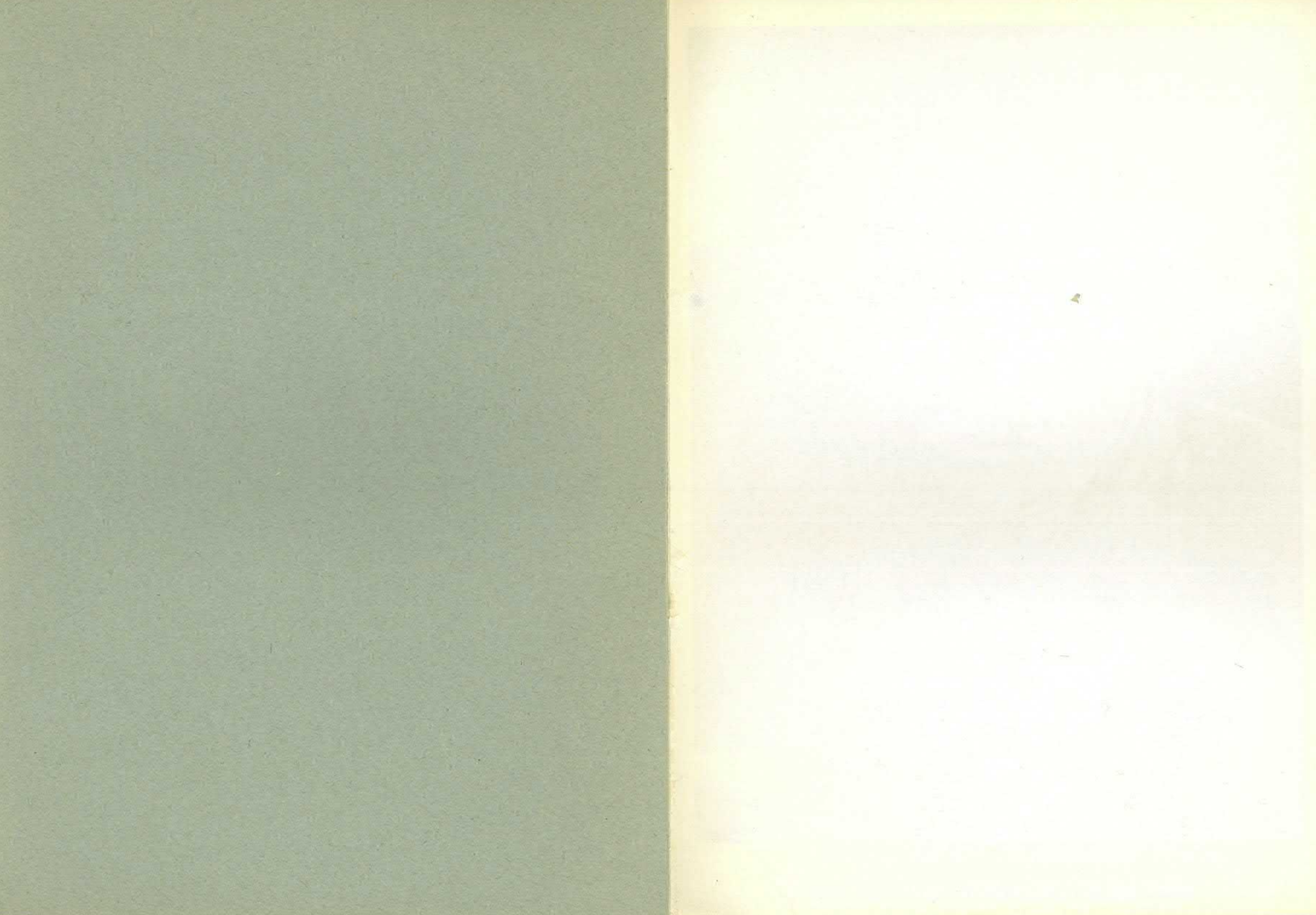




BERNARD LEACH

Essays in Appreciation







BERNARD LEACH

Essays in Appreciation

Collected and Edited

by

T. Barrow

A Monograph published by the
Editorial Committee of
the *N.Z. Potter*

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Mr. Wilf Wright has generously undertaken the task of distributing the book. Copies may be obtained for ten shillings each by applying to Mr. Wright at Stockton's Ltd., Woodward Street, Wellington, N. Z.

c 1960 by the Editorial Committee
N. Z. Potter

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Editor's Preface

In 1920 Japanese friends of Bernard Leach published An English Artist in Japan, a book containing farewell messages on the occasion of his return to England from Japan in that year. Dr. Soetsu Yanagi wrote in his preface: "We have compiled this little volume as a commemoration of our long friendship with Leach." Now, some twenty years later, Western friends in England and New Zealand have prepared a similar small volume as an expression of their friendship and admiration.

It was the original intention of the Editorial Committee of the N. Z. Potter to publish an ordinary issue of the journal devoted to the Leach theme, with articles by New Zealanders who either knew Leach or were interested in his work. The copy looked promising, so as editor I suggested that I should contact some of Bernard Leach's English friends whom I knew personally, and extend our publication to include them. Everyone responded well, and it was decided to print the material as a special monograph of the N. Z. Potter.

We could safely say that all serious potters in New Zealand have used A Potter's Book extensively in the development of their work. For some of us it has supplied not only technical information, but the way to a new philosophy of life and work. Just after World War II, I was introduced to A Potter's Book by Elizabeth Matheson, Wellington's pioneer potter, when I went to her like so many others for advice on how to get started in

pottery making. Soon afterwards I started to correspond with Leach, and managed to secure some Leach Pottery domestic ware, oddly enough by sending in exchange a carton of soap. At the time the shortages of the war years were still causing some hardship to the British people and I sent the soap because I was convinced that all potters needed soap! However my concern was misplaced for Bernard Leach wrote back to say: "The soap we gave to friends as we have not any personal shortage in that direction."

After closer acquaintance with A Potter's Book I started to study Zen (I am glad to say long before the current fad), ponder ceramic collections in museums, and generally to re-assess my own mental store. Mr. Ray Chapman-Taylor soon returned from Japan with a collection of ancient and contemporary pottery, and as he explains in his article, with his daughter started to import stoneware from St. Ives.* Like many other potters and collectors in New Zealand I am grateful to Mr. Chapman-Taylor for the stimulus of his collection. To read and see illustrations is one thing, to actually handle fine pots is another!

I had developed a strong desire to meet Leach in person, and by a fortunate turn of affairs in 1955 I sailed for England, where I arrived in December. When I reached London I conveniently found Leach there on a visit to his friend Lucie Rie. During the next two years (1956-57) I saw him on many occasions, and on two visits enjoyed the unsurpassed hospitality of himself and his wife, Janet, at St. Ives. My wife and I have the deepest regard for their kindness. On one occasion Leach generously came to lecture

* He explains the circumstances in his article. It would be appropriate to note here that Mr. W. A. Clark imported for sale in his shop (Craigs) at Napier items of Leach pottery as early as 1927. Miss R. Clark mentions that her father secured a list of available ware after seeing it described in the Studio. The last item of the imported stock was destroyed in the earthquake of 1931. I have also heard that a city hardware firm in Wellington made a trial shipment of Leach pottery domestic ware before World War II. The New Zealand agency is now with Mr. Wilf Wright, Stockton's Ltd., Woodward Street, Wellington.

to our newly formed Ceramic Society at Cambridge. There were also exhibitions, and a most memorable evening at the London home of Mr. and Mrs. Wingfield Digby where many friends of Bernard and Janet Leach gathered to honour them at a dinner party.

The appreciative essays presented in this small volume are by nature varied, each with its own special contribution. I hope that some of the reminiscences will provide material for a future biographer of Leach, for we all anticipate a comprehensive biography in English (I understand one has already appeared in Japanese). We are indeed lucky in having original manuscript from Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, Michael Cardew and George Wingfield Digby, for their comments have special significance. When Michael Cardew - the very Hamada of Western potters - writes, "What Leach began to teach me then, I am only now beginning to learn," we have an expression of deepest regard.

I have always been impressed by the versatility of Leach for he is not only a brilliant potter but also teacher, graphic artist, literary man, religious philosopher, and art historian. A reading of A Potter in Japan recently published by Faber and Faber will bear this out. This excellent book should be read with the essays presented here. It will answer many of the points of criticism one hears of Leach in England and New Zealand. In my experience his critics are, more often than not, inadequately informed. Leach welcomes honest criticism, but such vague statements as "too Oriental" or "his influence is too strong" are usually either a misinterpretation of what he is trying to say, or (in the latter case) a mistaking by immature students and downright imitators of what Leach actually teaches.

Leach describes himself as "inescapably British" and furthermore possesses a healthy dislike for fashions, fads or cults. A conventional dresser in the English manner, he is set upon by the bearded and sandalled fraternity or their female counterparts who are either with him or against him, but he prefers to be simple and unmannered, down to earth, and ever returning to the sources of his own peace of mind.

The religious and philosophical approach to creative work is fundamental to Leach's teaching, "work" being interpreted here in the sense of Zen. Few have access to the little privately printed pamphlet "My Religious Faith" in which he states his view of things "at the close of 1953". In it he says: "I admire most the art in which there is a power greater than that of the individual, less of the desire to shine for It shines, not the me. From Yanagi and Hamada, I learned much - the words of Yanagi and the actions of Hamada. There was also a long and memorable meeting with Dr. Daisetsu Suzuki in New York. I asked him about Zen and Shin Buddhism - the lonely road of self-discovery and the broad road of humility - 'Jiriki Do' and 'Tariki Do'. He replied that there was no conflict between them - the essence of Buddhism lay behind apparent opposites in a land of nakedness of 'thusness', that the path of the individual was hard - that either path could be an imprisonment - but that the more one gave of oneself to the 'Other Power' the more it saved. I came a step nearer." Leach's conviction as a Baha'i is fully explained in A Potter in Japan. From this world view he has gained ideas concerning the interplay of East and West, or had his own impressions confirmed by it?

To return to editorial matters, I wish to make it clear to readers that Bernard Leach wrote his "Open Letter to New Zealand Potters" under the impression that it would appear in an ordinary issue of the N. Z. Potter, and because of this it contains references to previous issues of that journal. The reason for the altered arrangements for publishing the Leach material is explained above (second paragraph). To help the reader I have added references in the form of footnotes. Other copy from Bernard Leach includes the script of a B. B. C. talk entitled "Looking Backwards and Forwards at 72", and by request, a list of events of his life arranged in chronological order. Mr. E. Ohly, Director of the Berkeley Gallery (London) kindly allowed me to reprint an article from one of his catalogues to an exhibition of Japanese tea ceremony wares, and Mr. Murray Fieldhouse who is well known to New Zealand potters as the editor of Pottery Quarterly generously permitted me to reproduce his article on the Leach Pottery from the first number of his journal.

The order of articles is more or less arbitrary. I selected Professor Bailey's "Bernard Leach in Perspective" as the most suitable introduction, for it does just as its title suggests. Wingfield Digby's scholarly contribution "Bernard Leach - East and West" makes a remarkably fitting climax.

Appended material includes the Leach chronology and a bibliographical reference which is as complete as I could make it from the resources available in New Zealand. I am aware of one or two other works, such as the life of Bernard Leach published in Japanese, but through lack of details it has not been possible to include these references.

The Leach "influence" is now part of our developing tradition of pottery making in New Zealand. It is evident in the work of our best potters including Len Castle and Peter Stichbury both of whom worked at the Leach Pottery after reaching England on fellowships of the Association of New Zealand Art Societies. Now we anticipate in this country workshops of the Leach Pottery type and ideal.

I am indebted to the Editorial Committee for help in the preparation of this volume, and to Professor Bailey for correcting the manuscript. The origin of illustrations is noted in most cases. Leach tiles appearing on the cover were photographed in situ on a fireplace in a Granchester pub, before a mystified barman.

It has been both an honour and a privilege to edit this volume for it has allowed me to express deep regard for Bernard Leach, and personal gratitude to him as my teacher and friend.



Wellington,
29th February, 1960.

AN OPEN LETTER TO NEW ZEALAND POTTERS

Bernard Leach

Dear New Zealand potters,

Terry Barrow has asked me to write an article for the next number of your journal which he says is to be devoted to my work. Thank you for the honour, sincerely. Having come to know him and Chapman-Taylor, and after Len Castle's and Peter Stichbury's periods in our workshop, we feel close to you despite the whole globe which lies between us, here under our feet. Then the fact that many of you show in your pots the revelation of a new sort of beauty, out of the Far East, is a strong bond between us. For today, for the first time, the modern potter inherits as a birthright the whole world of past achievement to inspire him with ideas and techniques for the life of today and tomorrow.

I propose to take up some issues raised in your magazine's pages. The most important is implied by Mr. Plishke when he writes of the need to digest the stimuli which we receive from the past so that we can go forward into the future.¹ How best to develop the strength to absorb and then to eliminate? William Blake, whom I have loved all my life, wrote "Drive your cart and horse over the bones of the dead". He practised what he preached, and in our time and amongst potters no one has done so more consistently than has Shoji Hamada, and nobody admires the truth and beauty of the past more than does he. First he had his feet well planted

¹ "Thoughts from an Architect", N. Z. Potter, vol. 1, no. 2, December, 1958, pp. 7-9.

on the soil of his own Oriental culture, then he entered into our life and our art over here. As a consequence upon his return he could see his Oriental inheritance with fresh eyes, reassessing the good and the bad. Since that time he has gradually and steadily put aside what he did not need from both East and West, and being born creative he was that much freer to digest and to produce new life in his pots.

Five hundred years before Christ, Confucius stated that, "The wise man is he who in his maturity can make natural use of the gifts with which he is born". I think that this is exactly what Hamada has done and that he is a shining example to us all in our struggle for truth of contemporary expression. Speaking from personal experience, (and in fairness it should be remembered that my early impressions were Oriental), I have always looked at pots, my own included, to see primarily if they possessed a quality of life. If subsequently I found my own judgment corroborated by others whose opinions I valued, such pots became my stepping stones.

