept for 6 months before use. The third pugging is done just before throwing.



Carved clay or
Wooden roulette

We were shown his home-made collection of mostly barrel-shaped roulettes in many simple designs— rope, carved wood, found objects, etc., as he greatly enjoys enhancing his pots with various textures. The roulette effects are applied over a layer of water poured on while still on the wheel immediately after throwing.

The pots are dried upside-down, Rim to rim in traditional manner On 20' trolleys. There are huge 2' flower pots made from 60 lbs of clay as well as many smaller pots and garden pieces. These latter are for garden sculptural decoration. There are several types: harpoon shapes, 'flame' shapes and arrowhead shapes, all solid with a hole in the end so that they can be mounted on sticks among the flowers and shrubs in the border.



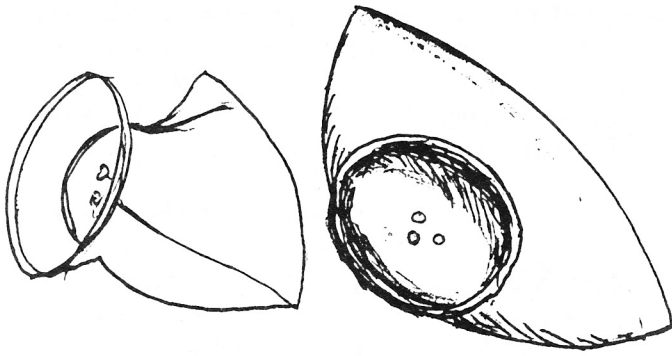
'Flame' and
harpoon shapes

There were also large and small discs of clay with central holes and these were shown as extraordinarily effective hung from trees and floodlit in a tree-lined avenue near Canary Wharf. The discs are very vulnerable to cracking in the kiln, but owing to variations in the clay and the heat, acquire beautiful colours.

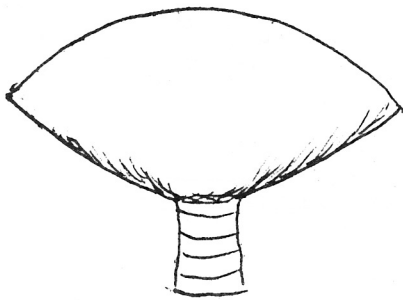
The pots also benefit from the method of firing, showing dark and lustrous blushing where hottest. The discs and most garden pots are unglazed, though he makes 'vase-shaped' tall glazed pots with holes in the bottom called long toms, such as were used in Victorian times for tomatoes, hence 'long toms'.

In his slides we also saw the French mediæval pots with rouletted fish-net design, & his own style of sideways-on

'sack pots' which lie on their sides for planting up. These have small drainage holes.



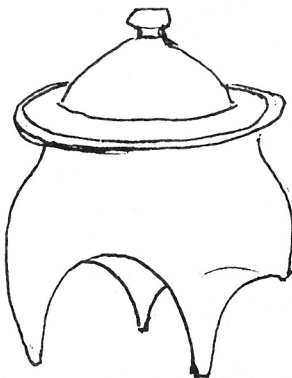
Sack pots



Fan-shaped decorative pot

Another of his styles is that of fan-shaped pots. These have small high-footed bases and the top is thrown into a wide flattish bowl. When suitably firm, the bowl is eased upwards and the two opposite sides joined in Cornish pasty mode, though the edges are smooth-welded together, not crimped. Some-times these have some white or black slip poured on in places before glazing. They are very graceful and attractive.

He demonstrated the making of his 3-footed pots, based on an ancient Chinese style again, by folding in the thrown clay, though this time at the base of the pot. An extra triangle of clay is Needed to fill in the centre After the 'legs' are made.



Three-legged pot

Jonathan demonstrated the throwing and making of many of the pots mentioned to the accompaniment of lively African music for an extra dimension to a most original event. For extra measure, we were also shown the making of a small pot on a large 4' momentum wheel placed on the ground on a tiny banding wheel and propelled by a stick Hamada-fashion. His strength and skill with clay and his total mastery of the medium was unmistakable.

Ruth Karnac

(with thanks to John Beckley for supplying additional material)

WHAT'S YOUR POT WORTH ?

- a report on "The Big Pricing Experience" at the AGM on 14th November 1999

(reprinted from Dec.99 issue of "Shards" with the permission of the author and publishers).

Fixing the price of pots is always difficult and the opportunity to participate in a pricing session prior to the AGM was a great incentive to me to attend. The fact that it was to be led by Ned Heywood was an added benefit.

Eleven of us were at the start facing a table full of pots, the majority of which were made by the participants. Late arrivals avoided the stress of peer review of their work but also missed out on the benefits.

Our first task was to price each of the pots, based on our objective view of what the market price should be. This excitement over, the group plunged into the factors that may affect the price of the pots. These could be surprisingly varied and apart from the direct factors such as the enjoyment of potting and the need to make a living, included such factors as artistic freedom, the opportunity for considerable contact with people, the need for recognition and lifestyle. An interesting debate giving the numbers who have been able to support themselves as makers. There was a dilemma for some in the current high volume and the low cost of imported third world ware. This undoubtedly affects the market for their work and the price which has to support relatively high costs of living in this country.

The logical first step in pricing is to look at production costs and the wage to which the potter aspires. Ned's detailed presentation of the likely costs of a workshop and shop/gallery and its comparison with working from home, was enlightening. Fixed costs were relatively straightforward but variables are far more difficult. Having also dealt with the likely costs of each element of the production process as well as what options and costs were involved in sales, Ned demonstrated that by far the largest cost was labour. Perhaps the most provoking part of the presentation was his view that a qualified potter of some 30 years experience producing good quality work could and should aspire to a wage of £800 a week based on 30 productive hours.

