



# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



IN THIS ISSUE -

MORE MILLENNIUM WALLS

GLAZE IMPROVERS

JENNIFER HALL MEETING

BOOK REVIEWS



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NEWSLETTER  
WINTER 2001  
£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, "Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts., HP3 0DJ** tel: 01442 250540. (If joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate).

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.

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1/2 page £22.50

whole page (depending on availability) £50.00

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from your artwork £ 7.00

or typesetting - maximum 50 words £10.00

Covers: Back + 20%; Inside + 15%

Distribution of leaflets: A5 [2.5 gram] - £33.00

A4 [ 5 gram] - £33.00

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## Front Cover Photograph

Study for Madonna & Child, Sculpture by Megan di Girolamo, who will be with the Guild on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2002

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## EDITORIAL

The year 2000 saw the introduction of the Stan Romer Award, memorably won by Jane Kilvington, whose work was chosen from many entries of an excellent standard. Jane was prevailed upon to reproduce her winning entry, a sculpted bison, on a smaller scale to become the presentation piece for following years. Currently this piece is with John Romer who is arranging for it to be mounted on a suitable base. This year we have fewer entrants than last year, possibly due to a more challenging subject. Perhaps members would like to choose a subject for next year. Please discuss your ideas with any committee member.

As I write, the committee is preparing for the AGM and also on the countdown to the Potters Open Day. I am hoping to have this issue of the Newsletter produced in time to remind you all to apply for Open Day tickets and I hope to see many of you at that event.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## GUILD EVENTS

Guild meetings are usually held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> Nov. 8.00 p.m.

RUTHANNE TUDBALL will be demonstrating her skills for us, don't miss it! See previous issue of Newsletter for more details.

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November

POTTERS OPEN DAY at Green Park Centre, Stablebridge Rd, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Bucks. DAPHNE CARNEGIE, JAN BEENY, ROGER COCKRAM. Details and application forms were in the previous issue of the Newsletter. If you are applying late or have lost the forms, please phone Harry Karnac on 01895 631738 or Joy Wills on 01296 481015.

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> Jan. '02 8.00 p.m.

MEGAN DI GIROLAMO, R.B.A.

Megan produces coiled structures in glazed stoneware and raku ceramics. Much of her work is about the relationship between mother and child, capturing fleeting moments of intimacy and tenderness.

Megan trained in fine arts and then followed a career in teaching while raising a family. She took an M.A. in ceramics at Cardiff and is now an award winning member of the Royal Society of British Artists and several other prestigious societies. She is a popular teacher and lectures at Missenden Abbey, Bucks., Chilterns University College and Aylesbury College of Art.

She will give an illustrated talk about her work & sources of inspiration on an evening which promises fascinating insights into the development of her unique style.

## OTHER EVENTS

4-25<sup>th</sup> Nov. ALAN WALWORK

Harlequin Gallery, 68 Greenwich High Rd.  
London SE10

10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2 p.m. Ming Ceramics: slide talk by Jessica Harrison-Hall at Sackler Room, British Museum. Prior booking essential. Elizabeth Smith 01398 331442

13-23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. *Elemental Work*

RICHARD BATTERHAM, SETH CARDEW, PHILIP & FRANNIE LEACH, GEORGINA FRANKEL, JILL FANSHAW KATO, PAUL PHILP, PRU PIPER  
Joanna Bird Pottery, 19 Grove Park Terrace, Chiswick, London, W.4

17<sup>th</sup> Nov. Dulwich Crafts at St. Barnabas Hall, Dulwich Village, London S.E.21.

17-18<sup>th</sup> Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> Southern Pottery & Ceramics Show, Farnham Maltings, Farnham

24-25<sup>th</sup> Nov. Wimbledon Art Studios Open Weekend

Until 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. PHILIP EGLIN V&A Museum (20thC. Gallery)

Until 21<sup>st</sup> Dec. *Designs as Signs: Decoration and Chinese Ceramics*. Percival David Foundation, 53 Gordon Square, London W.C.1.

## Bucks. Potters Events

26<sup>th</sup> Oct. KATE BRADFORD, a local potter will demonstrate making her thrown and altered teapots. Chorley Wood Arts Centre 8-10 p.m.

24<sup>th</sup> Nov – 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. ANNUAL EXHIBITION. Old Amersham Market Hall.

25<sup>th</sup> Jan '02 TETRA REYNOLDS – salt glazed pots from rolled slabs of clay. Little Kingshill Village Hall. 8-10p.m.

