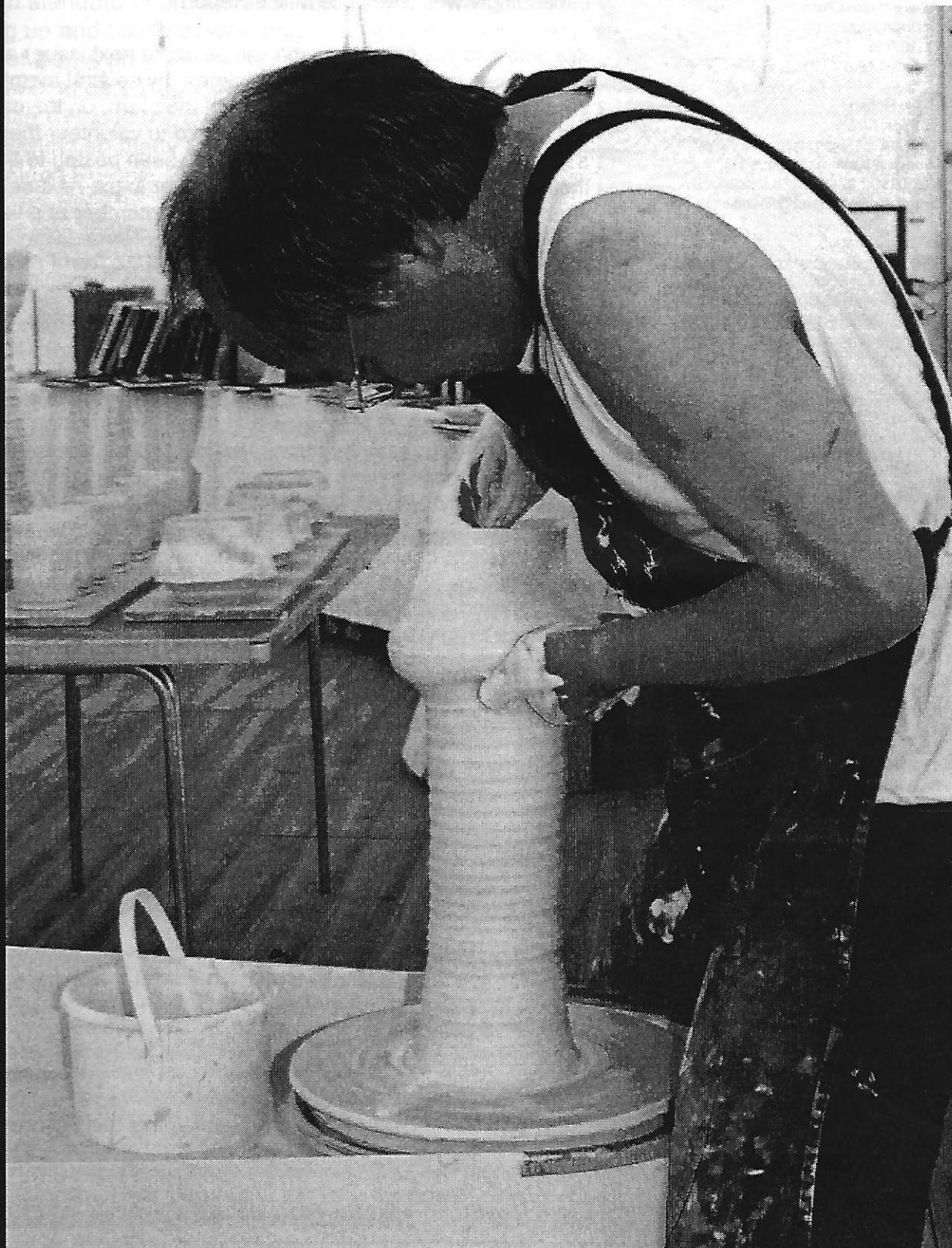


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# Northern Potters Association

[www.northern-potters.org.uk](http://www.northern-potters.org.uk)

Silver Jubilee Year



**Issue August - September 2002**

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## Editors Note:

Well a lot has happened since the last newsletter. We had the Silver Jubilee Festival at Rufford Country Park and those that didn't come missed a fantastic event. The weather was beautiful, the demonstrators were incredibly informative and a joy to watch (see Ian Howie's Report) and the exhibition of members work sold exceedingly well (see Julie Mile's Report).

