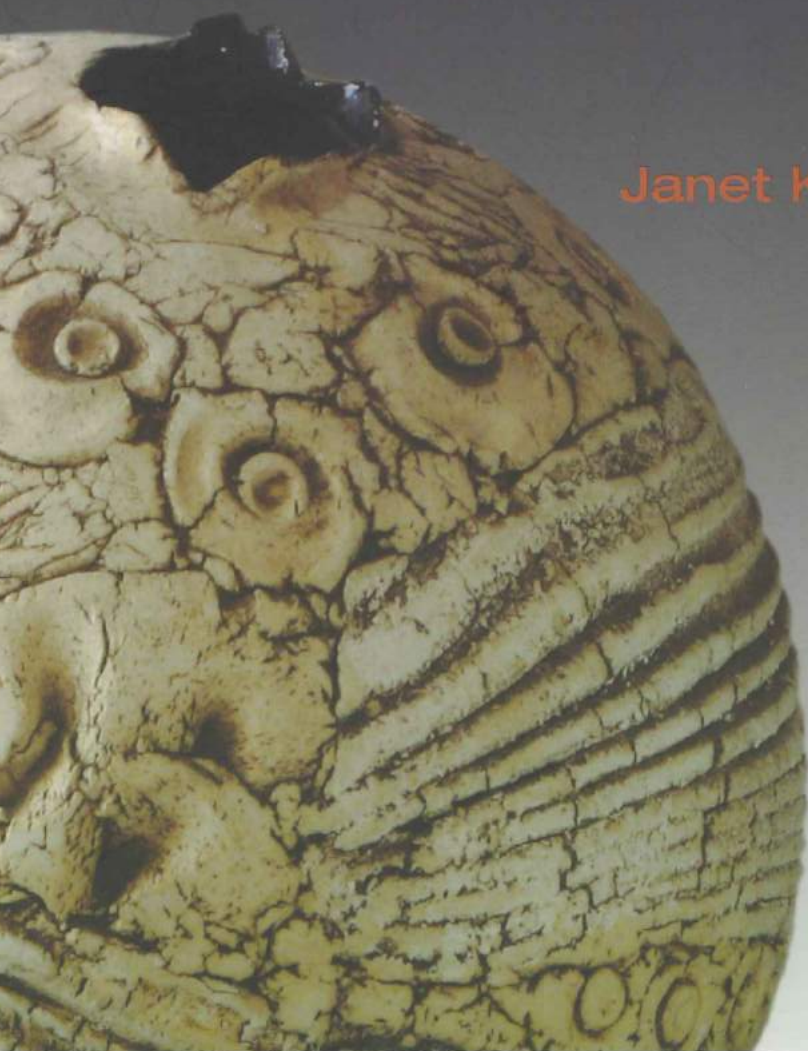


the first  
**50**  
years

# Perth Studio Potters

Janet Kovesi Watt



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the first

50  
years

1957 - 2007



Janet Kovesi Watt

Perth Studio Potters



Published by Perth Studio Potters Inc.  
1 Burt Street  
Cottesloe, Western Australia 6011  
Tel: (08) 9383 2668

PO Box 3  
Cottesloe, Western Australia 6911

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National Library of Australia  
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

Watt, Janet Kovesi  
Perth Studio Potters : the first 50 years

1st ed.  
ISBN 978 0 646 51389 8 (paperback)

1. Perth Studio Potters—History.
2. Potters—Western Australia—Perth.
3. Pottery—Western Australia—Perth.
- I. Title

738.099411

Typeset in 11 on 13.8 pt Minion Pro by  
Chris Ulyatt Consulting Services P/L  
Tel: (08) 9315 9617

Printed by PK Print  
23 Emplacement Crescent  
Hamilton Hill, Western Australia 6163  
Tel: (08) 9336 3800

Cover design: Kim Maple

Cover image: Textured Sphere by Judy Halliday

Title page image: Commemorative plate by the author



Perth Studio Potters acknowledge with gratitude  
the financial support given by Lotterywest  
towards the production costs of this book.

## Acknowledgements

I need to thank many people for their help in the writing of this book, which has been a tribute to the members of the club who have been such a support to me in my own life as a potter. My greatest debt is to the former secretaries and editors who kept and filed the club minutes, wrote the newsletters, and preserved material in the club scrapbook, which together have been my primary sources.

It has been a challenge to make a selection from this mass of material. Without going into exhaustive detail, I have tried to show the great number and variety of activities conducted by the club, and its connection with the wider world of ceramics and craft, both in Australia and overseas.

It has been a great pleasure to talk to the families of many of the original members of the club, who have shared memories and photographs, lent work for the 2007 anniversary exhibition 'Celebrating Our Past', and allowed me to use photographs of that work here. Trisha Kotai Ewers, who opened that exhibition, supplied me with the text of the charming talk given by her mother, Jean Ewers, at the opening of the club cottage in 1964.

Several past and present members of the club have supplied photographs, read different versions of my manuscript, and made useful comments, corrections and criticisms. Trisha Kotai Ewers also read my text and made extensive valuable comments and suggestions, for which I am enormously grateful. Any errors of fact or emphasis that remain are my own.

I am grateful to West Australian Newspapers for permission to reproduce copyright images, and to former club member Mr John Kato, now in Japan, who gave the club a generous donation towards the cost of this. I thank *The Stirling Times* for permission to reproduce an image published by them, and the City of Fremantle for permission to reproduce an image of a teapot in the City Art Collection. I am also grateful for permission to use two images originally published in the magazine *Pottery in Australia*.

I would not have been able to put this story together without the laptop computer which was the gift of my daughter Clare, the ongoing computer-related advice of my son Peter, and the digital camera given to me by all my four children. My husband Ted helped in many ways, but mainly by his tolerance of a project that has dominated my life for so long.

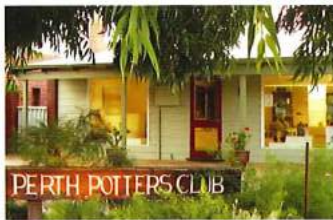
Dr Chris Ulyatt has done the typesetting and layout with exemplary patience, care and skill.

Finally, on behalf of Perth Studio Potters, I gratefully acknowledge the financial support given by Lotterywest for this history. Publication would not have been possible without it.

Janet Kovesi Watt



## Preface



Perth Studio Potters Inc. is a beacon of light for the hand-crafts at a time when many crafts—and the teaching of those crafts—have fallen away in the face of factory-produced ware and a lack of commitment to their long-term viability.

We are fortunate to have excellent premises that we own outright, thanks to the foresight of our founding members, and we are committed to making the very best use of these premises for the benefit of our members and the WA ceramics community. We are in a sound financial situation thanks to many members' efforts and the careful management of our resources.

The challenge we face in our second half-century is to be worthy of what was built by those early pioneers; to build on what we have; to move with the new times; to have fun while we do it; and to embrace change with energy and purpose. For nothing is surer than that trying to hold back change is like trying to hold your breath forever—if you succeed, you die.

This book shows how the fine organisation that we have today has grown from the dedication and hard work of a small but committed community of potters who, I am sure, took great joy in what they achieved. I hope that you, the reader, will get equal enjoyment from this book and if you're not already a member, that you are encouraged to join our great organisation or to visit our modern gallery of work.

Thank you to all PSP members and the many volunteer helpers who over the past years have contributed their time, donations of money and equipment to make Perth Studio Potters what it is today. This book is dedicated to all of you.

**Kim Maple**  
President

## The Background

The great English potter Michael Cardew, looking back over the three years he spent at the Leach Pottery, reflected in his autobiography: “in the perspective of years later it is clear to me, whichever way I look at it, that the landing of Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada on the Island of Britain in 1920 was for craftsmen potters the most significant event of the twentieth century”.

For Western Australian studio potters, and particularly those who became members of the Perth Potters’ Club, it could be said that the most significant event was the arrival from Hungary of Francis Kotai, who had trained in ceramics and sculpture at the Budapest School of Applied Art. He and his wife and their young children made their escape from Hungary and its Russian-imposed communist government in December 1946, finally landing in Fremantle in 1950.

What kind of place was Perth then? For a start, it was small, for a capital city. The population of Western Australia in 1947, when the immigration programme started, was less than half a million, and the population of Perth was about half of that. (As late as 1970, a single telephone directory covered the entire State.) In 1950, 12,864 displaced persons like the Kotai family arrived to swell the population. After the first two years, during which Francis was required to work on government contract wherever he was sent, he managed to get a job with the local pottery firm of Brisbane and Wunderlich (in the sanitary ware department) but then, as his wife Julia recalled:

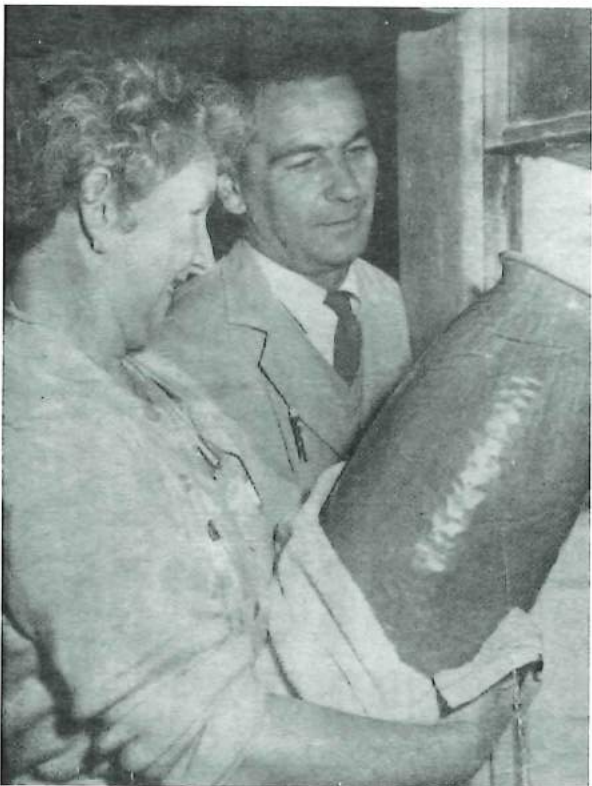
About the same time we heard about a small ceramics business for sale in Bassendean. We made contact with the owner. He was an ex-serviceman who was not an expert in ceramics and was looking for someone to buy the business. So we took over with no money ... [and] started the business with a small electric kiln making wall vases, ramekins, coffee cups, sugar bowls, lamp bases etc. I went to shops to take orders and to also deliver the goods. I took Eveline [the baby] with me. We ended up with a huge electricity bill and not much left for the basics. (Quoted in *Milk and Honey—but no Gold*, Nonja Peters, UWA Press, 2001, p. 186.)

Many of the cups and sugar bowls were ordered by Aherns department store for their coffee shop. Coffee, real coffee, as opposed to a drink made from essence out of a bottle, was a glamorous novelty in Perth at the time. One young Hungarian migrant, who was served essence coffee (with milk) and asked how he liked it, replied in some perplexity that it was the nicest cup of tea he had ever tasted. When the first espresso machine was installed in a café in South Terrace in Fremantle in the early 1950s, homesick European migrants used to go there almost as though on pilgrimage.

Francis’s pottery became known, and he was interviewed on ABC radio, as a result of which he was approached by Mr Stacey Turner, the head of the Fremantle Technical College, who asked him to teach a ceramics course. Pottery had been taught at Fremantle

a few years earlier, in 1948 and 1949, by Erna Manners, who had trained at the Poole Pottery in Dorset, in England, but her approach was more academic than the students had bargained for, and after her retirement the course was discontinued. Her former students had acquired a taste for pottery, however, and when Francis took up his position in 1954, they eagerly enrolled and formed the nucleus of his class.

Jean Ewers, one of those original students, paid tribute to him in an article in *Pottery in Australia* (Autumn 1979): "He was a gifted man, with a great breadth of knowledge, technical ability, artistry, generosity and wit. All this, with a good leaven of Hungarian temperament, made for evocative and exciting classes for the fortunate students". He did not lecture, being no doubt diffident at this stage about his command of English. One of his students, Jean Spry, confessed that there were times when she found it difficult to tune in to his accented English and occasional puzzling mispronunciations. What, for instance, could "higgenic" possibly mean? Oh, of course, "hygienic". So Francis would demonstrate, and *show* students how to do things when they asked and when he felt that they were ready. Having come from post-war Europe and a series of refugee camps, where scavenging and improvisation were essential survival skills, he was not deterred by the dilapidated state of the Finnerty Street Annexe of the Technical College, now the admirably restored Fremantle Arts Centre. As Jean Ewers wrote, in the article quoted above, "there always seemed to be the right bit of junk lying around when he needed to mend a kiln or a wheel".



*Jean Ewers and Francis Kotai taking a vase from the kiln, Fremantle, 1957*

His magnificent glazes came, as he said, not from books but from his solar plexus, but this did not mean that he kept them to himself. Jean Spry remembered asking whether she and a fellow-student could mix up a glaze, and were gladly shown what to do. Francis declared that he could make a glaze of anything, "even dog shit". (One student is said to have taken him up on this, and brought some in, dried, which Francis did indeed put into a glaze, but there is no record of how it turned out.)

Though the whole atmosphere of the classes was one in which pottery was pursued for enjoyment, Francis was careful to maintain standards, but in such a way that no-one took offence. (One student was heard to ask



plaintively what had become of the duck she had made at the last class, and was told: "Oh ... I think he went for a swim".) Work would go "into the water or into the fire", and only the better work would be fired.

Francis was totally dedicated to his students, and arranged yearly exhibitions of their work, while only putting on a single exhibition of his own, in 1964. Sadly, this received an insensitive and somewhat grudging review in *The West Australian* ("Though derivative, it is, nevertheless, well-made pottery of a high artistic standard") and Francis was hurt, despite the concluding sentence which commended his "considerable achievements as a potter". At the time he had not even heard of "Australian potter Hughan", from whose work his own was supposed to have been derived.

The original students found the classes so enjoyable that they kept on re-enrolling, in spite of the increased demand for places by new students. Francis urged them as they neared the end of their course to try and find a studio space where they could continue to work together, so that their enjoyment and companionship could continue. As Jean Ewers and Judy Halliday put it in their account of the early years of the Potters' Club: "He realised that over the years they had been welded into a group of friends who enjoyed one another's company, and stimulated one another's ideas. This he felt was something to be nurtured".

In 1957, Adelaide potter Merle Tuohy arrived in Western Australia, accompanying her soldier husband who had just been transferred to Perth. She was a member of the Adelaide Potters' Club, which had been founded as early as 1949, and still flourishes, and was eager to try and establish something similar in Perth. She had heard of Jean Ewers, and got in touch with her so that they could arrange to meet and discuss the possibility. Jean later described her as a "charming and dynamic personality—a woman with a mission, and that mission was to form a Potters' Club in Perth". Jean took Lyn Bannister with her and they both came away fired with enthusiasm. "They decided to call a meeting of all potters. Francis was delighted. Merle Tuohy wrote an article for *The West Australian* to let potters in the general public know, and Francis notified all his classes about the meeting".

"This first meeting was held in Jean Ewers' home. There was a good attendance and it was unanimously agreed that a Potters' Club be formed. Merle Tuohy was appointed provisional president. Pam Martin and Shirley Moir became joint secretaries. The second meeting was at Merle Tuohy's home, and the third at Mrs Brent-White's [later Mrs Meg Sheen]." (These reminiscences are taken from the first chapter, "How it all Began", of the booklet printed by the club in 1997: *The First 40 Years*.)

The club soon took on a more formal aspect, with a guest speaker being engaged to give a talk at monthly meetings in the Railway Institute building in Wellington Street, Perth. The first recorded minutes of the newly formed Perth Potters' Club were those of the meeting held at the Railway Institute on 11 July 1957. At this meeting Miriam Williams was officially appointed secretary, and "The financial statement was read by the treasurer Mr Barton". A constitution based on that of the Adelaide Potters' Club was formulated, which was finally drawn up and adopted in July 1958.

## The Club Finds its First Home



*The boatshed which was the club's first home*

Club members still needed to find a place where they could not just meet, but work with clay and get their hands satisfyingly dirty, and members were on the watch for suitable premises. The artist Owen Garde and his wife Vera, friends of Nina Michelides who was one of the 23 members of the club, offered the use of their boatshed on the Swan River foreshore. Touchingly, it seems that members could hardly believe their luck. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 1957,

record that members wondered anxiously whether or not to accept the offer: “Mr Garde may feel that we were not sufficiently active as a group to justify our taking over the room”. They agreed to send delegates to him “explaining the size and activities of the club, and should he be agreeable we would hold our next gathering at the new room”. Their misgivings were groundless, and the next meeting, on 6 March 1958, duly took place at “The Potters’ Shed”. It may have been only a shed, but it had a very grand address: 146 Victoria Avenue, Dalkeith. The Gardes generously offered it to the club rent-free on condition that it was shared with the Lapidary Club, and that members maintained it and installed three-phase wiring, which was necessary for firing the club kiln and for Owen’s pump. The club occupied the boatshed until early 1964.

