

DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



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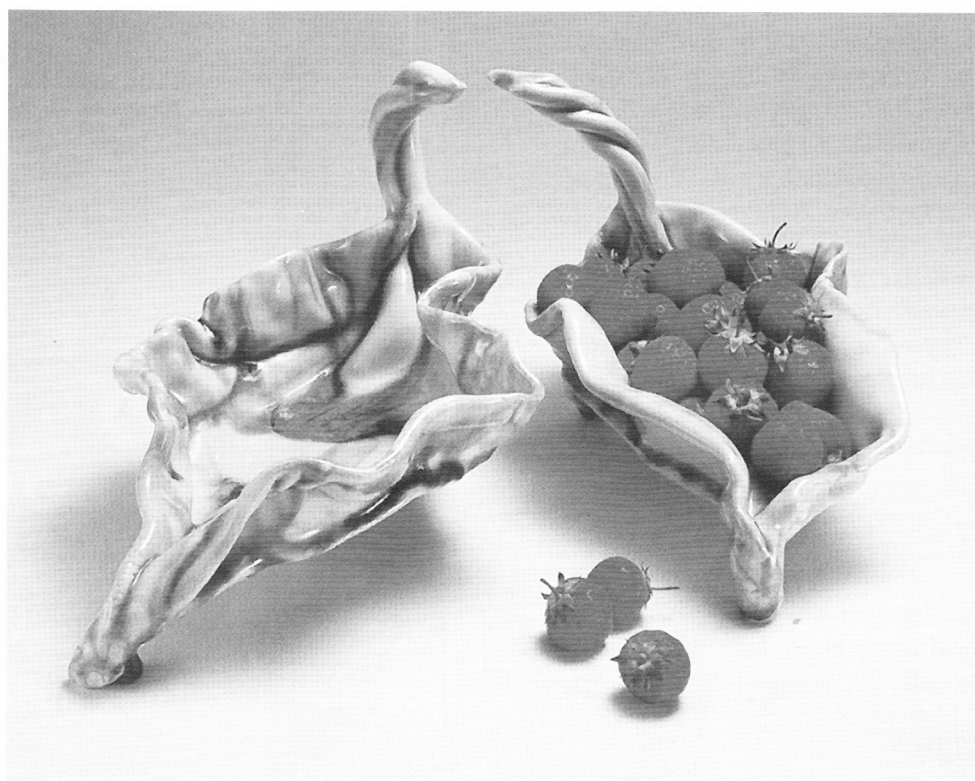
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www.thedcpg.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2007

£1.50

ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER

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

Single £17.50

Student £ 9.00

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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Copy dates

Publication dates

(latest receipt of material for typing)

6th January February

6th April May

6th July August

5th October November

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

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¼ page £14.00

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whole page (depending on availability) £50.00

small ads 25p per word (20 words free to members)

semi-display: 1/12 page 3.5 cm.high x 8cm.wide

from your artwork £ 7.00

or typesetting – maximum 50 words £10.00

Covers: Back + 20%; Inside + 15%

Distribution of leaflets: A5[2.5gram]-£35.00

A4[5 gram] - £35.00

The above charges are for distribution of 200 leaflets printed on standard weight paper [80 g.s.m.] ready for distribution and delivered direct to the Editor. For other size/weight leaflets and for all advertising enquiries please telephone Sylvia Fitzwilliam on 01442-242 332

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Walter Brayford

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Sensual Serving Dishes

By Kochevet Bendavid, who will be demonstrating for us on Friday 20th March 2007.

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EDITORIAL

Happy New Year to you all, I hope that you will all be shaking off the gloom & doom prevailing over a fair amount of 2006, and striving even harder for success in 2007.

There are several opportunities for members and visitors to attend guild activities coming up. Contact details are given in the GUILD EVENTS text of this issue of the newsletter. Please phone the appropriate contact number straight away if you are interested in the POTCRAWL, with Murray & Dorley Fieldhouse.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

A Message from the Membership Secretary

This message is addressed to existing members;

New members & the Data Protection Act

The *Data Protection Act* prevents me from keeping members details in a database until they have given permission. We are dealing with a Government statute, and, as I am sure you are aware, it is essential to have their permission in writing. When new members do not sign the Data Protection act portion of the Application Form, I am unable to process their application. In these cases I have to send them another form to obtain their signature. This in turn gives the new member some hassle because they have to complete the form and post it back to me.

The same actions become necessary when the form given to the the new member by a member of the guild is radically out of date. Often the completed form does not meet the requirements of

the Data Protection Act. As above I send out new forms. In both cases my correspondence rarely produces a prompt action and in some cases has led to the paperwork getting lost for months. All this is unfair to persons wishing to become a member of the guild.

In an attempt to make the consequences clear to new members and to existing members who retain out of date forms, I have revised the form. A copy comes with this newsletter. The revised form is sufficiently different from earlier versions for these to be readily seen as out of date. Nevertheless it would be a prudent move for all existing members to use a little of their undoubtedly valuable time, to get rid of any earlier versions of the application form. In this way you will be helping new members to avoid the pitfalls that currently exist.

I look forward in anticipation of your co-operation

Digby Stott (Membership).

FOOT NOTE

Unpaid suscriptions

membership renewal subscriptions were due in October 2006, if you are one of the people who has not yet paid, then you are on the point of becoming an ex-member, since after this issue of the Newsletter, the names of those who have not paid their subscriptions **MUST** be removed from the database, under the terms of the data protection act. If you fall into that category, please send your renewal cheque (with clearly printed name address & phone no.) to Membership Secretary Digby Stott as soon as you can, or you will become an ex-member and will not receive any further correspondence or newsletters. You will always be welcome at meetings and Workshops, but will need to pay a premium for each event you attend.