We also had the AGM (a report will be in the next issue) at the festival and the committee was depleted by several members who stood down having come to the end of their term on the committee. However several members came forward to volunteer their services, a list of all new committee members has been posted to the left, their positions on the committee will appear in the next newsletter after the meeting to be held on the 21st September at a venue yet to be organized. Committee members will be informed where and time the meeting is to be held.

Any member needing or wishing to contact a committee member can contact anyone on the list to the left.

I wish to thank all those who sent in contributions to this issue. Great to hear that Margaret Pilkington is fit again and sending in her well written, witty articles once more. Another one will appear in the next issue. Keep them coming everyone, as I keep repeating, the newsletter only happens if YOU send in the items for it.

May I take this opportunity to thank on your behalf, all the committee members who have stood down, for all their hard work over the years. They have held almost every job on the committee between them at one time or another and have given an excellent enthusiastic voluntary service at each and ever post. THANK YOU.

I hope you all have a good and productive summer whether it be making or selling or both.  
Kind regards to you all  
Judith

## Inside This Issue

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Front Cover: Takeshi Yashuda at the Festival (more in next is-

**Deadline for the next issue is  
September 20th 2002**

# Report on Potfest Perth

The Perth Potfest has been running for five years now but for Alasdair and I it was our first selling event North of the border.

Having been lucky enough to participate in the Penrith Potfest for several years we found the usual high standard of organisation and facilities was present in Perth: easy access (especially for setting up and taking down); good sign-posting and a very responsive audience. The diversity of wares on offer was a good representation of current techniques and genres. Buyers seeking ceramics for domestic use, sculptural work or objects for the garden had a wide choice. Being in the company of 100+ potters for a weekend is always going to be fun for us and meeting so many makers from Scotland was a real treat, as well as seeing our friends from mainland Europe.

The World Cup match on the Friday thinned the audience somewhat but Saturdays crowds brought with them an enthusiastic eye and good business. Sunday too was busy but in a much more manageable way - maybe this was due to the constant rain!

This is an imaginative, international event on a great site which deserves a bigger audience than the 3000+ visitors who came. However, their enthusiasm will ensure a return in the future.

Alasdair Neil and Sally MacDonell

## Festival Report

**Back to the Future  
NPA Potters' camp  
12-14 July 2002, Rufford**

The format of the Northern Potters' 25th anniversary festival in Rufford's Long Meadow was suitably back to basics - a marquee with a table for each demonstrator, slide shows in the Craft Centre next door and free camping. The perfect weather helped make a very relaxed atmosphere and with only 150 participants access to the demonstrators was especially good.

As always for this biennial festival the demonstrator line-up was first class. Throwers were well represented, with Takeshi Yasuda drawing applause for his to-the-edge porcelain throwing, allowing cylinders to twist, ripple and start to collapse before turning them upside down and shaking them gently. Nic Collins' pots have developed along with his anagama kilns through his observations of the way the flame and ash work. He used a gas torch to help with large three part jars - the flames from the burning bat licked around the steaming clay! Morgan Hall's work was more hi-tech. She showed her new ram-pressed plates and also computer-plotter cut vinyl stencils which she used as a slip resist on her thrown and turned tableware. Josie Walter made stew pots with oval and asymmetric lids and modelled fish knobs. She applied thick white slip freely with a brush, and sgraffitoed leaf and animal decoration to very fresh effect. Geoff Fuller didn't throw but built his figure groups, hares and dogs using only a few simple tools. He blamed the poor state of education for his belly-buttoned figures being mistaken for Adam and Eve. Dorothy Feiblemen slowly built up laminated coloured clay sheets for her delicate translucent vessels - 'like making Brighton Rock' as she put it. Her slides demonstrated the wide historical and geographical range of coloured clay. On a different scale of hand-building, Gwen Heeney led her helpers making a Green Woman by stacking and carving 8 tonnes of donated bricks, battling with the drying temperatures.

