



DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD

BULLETIN
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday 9th September at 8 pm at Northchurch Social Centre,
Bell Lane, Northchurch, Berkhamsted.

Pauline Littlewood is unable to give the talk advertised on our membership card (she has moved to Scotland) but we have been fortunate that MO YUPP has agreed to give us a slide show on the above date.

Friday 14th October at 7.30 pm at Northchurch.
Annual General Meeting. Business until 9 pm at the latest, followed by a talk and slides by MILDRED SLATTER.

SPECIALIST GROUPS AND OTHER NOTICES

RAKU Two 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 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 Two titles available £2.50 plus deposit (weekly). *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. **CLAYGLAZE** now have a video library of pottery tapes.

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.

THE GUILD EXHIBITION

This year's exhibition at St Alban's was a financial success, largely due to the new feature of a 'take-away table', and of course, due to all the hard work put in by the organiser, Ruth Karnac.

It was felt, however, that the venue was not ideal - a little dark and cramped - and the location too remote.

Next year's exhibition will be at the Watford Central Library.

THE POT CRAWL, 18 JUNE 1988

I have been reliably told that all previous Pot Crawls have been rainless, and so it was again, a glorious sunny day.

Our first call was to Richmond to visit Tessa Fuchs. We divided into two groups as the gallery was small for 50 persons. This in no way meant that there was little to see.

Tessa uses earthenware with 10% fine grog for throwing her pots and the modelled elements, thrown and slabbed that make up the pelicans and dodos etc. The glazing is very simple though the glaze firing is critical. The initial firing is 980°C and the later firing is 1080°C in an electric kiln.

The decoration is both strong and fanciful. This is got by applying an oxide (cobalt, manganese or copper) at the wheel and then covering it with a matt white glaze thinly. Outlines are then scratched through the glaze. Once the basic shape of the design has been established, further glazes are then applied to fill out the enclosed shapes. Her glazes are restricted to two types, a clear earthenware and lead bisilicate. The lead glaze enables her to have a compatible variety of colours by mixing oxides and glaze stains into the basic white. These are poured and sprayed

according to requirements. They are obtained from Dora Billington's book on glazes.

On walking around the studio, I was very struck by the fact that all the pieces were made up in sections of thrown and slab work, skillfully assembled when leather hard. This was confirmed later when she detailed her methods of potting and glazing.

So started a good day, with the coach taking us to Westcott, west of Dorking, Surrey, to the pottery of Joan Hepworth.

This was completely different to our previous visit. Firstly her home is set in a beautiful garden that gave a timelessness that complemented the lady and her work. No wheel here; as she said, there are many better at that discipline. She concentrates on cast porcelain and slabwork to great effect.

The item that fascinated me was what appeared to be a small paper bag painted with butterflies and leaves. The porcelain bag had folds, seams, strings and a delicacy that belied the fact that its creation was that of a potter and not of a printer. The decoration was done by using ceramic crayons to create motifs, flowers etc, much in the manner of an artist on paper or canvas. A soft line of colour is run around the edges of the form to define its outlines. This may be the only decoration. Alternatively, other pieces carried a panel or an overall design reminiscent of the 1920's.

Joan fires her pieces in an electric kiln, first to 1000°C and then to 1240°C. The smooth porcelain is not glazed as the material vitrifies at this temperature.

I have only described one item as the little bag encapsulates the methods and details for all the other items on display.

Having lunched in Joan's garden we departed for Losely, south west of Guildford, to the pottery of Mary Wondrausch. This was a more traditional pottery in an old barn, a stark contrast to the absolute neatness of the two previous visits.

Surrounded by fields, trees and a grand specimen of a giant Japanese hog weed in the yard, we divided again into two groups. Mary works in the style of Thomas Toft and could well fit into the workshops of her famous mentor. She likes to work in earthenware and decorate with slips. The plate she decorated for us was for a young Michael who was born during September 1987. Firstly a white slip was tipped into the plate, turned slowly for an even coverage up to the rim. This was banded on the rim and his name and date of birth

was written using a piece of bicycle tyre with a nozzle and a cork at one end and a bulldog clip at the other. This allows easy filling and even pressure ensuring that the slip escaped in a controlled manner.

The nozzle never touched the plate or any of the previously applied decoration. Mary outlined the shape of a rocking horse in black with a flowing mane and tail. While this was drying she 'pearled' the banded lines above and below the lettering. Pearling is the adding of regular dots of another colour, like a string of spaced pearls.

Colours are used in descending tones. Black first, through browns, greens and yellows to off-white. Outlines are always dark as these support the design. It is important that no white areas are left in the design as these look unfinished when fired, much the same as unpainted areas on a canvas. Honey and transparent earthenware glazes are used to give a warm glow to the plates and pots she makes.

Finally she showed us a novel way of decorating a cheese plate with the names of different cheeses. The slipped plate is centred on the wheel and is scratch-banded with what looked like a short blunt bradawl. As a printer, I have the greatest of difficulty in centring or spacing a sentence on a circle. Mary started without measuring or even copy in front of her. This fascinated me. Apparently, she too faces the same problems, but as a free agent she adjusted the names of the cheeses when the circle was near complete - for example Wensleydale down to Brie for a short space. How simple, no rubbing out and starting again.

This is only an outline of the day's events that was a credit to the organisers. I would like to thank the three lady potters who gave us their time and imparted some of their skills on what may prove to be the best Saturday of the year.

BRIAN BICKNELL

EXHIBITIONS

ABDO NAGI
is having two exhibitions

SATURDAY 15th OCTOBER to 5th NOVEMBER
at LETCHWORTH MUSEUM & ART GALLERY
THE BROADWAY, LETCHWORTH

SATURDAY 26th NOVEMBER to 17th DECEMBER
at HITCHIN MUSEUM
