

**10 YEARS OF
POTTERY
IN NEW ZEALAND**

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This is the story of the growth of the pottery movement in this country and of the people mainly involved in it over the past ten years as seen through my eyes as Editor of the New Zealand Potter magazine.

Interest in pottery making has been a post war development in most of the civilised world, and by the time it reached us was no longer a craft revival but rather a social phenomenon. Nevertheless there has been a large element of missionary zeal in our endeavours.

We are a young nation with enough leisure, education and material security to start looking for a culture of our own, and we want more human values than those usually found in suburbia. Pottery

making is satisfying because it combines the learning of skills with the handling of such elemental materials as clay and fire, so that once involved there is no end to it. In it the individual looking for a form of personal expression can find fulfillment, but it also lends itself to group activity and is something constructive to do together.

I believe that with all this pottery activity, stemming as it does from the lives of ordinary men and women, a seedbed has been formed out of which something real and vital is beginning to grow. I have tried to record the history of these last ten years for I feel that they are important in the understanding of what is to come.

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THE NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

In 1957, when Oswald Stephens and the Visual Arts Association organised the First New Zealand Studio Potters Exhibition in Dunedin, something was generated. Fifteen potters from all over New Zealand were invited to contribute. None of these potters was working full-time, and most of the pots were somewhat tentative and decorative rather than utilitarian, but the idea was implanted by this exhibition that together the New Zealand potters might have something to say. The Exhibition was held in the Otago Museum, this being a place in which pots were understood, for in 1947 a separate Department of Ceramics had been established with a small but representative collection.

This First Exhibition was received with pleased surprise by many who thought New Zealand a cultural backwater, and it heartened Oswald Stephens enough to come to Wellington and say to Lee Thomson and me that Wellington should do something about holding the Second Exhibition or Dunedin would make it an annual event. This was something of a challenge, for there was no money and no organisation to sponsor us. Doreen Blumhardt and Terry Barrow were called in, a Committee was formed, circulars were sent out to all known potters telling of the proposal to hold the Second New Zealand Potters' Exhibition in Wellington and asking for subscriptions and pots. It was decided that anyone could enter but that the pots would have to go before a Selection Committee. Adult Education lent us a large room in which the nearly 300 pots which arrived could be set up for the Selectors and we were all amazed by the variety and standard of the work, and 148 pots

were accepted from 33 potters. We were confronted with the job of packing and returning unaccepted pots and of storing the accepted ones in a garage until the Exhibition three weeks later. It was determined that the exhibition should set standards in layout as well as pottery, and Geoffrey Nees, who had already designed several exhibitions, was called in. His design gave the show form and impact, and it was quite exciting to see it take shape. By this time every able-bodied person even remotely interested in pottery had been called in to help, and much energy was expended hauling concrete blocks up several flights of stairs to the old Architectural Centre Gallery on Lambton Quay, and installing a four foot concrete drain pipe as a pedestal on which to place a large salt-glazed Brickell pot to act as focal point. A Castle pot was chosen to go on the invitation and catalogue and too late it was found that the printer had placed it upside down on the invitation. This, however, did not deter those invited on the Sunday afternoon, October 19, 1958, between 3 and 5 from storming the exhibition and for the first time we experienced that mad and heartening rush to buy which still distinguishes pottery exhibitions. No mention was made in the press because the only art critic in Wellington (of the "Evening Post") rather grudgingly came but on the day the review was to appear it was displaced by the description of a painting bought by the National Gallery. When taxed with this the critic said that it was the first time so much space had been given to art in his newspaper so he thought we should be rejoicing. Despite lack of publicity the public poured in and it was obvious that pottery exhibitions could pay for themselves. In *New Zealand Potter* (Vol. 1 No. 2) one of the selectors commented on the lack of good domestic ware and said "Could

potters produce a greater variety of work by doing some things that are in themselves a little more tedious or repetitious? Could there be more emphasis on articles for everyday use - on 'handleability' - and so encourage in a wider public a feel for fine craftsmanship which will have a leavening effect in other fields of design as well? Can New Zealand potters take up the challenge caused by import restrictions and fill the gaps in some of our finer shops, so helping to maintain the growing public interest in good design which has been apparent during the last few years of freer imports?"

The Napier Pottery Group volunteered to run the Third Exhibition and it was held from 1 - 10 October 1959 in a hall inside the showgrounds during the course of an A & P Show with an attendance of 2,552. Jim Munro of the Napier Art Gallery and Museum was the man who kept the show functioning with smooth precision. This time 119 pots were accepted out of 261 submitted, though some entries were delayed in transit and arrived too late. A Selector commented (Vol. 2 No. 2): "The standard of the work submitted was fair, although several pieces could stand with justification among the best of hand-made pots being produced in any country at the present time. But on the whole there were few experimental ideas, little attempt to give new meaning to basic forms, or a re-interpretation of function. In most cases the craftsmanship was good, but too often the ideas behind the pots were safe, dull and static. Some pots leant too heavily on well-known Western and Eastern prototypes." Jack Laird, as critic, was struck by the "preponderate influence of Bernard Leach in the work displayed. So much so that the derivative nature of much of the form speaks of overmuch dependence.

It is here, sadly enough, that the colonial spirit of self-reliance is weakest and thinnest." And the Editorial says: "Most of us have got wherever we are by trial and error, not training. There are very few properly trained teachers of the craft, very few professional potters. The rest of us are amateurs who can therefore afford to experiment, but who, according to our critics, have not yet learned to think for ourselves. On the credit side we have unbounded enthusiasm and a camaraderie, as evidenced by the small Napier Group, which was able to take the New Zealand Exhibition, cope with the tremendous amount of work entailed, and run it successfully. We also have a keen market for our pots - so much so that it can be a temptation to lower our standards. But biggest asset of all is our own country in which we can find everything we need; not only for raw materials but also for inspiration Culturally New Zealand is beginning to grow up. Let us take our part in that developing culture by breaking up the safe little pots and making instead vigorous pots that more truly express the New Zealander as he is."

The Fourth Exhibition, held in the Auckland City Art Gallery from 29 October to 19 November 1960, ran into trouble. The potters organising the Exhibition accepted the offer of the Art Gallery as a venue to save expense, and then found that they were allowed no say in how it was to be displayed. A Review (Vol. 3 No. 2) says: "The essential factors on which a successful exhibition is built would seem to be these: First, a body of working potters who are prepared to contribute the best pots from their year's work for the judgment of the Selection Committee. Second, a Selection Committee of which at least one member is a potter with a know-

ledge of the essentials of the craft and who is also familiar with the work that is being done throughout New Zealand as witnessed in past shows. Next essential is a strong body of local potters who will cope with the tremendous amount of sheer hard work involved, not only in packing and unpacking pots, but also in staffing the exhibition and dealing with the questions of the large number of interested people these exhibitions seem to attract. Last essential is a planned layout, and for this it would seem best to leave one experienced person in charge to work on a scheme approved by the Exhibition Committee. But it would appear most necessary that the potters themselves keep control of all these facets of the Exhibition. Mistakes due to inexperience are inevitable, but a body of potters working together are less likely to make mistakes of policy." The pots themselves also ran into some tough criticism and one of the selectors wanted to retain only the 18 to 20 pots he considered to be worth looking at. Another reviewer said "The Exhibition has survived the display which is a new low." Nevertheless, the Exhibition was seen by 3,571 people, most of the pots were sold, and much good work was done to create interest in pottery by photographic displays, the showing of a collection of pots from overseas, and the staffing of the display by a team of potters who answered many searching questions from the public.

The problems encountered by this Exhibition caused a lot of discussion and a guide for the arranging of future shows was drawn up by the Editorial Committee, which was still exercising a guiding hand and advancing a sum of Fifty Pounds each year to the Exhibition Committee, hoping to have it returned with interest to start things going the next year.

Each Exhibition was run by a specially elected Committee chosen early in the year at a meeting of all the potters in the area. Out of the ashes of the Fourth Exhibition came the now flourishing society of the Auckland Studio Potters.

Christchurch is a city with a reputation for running its functions efficiently and well, and Christchurch potters, aware now of some of the complexities of running an exhibition, got together early in 1961 to plan the Fifth. The only suitable hall available was the large and expensive Durham Street Art Gallery, so an Opening Function was arranged to which a limited number of guests were invited to pay Ten Shillings for the privilege of having first chance to buy pots. So enthusiastic was the response that on the opening night of September 22 the Opening Speech by Alan Reed had to be postponed until 9 p. m. while the patrons queued up to buy pots. Professor Simpson and his design students from the School of Art were invited to design the layout, and this they did with vigour, even building a large pool inside the Gallery in which big pots stood on stones and were reflected in real water. There was no doubt now that the Exhibition was on a stable footing. The Chairman of the Exhibition Committee described the whole thing as an "exhilarating experience", and the systems evolved for the handling of pots, and indeed the whole organisation, ran extremely smoothly. Demonstrations of throwing were given and the public flocked in. Local potters said how stimulating it was to see the quality of work being done in other parts of the country and it made them reassess their own standards. But what of the pots themselves? One of the selectors said "Owing mainly to the large amount of space available for display, the selection tended to be on

the lenient side, only two or three potters having none accepted." And another said: "Perhaps three or four dozen pieces in the whole exhibition looked as if they had been born of truly skilled and knowledgeable hands ... by and large, the impression left is one of too much striving for effects from too limited a level of skill. In other words, many potters seem to be over-reaching themselves seriously in their eagerness - they are trying too hard to produce 'exhibition' pots instead of working hard on the business of becoming good skilful potters." The magazine Editorial (Vol. 4 No. 2) observed "With this fifth year our Annual Exhibition appears firmly established, but it seems necessary at this stage to examine where it is leading us. As our only national show it would seem that its function should be three-fold: To embody the ruling standard of good craftsmanship; to provide the norm to which new potters can aspire; and to give the point of departure for the more unorthodox elements which we hope will develop."

The Sixth Exhibition went to Palmerston North and was well organised and displayed (with a Japanese setting) by Jack Laird and local potters in the very pleasant modern art gallery in that city. Some thousand entries arrived, of which 268 were accepted from some 66 potters. The problem and expense of returning rejects threatened to cripple the finances of the Exhibition and the sale of many of the rejects, some of which were displayed in a separate part of the hall, caused controversy. It was obvious that some form of government was imperative to deal with such matters. However, the event itself was most successful; comment in the magazine (Vol. 5 No. 2) said: "Our Sixth Exhibition has proved again that these events are worth all the hard work and effort. Not only do they stim-

ulate interest in pottery in the cities in which they are held, but they also provide an assessment point for potters all over the country. It is most valuable for us to see the work that is being produced and then re-examine our own efforts." And it was said that "the enthusiastic group of women who organised the catering put the Sixth Exhibition on record as the best fed potters' private view to date." But the Opener, Dr. Keith Thompson, observed somewhat wistfully "there was, with a few exceptions, little evidence of this freedom and the joy of living that one might expect in a young nation ... Here we see an austerity, a solemnity about the near classic shapes, the lack of decoration, the generally sombre glazes. Is this the climax development or a necessary stage only?"

The Seventh Exhibition went back to Dunedin. Despite the cost of freight many pots arrived and some 384 items were accepted from 78 potters. The Exhibition was displayed in the Foyer of the New Wing of the Otago Museum and was viewed by nearly 3,000 people. On display were 23 pieces from the Leach Pottery lent from the collection of the Arts Advisory Council and specially chosen by Bernard Leach. Tom Esplin, Organiser of the Exhibition, said "This small exhibit set a standard of comparison from which to assess the work of the New Zealand potters, for Leach had a profound influence on all studio pottery in this century ... His influence is still strong upon the potters of New Zealand and it might be expected that we shall in time outgrow the almost religious allegiance to his philosophy to produce a more indigenous pottery culture." Tom Esplin also observed that a noticeable feature of the exhibition was the "pre-

dominance of the useful article". And Dr. Sutch, the Opener, said "As the technical aspects of pottery have now reached a good standard, I believe that more emphasis should be given to raising and maintaining the standard of design, and increasing the rate of production". The potters themselves were becoming more critical: The Editorial Committee (Vol. 6 No. 2) said "Mention has been made that the general effect of the Exhibition was one of monotony. We agree but think that this was contributed to by the general effect of the colour of the walls, the lighting, and the pots being displayed all at one level. If the majority of New Zealand potters continue to make stoneware we will have to pay more attention to display and the quality and intensity of lighting." One Selector observed "There is ample opportunity for all potters to exhibit their work in the annual exhibitions held by the local associations, and in the future I feel we should aim at making the Annual New Zealand Potters' Exhibition a small one, with a highly selected group of only the really good pots." And another Selector said "Of the 308 pots in the show only 60 to 80 were of real exhibition standard, in so much that they would be worthy of inclusion in any International Pottery Exhibition. After that one comes down to the vast plateau of indifferent pots neither bad nor very good. Do we want our annual exhibition to be limited to the 60 or 80 pots of top quality or to include the large lower plateau?"

The Eighth Exhibition came back to Wellington and this time was held in the large and imposing gallery of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts and opened by Lady Fergusson, wife of the Governor-General. The layout was again designed by Geoffrey Nees who said (Vol. 7 No. 2) "to avoid having this vast-

ness swamp the relatively small scale of the pottery, it was important to provide more sympathetic surroundings. This took the form of a screen and beam structure which defined a route, gave a more domestic scale, and provided spaces which encouraged the viewer to linger. Spot lighting brought the duller glazes and the shape of the pottery to life." The selectors came in for a lot of criticism which is always one of the hazards but is aggravated when they are taken from the exhibiting members. One of them observed "It will be difficult to find a person, whether from New Zealand or outside, who has the divine qualities required to meet all needs. In any case he should, like Ned Kelly, appear in public after the selection only if attired in the kitchen stove." Peter Bland in a radio commentary said "It isn't peasants who make these pots, our New Zealand potters are largely good solid middleclass people with plenty of time, leisure, and - by overseas standards - money . . . Pottery is a social activity. It cuts across the boredom and isolation of New Zealand suburban living. It offers - thank goodness - a creative, communal sharing. This is the reason why it's taken such a big hold in New Zealand. It's a small scale social revolution that's grown out of a sensible resentment against the human and aesthetic sterility of the quarter acre." But John Roberts complained bitterly about the "absurd crush of humanity" at the opening after having paid his ten shillings to get in, and said "If the Society of Potters wants to join the Academy of Fine Arts at the bottom of the Gadarene Slope of exhibition snobbery then it must improve its organisation considerably merely to give value for money received. My dearest wish is that the Society should not try. The pottery movement in New Zealand has a compelling virtue of friendly sincerity

lacking among other artists who may occasionally be sincere but are rarely friendly . . . Pots should be shown in a way that reflects the spirit in which they are created. Potters are not guardians of some arcane mystery. They are, if I can be forgiven an unintended pun, the earthy attendants of a vigorous, lively, expanding and creative human activity."

