



# DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



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Future Guild Events  
West Dean Course  
Richard Miller Demonstration  
Pollie and Gary Uttley Workshop  
Norman Makinson Obituary



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NEWSLETTER  
AUTUMN 2010  
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## ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER

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 £22.50 Single £19.50 Student £9.50 Newsletter only; £7 per annum.

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## FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

Stephen Parry, at Art-in-Action, with one of his tall pots, made on his "Cart Wheel"

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## Editorial

A minor operation in late June led to very little being achieved during July. The main problem was a reaction to the anaesthetic, which meant I slept for most of three days and was at the very bottom of the energy scale for a lot of July. I am feeling better now, but really not 100%, so the Newsletter, amongst other things, has suffered. Fortunately, Harry Karnac continues to give assistance.

We have a lot to look forward to, with;

\*Open Studios

\*A visit to the British Museum, to see the Percival David Collection. (Still being arranged via the Curator) but planned for Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October.

\*The Stan Romer Award (Vessel). With a demonstration by our Judge, Joanna Howells, following our AGM, on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

\*Our Potters Open day, with Elaine Peto & Mark Griffiths, organized by Ronnie Powell.

\*A return visit by Margaret O'Rourke, to enlighten us all, & since this will be our "end of term" meeting, mince pies & fruit punch may well be on the menu.

I want you all to put your thinking caps on, because \*we need a new Secretary, since Jane Kilvington will be retiring from our committee at the AGM. If you think you could support this position, please phone me.

\*Our Exhibition last year was organized by Sue Lines, & very successful, well attended, lots of interest, with more than £1000 worth of Pottery & sculpture sold. The write-up did not appear in the Newsletter owing to a computer breakdown, & as Sue said, it is a bit late to put it in now. Sue could not organize another exhibition this year due to the venue being fully booked, but also because she is very committed to Open Studios & other activities. The question is; is there any other Guild member who could either organize another exhibition for us, or support Sue in doing this?

\*Our newsletter has been printed by Alpine Press for many of the eighteen years that I have been Editor, & I think that the long-term favour given to us by Alpine Press must be wearing thin. We really need help with production of the newsletter & in addition we need to update to colour if possible. Is there anyone who can help with this?

I am assuming that guild members want a Newsletter? With an excellent & informative Website, & with email contact increasingly in use, it is possible for most members to receive rapid updates, advertisements & notices. Ros McGuirk is sending you this information on a regular basis. Also many members distribute their own notices by email.

I am aware that some members do not have access to a computer or email, & in addition we do circulate our Newsletter to most other Guilds, & use it as a Guild information document at Art-in-Clay, Art-in-Action etc. so some kind of Newsletter is probably desirable.

\*The proposed Wood fired kiln build with Joe Finch, planned for the Subud site at Rickmansworth is on hold, & will be discussed in detail at our next Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> August. (This date has now passed, see meeting summary elsewhere in this newsletter).

Primary difficulties are;

\*A relatively very low positive response from guild members to this project.

\*The apparently very high cost.

\*The fact that the site is on short term lease.

\*Doubt that the kiln would have a future use.

(please refer to the email article from Jerry Seaborn). Paul Rowbottom has recently built small kilns on the present site as a Workshop activity, & some guild members have attended these Workshops. (see relevant Article).

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

## Summary of Main points at Committee Meeting. 27/08/2010

**Present:** Mervyn, Jan, Ronnie, John, Kirsteen, Jane

**Apologies** Ros, Digby.

**A letter of thanks** from Rev. Gill Hulme was circulated. It thanked the guild members for their contributions to two recent church festivals which included all the takings from the "Have a Go potting".

**The AGM;** Joanna Howells will judge the Stan Romer competition. And will then give a demonstration.

**Retirement of minute secretary** Jane said she regretted being unable to continue. So far there was no replacement.

**Membership** There are 78 single members and 18 family members making 111 in all. This is a reduction in numbers and finances are hit as a result. A discussion took place about how to attract more members: 1. Proposed a sheet of information for all visitors attending the POD 2. John to print 150 folded hand-outs to include information, future programme etc with application form on the reverse side. 3. Create a list of organisations to inform about our programme e.g. colleges, schools and Hemel Centre. 4. Offer a voucher for the next members meeting along with all three-pound visitor's ticket to POD

**Application for POD tickets** enclosed in the next newsletter should be on a separate form from the request for renewal of subscription 1. Both demonstrators have confirmed. Mark to

speaking a.m. and Elaine p.m. Mark will bring his own wheel. He requests aprons for audience participation. 2. The school has not confirmed; this is according to their rule of waiting till term begins. Mervyn will write to Joanne van Vegal at Longdean School. 3. Joy to be asked to help with the tea, if possible. 4. Linda Bryant to be asked to organise the raffle. 5. Jan will be on the door. 6. Ros will be asked to provide the hot toddy. 7. There will be a member's table where the Stan Romer entries will be on display. 8. Mervyn will ask Hazel Green and her daughter Annette Cole to look after a table selling various tools, materials, left overs from West Herts, & books withdrawn from the library, after they have been reviewed to ascertain whether any should be kept or not. There could be a notice board for members notices of things for sale.