The members' exhibition, book stall, barbeque, an anagama and raku firings were more opportunities for mingling and chatting at this intimate festival and I think everybody had a very enjoyable time. Unfortunately the low turnout (despite a ticket price of only £50) was the one big concern at the AGM as the festival probably ran at a loss. Events of this quality will not continue without greater support.

Ian Howie

# Crossword Answers

My sincere apologies, I forgot to put the answers to the crossword in an earlier issue. So here they are better late than never. Newsletter Editor

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## Members Advert

CROWN STUDIO GALLERY - Elsdon, Northumberland  
 WOMEN'S WORK- 17th August - 8th September  
 Ten women. Ten artists.

Ten celebrations of life and work in Northumberland.

Work by Ceramic Artists: Steph Jamieson, Jane Redfern, Lynda Taylor

Painters: Sue Dobson, Shirley Hall, Sarah Riseborough, Pam Vardy

Textile Artists: Anne Kinniment, Angela Noble, Hilary Wheeler

10am-5.00 Daily. Admission free. Tel 01830 520144

# Book Review

## PORCELAIN

By Jack Doherty. Published by A & C Black. £12.99

This is the latest in Black's `Ceramic Handbooks` series aimed at experienced and new makers experimenting in a specific area. The author has worked innovatively with porcelain for many years and his knowledge of and dedication to the ceramics world is evidenced by articles in magazines and chairing the Craft Potters Association.

Jack points out that potters and collectors have valued porcelain for its purity, fineness, translucency, whiteness, strength and durability while cursing it for the difficulties of working with it. He points out that recent formulations have eased some of the problems in use and that non traditional ceramicists have used different forming and firing methods to make work to take advantage of porcelain's responsiveness to smoke, raku firing and low temperature methods that show it can give clear colours and a soft look.

The first two chapters economically detail the history of porcelain from its Chinese origins through the rest of the Far East and into Europe and the USA plus the development of studio porcelain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chapters 3 and 4 explain the materials involved and the make up of commercial bodies or own recipes. The main body of the book comprehensively covers forming methods, decoration, glazing and firing. This is where knowledge and experience shine through with simple explanations of methods to achieve effects and minimize problems. For example the fact of porcelain being more vulnerable to cracking than other bodies because of its high shrinkage can be minimized in thrown ware by very thorough wedging and an emphasis on compression of the base. In handbuilding the addition of molochite is recommended. For all work slow, even drying should be provided.

The final section looks at innovative contemporary uses by such as Piet Stockmans, Margaret O'Rorke, Gwen Hansen Pigott and Edmund de Waal. Figurative sculpture by Michael Flynn and Sally MacDonell is described. Interestingly these latter both appear in Michael Flynn's book `Ceramic Figures` published at the end of July. Highly Recommended.

Roger Bell

## Possible Email Scam!

Hi My name is Marc Bradley from ReelThingProductions my telephone number is below for you to verify that I am who I say I am.

It has come to light that a virus or spammer is using my details and forwarding email to potters about my video that I made with mike finch at winchcombe pottery. I am getting hundreds of emails from people with some nasty comments about emails that we have not sent out! Is there a way in which you can inform your group of potters that the only place to purchase or read about our video is only available from 1 of three places listed below in the email that I have posted to the chapel of art chat board.

I am worried that someone has copied the video and selling it for their own gains. If you can help with this matter I would be very grateful.

I am going to copy this message and post it on the main message boards that I can find and hope that folk know exactly where to find us and not some hoaxer

If you can let me know or have had any strange email about this also please can you forward them to me via this email address.

The video is ONLY officially available from

<http://www.pottery-techniques.co.uk>

[Http://www.reelthingproductions.co.uk](http://www.reelthingproductions.co.uk)

or via requests to <http://www.winchcombepottery.co.uk> where mike will direct you to <http://www.pottery-techniques.co.uk>

Hope this clears up any confusion.

