

DCPg Newsletter
April 1991



I feel rather anxious about printing the Diary for this month! On the other hand, if our visitor doesn't turn up, it has now been proved beyond doubt that there are plenty of members who could take over!

Dick Pope's poem came as a treat among the usual collection of bills and circulars in the post, he wins my prize for an original voluntary review.

Material for May's Newsletter should be sent to me by April 25th.

GUILD EVENTS

The pleasures and difficulties of working with porcelain.

April 12th. at Northchurch Social Centre
8pm. Northchurch, Berkhamstead.

Caroline Whyman will give a presentation.

Kate Malone

May 10th at Northchurch Social Centre
8 pm Northchurch, Berkhamstead.

Kate Malone demonstrates coiled vessels.

EXHIBITION

March 23rd - April 6th at Chesham Graphics Gallery
Mon - Sat 9.30-5.00

An exhibition of Raku and decorated earthenware
by Robert Wheeler

FRIDAY 8th MARCH. DICK POPE

Now the lecturer from afar
Has a breakdown of her car
So with notice only fleeting
Who's to take the monthly meeting?

Al's for action - no inertia
Drafts in Ruth to talk on Persia
Slides of mosques in coloured tile
Ancient pots brought home in style.

Paula speaks of smoke and fire
Women chop while men admire
All get black and that's the fault
Of spending days below the salt.

Finally it's back to clay
Fired the mediaeval way
Could Les the perfect pot obtain?
No, thanks to very modern rain.

The efforts of the talking three
Were there for everyone to see
For exorcising hours of blanks
Are due our very hearty thanks.

EXHIBITION OF CHINESE POTTERY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM. Ruth Karnac

If you feel like braving the hazards of travel into London as far as the British Museum, you will be well rewarded. The pots are all from the museum's own collection and are beautifully displayed.

You may, like me, be overcome with admiration for the quality and beauty of the Chinese glazes. True these are the 'creme de la creme', but still so long ago, and we have never equalled, let alone surpassed them, in spite of all our technical knowledge. Note, for example, an altar vase, a sturdy 15 or so inches high, of 'imperial' yellow with two small foxes heads on the shoulder. Perfection of colour and form, I think.

More familiar to me from reproductions in books, is the grey/green phoenix-head ewer of the 10th. century, incised with a design of lotus leaves and flowers.

One of the oldest pots there is a small amphora with typical low-set lugs for cords, beautifully coiled.

I very much like the Han period, which has something very 'human' about it. From the many storied watch towers, to the pots and figurines. The three coloured pots of the Tang era seem to follow on naturally from there. They seem to show an almost casual expertise in the way they use colour in decoration.

In complete contrast is the delicate blue/green, transparent Ying Ch'ing glaze over porcelain, running off the ridges and pooling in the grooves.

I am always impressed by the variety of 'whites' subtle differences of ivory white, grey white, blue white, cream white and, above all, blanc-de-chine.

There is only one glaze that I really dislike and that is the copper-red, especially when it turns out a sickly mauvish hue. Heresy I know!