**The Kiln project** Mervyn has received a very limited number of replies to the questionnaire sent to guild members. There were doubts about costs and usefulness. Also supplies of wood. In particular Jerry Seaborn quoted his 1983 experiences when a soda kiln was built at great trouble but only used twice. There is a problem about long term use of the site, but Paul Rowbotham has made use of some bricks to build temporary, low-fired kilns with students from West Herts. (& guild members) his fee was approx £100 for a four day attendance. Mervyn will ask Paul if he could run a suitable guild kiln Workshop, at a lower cost.

**An Exhibition** Mervyn has asked if it would be practical to use a vacated shop. However private shops would require payment of rates and council owned property is deemed too complicated for merely a month's occupancy. (rents, insurance, special requests for lighting etc). It was resolved to return to Queen's Park as before. It was suggested that a one-day exhibition could be held at Pitstone in the big barn.

**The Library.** There are new cupboards for the library. The books have been sorted and some have been withdrawn (some to be sold at POD as described above, after review). Mervyn will ask Sue to make a list of both categories, although a few have already been sold. (This was not Mervyn's intention). \* see footnote

**Newsletter** Mervyn finds he cannot continue to do the work for quarterly newsletters. John knows a publisher who could print a smaller newsletter in black and white . 300 for £60-00. Gathering and arranging copy require other skills including using a computer programme. It was suggested that the membership is asked if they know of someone who could help. The next newsletter should include a questionnaire to ask whether members would prefer material or electronic copy. Do they value a) pictures b) advertisements c) articles d) recipes.

**Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup>** There will be a visit to the British Museum to see the Percival David collection. Approx. £10 per person to pay for a guide. It will be advertised on the website when arrangements are complete

**Sunday October 17<sup>th</sup>** the Boxmoor Conker Festival

**National Annual Ceramics Week** First week in May 2011 is proposed. Our ideas will be based on Queen's Park Centre.

**Rent of Methodist church Hall** An increase has been agreed.

**Date of next meeting 7.0 pm on October 8<sup>th</sup>** before the AGM to discuss any outstanding concerns for POD on November 13<sup>th</sup>.

**FOOTNOTE** The Stan Romer Library was assembled from his collection of 4,000 books. The majority selected being those that he had referred to in his own book "A dictionary of Pottery", in the possession of his son John Romer. When I agreed to some books being withdrawn from the library, I intended that they should be properly reviewed, classified, & if necessary valued, or at least carefully considered, since some are possibly valuable &/or fairly rare. We can then make a suitable decision on which ones to sell & which to keep. We should also consult John Romer. I am very sorry that some were arbitrarily disposed of, really not my intention, or instruction, but I want us to go through a proper review with the remainder.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam

### Membership News

**Peter Warren** joined the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild in December 2009 and trained at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts during the 1960's and then took up post teaching ceramics at a Stevenage secondary school where I remained until I retired in 2005. I live in Stevenage and produce thrown stoneware jugs, bowls and dishes which I fire in a reduced atmosphere in a propane gas fired kiln. The dishes are decorated using a process of paper resist in conjunction with coloured slips.

### GUILD PROGRAMME FOR OCT-DECEMBER 2010-

**8 Oct AGM and Stan Romer Competition with Joanna Howells.** Joanna is well known for her particular way with reduction glazes on robustly thrown and altered porcelain. Her work is currently changing towards really big, more sculptural forms. See [www.joannahowells.co.uk](http://www.joannahowells.co.uk) The doors will open at 7pm for competitors to bring their 'vessels' and set up the exhibition (look elsewhere in the newsletter for the application form.) The AGM will begin at 7.30 and will be followed shortly after by the main meeting.

