



# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2006

£1.50



## ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER

[www.thedcpg.org.uk](http://www.thedcpg.org.uk)

Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery and sculpture & offers the members many opportunities each year to see the top potters and sculptors 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: 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).

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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<u>Copy dates</u>	<u>Publication dates</u>
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(latest receipt of material for typing)

6 <sup>th</sup> January	February
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6 <sup>th</sup> April	May
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6 <sup>th</sup> July	August
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5 <sup>th</sup> October	November
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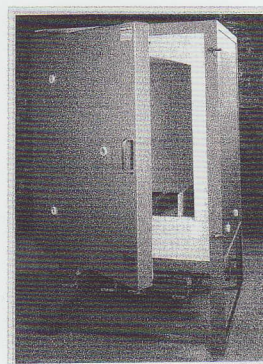
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### FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

A magnificent chandelier, entitled Porca Miseria, created by Munich based designer Inigo Maurer (see Notebook for more detail)

Photograph by Mervyn Fitzwilliam

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### EDITORIAL

I will start by wishing you all a very happy and prosperous New Year; hoping that you will all enjoy our programme of events for 2006.

Since I receive newsletters from most other Pottery Groups, I read at first hand of the anguish suffered by their Committee members, in trying so hard to keep up a momentum to keep those other guilds and pottery associations going. This is something all Committees are familiar with.

In our guild each year we usually have many new members join, but a surprisingly large number of people are either very slow to renew their membership, or in some cases they leave the guild. To understand this I carried out a research exercise beginning in November 05 and now concluded, to try to discover why this happens. The answers are not rocket science, but the conclusions are given under the Notebook heading.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### Pitstone 2006

Well another year opens ahead of us, loaded with opportunities for demonstrating pottery to the public at Pitstone and selling them some pots where we can. The Pitstone Craft Open Days this year will be 11th June, 9th July, 13th August and 10th September.

As well as the Craft days, the museum opens to the public on Bank Holidays. These seem to be even better attended than the craft days, as far as visitors go. This year the Bank Holidays are 1st May, 29th May and 28th August. As always, volunteers are very welcome, we need people to help with the have-a-go decorating for the Raku firing, with the firing itself and with selling pots. We

also had a lot of interest in 2005 from children making things from clay.

As far as the site itself goes, we need to treat our shed for woodworm sometime, help would be appreciated with emptying the shed, painting or spraying the wood and then putting things away again. This will have to wait until the weather warms up a bit, but we can't put it off for ever.

As ever, we would be very grateful for any pots you have that you could donate, either biscuit fired or glazed, we can use whatever you have available. I can collect them at the Friday meetings or if you can get them to a committee member, I can pick them up at a committee meeting.

Anyone wishing to volunteer or wanting more information can contact me at the Friday meetings, or by phone (01908 674051) or by email ([jan@jjktech.demon.co.uk](mailto:jan@jjktech.demon.co.uk)).

Jan Kent

### Future Guild Events

Guild evening meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Kings Langley, starting promptly at 8.00 pm., unless otherwise stated.

Admission is free to members £3 for Visitors

### GUILD MEETINGS

Fri. 10<sup>th</sup> March Jitka Palmer. Jitka is an artist who is well known for her large coiled pots that are decorated both inside and out, using slips and stains. These pots have stories to tell, with scenes drawn from her experiences of life. She uses earthenware clay, oxides and stains. She will give an illustrated talk entitled 'Drawing from life', and her demo will show how to paint with slips. Come and find out more about Jitka and the techniques she uses.





**Fri. 7<sup>th</sup> April**     **David White.** All the way from the Pennines, we welcome a potter who makes colourful earthenware with majolica glaze. A lively and entertaining evening can be expected, with this energetic and enthusiastic potter.

**Fri. 12<sup>th</sup> May**     **Stuart Smith.** Inspired by visits to India, with its rich cultural heritage and stark contrasts between rich and poor, Stuart has produced many very fine sculptures in clay. Tonight he will talk about his work and demonstrate some of his techniques, including the use of paper clay.



**\*\* Fri. 9<sup>th</sup> June**     **'Picking Up the Pieces'.** A 'summer special' with Guild member **Pauline Ashley** describing her new career as a restorer. Come and find out more about the repair of broken treasures, whether of china, porcelain or other materials.

*( Pauline expects her programme to last one hour, so we want members to bring some of their own pots for mutual discussion for the remaining time. In addition it has been suggested that members could bring any spare pottery tools/books etc. that they want to sell on, to add another dimension to this evening. Phone me if you have any questions. Mervyn Fitzwilliam 01442 242 332 ).*

**\*\* New date for your diary.**

#### **The Guild's Annual Exhibition**

We are holding our fourth exhibition at The New Studio in Olney in May, and hope that it will be as well supported as in previous years. Do consider it as a great opportunity to show off your work. We are keen to involve as many as possible, and will

give priority to new exhibitors, should we be inundated with applicants. Wall space is available as well as plinths.

Setting up will be on **Tues. 2<sup>nd</sup> May 06** and packing up will be on **Tues. 30<sup>th</sup> May 06**.

Please have your applications in by **Fri. 10<sup>th</sup> March**. Further information will then be sent out and you will be asked to reply with details of your work, including photos.

For those who have not been there, Olney is a pretty, old market town in NE Bucks. It lies east of Milton Keynes and 10 minutes' drive from the M1. It is a honeypot for visitors and tour operators on the Princess Di trail, who bring in folk from as far away as America. Our visitors' book shows that we get a good mix of locals with folk from the Midlands, the SE and overseas. So, work of high quality is required, and think about including smaller, lighter stuff too, as this is also a selling exhibition.

