



NPA

BI-MONTHLY NEWS-SHEET

JUNE 1997

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you to all those who told us of their appreciation of the Spring Event held at Harrogate College in April. We were fortunate enough to have had Ian Gregory and John Pollex coming for the day to give us slide shows talks and demonstrations of their work. It was a great day, and I think we all felt inspired and challenged by their respective working methods. In the end, we had to turn a few people away as the numbers had reached their limit of 95 people - 58 of these were NPA members and it was marvellous to have a good turn out of non-members as well.

On the strength of this, we have booked **Saturday 13th September** for our Autumn event which will be held at Bretton Hall - a familiar venue for many of us. John Calver, Mal Magson and Will Levi Marshall have agreed to be our demonstrators for the day and we are also going to hold our Annual General Meeting which we trust that many of you will attend. After the proceedings we plan to have a bit of a social so if you can stay on for that it would be great. See the enclosed item and form for further details.

FIRED PRINT - The title voted by the committee for the Festival in 1998.

This will be held over the weekend of September 4th 5th & 6th at the university of Central Lancashire in Preston. The theme of the festival will be ceramics and print and Paul Scott, who was largely instrumental in organising and setting up the exhibition 'Hot off the Press', will be our MC. We are very excited at the good response we have had from the demonstrators we invited. Confirmed are Les Lawrence Professor of Ceramics at Grossmont College California; Maria Geszler from Hungary; Neil Brownsword from the Gladstone Pottery Museum at Stoke; Juliette Goddard who works with litho and ceramics and Jefford Horrigan.

We are all familiar with transfers used on china, but there is growing interest in the many techniques which come under the heading of 'print' in conjunction with ceramics such as computer printing laser lithography screen printing and on every form of clay from paper clay to porcelain.

We are very grateful to Dave Binns from the ceramics department at the University of Central Lancashire for showing us the venue and being so helpful in getting this thus far off the ground.

Thinking ahead, we would be glad to know of members who would like to help us at the festival, so that we can make a rota for desk duty and the sales desk. I'm sure there will be many more tasks that become apparent as the time draws nearer!

Changing the subject, we would also be interested to know of any members who would like to do a spell on the committee. We need at least 2 new members who would be prepared to 'understudy' a current member with a view to taking over their brief in due course. Is there a particular role which might interest you?

Finally:-don't forget to check the list of exhibitions and events being held this year it is encouraging to get a good response. Don't forget to let the editor know of any local events in your area which may be of interest to the membership and also of anything we can share from bulk ordering of materials to potters tips!

Isa and Chris

BRIEF REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 19 IN DISLEY CHESHIRE

The meeting covered a wide variety of subjects, including the following matters:

1. Each committee member gave a report of progress made, and future plans.

Selected items from these reports;

A publicity screen will be used to promote NPA at future events.

Costings for a new loose leaf style directory are being researched.

Current directories are to be sold at the reduced price of £3:00 each plus P&P. Contact Mark Broomfield for details.

Finances are in a strong position. The treasurers report will be presented at the AGM.

2. Hire of plinths; Janina Emery is "keeper of the plinths", and operates a "booking system" for their hire. If you would like to use the plinths, please contact her directly. The cost of hiring them is £10:00 for NPA members, and £25:00 for non-members. They are to be returned promptly to Janina after use, in good condition.

3. NPA is 21 in 1998... and a special exhibition/event is being planned.

4. Other items discussed in the committee meeting are dealt with in other areas of the News Sheet.

DATE OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING is Saturday June 28. If there are any matters that members wish to raise, please contact the relevant committee member before this date.

Ann Evans (Sec/Vice Chair)

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Next News Sheet

Please let me have your news, views, articles, adverts etc. to arrive no later than July 31st for the August issue.

Membership Subscriptions

A reminder that your subscriptions may now be due, please check and forward payment to Laura Freeman, in order that you are still able to receive the News Sheet, otherwise you will miss out on many exciting events in the forthcoming year.