### Sat 13 Nov POTTERS OPEN DAY with Elaine Peto and Mark Griffiths.

**3 Dec Margaret O'Rourke.** 'Lights Fantastic'. We are delighted that Margaret is making a return visit to the Guild. Do not miss the chance to find out more about the work of this pioneering potter who makes large light shades, chandeliers and installations from the finest porcelain, using techniques both ancient and modern. See [www.castlight.co.uk](http://www.castlight.co.uk)



### Other events for autumn 2010

#### **4-19 Sept Open Studios Northamptonshire**

**11 Sept-3 Oct Herts Open Studios.** For venues and times, pick up a brochure from your local library, gallery, or tourist information centre. [www.hvaf.org.uk](http://www.hvaf.org.uk)

**Until 30 Sept '70 at 70' Jim Robison's** celebratory exhibition of 70 works at Booth House Gallery, Holmfirth, W.Yorks, HD9 2QT. Sat/Sun 1-5pm or by appointment. Tel: 01484 685270. See [www.boothhousegallery.co.uk](http://www.boothhousegallery.co.uk)

**Until 25 Sept National Sculpture Prize Exhibition** Includes ceramics. Bluecoat Chambers, College Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BZ. Tel: 0151 709 4014 Mon-Fri 10-5.30pm. Sun 12-5pm. [www.bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://www.bluecoatdisplaycentre.com)

**27 Aug-2 Oct Gareth Mason** New work. Lower Gallery, CAA, 2 Percy St, London, W1T 1DD. Tel: 0207 4362344

**17-19 Sept Ceramics in the City** at The Geoffrey Museum, Kingsland Rd, London E2 8EA. Selling exhibition with free admission. 10-5pm Fri and Sat. 12-5pm Sun. Tel: 0207 739 9873

**23-29 Sept Origins.** For this year only, the London craft fair relocates from Somerset House to the newly refurbished Old Spitalfield Market. NB. One week only. Tel: 0207 739 5561

**8 Oct-8 Jan Dylan Bowen** exhibition in Lower Gallery, CAA, Percy St. As above.

**27-30 Oct Handmade 2010 at Chelsea** Contemporary crafts and design in the old town hall.

**30-31 Oct Oxford Studio Ceramics 2010** The CPA autumn fair at St. Edwards School, Woodstock Rd, Oxford. Sat 10-6pm, Sun 10-4.30pm Tel: 0207 437 6781

**12-14 Nov Windsor Contemporary Art Fair** Royal Windsor Racecourse. Includes ceramics.

**20-21 Nov Art in Clay** Farnham Maltings. 10-5.30pm Sat, and 10-5pm Sun. Tel: 01159 873966

#### Coloured Clay Course – West Dean

The Creative Ceramics from Coloured Clays course at West Dean College with Jo Connell as tutor proved to be a wonderfully inspiring and enjoyable week end. West Dean is a centre of study for arts, crafts, gardening and music set in a lovely garden near Chichester. Wherever one sat in the dining room the conversation turned to art in some form with people who were informed and passionate.

There were 8 of us on our course. We started on Friday evening by mixing the stained clays, using a white stoneware base. Jo Connell was an excellent tutor, who kept the lightest possible hold on the exuberance of the class and yet managed to show us complicated new techniques and impart a wealth of information

Many of us will have read her books and seen the recent article in Ceramic Review. Whilst much is clear in the writing it was useful and fun to actually use coloured clays. In broad terms, her technique consists of making a design in coloured clay and then placing it on top of a backing of plain white stoneware and then either rolling out the clay or stretching it so that in the final piece the coloured clay is thinner than a layer of slip. The rolling out is easy but the stretching requires quite a lot of skill. These techniques are obviously more suited to hand building than to throwing or coiling. There were wheels in the pottery, in fact one of Mervyn's but none of us tried agate ware. I travelled down by train and so had to carry my pots back in my bag. This was something of a mistake and I would recommend anyone else doing the course to leave their pots to be fired at West Dean, particularly as some of our work needed to be fired in a reduction kiln. It is not so easy for us to go back down to Sussex to collect them. I knew that I would never have the time.

Margaret Tatton Brown

#### Letters to the Editor

Dear Mervyn

I would like to thank all my friends who sent me "get well messages" during my reluctant stay in Watford general hospital and later in the "old peoples home" at Bushey. They made my recovery all the speedier from what could have been an even more serious accident. I am thinking of setting up as a consultant tree surgeon as a result. In other words; if in doubt get in an expert.

Work in the studio has been slow to get off the ground and as I write this I am waiting for the results from my first firing since last year. My best wishes and thanks to you all.

Doug Jones.

Hi Mervyn,

Re your request for feed back on the proposed kiln at Loudwater Farm.