Applicants should fill in the form and post it to Ros McGuirk, 13 The Park, St. Albans, AL1 4UR, to arrive by **Fri. 10<sup>th</sup> March**. Alternatively, send your details by email.

For more info tel: 01727 834326, or e-mail at [ros@iclway.co.uk](mailto:ros@iclway.co.uk)

## **Other Events**

**23 Jan-24 Feb**     **Exhibition of Classic and Contemporary ceramics.** Galerie Besson, 15 Royal Archade. 28 Old Bond St., W15 4SP. Tel: 0207 491 1706

**24 Jan-18 Feb**     **'Creative Tension'.** An exhibition of British Art from 1900-1950, including works by major studio potters. Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond St. Tel: 0207 629 5116

**8-13 Feb.**     **'Collect' at the V&A.** Expensive, but stunning show with lots of ceramics and glass. £12 admission, £8 for concessions.

11am-5.45pm on Thurs - Sun, and 11am-4.45pm on Mon. Prepare to queue, or go on Fri or Mon afternoons, or pay extra for advanced booking on 0870 842 2208. [www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collect](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/collect)

**24-25 Feb.**     **Mould making and slipcasting.** A workshop with David Cowley at Brunel. £84. Tel: 01895 273 482, or email : [artscentre@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:artscentre@brunel.ac.uk)



25-26 Feb Glazing. Workshop by Matt Sherratt at Brunel. £84. Info as above.

3-5 March Ceramic Art London 2006. The second year for the great show at the RCA, Kensington Gore, SW7. 80 big names + talks, demos, films and a student exhibition. Tel: 0207 439 3377 or email: [organiser@ceramics.org.uk](mailto:organiser@ceramics.org.uk)

15-19 March Country Living Spring Fair. Business Design Centre, 52 Upper St., Islington. N1

16-25 March Prue Cooper – ceramics showcase. At Contemporary Ceramics, 7 Marshall St., W1. Tel: 0207 437 7605 [www.cpaceramics.com](http://www.cpaceramics.com)

28-30 April 'Festival of Fire'. The Midland Potters' Association 'do'. A weekend of demos, firings, talks etc. See Joe Finch, Gwen Heeney, David Jones, Kevin Millward in action, et al, plus a tea ceremony conducted by a real tea master. £120, including full residence. Contact Ineke Stevenson, The Courtyard, 32 High St., Belbroughton, W. Midlands, DY9 9SU. Tel: 01562 730 560 email: [ineke.stevenson@virgin.net](mailto:ineke.stevenson@virgin.net)

#### Potfest Shows 2006

Forms to apply for this series of shows can be downloaded from [www.potfest.co.uk/forms.htm](http://www.potfest.co.uk/forms.htm)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Chinese Pottery & Porcelain by Sheilagh Vainker  
The British Museum Press (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) Paperback  
£14.95

This book is a very well illustrated and comprehensive journey through the development of pottery & porcelain, in China, from the very earliest work up to the present.

The early influences and cross fertilisation of designs between metals (mostly bronze, but also silver) and ceramic work are well covered in general, with the first chapter devoted to the Neolithic & Bronze Age.

Funerary Art and Functional Vessels are covered in the second chapter on the Han & Six Dynasties, with some discussion of the Terracotta Army included. The third chapter is entitled Foreign Influences & Chinese Traditions, (centred on the Tang Dynasty).

The next chapter is entitled The Classical Period, and is the largest in the book., covering the Song Dynasty in some interesting detail, with 32 illustrations included. Subsequent chapters include Worldwide export of porcelain. Architectural &

popular ceramics, & the final chapter is on Imperial Porcelain from Jingdezhen.

This book has good colour plates of many pieces which are in the British museum, and useful maps of China. Since details and descriptions are included, a visit to the museum after reading this book, or using it as a reference could prove instructive.

The Appendices include notes on Clays, Glazes, and Kilns. Also included are a brief Glossary, Chronology of Cultures and Dynasties, a Bibliography, list of Illustrations (170) and also an Index.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

#### The Ceramic Process - A manual and source of inspiration for ceramic art and design.

Anton Reijnders of European Ceramic Work Centre A&C Black £45.00

As a manual covering many of the processes involved in the creation of ceramic works, this book is very useful. It is full of detailed technical information on the aspects of ceramics that need to be considered in producing a piece of work, with the strange exception of the actual making processes themselves. For instance, there is a useful chapter on choosing the right blend of clay to achieve good results in casting, throwing coiling and slab building. There is a chapter on supporting large pieces during building, another one on making moulds, one on drying especially as applied to large pieces, but nothing on the techniques one should use in actually designing or creating a piece.

All sections give a clear description of the mechanical, physical and chemical changes that are happening at each stage of the process and how to try to control them and there is a very useful section to help in analysing the reasons for faults.

Unfortunately in the welter of technical detail, it fails, in my opinion, to provide any "source of inspiration for ceramic art and design". This is a book for the ceramic technician, which admittedly we all need to be from time to time, but it totally ignores any discussion of aesthetics or design. This could, perhaps, have been alleviated by including photographs of beautiful or striking pots, but the pieces shown all seemed to me to be rather dull and not even well presented. The only thing the pictures inspired in me was sadness at the amount of time, effort and material wasted in their production.

Jan Kent



## **Richard Baxter Demonstration 9<sup>th</sup> Dec.05**

Richard runs a pottery workshop and gallery in Leigh-on-sea, in Essex, which was once the centre of the cockle fishing industry. The building was part of the boat yard, and looks over tidal mud flats and boats. In this historic and atmospheric place Richard makes a living from his craft, with some supplementary teaching, and, at one time, doing wholesale work, when he made thousands of ham stands for Sainsbury's.

