

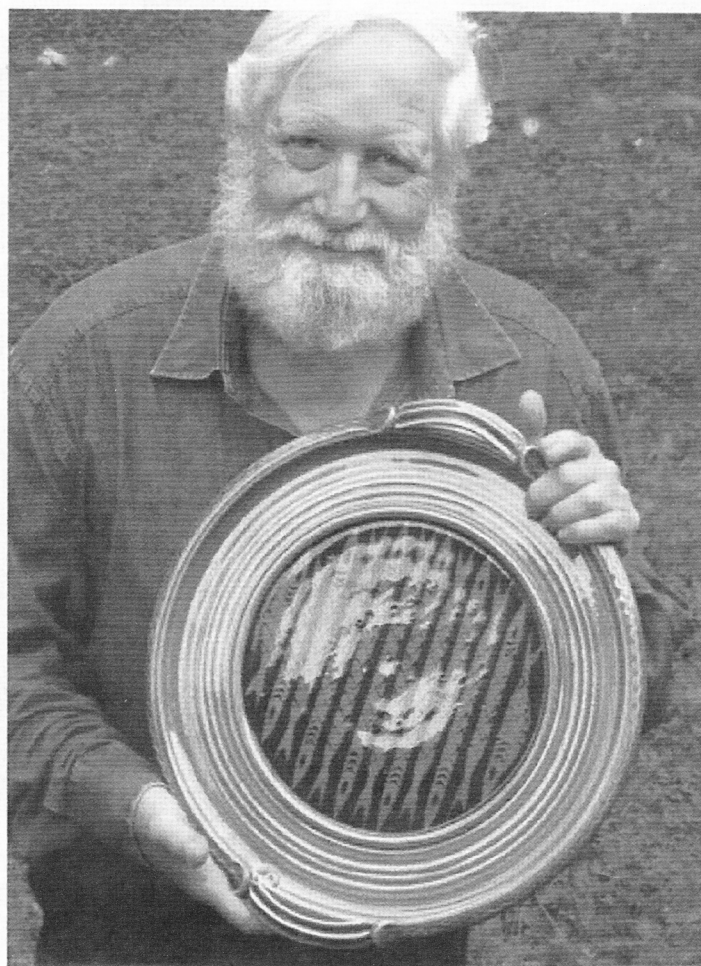


# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



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& much more



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NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2008  
£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

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

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**FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH**

**Mike Braisher with one of his dishes. Mike will be with us on 8<sup>th</sup> February – don't miss him.**

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**EDITORIAL**

I wish you all a happy & prosperous start to the New Year.

I had hoped to have this issue of the Newsletter out to you all before Christmas, and it was mostly typed accordingly. However, the best laid plans..... so I am now updating the text to include new items received. However, I find that some promised emails do not arrive, and unless I have remembered to make a note of what I am expecting (& I don't always know!) these undelivered mails sometimes slip through the net.

Sue Lines has volunteered to be our Librarian, & we are delighted to have her help.

We currently still do not have a Workshop Organiser, but live in hope.

The cost of running Guild activities inevitably continues to increase, & producing and distributing the Newsletter is a substantial part of the cost. We obviously cannot continue to send the Newsletter out to those who have not paid their membership subscription, which was due on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2007. This means that those not renewing their membership must regard this as the last newsletter that they will receive.

If you are renewing, please send your cheque, payable to DCPG directly to our Treasurer, Jan Kent. His address is;

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

Membership rates are;

**Single £17.50**

**Family Member & Spouse/Partner £21.00**

**Full time Student £9.00**

The PotCrawl was a great success last year, enjoyed by all those attending. How about a

Pot crawl around Suffolk this year? Just one slight difficulty, we need someone to organize it! Could you?  
**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

**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*

**Please Note**

**Change of speakers.** Mike Hardy & Ewa Wawrzyaniac have swapped their demonstration dates. Ewa will now be with us on 14<sup>th</sup> March, & Mike will be demonstrating on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

**Pitstone**

The dates for meetings at our Raku site at Pitstone Farm Museum in 2008 will be Easter Monday, the Bank Holidays, & the second Sundays in June, July, August & September.

Guild members are always welcome, particularly if they are able to lend a hand with the firing etc.

If you would like more details please talk to Ruby Sharp, on 01494 728 364. or email [rubysharp@furniture.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rubysharp@furniture.fsnet.co.uk)

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

**Fri 8 Feb Mike Braisher. 'A little Clay wrestling: large flatware and pitchers'**

Hotfoot from his recent trip to New Zealand Mike will talk about potting and potters on the Other side of the globe, and demonstrate throwing his large platters with their luscious glaze effects.

Mike is a retired teacher of ceramics, who is now enjoying a second career as a potter. He also makes pottery and sculpture tools. For more info see

[www.mikebraisherceramics.co.uk](http://www.mikebraisherceramics.co.uk).

**14<sup>th</sup> March Ewa Wawrzyaniac Insights into glass making.**

Including fusing, slumping, sand casting & mould making. Ewa teaches ceramics & glass courses at the University of Hertfordshire.

**11<sup>th</sup> April Carole Windham, Ceramic Artist**  
Carole is inspired by Staffordshire flat –

backed figures made in the eighteenth & nineteenth centuries, & by Freuds' effects on everyday language. Carole will give a presentation on her work which reflects on current issues in the world of arts & politics, and the movers and shakers therein. Her figures of well known artists, such as Tracy Emin, Grayson Perry, & the art critic Brian Sewell, have brought her a long deserved recognition. The techniques she uses combine handbuilding modelling & slipcasting. For further details see [www.carolewindham.com](http://www.carolewindham.com) & ceramic review 213

#### 9<sup>th</sup> May Mike Hardy

Former head of Art & Design at University of Hertfordshire, author of "Handbuilt Ceramics" & "Coiling" (both published by A&C Black) is now devoted to his work as a Potter & Sculptor. The title of the presentation tonight is; "Handbuilding, with particular emphasise on the versatility of slab building"



#### Friday October 10<sup>th</sup> (provisionally) The Stan Romer Award & Guild AGM.

The subject for this year's Stan Romer Award was chosen by guild members attending the Potters Open Day on 10<sup>th</sup> November. The subject is "Out of Africa". So, now you can get started on your piece of work. This can be made by any ceramic method, glazed, decorated or not. It must be the work of the entrant, and it MUST

be made this year. Previous work may not be submitted. In addition to the trophy, there is a financial incentive; first prize £85, second prize £35 and third prize £20.