The next issue is brought out in Professor Bailey's thoughtful letter² on Terry Barrow's earlier article on Hamada.³ He emphasizes the sense of need, or necessity, by which preconscious pots were motivated. By contrast, he writes, "That is why it is so very hard for the studio potter to pot with purposeful conviction... the studio potter's need is to make and create. It is not the 'pot itself' that is needed." Quite so. But is he not rather neglecting the ritualistic, symbolic and even mystic impulses which underlay the forms and decorations of primitive man's work? Is there any inherent reason why a potter cannot give expression to these impulses today? Pots and all other artifacts serve the mind as well as the body. They are born of a marriage between use and beauty. They are not just art for art's sake so much as art for life's sake. Whether less or more conscious they are extensions of people striving to make human products with as much wholeness

² "Extract from a Letter", N. Z. Potter, vol. 1, no. 2, December, 1958, pp. 38-40

³ "Shoji Hamada", N. Z. Potter, vol. 1, no. 1, August 1958, pp. 17-22.

and naturalness as a sea-shell or the wing of a butterfly. Thus, returning to Confucius, if they do not make peace with themselves as part of a whole - nature - one can hardly expect to find them or their pots mature. That brings me to my third point which is his criticism of our pots in the Red Rose Exhibition in Manchester.⁴ I feel that he both over and under praises. I have rarely thought that any contemporary pots, certainly mine, rise to the level of truth and beauty achieved by the mainly unknown craftsmen of the past, for reasons which he and I have already indicated. The new task of assimilating all that has gone before and of re-creation is tremendous. The potter of today has to expand to world consciousness in contrast to his predecessors who thought in terms of village or, at most, country. Of course we suffer from indigestion! Naturally it is difficult to arrive at a "purposeful conviction", but I do not believe that it is impossible. We have, after all, the example of artists in other fields, such as Cezanne and Van Gogh, who have achieved the necessary degree of integration in their work. Professor Bailey does I think rather under-value some of my group by generalizing from the small selection of pots which we happened to send to Manchester last year. As to my own more recent work, I do the best I can and leave it to others to judge. Quite a few discriminating critics have said, however, that my exhibition in London last year at the Primavera Gallery was the most lively I have ever had. I may be wrong but it does not seem to me that I am slipping into a rut with old age but, of course, few would see it if they were, and perhaps some would not admit it if they did!

Finally I want to come to a problem which Roy Cowan seems to think concerns New Zealand potters in particular.⁵ Assuredly it does, and it is for them to solve the matter in their own way. I only want to touch upon the reasons why stoneware, mainly of Sung China, means so much to the West in general as well as to New Zealand of the southern Pacific. I don't disagree with Roy Cowan's deductions, but I would like to add to them the significance of a deepening relationship of Eastern and Western cultures within a world whole of which pottery is a small but significant part. The interplay between the two main streams of human culture, East and

⁴ "An English Exhibition", N. Z. Potter, vol. 1, no. 2, December 1958, pp. 10-15

⁵ "Schools of Thought", N. Z. Potter, vol. 1, no. 2, December, 1958, pp. 33-38.

West, provides the strongest stimuli, the widest mental expansion and the need for the best digestion as well.

In such a letter as this I can only touch upon the meanings and values involved. Some of you may care to follow them further in the context of Japanese craftsmanship in my "A Potter's Diary in Japan" which Faber & Faber are bringing out next autumn.⁶ The potters' problems are very much the same today, whether they work in Japan, New Zealand, or England.

I send you my warm greetings, wishing you strong digestions and good firings.

Bernard Leach

13th May, 1959.

⁶ Published this year (1960). See Bibliography for details.

LOOKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS AT 72

Bernard Leach



**BERNARD LEACH - SELF PORTRAIT
DATED 1919 - REPRODUCED FROM
AN ENGLISH ARTIST IN JAPAN**

I have been a potter for close on 50 years. By a potter I mean a craftsman who carries out his ideas of form, texture and pattern with his own hands.

I did not start life as a potter but as an artist. From childhood I enjoyed drawing more than anything else and so at sixteen when my father was at home on leave and asked me what I wanted to be there was no hesitation in my reply. My answer rather dismayed him but my teachers at Beaumont backed me up and rather by chance I presently found myself the youngest student at the Slade School of Art under the famous Henry Tonks. A year or so later my father died and to carry out a death-bed promise to him I tried to become a banker in the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank and very soon came to the conclusion that I was not cut out for that sort of life. Much against the wishes of my family, I returned to art. Then I fell in with the writing of Lafcadio Hearn which reawakened my childhood memories of Hong Kong, where I was born, and of Japan where I had spent the first four years of my life. I became more and more attracted by the Far East, and in 1909, at the age of 21, I went out to Tokyo with the intention of trying to understand the life and art furthest removed from our own.

I had hoped to earn a living by teaching etching which I had studied under Frank Brangwyn. I fancied that modern Japanese artists, who I knew were being much influenced by Western art, might be interested in this means of expression.

Fortunately for me the skill of my first students was such that I began to question my own idea of teaching in favour of learning and, as I was told years later, it was this change of heart which

Self portrait 1919

caused my new found friends to open the doors of Eastern art to me. But at the same time I found out that their eager discovery of the contemporary world of Western art helped to keep me awake to what was going on in the Occident. With these young Japanese painters and writers I could share enthusiasm for the French Impressionists, for Cezanne, Van Gogh, Matisse, Goya and El Greco, for example, whilst at the same time I stepped gently into the quietist world of Oriental art - equal and opposite.

Some of my admirations were even transferred; for William Blake, for Walt Whitman, for Augustus John as a draughtsman, and for others. I built a Japanese house, I married a cousin, the circle of friendship grew, then one day in 1911 I was invited out to a party of painters, poets, and actors, at which the main entertainment consisted in painting on unglazed biscuit-ware pots which were then and there glazed and fired in a portable "Raku" kiln. The sight of our pots being taken with long iron tongs, red hot from the charcoal fired muffle chamber, and gradually cooling on tiles until, with cries of excitement, we could handle what we had painted but an hour earlier, awoke in me something dormant and I decided on the spot that I must find a master in this craft. Eventually I was introduced to the 6th Kenzan and he agreed to take me as his pupil. Day after day on the bare boards of his humble house in the northern outskirts of Tokyo I learned my alphabet of clay. He was a man of kind and honest character - a craftsman working in a tradition 250 years old rather than an artist of originality like the first and most famous Kenzan. I never attempted to work in my master's style, I felt it would be false for me, a foreigner, to do so. I often worried the old man with my questions in broken Japanese, he said my "whys" and "whats" made his head ache, that if I did this and that as his master had taught him, so and so would happen. After about a year he said it was time for me to start on my own and he made a kiln for me in a corner of my garden and eventually gave me a signed "Densho" or inheritance of the Kenzan title.

About that time a young Japanese architect, Tomimoto, returned after his studies in England and I was introduced to him and we struck up a friendship. He could not get a job which offered him the opportunities which his talents warranted so I persuaded him to try his hand at decorating pots. He caught my enthusiasm, worked

briefly with Kenzan, and then set up a raku kiln in his home village near Nara. For ten years he was my closest friend and we constantly exchanged all the information about pottery which we gathered and held rival exhibitions in Tokyo year by year. Our pots always sold well.

Japan is a paradise for potters. Appreciation has been inbred by generations of Tea Masters who look at a pot with as discriminating an eye as any of us give to a picture. Art in Japan is an integral part of life and applied art is not something separate from fine art.

Meanwhile we had both been making friends with a group of young writers, most of whom had been educated at the Peer's School and had just completed their studies at the Imperial University. They started a magazine (the "Shira Kaba", or white birch) which was devoted to the visual arts as well as literature. It gradually gained influence and several of its founders are now leading Japanese writers. Amongst them my closest friend was, and is, its editor, Soetsu Yanagi. He steadily became more and more interested in crafts and craftsmanship and is now the leader of the craft movement and the Director of the National Craft Museum. By academic training he is a philosopher and by free choice a profound student of aesthetics and mysticism. It is he who, more than anyone else, has built up the modern Japanese Craft Movement which is more vigorous and wide-spread than any parallel movement of this century. In fact it would not be amiss to describe Dr. Yanagi as the Morris and Ruskin combined of Japan. I owe both him and Tomimoto an incalculable debt and although they have diverged in their thinking in later years these two men and one other, the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, have opened my eyes to the contemporary values and ideals of Oriental art and life more than any others.

The years 1916 to 1918 I spent in Peking learning at first hand about the parent culture of China. For it must always be remembered that Korea and Japan received their religion, philosophy, art and refinement from that ancient mainland source much as we received ours through the Romans. After my return to Japan I bought old Kenzan's stoneware kiln and set it up on Yanagi's property 25 miles out of Tokyo. There I received my first visit from

young Hamada, who came to tell me that it was my work and Tomimoto's which had decided him to take up pottery as a career. A year later, in 1920, I arranged for him to accompany us to England to help me to start the St. Ives pottery. I had decided to come home partly to educate my growing family and partly to set foot as a potter upon native soil and to draw sustenance from it. I still think that this was a true move not only for the sake of immersing myself in birthright traditions of right making, but also in order to digest so much which I had received from the antithetical East. Somehow I seem to have been a sort of a messenger between East and West all my life. I believe profoundly in their interplay, I have seen it growing and deepening, I am convinced that peace and a mature life for humanity depend on the exchanges which the two main divisions of mankind can make.

As to the value of the work which I have done, in pottery chiefly, I don't care to speak, I don't want to dwell upon it, others will decide. I would only add that from the outset I determined that I would always endeavour to be my own severest critic.

It is thirty-eight years since I started work at St. Ives. Hamada stayed three years. After his return it was a struggle to survive. I used up all my capital; my friends in Japan helped me to establish this pottery in my own land by sending the whole proceeds of the exhibitions of my pots which they asked me to send out. But good students began to come to St. Ives and my eldest son, David, joined us, became my partner and a good craftsman and manager. Later on my second son, Michael, also joined us and now they each have their own independent workshops in Devonshire.

In 1934 I went out again to Japan for a year at the invitation of the Japanese Craft Movement and found Hamada well established as one of its leaders and making excellent pots. He had discarded much which he had learned in the West and was settling down to a slow process of digestion and reintegration.

In 1940 my A Potter's Book was published. In it I attempted not only to describe and illustrate processes but also to seek a standard, or criterion of values, for the modern potter and to pass on something of what I had learned in the East. The response, not only in England, but abroad, especially in America, was far greater

than I anticipated, which seems to show that at least the subject matter was of wide interest. What I have tried to clarify was the significance of the artist craftsman in a machine age. With the replacement of the hand by the machine so much of permanent value to society is being lost all over the world. The common conclusion that the machine can make what we need in larger quantity and cheaper is true, but it leaves out the heart of labour: feeling, imagination, direct control. Somebody must employ these faculties, and because the hand-working country craftsman has gone for good the artist-craftsman is the only man left to take his place. He is almost the only kind of worker left who employs heart, head and hand in balance. In our St. Ives workshop we have gradually built up a team of a dozen under my leadership who believe in their work and make a simple living out of catalogued pots for daily use at as low a price as possible (about 6/- net average), with about a tenth of the total output of individual and comparatively expensive pots. As to the future of hand-craftsmanship, my conviction is that granted the eventual end of the Cold War, the predictions of the economists that we shall enter an age of short working hours, and security will be realised, the problem will then be what to do with our increased hours of leisure. I believe the number of week-end potters will increase, as it has in America already. That the character of most of the pots produced will be amateurish and undigested goes almost without saying, but more people will be able to employ their initiative, find their pleasure in work, and add to their basic incomes, and an increasing minority will produce pots and other things which are extensions of themselves, and alive.

My first book led to an invitation to lecture and demonstrate across the U. S. A. In 1950 my second book, A Potter's Portfolio was published, which was a review of the present situation of potters and a collection of fine pots of many periods which I selected purely by personal preference.

In 1953 the first International Conference of Potters and Weavers was held at Dartington Hall in Devon through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Elmhirst.¹ Dr. Yanagi and Mr. Hamada

¹ Two talks by Bernard Leach are published in the Report of the International Conference at Dartington Hall. For details, see Bibliography.

were the Eastern delegates and subsequently lectured and demonstrated with me all over America and Japan for more than two years, reporting the conclusions arrived at and contributing the thought and actual procedure of the East to what we have discovered to be a world-wide problem. Put as briefly in words as possible, this is the question of integration or wholeness in life, in art, in work. The East has always put stress upon the inner, and the West has come to an emphasis upon the outer, aspects of life. Truth for a potter is only part of general truth, we desperately need reintegration or wholeness once again. By striving to achieve it in the pots which we make I believe that we are contributing directly to the good of the whole.

BERNARD LEACH IN PERSPECTIVE

C. L. Bailey

To me Bernard Leach is to potting what Bacon was to the physical, and Darwin to the biological and social sciences, Pestalozzi to education, Rousseau to political theory and the rights of man, Matisse to painting, and so on through the list of "nodal" men whose influence has changed the direction of the field in which they worked. What is common to the thought of all such men is not necessarily any intricacy of argument, complexity, or abstruseness, but rather an essential directness and simplicity of vision that enables them to see their materials afresh and anew, unfogged by the class or intellectual-caste judgments of their time. They went back directly and with the humility of the observing eye to the basic raw material of their craft or their science - Darwin to observe the humble phenomena of the natural world, Bacon to record the factual outcomes of manipulations and experiments, Matisse to observe and work with light, the link between the mind of the artist and the world he lived in, Pestalozzi to live with and observe the mental and emotional world of childhood, Rousseau to listen to the inarticulate longings of man for dignity and identity. In this company is Bernard Leach, the greatest teacher, and in my opinion the greatest influence there has ever been in the oldest craft known to man.

The essence of Leach's contribution, in my view, has been to bring back into focus the actual point at which creation takes place (in this case in a particular craft), and to insist that the process itself, visible for re-experience by the observer, is the quintessence of the created thing itself. Under the impact of the twin influences of technological advance and middle-class aspirations for "refinement" most of the arts had come to look immaculately

conceived with no evidences of the human processes that had been involved in their making. And not only the processes were suppressed as regrettably unfortunate (though "good" decoration could, like fig-leaves, save the decencies), but moreover the materials themselves were kept below stairs as it were, whether textured canvas, oil and pigment, clay and sand, or the rock of ages.

Leach, through his writings, his folios, his own pots, and those of the Leach Pottery at St. Ives, has for the last forty years been the major force in bringing human feeling back into the most human of all the arts, and with it the decent human respect of the craftsman for his material. His outlook has touched two of the most fundamental things in human beings - a deep and ancient instinct to create things personal to oneself, and an equally ancient interest in the raw material from which the earth is built and which clothes it, and upon which ultimately the whole embroidered civilisation of man is based, clay, rock, wood, metals, fire. Through all of Leach's work these elemental human interests are given play. The St. Ives pots show the creative processes manifest - the finger patterns left by the potter, the strongly-thumbed-on handles, the play of fire, the extrusion of mineral elements through the glaze. They show both in form and decoration a profound respect for the possibilities and the limitations of the clay, a restraint on the potter imposed by the materials themselves. As Leonardo da Vinci said: "Art is born of constraint and dies of liberty". This dictum runs through the folios of pots that Leach has published, taking us to the work of the greatest potting periods, the Sung and the Tang of ancient China, where the notes were modesty and understatement of form, restraint in decoration, and a secretive beauty that called the imagination into play. By his discerning choice of pots from many cultures Leach trained us to look for "character" and "mood" in the products of a craft that more than any other owes less to tools and more to the character and personality of the craftsman.