## TONGUE IN THE CHEEK

*(Reproduced from September '01 issue of the Midland Potters Association Newsletter with the permission of the editor, Ineke Stevenson)*

Those members who do business with European Union countries will no doubt be pleased to read the following (tongue in cheek) report:

Finally - sensible spelling for English!

The European Commission has just announced an agreement that English will be the official language of the EU – rather than German (the other possibility). As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement, and has accepted a 5 year phase-in of new rules which would apply to the language and reclassify it as Euro-English. The agreed plan is as follows:

In year 1, the soft 'c' would be replaced by 's'. Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be replaced by 'k'. This should klear up konfusion and keyboards can now have one less letter. There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome 'ph' is replaced by 'f'. This will reduse 'fotograf' by 20%.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will encourage the removal of double letters, which have always ben a deterrent to akurate spelling. Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent 'e's in the languaj is disgrasful and they should eliminate them.

By yer 4, pepl will be reseptiv to lingwistik korekshons such as replasing 'th' wiz 'z' and 'w' wiz 'v' (saving more keybord spas). During ze fifz yer, ze unesesare 'o' kan be dropd from vords containing 'ou' and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinashons of letters. After zis fifz yer, vevil hav a reli sensibil riten stil. Zer vil be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer.

ZE DREM VIL FINALI KUM TRU !!!

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Clay for People with Special Needs.** Claire Botterill  
A & C Black. P/bk. £12.99

There seems to be a dichotomy here. In one small book, Claire Botterill has attempted to write two books – one for a teacher who has no experience of working with clay, and one for a potter who wishes to teach students with special needs.

A teacher friend was here when I was reading the book and asked whether it would enable her to teach pottery to primary children – she knew *nothing* about pottery and I had to say "No!" However, if the teacher had even a *little* experience of pottery already, he or she might find the book quite useful, as many oif Claire's well illustrated instructions are quite clear. These include sections on clay, small tools, packing and firing kilns and glazing. But there are gaps! For instance, although she emphasises the importance of switching off the glaze kiln at the correct temperature, Claire fails to mention the kiln should not be opened until cold; she makes no mention of pinch pots; and she nowhere explains the difference between stoneware and earthenware.

I feel that a novice potter would find it difficult to teach throwing from the given instructions if she had not previously learned this skill – although the instructions are quite clear, it looks *too easy*! Some of the ideas for projects are useful & clearly described, although perhaps due to limited space some are a little reminiscent of painting by numbers. Others are more imaginative.

Special Needs students can vary enormously in their type and degree of disability and usually learn slowly, requiring much patience and encouragement to progress in slow steps, gradually learning the process. If the teacher is inexperienced in the subject, it is even more important to keep everything very simple and foolproof. Students with limited motor skills or comprehension might find the making and use of complex templates difficult, mouldmaking and slipcasting almost impossible, Claire is clearly experienced in this, but a novice potter would surely run into trouble. Experimenting with alternative kilns (paper or sawdust kilns or pit firing) might be fun for the students but would demand more expertise on the part of the teacher than Claire expects him or her to have and could be disastrous – or even dangerous! I think Claire Botterill has only partly succeeded in her "main aim ..... to enrich people's lives through ..... working with clay in a way non-potters can follow with ease and pleasure" while her "main objective ..... is to be creative with people with special needs". It would be difficult for a teacher to achieve this without more experience in the subject.

Mary Beerbohm



**Glaze Cone 6. Michael Bailey. 128 pages.**  
**A & C Black 2001 pp.128 p/bk. £12.99**

This book is the latest in the excellent "Ceramic Handbook" series. As the title suggests, the author (a partner in Bath Potters Supplies) confines his subject to glazes firing to Orton Cone #6 (1220-1240°C.) temperatures. This book operates on several levels. It can be used purely as a recipe book, containing about 40 base glazes. It has many coloured plates showing the effect of colouring oxides on each generic glaze.

For the more demanding, the glaze balance is illustrated for the individual base glazes by mathematical considerations and in the form of graphs. Finally all his formulæ are also represented in 'Unity Formula' notation, which he explains in some detail.

The text is easily understood and individual chapters are devoted to specific glaze types. These range from transparent to matt glazes and include chun, lustre and crystalline types. He also discusses the 'Fit' of glazes and how to adjust a glaze appropriately. The book includes tables giving analyses of raw materials and various frits. Finally, at the end of the book, he lists various suppliers and throughout the book many useful internet addresses are included, both for suppliers and other useful sources of help and information.

