

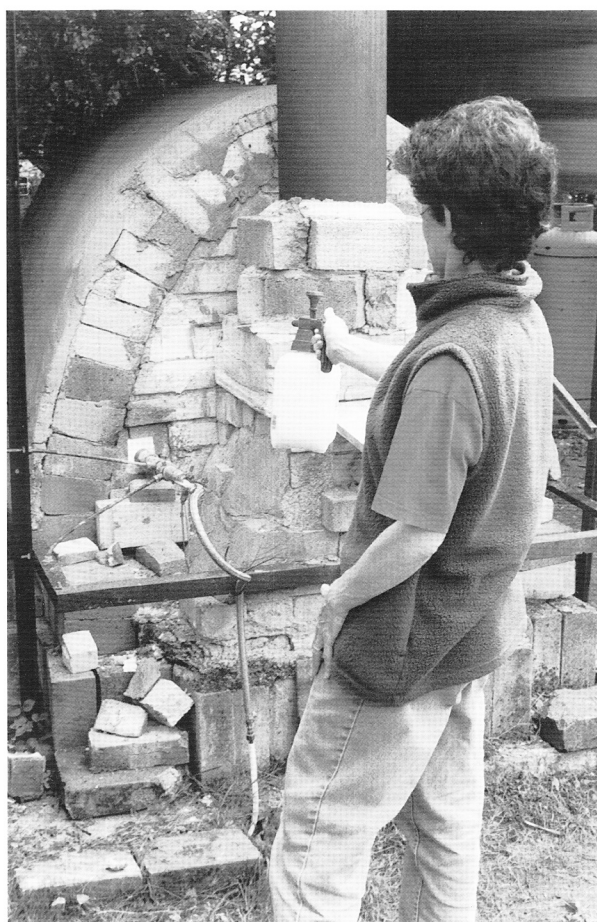


# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



IN THIS ISSUE -

SODA GLAZE FIRING WITH STEVE HARRISON  
WILLIAM MOORCROFT - APPRECIATION  
PENNY FOWLER DEMONSTRATION  
BARDON MILL POTTERY



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NEWSLETTER  
AUTUMN 2002  
£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 Publication dates

(latest receipt of material for typing)

6 <sup>th</sup> January	February
6 <sup>th</sup> April	May
6 <sup>th</sup> July	August
5 <sup>th</sup> October	November

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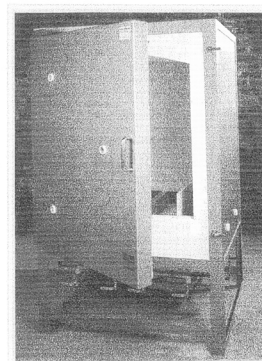
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## Front Cover Photograph

left) Soda kiln packing complete. Right) Ros McGuirk adds the soda

(photographs by Vivienne Roddewell-Davies)

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## EDITORIAL

With my photocopier broken down, it very quickly became evident that something had to be done. It is surprising how many copies I need to make for guild business and preparation of the newsletter. Cutting a long story short, after much anguish and investigation I found a very inexpensive alternative machine, but then managed to get the original copier repaired. Cutting the story very short, I decided to purchase the alternative copier for the Guild, as a back-up in the event of a repeat failure. Just one problem, where the devil do I put it?

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have two new members: Barbara Davidson, a development officer and her partner Marshall Colman are from St. Albans and are interested in all aspects of pottery. We look forward to seeing them at our future events.

## GUILD EVENTS

Guild meetings are usually held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall

Friday Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. FRAN TRISTRAM



Fran set up the Lady Bay Pottery in Nottingham in 1992 where she produces a standard range of single-fired domestic stoneware and also some individual sculptural forms which are wheel-thrown and later altered.

She organised the recent Open Studio event in the Lady Bay area involving 26 local artists working in a wide range of media. She is also the author of *Single Firing* published by A & C Black. This meeting promised to be both informative and inspiring.



\*\*\*\*\* GARDEN PARTY \*\*\*\*\*

Sunday September 1<sup>st</sup> at the Chairman's residence

See enclosed leaflet for details

**Friday Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. (NOTE EARLIER TIME) A.G.M.**  
**CHRIS BRAMBLE DEMONSTRATION**

7 p.m. Bring pots for competition  
 7.30 p.m. A.G.M. followed by presentation & demonstration.

With the Stan Romer prize to be awarded for the best piece inspired by the human form, and the return of one of our most popular guests, be sure to arrive in good time.



Chris's work is quite unique, with sculpted faces and torsos emerging from wheel-thrown vessel shapes, they show a fascinating combination of European and African influences. They are described by their maker as a "meditation – a spiritual and emotional activity" which he can share with everyone.

**NEXT POTTERS OPEN DAY Sat. Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**at the Rudolf Steiner School, Kings Langley.**

We hope you will join us this year for our pre-Christmas Open Day with three outstanding potters all of whom are members of the C.P.A.

Each potter will give a talk and show slides of their work prior to their demonstration.