Editor

Pitstone

Where and What is Pitstone ?

Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild has a Pottery with Raku firing facilities, at The Pitstone Green Museum.

Pitstone is on the B489 approximately 6 miles west of Dunstable and 3 miles east of Tring.

Pistone Green Museum is a rural museum housed in the buildings of an 1831 Farm opposite the village green on Vicarage Road Pitstone, Map reference 165 936 157.

The Museum contains a wealth of fascinating exhibits including those relating to rural life, local trades and professions, engines and farm machinery, a large Crossley gas engine, a science and vintage radio room, 2 model railways and a full size section of a World War 11 Lancaster Bomber.

Additional entertainment is always available and may consist of Tractor rides, Crafts, Country Dancing, **Pottery Demonstrations (THIS IS US !)**, Working Rack Saw, Military / Vintage vehicles and other working exhibits and demonstrations.

The Museum will be open on the following days in 2007;

Easter Monday 17th April
Bank Holiday Monday 7th May
Sunday 10th June
Sunday 8th July
Sunday 12th August
Bank Holiday Monday 27th August
Sunday 9th September

On these open days *The Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild* aims to organise activities and demonstrations to:-

Give the public opportunities to "have a go"
Promote the work of the potter
Give DCPG members the opportunity to learn, get involved and improve skills.
Advertise DCPG
Raise funds to pay the rent for the premises.

Can you come on one of the above days?
Bring some pots and try out some Raku techniques
Have a go on the Treadle wheel
Help "youngsters" of all ages to work in clay
Help the public with Raku firing
Demonstrate a ceramic skill that you have acquired
Have some fun
Eat some homemade cakes from the Café !

Contact one of your new Pitstone organisers
Ruby Sharp

Helen Vernon

01494 728 364

01908 648 655

rubyssharp@furniture.fsnet.co.uk
strawberry.fair@virgin.net

& finally, Pots & sculptures are always wanted for the Pitstone activity, either bisque or finished ware. Please remember this when turning out your studio or shed.

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 Programme

Fri 16th Feb. 'From Wax to Clay'. The sculptor and teacher Paul Bainbridge Will present an illustrated talk including his career at Mm.Tussauds.

NB. This meeting was originally planned for an earlier date.

Fri 9 March Paul Rowbottom. Guild member, ceramics teacher and sculptor, will cover a variety of approaches to press moulding for garden planters, sources of inspiration for recent stone-carvings, spun metal forms and hand-built pots.

Guild Exhibition 30 April-12May

DCPG Members Annual Exhibition. at Watford Girls' School.

The Private View Party for the Members Annual Exhibition will be held on Monday 30th April from 7-9pm, in the Visual Arts Centre at Watford Grammar School for Girls. With about 20 members taking part, including five newcomers and one who took part in the inaugural meeting, it promises to be an excellent show. As access to the general public is restricted to the hours of after-school activities, it will be really important that we make full use of this private view.

The venue is situated just off the ring road on the south side of the town centre. Follow the signs for the hospital and come off on a slip road on the left. This becomes Vicarage Road. Ladys Close is first left and leads to the main school entrance. The main area of car parking is further on down Vicarage Road, on the left beside the school sports complex. The modern Arts Block lies to the right of the old building.

Bring your friends and family....See you there
Ros McGuirk 13 The Park, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4RU Email: ros@iclway.co.uk
(phone 01727 834 326)

Fri 20 March Kochevet Bendavid.

Slab-building combined with throwing in porcelain, to make celebratory tableware with soft forms and colourful, fluid glazes.

Fri 11 May Antonia Salmon.

Finely burnished and smoke fired sculptural forms. A fine artist in clay, whose work is found in galleries and collections around the world.

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd June POTCRAWL

Murray is currently working on the details for this event, including where we are going and accommodation. The current plan is to start off by visiting Whichford Pottery, to meet Jim Keeling and see the new Gallery and pots. After that we are

hoping to visit Hook Norton Pottery, meeting Russell Collins (who gave us such a memorable demonstration at one of our Open Days).

The details are still to be decided, but we are hoping to visit Reg. Moon's Gallery on the opening day of his Exhibition. Part of the attraction of this is that there will be many potters attending.

There is still much to do, so the details of other visits and costs are yet to emerge.

We do need to know how many people have an interest in going on this trip, and whether a coach booking is viable, so if you think you will want to go, please phone Murray or Dorley on 01442 851 229 STRAIGHT AWAY.

Fri 8 June A 'summer special' meeting with Peter Starkey. talk and demonstration by a specialist in salt and soda-fired pots. Peter is the retired head of ceramics at Cardiff and will stay on to run a weekend workshop at Northfields Studio;

9-10 June A two day soda-firing workshop with Peter Starkey. Please see the application form enclosed with this newsletter for more detail. Please apply straight away if you are interested since the number of participants must be limited.

30 Jun-1 July A group from the Guild are going to Aberystwyth. Anyone who wishes to make a late booking will have to wait for returned tickets, and should contact Ros, and also check www.internationalceramicsfestival.org

Tel : 0207 491 1706

8-12 Feb Collect. 41 galleries presenting + 350 artists, including many Potters. At the V&A.

Tel : 0207 278 7700

email: collect@craftscouncil.org.uk

25 Feb Handbuilding Masterclass with Jim Robison. Broadway School, Birmingham.

Tel : 01484 685270

www.jimrobison.co.uk

2-4 March Ceramic Art London 2007. At the RCA, Kensington Gore

www.ceramics.org.uk

13 Mar-13 May Pots from France. Rufford Craft Centre. Tel : 01623 821315

www.ruffordcraftcentre.org.uk

30th April- 25th May 2007 POTTERY FESTIVAL

THE QUEENS PARK ART CENTRE,
Queens Park, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Throughout May a Pottery Festival is to take place at the Queens Park Art Centre. On Sunday 13th May '07 from 10.00-4.00 p.m. there will be a full day of seminars, exhibitions, raku firing and sale of pots. Ceramicist Gordon Cook along with the ever-popular Paul Priest. will be there. As well as activities for children, there will be an introduction to 'throwing' and 'hand-building' for visitors to take part in during the day.

