



# Pot Chatter

Craft Potters Nelson Inc.

PO Box 3149 Richmond, Nelson, NZ Phone: (03) 544-5172

MARCH 2002

Sue's Teapot



## EDITORIAL

Nelson has had a good season, (so I have been told by those who know). Potters have done well commercially although some may not have been entirely satisfied. There are changes on the pottery scene. Some customers are displaying a new appreciation of what is available in the pottery world. Nelson especially has acquired a reputation for being a pottery centre. The Stoke on Trent of New Zealand perhaps or are we being too arrogant. We have acquired a reputation for value in the ceramics available locally

When in Canada in 2000 I met potters who come to Nelson on regular visits, who have met Royce McGlashen, who have talked to Mike Rodgers and know them by name.

When they return home, they take with them Nelson pots.

We in Craft Potters are being given choices that have not been available before.

New clays at temperatures unheard of twenty years ago. Stains and engobes not known then are now being used by new potters without a thought of how we struggled to get the elusive "colours" onto our pots. The various ways of using these new mediums for decorating are endless and a bit daunting to some of us. Younger and more adventurous potters take advantage of the newer materials. There is much for us all to learn and it is **Exciting**. May we not be left behind, may we all join the worth of the old with the stimulation of the new.



Sue Newitt's Pottery display

## PERFECTION

The concept of perfection is a wide open topic, the answers to that question are often in the `eye of the beholder` we set our own standards of perfection, they often do not belong to anyone else. A good benchmark for throwing, I would think, is the Japanese master tradition of `consistency` or, can you repeat what you do? Far too often folks think of `thin` as perfect. I have customers that reflect on British bone china, thin as paper, as perfect. Well, I do not think so. First, it is cast. Thin is fragile, thin breaks on the edges. Durability is sacrificed for thinness. When throwing on a wheel, the potter should seek a thickness of wall that can be learned, and then repeated time after time. It should fulfil the need of the pot. For example: tall vases should be thrown a bit heavy in the bottom. It keeps the vase steady when filled with water and you have tall flowers in it. Just makes sense.

Mugs should be thrown light...just a flare that fits the mouth. Pitchers should be thrown for balance. Handle placement should facilitate the pouring action. Low, thin handles cause the pitcher to seem to shift forward and down. Mixing bowls should be made for maximum durability...they will have an electric mixer in them often, banging the sides. Dinner plates must be thrown to fit dish washers, and the pounding that is received inside that turbulent machine. Well, you get the idea. The potter has to be a good designer, a practical designer, along with an aesthetic designer. It is a wide street of knowledge.

We make things for many reasons...perfection is a concept. An idea. We must blend that idea with practical, every day considerations for making pots. It is the years of making, hundreds of makings that give the potter the skills to reach for perfection. When you reach it, well, it should be too late, you will be dead. ( let's hope so, for you will have nothing to reach for.)

Mel Jacobsen      Potter Minnesota.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

The beginning of this year has brought us several new members and there may be more to come. The following members have either joined or rejoined CPN

Alan Ballard, Hugh McMillan, Bruce Lissant-Clayton, William Campbell, Lindy Tarrant, Alison McLeish, Diana Dumont, Walter Day, Kaye Farrer.

Please make yourselves known , (if you are not already acquainted) and welcome them to the group. Try and show a friendly face. It takes a little time to fit into any social scene and new members are often at a loss regarding the organisation and need a bit of encouragement. Some people cope well but there are always those who may be a little shy or afraid they may put a foot wrong. Help them!

## **CLASSES 2002      Tutor Sue Newitt**

The Wednesday morning class got off to a good start and there has been an atmosphere of enthusiasm and cordiality that bodes well for the rest of the year. There is no doubt that our tutor for this year has the knowledge, experience and the ability to impart both which means we are in for informed and interesting classes. Whether it is concentrating on the skill of centring the clay, dealing with the techniques required for more skilled throwing operations or just the disciplines required for consistency and uniformity. Sue is able and willing to spend the time dealing with the difficulties as they arise. We are lucky to have her.

## **LIBRARY**

Note from Amy re the videos in the library. These may be taken home to view for up to 7 days, that is to say for not more than a week. You should be able to see a video more than once in that time. The charge is \$1 to be put in the jar and PLEASE do fill in the card so we know where the video is. It might be needed to demonstrate a technique. For new members they are in the cupboard by the T.V.



## **PUGMILLS**

The old pugmill has been cleaned up and electrogalvanised, (a new procedure I have not heard of till now) which means it can be safely used for white clays and will not contaminate them with iron. The committee have done well with this and the price appears to have been reasonable. Only specific clays may be used in this and a chart will be on the wall above each pugmill denoting which clays go in that pugmill. **PLEASE** for the sake of other members be very careful which clays you put in each one. Make your scraps of the right consistency. You should be able to hold it in your hand without it being sticky. **However** it must not be too hard. In either case the machine will cease to work or it will put wear and tear on it that is damaging.