### The Box Moor Conker Festival

#### Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October - Box Moor Trust

The Trustees of Box Moor Trust have invited us to attend the Box Moor Conker Festival again in 2008. this will take place on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October. If all goes according to plan we will be there to offer members of the public the opportunity to participate in throwing & hand building with clay. Also the opportunity to purchase some of our pots. Proceeds go to the Hospice of St. Francis.

### **Other Events**

#### 5 - 14 Feb "setting out"

Annual graduate show at Marshall St. W.1 Mon to sat 10.30 to 6.00pm. (7.00pm on Thurs ).  
0207 437 7605 or [www.cpaceraics.com](http://www.cpaceraics.com)

#### 23 rd Feb Ceramics Fair

St Bernards Prep School, Slough, SL1 1TB.  
Phone 01895255027

#### 29 Feb - 2 March Ceramic Art London

Annual show RCA Kensington Gore, SE7 2EU  
Fri 10am - 8 pm, Sat 10am - 7pm, Sun 10am - 5pm [www.ceramics.org.uk](http://www.ceramics.org.uk)

#### 8 March to 12 July British studio Ceramics

Exhibition of 100 plus items from the outstanding collection at Bucks County Museum, Church st. Aylesbury Mon-sat 10am to 5pm.

#### 18 to 21 March Affordable Art Fair

Battersea Park London. Tickets on 0870 777 2255  
11am to 6pm.

#### 12 & 13<sup>th</sup> April A Celebration of salt & Soda

2 day weekend Workshop & seminars, with Jack Doherty, Ian Gregory, Lisa Hammond John Jelfs & Phil Rogers. In addition Jim Keeling will throw one of his enormous pots! (See advertisement in this newsletter). Two new kilns are being built especially for this event

Also opening of the Octagon, spectacular Exhibition space; With a major selling exhibition of new work in salt and soda by Sheila Casson, Richard Dewar, Jack Doherty, Ray Finch and Winchcombe Pottery, Lisa Hammond, Ian Gregory, Mark Griffiths, John Jelfs, Toff Millway, Phil Rogers, Peter Starkey,



Ruthanne Tudball, Sarah Walton and Alistair Young.  
Whichford Pottery. 01608 684416

**26 April to 3 May Hamada Shoji Exhibition & Sale**  
Powys LD6 5LT [www.philrogerpottery.com](http://www.philrogerpottery.com)

**17 to 18 May Clay Art Wales**  
Selling Fair, with 70 plus leading Potters.  
Demonstrations, firings, Workshops, books etc.  
01745 812 805 [www.clayart.org.uk](http://www.clayart.org.uk)  
Adults £4.50, children under 12 free.

**28 to 29 June Rufford**  
Please note that Rufford is under threat of downgrading by Nottinghamshire County council.  
Your support is needed. See article in this issue,  
also see <http://saverufford.wordpress.com/>

**1 to 3 August Art in Clay**  
Hatfield House

## **Membership News**

### **New Members**

Annette Cole is one of our new members. She is a student currently resident in North Yorkshire. Annette is a Thrower, & is interested in Stoneware, porcelain & Raku.

Jaqueline Ryan lives in Hertford. She is a thrower, also a hand builder, but in addition is keen on mould making & slip casting. Jaqueline is a student in year 2 of Applied Arts.

Susan Bracken has a wide level of pottery interests, & is particularly interested in Pit Firing. She lives at Borehamwood, and is a Further Education Teacher.

Beverly Schramm is also a Teacher, from Hemel Hempstead. She works in Earthenware & Stoneware, Hand Building & also Throwing.

Sue Prowse is located in Hemel Hempstead, & works part time. Sue has ticked almost all of the pottery interest boxes, & indicates that she is a "Wide eyed beginner".

Richard Bicknell is a Designer living at Sarratt Bottom. Richard is a Thrower & decorator in both earthenware & Stoneware.

Joanna Anderson is a Teacher who lives in Greenford. Joanna is interested in all types of ceramics & making techniques.

Graham Legge lives in Milton Keynes & works at a Hospital. When not doing that he is a Thrower, working in earthenware.

Colin Adelman is now retired & resident in Fulham. Colin indicates that he finds an interest in any type of pottery & ceramics.

We are always glad to have new members joining the guild, and hope you will all enjoy the events & meetings which we arrange.

Please all bear in mind that although your committee are amazingly dedicated to arranging events and activities for members, they are often rather short of time & psychic powers. This means that we would like to know if you think that there is any aspect of guild activities that should be addressed. If you don't tell us we might not guess what it is.

In addition if there is some event that you would like to arrange, or workshop that would be of particular interest, then talk to any committee member about it.

The committee list, with contact details is always given somewhere at the tail end of the Newsletter.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### **Report on pre Christmas meeting centred on a demonstration by Sylvia Dales.**

#### **Slides**

Sylvia introduced herself with slides of her home, family, studio, and gas-fired kiln, so by the time festive refreshments were ready to be enjoyed, we had a good insight into how her work had evolved. She studied at Harrow, under "Wally Keeler, David Leach and Mick Casson, and displayed in her work, a passion and understanding of the clay; no frills, but sound shapes and strong interesting marks.