In some ways the Ninth was the exhibition to end all exhibitions. Auckland potters were determined this time to demonstrate that they could mount a first class show. The layout was a major achievement: to soften the vast grey room of the Lecture Hall at the Museum, screens were made from the seed stalks of flax, these provided a good background for the exhibits and divided the hall into areas which made it easier to view the 363 exhibits from 86 potters. The lighting, designed and made by the team, was ingenious and effective. Cedar planking was used for shelving and added interest was given by the use of piles of large thin slabs of local greywacke rock. Echoes of this display are seen in craft shops and local exhibitions all over the country. As Peter Stichbury the organiser said "The success of the exhibition as a whole and of the display in particular was due to the tremendous effort of a group of people working together as a team. First there was the larger team of potters throughout the country who sent of their best work, and then there was the team of the Auckland Studio Potters. This group effort from packers and sorters, supper providers, display men, to secretary, treasurer, president, showed what can be accomplished by a determined body of potters working to a common end." The Annual meeting of the Society was held at Elam School of Art in an atmosphere of relative harmony, and at the lunch afterwards potters from

all over the country really enjoyed the opportunity to discuss common problems and to get to know each other. In an Editorial the Potter (Vol. 8 No. 2) said "Can it be that the emphasis of the exhibition is changing? In the past the most important aim has been the guardianship of standards, but with the excellence of the many one-man shows now being held, perhaps the main function of the annual national exhibition is now to bring together the work that is being done throughout the country, and to provide a meeting point for potters. The opportunity for younger potters to meet and be accepted by the older ones, the discussions that arise from knowledgeable criticism of the directions that potters are taking, the general swapping of knowledge, all these are of increasing value as time goes on and traditions are built. The local associations in the four main centres are strong enough and have enough experience now to run these exhibitions with guidance from the New Zealand Society. The changing of place ensures flexibility and gives local potters an idea of national problems." In the foreword to the catalogue Martin Beck says "New Zealand potting has come a long way, both aesthetically and technically, in a comparatively short time . . . The question now asked by many potters, perhaps a little self-consciously, is - 'Where do we go from here?'"

This is the question that the Christchurch potters asked themselves when they accepted the challenge of running the Tenth Exhibition. In the foreword to the catalogue it was stated "In this Annual Exhibition, alternating as it does between the four main centres, and containing a fair cross section of the work being done throughout the country, we are able to take a good long look at what is going on and to assess our

strengths and weaknesses." This is what David Brokenshire, the organiser, was determined to do. The white, clear light of the Durham Street Art Gallery was accentuated by the plain untextured setting of the black, white and grey background, the stands well arranged on different heights. 75 potters were exhibiting 327 items. The overall standard was far ahead of the Fifth Exhibition five years before but there were few peaks, and somehow the old excitement was not there. Critic John Simpson said: "If this exhibition can be regarded as revealing national strengths and weaknesses, then the lack of proper concern for the primacy of function gives me greatest concern. So many of the exhibits just didn't work, perhaps were not intended for use, will never be used! Pitchers which couldn't pour, lids which served only to annoy, mugs and cups with coarse and rough lips, the list was endless and dispiriting." And after an excellent dissertation on the use of ornament on pottery he ended by saying "I do hope my remarks will not offend or hurt. They are meant to stimulate discussion and prompt a re-examination of potting in the machine age where half the world's population lack food and education. It is only because of my affection and regard for potters that I have felt able to share so frankly my own doubts about the direction potting seems to be taking."

THE NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF POTTERS

From 1958 to 1963 the magazine held a loose organisation of friends together and acted as a clearing house for the general administration needed for the running of the annual exhibitions. The Editorial Committee even organised and selected the first major overseas exhibition which was sent to Australia in June 1963. By this time, however, the thing was getting so big that some form of organisation had to be found if only to protect the Editorial Committee. The major problem was to decide on the form of organisation. In 1961 the Auckland Studio Potters put forward a proposal through the magazine (Vol. 4 No. 2) that a National Council be formed with one representative from the Editorial Committee, and one each from all city or provincial groups who wished to nominate representatives, headquarters to be in Wellington. There was little or no reaction to the proposal, and in December 1962 (Vol. 5 No. 2) the Editorial Committee tried again by suggesting that a Potters' Guild be formed consisting of the 58 people who had exhibited twice or more in national exhibitions, and that those 43 people who had exhibited once only could be given the opportunity of coming into the original group if their work was accepted in the Seventh Exhibition in 1963. The idea was that from then on new potters would have to apply for membership, acceptance only being given on a reasonably high standard of work.

However, the Editorial Committee was not sure enough of the desirability

of the Guild type of membership to want to take the responsibility of forming such a Society. The strength of the pottery movement in this country has always been the general goodwill and friendliness that has enabled potters to pool their knowledge and resources, and to work together as a team towards a common objective such as the national exhibitions. Whether this could be retained as the potters inevitably split up into the two camps of the accepted and the unaccepted was anybody's guess.

The first meeting called to consider the matter was held in the Centre Gallery in Wellington on June 15 1963, at the same time that the pots for the Australian Tour were on display. 76 people attended from all over New Zealand, the only stipulation being that they were paid subscribers to the magazine. It was obvious from the discussion that followed that the membership would have to be more restricted if an effective organisation was to be formed. A draft constitution was drawn up which was to be put before the first A. G. M. to be held in Dunedin in October that year during the course of the Seventh Exhibition. The Editorial Committee did not agree with many of the clauses in the draft, and said so forthrightly in Vol. 6 No. 1; nor did it approve of the attempt to make the magazine the official organ of the Society, preferring to retain its independence until it was quite sure what form the Society would take. All this discussion helped to make everyone more aware of the problems involved, and the result was that at the A. G. M. in Dunedin a relatively quiet meeting ratified a constitution that kept control in the hands of the working potters. Muriel Moody as President for the first two years held the whole thing together

with her wisdom and discretion. Audrey Brodie acted as Secretary for the first year, and then the task was taken over professionally by Noel Macken, a Public Accountant of Wellington.

The situation now is that we have a New Zealand Society of Potters consisting of exhibiting members whose membership may be terminated at the discretion of the Council if they have not submitted or had work accepted at three successive exhibitions; honorary members elected by resolution at an A. G. M. for services to the craft; and a group membership (recognised potters' groups may apply for group membership which gives them the newsletters but no voting rights). The Council of the Society is composed of a President and two Vice-Presidents, also a Secretary-Treasurer elected at the A. G. M., one member nominated by the Editorial Committee, and one member (exhibiting) to be nominated by the Auckland Studio Potters, the Wellington Potters' Association, the Canterbury Potters' Association, and the Otago Potters' Group. The Council meets twice a year, once during the course of the Annual Exhibition and the other time in Wellington each May. With David Carson Parker as President the Society is settling down and learning to use its powers to plan ahead and to deal with problems on a national scale.

The advantages of such a form of government are obvious, and when inevitably, the situation changes and different rules need to be framed the A. G. M. and the constitutional provision for special meetings give adequate opportunity for the Society to grow and to develop in effectiveness.

THE NEW ZEALAND POTTER

"The task of the magazine has been to provide a measure of continuity and co-ordination; to guide, at times to criticise, and to reflect the current situation as it seemed to us and to those whose opinions we sought" (Vol. 6 No. 2). The magazine originated when ways and means of organising and financing the Second New Zealand Potters' Exhibition were being discussed. In return for their ten shillings towards the cost of the Exhibition we promised contributors a Newsletter so that they would know what was going on. Doreen said "Why not make it a magazine?" and so Volume 1 No. 1 of The New Zealand Potter of August 1958 was born. No. 2 was produced in December of that year giving a full description and criticism of the exhibition. We called ourselves the Editorial Committee. I knew something of editing because I had worked for a short time under Oliver Duff when the New Zealand Listener was first started in 1939. Terry Barrow, with his knowledge of how things should be done in scientific publishing lifted the contents out of the domestic sphere; Doreen Blumhardt knew about layout and design; and Lee Thomson with her common sense and good judgment kept things in focus. The project was financially possible because Doreen, in her position as Head of the Art Department of the Wellington Teachers' College, was experienced in the new methods of printing using the Multilith process which reproduces type and photographs cheaply and well. The history of the magazine is also the history of learning how to gain control of the medium and finding out how to get the maximum from it. In this we were helped greatly

by Roy and Juliet Cowan who joined the Editorial Committee with Volume 5 in 1962 when Doreen went to Japan. Their knowledge of layout and printing helped considerably in presentation, and Juliet spent many patient hours on pasteups. Terry Barrow resigned after Volume 2 when he went to England, but he had prepared for us to publish a monograph Bernard Leach, Essays in Appreciation which we did in 1960. This was an ambitious and worthwhile special issue, the remaining copies of which were bought by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Leach Pottery. Another production published by us was New Zealand Rock Glazes by Minna Bondy, the history of an attempt to codify the possibilities inherent in our own raw materials.

The founding of the New Zealand Society of Potters in 1965 was a great relief. In Vol. 7 No. 2 we observed: "This magazine, during most of the seven years of its existence, has acted as a contact point for potters and has been the means of keeping the Annual Exhibition together. At times we have been nearly swamped by the burden of administration, simply because there was no one else to do it. The initiative for forming the Society came from us: it was the logical stage of development to safeguard the common interest. However, we have kept our independence because we believe in the flexibility that comes with freedom and the individual effort. It is with great relief that we can now get on with our function of publishing useful information, and observing, recording and commenting on potters and their pots."

The next stage of development is that with Vol. 10 No. 1, due out in March 1968, the magazine becomes the official journal of the Society, thus ensuring continuity. The potential is there; circulation and advertising are increasing each issue without even trying. Something worth recording is happening that is of interest to many people both here and overseas. With an intelligent appraisal of all the factors involved the magazine cannot fail to consolidate and develop.

CONNOISSEURS

Before the national exhibitions co-ordinated activity several influences were at work in forming a school of thought that acted as a germinal factor.

The upstairs flat of Ray Chapman-Taylor and his wife Florence at Island Bay in Wellington housed a collection of pots that had a far-reaching effect on New Zealand potters. Ray had been corresponding with Bernard Leach for some years after reading his "A Potter's Book" published in 1940 and through this was conversant with Japanese pottery. After the war Ray went to Japan as an Education Officer with the Occupation Forces and it was through him that Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach made contact again in the chaotic days when Japan was just recovering from post war shock. Ray visited Mashiko and many other potteries and brought home with him a collection of handmade pots which were completely different in conception from anything we had seen before. Their freedom, sensitivity and unashamed joy in the material of which they were made to us were startling. Sometimes on a Saturday afternoon three or four of us would gather in the Chapman Taylor flat for the privilege of handling these pots. Tea was served in Leach cups and Crowan plates, for Ray through his daughter Helen imported these pots, and in the background there were always one or two very simple flower arrangements in which branch and pot made a perfect whole. For those of us raised in middle class suburbia these afternoons had a fantastic quality belonging to a completely different world. No wonder our pots at that stage had a strong Japanese flavour, the influence was so powerful it was difficult to express ourselves in any other way, but almost total lack of

technique sometimes meant that our thoughts were expressed in rather peculiar ways.

Dr. Terry Barrow, then ethnologist at the Dominion Museum, Wellington, also exercised a powerful influence at this time. Friend of Bernard Leach and Hamada, well travelled and knowledgeable on many subjects besides his own, he was a link with the wide world of the Pacific whose importance to us we were just beginning to realise. In his little room at the Museum, and in his roomy brick flat above a shop opposite the Kilbirnie Rec. he had a fine collection of books, pots and artifacts chosen with a wide and catholic taste. He had learnt the rudiments of potting from Len Castle, and Barry Brickell had built him a very smutty updraught drip feed kiln at the back of his flat. Had he channelled his activities into becoming a serious potter he could have been a very good one indeed. As it was, his stem cups, tea bowls and ming tree containers were delightful. He had a useful habit of producing from his collection just the pot that tied in with the line of thought you were pursuing, and his influence can be seen in many of the coiled and carved pots with a strong Pacific bias that Barry Brickell was producing at the time. His friendship with Wilf Wright was also very beneficial, and he gave him much help and support in setting up the pottery at Reikorangi. As well as the special Bernard Leach, Essays in Appreciation issue published by us in 1960, he also edited the New Zealand issue of the English Pottery Quarterly Number 27 which came out in 1962. He was a prime mover in arranging Bernard Leach's visit, and with his knowledge of and love for Japan he helped greatly in the visits of Takeichi Kawai and Shoji Hamada. He made many journeys

overseas and always acted as a link between potters in many countries. When he finally left New Zealand in January 1966 to become anthropologist at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu some of the savour went out of pottery in Wellington. Sometimes irritating, always stimulating, he taught us a great deal, the value of which is only becoming increasingly apparent as the years go by.

Another collection whose importance has hardly yet been realised is that which Peter Gordon brought back from Indonesia. While stationed at the New Zealand Embassy in Bangkok Peter, already knowledgeable from his contact with New Zealand potters, went down to the banks of the river in his spare time and watched the potters there making red clay pots. From Bangkok he was sent to Indonesia, and here he set about gathering a collection by letting it be known among the locals that he was in the market. With his Maori warmth and friendliness he soon gained their trust, and when others were sleeping at siesta time Peter was examining pots brought to him and bargaining with their owners. Indonesia is a treasurehouse of ancient pots from all over the East, and Peter was able to bring home with him an incredible collection of Chinese, Annamese and Swankalok pots dating from very early times. The few of us who have been privileged to see these pots have gained much benefit and it would be good if a suitable place in which to house this collection publicly could be found.

TRAVELLERS

The beginning of the magazine in 1958 was also the beginning of a new and intensive way of purposeful travelling by many potters. This gave us material to publish which helped to lift us out of the parish notes idiom.

To understand the impact that letters home had from travellers such as Colin Bailey it is necessary to visualise the cultural climate as it was towards the end of the 1950's. The idea of the "trip home" by sea and in one's best clothes as a reward at the end of one's working life still lingered. The epitome of art was enshrined in the quarterly Art Society Shows where landscapes of varying degrees of competence were viewed by audiences of all the best people clad in mothballed reeking splendour for the Opening Night. If one's children encountered any more art education than a vague knowledge of a few "old masters" they were fortunate. But something was stirring. In Auckland, Eric Westbrook was making things lively at the Art Gallery, and the work of Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston, which had been going on for years, was being uncovered. The first wave of young teachers was coming out from Training College, and children were coming home from school with interesting projects they wanted to get on with in their spare time. Their mums were going off to pottery and painting classes and to Summer Schools, and in the younger groups of Kindergarten Mothers' Clubs good speakers with something to say were giving us all something to think about.