This year's demonstrators are **PHILOMENA PRETSELL** who combines a sense of theatre with a visual challenge to her work when making her slip-decorated handbuilt vessels.

**KARIN HESSENBERG** is a Fellow of the C.P.A. and makes hand built stoneware planters, stools and birdbaths which were inspired by visits to India and Nepal.

Our third potter **MARK PEDRO DE LA TORRE** makes unusual thrown terracotta pots of soft round shapes and textured surfaces which are the product of his love of plants.

To overcome the ever-increasing annual cost of putting on the Potters Open Day, the committee has decided not to include lunch in the price of the ticket for this year's event to make the day as affordable as possible; however, tea coffee and biscuits will be included in the price. The dining room will be available for people to sit and eat their packed lunch if they wish to do so.

Please note this year's event will be returning to the Rudolf Steiner School. Please put this date in your diary.

**OTHER EVENTS**

**Art in Clay – Hatfield House 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Aug,**  
 10 – 6 Fri. Sat. Sun. Adults £5.50

**Dewbury Potters – New Ceramics at Uxbridge Library**  
 Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> - Sep. 6<sup>th</sup> (01895 250600)

**The Wheel – Potters Conference (C.P.A. organised)**  
 Sept. 14-15<sup>th</sup> – Courtyard Arts Centre, Hereford  
 (01989 750644)

**Doug Jones Open Studio Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept Riverside**  
 Cottage Norfolk Rd Rickmansworth- 01923 770913

**Vivienne Rodwell-Davies Open Studio Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and**  
 Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>  
 Sept.

Frethun Cottage, 20 Grimsdyke Crescent, Barnet, Herts.  
 Tel: 02084 410904

9<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> Sept. 'MAMA' – a collaborative ceramics installation project at Queens Park Centre, Queens Park, Aylesbury, Bucks. Exhibition open Mon – Thurs 10am-9.30pm Saturdays 10am – 1.30 pm.  
 Proceeds of sales go towards women's Charity 'Wellbeing'



The next Herts. Open Studios takes place from Sept.7<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. Preview exhibition Aug.31/Sept.1. This is an annual event in September and is open to all artists and craftspeople in the county, providing an opportunity for them to meet the public, increase awareness of and access to the visual arts, and discuss ideas and working methods. Work is usually for sale. Studio openings, exhibitions, workshops and residencies are encouraged.

The organisers are Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum (HVAF), contact is Barbara Starkey, 25 Cunningham Avenue, St. Albans, Herts AL1 1JJ (07813 100651).

More details available from local libraries.

## **PENNY FOWLER DEMONSTRATION**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2002**

Why! Oh! Why! did I volunteer to write this. Well at least I won't be glared at by Mervyn for a short while.



I am a new member, barely got my name listed in the last Newsletter Summer 2002. I have "potted" for many years with no formal training whatsoever until this spring, so I am relatively new to the "potting jargon". So here goes, head down and away.

### Profile

Unlike myself, Penny has an impressive CV; she started her involvement with ceramics at the Central School of Art in London in 1967 and completed a postgraduate Diploma in 1981. From that date she has undertaken several commissions as far afield as Japan, Holland, Hackney and Gloucester. Penny has also found time to exhibit in high profile exhibitions and galleries continuously since 1994 not only in the United Kingdom but abroad.

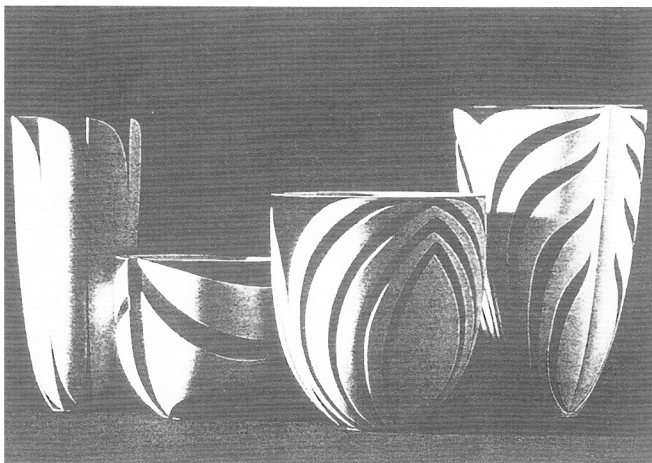
Whilst at the Central School Penny soon mastered the art of throwing but preferred the "tooled" surfaces that could then be carved. From the early slides of her work it was noticeable that she was influenced by Islamic forms, simple minaret shapes that were thrown then turned to give a flawless surface. The clays being coloured with body stains and fired in a reduction kiln. Penny admitted that the work of Lucy Rie also played an important part in her progression. She threw simple cylinders to show the light and shade with carved surfaces.

Penny soon realised that the type of work she was doing needed to be speeded up. She admitted that a small vessel could take 5 to 10 hours for her to carve a simple pattern on its surface. Elaborate designs and larger pieces would take much longer. This is when Penny turned to slip casting. Not only did it ensure that a set of vessels would be exactly the same size, but it opened a whole new area of layered casting and delicate inlay.

