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NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2005
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Membership Rates: Family £21.00

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Send your cheque, made payable to D.C.P.G., to Digby Stott, "Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts., HP3 0DJ tel: 01442 404122. (If joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate).

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Hand sculpture, at the guild exhibition, by
Elspeth Owen. *KJTM*

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EDITORIAL

Preparing this newsletter has been more than usually difficult for a whole range of reasons, although I hope to have it ready for distribution by 11th August.

The Summer races past us all, and Art-in-Action has already come and gone. The weather was extremely hot at this event, and the ceramics tent was larger than before, with more potters included. It is always a great pleasure to meet so many friends and chat about the pottery scene. The general consensus was that sales were pretty much O.K., for most, though not all, but very definitely down on two years ago when the event was last held. Opinions on why were mostly that retail is generally lower at present, but also that the high temperatures tend to slow the sales down.

The Guild exhibition at the New Studio in Olney was a recent highlight, and sales were up on last year, so Ros McGuirk and the organisers are to be congratulated. A report on the exhibition is included in this issue.

About twelve Guild members attended the Aberystwyth event, and we have a mini-report from most of them included in this issue.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

Future Guild Events

Soda Firing at Northfields Studio, Tring, on 3rd&4th September 2005. This is open to all

Guild members. see application form

This workshop will be for six people, with or without soda firing experience.

The space available to each person will be equivalent to approximately five or six medium sized mugs or equivalent (the pots must not be too tightly packed, so that the soda effect is achieved).

The pots must be biscuit fired, any white or buff stoneware clay should do, providing there is some grog in it, with the exception of clays that fire pink at the biscuit stage.

They will be slipped and glazed on Saturday morning and packed into the kilns in the afternoon. Bring a packed lunch. The firing will start early Sunday morning so that the kiln should be ready for the soda by early afternoon. Bring a picnic to share.

The cost will be £24 each for Guild members, and £27 each for visitors. Some small additional payment may be needed for materials.

The Guild Garden Party will also take place on Sunday 4th September at Northfield Studio. (see Editor's Note-book for details)

Unless otherwise stated, meetings are held at Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall, starting at 8 p.m.

Fri. 14th Oct. AGM and the Stan Romer Competition, 'New Pots from Old' If you have not yet made a piece for this, there is still time to take part. Bring your exhibit along at 7 p.m. Please note that this meeting starts at 7.30 p.m. The demonstrator tonight is our very own Doug Jones who is guaranteed to enthuse and inspire, with ideas and tips for everyone.

Sat. 22nd Oct. Workshop at Longdean School with Sarah Robertson PLEASE SEE APPLICATION FORM

Sat. 12th Nov. Potters' Open Day

at Longdean School, Rumballs Road, Hemel Hempstead
This year's POD will be an exceptional one as there will be free entrance to all paid up members of the Guild, with the exception of lunch and refreshments which will have to be paid for by the consumer.

Our two well-known guest potters Jack Doherty and Ruthanne Tudball share a passion for soda glaze fired pots but that's where the similarities end. Jack works with porcelain and uses different coloured clays that are arranged on the wheel in such a way as to create intriguing patterns. Ruthanne's work by contrast is stoneware, raw glazed, slip decorated and once fired forms that have been drawn from the natural world and the human body.

POTTERYCRAFTS have been invited to sell their equipment & materials on the day.

There will also be an opportunity to order books at discount prices, through the Guild.

PLEASE NOTE the expectation is that this year's event will be popular, therefore we advise you to book your seats in advance to avoid disappointment.

The caterers require three weeks prior notice of lunch requirements, so the closing date of both seat reservations and lunch bookings will have to be no later than 28th October.

For those of you who wish to bring your own packed lunch, you may do so. If you wish to have refreshments during break times only, the price will be £2 per person. If you wish to take advantage of refreshments and lunch, the cost will be £7.50. Lunch will consist of a finger buffet and include a choice of vegetarian food. You will be greeted on arrival, as usual, with a 'hot toddy'.

Ticket cost to non Guild members will be £20. Guests can join the Guild as a member and pay £17.50 or £9 as full time students, to qualify for free entrance.

Maps will be sent out with tickets. Please book this date in your diaries. Phone 01296 481 015

Joy Wills

Fri. 9th Dec. Richard Baxter is a potter who runs the 'Old Leigh Studios', a gallery in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, who uses a wide variety of techniques in his own work. Tonight his demonstration will include how to cut and reassemble bowls, using paper clay.

Other Events

23rd - 25th Sep. 'Ceramics in the City' 50 potters at the Geoffrye Museum, Kingsland Rd. E.2. Free.

Sun. 25th Sep. Doug Jones' Open Studio Delicious pots and beautiful cakes in a magical setting. 114 Norfolk Rd. Rickmansworth, WD3 1LA 01923 770913

17th Sep. Potclays @ Stoke-on-Trent have a special Open Day if you are in the area tel: 01782 219 816

25th Sep. Slide talk by Duncan Ross at Univ. of Westminster, Regent St. Followed by a private view at his show at 7 Marshall St. (tel: 0207 437 7605). Booking is essential £8, £10, £4. Contact Do Hudson on 01297 444633.

POTTERY FESTIVAL

The Queens Park Centre, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Sunday 2nd October 10am - 4.30 pm

Heather Paul has worked tirelessly to come up with ideas to help raise funds towards the cost of buying The Queens Park Art Centre and finally came up with the wonderful idea of holding a Pottery Festival.