And now I would like to state the unpayable debt I personally owe to Bernard Leach. When I look at and handle one of his pots (as for example the jug on my table as I write, crammed with marigolds) I see not only the thrower's hands in St. Ives, but, through the marks of the making, I feel myself linked in quiet communion with the potters down the ages, in China, in Japan, in

Sawankelok, Persia, Chaldea, and back to Beaker Hill, who have left us not merely pots but evidences of their own humanity and their passion to create, frozen in fire for all eternity. This is the true immortality; and the ultimate sin against the Holy Ghost committed by the machine age and its synthetic slickness of production is that it not only denies the craftsman his own immortality but takes from all of us the spiritual experience of entering into this communion with the creative past. I, conscious of an occasional niggling comment on this pot and that pot of Leach or his associates, have never wavered in my sense of debt to him for his work in giving us back, in one craft field, the means of entering into spiritual continuity with creative men and to share with them the deep satisfaction of the creative process.

BERNARD LEACH - RECOLLECTIONS

Michael Cardew

I think I can claim to be Bernard Leach's first European pupil. I started work at the Leach Pottery in August, 1923, and was there until June, 1926, except for an eight weeks' absence in the Mediterranean countries. I ought to be able to give you some illuminating and valuable memories; yet when I look back, my recollections seem scrappy and superficial. I remember quite well what I myself thought and did and planned in that rather distant age, but disappointingly little about my master. No doubt I was a very self-centred (as well as "pot-centred") young man.

I think also it was partly due to our age difference of 15 years, which is nearly always a difficult one - the master is not old enough to be one's father, nor yet young enough to be an elder brother.

On top of that, there was the effect of the 1914 war. I had been, by a few months, too young for the slaughter, but it permeated the whole climate of those years of adolescence during which the future pattern of character is indelibly stamped; and then suddenly, in 1918, gave place to an almost hysterical sense of relief and emancipation. So in those days Leach appeared to our rather irreverent eyes as a perfectly preserved example of an "English Edwardian". When he returned to Britain in 1920 he had only been away for about ten years; but we, the post-war generation, felt as if we had crammed about fifty years of mental change into that fatal decade. He must have found us distressingly blasé and cynical; we on our side felt slightly inhibited - for instance if the subject of Freud came up, one was not at all sure how shockable he would be. (We were still sufficiently old-fashioned to dislike the idea of

shocking our elders.)

I first met Leach in December, 1922, or it may have been January, 1923, when I was still a student at Oxford. I had begun to learn to throw at Braunton Pottery in North Devon, and had seen there a short article in the Pottery Gazette about this new potter from Japan. That winter I hired a bicycle and rode down to Truro to see the pottery there, promising myself to go on to St. Ives if there was a train. There was a train, and I reached St. Ives in the late winter afternoon, just before dark, and walked up the Stennack to where a wooden sign with rather 'curly' lettering said "The Leach Pottery." Inside I was greeted by George Dunn, the pottery watchdog and general factotum. "The Boss" wasn't in, but Mr. Hamada was there, in the small bedroom where the Sliphouse now is. So he presented me to Mr. Hamada, and we began talking pots. Would there be any chance of a job here for me when I left Oxford? Yes quite possibly, because he (Hamada) was nearly due to return to Japan. It was dark now, and we walked the two miles through the fields to the Count House, Carbis Bay, where Leach then lived, talking all the way. There I met Leach and Mrs. Leach, and the children - David then about 12 years old, and Michael, and the three girls. We ate a meal, using plates and cups of grey stoneware with decoration in a reserved blue-black pigment. When he heard I wanted to work in the pottery Leach said, or implied "Let's see first what your ideas are", and handed me a deep bowl with a matt paper-grey glaze and a decoration of incised fluting. (See the illustration, Potter's Book 2nd edition page 4.) "What do you make of that? Probably Tenth Century." Of course I didn't make anything of it. I had seen and admired some exciting sepia-painted Tzu-chou pots, which at that time were beginning to appear for the first time in London, but I had never seen anything like this bowl before. Luckily I had enough sense not to say anything stupid. I felt myself then to be (and still to a great extent am) a "Western Barbarian". What Leach began to teach me then, I am only now beginning to learn.

In August, 1923, Leach came over to my father's house in North Devon. The house was full of pots by E. B. Fishley of Fremington, whom Leach described as the last of the English peasant potters. He did not say very much about the pieces we most admired, but was enthusiastic about the pitchers and oval baking dishes, which we had always relegated to the kitchen. He made us

look at them with new eyes, and realise that here, and not in the drawing-room pieces, the true English tradition was to be found.

Those early years must have been an anxious time for Leach, because the financial backing which brought him over from Japan to Cornwall had met with unforeseen disaster, and the venture had to fend for itself from the very beginning. In October, 1923, Hamada held an exciting exhibition of his work in Bond Street, but his last firing had finally burnt out the old kiln. When I returned to St. Ives at the beginning of November, Hamada was already about to leave, and Mr. Matsubayashi, a young potter who represented the 39th generation of the Asahi Pottery tradition, was getting ready to build a new kiln, the rest of us acting as "supporting labour".

Mr. Matsubayashi was no artist, but a very accomplished craftsman and technologist. During that winter he gave us evening lessons in the theory of pottery. His best pupil was Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, who took conscientious notes of his lectures. At that time I thought the theory of ceramics did not matter, and I took almost no notes at all. (I lived to regret this missed opportunity.) Leach himself attended the lectures, rather as a philosophical critic than as a student.

In the pottery we all worked very hard. I learnt to throw saggars without losing too much skin, to wash china clay and mix bodies, and to make firebricks from crude china clay rammed into a mould. Much of our energy was devoted to reviving the slipware tradition, making large dishes both thrown and moulded. I learnt from Leach the supreme importance of shape, and how much it depends on subtle differences of form, even in such apparently simple things as plates and dishes. He would show me an old slipware dish and say "Try to get that completeness of form - it is like a full moon!"

We also made a lot of Raku at that time, chiefly with a view to keeping the wolf from the door. All this provided plenty of practice in throwing, and a very good foundation of experience in pioneer work.

The first firing of the new kiln was, as first firings of new kilns are apt to be, a failure. The stoneware in the first chamber

was disappointing - ashed and underdone. The slipware in the second chamber was practically a dead loss. We had not realised how very sensitive galena is to damp conditions - the lead had volatilised, leaving the surface starved and rough. Someone quoted the old saying, "Experience keeps a hard school, but fools will learn in no other". "Well," retorted Leach, "I should rather reverse the proverb and say 'They are fools who would ever think to learn in any other'".

Meals at the Leach Pottery were a great thing in those days. We each had to take turns, week by week, to be cook. Here also we had to learn by experience; for the most part, enthusiasm and good appetite had to make up for lack of skill. One great lesson I learnt was the proper Japanese way to boil rice. Leach's week as cook was always the best. He knew how to make interesting food from simple materials, leaving a minimum amount of work for the "washers-up". Chopsticks were always used by Leach, Hamada and Matsubayashi but (luckily for me) were not dé rigueur. I was always much too hungry at meal times to spare any time to learn a new skill. It was not until 1929 that I learnt the art and thus acquired a new pleasure in life.

One of the mainstays of our diet was what George Dunn called "Raw Fry", but sometimes in the evening we had our local version of the Japanese Giu-na-be - the gas ring on the table, meat and spinach simmering in the frying pan, with "marmite" as a makeshift substitute for Shoyu.

Perhaps the best thing about those meals was the plates and bowls we used. There were some beautiful Tzu-chou rice bowls and plates which Leach had bought from coolies at Shanghai or Hong Kong for a penny or two each: they were rough but had infinite refinement in shape and in the slight, summary brush decoration. True potters keep their souls and their brains in their stomachs. Eating from these exciting bowls and plates, we went on to discussions of how they were made, in a metaphysical as well as technical sense. I can only remember one such discussion, which turned on technical matters. We were looking at a turquoise green Chinese pot, and Leach said "I wish we could go to the place where it was made, and see what they use: it is sure to be something quite simple". Matsubayashi smiled, drew his breath through his teeth

in the true Japanese way, and said, after a pause, "I think - ah - rather complicated!"

The year 1925 was a critical one in Leach's life. Sir William Rothenstein had to appoint a new head of ceramics at the Royal College of Art, and chose William Staite Murray, chiefly I suppose because Murray lived near London, and it would obviously have been difficult for Leach to hold this post and still work at St. Ives. This was a blow not only to Leach himself but to all of us. And though Staite Murray had a profound and fruitful influence on all his pupils, I still feel that Rothenstein was wrong and that Leach would have been the right man for that job. Murray was too much the pure and absolute artist, comparatively uninterested in pots as objects of utility, still less interested in industrial design. It always seems to me there is something sterile in this approach to pottery. Leach, though absolutely uncompromising where standards are involved, has always been deeply concerned with the problems of the possibility (or impossibility) of works of real ceramic beauty coming out of the factories, for the daily use of the "common man".

It has been well said that there are no "ifs" in History; but the history of modern pottery in England would perhaps have been different if Bernard Leach had had that post, and we might have been spared that extreme "swing of the pendulum" by which the Pottery School in South Kensington has, since about 1947, been oriented exclusively to the North Staffordshire Whiteware tradition.

It would have been a good thing not only for English pottery, but also for Leach himself, who at that period was continually feeling frustrated by the geographical isolation and provincialism of St. Ives, where the local "art colony" did not recognise potters as artists and only admitted Leach to their club because he was an etcher.

About that time Leach acquired a motor-bicycle and sidecar, on which he used to roar up the Stennack "like a ball of fire" in George Dunn's phrase. In the spring of 1926 he arranged with the Russell Workshops at Broadway in the Cotswolds to come up and give potting demonstrations as part of an Easter exhibition of rural crafts and industries. I was to come up too and take care of the throwing.

It was a memorable journey, Leach driving, with me riding on the carrier, and the sidecar full of our luggage. We took three days and two nights to reach Broadway. Here we were greeted by Gordon Russell (now Director of the Council of Industrial Design) who was already planning to transform the Russell Workshops in the direction of greater mechanisation - his idea was that machines plus good design would add up to a satisfactory substitute for the instinctive craftsmanship of the past.

There were many long arguments during that April between Gordon Russell and an architect on the one side, and Leach supported by myself on the other, during which Leach and I always seemed to be getting the worst of it. I don't remember the arguments in detail, but I suspect that both sides were right in the sense that Gordon Russell and his friend were thinking of furniture and architecture, where drawing-board design can be, and has to be, carried out "by proxy" and where there is more donkey-work to be done by machines; whereas Leach and I were chiefly thinking of a much more personal art, in which there is no substitute for the individual thrower's sensitivity, skill and judgment.

The saying of Samuel Butler that "in the end, the world will only follow those who have despised as well as served it" may justly be applied to Bernard Leach's career. One hates to use ready-made phrases; but in the early nineteen twenties he really was a voice crying in the wilderness, and his work was, to an extent distressing to him and discreditable to the British public, despised and rejected. That public was not yet ready for such deliberately "unshowy" work. In those days the popular idea was that an artist potter should produce glossy, highly finished, brightly coloured rarities, or paint in a meticulous post-Preraphaelite style on ready-made white plates from Stoke-on-Trent. His work came as a shock and a rebuke to those who admired the meretricious and the anaemic. As Ruskin publicly accused Whistler of "charging 200 guineas for throwing a pot of paint in the face of the public", so there must have been hundreds of suburban Ruskins who (privately) accused Leach of throwing a lump of clay in their faces, and having the impudence to charge a guinea or two for doing so. But in spite of much discouragement he stuck to his standards and beliefs, and after many years the British public has come (more or less) to recognise those standards and those values.

Leach's potting life has been that of a great pioneer, and his influence has perhaps been greatest on those who from conviction or necessity or temperament (or all three) have the pioneer's approach to pottery. His principles, sometimes explicit and sometimes implied, may be said to have been these: Pottery is a fundamental craft and should be pursued in a fundamental way. Beware of all "short cuts". Begin at the beginning. The simplest materials and the simplest methods are often the best. The most primitive work is often the most refined. Potters must be artists, but they should make things that are useful as well as decorative, otherwise they are in danger of losing the common touch. Teapots, cups, dishes, casseroles, are just as interesting as pots for flowers, for "Eternity is in love with the productions of Time".



MASU MINAGAWA. A PORTRAIT DATED 1953

Masu Minagawa aged 80 BL 53



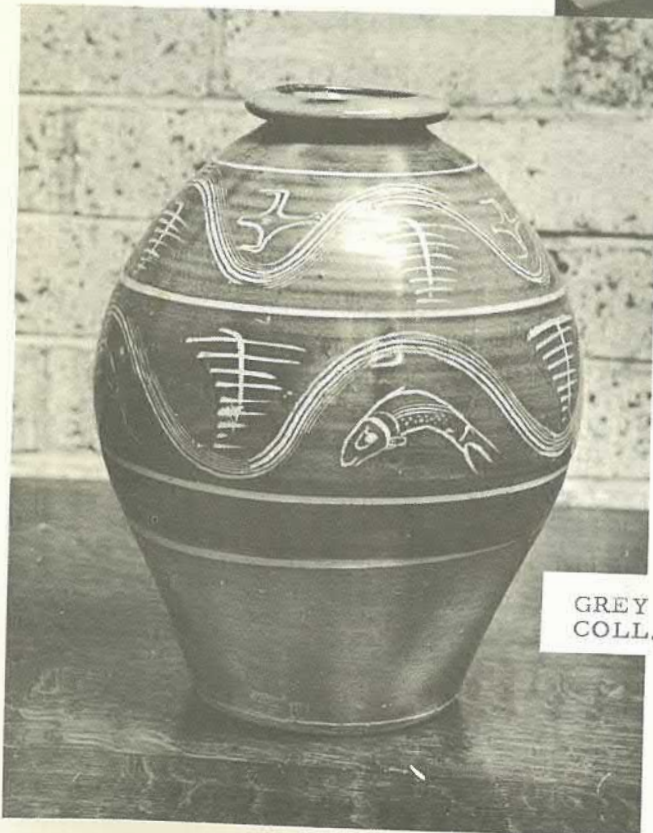
PELICANS. BOTH SKETCHES REPRODUCED FROM DRAWINGS ON JAPANESE POSTCARDS.

Bl.