Millennium Year 2000

So far there has been no response from you, the members, of ideas as to how NPA could celebrate this event. Please put your thinking caps on. Maybe as a Group we could produce NPA beakers, plates etc.? How about producing some designs?

Margaret (Editor)

CONGRATULATIONS to Claude Frere-Smith and Sandra on the birth of their son Oska - born April 18th.

SEACROFT HOSPITAL I would be grateful to know of anyone interested in displaying their work at the Seacroft Hospital display cabinet. In particular we need some work for the October/November slot and then the December/January one. Please phone Isa Denyer on 01937 835 632 if you want more details. Thanks.

REGIONAL EVENTS & NEWS

EXHIBITIONS' CALENDER

*5th July (Sat.)

*26th July (Sat.)

8/9/10th Sept.

9th Sept. -2nd October

13th Sept.

20th Sept. - 8th November

15th November - 10th Jan '98

*Nov./Dec. (dates to be confirmed)

4/5/6th Sept.1998

Open Air Art Exhibition, York

Craft Fair, The Platform Gallery, Clitheroe (to be confirmed)

Potfest, Penrith.

Annual Selection Exhibition, The Arts Centre, Washington

Autumn Event, Bretton Hall plus AGM

Annual Selected Exhibition, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston

Christmas Selling Exhibition, Cleveland Craft Centre

Jim Robison, Booth House Gallery Exhibition, Holmfirth, Yorks.

1998 Festival,-Fired Print - University of Central Lancashire, Preston.

The Warehouse Gallery: *The New Reserve Collection at European Ceramics is now officially open and offers for sale items of premier quality by makers from Mainland Europe and the UK.. All members welcome. The Warehouse, Finkle Street., Knaresborough, Yorks.(01423 867401)

*The NPA Committee is not directly responsible for these events.



EXHIBITIONS.....IMPORTANT!

Christmas Selling Exhibition, Cleveland Craft Centre, Nov. 15th 1997 - 10th January 1998.

The selection will be by slides and photographs which must be sent in by **August 15th at the latest.**

As the next News Sheet does not come out until August, make a note of it NOW.

If you wish to take part, send 4 to 5 slides/photos to:

Julia Palmer

Cleveland Craft Centre

57 Gilkes Street

Middlesborough

TS1 SEL.

(plus self addressed stamped envelope for their return)

Annual Selected Exhibitions. Application forms enclosed .

Please note the dates for **Delivery of Work:**

-The Arts Centre, Washington.

Saturday 23 to Saturday 30 August

-The Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston.

Monday 1 to Saturday 6 September

NPA SPRING EVENT: Flat pack kilns and Abstract Expressionism

Nearly 100 people turned up to Harrogate College on 12th April to see Ian Gregory and John Pollex, lured by the chance to see paperclay in action and to find out what is behind that bright painterly slipware.

Ian started with slides of his Wiltshire garden and carp pond before showing us some of his recent work - ranging from a serene seated figure to a ravenous Dog of War via fish nearly breaking open to show their insides. He works immensely quickly, aided by the robust working qualities of his paperclay (containing up to 20% of paper fibre). Many of the pieces start from an internal frame made of bubble wrap, chicken wire and/or steel rods which is often left inside during the firing. A deep knowledge of the anatomy and character of the animals was obvious during Ian's demonstration, when a

dog appeared almost magically from an initial "pastie". The manipulation of the clay was direct and completely sure. It truly was drawing in clay; there are no paper sketches before the piece is made.

The size of some of his work (life-size human figures) demands non-conventional firing techniques, and kilns made from ceramic fibre and steel weld-mesh are erected around the finished piece. These are obviously very flexible and easy to store - and also cheap to make - but also hardy enough to withstand the various firing effects to which he subjects his pieces, particularly types of salt firing and flashing with offcuts of copper tubing. These treatments combine wonderfully with the directly-worked surfaces to produce final results that are no static ornaments but vigorous and sometimes disturbing.