With kind regards

Marc A Bradley

<http://www.reelthingproductions.co.uk>

[mbradley@reelthingproductions.co.uk](mailto:mbradley@reelthingproductions.co.uk)

01242 609117

# Exhibition News

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who submitted work to the unselected exhibition at the Potters camp in Rufford. The space unfortunately was not what we expected and some of the plinths had gone damp in storage so space was tight (apologises for over estimating the amount of pots members could exhibit) but over two thousand pounds in sales were made so I think it was a successful event.

I would like to also take the time now to thank everyone who helped me from the student's excellent painting to the committee's fantastic support and the membership who took turns on the desk. There are too many to mention by name, I think you know who you are, but I couldn't have done this without you, so thank you very much for every ones hard work and effort. This was my first festival as the Exhibitions Co-ordinator though things were fraught at times I hope you thought it went ok. If not you know what to do help is always appreciated.

Well now you will also find an application for the next exhibition at Clitheroes' newly refurbished Platform Gallery. The exhibition 'Fired Up North' will feature the work of local NPA member Jenny Eaton and hopefully a good deal of you will submit work for this selected show. Up to 15 pieces of work can be submitted the guidelines for the exhibition are:

## **For Exhibitors:**

1. Label all work (see form).
2. Make sure the work submitted works as a group. Odd ones are very hard to exhibit properly.
3. Wall work must be mirror plated or have a secure hanging mechanism.
4. All work must be packed appropriately and all packaging and boxes labelled with name, box number if need be and amount of pots in each. These Instructions help with packing and unpacking of work on selection days.

## **Guidelines for Selectors:**

1. Selectors should represent the diversity of work produced by NPA membership, (rather than reflecting personal selection taste).
1. Work selected should be of the highest possible standard.
1. The number of pieces selected per member should not be unbalanced.
1. Selectors should take into consideration the size of the venue, with regard to the total number of pots to be exhibited in that particular space.
1. Selectors should try and represent as many of the membership as possible and work should only be rejected if there is a majority decision against it.

There is space for wall work and display cases for Jewellery if needed.

Please send info on you and your work too as some background information is always welcome on the processes of the work and about the maker. This will go in a file to be displayed along side the work.

The gallery is easy to get to off the A59 just follow the signs to Clitheroe there is a train station at the side of the gallery if you don't drive, also contact your nearest committee member if you can not get there yourself with work. They may be able to pass on details of others in your area that intend to exhibit and could help with delivery or collection.

Now don't tell me you have an excuse now not to exhibit please support your exhibitions as this will help attract further venues for future shows.

Now get making and I'll see you there.

Julie Miles.

# Letter from Walter Brayford

Well, its finally happened.... I AM SETTING UP MY OWN SMALL KILN FURNITURE COMPANY, SPECIALISING IN STUDIO POTTERS, COLLEGES, SCHOOLS AND SMALL ORDERS.

After 16 years, I am no longer with Acme Marls ( or Dyson Ceramic Systems as they are now called ). Unfortunately, in the two years since the take over, I was unable to convince the management that small orders are profitable enough to warrant a specialist department and so unfortunately they are closing 'Kiln Furniture Supplies' and have made me redundant. The good news is that they have agreed to supply me if I want to go it alone and concentrate on smaller orders.

I am using my redundancy to buy stock, In theory I can do everything as before, same prices, cut to size service, no minimum order; generally a better, more professional service, everyone speaks to me, if I do not have the goods in stock, I will personally try to source whatever is required.

As a bonus, I am no longer tied exclusively to one kiln furniture manufacturing company, I am now delighted to be able to offer not only new kiln furniture to suit all pockets !....but also the usual, reduced price slight subs and now BANKRUPT STOCK, all at unbeatable prices ( subject to availability of course ! - I don't believe in making promises that I can't keep ! )

As always, happy to quote, completely without obligation of course. PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD...All help and free publicity gratefully received ! (Seriously though, happy to pay for an advert in the Northern Potters Magazine, please send details) .

I know that last year was a struggle for many designer/makers (my other half Katherine is a silk painter) thanks to foot and mouth and then September 11th. we all had problems but fingers crossed this year will be better!