It will be a fun-packed day for all ages and will include seminars by Paul Priest, Megan di Girolimo, Chris Bramble and a raku workshop with Chris Mullins.

There will be sales of pots, books and a raffle that will include prizes by our demonstrators. So please come along and support the Centre and tutors and help make the day a successful one

If any Guild member would be interested in having a sales table on the day at £15.00 or share a table with another keen member, please contact me on 01296 481015 for details. --- Joy Wills

11th-23rd Oct. Chelsea Crafts Fair at Chelsea Town Hall, Kings Rd. SW3 5EF. Open Tues-Fri 10-8p.m. Sat & Sun 10-6p.m. £7 for single ticket, £10 for one visit each week (£5 & £7 for conc.) Note the fair is closed on Thurs. 20th Oct.

15th Oct. A Potter's Day with Ian Gregory at St. Mary's Parish Hall, Hendon Lane, Finchley, N3. £28 to include lunch and coffee. Bookings and further info from Anna - 0208 449 4776. Organised by the Barnet Collection

15th-23rd Oct. A selling exhibition of the work of Hamada Shoji curated by Phil Rogers at Marston Pottery. Show-room opens at 11 am on the 15th for viewing. Sales start at 2pm. For further info: 01597 810875. Marston Pottery, Lower Cefn Faes, Rhayader, Powys, LD6 5LT.

28th - 30th Oct. The Islington Contemporary Art and Design Fair for more info tel. 0207 837 4249

29th - 30th Oct. Oxford Ceramics Fair CPA Autumn Fair at St. Edmund's School, Woodstock, Oxford Sat. 10-

6pm Sun.10-4pm Demos and talks. 60 potters. see www.oxfordsc.co.uk

4th Nov-24th Dec CAA Christmas Show 2 Percy Street London W1T 1DD tel. 0207 436 2344 Mon-Sat. 10.30-5.30 pm. www.caa.org.uk

8th Nov Bonhams Sale - 20th C. Japanese Ceramics and Works of Art Auction at 101 New Bond St W1S 1SR at 6 pm. Info: 0207 468 8269

19-20th Nov. Art in Clay In The Maltings, Farnham, Surrey 10-5pm tel: 0115 987 3966

25-27th Nov British Crafts A fair at Chiswick Town Hall, W4 Sat.11-6pm Sun.11-4pm 0208 742 1697

8th Dec-26th Feb 'Table Manners' International contemp. tableware at The Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Road N1 9BY.

PITSTONE UP-DATE

The June Open Day was cold and damp and there were very few visitors to the Museum. We sold several pots to other craft demonstrators and we had 3 takers for 'have-a-go' which they did with mixed success.

For the July Open Day, the weather at least was warmer. Perhaps because of Silverstone and the Grand Prix, there were still disappointingly few visitors. However, it was not as bad as June and we had 7 successful and happy 'have-a-goers'. Pot sales, alas, were not good - despite Mervyn's valiant attempts, we only sold one pot all day.

Next Open Days are Sunday, Aug. 14th, Bank Holiday Monday Aug. 29th (Bank Holidays are usually our busiest days from past experience) and Sun. Sept. 11th.

Jan Kent

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Elizabeth Hedges has joined us. She lives at Staines, and is a crew operations officer at Heathrow. Elizabeth is the daughter of the late Rena Green, and is hoping to explore many aspects of pottery, but is presently concentrating on throwing and terracotta.

Sarah Rooms-Heaphy lives at the old school in Wiggington, and states her occupation as Homemaker. Her pottery interests include hand-built stoneware and Raku.

We are always delighted to welcome new members and hope that you will both be joining us at our future events.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

BOOK REVIEW

Crystalline Glazes, by Diane Creber (2nd edition)

£14.99, A & C Black

This book is one of the Ceramics Handbooks, which has proved to be a very popular series from A & C Black, Diane Creber is a Canadian Potter and has become well known for her crystalline glazed pottery.

The book is filled with spectacular photographs of crystalline glazed pots of many types and I find myself thinking hey! I should try this! But come now, have I got time? The reality is that I do not now have time to make any pots at all!, but if you are someone who has, then this could be the inspirational book that will start you on the journey to producing pots with crystalline glazes. The photographs are of the work from many potters, including Avril Farley and Kate Malone.

The book gives details of the types of clay to use, kiln information, plus glaze recipes and techniques. Details are given for both oxidation and also reduction firing methods. In addition Diane does discuss the aesthetics of pottery using crystalline glazes.

Perhaps, when I retire for the third (or fourth) time, I might have time to explore crystalline glazes. When (if) that happens, I would certainly reach for this book.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

THE ANNUAL EXHIBITION

Many thanks to all the members who took part in the recent exhibition at the New Studio in Olney, and especially to the new exhibitors, who gave the show a fresh look. And thanks are also due to Heather and Peter Nissen who supervised putting it up.

It was well received by all visitors, except one who declared that her pots were better! Sales were up on last year, with more than £1,500 - worth of pots and paintings being sold. This is very encouraging at a time when the market in studio ceramics is changing fast, and selling pots is becoming more of a challenge.

Those who have not yet joined in the annual exhibition, should consider giving it a try, for several reasons. First, why leave your best pots in store? Get them out and give them a life! Someone may come along who yearns to own one, and give it the TLC it deserves. You might even get asked to make more. And if not, well be patient. Enjoy how your good pots look on plinths in a gallery setting, and try again next year. It is amazing how much feedback you get, simply from viewing the work this way. It will influence the way you feel about your own work, and this will feed into your next project. That is the second reason. For the rest, come and find out for yourself.....

