

BULLETIN  
NOVEMBER  
1987

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### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday November 14th 9.20 pm at Rudolf Steiner School  
Langley Hill, Kings Langley - POTTERS OPEN DAY. The  
detailed programme went out in September.

Friday December 11th 8 pm at Northchurch Social Centre,  
Bell Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamstead -  
DAVID SWINTON ON PAPER SCULPTURE

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The business part of the evening was taken up by discussions on the increase in subscriptions, the form of the Bulletin and aspects of the annual exhibition. A resolution to increase fees was carried (see notice at the end of this Bulletin), while the other topics were eventually referred back to the committee. Information will appear in future Bulletins.

Also the officers and committee of the Guild were agreed to be the following for 1987/88:-

#### OFFICERS:

Murray Fieldhouse - President  
Ray Phipps - Vice-President  
Christine Bull - Chairperson  
Alan O'Dell - Vice-Chairman  
Valerie Williams - Secretary  
Tony Plessner - Treasurer

#### COMMITTEE:

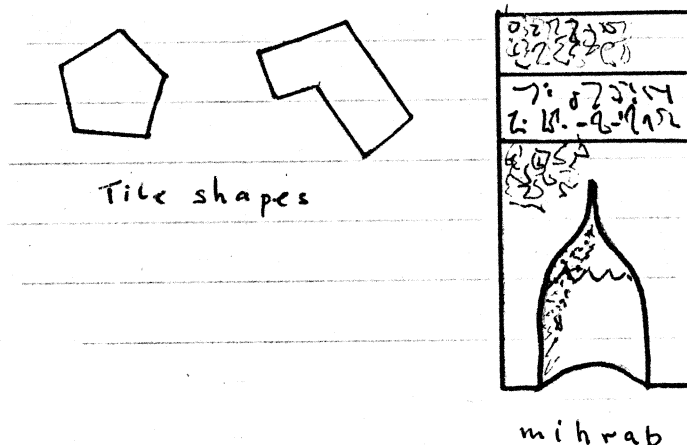
Brian Bicknall  
Gill Brown  
Ruth Karnac  
Gillian Longland  
Winifred Mitchell  
Frances Reynolds  
Jean Sedgley  
Digby Stott  
Roger Winn

The business part was followed by a talk on his tiles for the Watford Mosque by Arthur Ball. Gill Longland writes as follows:-

One October during a pottery class at college Arthur mentioned that he had been asked to make tiles for the mihrab (niche) in the mosque in Watford. After our initial laughter we became speechless as he described this project which proved to be far more ambitious than anyone had envisaged - least of all Arthur and his wife. The task was to be completed by February as HRH Prince Charles and HRH Princess Diana had been invited to open the mosque.

As the Guest Speaker at the AGM, Arthur gave us an entertaining account, with slides, of the 4 months which added 10 years to his life. It was an ego trip, he said. After all when someone phones to say that he has been told you are the only person to do the job, what else do you do but accept!

A meeting was arranged with the architect to discuss the design and, being an engineer, Arthur was somewhat surprised to be given an A4 piece of paper with a rough pencil sketch. Being faced with only this it was impossible to realize that it represented a mihrab about 5 m x 10 m, the depth of the niche being about 2 m, and made of awkward shaped tessellating tiles.



"How much?" was the immediate question and without time to cost (still on his ego trip) Arthur gave his reply which was too readily accepted.

After weeks of pugging clay at college and cutting individual tiles, Arthur acquired his own pug mill and made his own tile cutters - Heath Robinson fashion. This not only hastened production but also left the other students to work without Valium or headache. Anyone else would have probably been well on the way to cracking up but Arthur retreated, hibernated and continued. Having 30 bags of assorted unmarked clay he thought he would put it to good

use and proceeded. No two clays are alike and of course he encountered all the associated problems. The tiles were bisque fired in 2 kiln loads. Fortunately he was just passing and noticed the temperature had reached 1020°C and was able to switch off - he also noticed that he had set the controller for 1100°C!

So far so good, but now it must have been Christmas and with 2000 or more tiles to glaze, fire and fix in the mosque, time was short. Other people were asked their advice - even David Frith on a 3.00 am phone call - time had become meaningless. Glazing and glaze tests were not to be taken lightly as the green had to be precisely the colour of the Pakistani flag. Moreover, the orange glaze was varying in shade according to which batch of glaze was used and which clay. Arthur was not to be beaten by these minor set backs. When told the green was not quite right he returned later with the same glaze saying "Is this a better colour?" - "Ah yes Mr Potter Sir, that is better" was the reply. The different orange tiles mattered not as the architect was persuaded that this was a deliberate play to make the whole effect more aesthetic, as indeed it did.