Ian Gregory

Lunch was spent busily chatting and catching up. John Pollex started in again with slides of some of the paintings which have inspired him - work by Howard Hodgkin, which makes immediate sense, and others including Mark Rothko and Patrick Heron. Ben Nicholson also featured, with overlapping pots on pots. An earlier Toft-like slip-trailed plate showed how far John's work has changed since the mid 80s. It was fascinating to hear him discuss his apparently abstract style and to hear of influences as diverse as the above painters, Buddhist tankas, Aboriginal dreaming paintings and Cornish surfing experiences. We also saw slides of the 1890s "mad potter" George Orr which showed that there's nothing new in the idea of brilliantly coloured distorted pots.



John Pollex

After some quick blows to a leather-hard pot John went on to demonstrate the application of coloured slips onto a background black using a variety of sponges and brushes. Medcol got a plug for supplying the body stains that give those amazing colours. Regions of colour are built up and enriched with the neat stains and areas of spots of varying sizes are applied on top. There was a display of finished pots showing the rich and wonderful results.

The college was an ideal location with its nicely-sized lecture hall for slides and demonstrations and ready access to refreshments in the breaks. Many thanks to the organisers, the helpers and of course Ian and John for providing such an entertaining, informative and stimulating event.

Ian Howie

PLATFORM GALLERY CRAFT MARKET REPORT

Saturday 26 April saw the first of the two "craft market" days at the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe, Lancashire. Eleven NPA members, some travelling a considerable distance to take part, set up an interesting variety of work and waited for eager customers to arrive!

The day was very grey, and wet at times, and the majority of people visiting seemed to be shoppers, browsing to escape the rain. Apparently the 'craft fair' was announced on board each incoming train (the gallery shares space with a ticket office), and every hour there was a small influx of people as each train arrived.

There were some very quiet periods during the day, which gave a good opportunity to chat with one's fellow stall-holders, though this clearly did not help to make the day financially rewarding.

The gallery charged each exhibitor £10, which bought a 5'x 2' table, between 10 am and 4pm, and took responsibility for advertising. This took the form of flyers and a simple A4 sheet poster.

Total sales for the day amounted to £489.50, but there was a big difference in the amount sold by different people. The (anonymous) individual takings were as follows:

£70, £135, £13, £3, £61, £83, £26, £8, £16, £10 and £64.50.

A member of staff from the gallery approached some (but not all) of the participants, at the end of the day, asking them to leave work for sale in the shop. As you can see, no-one sold vast amounts of work, and several people did not cover costs. How much of this could be attributed to poor weather, and how much to lack of effective local advertising (there was nothing in the local press), it's hard to tell. I spoke to three people who had come to the event specially, because of an interest in ceramics, but the majority were simply passing through. A large banner outside said 'Craft Market Today' but this didn't give any details of the type of work on offer.

I came away feeling that the gallery staff were happy to take the fees from stall holders, but didn't view the day with any great importance. It must have been very cost-effective for them to be able to 'cherry-pick' at leisure from the large quantities of unsold pots at the end of the day, and their own retail outlet benefited from the increased numbers of visitors passing through.

In conclusion, it's difficult to assess the potential of the gallery as a sales venue for this type of event based on the experience of one wet Saturday in April, but if your travelling costs are high, and you're hoping to make serious money, you will be disap-

pointed. On a positive note, lots of people took Potfest flyers with them, and more are now aware of the existence of NPA.....so some benefits! The next NPA Craft Market day is on Saturday 26 July. Only a couple of people have been interested to date, and the gallery has space for up to twelve stalls. If you are interested in taking a stall, give me a ring on 01200 426304, and I will co-ordinate numbers again.

Ann Evans

AUTUMN EVENT at BRETTON HALL

West Bretton. Near Wakefield, West Yorkshire

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 13th 9.45a.m. - 5.30p.m.