From Monday 30th April to Friday 25th May there will be an ongoing exhibition of ceramics held in the Main Gallery, Subway Gallery and coffee bar. Guild members are invited to exhibit their work in one of the galleries if they wish. The fee will be £10.00 plus 15% commission on sales. *Helpers on the day will be able to exhibit their work free of charge.* Sales stalls will also be available for the day on Sunday 13th May at a fee of £15 per table.

There will be no commission charged for sales.

The Queens Park Art Centre and Limelight Theatre is a registered charity and offers a good range of workshops, music and drama for the community. Guild member Heather Paul together with Queens Park staff, tutors and volunteers have worked extremely hard to raise funds to buy and refurbish the Centre, so far they have managed to raise £50,000 in organised events.

If any Guild member wishes to support the Centre by exhibiting work, selling pots, helping or booking tickets for the 13th May, please contact the Queens

Other Events

3 Feb-31 March Janet Leach exhibition. Crafts Study Center, University College for the Creative Arts at Farnham, Surrey. Tel: 01252 891450 or www.csc.ucreative.ac.uk Janet Leach Symposium on 7th March. £15. Must book.

7 Feb-8 March Classic and Contemporary Ceramics. Mon - Fri 10-5.30pm Galerie Besson, 15 Royal Arcade, Old Bond St.

Park Art Centre. For further information or bookings the Centre can be contacted on:
01296 424332/4312729 (24 hrs)
Fax: 01296 337363
e-mail www.qpr.org

Joy Wills

19-20 May Clay Art Wales 2007 A selling fair with +70 UK +overseas potters, demos, firings, workshops etc. www.clayart.org.uk

25-27 May Scottish Potfest. Agricultural Centre, Perth. www.potfest.co.uk

1-3 June Potfest in the Peaks. Bakewell Agricultural Centre www.potfest.co.uk

23-24 June 'Earth and Fire'. Rufford. www.ruffordceramiccentre.org.uk

29 Jun-1 July Aberystwyth. 2007
 (see guild events).

27-29 July potfest in the Park. Penrith. www.potfest.co.uk

3-5 Aug Potfest in the Pens Penrith. www.potfest.co.uk

Many more may be found at
www.studiopottery.co.uk.

Potters Open Day 2006 Richard Godfrey

Richard's work is down on the stage to the left. Brightly coloured pots, bowls, jars displayed on three tables with further boxes of goodies underneath.

He bounces into view promising to pack in as much as possible.

Richards talk and slide presentation was really inspiring and showed us exactly where He, His work and the landscape merge.

Until 16 yrs old Richard Godfrey lived in Gibraltar, where his Father was a Civil Engineer. His formative years spent in the Mediterranean absorbing the light and colour and painting the landscape have served him well. His studio is in Devon overlooking the sea where he continues to observe light and colour in the context of a coastal location.

He studied Maths and Physics to A level and was offered a place at York to study Architecture. He rushed to complete his assignments and then spent the rest of his time in the Art Department

Potting and realised that making Pots was where he wanted to be.

He has fond memories of a wonderful Art education in the 1970s.

He projected a slide of a pot glazed in peach and aqua, the first coloured pot that he had produced 25years ago having been told that you "can't make bright colours"! What a challenge for such a Guy as Richard Godfrey. This "first" now looks quite pastel beside his current work.