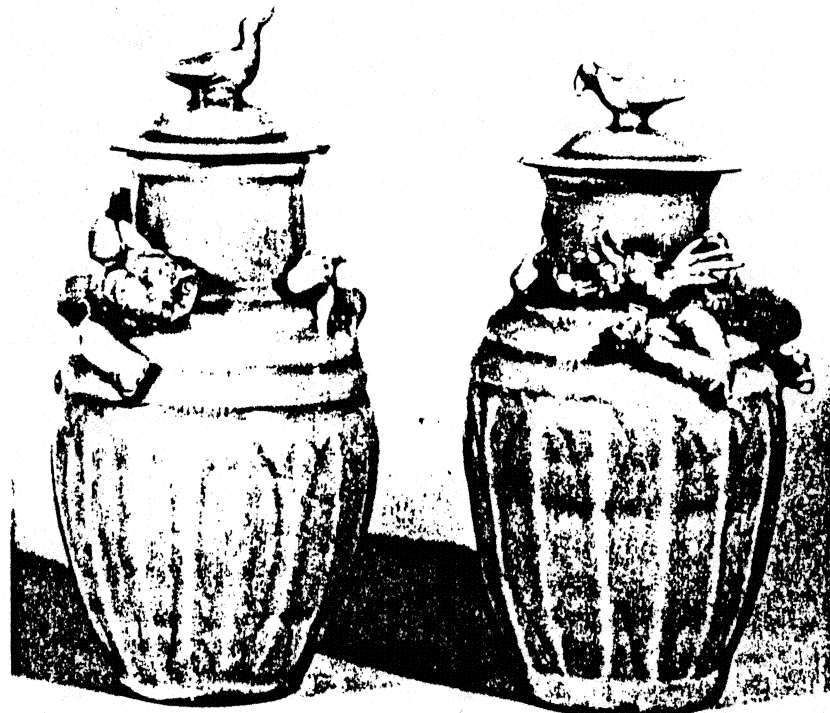
There is an interesting stepped saggar shoen for firing small bowls upside down and also an elaborately carved press-over mould for decorating the inside of bowls. I wonder why potters don't seem to use that method any more?

You can see plenty of blue and white ware, some very freely brushed and some more formal. There is one particularly lovely stem-cup with dragons and a much paler background of swirling clouds. Does anyone know how they managed to avoid the cobalt bleeding into the glaze?

The most spontaneous brushwork is of a fish, painted in red on the inside of a small bowl.

The Ming period is well represented, notably by a large Famille Rose vase, painted with peaches and peach blossom. These pots are so much more elaborate and sophisticated than those of earlier times, but they are not my favourites,

though they may be yours. Do go and see them, and the Tang Buddha too, with his long ears and serious face; far more impressive than the Bacchanalian versions of later times.



● Chinese Longquan celadon funerary jars, thirteenth or fourteenth century. These jars have freely modelled creatures applied to their shoulders. On

one is the dragon, which represents the East; and on the other is the tiger, representing the West.

Kiln for Sale

Hymus 10cu.ft. 16kw. 3.Phase.
Fires up to 1300°C. Including shelves £375.
John Capes: tel. 0923 856018

ANOTHER VISIT TO THE CHINESE POTS.

Pam Tames

The marvellous free exhibition of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain at the British Museum surveys the history of ceramic production and traces the development of stoneware, porcelain and religious sculpture. It assesses the role of porcelain throughout China's history and its impact on the world's ceramic industries. There is a large section showing Chinese export porcelain for the Middle Eastern, Japanese, South East Asian and European markets. Separate displays are devoted to Imperial taste, ceremonial wares and literary subjects on porcelain.