#### **The reduction-kiln**

Using a gas kiln enabled Sylvia to exploit Shino and Ash glazes to their full potential, creating "hot reds" texture, and black speckles [present as iron pyrites in the black French stoneware clay she uses, and drawn out by the reduction-firing]. She very kindly explained her firing schedule so that those of us with gas kilns at home might benefit from her experiences, though I personally found the idea of flames like flying saucers rather alarming! An interesting tip was the mirror on the floor under the kiln, so the burners could be viewed without singeing ones eyebrows! She called her firing "faking anagama in a gas kiln in 8 hours". Without the reduction, she said, her pots would look pale and uninteresting.

#### **Glazes and decoration**

Sylvia harvests the ashes from her wood-burning stove to make her own Ash glaze.

2/3 feldspar to 1/3 prepared ash. The ash is prepared as follows;

1/3 bucket of ash from the stove to -2/3 water

The debris that floated was poured off with the excess water, and the remaining sludge sieved [80 mesh].

This further sludge was allowed to fully dry in the bottom of the bucket, to a cake, so it could be measured by dry weight for the glaze.

She uses Shino, which fires white when applied thickly, and hot-red when thin. The Ash used in conjunction, produced a watery effect when mixed with a little cobalt and chrome oxides. The watery effect looked like gold lustre.

Other decorative effects used kelim-inspired geometric designs, black slip under celadon, the use of paper-resist [which she demonstrated], thick slip trailing, and double/triple dipping.

#### Pots for sale and demonstration

Examples of her work included "classic" and oval-section jugs, plates, mugs and pots, and breakfast-cups with little waists, deftly thrown feet, and expertly pulled and attached handles. Sylvia demonstrated her throwing skills despite the absence of her own, obviously adored, Fitzwilliam wheel, and showed us throwing onto a pot with a clay doughnut, a technique that we had also seen Nic Collins demonstrate.

It is always great to watch another potter at work, and Sylvia did not disappoint. She had an easy manner, was engrossed and absorbed by her work and showed instinct and inspiration in her firing. What a lovely evening!

Valerie Whitbread

#### Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> & Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June POTCRAWL

Murray & Dorley Fieldhouse planned this event with considerable care, and visited the various venues beforehand to arrange details.

Dorley had planned the transport around a 24 seat coach from "Cliffs Coaches" but had slight doubts about the comfort level. To address this I drove over to their base with Dorley and we examined the options in detail. Finally we decided on a larger, more luxurious coach, after checking the route with Clifford, to ensure that we would not encounter difficulties on the roads with the larger coach.

#### SATURDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> June

8.30 am: Everyone arrived pretty much on time, at Northfield Studio and with the cars all parked we climbed onto the coach and were off on our adventure.

10.00 am: Stop at Woodstock, visit Iona Gallery in the high street to see work by Nicola Theakston, Trevor Price, Roger Lewis & Sue Hanna. Plus others. After looking round the Gallery, & other

shops, we congregated in groups for coffee and a chat.

10.30 am: Tackley was our next stop, to visit Dylan & Jane Bowen's workshop. Dylan talked to us about the slipware he makes and answered questions on techniques. He uses valentines earthenware clay & a lead silicate glaze. He emphasised the importance of not using copper with this, due to solubility problems on domestic ware. The workshop is situated in a quiet idyllic position and with the bright sunshine, we all felt relaxed, and some purchases were made. Back on the coach, we were soon at;

Hook Norton Pottery, with Russell Collins.

Russell is always confident & filled with enthusiasm. He explained that since his pottery make extensive runs of standard designs, for pubs & export, he mixes his own clay from powdered ingredients. Russell talked of the many changes in demand over recent years, with competition from other countries playing a part. Changing regulations, and changing tastes all lead to the need to modify the work produced.

With our tour completed, we stayed in the pleasant garden at the Pottery to have our lunch & talk further with Russell.

After lunch we were off to Whichford Pottery, which is managed by Jim Keeling, Author of two books on Terracotta Gardening, impressive thrower, & philosopher. The Whichford staff do not work Saturdays, but Andy Gill stayed on to give us a demonstration, and Rob Garne also stayed to show us round the Pottery.

Andy gave us an impressive demonstration of throwing & decorating a large pot.

At Whichford they make garden pots for the National Trust, Hampton Court Palace and the Royal Horticultural Society.

During the throwing demonstration Andy & the rest of us discussed the local clay which is used & the competition from imported Pots, & also the related difficulty of increased fuel prices. To make the Whichford pots frost proof, they receive a 2 hour soak at 1040 deg C.

At 4.00 pm (theoretically) we bid farewell to Whichford Pottery, & drove to the Glebe Hotel at Barford, near Stratford on Avon. After registration we left for Stratford to briefly visit the Montpellier Gallery.

Most of us had planned to have dinner at the Dirty Duck, which was generally good, but the payment arrangements led to some considerable delays, since they were so busy.

Those of the party who had previously booked, met at the Swan Theatre at 7.15 pm: for a riveting performance of Macbeth. We had good seats, thanks to Murray & Dorley.

Back on our coach & back to the hotel for some shut-eye before the next days' adventure

**SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

9.00 am

Our coach leaves Barford, & at 10.00 am we Arrive at Shipston on Stour to visit the "Where I fell in love Gallery"

This is a gallery run by "Bruno" a French chef, and was originally a restaurant, until he became taken by Pottery – he fell in love – and called it "where I fell in love Gallery".

When we visited there was a wonderful display of high quality work from many well known Potters, including a Lucie Rie for £10,000, and a Bernard Leach for £7,000, plus Pottery from La Bourne etc. There were a lot of sculptures in ceramics, metal & wood, and I noticed that almost everyone seemed to find something which they just had to have.

10.30 am: Leave Shipston on Stour, to visit Liz Teall at Salford Mill Pottery.