In March 1958, quotes were called for the connection of three-phase wiring, the kiln committee (headed by Jean Ewers) was authorised to purchase necessary kiln equipment, and early in 1959 Francis Kotai built the club kiln. The overall cost was the oddly precise total of £153 6s 7d—one hundred and fifty three pounds, six shillings and sevenpence. (When decimal currency was introduced in 1966, two dollars was the equivalent of one pound, or twenty shillings, and ten cents was the equivalent of one shilling, or twelve pence.) Paying for the kiln had been a struggle: the minutes of the annual general meeting on 9 July 1959 record that the treasurer “smilingly announced that we were almost bankrupt after our spending spree on the Kiln, but we were still solvent with £1 8s 11d still in the bank, after all debts had been paid. As subscriptions were all due again we were not unduly worried”. The first firing took place on 11 June 1959. The kiln was of inestimable value to the club, as it would be some time before kilns, and indeed most pottery equipment, became commercially available in Western Australia. Shelves and furniture for the club kiln had to be ordered from the firm of Russell Cowan, in Sydney, though bricks were available locally. During the 1960s, Meg Sheen started her comprehensive craft supply business, and Jackson’s Drawing Supplies diversified into supplying materials for ceramic crafts. The minutes of the club meeting held on 10 December 1964 reported that “Jackson’s are beginning to carry quite a lot of



necessary lines, chemical supplies and American glazes". In the early days of the club, however, it was not possible for eager would-be potters simply to go out and buy a ready-made wheel or kiln, though the club was at least able to obtain clay from the Brent-White [Sheen] Studio. It was a period of ingenious improvisation, when some resourceful husbands devised wheels using washing-machine motors, but these unfortunately were not a great success, since they were likely to be single-speed, or at most two-speed. The present writer even encountered one based on the mechanism of a treadle sewing-machine, which was even less of a success, since the leverage that can be exerted by the human foot and ankle on an up-and-down treadle is hardly sufficient to cope with the strains imposed by throwing. No amount of ingenuity at that time, however, was likely to be an adequate substitute for the technical knowledge needed to build an electric kiln, though Rowan and Myf Young built a little one fired with coke and coal, and Joan Campbell's father built her one which was also fired with coke, using the plan published by Denise and Rosemary Wren in England.



*"Green Dragon" by Myf Young.  
(Collection of Mrs Brook  
Oliphant, the artist's daughter.)*

Denise Wren (née Tuckfield) had been born in Albany, Western Australia, but left as a child with her family in 1899. Her father was an inventor, and she and her daughter Rosemary inherited his talents: they were pioneers in England of do-it-yourself equipment and backyard kilns, and were also pioneers of salt glaze as early as the 1950s. Rosemary and eight other potters formed the working party which planned and shaped the Craftsmen Potters' Association of Great Britain, and Rosemary was its first chairman. This body was re-named the "Craft Potters' Association" in late 1991 and, like Perth Studio Potters, celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 2007. Denise later corresponded with Western Australian artist potter Eileen Keys.

With the kiln in place, the club made rapid progress, and in November of that year, club members were able to join forces with Owen Garde's students to mount an exhibition in Newspaper House in Perth. By contrast, it is worth mentioning here the frustrating experience of Leon Pritchard, who had arrived in Perth in 1957, and started to teach drawing, design and sculpture at Perth Technical College in 1960. He planned to introduce pottery and, in 1963, put in a request for the purchase of a kiln and wheels, but without success. He was privately told later that Bill Hayman, the Director of Technical Education, had queried the need for a kiln in Perth since there was already one in Fremantle, where his wife attended classes, and he could not see why another was necessary. It was two years before Leon got his kiln, but the Potters' Club, being an independent organisation, had been able simply to go ahead and commission one of its own. Later, from 1968 to 1985, Leon taught at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) where in 1968 he organised the visit to Perth of legendary potter Michael Cardew, whose demonstrations were held in the mezzanine area above the then brand-new Hayman Hall.

Members of the Lapidary Club briefly shared the boatshed, between 1958 and 1960, but then moved themselves and their equipment out and went elsewhere. Members of the Potters' Club, too, although they had lined and painted the shed and entered into a five-year tenancy agreement with the Gardes, started to plan for the day when they could move to somewhere more permanent that would be truly their own. The then president, Doris Harms, started a building fund in 1960. When the club was formed the yearly subscription was set at a guinea—one pound one shilling (£1 1s or \$2.10 in decimal currency). In October 1959, a nomination fee of ten shillings and sixpence (10s 6d or \$1.05) was introduced for new members, since they had not taken part in the effort to finance the kiln. During these first three years, members held 'bring and buy' stalls, jumble sales, film evenings, barbecues and bridge parties, to swell the funds when extra equipment was needed. Once the building fund was established, the club efforts were accelerated: the 'bring and buy' stall became a regular feature of meetings, and members were given a bank money-box to fill during the year with the proceeds of individual fund-raising efforts.

Members were eager to improve their personal skills and standards, and the more experienced potters gave classes in their own special field. Judy Halliday fired the kiln and taught others to stack and fire. Jean Ewers took classes in clay preparation, and making and applying glazes. Thursday each week was club day, and the potters cheerfully, though sometimes heavily laden, plodded down and up the hill path between road and boatshed. They potted enthusiastically together, stopping on hot days for a swim in the river. The minutes of the committee meeting held on 12 October 1961, suggested

that for the Christmas meeting and party, "Members may like to swim. Dress: for swimming, formal, otherwise informal".

In 1960, a library of books and periodicals was started, with an outlay of £12 6s 7½d. This became a major club asset, and was well used. In the self-help circumstances of the time, all sources of knowledge were avidly consulted, though the books available then were few compared with the huge selection in the bookshops today. Bernard Leach's *A Potter's Book* was tremendously inspiring, but not much practical help to potters striving to make interesting earthenware glazes to be fired in electric kilns. Daniel Rhodes's *Clay and Glazes for the Potter* was a frequently borrowed volume, but potters at this date could not help feeling wistful as they read his *Stoneware and Porcelain*, since high



Alex Croll



temperature electric kilns were not available until the late 1960s, and natural gas for convenient reduction firing did not arrive until the 1970s.

To establish and promote the club in the community, members were prepared to exhibit for any community body that asked for help. These included Wanslea, Meals on Wheels, the Institute for the Blind and Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Nedlands Festival of Arts, CATS (Children's Activities Time Society), the Red Cross and the Lucy Creeth Home for Crippled Children. This last became a particular interest of the club: a sale at Muriel Young's home raised enough money for the purchase of two wheelchairs, and at sales of work for many years there was a special place for small pots and 'seconds', which were sold in aid of the Lucy Creeth Home. The partly disabled ex-serviceman Alex Croll, who had been wounded in both the Second World War and the Korean War, and threw pots with one hand, used to donate money from the sale of his pots to this charity. He provided careful catalogue sheets with little drawings of the pots, and notes about the ashes and rock dusts used in the glazes. He was awarded life membership of the club at the annual general meeting of 1969.

In 1962, the subscription was raised to two guineas (£2 2s). Club members now seriously resolved to work even harder at fund-raising, and save enough money to be in a position, as soon as possible, to purchase a home of their own. Then, as Jean Ewers put it later, "we could put the different activities of a potter into separate rooms, so that the glaze wouldn't be mixed with the clay and they wouldn't both be part of our afternoon tea". A confidential survey of members was conducted in order to find out how much could be raised as a loan in case of urgent need. It was found that a total of five hundred pounds could be contributed if necessary, but in the event such an emergency loan was not needed, so effective and rapid was the fund-raising. At the annual general meeting in 1962, the treasurer reported a bank balance of £64 14s. By September it had risen to £147 17s 3d, and by 1 November to £340 12s 1d. This followed the holding of a successful fête, even though a generous £120 from the proceeds had been donated to the Lucy Creeth Home. By 13 December the Club had nearly £400 in the bank, and by 1 August 1963 the balance was £693 10s 9d.

Meanwhile, in March 1963, the first issue of the club newsletter appeared, a quarterly publication sent to all members and affiliated bodies, and a copy still survives, together with its successors, though smudged and now yellowed with age. It proudly announced that "in recent weeks we have acquired several new members and are fast approaching our limit of 100". The social notes in the December issue of that year, record the Melbourne Cup lunch party held at Esmé Macaulay's Federation home overlooking the river at 50 Victoria Avenue, Claremont. The house had been built in 1911 for the Bunning family, and much magnificent timber had been used in its construction. It



*The entrance gallery at 50 Victoria Avenue.  
(Photograph courtesy Mr Barry Macaulay.)*



*Group photographed on the verandah in 1983: Lil Caesar, Georgie Davy, Jean Ewers, Dorothy Ewers;  
in front: Esmé Macaulay, May Piesse, Judy Halliday.  
(Photograph: Mrs Mary Urquhart.)*

was for many years, until 1986, a gracious backdrop for memorably enjoyable social occasions which were also “a most congenial way of raising funds for the club”.

### **A Cottage in Cottesloe**

**COTTESLOE: £1,250.**

#### **FOR QUICK SALE**

**JWB Asb. Cottage. Comprising front ver., lng., 2 b/rms. RFSO, kit. and cons. Needs some renovations.**

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The year 1963 marked the realisation of the club's dream of a home of its own. Its guaranteed tenure of the boatshed was coming to an end, but thanks to all the fund-raising efforts of members the club now had enough money in the bank for the purchase of a property to be a realistic ambition. Accordingly, Esmé Macaulay, the club secretary, and May Piesse, the treasurer, took the necessary first step of arranging for the club to become an incorporated body. It would then be in a position to buy a property of its own as soon as a suitable one could be found. By doing this themselves they saved the club



considerable legal expenses, though a basic fee of rather more than £20 had to be paid. Meanwhile, members studied the real estate pages of the papers and attended auction sales until, on 13 September 1963, the property at 1 Burt Street, Cottesloe, was offered for sale.

At the committee meeting held on 26 September the secretary, Esmé Macaulay, was able to report:

Thanks to the alertness of our past president Mrs Doris Harms we were able to have the first opportunity of seeing a property—wood, brick and asbestos house on a very valuable well placed block of land at 1 Burt St. Cottesloe. A hastily gathered quorum rushed to keep an appointment with an estate agent, and we soon realised that this was something we could easily finance and cope with. The price was £1,250 and as our bank balance was over £700 [£716 8s 5d on 5 September 1963] we were able without any trouble to raise a mortgage with the Bank of New South Wales in Claremont of £600 out of which we must spend some money on new toilet facilities.

Thus with a debt of only £600 we now are people of Property—a property which I am sure will be worth between £2,000 and £3,000 within a very short time.

As Jean Ewers later told the story, in the speech that she gave at the official opening of the clubhouse on 4 July 1964, Doris Harms's husband deserves much of the credit for the purchase of the little house, because he kept the family clocks advanced half an hour, "and when Doris Harms read the For Sale notices with her early morning cup of tea she rang the estate agent even before estate agents expect to be disturbed, and got an option on the house. A snap decision was made by the Vice-President [Judy Halliday] and committee, and our civil servants, the secretary and treasurer, moved into the house-buying business and made just as great a success of that as they did of the incorporation".

An important consideration was, as the secretary had said, the position of the land: within a few minutes' walk of a bus stop on the Stirling Highway in one direction, and the railway station at Cottesloe in the other. At this date public transport was widely used, and not all members could drive. Since that time, the space for overflow parking on the railway reserve nearby has been a great asset to the club.

Jean Ewers, the president, was away on holiday at the time, and recalled that she had been



*Doris Harms. (Photograph courtesy Mr Geoff Harms.)*



*Esmé Macaulay, an inventive sculptor in media other than clay. (Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*



home for only a few hours when the telephone rang, and an excited voice announced: "We've bought a house!" Permission to conduct a potters' club on the premises was sought and obtained from the Cottesloe Council, and Esmé Macaulay and May Piesse were now asked to take over all necessary financial and legal matters, so that the club could obtain an overdraft and secure the title deeds of the new property.

Present club members can only applaud the foresight of their predecessors, in view of the startling increase in the value of Cottesloe real estate. At the time, however, the humble weatherboard cottage was in poor shape and needed a lot of attention. There was trouble, too, with the unsatisfactory tenants who, on being given notice to quit, "had responded in a very hostile manner". The secretary and treasurer, beside their legal activities, struggled with preliminary cleaning of "indescribable" squalor (the toilet was condemned by the council and had to be replaced) and engaged a contractor to cart away the rubbish from the "unsavoury" backyard. As Jean Ewers and Judy Halliday recalled later, "then came operation 'clean up' and this involved a very gallant band who removed all traces of the last tenants. Then the whole club membership was called into action, and with paint and goodwill a neglected house was transformed into a functional clubroom". In the speech that she gave at the opening of the clubhouse Jean commented with amusement:

It was one of the miracles of modern science to see thirty women at a time with thirty brushes and thirty tins of paint, attacking thirty different spots, and miraculously the spots all came together and the house was painted. Typical of the enthusiasm was the story of Mrs Serventy, who couldn't sleep one night. She thought: 'I might as well be painting the cottage as tossing here.' So she put out bowls and cereals on the table for Dr Serventy's breakfast and came down to the cottage and lay on her back on top of the kiln and painted the kiln room ceiling—a modern Michelangelo.



*Cleaning the gutters. Judy Halliday is on the ladder.*

The first meeting at Burt Street was held on 5 March 1964, and attended by about 40 members. The June newsletter expressed the hope that yet more members would attend the annual general meeting on 2 July, to see the great progress that had been made in recent weeks. On 14 May, Francis Kotai dismantled the old kiln (after an impressive 154 firings in five years) and it was passed brick by brick, element

by element, from hand to hand of a human chain up to the cars. At Burt Street he rebuilt it, fitting new elements and a new metal outer casing. This cost the club £98 5s, for what was in effect a new kiln. A great deal of basic work was done in the little cottage: three-phase wiring was installed, the wheels were overhauled, Rowan Young built a wedging table in the laundry, and Dr Harms converted the bathroom into a canteen. Mr Harry Wallace built a retaining wall in the garden, and plans for future alterations and extensions were prepared.



*Laying crazy paving at the back of the cottage. Lil Caesar is kneeling on the right. It is worth noting the formality of members' clothes, even when laying paving. The minutes of the annual general meeting in 1960 reported that "Mrs Kent presented Mrs Harms and Mrs Halliday with a gift of stockings in appreciation of the work they had done during the year in firing and costing".*

The club was officially opened on 4 July 1964 by Jean Ewers, who gave a brief history of the club's first seven years, during which membership had grown to more than a hundred potters. She thanked all those who had made it possible, and concluded by saying: "This has been something more than establishing a Potters' Cottage. It has been building a foundation in friendship. Now you know why I am so delighted to be asked to open this cottage and I do so now declare it open with the wish that many beautiful pots will be born here".

In the evening, members fired the newly installed kiln for the first time. To mark the occasion, they commissioned Jane Vandon to design a plant-container letterbox, to be made by members and her students, decorated with their potting marks. This masterpiece still stands in the club garden, though without the lid which it originally had. After a while, however, it was no longer used for letters, as snails used to eat them.

In 1963, the club exhibition had been held in the Naturalists' Hall in Merriwa Street, Nedlands. Now the club had a home of its own, and the members' exhibition for 1964 was a major one: it was opened on 26 September in the newly renovated club house by Hew Roberts, the Director of Adult Education. More than 800 exhibits, representing the work of 38 potters, were somehow fitted into the little house. The February newsletter had commented: "With more and more people becoming interested in this art, the importance of a well established and organised club is most essential, to fill the needs of the potter. Now that the dream of our own club house has become a reality it is possible that the Perth Potters' Club could become one of the cultural centres of the state".

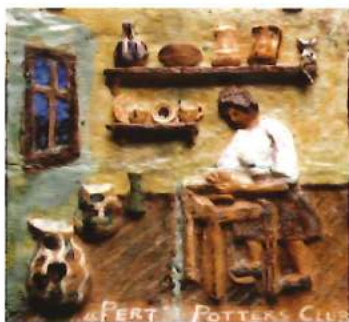
This same newsletter had reported the first pottery class held by May Piesse at the country community of Gidgegannup, and the subsequent decision of the club to affiliate this enthusiastic group of potters. Affiliation would entitle them to exhibit with the





*The celebration for the opening of the club cottage. Julia Kotai is standing to the right of the veranda post, and Myf and Rowan Young are on the left with their small daughter Brook, whose twin brother Steven is over to the right. Jane Vandon's husband Harry is standing left of centre. The painting is by Hungarian artist George Laszlo.*

club as a group, receive the newsletter and hire the kiln. The previous year it had been reported that "one afternoon during August, Mesdames Young, Piesse, and Macaulay, visited Gidgegannup, and demonstrated the Pinch Pot, Slabwork and Modelling to a group of ladies very interested in Pottery. About thirty ladies were present, and I believe the afternoon tea served to the visitors was delectable". By November, potters' groups from Bridgetown and Geraldton had also affiliated. Melva Preston, who was at the time living in Bridgetown, drove up with some friends to see the first club exhibition, and always remembered the warm welcome they received from Jean Ewers. She used to say that, ever after, she regarded the club as a second home.