(See the photographs at the Potters Open Day)

Ros McGuirk

OBITUARY: HELEN PINCOMBE

(Originally published in The Guardian and reprinted here with their permission)

In mid 20th century photographs Helen Pincombe, who has died aged 96, can be seen, with other studio potters, as a tall strong figure often looking away as if trying to remove herself from the frame.

A reviewer of an exhibition held with Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie in Primavera, London in 1956, commented that her pots were very fine and very underpriced. Her work is to be found in many leading ceramic collections, including the Eagle Collection in Gateshead museum and in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

She was born in India, the only child of the chief engineer of the Eastern Railways, from an empire building family of tea planters, government officials and missionaries. When not at boarding school (she was sent to school in Geelong, Australia at the age of seven), she lived with her Plymouth Brethren aunt whose rigid outlook led to Helen's lifelong avoidance of organised religion. Helen had been so fearful of getting things wrong in that fierce household, that she always said "please, thank you, excuse me" to cover all possible eventualities.

The early separation from her parents turned Helen into a profoundly private person, self-sufficient and independent. She never married, and her work was her passion, along with gardening and photography.

In Australia she first encountered clay, dug from a river bed. She never forgot it. When she came to England to finish her education, she went to the Central School and to the Royal College of Art. Her style was influenced by English traditional and eastern pottery. She worked with the wheel and used a Pueblo coiling technique.

She always strove for strength and simplicity of form, and is remembered particularly for her domestic ware, garden pots and individual bowls – a form she returned to again and again. She developed an elegant style of brush work, and always worked in stoneware, with temoku and grey glazes and dark slips.

After the second world war, she taught at Guildford School of Art and set up a pottery in a converted forge in Oxshott, where she lived a frugal simple life never learning to cook beyond boiling an egg or stewing apples. Students from those days recall her patience and firmness, her ability to inspire them with what pottery was really all about.

Helen, who never learned to drive a car or master a bicycle, lived her life at a walking pace, taking time to look and find beauty in places others would not think to look. On holiday, she would prowl the beaches of Norfolk, camera at the ready, searching for a stone or

shell to scrutinise – turning it slowly in her long, fine fingers. She travelled to unfamiliar destinations, always researching meticulously and photographing assiduously. Her bookshelves were witness to her eclectic interests: architecture, indigenous peoples, world literature, nature and pottery.

When she moved to Cambridge in the 1970s, she taught at the newly opened Country Centre for Adult Education and inspired her students with her witty, dry humour and deep knowledge of her craft.

Among her effects was an unsourced quotation suggesting that "all beautiful work is the work done by the work itself". These words go to the heart of what she did. She is survived by her friends and her work.

Henry and Liz Rothschild

VIVIENNE RODWELL-DAVIES DEMONSTRATION

Friday 13th May 2005

Stimulation and inspiration were the order of the evening as Vivienne Rodwell-Davies spoke to us about her work. She began the evening with a talk, illustrated with slides, covering her work from 'early days' to her current concerns. The work ranged from teapots with wildly exaggerated spouts and handles sculpted with rams and birds, to large hand-built pieces inspired by pebbles collected on the days she loves to spend on the beach. Vivienne spoke of her inspirations and thought processes, of the beauty of clay and the frustrations which come hand-in-hand with the medium.

Vivienne's output is diverse, drawing inspiration from the delicate tracery of finely pierced silverware to the stark silhouette of the tree growing outside her window.

She spoke of her many sources of inspiration and her slides showed various examples of the resulting work. We saw teapots, slab built vessels 3 feet high and decorated with the ghostly impressions of cowslips, delicate spoons with spiralling handles reminiscent of tendrils on the vegetables she grows, thrown mugs and dishes, composite bottles and slab built sculptures topped with modelled heads. Vivienne utilises varied firing methods to produce a wide range of surface effects. Soda, salt, smoke, raku and paper firings all feature heavily in her work. She particularly enjoys experimenting with making additions such as banana skins or seaweed to smoke and raku firings to attain varied effects.

During the interval, members had the opportunity to look through Vivienne's remarkable collection of sketchbooks – she described herself as a 'sketchaholic' and her addiction is evident! The sketchbooks are filled with page upon page of delicate watercolour sketches made in St. Ives, Venice and Spain, amongst other places. They express place,

thoughts and feelings with sensitivity and record inspirations with clarity of vision.

The evening continued with a fascinating demonstration of the building technique used to produce elegant roll topped dishes, of which she had brought examples which were offered for sale. Throwing from the hump was demonstrated followed by turning a foot. We sat transfixed as Vivienne demonstrated her techniques with the kind of confident skill that only comes after years of hard work. We saw the previously prepared pieces of an altered thrown form become an elegant colander, a very simple honest piece.

One of the most fascinating things about this demonstration, for me, was the insight it gave into the working practice of an artist potter. It has often been thought necessary to have a clear definition of one's work - "Oh yes, J.S., she makes teapots.. bowls.. sculpture..." After seeing the diversity of her output and the very many sources that inspire her, I have finally come to understand that we can make exactly what we please!

Vivienne runs a varied programme of workshops from her home. For further information phone: 0208 441 0904

Julia Knowles

NOTES FROM ABERYSTWYTH

Despite cool, damp and blustery weather, 12 Guild members had a fine time at the International Ceramic Festival at Aberystwyth, in early July.