JOHN CALVER Makes functional reduction fired stoneware. Pots that start off round on the wheel are cut, pulled, pushed or stretched to give their final shape. Decoration using a variety of techniques executed at the wet or leather hard stage and biscuit firing 2 or 3 layers of glaze are poured to give coloured and textured surfaces.

MAL MAGSON uses stained stoneware with additional lustre in conjunction with porcelain. Work is hand built, with areas of coloured inlay and agate decoration and consists of vessel forms and sculptured panels with extruded moulded elements.

WILL LEVI MARSHALL Makes oxidised stoneware with additional lustre. Forms are wheel thrown and altered and glazes are used to articulate the form exploiting colour and surface in conjunction with a glaze's natural opacity and viscosity. He will demonstrate decorating a large dish applying multiglazes without the glazes overlapping by masking techniques, emphasising the design.

Programme

9.45 - 10.15	Assemble
10.15 - 10.50	Lecture 1
10.50 - 11.50	Demonstration 1
12.00 - 12.35	Lecture 2
1.35 - 1.35	Lunch
1.35 - 2.35	Demonstration 2
2.45 - 3.45	NPA AGM Please note!
3.50 - 4.25	Lecture 3
4.25 - 5.25	Demonstration 3

Please bring your own lunch There will be tea and coffee available at the college

At the end of the day, from 5.30 - 7.30 pm, we thought it would be nice to have a social get together. If you would like to stay for that please bring a bottle of something suitable. Nibbles will be provided. Please indicate if you think you might stay on.

TO BOOK YOUR PLACE send a cheque & SAE made payable to NPA by the 25th AUGUST (Booking form attached to News Sheet). You will receive a ticket, and a map of how to get there.

Send to: Lissa Hall, 48, Dean Head, Summit, Littleborough, Lancs OL15 9LZ 01706 373906

NPA Members	£12	Non Members	£14
NPA Students	£8	Student non members	£10

NOT A DAY BUT A WEEK IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

or

THREE ON A TRIP

It was on a Friday morning that I met up with Vicky and Mike Eden at their pottery in Lancashire. This was day one of nine days in which we would drive three thousand miles and meet with many potters and explore ten different potteries in the south of France. Mike and Vicky are writing a book for A. & C. Black on Slipware and for the French section they had invited me along to help with the language. It seemed like an opportunity I could not pass up so here we were ready for off. The car was stuffed to the brim - Mike can pack a car like he can pack a kiln! and his Mum had stuffed boxes full of goodies to keep us going on the long haul down to the Gard in Languedoc.

We arrived on Saturday evening to a glorious sunset over the garrigue having travelled through beautiful cherry and almond orchards all in full blossom. The weather was warm and sunny. We could not have picked a more perfect time to see this southern part of France (just below Lyon on the map). We finally reached our destination and found David Miller looking almost more French than the French in a bar in Uzes. David has lived in the region for at least fifteen years and was most helpful with advice about who was who and together we sorted out a list of potters to contact and arrange to visit.

Sunday and my first real language test. The evening before I had had my initiation with the local dialect trying to find the bar where we were to meet up with David and it is certainly quite different from the part of France in which we normally stay. So, on the phone to sort out our week. Success! The week was organised except for Sunday which became more or less a day of rest after that. We took the opportunity to wander round the town of Uzes, do some shopping for provisions and then visited the nearby village of St. Quentin-la-Poterie which as its name suggests is a village full of potters. Potters of all kinds. Slipware, Earthenware, Raku, Stoneware, wood kilns, electric kilns, gas kilns. You name it and you could find it in St. Quentin-la-Poterie. And we discovered that there was a clay extraction pit not far away so to complete a

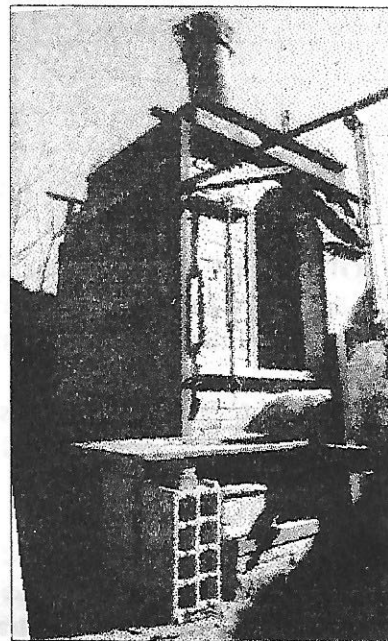
wonderful day we returned via St. Hyppolite and found the reddest looking earth I have ever seen.

