



DCPG NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1990

after Andy
Goldsworthy

Hello again. I hope you all had an enjoyable Summer break. Did you manage to take in any exhibitions, visit any galleries, discover any potters - or perhaps you visited La Borne? You did? Then why not tell us all about it. The Newsletter has reopened shop for new material.

Articles, drawings or photographs for the next issue should reach me by Thursday 20th September. The address is:
Alan O'Dell, 35 Pondfield Crescent, St Albans, AL4 9PE

GUILD EVENTS

September Guild Meeting - Daphne Carnegy

Friday 14 Sept. at Northchurch Social Centre
8pm. Northchurch, Berkhamstead.

Daphne Carnegy will demonstrate her approach to tin glazed earthenware.

DCPG AGM

Friday 12 Oct. or possibly Friday 5 Oct.

*Yes
this
confirmed*

Note the possible change from the published programme. Plans for this meeting are still in a state of flux. Further details in the next issue.

Potters Open Day

Saturday 17 Nov. at Rudolf Steiner School,
Langley Hill, Kings Langley.

More information in the next Newsletter

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I wonder if it would be of interest to readers of the Newsletter to compare the merits of the different ceramics classes in and around their district, especially as the weather is too inclement to pot in the shed in the Winter.

After listening to two members discussing classes at Arthur's and Margaret's garden party, I thought it could form the basis for a series of letters to the editor.

I go to Harrow Weald College, which is only down Brookshill from Grimsdyke, a short way from Bushey's Alpine Restaurant. There is a smallish (compared to Cassio) but well equipped Ceramics Department, and I understand this will be expanded for the coming year.

In the City and Guilds (Ceramics 790) day class which I attend there are several Guild members. The excellent tutor is John Higgins and Sally, the part-time technician is pleasant and hard-working.

It is difficult to say much about the course because it is very much 'what you make it', although it is more structured and there is more supervision than any evening class which I have attended in the past.

So far, (after one year, going one day a week) I have made an attempt at the 'Preparing Working Designs' Module. This has since been dropped in favour of a return to the older idea of the 'Common Core Studies' - common to all the creative studies courses. Other sections of the syllabus include 'Functional Pots', 'Non-functional Objects', and 'Multi-piece Moulds', all of which I have started. The research projects are still to be tackled, as I am a bit hazy about how to start and what kind of end product there should be.

Apart from the aforementioned projects, which take up quite a lot of time at home, the class makes visits to places of interest. This year we've been to the Geological Museum, the V&A, Kew Gardens and Dunton's Brickworks. Some of us have visited places much further afield to look at pots, and others confine themselves to exhibitions in London.

At the end of June we built a wood-fired down-draught kiln for

a day of Raku firing. This was a day which was greatly enjoyed by everyone and we are hoping the kiln can become a permanent feature in the grounds of the college.

Marguerite Moon

An urgent plea from Elaine Hudson

I have just finished the HND Ceramics course at Harrow and am searching for workshop space, preferably within a reasonable distance from Chalfont St Peter. Would anyone with space to spare (if that's possible for a potter) like to receive regular rent in exchange?

Please contact: Elaine Hudson on 0753 885740

NEW MEMBERS June 1990

Ian McGregor 2 Dashwood Road Crouch End London N8 9AD	'Making and Teaching' (telephone: 081 341 0304)
Christopher Buras 205 Whipperley Ring Luton Beds. LU1 5QX	'Interests infinite' (telephone: 0582 415624)

DID ROMAN POTTERS CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY? John Capes

The reasons given for the fall of the Roman Empire are various, but one theory is that the decline into insanity of so many of the top statesmen, generals and other leaders was a very important contributory factor to the demise of the great empire.

It has been suggested that this was due to both inbreeding and hereditary insanity. This raises the question of how these leaders stayed sane long enough in early life to gain their positions of importance before mental decline set in.

Some years ago a new theory was proposed. It was that, while Romans may have used unglazed earthenware to store water, which stayed cool owing to evaporation, they would have used lead glazed vessels to hold wine as they did not want it to evaporate.

Given the enormous proportions reached in wine drinking by the upper classes during the later stages of the empire, it was inevitable that lead poisoning would have developed on a grand scale. The symptoms described could certainly be attributed to this form of poisoning and this would explain how these Romans stayed sane in early life until the consumption of lead began to have its effect.

If this supposition is correct it means that the working methods of potters affected not just the Roman Empire, but also the early history of Europe resulting from the Roman decline. This in turn, may have caused further influences which could still be affecting us today.

It may be difficult to refute this theory, but can we really take it seriously, or is this another example of those potters' yarns to be told over drinks (which have not been stored in lead glazed vessels) as the evening fire burns lower in the hearth?

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY IN EDINBURGH - A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

This exhibition included the things that have made the sculptor so well known: - his leaf and thorn boxes and forms and photographs of leaf trails in woods and on water as well as his ice and snow sculptures. But it was a huge show with new sculptures too.

The loveliest of these, constructed for the exhibition, was a screen of horse chestnut stalks pinned by thorns to the ceiling and falling from many flimsily balanced points to the floor. At the centre the stalks had been interwoven, leaving a circular hole. It divided the light, airy room like a delicate web.

In contrast to this was a room full of what Andy Goldsworthy called 'torn stones'. These appeared to be roughly formed balls or ovals of unrefined clay (found in the wild) which had been fired producing strange cracks, splits and bubbling of the surface. They lay about the floor for people to walk among and touch and wonder at. They were simple and startling at the same time, and very beautiful. Not so his other fired clay constructions, which were large, black pots, rather like poppy seed heads. Piled together in a tumbled heap, or standing singly in a circle of earth, they seemed cumbersome and contrived in comparison with his other works and I found them unsatisfyingly crude.

There were a lot of stone pieces including a circular wall enclosing a domed, holed centre rather like the shape of a sunflower. It had wonderful rhythmic stone patterns, with the stones slanting or upright or horizontal. This was in the open air: inside was a high white room which contained only a deep layer of stone covering the floor. This was the only sculpture which had a surrealist, nightmarish quality. You had to view it through a small half door and the feeling of so much stone, laid so carefully in what was an ordinary room gave me the creeps!

Andy Goldsworthy's sculptures are made of entirely natural materials - he has used grass to 'sew' shapes, spit to stick, and thorns to pin parts together. Most of the works in the exhibition were as accessible as natural things in that you could walk round them and touch them. It was an exhibition to get involved in and all the time you were thinking 'It's such

a simple idea, why couldn't I have thought of that?'... the difference between a person who is a person, and a person who is an artist!

If you can't manage to see the exhibition, get the catalogue from the library -
'Hand to Earth' Andy Goldsworthy Sculpture 1976-1990
published by
The Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture(1990)

Pauline O'Dell.