I found this to be a thoroughly professional work, full of detailed practical information and I strongly recommend it to both professional potters as well as the more theoretically inclined reader.

**Tony Stevens**



### NOTEBOOK

Murray Fieldhouse drew my attention to the fact that Sam Haile worked at the Bulmer Brickyard (see previous Newsletter) with his wife, Marianne de Trey. In 1945, Sam was making slipware there, before moving to Shinners Bridge in 1947.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

### GLAZE IMPROVERS

*(This article was first published in the Ceramic Review & is reproduced here with the permission of the author & the editor of the Ceramic Review, Emmanuel Cooper)*

Glaze improvers are substances which, when added to a glaze recipe, improve the physical properties of the raw glaze *without affecting the ultimate glaze characteristics after firing*. These improvers fall into two basic categories, glaze suspenders and glaze hardeners, although many substances (e.g. gelatine) can fulfil both

functions. A raw glaze is essentially an aqueous suspension of various rocks, minerals and insoluble metallic compounds. With one proviso all these ingredients, being heavier than water, will eventually settle out in layers at the bottom of the container. The time taken for this to happen is a function of the density and particle size of each component, and the viscosity of the aqueous medium. Hence a coarse lead frit would settle out before talc. The general exception to this rule are the fine alluvial or ball clays. These clays contain particles so small that they are comparable in size to the surrounding water molecules, and the constant buffeting (Browning Movement) they receive from these molecules can keep them in suspension indefinitely.

The molecular structure of clays is rather complicated. They tend to form flat plates that easily slide over each other, so giving rise to the slippery feel of wet clay. However they can also be electrically charged causing them to clump together, form larger particles and sink to the bottom of the container. This flocculation, as it is termed, is enhanced by the addition of mineral salts to the glaze such as Epsom Salts, Aluminium Sulphate or Sodium Silicate. However it is a very delicate balance and variations in water hardness from one region to another can dramatically affect the viscosity of a glaze, as can the passage of time as the glaze absorbs carbon dioxide from the air.

The opposite effect can be achieved by the addition of Bentonite, itself a clay. This substance has the ability of absorbing up to 30 times its own weight of water and is often advocated as an additive to increase the viscosity of a glaze. I do not personally like this method. For one thing it introduces additional clay, and thus alumina, so upsetting the balance of the original formula. The property of Bentonite to swell up and absorb great quantities of water also causes great shrinkage on drying and possible crazing of the drying glaze. And, as before, the sensitivity to the mineral quantity of the water used in the glaze can cause variations of viscosity with location and time.

As a digression, it is the viscosity of the wet glaze that it is the determining factor in how effectively it will adhere to a pot, a consistency of thin cream is often advocated. Obviously this 'ideal' consistency will vary with method of application and individual preferences. This 'creaminess' or viscosity, as mentioned above, is not directly dependent on the water/solids ratio of the slop but on the clay content. So a low clay formulation, i.e. a very runny glaze such as a crystalline formula, will need less water added than a high clay mixture. This makes the use of hydrometers rather pointless except for checking repeat batches of an identical glaze.

It is the adhesive properties of clay that binds and hardens the dry but unfired glaze on a pot. So once again it is the low clay/alumina mixtures that are worst

in this respect. Added hardeners tend to be gums that effectively glue the glaze together and to the surface of the pot. Typical of these gums is Gum Arabic and whilst the following remarks refer specifically to this particular substance, they apply in large to all tree gums. Due to its difficulty in dissolving, this gum is usually kept as a concentrated solution. This means that a large batch of dry glaze mix cannot be made in one go and used piecemeal. Also I found, again in crystalline glazes in which I have a particular interest, that often a very thick layer of glaze needs to be applied. This is usually achieved by applying multiple thinner layers, allowing each one to dry before applying the next. Unfortunately these gums have a waterproofing effect so retarding the drying of the current top layer. Finally, in solution they are very prone to bacterial attack which not only destroys them, leaving large multi-coloured glutinous lumps that have to be sieved out, but they also create a disgusting smell !

Since, to a great extent, the viscosity of the 'improved' glazed slop is dependent only on the amount of suspending agent used, then the amount of active glaze ingredients in a given volume of slop can be accurately controlled. For example, using my usual suspending agent with a 2.5 kgm dry weight of glaze, if I use a 0.4% concentration then I need to add 5 pints of water. With a higher concentration of 0.6% suspender I now need 7 pints of water to achieve the same consistency. The point being that although one batch contains two pints more, they both have the same amount of active ingredients. This provides an accurate method of controlling the thickness of a glaze layer for the more 'fussy' formula.