And that was the end of rest! We really filled every minute after that. And visited the best slipware potters of the region. And there were lots of them. It was like a piece of detective work and by good luck as much as anything else I think we visited the potters in more or less the right order. We discovered Cliousciat on the Tuesday and this was the centre, the hub of the wheel. Nearly everyone else we visited had had something to with this extraordinary place - a living, working pottery from a previous age - a museum piece, (which incidentally has its own museum). If you ever find yourself in this part of France, not far south of Lyon, put it on your list of 'must-be-visited' places. David Miller himself was, of course, on the list. We spent a number of happy hours with him exploring his workshop and photographing his updraught wood fired kiln. This was a baby version of the one we saw at Cliousclat - although still big enough for me to lie inside to take a shot of the ceiling, which is the flue effectively. Lots of spaces for the smoke and gases to escape through into a kind of funnel above and thus into a 'normal' chimney.

We travelled quite long distances - never underestimate the time needed to travel! We seemed to frequently arrive late but even so we were treated with quite outstanding hospitality and kindness, without exception. In fact as the week progressed so did the generosity of our hosts. Perhaps it is just that potters the world over are kind and generous people and we were the lucky recipients on this occasion.

We even travelled into Provence to visit an extraordinary person, Gerard Lachens. But about him and all the others I'll leave you in suspense until Vicky has finished her writing! Suffice it to say that this was a trip I would not have missed for anything. The pattern of our days went something like this - we would arrive (usually late) - general chit chat - me doing most of the 'serious' talking - Vicky taking down notes and Mike photographing. Everyone's French had improved by the time we had finished.

We left the Languedoc after a very thrilling few days and spent Friday *chez-nous* in the Jura to try and get some coherence into the notes - remembering who had said what and sorting out our thoughts and impressions about the various people we had met.



David Miller's kiln

Saturday - time to go home. But we managed one more visit in Borgogne en route for Calais and the ferry. For the first time in the whole nine days we arrived early but to no avail - we were unable to catch an earlier boat !!! There must be a moral here somewhere. However it did give us a bit of a break from the driving and we were able to continue and get all the way back to Mike and Vicky's by the early hours of Sunday morning. A short sleep and then back to my family for a Sunday afternoon climb up Sharp Edge on Blencathra. My head was still dizzy from the long hours on the road so this was the breath of fresh air I needed before returning, tired, happy and invigorated to normal existence on Monday.

Sally Shrimpton

VIDEO HIRE

Barbara Hayward (education) is responsible for a number of videos belonging to NPA. The committee has agreed that these could be rented out to members for a charge of £2.00 per week, plus postage. If the video is not returned to Barbara by the due date a fine of a further £2.00 would be required.

The videos available are:-

1. Phil Rogers and Mo Jupp
2. Michael Casson and his wife
3. Takeshi Yasuda
4. Richard Plethean - The introduction to Throwing

MEMBERS' CORRESPONDENCE.

I rarely sell my work through galleries. I find too problematical :

- 1 Taking the work to the venue [time and transport costs].
- 2 Keeping records of what has been sold, what is left in stock to maintain a balanced display.
- 3 Replacing stock (time and transport).
- 4 Little control over how the work is presented.
- 5 33% - 50% Commission.

Instead, over the past 20 years, I have preferred direct selling wherever possible, often at the larger craft fairs because of:

- 1 Personal contact and its development potential in a customer list.
- 2 Control over pricing and presentation.
- 3 Gaining feedback on new work.
- 4 Direct communication with the market.
- 5 No commission [except the cost of the show].