Liz makes masked ware using slips in Earthenware. She studied at Bournemouth College of Art, with David Ballantyne, Peter Studely & Adrian Lewis - Evans as Tutors.

Liz cuts paper leaf shapes which she uses on her earthenware in a variety of ways, under or over applied stained slips. She adds veins to the leaf designs using sgraffito techniques. The lead glaze that Liz uses is supplied by Johnson Matthey. Firing is to 1100 deg.C.

12.00 pm.: most of us climbed onto our coach again for lunch at The Windmill Carvery near Burford. This was an excellent Carvery lunch at a very reasonable price.

Returning to Chipping Norton to the Exhibition in the Town Hall. Four Potters & other artists & woodworkers were exhibiting. & since it is the last day, they intend to be there. Potters were; Liz Teall (already mentioned) Neil Ions, Kate Hopkins-Searle: life size shoes, highly detailed & coloured, as featured in the Ceramic Review. Selma Stagg: Glazed porcelain Jewellery using metal, beads & pearls.

I spoke to Kate at some length about her ceramic shoes. They were made using a basic mould, and other clay components were added & they were decorated in very colourful detail. Kate explained that she was very hooked on shoes, but had been disappointed by the lack of sales. The work was very well done, although talking to others it seemed that although they appreciated the detailed work, they did not generally want to buy such objects.

By the time we were assembled to continue it was really too late to visit Aston Pottery, which closes at 4.30 pm., so we set off for Northfield Studio.

When we arrived Murray & Dorley, ever the genial host & hostess, arranged drinks & snacks in no time at all. After chatting about our wonderful visit for some time, people gradually drifted away, back to their homes.

Our thanks again to Murray & Dorley for arranging this excellent trip for us, which we all enjoyed very much.

The question now is who will arrange a Pot Crawl for us in 2008? How about you?

**Footnote**

Russell Collins was at Harrow Art School in the early 1960's, with Mick Casson & Victor Margrie, when I was also in Mick Casson's (& Wally Keeler's) class. Russell helped students with Wheel building, when I supplied the parts equipment & plans plus expertise to students there. He also built the wheels that he still uses for production at Hook Norton, from the same kits of parts.

When we visited Whichford, the demonstration was given on one of my "kit" wheels. Whichford have several wheels that I personally built & some built from kits I supplied.

I always find it gratifying to see these early wheels still in robust use, after some thirty or even forty plus years.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

**Book reviews**

Setting up a Pottery workshop, by Alistair Young. A&C Black, [www.acblack.com](http://www.acblack.com) Paperback £14.99

This book is a 2006 reprint of the original, produced in 1999.

When setting up a Workshop there are many basic things to consider. Alistair has addressed this in general by giving examples of how other potters have approached the various challenges encountered. There are photographs and line illustrations to give guidance in making turning tools, your own spray gun, shelving, etc.

the prices given in the finance section relate to 1999, so may need updating to 2007.

The book fulfils the original purpose well, being a useful guide to setting up a pottery Workshop, and would be a good reference to cover any area of difficulty.

Slipcasting (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) by Sasha Wardell

A&C Black, [www.acblack.com](http://www.acblack.com) Paperback £14.99

As we know from recent evening demonstrations, slip casting is a method increasingly being used by modern studio potters.

In this book Sasha explains the technique in great detail. There are many good line illustrations to help with understanding the methods employed, and also many photographs of work in progress, or finished.

If you are thinking of experimenting with slip casting methods, or just want a reference work on the subject, then this book would be ideal.

**Colouring Clay, by Jo Connell.**

A&C Black, [www.acblack.com](http://www.acblack.com) Paperback £14.99  
Chapter one, which is entitled The use of coloured clays in history, opens with a good description of encaustic tiles, & methods originally & more recently used to produce them.

The other items in this chapter are; coloured clay bodies, Sprigging & Agataware.

The book goes into the colour of naturally occurring clays, staining clay, then in chapter four goes into more detail on changing the colour of clays, using oxides & stains. The basic definition of a stain is also briefly covered.

In chapter five the techniques for using coloured clays are covered in detail, with examples of work from many well known ceramic artists.

As with all of the "Ceramics Handbook" series, all the basic information is included in this book.

**Kiln Construction- A brick by Brick approach, by Joe Finch** A&C Black, [www.acblack.com](http://www.acblack.com) Paperback £16.99

Being an Engineer, I like books that lay out the facts in a straightforward way, and I must say that this book by Joe Finch does just that.

In his preface Joe explains that the book contains;

\*Detailed information & step-by-step instructions on how to build tried and tested kilns

\*Full plans & colour photographs showing brick by brick construction.

\*Description & lists of materials & tools needed for construction.

\*Practical advice on kiln setting & firing schedules.

So, what more could you want?

Joe goes through all the basic information, then gives detailed instructions for building;

A wood fired kiln, Wood & gas kiln ( This is Ruthanne Tudball's Kiln, used for soda firing) & a gas kiln.

One note of caution, Joe does explain that Salt firing is particularly destructive when soft bricks are used, and the designs in this book are not intended for salt firing, although modifications would be possible for this. Joe also touches on the environmental impact of salt glazing.

If you want to build your own kiln then this book is an excellent guide on how to do it.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### Sat 10 Nov Potters Open Day

**At Longdean School,**

We had an excellent Potters Open Day on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November. The venue, Longdean School, was very good as usual, and our demonstrators excellent.

**Nic Collins**

Showed us how he produces one of his large bottle forms. The need to dry the initial thrown shape was hampered rather by the fact that we could not use

a large gas torch in the school hall. We used an electric heat gun instead, but it really was not up to the job of drying such a large pot quickly. However, all was well in the end, and Nic completed the pot.