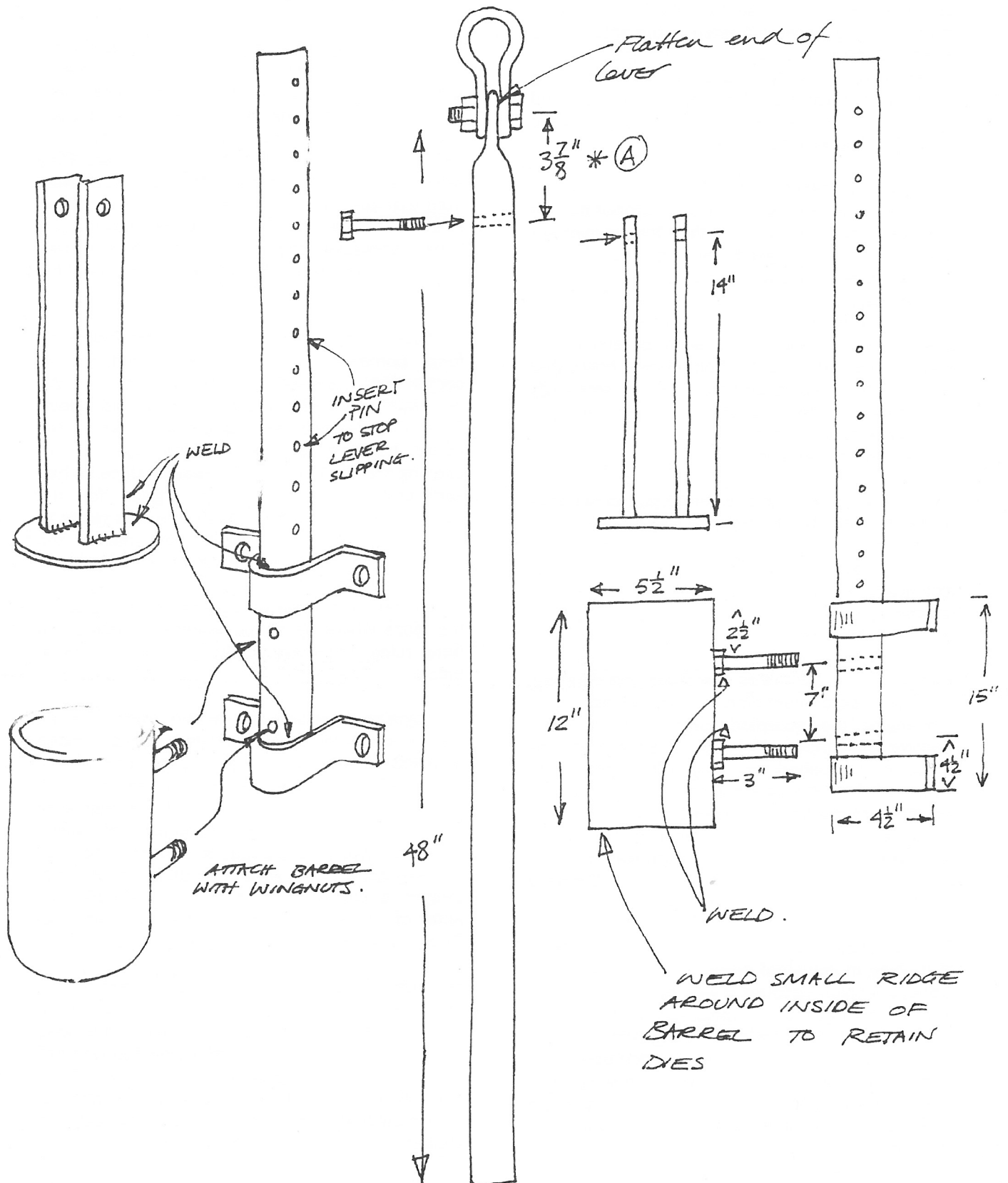
Richard used his early colour with black or white to really make the colour stand out. Now his bright colours stand so well both with other "brights" or with black or white.

His work is informed from sketches and photography inspired from the landscape in which he lives and works. He describes his walks through the landscape to places like Mother Combe Beach, where scenes from "Sense and Sensibility" were filmed, showing his images of sunrise, sunset, patterns of trees and black telegraph poles against a red sky. He captures the lines of hedges and fields with shadows from the sun, folds in the landscape and the intense colours of berries; lime, lemon, orange, red sparkling in the winter Sun. The sharp lines of bare stems stand against the winter sky, sulphurous furry lichen glowing against the matt black bark and rock. Moonlight on a beach highlighting the ripples of the tide in the sand, the marks of a tractor tyre, flight lines in the sky, patterns of wave and foam and texture on rock at low tide all absorbed and imaged.

Beach combing reveals the unexpected litter from life that has been tossed by the tides and positioned against the beauty of nature. The remnant of blue paint on an old door against the golden sand, light and water through plastic bottles against the purple and violet of seaweed roots.

I am now convinced by Richards's colours, observed and captured through the eyes of a Guy whose early impressions were formed in the light of the Mediterranean where land meets water. His power boat shapes observed at the harbour wall and modified with the aid of his formative Maths and Physics

Helen Vernon



Plan for an Extruder, supplied by
Richard Godfrey
See his Website for more details

Peter Beard (A visitor's view)

It was the clash of the bearded titans at the annual Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild demonstration; in the morning we were treated to the entertaining Richard Godfrey, whose pots are as colourful as his patter, skipping swiftly about the stage conjuring countryside magic from his clay, for all the world like an oversized leprechaun whose cheeks were marked by his beloved red berries!

The job of following that in the afternoon befell Peter Beard, an altogether different proposition for a potter. Not for Peter the tongue-in-cheek assertion that 'all good teapots should have exhaust pipes'! Instead, this taciturn ceramic pioneer hailing from Southport, Lancashire let his craft do the talking. In his initial presentation, Mr Beard gave us slide after slide of simple yet achingly beautiful shapes, from classic bowls and vessels via intriguing organic forms in seemingly impossible combinations of material and finish to the masterfully realised 'heads' series with its strong Egyptian influence.

(I should add quickly at this point that, while I have plunged my hands into the good clay on one or two occasions in my life and I have been your guest in previous years, I am no potter. I hope the technically minded among you will forgive my ignorance and have the patience to indulge my layman visitor's view of the afternoon!)

Peter's story struck me as one of restless curiosity, endless experimentation, questioning and challenging the accepted rules. From his first creative encounter with clay at eight when he deliberately crashed his clay space rocket to unwittingly launch a career in ceramics, through his insights into the links between the cycle of house renovation and sale and the cycle of creativity to his intense observations from his travels, Peter is not one to accept either the ordinary or the tried and tested.

The slide show took us on a swift tour of early years of training in industrial design, chosen in contrary teenage fashion because it was expected of Peter that he would go into ceramics. As it was, he spent all his spare time at college making pots! The first commercial focus in his career was domestic ware on the shores of Loch Ness, quickly moving on to technician's work in southern England and then an extensive tour of America which led to the early landscape work.

'Landscape' is a loose term in this context; in Peter's work it was the setting of oxidised stoneware surrounding delicate porcelain flowers or fungi creating quite disturbing patterns of light and dark. The uncompromising approach in

materials and concept was clear in the cheese-bowl rat and the unsettlingly surreal door and head compositions after Magritte.

Typically strong influences from his travels were clear in the comically humped Chinese mountains and the ceramic discs. Closer to home were landscape panels using textures and shapes inspired by avenues of trees in the country and derelict mills in abandoned city industries. Early work used 'clay as canvas' with 'happy accidents' from that constant experimentation and consisted of a mix of thrown and built work. The finishing of a house renovation project would lead Peter to free time and consequently to further thinking about his work. Change was the result.