To earn a living, these costs must balance against the market demand and what it will pay: a real dilemma. Ned explored his approach which involved an appreciation of production costs and value judgement based on experience and then on the ongoing monitoring of sales.

He had no easy answers but adjusts his prices hopefully upwards as demand permitted. There are limits to this with increasing prices resulting in reduced sales and the need to monitor the sufficiency of overhead recovery. Every maker is unique and in the end must do their own calculations.

The presentation by Ned had great value in identifying the elements and issues that should be addressed. He was clear that selling is about what customers want and how much they will pay. After all the calculation he still had to decide the price which will be more than the production cost, if this can be achieved.

Wally Keeler and Michael Casson were singled out in discussions concerning the influences on prices. Whilst undoubtedly famous, this is with a very small part of the general public. In Ned's experience the reason they command such high prices is that they have such fine qualities of design and workmanship which customers recognise and are prepared to pay for.

Inevitably the high point of the session was comparison of the prices put on the pots. There was considerable variation with perhaps the most experience being for a teapot/teabowl which ranged from £7 to £80. It was revealed that it was the work of a prominent Korean maker with a purchase price of £75; perhaps a comment on varying aesthetic taste and its effect on price? By comparison a simple teabowl showed almost complete unanimity in pricing. An early Wally Keeler lidded vessel was not generally spotted but the obvious quality was recognised in pricing. All the participants who submitted work were extremely interested in the pricing of their work. This sometimes accorded well with their own ideas, but often gave food for thought and reconsideration.

It was suggested that because potters have a greater interest, knowledge and appreciation of other people's work than the general buying public they tended to over-estimate market prices. This was obviously a serious issue and one that would have benefited from much more extensive discussion had time allowed. Similarly, time constraints meant that not all the priced pots could be looked at.

The session demonstrated that there are no simple answers. Every potter must go through the process discussed. Ultimately the price is what the customer will pay and is up to the maker to find an acceptable balance.

The meeting was attended by a variety of makers, some new and others with a lifetime of experience. It was obvious that they all welcomed the opportunity to discuss pricing and will undoubtedly consider their own approach in the light of this. Ned deserved our thanks for leading such an interesting and enjoyable session.

Jeff Taylor

As well as this article by Jeff Taylor and others on pricing work, we have also had evening meetings dealing with the same subject. The usual approach is to develop a pricing structure based carefully on actual costs and expenditure, time taken to set up and make each piece, etc. The following article appeared in the June 2000 issue of the West Country Potters Association Newsletter, and Mariette has given me permission to reproduce it. Please give me your own views on this approach, or your own methods. I would be delighted to pass them on by giving space in this Newsletter.

Editor

Adding a few Sticks to the Fire of the Debate on

Pricing: My own idiosyncratic approach to the problem

I first decide where I want to pitch myself in the market, accepting that I will probably be stuck there for ever! This has nothing to do with actually selling anything. To sell, it has to be in the right place. Price becomes a secondary issue.

Before pricing work, eat well, have a massage, hot perfumed bath, a stiff drink, anything that induces a state of relaxed euphoria. Never look through unpaid bills during pricing. This leads to a panic, a shaking of resolve and a dropping of the noughts.

Before pricing for an exhibition or submission, I recommend looking through sophisticated journals, reminding oneself how much it is possible to spend on a miniscule item of clothing, a gem of a shoe, a square metre of exquisite fabric or vibrant tiles. Did you know that wallpaper can cost £100 per metre? to commission 10 minutes of music costs the earth?

I do not believe that the work of a solicitor, cosmetic surgeon or dot-commer has more intrinsic value than mine. If they earn £x per hour, I can legitimately, in my estimation, charge them for my work on at least an equal basis. Works out a lot but is an amount they understand.

These activities will prove more productive in the long run than wedging up a ton of clay and leave you refreshed and confident. I assure you that there will never again be a problem putting a proper value, and therefore price, on your work.

If you feel faint at the figures arrived at, have another stiff drink. Any work of an erotic nature? Quadruple it! You will also notice that more attention is given to the higher priced artwork. The ignorant will assume it must be worth it, the knowledgeable will know it's worth it, and the snobbish will be able to boast how much it cost and how much it will be worth in the future. So everyone is happy.

In a world where people starve, some of us are selling something which is a luxury by its very uselessness. For this reason it could even be said to be immoral to charge less than an exorbitant amount.

Developing an arrogant carapace of professionalism, I promise, has no damaging effect on one's humility, sense of the ridiculous or drinking habits. When you are rich and famous – remember me!

Mariette Rennie

PROFILE: SUE VARLEY

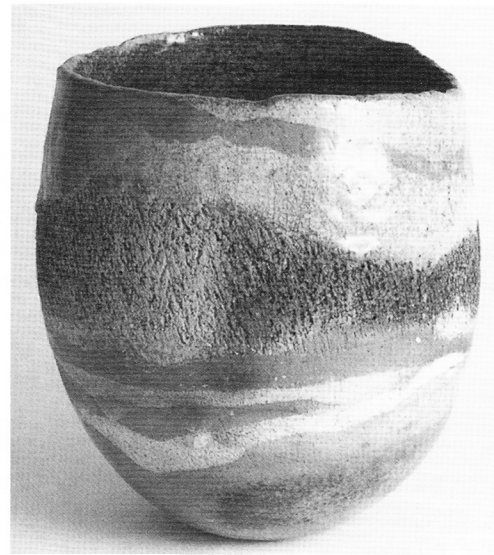


I am pleased to have rejoined the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild and I look forward to taking part in the Guild's various activities.