"What conference is that, then?" "Pyromaniacs and arsonists, mostly". Well that gave the taxi driver something to think about as we drove up to the university!

Now, looking back, I think that this particular event will indeed be long remembered for the number and variety of its kiln firings. Pots were being fired all over the place, and the sheer creativity of those doing it was most impressive. There was a 'crematorium' kiln, that we were invited to model tiny figures to fire in. Ian Gregory demonstrated one of his rocket kilns and, most ingeniously, a shopping trolley kiln. Pots were fired in a car, a bonfire, an anagama kiln and a replica seventeenth century kiln. And best of all, on Saturday night, there was the spell-binding ice kiln. This was the most beautiful object at the show, as coloured flames flowed through ice as clear as crystal, slowly melting and softly reshaping the space within.

There were, of course the usual double demonstrations, talks, slide shows, films, the Saturday night buffet, exhibitions, and the first ever sale of cups donated by the participants. Just as valuable as all of these were the pleasures of meeting up with old friends and the opportunities of making new ones.

Here are notes made by the guild members who went to Harry's Restaurant on Sunday night:

'It was inspirational to have two ceramic sculptors amongst the demonstrators. Both had been commissioned to build large sculptures for display in prominent sites. One of these was Claire Cumeen, who worked in porcelain and had made spectacular figures of saints, some with wounds dripping with gold blood, and some that have been displayed in churches. Some pieces were of the Madonna and Child, and others were of the Crucifixion. What was so impressive was her portrayal of love, of despair, of pain, of betrayal, and of resignation. Her demonstrations were good, and her sculptures were moving.'

John Beckley

'A lovely, friendly atmosphere throughout the festival. On Saturday evening after a good tasty buffet meal, a local band played middle-European music. Then, as the light faded the pyromaniac from New Zealand, Peter Lange, commenced construction of his ice kiln. Health and Safety? No issue! Sparks flew, and an ever-changing inner structure was enhanced by chemical additions and fireworks!'

Helen Vernon

'For me the highlight was Gustave Perez (from Mexico), who stunned me with the way he manipulated the thrown forms. Wow!

Also, Wilma Cruise and Claire Cumeen, with their way of sculpting figures, were inspiring. The ice kiln late on Saturday night was spectacular, but health and Safety would have had a fit. And I had great company, with whom I seemed to laugh a lot.'

Kirsteen Holuj

'After a prolonged journey caused by delays and a missed connection, I eventually got to the campus at 10.30pm in a very weary state. It was a very pleasant surprise to find the accommodation so comfortable and close to the event.'

Mary Jones

'My prize possession from Aberystwyth is a Welsh dragon constructed with three half-melted cones made by Joe Finch and fired in Nick Collins' anagama kiln. Along with many others, I built a recumbent body fired in 20 minutes on the conveyor belt of a cremation kiln. These bodies were later brought back to life in spectacular fashion around a fiercely burning wooden church installation.

My other big experience was the firing of the African pots by the Bennin Potters. They fired their huge pots on an open wood fire in less than 45 minutes.'

Pierette Beckley

'The memory I will cherish is the signing of my pot by the African potter Angelique - a magic moment. - Also her beautiful hands, and the bottoms of her elegant

feet - pink and so flat, as she sat on the floor next to me!

A wonderful weekend.'

Joyce Hill

'For me, it is the generosity of the potters in giving all their information so freely, the friendly atmosphere, the good food and the like-minded company. Best of all was the wonderful knowledge and skills that Mtsuzaki Ken showed me.'

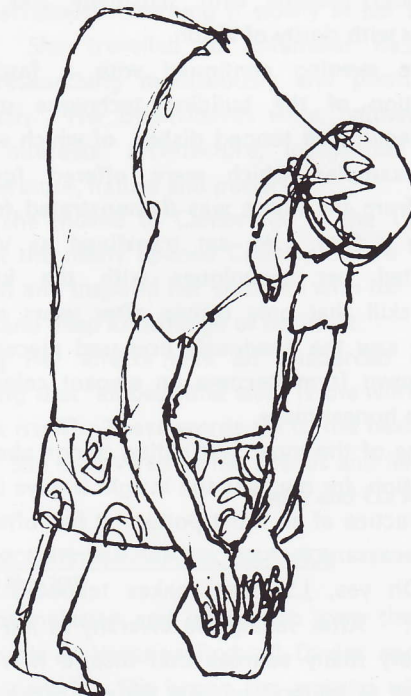
Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

'As usual, almost all the demonstrators gave us information, responded to all questions, and inspired interest and excitement. I found it difficult to choose between them. As always, I learned a great deal.'

Ruth Brown

'A breath of fresh air mixed with fumes from the kilns. A most delightful treat for a Californian girl. Thank you, Dacorum and Chiltern Potters, for befriending a stranger and making me feel so welcome. I will remember you and this exciting weekend, always.'

Anne Godsey



The notes were introduced & compiled by Ros McGuirk

**Drawings by
Dorothea Patterson**



Angeline & Veronique . Bonfire firing.



I have a passion for textiles, which began at the age of fifteen when I discovered jumble sales as a source of vintage fabrics. This was mid

60's and the trend for vintage clothing had just begun.

As most of the 'gems' needed some restoration, I began to learn how to construct these garments by deconstruction. By the 1980's I had taught myself to make pretty much anything on a sewing machine. Then one day someone came to me and asked if I could make them a hat, I thought why not? Then set about the task.