To obtain the desired translucency Penny moved to carved Bone China but found that it has a tendency to wear during carving. She tried many ready-made white casting slips but none gave the uniformity she required. Penny has now perfected a semi-porcelain casting slip (recipe given at the end ) which gives a robustness suitable for carving but translucent enough to allow light to show through. After the desired shape has been thrown, Penny makes a one or 2-piece mold using very fine dental plaster.

### Layered Casting

To obtain the striking black and white contrast shown, the slip is coloured with body stains. One important thing to remember, the slip must be sieved just before pouring, Penny uses 100 mesh sieves and often the plastic kitchen ones. The molds are sponged with a damp clean sponge to ensure the slip doesn't grab the sides and give an uneven coating. The white slip is poured in and out almost immediately. The mold cleaned of any spillages on the top and sides. When the thin layer of slip in the mold no longer shines, the black slip is poured in and timed for approximately 5 minutes and the process repeated. The final layer of white slip is then added as before and the vessel is then left to dry until it separates from the mold. The colour sequence can be altered as Penny showed one vessel is black pattern on white while its partner is white pattern on black. At the leather hard stage Penny then carves by gently scraping away the top white layer to reveal the black slip underneath. Her patterns are influenced by sweeping geometric designs which are almost zebra like. These contrasting black/white patterns are obviously a favourite with Penny and though she admitted she had tried different colours she tended to revert back to black and white.



### Inlay

Penny has perfected the art of inlay by two methods. Firstly she attaches small pieces of stained clay to the inside of simple moulds, then pours casting slip in. When the vessel releases from the mould the inlay pieces are stuck to the outside of the pot. Secondly Penny paints coloured slip in patterns on the inside of the mold, again after casting the pattern is evident on the outside of the pot.

### Carved Lamps

Penny displayed by way of slides her carved lamp shades. Again the meticulous method of sieving and preparation was evident. The slip is poured in and timed for about 5 minutes, subject to atmospheric conditions. The influence for these lamps was drawn from flowers, especially bluebells and sweet peas. The delicacy with which she carves these items is astounding. It must be stated that the finished article was barely the thickness of an eggshell. When lit, the pattern shone through.

All the wares are bisque fired to 1000 degrees then sanded to remove any blemishes or marks.

### Conclusion

While I watched I was made aware of the delicacy and meticulous dedication to detail that Penny has perfected. Her finished vessels are mostly unglazed but all have the simple beauty of a well-made piece of china. The slides of the carved lamps did not illustrate their full beauty. As was remarked by another member, "rarely does the finished object look as good as the photo", but in this case the finished pots surpassed my expectations. I will conclude by saying that I have been playing all these years. A dedication to perfection that Penny has demonstrated doesn't just come with practice. Penny has passion and focus in her high standard of work.

### Recipes

#### Semi- Porcelain

White earthenware fired high – bisque 1000°C.  
2<sup>nd</sup> firing 1200°C with 15 minutes soak

20 kilo Casting slip ( Dry ) from Potterycrafts.  
15.6 grams soda ash  
15 mls. Sodium Silicate  
6.75 Litres water

#### Coloured slip

2 pints semi- porcelain  
70 grams body stain

Other works by Penny Fowler can be viewed by appointment at the following:-  
Cecilia Coleman Gallery, St Johns Wood, London  
Eton Applied Arts, Eton, Berks.  
Contemporary Ceramics, London W.C.1.

Glenda Seal

### CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Mervyn

In reply to your questions about "do we need workshops", I for one welcome workshops, and where possible (family commitments permitting) am dedicated to attend as many as possible. My perspective however (from a limited knowledge) is that there seems to be far too many for me to attend without complete family anarchy. Especially when you take into account the number of exhibitions and gallery invitations that are available. I also note that you applied for a grant for assistance in these workshops. Which agency did you apply to? I applied three years ago to 'Help the Aged' for a grant to introduce pottery to our village and was successful in obtaining £3800. I have been involved in grant seeking for over three years, some successes and many failures. If I can be of assistance then let me know. I don't wish to tread on any toes or seem too enthusiastic. You and your committee have successfully run the DCGP for many years, which in today's climate is a credit to yourselves.

Yours sincerely

Glenda Seal.

*Thank you for your article about the demonstration by Penny Fowler and the above letter, Glenda. It is helpful to have members express their views on Guild activities and events. I note your expertise in applying for grants and feel sure that the committee will want to talk to you in more detail about this subject. (Ed.)*

## NOTEBOOK

### LIBRARY NEWS

Janet Collings, assisted by Ruth Karnac has undertaken a complete reorganisation of the Library. Members will now find that our books have been colour – coded into categories. In addition some books with a limited reference to pottery subjects or which are very out-of-date have been removed to give more space to arrange the other books in a more accessible fashion. This marathon work should help members in locating the subject matter of interest to them. We are very grateful for the time that Janet and Ruth have put into this reorganisation for us.