Colin Bailey was Professor of Education at Victoria University and he had taken the trouble to make friends with Colombo Plan students who were coming to him from all over

Asia. Thus when he started out on his sabbatical leave in 1958 with his wife and family they went on Round the World air tickets which gave them the freedom to stop off in South East Asia and learn something of the life of the people through students they knew well from having had them in their own home. Colin sent back letters telling of potters working in the old traditional ways in Thailand (Vol. 1 No. 1); described "the greatest, the largest collection of porcelain in the world, and immeasurably the worst" at the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul (Vol. 2 No. 1); gave an account of the 1958 Exhibition of the Red Rose Guild of Craftsmen in Manchester in which, to our surprise, he compared most favourably the work of the New Zealand potters with those of the English (Vol. 1 No. 2); and then in the same issue said: "To go right back into the era of pre-conscious potting is to me a revelation, in the matter of the relation of use to form. That is why it is so very hard for the studio potter to pot with purposeful conviction. Any form he chooses to make is by and large a form emerging from a 'spurious need'. He doesn't actually need the pot he makes, nor does the person who buys or is given it, in the same way that the neolithic potter really needed a pot made. The studio potter's need is to make and create; it is not the 'pot-itself' that is needed. This is a very important point because out of the need or the obvious use for the 'pot-itself' comes the essential form. This explains why so many pots of studio potters are like neurotic people, not knowing where they are going, aimless and purposeless in their restless behaviour. This feeling has been growing in me for a long time now; it explains, up to a point, why form always interests me more than glaze and decoration; it

explains too, why I find satisfaction in the honest utilitarianism of the primitive potters of the remote past, or of unsophisticated societies today. I would like to think that by hammering this point I could help a little in convincing New Zealand potters that their hands must feel use and purpose before approaching the clay. Not a pot, but a pot to hold zinnias, to hold tall iris, to hold dark-stalked quince blossom, each pot formed for an envisioned and felt need, and each significantly different."

Another traveller was Elsie Inkersell, who in Looking at the World with a Potter's Eye (Vol. 2 No. 2) describes how she made friends with an old potter in a village in India by working on his wheel.

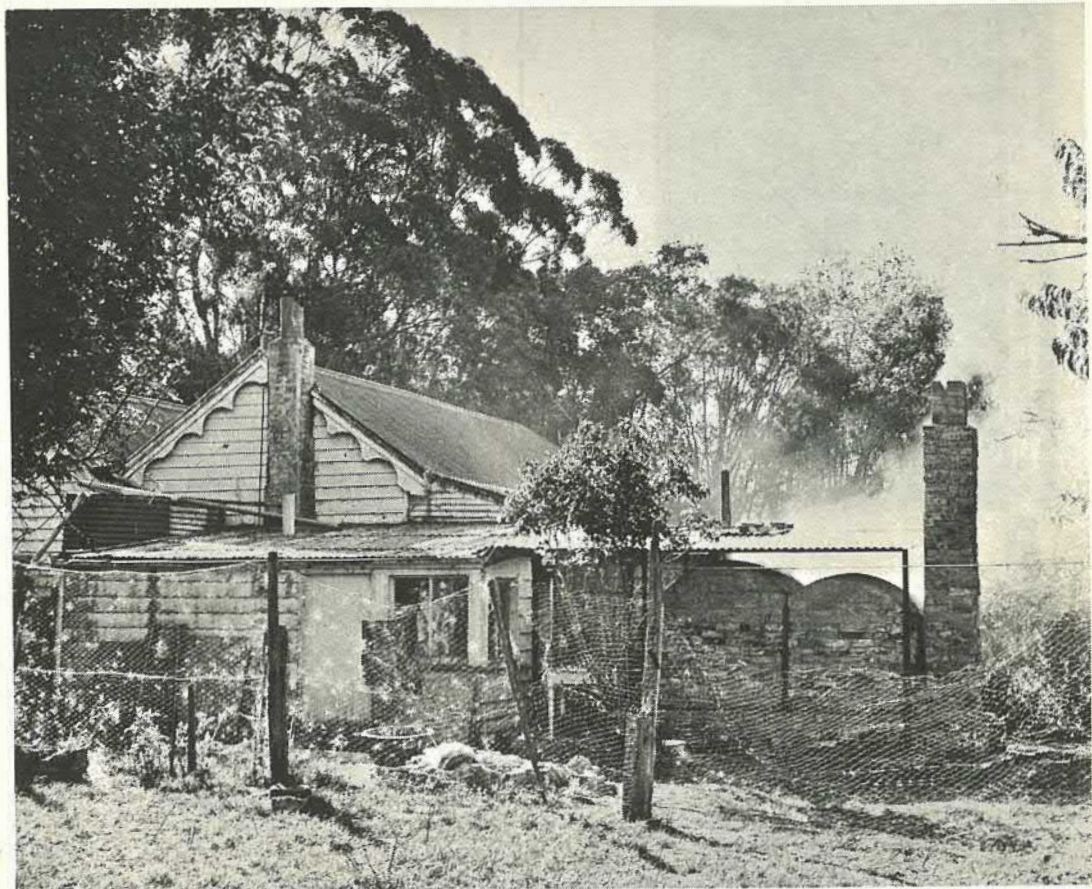
Len Castle, first potter to go overseas on a Fellowship from the Association of New Zealand Art Societies, worked at the Leach Pottery in England in 1956-57, sending back news and colour slides of the ideas and pots he was encountering. Peter Stichbury and his wife Diane, on a similar Fellowship, set out in 1957 and after a year spent in working at the Leach Pottery and travelling round Europe went on to work with Michael Cardew in Africa. This contact with a man of Cardew's stature, dealing with problems somewhat similar to those of the New Zealanders at the Pottery Training Centre, Abuja, Nigeria, was extremely valuable. From Cardew Peter learnt much about practical methods of dealing with primitive conditions, raw materials, and the training of potters. He sent back well illustrated articles (Vol. 1 No. 2, Vol. 2 No. 1, 2, Vol. 2 No. 1) which opened up a new understanding of the African for us, and was helpful when we made contact with Fijian potters, who are also of negro extraction and whose

methods of pot making are very similar. (Vol. 9 Nos. 1 & 2).

Graeme Storm, whose interest lay more in Europe and America, was another to send back news and photographs. In 1960 (Vol. 3 No. 1) he described a visit to a peasant pottery in Spain which made water jars, drinking pots and large shallow dishes. But he also had an eye for more sophisticated work, and described an exhibition in Helsinki (Vol. 6 No. 2) with a new conception of grouping very simple pot forms together to make an arrangement of form and colour alone. He also came across many interesting murals in which clay and glaze were used in fascinating new ways.

Terry Barrow was the first New Zealand potter actually to arrive in Japan, and he sent back vivid descriptions of his visit to Mashiko and friend Hamada. (Vol. 3 No. 2)

Helen Dawson and I arrived soon afterwards and found it difficult as at times to realise that we were actually walking round in this country which had been Mecca to us all for so long. In 1962 both Helen and I were fortunate enough to return to Japan for a short time, which gave us a valuable opportunity to reassess the impressions of the first visit, and on one occasion we met up with Doreen Blumhardt at John Chappell's exhibition at the Matsuxy Store on the Ginza in Tokyo. Doreen was there on a Scholarship given by the Japanese Foreign Office and made very good use of the opportunity to study for some months. This official standing made it possible for her to travel all over Japan and to work for a while with Mr Arao of Kyoto, Fukuma of Matsue, and Fujiwara in Bizen. Her vivid descriptions are recorded in Vol. 5 No. 1&2.



HELEN MASON'S KILN, WAIHAKEKE, CARTERTON.
EASTER 1966

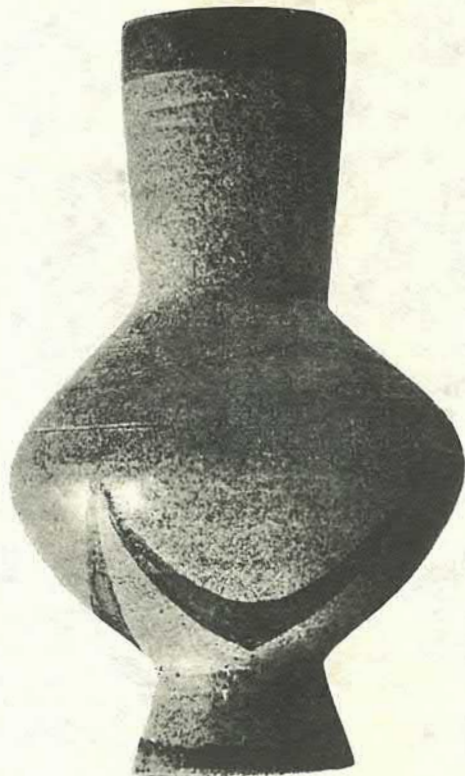
NEW ZEALAND STUDIO
POTTERS



First Exhibition

OTAGO MUSEUM
16-30 NOVEMBER, 1957

VISUAL ARTS ASSOCIATION



You are invited to attend a preview of the

**NEW ZEALAND
STUDIO POTTERS'
SECOND EXHIBITION**

*between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Sunday, 19th October, 1958*

*The Exhibition will remain open from 20th to 31st
October, 1958 ✦ Hours: Monday to Thursday
11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday, 8 p.m.*

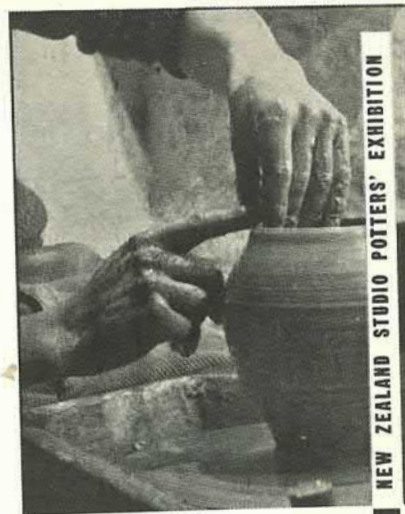
◁ Oswald Stephens,
who started it all.

**NEW ZEALAND
STUDIO POTTERS'
THIRD EXHIBITION**



1st to 10th OCTOBER, 1959

**McLEAN PARK
NAPIER**



NEW ZEALAND STUDIO POTTERS' EXHIBITION

FOURTH

**29th OCTOBER
19th NOVEMBER 1960**

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY WELLESLEY STREET



**6th NEW ZEALAND
ANNUAL POTTERS'
EXHIBITION**



8th to 19th OCTOBER, 1962

**THE ART GALLERY
PALMERSTON NORTH**

**7TH
NEW ZEALAND
POTTERS' EXHIBITION**



OTAGO MUSEUM



Selectors for the Seventh:
Wyn Reed, Len Castle, Doreen Blumhardt



**NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY
OF POTTERS**

**EIGHTH
NEW ZEALAND
POTTERS' EXHIBITION 1964**

You are invited to be present at the private view
to be opened by Her Excellency Lady Fergusson
at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts gallery
Buckle Street Wellington
on Wednesday 25 November 1964 at 8 pm

Admission tickets 10s. each, are also season tickets
Apply by 17 November, enclosing remittance to the
Secretary, 8th New Zealand Potters' Exhibition
Post Office Box 41 Porirua

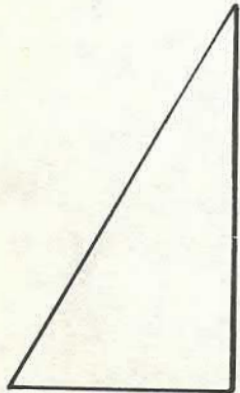
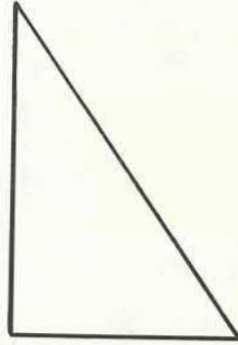
Dress informal, supper will be served





9th.

NEW ZEALAND
SOCIETY OF
POTTERS'
EXHIBITION



10th Exhibition
New Zealand
Society of Potters

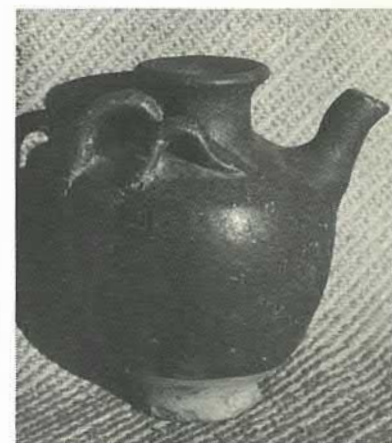




Muriel Moody, First President of the New Zealand Society of Potters.



Nan Berkeley, President of the New Zealand Chapter World Crafts Council; Sir Francis Kitts, Mayor of Wellington; David Carson Parker, Second President New Zealand Society of Potters with bowl by Mirek Smisek.



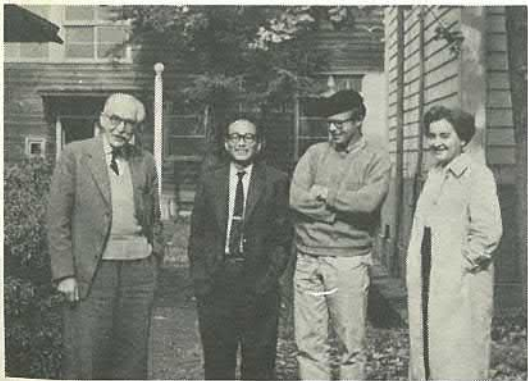
Three pots from the collection of Swankalok, Annamese and Chinese pots owned by Peter Gordon



Doreen Blumhardt with Fukuma
in Japan 1962



World design conference, Tokyo 1960



Bernard Leach with Mirek Smisek
and Cicely Gibson, Kyoto 1961.