BERNARD LEACH WORKING IN HIS STUDIO



STONEWARE JAR - COBALT WASH OVER WAX RESIST
DECORATION WITH IRON PIGMENT BRUSHWORK
COLL. NAPIER MUSEUM



GREY STONEWARE JAR INCISED DECOR.
COLL. NAPIER MUSEUM



PRESS-MOULDED BOTTLE - INCISED DESIGNS UNDER RAW
GLAZE

A FEW LINES ON BERNARD LEACH

Ray Chapman-Taylor

The editor has asked me to write a few lines about my relationship with Bernard Leach. It came about more or less by accident.

About twenty years ago I had made a wheel for my school children to work with and was trying to get a little useful information about pottery when I came across his book. Before I had made much practical use of it - we built a kiln in the playground and fired some biscuit - the army intervened. My next contact with Leach was in Japan when I used his book to help me look at some Japanese pottery and to trace the whereabouts of Hamada, Kawai and Tomimoto. Tomimoto had shifted house. Kawai was ill when I was near his home, but Hamada was well and producing pots when I visited him at Mashiko. My first letter to Leach was simply to give him news of Hamada.

The influence of a man like Leach does not all come directly from his own pots. After reading his book I made up my mind to bring back from Japan a small collection of pots that New Zealand potters might use as a sort of standard of reference. This little collection has influenced some local potters to a small degree, a circle of influence somewhat remote from the pebble that Leach himself dropped in the pond.

Back in New Zealand I wanted a few cups and saucers and wrote to St. Ives to get them. It then occurred to my daughter, Helen, that someone ought to try to get Leach pottery into the country and make it available at a reasonable price. We approached Leach about this and he agreed. Shortly afterwards, Harry Davis

also agreed to send some pots. We hoped these pots would spread the gospel of Bernard Leach in a practical way for although he has preached plenty of sermons in words his best ones are in pots. These show us what he really means.

After several years of this I was able to go to England and visit the master. As a matter of fact I visited three masters on the same day - Cardew in the morning, Davis in the afternoon, and Leach in the evening, each at his own pottery. The measure of Bernard Leach can be taken from two statements by Cardew and Davis, which I quote from memory, but the sense of which I remember very well because I was so impressed at the time that both should have said practically the same thing. One said, "Of course I owe everything to Leach". The other said, "Leach taught us everything". These very generous statements were made as simple and very obvious statements of fact. Of course, men like Cardew and Davis are not completely moulded by anyone. Their bodies are of too independent a texture. But there is equally no doubt that they could not have realised their promise without the help of Bernard Leach and both were proud to acknowledge the debt and to have been pupils at St. Ives.

And Leach himself? Nothing I can say is likely to add much to the picture most New Zealand potters have of Bernard. Each visitor brings away his own impression and each impression is different. He is a simple-seeming but really very complex man. At the time I met him he was very far from well and he was oppressed by business worries due to his taking over the pottery again from his son at the moment when the British Government had imposed a heavy purchase tax on pottery. That he was unfailingly kind and thoughtful at such a time does not make him a great potter but it makes him, what is better, a pretty good sort of man.

Leach has been called a writer and a decorator rather than a potter. Although he writes well and is a competent decorator this sort of statement is just nonsense. At seventy he is a far better potter than most men who have concentrated on potting will ever be. But it is a mark of his variety that people can imagine such things. I would be inclined to make a quite different appraisal and say that he is really a sort of religious philosopher; but experience with half a dozen great potters has led me to believe that to

be a great potter one must be a sort of religious philosopher, and that what such men do is use pottery to work out and express their view of life and of what it ought to mean. For them pottery is a way of thinking. They do not separate what they think and believe from what they do. Leach himself has been concerned with some of the urgent problems of our age - the fusion and diffusion of cultures, the use and development of traditions, the making of people and the living of the good life in a machine age. If he had not felt that pottery is capable of revealing something and saying something about human beings, and doing something to enhance their humanity, I doubt if he would have been a potter at all.

The last time I saw Bernard Leach he had just received into his home as an apprentice, Atsuya Hamada, the son of his own old fellow student, Shoji Hamada. Len Castle was working there at the same time. Now Len is back in Auckland and Atsuya is still travelling. It would be nice if Atsuya could return to Japan by way of New Zealand and these two fellow students could set up in New Zealand a pottery that would be as important for us as the Leach pottery at St. Ives has been to England. And should that happen no one would be better pleased than Bernard Leach.

AT ST. IVES IN THE EARLY YEARS

Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie

I met Bernard Leach for the first time at one of his earliest shows, in 1923. It was the first show of modern stoneware I had ever seen, and I thought it was wonderful. Bernard, a long spidery man, giving a curious impression of shagginess in a Norfolk jacket and an extensive moustache, appeared to be about eight feet high and much older than he was: he must in fact have been about thirty-five. Moved by a sudden impulse I asked him, if he ever thought of taking a pupil, to think of me. But he, not unnaturally, took a poor view of that; he said hastily that he had Michael Cardew coming to him shortly and did not want anyone else. I left him my address in case he should change his mind, and went away sorrowful like the young man in the Bible, but for different reasons. I don't think he ever did change his mind; but the St. Ives Pottery was going through a difficult time just then; and it occurred to his partner-secretary, Edgar Skinner, that it might be worth while to collect a paying stooge. So I was allowed to join the party for a fortnight on trial; and the fortnight must have gone all right, for they let me join up for a year, a month or two later, in January 1924.

The team at St. Ives at that time consisted of Bernard, Skinner, Michael, Leach, Shoji Hamada, Matsubayashi, and an elderly ex-fisherman called George Dunn, who lived in the pottery cottage at the end of the garden with his wife and a rabbit warren of young Dunns. He was like something out of a book about buccaneers, stocky, very short, indestructibly good tempered and devoted to Bernard. If "the Cap'n" had taken an illicit fancy to any of his neighbours' goods he would undoubtedly have found them on his doorstep next morning; for what Dunn did not know about wrecking, looting and smuggling would have gone in a nutshell. When he

be a great potter one must be a sort of religious philosopher, and that what such men do is use pottery to work out and express their view of life and of what it ought to mean. For them pottery is a way of thinking. They do not separate what they think and believe from what they do. Leach himself has been concerned with some of the urgent problems of our age - the fusion and diffusion of cultures, the use and development of traditions, the making of people and the living of the good life in a machine age. If he had not felt that pottery is capable of revealing something and saying something about human beings, and doing something to enhance their humanity, I doubt if he would have been a potter at all.

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approved of anything he said "handsome". When he disapproved he spat.

Hamada, rather silent, quick moving, with an air of always knowing exactly what he wanted to do and being determined to do it at all costs, went back to Japan soon after I arrived. But Matsubayashi stayed on all that year. He was a precise little man, a member of a well known Kyoto pottery family that had been making pots for thirty-nine generations, and a very competent chemist and engineer. His pots were rather terrible; and Bernard looked on them with a withering contempt which he was at no pains whatever to hide. It seemed a little hard on Matsu, who made him a beautiful kiln and quantities of very fine saggars, lavishing on his building all the artistry that he never got into his pots. But Matsu, wrapped in a cloak of complacency that was so impermeable as to be comic and rather endearing, remained quite unperturbed by all the things that Bernard said.

Michael at that time was twenty-two, looked like Apollo, played recorders and the clarinet and was learning Chinese. He was subject to attacks of sudden fury that were extraordinarily funny, appearing like thunder out of a clear sky and usually disappearing as suddenly. There was one splendid occasion, which I unhappily missed, when, moved by some unspecified irritation, he solemnly threw twelve large bucklers into the pottery stream. After which, with equal solemnity, he walked into the stream and threw them out again. It is recorded that nobody laughed. He and Matsu lived at the pottery, sleeping in two minute rooms upstairs. Each room had a rather beautiful Japanese bed, but there the resemblance ended; for Matsu's room looked like the bed-sitting room of a Victorian spinster with Oriental accretions, and Michael's like something out of Murgers' *Vie De Boheme*.

Skinner had, I think, spent his youth in a bank and his age in Italy. The bank had given him a sense of order that must have been very useful to the pottery, and Italy had added a philosophical outlook that was undoubtedly very useful to himself. Kind and polite, a painter of watercolours upon which Bernard cast a baleful eye, he trotted in and out of the sheds, wrote the business letters, and usually cooked the midday meal which we all ate by the big open fire in the main shed. My chief memories of these meals are of curry

and rice, interminable arguments, black treacle and Bernard making sauces over the open fire. When not making sauces he drew pots on a large blackboard or made them in his corner of the shed, throwing and turning on the stick wheel which at that time he almost always used. "There is no drudgery in pottery" he pontificated happily, slapping the clay down on the wheel. Michael, kneading at his bench, Matsu, handmaking special bricks for the firemouth of the new kiln, Dunn at his sieving and I, grinding cobalt, felt a bit less dogmatic about it; but anyhow there was plenty that was not drudgery and on the whole it was very good fun.

At intervals Matsu had us all round the table taking notes while he lectured about kiln construction, chemical formulae or the plasticity of clay. "Velly important the cray should have the plasty" intoned Matsu, who never learned the difference between the letters L and R, but shook them up in a bag and took what came. "For which put in tub with water till smell bad, yes leally strike your nose too much, when have the plasty and perfect condition for make the cray body." The lectures were full of good sense whenever it was possible to disentangle their remarkable English; and I think it was memories of them that started Michael off long afterwards on his researches into potters' materials.

St. Ives in 1924 ended at the pottery; beyond it were fields and farms and heathery moors looking over the sea. Very occasionally on one of the rare sunny days of that characteristically wet year, we downed tools and picnicked on the cliffs. But for the most part we worked rather steadily; and gradually the big kiln took shape until the day came when it was fired for the first time to stoneware temperature. The stoking, after a slow fire of - I think - coal overnight, was all of wood; great logs in the firemouth and, towards the end, sky firing with split sticks straight into the chamber. If all three chambers were used the second was side stoked up to stoneware temperature when the first was finished, and the raw ware biscuited itself in the third meanwhile on the waste heat from the other two.

The first firing began, I remember, with a ceremonial offering of salt on the fire arch. And gradually, through the long day's slow stoking, an atmosphere of tension developed that would have been quite suitable on a battlefield. The rate of firing in-

creased and the kiln grew hotter. So did we. There was a great deal of black smoke billowing out of the chimney, making an acrid fog in the shed. We got blacker. Night came, and in the flickering light of what Matsu called the "bro hoes" (blow holes) and the crackle and flare of the logs in the fire mouth we moved about like creatures out of one of the more sinister creations of Hieronymus Bosch. And then, in the grey dawn, something began to go wrong. Matsu took out a spy brick, and as the wicked little flame that jumped out at him died down, peered into the incandescent kiln and let out a ghoulish roar. "Oh-ho-ha-ha-hay - awful sings happen," sang Matsu with every appearance of enjoyment, as a six foot bung of saggars leaned slowly forward and collapsed on to the front wall, blocking up the draught.

I shall always be grateful to Bernard for letting me be at St. Ives that year. It was a great experience and he was very kind, ungrudgingly generous with information and suggestions. He did not know the meaning of the words "trade secret", and I have never known anyone who would give his time and attention so completely to another person's problems. I shall always remember how he came to us at Coleshill when we got into a muddle with a kiln, and sorted out an idiotic error in construction. "Your chimney is too small," he said. When Matsu said, "Chimney 10 x 10 but a round one is best," he meant a 12 inch diameter tube, not a ten inch. Well, of course. But it was Bernard who spotted it.

THE COLONIAL RESPONSE TO LEACH

Barry Brickell

With much pleasure do I contribute to the acknowledgment of a stimulus which has revitalized the approach of the modern studio potter. The consequences are world wide, but appear in New Zealand with the significance of a true beginning. We are as yet quite lacking in the strengths of any tradition which we can honestly call our own. Socially, we are still firmly tied to the homeland, while geographically we are very much apart. About us is a great concentration of natural wealth, for long abused by commerce but becoming recognized at last. Although still at a shaky stage, this realization by painters, writers and potters is starting to bear fruit.

Just over a hundred years ago, the first large-scale European settlement of New Zealand began. The English pioneers were headstrong and energetic in a vulnerable land of natural luxuriance. They quickly set about the inevitable task of changing the new habitat to suit themselves. The dominance of nature could not be excluded too soon. Exploitable wealth such as kauri timber and gum, gold and loot ensured boom settlement with its accompanying industry. This provided an excuse for small clay workings to start up, making bricks, tiles and a few hand-thrown wares. These included ink pots and storage jars, often salt-glazed in the manner of the English potteries of the time. The work had a ruggedness and vitality of its own, no doubt quite harmonious with the cast iron pots and hand-wrought equipage of pioneering life. At the same time some very fine colonial painting was being done by Kinder, Martin, Sharpe, Hoyte and others together with pen and washes of fine draughtmanship, for example those of Ashworth. Nevertheless it is significant that colonial art, least of all pottery, was scarcely

influenced by Maori art or art forms. The Maoris, with a complete lack of potting knowledge, barely touched upon their vast resources of good clay. It was used chiefly as red ochre or "kokowai" in the dressing of wood carvings and panels, or as paint for traditional pattern-work. Their "pot equivalents" were made from wood, gourds, stone and plant leaves in the traditional manner of the Polynesians. These forms, which have a great power, quite characteristic of Oceanic art in general, are at last beginning to capture the devotion of a few "pakeha" artists. It is part of the Western general awakening to the work of the "primitives".

After the turn of the century, as our population grew, so did the odd individual potter spring to light, though not always to life. They set up their kilns in some of the rapidly expanding towns. Though few in proportion, they were not commercially minded to the extent of the general fraternity around them. Their work was a kind of craft pottery which, though unrelated to New Zealand, did have utility value. After World War II, people began to find more leisure with time to contemplate the broadening of their narrower interests. They were already surrounded by great hoardings of "art pottery", junk, and architecture of Victorian vulgarity. What could more distract the attention of New Zealanders from their own land? Little Englands were being established on the plains while fences and fires blocked off their feelings for the true native environment. The potters' clay and glazes were often imported, so little of the earthenware produced achieved any degree of meaning. Unlike that of America, our local pottery suffered a poor start, for the colonization of New Zealand began at an unfavourable time.

As awareness of our clays increased, so did the number of local potters. Even Auckland's pottery factory began to incorporate local clays into their "China" body. Apart from our railway cups and saucers, there was every likeness to the products of European potteries.

Finally, the greatest stimulus to World studio pottery was received in New Zealand in the later 1940's. It came from Bernard Leach, following the publication of *A Potter's Book* in 1940. Its arrival at an ebb tide period of art in general was highly opportune, for Leach discovered the lasting vitality and great feeling for nature of the East. It seems that the better of European art was

equally sound, but strikingly opposite in context to that of the East. By a synthesis of both, Leach has shown us a completely revitalized approach to potting. Philosophically, this had to come through our advances in transportation and education, but it is Bernard Leach who has been an unparalleled leader in the true synthesis of East and West.