### MEMBERSHIP FORMS

Our Membership Secretary, Digby Stott, has had some difficulties with new members applying for guild membership on old forms, which have out of date information and membership rates on them. A current membership form is enclosed with this Newsletter, so please dispose of any other old application forms that you have, keeping the latest one to give to any prospective new member you may come across.

### BOOK AUCTION and MEMBERS EVENING

Our book auction was attended by a disappointingly low turnout. Those who came enjoyed the evening and the sales figure was approximately £140.

The second part of the evening was given over to a discussion of pots that members had brought along to show and talk about. Of particular interest were some of the pots from the Soda firing which members had attended with Steve Harrison.

### POTTERS OPEN DAY

The Green Park centre had been booked for our POD on 16th November 2002, almost immediately after last year's POD and terms were agreed. However, the GPC made a recent decision to increase the charge and then informed our organiser, Joy Wills that the cost was to be £34 per head. Confronted with a price rise of this order, the cost of our POD would be approximately £50 plus per person when the demonstrators fees were taken into account.

Presently, Joy is negotiating final details, having booked the Rudolf Steiner school hall for this event.

*[also see GUILD EVENTS]*

### GUILD EXHIBITION

The recent Exhibition held at the Finlandia Gallery had very few sales. The gallery is located on a main road but seems to attract a limited number of visitors.

### SODA KILN

The recent Workshop with Steve Harrison was an exciting event. The final results were very good indeed, with most participants delighted with the pots. There was a slight mishap with the front shelves

partially collapsing, but in general the outcome was very satisfactory, the pots having a beautiful sheen on them. I had my video camera with me and filmed the kiln packing and at other stages through to the opening 6 days later. I hope to have this video available for members to see at some future time.

The committee are hoping that members will want to have further firings of the soda kiln. The cost of the gas (approximately £40 per firing ) would be shared by those members with pots in the kiln and participating in the firing. Each participant will be expected to pay £5 towards the cost of kiln maintenance, (non members £10) to help make the project self-supporting. Members who come along to watch the proceedings will not be expected to pay, but obviously any financial support offered would be gratefully accepted. From the above it will be apparent that with 5 to 8 members firing the kiln, the cost would only be about £8 to £10 per head.

If you are interested in this activity please phone either Paul Rowbottom 01923 263 032, or Vivienne Rodwell-Davies 02084 410 904.

### INSURANCE

The cost of all insurance has risen, quite dramatically in some cases. A fair proportion of the money received in membership subscriptions goes towards insurance for the guild equipment and activities. When visitors attend guild events, or use guild equipment, some aspects of the guild cover are extended to those people. This is one reason why we usually ask for an increased fee for visitors attending guild activities.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### A TRIBUTE TO JEFFREY HAWKINS

I did not hear that Jeffrey Hawkins had died until a few months ago. He had a short illness and died on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2001, at the age of 80. I believe that Jeffrey was a founder member of our guild and he was also a founder member of the Chiltern Society.

In 1939, at the age of 18, Jeff was left to manage his father's farm virtually alone, when his father became war agricultural advisor for South Beds. This was apparently a very tough time for him as such a young man. Jeff was very instrumental in restoration of the Pitstone Farm Windmill and led the local team which became the Pitstone Local History Society. He was passionate about saving early agricultural machines and was involved with many local matters, helping to start the Chiltern Open Air Museum and also his own Pitstone Farm Museum.

The Guild has received the benefit of Jeff's generosity in the support he gave us at Pitstone. He was always prepared to listen and found ways of helping us with our raku projects at the Farm museum. I personally found that Jeff would go out of his way to help us in any way that he could, his cheerful presence will be sadly missed.

*(My thanks to Barbara Meeking, for lending me her copy of Chiltern News dated March 2002 , in which a more detailed obituary is given).*

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## **POTTERY – OLD AND NEW**

Recently Sylvia and I visited the Bardon Mill Pottery in Hexham, Northumberland, in Hadrian Wall country. We also visited the Roman fortress site of Vindolanda which is quite close by.

### **Bardon Mill Pottery**

Producing a range of salt glazed stoneware garden pots and some specials, this pottery was founded in 1878 as a pipe works. Examination of the tips also showed that they produced tiles, various types of bricks, chimneys and domestic sinks in earlier times. We were shown round by Ian Glasson, the commercial manager and also by Ian Round, the technical manager. There are several throwers working on the site (we were delivering a new wheel, hence the visit).

Two kilns are used, one is a bottle kiln fired with coal. This kiln had just been opened and was filled with a huge stack of warm pots as shown in photograph (1). The second kiln is oil fired, with a burner at each end. We were fortunate to be there when this kiln was being fired and stayed to watch the salting process. The salt is poured into two hoppers, one on each side of the kiln, and blown into the flame of the burners using an air supply. With £10,000 of pots in the kiln, the temperature was being closely monitored by Ian Round and his assistant, Chris. When we left, the temperature was still climbing, but rather slowly. Photograph (2) shows Ian removing a test piece from the kiln.