Currently, using Valentines grogged red earthenware clay, Richard produces a range of domestic ware consisting of about ninety items in two different colour clays, one in a light blue glaze, and one in terracotta. He is particularly interested in leaving unglazed areas, and in emphasising the different facets of a pot by differential decorating. It is a system he began at college, inspired by Spanish medieval pottery. His terracotta range is typical of this work, with parts of the outsides left unglazed and the interiors and rims a rich glossy dark brown, with honey glaze. Vessels such as teapots are decorated with a medallion made of slip-trailed honey glaze and white slip.

In addition to these popular lines, Richard likes to make pots that push the boundaries of function and form. Some cups have pointed bases and stand balanced on three feet, either stilts, or balls. Teapots were made this way to lean backwards, and then were rebalanced when the spouts were added. We were shown slides of his "relic pots", which had been deliberately broken and reassembled with wire. There were also pots with an interesting knobbly texture. This texture was produced by rolling a dry slab of clay until it crumbles, biscuit firing the crumbs, and then wedging the bits into throwing clay. Towards the end of the throwing process, the pot is bellied out from the inside only so that the dry lumps stand proud on the surface.

Richard has also developed a particular line in finely thrown porcelain, often using a gold glaze on the rims and a barium/lithium translucent glaze elsewhere. The copper in the gold glaze bleeds a little into the translucent glaze - which over porcelain appears white - producing a delicate line of turquoise. These pots are quite exquisite. We also saw a slide showing the result of further experiments with glazes over porcelain. In this case a narrow necked, round bottle form was decorated in broad bands of pink and blue, which merged softly into one another. The pink glaze contained nickel, and the blue was produced by cobalt chloride, a toxic and soluble salt which bled

through the wall of the pot and caused that colour blending.

Richard fires porcelain to 1220C to avoid the sagging of deep round forms. At this temperature, Limoges porcelain tends to blister, so he changed to Aubrey Blackman clay, which is better, and is also much stronger when dry.

For his demonstration, Richard showed us how he makes his "wave bowls". He threw two, one wide and shallow, the other deep, using the terracotta clay. They were thrown fairly thick, about 6-8mm. He used a credit card for a rib, and refined the form with a metal kidney. A small piece of polythene from a bin liner bag was used to smooth the rim, and the pot was cut off using a piece of cotton thread, (he uses a twisted fishing line if a shell pattern is required). He took great care with the form, and removed the slip. (Normally the bowl would be left overnight to firm up. In winter drying may be aided by a hot air paint stripper. In summer he places all the fresh pots on a bed of damp newspaper, and covers them with it, too, so that they dry evenly.)

Next, he turned a bowl that had been made earlier. It was fascinating that he used a piece of hacksaw blade, held by a hand at each end. There was no foot ring - just a smooth dome with a dimple made in the centre using a potter's knife.

Then we were shown how to cut the bowl. Richard uses a paper pattern, and marks the points he is to cut to, to make 6 even segments. An old Stanley knife is perfect as it is short and blunt, and not too flexible. He cuts free hand. Then he scores the cut edges with the quick swipe of a hacksaw blade. Easy! Slip is brushed on to the cut edges. This is made from the clay body mixed with paper fibre. The advantage is that it shrinks very little, and the seams do not crack. The excess slip is removed straight away, using a shorthaired, stiff brush.

The bowls are reassembled so that the adjacent pieces are slightly stepped - the misalignment is about ¼ in. They are joined in pairs before being put together, and left covered overnight for the moisture to even out. Most of the bowls will be glazed in a semi-matt blue, which seems to emphasise their interesting structure and pattern.

If you missed this fascinating demo, I hope you have at least picked up a few useful tips. The rest of us will remember a convivial evening facilitated by Tina's hot punch and the dry humour of a most entertaining and enthusiastic artisan potter.

### **Recipes**

#### **Paper clay slip**

Place two handfuls of paper pulp in a plastic container and wet it until soft. Add two or 3 times



the amount of clay slurry from the throwing tray. Mix.

Matt white glaze	
Nepheline syenite	47.3
Barium carbonate	36.6
Flint	7.5
Ball clay	6.6
Lithium	2
Bentonite	2

**Ros McGuirk**

### Workshops

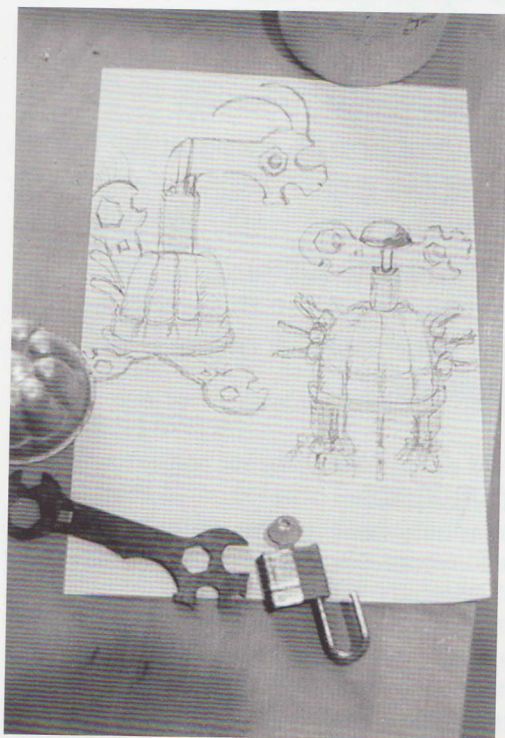
Our workshop Organiser, Helen Vernon, is presently arranging Two Workshops for us with Jola Spytkowska.