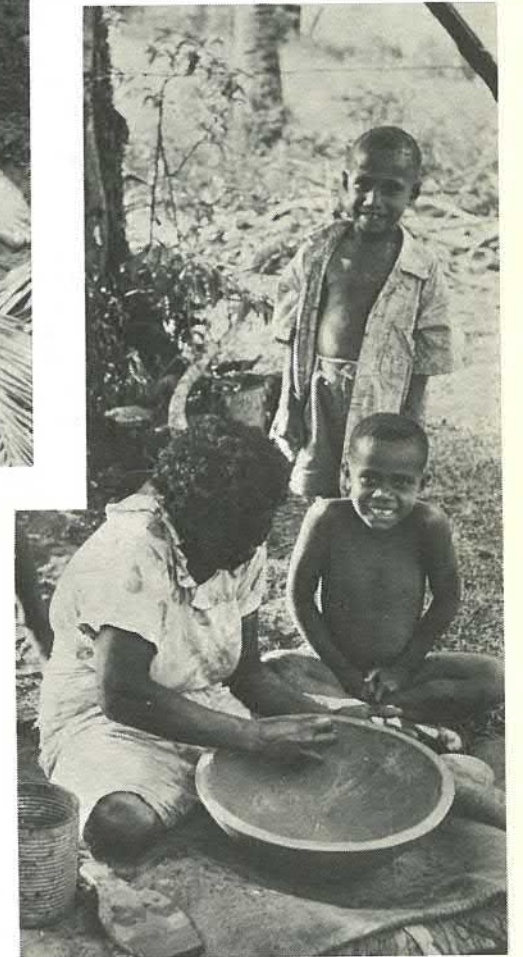
Peter Stichbury's photo of Nigerian potter

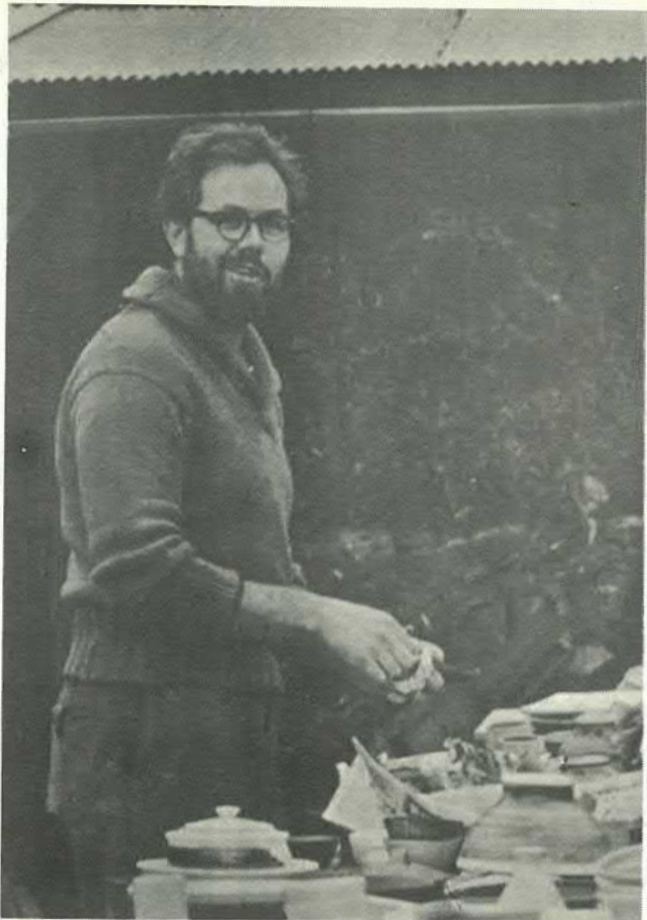


Top left:
Helen Mason with Fijian friends

Lower left:
Michael Gill in Uganda

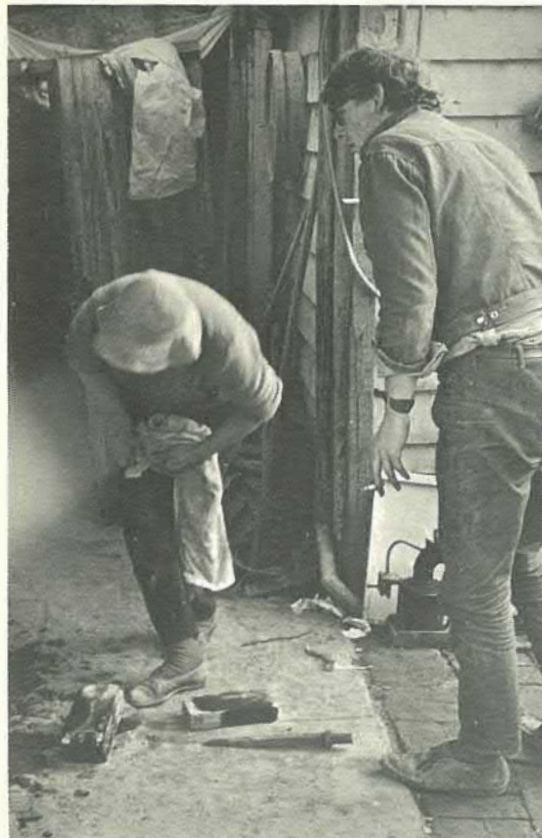
Lower right:
Fijian potter at work



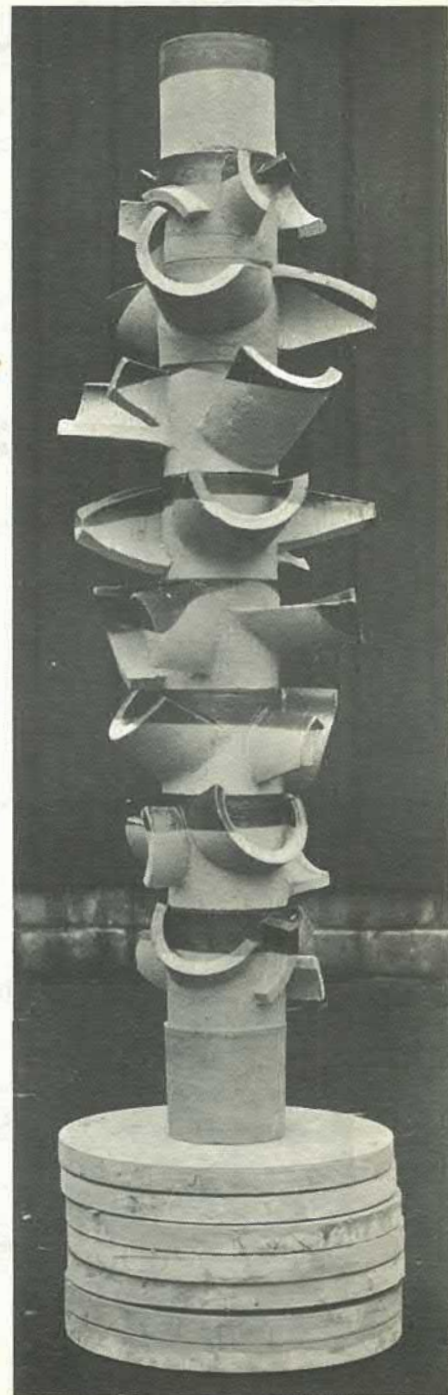


John Chappell
in
Japan
1963

Teaset by John Chappell



△ Peter Hoey at firing 1966
John Kingston 1964▽
Drainpipe sculpture: John Kingston ▷

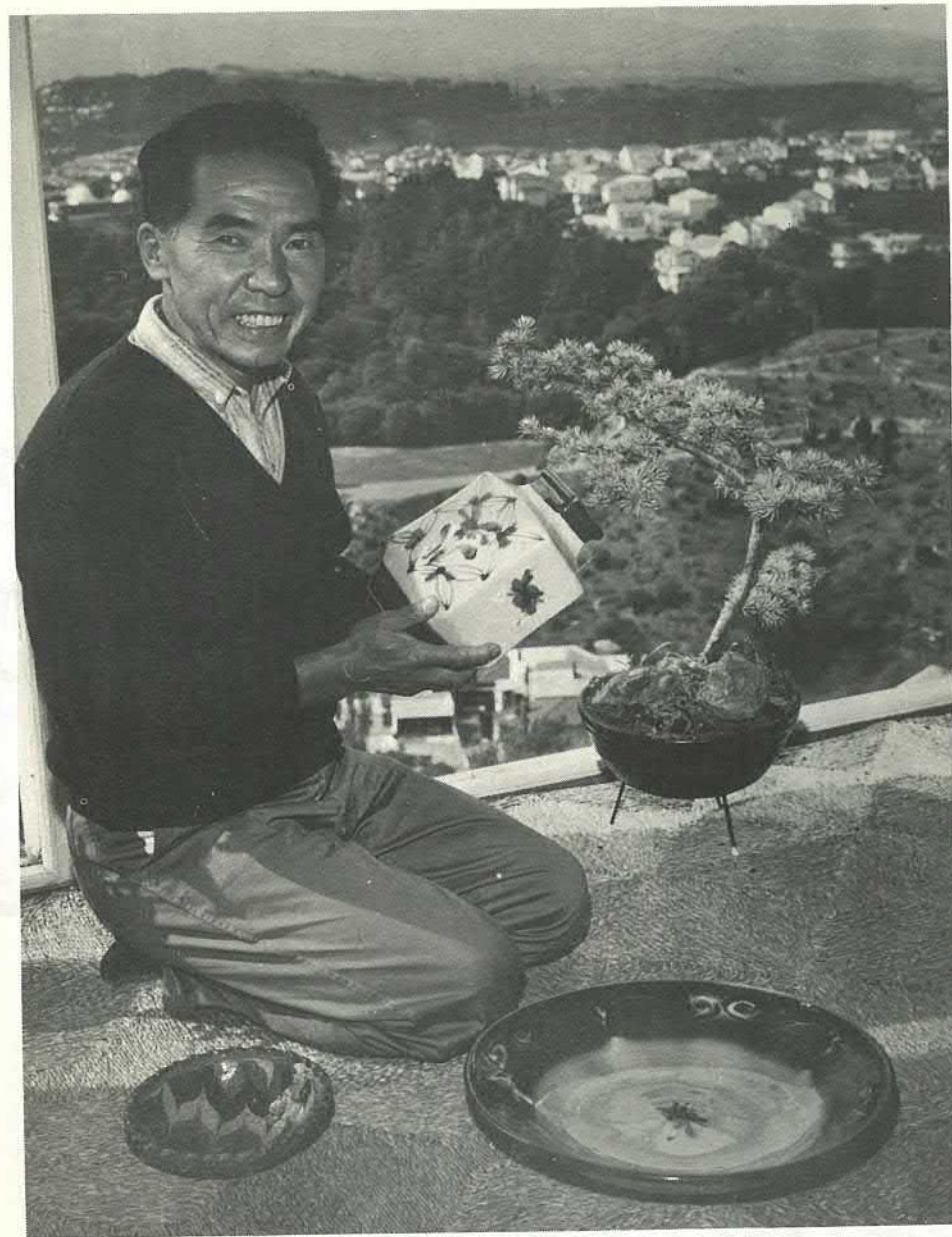




Bernard Leach at Coromandel 1962



Takeichi Kawai with Wellington potters 1964



TAKEICHI KAWAI



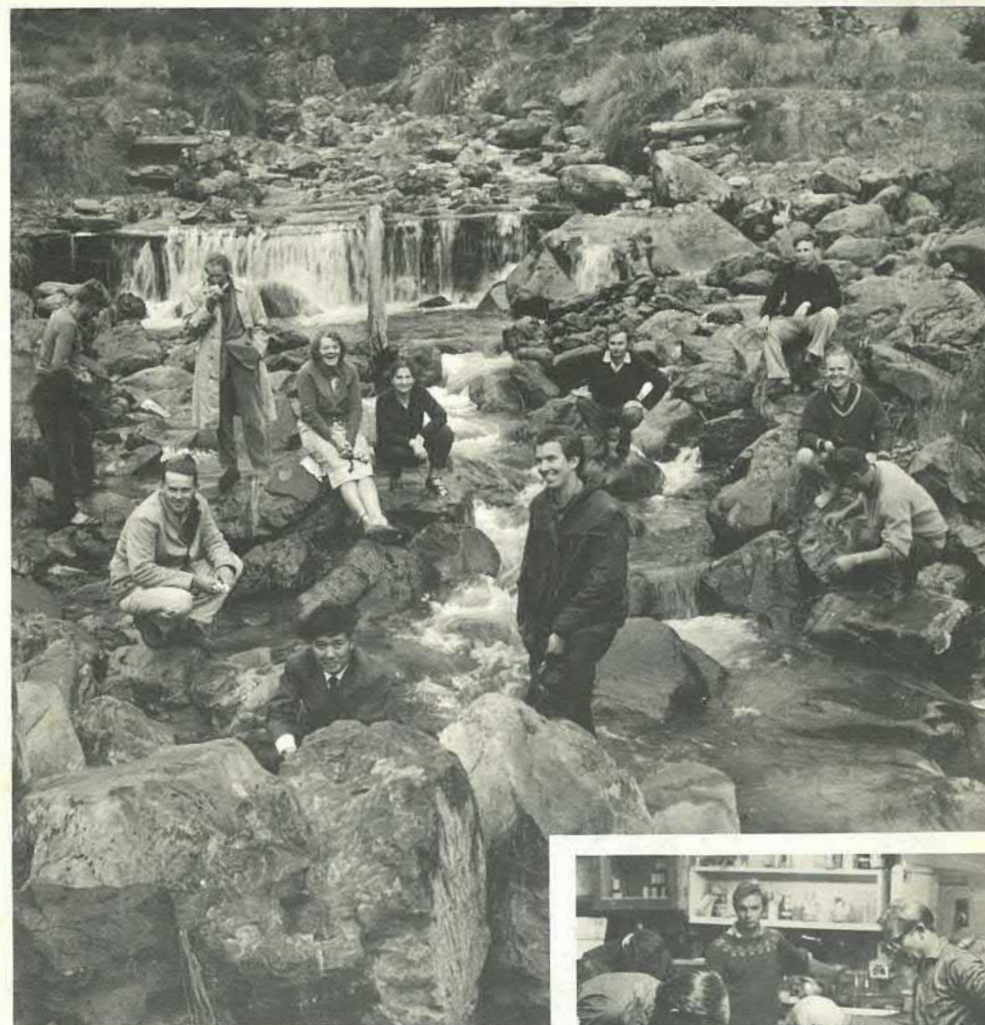
Christchurch welcome Committee



At Reikorangi - On left with Terry Barrow, on right Paul Melser



With Peter Stichbury at Auckland

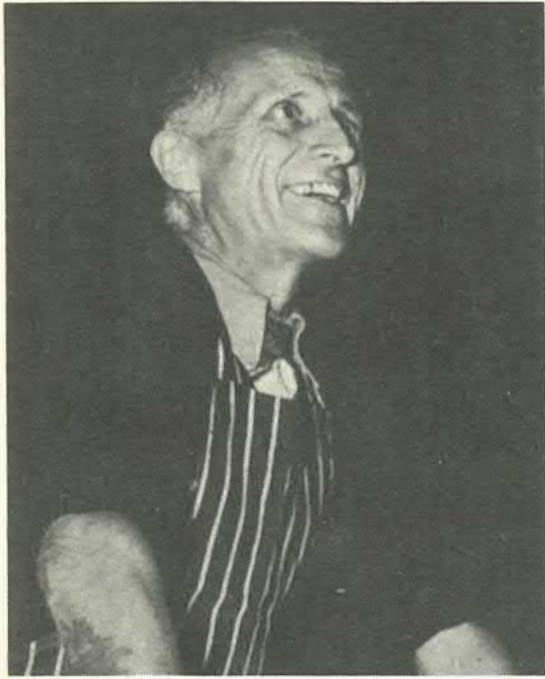


SUNDAY AT ARTHUR'S PASS

Barry Brickell, Graeme Storm, Denis Hanna, Atsuya Hamada, Yvonne Rust, Patricia Perrin, Neil Grant, Warren Tippet, Len Castle, Peter Hughson, Michael Trumic.