I was a member of the original D&CPG wood fired kiln project that was erected at Northfield Studios sometime about 1983/84. (I have a receipt for some fireclay dated July 1983 which I am sure was used on the build). I only have vague records of that time and in fact, do not have any photographs that I can find. I do have a lino cut print done by Pauline Odell, which is attached (somewhat truncated, as print is 24 x 30 cm, not A4). I think the group was set up over the winter of 1982/83 and consisted of Alan Odell, John Capes (who so sadly died some time ago), Simon (surname escapes me) and myself. Alan is on the right in the print, then John with his back to us, then myself and Simon on the left. The bending figure getting the wood for the kiln, is my son Jensen, who was, depending on which year photo was taken but I think 1984, 10 years old and looks to be the only one actually working!. It took us a whole summer to build and it was based on the Olsen quick fire kiln system. This is quite easy to build providing you have a couple of suitable kiln shelves for the kiln floor. It needs a steel frame to support the arch however. We all had full time jobs and it was difficult to get everyone together at the same time, obviously only at weekends. I suppose we were there on site probably only 4 or 5 times to get it built(?).

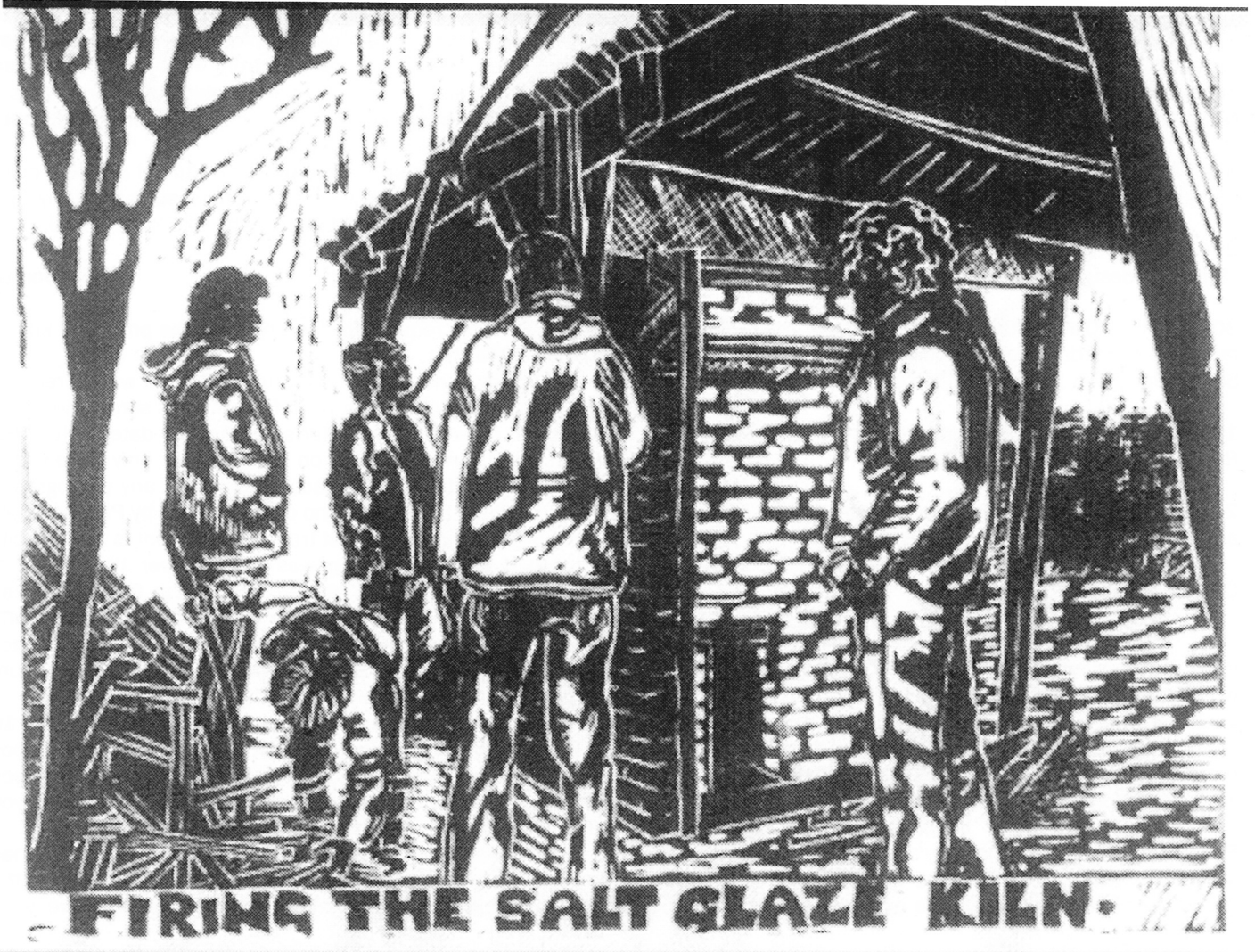
I have records of making pots for the kiln in 1984 and 1985 and I think we as a group, plus other guild members, did one salt glaze firing in each of those years. I am not sure if other guild members subsequently went on to do other firings with the kiln. I know that Dorley built another kiln later, whether by stripping down the first kiln or a complete new build, I don't know. The problem was that the kiln was too big for any one of us to make enough to fill it ourselves. Murray had a supply of wood there, which we had use of but any more frequent use would have meant organising a supply. Therefore, no one really wanted to take control of the kiln. If you were making enough to fill the kiln, you would then have had the problem of getting pots to and from Northfield Studios and if you were making that much you would probably have your own kiln. Glaze firing and testing becomes a problem. Firing with other people means that your glazes must mature the same way and temperature. We avoided that by