The outline plan is that this will be along the same lines as previously, with an inspiration/building session, followed at a later date with a decorating/raku firing session.

The previous Workshops with Jola were voted a great success, so this is in response to requests from members.

The application forms should be in this issue of the Newsletter, proposed dates being either 6/7 May or 13/14 May. If forms are not enclosed, or if you want other details contact Helen by email [strawberry.fair@virgin.net](mailto:strawberry.fair@virgin.net) or phone 01908 648 655.

A soda firing Workshop is being planned at present and also a salt glaze firing using the "Rocket" kiln. Details from Helen as above.



Inspirational sketch by Ruby Sharp



Finished sculpture by Ruby Sharp made at the previous Jola Spytkowska Workshop.

### NOTEBOOK

#### Front cover Photograph

I visited Waddesdon Manor with Sylvia recently & we were both impressed by the chandelier shown on the cover. This is made using bone china, porcelain, and stainless steel cutlery, being entitled Porca Miseria. We were told that this translates into "Oh dear!" or "Oh Goodness!"

Lit from inside, the chandelier is very striking indeed.

#### Exhibition Stands

Most people attending the Potters Open Day (POD) will have seen the splendid exhibition of sculptures which had been made at the Paul Priest Workshops. The exhibition stands used to display this work were the result of a donation of two round whiteware tables. These were used, but since a total of about twelve were needed, I set-to and made about another six or seven with material that I had, then Helen also made some more, in the same style, and painted all the cut edges etc. to give them all a uniform appearance. I hope you will agree that the end result was worth the effort.

The secondary outcome of all this work is that the guild now have these stands all flat – packed in the garage, awaiting use by any guild member who needs them. Just give me a ring on 01442 242 332.



### Parking at Methodist Church Hall

The amount of car parking space at the Kings Langley church hall is limited to about 14 cars. If the car park is full when you arrive, please park in the restaurant car park next door, or in the small road opposite the church hall. Please do not park on the main road.

### Membership Subscriptions

The new guild membership year started on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005, so if you have not paid your subscription your name will now be removed from our circulation list, in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Sadly, you will not be eligible for free entry to Guild Events or free entry to evening meetings. Details of subscription rates are given on the inside of the front cover, so to retain your membership, please send your subscription in straight away.

### Where do they go?

Every year, the Committee are puzzled regarding the large number of members who are either very slow to renew their subscriptions, or lose contact and do not renew. On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2005 the number who had not renewed was 36.

In an attempt to understand this I phoned as many as I could, and sent a letter to all those I could not contact on the phone. By 4<sup>th</sup> February 2006 the position was that we knew 5 members would definitely not rejoin and 9 others had not reapplied for membership, a possible loss of 14 members.

A full report has been prepared for the Committee to consider, and the conclusions are as follows;

### CONCLUSIONS (to report of 4/02/2006)

*The reasons that members leave the guild, or delay rejoining seem to be those very human things that affect us all, ie., decreasing health & change of family circumstances, change of address etc.*

*In some cases people have lost interest in pottery, sometimes due to other interests or lack of time to continue.*

*In general it seems that the guild is well appreciated, and members who delay rejoining, or do not rejoin, are not doing so because of failings of guild activities or events.*

*It is now fairly obvious that if we do not continue to find new members through our publicity or personal contacts, then membership would steadily decrease by approximately 8% to 12% annually.*

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### Help needed with Transport

Pat Green is a member living in Boreham Wood, who needs a lift to evening meetings. If you can help please phone her on 02 083 866 620

### the next step with Longdean School

In recognition of the help given to our guild, by the school, and as part of an ongoing co-operation, some guild members gave an introductory Pottery morning to a group of students on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

This gave the GCSE students the opportunity to incorporate some ceramic pieces into their course-work. Those acting as tutors were Ros McGuirk (tiles & impressed surfaces). Helen Vernon & Joy Wills (hand building various forms) & David Wright, who gave detailed instruction on "Egyptian Paste". I took a small wheel along & gave instruction on simple throwing.

Joanne Vanveggel, Head of art, took some photographs which have been put on the guild website by John Powell.

### Pottery on the Moor - October

Our participation at the Boxmoor Conker Festival was received with great enthusiasm from all concerned in 2005

The Boxmoor trust had hired a magnificent marquee for the day. In brief discussion with Trust representatives at the end of the day, the suggestion was made that next year the marquee could be hired for the Saturday and Sunday, at probably only a nominal additional cost.

If guild members are invited to participate, by running a pottery event on the Saturday would They pick up the baton?

**O.K. this is the question – do you want to do this? Are you prepared to show/sell your work?**

**Demonstrate pottery making?**

**Talk to members of the public about pottery and the guild?**

**Or – What else? It's really up to you to come forward with ideas.**

**Write to me not later than the end of April with your ideas & offers – address in committee list.**

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### Correspondence

I received a note from Heather Paul in thanks for the donation from the Guild to the Queens Park Centre at Aylesbury - Jan Kent;

Dear Jan,

Sorry I haven't written to you earlier to thank you for the money we received from the Potters' Open Day, only Christmas seemed to get in the way. I have passed the money on to Queen's Park Centre and it will go towards our building purchase fund.