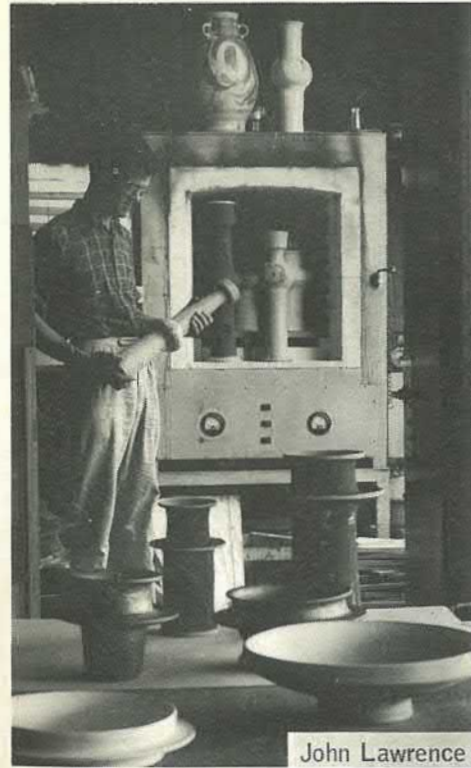
Working in Yvonne Rust's Studio.



Michael Cardew



Gwynn Hanssen 1966



John Lawrence



Ann Verdcourt's Sculptures



Michael Cardew's Kiln Shed, Abuja, Nigeria.



Marian Wilhelm at Doreen Blumhardt's Home



△ Harry and May Davis arriving in Wellington August, 1962.
◁ Their House at Wakapuaka, Nelson.



Pots bought from Bernard Leach after his New Zealand visit in 1962 and shown at the Seventh Exhibition in Dunedin. They include individual pieces and standard Leach Pottery ware.



CROWAN CASSEROLE AND TEASET



AUCKLAND STUDIO POTTERS
RAKU FIRING AT ARDMORE
COLLEGE 1966



Building a kiln at Waimea College, Nelson 1959



Neil Grant and kiln



Peter Stichbury and students
building a kiln at Ardmore

Pot by Patricia Perrin





Yvonne Rust helping Patricia Perrin to build her stoneware kiln



Pots by Helen Dawson



Mary Hardwick-Smith in her studio



Long-bod:
June Black



Lee Thomson



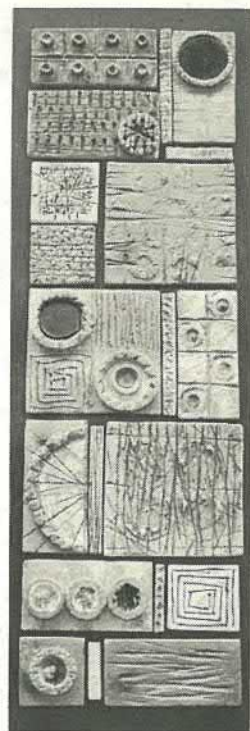
Minna Bondy



Roie Thorpe

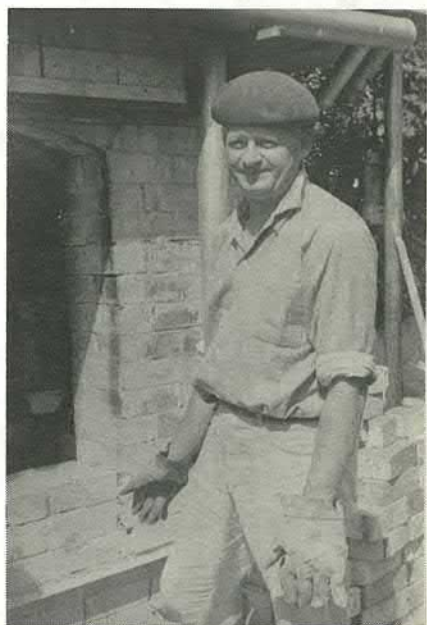


Top left:
Kiln activity at the Cowans

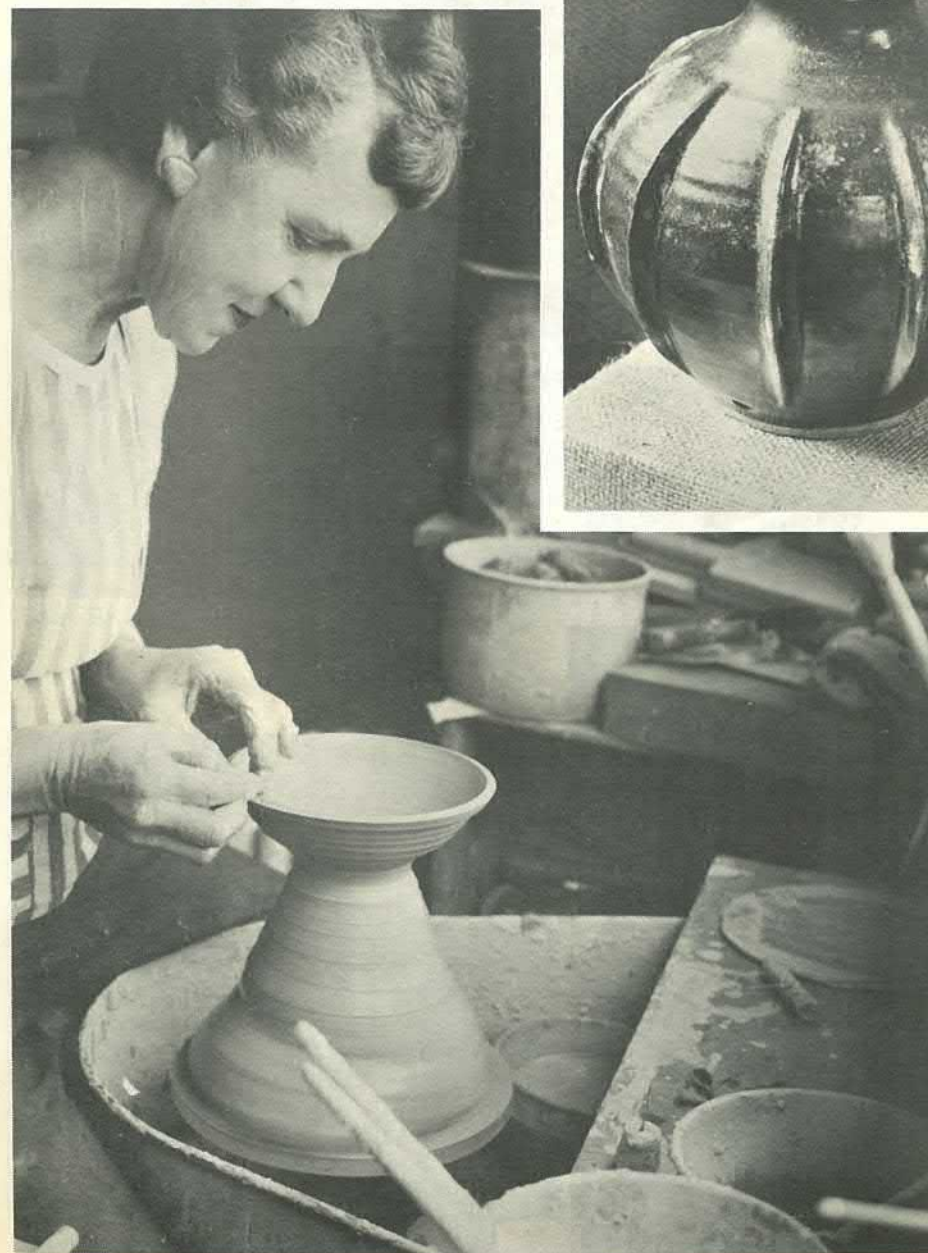


Top right:
Wall panel - Juliet Peter

Lower right:
Roy Cowan



DOREEN BLUMHARDT





THE BRICKELL WAY OF LIFE



Denis Hanna's Kiln, built by Barry Brickell, 1958.



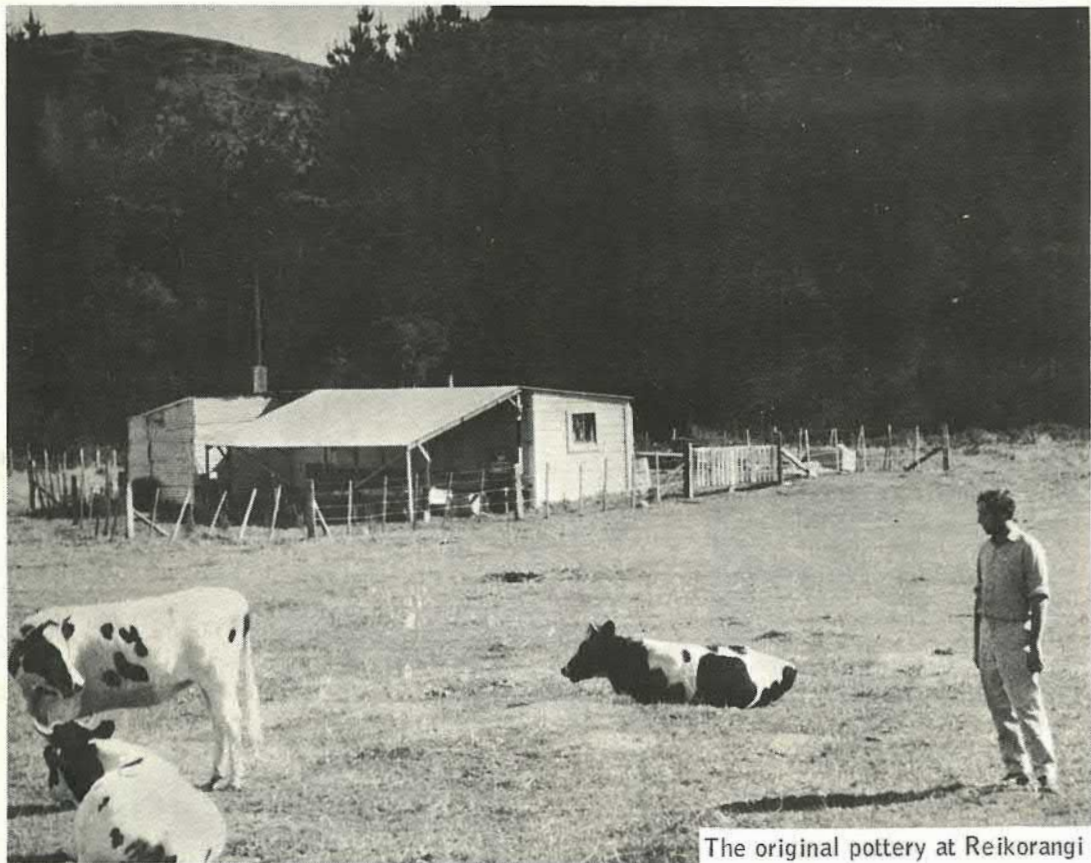
Mirek Smisek, Barry Brickell, Warren Tippett



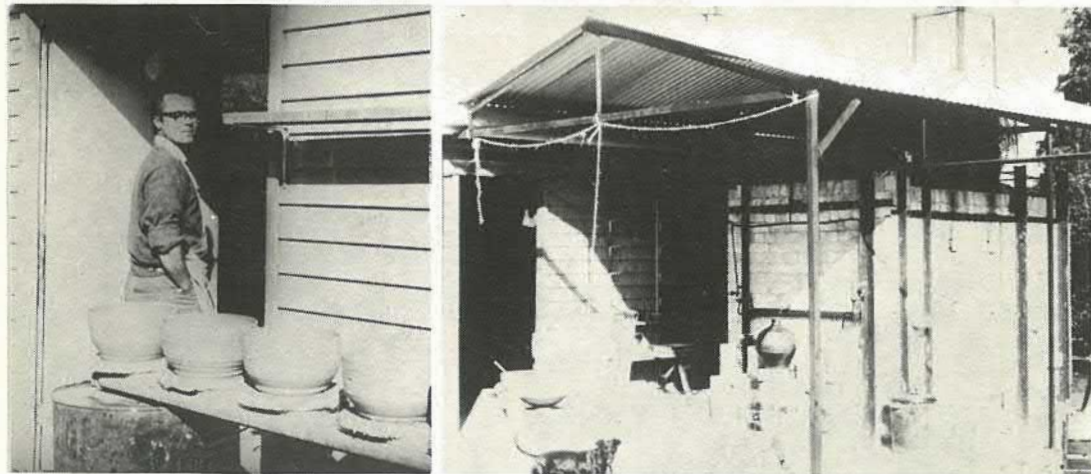
Driving Creek Railway.



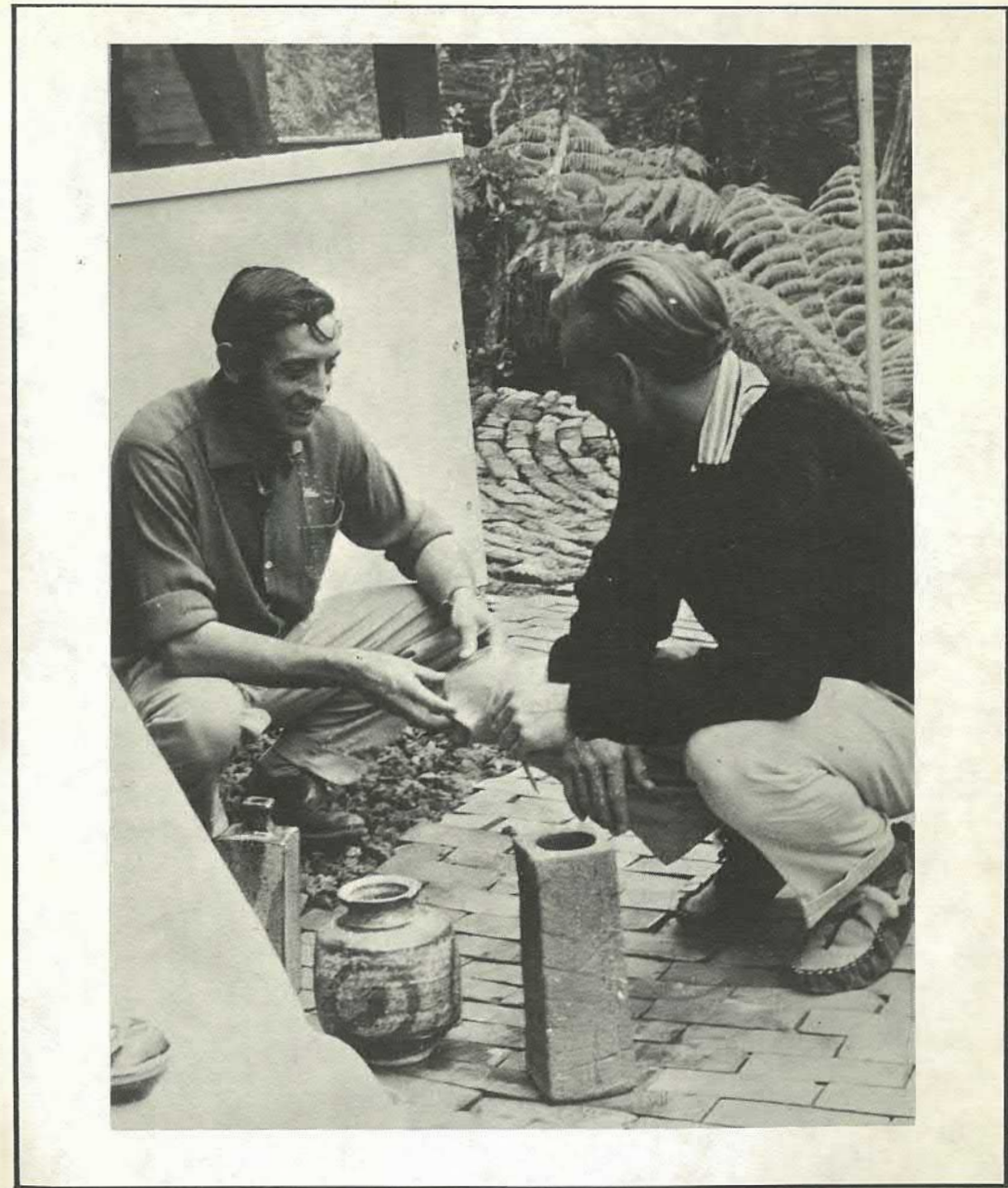
Wailin Hing.