Wire through the scraps and be very sure there are no foreign objects in the clay, sponges, bits of plastic, chamois leathers and metal or rubber kidneys have all been found when the pugmill has ground to a halt due to misuse. I personally found a needle in the clay when throwing after putting clay through the pugmill. Lucky I found it before it found me!!

Clays so far designated as for the newly refurbished pugmill are :-

Nelson White , Mac's White, Midfire White, Abbot's White

**NO UV** to be kept in the shed at all .. If you use this clay **ANY POTS MADE** must be taken home and not left for fear of being mistaken for another clay of another firing temperature.

**Rodger Fowler.**

## **EXHIBITION**

It is becoming imperative that we find a Convener for next years Exhibition. So far there have been no volunteers. Perhaps someone can suggest who would be able and willing to do this job. There are plenty of assistants available for the hard work and the Group is at the stage where perhaps some new ideas could be incorporated. A bold idea but perhaps someone from outside Craft Potters might be persuaded to show their talents in this direction. Think about it and let someone know what new thoughts there are regarding what is after all a very important part of the calendar.

With profuse apologies, Uta thinks someone spoke to her and asked about this but she cannot remember who it was and "Would they please get in touch with her again". Us 'oldies' all have these temporary lapses, don't feel too bad Uta!

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

There is a questionnaire attached to this Pot chatter and all members are asked, (ever so nicely) to fill it in to the best of their ability. It will be a big help when the Committee comes to plan the rest of the year.



## **GALLERY**

As most of you will be aware, we have a 'Centre' Table that is used each month by one potter to hold his/her small exhibition. For the month of April we would like to feature a display of pottery items relating to Easter, e.g. bunnies, eggs, Easter Bonnets, baskets etc - whatever Easter means to you. We would like as many members as are interested, new and 'mature', to participate. If you haven't yet sold pots through the Gallery, you can still display your pot. Just put a sticker on with your name and **NOT FOR SALE** written on it. All pots need to be at the shed, behind the curtain, by Thursday 28th March, no

later than 4pm. So get those creative juices flowing and let's see what each of us can come up with. If you have any queries, please contact me {Lyn ph 5446821} or any of the Gallery Committee. There is a list of Committee Members on the noticeboard round the back.

This is a plea to all members. You can arrange or fiddle with your own display in the Gallery, but please don't touch anyone else's display unless you are dusting it or replacing a sold pot. A couple of our sellers are getting quite frustrated and annoyed when they go out to the shed and find once again that the display that they spent time arranging has either had pots removed from it or it has been rearranged.

Lyn Packer, Gallery Convener



## OBITUARY

It is with considerable sadness that I write of the death this last month of Shirley Bruton. Shirley was with us as a member of Craft Potters for only a short period of time. She joined the morning class and became a very enthusiastic potter. Her pleasure at learning the craft was self-evident and from the start she was constantly at the shed in every spare moment. She became good at what she did and was quickly producing pots that were of good quality. It really is very sad that her illness cut short what became for her a satisfying and creative activity. She endeared herself to those members who came to know her with her delightful personality and appreciative nature. We will miss you Shirley. Our sympathy goes out to your family

## Ferro Clear Earthenware Glaze

Designated 271P by Ferro (recently changed from being called 271D due to a change in milling methods), this clear-gloss glaze is made in Australia by frit and coatings manufacturer Ferro Corporation.

It is virtually the standard clear glaze utilised by potters working in the low to medium-fire range in New Zealand. While the glaze has a small lead content (Ferro states this to be  $< 1\%$ ), it was designed for mass-produced industrial ware (including tableware) and has exceptional durability, brilliance and finish for such a low-firing, low-lead glaze.

Ferro advises the firing range to be  $1050^{\circ} - 1150^{\circ} \text{C}$ , however this recommendation applies to 12-24 hour industrial firings, so in a potters kiln for shorter firings the upper limit should be about  $1190^{\circ} \text{C}$  (cone 4). It is wise not to exceed this because, although the glaze may look fine when higher-fired, the lead atoms within it will have likely boiled away above  $1200^{\circ} \text{C}$  and contaminated the surroundings. Notwithstanding these comments, if properly fired, 271P is a perfectly safe, stable and non-toxic glaze.

One of the reasons for the popularity of this glaze is that it a pre-fritted composition, and cannot be equaled in silica content, hardness and cost by potters mixing frits and other raw materials together

## HINTS & TIPS

Household materials that are useful.

Baby Oil -- Add a few drops to the throwing water when using fine body clays like porcelain. Use to thin the wax in the hot wax pan for a smoother flow.

Vinegar -- In winter in throwing water will counteract the alkalinity which sometimes develops in Nelson. Helps to acidify clay when repugging clay.

Can be used to join pieces when making sculptures.

Vaseline -- Use your fingers to smear on thin or fast drying edges or added parts like handles.

## Glaze recipe "March"

This is the recipe of a glaze from Vic Evans. He also with typical generosity donated quite a large bucket to Craft Potters, when he changed his clay.