Regards

Walter Brayford BA (Hons) Mobile; 07817 040971

Tel/Ans; 01782 505405,

Fax; 01782 504422

walter@claylake.com

## Opportunities

**Astley Cheetham Art Gallery** are looking for North West Artists to submit 2 & 3D work for their Christmas Selling Show "Crafted" which runs from 25th October to 11th December (but 3D work can be on display until Christmas) Commission is 20% on all work sold. Send information, photographs and price range to: Meg Lewis-Crosby and Julie Mosley, Astley Cheetham Art Gallery, Trinity Street, Stalybridge, Cheshire. SK15 2BN  
Tel: 0161 338 6767 or  
Email: astley.cheetham@mail.tameside.gov.uk Send a S. A.E. for return of photographs. Deadline for submissions is 31st August 2002

**Contemporary Craft Makers' Market**  
Lakeside Arts Centre, University Park, Nottingham.  
NG7 2RD  
Tel: 0115 951 3189  
16th/17th November 2002

## Events

### Chelsea Craft Fair

Chelsea Old Town Hall, King's Rd, London.SW3

Tel: 020 7806 2511

Wk 1: 15th to 20th October 2002

Wk 2: 22nd to 27th October 2002

### The Wheel

CPA event exploring the potter's wheel as a production tool and a creative force

Courtyard Arts Centre Hereford

Tel: 01989 750644

14/15 September

### Symposium:

**Talking pots, the role of communication in studio pottery**

Ruftord Craft Centre Rufford Country Park Nr Ollerton

Newark Nottinghamshire NG22 9DF

Tel: 01623 822944

26th Oct

# 'BODY PLASTIC' & RESHAPING THE FUTURE

by

MARGARET PILKINGTON

'Variety is the spice of life' ~ or so they say. Well, after the year of sameness I've been forced to take out, in order to make improvements to my physical well-being, the last fortnight has seen me trying to put back the variety and move forward constructively without raw anger.

On the face of it Westcountry Potters AGM has no relationship to 'The Devon Open Classic IX'. The first, a gathering of ceramic artists with attendant guest speaker John Maltby, well known potter: the second event, a body building contest with attendant personality Dorian Yates, six-times 'Mr Olympia'. Two extremes, illustrating the different stimuli I have been subjecting myself to recently. Add to those, attendance at poetry readings in the Parish Church, a slide lecture about John Flamsteed, one of the *fathers* of astronomical observations in England, and another slide lecture on the newly designated World Heritage Coast, and you have some idea of where I might be coming from as I write my thoughts and report on the day event that encompassed Westcountry Potters AGM. Whatever one does with one's life is always informed by or modified as a result of all that has gone before. Naturally, the older one gets, the more experience one brings to any activity one is engaged in. There comes a point in the life of any creative person when the volume of experience and the depth of thought is so great, that they can make everything they do seem so easy and so natural. That impression was created by John Maltby as he talked to us about his life and work and what had influenced him. His demonstration was deceptively simple ~ the ease with which he handled his materials whilst at the same time adapting to working on a wobbly table of the wrong height could only have been born out of years and years of intimate knowledge of both materials and self, and an empathy with the prevailing conditions of the location. John's opening remarks for the day were something like, 'I have no secrets, so don't be afraid to ask me anything you like. I have bags of experience of all aspects of ceramics.' Anyone who can make a statement like that from the off, is immediately signalling to me that it is not materials and techniques which make this person a successful artist-potter, but that it is the thought and reason leading to the creation of the artefacts which is key. There was a period when glaze recipes etc were closely guarded secrets, no doubt because it was the colour and quality of the glaze which 'sold' the pot and therefore made the potter the money needed to live on. In general, those secretive days have gone and we are in a period when recipes and techniques are freely exchanged. During the day John gave us the clue as to when and where this came about historically. Before commencing his demonstration after lunch,