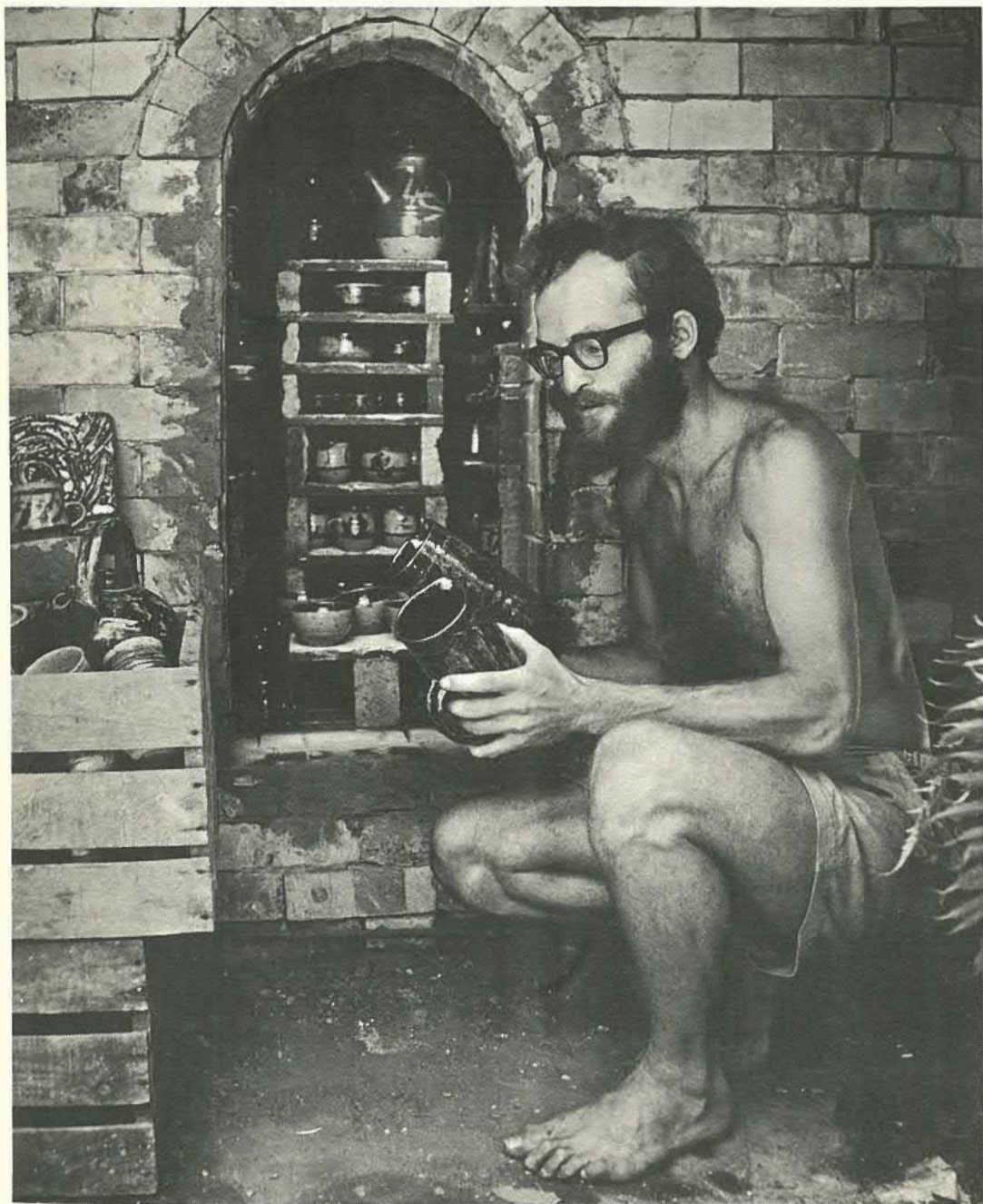
The original pottery at Reikorangi



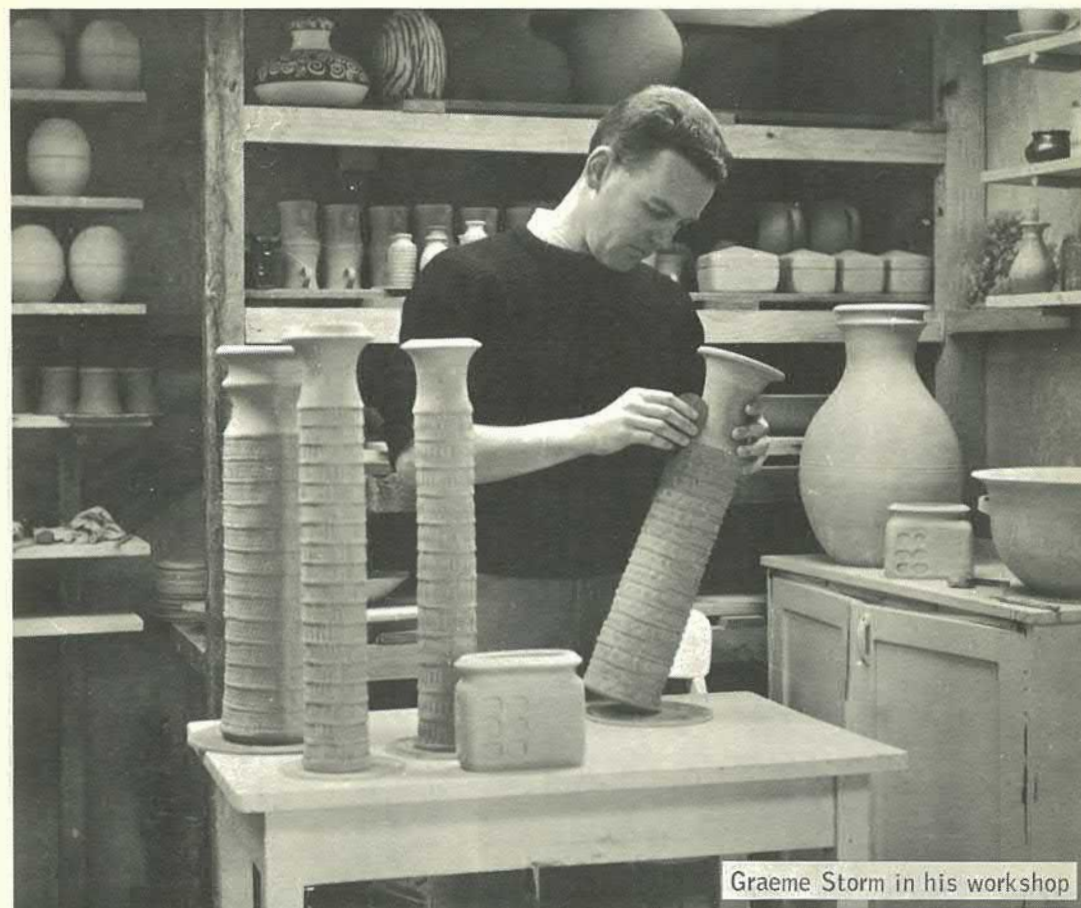
Mirek Smisek and kiln



Wilf Wright and Len Castle discussing pots



Adrian Cotter at his kiln.



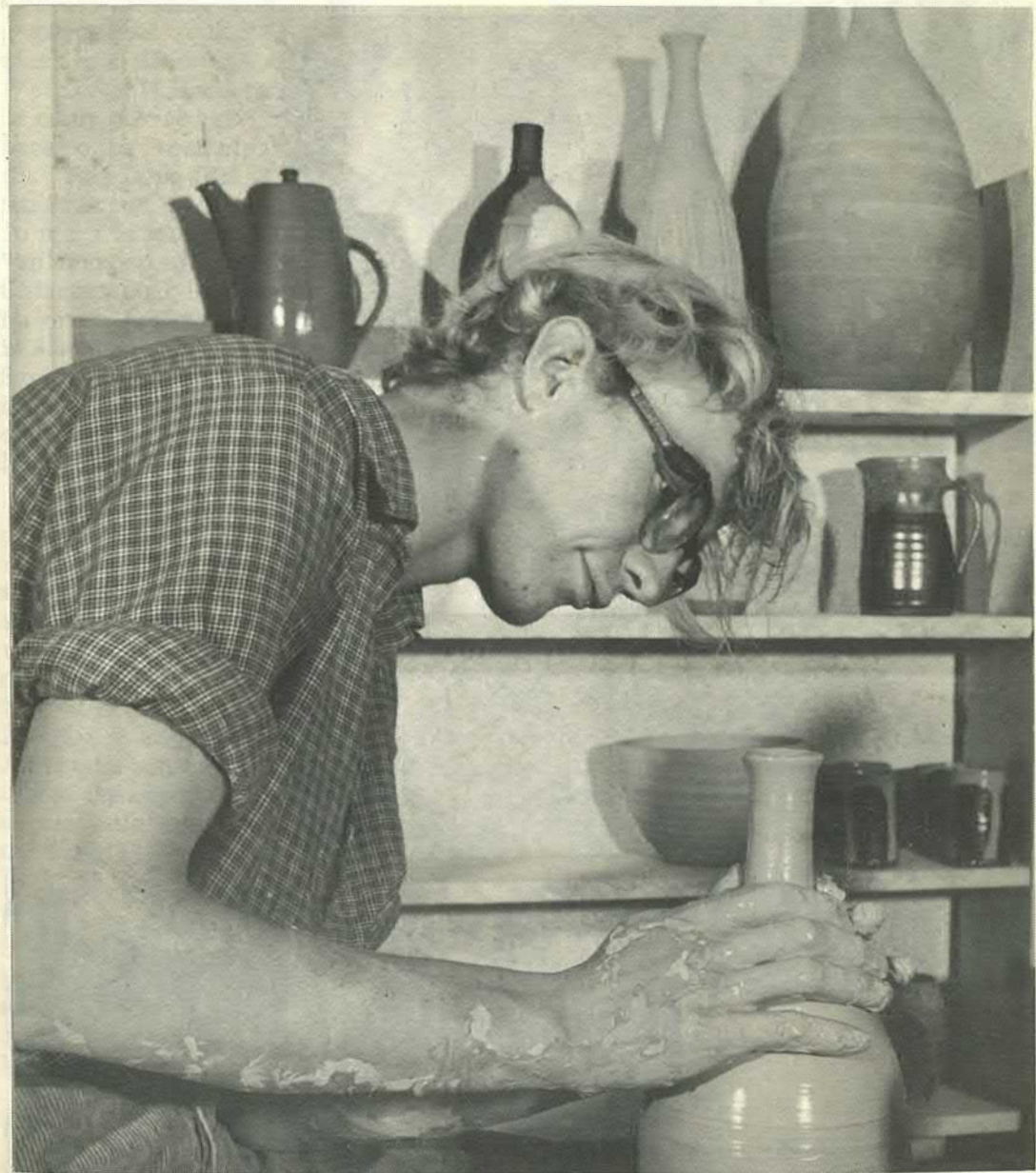
Graeme Storm in his workshop



Warren Tippett and pots



Jeff Scholes in his workshop.



PAUL MELSER



Len, Ruth and
Briar Castle -

- and their home.



Verna Corbett spent three months in Greece and made friends with some potters there (Vol. 5 No. 2), I had a quick look at Europe and the U. S. A. (Vol. 5 No. 1) made contact with potters in many places, but was thankful to get back to the fresh clean air of the Pacific. Ray Rose (Vol. 8 No. 2) went to Sarawak for family reasons and found so much to interest a potter that it was "an unexpected extra", what with a Chinese family pottery, an excellent Museum, a Teachers' Training College in Kuching where artist and teacher Susi Heinze was developing the traditional crafts of her pupils, and the opportunity to observe the primitive Iban potters at work.

Margaret Tuckson, an Australian potter, had studied similar primitive methods in New Guinea (Vol. 9 No. 1) and gave a vivid description of the fine skills these potters had developed. It was interesting to compare these methods with those I found in Fiji with the help of Bruce Palmer, Director of the Museum there, and Peggy Dickinson, American potter who was making good use of the opportunities given her as she accompanied her husband on a Geological Field Study Scholarship in New Zealand and Fiji (Vol. 9 Nos. 1 & 2).

Frank Finan went to Mexico, and though somewhat disillusioned with the pottery there came back with new techniques for making richly coloured objects out of stained and textured glass (Vol. 9 No. 1).

Harry Davis, invited to make a lecture tour of Canada, went on to look at Europe again. In both North America and Europe he saw the potters' "halting attempts to recapture a creative experience which their forefathers had taken for granted ... in a context circumscribed by urban and suburban municipal

regulations, harassed by a welter of paraphernalia thrust at them by an aggressive commercialism seeking to exploit any untapped aspect of the age of leisure." He too, came back to the Pacific with relief, and found at Kuching in Sarawak several flourishing Chinese potteries where the unit was a family based workshop with not more than four workers in each. He said "Throwing skill was indeed impressive, and the whole quality of the work and the atmosphere of the workshop was very reminiscent of the English country pottery as it still existed about thirty or forty years ago. The parallel was also noticeable in the quiet easy rhythm which produced an astonishing number of pots without fuss or hurry. The same matter of fact idea of how many pots it takes to make a living, and the same robust idea of what constitutes a suitable size of kiln to do it with. All this contrasted very remarkably with the world of studios and colleges in the era of craft revivalism today." (Vol. 9 No. 2).

It is apparent from all these observations that with pottery we have a universal means of communication. John Roberts has stated (Vol. 7 No. 2) that "the pottery movement in New Zealand has a compelling virtue of friendly sincerity". If this becomes a tradition it could well make an effective contribution towards world understanding.