I would like to point out that I am not a Raku potter, though my work is sometimes confused with Raku since I may at times experiment with low-fired glazes, sometimes using Raku crackle glazes

I first became interested in the use of sawdust kilns in 1956 and have used sawdust firing continuously, both as a means of firing pots and for the design and decoration of my work since that time.

As a student at the Bath Academy of Art, we were introduced to simple means of firing pots, for example coke-fired dustbin kilns because the village schools we worked in for teaching practice were unlikely to have electric kilns in those days.



"Welsh Landscape": sawdust fired pot

I later went on to use sawdust kilns, in my teaching with both children and adults, as a means of demonstrating how heat is essential in the process of changing clay into fired pottery. I also fired my own early work in sawdust kilns, often using a small biscuit tin. One or two pots still survive from that time!

It was only in 1970 when I was finally able to buy an electric kiln that I began to use sawdust firing to enable me to create areas of post-fired reduction on the surface of my landscape bowls and dishes, using the element of chance to help create the effects and surfaces I wished to achieve on my ceramics.

Sue Varley

BOOK REVIEW

Wood-fired Ceramics – Contemporary Practices

Coll Minogue and Robert Sanderson. Pub'd. A & C Black. Hardback £25.00

With copious photographs of pots and kilns, this book presents a survey carried out over the last 10 years of potters around the world who produce wood-fired Ceramics. 26 potters are covered in detail, with information on their career histories, personal philosophies and working practices. A further 40 are covered in less depth in the "Gallery" at the end of each main section of the book. The book is divided into three main sections, grouped by the type of kiln.

The first section covers kilns based around an ancient French firebox design, first formally described by Emil Bourry in 1890, and thus called the "Bourry Box". These kilns are fired with a comparatively short firing cycle, one or two days, giving a relatively light dusting of ash, adding just a blush of colour to glazes.

The second section covers "non-traditional" kilns, with a wide variety of designs. These take elements of kiln design from a wide range of sources and combine them

to give highly individual results. Some are adaptations of Fred Olsen's "fast fire" kiln, some are heavily adapted from oriental designs and two seem to consist of a firebox and chimney with a simple pair of low walls forming a "long throat" connecting them. These potters use a wide variety of firing cycles, each adapted to their particular kiln with several using salt in varying amounts to achieve further modification of the clay surface.

The third, and largest section covers kilns based closely on oriental designs from China, Korea, Thailand and Japan, designs that date as far back as the 12th and 13th centuries. Here we meet potters for whom wood-firing is a mystical, almost religious experience including, in one case, ritual offerings at critical points of the firing cycle. The process of firing these kilns runs for up to ten days to achieve heavier ash deposits, with teams of firers working in shifts to maintain the process.

A final short chapter on kilns built and run by groups of potters for communal use, and appendices giving examples of firing logs, glaze recipes and drawings of kiln designs round off the book.

The book gives a fascinating tour through the world of wood-firers, delving into the depth of feeling that potters develop for the whole wood-fire process and exploring the great skill needed to achieve their desired results. They must learn to cope with the interactions of the clay, the glazes, the wood, the firing cycle, the flow of ash and flame through the kiln and the best position within the kiln for each type of pot. The wonderful pots captured in the photographs show how well they succeed.

This is another book I have thoroughly enjoyed reading and I will probably go out and buy it for myself. I'm not sure I can afford to go on with this reviewing, it's getting too expensive.

Jan Kent

BANK HOLIDAY CARNIVAL AND FUNDAY

Would anyone be interested in having a stall to sell pots and/or demonstrate their skills? The Northwood Lions' Club will be having its annual carnival on Bank Holiday Monday August 28th from 11 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. at the Northwood Football Club and Recreation Ground, Chestnut Avenue, Northwood. For further information, contact Mr. Chris Rignall, 4 Moat Drive, Ruislip, HA4 7 QE. Telephone: 01895 675845.

LIBRARY NOTE

Now that I have got myself and the books sorted and the second library box is in use, the temporary amnesty on overdue books will finish after the September meeting. After that, the penalty fines (£1 per book for each month overdue) will be reintroduced, so please remember to bring back the books you have had out all summer – you must surely have finished reading them by now. Remember though, you can always extend

your borrowing of books by phoning me, if you can't make it to the meeting to return them.
(01908 674051)

Jan Kent

POTTERY IS LIKE THAT !

I stood there, horrified. Never in my life had I made such an evil-looking, bilious-coloured pot. Not only horrified, disbelieving. What hostile jinx had had a hand? What foul enemy had poisoned my kiln? I stood and thought. Slowly it dawned on me. I had first lovingly created my best decoration, then I had glazed it with the wrong glaze. *Mea culpa*. You can't win them



all. Try and learn from your mistakes. It was just a very nasty, useless object.

It so happened that I was asked to sell some pots for charity and I sorted out various bits and pieces. Old sourpuss surfaced again. I thrust it onto the stall in a mood of defiance.

When the doors opened and a pulse of buyers surged in, a man advanced towards my table. His eyes sparkled. He reached across and, without hesitation, he held his trophy triumphantly. My awful pot. "I'll have that" he said. Pottery is like that.