John read us a quotation from a letter that Bernard Leach had written to his grandson where he, (Bernard) was indicating the direction pottery would/should go in Britain. Although I did not make a note of the exact quote, and I have never studied directly or deeply Bernard Leach, I guess the sentiment of his letter struck a chord within me. He was stating that from the time of his writing, studio pottery would change from being purely functional and would henceforth incorporate something of the thought and *raison d'être* of the potter into design, decoration and function. That seed-change has now had plenty of time to work through a generation or so, hence John could feel free and confident enough in himself to know that however many details of his working methods the audience noted down, no one could 'steal his thunder' (so to speak) because 'his thunder' was and is unique to him. I suppose, in a nutshell, it was Bernard Leach who unfettered the craftsperson and gave them the freedom to become 'artist'. (That is not to say all craftspersons are artists nor that all artists are craftspersons ~ but the barriers are down.)

During John's talk he mentioned how it was OK for poets, composers, painters, sculptors to deal with the *big subjects* of life, like Picasso with his painting 'Guernica'. Whereas, when John began his career, it was not the done thing to tackle such subjects. Maybe, generally, there is still a hesitation on the part of potters, to delve into subjects of war and so on. However, by the end of John's talk we were made privy to the confession that he was finding his own way into areas of thought hitherto forbidden to potters. My notes taken on the day, indicate that the change occurred after John had experienced serious health problems about seven or eight years ago. Recovery after heart surgery had forced him to re-evaluate many aspects of his life and work. Physically, the scale of his work had to change, and, although he did not dwell on the subject, one sensed that mortality was very dominant in the thought processes behind his recent small sculptural pieces. I thought his statement of, 'being desperate to make something happy', was very telling.

This statement ended the résumé section of his talk and was followed by, 'Shall I perform a striptease or what?' ~ as Joanne struggled with the slide projector for the next part of the talk. (The 'happy' is obviously bursting to happen!) How different the attitude between John the artist and Bob the scientist, to slide projectors that do not work perfectly. The artist prepares to strip, whilst the scientist demands more money be spent on more sophisticated (read complicated!) technology ~ as if the technology is what makes the talk interesting! (*Don't forget, I've experienced that and more within the space of a*

*fortnight!)*

Perhaps it is unfair of me to compare and contrast scientist with artist, but it is where I live my life between the two disciplines. The two slide talks freshly in my mind, both dealing with the passage of time ~ the one on the World Heritage Coast detailed geological time, the personal talk by John Maltby detailed time on a human scale. Yet again, no obvious relationship, however, when one learns that Devon's red cliffs were once equatorial desert sands, moved by plate tectonics to their present position on the globe that is Earth; then, one learns that John Maltby began life as the son of a Grimsby fish-merchant and has become artist / potter dealing with abstract concepts of the mind, the two are not so far apart. Taking heed of the respective time-scales, equivalent ground has shifted. On a more basic level, if it was not for the passage of geological time, the 'potter' would not have the materials with which to work.

A slight tangent, perhaps, on my part, but it is my way of relating to the work John showed us as he talked of his present concerns and ideas in relation to the materials and techniques he chose to use in order to make tangible the intangible. He talked about expressing his Englishness by capturing something of the dignity in English art, of wanting to create a seamless match with history by the particular use of the materials he chose to work with. Now, anyone who is trying to deal with such abstract concepts by use of 'plastic / concrete' materials needs a very broad base of knowledge about the way those materials behave in certain conditions. Perhaps this can only come about after a long passage of time (human scale), perhaps that is when and why the Japanese regard some potters as national treasures. It is 'knowledge' per se which is valued, not necessarily every finished artefact by the said 'treasure'.

That said, one of the slides John showed was of a Japanese pot which is now a national treasure. He pointed out that such could never happen in England because the particular pot in question came out of its bisque firing with a very large wide crack through it. In England this would have been thrown away as useless. In Japan, the potter had incorporated the crack into his design decoration ~ two contrasting mind sets, one acknowledging the potential of difference, the second treating 'difference' as imperfect, something to be disposed of. Perhaps the West could learn valuable lessons from this cracked pot!