Would you thank Dacorum and Chiltern Potters' Guild for me and tell them that we raised over a thousand pounds for our Art for Art- Centre sake. There are still some ceramics by Richard Godfrey, Peter Hayes, Ian Gregory and Ruthanne Tudball up for sale. If anyone would like to buy something, could they contact Queen's Park Centre on 01296 424332

Best wishes

Heather Paul

### **POTTERS OPEN DAY, 19<sup>th</sup> November 05**

Our Potters Open Day (POD) on 19<sup>th</sup> November was an outstanding success measured on almost any front. The venue, Longdean School Theatre was very good for this event, with comfortable seats and excellent facilities. We even had help with the video, lighting and audio from a member of the school staff in the morning. Then, in the afternoon two school pupils Laura (audio) and Steph (Lighting) gave us technical support for the whole afternoon. We are very grateful for such dedication. (both students were given a small token of our appreciation).

Our own John Powell was in charge of the video camera and slide projector, and we are very grateful for his dedicated work.

Our two demonstrators both gave us a polished performance, and Guild members purchased their pots with a will, topping sales of £1,700. The staff managing sales of demonstrators pots included John & Pirette Beckley, Colin Hazelwood and Ros McGuirk. I know that others also helped but do not have their names to hand.

The enthusiasm didn't stop there, raffle tickets were snapped up from Dorley Fieldhouse, Kirsteen Holuj, and Linda Bryant at a phenomenal rate, leading to our raffle raising £280, a new record for the guild. Very well done to both our ticket sellers and purchasers. The raffle included one of Doug Jones' "Retro" pots, Books from A&C Black, a Whirler from Potclays amongst the prizes and we are very grateful for all the donations we received.

A further success was the two stalls selling early copies of the ceramic Review, and books, plus another selling various guild stock items and many tools, glazes materials and plaster moulds donated to us from the family of Shirley Bell. Thanks to Susan Fong, Vivienne Rodwell-Davies, Tina Hall & Joy Wills for taking care of the sales stalls.

Helen Vernon had set out an exhibition of the sculptured heads made at the Paul Priest Workshops, and these pieces were very impressive.

Joy Wills had worked hard to ensure that the day went well and it certainly did. The very

gratifying outcome was that we had very good feedback from members of the audience

The catering was excellent, the only slight hitch being the delays in serving coffee & tea.

When all the financial juggling had been completed, it was apparent that the various fund raising efforts had covered the costs of the demonstrations, and we even had a surplus.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

Ruthanne Tudball at POD, Nov'05



Ruthanne Tudball in her studio

Ruthanne began by telling us how she taught herself to throw in the tiny basement of her house in Reading, using Mick Casson's book. She went on to do a part time post graduate course at Goldsmiths' College, where she developed her distinctive throwing style which requires soft clay and very little additional water.

Natural features and landscapes are a great source of inspiration to many potters, and we were shown some splendid slides of the Mojave Desert, beach features along the Gower Peninsular, Vancouver Island, and her old home in California. The big skies of East Anglia, where she now lives, were subtly represented in a series of platters, which Ruthanne exhibited at the new RCA show, last May. Drawing is helpful, too. Ruthanne finds it is a useful design tool in developing her work. She also enjoys life drawing and that, too, must surely feed into her flowing and vibrant forms. Other influences include twentieth century artists, medieval pots and Roman glass.



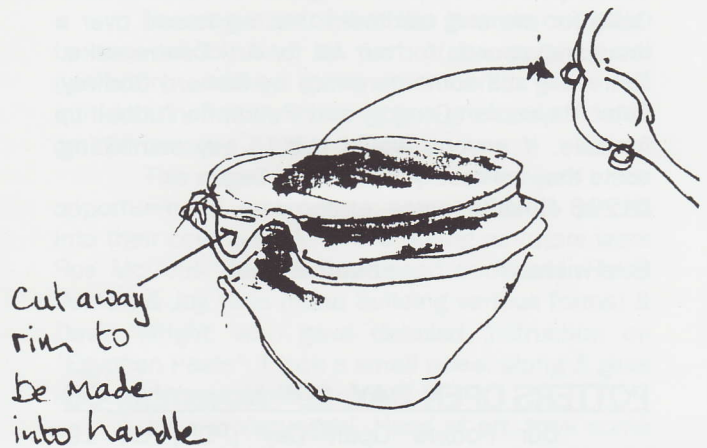
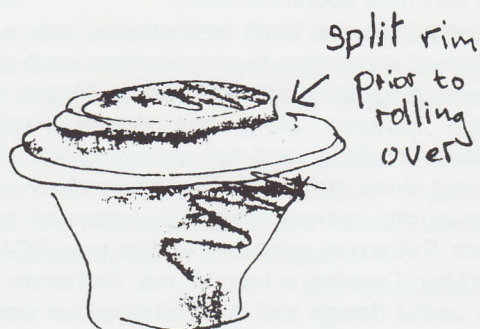
When it came to her demonstration, we learned that Ruthanne has had to learn to throw left-handed since we last saw her in action, due to damaging a tendon on her right forefinger when emptying a bin. It makes one wince, just thinking about it. However, I am sure that few would have noticed if we had not been told, for her throwing is just as proficient as ever, and Ruthanne remains one of the fastest demonstrators around – as those of us who are called upon to write reports for this esteemed journal know to our cost! This time around I put down my pencil to watch and enjoy the show. Thus I am indebted to Vivienne for her help in generously giving me her sketches – I doubt that anyone else could have kept up with Ruthanne!

Ruthanne produces her own soft clay mix from Hyplas 71+ grolleg china clay + AT ball clay + sand. It is a white body and gives a good colour response in soda firings. Her tools are rather unusual. To aid her new style of throwing, she uses a Japanese bull's tongue, which is a type of large wooden rib. There is a slightly curved throwing stick with a bulbous end, and a small bamboo harp for faceting, which she made by soaking a strip of bamboo for 24 hours and then bending it into shape.