**Josie Walter**

Works with earthenware clay, decorated either with a fine or thick slip, raw glazed prior to firing. Her current work is based on leaf decoration. She demonstrated several aspects of her work, including thrown & hand built pieces. The brightly finished work she had for sale was smartly snapped up by guild members.

We are particularly indebted to four of the school students, who were with us all day, taking care of the sound & lighting, they were;

**Harry smith, Daniel Marlow, James Stevens, & Graham Glass.** It was very fortunate that Graham was with us, since a mismatch between the laptop software and the disc carrying the slides for Nic Collins presentation was overcome by some fast dedicated re-formatting work by Graham.

We are very grateful to Longdean School for allowing us to use their excellent hall for our POD (Potters Open Day).

*[For the past two years we have given Pottery lessons at Longdean, in February, for the B Tech Art students & this year we will do the same thing. This co-operative arrangement is one way that we can repay the school for the use of their excellent hall.*

*The date for our lessons is to be Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. starting at 8.45 am. We will have four one hour sessions with about 10 or 12 students in each group. Guild Members participating will be Ros McGuirk (tiles) Ruth Brown (press moulds) & Veronica Powell (coiling). I will take a wheel to give instruction on simple throwing techniques ].*

Joy Wills was our Open Day organiser again. Julia Knowles was her assistant, but Julia was unexpectedly faced with a family issue which she had to devote maximum time to, so Joy soldiered on alone.

Organising the POD, and picking up the things that Julia had been working on meant that Joy had a very substantial workload, so we are very grateful for all the effort she put into the day, the catering, & all the prior work for us.

Our thanks also to Jan & Jola Kent for taking care of the finances, John Powell for being our video cameraman, and Ros McGuirk for making the hot toddy – a good start to the day as always.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam



### Josie Walter Demonstration at P.O.D.

Josie Walter traces her enthusiasm for clay to a teenage holiday visit to a traditional Spanish country pottery. Domestic earthenware remains central to her work.

Slides of her own and others' pots, of the fabulously romantic Poterie du Don, at the end of a series of hairpin bends in the Auvergne, where she served her apprenticeship as a thrower and of the collapsed garage which became her current workshop, showed how she arrived at the forms and decoration she produces today. Her talk was liberally sprinkled with promises to "show you later how I do this. True to her word and thanks to much preparation, exemplary organisation and the ability to explain as she worked, she gave a demonstration rich in inspiring and useful tips.

Josie throws mainly with Valentine's medium earthenware, adding sculptural body for slab pieces. She also uses chocolate black earthenware mixed 50:50 with the sculptural body.

To make a shallow oval dish she threw the base and wall separately and, when the latter was just firm enough to hold its shape, wired it off, shaped it and attached it to the base which had been left on the bat, uncut. The clay was still wet enough for the components to join without the need for scoring or slip. The base was then cut from the bat with a long-bladed knife, the excess base trimmed away and the pot turned over onto a bat and tidied up.

An alternative technique, better suited to a deeper dish, is to throw a round pot, make two parallel incisions in the base, cut the pot off the bat from the edges to the incisions, lift the outer segments of base up and push the sides in towards the middle. The clay should be soft enough to smooth the base down again and the pot can then be wired off. the wire, Josie uses is 20lb breaking strain pike line, two strands twisted together, which leaves a pleasing pattern on the base.

Measuring and weighing is crucial to achieve uniformity and lids that fit, and the spontaneity of her work is underpinned by meticulous record keeping.

Josie also showed how to make a square dish, cutting the sides of a thrown pot off just above where it meets the base and repositioning them to form a square, working with clay soft enough to reduce to a minimum the amount of working in joining them back on, thus retaining as much as possible the freshness of the piece. Handles and knobs are bold and functional, often bird or fish forms which have the direct, stylised character of cartoons, a long standing interest of Josie's, beautifully illustrated by the chess set she made, with figures based on family and friends.

Freshness and energy are qualities not only of making, but also of Josie's decorating style. Josie does not biscuit fire her ware, preferring instead a single slow firing. She will often apply a thick wrap of white slip, use a paper cut resist as the basis of a design and finish off with coloured slips, oxides and glazes, giving a lively watercolour effect. She raw glazes her pots as soon as they are firm enough to pick up, glazing the inside first and then pouring the glaze over the outside, after having waxed the base.

Josie was generous with tips on technique, equipment and materials, among them:

Make paper resist shapes of florists' paper, designed to resist moisture, so that they can be re-used.

Ear cleaners available in French pharmacies make good slip trailers.

Use a ridge tile to dry slabs, to give it a good, even curve. Josie demonstrated this with the lively fishy spoon rests she designed to give non-throwers in her workshop a piece to decorate with the combination of coils, paper resist and freehand drawing characteristic of her style.

Make a lid by cutting a slab slightly bigger than the opening of your pot, laying it, in stretchy material, over the top of the leather hard rim, pound it gently with a grog-filled sock turn it over and trim it to size.

Josie's energy and inventiveness was an inspiration to us all. Thank you.

**Mary Anne Bonney**

### **Rufford Ceramics Centre - Future Uncertain**

Nottinghamshire County Council has had its arts funding slashed and is in the process of implementing changes at Rufford that are likely to result in it losing its status as an internationally important venue for ceramics.

For more than twenty years the centre has held workshops, residencies & also sold Pottery & ceramics made by British artists. In addition, the Earth & Fire event which is held each year attracts people from all over the world.

Although Earth & Fire is expected to go ahead in 2008 the future of this event is in some doubt & the future of the use of the site is also in some doubt.

On behalf of guild members I have written a letter of protest to Councillor Steven Carroll, and Steve Bradley, Head of Arts Sports and Tourism, the Notts County Council employee who reports to Councillor Carrol. If you also want to write, the address is  
Nottinghamshire County Council  
County Hall  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
NG2 7QP.