The book or "bible" as it is often termed, stimulated healthy creative ideas in many thinking people, who are concerned with the spirit of living. In fact it contains a philosophy of potting, but it is a philosophy which is indeed applicable to all art. Leach was the first to point out many facts which are now taken for granted. In the first page, we find power in a fine example: "Factories have practically driven folk-art out of England; it survives only in out of the way corners even in Europe, and the artist-craftsman, since the day of William Morris, has been the chief means of defence against the materialism of industry and its insensibility to beauty." Much of the first chapter is concerned with the place of the artist-craftsman in present society, for whether we like it or not we are undergoing a process of "dehumanization". In New Zealand the pressure of commerce and materialistic thought is high; though we are renowned for an individuality that is in keeping with our native environment. This may save us in the end. As Leach points out in many ways, the beautiful things around us are the most important. If we have a true understanding of beauty our work only then may inherit beauty. Dr. Yanagi, leader of the Japanese craft movement, in referring to handicraft objects, says "...utility is the first principle of beauty". Let us not be confused then, by what we want in pottery. Look at the results when someone tries to turn it into an art, self-consciously. Throughout the book, Leach raises the most interesting points in connection with philosophical thought. His clear and powerful way of explanation never leaves one confused, for herein he is a brilliant teacher.

Let us now consider the interpretation of Leach's work in New Zealand. Inevitably there are some of us who might have arrived at some sound working philosophy of our own accord. But through his guidance, our awareness of a philosophy has been greatly hastened, and enlightenment has come sooner in our lives. Through the minority, the spirit of beauty may some day reach the

majority. There are always those who tend to copy rather than to interpret an influence. Because of their narrower thinking, they become cogs in a cult, say of stoneware versus earthenware. (I have heard the same between painters, of water versus oil). It is human enough to expect a "Leach cult" to follow from a great stimulus, but the indications are already clear that such is short lived, here in New Zealand. Pots, based on Leach's teachings, are beginning to appear. They have a new character, one of great clay feeling in the beauty of understanding. I have seen some vigorous and natural potting lately, with a selection of glazes and mastery of firing that is truly worthwhile. The Oriental environment is reflected in Oriental pots; let us have some New Zealand pots. They must contain the spirit of New Zealand. Equally, beware that we don't copy Oriental pots, or at the other extreme become individualists trying to make consciously "original" pots. True beauty is neither copyist nor individualistic, but flows from the artist's true understanding of his materials. Thus there is considerable untapped beauty in the work of primitives. In New Zealand we have this wealth of material about us, waiting to be answered.

If this letter has wandered and strayed from time to time, it is only through the magnitude of its cause. The acknowledgment of a great leader may not come in his lifetime, but if it does, I am sure it is one of the greatest rewards that can be given. Though I have never met Bernard Leach, he has done for me what he has for others; promoted my contribution to the world of potting. In the highest, may not pottery-making be regarded as a great chapter in the history of mankind? I first read A Potter's Book when I was a schoolboy, several years ago. Now I find its content so great that I am in the process of rediscovering it. For a yet fuller understanding of Leach, one must also turn to his several other publications, amongst which A Potter's Portfolio is a collector's piece. Let us then, in the acknowledgment of a leader, accept the spirit of his teachings with gratitude, for words are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.

A NOTE ON JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY WARES

Bernard Leach

From a catalogue to an Exhibition of
Japanese Art held at the Berkeley
Galleries, London,
6th June - 9th July, 1955.

The war had the effect of banishing Japanese arts from the English scene and of hardening many hearts towards the Japanese people.

That is doubly unfortunate because peoples are made up of all kinds and the Japanese have a high degree of sensibility which they demonstrate in their arts and crafts, and art is by its very nature international in value. They have moreover "the eyes to see" trained to that purpose during centuries.

Their Tea Masters have been arbiters of taste and culture who have set standards of aesthetic appreciation such as no other race has approximated.

For some four hundred years these men of refined perception, regardless of rank, have foregathered in an almost Quakerish quietism to drink tea together and to enjoy all that pertains to beauty and poetic insight in the things of the house, - pottery, painting, calligraphy, lacquer, food, flowers, movement and human relationship itself.

Various untranslatable words, expressive of subtle moods of perception, have percolated from them into normal use such, for example, as the adjective "shibui", which is understood by everybody in Japan. It expresses the highest quality of true beauty, - austerity, nobility, warmth, certitude and unpretentiousness combined.

That by itself is a remarkable achievement for without standards we are lost, and when the standards are too private, as with us now, we are confused.

That the standards of Tea gradually petrified and even fell into downright vulgarity under the disintegrating influence of Western Industrialism cannot be denied. But one does not judge a culture by its debasement, but by searching into its roots for the secret lore which gave it a unique vitality.

The pots employed in the Tea Ceremony, - bowl, caddy, waterpot, etc., are probably the most difficult for us to appreciate, to assess and to display. Their virtues, even when one has crossed the barriers of the meretricious and the merely imitative, are often hidden behind rough exteriors. They are at the furthest remove from Greek pots, or in more recent times, Sevres, Meissen or Chelsea. When best, they are unselfconscious, in fact they are what Buddhists would describe as undifferentiated, deriving their appeal from the born character of the potter working in his native tradition.

They are made by potters, and good amateurs, in a land of earthquakes where nothing can be built for permanence and the Tea Rooms are like charming human birds' nests in rock gardens where nature, irregularity, poignancy and brevity hold sway.

The prototypes of Japanese Tea Bowls, so much admired by men of Tea were called "O Edo". Originally ordinary cheap Korean rice bowls, they were taken out of their commonplace background and enshrined in the most exclusive and refined Tea Rooms of Japan wherein alone this unobtrusive beauty can be seen in a plain unvarnished setting of severe exquisiteness.

Our own pots spring in the main from classic roots, Roman, Greek or Renaissance, and have a bias towards the symmetric. From our point of view these Japanese pots may be said to lean towards the asymmetric and in a broad viewing of ceramic values the extreme East is the complement and balance of the West.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE LEACH POTTERY¹

Len Castle

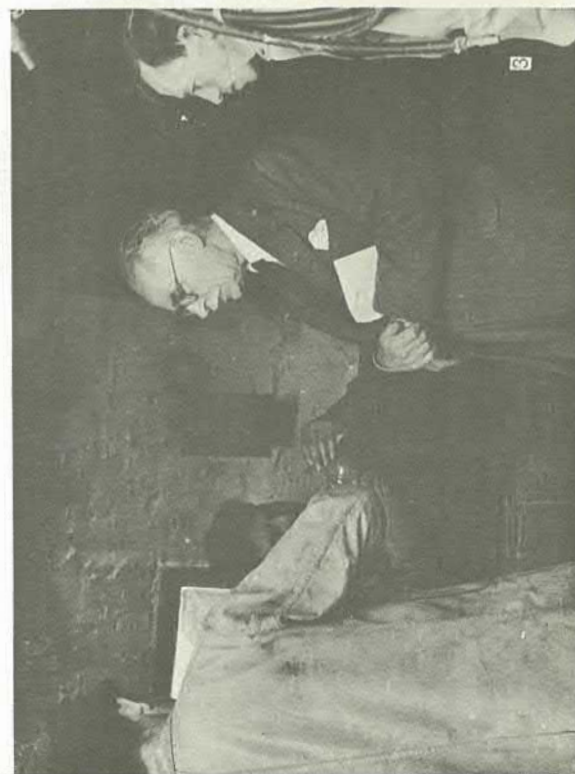
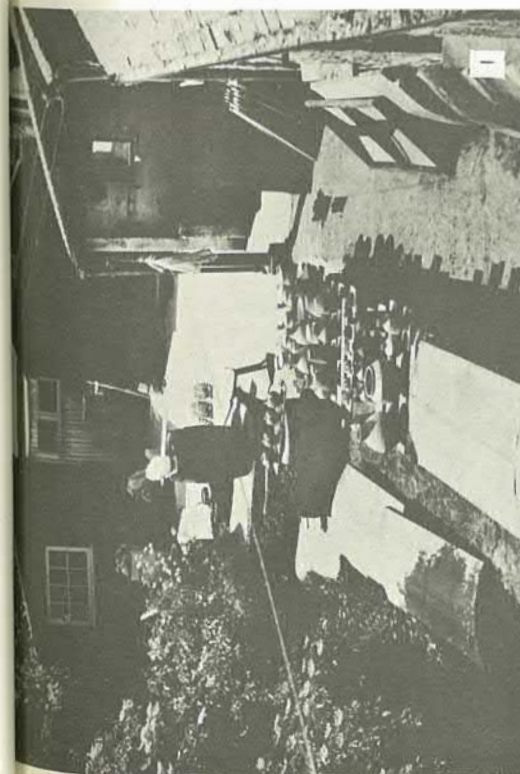
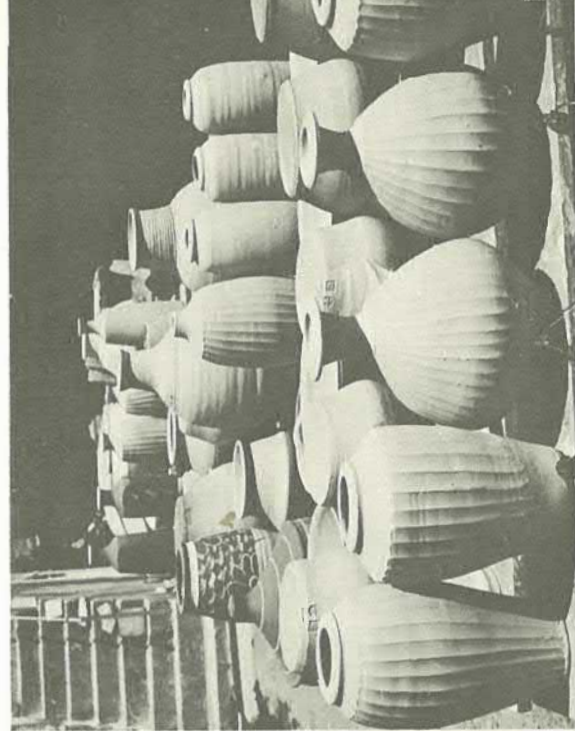
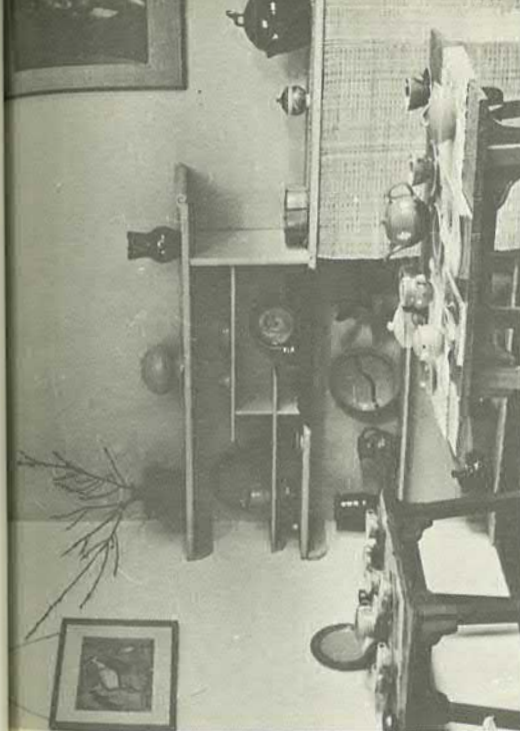
1. Some of the outbuildings of the Leach Pottery. In the background, laboratory, packing shed and office. In the foreground one of the drying troughs where the sieved slip slowly hardens on porous china clay bats. Beneath the elder trees runs the Stennack, a stream that drains the granite country beyond the pottery.
2. A corner of the showroom. Visitors have the opportunity to examine a representative selection of 'standard' items and 'individual' pieces in pleasant surroundings.
3. "This small pottery is an experiment both in aesthetics and in the human relationships which lie beyond that kind of work, which employs feeling as well as intellect and manual skill."