The customer was delighted with the result and word spread, before long I had orders for a dozen or so and decided to make hats my primary source of income. I set up and ran a market stall for a year and then met someone with a small unit who could produce the hats in volume.

Thus I found myself at the 1990 London International fashion Show at Olympia, agreeing to supply French Connection and Fenwick's among others. It seemed as if my dreams had come true, but in the 90's bank managers were hard on small business and mine failed.

I decided to investigate higher learning and enrolled on an Access to Art course at the local college. I didn't know it but this was to change my life dramatically. By the time I finished the course I had met my future husband, Ken, who has been so supportive ever since. I also found inspiration in a material quite new to me, clay.

After a three years degree course studying ceramics at the University of Wolverhampton, I spent one more year studying and developing my skills at the Design Workers Foundation. When the DWF folded, I stayed on in the rented studio sharing it with a friend I had met at university.

In 2001 Ken and I had the opportunity to move to the beautiful location where I am so happy to be living. I have a large and airy studio in a former granary on the Claydon House Estate, where I create the ceramic art I sell to visitors and galleries across the U.K. and internationally.



Soon after I graduated from the University of Wolverhampton, I was offered a three months artist in residence at Bilston Community College. As the residency came to an end, I was speaking to the tutor and saying that I didn't know what I would do now that it was finishing, at that very moment the phone rang, it was the secretary of the Design Workers Foundation, who had seen an article about my work in the local paper and wanted to know if I would like to join them. This opportunity would give me a free studio and further training in teaching, business studies and I.T.

The Foundation was in it's twelfth year when I joined, EU and local government funding with all it's red tape had been more than a match for the by now elderly and benevolent Alf Merricks who began it.

As the course finished the administrators were called in to dispose of all the equipment in the various studios. Again I was wondering how I would keep going without the use of the facilities, when a chap from the council came with his clipboard, to do an inventory.

We spoke about the course and he asked if I would be going into business for myself afterwards. I told him that if all the equipment was taken away, I would have no capital to start one. He looked around and then at me, and said; 'What equipment? I wasn't here. I didn't see any!' Unbelievably, I had found an 'official' with a heart! I inherited all the equipment I needed to continue and I am still using the kiln to this day.

Some weeks later I had a dream. I dreamed about the place I am living in now, in so much detail that it was mind-blowing when we found it! In my dream it was a craft centre, it isn't yet, but do you know? I think it might be!



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University of Wolverhampton.
Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology.
Stroud College of Art and Design

Top Drawer, Olympia, London, 2000
The London Show, Design Centre, Islington, London, 2000
California Gift Fair, Los Angeles, 2001
'Festival 2001', Harrow, 2001
Pride in Crafts, Kuusaamo, Finland, 2001
British Crafts Trade fair, Harrogate, 2002
Spring Fair, NEC, Birmingham, 2001, 2002 and 2005
Living Heritage Craft Fair, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, 2002 and 2004
Ceramic Showcase, Stoke-on-Trent, 2002
Nelson Potters festival, New Zealand, 2005
The Grape Escape Gallery, Richmond, New Zealand (current)
The White Gallery, Kuusaamo, Finland
'A' Frame Gallery, Brecon (current)
The Alexander Collections, Old Amersham (current)
Cecilia Colman Gallery, St Johns Wood, London (current)
Church House Designs, Congresbury, Bristol (current)
'Papaya' Tenby, Pembrokeshire (current)
The Red gallery, Thame, Oxfordshire (current)
Halcyon Daze Gallery, Ross on Wye (current)
Obsidian Art, Stoke Mandeville, Bucks (current)



Oriel-y-Felin, Trefin, Pembrokeshire (current)
The Fiery Beacon Gallery, Painswick, Gloucestershire
The Anderson Gallery, Burford, Oxon
The New Studio, Olney, North Bucks

Sue Megson Gallery, Cotswolds
Wolverhampton Art Gallery shop
Bilston Art Gallery

You can contact Lucinda by email:
flightingales@tiscali.co.uk
or phone:
01296 733984

CHAIRMAN'S NOTEBOOK

Library

The Guild library is a popular feature of our Guild, being open during our evening meetings at the Kings Langley Methodist Church Hall.

To retrace the history of the library, briefly; the start of it all was the bequest of Stan Romer's pottery books some 6 years ago. Since that time we have added many recent books to the library, making it a very useful information source for all members.

Our librarian, Janette Collings, will be standing down in October, and our assistant librarians are Joy Wills and Caroline Hughes. Caroline rarely comes to meetings now, owing to an increasingly hectic family lifestyle, and Joy is unable to take on the library on a regular basis, due to other commitments.

Well then, as you guessed, we are hoping that one or more of our members will come forward to help us with the library. The primary requirement is to be available to open the library for members during evening meetings, record books taken out and returned, then close the library at the end of the evening.

All of our Guild administration is on a voluntary basis, and I know that many of us struggle to find the time to help, but I am sure that someone can help us - how about you? Please phone either Joy Wills or Janette Collings if you need answers to any questions - phone numbers are given in the committee list.

Soda Kiln at Northfields Studio, Tring

This 15 cubic feet capacity kiln was originally built for the guild in 1999/2000, at a present capital cost of approx. £1,100 and has been fired at various times on an ad-hoc basis.

Currently only a few Guild members seem to be showing any interest in this kiln, so firings are restricted to infrequent times, when these people are available.

Two Guild workshops have been held using this kiln, and we are now considering how to proceed with future firings, in the best interests of all interested Guild members, and in accordance with the Guild constitution.