VISITORS

The first bearded, sandalled potter to arrive in this country with the post-war world outlook and the new set of values was Michael Gill. Educated at a progressive school where he had learnt the rudiments of pottery, he had been one of the English children sent off to America to finish their education, and had gained an MSc at Harvard. For five years since then he had been wandering round the world working in potteries wherever possible. Already he had spent some time in Africa, where he accidentally came across Staite Murray, and also in Australia, where he worked at the Sturt Pottery in Mittagong. He moved on to New Zealand towards the end of 1955 and in Auckland found Barry Brickell. Coming down to Wellington he could find no pottery to work in but kept himself at first by cleaning railway carriages until he found more congenial work with a cabinet maker. He contacted me, and realising that such knowledge and experience was valuable, Professor Bailey made his rumpus room available for a school. There on a cold wet southerly day when all New Zealand was plunged in gloom because it was the day that the Springboks defeated the All Blacks (Michael Gill could not understand what all the fuss was about) five of us got together and had a very useful time learning the rudiments of throwing. On other occasions, whenever we could arrange it, Michael Gill also taught us spiral wedging in the Japanese manner, and tried to teach us how to work out glaze formulae using the slide rule. Michael Gill's skill made us understand just how much was involved in pottery. In due course he moved on, and after a time in England went to Uganda where he was employed

by the Uganda Development Corporation to set up a pottery where an artisan craftsman class of workers could be trained to help bridge the gap between the peasant farmers and the new industrialist-technicians. The difficulties were enormous, but he made some headway before the African upheaval forced him to leave a year or two ago. He is now back in England and, with his brother, is engaged in restoring and selling old houses.

Through the magazine, New Zealand potters were invited to attend the World Design Conference held in Tokyo in May 1960. Helen Dawson, Elsie Inkersell and I were able to attend, and here we met John Chappell, an English potter working and living in Japan. His philosophy was known to us through articles in the English Pottery Quarterly and his address was given me by Michael Gill, who had been corresponding with him. John was working in Kyoto in the workshop of Uchida and he was involved in a different pottery world from the Leach-Hamada-Mingei school of which we had read in Leach's books. John's experience, and his insight into Japanese life, meant that Helen and I made contact with something real and valuable that was immensely stimulating. His whole attitude to work and the standard of his craftsmanship impressed us. We learnt that John and Anja, his Swedish wife, would soon have to leave Japan for six months because of the usual visa problem before they could re-apply for admission. This seemed too good an opportunity to miss, and after our return to New Zealand several potters combined to find the necessary funds to bring the Chappells to this country. After making contact with Wanda Garnsey and Les Blakebrough in Australia

John and Anja arrived just in time for Christmas in 1960. John was very similar to Michael Gill in outlook and had a sense of purpose and a driving energy that were quite exceptional. He believed in cultivating awareness in everything he did and was a cook and gourmet as well as potter. Such intensity was bound to upset the rather casual New Zealanders, but as the magazine observed (Vol. 4 No. 1) "However much many of us have argued with John over different questions, as soon as he starts to make pots the arguing gives place to respect. Perhaps the greatest benefit he has given us is a realisation of how long and arduous is the way to becoming a good potter. At the same time, the knowledge and technical skill he has so freely imparted should have the effect in time of raising our level of achievement." John gave lectures and demonstrations at several centres, and also worked at the Reikorangi pottery with Wilf Wright. At the end of six months he and Anja returned to Japan, but John promised that when the time came for him to leave Japan again he would return, bringing with him an exhibition of his recent work, and if possible, a Japanese potter. This promise he was about to fulfill with Takeichi Kawai when he was killed in a motorbike accident in Sydney on February 8th 1964.

Bernard Leach is a legendary figure and the publishing of his "A Potter's Book" in 1940 gave the postwar pottery movement something to build on. As John Chappell said (Vol. 4 No. 1) "Bernard Leach with his groundings in Japanese traditional techniques and exceptional feeling for rightness in form and material, has done more than anyone else, perhaps more than the rest put together, to set English potting on a firm foundation." In 1962 from 23 January to 24 February, Bernard Leach

visited this country. His visit was financed by the Department of Internal Affairs, the New Zealand Potter, the Japan Society, Mr Cohen of Seaboard Joinery, and Tom Clark of Crown Lynn Potteries, and organised by Dr. Terry Barrow and the New Zealand Potter with the help and co-operation of potters throughout the country. As the magazine chronicled (Vol. 5 No. 1): "Bernard Leach had indeed become a legend. The depth of his influence could be gauged by the trepidation from which nearly every potter seemed to suffer at the prospect of meeting the great man ... The relief was all the more profound, therefore, when he was found to be human after all, and a very charming human... who reminded us irresistably of English relatives who have played so large a part in the formative stages of New Zealand ... Throughout his month in this country "BL" (as he came affectionately to be known) gave inspiring public lectures, stimulating talks to groups of potters, and innumerable broadcast interviews. The films he showed were excellent ... He said many times during his stay that he was surprised to find how strong was the pottery movement in New Zealand. The reiteration of this remark by such a famous man helped greatly in our endeavour to have the seriousness of our work recognised as a cultural potential ... Now that we have had personal contact with him we can understand the appeal that these ideas (that modern man living in an industrialised world still needs handicrafts such as pottery in order to fulfil himself) have for so many of us. We have in fact come to love him. In whatever way New Zealand pottery may develop in the future, and develop it must in its own way if it is to have any character at all, Bernard Leach's philosophy will have its place as probably the strongest foundation stone of them all."

A twenty minute film was made containing a discussion between Bernard Leach, Len Castle and Barry Brickell at Len Castle's house and pottery, and also a tribute to Leach by Peter Stichebury. Already the opinions and attitudes recorded in this film give an interesting sidelight on history.

The next visitor to arrive was Takeichi Kawai. Gentle and kind, saddened by the death of his friend and interpreter, John Chappell, who had planned to smooth his way round this very foreign country, Kawai spent from March 13 to April 16 1964 among New Zealand potters. He brought with him a very fine exhibition which was shown at the Centre Gallery in Wellington, and which made people understand more of what the work of a real artist potter was like. Part of this exhibition was held back to be shown in Auckland and the prices realised, though low for Japan, were the highest ever paid for pots in New Zealand. Kawai gave demonstrations of pot making and of painting with the brush throughout the country. Because of his lack of English everything had to be done for him, and the burden of administration was a very heavy one. The need for the New Zealand Society was most apparent if only to cope with such problems. Takeichi Kawai is such a fine human being that his goodness and warmth surmounted all barriers and he made many friends. Of them all, perhaps his contact with young Warren Tippett, with whom he stayed in Christchurch, was the most beneficial. To him he said, "Work, work, you must always be working" and he inspired him with confidence.

From May to August of this same year, 1964, John Kingston made a whirlwind return to his homeland from the U. S. A. Vol. 7. No. 1 reports "He covered a lot of ground, giving demon-

strations and lectures wherever he went, and holding exhibitions in Wellington and Auckland. His principal aim was to try and excite artists, patrons, and architects into studying the possibilities of employing clay for a new look in our public places." The talk he gave in Auckland with excellent colour slides of tiles, wall panels and pots in America was a stimulating night when ideas flew.

The East-West friendship of Japanese potter Shoji Hamada and English Bernard Leach is well documented in pottery legend and has been of immense value in giving a firm point of contact and understanding between potters of two such different races. Christchurch potters took the initiative in persuading the committee of the Pan Pacific Festival to invite Shoji Hamada and his son Atsuya to be a feature of the Festival, which was held from 22 February to 6 March 1965. Shoji Hamada brought with him a major exhibition which was shown at the Canterbury Museum. He also gave seminars and lectures, but most valuable of all worked steadily at making pots in Yvonne Rust's studio whenever the time could be found. Two firings using Hamada's own glaze recipes and pots were also put through with the co-operation of several potters working as a team under Mirek Smisek. This opportunity to study the finished pots and at the same time to watch such a master potter at work did much to clarify the vision of many New Zealanders. It showed Hamada, not as a figure of fantasy, but as a potter with a zest for living, a realistic approach, and a tremendous amount of skill and knowledge arrived at through many years of hard work.

Gwyn Hanssen, an Australian potter who has been living and working in Europe for the past five years, spent the month of June 1966 with us. On a

grant from the QEII Arts Council she went round the country demonstrating and lecturing and showed a rare ability to explain the differing potting philosophies clearly and with sympathy. Intrigued with wood firing, she has bought a house in the potters' village of La Borne, in France, which opens up a new area of interest.

Michael Cardew is the next famous visitor to be invited to feature in the Second Pan Pacific Festival early in 1968. This time the New Zealand Society, aware of the problems involved, is in a position to plan well ahead so that the best use can be made of a man well known for the richness and generosity of the pots he makes. Not only has Michael Cardew established the famous pottery at Winchcombe in England, but also he has for many years been face to face with real problems in the emerging countries of Africa. This knowledge should help us in the growing contact we are making with primitive potters of the Pacific.

NEWCOMERS

John Chappell, in the New Zealand issue of the English journal Pottery Quarterly No. 27, observed that "the vast majority of potters stand in crying need of technical instruction . . . The only total solution would be to attract a number of older established potters to come to settle and work in New Zealand, but . . . that doesn't seem to be a very likely possibility." This was written in April 1961 and strangely enough even then Harry and May Davis, who had established the Crowan Pottery in Cornwall in 1946, were thinking of shifting their family and pottery to a younger country, and were finding out all they could of New Zealand's geological and sociological potential. They were experienced in facing pioneer situations in Africa and South America, and rather relished the idea of difficulties they were likely to encounter here. In August 1962 they arrived in Wellington with four children, apprentice potter Stephen Carter, fifteen tons of luggage, and very strong ideas about good craftsmanship and no arty-crafty nonsense. The Wellington potters, somewhat overawed by such stern devotion to principle, made them welcome, and helped them on their way to the Nelson province, which geologically and climatically was obviously the best part in which to settle. Two years later, Vol. 7 No. 1 (August 1964) reported "The bulk of the hard work of re-establishing the pottery at Wakapuaka, Nelson, has been achieved, and Crewenna pots are appearing in our craft shops. The few samples so far seen of the translucent porcelain being evolved from local materials set a new standard of excellence in the rapidly expanding pottery movement in this country."

A twenty minute film was made containing a discussion between Bernard Leach, Len Castle and Barry Brickell at Len Castle's house and pottery, and also a tribute to Leach by Peter Stichebury. Already the opinions and attitudes recorded in this film give an interesting sidelight on history.

The next visitor to arrive was Takeichi Kawai. Gentle and kind, saddened by the death of his friend and interpreter, John Chappell, who had planned to smooth his way round this very foreign country, Kawai spent from March 13 to April 16 1964 among New Zealand potters. He brought with him a very fine exhibition which was shown at the Centre Gallery in Wellington, and which made people understand more of what the work of a real artist potter was like. Part of this exhibition was held back to be shown in Auckland and the prices realised, though low for Japan, were the highest ever paid for pots in New Zealand. Kawai gave demonstrations of pot making and of painting with the brush throughout the country. Because of his lack of English everything had to be done for him, and the burden of administration was a very heavy one. The need for the New Zealand Society was most apparent if only to cope with such problems. Takeichi Kawai is such a fine human being that his goodness and warmth surmounted all barriers and he made many friends. Of them all, perhaps his contact with young Warren Tippett, with whom he stayed in Christchurch, was the most beneficial. To him he said, "Work, work, you must always be working" and he inspired him with confidence.

From May to August of this same year, 1964, John Kingston made a whirlwind return to his homeland from the U.S.A. Vol. 7. No. 1 reports "He covered a lot of ground, giving demon-

strations and lectures wherever he went, and holding exhibitions in Wellington and Auckland. His principal aim was to try and excite artists, patrons, and architects into studying the possibilities of employing clay for a new look in our public places." The talk he gave in Auckland with excellent colour slides of tiles, wall panels and pots in America was a stimulating night when ideas flew.

The East-West friendship of Japanese potter Shoji Hamada and English Bernard Leach is well documented in pottery legend and has been of immense value in giving a firm point of contact and understanding between potters of two such different races. Christchurch potters took the initiative in persuading the committee of the Pan Pacific Festival to invite Shoji Hamada and his son Atsuya to be a feature of the Festival, which was held from 22 February to 6 March 1965. Shoji Hamada brought with him a major exhibition which was shown at the Canterbury Museum. He also gave seminars and lectures, but most valuable of all worked steadily at making pots in Yvonne Rust's studio whenever the time could be found. Two firings using Hamada's own glaze recipes and pots were also put through with the co-operation of several potters working as a team under Mirek Smisek. This opportunity to study the finished pots and at the same time to watch such a master potter at work did much to clarify the vision of many New Zealanders. It showed Hamada, not as a figure of fantasy, but as a potter with a zest for living, a realistic approach, and a tremendous amount of skill and knowledge arrived at through many years of hard work.

Gwyn Hanssen, an Australian potter who has been living and working in Europe for the past five years, spent the month of June 1966 with us. On a

grant from the QEII Arts Council she went round the country demonstrating and lecturing and showed a rare ability to explain the differing potting philosophies clearly and with sympathy. Intrigued with wood firing, she has bought a house in the potters' village of La Borne, in France, which opens up a new area of interest.

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After reading a copy of New Zealand Potter before arrival Harry Davis wrote "This to be frank I confess I find a little alarming! It suggests to me that the pattern of activity among New Zealand non-industrial potters is following very closely that of the UK equivalent. I may be mistaken in this but in fairness I should explain that for a long time it has been our aim to find a modern and adequately efficient equivalent of the pre-industrial country pottery, which managed to make sound and fine wares for the daily needs of its day, without the elements of fine art preciousness and personality cult which is such a conspicuous feature of the studio pottery movement. I should add that the title 'studio potter' always gives me a very chill feeling."

Such a strong statement of opinion, backed up by the production of very fine pots, was worthy of consideration. In many ways the advent of the Davises, at such a point in our development, made the more thoughtful of our potters realise just how much was involved in such a way of life. Here were potters of stature who had lived by what they believed for many years and who proclaimed their beliefs by the goodness of their pots. As time went on and the Davises settled down here, they too began to see that what they had feared was arty-craftyness was in fact a stage in the development of a climate in which potters could live. Because of the education the potters themselves had given the public through their exhibitions and general enthusiasm the Davises own work was understood and appreciated. In Vol. 6 No. 1 May Davis said "There seems to be a general idea, particularly in England, but also here, that New Zealand because of its remoteness and isolation is 'provincial' and culturally lacking, but I think this idea is very exaggerated, and that there is

a tendency to lose sight of the fact that in England the arts flourish mainly in London and the big cities rather than over the whole country... No doubt one can compare London with Auckland or Wellington to New Zealand's detriment, but I suggest that apart from the major centres the position is reversed and that the level of intelligent interest taken in music, drama and the graphic arts, to say nothing of pottery, over the country as a whole is something of which New Zealand can be proud." By the Eighth Exhibition in 1964 Crewenna pots were taking their place upon the stands and helping to carry on this work of cultural education. In April 1967 Harry and May Davis put on their own exhibition of Crewenna Pottery at the New Vision Gallery in Auckland. The pots were nearly all sold within hours of its opening. At the same time Harry's philosophy was being quoted with appreciation in Vol. 9 No. 2, and it was obvious that understanding of the Davises and what they stood for had developed as the New Zealanders had deepened their own knowledge of what pottery was all about.

But before the Davises there were other English potters and Jim Nelson was one of the first. Together with Yvonne Rust he established the Craft Centre in Christchurch. In 1961 he moved to Hanmer Springs where he set up a commercial pottery catering to local needs. One of his students, Val Hunt, is now making a thorough study of English pottery methods and techniques at Stoke-on-Trent, England.