Anything you can do to rally support will be helpful, and I would ask you to sign the petition, which has more than 1200 signatures already. The e petition site is:  
<http://www.gopetition.co.uk/petitions/save-rufford-ceramics-centre.html>

The blog site is:  
<http://saverufford.wordpress.com/>

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### **CHAIRMANS REPORT Produced for the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

At our AGM last year the prizes were given for the 7th Stan Romer Award, won by Ros McGuirk with a "Dalek Teapot". Second prize went to Vivienne Rodwell Davies, & the third prize was received by Danielle Bunker for a rather fanciful tea pot. Our judge & demonstrator for the evening was Richard Phethean.

**Evening meetings** Ros McGuirk continues to arrange our evening meetings for us (she will report on this in detail).

**Exhibition** The Guild Exhibition was held at Watford Girls School, in an attempt to find a venue closer to the Guild area. We did have a Private View party, but because of entry restrictions, the number of visitors, and the sales were negligible.

The Studio, at Olney will be used again in 2008, with other possibilities being considered. (remember that you can help us find a suitable venue).

**Pot Crawl** After years without one, Murray & Dorley Fieldhouse arranged an excellent PotCrawl for us, In the Stratford area, visiting Whichford Pottery & Russel Collins at Hook Norton on the way. Those attending had a most enjoyable weekend. We hope that someone will come forward to organise a similar visit in 2008.

**Workshops** A Soda firing with Peter Starkey gave some good results, with a further Workshop being organised by Ros McGuirk. Helen Vernon is unable to arrange further Workshops, so a vacancy remains for a Workshop organiser.

**Potters Open Day (POD)** Joy Wills organised an excellent POD for us. Our demonstrators this year were Peter Beard & Richard Godfrey. The day was another success, with excellent pottery demonstrations at Longdean School Hall.

John Powell was our video expert again, & we had very strong support from school staff members & pupils, with students helping as lighting & sound technicians. Richard Godfrey made good sales figures, but Peter Beard had few pots for sale. Julia Knowles helped with organisation, & her son worked like a Trojan as salesman on the guild stall, raising a substantial sum to support the guild expenditure. In February 2007 we arranged to give the Longdean art students some basic pottery lessons, as repayment for the use of the hall. This was reported in the newsletter in some detail. We had strong support from Ruth Brown & Ros McGuirk. I took a wheel so that students could do some throwing with instruction. The work that the students did was woven into the Art curriculum. The

committee have decided to make the entrance to POD free to all Guild Members in 2007.

**Pitstone** Ruby Sharp is now our Pitstone organiser, with help from Tina Hall, plus Veronica & John Powell & occasionally myself & Jan Kent. The Pitstone days continue to be a popular part of the Guild interface with the public, and guild members are always welcome. Ruby would appreciate support from another organiser with a commitment to Raku, since she is not always able to attend.

**Other activities – Box Moor (Conker) Festival**  
The 2006 festival was held on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October, on Blackbirds Moor, next to St. Johns Church. Those helping were Helen Vernon, Joy & Jack Wills, Sylvia Fitzwilliam and Linda Ablett (plus yours truly). Ruby Sharp could not attend, but Julia Knowles turned up with her family & helped us a lot when the pace became frantic. We raised £247 for the Hospice of St. Francis, exceeding our expectations.

#### **Membership**

Digby Stott continues to be our Membership Secretary. Our membership (2006 – 2007) was approximately 135, with family membership counted as 2 people. The Committee continue to review the membership subscriptions, but do not want to increase them if we have sufficient funds to cover our various activities.

**Newsletter** We continue to produce the Newsletter each Quarter, with help from Harry Karnac, and the staff at Alpine Press. Thanks go to all those who contribute articles for us.

With many other commitments, and having produced the Newsletter for fifteen years, I find it very difficult to ensure that the newsletter is published on time & to a standard that I want. I also recognise that producing the Newsletter bi-monthly, as previously, would be better in keeping us all up-to-date, but really cannot give the time to support this personally.

**Library** Our Library is a very popular & valuable guild resource. Our Librarian, Julia Knowles, is now unable to continue, so we urgently need someone to take up this position.

**Website** John Powell continues to run our Website ([www.thedcpg.org.uk](http://www.thedcpg.org.uk)) which is growing in popularity. Do let John know if you have any ideas for the website.

**Committee** Our Committee is substantially as during the previous year, although Kirsteen Holuj has volunteered to take over the task of Booking Clerk, when needed.

Jan Kent continues to be our Treasurer & has volunteered to stay on in 2008.

John Beckley continues to be our Secretary. Our thanks to all of our committee & helpers for all that they do for us. If you have any ideas about Guild events, or Guild activities that you would like to discuss, please do talk to any committee member about them.

#### **Footnote**

I must point out that it is essential that Guild members do participate in organising activities that interest them. Too often, the same few people put in a lot of effort for the general benefit of guild members, perhaps without any input from other members. We are a voluntary organisation, so we always need volunteers to arrange & support our activities.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam (Chairman)

### **OBITUARIES**

#### **Tony Plessner 1923-2007**

A most unassuming person, Tony Plessner was one of the founding members of our guild. Indeed, he was more than just that to the DCPG. I first met Tony shortly before the guild was formed. It was at a meeting which was held at Tony's house "Little Winch" in Chipperfield.

The group at the meeting were keen potters, mostly amateur. We were there to discuss the possibility of forming a local association of potters. Also there was a talk given, in this case a very interesting talk about potter's wheels, ancient and modern, with a slide show. On this auspicious occasion the talk was given by our current President, Murray Fieldhouse. At a subsequent meeting Murray was elected as Secretary, Ray Phipps as Chairman and Tony as Treasurer. These three were crucial in bringing the DCPG into being and maintaining the initial momentum. Some years later Tony was key to the continued survival of the Guild

when it almost collapsed due to a lack of funding.