*Tile panel by Gertrude Serventy celebrating the opening of the clubhouse on 4 July 1964.*

Plans to alter and extend the club cottage were considered as early as the general meeting in March of the following year, 1965, and a bank loan of £600 was raised to cover the cost of building a kiln room. The architect husband of member Audrey Heffernan had prepared plans for this, free of charge. The club has always been fortunate in the services voluntarily

performed by members' husbands. Already by June 1965, the newsletter could report that the new kiln room had been completed. The ceramic letterbox was also assembled and installed, and the club engaged a gardener, paid for by an increase in the subscription to £2 5s. Club members were plainly relishing their new status as house-proud property-owners, though Jean Ewers warned against being too house-proud, observing that good pots were more important than clean walls.

The possession of a permanent home evidently inspired the members of the club with enthusiasm for a wide variety of activities, raising funds to reduce the club overdraft (and for various charities as well) by holding such events as film nights and an evening of Australian

Humour presented by the writer John K Ewers, Jean Ewers's husband. But making pottery and raising personal standards was the priority. There was a good response to a proposal to put on a monthly display in the club of members' work, to be arranged by Dolores Gable.



*Dolores Gable with students at Bridgetown. Merle Best is in the centre. (Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

## Exhibitions, Demonstrations and Classes

A more prestigious opportunity presented itself when the club was invited by the Festival of Perth committee to participate in an exhibition in February 1966. It was a combined exhibition of work from a number of art groups, to be held in the Adult Education Studio, upstairs on the corner of Hay and Milligan Streets, Perth. An elected sub-committee and an outside selector, John Fawcett, chose a total of 109 pieces. Prices ranged from 25c to \$50, with few pieces costing more than \$10 and many less than \$5. The exhibition opening hours are worth noting: from 10.00 am to 8.00 pm on weekdays, and 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm on Sundays, from 18 February to 3 March, and members were requested to roster for duty. "We hope that all members will do their best to make this Exhibition a credit to themselves and their club."

This approach to the club by the Festival committee contrasts with the approach by the club to the Festival many years later, in the mid-1990s, at a time when the standard of members' work has probably never been higher. The response on this

FESTIVAL  
OF  
PERTH EXHIBITIONS BY WESTERN  
AUSTRALIAN ART GROUPS



*Catalogue for the Festival of Perth exhibition*





*Work by Maria Phillips (left) and Muriel Young (above) displayed during the Festival of Perth in 1966*

occasion was discouraging and even dismissive. It was partly this response that led to the club's reluctant change of name: evidently the name "Potters' Club" conveyed an image of amateurish cosiness rather than the professionalism to which members aspired, and which had been taken for granted by the earlier Festival committee. At that date, when international and even interstate travel

was not commonplace as it is today, the Festival relied to a large extent on using and promoting the talents of local people.

Members were eager to enhance their pottery skills: Jean Ewers and Judy Hallday ran two classes on glazing in that summer of 1966. These, of course, were low-temperature earthenware glazes, since the electric elements in kilns of the time were not capable of reaching the high temperatures required for stoneware. Potters of today would note with some alarm that the ingredients required included white lead. Members were advised in the newsletter that "white lead may be procured for 3/3 per lb by asking for Mr. Ian Bateman at J. and W. Bateman, Hay Street, Perth". This was just west of His Majesty's Theatre. (The present writer was one of the customers.) Fine bronze sieve mesh for the home-made sieves also needed for the classes could be bought from another hardware shop at the other end of Hay Street, near the Pier Street intersection. Besides such classes the club arranged monthly demonstrations on pottery topics: Janet Kovesi on slipware (the first of a number of such demonstrations), Rhonda Stevenson on making plaster bats for the wheelhead, Lil Caesar on bonsai pots, and Joan Campbell on "An Approach to Pottery". Muriel Young showed her methods of mixing clay, Teddy Letham the making of a pot and lid in one throw, and Kath Brealey the modelling of figurines. Meanwhile, the monthly displays were fully booked until September. It was a busy and productive time, typical in fact of the busy and productive years to come.

At the general meeting in December 1965, members had voted to have two exhibitions in late 1966—a selective one in mid-October, followed by a general sale of work in November. Joan Campbell,



*Slipware dish by Janet Kovesi with a design based on an antique playing card*



Judy Halliday, Dolores Gable and Jean Ewers made up the selection committee, with John Fawcett as the outside selector. Frank Norton, Director of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, was asked to open the exhibition. (His wife, Audrey, was a club member and was one of the exhibitors.) The newsletter recorded that this was a great success, and the club was inspired to plan yet another selective exhibition for mid-June the following year, which was opened by the artist Bryant McDiven. A subcommittee was again chosen from the club to do the preliminary selecting "and Mr Kotai has been asked to consider being the outside selector". (It is worth noting that Francis Kotai, the respected teacher, is still here referred to formally in the March newsletter as *Mr Kotai*. By the end of the 1960s, the social conventions became more relaxed, and members were no longer referred to, both inside and outside the club, as *Mrs So-and-So*, or in the plural as *Mesdames So-and-So*. Earlier in the club's life, in the captions to newspaper photographs preserved in the club scrapbook, members were identified by their husband's names rather than their own, e.g. *Mrs Walter Gable*.)

Teddy Letham proposed a club project for the making of a jug, to be held as an educational exercise to accompany the exhibition, and though, as the newsletter reported, the response was "not overwhelming", members generally agreed to have such projects from time to time. On a later occasion a project with the theme "Mother and Child" proved popular. Maria Phillips made a pot mother and child, and the dragon and hippopotamus mothers and children were especially endearing.

Selective exhibitions such as these were held in addition to the ordinary annual sale of work, which was now to be known, at Marjorie Tayler's suggestion, as "Open Week at the Perth Potters' Club". Members decided to hold it in Show Week, for the benefit of country people who might like to combine a visit to the Show with one to the club. The sale was held in Show Week until 1988, by which time attendance at the Show had become such a costly enterprise that the public probably did not have much cash to spare for buying pots. Certainly by this date sales were down, and the club held its general sale of work at Christmas time instead.

In July 1967, the club celebrated its tenth birthday. Esmé Macaulay, now president, reflected with pleasure that it was no longer necessary to carry heavy buckets of water



*Indonesian mother and daughter by Jane Vandon. (Collection of Mrs Julie Bethell.)*



*Monkey mother and child by Dolores Gable. (Donated to the club collection by the artist's family.)*

down hill to the Dalkeith boatshed, now that members could work instead in the well-equipped and well-plumbed club rooms, and she paid tribute to the “tireless efforts of club members who must feel great satisfaction”. Members might well feel satisfaction, after the achievements of a mere ten years, in which they had come together to form the club, ratified the constitution, commissioned the kiln and equipped the boatshed, and finally raised the money to buy the little house. In only two years’ time the loan for the purchase would be paid off.

## **Formation of the Craft Association**

1968 was a significant year for many reasons. On 26 February the Western Australian branch of the Craft Association of Australia was formally constituted. The Australian association was one of the associations from 53 nations constituting a World Crafts Council. The aims of the association were to:

- Encourage the establishment of craft and design training facilities.
- Bring together Australian craftsmen and designers, to encourage high standards of craftsmanship, and to widen interest in crafts. Hold meetings, discussions, lectures and exhibitions, and to publish.
- Establish an index of Australian craftsmen and their work, and a library.
- Establish a crafts gallery.
- Exhibit and promote abroad the work of Australian craftsmen and designers and introduce overseas crafts to Australia.

A new world opened up to club members who until then had been exclusively absorbed in their own craft, but now became aware of the achievements and concerns of spinners, weavers, fabric printers, jewellers and silversmiths. In Western Australia, club members Joan Campbell and Teddy Letham were elected to the committee of the new association. In 1972, the Potters’ Club agreed to join the Craft Association as a group member, and nominated Janet Kovesi as club delegate to the Association’s annual general meeting. One of Jean Ewers’s pots was selected for the Craft Association’s permanent exhibition in Sydney, and though it was unfortunately broken in transit, the honour of having been selected remained. In April 1982, the club newsletter announced that Nan Ford, who had been club president from 1979-1980, had been elected president of the now re-named Craft Council of Western Australia.

## **From Earthenware to Stoneware**

A landmark of more immediate practical concern to potters was the coming on to the market of high temperature electric kilns, small enough to be run off single-phase domestic power, and at a very reasonable price, which were made by the firm of Ward, of Adelaide. (In 1968, the present writer purchased a Ward kiln with internal measurements of 33 cms x 33 cms x 46 cms for \$120.) These opened up new horizons for local potters



who had been restricted to low temperature work. Now they no longer needed to use white lead, and struggle to achieve glazes that would not craze on a porous body. At higher temperatures, even if a glaze did craze, at least the body was non-absorbent, and butter dishes, for example, did not start to smell depressingly of rancid butter after a period of use. Western Australian clays seemed to be more suited to high temperatures. Even the so-called terra cotta drainpipe clay was able to withstand the temperature needed for stoneware firing, though it did become rather dark and brittle. It was a strong and plastic clay which was at its best as an ingredient in a blended body.

## Visit of Michael Cardew to Perth

Michael Cardew (1901-1983) was a key figure in the development of studio pottery during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He had first encountered pottery in one of the last surviving traditional workshops in England, at Fremington in north Devon, before joining the Leach Pottery in 1923. In much of the studio pottery of today the two influences can still be traced: the oriental traditions learned by Bernard Leach during his years in Japan, and the robust English country traditions absorbed by Michael Cardew. Many of today's studio potters have been influenced by his work, his writings and his powerful personality. Australian potter Ivan McMeekin spent three-and-a-half years working with him at his Wenford Bridge Pottery in Cornwall, before returning to Australia during the mid-1950s, and becoming head of the Sturt pottery workshop at Mittagong, in New South Wales. At Sturt he trained Les Blakebrough, who made a memorable visit to the Perth Potters' Club in 1982. Les Blakebrough's early pots clearly show their Cardew inspiration. (A photograph of some of these appears on p. 17 of *Les Blakebrough: Ceramics*, by Jonathan Holmes, Craftsman House, 2005.)

In May 1968, Michael Cardew came to Western Australia, and gave demonstrations which some fortunate club members were able to attend. Teddy Letham and Janet Kovesi had experimented with blends of local clays, and were able to supply him with some reasonable stoneware bodies to work with. No-one who attended his demonstrations is likely to forget them, or him. One memorable remark was: "I never don't decorate if I can help it", and his constant refrain was that "throwing is *dangerous*: you have to take risks; that's what makes it alive". Few, if any, of his audience would ever have seen handles pulled at arm's length up in the air and then straight away cut off, attached to the pot and pulled some more. ("I like to take as many risks as possible.") The significance of his visit was recognised by a full-page feature article which appeared in *The West Australian*, with a dramatic photograph of the handle-pulling, and this was cut out and preserved in the club scrapbook. It is worth noting that this article and photograph, like the many others that appeared in the newspapers during these early years of the club's existence, appeared on the page devoted to "Women's Interests".

Cardew maintained that he was one of the world's worst throwers: "the only one worse than me is Mr Bernard Leach", and certainly he threw at a most reassuringly leisurely pace, remarking that it was better to spend a little longer at the wheel than a lifetime

regretting it afterwards. His method of making a bowl deserves description. He first threw a fairly wide cylinder, then with each subsequent pull drew the sides up and then out at the rim, explaining that a flared shape was strong and could support itself, and leaving until last the final gravity-defying curvature into a bowl shape. A bowl made by this method needs surprisingly little turning. He confessed that he did not really *like* turning, and only learned how to do it when he joined the Leach Pottery and came into contact with Japanese traditions. (Bernard Leach, on the other hand, was unfamiliar with the technique of pulling handles, since mugs and jugs were not part of the Japanese repertoire.) Cardew's visit, the first by an international potter to Perth, introduced Perth people to a wider world, and not just the world of the Leach Pottery in England, but that of West Africa, where he had worked for many years. He gave an illustrated lecture at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, and showed slides of magnificent West African pots, showing what women potters working without a wheel and firing in primitive bonfires could achieve. Those many local potters who hand-built their pots must have found this particularly inspiring. It was because of his experience in Africa that he had been invited to Australia to establish a training centre for Aboriginal potters in the Northern Territory, and the legacy of this project has been an enduring one. In 1996, a retrospective exhibition of work by one of his first students, Eddie Puruntatameri, was mounted in Parliament House, Canberra.

In May of that memorable year, five club members: Jean Ewers, Judy Halliday, Janet Kovesi, Maria Phillips and Jane Vandon collaborated to mount an exhibition in a small City gallery—the Cremorne Gallery in the Cremorne Arcade, off Hay Street, east of the Town Hall. The large crowd at the opening showed how appreciative Perth people were of hand-made pottery, which was still an intriguing novelty.

At about the same time, Jean Spry attracted a fascinated crowd with a demonstration in the window of Aherns department store during the “Winter Holiday of Arts”, for which “congratulations were received from the manager himself”. Of the “Open Week”



*Judy Halliday with some of her characteristic flagons.  
(Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

exhibition in September, the newsletter reported that “The moment the doors of the club opened we were almost overwhelmed by admirers and people eager to acquire your masterpieces for posterity”. The club was entering a golden age of buoyant sales to an enthusiastic public.

In 1969, Teddy Letham embarked on an educational programme, undoubtedly partly inspired by Michael Cardew's visit, with a geological display in the club and a series of talks which she called: “A Petrological Anagram” or “From Rocks to Pots in Millions of Moves”. Esmé Macaulay, in her later report on these talks in the club news-

letter, expressed warm appreciation of all the work that Teddy had done to collate the information that she was passing on. She commented lightheartedly that “the subject is so vast that it would take years to absorb it all, and it is remarkable just how much we did not know. Even the fact that ‘electrolytes, if used in excess, give rise to a thixotropic condition’ was something we had given very little thought to”. Teddy Letham subsequently published a number of articles about her many research interests in *Pottery in Australia*, beginning with a comprehensive and most useful compilation (in Vol. 10, no. 2, 1971) of materials and equipment then available for potters in Western Australia.

## **Ceramics Industries in and Around Perth**

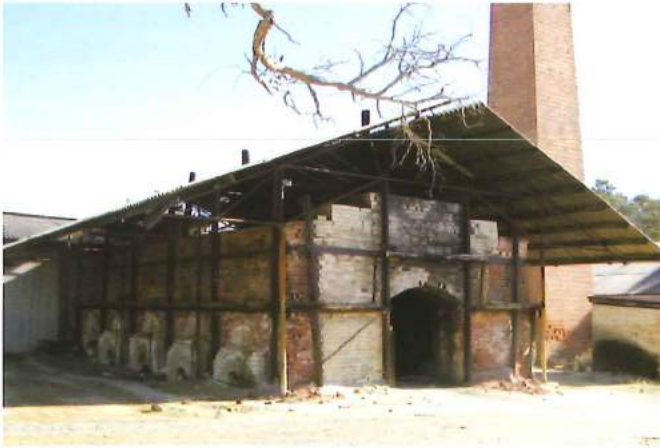
A visit to the Brisbane and Wunderlich (later Australian Fine China) factory in Subiaco was a different kind of educational experience: “We were all most impressed by the efficiency and far flung interests of the company. We were surprised to learn that this local factory supplies hospitals as far away as Queensland as well as Government Departments, Companies and Institutions in all the Eastern States”. Members sympathised with “one poor lady, sticking handles on jugs for twenty-four years”, and were “glad that our interest in Ceramics covered a greater variety than this necessity to functional pottery”.

By 2007, the factory had closed, and Australia will now be supplied largely from overseas. The closure also meant that a useful source of second-hand firebricks and kiln shelves would no longer be available for hand potters. Mike Kusnik remembered with amusement how, soon after he started work as ceramics chemist at the factory, he encountered artist potter Eileen Keys, as she was clambering over the factory rubbish heap in the rain, in order to salvage a slightly damaged kiln shelf.