The basic costs of firing the kiln are; gas £90, soda £5, material for wads, & materials to restore the kiln after firing £10 to £20, capital repayment to the Guild Treasurer £30, making a total of £135 to £145. The cost of clay/slip/glazes will be borne by participants, but some materials may be available.

Any group using the kiln will be expected to share the above costs in relation to the amount of space each uses within the kiln. If the group has experience of firing they can undertake this between them. Advice will be available from experienced Guild members, and previous kiln logs should be available. If you have an interest in firing this kiln then the opportunity to do this is open to you. Please complete the form enclosed with this issue of the newsletter, and send it to the designated recipient, for group coordination.

In the event of instruction and full time assistance being required, our own expert, Vivienne Rodwell-Davies is prepared to offer this, in exchange for space in the kiln, providing that she has the pots and time available. Typically Vivienne would expect 50% of the kiln space in return for free instruction & assistance. If the group is large and kiln space available to her is reduced, then it would be necessary for the group to agree a fee with Vivienne.

Soda Firing Workshops organised by the Guild

Details will be set out in the Newsletter when any future soda firing workshops are arranged by our organiser. PLEASE NOTE a workshop is planned for 3rd & 4th September, to coincide with the Guild Garden Party. NUMBERS ARE RESTRICTED TO SIX PARTICIPANTS, AND PLACES WILL BE ALLOCATED ON A FIRST TO APPLY BASIS, so, send in your application form straight away if you want a place. If there are more than six applicants, we will try to arrange a later workshop.

NORTHFIELDS ON FIRE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Guild Garden Party) Sunday Sept. 4th.

This will be held at Northfields Studio, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5QW. the home of our President, Murray Fieldhouse. Phone 01442 851 229. The start time is to be 12.00 noon. Dorley and Murray are planning to make a large vegetable curry, and a large chicken curry. If you plan to join us, please phone Dorley, & bring suitable side dishes or desserts, or fruit dishes, and something to drink. If your mind becomes blank, phone Dorley (well in advance) for advice. Car parking on site is restricted so share a car if you can.

Craft Pottery Charitable Trust

Annual Grant Scheme - details on lizzgale@interalpha.co.uk or phone 02392 632 686. closing date 15th December 2005

Help at Longdean School

Currently the guild are using the school facilities for Guild Workshops free of charge, and the Potters Open Day is also to be held at the school this year. We have been searching for a way to repay the school, and the Head of the Art Dept. Joanne Van Veggel has suggested that she would appreciate some Guild interface with the students. The outline plan is to give a group of students some details of what a potter does, then follow up with some instruction on making pots. Initial ideas are either making pots to be fired in the school kiln, or possibly bisque fired, with a follow-up Raku session or sessions at the school, using the Guild kiln, with the same students. Alternatively, we might take the Guild wheels to the school and give some throwing guidance (the school has only one wheel).

This will need to take place in school time, so that our helpers/teachers will need to be able to attend during school days. If you are able to assist, please complete the enclosed form, or phone Mervyn Fitzwilliam on 01442 242 332.

Pottery on the Moor?

The Box Moor Trust at Hemel Hempstead is holding a Conker Festival & Championship on 16th October this year. (Believe it or not I was the Conker Champion for 2004, & have a medal & rosette to prove it!).

I was wondering if any Guild members would like to add an element of pottery to this event, by giving instruction to those interested? The Trust are being approached with this suggestion, so if you are inclined please phone me or add your name to the enclosed form and send it in.

Insurance

The Guild does have public liability insurance which covers public liability at guild events, where an interface with the public occurs. So for example, our evening meetings, and our Open Day would be covered. Our own equipment is also covered for loss or damage. However, the cost of insurance is substantial, and rises dramatically with the level of perceived risk. Covering the cost of pot breakages at events, for example, would be substantial. Insurance for any kind of kiln firing would be very costly, and restrictions would be imposed if indeed cover could be obtained.

Our secretary, John Beckley manages our insurance, and I have always found him very helpful on this subject, if you have any questions.

Setting up a selling co-operative

I phoned Leslie Parrott recently to check what response he had received about forming a co-operative selling

group of some kind, and guess what, he had received no enquiries of any kind from any members of the Guild!!

Going on past experience, this may indicate that we have not written enough about this idea yet, so, in case you missed it:

Leslie is a Guild member who is keen to sell his own work, and believes that it would be a good idea to join with other members who also want to sell. If enough people are interested then Les proposes a meeting could be held to start this off. If you are interested phone Les on 01895 255 027 or send him a note to his home address; 8 Belmont Road, Uxbridge, Middx. UB8 1RB.

Pottery & toxic materials

At our recent committee meeting we briefly discussed the toxicity of pottery surfaces, with respect to offering pottery items for sale to the public.

One thing to be quite clear about is that the responsibility for the quality, usability and safety of pots offered for sale rests with the potter who is selling them. If an item is not intended for domestic use, but could conceivably be used in this way, then a label stating this fact should be attached.

"No lead in my glazes" or "The manufacturer of the glaze stated that all lead is combined in the glaze at X firing temperature". O.K. no problem then, or is there?

Under some circumstances the combined lead within a glaze can become soluble, typically due to the addition of copper. Also, lead and other materials can be volatilised at higher temperatures or under certain conditions. Volatile lead can combine with other glazes within the same firing, so including an "experimental" pot with a kiln filled with other pots may result in all of them receiving some lead in the glaze.