#### Pouring bowl

Ruthanne began by making a pouring bowl with a spout, and a handle on the opposite side. She threw the bowl and before it was refined, the rim was split to form a thin inner lip and a thick outer gallery. This gallery was then thrown out and rolled over to form the broad double rim that is such an attractive feature of her large bowls.

The handle was made by cutting a slit between the inner and outer rims. The inner rim was pushed inwards and the outer part was reinforced with a small coil of clay, to form the handle, see diagrams below;



About 2cms of the inner rim was cut away on the opposite side to the handle. Then the remaining outer part was gently pulled with wet fingers and formed into the spout.

#### 'Dancing' pot

Ruthanne threw a tall narrow based pot. It was about two feet in height, most of which went up in one long slow lift. To do this she stood up, put her right hand inside and the left hand on the outside and to the left (remember that she is using left handed techniques and the wheel is going clockwise.) The interesting thing to note was the left hand position with the thumb pointing forwards and the fingers together and pointing back. This is the opposite hand position to normal, and was the method of the German master potters who used a paddle in place of the outside hand. If you try this yourself, remember to make the necessary adjustments for being right handed – unless, of course you are left handed, in which case – lucky you! If you have not fallen over yet, remember to keep the wheel turning slowly and take your time on that one long slow lift.

Now Ruthanne took the fine cherry wood throwing stick and refined the form a little. She ribbed off the slurry from the outside, and collared the pot to straighten it. The rim was trimmed, then rolled down and pulled up on opposite sides. Two lugs were added to the lip and a small hole was made in each with a porcupine quill.

Maintaining a very slow and steady wheel, the bamboo harp was used to facet the pot, and the strips of surplus clay were carefully removed. The rough edges would be brushed away later, when the pot was dry.

Then the base was turned up with a bamboo tool, the piece was bent a little to put some movement into it, and it was wired off and removed from the wheel. Last of all, the pot was decorated with a



strip of clay with crinkled edges. The dancing pot was well finished and draped.

### The "not round dish"

A slab of clay was cut off the block patted into a shape. It was about one inch thick and four inches square. It was placed on the wheelhead and thrown using a fairly fast wheel speed. This caused a lot of vibration. It only took about two throws, and after each one, excess clay was turned off the base. Then the bulls tongue rib was used to shape the inside of the dish in one last throw, and it was done - one shallow dish with lovely rubbley edges.

### The grand finale - the "ten minute teapot"

This is what we were all waiting for - Ruthanne was about to start on one of her famous teapots thrown off the hump and assembled on the spot, with no drying time and no hot air guns - when Mervyn called out. "Ruthanne. You have only ten minutes left. Can you do it....?"

Would she throw in the towel, and fill in with an extra few words about firing the new kiln? Would she change tack and do something easier?

She did neither. She made a real teapot. The whole thing! Brilliant! I neither watched the clock, nor took copious notes. This is, more or less, what I wrote:

"Then threw teapot off the hump:-

a tiny bottle for a spout. Cut off with a thread and placed on a sponge.

a ring, which is then pulled to make a handle (some are made to arc over the pot, some are made to be fixed on at the side)

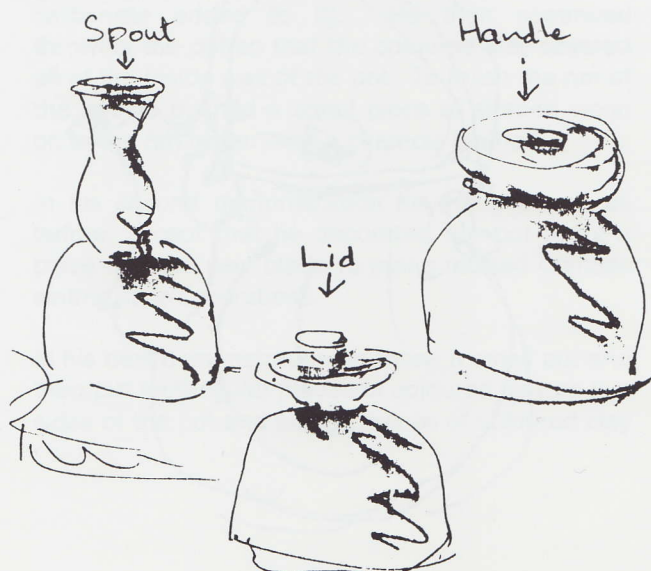
a 'drop - in' lid. This is measured.

Then the teapot is thrown to fit the lid!"

For information on firings and slip recipes, see our Newsletter of Spring 2002, Ceramic Review 190, and Ruthanne's book 'Soda Glazing' published by A&C Black.