During the early years of the club’s existence, there had been a number of ceramics industries in and around Perth: the drainpipe factory in Belmont near the racecourse was the source of terra cotta clay, which was used either on its own, or as part of a blended clay body, as mentioned above. Some of the kilns are still there, and are recognised as a significant piece of industrial history, but now that drainpipes are made from plastic rather than fired clay, the rest of the land has been developed for riverside housing. On the other side of the Great Eastern Highway, the garden pot factory run by three generations of the Courtland family has completely gone, and with it the “Courtland’s cream” hand-building clay which many potters had enjoyed using. Stoneware Pipes and Tiles in East Perth, near the historic cemetery, was another useful source of clay and materials, now also replaced by elegant housing in this “City for People”. A great loss for studio potters has been in the refractory materials formerly produced at Statham’s Darling Range Firebrick Factory in Glen Forrest, and especially at Clackline Refractories further inland. Many kinds of refractory products were made there, including crucibles in all sizes for the mining industry both in Australia and overseas. Now the land is fenced off, with notices warning trespassers to keep out.

Second-hand Clackline bricks are treasured and sought after, as the imported ones are now dauntingly expensive. (In 1973, hard firebricks cost 11c each and porous





*Abandoned kiln at Clackline*

insulating bricks 25c, the price of the latter rising to 45c by 1975; even allowing for the change in the value of money, these were very reasonable prices.) A useful fireclay was also available from Clackline, but the pit may now have been worked out. Many commercially produced clay bodies are available today, as was not the case in the 1960s and 1970s, but they

are expensive compared with the home-made ones that potters mixed for themselves from Western Australian materials in earlier years. Some local potters, such as Greg Crowe, Stewart Scambler and Garry Zeck, still mix their own clay bodies, preferring to be in control over different aspects of the character and performance of their clay. Mike Kusnik developed the recipes for the bodies made up by Garry Zeck.

## **The Club is Free From Debt**

The newsletter following the annual general meeting in 1969, less than six years after the purchase of the little house, was able to announce the most gratifying event of the year: “Our treasurer, Audrey Foyel, had great satisfaction in reporting that our balance sheet showed assets of \$13,459 and NO LIABILITIES. This must be almost unprecedented in any club’s history. We are indeed fortunate that we were able to buy our club house at the right time and that our main asset has appreciated along with the rest of this bustling State”.

A selective exhibition was held in 1969, the work being chosen by Heather McSwain, lecturer at the Fremantle Technical College, Jean Robins, who had been trained at the St George Technical College in Sydney, and artist-jeweller Geoffrey Allen. They were reported as having “approached their task in a very objective and workmanlike manner”, and the pots that passed their scrutiny were warmly commended by Mr Des Simpson, the deputy head of the Art Department at WAIT, who opened the exhibition and “was lavish with his praise”. Maria Phillips enlivened the occasion by a demonstration of throwing described as a show-stopper.

With all the work involved in making pots for the exhibition, the club kiln had been so busy during the year that members resolved to purchase an additional small kiln. After some investigation, Judy Halliday recommended a 38 cm cube, front-loading kiln, locally made, price: \$270.00 delivered, plus \$15.00 for a stand and approximately \$25.00 for installation. (This kiln, purchased from Cynthia China Painting Studio in Cottesloe, was

inevitably christened “Cynthia”.) Charges for firing the kiln were: 50c for earthenware to 1100°C, and 75c for temperatures above that, plus the cost of electricity, at 3c per unit, calculated after reading the meter. These figures may seem improbable to readers of today, but are vouched for in the newsletter for October 1971.



*Wheels at the club in the early 1970s. A Saxey wheel is in the background.*

The committee members were also constantly engaged in evaluating new electric wheels by local makers such as Mr Fred Saxey, of Busselton. One of these was used and approved by the celebrated American potter Paul Soldner, when he visited Western Australia early in the 1970s and demonstrated at Waterways Studio at Wungong.

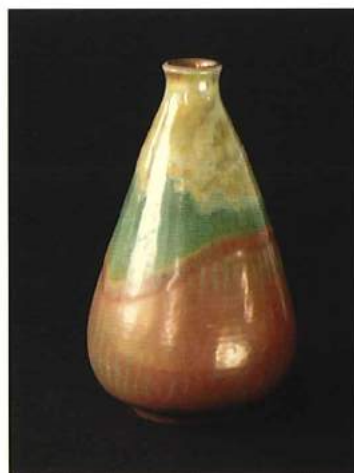
In January 1970, the club newsletter bade farewell to the 1960s:

Members can look back with pride in our achievements of the past decade—a well situated freehold, debt free club house—a range of excellent modern equipment—a comprehensive library and, above all this, a society which consists of a group of friends; friends who have shown that they can discuss, debate and also disagree and still preserve that common bond which urges us to transform the world’s mud into things of beauty.

This optimism was soon to be overshadowed by sadness. At the end of 1969, Francis Kotai had resigned from the Fremantle Technical College, and Jean Ewers reported that he planned to start a private pottery studio and school in Mount Lawley, but then came the shocking news, on 5 February 1970, of his death, aged only 61. The February newsletter paid tribute to him:

It is with great regret that we record the death of Francis Kotai, our friend and life member. Most of the original members of the Perth Potters’ Club have had very close association with Francis as a teacher, adviser and friend, and indeed it was due to his efforts that we were able to start, very early in our club life, firing our own kiln ... His passing is a great loss to all potters of this state. The first thoughts of forming a Potters’ Club began in his class at the Fremantle Tech.

Indeed Francis left an enduring legacy and was remembered with gratitude and affection. Judy Halliday



*Vase by Francis Kotai*



presented one of his pots to the club, on permanent loan, in his memory. In later years his son Bela maintained the family connection with the club, and gave workshops and impressive demonstrations of his throwing skills.

## First Moves Towards Reduction Firing

During the first half of 1970, Janet Kovesi had visited the United States, where she had been able to join the Wallingford Potters' Guild near Philadelphia. (Paulus Berensohn, author of *Finding One's Way With Clay*, was the respected guide and mentor of this guild.) There she was able to experience the excitement of firing in reduction in the guild's gas-fired kiln, and on her return she raised the possibility that, if the Cottesloe Council allowed it, the club would one day likewise be able to build and fire a gas kiln when natural gas reached Perth. (Jean Robins had already built herself a kiln using producer gas.) First tentative steps towards this goal were taken in 1972, when a subcommittee arranged to inspect gas kilns already in operation in Perth, beginning with the one built by Maria Phillips to the design of member Bill Rourke. The minutes of the 1972 annual general

meeting reported that Maria had described her gas kiln as "very satisfactory, and cost about \$400". It was not until 1984, however, that the club finally acquired a gas kiln of its own, and it was fired with bottled rather than natural gas. Meanwhile, the club bought a triple beam balance of laboratory accuracy for reliable weighing of glaze ingredients, down to as little as a tenth of a gram, and decided to purchase bulk supplies of sieve mesh, large corks (potters made a lot of storage jars in those days) and basic materials such as feldspar, silica, tin oxide and kaolin. (This, by a comical slip of the editor's pen, appears in



*Before the acquisition of the triple beam balance, these were the kind of scales used for small glaze tests, capable of weighing a minimum of one gram.*

the newsletter as a uniquely Australian substance: koalín.) Later on, and for many years afterwards, the club stocked a wide variety of supplies, including different clays, which was a very useful amenity for members who found that they had run out of something just when the shops had closed. Besides, the club was able to charge rather less than the standard retail price.

The September newsletter for 1970 reported, with justifiable pride, that Jean Ewers had had an article about the club published in the American magazine *Ceramics Monthly* (April 1969). It was illustrated with photographs of pots by Jane Vandon, Judy Halliday and Rhonda Stevenson, and inspired a group in Canada to write and learn about "our ways and means of becoming such a well-established financially independent club". An English potter, Robert Osborne, who had known Michael Cardew in West Africa during the Second World War (and who managed his pottery at Abuja in Nigeria for a while,

after Cardew had left), also saw Jean's article, and decided to migrate with his wife to Western Australia. In June 1971, he gave a handle-making workshop at the club.

Heather McSwain and Jean Robins (who had recently been accepted as a member of the Potters' Society of Australia) again agreed to choose the work for the biennial club selective exhibition at the end of April 1971. Unfortunately, it had been a sad and worrying year of illness and accidents for members, and fewer pots were submitted than had been hoped for. It even seemed at one stage that the exhibition might have to be postponed, but after all this turned out not to be necessary, and though somewhat low-key, it was held as planned.

### Increased Club Activities

The club decided to try and recapture the atmosphere of its early days, when members all worked together, by programming a working session on the third Wednesday of the month, and more than twenty members turned up to the first of these. They were held in addition to the regular monthly talks and demonstrations already put on by members for each other. At the end of 1972, for instance, Maria Phillips gave an impressive demonstration of big pot throwing, and Michiko Love demonstrated Japanese brushwork, as she had done before and was to do again in the future. (She was always willing to show people how to fold *origami* cranes.) The programme for the following year may be quoted as an example of the activities of the club at this time: in March, Janet Kovesi again demonstrated slip decoration; in April, Kath Brealey showed how she modelled her figurines; and in May, Lil Caesar spoke on design and decoration for pots. In June, Gos Rosenbrock gave a presentation on brass-rubbing (a change from her usual speciality of knots and cords for the hanging planters which were such a popular pottery project at the time), and in July, Jean Ewers gave one of her many talks on glazing. At a Wednesday evening workshop session, Eastern States potter Judy Varley gave a demonstration of her individual style of hand-building: she had trained at the East Sydney Technical College, and was working at the Maritime Museum in Fremantle as a restorer on the pots from the Dutch wrecks. Further attractions were a Japanese lunch served by Michiko Love in August, a handle-pulling session by Janet Kovesi also in August, a talk in September by Gertrude Serventy



*"Sleeping Cherub" and "Baby Penguin" by Kath Brealey. (Collection of Mrs Mary Urquhart.)*





*Muriel Young and Judy Halliday with Maria Phillips. A fine array of hanging planters is in the background.*

at Perth Technical College. The exhibition was opened by Ian Templeman, Director of the Fremantle Arts Centre, now superbly restored and very different from the decaying building in which Francis Kotai had taught the original members of the club. The newsletter reported: "In part of his eloquent oration he compared potters with poets and words with clay, to be moulded into things articulate which can say different things to different people, in so many different ways". In contrast to the previous disappointing selective exhibition, the club had never had so many pieces on show [282] or so many potters represented. It was also almost a complete sellout, described by

the treasurer, Audrey Foyel, as "a happy success". Open Week in September was also gratifyingly successful, with sales amounting to over \$3,000. Open Week coincided with the Royal Show, and here, too, some indefatigable members upheld the honour of the club by demonstrating to the public. The newsletter reported that Jean Spry, Andy Cook, Michiko Love and Gertrude Serventy "were kept so busy that the only peaceful place Gertrude could find to eat her lunch was the goat pavilion".

Encouraged by these successes and by the resultant healthy bank balance, the club bought (for \$556) a new and larger electric Robertson kiln (unsurprisingly christened "Robert") to replace "Cynthia" which disappointingly had proved hard to manage, fired unevenly (a major disadvantage in such a small kiln), and affected the neighbours' television when it was on. The committee considered that an electric kiln was a more practical purchase than a gas one at this stage.

**P** is for  
**POT**  
and the place to see pots is  
the annual  
**OPEN WEEK**  
**DISPLAY & SALE**  
of work by the  
**PERTH POTTERS CLUB**  
at  
**1. Burt St. Cottesloe**  
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*Flyer for the 1973 Open Week*

## The Back Workroom is Built

During the previous year, 1972, Jean Ewers and Judy Halliday had approached the Cottesloe Council to find out what kind of additional building was permissible on the property. They were told that there would be no objection to the construction of a rear extension to the building, in similar materials, and were invited to submit plans when they were ready.

At an extraordinary general meeting held on 11 October 1973, Maria Phillips, now the club president, outlined ambitious plans for the club in view of its present cramped condition, unable to cope with the pressure of those eager to join. She explained that the tempting idea of a complete rebuilding had had to be abandoned, partly because of the expense, estimated at \$16,000, as the club would be most unlikely to receive an outright grant of the necessary amount, and the burden of repaying so large a loan, even if it was interest-free, would be too great. Besides, the club would be homeless while the building was going on. Accordingly, the committee had settled for a more modest plan: to build a good-sized detached work-room at the back of the existing building, which would give more working space for the present, and could eventually, funds permitting, form the first stage of a completely new building. The committee had been preparing to apply for a grant to supplement the club's savings, as the Federal Craft Board would shortly be inviting submissions. The possibility of attracting grants for such projects was a new situation. The 1970s saw the birth of the Australia Council and its various Boards, the period when, as Barry Humphries put it, artists became "ingenious mendicants engaged in a ceaseless struggle to wrest alms from the gigantic bureaucracy which administers Australia's cultural life". (From *Punch Down Under*, Robson Books, London, 1984, p. 7)

The main purpose of the meeting was to approve the new formal constitution drawn up by Jean Lodge's lawyer husband, which needed to be included in the grant application. Maria explained the few slight alterations made by the committee to the original draft, and the meeting unanimously approved and adopted the new constitution. A provisional plan for the new building had been obtained in record time, and had been put to the Cottesloe Council. A preliminary (over-optimistic) estimate of the cost of such a building, with cement floor, double brick walls and asbestos roof was \$5,800.

When Maria and the secretary met members of the Craft Enquiry Board (this was not the same as the Craft Board) however, they were informed that the club was unlikely to get a grant for building, and should apply to the State government, which, as it turned out, was also unco-operative. As in former times, the club was thrown back on its own resources. Members approved Esmé Macaulay's proposal, that they should be invited to help raise the money to finance the building by paying their subscriptions for up to ten years in advance. In an impressively short time \$1,500 was raised, with \$900 already in hand. And, after all, the club did receive a grant of \$1,300 from the Australian Council for the Arts, not for building, it is true, but for "books and stimuli, electric wheels, kiln and kiln furniture".

The 1974 Open Week was bigger and better than ever: 1,458 pots were sold, and the club gained over \$900 in commission. The treasurer was able to report that by now the club had \$3,900 in the Perth Building Society and \$4,000 in AGC.



The November newsletter reported triumphantly: “The plans and specifications are now in the hands of the Cottesloe Council awaiting approval, and tenders are to be called”. On 18 December the building committee accepted a tender from J G Kyros Pty



*Blue urn by Audrey Foyel. (Collection of Mrs Eve Manolas, the artist's daughter.)*

Ltd of \$10,367, plus \$80 for painted internal walls. The final cost was rather higher: \$10,645.41, partly because the Council required the provision of two additional soak wells. The building was begun on 20 January 1975, and finished in early May—just in time for the selective exhibition to be set up in it.

John Fawcett again selected the work, and chose an astonishing total of 378 pieces. Joan Campbell, now an internationally known potter and member of the International Academy of Ceramics, performed the opening ceremony. The exhibition sales were approximately \$2,500. At the annual general meeting Judy Halliday, the president, paid tribute to Audrey Foyel, the club's meticulous treasurer for nine years, who had overseen the financing of the building now so successfully completed.

## **First Functions in the New Workroom**

The Craft Association now approached the club, to ask if a master class for twelve potters by visiting English potter Bryan Newman could be held in the new workroom in early October, after Open Week. Demand was such that fifteen students attended, including six club members, together with a number of observers. Participants set up their wheels along the passage and in every corner. In March of the following year, 1976, a group of the students gave a follow-up workshop to club members, demonstrating what they had seen and learned.

It proved to be an absolutely wonderful class. As the magazine *Craft Australia* (1976 vol. 6/1) reported: “The most notable event in the last few months for many potters was probably Bryan Newman's workshops in whichever state they happened to be—for probably no visiting craftsman has tried so hard to cover Australia and give of his best than this likeable Englishman”. The demonstration pots were biscuit-fired and remain on the shelves as teaching aids. Bryan Newman demonstrated intriguing and unusual techniques, such as a method of making asymmetrically lobed bowls by wrapping them with string when freshly thrown. He made the gallery for teapot or casserole lids by turning the rim first inwards, then down, then in again to form the necessary little ledge. When making a plate, he surprised his audience by throwing directly on the wheel, without using a bat. After wiring through, he then calmly peeled off the finished plate, and laid it down on newspaper, explaining that if this was done gently the plate would recover from the distortion of being lifted, and regain its shape. When pulling

handles he first patted the clay into the shape of “a standard British carrot”, and then dipped the clay rather than his hand in a bucket of water, to lubricate it during the pulling process. One member was quite overwhelmed by the ingenuity of his various teapots, and declared that teapots would never be the same again. One started life as a bottle shape, which was laid on its side, angled upwards, the neck of the bottle becoming the spout. Another was made in the shape of a Christmas pudding, and then turned upside down, Bryan Newman explaining that this was the only way to achieve a completely flat top. The most elaborate was made from a drum-shaped cylinder without a base, which was gently coaxed into a square shape and given side panels, which had previously been decorated with swirling patterns. It was then stood on end, a hole was cut in the top to receive a lid, and small lugs attached for a cane handle. Janet Kovesi took a series of photographs of the teapots’ progress, which were later published in the English *Ceramic Review* (No. 51, May-June 1978).