The second-hand kiln you purchased for odd firings could have been used with lead, or other poisonous compounds & materials, which could be volatile. Some may remain in the fabric of the kiln, so be sure that you have a good understanding of the kiln history if producing domestic ware.

Some materials to treat with caution are; Antimony (oxide) arsenic oxide, beryllium oxide. Chromium & cadmium can cause toxicity problems in the finished ware under some circumstances, and I am told that barium carbonate (sometimes used in clay bodies) and barium hydroxide are toxic materials to be avoided, although barium sulphate is not soluble in stomach acid. Glazes or surface finishes which are heavily loaded with oxides or other materials which are loosely bound, may be toxic, even if higher firing temperatures are used.

The introduction of paper clay, may lead potters to experiment with the inclusion of other materials within the clay body. Surprisingly, under some circumstances, this can lead to dramatic local increases of temperature, way above the kiln temperature, due to local coke formation within pots fired at almost any temperature. The possible result being that local glaze or body content volatility may take place, with unintended consequences.

Some raku or low fired glazes just might be "safe" with respect to solubility, but the attractive crackle finish we are all familiar with could lead to problems of a bacterial nature if the ware were used in a domestic situation. But, surely no-one would use a raku pot in this way? Well, if there is not a label to explain that the item is not suitable for domestic use, then it is very possible that a customer would not know this; so the decorative raku "jug object" just might be used for the morning fruit juice. Even earthenware with non-lead glazes that do not fit the body could be a hazard of a similar type.

For more details, or to have your own ware tested for toxicity, talk to Mr. Reynolds, who runs a test company for this very purpose, called "Due Diligence Limited". He is an absolute dictionary of information on this subject, and very willing to help. Phone him on 01392 431222, or fax 01392 422 691.

Footnote

Letters about this or any other subject for discussion are always welcome

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

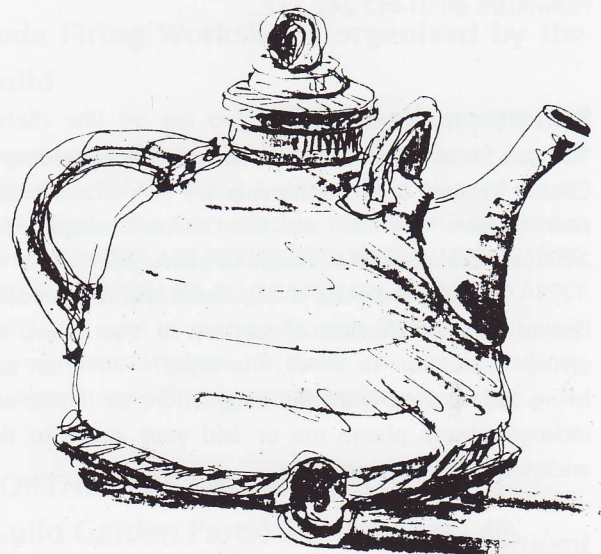
VISIT TO CERAMIC ART LONDON 2005, 7th May 2005

Yesterday I went to the Ceramic Art London 2005, held at the Royal College of Art. It was a lovely exhibition in that there were just the right number of people and it wasn't too hot. The layout was excellent with each potter having a booth. Vivid earthenware pots were represented by some new large work by Richard Phethean, Mike Eden's prize-winning work, Jane Cox and Fenella Mallalieu bowls. There were a large number of gas fired porcelain pots including work by Joanna Howells and Takeshi Yasuda. Geoffrey Swindell's pots also looked gas fired and were probably porcelain. Tjok Dessauvage had won a very impressive number of prizes for burnished enclosed. Ashraf Hanna exhibited lovely raku work and Tony Laverick showed his gold leaf brightly coloured vessels. The

Australian, John Stroomer, exhibited large crystalline vases. The field of soda glazing was represented by Maze Hill Pottery and Ruthanne Tudball and salt glaze by Walter Keeler. There were also some very attractive wood fired pots. These were the only ones out of an exhibition of impeccably finished pots to give the impression of being handmade. However, the point I am making is, that out of ninety potters, not one, as far as I could tell, was working in stoneware and firing in an electric kiln.

Margaret Tatton-Brown

STEVE WOODHEAD ON TEAPOTS – Friday 15th April



Steve's visit to us coincided with the launch of his new book *The Teapot Book*. He started the evening with a brief and enthusiastic account of its content. It took him 3 years to write. It is not only a book on the technique of making teapots, with numerous photographs of Derek Emms at work, but also a gallery of the works of teapot makers worldwide. Steve admits to being very proud of it and justifiably so; it must surely become established as the definitive book on the subject.

Steve describes the teapot as the potter's mountain. Conquering it requires the amalgam of correct body, fitting lid, strong handle, a spout that pours and each perfectly executed to produce a balanced aesthetic. To achieve this, he considered it quite legitimate to bring together the best elements of

other potters' work and gave us a hint of those influences.

He then set out to demonstrate how perfect execution might be achieved and started by demonstrating the assembly. He makes his pots in batches of only three because of the number of assembly operations to be performed while the clay is in the correct condition.

ASSEMBLY

a) The body: he checks that the profile is smooth and isn't afraid to turn the pot a little until perfection is achieved. He removes the slight arris which is formed when the pot is wired off the wheelhead. The base of his pot has a skirt and is given a pattern by a roulette to catch his fluid glazes.

b) Lid: This is something to which he pays very particular attention. The lid sits on a collar, not an internal gallery. This collar and the corresponding element of the lid are made on the heavy side so that they can be turned to give a tight fit. This helps resist distortion in firing under influence of the handle and the spout. The lid's surface is textured to collect glaze.