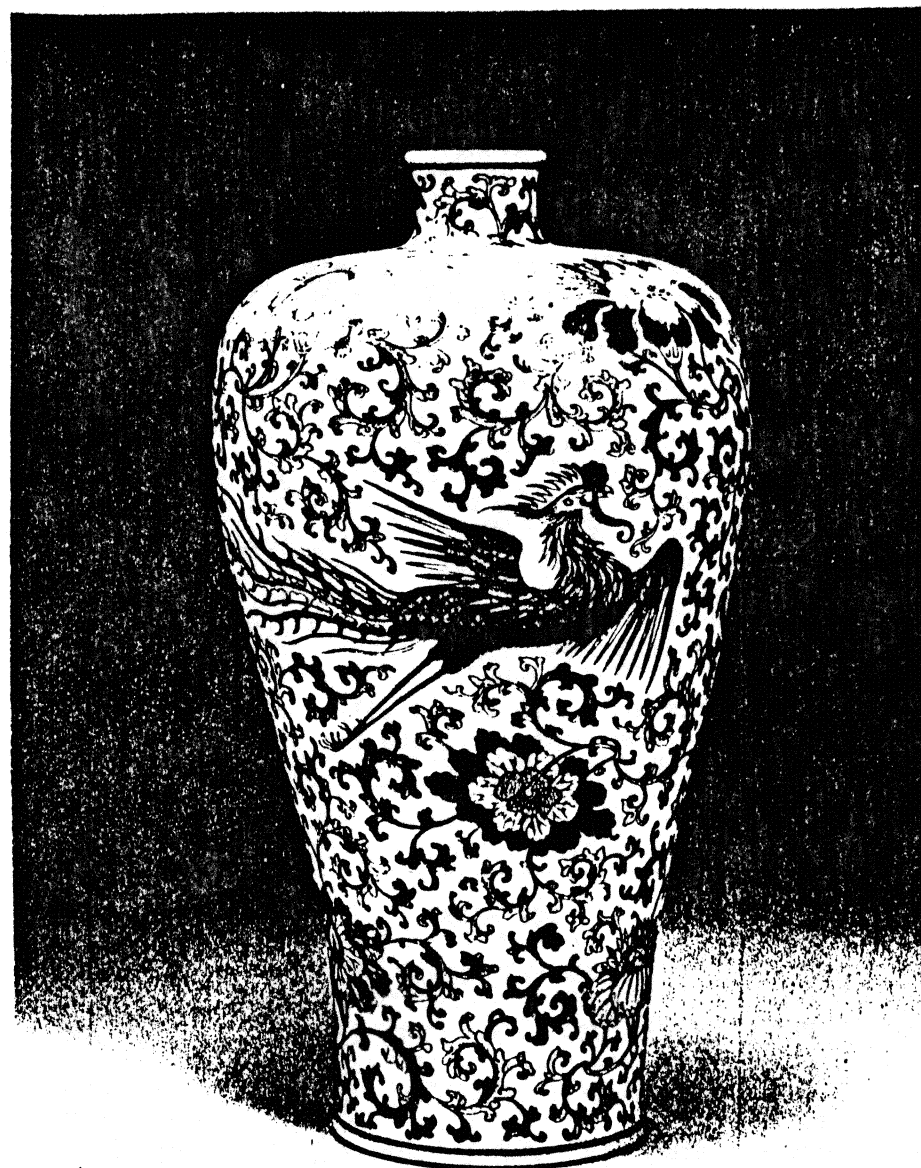
The exhibition also examines the technical relationship between the different wares and demonstrates how, in recent years, the understanding of Chinese pottery and porcelain has been greatly advanced by archaeological evidence from kiln sites and extensive scientific analysis of ancient ceramic materials and glazes.

The Chinese themselves mostly regarded ceramics as utilitarian and inferior among the decorative arts to jade and calligraphy. It was not until the Song Dynasty (960 - 1247 AD) that scholars began to prize pots and collect them. This period produced the pure forms and monochrome glazes of T.S. Eliot's Chinese jar:

"That moves perpetually in stillness".

European aristocratic families sent out drawings of their coats of arms to be copied on to dinner services. Occasionally communications broke down and one family whose motto was "think and thank", were crestfallen when the Chinese rendered this as "stink and stank"!

(Pam is concerned that in her 'Valentines' review, she priced the vases of Helen Smythe at £9.70 - in fact that price applied to brooches.)



Five colour (Wu Cai) Porcelain Mei-Ping
vase decorated with Dragon and Phoenix.

STEPS IN CONVERTING THE NON-POTTER.

Carol Woodland

I was fascinated to read the non-potters' view of Open Day as I also took a non-potter along. She went with some apprehension having never handled clay in her life, let alone attempted to make it into anything. Even if she had thought about it, the first decision would be whether or not she could bear to sacrifice her immaculately manicured fingernails (in her place I would probably trade in the solid gold one for some kit!).