I would like to know of other potters in the Northern Region [not just N.P.A. members] who would be interested in organising direct selling events in their own areas. I personally would be interested in being part of a network of full time potters trying to maximise on volumes of sales by helping to develop regional markets.

There has been much talk in the past of the N.P.A. not providing enough opportunities to make sales. I don't see this as the job of the committee. Selling is part of the making process: both take effort and commitment. Potters committed to selling can help each other by pooling their efforts leaving the committee to organise events to promote N.P.A. as a whole.

If enough potters[20 -30] find this of interest, I will organise a meeting where we could discuss the matter further. I suggested this idea through the newsletter in 1991 and no one replied so I don't hold out much hope. Still if you don't ask!!.

Geoff Cox tel :- 017684 83820

NATIONAL EVENTS & NEWS

“Flights of Fancy Food for Thought” Lessons from Geese

- Fact 1:** As each goose flaps its wings it creates an “uplift” for the birds that follow. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.
- Lesson* People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling in the thrust of one another.
- Fact 2:** When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance to flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.
- Lesson* If we have as much sense as the goose we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give help to others.
- Fact 3:** When the lead goose tires it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies into point position.
- Lesson* It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are dependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.
- Fact 4:** The geese fling in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.
- Lesson* We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and to encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking.
- Fact 5:** When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out in another formation or catch up with the flock.
- Lesson* If we have as much sense as geese we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.

Reproduced from SHARDS, South Wales Potters' Newsletter

LONDON POTTERS'

A major ceramics exhibition of contemporary applied arts which will feature the works of Emmanuel Cooper, Kate Malone, Colin Saunders, and Richard Slee. The exhibition is succinctly titled “Glazed Ceramics” and runs from 27th June until 2nd August at *Contemporary Applied Arts, 2, Percy Street, London W1*

DORSET POTTERY GROUP

Preparing for the Millennium

It was agreed that a theme for the group as a whole might be devised to celebrate this historic event. At the same time, individual members might consider what souvenirs they might make on a country, county or town basis.

Possible Staging of a National or International Exhibition

- Members felt they should go ahead with this and that they should ascertain what interest other pottery associations would have in participating. The following preliminary thoughts on such an exhibition were put forward:
- If enough people were interested a period of a least three weeks would be pencilled in to hire Allsop Gallery in 1999, preferably in the tourist season
- The cost of hiring the gallery would be split equally between participants who would be allocated the same amount of floor space. Dorset Pottery Group however would pursue the possibility of getting some financial help from other sources to cover these costs e.g. National Lottery Funds

- d) Exhibiting Pottery Associations would be asked to carry out any selection process, deliver exhibits to the All-sop Gallery, provide their own stands etc. and produce their own catalogue.
 - e) Bridport Arts Centre would be asked to provide a bar for the Private View and provide most of the stewarding. They would also do most of the advertising.
- Dorset Pottery Group would assist with organisational matters and provide additional stewarding. They would also help finding overnight accommodation in the Bridport area for members of participating associations if required. Tel. Alan Ashpool 01297 189347

POTFEST in SCOTLAND 1998

Perth will be the venue for the first Scottish Potfest in June 1998. Organised on the same lines as the Cumbrian-event, this will be an unselected potters' market open to any studio potter trying to make a living from the sale of his or her work.

For anyone contemplating taking part, visit Penrith Potfest August 8/9/10 this year to see how it works.

For further details please send a stamped self addressed envelope to

Geoff Cox
Penrith
Cumbria
CA 11 0RY

EDITORIAL FROM STUDIO POTTERY

Feb/March 1997 No 25 Potters' Associations - a need to participate

"Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country" ran John F Kennedy's useful exhortation in 1961. Instead of "country" today, one could substitute the names of a great many membership organisations, from local civic societies, sports and social clubs, to local branches of political parties and, in our own context, potters' associations. In 1997 the decline of the democratic process is becoming a hot topic.