Jane Kilvington

SURPLUS EQUIPMENT SALE

As well as the books donated to the library by Stan Romer's family, the Guild also received his pottery equipment and materials, and what could not be used immediately was stored in a spare barn at Pitstone Farm Museum. By now most of it has been put to use, but two large pieces of equipment remain unused: a pugmill and a momentum wheel; also an electric Snow Hills Wheel (not working). The Museum have now asked us to vacate the barn so that they can mount a new display in there, so we need to find a new home for these items. It has been decided to allow the Guild membership to submit sealed postal bids for these items and the highest bid received before the AGM in October will win the auction. The momentum wheel is a large one and may be awkward to transport, but would be good for someone wanting to try their hand at non-electric throwing. The pugmill looks to be fairly new, but will probably need extensive cleaning to put it back into full

working order. If you would like to see any of the pieces before bidding, give me a ring (01908 674051) and I will arrange for you to see them. If anyone would like to bid, my address is in the back of this Newsletter.

Jan Kent

OPEN DAY – SATURDAY NOV. 11TH '00

To be held at the Rudolf Steiner School,
Langley Hill, Kings Langley Herts.
9a.m.-5.30p.m.

Our popular annual event will take place this year with the tried-and-tested formula of three demonstrators each giving a short slide show giving us something of their backgrounds and achievements.

After the coffee break, the sale of pots and pottery materials can begin and the individual demonstrations take place – one before and two after lunch. This will be the usual excellent sit-down meal.

This year we are lucky enough to have **Toff Milway**, eminent maker of salt-glazed, classic shapes individually decorated; **Gilda Westerman** who does elegant work in fine porcelain; and last, but by no means least, **Roger Lewis** who will demonstrate his own inimitable style of hand-building and decorating.

There will, of course, be a raffle and time to meet and talk to other members, to visitors and to buy pots of your choice. Pottery materials will be available from **Steve Rafferty** of 'Ceramatec'. You can order in advance for collection on the day.
Tel: 0208 885 4492
Fax: 0208 365 1563

The poster and application form for membership and for OPEN DAY is enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. If you are not ready to send it in, please put it in a safe place until you are.

Looking forward to seeing you in November put it in your diary, *pronto!*

Ruth Karnac

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Hilary Clinch has recently joined us. Hilary lives at Stoney Stratford, Milton Keynes and is retired. She is mostly interested in stoneware, either thrown or hand-built. Currently, Hilary is on a City & Guilds course and is exploring various aspects of terra sigillata.

Melanie Arbib has written to us, since Arbib is her married name, previously Kotecha. Our congratulations to Melanie on her recent marriage.

Editor

PITSTONE OPEN DAY JUNE 2000

June 11th saw the start of this year's Pitstone Museum's activities with their first Open Day. Unfortunately this date clashed with both the Pot Crawl and the Cow Byre exhibition, so support from the Guild membership was a bit thin on the ground. Despite this, we had a reasonably successful day. The weather remained bright and not too hot all day, so the museum was well attended. The sales of donated pots went slowly but steadily and once again the "have-a-go" was popular with the children. Tina had produced some tortoises which went over well and so did the teddy bears I had made. There was even a photographer from a local paper taking pictures (of course I forgot to ask which paper), so by now you may have already seen us in action.

The sale of pots donated by members remains a popular feature, producing a steady trickle of donations to the Museum and we would be grateful if anyone has any more pots they feel they could donate. They don't need to be your greatest masterpieces, this is a good opportunity to clear out any pots you haven't been able to shift or to make space on your shelves for your new work. If you have some pots to spare, please give me a ring (01908 674051) and I will arrange to pick them up.

Jan Kent

SODA FIRING AT NORTHFIELDS STUDIO – Saturday May 27th 00

Kiln Log

7.30 a.m.	Burners lit. Firing commences
12 noon	600°C
16.30 p.m.	Cone 06 bends. Pyro reads 1000°
18.00 p.m.	Cone 05 bends. Pyro reads 1150° (primary air vents reduced in size)
19.30 p.m.	Soda solution introduced into chamber through bungs & primary air vents (some problems experienced with crystallisation of soda solution in spray pipe and nozzle. The solution was probably too strong – it was a saturated solution – this can be changed next time)
21.30 p.m.	Soda solution spraying completed. Cone 9 over. Period of oxidation maintained to Cone 10.
22.30 p.m.	Firing completed. Kiln closed and left to cool.

On the evening of the Bank Holiday, a good number of participants gathered for the kiln opening – with an air of great anticipation.

The kiln door was unbricked to reveal some very interesting glazed surfaces. It must be emphasised that

any firing of a new kiln is experimental and there are many fascinating lessons to be learned from every piece. For example, there were different types of clays, of glazes and slips used as well as bare surfaces of clay. Each piece reveals something of interest. Some parts of the kiln were hotter than others of course and the distribution of soda varied. The kiln itself absorbs much of the soda in a first firing and I hope to do many other successful firings in future, both soda and salt. This is a great opportunity financed by the Guild and not easy to find elsewhere.

I will be announcing future firings in due course, so keep your eyes and ears open.

Many thanks to Murray and Dorley for their support and enthusiasm for the project and also for the use of their 'back yard'.

Paul Rowbottom

THE EDITOR'S DREAM



.... and as they all stood, enchanted, watching the clay rotate on the wheelhead, the skilled potter shaped it deftly into a beautiful tall pot. The pot was finished and as the wheelhead gently stopped, the editor turned to the silent group and asked quietly "Who would like to write this up for the Newsletter?" "Me! Me! Me!" shouted the whole group in unison, all simultaneously throwing up an arm and pressing forward, begging to be allowed to write the article.

"I should do it" said one, turning to her neighbour. "I have written the most notes" "It's not fair! You wrote the article last time!" came the reply.