Ros McGuirk

Items thrown off the hump:-



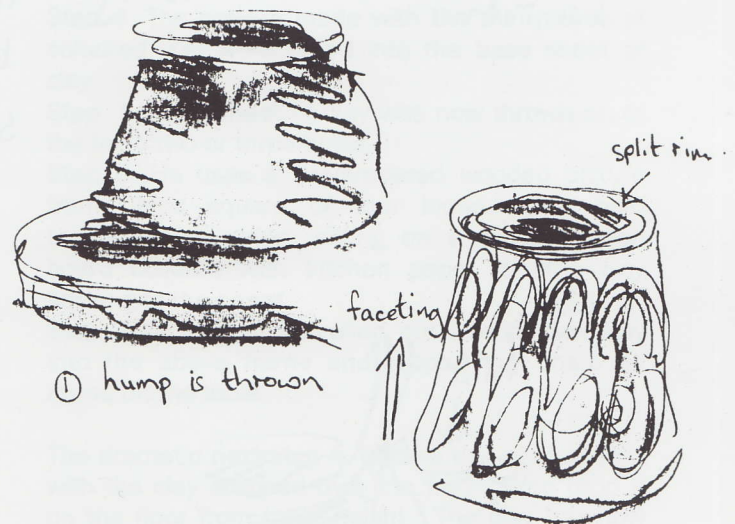
Close-up of lid, showing how the



Knob is made:-

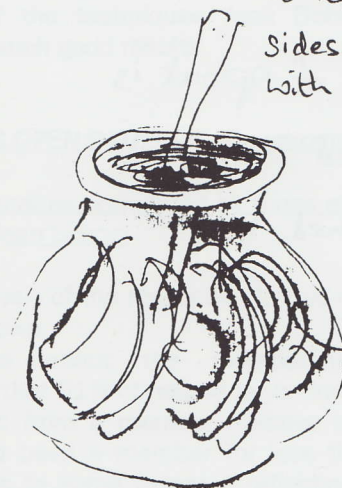


Throwing the teapot:-



② rim is split to form a gallery and a rolled lip.

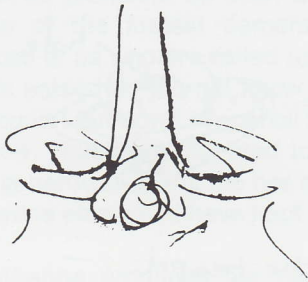
Sides are faceted with cutter.



③ belly out using tool inside the pot.



# Assembly of components:-



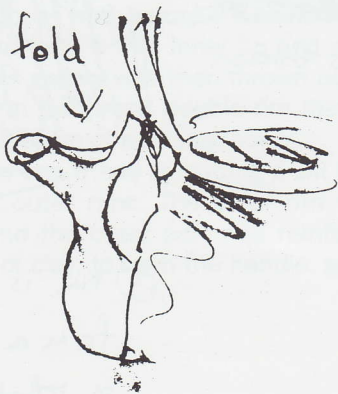
handle fixed  
to rim



Spout cut  
away

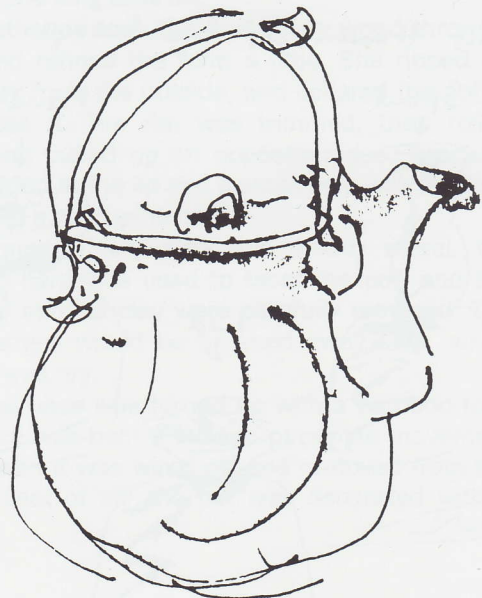


handles made  
in pot



Rim of spout is  
folded over and  
attached to pot.

Finished teapot.







#### JACK DOHERTY DEMONSTRATION

We were privileged to have a slide show and demonstration from Jack Doherty, a specialist in coloured and decorated thrown porcelain work, who has his house and studio in Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

He normally uses Potclays' Harry Fraser porcelain clay, and the surfaces and decoration on his work are built up by adding stained and textured clay. He adds colour to the clay by dissolving the colour stains in hot water, adding the appropriate quantity of clay and then mixing the colour and the clay together. He gets the colour effects when the coloured clays show through the final glaze.

In his first demonstration, Jack threw the start of a pot, and just opened it out. At 3 to 4 inches high he filled the inside wall of this vessel with a strip of green coloured clay (which had 2½% of copper carbonate added to it). He then continued throwing the pot so that the coloured clay covered all of the inside wall of the pot. To finish the rim of the pot he pushed a small piece of shaped wood on to the rim rather than a chamois leather.

In his second demonstration he made a pot, as before, except that he decorated the pot using a piece of band saw blade to make incised Chinese writing style decorations.

In his next demonstration he threw a small pot and then put rectangular pieces of coloured clay on two sides of the pot and curved pieces of coloured clay

on the other two sides. The throwing then continued and the added pieces distorted in an organic way to make an attractive, random style of decoration on the pot.

He does not normally turn any of his thrown work, but on very large bowls he leaves a fairly thick base for a foot ring when throwing and, the next day, when the clay has firmed up a little, he turns the base to obtain a reasonably sized foot ring.

In another demonstration, Jack showed us how he made a square dish:

Step 1. He banged Harry Fraser clay straight from the bag onto the table into a flatter shape.

Step 2. Pieces were cut from a sheet of previously coloured Limoges porcelain clay which had been rolled out into a thin sheet.

Step 3. The above pieces were arranged in a pattern on the original sheet of clay, along with other similar pieces of Harry Fraser clay.

Step 4. The pattern made with the thin pieces of coloured clay were rolled into the base sheet of clay.

Step 5. The sheet of clay was now thrown on to the table two or three times.

Step 6. He uses a pre-prepared wooden picture frame type square of four loose sides, held together with string, sitting on a large wooden board covered with kitchen paper to stop clay sticking to the board.

Step 7. He places the rolled out and thrown clay into the above frame and tapped the board all round on the table.

The dramatic next step is to take the whole board with the clay dropped over the frame, and drop it on the floor from table height. The clay has now taken up the shape from the frame, and the clay can be trimmed round the edge of the frame.

He normally fires his work in a soda glaze kiln. Many potters find that porcelain is a challenging clay to use, so it was instructive and encouraging to see some of the techniques Jack Doherty uses to achieve such good results.