Voluntary groups everywhere have been suffering from the paucity of members volunteering to occupy the official posts without which the group cannot exist. No doubt the situation has come about for a number of reasons. It may be that people are engaged in more interesting leisure-time activities at home; the sense of community responsibility is waning, or is being held intact only by older members of the group, brought up with a different set of values. As a result, living as we do in a mass 'consumer' culture, an individual that offers to take responsibility may be afraid of being thought eccentric or pushy by his or her peers. In the broader social and political environment, commentators have been pointing to a growing culture of individual rights and freedoms, and simultaneously a dwindling culture of community responsibility. They warn that this will lead to decay in some of our best-loved institutions.

A favourite example of the balance necessary to preserve a fair and democratic society is the system of trial by jury. Everyone, we are told, has a right to be tried by jury. There would be an outcry if the system collapsed for want of jurors, yet how many welcome the chance to serve on a jury, seeing it as a privilege of living in a democracy?

So it is with most voluntary clubs, societies and associations. They are not short of members wishing to reap the benefits of membership indeed membership is thriving - but when it comes to the election of officers at the Annual General Meeting, rarely these days are there more volunteers than there are posts to be filled. Those who agree to put their names forward often do so reluctantly, rather than leap at the opportunity to serve, to bring forward new ideas and projects. The epithet Honorary, as in Honorary Secretary or Honorary Treasurer, carries little sense of honour these days, it seems, and the feeling among those attending the meeting is usually one of relief that they succeeded in not being elected. The simplest way to avoid committee work, of course, is not to attend the meeting at all. No wonder, then, that the AGMs of voluntary groups often attract so few members that not only do they fail to be properly representative of the organisation as a whole, but are sometimes unable constitutionally to take place for lack of numbers.

There is a case to be made afresh for the personal rewards of participation, intangible though these may be, and more importantly to understand the potential of teamwork to achieve great things. The taking on of responsibility (elected by an agreed democratic procedure) earns not respect and gratitude (if not exactly honour), but gives the

holder of office real authority if he or she wishes to use it. Working with a small team of members sharing the same (elected) status and common aims, makes projects achievable ways no individual could achieve. Even three people, duly appointed to serve a group of a hundred or so potters, can organise an event that attracts thousands. Conferences, workshop demonstrations, exhibitions and publications are just some of the outcomes of small teams, working a properly constituted organisation.

The strength and status of the organisation itself is important. In order to achieve objectives, the organisation must deal with other organisations as well as with own members, its power to negotiate being small in relation to its size and energy. A small organisation can make up for size by being cohesive and dynamic. A large organisation has greater resources and experience. Whatever form an organisation takes, it is often thought of in human in human terms. It can be sleepy or lively, powerful or ineffectual, adventurous or timid, friendly and open, or downright xenophobic. To a great extent its perceived character depends on the quality of the officers and how closely they work together. It also depends on the creative partnerships it can build with other organisations to achieve mutual benefits.

What really determines the success of any voluntary group is the ability to unite its members in a common project or programme of development. Historically the (national) Craft Potters Association has been the most successful potters' association by establishing its own shop, publishing *Ceramic Review* and a directory of members which has always provided a useful, if not comprehensive, guide to contemporary studio pottery. But the regional associations have been equally dynamic. Northern Potters run an annual residential festival, while South Wales Potters and North Wales Potters in partnership with Aberystwyth Arts Centre arrange the successful International Potters Festival every two years. London Potters will hold an important conference this spring to coincide with their 10th anniversary. Every association provides for the sharing of views and information through regular newsletters, and these also carry a programme of events such as workshops, visits and joint exhibitions.

While there has been a tendency for the number of regional groups to increase in number until all the UK regions have been covered, there is a growing realisation that some of the aims and objectives of each association are common to all. In general, all potters' associations wish to stimulate public interest in ceramic work, and to encourage the development of good pottery-making among practitioners. Specific measures include negotiating discounts for services for members, and organising events open to all comers. The agreement by several groups to allow other groups to freely publish articles from their newsletters is an example of this recognition.