Bryan Newman generously passed on his glaze recipes. These were published in *Pottery in Australia* (vol. 15 no. 1, 1976) and the recipe for the lustrous black-brown oriental glaze known as *tenmoku* has remained in the standard repertoire of many potters Australia-wide: Feldspar 40, Whiting 15, Ball clay 5, Kaolin 10, Silica 20 and Red Iron Oxide 9.

He was the first of a distinguished series of international and Australian potters who have demonstrated and taught in the club’s work-room, which has proved itself an ideal venue for such events, and has been used, as on this occasion, by other organisations as well as by the club itself.

Members were also exhibiting outside the club: Janet Kovesi held a solo exhibition at the Fremantle Arts Centre, Lil Caesar had a show at the Colonial Gallery in Rockingham, where Alida (Andy) Cook later exhibited in 1977, and Jean Ewers and Maria Phillips joined eight other distinguished potters at the University undercroft. The following year Michiko Love also exhibited at the Arts Centre, with her work being eagerly snapped up by avid purchasers.



*Bryan Newman with the upside-down “Christmas pudding” teapot (above) and the squared-off teapot (below).*







*Michiko Love and some of her work, including the miniatures for which she became well known.  
(Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

electric kiln was a more practical asset, and duly bought one. This was subsequently used, outside, for periodical successful raku firings.

In March 1977, the Club again made its workroom available for a Craft Association workshop: "Design and Touch", by the distinguished Australian potter (and kite-maker) Peter Travis, as the original planned venue at WAIT had proved to be unsuitable. He was a maker of highly individual and inventive pots, but to the surprise of participants

he did not demonstrate any of his own techniques, apart from an idiosyncratic style of making pinch-pots. (Lil Caesar turned out to be adept at this.) He had asked students to bring in some of their own work for appraisal, and was mainly concerned to work *with* them, helping them to make their own normal range of pots, but better, guided by his perceptive eye. He reminded members of the importance of light and shadow in three-dimensional work, and pointed out the subtle details which made one pot better than another, such as a slight



*Pumpkin Pot, by Lil Caesar.  
(Collection of the Caesar family.)*

lift to the shoulder, or a straight springing line from the base. His criticisms were sometimes trenchant, but fundamentally kind. He stressed that the most original and unusual

1976 saw continued activity, with large numbers of members attending the various demonstrations: Jo Stewart on bonsai pots, a video of the workshop given at Joan Campbell's studio by larger-than-life American potter Don Reitz, one on the texturing technique known as chattering, more knots from Gos, more throwing techniques from Michiko Love and Rosemary Whitaker (now known as Rosie McLaren), and one on wall vases by Judy Halliday. The committee again discussed the possibility of acquiring a gas kiln, but after all decided that a small additional elec-

ideas must be backed up by constant practice and conscientious craftsmanship. The club benefited greatly from the visit of its unexpected guest.

For the selective exhibition this year, Dell Campbell and Robert Bell, curator of Craft at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, chose a grand total of 321 pieces, the work of 38 members. Judy Halliday, who opened the exhibition, briefly recounted the history of the club, which was now 20 years old.

## **The Front of the Cottage is Rebuilt**

Members had planned to hold a busy bee to smarten up the front part of the building before the Open Week, but then realised that so much needed to be done structurally that merely repainting would be a waste of time, effort and money. Perhaps now was the time to completely rebuild. They asked the committee to look into the cost of a new building. One of the committee exhorted: "Let us give serious thought to the aims and, hopefully, future exciting developments of our club, and make it one that people feel privileged and proud to belong to". The club voted to go ahead, and at an extraordinary general meeting held on 27 October 1977, the proposed plan was passed round for approval. The builder, Murray Henderson, husband of member Jill Henderson, had quoted a price of \$12,750, which included the demolition and all preparatory work, double brick side walls, and a front wall of Hardiplank, which members accepted. The provisional plan was put to the Cottesloe Council, who indicated that it seemed satisfactory, and that they would consider the finished plan when submitted, adding that they would have no objection to an increase in the club's activities, so long as the neighbours were not disturbed. They also stipulated that cars belonging to members and visitors should not obstruct Burt St, but be parked out of the way at the back of the property or on the railway reserve.

When the workroom was built at the back, the club already had more than half the money in hand. Now, though the overdraft had been paid off, there was no surplus with which to fund the new building. The club needed urgently to raise some \$2,000 to \$3,000. As Jean Ewers encouragingly said: "Now, we're good at this". Members were again invited to pay fees in advance to raise funds, or give interest-free loans, and they agreed to pay a deposit of \$10 on keys to the new building. Jill Henderson arranged a fund-raising quiz night, and members hastily organised an extra Christmas sale. They also suggested that the club should run classes, to be taken by members with a particular expertise, and this has been a regular activity of the club ever since. Fund-raising was impressively rapid: already by the December meeting, the treasurer was able to report that bridging finance of \$3,000 was available, and that the Bank of Adelaide, unlike the Bank of New South Wales, would accept repayment of a loan over a period of eight years rather than six. In the event, the longer time was not needed, and by 1983 the club was free of debt.

The front page story of the February newsletter in 1978 described the progress of the new building: "The foundations are finished, the concrete raft poured, and timber frame up, brickwork advanced, nearly ready for the roof. By the time you get this the roof may





*The new-look club house. (Photograph; Derek Large.)*

would then be made available to the Bank, to show in their Perth building during Western Australia Week.

The March newsletter proudly announced that the building was finished and painted, and that normal life would start again in April. Members congratulated the builder, Murray Henderson, and warmly thanked him for the speed and economy of his work.

The Hon. Peter Jones MLA, Minister for Cultural Affairs, Education and Recreation, duly opened the new clubroom on 17 May. "This was a warm and historic occasion, the culmination of months of hard work." Club president Lil Caesar made a graceful speech, and presented Mrs Jones with a vase made by Jean Ewers. Over 50 members submitted a special pot for exhibition, and the standard was described as uniformly high.

As part of the club's necessary efforts to raise money, this grand occasion was followed in early June by an invitational exhibition of mixed arts and crafts, a new and successful idea, which brought in about \$400 to club funds. The pottery classes also started, bringing in a further \$325 in student fees. Open Week brought in over \$900 after exceptional sales (of which \$265 was donated to the Lucy Creeth Home), and the club benefited by \$490 from the Christmas sale. Repayment of the loan had got off to a good start.

Normal activities continued during the year, with workshops on throwing and glazing by Claire Cameron and Jo Jones, and a hands-on weekend workshop from Bela Kotai, which was so well received that he gave another the following April, of big pot throwing, for advanced potters.



*Mrs Jones, Lil Caesar and the Hon. Peter Jones MLA.  
(Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

## The Club Celebrates Twenty-one Years

The club was 21 years old in 1978, but the actual celebrations took place in 1979, coinciding with the sesquicentennial year of the founding of Western Australia. The year started with a workshop by yet another distinguished visiting potter, Ivan Englund from New South Wales, one of the original members of the Potters' Society of Australia. He specialised in raw-glazing of pots at the leather-hard stage, using glazes made with finely ground rock dusts. A visit to a local quarry produced a supply of crushed granite and diorite (at \$1 a ton, a few cents' worth went a long way), and research in the library of the Department of Mines produced the necessary analyses of the rocks. The weather was overpoweringly hot, but members armed themselves with fans and ice blocks, and were able to concentrate on the rock analyses and glaze calculations. The cheap electronic calculators which had become available during the 1970s made this much easier than in earlier times, when all such calculations, down to three decimal places, had to be done by old-fashioned arithmetic. In 1983, Ivan Englund privately published a book on rock glazes, and the recipes he worked out in Perth using Western Australian Bentonite, "Gosnells Granite" and "Armadaile Diorite" appear in it.

Sandra Black gave a workshop on porcelain later in the year. This was at the time a great novelty, since Sandra was almost the only local potter working in the medium. She suggested that students should use a commercial fine white body at her workshop, but for her own practice she dug clay from a pit at Byford (on Prisons Department property, with permission) and mixed it with 40% feldspar into a porcelain body developed by Mike Kusnik.

Mike Kusnik's career parallels that of Francis Kotai: he came from a background of industrial ceramics chemistry in Czechoslovakia, and arrived in Sydney in 1950. Like Francis Kotai, he started his own business after only two years in the country, and ran it for seven years before moving to Melbourne, where he answered a newspaper advertisement for a position as ceramics chemist with the Western Australian firm of Brisbane and Wunderlich. He was interviewed, and rather to his surprise, since there had been awkward moments during the interview, was offered the job, and three days later was on his way to Perth. In 1974, he moved to a teaching position at WAIT (now Curtin University), and has been a valued mentor and adviser to Western Australian potters over many years. In the Australia Day honours of 1997, he was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia, in recognition of his enormous contribution to ceramics in Australia in general, and Western Australia in particular. When approached by the researchers of the Order, the club had been delighted to support the proposal (initiated by



*"Encounters" plate by Sandra Black.  
(From the club collection.)*



the Ceramic Study Group) to award Mike the medal. The newsletter editor commented: "there is hardly a bucket of glaze in town that does not owe Mike something". Many members of the club are his former students and have profited greatly from his wide knowledge and sage advice.

The club planned to hold a selective exhibition for this significant year in June, and the newsletter published a fervent prayer for success, offered by an anonymous member:

Grant that I may make a pot,  
Simple and lovely, which is not  
Marred by blemish or by blot,  
Too thick, too thin, too tall, too squat.  
Grant it may be made quite soon  
For our biennial show in June.

Ian Templeman, the Director of the Fremantle Arts Centre, chose the work for the exhibition, and it was opened by Jean Ewers, who was shortly to be awarded life membership at the annual general meeting. A large 21<sup>st</sup> birthday cake had been made, with a catenary arch sugar kiln on top, complete with little pots inside made of icing sugar, and the exhibition opening was a suitably festive occasion. Rosemary Whittaker's solo exhibition followed in July, and then of course the usual Open Week sale of work took place in September, at which sales surpassed all records: of 1,300 pieces submitted 640 were sold, for a total of over \$5,000. And still members were able to produce yet more work for a successful Christmas show.



*Rosemary Whittaker with pots for her exhibition. (Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

There were more in-house workshops during the year: Lil Caesar conducted two sessions on the making of pottery heads, and Jean Ewers demonstrated the making of her trademark square bottles, for which she wrapped clay slabs round cardboard boxes.

Gos Rosenbrock's final newsletter of 1979 took an affectionate look back over the progress of the club during the decade, commending the efforts of members who had contributed to the continued success of "this happy band of potters". She noted with pride how, during the 1970s, the cottage had been completely rebuilt, enlarged, re-furnished and re-equipped, and that, with the exception of an Arts Council grant of \$1,300, all these things had been accomplished by members' own efforts. She paid tribute to Alice Sawkins, then the club's oldest member, who when aged over 90 still used to come to the club by bus from her home in the hills, and had been made a life member in 1976. Mrs Sawkins used to tell how, during her childhood, when she set off to walk to school in Claremont along what was then a mere gravel track, her mother would remind her to walk in the middle of the road and keep her eyes on the ground. The danger then was from snakes rather than from motor traffic.



*Squared vase by Jean Ewers*



*Mrs Sawkins. (Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*



As a farewell to Gos in her editorial role it is worth quoting one of the little verses with which she used to enliven her pages:

All right, I made this perfect pot, now try my hand at glazing.  
(Things that can happen to a glaze are really quite amazing!)  
With recipes and formulae and chemicals I wrestle,  
I sieve and weigh and pound away with mortar and with pestle.  
I mix and strain and leave to set; I siphon off the water,  
I pour, I brush, I spray, I pray—do everything I oughter.  
Now you think with all this fuss I'd turn out perfect glazes.  
Alas, it crawls, it shines, it bloats, and always runs like blazes.  
Next time I make a perfect pot, with glaze I'll never risk it  
But just rub in some pretty stains and do no more than bisque it!

It had been an extraordinarily busy and productive time, and more was to come. Encouraged by all the gratifying receipts from the various exhibitions, the club decided to enclose the side verandah between the two parts of the building to make a kiln room (this cost \$2,100) and, at last, to purchase a gas kiln. But then came a moment of doubt, and a special committee meeting was called in June, to consider members' responses to a survey to determine who would actually use a gas kiln, before taking the plunge and buying one. As only seven people said that they would be interested in using one, as against fourteen who said that they would not, yet again the committee decided to postpone the purchase.

Early in 1980, the committee decided to hold a selective exhibition in the middle of the year, although there had been one only the year before, and Robert Bell, who had just been appointed chairman of the Australian Crafts Council, again agreed to do the selecting. But compared with the show in the previous year, it was rather a low-key affair, with fewer exhibits, fewer customers and fewer sales. Open Week and the Christmas sale, however, both did well. The club was very conscious of its overdraft and the rise in general expenses, and opportunities for selling work (and gaining the commission from sales) were much needed. The four weekly classes, taken by Joel Smoker (later by Phillip Douglas), Claire Cameron, Lil Caesar and Michiko Love brought in not only welcome student fees, but new members.

David Woodland gave a workshop in October on spray glazing, an unfamiliar technique for most members. They were fascinated by his masterly handling of pictorial effects and built-up sprayed colour, using stencil resists on both flat and vertical surfaces. He used commercial stains in a transparent glaze. Members found that using the spray gun was not as easy as David made it seem, but that the method gave lovely subtle colour effects.

Maria Phillips, now a full-time professional potter, visited the club in March 1981, to demonstrate to a large audience her method of two-part throwing for large pots. During the 1970s and 1980s, an efficient potter such as Maria could indeed earn a living from making and selling domestic pottery. Ian Templeman commissioned her to make the cups and saucers and sugar bowls for the Fremantle Arts Centre coffee shop. In answer to the question how long it took her to make a dinner-set, she would answer that it was

about a week—"but seven years learning how to do it". Like Ivan Englund she glazed her pots raw, at the leather-hard stage, and she returned to the club later in the year to talk about her once-fire slip glazes which she had recently patented, and which were available at Jackson's Ceramic Crafts. "Maria is indeed a study in economy of time and motion, and her seemingly effortless glazing of very large pieces is a pleasure to behold."

Joan Campbell, a former member of the club, ran a raku workshop in May, which was completed at her Fremantle studio. Members, as always with raku, were enthralled by the process as well as the results, and entertained by Joan's account of the history of raku and "several philosophical talks for good measure". Other workshops were given by Lil Caesar on garden sculpture, while Rosemary Whittaker gave two on the finer points of glazing.

A number of exhibitions were held in 1981: Phillip Douglas, Joel Smoker and Elizabeth Lyon all held solo exhibitions at the club, and Rosemary Whittaker and Michiko Love exhibited at the Fremantle Arts Centre. The club again held a selective show—this time at the Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education, in collaboration with the WA Quilters' Guild. The WA Craft Council had initiated this exhibition, and it was regarded at the time as a sort of public debut for the club. (It would seem that the 1966 Festival of Perth exhibition had been forgotten.) Sandra Black selected the work, and it proved to be a great success, "bringing many new faces and much praise for the high standard of pottery". The high standard of members' work was recognised by the Art Gallery of Western Australia, which purchased work by Judy Halliday and Michiko Love. Janet Kovesi and Jo Reid are also represented in the Gallery collection.

The financial state of the club, however, was gloomy, with expenses and overheads all increasing and the size of the overdraft a constant preoccupation. Annual fees were reluctantly increased to \$30, and fees for social members to \$12.50. (This membership category had been introduced in 1977, for the benefit of former members, or those living at a distance, who wanted to keep in



*Maria Phillips (Photograph: Philip Garderton; reproduced courtesy Pottery In Australia.)*



*Textured sphere by Judy Halliday, similar to the one in the Art Gallery. (Collection of Mrs Janet Hunt, the artist's daughter.)*



touch and receive the newsletter. They would be entitled to the members' discount on fees for workshops, and would always be welcome at meetings, but not eligible to vote.) Charges for firing the kilns were also increased, in line with the 16% rise in the cost of electricity: \$10.40 for a biscuit firing; \$12.50 for an earthenware glaze firing and \$15.60 for stoneware. The final issue of the club newsletter for the year, however, was able to give the pleasing but surprising news that the overdraft had been dramatically reduced. The secretary, Wendy Buffham, had achieved this by the simple but laborious process of telephoning members to remind them of their overdue fees.

At the December general meeting, a move was made to have the name of the club changed, mainly because of possible confusion with the religious organisation known as The Potter's House, but was defeated. (See *Jeremiah* chapter 18, vv. 1-6.) The February newsletter in 1982 reported that "most members were quite horrified at such a thought".