Squabbles immediately broke out, with each person arguing with others about being the most eligible to write the article. In the general hubbub, the editor held up a hand for silence. When the noise died down he said "thank you, thank you all for your response, Jane can write this up and then Louise can write up the next visit and John can write about the next evening meeting. Bright smiles lit the faces of the selected few, the others scowled darkly and one muttered "what about us, what

can we write about?" "Well" said the editor "Mary, Roger and Alice can write up the Open Day and the rest of you can all write a letter for the Correspondence column, or a Potters Tip, but not too long, please".

There were now smiles on all the faces. "Thank Heavens for that" thought the editor "I suppose we will have far too much copy for the next Newsletter, I will have to cut out some of the advertisements".

The group all filed out of the Workshop with the editor contemplating the deluge of mail that he would have to sort out during the next few days. "Ah well" he mused "I suppose it is better than having to bully people into writing, as they do in some Guilds".....

An anonymous editor

POTCRAWL 2000

(1) Our visit to IAN GREGORY

We had to rise very early on the morning of the Potcrawl in order to travel to Ansty in Dorset for our first potter – Ian Gregory. He lives in Crumble Cottage, a beautiful 18th century cottage surrounded by a lovely garden with countryside beyond. We were welcomed by his very enthusiastic dogs who accompanied us throughout our visit, eventually settling down under Ian's workbench.

Ian Gregory's sculptures depict a range of animals and people, many made from paper clay. Phil Rogers writes of his animal sculptures: "Ian Gregory's animals can be savage hounds with exaggerated limbs crouching in aggressive poses, bared teeth behind a curled lip and that slightly sideways look that shows the whites of their eyes and announces that you are about to be attacked. Others have that head down, tail in, sneaky 'I'm coming round you to nip your arse' look. Fighting cocks frozen in that earnest dance of death, feet and claws up, ready to defend or to cut an opponent open with a downward slash. They can be frightening and disturbing. They can also be comedic: fat, lazy pigs and sleeping dogs are cleverly depicted. Ample folds of flabby flesh, apparently quickly and easily achieved with clay being allowed to be clay - n- pre-formed, moulded carcasses here".

Making

Ian Gregory uses either paper clay (4 buckets of clay slip and 1 bucket of jiffy bag pulp with an addition of Jeyes fluid to keep it smelling sweet) or coarse grogged tandoori mix from Potclays (which is apparently used to make tandoori ovens).

As one of the first potters to use paper clay, Ian exploits its properties to the full, especially when making life-sized pieces. If a piece gets broken it can easily be mended or added to – paper clay evens out the

moisture content between the wet and the dry. He also makes and fires, often within one day, putting wet sculptures into the kiln to complete the drying process during firing.

His pieces are often built onto a wire armature or he uses bubblewrap as a basis for the carcasses which allows him to model and re-shape the body as he requires. He frequently makes several bodies at once so that he can work on them all at the same time – Ian tends to work quickly and gets easily bored. This speed expresses itself in his sculptures as a liveliness and a living quality.

During firing the armature or bubblewrap remains in the sculpture. Many of our members expressed concern about toxic fumes – but Ian assured us that he believes it to be perfectly safe.

Salt Glazing

Ian builds his own kilns, often making one specifically for a piece (especially a life-sized figure). He fires using oil and wood for larger pieces and gas for smaller items. He told us that a new kiln would take 40 lbs. of salt per firing which reduces to 20 lbs. after 20 – 25 firings, due to the residual salt on the kiln bricks.

He wraps 1½ lbs. of salt in a long sausage of dampened newspaper for insertion into the kiln. As it hits the firebox, it has a tendency to explode and so scatters the salt throughout the kiln.

Guild members asked about fumes, but Ian reassured us that the clouds rising from his shed during a firing tend to be mainly steam and not carcinogenic at all. However, he does use a mask when emptying his kilns.

Not being particularly technically minded, I wasn't able to pick up the finer points of Ian's talk on temperatures, timing, etc. Suffice to say that he was a very interesting person, very willing to answer questions and share his extensive knowledge and experience with us. Many thanks, Ian, for a fascinating visit.

Lunch followed in "The Fox" in Ansty – well worth a visit. Well done, Brian for a good start to the Potcrawl.

Linda Bryant

(2) Paul Green, Abbey Pottery, Cerne Abbas

Paul was initially filled with dismay when we arrived and it must have been daunting to be confronted by a whole coach load of 40 people that you were not expecting. A communication error meant that the date of our visit was mistaken. We descended on the place like a hoard of locusts and Paul was pushed into service behind a till to accept cheques and wrap pots (a pattern repeated with Ray Finch at Winchcombe Pottery later).

Paul's wife struggled to make all of us a cup of tea, with a single kettle, mugs whipped off the shelves and pressed into service.

Paul makes stoneware and porcelain. I particularly liked the faceted jugs in *tenmoku* and purchased one of these whilst Sylvia followed up with some bellied mugs in a similar glaze. With purchases and mugs of tea, we drifted through into the garden and sat around, mostly on the grass, chatting as Guild members do.

At this point Victor Earl became more animated than I have ever seen him before, since he took on the task of entertaining the family dog, rushing about, throwing sticks and toys which were retrieved for him.

The pots, the garden, the sunshine, my precious mug of tea, Victor, the dog, are all encapsulated clearly in my memory as a part of our Pot Crawl.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

(3) Mike Dodd

At the bottom of a sloping track beside a wild flower-filled donkey field in a small clearing is Mike Dodd's home and studio. While we were there, the birds sang because Mike and his few neighbours don't own any stalking cats. He recently moved to this charming spot. Under a Virginia creeper, Mike discovered a kiln unused for twelve years.