John Lawrence is another who, with his wife, sculptor and potter Anne Verdcourt, and two children, emigrated to New Zealand in 1965. They settled in Pahiatua, and are showing what can be done in the field of adult education. John's pupil Peter Hoey made the jour-

ney from England in 1966 and stayed about nine months in this country working with John and helping to build a kiln at Tararua College before returning.

When in England in 1958 Professor Bailey was interviewing prospective Arts and Crafts Tutors for Adult Education in Wellington he nominated one with a pottery bias. This was Jack Laird, who with his wife and three children arrived in this country in the middle of 1959. He had been trained at the London Central School of Arts and he and his wife had worked for a time in a pottery making domestic ware for the London market. He brought knowledge and a practical point of view with him and his setting up of the Art and Design Centre at Palmerston North University College led to the establishment of a flourishing pottery movement in this area. Students came long distances to take advantage of his efficient teaching methods and from these students the Manawatu Pottery Society was formed, strong enough now to deal with the Eleventh National Exhibition to be held there this year.

Jack and his wife Peggy had always dreamed of setting up a semi-industrialised pottery where a team of people could co-operate in the making of domestic ware from the resources available in the surrounding country. In 1965 this dream was realised, and the Waimea Pottery established in Nelson. This concept, rather foreign to the rugged individualism of the New Zealander, had been tried before in Christchurch on a smaller scale by the Hillsborough Group. The aim of the Waimea Pottery is to gather a strongly co-operating team to work out designs originating from Jack, which are modified in practice and attain their final settled form after several months of production. At present there are seven potters working together in a balanced

group which becomes a very effective unit free from the temporary disruption which can be caused by adjustments to short-term students. In a country such as this, short of overseas funds, such a method of production, in a workshop small enough to be flexible, can be extremely useful.

Another of Jack Laird's ideas was the holding of a Study Conference at Palmerston North in August 1963 to examine the place of crafts in New Zealand and to try and form some idea of which way they should be going. Helped by Gerald Wakely and Terry Bryant, a second conference was held in Auckland a year later. Papers and discussions were most interesting but not having the backing of enough people who cared and understood what it was all about the organisation collapsed through lack of support. Jack Laird was one of the first to see the craftswoman potential in the farmers' wives. He maintained that spinning, knitting and weaving from natural fleeces could become a creative and profitable outlet for the energies of these women, and in the last year or two this potential is beginning to be realised.

The ideas and skills that these newcomers have brought, once assimilated, have helped to strengthen and develop what we have been finding out for ourselves. For many years New Zealanders have been prone to think that the visiting expert must always know so much more than we do. At last, however, we have gained enough confidence to take from them what is valid for us and to give them something in return.

Self-Help

In 1959 (Vol. 2 No. 1) the Editorial stated: "The cement that binds the potters together is difficulty - the difficulty of controlling the elements from which pottery is made". There was practically no information applicable to our own environment available and hardwon knowledge was swapped at Summer Schools and during visits to each others' kilns. We published all the useful information we could obtain. In Napier, Hilary Thurston was evolving lead glazes that would fit the local red clay. These were published in Vol. 2. Jack Laird, (Vol. 3 No. 1) gave his accumulated wisdom on earthenware glazes, and Carl Vendelbosch told us what he knew about saggar making. Mary Hardwick-Smith, then getting established in her combined house and pottery at Takapuna, gave sound advice on the evolving of well fitting Bristol glazes of good colour in an electric kiln (Vol. 3 No. 2). She also gave very practical notes on clay preparation (Vol. 4 No. 1) using readily available equipment adapted for the purpose. Oswald Stephens of Dunedin is a scientist as well as a potter who for many years has put his knowledge to work in the perfecting of glazes. He shared his knowledge in a series of three articles commencing in Vol. 7.

Kiln Builders

Perhaps one of our greatest strengths has been the overcoming of the technical difficulties involved in the building of kilns. This has come about by learning through doing and the pooling of the knowledge so gained. By Volume 2 of the magazine, Peter Stichbury was sending back information and kiln plans from

Africa containing the knowledge he had gained from building his own kilns here plus observations made overseas; Barry Brickell was giving plans of and advice about drip feed kilns; and Mirek Smisek gave his own kiln plan and very practical information on how to build and fire a salt glaze kiln. In 1961 Jack Laird, now getting the Art and Design Centre at Palmerston North into good working order, produced a pamphlet containing plans for both kiln and wheel and giving advice on how to construct burners. We had this pamphlet reproduced and were able to send this free to anyone interested.

In January 1962 at an Adult Education School held at Palmerston North Jack Laird and Roy Cowan were the tutors, and when a lecture on the firing of oil-burning kilns was given by an engineer from the Shell Company some very interesting ideas were germinated which were taken up and codified by Roy Cowan, who in Volume 5 became Technical Editor of the magazine. From then on he continued to print in each issue a series of articles giving the fruits of his experiments with both burners and kilns. The jet burners he evolved and the kilns in which to use them are quite revolutionary, doing away with bag walls, (thus saving space), and smoke (thus saving nuisance). The building of kilns to this design, and the gaining of the knowledge of how to fire them all over the country, has at last got many potters on to firmer ground and freed more energy to be concentrated on the bettering of the pots themselves.

Looking back over the difficulties confronting the would-be potter even ten years ago it seems amazing that most of us even got started. There were very few facilities available. W.D. McGregor Ltd., of Auckland began manufacturing electric kilns in 1946 and this was a start. They have improved and developed these kilns up to the present day. Mr McClure, a ceramic chemist who later founded Commercial Chemicals Ltd., managed to obtain enough import licences to bring in small stocks of oxides, cones and raw materials. He also distributed limited supplies of locally prepared clay, and by making himself available for consultations he straightened out some of the problems.

Mavis Jack in 1958 procured enough import licences to bring in small quantities of English clays, glazes and electric kilns, but her licences kept getting cut back, and her Podmore Agency was finally taken over by Mr Hourigan of C.C.G. Industries Ltd., Auckland. C.C.G. also took over the distributing of New Zealand raw materials prepared by Webb Refineries of Henderson (who began the supply of these in 1962) and were able to import greater quantities of necessary overseas supplies, so that by the end of 1963 the worst of the supply problem was over.

It was very difficult to obtain good wheels, and in 1959 Mr Whitwell and his son of Khandallah evolved a continental type wheel motivated by kicking directly on to the flywheel. The flood of orders, however, was too great for their limited output working as they did in their spare time, and after a year or two they discontinued production.

In 1959 Leon Cohen of Seaboard

Joinery in Auckland was shown the plan of a wheel designed by the Leach Pottery and commenced manufacture. Bernard Leach waived the royalty on these wheels and in 1962 personally approved them. These strong and sturdy wheels are now used all over the country and from the original design an electric wheel has been evolved.

Oil firing at stoneware temperatures and with reduction is very hard on kiln furniture, and in the early days there were many tragic moments and shaggy kiln stories circulating about what happened when shelves broke at the height of a firing. A source of tough silicon carbide shelves was located in Australia from the Nonporite Pty., Melbourne, and in 1964 we began to bulk our orders and import these through J. H. M. Carpenter Ltd., of Auckland. Though it takes six months to obtain delivery, once potters had built up stocks of these shelves another headache was eliminated.

Nelson clays, derived as they are from granite, are of very high quality, and for a while Mirek Smisek tried to help his friends out by digging and preparing clay. This was a time-consuming and tedious job, and there was great rejoicing when Ian McPherson of Mapua began in 1963 to prepare and sell Nelson minerals and clays. Conditioned as most of were to digging, sieving and drying our own clays, being able to obtain ready pugged clay in plastic bags was a much appreciated luxury.

The relationship between suppliers and potters has been a vital one, and through it we have arrived at a mutual respect for our ability to overcome problems.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Many people have given us help at critical periods. The Fellowships administered by the Association of New Zealand Art Societies and given to Len Castle in 1956 and Peter Stichbury in 1957 were a most useful start towards recognition of the potters. The magazine never asked for any finance for itself, but was given by the Arts Advisory Council several small grants to help with projects such as the bringing of overseas potters to this country. Barry Brickell, Warren Tippett were helped at crucial points by the Arts Advisory Council, as were Wailin Hing, Graeme Storm and Jeff Scholes by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, which also awarded Fellowships to Len Castle and Roy Cowan in 1966.

Kenneth Clark, a New Zealander now living and working as a potter in London, has sent out several valuable exhibitions for showing throughout the country, and has also sent to the magazine every year a London Newsletter complete with excellent photographs which keep us informed on the latest developments of English ceramics.

Rewi Alley, another New Zealander who lives in Pekin, contributes articles from time to time about ancient Chinese kilns sites he has discovered. He is very knowledgeable about pottery, for at the Baillie Industrial School he established in Sandan in China many years ago he used pottery making as a means of developing character in the boys under his care.

Vernon Brown, Auckland architect, watched the growth of the pottery movement with intelligent and encouraging interest. As a selector to the Fourth Exhibition he observed "In the plastic press age the potter will prevent our getting too far away from the source,

working as he does with simple function."

Nowadays there are many craft shops all over the country, but the three original shops that saw us through our teething troubles and provided us with outlets and useful advice were Patrick Pierce of the Art of the Potter in Auckland, Stocktons in Wellington with Gordon and Wilfred Wright, and Tine and Kees Hos with New Vision in Auckland. As Mrs Hos says (Vol. 5 No. 2): "The shop has the mediating role and has a responsibility to both artist craftsman and customer. It should be more than a place to buy things, it should have a special atmosphere and style. The salesman or woman should have an understanding and love for the work displayed, and there should be time for discussion with the customers. The goods to be sold should be of good design and honest work, and concern with this standard should not be a highbrow snobism, but a matter of public health, spiritually and materially."

Dr. W. B. Sutch, former head of the Department of Industries and Commerce, has always kept an understanding eye on what we were doing, and in 1961 promoted a Ceramic competition in connection with the Festival of Wellington. In Vol. 7 No. 2 he said "New Zealanders, because of their humanity, are capable of producing great music, great architecture, or the best pottery. When it is fully realised that aesthetics are not on the periphery of life but are the heart of it, then we are laying the foundations for this greatness. When they are accepted as full contributing members of society, artists can act as pathfinders to industry and can help instill some of the human attributes of their work into other aspects of the nation's economy. New Zealand designers, architects, town planners, artists and craftsmen will then be the new pioneers, in New Zealand's drive for quality in all its aspects."

CONCLUSION

It seems to me that the vitality of the pottery movement in New Zealand is due to a certain combination of factors: good leaders, artistically, inspirationally and technically, who have been prepared to share their discoveries; good climate, in a country just ready to find its own culture; and good people, who want and enjoy the opportunity to live more purposefully.

These are my own observations made over the years that I have been Editor of the New Zealand Potter magazine. I have recorded what I feel to be the significant features of what is a very interesting sociological development, and what may in time become a forceful art form.

As I said in 1962 (Vol. 5 No. 1) "Where do we stand in New Zealand? Our isolation means that we are not swayed by every changing concept just over the border. At our leisure we can sift out of the world what we need for our own development. Books, films, and travellers' loot all help to keep us in touch, but it is the quality of our endeavour that matters. There is no reason why a group of straight-thinking, artistically-conscious people should not produce, right here, work of high value."

And I think the time is NOW.

NEW ZEALAND STUDIO POTTERS'
FIRST EXHIBITION

Otago Museum 16 - 30 November 1967.

(By invitation)

Martin Beck (Auckland)
Doreen Blumhardt (Wellington)
Minna Bondy (Wellington)
Barry Brickell (Auckland)
Len Castle (Auckland)
Helen Dawson (Dunedin)
Grete Graetzer (Dunedin)
Doris Holland (Christchurch)
Olive Jones (Onehunga)
Mavis Jack (Wanganui)
Helen Mason (Wellington)
Patricial Perrin (Auckland)
Oswold Stephens (Dunedin)
Peter Stichbury (Auckland)
Lee Thomson (Wellington)

NEW ZEALAND STUDIO POTTERS'
SECOND EXHIBITION

Architectural Centre Gallery, Wellington
20 - 31 October 1958

(By selection)

All the above plus -

Ina Arthur (Dunedin)
Terry Barrow (Wellington)
Nancy Beck (Auckland)
June Black (Wellington)
Pat Brown (Takapuna)
Roy Cowan (Wellington)
R. B. Hall (Auckland)
Mary Hardwick-Smith (Auckland)
Hillsborough Group (Christchurch)
Hazel McCaughern (Christchurch)
Elizabeth Matheson (Wellington)
Muriel Moody (Wellington)
Juliet Peter (Wellington)
Inez Rennie (Wellington)
Ray Rose (Wellington)
Mirek Smisek (Nelson)
J. L. Stewart (Wellington)
Hilary Thurston (Napier)
Carl Vendelbosch (Christchurch)

FOUNDATION MEMBERS of the NEW
ZEALAND SOCIETY OF POTTERS,
October 1963

Gwyn Ace
Margaret Anderson
Ina Arthur
Trevor & Marjorie Bayliss
Nancy & Martin Beck
R. G. B. Bevan
Barry Brickell
Paula Carter
Len Castle
Flora Christeller
Betty Colson
Roy Cowan
Helen Dawson
Winifred Dunn
A. M. Ferguson
Nora Flewelen
Pamela Forsyth
Grete Graetzer
Denis Hanna
Mary Hardwick-Smith
Maisie Hill
Hillsborough Group
Doreen Blumhardt
Mavis Jack
Stan Jenkins
Olive Jones
Paula King
Erna Kral
Jack Laird
Marjorie Leighton
Hazel McCaughern
Helen Mason
Paul Melser
Margaret Milne
Muriel Moody
Guy Mountain
Phyllis Oxford
Jim Palmer
Patricial Perrin
Yvonne Perrin
Juliet Peter
Dora Prime
Inez Rennie
Rachel Rose
Elizabeth Schiessel

W. S. Schiessel
O. C. Stephens
Esma Stevens
Peter Stichbury
Graeme Storm
Noelene Thompson
Lee Thomson
Hilary Thurston
Carl Vendelbosch
Lilyan Walcott
Jocelyn Wilkie
Marcia Wilkinson
John Wood
Muriel Wotton
Wilf Wright
Terry Barrow
June Black
R. B. Hall
Elizabeth Matheson
Mirek Smisek
Jocelyn Thornton
Jean Weir
K. M. Caughley
Veronica Clear
Gwen Keys
Mavis Robinson
Marion Mauger
D. J. Watkins
Doris Holland
Minna Bondy
Wailyn Hing
Nan Berkeley
David Brokenshire
John Brown
Danella Cooper
J. M. Craig
Frank & Peggy Finan
Neil Grant
D. I. Lascelles
Margaret Oglivie
John T. Patrick
Nan Patterson
Mr and Mrs F. G. Shewell
Warren Tippet
Michael Trumic
L. J. Wilde
Audrey Brodie