### Visit of Les Blakebrough

The year 1982 began strongly, with a visit from Les Blakebrough, senior lecturer in the ceramics department of the Tasmanian School of Art at the University of Tasmania, and one of Australia's most distinguished potters. He gave a four-day master class for 11 students, and a two-day demonstration workshop attended by 36. Despite the heat, he made and decorated large numbers of pots, and, like those made by Bryan Newman, they were biscuit-fired and remain at the club as inspiring teaching aids. Participants were interested to see that he pulled the handles for his teacups from bottom to top, so that the thickest part of the handle was positioned where it would take the most weight. He left his demonstration teapot to dry completely before tidying the ragged inside edges of the strainer holes, a trick of the trade which is common knowledge now, but was not then. He also brought a small exhibition with him. Some plates in this were part of a batch of 20 which he had made in order to be sure of having just four good matching ones for a commission, and members who had difficulty in making matching sets of pots found this most reassuring. He was also remembered as saying that "pots do not have to be big in order to be good". At the time of writing he is honoured as a "Living National Treasure" in Australia.



*Teapot by Janet Kovesi with trailed glaze decoration. (Reproduced courtesy the City of Fremantle Art Collection.)*

In March, and again in May, Janet Kovesi held workshops on the making of teapots, which were well received, and in November Alison Brown gave a workshop on decorating platters with coloured slips, impressing everyone with the sheer size of the platters, quite apart from the decoration.

In May, the club decided to hold a Mothers' Day sale, and this has since become a regular event on the club's calendar. Soon afterwards, the club held a selective exhibition on the long weekend in June, with the

work again selected by Jean Robins but, disappointingly, only 22 exhibitors took part, and sales were down. The committee had anxious discussions about this, and decided that the club should return to having selective exhibitions only in alternate years, which has now become customary.

The Open Week sale of work later in the year, on the other hand, was enormously successful, as after deduction of expenses, club funds gained nearly \$1,000 in commission. The year ended with a charming exhibition of work in porcelain by two new members, Estelle Boak and Elizabeth Nottage.



*Two small porcelain fish dishes by Estelle Boak*

## **The Club House is Owned Outright**

The February newsletter for 1983 started off with some very good news: "The Club is now free from debt—our credit in the bank being \$1,171.35, and free-of-interest loans all paid off. So this small but important house is ours completely at last. We should all feel proud of this happy state of affairs and can now plan ahead for future improvements". It was indeed something to be proud of—to have paid off the cost of the re-building in such a short time, less than 20 years from the original purchase of the little cottage.

Club activities continued with a mix of workshops, demonstrations and exhibitions. Members were impressed by a throwing and turning workshop given by Greg Crowe, who was described prophetically as "a potter to watch for in the future". Indeed, he was later to play a similar role in the club to Francis Kotai, as so many future club members joined after attending the courses he gave at the Carine College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). He was to give more workshops to the club later on.

An attractive group exhibition with the title "Fireworks" was held in the middle of 1983, by Lorna Brady, Wendy Buffham, Beth Clark, Jo Jones, Liz Owens, Liz Packwood, Colleen Pozzi, Gloria Smith, Jo Stewart, Pat Stuckey and Rosemary Whittaker. Jo Stewart had some of her large slab pots from this exhibition chosen for a gallery in South Australia.

Later in the year, Lorna Brady gave members a demonstration of the sgraffito methods she used on her pots, and Margaret Lane demonstrated screen printing on clay, a technique which would not have been dreamt of in the early days of the club. Sandy Chambers gave a portrait sculpture workshop, and Ian McCann gave a demonstration using the "Claytec" clay which he blended himself from a recipe developed by Mike Kusnik, and which was used by many local potters. Much to their and his regret, he had to wind up his operation during the 1990s. Other locally manufactured clays: Kalcraft, Matcraft, and those supplied by "The Clay Cottage" also went out of production by the end of the decade.



## The Club Buys a Gas Kiln



*President Liz Owens admires the results of the first gas firing.*

At the September quarterly meeting of 1983, Liz Owens, the club president, was able to announce that the Club's application for a grant towards the purchase of a gas kiln had been successful: \$1,784 on a dollar-for-dollar basis. (In the end, however, the total cost was \$4,854.) Accordingly, on 27 October, a special meeting was held, at which members decided to purchase a gas kiln, and chose one made by Kiln Manufacturers of WA.

The newsletter for March 1984 proudly announced that the new 8 cu. ft. gas kiln had duly been installed at the back corner of the property, in a neat metal shed complete with skylight and slab flooring. "This is a great step forward for the club and it is to be

hoped the members will avail themselves of this excellent new addition." (And despite all the expenses, the club's bank balance was in credit.) Special demonstrations were arranged to instruct members in the use of the gas kiln: Rosemary Whittaker did the first firing, and Robert Derham was appointed supervisor.

The Mayor of Cottesloe opened the year's selective exhibition, for which the work was chosen by Stewart Scambler, who had recently given the club a demonstration workshop which had been booked to capacity. Only 19 members entered work for this exhibition, and only 97 pieces were chosen, which caused the committee and Stewart himself some heart-searching. They speculated that perhaps members were diffident about

putting their work forward, and anxious about possible rejection, though the club has always encouraged members to regard the submission of work to the judgement of an outside selector as a valuable educational exercise. The pieces chosen for the two previous selective exhibitions, in 1980 and 1982, had also been disappointingly few, though some fine pots were submitted, and yet, later in those same years, members had made and sold large numbers of pots at the sale of work. Possibly members had not been able to get into a productive rhythm of work so early in the year as June, which was then the traditional time for the selective exhibition.



*Estelle Boak with some of the work for the 1982 selective exhibition.  
(Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

Dulcie Townsend gave a workshop at the end of July, on hand-rolled clay birds and animals, which provoked much merriment and sometimes dismay, when it was found that one animal had five legs, and two others had legs in front and at the back and one on each side. The newsletter soothingly reported that a little minor surgery and chiropractic manipulation soon set things to rights. Fergus Stewart gave a rather more down-to-earth workshop at the end of August, intriguing members by his demonstration of how to throw—among other large and impressive pieces—a lemon squeezer.

Later in the year, the club organised a number of excursions: to Waterways Gallery and Roleystone and, more ambitiously, to Busselton and Dunsborough.

## **The Club Opens a Saturday Gallery**

At the September quarterly meeting of 1984, with Jo Jones now president, members made a major new decision: to open the club regularly on Saturdays for gallery sales. As early as October 1967, the committee had discussed the possibility of opening the club to the public on one Sunday each month, “to foster and sustain an interest in pottery”, and this was raised again by Teddy Letham in 1969. Every so often the possibility of regular openings had been discussed, but every time members had been apprehensive that the need to do regular gallery duty might prove to be a burden, and had considered that there were already enough opportunities to sell work. This time, however, they made a firm decision to give the proposal a year’s trial. The Cottesloe Council was approached, and although one councillor argued against regular opening for sales, since the club was in a residential district, others voiced no objections, since the club already opened to the public for periodic exhibitions and sales of work. The Council approved the proposal for a trial period of twelve months, provided that there were no complaints of traffic congestion in Burt Street.

It is hoped this venture will increase awareness of our club, attract potters both active and social, benefit the club financially and more importantly involve all members, so increasing club spirit. It is hoped, with these aims in mind, all members will not begrudge giving their time to the manning of the gallery. Without the rostering of all members it would be impossible to consider the gallery as a successful venture. From the enthusiasm displayed on Thursday it can only prove to be a success. All we need now are customers, so spread the word.

The first newsletter for 1985 gave instructions and advice on the running of the gallery, as some mistakes in the book-keeping had been occurring. In fact this remained an intermittent problem for years, creating tiresome puzzles for the treasurers who had to sort them out. The other recurring problem, discussed in almost every subsequent newsletter and general meeting, was that of members forgetting to turn up for their rostered gallery duty, and what to do about it.

Apart from running the gallery, the committee arranged a busy workshop programme: Chinese brush strokes with Mrs Young Hi Newman, which proved so popular that there





*Work by Janis Heston, decorated with paper-resist and faceting. Exhibited at "Celebrating Our Past" in 2007.*

were two additional sessions, and basic glaze understanding with Claire Cameron. Robert Gordon gave one on working with slumped glass, foreshadowing the interest later to be shown by potters (including members Pauline Burnet, Helen Mee and Elaine Bradley) in this related medium. Ian McCann made a return visit to demonstrate throwing and turning, and Marion Lynch demonstrated her personal approach to working with slabs. In May, Estelle Boak gave a demonstration of screen-printing on clay, and in June, Janis Heston came to speak about her experiences of two pottery apprenticeships in Japan, and a period at the Jam Factory in Adelaide. After her talk, she gave

demonstrations of faceting, carving and *hakeme* brush work.

Besides these workshops, a number of exhibitions were held: of clay figurines, by member Jenny Black, one of which was purchased for the club collection, and some non-pottery ones, such as floral collages by Linda Henfrey and Julie Warrenner. Pam Luff and Eleanor Ironside mounted an exhibition of soft leather sculpture, and Nalda Searles gave a workshop to a group of potters, weavers and textile workers, on creative basketry using vines, ropes, wool and twigs.

Instead of the usual June quarterly meeting, a re-union lunch was held for past presidents, former members and honorary life members, which was attended by about 60 people. The club received the welcome news that the Arts Council had awarded the club a grant towards the purchase of a slab-roller, which became a well-used piece of equipment, facilitating the making of dishes and tiles, which started to appear in substantial numbers at future exhibitions.

## **Refurbishment of the Gallery**

The gallery was given a new look in 1986, as the club was able to purchase a number of display boxes (for \$500), replacing the wooden planks and "Larboard" slabs supported on Besser blocks, which had been standard for many years. Given the prosperous state of the gallery at the time, the expense was justified. The old and by now somewhat tattered sea-grass matting on the floor was also discarded, in favour of neutral, hard-wearing carpet tiles. Besides the normal classes, a number of "in-house" workshops and demonstrations were

held during the year: Jeanne Herring demonstrated press-moulded bottles using two-piece moulds, Estelle Boak again demonstrated screen-printing on clay, and Nicola Purcell showed the various effects possible from mixing and combining coloured clays.

Colour of a different kind was provided by the treasurer Derek Large, who, when not busy doing the club's accounts, was fully occupied as a professional photographer, and mounted a handsome display of photographs of Kalbarri wild flowers in March. Another non-pottery exhibition held later in the year featured long-stitch canvas embroidery by Dorothy Ewers. Ceramic colour and decoration was the theme of a well-attended workshop given by Jill Smith in April, on the use of lustre, china paints and ceramic pencils. Jill Smith later had some of her designs accepted and put into production by Australian Fine China.

Work for the selective exhibition this year was chosen by Janis Heston, who had spoken at the club about her Japanese experiences the year before, and who had just held an impressive exhibition in the central gallery at the Fremantle Arts Centre. The club exhibition was held as usual on the June long weekend, and was opened by the Hon. John Williams MLC. Janis selected 161 pieces, made by 27 members, but commented that most of the handles were not up to standard (she accepted no mugs or cups) and that some functional pots were inappropriately glazed with dry glazes, while others were too thinly glazed. The committee discussed afterwards whether the exhibition should be held over a longer period—a single weekend seemed very short, considering the amount of work involved. Some of the work was transferred to a Guild and Group Promotion at the Craft Council Gallery over the Perth railway station, but the arrangements and facilities for this were disappointing, the pots being displayed in a draughty passage. On the other hand, a handsome display was set up at the Perth Building Society in the City, which was good promotion for the club, and work was sent south for an exhibition at the Busselton Court House. Open Week this year continued during the whole of Show Week, and the stall for the now



*Before the purchase of the display boxes, this was a typical view of the gallery, some time in the 1970s.*

*(Originally there was a fireplace on this wall, which was removed in 1970. Members heard that the National Trust needed just such a fireplace for a room in their recently renovated property "Woodbridge", at Guildford, and gladly donated the one from the club.)*



*Moulded bottles by Jeanne Herring, with inlay decoration*



re-named “Rocky Bay Village” (formerly the Lucy Creeth Home) was again held, as it had been for over 20 years, but this was for the last time, since the committee considered that members might prefer to support a charity of their own choice.

## Visit of Greg Daly

The major event of 1986 was the exhibition and visit by Melbourne potter Greg Daly, who gave the club two demonstration workshops. Both were fully booked, and participants profited greatly from the mass of useful and inspiring information which he imparted, and the pleasure of seeing his exhibition. Many of his platters were decorated with a number of different glazes poured over different areas, in such a way as to suggest landscapes. One of his sayings which stuck in the memory was: “You have to learn to reject—but then you also have to learn to accept”. This echoes what the American writer Flannery O’Connor once said in a letter to a friend: “I write what I can and accept what I write after I have given it all I can”. Greg Daly made two later visits to the club: in 1995 he gave a workshop on lustre. The first ten or twelve people to register for this paid a small surcharge, which entitled them to bring small pots for hands-on lustre application, while a larger number could watch. It seemed to members that there was no pottery technique of which he was not a master. In 2006, he returned to conduct a long-awaited hands-on workshop in which he introduced students to a comprehensive but fast and trouble-free

method for the development and testing of enormous numbers of glazes.

Just before the 1986 Christmas sale was due to start, part of the workroom ceiling fell in, landing in fact more or less on top of member John Kato. He retained his composure despite his surprise, and worked on amongst the debris, while the possum family, whose activities had presumably caused the collapse, escaped out of the door. Luckily it was possible to repair the ceiling in time before the sale. It had been a worrying year for structural damage, since during a winter storm there had been a major cascade through the corridor roof in July, with Gos Rosenbrock holding out a kettle underneath, to make morning tea for the committee with genuine fresh rainwater. Considerable mopping up of the new carpet was needed, and of course both the roof repairs were costly, as only the damage to the carpet was covered by insurance. The club ended the year, however, with a small credit balance.



*Greg Daly at the lustre workshop*

## The Club Celebrates Thirty Years

1987 marked the thirtieth birthday of the club. One event which those who took part in it will long remember was the lamington drive held to pay for the new "Skutt" electric kiln. Such an event has now passed into social history, as present-day health regulations would prohibit the use of a space such as the club workroom for the preparation of foodstuffs to be offered for sale.

At the annual general meeting in July the president, Dorothy Atkinson, reported:

Members came closer together in friendship and determination on the great Lamington Drive Day. We won't forget the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1987, not only for the fun about 30 of our members had with their very professional lamington dipping, boxing and selling operation, but for the astonishing financial success it became which helped us to pay for our new Skutt kiln. It was a display of devotion to the club which brought together dozens of sticky fingers, sticky aprons and sticky shoes, to make what we considered an impossible target of 500 dozen top quality, beautifully boxed and presented, lamingtons.

After an exhausting day, members earned the club \$762. (There was a proposal to hold another lamington drive in the middle of the following year, but this, somewhat to the relief of all potential participants, was cancelled, as the organiser was unable to attend and supervise.) So now there was a new good-sized kiln (replacing "Robert", which was bought by a member), and a small one which had been given a new casing, at cost, by the husband of member Doreen Wilkinson. Disappointingly, the new kiln turned out not to be very durable. It was a top-loader, and in the club situation may not always have been treated with the necessary care. The newsletter for February 1994 reported that it had done its last firing at the club.

Members held a special meeting in May, to review the functioning of the gallery, and, after discussion and a vote, decided to open on Sundays as well as Saturdays, for a six-months' trial period. This was the high-water mark of the club's confidence and prosperity.

The programme for the rest of the year included workshops and demonstrations of lid-making, coloured inlay on porcelain, and air-brush decoration. Jane Watkins (Lanyon) demonstrated mocha patterning over slip, and Wendy Binks decorated platters with her trademark Australian birds and animals. From one of these a full-face emu still stares out balefully at members from its shelf. A more intellectual workshop, on glaze formulation, was held by Graeme Symons in July, and Greg Crowe revisited the club with a session on big-ware throwing, bringing with him a small exhibition. Member Fran Martin put on an individual exhibition, "Fantasy Impromptu", from which the club purchased a piece for the collection, to add to the year's acquisitions of pots by Greg Crowe, Estelle Boak and Judy Halliday. Estelle Boak, Helen Manson and Melanie Guelfi (now Mackenzie) all had slides of their work selected for the slide library of the Crafts Council of Australia, a considerable honour, since fewer than half of the slides submitted nationwide were chosen.



The social aspect of club life has always been regarded as important, and the highlight of the year was the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday lunch, which was held at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle on 6 August. Derek Large paid tribute to president Dorothy Atkinson and to life and foundation members Doris Harms, Jean Ewers, Judy Halliday, Miriam Williams, May Piesse, Esmé Macaulay, Gos Rosenbrock, May Metropolis, Jean Spry, Phyllis Caudle and Sue Vickers. The hotel entered into the spirit of the occasion by providing free champagne and the services of the hotel pianist, who played "Happy Birthday" at the appropriate moment.