salt glazing, which hopefully works for the majority of clays used by the participants.

My feelings are that it will not work as an ongoing project, but would be a great idea as a "learning to build a kiln workshop" but as my experience shows, it would probably have no long term usage, unless the college wanted to use it and take responsibility for wood supply, glazes etc. Probably better to convert it to propane fired for the college use or even make the kiln dismantlable and then have another workshop for a gas fired kiln build or catenary arch build etc. For me personally, I would be happy to put some time in, but not at £100 a time, having already built a number of other kilns and struggling to make enough to fill my one here at home.

Regards

Jerry Seaborn.



## December Meeting with Pollie and Gary Uttley

When they took early retirement in November 1995, both Pollie and Gary left behind the fulfilling but stressful life of running art departments in different comprehensive schools. Gary's specialism was ceramics, and Pollie's was textiles and fashion. To celebrate their new found freedom they looked for an exotic holiday, and chose southern India. They could not have done better, for they were instantly hooked, and have returned to the subcontinent many times since. Moreover, they went on to create a new career for themselves, combining their talents with a newfound passion for the handmade fabrics and tribal costumes of India.

As a start to our evening, we were treated to a terrific collection of colourful photographs from their travels. There were fabulous fabrics and patchwork quilts from their first trip to Rajasthan. The details were amazing; fine stitching, mirror-work, bells, and rows of coins. The ceramics that Pollie and Gary created together, in response, were equally finely worked, colourful and creative. They began to look beyond the use of glazes in their search for strong matt colours, and turned to stains and even emulsion paint.

They soon returned to India and began to collect traditional tribal costumes; gorgeous, colourful, everyday wear. We were shown pictures of fabrics and clothing, and these were interspersed with photos of the ceramics that they had inspired. We learned more about their story, how they were invited to run a ceramic workshop at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad and also to take a residency at the Global Artists' Village in Dehli where they made a large wall panel.

Now they make ceramic wall-hangings, dishes and life-sized garments based on lengths of fabric, quilts, dresses and shirts, door-hangings and saddle bags. The wide range of techniques they employ include screen printing, stamping and impressing, mono-printing, moulding and sprigging.

Sometimes they use woodblocks produced for textile printing, but these tend to get wet and grab the clay. They had copies of the blocks made from polymer which work better. They use Spencroft's white earthenware clay and bisque fire to 1020C. Glazes are fired to 1080C. Emulsion paint is often used instead of glaze when a strong matt colour is required. It is diluted 1:1 with water, and dries hard. It is stable even in a dishwasher. (As most of their output is decorative, this is not as strange as it sounds).

Pollie's demonstration began with screen printing. She showed us the most beautiful piece of fabric. It was black, was finely hand-stitched in white thread, and had taken six months to make. Part of the pattern had been enlarged on a photocopier and a copy made on acetate. Using college equipment, Pollie had made a screen from the acetate. This process involves the use of 'sericol', a light sensitive fluid which is put on the acetate and left in the dark overnight. Pollie uses underglazes, or oxides, mixed with a little water and polycell to a thick paste to replicate the pattern on clay. This mixture is pushed through the screen onto a sheet of

clay. Pollie worked quickly and made screen printing look very easy. The result was most impressive with all the finest details clear and crisp.

She went on to show us how to build up patterns with small blocks. Some were original wood blocks and others were made from clay (often giving the negative impression). Some of their pieces are mosaics and employ mixed media with glazed, non-glazed and raku work.

Gary prefers mono-printing. He starts off vaguely copying a pattern and then continues free-style, developing his own patterns. The results are lovely.