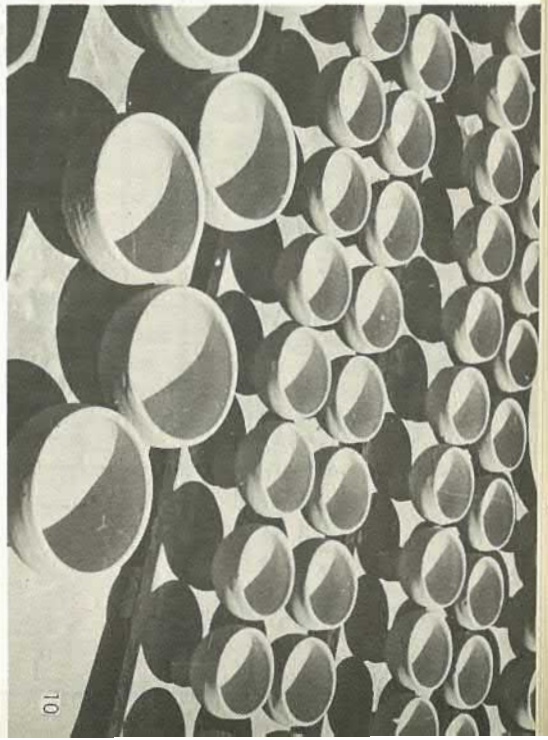
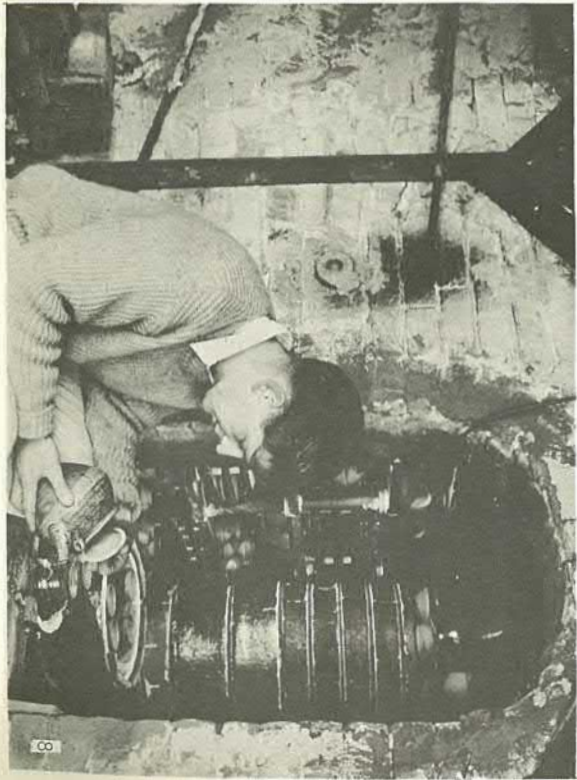
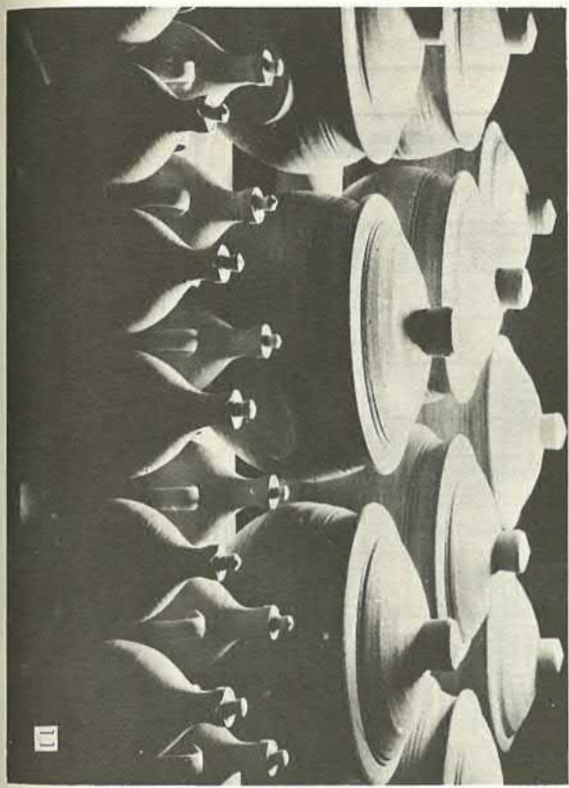
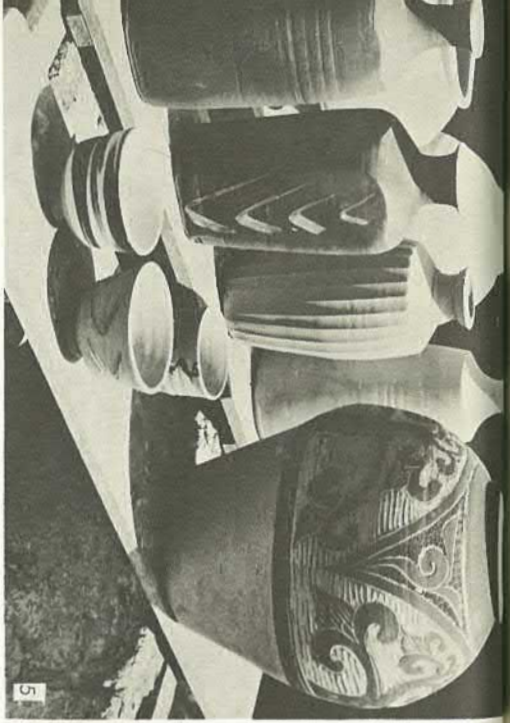
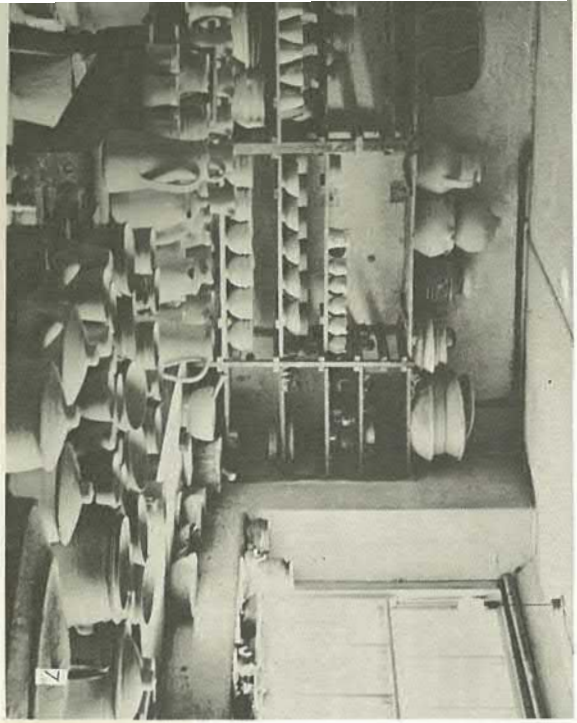
After each firing of the three chambered kiln informal discussions are held. It is an opportunity for analysis and criticism of the work of the previous three weeks. Left-right: Bill Marshall, Peter Woods, Bernard Leach and Joe Benny.

4. Unfired pots drying in the sun. In the foreground individual pots by Bernard Leach. The fluted pots after 'biscuiting' will be dipped in a tenmoku glaze that ranges in colour from black to rust red when fired.

¹ The photographs, numbers 1 to 12 (Plates 5, 6 and 7), were taken by Len Castle during his period of work at the Leach Pottery in 1956/57.

5. In the right foreground is a large 'individual' pot by Bernard Leach. The leather hard pot has been dipped in an ochreous slip. The 'Tree' pattern has been produced by sgraffito. The biscuited pot will be dipped in an oatmeal glaze.
6. Chamber II of the kiln is approaching full heat and a steady belch of flame comes from the crown of the chamber as Peter Woods removes the bung to check the effect of the side-stoking with wood.
7. Part of the glazing and decorating room. Biscuit fired pots are ready for checking, brushing and glazing. Jugs, mugs, beakers and porringers are 'double dipped'. The standard glazes used are oatmeal (usually over an ochreous slip), celadon and tenmoku.
8. After a stoneware firing. Firings take between 21-24 hours. Chamber I has been opened and most of the first two bungs of saggars removed. The temperature variation in the chamber ranges from 1310°C . near the top of the saggars to 1240°C . at the back of the bottom shelves. In this chamber oatmeal and tenmoku glazed pots are fired in the saggars and celadon glazed pots between the shelves. Pots placed on top of the saggars and shelves are unglazed on the outside and the exposed clay is 'toasted' and 'flashed' by the wood-ash during the final stoking. Len Castle examines a wood-ash glazed teapot.
9. The 'throwing' room. Dinah Dunn works at a kick wheel. Peter Woods is making 'snakes' that will be used to cushion the saggars in the kiln.
10. Porcelain wine cups recently glazed dry in the sun prior to kiln packing.
11. Unfired pots drying in the loft produce an interesting pattern; casserole dishes and vinegar bottles, sturdy and graceful forms.
12. Peter Woods, a student potter from Suffolk, at the fireplace in the workshop. Peter spent two years at the Leach Pottery and then left to start his own pottery at Leiston. He is especially interested in slipware.





WORKSHOP VISIT - THE LEACH POTTERY *

Murray Fieldhouse

Of the influences that have been brought to bear upon craft pottery during the last thirty years that of Bernard Leach has dominated. And it is proper that the first article in this series should concern itself with his brainchild.

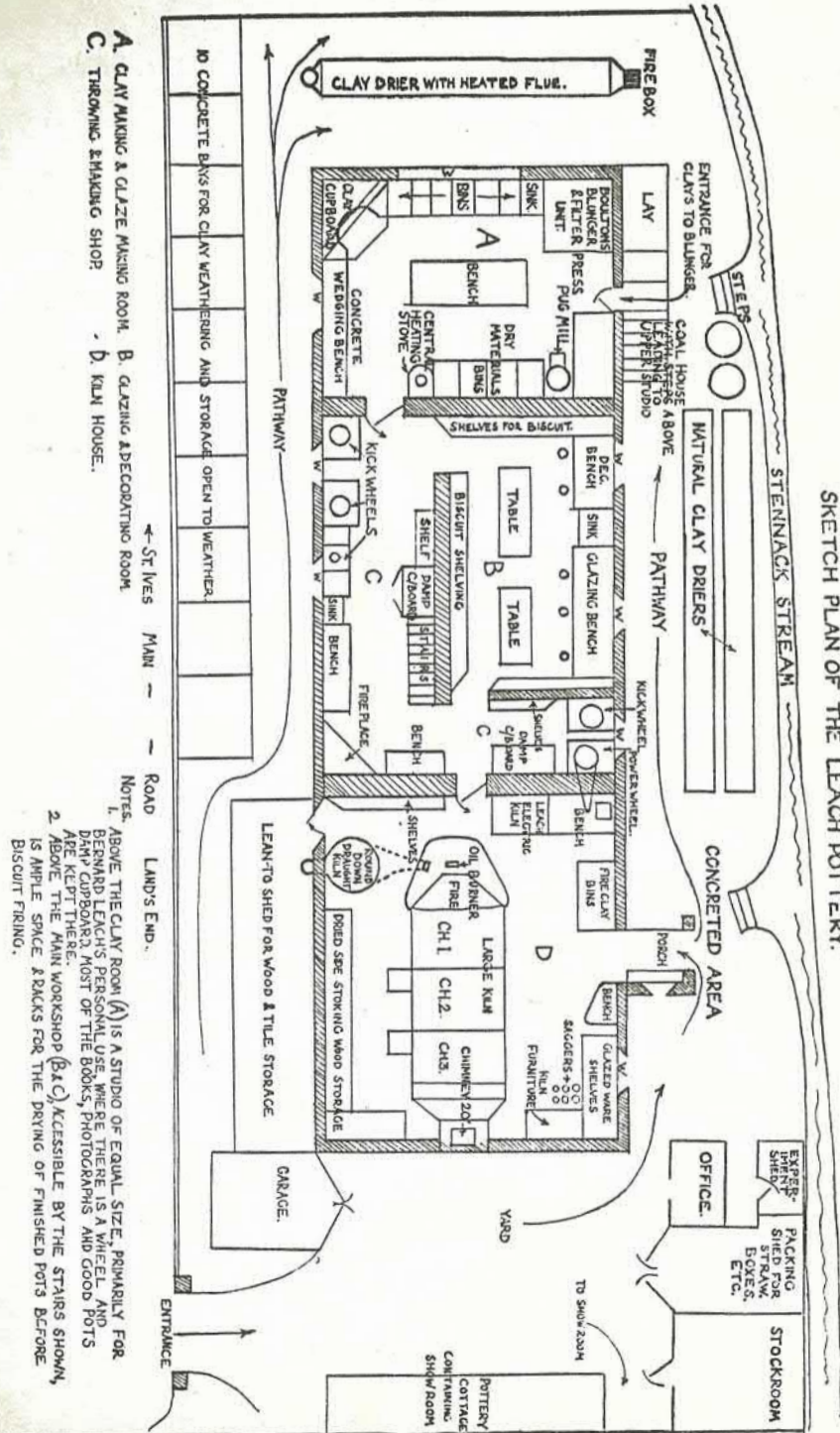
The tremendous impact of Leach at a time when the vitality of the earlier pioneers of the movement was spent is now little appreciated. But it is easily measured by the fact that, although in 1920 he was regarded as progressive and his work highly experimental, he is now largely regarded as the more conservative influence.

Most of what he has said and done has now been assimilated in this country, although his missionary zeal is still felt in the U.S.A. and other parts of the world. It has diffused into and been accepted by the movement to such an extent that some would only recognise his ability to formulate, better than others, inherent truths. Certainly new influences in this ceramic epoch are merely qualifications of his own, and are of minor significance: "Seeing the particular in the general instead of the general in the particular", as he no doubt would put it; in fact, leading to high feelings only if wholly exaggerated.

"To Leach or not to Leach?" is not the question. For one sees the work of any young potter growing out of him quite without its author knowing it. Whether more or less deliberate imitation of his work by those who have not spent considerable time in the Leach workshop is healthy or justified is quite another question,

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SKETCH PLAN OF THE LEACH POTTERY.



SKETCH PLAN OF THE LEACH POTTERY - REPRODUCED
WITH THE ARTICLE BY MURRAY FIELDHOUSE FROM
POTTERY QUARTERLY, No. 1, Vol. 1, P. 24.

and one which readers may care to discuss. It is the conviction of one of our most distinguished retailers that the practice is so dangerous as to outweigh much of the good that Leach had done.

Bernard Leach, son of a colonial judge, was born in 1887 in Hong Kong. At ten years of age he came to Beaumont College, and in 1903 was studying drawing and painting at the Slade under the disciplinary influence of Professor Tonks. After a few years in a bank, he went to the London School of Art, where John M. Swan was teaching painting and Frank Brangwyn etching.

In 1909, fascinated by his childhood memories and the writing of Lafcadio Hearn, he returned to the Far East, to Japan, as an art teacher, where, besides lecturing and teaching design, he gave the first demonstration in Japan of etching. Leach describes his introduction to pottery, in 1911, in his *Potter's Book*; how he was at a "sort of party" at which Raku ware was made; and how, taking in his hands a finished pot fresh from the kiln, he thought: "This is something I have got to do." "I began at once to search for a teacher, and shortly afterwards found one in Ogata Kenzan." (Sixth in the line of master potters who worked in the Kenzan style, but with a background of many more generations of traditional pottery behind him). "Old, kindly and poor; pushed on one side by the new commercialism and living in a little house in the northern slums of Tokyo." It was here that Leach persuaded his architect friend Tomimoto to try to throw a pot - both little knowing at the time that they were to become recipients of the certificate of proficiency that made them the only heirs to the title of Seventh Kenzan.

Later, Leach set up his kiln at the artists' colony of Abiko, but also worked for periods at other kilns, where he produced as wide a range of wares as blue and white, raku, overglaze enamels in addition to the temmoku and celadon in which he has gained so much distinction. His studies also took him to Korea and to China, the former country ultimately providing the maturing influence on his work. This, says Dr. Yanagi, the leader of the Japanese craft movement, who was in this country last year at the Dartington Conference, is not surprising - for Leach is for the austere gothic, and yet what he makes is intimate

and warm. He has never been an artist of an excessive or repulsive nature.

Leach had been in Japan about ten years when, in 1920, at the age of 33, he returned to England and set up a workshop at St. Ives. Soon he was joined and assisted by the young Shoji Hamada, who also had been absorbed into the craft and was from the pottery school of Kyoto. In a field beside a stream they built a pottery more after the style of the individual artist's studio than the country workshop. It comprised a small two-chambered climbing kiln on the same site as the present one, and the workshop extended as far as the existing glazing room. They were assisted by a local builder's labourer, George Dunn, who remained with the pottery until his death in 1949. Entirely raku and individual stoneware was made until 1923.