Your current Chairman and Newsletter Editor, Mervyn Fitzwilliam was also at that meeting. After Murray finished Mervyn gave us an update on the latest generation of electric wheels and the benefits which the use of direct current motors brought to potter's wheels. I joined the discussion which then became somewhat technical. If memory serves, it was Tony who realised that 'eyes were beginning to glaze' and quietly brought the discussion to an end.

Tony brought his first wife, Carla, with daughters Jane and Susan, to Little Winch in the early 1960's where they lived for some 30 years. Many of us knew Carla, mostly through our visits to the Plessner household and when she joined us on other social occasions. It was a sad time when she died in 1981.

In 1993 Tony married Canadian-born Marylyn. With her children and stepchildren his extended family now spread from Canada via England as far as Finland. Tony left the guild in 1997 when he and Marylyn moved to Aldeburgh on the beautiful Suffolk coast just 23 miles North East of Ipswich.

Tony died on 11 September 2007, aged 84. The funeral service was held in the North Chapel at the crematorium in Ipswich. The chapel was filled with family and friends, amongst whom were five of his friends from the guild. Seven of his closest friends gave fulsome tribute to Tony, which gave us a wonderful insight into the interesting life he had before he arrived at Chipperfield and the life he enjoyed at Aldeburgh.

Dr Karl Wolfgang Plessner, to give Tony his proper name and title, was born on the 5 February 1923 in Breslau, Germany in what used to be the Polish Province of Silesia (The Polish name for Breslau was and is again, Wroclaw). Like many living in Silesia, well away from what was happening in and around Berlin, Tony's family were not aware of the pervasive nature of the Nazi regime when it arrived in power. They were comfortable in their life in Breslau and expected this to continue.

As most of us know, this was destined not to be. By the mid 1930's normal life in Germany

was becoming more difficult and it became evident that families like the Plessners were in danger. Tony's family started to make arrangements to leave the country and a few years later they moved to Paris.

It is a matter of history that the move to Paris was not a good idea, consequently the family made further arrangements to move to England. These plans were put into action during 1939. Father and son travelled to the coast and the 16 year old Karl was despatched to England.

An unusual 'refugee', Tony arrived in England with a considerable amount of luggage among which was a 'racing bicycle' the like of which had not been seen within these shores. He appears to have been fully established in England before the hostilities commenced and continued his education, studying science and gaining a Ph.D in Electrical Engineering. Later he worked in research for the cable manufacturer BICC.

During that part of Tony's career he was engaged in the development of optical fibre cables, so essential for telecommunication and many other uses in the modern world.

Within the home he applied his engineering and scientific skills to practical problems, as he did for the guild. His interests in the arts and music were shared with his family, he made beautiful pottery and he learned to play the cello after his retirement.

At Aldeburgh, Tony and Marilyn worked to transform what seemed a house with little promise and created a beautiful walled garden. Tony stayed at Aldeburgh after Marylyn died in 2000, remaining as fit and energetic as ever. An avid traveller, he was known to drive long distances and fly overseas to visit family and friends. Enjoying the music available at Aldeburgh, he also played in a local amateur orchestra and went to the opera in London. He loved entertaining his many visitors, as he had done at Little Winch.

It was said that he was a familiar sight in Aldeburgh, riding his bicycle to and from the shops. It was on such a trip that he was struck by a car door being flung open just as he was passing. He was thrown to the ground, injuring his head. Initially he appeared to get over this unfortunate event, but a few days later he had a relapse and died from the head injuries.



It is clear from the rapt attention to the tributes given at the funeral, together with the general feeling thereafter, that Tony will be missed by his many friends. They will remember him as a soft-spoken, helpful and friendly man with many talents and interests. An unassuming person and a gentleman.

Digby Stott

**COLIN PEARSON:** Innovative potter who rejected tradition in favour of clay and polyester fibre.

Colin Pearson, who has died at the age of 84, was one of the most creatively charismatic of postwar British potters. Noted not only for his highly individual vessels, which broadened the language of the potter's wheel, he was also a masterly educator who imparted his love of clay and his extraordinary knowledge of the chemistry of ceramics to generations of students.

That many potters in Britain and abroad began to approach clay on the wheel with far more freedom, bringing out the raw physicality of the material, is due in part to his pioneering example. Rejecting some of the traditional methods of working, he evolved his own signature form, developed in a variety of ways, the vessel with wings, powerfully conceived cylinders with vertical or horizontal attachments that gave his work great sculptural presence.

Pearson was born in Friern Barnet, north London. He was passionate about drawing as a boy but it was only in 1946, on being demobbed, that he used his ex-service grant to study painting at Goldsmiths College, London. Here, he met his future wife, fellow student Leslie Thomas, and discovered his lasting fascination for clay. Taught by the well-known potter Kenneth Clark, he began to make maiolica wares, influenced by the in-vogue tin glaze ceramics of William Newland, Margaret Hine and James Tower.

But Pearson wanted to explore the broader potential, of clay, and joined the staff at Winchcombe pottery in Gloucestershire. Here, he could gain useful throwing experience (the skill of building up a pot on the wheel) in a traditional country workshop. He spent a happy year there, gaining a more rounded

knowledge of the potter's art and a respect for craft values that never left him.

Still hungry for more technical knowledge, he then went to work at the Royal Doulton factory in Lambeth, South London, where he was employed in slipcasting in the chemical porcelain department. The industrial processes fascinated Pearson, keen as he was to investigate the science of ceramics, a discipline as much about chemistry and engineering as art. He began to test bodies and glazes that were more practical and durable for everyday use.

In this he shared similar views to the potter David Leach, and in 1955 he went to help Leach establish a training pottery at Aylesford Priory, Kent. Here, they produced slipware and later stoneware, loosely modelled on the Leach pottery in St. Ives, Cornwall. Three years later, Pearson began a parallel teaching career at Camberwell College of Arts (where his pupils included Mo Jupp, Ian Godfrey and Ewen Henderson), and later at Harrow School of Art and Medway College of Design, Rochester.