I digress a little, for I was leading into some comment on John's chosen way of realising his ideas in solid form. I do not intend to detail every last ingredient in his decorative slips, rather make broad observations on how he set about 'capturing Englishness and dignity and seamlessly matching it with history.' Undoubtedly, before he made any kind of physical move, John had been sorting and sifting in his mind, techniques with ideas, until he had a distillate of the ceramic 'result' which would best represent his personal idea of Englishness, dignity and seamless matching with history. He told us this was a kind of over-all surface decoration which he applied to the slabbed clay which came out looking like 'stressed paintwork' or once-polished stonework which has weathered and now

supports lichen growth. A surface neither matt nor shiny, in a colour light enough to allow images or motifs to be painted on top. Or a colour suited to scraffito technique where the body shows through. During much of John's demonstration it was very difficult to determine what exactly he was doing. He almost seemed not to be doing anything in particular, yet a jug materialised. This is why I've been emphasising his depth of knowledge ~ to work as John does one would have to reject so much before even lifting a finger. In order to consciously reject one method in favour of another, one has to know a tremendous amount in the first place. As a result of all this the detail of working method is so subtle as to be almost imperceptible.

At one point in the demonstration he seemed to be Goldilocks with baby bear's porridge, everything had to be 'just right', the harp-cut slabs of clay were stroked onto silica boards of just the right absorbency before being cut to shape. Some cuts were made using the back of the knife blade, others made with the sharpened side ~ every subtlety had its reason. Time, space, physical effort were all employed in the most economical and efficient way possible. Slabs were stroked gently into curved formers because this helped to change the 'memory' of the slab from flat to curve ... John specifically commented on this technique, had he not, it could have passed unrecognised as nothing more than his way of moving clay about. In some sense one has to have 'been there' to appreciate how John wasted absolutely nothing ~ especially time and effort ~ a brush with mortality does that to a person, reshapes the mind, sharpens the focus on what life is about.

'What life is about', we are each concerned with that in our own different ways, so although we all experienced John's talk and demonstration, we all have our own take on events. I have tried to give some idea of my particular take, but cannot conclude without returning to the AGM and that body-building competition I mentioned earlier! So far I have dealt with the mind shaping part of the day at Kenton on 18th May 2002, but the business of the day was equally important if Westcountry Potters is to grow and prosper as an Association. If I may illustrate what I mean with reference to something Dorian Yates, 'Mr Olympia' said in answer to a question from his audience. He said when he was a fit young man he wanted to change the shape of his body and the only healthy way he saw to do this was by weight training which develops each individual muscle and thus results in a change of body shape. If we artist-potters want to change the shape of 'our body' (WPA), then, individually we must each pull our weight, flex our muscles. That way 'our body' will continue to support the reshaping of our minds and lives, by putting on wonderful day-events like the one described, and we as individuals will give new shape to 'our body'.