The pottery on display had been exported from his old studio. The work was stoneware with usual colourful glazes. One blue bottle vase was overlaid with a white on the neck which on its downward journey split into, first, large snowflaked effects becoming smaller particles finally to disappear into the large sides just below the shoulders.

Mike said his influence was eastern, mainly Indian. He used copper in a thick pale glaze very sensitively so it combined with the bowl underneath, thinning on the ridges, darkening and combining on the ridges to form a free-looking sculpture. The small thrown pots were a wonderful vehicle for his treacle glaze which ran colourless and glittering on the smooth parts of the sides to reappear as dark black/brown glistening beads where it pooled on the small ledges near the foot. He spent time demonstrating his throwing techniques and various features he had adapted to his wheel.

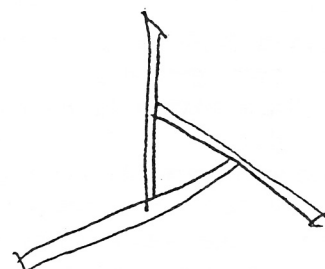


Fig. 1

An absorbent large piece of foam rubber sopping up the redundant water while he was throwing and a piece of wire on a screw, set on a board for gauging the size of pots. He also had a fitment for mixing clay over a bucket. (see Fig. 1)

The clay he used was Dobles-Cornwall, either dark and gritty or smooth and white mixed (St. Agnes – Cornwall). He also used a thin sponge set on a piece of glass cut to different sizes to wipe off glaze. He threw his spouts on the wheel, then elongated them and almost closed the top before cutting them off. He used the force of the clay coming towards him for throwing large pots. He put his left hand inside the vessel and the right hand outside. Using his left hand to push the clay up and the right hand outside lifting the clay up.

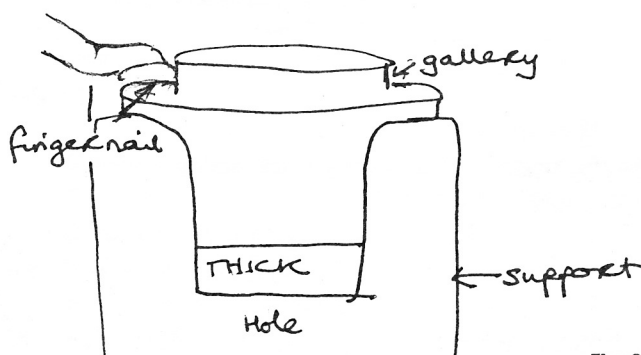


Fig. 2

He threw the gallery upside down on the lid with a flange resting on a hollowed hump, using the straightened fingernail to keep the side flat. After the lid had dried sufficiently to take the pressure, he threw the knob out of the thick body left at the base.

Pat Calder

(4) Winchcombe Pottery

"I suppose we must have Vases" (Michael Cardew on non-functional art pottery)

Harry Trethowan of Heals who did much to promote Real Crafts in the 20s and 30s wrote in 1929 of the innovation of a Standard Ware from a Studio Pottery, namely the Leach Pottery. It was not this range of ware, however, that Oliver Watson was referring to when he wrote that "One of the great triumphs of the Leach Pottery was the standard ware range developed just before the war".

It was this endeavour that set the philosophy and criteria for all the studio standard ware that followed, although some of the current generation of potters in their ignorance may not be aware of the inheritance!

The Leach standard ware has never been bettered. Despite the many hands that made it at the Leach Pottery, it never lost that organic quality of pre-industrial making. Other studio domestic wares are not so poetic

and although handmade reveal a touch of the mechanistic.

It is something, however, that in an age of overstressed individualism we still have studio potteries of integrity and idealism making standard domestic wares for a reasonable price. It is the Winchcombe Pottery as established after Cardew by Ray Finch that takes precedence. Its history and achievements have been well documented and observed so there is nothing to add in that respect.

We arrived two hours late swarming into the showroom, overwhelming Ray who was alone to cope with a long queue of eager buyers and so had no chance to show us round the pottery and answer questions. Brian told us that Ray's seal had a dot on it that would reveal that he was the author. Everyone began turning over every pot they picked up to see if they could find it! At our other venues, the members desperately picked the brain of the host. I believe this would not in any case have happened at Winchcombe, for Ray has a dignity that would have restrained such cross questioning.

Murray Fieldhouse

(5) Clare Wratten – A Summer Visit, June 2000

Clare Wratten was the last potter we visited. We had been lucky, the weather had been fine and not too hot, and for two days we had been seeing the English countryside at its best, from the vantage point of a bus. On Sunday we took longer than we should have at each point of call and so when we got to Clare's studio, we were late. She didn't mind. She was welcoming and informative. Everything was immaculate and ready for us to see, laid out and in careful order of sequence and form.

Her workshop lies within what seems to be a very large converted farmyard. Workshops open out onto a large pebbled area. Clare's tall foxgloves outside the door in full bloom reaching up to the windows of her studio.

She has been here for two years, but has been potting for 15 years, starting with evening classes in Lewes making stoneware and porcelain, going on to take a degree at Bath in 1996. Through all of her development in ceramics, it has been the "form" that interested her most and this was very apparent when we looked at the pots laid out for us to see.

Thrown funnel shapes – some quite large – impressed with her own made stamps incorporating natural objects. Larger one rises from a base of about 1½ to 5 inches diameter top at a height of about 10 inches, then pressed and squeezed giving a wider and narrower section.

Small fragile translucent cups, saucers, jugs, curved bowls and teapots with twisted copper-silver and coloured wires for handles. All these wares were laid out in graduated sizes – almost families of forms, deceptively simple yet each one standing alone in its own right.