Popular with his students, he was greatly admired by his students for his generosity of knowledge and a belief that rules were there to be broken. Experimentation was a lifelong passion for Pearson, events in which his pupils and studio assistants were always actively involved. In 1996 his contribution earned him a rare honorary fellowship of the University of the Arts, London.

In 1961, with the help of his wife and the American potter Byron Temple, he set up his own workshop, the Quay pottery, in Aylesford. Here, he made succinctly designed practical tableware – press moulded dishes, big casseroles and plates as well as more individual pieces. Richly glazed with minimal abstract decoration, they were modern pots for modern living. Yet Pearson remained creatively restless, his low boredom threshold pushing him to explore other areas. He wanted to investigate the more expressive potential of ceramics, to prove the wheel was capable of so much more. He tried out different modes of throwing, making more sculptural pieces in a softer, more plastic clay on a slower wheel, achieving freer, more rugged textures, with irregular, gestural throwing marks..

Despite their strong material dynamic, these pots were barely noticed until a major show at the British Crafts Centre in Covent

Garden in 1971, when Pearson added his now famous wings to many of the pieces. Deriving ideas from ancient Chinese bronzes and Tang and Song dynasty ceramics, he was now radically combining the technique of throwing and construction. Whether working in bold stoneware, or crisp, delicate porcelain, the 1970s and 80s saw a fertile development of pots with richly pooling sprayed glazes and slips, the colours accentuating the pot's contours. His prize-winning work (awards included the 33<sup>rd</sup> Grand Prix at Faenza, Italy, in 1975) and pieces were collected avidly by major museums in Britain and abroad.

In the early 1980s the Pearsons moved to North London, establishing a studio in Islington. It marked a new creative period in which he could concentrate on increasingly ambiguous assembled pieces and develop new glazes and surfaces on a multiplicity of forms – not only big, broad bowls, but stem pots, vases and tall jugs, their curving and twisting attachments adding life, stability and balance. Rims, delicately torn and rented, helped to open out rather than close form. With the aid of his assistants – Stan McInnes, Marco Toro and daughter Clare – He created ceramics of even greater ceramic complexity. His pioneering use of polyester fibre enabled him to manipulate clay in unexpected ways, folding and bending it into very different structures.

Having moved to a final studio in Hackney in 2000, Pearson continued to work, with increased assistance, despite the advance of Parkinsonism (a variant of Parkinson's disease), a condition so complex he once proudly told me he was known to every hospital in London. An exhibition in the Marianne Heller Gallery in Heidelberg marked his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, but by then he was too poorly to attend.

In his prime, a bear of a man with a great appetite for living and a wicked sense of humour (friends will not forget his practical joking, his life-enhancing silliness), it was painful to see his body so maligned by illness. Yet with the enduring support of his wife and family, and latterly the staff at the Mary Seacole House day care centre, Pearson's spirit won through, his ability to laugh never dimmed. He will be remembered not only as one of the great and most inventive potters of

his generation, but as a remarkably tenacious and warm human being.

He is survived by Leslie and their three children, Julian, Clare and Daniel.[This obituary originally appeared in the Guardian newspaper and is republished here with their kind permission].

David Whiting

*Colin Pearson, potter, born September 14 1923; died December 3 2007.*

### WORKSHOPS

Currently we do not have any workshops planned.

We need help with this, so If you are interested in helping please talk to any committee member or phone the editor.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<u>Murray Fieldhouse</u> (President)	01442-851 229
Northfield Studio, Tring, Herts. HP23 5QW	
<u>Mervyn Fitzwilliam</u> (Chairman & Newsletter)	
"Longfield", Bulstrode Lane, Felken, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 OBP	
	01442-242332
<u>Jan Kent</u> (Treasurer)	01908-674 051
48 Coleshill Place, Bradwell Common, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 8DP	
<u>John Beckley</u> (Secretary)	01923-822 659
44 Wolsey Road, Northwood, Mdx. HA6 2EN	
<u>Digby Stott</u> (Membership)	01442-404 122
"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts, HP3 ODJ	
<u>Joy Wills</u> (Open Day Organiser)	01296-481 015
21 Tindal Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 1HT	
<u>Ros McGuirk</u> (Programme Organiser & Vice-Chairman)	
13 The Park, St.Albans, Herts. AL1 4RU 01727-834 326	
<u>Kirsteen Holuj</u> (Publicity)	01280-823 331
Railing, 7a Mitre St. Buckingham, Bucks. MK18 1DW	

### 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;

Tina Hall (Pitstone & Catering)	01442 826 223
John Powell (Website)	01494 774 398
Ruby Sharp (Pitstone organiser)	01494 728 364
Workshops Organiser *** Vacancy	



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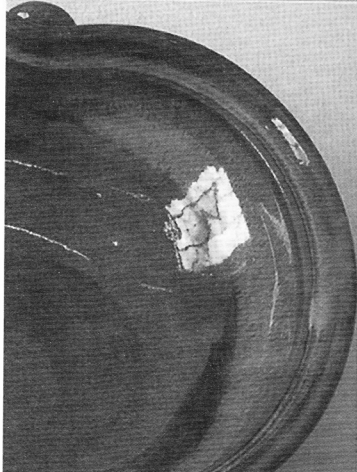

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| 2/3   | Ikebana                    | £78  |
|       | <i>Kiyoko Sawada- Rudd</i> |      |
| 16/17 | Mouldmaking & Slipcasting  | £92  |
|       | <i>David Cowley</i>        |      |
| 16/17 | Large Scale Life Painting  | £108 |
|       | <i>Alejandro Ospina</i>    |      |

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