### Practicalities

So far, glaze improvers have only been dealt with on a general basis. The following quantities suit my methods, others may wish to vary the percentages etc. to suit their own techniques. After trying several thickening agents, I finally returned to the old favourite CMC (Carboxy Methyl Cellulose). However, a word of warning: CMC is (not surprisingly) derived from Cellulose, which is itself a long chain-like molecule. The 'Carboxy Methyl' bit (or radical as it is more properly termed) is chemically attached to individual 'links' on the chain. Like a charm bracelet, there can be a few or many of these side linkages. The more links the more powerful is the effect of the CMC (and the more expensive to manufacture). Thus CMC is not a single substance, but a family. So whilst CMC is often stocked by pottery suppliers, there is a strong economic pressure in this competitive field to supply the less active grades and one supplier may stock a different grade to another anyway. For this reason I obtain my supplies direct from the manufacturer (listed at the end of the article) who also publishes detailed performance charts and data for each

grade. I use the highest viscosity grade, for whilst it is the most expensive on a pence per gram basis, it is the cheapest to obtain a given viscosity level as it requires less.

The hardening agent I prefer is Dextrin. It is obtained by heating starch, though it is not starch itself. It is the gum used on postage stamps and suffers none of the ill effects of some of the other gums mentioned above. The grade I use is manufactured from maize starch and is a very fine powder, similar in texture to cornflower from which it is derived. Adding 1% of Dextrin to the dry glaze when mixing the ingredients will provide a tough cohesive glaze which, once dry, requires quite hard scraping to damage the surface. I have also kept bottles containing only water and the improvers in the above concentrations for several years with no sign of bacterial attack or noticeable deterioration.

Since using glaze improvers I have had to modify my mixing techniques. I can no longer add the dry ingredients to an excess of water and later decant off the excess water once the glaze had settled. Instead I add a measured amount of water to the dry mixture, passing it through a *coarse* kitchen sieve several times to ensure an even mix. The dry CMC has quite a coarse granular texture and will not pass through an 80 mesh sieve. These additives also lower the surface tension of the wet glaze, wetting the surface of the pot more effectively so helping to avoid pin-holing, but this detergent action coupled with increased viscosity does mean that lots of small bubbles are formed during the addition of water. I therefore let the mixture stand for a day. This allows the bubbles to rise and dissipate. It also gives time for the CMC grains to fully dissolve. At this point the glaze can be given its final sieving through a standard fine mesh sieve, it is then ready for immediate use as required.

### Suppliers

The two suppliers listed below are the manufacturers of the CMC and Dextrin respectively. They are not set up to sell in small quantities, but I found them both very helpful and they might be willing to supply the names of their customers who, in turn, could possibly provide smaller amounts.

**Dextrin:** National Starch & Chemical Company,  
Pestbury Court, Greencoats Business Park, 333 Styal  
Road, Manchester M22 5LW  
Tel. 0161 435 3200

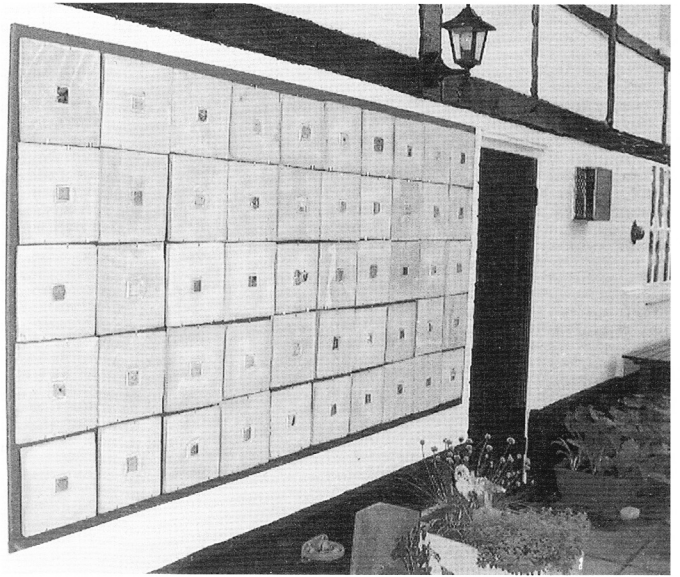
**CMC:** Aqualon Ltd. Graigowl, Hedgerows House  
Claypole Road, Stubton, Newark NG23 5BU  
Tel. 01636 626 050