He began his demo by rolling out a large sheet of clay using the most enormous rolling pin. It was specially made from elm. The clay was put to one side while he showed us how he makes the pattern. A sheet of glass was coated with wet underglaze colour, a piece of plain newsprint paper was placed over it and stuck down with sellotape to stop it shifting. Then the pattern was drawn using fine lines. The paper was then carefully cut away and peeled off and placed, wet side down, on the clay. This is the tricky part, because there is only one chance to get it right. Then by wiping over the paper with an old credit card, the pattern was transferred to the clay. Gary worked fast, moving from the centre outwards. He worked at this until the paper was soaked from the moisture in the clay.

The clay sheet would then be placed in a plaster mould to form a shallow decorative dish. Colour is added later, either when dry, or after bisque firing.

It was an excellent evening, one of the best. We had been treated to our own guided tour of India, and, fuelled by Tina's delicious mulled wine and cake, we enjoyed a double demonstration. All the time, information poured out of Pollie, who not only gave us one of the most informative and visually stunning presentations, but with her cerise silk jacket and slim black pants wins my Best Dressed Potter Award. Congratulations Pollie!

I hope I have given you the main points. For more information, e.g. about where to source the materials and screen makers, do contact the Uttleys on [polliegarry@yahoo.com](mailto:polliegarry@yahoo.com). And if you are interested in a group lesson at their studio in Chesterfield this summer (cost £50 + travel), do contact me asap. There are already six on the list. Another six would make it work.

**Ros McGurk**

## RICHARD MILLER - 14/05/2010

As I drove to the meeting, I was wondering whether tile-making would be enough of a subject to occupy a whole evening. In the event I need not have worried. Richard gave us a great time, filled with enthusiasm and energy.

From the start of his slide show, Richard explained that his interests lay in making useful things and in the processes of making in general. During his degree course in Farnham, he built a simple wood fired kiln in a corner of the car park and then an experimental tunnel kiln consisting of a woven wooden frame, covered with clay. As he explained, loading and unloading was a little awkward, showing us a slide of a pair of



feet sticking out of the firebox end of the kiln.

After Farnham came a spell in North Devon, including working for Clive Bowen in the construction of a large wood-fired bottle kiln in a Bideford park as part of a public art project. Following Devon, he went off to Japan for an International Convention of wood-firers. He showed us slides of five different kilns in various stages of construction and use, including Koreans doing a wood-fired salt firing. Back in England, he was doing odd jobs when he heard that the Froyle Pottery was closing down and, hoping to pick up some cheap second-hand equipment, he went to visit. Instead he ended up taking over the entire pottery, debts and all. There then followed a steep learning curve, putting the business back on a firm basis and just as he was getting on top of it, the landlord decided to sell the site. Negotiations with the Farnham building restoration group allowed him to move into the old Wrecclesham Pottery buildings, and there he still is.

After the tea break, he moved on to explaining some of the technicalities of their tilemaking processes. Tiles up to 5 inches square are produced from blocks extruded with a square cross-section. Thirty tiles are wire cut off each block, one face is quickly smoothed with a rubber kidney lubricated with a little water and then they are laid on wooden racks overnight to stiffen.

The next day the edges are tidied and the tiles put back on the racks the other way up to continue drying. Over the next three days the tiles are flipped periodically until bone dry. The tiles are raw glazed, Richard demonstrated a deceptively simple glazing action using a large metal ladle. Two quick pours, with a ninety degree turn of the wrist in between and the tiles were evenly glazed without drips. Simple, when you have been doing it for years! The tiles are then fired over 24 hours up to 1280, 60 deg/hr up to 600, 120 deg/hr to 1280, soak for 40 mins and then cool. A gas fired trolley kiln and two electric top loaders are fired three times a week to achieve their reduction quantities.

Tiles larger than 5 inches are either press moulded or are cut from flat slabs using a large wire harp, both techniques he demonstrated next. For the press mould, he layed in a sheet of paper, slapped in soft clay, wired it off level with the mould, smoothed the top with a rubber kidney and pushed it up out of the mould. The paper layer allowed it to release from the mould and be transferred to the rack for drying. It seemed to take no more than 30 seconds per tile as he was churning them out and explaining as he went. Similarly the slab tile was dispatched in short order. A large lump of clay was bashed out to the right size and then a quick swipe with the harp cut it to the required thickness. It was smoothed and trimmed to size and ready for drying in no time at all. He said they are producing tiles up to half a meter and are experimenting with larger. They use a very open clay, with lots of sand and molochite and they have no major problems with warping or splitting.

The basic range of tiles are all glazed with the same base glaze, coloured by the addition of pigments and oxides. For instance they produce seven shades of blue. Since they are

fired to stoneware temperatures, the tiles are suitable for outdoor use and they do get orders for swimming pools and the like, but their main market is indoor use, for kitchen splashbacks, bathrooms and showers.