### **Haltwhistle – centre of Britain**

We stayed overnight at Haltwhistle, having supper at "The Centre of Britain Hotel". The landlord entertained us with stories of the difficult lives of the local inhabitants on the borders, when skirmishes from one side to another were a constant threat, many years ago.

### **Vindolanda**

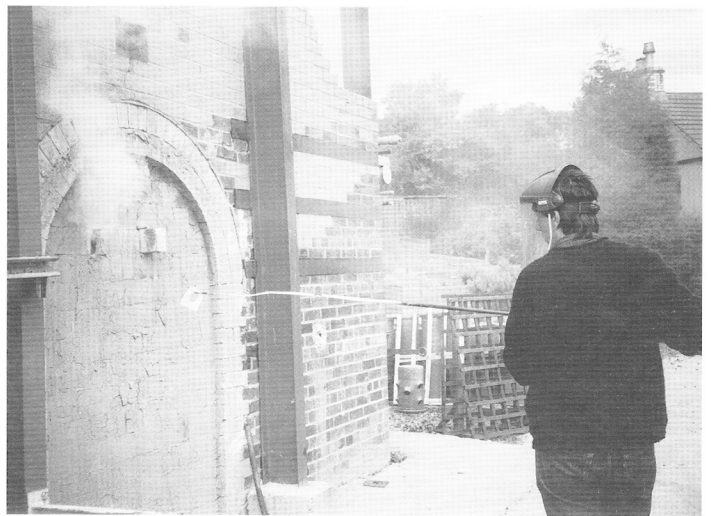
The next day we visited the nearby site of Vindolanda, where a Roman garrison fortress had been established around 85 A.D. The fortress had been demolished and rebuilt up to 7 times during the Roman occupation. During our visit, excavations were under way and, astonishingly, wooden note tablets were being recovered from the anaerobic clay. There were some of these in the museum and scientists had revealed the writing on them, which had been translated, giving an insight into the everyday life of the time. We talked to some of the people excavating the upper levels and were shown fragments of glass and Samian ware which they were finding as we watched (see picture 3).

Our drive home was filled with discussion of all that we had seen, it certainly was an interesting visit.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



The top of the pot stack inside the bottle kiln



Ian Round removing a test piece from the oil-fired kiln



Sylvia and one of the archæologists, Christopher Frye, with freshly excavated pottery fragments at Vindolanda



## **BOOK REVIEW - Stephen Murfitt: The Glaze Book.** Thames & Hudson £19.95

There is not much one can say by way of a review of this book. It consists of a few pages of text providing basic information on the history of glazes, materials and glaze mixing and then over 700 glaze recipes.

The recipes are divided into sections covering earthenware, majolica, raku, lustre, stoneware, soda and porcelain firings and are then further subdivided, where relevant, into glazes for oxidising and reducing atmospheres. Each recipe gives a short text description of the glaze, a list of ingredients, the recommended firing range and a photograph of a standardised test tile.

My only criticism is that the lighting in the pictures of the tiles has caused harsh reflections on edges of the tiles with high gloss glazes. This makes it difficult to see how the glaze colour breaks on edges – softer lighting or a more three-dimensional test piece could perhaps have given a better result. I expect this book will be a very useful starting point for anyone wanting to develop glazes.

Jan Kent

### **PITSTONE 2002**

Following our workshops with Jola Spytkowska and Megan Di Girolamo, both of which went very well, our Pitstone Open Days season started early this year. In May the Museum had a "Wheels in Motion" day with all sorts of ancient engines. This brought in a lot of visitors on a fine sunny day, but although quite a few were interested to watch our firings, only three youngsters decided to "have a go". As a result, Barbara Meeking, Lip Ong and I had plenty of time to fire our own pieces, with considerable success.

The next Open day was in June and we were not so lucky with the weather. The Craft Fair still brought in a fair number of visitors, but not many wanted to stand outside in the drizzle to watch us work, and no customers for "have a go". Because of the damp weather, things went rather slower than usual, the glazes took longer to dry and the kiln took longer to heat, but again Tina Hall, Maurice Clark and I were able to fire plenty of our own pieces. Financially, these have not been particularly successful days, with very little income from "have a go", but we have made a few sales of pots donated by members. Do any members have other pots they could donate? Does anyone have any biscuit fired ware that we could use for the "have a go"? If you do, please contact me and I will try to arrange to collect them. (tel: 01908-674 051)

There are three more Open Days this year. July will have passed by the time you get this issue, but that still leaves August 11<sup>th</sup> and September 8<sup>th</sup>. I look forward to seeing some of you there.