The final social event of the year was the Melbourne Cup lunch, held this time not at Esmé Macaulay's home in Claremont, but at Lyn Salfinger's in Duncraig. It was the end of a long and enjoyable tradition which had begun in 1963 and lasted for 23 years, almost half the lifetime of the club. In subsequent years the lunch was held irregularly, sometimes at the club, sometimes at the homes of other members.



*Racegoers at Ann Storey's home in November 1993, with members dressed for the occasion: Lyn Salfinger and Dianne Sigel with, in front, Ann Storey, Dorothy Atkinson and Teddy Letham.*

At the beginning of 1988, Helen Mee and a willing team conducted a major repainting project in the workroom, and fitted dark brown blinds over the windows, so that colour slides could be satisfactorily viewed during the daytime. Janet Kovesi gave illustrated talks on the history of tin-glazed pottery and slip-decorated pottery ("It's a Long, Long Trail"), and Yvonne Cuff, former lecturer at Goldsmith's College in London, gave a seminar on "Modern Sculptural Ceramics in Continental Europe". Hands-on workshops were conducted by Jenny Macrae on hand-building and decoration, and Jenny Senjuschenko (now Dawson) on the making and application of ceramic decals. Ruth Elder gave the club a demonstration workshop on production throwing. She had trained at the prestigious Harrow School of Art in England, and was now the resident potter at Tresillian in Nedlands, where she and a partner ran the "Plum Pottery".

At the June quarterly meeting, Jean Spry was made a life member. She had served on the committee in many capacities, including secretary, and for many years, together with Mollie Davies, had taken charge of the stall to raise money for the Lucy Creeth Home.

Mike Kusnik chose the work for the selective exhibition in June this year, which was opened by Dr Charles Murphy, the Mayor of Cottesloe. (The 1984 exhibition had also been opened by the then Mayor. As Gos Rosenbrock commented in her final newsletter, the club has always enjoyed good relations with the Cottesloe Council.)

At the annual general meeting of 1988, members decided, after a survey, to open the gallery on Sunday afternoons only, rather than all day. This was the first retreat from the confidence of the previous year. One reason must have been the extra number of roster duties necessitated by the increased hours of gallery-opening, and the consequent strain on members.



*Jean Spry arranging a display.  
(Reproduced courtesy The West Australian.)*

## Visit of Hiroe Swen

The great highlight of this year was the visit by the Japanese-born potter Hiroe Swen. She gave two demonstration workshops and held a magnificent exhibition in the club gallery, elegantly set out by Melanie Mackenzie and opened, charmingly and wittily, by Sandra Black. One major piece was purchased by WAIT for its collection, and a black box with lively birds on it for the club's own collection.





*'The Black Box Flight Recorder' by  
Hiroe Swen*

One of Hiroe's demonstration pots was decorated with a similar bird: she simply picked out a piece of broken plaster of the shape she wanted, and used it as a textured stamp to define the body, adding final details with a wooden tool. Her demonstration style included a number of comic little sayings: as she prepared a slab she slapped it down quite hard all over, remarking that one must "give it a hard time, like good mother; otherwise you have a spoiled child, and afterwards, when trouble comes, is cracking". One of her pots was

started upside down, on a slab laid over a convex plaster mould, so that when finished and turned right way up it would have a *concave* top. As it grew taller and narrower she commented that she needed the skills of a gynaecologist to reach inside and weld the coils together. Bryan Newman, when he visited the club in 1975, had similarly made a teapot upside down when he wanted it to end up with an absolutely flat top.

Hiroe revisited the club in 1997, to give a hands-on workshop at which the participants could not just sit back and admire her skill at leisure. This time they had to actively engage with their teacher and work to design and make something of their own while taking to heart her dictum: "Craft does not need art; it needs craftsmanship".

In early 1989, the club was privileged to be given a notable demonstration of Japanese calligraphy by Seinosuke Kato, a descendant of the founder of the ancient pottery of Seto in Japan, who was not only a calligrapher but a distinguished photographer and poet. He was the father of member John Kato, the busy manager of the Perth Office of a Japanese trading company, who nevertheless found time for pottery, and was a generous friend of the club. He had entertained Hiroe Swen and club committee members to a lavish Japanese meal in Fremantle the year before, and now held another gathering at his home in his father's honour. He often acted as interpreter during negotiations between Japanese and Western Australian government ministers, including the then Minister for Mines, Hungarian-born Andrew Mensaros who, like the Kotai family, had arrived in Western Australia in 1950. Of necessity, they communicated in a language that was native to neither of them.



*Hiroe Swen starting an upside-down pot  
Below: Trimming the base*



## A Visit to Eileen Keys



*Group photograph at Roleystone.*

*At rear: Lyn McBain, Dianne Tulloch, Helen Manson, Jeanne Herring, Jo Jones, Lyn Salfinger;*

*Middle row: Betty Bateman, Teddy Letham, Helen Mee, unidentified;*

*In front: Roberta Stearne, Eileen Keys, Gos Rosenbrock, Lyn Robinson, Dorothy Atkinson, Dorothy Ewers.*

An enjoyable outing was arranged in May, to visit Sue Young's studio in Roleystone, followed by lunch in a local restaurant. This in turn was followed by an unexpected treat when Teddy Letham's guest, Eileen Keys, invited everyone to visit her own home and studio nearby. Eileen was a notable pioneer studio potter in Western Australia from the early 1950s onwards. She was born in New Zealand, where she first studied fine art, and had come to Perth in 1947 when her husband, Dr Maxwell Keys, was appointed headmaster of Scotch College. At Scotch she taught art and introduced pottery. One of her students at Scotch, Professor Ted Snell, recalled her classes as "an active, thoughtful and very physical engagement with earth and fire ... Three years before I arrived at the school she had begun using rocks and ash, collected on trips round the state, to create glazes for her rough stoneware forms. This fascination with the earth and the mysterious colours that would appear when her pots were passed through the trial of fire, was the key to her teaching". In 1961, she had written to Denise Wren in England: "I made great discoveries as the rarer minerals in high temperatures separate and make wonderful designs. I got a big piece of gold and silver rock given me from a mine, and it made wonderful glazes, the silver, iron, gold and rock separating in lines". Using a miner's dolly pot she pounded



and crushed all kinds of rocks for her glazes, including volcanic ash from her native New Zealand, and, alarmingly, uranium ore from Rum Jungle. Her masterpiece, "Desert Form", is in the Art Gallery of Western Australia. At the time, her rugged style of pottery was uniquely her own, and it is interesting to see how, many years later, potters around the world are aiming at similar effects, not only by using ash and rock dusts in glazes, and chips of rock in the bodies, as she did, but by prolonged and arduous wood firing.

Eileen was a benevolent but somewhat formidable figure in the Perth pottery world, admonishing timid potters to "just go and dig some clay—make something!" She had been a guest of the club at its second official meeting, on 8 August, 1957, and the minutes describe the occasion:

The rest of the evening was given over to a talk by Mrs Maxwell Keys, who inspired us with her enthusiasm. We were filled with admiration for her determination and zeal in the pursuit of potters during her trip abroad. The samples of pottery she displayed were very greatly admired by all, and we would like to record our appreciation to Mrs Keys for her very stimulating talk.

Eileen also opened the club exhibition in September 1965. She was now living in retirement at Roleystone, and the visit was an enormous pleasure. Eileen died in September 1992, at the age of 88, and the club newsletter published a tribute to her by Teddy Letham, her friend of 35 years.

Sandra Black re-visited the club in July, to give a meticulously-presented hands-on workshop on slip-casting, the technique which she uses for much of her own work. She returned some years later, in 2006, with a workshop on the making of moulds, necessary for slip-casting as for other pottery techniques, using both traditional and paper plaster.

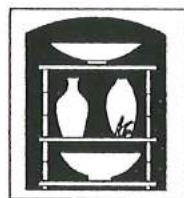
Work for the 1989 selective exhibition was chosen by Anne Gordon, who later gave the club a workshop in the Japanese colour inlay technique of *neriage* in which she herself specialised and excelled. Maria Phillips opened the exhibition with a speech in which she recalled the early days of the club, when she had been one of those who tramped down to its then home in the boatshed, and compared it to its current comfortable and prosperous state. A small but attractive display under the auspices of the Craft Council was also set up in the Alexander Library, which helped to publicise the club. The club publicity officer, Anne Clark, resigned this year, but before she left she re-designed the club logo of a kiln full of pots, and this appeared in future publications.



*Designed by Reg Stuckey, 1978*



*Used from 1983 to 1989*



*Designed by Anne Clark 1989  
Modified in 1998*

The year's practical activities in 1990 started off on a light-hearted note, with a slide night presented by Janet Kovesi on the subject of "People and Animals in Clay", for which the club was joined by members of the Ceramic Study Group. More seriously, there was a hands-on workshop from Judy Chambers (a lecturer at Perth Technical College) on Design, and later a demonstration workshop on domestic ware from Mary Wallace, of which one participant commented: "I learned more here today than in four years at Tech". Mary returned to the club the following year to choose the work for the selective exhibition, which was opened by Joan Campbell with her customary panache. Joan always remained a good friend of the club, long after she had ceased to be an actual member.



*Joan Campbell, with pots  
by Jeanne Herring*

The club arranged two more enjoyable outings: one to the Alcoa plant at Jarrahdale, where members were impressed by the rapid regrowth of the forest and native flora as a result of Alcoa's careful and strictly monitored mining procedures. Members also visited the Bristle China Factory (before it was re-named Australian Fine China), and enjoyed seeing the efficiency of mass-production techniques while reflecting with pleasure on the rewards of making pottery by hand.

## **Fund-Raising for the Club**

In 1990, the June newsletter presented some sobering figures about the cost of running the club—more in fact than was covered by subscriptions. (To economise, the honoraria formerly paid to president, secretary and treasurer, had been cut back some time before.) This prompted the first of a number of garage sales organised by Jill Wood, with the help of her sister and Lorna Oxley, which raised \$750 in a rather less arduous way than a lamington drive. She was to run many more over the years. (The early club minutes frequently announced arrangements for jumble sales which then, too, routinely contributed to club finances.) Jill was also the hostess at the 1990 Melbourne Cup lunch, in her Nedlands home, and at a later date she was one of a number who opened their homes and studios for fellow-members, who made a fund-raising donation to the club. Jill described the social and historical background of the authentic English cottage models which she makes, and appropriately served her visitors cottage pie. Others who issued such invitations included Jane Lidbetter, Sonia Phelan, Marjorie McKercher, Janet Kovesi Watt and Sow Fong Khoo, who besides showing her studio, introduced members to the delights of Asian cookery, and served them beef satay. This programme had been initiated by Linda Ruby, who with Jane Lidbetter was then in charge of the club gallery.

In July 1990, Dianne Sigel was elected president, for what was to be an unprecedented four-year term, and with the new committee organised the programme for the following



year, which opened with a stimulating workshop from visiting English potter Toff Milway. He brought a small exhibition with him, from which the club purchased a salt-glazed jug, which whetted members' appetites for the effects possible with salt glaze.

Greg Crowe gave the club a memorable wood-fire workshop this year, which began with a talk at the club in April, and then, when members had had time to make their pots, continued in mid-June with the glazing, loading and firing at Greg's studio in the hills at Hovea. A week later, members were able to unload their pots, which they then set up in a small exhibition at the club.



*Group photograph of potters who took part in Greg Crowe's wood firing.*

*At rear: Lyn Salfinger. Back row: Anne Airey, Colleen Norton, Jeanne Powell, Eleanor Frith, Janet Kovesi Watt, Heath Crowe, Greg Crowe. Middle row: Margaret Frew, Dianne Sigel, Melva Preston, Janet Townend, Lyn Robinson. In front: Jeanne Herring, Kate Crowe.*

At the 1991 annual general meeting, members agreed to work towards the purchase of a new high-temperature electric kiln, as the Skutt kiln was now relegated to low temperatures. Two low-key lamington drives, where members just took orders, were accordingly arranged, and together raised just over \$700. Club subscriptions were also raised: to \$45 for full and provisional members, and \$15 for social members. The provisional membership category had been introduced some time before, for applicants whose work was felt not yet to be up to exhibition standard, but who wanted and needed to use the club equipment in order to gain greater proficiency.

The final major event of the year was the demonstration workshop given by Victorian potter Victor Greenaway, held in conjunction with his exhibition at the Stafford Studios

nearby, with a slide show in the evening. Demonstration workshops like these, which can accommodate about 35 participants attracted by major names in the pottery world, have always been a success at the club, and the kiln fund duly benefited. It looked even healthier by the beginning of the following year, 1992, as the club received a grant from the Lotteries Commission towards the cost of the kiln required. By June, the newsletter was able to report that the new Tetlow kiln had been purchased and delivered. It had internal measurements of 46 x 46 x 69 cms, and came complete with stainless steel casing, thermocouple, computerised controller and automatic cut-out as a built-in safeguard. It was well worth saving up for, and still giving good service many years later.

Bela Kotai gave a workshop in March, on advanced throwing techniques for large pots, throwing upside down, and joined and altered forms; Victor Greenaway returned in May, to give two more workshops, with new decorative techniques including brushwork and the use of ceramic crayons; and Mike Kusnik came in August, to show members how to make their own crayons. The base recipe for these was: BBR Kaolin 50, Silica 30 and Whiting 20, with the addition of 40% of colouring oxides or ceramic stains. These need to be very thoroughly mixed, dry, and then moistened with enough water so that the mixture can be rolled out into pencil shapes which can then be reinforced by being wrapped in paper. (See *Pottery in Australia* vol. 31 no. 4, summer 1992.) Such crayons were also featured in an entertaining workshop by the visiting Lithuanian-born potter Rimas VisGirda from the United States. To round off the year, Garry Zeck gave a workshop on brush decoration and lustre, one of many workshops to come, generally with a decorative theme.

The year 1992 marked the club's 35th birthday, which was celebrated after the annual general meeting with a restaurant lunch. At the meeting, Frank Parrotte (an accountant in private life) was elected to the committee as treasurer. Those in the key positions retained their portfolios the following year, when Jo Jones acted as returning officer, inheriting Judy Halliday's traditional office.

The club has always encouraged members to put on individual displays in the gallery, and this year



*Bela Kotai at work on a large pot*



*Rimas VisGirda, watched by Jenny Dawson*



Doris Kontrimas and Kay Phillips held small solo exhibitions. In early December, the club staged an elegant exhibition in Aherns department store in Claremont, which also served to publicise the club's Christmas sale. The reader will have noticed how, at intervals during this story, Aherns have appeared as patrons of studio ceramics, beginning as early as the 1950s, with their commission to Francis Kotai to make cups for their coffee shop. In February 1995, the club was invited to mount another, larger, exhibition in the City store, of which more later.

Activities for 1993 began with a well-publicised exhibition in the Perth City Council Library, selected and arranged by Dianne Sigel. In March, the club enjoyed a musical day with Robyn Lees, who took members through the technique of making ocarinas, a skill with which she had once seriously made her living, before moving into the voluptuous lady-teapots for which she is now well known. In May, Garry Zeck conducted a raku workshop, for which members gathered at Jeanne Herring's studio in Karrinyup for the actual firing, away from the stern anti-smoke regulations imposed in Cottesloe. Also in May, Helen Mee displayed her recent work in clay and glass in the club gallery, and in June, Maureen Spencer and Rachael Knagg mounted a joint exhibition which they called: "Potted in Perth: an exhibition of ripening work".

## Visit of Takeshi Yasuda

The highlight of 1993 was the visit by Japanese-born potter Takeshi Yasuda, now based in England, and a guest at the National Ceramics Conference which had just been held in Adelaide. The club was delighted by the opportunity to host a major ceramics artist from overseas who was conveniently already in the country. Members were intrigued by his making techniques: much of the centring of a large lump of clay, destined to be turned into a bowl, was achieved by lengthy thumping out with clenched fist, as the wheel slowly turned. One bowl was first thrown as a dish with a slightly thicker base than usual, which was then set on a supporting collar of clay as wide as its circumference, and the base stretched by being thrown inwards and *downwards* until the centre met the wheel head. Paradoxically, this gave a wonderful lift and spring to the finished bowl. Takeshi



*Small jug and dish with "squirrel tail" handles by Takeshi Yasuda. (From the club collection.)*

laid emphasis on a ceremonial approach to the serving of food, and another piece was a kind of raised platform, which he called a "plateau", suitable for serving, say, a selection of cheeses, made from a dish form turned upside down. His handles were endlessly inventive: he made several families of related shapes, some pulled, some twisted, some indented or grooved or textured, and set them out so that he could choose which was the most appropriate for the piece

in hand, or perhaps make another as a variant on an existing theme. His deft touch with these can still be studied, since his demonstration pieces, including sample handles, were biscuit-fired and remain at the club. Takeshi was accompanied by the potter Felicity Aylieff (now his wife) who gave the club a slide lecture on her own work.