She loved the day. She was totally enthralled by the techniques and by the finished work, and, when she won the first prize in the raffle and made off with Jim Robison's dish, she became almost beyond control. I'm sure that there were many of us who coveted that dish, but I can promise you that it has gone to a good home. It was dutifully shown to my mother before we left the area, and was then hugged all the way to Bedford. She went into her house, fearing that her husband wouldn't like it - but he did. It now resides on a table in their new conservatory.

The finger nails are still beautifully manicured, but if I persuade her to come next year, who knows? But of course we mustn't forget that we all need those who appreciate, but don't make!

FOR SALE

JEWELLERY ENAMELLING KILN

Horst Vhlig type U5 900 watt muffle kiln.
Interior measurements: 11cm. x 12 1/2cm. x 6 1/2cm.
Reaches working temperature of 800 - 850°C in about 45 minutes.
Includes trivets and scrolling tool. £25

JOHN CAPES TEL: 0923 856018

And now.....words from one who has lain very low and quiet of late....!

A VISIT TO LA BORNE

Arthur Ball

It had been my hope that Murray would have written you a story on our visit to La Borne in the summer as only he is able. I would have then sent you some thoughts on the 'Garden Party', but neither came to fruition.

When Murray sent me the programme for 'La Borne en Feu', my immediate reaction was that I wanted to go even if it meant going with him. Those of you who know Murray well will know that he is a placid, thoughtful, quiet intellectual, who will suffer others' faults without complaint. I, on the other hand have emotional problems associated with a 6' 6" giant in a 4' 6" body and the imagination of a social service chief executive. In the event Dorley and Margaret managed to get us organised and on our way; loaded with tinned food, primus stoves and various health concoctions. It ought to be said here that Murray does not drive and was given the job of telling me when I could "Pull out" to overtake. We got on very well though I had perverse pleasure in sticking him out to see if we could pass - he was a very subdued President of our Guild.

Ray Phipps, according to Murray, is an expert in choosing B&B in rural France and so we looked forward to a dinner for which the French are renowned. The little French man, even by my standards, greeted us like Maggie meeting Geoffrey Howe in Benidorm.

Ray, the food was awful. Murray said it had been excellent 4 hours earlier - it was still sausage and cabbage whenever it had been cooked. Our bedroom had not been slept in for weeks and smelt of stale socks, though wonderfully clean and smart.

I opened the fanlight window before having a drink with Murray who was now beginning to speak again, then to bed. The storm about 3am. did not register until I went for a pee and found an inch of water on the floor (before the pee). Murray did not wake, however. I did enjoy hearing him having a bath later, knowing that I had the only dry towel and that he had the storm towels.

We left the next morning, to see the 'little man' in his best suit, complete with beret and executive brief case, on his way to the Mayoral buildings, no doubt paid for by the EEC (that's us).

A pleasant ride into La Borne and to our hotel: a room 6'x7' with two beds and the nearest loo through the bar and dining room. "Simple" they call it.

By this time we had almost forgotten why we had come so far, and in the full knowledge that some dear friends have left La Borne since our visit - the death of Janet still lingers.

All this time Pauline and Mary were on their way to La Borne and were to camp, what brave souls. For those interested in such things, it is 496 miles from Hemel Hempstead.

Our first demonstrator was none other than Sven Bayer who made one of his large pots. He uses the Japanese method so far as I can see (my notes say "I will make one of these pots")

A paddle bat, something like this is used to shape the sides.

He threw a largish base, about 24" with shortish sides, and proceeded to make the top pointed with scratches on the inside and outside. A coil of about 1.5" diameter was placed on top of the pointed top and thrown in the usual manner. The second and third coils were placed on the OUTSIDE of the pot so as to give a smooth inside. It must be said that Sven made an excellent pot with clay which he said was much better than any we get in the UK- he uses 30% grog.

A talk by an American on kilns was translated into French; a talk by a Frenchman on kilns was not translated.

After much drawing of clocks we managed to arrange Petit Dejeuner for 8.45am. Murray was up at 7am. talking about his map and the Disco which hammered away till 3am. By this time I am beginning to see that the making of pots has nothing to do with 'La Borne en Feu' - it's all about kilns. (and the

grub is not very good).