Jan Kent

## **SODA GLAZE FIRING WITH STEVE HARRISON at Northfields Studio 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May '02 Saturday**

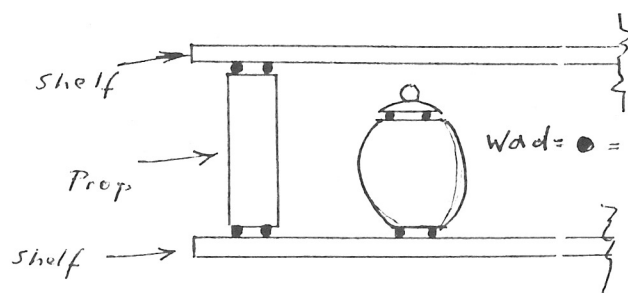
We arrived at Northfields Studio at 10 a.m. and found that Steve was already there and had almost finished making slight adjustments to the kiln. There had previously been some difficulty in reaching temperature and Steve felt that by moving the bag wall closer together the difficulty would be overcome. So it proved when the kiln was fired the following day.

Our task the first day was to slip or glaze our biscuit fired pots and load them into the kiln. The process of salt and soda glazing often fails to glaze the insides of enclosed pots, e.g. jugs and deep bowls and it is necessary to glaze the insides with conventional stoneware glazes, in our case celadon seemed to be the favourite.

Neither salt nor soda glazes generally provide an attractive colour when applied to the natural clay colour of pots and in order to obtain the typical orange red, grey or blue colour required, coloured slips need to be applied to the biscuit ware before the glaze firing.

Another pre-glaze firing task required was the finicky job of applying 'insulating' non-stick wads to the bottom of each pot and between a pot and its lid. This is required because the vapour occurring when salt or soda are added to the correct temperature will settle on every surface in the kiln sticking each surface to any adjoining surface. As if this was not labour intensive enough, non-stick wads also had to be added between the bottom of each shelf prop and the shelf below and to the top of each prop and the shelf above.

The work involved in glazing, slipping, applying the non-stick wads and then introducing salt or soda into the kiln, make, in my experience, the making of salt glazed or soda glazed ware the most labour intensive method of producing pots, a method one would have to be a real enthusiast to want to follow on a regular basis. When all the above jobs had been completed, Steve loaded the pots into the kiln using three separate stacks of three shelves. By the time this was completed, most of us felt we had done a good day's work and were ready for a rest!





## Sunday

Dorley Fieldhouse had very gallantly lit the two kiln burners at 7.30 a.m. and Steve arrived at 8.30 to take control of the firing. The rest of us arrived at about 10 a.m. The kiln gained heat satisfactorily and Steve's adjustments to the bag walls had proved successful.

A small wood fire was lit and a soda solution obtained by boiling bicarbonate of soda in a saucepan. This was then poured into two garden sprays which were pumped up to obtain pressure and then squirted in a continuous jet through spy holes at the front and back of the kiln when the kiln had reached Cone 5 – 6 (1200°C). The soda solution was introduced non-stop for about an hour into the kiln until Cone 9 (1280°C) was down. Reduction was present all through the application of the soda.

Unfortunately, near the end of the firing the front stack of three shelves fell forward, luckily away from the other two stacks. We would not know until the following Thursday how many pots had been affected.

## Thursday evening

The time for opening the kiln had arrived at last. Steve had thought he would not be able to get to the opening but, in fact, managed to make it and we were able to benefit from his verdict on the firing.

As feared, a number of pots on the front three shelves had been damaged but amazingly some had survived the collapse safely. It was sad that Vivienne who had worked so hard towards putting on the course had suffered most in the fall. Generally the results of the firing were good with a number of the pots having an excellent soda glaze finish.

Steve's enthusiasm was infectious and we learned a lot from his enormous experience and expertise. All those who attended the course have now some of their pots soda glazed, an opportunity that is available to few potters. Many thanks to Vivienne and Paul for their hard work, but a special thank you to Murray and Dorley Fieldhouse for allowing us to use their home and grounds and for two delicious lunches with home-made bread and cakes with our coffee!

The next time the Guild have a soda firing, why not bring along some of your biscuit fired pots and enjoy an interesting day in beautiful surroundings.

## Technical information

### Non-stick wads

These were made of a mixture of five parts alumina to one part china clay. Steve adds a handful of flour to his mix to help the wads stick to the pots, shelves and props.

### Celadon linear glaze

Cornish stone	80
Whiting	10
China clay	10
Talc	6
Iron oxide	2

### Decorative slips applied to biscuit ware

#### Orange/cream/tan slip

AT Ball clay	50
Potash feldspar	50

#### Orange/tan slip

AT Ball clay	90
Nepheline syenite	10

#### Blue/black slip

WBB Ball clay	30
EWVA Ball clay	30
Potash feldspar	20
China clay	20
Cobalt carbonate	1.5

Geoff Parr

## 'BREEZE INTO NORTHUMBERLAND'

The Aurora Project – A quality exhibition and sale of art and craft work of Northumbrian artists at the Exhibition Centre Henley-on-Thames (behind the Town Hall) Sun.25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> Aug. from 10am to 5 pm.

'Breeze into Northumberland' is a blend of Northumbrian arts, crafts and music provided by professional artists living and working in the rural countryside of Northumberland.