Gradually Arthur's living room floor was taken up with tiles carefully placed and marked. Many tiles had to be made to fit the curve of the arch. These particular ones were made with a right-angle to fit from the front into the niche.

Eventually all the tiles were made, plus boxes of seconds to be used as spares. It was up to Arthur to affix them and so with the aid of a tiler he proceeded. Unfortunately in Arthur's absence the tiler began to stick tiles on the walls and some of the carefully numbered tiles were placed out of sequence which meant the spacing around the arch was uneven. This, coupled with the fact that the 'seconds' had been used first would have driven most of us demented; but not Arthur. Undaunted, this scheme was completed only slightly later than planned. (HRH's unable to wait any longer went off to Italy).

This whole project was an experience never to be forgotten and probably never repeated. However, the final result looks wonderful on slides, although as a mere female I am not allowed into the mosque to see its true glory. The only part unfinished is a small portion hidden behind the mimbar. I hope that he can find enough incentive to make these few tiles and sign them, as this masterpiece is as yet unattributed to this engineer, potter, adventurer, Arthur Ball.

## SPECIALIST GROUPS AND OTHER NOTICES

RAKU Three sites now available for members' use as follows:

- 1 Pitstone Museum, Pitstone, near Tring. A sheltered kiln with workshop beside it which includes two wheels. Can be used any time.  
Details from Christine Bull (Princes Risborough 3515)
- 2 A kiln at Pipers Corner near High Wycombe. Further details from Jenny Templeton, Amersham 7243.
- 3 Berkhamsted, Bulbaggers Tip. For details contact Roy Adams, Berkhamsted 71095.

MEDIAEVALISTS Contact Lesley & Ann Sutherland: 01 907 4944 if interested in the making of medieval pots.

SALT GLAZE KILN Available for use to Guild members and their friends. Wood fired, and about 30 cubic feet of setting space. £10 will entitle you to as many firings as you would wish during the year. Contact Christine Bull (Princes Risborough 3515) for further details.

VIDEO Three titles available £2.50 plus deposit (weekly). *The Potter's Craft, Rolled Figures Audrey Blackman, Exhibition Work Audrey Blackman.* Other titles on the way. Guild use is for members' showing at Open Houses (no charge then). The video-tape made by Mr Athill of the Dave Roberts Raku demonstration last June is now available.

RECRUITMENT OF NEW MEMBERS Boards showing the activities of the Guild are available for display at Public Libraries and some members have been recruited by this means. The committee would welcome any further bookings for the display (one or two weeks) at local libraries. Usually it needs a word with the Librarian. We will deal with the donkey-work.

CHORLEYWOOD ARTS CENTRE Regular members' meeting each Wednesday, plus opportunity to pot. Ring the Chairman of the Chorleywood Community Arts Centre on Chorleywood 2918, or the Secretary on Chorleywood 4627 for further info.

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## THE STAMP OF FAME

I recently went to this exhibition of the studio pots which appear on present day postal stamps and of other works by the same potters. This exhibition continues at the Fischer Fine Art Gallery, King Street, SW1 (just behind Fortnum & Masons) until November 6. Though a small exhibition it contains the best examples of pots by Bernard Leach (costing around £5000); Hans Coper (£9500); Lucie Rie (£1000-£3000) and Elizabeth Fritsch (£5000).

Or you can always cross the road and go through Spinks  
locked doors and pretend you have come to buy a T'ang figure  
for £18,000 like I did!

PAM TAMES

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### EXHIBITIONS

"Shadow Pots and Landscapes"  
Ceramics by Marigold Austin  
at Primavera, 10 Kings Parade, Cambridge  
from 14th - 28th November

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Raku, Porcelain and Stoneware  
by Pauline Ashley and Marigold Austin  
at Hitchin Museum, Paynes Park, Hitchin  
from 21st November - 19th December

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### INCREASED MEMBERSHIP FEES

At the Annual General Meeting of the Guild held on Friday  
October 16th 1987, it was agreed by majority decision to  
increase membership fees:-

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP:	£10
SINGLE MEMBERSHIP:	£8
STUDENT (Full-time):	£4

Please make your cheques payable to:-

**DACORUM & CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD**

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5 Saxon Close  
Letchworth Herts  
SG6 4RF

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE PLEASE