The embryonic beginnings of a federal system can perhaps be detected here. Not a contentious federalism in which a central bureaucracy is seen as imposing the rules, but a good-willed and right-minded federalism coming from the grass-roots. While strongly maintaining the benefits of regional identity, a national federation might bring further power and advantages for the field of ceramics, likewise for all members of potters' associations.

Studio Pottery magazine

SPECIAL OFFER DURING 1997

£18 annual subscription (6 issues) for current members
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please send cheques to *Studio Pottery*
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HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKSHOP

RISK ASSESSMENT

It is a legal requirement to assess risk in a workplace. These are risks to yourself, employees, members of the public, or in a shared workplace, risks that other users of the space might be exposed to by your activities. The following is an extract from a leaflet produced by the Health and Safety Executive.

FIVE STEPS TO RISK ASSESSMENT

STEP 1:

Look for the Hazards

1) If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around your workplace and look afresh at what you could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore trivial and concentrate only on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people. Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Manufacturers' instructions or datasheets can also help you spot hazards and put risk in their true perspective. So can accidents and ill health records

STEP 2:

Decide who might be harmed, and how

2) Think about people who may or may not be in the workplace all the time e.g. cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance personnel. etc. Include members of the public, or people you share your workplace with, if there is a chance they could be hurt by your activities

STEP 3:

Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

3) Even after all precautions have been taken, usually some risk remains. What you have to decide for **each significant hazard** is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. **First**, ask yourself whether you have done all the things that the law says you have got to do. For example, there are legal requirements on prevention of access to dangerous parts of machinery. **Then** ask yourself whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. But don't stop there- think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workplace safe. Your real aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions if necessary. More information about legal requirements and standards can be found in the HSE publications *Management of Health and Safety at Work: Approved code of Practice* and *Essentials of Health and Safety*

4) Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicles accidents, or putting some non-slip material on slippery steps, are inexpensive precautions considering the risks.

5) If you find that something needs to be done ask yourself:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Only use personal protective equipment when there is nothing else that you can reasonably do.

6) If the work you do tends to vary a lot, or if you or your

employees move from one site to another, select those hazards which you **can reasonably foresee** and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any unusual hazard when you get to a site, get information from others on site, and take what action seems necessary

7) If you share a workplace, tell the other employers and self-employed people there about the risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also think about the risks to your workforce from those who share your workplace.

STEP 4:

Record your findings

8) If you have fewer than five employees **you do not need to write anything down**, but if you have five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your assessment. This means (1) writing down significant hazards and (2) recording your conclusions - for example "Electrical installations: insulation and earthing checked and found sound", or "Fume from welding: local exhaust ventilation provided and regularly checked". You must also inform your employees about your findings.

9) There is no need to show how you did your assessment, provided you can show that

- A proper check was made
 - you asked who might be affected
 - you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
 - the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, not perfect. The real points are
- Are the precautions reasonable, and
 - Is there something to show that a proper check has been made?

10) Keep the written document for future reference or use: it can help you if an inspector questions your precautions, or if you become involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular matters. And it helps to show that you have done what the law requires

11) To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, the arrangements in your health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions, and your health and safety procedures. These may already list hazards and precautions. You don't need to repeat all that, and it is up to you whether you combine all documents, or keep them separately.

STEP 5:

Review your assessment from time to time and revise if necessary

12) Sooner or later you will bring new machines, substances and procedures which could lead to new hazards. If there is any significant change, you should add the assessment to take account of the new hazard. In any case, it is good practice to review your assessment from time to time. Don't amend your assessment for every trivial change, or still more, for each new job, but if a new produces significant hazards of its own, you will need to consider them in their own right and do whatever you need to do to keep the risks down

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Closing date for copy for the August Newsletter is July 31st.