He notes three distinct phases: the first being the fungi porcelain creations; the second led to contrasting incised markings and the experimentation with oxides to give a gold colour. Peter identifies two key practical pleasures for the potter: handling the clay and the enjoyment of opening the kiln to behold the results. Once he had sufficiently mastered the gold glaze for the outcome to become predictable, he was ready to move on. The third stage of work instilled the unpredictability and creative excitement he craved; using a high temperature matt stoneware glaze in conjunction with water based wax patterning and a top glaze where he characteristically ignored the firing rules, Peter was creating work which was unique.

An Egyptian travelling scholarship fuelled Peter's fascination for the country and its history and made connections with his preferred colour palette and shape references. The simplicity of the Egyptian sail; the texture of sand in a dune; the exaggerated fashion of a pharaoh's headdress; all these influences would have begun to appear in his work had any aspect of it gone right once he returned. Despite a profusion of stimuli, the struggle and angst of innovation and development led simply to Peter, in his words, 'copying' Egyptian ideas.

Eventually his emotional responses to what he had seen transformed into worthwhile work and gave Peter a new perspective. He revisited the disc shape with renewed vigour, experimented with sail patterns where the glaze would run from thin to thick, gave work a sharkskin texture and tried out sprig-moulding shell forms and hieroglyphic shapes.

Working with a Japanese company gave access to sand-blasting technology which, when used in conjunction with latex masking over clay tiles created an organic patterning.

Current work includes a series of heads, many with that strong Egyptian flavour but with a branching out into different materials such as stone, wood, bronze and glass. In much of this strikingly simple and powerful work, there is a Brancusi influence.

Personally, while I was fascinated by the shapes and textures, I was disappointed by the presentation of the slides and indeed the website pictures because of the lack of a sense of scale of the work. I would also disagree with Peter's justification of presenting a ceramic work of art as a one-sided affair; I would argue that a pot is a tactile object to be handled and appreciated, not a two dimensional presentation to be relegated to a mantelpiece.

* * *

Peter then gave a practical demonstration creating a signature slab-built curved shell. What follows is an account of that demonstration complete with practical tips.

Peter uses a slab roller made from a concrete-filled drainpipe with the clay rolled on tent canvas which also allows the clay to be carried. He uses 'Peter Beard' clay and fires to 1280 degrees. He has template markers and recommends the 'Godfrey method' of shaping clay through the cardboard box. Suggested additions were wooden battens at the sides to give strength to the cardboard for larger items and cotton jersey material under the clay to allow the stretching of larger shapes. He reminded us to cut both a left and right shape from the template.

The chamfer is roughly done by hand and given a good scratched surface. The slurry/slip bucket is never emptied or dried and is of a good sticky consistency. Peter uses soft sausages of clay as a filler for the joins and with such a heavyweight object, this 'belt and braces' approach to the joins is seen as necessary. The addition of a locking wing nut to a banding wheel creates a steady stand against which to lean the shell. Thick dowel is then used to prevent the hollow shell flattening while the methodical pinching together goes on.

A foam 'V' shape between two bricks supports the object upside down for joining while a hand inside will help to billow out the shape. Balloons blown up then slightly deflated, wetted and slipped into the hollow shape maintain the required curvature of the shell during shaping. Remember to puncture and remove with a flexible grab through a patchable hole before firing or you will have problems with expansion and burning rubber! Indeed, the balloons need to be removed before

the final finishing or their resilient bounce will distort the shape.

Surform blades are used to shape and smooth. The blades themselves can be heated, shaped and quenched in order to achieve the required tools. Any shavings are collected and returned to the slip/slurry pot. Flat edges to the shell shape define the outline better than sharp or rounded. Use mild steel flat scrapers which are better than stainless steel because of their fine toothed effect. A slot created in the flattened back of the object by drilling two holes joined by two knife cuts will allow for hanging the object safely on a wall hook.

When the object is bone dry, sand to get a smooth surface. Use a white slip. Biscuit-fired rough clay pyramids used as support will shrink at the same rate as the object and ensure that it is supported throughout the firing process. Water based wax can be painted on with a brush. Add food colour to allow you to see where you have painted the marks. The colouring will burn away in the firing. Clean brushes in white spirit for five minutes. Try using a proprietary foam roller used for gloss paint; create your own texture by cutting burning or picking the foam. Foam blocks can be similarly textured.

Try test glazing using a whole large tile angled upright to test the propensity of the glaze to run. Try a combination of glazes and thicknesses on a tile. Experiment all the time! Sometimes it pays to ignore the book advice and instructions! Trial and error pays off!

Peter Beard ended his presentation with an exhortation to experiment, to break the mould, to think outside the box; just as he began his career at the age of eight with that restless desire to smash the rocket and create phoenix shapes from the re-used clay. Change and reinvention is the key!

William Portch

DCPG FIRING DAY at Pitstone 1st October 2006

I arrived with Mary Jones and our friend Christine, rather early at 8.30am having misjudged our travelling time. Norman the Pitstone manager arrived moments later and let us in.

As we were unpacking the car Jan Kent arrived and unlocked the shed.

Jan brought his Raku kiln and Mervyn brought the Salt Kiln.

Eleri Evens is a member and joined us for her first visit to a Guild activity and has promised to come again.

Ruby Sharp and I have agreed to be joint organisers for Pitstone, taking over from Jan Kent who is stepping down from this post after 9 years. Jan has promised to help next year to ensure a smooth hand over and to pass on his expertise. It was good to meet Ruby and have a chat about Pitstone with her and Tina who intends to continue her support for the Project... So watch this space.