Sales are mainly through Fired Earth and Country Living, but there are also specials. On one occasion the BBC had them produce tiles to cover the front of Walford East tube station in Eastenders, to hide the wooden construction.

Even their small number of failures are not wasted. A friend is collecting tiles for a swimming pool and takes those that are sound but colour rejects and any cracked tiles go to a teacher who breaks them up to do mosaic work with children. Richard estimated that their wastage rate is around 7% overall.

Richard also showed us samples of hand painted tiles with delightfully executed birds and insects. These were examples of special made-to-order tiles that they make, hand painted on a part time basis by a decorator who used to work at the Aldermaston Pottery.

They have had many different requests, including some strange ones like a range of weapons and tanks for a retired army officer.

Apart from providing employment for himself, the business employs Zee, a friend from college days who is the other tile maker, Richard's mother, who does the accounts, the part-time decorator and various work-experience students. These are taken on to learn the ropes of running a business and they are encouraged to develop a range of tiles on which they earn a commission from any sales.

You might think that this would be enough for anyone, but Richard has just taken on another building in Hambledon. He hopes to move tile production there while keeping Wrecclesham for domestic wares. And of course he is building another wood-fired kiln at home, for his personal use. It made me feel quite exhausted.

Jan Kent

#### **OBITUARY - NORMAN MAKINSON.**

Norman Makinson's best known work was the commemorative mug which he designed for the 1951 Festival of Britain

The ceramic artist and designer Norman Makinson, who has died at the age of 88, was best known as the designer of the Festival of Britain commemorative mug. The festival exhibition, held on London's South Bank in 1951, was epitomised by the futuristic Skylon sculpture. Makinson, a Wedgwood designer, cleverly captured the spirit of this structure in his classic Queen's Ware mug design.

The festival looked forward in hope and optimism, but also, since it marked the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851, celebrated the past. Makinson's striking design drew from the structures that came to represent both events – the Skylon, and the floating, innovative feel of Crystal Palace's iron structure, the scene of the Great Exhibition.



Makinson approached the field of contemporary ceramics by what would now be seen as an unusual route. Born in Wolstanton, Staffordshire, and attending the junior art school in Burslem from the age of 11, he progressed to the position of apprentice decorator at the Wedgwood pottery factory in 1936. Later, after studying industrial design at evening classes, he moved into the factory's design department.

He was successful in the Royal College of Art (RCA) entrance examination in 1939, but a lack of grant support obliged him to wait a further seven years until the war ended before taking up his place. He served on Atlantic convoys and in the far east as a marine during the second world war, and it was an ex-serviceman's grant that eventually enabled him to take up his place at the RCA, studying ceramics there from 1946 to 1949. It was there that he met Kathleen Perris, an illustration student who became a notable silversmith and jeweller with pieces in many public collections. They married in 1947.

In 1949 Makinson rejoined Wedgwood, returning to the company's design department as a factory designer and received a travelling scholarship to visit Italy, Switzerland and France. In 1952 he received a nine-month RCA travelling scholarship, funded by the British Pottery Manufacturers Association, to Scandinavia, where he encountered Danish and Swedish craft and design developments. This proved a major influence on him and the work he subsequently designed at Wedgwood. A particular favourite of his was a cup, saucer and plate that were produced with a boat and net design. His famous Partridge in a Pear Tree design was selected by the Design Council.

In 1953 he was appointed lecturer at Glasgow College of Art and taught ceramics there until 1956. For the next 25 years he taught at what became North Wales College of Art. An inspiring teacher, he influenced a generation of art students. Through his lifelong passion for the importance of proficient drawing skills coupled with sound technical knowledge, thousands of students benefited from Makinson's teaching. Lifelong friendships were formed and many remained in contact with him throughout their careers. Several of his former students still live and practise in north Wales, notably the potters David and Margaret Frith. Initially, as well as teaching, he ran a smallholding in Llanellidan, north Wales, with Kathleen, growing and raising their own food ("the good life" 20 years before the television series). The livestock and poultry became an inspiration for his ceramics. The family moved to Denbigh, also in north Wales, in 1979 and for more than 30 years he worked from his ceramic studio at his home there.

Makinson's smaller ceramic sculptures were shown, and sold, through galleries across the UK in both solo and group exhibitions. His early design influences, the drawings and paintings of birds in Japanese books, copied as a small child, are apparent in his work. Many pieces display an interest in Babylonian and Assyrian art – particularly apparent in larger pieces depicting livestock – along with the archetypal Egyptian ibis image, possibly obtained from British Museum visits during his RCA studies.