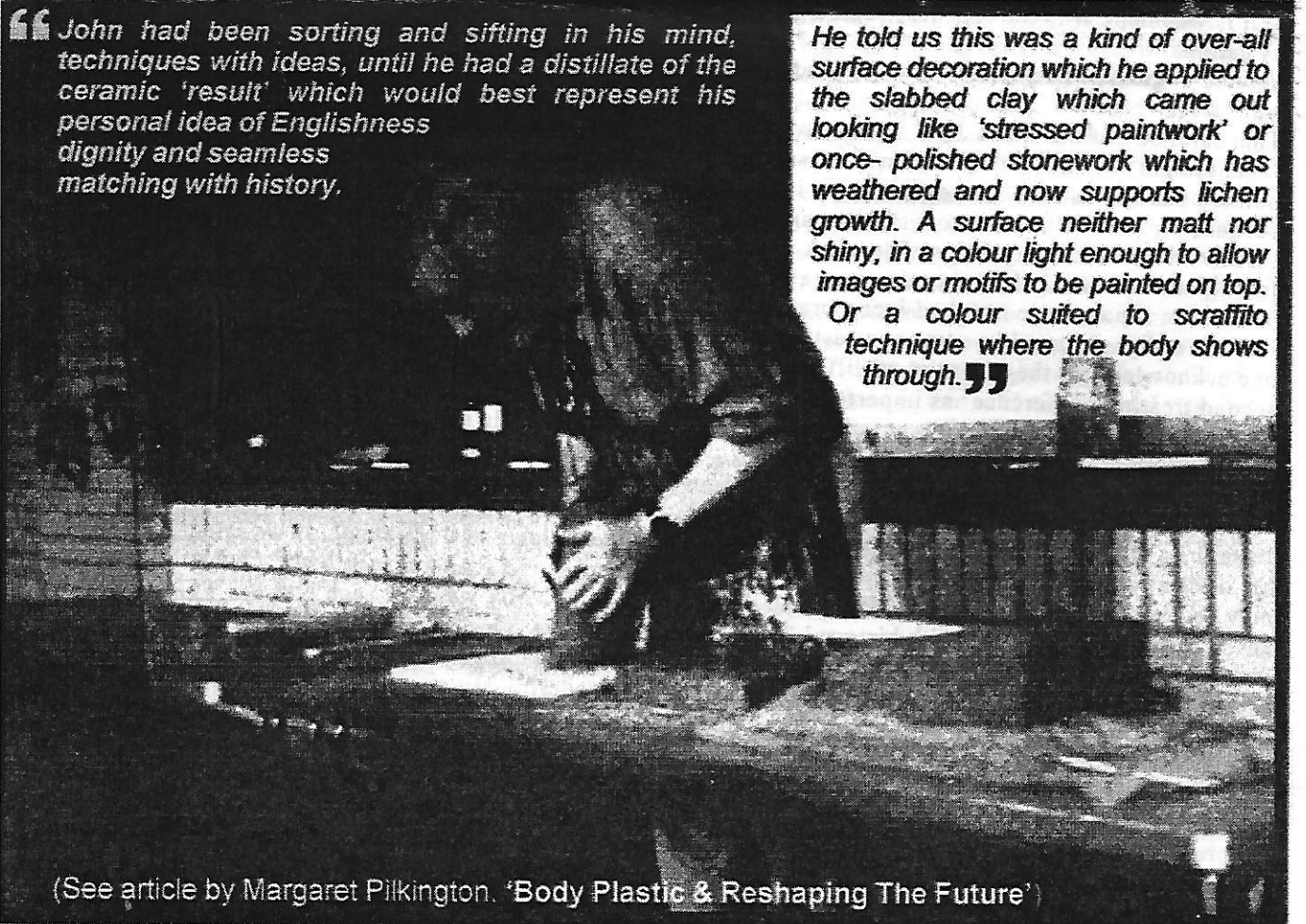
May I conclude by saying a personal thanks to all the members of the committee and all the co-optee helpers who made the event run so smoothly. Thank you all, it was the best medicine I have taken all year! Hope to see you all again at Bickleigh ~ Margaret Pilkington, May 2002



John Maltby  
demonstrating at Kenton for  
Westcountry Potters Association AGM, 18th May 2002

“ John had been sorting and sifting in his mind, techniques with ideas, until he had a distillate of the ceramic ‘result’ which would best represent his personal idea of Englishness dignity and seamless matching with history.

He told us this was a kind of over-all surface decoration which he applied to the slabbed clay which came out looking like ‘stressed paintwork’ or once-polished stonework which has weathered and now supports lichen growth. A surface neither matt nor shiny, in a colour light enough to allow images or motifs to be painted on top. Or a colour suited to scraffito technique where the body shows through.”



(See article by Margaret Pilkington. ‘Body Plastic & Reshaping The Future’)

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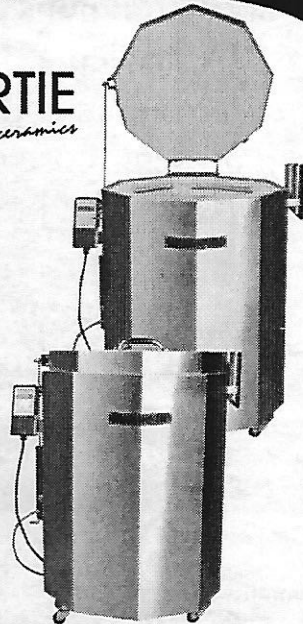
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