(c) Feet: These are attached at three points (ensures pot does not rock) using slip to scored spots on the base. The pot is pushed down slightly to flatten them. Two feet are slightly closer together; it is between these that the spout will be attached.

(d) Spout: The position of the spout is critical. In particular the level of the tip which must be level with the top of the collar. Too high and tea will come out at the lid when a full pot is poured; too low and tea will leak from the spout when the pot is being filled. The wide end is cut first and chamfered back a little to facilitate a smooth and strong attachment. The spout is offered up to determine the best aesthetic position, marks made on the body in preparation for the next operation, and the spout is dipped in water to soften it ready for attachment.

e) Spout holes: This operation (and the remainder of assembly) is done at soft leather hard with a tapering boring tool which allows holes of differing diameters to be cut. A large hole is made in the middle so that at the moment of fixing the correct alignment can be checked by looking down the spout. The holes should be quite large so that they are not later bridged by glaze. (Steve uses a thin glaze for the interior and blows down the spout). Steve stressed how important it is that the aggregate area of these holes is greater than the area of the spout tip, if not there will not be enough flow to the tip for it to pour properly.

f) Spout attachment: The body is scored where the spout is to be attached, slip is applied to the spout but not to the body, offered up, position checked and

chamfered edge pressed down with a finger. The ungrogged clay is sponged to remove finger marks.

g) Creating a locking lid. This I think is a Woodhead special and probably original. One groove is cut in the collar of the pot in line with the spout. Two matching lugs are attached to the exterior of the collar of the lid. A linear knob for the lid is attached at right angles to the axis of the two lugs so that when the knob is aligned with the spout, the lid is locked in position. Rather than drill a hole in the top of the lid, as is often done to allow air in when pouring, Steve makes another groove horizontally in the collar of the body.

h) Front Handle: This is attached by scoring and slip. It is important to ensure alignment with the spout and that there is no mechanical interference with the lid.

i) Lip of the spout: This has to be cut to allow for the unwinding of the twist imparted during throwing. The spout is supported and cut in one smooth action. If necessary, it can be refined with a surform blade at leather hard or even at biscuit with a file. Steve recommends taking a photograph of the angle before firing so that if allowance for twist proves not to be correct after glaze firing, a more appropriate allowance can be made next time. This of course assumes that one's throwing imparts the same twist each time! Doubtless it is true for Steve.

j) Handle: On the pot demonstrated, this was made by drawing a profiled loop through clay and it was attached conventionally except that a thin sausage of clay was lain right round each joint for strength and then embossed to improve the aesthetics.

GLAZING

Steve's base glaze is a standard David Leach recipe: one part each of Potash Feldspar, Flint, Whiting and China Clay. If he intends to apply On Glaze decoration, he replaces the Feldspar with Cornish stone. The glaze matures at cone 9. Sometimes he uses a porcelain slip to get a greater intensity of glaze colour and in order to prevent it shrinking and flaking off, adds 20-30% malachite. He takes his kiln up to 1240 as fast as possible and then climbs to 1245 over the next 45 minutes by way of soak. By this time cone 9 is down (The cone of course is the important indicator; Steve concedes that his pyrometer is way out of calibration).

THROWING

Most of Steve's work has used Valentines Extra Smooth Earthstone.

The body: He spreads the centred clay to a broad flat slab, compresses the base and then brings up the sides. At about 6 inches he begins to collar in. This thickens the collar and, as we learnt earlier, this is just what he wants. He uses a hacksaw blade tool to profile the circumference of the base, then at the three points

where the feet will be attached he pushes in and up to create distinctive "dents". He then re-centres the collar and ensures that it slopes inward slightly as this facilitates the lid lock.

The lid: This is thrown from 200gms of the same batch of clay as the body. This ensures that they both shrink to the same extent and the accurate fit is not lost. The lid demonstrated was of 'sit on' type and thrown upside down. The wall was pulled up, then split with down-ward pressure of the thumb. The first finger provided some restraining pressure to prevent the flange being created from spreading too far. The angle between the collar and its flange is refined to 90° with a metal tool. It is inclined in slightly so that when it sits on the collar of the glazed pot, no unglazed body can be seen.

The spout: From 250gms. of clay, centre, come down to wheelhead, pull out, collar, pull up, collar, lift, thin and repeat until adequate height and slenderness is obtained. The final refinement with a slight flare at the tip is achieved with a metal kidney against a finger inside.

It was unusual to have a demonstration lasting more than two hours. It not only demonstrated that a teapot is complicated - we knew or had anticipated that - more significantly it demonstrated the patient attention to detail that sets the Master apart.

Colin Hazelwood

(drawings by Vivienne Rodwell-Davies)

COMMITTEE LIST

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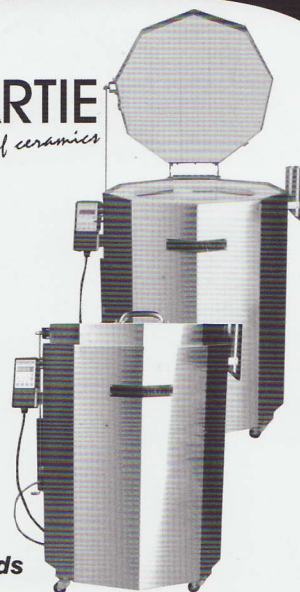
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