The Aurora Project is a network of traditional Northumbrian artists and craftswomen who support each other collectively to build a reputation for quality, individuality and creativity. It supports members business and personal development, provides guidance through group meetings, one to one meetings and monitoring. The project provides business advice and training, marketing support and organises and participates in related events.

Due to the foot and mouth epidemic, which decimated trade in rural Northumberland during 2001, the project will be travelling throughout Great Britain to promote traditional crafts and the Northumbrian Tourist Industry. The Aurora Project recognises the need to promote Northumbrian culture to attract visitors back to the rural countryside to supports its traditional arts and crafts.

The project has 130 members, 15 of whom will be selling their work in Henley-on-Thames during August. The work will include textiles, ceramics, pottery, fine art, embroidery, photography, wood and handmade papers.

Vanessa Waller and Veronica Ballan, two of the leading members, will be available in the Exhibition Centre during the above dates to discuss Northumbrian arts and crafts with you. Vanessa has a great affection for Henley-on-Thames as she spent most of her early life there and is keen to revisit the town and her family who still live in the area.

Vanessa and Peggy Leonard (a friend and Henley-on-Thames resident) will be playing the traditional Northumbrian small pipes.

### WILLIAM MOORCROFT 1872 – 1945



Macintyre Florian vase with peacock design by W.Moorcroft c.1899

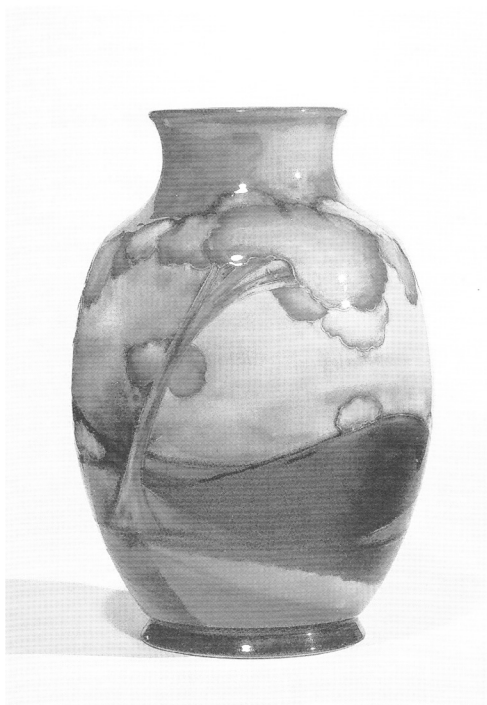
William Moorcroft spent most of his life in and around Burslem. He was the son of Thomas, an artist and designer at the Hill Pottery. He trained at the Burslem School of Art and at what is now the Royal College of Art in South Kensington (then the National Art Training School) in the heyday of the Arts and Crafts Movement. He returned home to teach but instead accepted an offer to design for James Macintyre & Co. at the Washington works in Burslem. Here he joined the new "Art Pottery" department and was soon designing and producing their "Florian Ware". He was in control of the entire process from beginning to end and was able to experiment freely with glaze and decoration. It set a pattern for the rest of his life and he quickly developed his own characteristic style and techniques.

The forms he preferred for his pots were strongly influenced by his love of old Chinese pots. Mostly they were thrown from fine white porcelain. His decorations were designed to enhance those forms and, like those of William Morris and de Morgan, were generally based on flowers and leaves.

Moorcroft's work was highly successful. Within a year of its introduction, Florian ware was exported to New York and Paris and sold by Liberty in London. Moorcroft's department was an entirely separate operation within the Washington works. In 1913 they split up. Macintyre closed his Art Pottery department to concentrate on the production of "electrical porcelain". Moorcroft married an Inspector of Factories and set up a new modern factory that the two of them had designed. It was located at Coleridge on the outskirts of Burslem and staffed mostly by his old team of craftsmen and decorators (i.e. women).

He remained there for the rest of his life, working throughout as factory owner, manager, designer, chief technician and kiln operator. Each piece was fired at least twice and some were fired many times. The long *flambé* firings were especially arduous and involved complicated schedules of temperature control and reduction. The kiln was fuelled by coal and coke, and the results were unpredictable. Customers were expected to tolerate this and still pay the prices demanded for good pieces. Each piece was unique and many were highly prized.

Moorcroft's work has always been highly regarded by collectors abroad, which enabled the business to survive long periods when the home market demanded much more austere pottery, e.g. during the world wars and the 1930s.



Flambé vase, William Moorcroft 1940

When William died in 1945, having kept the pottery going virtually single-handed during the last war, the factory was taken over by his son Walter. The coke oven was replaced by an electric kiln and the Clean Air Act consigned the flambé firings to history. Slip-casting came to replace throwing as a more efficient method of production. The designs changed and developed but remained focused on form and plants. The business was revived in the early '80s by new owners and the old coke oven was converted into a visitors' centre. Other than all this, little has changed ! The pots are all made in much the same way as before. The factory is, in reality, a large pottery studio and the workforce is like a large extended family, with several generations of some families all working together. The pots are easily identified as Moorcroft, no-one else makes ceramics quite like that today. The Moorcroft style is quite unique and that is the secret of its success.