It was in 1922 that the pottery was joined by T. Matsubayashi, engineer, chemist and potter of the thirty-ninth generation. The disadvantage of the existing kiln was its size, which was not conducive to efficient performance. And it was Matsubayashi who rebuilt it with three chambers for longer service; working slowly and alone for nine months. Each chamber measured 6 ft. high and wide by 4 ft. deep, and the kiln held an average of a thousand pieces. Fired with wood, this kiln took about 35 hours to reach 1,250-1,300 C. About 24 hours of this time were spent stoking the first chamber with wood in the main furnace. Logs of dry pine were used, about two feet long; two or three pieces fed first into the firemouth every fifteen minutes and, after two or three hours, working up to a dozen logs every four minutes in the stokehole. When maturing temperature in Chamber I was reached, after about 23 hours, a soaking heat was maintained for 1 hour. By this time Chamber II had reached 900 C. and Chamber III 500 C. from heat overflowing from Chamber I. Side stoking then began, the heat entering Chamber III, if it contained biscuit ware, and if not was diverted into the chimney.

This same kiln is used today at St. Ives, but is now oil fired. The change involved reduction of the firemouth opening,

from 150 to 16 square inches, and insertion of a central wedge of brick in the combustion chamber (to spread the narrow flame) together with the special refractories required to stand the intense heat. The kiln was almost completely rebuilt in 1952 by David Leach including the relaying of the foundations. The flues were enlarged in the combustion chamber and better refractories were used, but no change was made in the basic design. A firing today takes 24 hours; wood fire increasing in the main firemouth for the first two hours; change to oil burner after the firemouth is thoroughly warmed up. Fire in an oxidising atmosphere for nine more hours until 900 C. is reached in the centre of Chamber I. Change to reduction with large flame showing when blowholes in Chamber I are opened. After 16 hours Cone 10 (1,300 C.) on top of the saggar bung, and Cone 8 (1,260 C.) at the side spyhole are half over. Chamber I is fired till the Cones are down by adding wood - side stoking to decrease oil consumption at the burner. This lasts for approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours making the total firing time of Chamber I, 17 to 18 hours. This last $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours of wood firing is done primarily to create a wood ash which is carried up the kiln on to all exposed ware by the strong draught. Unglazed exteriors become toasted in a manner similar to salting. During this final period the atmosphere is an alternating one every few minutes. At the start of the wood stoke there is smoke and flame dying away to clear oxidised flame and then repeated.

When Chamber I is finished the oil burner is moved to the side stoke opening of Chamber II, which is at about 900 C. The main firemouth is opened to allow air to run through, which is preheated by the time it reaches the oil flame. Chamber II rises to 1,300 C. in about six hours. Wood is again introduced during the end of the firing.

The kiln today holds about 2,800 pots, 1,200 biscuit and 1,600 gloss, one-third of these being placed in saggars and the rest open fired on the shelves behind saggars in Chambers I and II.

Another climbing kiln was built recently at Charnwood Priory by Vincent Ely, with the assistance of Mr. Heber Mathews,

of the Rural Industries Bureau.

In 1923 Hamada returned to Japan, and Matsubayashi returned a year later. By this time the pottery was receiving recognition, and between 1920 and 1931 several one-man exhibitions were held in Bond Street and its vicinity. In addition, work was shown in international exhibitions at Wembley, Paris, Milan and Leipzig.

Yet in 1921, when Leach published his "Potter's Outlook", it was clear that the many difficulties facing the individual artist craftsman were more likely to be solved in a movement towards group work. A team of craftsmen producing useful wares at moderate prices, to be retailed in selected shops and small galleries of sufficient taste and discrimination, was obviously a more healthy springboard for the reintegration of the crafts into society than the expensive precincts of Bond Street.

A standard useful ware was therefore evolved in Slipware and individual pots only in stoneware up to 1939. The slipware, production of which ceased in 1938, was available in approximately 40 different standard shapes. The body consisted of

61 parts local red clay from St. Erth,
23 parts waterground quartz,
16 parts china clay,

and was decorated with

Black Slip: 7 parts red slipware body: $2\frac{1}{2}$ parts red iron,

White Slip: Pikes silicious ball clay,

Red Slip: local clay,

and mixtures of these for intermediate colouring. The slipware was fired in a round updraught kiln built in 1925 and again in 1930, after the pattern of diagram p.181 Potter's Book, with shelves forming the segments of a circle. The kiln was preheated with a paraffin dripfeed into a tin of sawdust for 2 hours,

and the firing, to a temperature of 1,050 C., took 12 hours in all. The St. Ives slipware glaze ultimately consisted of litharge 3 parts, red clay 1 part, flint 1 part.

In 1934, an increasing amount of slipware was made, involving sometimes as many as a dozen firings without a break. Laurie Cookes and Harry Davis were at this time in charge of the pottery and working with tremendous energy, carrying out samples, taking orders, and setting out immediately to execute them.

During this time Bernard Leach was again in Japan, where he had been invited to assist with a national craft movement. With Dr. Yanagi as leader, a group of craftsmen travelled 4,000 miles lecturing and planning, and were ultimately rewarded with the building of a national museum of folk art.

Leach and his American friend Mark Tobey were financed in this visit by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst, of Dartington. As early as 1924 Leach had been invited to transfer his pottery to the Dartington Estate; and, though not feeling able to uproot at St. Ives, he did in fact intermittently teach at Dartington. Later, after returning from his second visit to Japan, he lived for a while at Dartington while working on A Potter's Book. During this period, David, Bernard Leach's son, who, in 1930, had decided to join the pottery, was in charge after a two-year course at the North Staffordshire Technical College, with a free hand to carry out a three-year development plan.

During his years as an apprentice David Leach was increasingly convinced that a long-term view was essential to the healthy survival of the workshop if his father's creative capacities were to be established and given continuity. He saw that the way in which he could most help was by becoming a good practical potter and concentrating upon those aspects of the work where lack of technical knowledge was causing heavy losses of good creative work. From 1937 to 1940 he was responsible for introducing oil firing and electric test kilns, making a systematic series of glaze and body trials. Boy apprentices were taken and trained in the making of and increasing the number of standard stoneware shapes,

subsequently justifying a catalogue. Bernard Leach did not return to St. Ives until 1940, but the shapes for repetition, for the most part, originated from his conceptions.

"During this period," says David Leach, "I thought little about my personal work, feeling that my first attention should be given to the building of the team and the practical establishment of the pottery, which must combine economic stability with good craftsmanship. I thought of my father as the creative force. I had a deep urge to make my own pots but no great impatience about it. This came later."

With the installation of the oil burner, stoneware temperatures became obtainable with little fatigue, and it was decided to turn the standard ware over entirely to oriental stoneware and porcelain, as being technically more amenable to the conditions of modern life. It is the feldspathic stoneware and, in particular, the celadon and temmoku types, for which the Leach pottery is best known. For some time the pottery depended for its stoneware body upon local materials - a red clay together with feldspar, china clay and sand. Later, Pikes silicious ball clay was introduced in compounding the porcelain body; then also into the stoneware body, making it more workable and less likely to blister if slightly overfired. The local red clay could still be added if a darker body was required, but the addition of red sand provides a pleasing texture. Today the standard stoneware body consists of

70 parts silicious ball clay,
5 parts red ball clay - 4% Fe_2O_3 ,
10 parts china clay,
15 parts red sand.

This recipe gives sufficient plasticity for good light throwing and stands up well at stoneware temperatures, with sufficient vitrification if the sand is fine enough. It has excellent drying properties and a good relationship with glazes.

At one time, the bodies were prepared by sieving the weighed materials into a barrel and siphoning off water as they settled. The sticky mess was dried out in a trough made of fire-clay bats. Today all clay is mixed in a 24 in. Boulton Blunger and then through a vibrating sieve. Most of the stoneware body is still dried in troughs the sand being added to the slip. A filter press is chiefly used for the porcelain body; if used for the stoneware, then sand is added at the pug mill.

The clay is finally tempered up by wedging and kneading by the throwers to their own personal preferences.

The standard stoneware is made in a number of different finishes, depending upon the shape:

1. Celadon and temmoku inside only, grey stoneware body outside.
2. Temmoku glaze all over.
3. Celadon glaze all over, sometimes with incised decoration in body.
4. Opaque glaze on grey body, decorated with cobalt or iron.
5. Oatmeal glaze, decorated with cobalt or iron, or dipped outside in thin temmoku glaze or iron wash.

Other glazes are used for individual work, and these, together with the standard glazes, are used for a variety of decorative effects, one over another, for example, with wax resist or carved upper glaze pattern. Sgraffito iron slip over both stoneware and porcelain, usually under the oatmeal glaze. Decoration is chiefly abstract free incising and flowing calligraphic brushwork. Particularly noticeable in the decoration of Leach pottery is the feeling of easy rhythmic execution that is conveyed.

LEACH POTTERY GLAZE FORMULAE

	Ball clay	China clay	Lime	Felspar	Quartz	Iron oxide	Flint stone	Talc	Hard Wood Ash
1. Temmoku	5	10	10	40	20	13			
2. Celadon	12	13	26		20	2½	26		
3. Oatmeal	23	5	2½				52	5	12½

The standard glazes above are used for both stoneware and porcelain bodies. The latter body consists of: china clay = 25, felspar = 30, black ball clay = 33, water ground quartz = 12. The present proportion of stoneware to porcelain is 4 : 1, and the work cycle (three weeks between firings) is as follows.

Everyone takes part in the kiln unpacking, sorting and counting. This, together with the cleaning up, takes a day. Frank Vibert, the secretary, calculates the value of the kiln and simultaneously David Leach prepares the making list. This list of 2,000 pots is divided between the throwers, some of whom will throw for only ten days. It is prepared with a number of considerations in mind. 1-Pots required for orders. 2-Pots required to replace stock. 3-Kiln combination for economic packing. 4-Variety, to extend the throwers' sensibilities and capacity to throw full range. While the throwing is proceeding the biscuit from chamber II is glazed and decorated by one or two people. A week before firing the two best throwers, Kenneth Quick and William Marshall, have finished their quota and are free to commence kiln packing. The last chamber is left until the day before the firing, so that the pots are thoroughly dry. Horatio Dunn,

son of George Dunn, divides his time between packing and clay making, being assisted in the latter work by the junior apprentice, Scott Marshall. The making list is flexible enough to allow each thrower half a day a week for his individual work. David Leach feels that the present way of working has proved itself and is good, but he would like in the future to give more opportunity to the team in the creative field of design, which heretofore has depended upon the inspiration of his father. "A tradition has been passed on which releases creative potential and can provide the team with opportunity for expression."

About one-third of the wares of the pottery are disposed of by seasonal selling at the pottery and a shop in the town. The rest by mail order, exhibitions and in discriminating stores. The one-man shows are of publicity value, but only just pay for themselves. Last year's production was 22,000 pots, the retail value approximately £6,000.

Before concluding an account of the many practical achievements of the Leach Pottery, mention should be made of raku ware, which was produced at demonstrations in the early days and did much to establish a nucleus of enthusiastic patrons. The practice was to have a slipware firing going so that by 2 p.m. it had reached a temperature of 800 C. at the top. Biscuit pots in a refractory body were priced and displayed on shelves for visitors to paint with raku underglaze colours. The decorated pots were taken out to Bernard Leach who dipped them in a raku glaze: white lead 66, quartz 30, china clay 4. After drying, the pots were placed in the kiln by removing two bricks in the crown. During the firing the visitors had tea and the colourful pieces would be ready for them to take away.

Raku ware has been utilised more recently by Mr. John Bew, demonstrating in our leading department stores and using a Grafton kiln with a special fireclay door from which the glowing pots could easily be removed and so evoke greater interest among the general public in the work of the craft potter.

Bernard Leach is again in Japan, and it is hoped to publish in Pottery Quarterly some notes on his impressions on his

third visit, which followed a year of tremendous achievement - the publication of his A Potter's Portfolio; an International Conference of Potters and Weavers, held at Dartington (largely through his inspiration and leadership), and, conjointly, an exhibition of Thirty Years of British Craftsmanship. Arranged in collaboration with the Arts Council, this exhibition moved from Dartington to The New Burlington Galleries and then to the provinces. At the same time, Leach and Hamada, whose work had not been seen in this country since before the war, had a two-man show at the Beaux Arts Gallery. Leach left before the exhibition was over for a lecture tour of the United States, and then on to Japan. Writing at that time, in a leaflet sold with his exhibition catalogue, Leach said: "This small workshop is an experiment both in aesthetics and in the human relationship that lies behind that kind of work which employs feeling as well as intellect and manual skill . . . An exceptional degree of faith and trust held in common is essential to that end, and a willingly accepted leader is necessary who is good enough man and potter to draw out the latent capacities of each member of the group . . . From the date of my departure my son David will be in charge of this pottery . . . The freeing of latent talent, the release of communal design and the acceptance of greater mutual responsibility remain to be worked out."

BERNARD LEACH - BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

George Wingfield Digby

My first piece of Leach pottery was acquired when I was an under-graduate in Cambridge, in about 1930. Since the last war I have used and collected his work as far as means permitted; also I have attended his major exhibitions, studied the best collections of his work in England, and visited the pottery at St. Ives each year.

Apart from the pleasure of handling the pottery, I have been interested in trying to find out some of the facts which might help to reveal the secrets of Bernard Leach's work. I wanted to know how far the different types of pots and shapes were repetitive, what was the proportion of fine individual pieces to ordinary workshop output, and among the former, the proportion of successes to failures, of really outstanding pieces to those which could be classed as second rate or 'also ran'. I wanted to learn to distinguish the different phases of work at St. Ives since 1920, and most important of all, to get to understand something of the psychology of his working methods.

I soon found that the types of pots, the shapes, body materials, slips and glazes, were always changing, although in some cases within a fairly narrow circuit. I found it was theoretically possible, and often possible in fact, to date a pot, even a piece of "standard" ware, within a quite narrow range of years. My visits to the pottery at St. Ives had showed me that the materials used, clays, oxides, glazes, were always being modified, partly on account of new trials and experiments, but also because the old familiar material was always changing (clay from different parts of

a pit, for instance, being minutely varied in composition) so that a mild chain reaction of disconcerting adjustments was being constantly set in motion; in the latter cases, innovations were the result of the recalcitrant material itself, whose challenge was accepted.

Each year at St. Ives one would hear that there was a new glaze, or a new pigment being used; but also one would hear that one of the well-known glazes which had been thought to be fully mastered, was giving trouble. Then one might notice that some familiar ware, or shape, was no longer in production, and at the same time one would become aware of a number of trials which were in progress, sometimes culminating in a successful pot (perhaps only recognised a year or two later), sometimes apparently leading nowhere. At first, alongside a stream of good wares issuing from the kiln, one was perplexed at the amount of wastage in seconds and in only moderately successful pieces. Later I began to understand that this was part of the flux and vitality of the Leach pottery, a fertilising ingredient of the soil, (as it were), from which the vital quality in Leach pots seems to grow. Only in such conditions, I became convinced, could the artistic quality in pottery thrive; and I have never left St. Ives without experiencing this quality: the bewildering, other-worldly nature of art, which somehow combines what is right and apparently obvious with that which is most surprising and unpredictable.