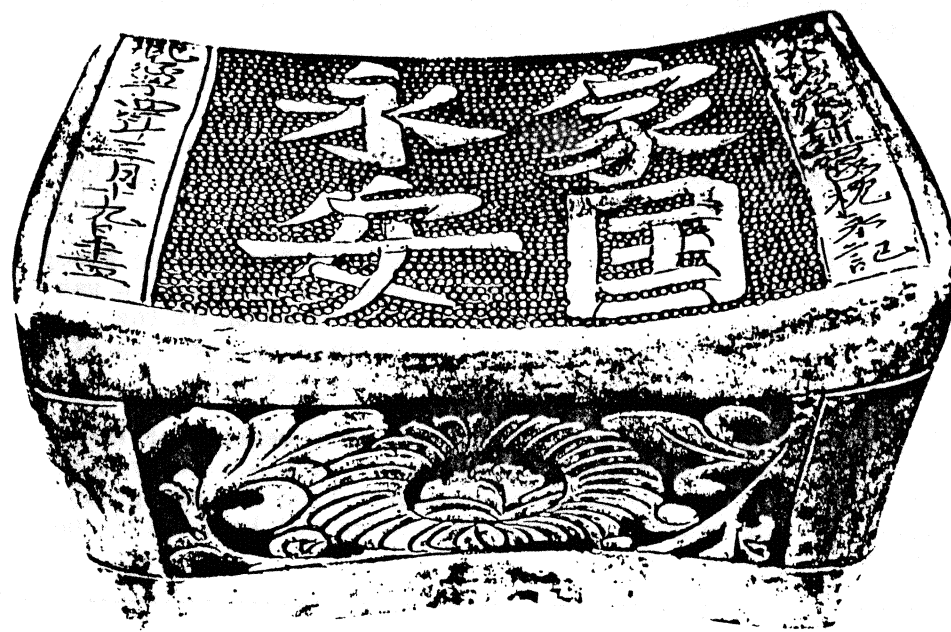
A lady made a paper kiln - they are a dead loss wherever they are made.

I forgot to tell you that Murray washed his hair early that morning, hence the 7am. prattle. He looked very smart in his new RED trousers and flowing locks. A walk around the village at 9am. brought a salutation to me: "Bonjour monsieur" - and to Murray: "Bonjour madame". He took his trousers off when we got back to the B&B.

And so on till we came to home again.

Coming Soon to this Publication!.....

Arthur's tale of The Garden Party.



A DISASTER AVERTED

After the cancellation of our February meeting it didn't occur to us that the same thing could happen again. When Judith Wootton was unable to reach the meeting due to a brake failure on her car, we were caught, like the foolish virgins, without a contingency plan. Some manic phone calls and silver tongued persuasion from Alan resulted in one of the nicest evenings I have had at the Guild. For a start, everyone swallowed their disappointment at the enforced change of plan, and made the noble substitutes feel at ease.

Ruth gave us a guided tour of Persia, with some lovely photos of interiors of mosques. The details of tiles were particularly interesting: such vibrant colours and complex designs. They formed kaleidoscopic patterns on ceilings and floors, yet were so cleverly planned that they did not create confusion or an unpleasing busyness.

Perhaps the most wonderful things were the Neolithic pots. It was a strange experience to hold something so very old and yet still retaining the liveliness of both shape and decoration. It was brave and generous of Ruth to bring them and let us handle them so freely.

Les Sutherland's account of a particularly frustrating group of archeologists interested in mediaeval pot production was very entertaining as was his brief demonstration of the results of the one and only firing. Perhaps by the turn of the century they may have managed another firing!

It seems to me that there are a great many members of the Guild who are hiding their lights under pots - I think that we could have more evenings with people from our own group giving us the benefit of their knowledge and interests - how about it?