There is still a demand for these pots as collectables, yet one wonders how the modern pots will be considered in the years to come. Part of the fascination is that no two pots can possibly be absolutely identical. Hand-made pots never are, especially where the decoration is so densely applied – even the colours vary a little. However, none of these can match the old flambé ware for sheer excitement, colour and lustre.

William Moorcroft's old factory is now a Heritage site where visitors can watch the entire production of pots that are designed and marketed almost exclusively for collectors. Here there is now only one method of making (slip casting), one method of decoration (slip trailing or 'tube lining'), one glaze and one type of firing. Could modern Moorcroft be dismissed as merely

a very classy museum? Well, yes, maybe, if it were not for the fact that there is a second pottery at Coleridge which produces a wider range of stoneware, including a beautiful reduction fired range of pots. Perhaps the spirit of William Moorcroft lives on .....

Ros McGuirk

*References: "William Moorcroft & Walter Moorcroft" -  
Richard Dennis – Factory Visit ....*

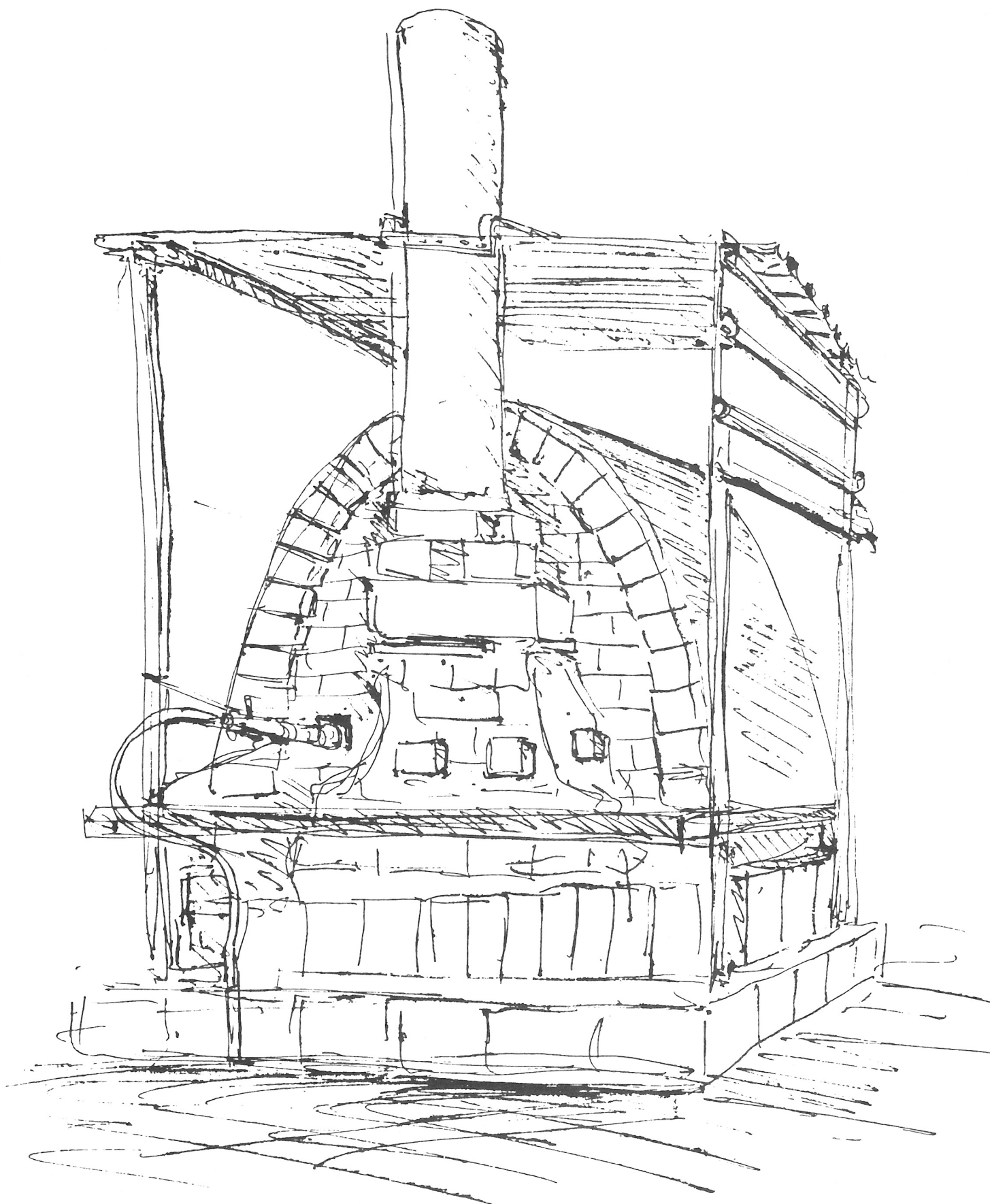
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