In the workshops at St. Ives, I have always been struck by the unremitting attention paid to small, often indeed minute points of detail; the pulling of a handle and the way it was fixed, the thrust or sag of a shape, the turning of a foot. There always seemed to be endless discussion about points such as these (as well as others too detailed for the layman to appreciate) which one might have thought a competent potter would have learnt in his first year of apprenticeship. In fact, I came to see that this continual rectification of detail and assessment of standard is the clue to first-rate craftsmanship.

The unpacking of a newly-fired kiln is an exciting experience to a student and collector of pottery; but I have often been

surprised to see that it appears to be no less exciting to all hands in the pottery. The attention of every member of the workshop is of course focussed on the culminating result of their work during the previous weeks. As pots come out of the kiln there is criticism of reaction to touch and eye, of weight and handability, as well as exact assessment of success or failure in firing. Again the analysis of detail is impressive, as though a hundred, or a thousand imponderables were once again being weighed, observed and judged -- a debate in which each member seemed to bear a total responsibility.

A visit to the Leach pottery is not like a visit to any ordinary workshop or factory. It soon becomes obvious that entirely different principles are here at work. It is not only the psychological atmosphere of the pottery which is different, producing as it does the rewarding human quality of the Leach wares. The secret lies elsewhere. Now a good deal is known about the scientific basis of modern industrial production, with its laboratory techniques, its analytical methods, isolation and verification of determining factors, elimination of imponderable elements and, of course, its division of labour. But what are the principles, obviously so different, according to which Bernard Leach has been running his pottery since he returned from Japan in 1920? In what direction should we look to discover and understand these principles?

His attitude to the potter's art, the standard which he advocates and which he has set himself, are well known from his writing and lecturing, particularly the chapter "Towards a Standard" in his A Potter's Book (1) and the essay and commentaries in his A Potter's Portfolio (2). Very briefly, they may perhaps be summarised as follows.

The craftsman-potter should work directly with accessible raw materials according to the traditions of his craft. Over-refined commercial raw materials, produced for industry, he should avoid; his clay and raw materials for body and glaze, his oxides, will therefore come to him replete with the impurities of nature, and their behaviour in the many processes and combinations to which he will subject them will always be in some degree unpredictable. On the other hand, these materials will yield the lively, surprising qualities which are so lacking in standardised commercial wares which look what they are, namely, sterilised.

Also, the craftsman-potter must allow the processes of manufacture to freely show themselves: throwing on the wheel, the turning and paring which follows, the application of slip or glaze and the juxtaposition of these, the addition of handle or lug, the decoration with incising instrument, stamp or brush, all these and their skilful combinations are processes in the potter's craft. These processes must not be hidden or camouflaged, for there is nothing external to the material of a pot and the means by which it is made which can add beauty to it; rather it is the skilful way the materials and the means are used which distinguish the good craftsman and it is only in this way that the flair and invention of the artist can truly express itself. Similarly, the method of firing, which in pre-industrial-age kilns was always based on wood or coal as fuel, but which nowadays may rely on oil or electricity, possibly in some combination with the former, must also as a process be allowed to show its character to the full and be

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- (1) Bernard Leach: A Potter's Book. Faber. 1940. Chap.I.
 (2) Bernard Leach: A Potter's Portfolio. Lund Humphries, 1951.

exploited in the pragmatic way of art rather than the controlled, reductive way of science.

In addition to his materials, his tools, his kiln, his methods, the potter-craftsman also brings his own character as a man, coloured as this must be by the civilisations and cultures which have conditioned him. This intangible character will also appear stamped on his pot, or rather it will find subtle definition in the total artifact. Once again he cannot hide anything; he must accept this along with the rest as a determining part of the whole. The making of pots must therefore be a total effort rather than a special effort. If there is a striving, it must be a striving after purification and soundness: purification of self as a man and soundness of judgment as a craftsman who has nothing special himself to express.

Now in his enunciation of standards and attitude to pottery, Bernard Leach stresses the intrinsic potential beauty of the artifact, of the pot, to a degree quite unfamiliar to our western civilisation. Pottery and porcelain is not, or need not be, just a matter of utensils for food, whose worth is gauged by the price paid or the refinement of the ornamentation. Nor has it anything to do with pretty, or perhaps facetious ornaments to stand about on table or mantelpiece. Nor is it something to be made with reference to the latest style in sculpture, as a credential of the avant-garde taste of the owner. Bernard Leach, obviously, thinks of pottery as being in an aesthetic category quite different from this. He thinks of a pot, even the most unpretentious piece, as being specifically a work of art. Other European artist-potters have proclaimed that a ceramic pot can be a work of art. But Leach, who absorbed the Oriental aesthetic attitude which had become part of the heritage of Japan and which is still not altogether extinct there, seems to say rather that every pot, every artifact, when made according to the tradition of the true artist-craftsman is a work of art, something complete and integrated, however humble.

To appreciate this point of view, I believe it is helpful to study the fundamental ideas of Taoist-Buddhist thought, which are the basis of so much of the culture of China and Japan and other countries of the Far East. To begin with, we must try to clarify our thoughts about the idea of beauty.

The Buddhist idea of beauty has been ably expounded by Dr. S. Yanagi⁽³⁾, leader for a generation of the Japanese crafts movement. From this point of view, beauty must not be thought of as a concept whose opposite is ugliness; this dualistic, conceptual beauty is not what is meant. The beautiful is something deeper, springing from the creative flow of life. Beauty appears most readily where there is no sense of duality, or where this has been temporarily transcended; it is in itself a manifestation of integration, an instance of all-embracing transcendence. It is, as it were, the essence or flowering of life which grows up in a thousand different forms, always varied, always unique. Beauty, therefore, can never be a question of special effort, of purpose, for it is never within reach of the human will. It has nothing to do with the triumph of spirit over matter, the ethical over the profane, nor with a creative effort in combat with a recalcitrant material. It is of the nature of the lily of the field, which achieves a loveliness to which Solomon in all his glory never could attain.

This Buddhist attitude to beauty has been contrasted with the Western attitude by Alan W. Watts in his "The Way of Zen"⁽⁴⁾. He writes:- "Malraux speaks always of the artist's 'conquering' his material, as our explorers and scientists also speak of conquering mountains or conquering space. To Chinese and Japanese ears these are grotesque expressions. For when you climb it is the mountain as much as your own legs which lifts you upwards, and when you paint it is the brush, ink and paper which

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- (3) Apart from work published in Japan, Dr. Yanagi read two important papers on this theme at the Dartington Conference of Potters and Weavers in 1952.
- (4) Alan W. Watts: The Way of Zen. (Thames & Hudson 1957), pages 174-5.

determine the result as much as your own hand." The dualism of spirit divided from nature, or material, is quite foreign to this way of thought, for the latter is felt to be as spontaneous and creative as the former. Hence Bernard Leach's insistence on the value of "accidentals and incidentals".

E.S.C. Northrop in "The Meeting of East and West"⁽⁵⁾ has drawn attention to this Oriental attitude to material as the conditioning factor not only of art, but of life itself. He quotes from the Tao Te Ching:

"The spirit of a valley is to be undying.
It is what is called 'The Original Female'.
And the Doorway of the Original Female is called
'the root from which heaven and earth sprang'.
On, on goes this spirit for ever, functioning without
any special effort."

He comments that it is the "effortless, infinitely diversified creativity of this (female) aesthetic continuum" to which the Oriental mind believes it is so important to be attuned. For in this resides not only aesthetic creativity, but also freedom itself, which the Taoist looks for in the indeterminate part of the nature of things, and likewise in the indeterminate part of the nature of man (not according to the Western tradition in the differentiated, specifically sensed portion of himself and things). According to this point of view "inspiration" must be sought as much in the indeterminate material as in the "idea" or plan.

A reference, however summary, must here be added to the important idea of the world as a field of opposing forces, which is a fundamental tradition of Chinese and Japanese thought. What Oriental, brought up in this cultured tradition, would not be familiar with the Book of Changes (I-Ching), with its commentary on life as a way within this flux of change, where forces and tendencies oppose and complement and balance one another on all

(5) E.S.C. Northrop: The Meeting of East & West.
(Macmillan & Co. 1946), pages 343-4.

sides? Who would not know the old saying about the passive 'female', earth polarity. "He causes them to help one another in the sign of the Receptive!"⁽⁶⁾ For in the I-Ching the Receptive, "Earth", is regarded as a fecund, fostering source of energy, although from the point of view of man's mind it is the most passive and inanimate of things. To quote Chuang Tzu: "The Tao does not exhaust itself in what is greatest, nor is it ever absent from what is least; therefore it is to be found complete and diffused in all things." (7) The Tao resides equally in both opposites.

Northrop has called particular attention (in his book mentioned above) to the importance attached to aesthetic intuition in Oriental culture. He speaks of a "concentration of attention upon the all-embracing immediately apprehended aesthetic continuum",⁽⁸⁾ in contrast to the Westerners' prime concern for categories of thought. He points out that the "aesthetically immediate" is accepted as an ultimate of cognition, a quality of consciousness itself, whereas in Western culture it tends to be regarded as something secondary and derivative. To the Oriental, aesthetic experience is a fundamental means of experiencing the world. He quotes Younghill Kang describing his village home in Korea and insisting that Confucius taught that "a man has no place in society unless he understands aesthetics";⁽⁹⁾ and in the Analects, Confucius names aesthetic sensibility as a prerequisite for a good public servant.

(6) The Eighth Wing: commenting on the "Sequence of Heaven" or "Inner-World Arrangement" of the Eight Trigrams.
Richard Wilhelm's translation.

(7) Quoted by Joseph Needham: Science & Civilisation in China. (Cambridge University Press 1946) Vol. II.
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(8) *ibid.* p. 318.

(9) *ibid.* p. 328.

The need for the cultivation of aesthetic intuition has always been recognised in the East. Take, for example, the Japanese Tea-masters of the 16th and 17th centuries; they were regarded as masters and educators in this field and they were looked to for guidance. Aware of the refinements of Japanese court taste, where artists and craftsmen worked on a most lavish scale and with the utmost ingenuity, they taught that there was beauty also in the humblest and simplest things. The Tea-room with its furniture was an essay in extreme simplicity. They taught how the quietened mind could be receptive of "ordinary" beauty: could hear the rhapsody of the sighing wind in the pine trees, or the gentle sound of the kettle on the hearth; could be open to the subtle, restrained, "shibui" beauty of those things which were without show or pretension. One of the early Tea-masters chose to drink tea from the common rice-bowls made by peasant potters in Korea. These, and pottery made at Tamba and other of the many peasant potteries of Japan, have set a standard for the "shibui" beauty of un-selfconscious craftsmanship ever since.

Thus alongside the cult of the grandiose, the technically brilliant, the refined and perfected, there has always been a school of thought in the East pointing to the essential nature of beauty as something quite distinct from all this, something very simple, often austere, restrained and (to the indiscriminating) often apparently commonplace, but visible in its quintessential form to the man of refined aesthetic intuition. Dr. Yanagi has quoted in this context: "What if I gazed upon the Buddha by whisking away dust?" To which the master replied, "Buddha is also dust."

Moreover, the Tea-masters were aware of the meaning of Nanzen's saying: "The everyday mind is the Tao". This is the mind of "no special effort", of no striving after a particular effect or attainment. The Tea-masters looked for the working of this mind in peasant craftsmen communities when the throes of individual conscious effort were absorbed into the routine of community life, and where the gesticulations and tours de force caused by special talent and personal originality were rounded and smoothed in the stream of tradition. For, if a work of art

may attain unity and transcendence in the hands of a genius, it may also appear in quite other ways, and the danger of originality (or even mere novelty) being mistaken for genius is quite as great as the difficulty of being alive to simple, humble beauty; both call for true sensibility and respect for aesthetic judgment.

I have suggested that, with regard to man's relationship with beauty, these are some of the ways of traditional Oriental thought which are relevant to Bernard Leach's work. The Oriental attitude stresses the need for co-operation with nature rather than dominance; the need for awareness of the whole, especially through aesthetic sensibility, rather than analysis and abstraction. It would be interesting to pursue these and other Taoist and Buddhist attitudes further, particularly with regard to the fundamental cleavage between industrial production based on the scientific approach, and manufacture done as an art and craft. But here it has only been possible to point out that Bernard Leach's pottery -- which has been for many people a revelation of the appeal and significance of simple beauty, which depends on the vigour of the artist-craftsman, not on the mistaken virtues of mechanical perfection -- can also lead one to a quite different approach to the problem of beauty, and indeed of life itself. In this sense Bernard Leach stands as a unique bridge between East and West, for if the East has taken much from the West, never was there a time when Eastern art, philosophy and religion were of greater interest to the West. His work is a practical example of the working of the principles which are all too unfamiliar to us in the West.

BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY⁽¹⁾ -BERNARD HOWELL LEACH

- 1887 Born in Hong Kong of characteristic middle class stock with some Welsh ancestry.
- 1897 Sent to school in England.
- 1903 Went to the Slade School of Art.
- 1908 Went to the London School of Art under Frank Brangwyn.
- 1909 To Japan and married a cousin, Muriel Hoyle.
- 1911 My son David born in Tokyo.
Began to study with Kenzan VI.
Met Tomimoto and started him potting.
Met Yanagi and involved him in crafts.
- 1913 My son Michael born in Tokyo.
- 1916 Visited Peking.
- 1917 Moved to Peking with family.

(1) Kindly supplied by Bernard Leach. The last two items were added by the Editor. Some 50 exhibitions were interspersed throughout these years.

- 1918 Returned to Japan; built my first stoneware kiln.
- 1920 With Hamada and family to St. Ives, Cornwall.
- 1922 Matsubayashi stayed a year and built our second kiln.
- 1923 Hamada returned; first student, Michael Cardew, came.
- 1929 Japanese Craft Movement founded by Yanagi, Hamada and Kawai.
- 1933 Built a small pottery at Dartington.
- 1934 Revisited Japan for one year at invitation of Japanese Craft Society.
Biography published in Japanese.
- 1935 Returned to Dartington and St. Ives.
- 1940 "A Potter's Book" published.
- 1944 Married Laurie Cookes.
- 1949 Visited Scandinavia at the invitation of the Danish Arts & Crafts Society.
- 1950 "A Potter's Portfolio" published.
First American journey.
- 1953 The Dartington Conference.
Second American lecture tour with Dr. Yanagi and Hamada.
Second visit to Japan with them.
- 1954 Return to England.
- 1955 David and Michael left St. Ives and started their own potteries.
Married Janet Darnell, American potter.

1960 "A Potter in Japan: 1952-1954" published.
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