Jon and Ron [John & Veronica Powell] arrived during one of the breaks in the rain. Ron joined in with the firing while Jon took pictures and talked about his new camera and very large Lenses.

Sylvia arrived with Mervyns' lunch which he was ready for as he and I had spent the morning trying to remember the firing procedure for the salt Kiln as well as getting involved in the Raku.

The morning started damp and progressed to intermittent torrential rain, hail plus thunder and lightning as the day progressed. Quite dramatic at times !

We had two firings in each of the Raku kilns the results of which you can hopefully see From the photos on our website.

Despite the weather we had a super day so thanks to Jan for organising it and to us all for turning up. Hopefully Ruby and I will follow on with something similar [but hopefully drier] next year.

Helen Vernon

Helen Johannessen demonstration & Christmas meeting on 8th December 2007

Helen is well known for her brightly coloured 'Tupperware look-alike ' ceramics, which she has shown at venues such as Chelsea and Ceramic Art London (at the RCA). She came to our December meeting and gave a fascinating presentation using Power Point.

At art college Helen found that her creative instincts drew her to plaster and all its possibilities. Now she is a professional mould-maker, designer, ceramicist, business- woman and teacher of business studies. On the way, she enjoyed experimenting at the Royal Staffordshire factory, and later took a work placement in Norway. For a period she worked on handbuilding with slip-casting clay. On graduating she learned her trade as mould-maker, working with many different materials and in a wide variety of other fields, including with furniture designers and the film industry. The band U2 have worn her hats, and she

worked on a Walkers crisps advertisement. She joined the special effects team at the Shepperton film studios for 'Lost in Space', and, most intriguing of all, she sculpted part of the Admiralty Arch, at 1/20 scale, for 'The New Avengers'. The latter project involved 70 people, cost millions, and most of the film footage ended up on the cutting room floor!

Her current work may seem quite tame in comparison, but when Helen outlined all the processes involved in designing and producing the work and in running the business, it became clear how talented and hardworking she is. Helen also teaches business studies at Regents Park College, and understands very well how to market and sell. Among her tips were the importance of good photos, and how useful it can be to get some published in a trade magazine.

Copying is a big issue for some potters, for it can destroy a small business, and when asked how this could affect her, the reply was intriguing. Her current work began when she cast a small plastic box from Woollies, which itself was copied from Tupperware. So, in effect, her work may be viewed as an ironical comment on the process of copying. As for worrying about it happening to her? Well, no. She would not mind at all. She will be ready to move on to the next project when that happens.

Helens work is currently made in small batches in a factory. Despite this, at heart she regards herself as a hand-builder. Her brand name is 'yoyo ceramics', and it helps her to be more dispassionate about her work.

Thus a convivial meeting drew to a close, and I think we all left feeling inspired by Helen. Despite the fact that only one of our members confessed to having worked much in plaster, there was a lot of interest and many questions from the floor.

This was only the second time that a computer projector had been used at our meetings, and it was interesting to see the differences between our trusty old projector and its modern version. Many more makers already use this technology, and we will have to cope with it more often. The Power point system did suffer a glitch at the beginning, which had our engineers reaching for their spanners, but it got sorted eventually by being switched off and restarted, and then it proceeded well. Computers, apparently, can suffer indigestion, and the one that was used had taken on too much software and was rather slow to get going.

So, a big thank you to Helen for introducing us to the possibilities of plaster, and another round of applause to Tina for her delicious mulled wine and mince pies. With only 13 members present there was plenty to go round. But where were the rest of you?

Helen Vernon

Matthew Blakely Demonstration 12th January 2007

Particular thanks are due to Matthew who saved the day by stepping in at short notice to replace Paul Bainbridge who unfortunately had to cancel for domestic reasons. Our thanks also go to Ros for organising this last minute swap. And what a treat Matthew's session was.

He began the evening by telling us about his background & showing slides of his work, past & present. Matthew was born in the UK but spent 16 years in Australia where he studied at the National Art School in Sydney. He returned to the UK in 2002 & set up his workshop in Cambridgeshire where he has 2 gas kilns, one of which is for salt firing.

He throws in porcelain, using either Southern Ice, which he particularly likes for its whiteness & translucency, or high-firing Limoges - good for throwing but greyer. For his salt glazed pieces he uses Valentine's Royale.

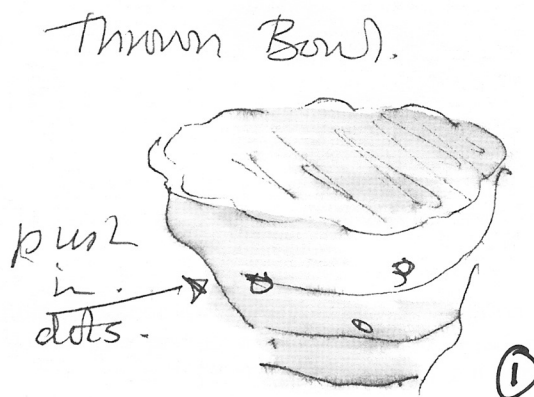
Matthew makes functional pots & his work is wonderfully soft & fluid, managing to re-capture the feeling of freshly thrown porcelain. This is partly as a result of his loose throwing style & partly due to his beautiful fresh, clear glazes which are thickly applied, pooling in indentations & giving great richness & depth of colour. For his blue he adds 0.5% iron to his base glaze, & for his green he adds chromium & a tiny amount of cobalt. In addition to his pastel glazes, he also uses Tenmoku because he likes the contrast with the white porcelain, & he has recently developed an ox-blood red which he fires to 1300° instead of his normal 1270°. Matthew applies the glazes in 2 stages - he glazes the inside first, & waxes it. Then he allows the pot to dry before glazing the outside.