Clare makes spouts for her teapots rolling round various sizes of dowel and her handles are rolled. She uses Audrey Blackman's porcelain body from Valentine Clays, and Derek Emms' Celadon glaze recipe from *Ceramic Review*.

She bisque fires her pots to 960° and then sprays on the glaze using a Clarke's Ranger Compressor from Pottery Crafts. She finds this quite noisy but it has a big tank capacity and a moisture trap. She fires her glazed pots in a laser kiln to 1270° reducing during firing of about eight or nine hours.

At this moment she is trying to solve problems of cracking in her teapots and some distortion where she uses her stamps. She finds her work shrinks 20% during the firing.

Clare works in the workshop every day and teaches nine students twice a week in evening class in her studio. She time-shares her workshop with another potter. She doesn't sell from her studio as a rule (we were an exception) but works for exhibitions. She has her work in five or six galleries in this country and a Japanese gallery has shown interest in taking her work further afield. She does attend shows and will be at Hatfield this year.

We couldn't stay long but due to the care Clare had taken to give us an insight into her way of working, we left full of admiration, and wondering where her growing detailed knowledge of her chosen materials would take her.

Dorley Fieldhouse

(6) Another view of the visit to Clare Wratten

The last visit on this year's Potcrawl was to Clare Wratten at North Leigh, Witney. Clare specialises in producing thrown, very thin, fine translucent porcelain ware.

Many of us who have tried to throw thin porcelain ware have had difficulties with the process, particularly with the 20% shrinkage. Clare uses Audrey Blackman porcelain clay which she finds very good for throwing very thin ware. She overcomes the difficulties that normally arise with the 20% shrinkage by wrapping up her newly thrown ware in plastic for 4 to 5 weeks before drying it in the air and then bisque firing it.

Clare fires her work in a propane gas reduction kiln

(model JP9 made by Laser Kilns). The bisque firing is to 960°C. The glaze firing is to 1270°C, taking 2 to 3 hours to increase from 960°C to 1270°C. The kiln atmosphere is reduced from 1000°C to 1270° and the work is soaked for half an hour at 1270°C.

The glaze Clare uses is a gloss celadon glaze which she fires to a very subtle pale blue colour which she described as "like the bluest sky after rain". Clare makes up this glaze to a Derek Emms recipe which was published in the *Ceramic Review* about ten years ago. She sprays the glaze on her work very thinly in a spray booth. Clare said that this glaze is very sensitive to how much reduction takes place in the firing. If you don't reduce the glaze has a grey colour. Depending on the amount of reduction the glaze can vary in colour from pale to darker blue.

Clare teaches at two evening classes locally. She sells her very fine work in galleries in Oxford.

John Beckley

NOTEBOOK

Pottery is like that

A free Kodak Advantix camera with film, goes to Jane Kilvington for the best contribution to "Pottery is like that". (In fact, it was the **ONLY** contribution, so if you had sent a story you would have had a 50% chance of winning!). Your jokes/brief amusing stories are always welcome, they should be original and unpublished. Please send them to the Editor in time for the next Newsletter (no cameras left, but don't hold back).

More Freebies

The free book, published by A. & C. Black, "Ceramics for Gardens and Landscapes" by Karin Hesselberg goes to Ros McGuirk. Ros sent in her notes on Nic Collins & Morgen Hall which she had prepared during her studies for C. & G. At this moment, I am not sure if we will have sufficient time to prepare suitable copy for this issue of the Newsletter, since the last minute typing marathon is now on.

Think Metric – or Else!!

Some while ago we reported the growing legislation and clampdown on the use of imperial measures, i.e. are you allowed to make 1 pint jugs? If you do, are you allowed to sell them? Can pots be 12 " high? Or will the thought police get you unless you say the pot is 30.48 centimetres high? Etc. etc.

It was reported this week (7th July 2000) that Steven Thorburn, 36, had been reprimanded for selling groceries in pounds and ounces. Trading Standards officers descended on his market stall and brought his business to a halt by confiscating his three sets of Imperial scales.

Steven had to lay off his staff and is under threat of

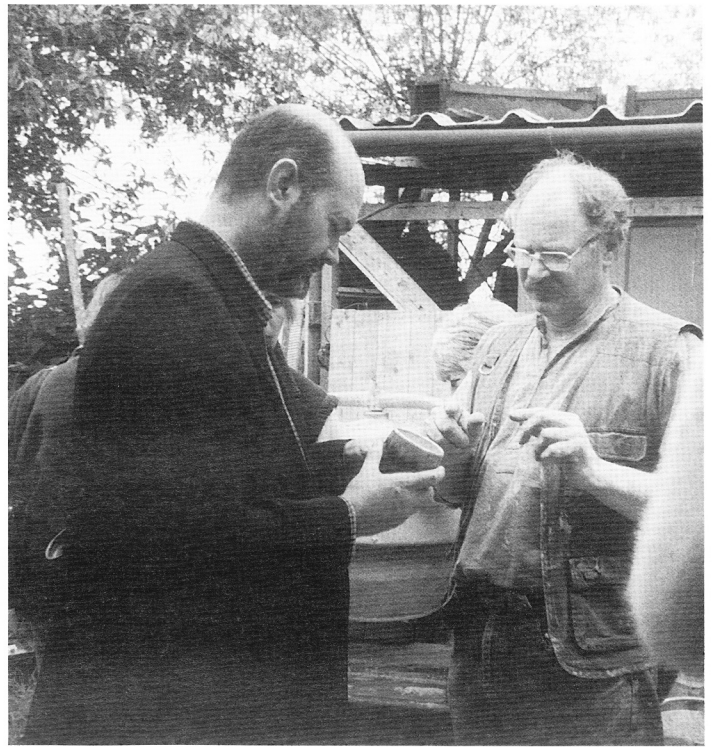
further action in court if he does not use metric scales. He was very upset and so are his customers. It is worth noting that Steven is not an old man clinging to the past, his customers want to buy their goods in Imperial measurements.