Tony Stevens

## ANOTHER MILLENNIUM WALL

I thought you might be interested in my Millennium Tile Project which I have installed on the outside wall at the back of our garage. The tiles have inserts of clay from a number of different countries, France, Australia, Greece, Malaysia, Belgium, U.K. (Oxford, Penn, Holmer Green and Hazelmere). Each inset has interest of technique, colour or my family. I started the project in 2000 and finished in 2001, either of which, according to opinion, could be Millennium year. The project was great fun to do. Duncan, of course, had the job of fixing the tiles to the wall, and wouldn't his life have been easier if all the tiles had been the same size !!!! – but not so interesting.

Christine Bull



## YET ANOTHER MILLENNIUM WALL

This piece was commissioned by Hampshire County Council, Design and Project Services, funded by an Arts Council Lottery Award for Horn Dean Community School. The wall area measures 12.2m. x 2.4m. The lower section features a repeated motif depicting sound waves which creates a continuous wave form unifying the panels. The upper section of each panel features forms derived from string, wind and percussion instruments. In its entirety, the panel suggests the potential for sound, music and performance – a kind of “eye music” or visual notation.

**Materials:** Lower section – G.R.P. with pigmented gel coat (colour pigments orange and blue). Blue and white tiles created by John Blackwell. Upper section – Dobies crank stoneware clay (bisque fired at 1200°C). Surface finish Duncan brush-on glazes. Cochlea form - copper and ferrous resin. Assisted by Jola Spytkowska.

**Fixing:** All features have been chemically anchored directly to the wall using concealed fixings with appropriate panel adhesives/sealants and M10 studding.

Paul Rowbottom



**JENNIFER HALL - Evening meeting/demonstration 14<sup>th</sup> Sept. '01**

Jennifer Hall completed a BA honours degree at Cardiff Institute of Higher Education in 1994 after which she went on to work in Gwilli Pottery in Carmarthenshire as a thrower and decorator for two years. Jennifer then went on to set up her own pottery in 1997. She now produces a range of functional earthenware pottery, using red clay decorated with a combination of slips, which are dipped, trailed and sgraffitoed with lively and positive designs. They are then glazed in honey and green non-toxic lead sesilicate glazes. The forms of the pots are inspired by their function and the making process itself.

For her demonstration Jennifer chose to make oil pots (similar to teapots but with narrower necks). A competent and lively thrower, she led us through all stages to make the pot. First she threw the body using 12 oz. Of clay, wired it through but left it on the batt. Then she threw the lid from the hump, followed by the spout also from the hump. The knob and handle were made from coils, and flattened or decorated accordingly. Jennifer then went on to assemble two leather hard jars she had made earlier. She then showed us how to slip, dipping the pot in thin slip for an even coating, and then using various techniques to decorate when the pot was leather hard.

Technical notes: Roach red E/W clay from Potclays

12 oz for ½ pint pots

16 oz for ¾ pint pots

Bisque fire 1000°C

Glost fire 1055°C with a 1 hr 45mins soak

Electric kiln 6.5 cu ft

Slip is made from white E/W clay coloured with oxides

Lead sessilicate glaze held in suspension with Epsom salts.