Other than bowls, Matthew tries to throw everything so that it doesn't need turning. He often alters the forms, sometimes cutting them & re-joining bases. He wires off using 0.4mm nylon fishing line because it stresses the clay less & reduces cracking. With his distorted lidded pots, he makes them in 2 parts &, as soon as they are dry enough, he put them together before distorting the piece, placing toilet paper round the rim of the bottom half to stop them sticking. To make his oval jugs, he throws them without a base & distorts them. Then the base is attached. Any indentations are created when the pot is freshly thrown, using stamps of biscuit-fired porcelain.

'Skirted' Bowl

(The 'skirting' technique is a fairly recent development designed to accentuate the glaze drips.) Matthew spent a lot of time working the base to & fro & compressing it, to avoid cracking. Early on he created a series of wobbles in the rim with his index finger, then carried on throwing up. Regardless of the piece, he aims to get to full height in 3 pulls! He used minimal water to avoid the clay becoming floppy. He used a rubber kidney to help flare out the rim & removed all slurry from the outside before deliberately putting the throwing rings in at the end, again with the rubber kidney. He finished the rim off with a piece of polythene.

(1)



To avoid damaging the rim when turning, Matthew used a biscuit-fired chuck which had a sausage of fresh clay round the rim.

(2, 3)





He did little to the outside of the bowl. The surplus clay was turned away on the inside, leaving the 'skirt'.

To create the deep foot-ring, he scored & slurried the base, then attached a coil of clay which he joined inside & out & then threw the foot-ring.
(4, 5)



He worked quickly to avoid getting too much water on the base of the bowl which was now quite thin. To create the wavy 'skirt', he used a knife to cut scallops out of the skirt. He then dampened the scalloped edge with wet fingers to soften it before throwing it out slightly.
(6,7)



Tall Jug

Using Limoges, Matthew threw a 20cm high jug in only 3 pulls! But after 2 pulls he smoothed the bottom third of the pot with a kidney because later it would be too tall for him to get down to the bottom. To avoid dragging, he applied water with a wet sponge, to avoid over-wetting the pot. After the third pull, he used a rubber kidney to create the 'Chinese lantern' shaping, then went over it again with a metal kidney to get a sharper effect. He turned off the surplus clay at the base by cutting it away downwards with a knife. He created the spout by gently pulling & thinning out part of the rim with wet fingers. With the spout facing him, he tilted the jug by pushing the upper half of the pot away from him. Then he pinched the sides in around the spout. (He couldn't do this with Valentine's because it would collapse).

Facetted Vase

Matthew threw a vase with 6-7mm thick walls, spending a lot of time on the shape, because once facetted, it cannot be altered at all. With a piece of wood, he pushed the base into a rough pentagon to start to create the facetted shape. He then created 5 facets using a cheese slicer, cutting from bottom to top. To stop the roller rotating & juddering, he plugged it with clay. He cut away the surplus clay at the bottom of each facet.

Handles

He scored & slurried the pot top & bottom & attached the partly pulled handle. Before pulling, created the basic finished profile of the handle, then pulled it gently. Once the handle was attached, he pulled & waggled it using wet fingers on the inside of the handle, so that it 'forgot' it was originally straight & would be less likely to pull away & crack.

Matthew's session was absolutely excellent – most enjoyable & also packed with information. Just what we needed to start the New Year off!

P.S. Matthew's website is worth a visit (www.matthewblakely.co.uk). Apart from photos of his work, under 'technical' there are a series of pictures illustrating how he makes his little soy bottles & also a platter, and also information about glazes.

Lesley Paton

CHAIRMAN'S NOTEBOOK

Membership News

Mark Compton classes himself as a potter and also a Carpenter. He is based in Milton Keynes,

and (very appropriately) he has a strong interest in Wood fired Stoneware. Mark is a thrower and also a hand builder.

Sue Lines lives in Letchworth, and is primarily interested in hand building. Sue indicates that she works with Raku, earthenware, stoneware and also porcelain.

We welcome you both to the guild, hoping that you will make good use of all the opportunities that we provide.

Some news from our furthest-out members; We finally did it

This summer we made the move out of London to Scotland. First we stayed in Dunfermline, moving in with Heather's Mum and Dad while we looked for a new place of our own. It took quite a while, but eventually found lovely Wester Lix and now here we are! It is a truly beautiful place, in the wilds of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

The house is split into two – the Farmhouse and the Cottage, enabling us to let the Farmhouse for holidays, which provides income and when there are no lets, we have the whole big place to ourselves.

We are in the process of building a log cabin for our pottery in the garden, and already the dining-room in the cottage has been taken over as a painting studio – inspiration is all around, you can't escape it! We are settling in very happily.

Heather and Peter Nissen

Wester Lix Cottage

Killin,

Perthshire, FK21 8RD

Tel 01567 820093 Mobile 07778 808929

e-mail peter.nissen@btinternet.com

So – Greetings from Wester Lix! And good old Scottish hospitality awaits you should you decide to come by. So it's 'och aye the noo and warmest wishes from us

Heather and Pete

(check out www.westerlix.co.uk and see pics)

Longdean School

The committee did extend an invitation to interested teachers & students at Longdean to join us at our Open Day. The students who did attend were our helpers on sound and lighting, and their efforts were greatly appreciated. By way of thanks to the school, for allowing us to use their excellent hall for our Potters Open Day, we are going to be holding a teaching session for 24 students at

Longdean, on 23rd of February 2007. Our teachers will be Ruth Brown (hand Building) and Ros McGuirk (tiles). I will take a wheel along to give basic throwing instruction to those wanting it.

WORKSHOPS

Please give our workshop organiser Helen Vernon a ring if you have any suggestions about future Workshops. strawberry.fair@virgin.net or phone 01908 648 655.