One last thought, should the company manufacturing "Imperial Leather" soap and other products be forced to change the brand to "Metric Leather"? It would, of course, be ridiculous, and so is legislation of such a draconian nature for such a transgression.

Footnote: Tesco has now announced that they are reverting to Imperial measures at customer request.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

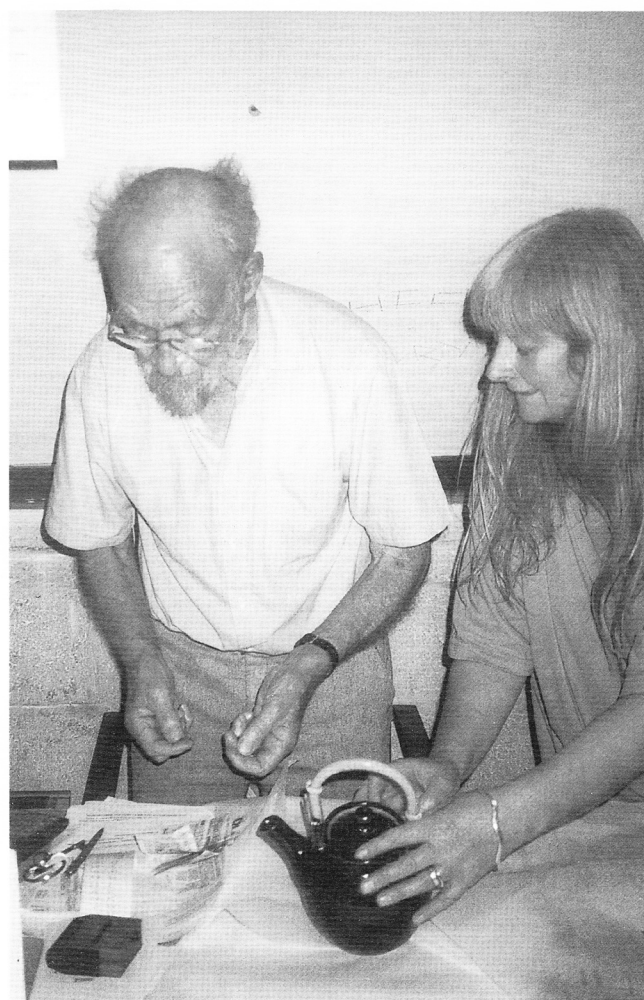
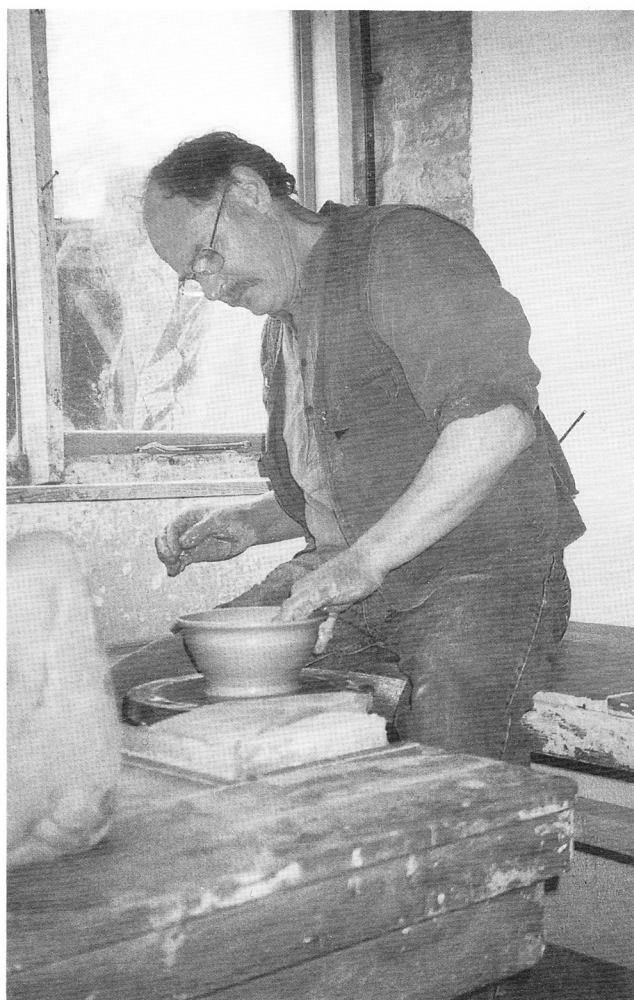
PHOTO GALLERY



Top right: Mike Dodd (right) discussing the glaze on one of his pots.

Below: guild members spill out onto the lawn at Cerne Abbas, home & workshop of Paul Green.





Top; Mike Dodd had carefully laid his various pottery tools out for our inspection.

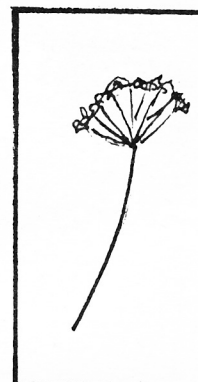
Bottom left: Mike throws a bowl on his wheel.

Bottom right: Ray Finch & Dorley Fieldhouse wrapping a teapot for Margaret Aanonson.

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