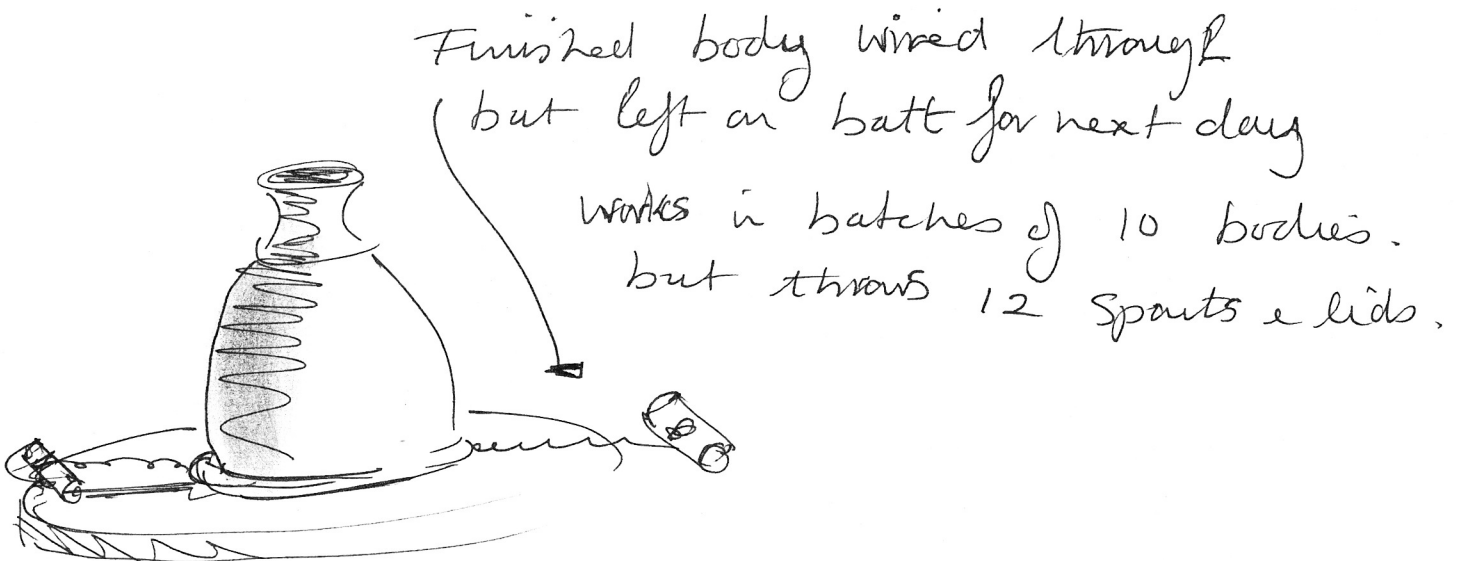
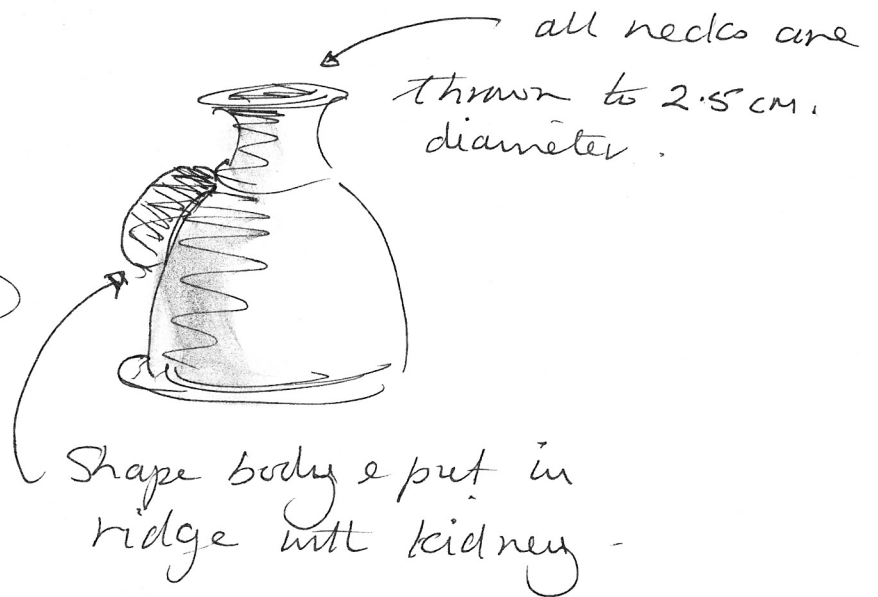
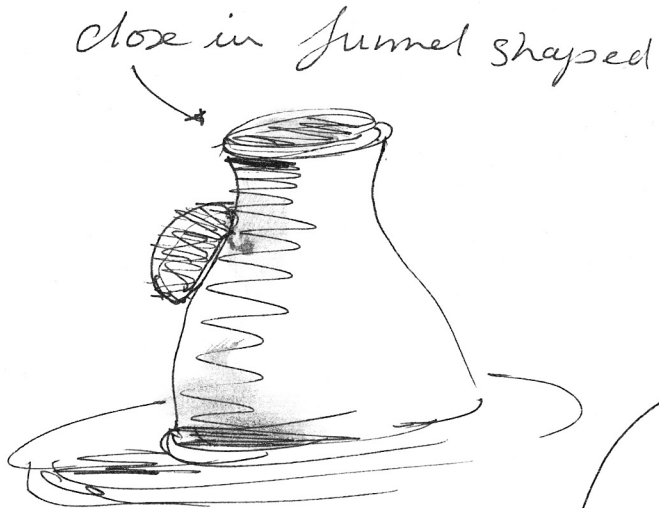