Technically, sheets of plastic clay were moulded to create basic forms, which were then developed and modelled further,

with a clay glaze combined with other glazes and fluxes. The forms are finished by cutting through the unfired glaze and painting with various metal oxides. In this way Makinson used both brushwork and sgraffito to communicate the texture and attributes of the subject with considerable expertise and dexterity, often creating surprising surfaces, which are smooth to the touch.

His work had two distinct strands. The above influences also link with South American and Chinese sources – some of his more formal work focuses on male and female birds, exploring the dichotomy and harmonies of gender, in a stylised manner. However, his main body of work is deeply influenced by the natural world, growing out of close observation and from the expressive process of drawing. Framed drawings usually accompanied the objects that during later years included small bronzes.

Makinson was involved with many organisations, serving on panels for North Wales Potters, North Wales Arts Association and Denbigh Civic Society among others. He was also politically active in the Social Democratic party and latterly the Labour party. His sustained support for contemporary British ceramics meant that his voice will be greatly missed. He is survived by Kathleen, his daughter Cathy, his son Chris and grandchildren Sally and Ben.

Philip Hughes

*This obituary was originally published in The Guardian and is reprinted here with their kind permission.*

#### Workshop at Field Cottage with Pollie and Gary Uttley

July 10<sup>th</sup> dawned fair and warm, and we set off early for the long drive to North Nottinghamshire. With Beverley looking forward to her imminent trip to Calcutta, there was plenty to talk about, and the journey passed very easily. We found the back way to the cottage, following signs that took us through an idyllic farmstead complete with a duck pond and an eighteenth century stable block. A rough track across a field followed, and then the cottage appeared. The Uttleys really do live off the beaten track, and the journey had taken longer than expected. We joined the rest of the group parked around cups of coffee in a beautiful sheltered garden, and then the workshop began.

We were led through part of the old barn behind the house, where clay is prepared and rolled, and where the kilns are. Behind this is the studio, well lit from above, and spacious. Here, Pollie and Gary gave a speedy demonstration of the techniques we were to use, of monoprinting and screen printing onto clay. Those of you who came to their excellent demo last December will remember how they use photos and drawings of hand made Indian textiles to produce textured and coloured ceramic wall hangings, dishes and jewellery. We were able to choose which particular technique to start with, and develop it our own way, using their tools and materials. By the end of the day we had all made at least one moulded dish, which we left to dry in the kiln room.

It was all very satisfying. Everyone had taken the opportunity to focus on a new project, enjoy a wonderful lunch in the garden, and to appreciate the beautiful ceramics that Pollie and Gary make, together with the collections that inspire them.

It was a really good day out and we are all very grateful to them for organising it.

As I write this I am looking forward impatiently to seeing the finished pieces when they are brought to Art in Clay for collection. You can see photos of the unfinished work, together with some of the action, on our website.

Ros McGuirk

### Last minute notes

Producing this issue of the Newsletter has been much more fraught & delayed than usual. I am well aware that some items have been missed out, but I am going to press with what I have at this stage so that the Newsletter is not further delayed.

Editor

### Proposed Wood / Coke Firing Workshop - October

Paul Rowbottom is planning a Wood firing Weekend Raku Workshop at the Subud Site in Rickmansworth. There would be coke firing & smoke firing as well. Proposed cost is £50 per person.

Paul is hoping to bring some of the work fired at the summer event for members to see, or it will be on display at the West Herts. Campus.

For details phone Paul on 07946 189 670 or email;

[Sculpt1956@hotmail.com](mailto:Sculpt1956@hotmail.com)

### Box Moor Conker Festival

The festival this year will be on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October. The Conker championship is now quite closely linked to our guild pottery activity.

I will bring three Wheels as usual, & we will give any members of the public a chance to use the Wheel, or hand-build a pot or sculpture. We will have a separate table on which helpers can sell their pots.

We usually set up at about 9.30 to 10.30, & finish time is usually about 2.30 to 3.00

Over the past few years we have raised a total of about £1,000 for the Hospice of St. Francis, plus given many people the chance to create something with clay. So, if you would like to participate, please phone Mervyn on 01442 242 332

Alternative Kiln Site Danielle Bunker is in contact with Box Moor Trust, with a view to arranging a possible kiln build on Box Moor Trust land. The details are in initial stages at present, with many formalities to be covered.

... just broke off to answer the phone, it was Arthur Ball. He explained that he had just finished his ninth teapot, of his batch of 20, & thought he would have a break, so he phoned me!

How many Guild members do we have who would make a batch of 20 teapots? Come to that how many members do we have approaching the age of 100? (well at least he admits to being over 90).

Or.... was he just pulling my leg?.....

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