John Beckley

#### POTTERS OPEN DAY 2005 - Questionnaires

##### Questionnaires completed by those attending POD at Longdean School

The analysis of the responses to this questionnaire is as follows:

Questions about the membership produced answers that 51% of respondents first heard about the Guild from a member, relative or friend and 27% had been a member for less than a year – doubtless to some extent a reflection of the fact



that there was no charge to members attending Open Day this year.

Other interesting statistics were:

43% did not attend Friday evening meetings last year

65% attended all or most Potters Open Days

46% had not attended any of our workshops

32% had attended several workshops

70% had never been to our raku firing site at Pitstone

19% said they would like to go to Pitstone, or write an article for the Newsletter, or help to run the Guild or organise Guild activities

13% said they would perhaps like to do some of the above.

When asked about particular events or activities they would like organised, 16% suggested more workshops and 8% wanted more annual potcrawls visiting prominent potters in their own studios. There were many other suggestions made, ranging from a further head sculpture workshop, to a group visit to Japan.

The question asking for other suggestions resulted in 8% saying they would like two demonstrators at a POD to be demonstrating two different techniques rather than having two throwers on the same day. Other items included a suggestion that it would be nice to see the work of other members and have an opportunity to know them better, and another idea was that we should invite ceramic students to a 'taster' student day.

Comments about the POD were all very positive: 16% said 'Excellent day'; 10% said 'Great audio/visual arrangements'; 10% said 'Very good demonstrators'. The remainder made other laudatory comments.

John Beckley

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

The Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild has seen a substantial increase in new members joining.

We are delighted to report that a further thirteen people have joined us since our membership increase noted in the previous Newsletter. This means that a total of thirty three new members have swelled the ranks of the guild in the last two or three months.

Mr. & Mrs. Amirak have joined us. They live at Kenton, and Mrs. Gunizi Amirak is a full time Potter, established at Kingsgate Workshops.

Arlette Ayres of Watford is a Teacher, having an interest in most aspects of pottery, with a bias towards higher temperature firing.

Sue Jarvis and her husband from Harpenden have joined us. Sue is interested in most types of pottery, but particularly slip casting of bone china.

C. Hamilton Stevens & W. Stevens live in Rickmansworth, and have an interest in most types of pottery.

Susanne Graham is from Welwyn Garden City. Paper clay is currently one of her interests.

Rosemary Dwight is a student member, presently working on a full-time degree course in ceramics.

Isabel Weinberg has joined us, she lives in Stanmore.

We are very delighted to welcome Paul Priest as a member. Paul lives at High Wycombe, and has given tuition to many of our members at previous Workshops and demonstrations. The recent sculpture Workshops during which guild members and visitors worked on sculptures of heads were very inspiring, and much of the work was on view at our Potters Open Day.

Mark Harris is a Design Engineer, from Chesham and is interested in most types of ceramic techniques.

Marni Bloor is based in London NW2, and is a Lecturer in Ceramics. Human form sculpture is a main area of interest, with inspiration being derived from Mo Jupp, Philip Eglin and Claire Curren.

## **Committee - Changes**

Julia Knowles takes over management of our Library, with occasional support from Jan Kent, and Joy Wills.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## **COMMITTEE LIST**

**Murray Fieldhouse** (President) 01442-851 229  
Northfields Studio, Tring, Herts. HP23 5QW

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam** (Chairman & Newsletter)

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01442-242332

**Jan Kent** (Treasurer/Pitstone Organiser) 01908-674 051

48 Coleshill Place, Bradwell Common, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 8DP

**John Beckley** (Secretary) 01923-822 659

44 Wolsey Road, Northwood, Mdx. HA6 2EN

**Digby Stott** (Membership) 01442-404 122

"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts, HP3 0DJ

**Joy Wills** (Open Day Organiser) 01296-481 015

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**Ros McGuirk** (Programme Organiser & Vice-Chairman)

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**Kirsteen Holui** (Publicity) 01280-823 331

Railing, 7a Mitre St. Buckingham, Bucks. MK18 1DW

**Julia Knowles** (librarian) 01923 260 054

6 Common Cottages, Common Lane, Kings Langley, Herts. WD4 8BW

## **COMMITTEE HELPERS**

We are very grateful to any members who help with guild activities, and especially to our members who help us on a regular basis. Other members sometimes need to contact these helpers, so phone numbers are given below;

Jane Kilvington (Event bookings) 01727 853 156

Tina Hall (Pitstone & Catering) 01442 826 223

John Powell (Website) 01494 774 398

Helen Vernon (Workshops) 01908 648 655

Peter Nissen (Pitstone & Exhibition) 07712 527 869

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11/12 Mouldmaking and Slipcasting *David Cowley*  
25/26 Celtic style illumination *Timothy Noad*  
25/26 Glazing *Matt Sherratt*

### March 2006

- 4/5 What is Drawing? *Linda Austin*  
4/5 Throwing and Turning *Beryl Sedgwick*  
11/12 Life Sculpture in Wax *Julian Cooksey*  
11/12 Ikebana *Kiyoko Sawada-Rudd*  
25/26 Life Drawing *Gideon Rubin*  
25/26 Porcelain Paperclay *Anne Lightwood*

### May 2006

- 20/21 Stained Glass *Lucy Perkins*

### MAY WEEKDAY COURSES (4 sessions)

- Tuesdays:** Painting with *Gideon Rubin*  
Life Drawing with *Gideon Rubin*  
**Wednesdays:** Ceramics with *Beryl Sedgwick*  
Painting with *Linda Austin*

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