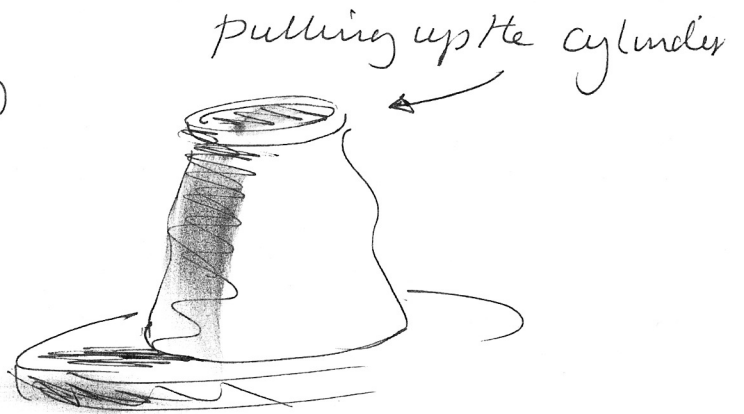
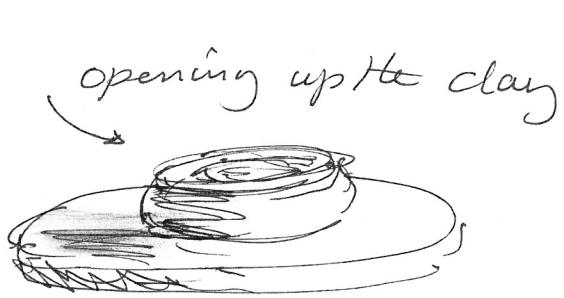
Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