Membership Directory

You can add your name to the membership directory by writing to Jan Kent (address in Committee List). If you have an email address please include that information.

Potters Open Day Success

Our potters Open Day with Peter Beard & Richard Godfrey was voted a great success. My thanks to those of you who sent me a note to say how much you enjoyed it. Your committee are already discussing the next POD, and we are hoping (but not yet promising) to make this a FREE EVENT FOR ALL GUILD MEMBERS.

Articles & photographs for the Newsletter

We are always delighted to have articles submitted for the Newsletter.

The typeface we presently use is Franklin Gothic Book., so please use that if possible. Photographs as Jpeg or hard copy are fine.

If any of you fancy being a Newsletter Editor please phone me.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

Advertisement

Pottery Course at The Making Place, Berkhamstead.

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Opportunities for throwing and hand building.

Contact Geof Parr on 01494 782657

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;

Event bookings; Jane Kilvington has now left the guild, so the position of booking secretary is vacant.

Tina Hall (Pitstone & Catering) 01442 826 223

John Powell (Website) 01494 774 398

Helen Vernon (Workshops) 01908 648 655

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Murray Fieldhouse (President) 01442-851 229

Northfields Studio, Tring, Herts. HP23 5QW

Mervyn Fitzwilliam (Chairman & Newsletter)

"Longfield", Bulstrode Lane, Felden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 0BP 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

21 Tindal Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 1HT

Ros McGuirk (Programme Organiser & Vice-Chairman)

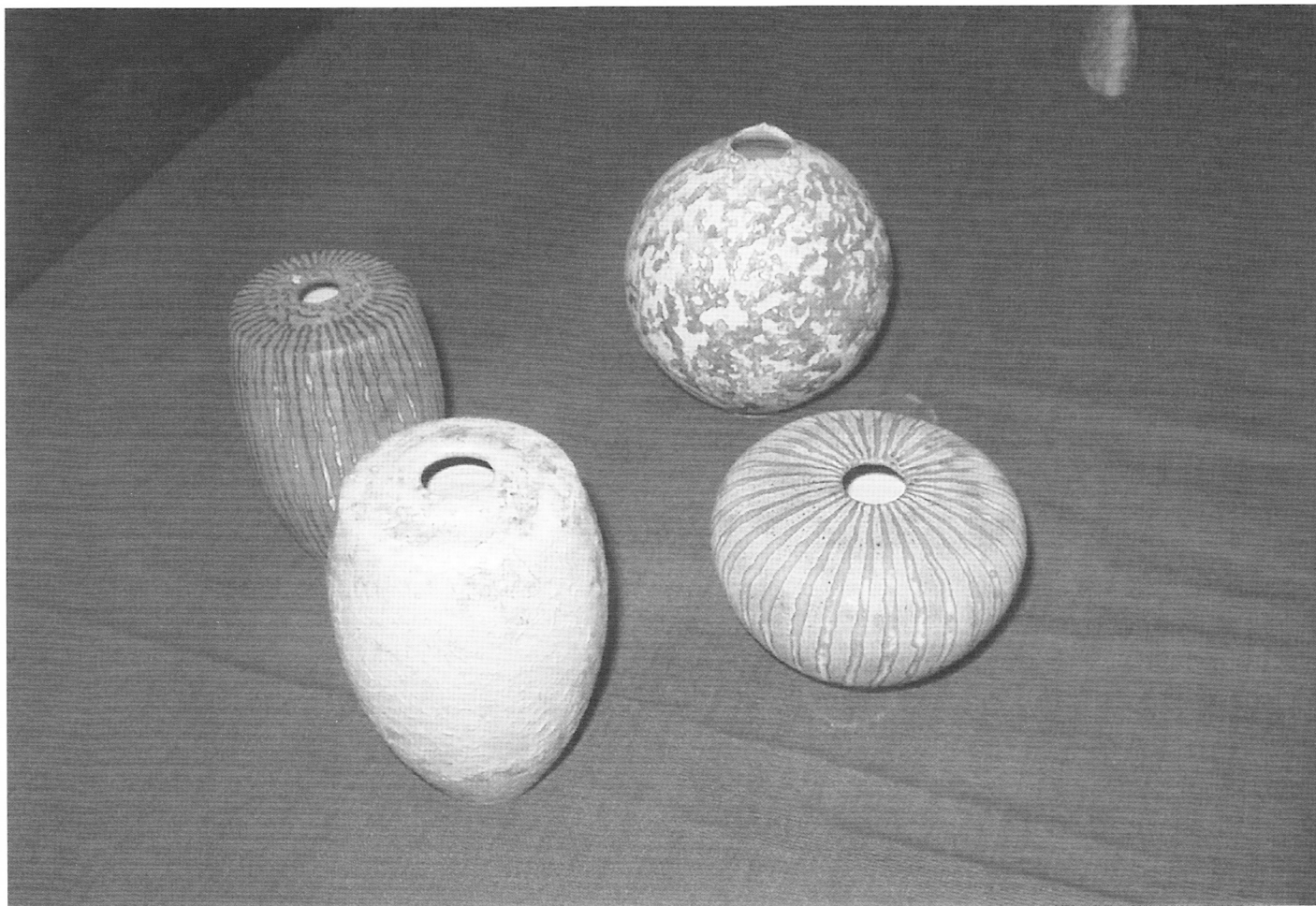
13 The Park, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 4RU 01727-834 326

Kirsteen Holuj (Publicity) 01280-823 331

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

Julia Knowles (librarian & Open Day) 01442-240599

1 Shendish Edge, London Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 9SZ



Four of Peter Beard's pots at the Guild
Potters Open day – 2007

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