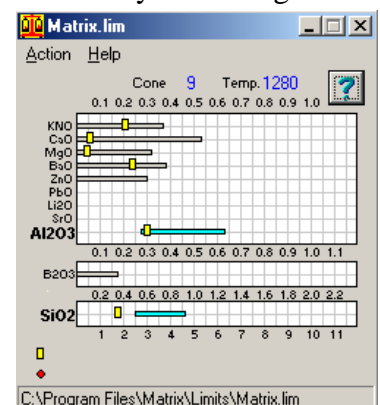
It was very popular with members once they saw the results. Reduction or Oxydation it gives a beautiful satin glaze with blue to purple shades varied by the firing.

Australian Potash Feldspar	55.0
Premium China Clay	10.0
Dolomite	05.0
Silica	10.0
Barium Carbonate	22.0
Copper Carbonate	01.0
Cobalt Carbonate	00.6

Thank you Vic. For this recipe



Not recommended for domestic ware. ( NOT for food utensils)



## . Glazing for beginners 7. By Robert Heatherbell

### **Crazing!!!**

Just by way of a digression, let's talk briefly about *crazing*. Most of you are making pots that can be used to contain food, so having your glaze fitting your pot is very important. Pots that are crazed should not be used or put up for sale either. A glaze that is crazed allows fluids to penetrate the surface and enter the clay body. So the pot is a hygienic risk and will most likely have a short life as the moisture gets into it. Crazing can easily be seen in a strong light. And look in the inside of your mug. The stains of tea or coffee will show it up. If the quality controller rejects your pots and says they are crazed, take the matter seriously. On pots that are just decorative the question of hygiene doesn't arise.

When you put your pot in the kiln to fire it, the heat expands the pot and its glaze a little in the process. When the pot cools it contracts and during that process the glaze shrinks to fit it like a skin of glass. If the glaze formula isn't right and it expands too much, it will most likely craze as it cools. The materials we use for fluxes have different rates of expansion, and this will have a bearing on which ones you may decide to use. So let's have a look at the oxides they contain, and compare their thermal expansion and contraction. Remember that we're looking at them in isolation, not when they are combined with other materials. Starting at the top of the list are the oxides that expand the most, and as we go down the list the expansion gets less, until at the bottom, is the oxide expands the least.

#### ***High Expansion.***

- ▲ Soda Oxide.  $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ . Found in Soda Feldspar.
- Potash Oxide.  $\text{K}_2\text{O}$ . Found in Potash Feldspar.
- Calcium Oxide.  $\text{CaO}$ . Found in Calcite (Whiting), and Wollastonite. Calcium also opacifies.
- Barium Oxide.  $\text{BaO}$ . Usually purchased as Barium Carbonate.
- Lead Oxide.  $\text{PbO}$ . Usually available in a fritted form. Toxic. Best to avoid it's use all together.
- Titanium Oxide.  $\text{TiO}_2$ . Sometimes used as an opacifier.
- Lithium Oxide.  $\text{Li}_2\text{O}$ . Usually purchased as Lithium Carbonate.
- Zinc Oxide.  $\text{ZnO}$ . This is both a flux and an opacifier. Don't overdo this material.
- Magnesium Oxide.  $\text{MgO}$ . Usually obtained using Talc or Magnesium Dioxide.
- Zirconium Oxide.  $\text{ZrO}$ . Used as an opacifier.
- Tin Oxide.  $\text{SnO}_2$ . Used as an opacifier.
- Alumina Oxide.  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ . Found in the clays (eg. China Clay, Ball Clay).
- ▼ Silica Oxide.  $\text{SiO}_2$ . Purchased as prepared Silica or sometimes Quartz.
- Boric Oxide.  $\text{B}_2\text{O}_3$ . Purchased as a frit. Is both a flux and a glass former.

#### ***Low expansion.***

Included above are the materials you commonly use. At the top are the fluxes and at the bottom is the Silica and the Clay, as you would expect. The trick is to get the right combination of them to fit the clay that you use. The materials used for fluxing may have other properties to contribute. For instance the glaze may have too much Calcium in it, leading it to opacify and show some crazing. Substituting some Talc for some Calcium provides extra Silica and lower expansion, which just may prevent that crazing. Don't be put off by the symbols and the formulas. When you get used to them they provide information about the materials they relate to.

Always test your glaze before you mix up a bucket, even if your computer worked it out!!

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We are not all at the same place either in experience or ability but there is always knowledge to be gleaned from any submission or article we print. If you do not understand it now you may do so later on. Good luck with your pots.

May the Kiln Dragon guard you Firings

*Maggie.* Editor.

Phone: 544-8768

#### **QUOTE**

EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND WATER-- these are the ingredients of pots and human beings alike, and each formula contains also the element of Chance.

Do not seek perfection in pots or people, for your search will go unrewarded, and you will miss knowing many good pots and many good people...." Author Unknown

#### **Wanted**

A very small kiln that fires to cone 9. E mail the editor or telephone 544.8768.