*During the demonstration, Vivienne made the following sketches to guide us through the stages Jennifer made (ed.)*

*Jennifer Hall . demonstration . 14/09/01.*

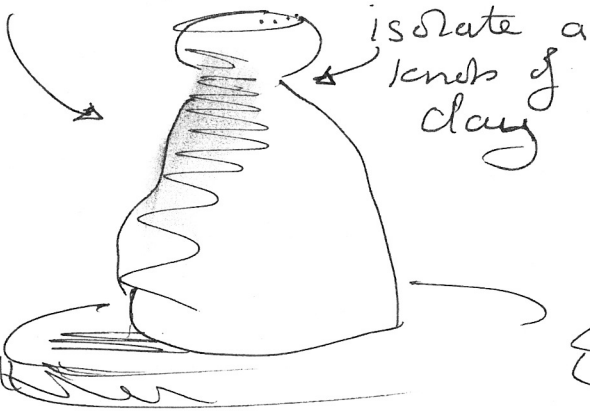
*Two finished oil pots with different lids  
all wheel thrown -*



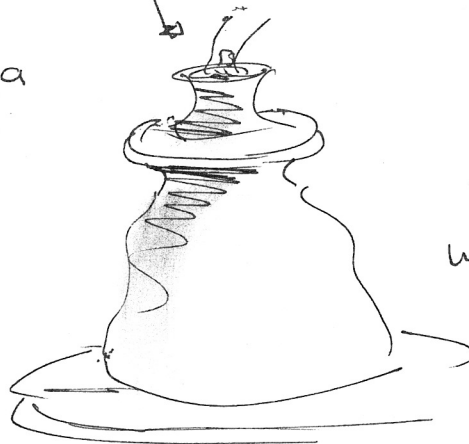




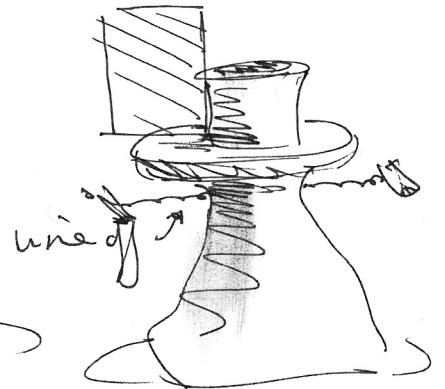
Lid is thrown from a hump



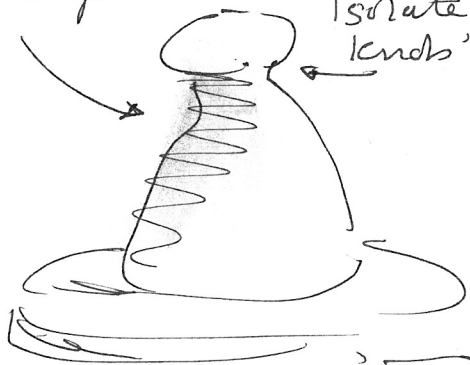
open up



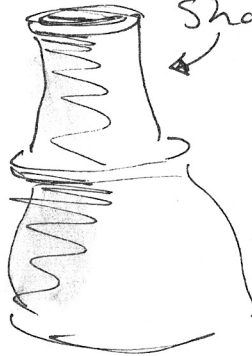
pull up top & straighten with 90° rib.



Sprouts thrown from hump



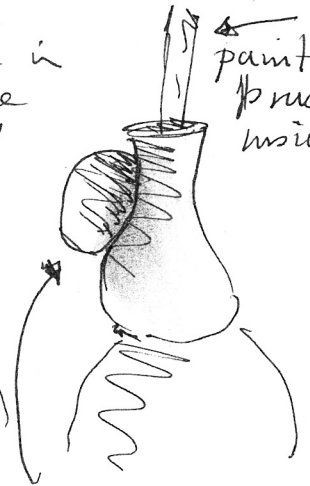
Start with small bottle shape



Squeeze in & shape



paint & mol inside



tidney outside & gently thin out

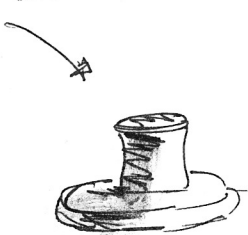
cut off hump



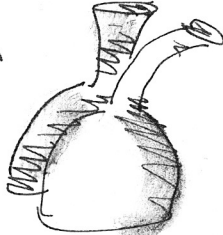
put in finger & pull off centre... leave for next day



lid



Sprouts



body



a row of components ready to assemble

plastic die for extruding handles.



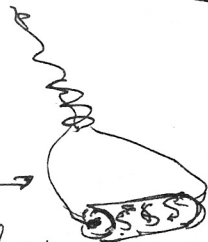
coil made from looped tool.



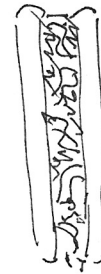
roulette wheel rolled along handle strip



roulette wheel for patterning



Slightly flatten one side



beaded handle



handles left spring to dry



alternative 'twist' of clay for handle

coil of clay for knob



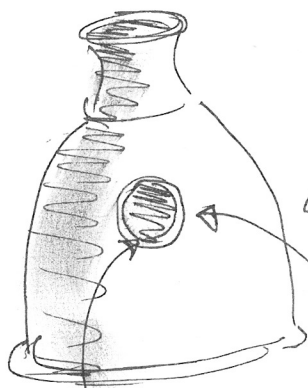
flattened on bench



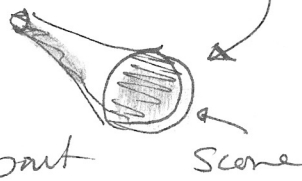
attached to lid



Select a spout & cut to fit angle of body thin down edge



Smooth off inside edge



Join spout to body.



fits spout on & leave excess slip on the join to clean off next day - this helps prevent cracking

put hole in back to allow air in for pouring



cut spout at an angle & smooth out with sponge upwards



clay plug in spout - when dipping in decorating slip

Gennifer likes "honesty" in her work but also heatness!

position handle for good balance higher - almost level with spout. Wrap the whole pot in plastic to 'equalise', then clean off slip next day

# Decorative



for decorating with slip  
Jennifer uses thin (milk)  
for priming - leaves that  
to matt dry & then  
decorates with thicker  
slip.

scgraffito



trailed lines & dots  
of slip

the lines are  
positive & fast

'Speed - life energy'  
not laboured.

3 dots of  
trailed slip

Stenciled

a 'stiffer'  
form of  
decoration.



thin transparent  
plastic with  
cut out oak leaf  
design to use  
as a stencil  
for sponging slip

slip trailed stem  
adds 'life'.

# 5%

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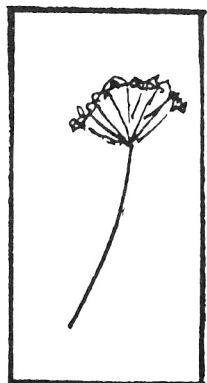
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