## Formation of the Clay and Glass Association

A new venture in the Perth Ceramics world was announced in 1993. A preliminary meeting was to be held on 22 September in the Craft Council rooms, to discuss the formation of an association of potters and glass workers, followed up by a general meeting on 27 October. This marked the birth of what was first known as CAGAWA: the Clay and Glass Association of Western Australia. It was formed as an umbrella organisation, to represent the interests of the various pottery and glass groups in Western Australia, and as a representative association to put in a bid (well in advance) to host the ninth National Ceramics Conference due to be held in 1999. A number of club members joined this organisation, and were later to take an active part in the Conference, which was indeed held in Western Australia. This connection with the wider craft world was reinforced by the invitation to Louise Howden Smith, the Executive Director of the WA Craft Council, to open the selective exhibition in October, for which the work had been chosen by Garry Zeck.

A final workshop for the year was given by versatile member Melanie McKenzie, with the intriguing topic of sunlight direct photography on clay, indicating how many kinds of sophisticated techniques of making and decoration had been developed in the years since the founding of the club. She returned the following year for another valuable session on business practice, and later published an article in the special Western Australian issue of *The Journal of Australian Ceramics* (vol 45 no. 3) in which she described an ingenious method of low-tech screen-printing on ceramics, using old X rays.

In May and June 1994, three hands-on workshops (the third by popular demand) were held by the ebullient Pippin Drysdale, on decorating plates and platters with colour and lustre. It is pleasant to note that the base glaze underneath all the colour was the one developed by Mike Kusnik, when he worked as a chemist at Brisbane and Wunderlich, for use on sanitary ware. This has proved to be an invaluable glaze of exceptional durability, acid-resistance and wide firing range (1180°C – 1300°C), used by a number of Western Australian potters, including Sandra Black, Janis Heston and Garry Zeck. For those interested, the recipe is: Nepheline Syenite 29, Whiting 10, Barium Carbonate 6, Zinc Oxide 8, Talc 4, Kaolin 15, Silica 28.



*Press-moulded piece by Melanie Mackenzie, with photographic decal and brass additions*



The glaze can be opacified by the addition of 6% Tin Oxide and up to 14% Zirconium Silicate to give an intense white. The maturing temperature can be lowered (as it was for the Pippin Drysdale workshop) by the addition of between 5% to 12% of a standard leadless frit.

## Distinguished Visitors to the Club

This year, 1994, the Clay and Glass Association hired the club workroom for a workshop by Seth Cardew, the eldest of Michael Cardew's three sons, now running the pottery founded by his father at Wenford Bridge in Cornwall. It was a fascinating link with the early history of studio pottery in England. He showed videos of his father's work in Africa and England, and gave a slide lecture. He demonstrated using a kick-wheel, which had been made by local craftsman John Boyes in the 1970s, from the plan supplied by the Leach Pottery. The design is based on the wheels used in the Fremington Pottery in north Devon, where Michael Cardew first encountered pottery as a boy and young man. This was a novelty to most of his audience. The silence of a kick-wheel, and its height, made it ideal for those watching. One of the pots he made was a mug, for the baby son of member Rachael Knagg, and he pointed out the practicality of giving the rim a very slight turn inwards, to protect it from chipping. Like his father, whom some members had seen in 1968, Seth pulled his handles at arm's length above his head—another link with the past.



*Seth Cardew pulling a handle*



*Attaching the jug handle*

In October, the club welcomed another distinguished visitor when Janet Mansfield, the internationally-known potter, writer, editor and ceramics advocate and entrepreneur, fitted a demonstration workshop at the Potters' Club into her busy life of frequent travel. She showed how big pots can be made even by the not-so-strong if the work of centring is tackled in two instalments: first centre one medium-sized lump of clay, then another one on top. She demonstrated the sort of pots which she wood-fires and salt-glazes at her country workshop near Gulgong in New South Wales. Gulgong is not only "the town on the (old) ten dollar note", but is situated near clay-pits which are the source of some of Australia's most widely used clays. For many years she has held periodic events such as "Fire Up Gulgong", of which she showed slides. Some club members had attended this, their enthusiasm triumphing despite camping under conditions of considerable discomfort, and spending many bleary-eyed hours stoking a variety of wood-fired kilns. Janet Mansfield's demonstration pots joined the distinguished gathering on the club workroom shelves. At the time of writing she is the president of the International Academy of Ceramics.



*Janet Mansfield*

At the end of the year, after considerable discussion, the committee decided that the gallery would no longer open regularly on Sundays. Members felt that it was still worthwhile to open on Saturdays, so that someone would be available to talk to visitors and answer inquiries, but compared to the previous decade, sales at weekly openings were not brisk. Many reasons could be put forward for the widely experienced decline in pottery sales after the heady days of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. One must surely be that hand-made pottery was no longer a novelty; another that fashions in interior decoration had changed, and another that a great variety of pottery was now being imported to Australia from all over the world.

In 1995, the year's activities began with the previously mentioned show at Aherns City store in February. It was rather tucked away behind the lingerie department, but signposted for shoppers, and advertised by a display in one of the main shop windows. The pots were imaginatively set out on pine boxes and crates, nestled among wisps of straw, so that they would look as though they had only just been taken out of their packing cases. Thirty-eight members exhibited a grand total of 193 pieces. The standard was high, and sales were excellent. This was followed by a mini-exhibition in the club by Ann Storey and Frank Parrotte, mostly of salt-glazed ware, which, as they reported, also sold well.

Lyn Salfinger, who had organised the Aherns show, suggested an approach to the Festival of Perth, with a view to mounting an exhibition which would be part of the





*The Aherns exhibition.  
Work by Kathy Evans and Frank Parrotte (left)  
and Dianne Sigel, Caroline McCrudden  
and Yolanda Pullman (above).*

Festival in a future year. The representative of the Festival was discouraging, however, and expressed doubts about the professional quality of members' work, suggesting that the proposal might be acceptable if an international potter could be invited to exhibit alongside members, to add prestige to the home-grown product. Admittedly, nearly 30 years after the club's Festival exhibition in 1966, the Festival had grown enormously and had a far more international focus. Club members did, however, start to wonder uneasily whether the name "Potters' Club" gave a misleading impression of their aims and achievements.

Ian Macrae, well-known studio potter and Perth TAFE lecturer, chose the work for the 1995 selective exhibition. The club was able to invite Tim Proud, a potter from Dundee, who was staying in Perth on his way back to Scotland after a residency at the Tasmanian School of Art, not only to open the exhibition but to give a demonstration slab-building workshop. He used thin slabs to construct pieces that suggested reliquaries or shrines, which in his own practice would be destined for raku firing and the ordeal of being taken red-hot from the fire with tongs for further treatment. He was impressed by the standard of work at the exhibition, particularly so since the name of the club (as he confessed) had suggested to him a more amateur organisation.

Members had already considered a possible change of name for the club, despite the hostile reaction recorded at the meeting in December 1981, and put forward suggestions at the December quarterly meeting of 1995, such as: Perth Studio Potters, Perth Potters Studio, Studio Potters Association, Perth Studio Potters Association. It was to be a decision made reluctantly, in the uncomfortable knowledge that original members of the club would be saddened, but influenced by the reaction of people like Tim Proud and the representative of the Festival of Perth. At the March quarterly meeting the following year, members suggested more names: West Australian Potters Association, or Potters Association of Western Australia. The decision was not rushed.

In 1996, the Clay and Glass Association again hired the club workroom for a workshop on maiolica decoration by yet another distinguished visitor, the Canadian potter

Matthias Ostermann. He spent some time advising members on choosing a harmonious personal colour palette before demonstrating some of his own designs, which included birds, flowers, fishes and a lively mermaid. Sometimes he lightly smudged some of his brushwork with his fingertip to give a romantically misty effect, while highlighting other details with crisp sgraffito.

Immediately after the workshop, members set to work clearing the front courtyard, before the laying of sand-coloured paving bricks to replace the tired front lawn, a project assisted by a grant from the Lotteries Commission. This created a useful outdoor space for social occasions, and as a setting for a "Courtyard Garden Spectacular".

Matthias Ostermann returned the following year, this time to give a hands-on workshop. A number of potters did explore a more colourful and painterly approach to pottery at this period, in reaction perhaps to the earthy look that had been in vogue some years earlier, and had sometimes looked not so much earthy as downright muddy. In those years there had been a feeling, born partly of necessity, that potters should be self-reliant and use the materials to hand: dig their own clay, and mix glazes from natural unrefined rock dusts and ashes with their interesting impurities. The present writer developed a "hare's fur" glaze from granite and diorite dusts, silica, terra cotta clay and garden incinerator ash (in those days practically every garden had an incinerator). Jean Spry made effective use of a handsome dark brown glaze, based on the red clay which she prised from the wheels of her husband's truck after trips up north. Such glazes did tend to be mostly various shades of brown or sombre green. Potters realised that, if they wanted to use brighter colours, it made practical and artistic sense to use the stains and pigments made by the big ceramics manufacturers, and profit from their expertise and facilities that an individual could not possibly match. By this date a wide range of ceramic colours was available, including rich reds and pinks, many of which could withstand high temperature firings, and even the oxygen-starved atmosphere of reduction firings, such as would have been unimaginable in earlier years.

Frank Parrotte advocated the formation of a club study group, to meet monthly, with each member taking turns to research a particular topic and run a tutorial on it, or visit a workshop or gallery. The ultimate fruit of this proposal was a project to make tiles representing historical pots, to be mounted on a wall at the club. In 1996, members organised an excursion to look at the tile mural created by Garry Zeck at the Benara Road Community centre, and one at Ellenbrook, made by local people under the direction of Alison Brown. Alison had visited the club the previous year, to give a well-attended hands-on workshop on design for the garden, which included the use of armatures for garden sculpture.



*Matthias Ostermann*





*Alison Brown with Sow Fong Khoo at the garden sculpture workshop*

A wide variety of tiles have been made for the club project, using some of the last batch of cream clay supplied by the Courtland factory before its closure, but at the time of writing, a final decision on their position had not yet been reached.

Meanwhile, Jeanne Powell guided interested members in the use of the club's new extruder. This acquisition prompted the publication in the newsletter of the following anonymous piece of verse, minimally edited here:

Upon the wall in triumph sits  
 A wondrous plastic pipe.  
 Contained within, a plunger kit  
 And dies of varying type.  
 And now, my friends, insert your clay  
 And heave upon the handle;  
 Form coils or tubes, or what you may,  
     And then...  
 By flick of wrist now cut and catch  
 The clay upon a board;  
 And so by clever mix and match  
 You earn your just reward,  
 With pots of any shape or mood  
 That you did just extrude.

Further afield, at the end of June, Caroline McCrudden hosted an enjoyable stoneware wood-firing for club members at her Gidgegannup property. She had built the kiln the previous year, and later published an article about it in *The Journal of Australian Ceramics* (vol. 45 no. 3). Though the weather was both wet and windy, which made for a prolonged firing, this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the participants.

The club workroom was again hired by the Clay and Glass Association in July, for a spectacular demonstration of coil-and-throw big pot making by Svend Bayer from England. Svend was trained by Michael Cardew and now works in Devon. The magnificent jugs which he makes are clearly inspired by the traditional jugs of Devon and Cornwall. Towards the end of Cardew's life, Svend used to go and help with his wood firings, since Cardew always described himself as a mud and water man rather than a kiln man (unlike the New Zealand potter Barry Brickell, who once described pottery as a socially acceptable form of pyromania). Svend himself is very much a kiln man, frequently demolishing and then re-building his enormous *anagama* kilns, of which he showed impressive slides.



*Demonstration by Svend Bayer*



## Forty Years On

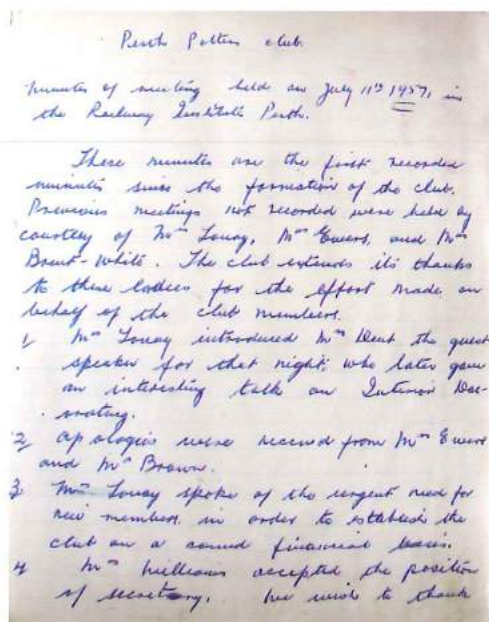
In 1997, the club celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Anne Airey was now president. Both gallery and office were given a new look, with a mirror wall in the gallery, and glass fronted cabinets in the office to safeguard the club collection of studio pottery. These had been bought with the proceeds of the previous year's garage sale, supplemented by a donation from Lyn Robinson, who had suggested the purchase. The collection itself had been started in 1969 by Janet Kovesi Watt, after a visit to England during which, on a very modest budget (initially of only \$50) she had purchased pots on the club's behalf. Forty years and many gifts and purchases later, the collection now includes work by local, national and international potters, and has become a valued educational and artistic resource. (For a complete list of potters represented in the club collection see page 90.)

The backyard was also given a new look, as the club was offered the opportunity to buy a large metal shed, 7.6m long by 3.8m wide. A member gave the club an interest-free loan so that it could be quickly bought, and Chris Airey and a team of capable husbands transported it in numbered sections and erected it in the backyard. Anne Airey and Frank Parrotte had had considerable difficulty gaining permission from the Council for this, since there had been disputes with a neighbour about the activities of the club, despite all club efforts to be accommodating, but in the end all was satisfactorily resolved. The shed has, of course, proved invaluable for storage, and has freed up working space in the main building.

This year, club members were at last able to experience for themselves the "Magic of Salt and Fire" at the workshop given by Greg Crowe, which was followed in June by a small exhibition at the club of the resultant pots. He also chose the work for the selective exhibition, which was opened on 1 August by Robert Bell, Curator of Craft at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.



The club celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a re-union Morning Tea on 19 July, which was attended by a large gathering of about 60 members. This date was remembered (mistakenly) as having been the anniversary of the first minuted meeting of the club, but the club is actually a week older than that. Those minutes still exist, and record that the meeting had actually been held on 11 July 1957. To mark the anniversary, the club produced the booklet referred to earlier: "The First 40 Years", containing the reminiscences of Jean Ewers and Judy Halliday, with extra contributions by Gos Rosenbrock, Sue Warrington and Teddy Letham. This present account owes a great deal to it, especially the first part.



*The first club minutes*

## A New Name For the Club

At the annual general meeting in July 1997, members finally voted to change the name of the club, and "Perth Studio Potters" was the title chosen.

During this year, the club was assisted by a grant from ArtsWA to host a workshop by Margaret O'Rourke from England, who demonstrated the throwing and assemblage



*Light piece by Margaret O'Rourke, from her exhibition at the club*

of her magical porcelain light forms. She had recently exhibited work in London, which involved not only light but water: tiny jets of water sprayed her translucent forms, so that they glistened and shimmered. A special porcelain body was sent out for her to work with, made by the firm of Valentines in Stoke-on-Trent, and originally developed for the rolled porcelain figures of British ceramics artist Audrey Blackman. Margaret also sent out a distinguished exhibition which she personally set up in the club gallery, later sending her work on to Janet Mansfield's gallery in Sydney. It was fascinating to see how the pieces were transformed when they were lit from within, the multi-levelled ribbons and skirts of clay taking on a new life and forming new relationships with each other, depending on their thickness and their distance from the light source.



*Margaret O'Rourke assembling a pyramidal light form*

Towards the end of the year, the club hosted the first of three annual exhibitions for new graduates of ceramics teaching institutions: "New Generations". The exhibition aimed to show-case the work of the students and introduce them to the club and its facilities, and a year's membership was offered to the student judged to be the most promising. It is sobering to reflect that, ten years later, the ceramics classes at many Western Australian institutions had closed. It is also sobering to reflect that, 30 years before, one of the aims of the newly formed Craft Association had been to encourage the establishment of craft and design training facilities.

Jo Jones was in charge of the gallery in 1998, and had organised a number of theme displays to greet the new year. The club had purchased a number of biscuit-fired pots to be glazed and then decorated by members. Anne Airey made exhaustive tests of a variety of glazes and pigments for the project, which took place at the end of February, and the resultant pots were shown in the club gallery in June, under the title "Collaborative Colour". Members were still drawing inspiration from the memory of Matthias Ostermann's workshops.

Garry Zeck had returned to the club in May, to demonstrate "innovative and unconventional methods of throwing to form interesting pieces", and then to decorate them. This workshop was attended by 31 people from all over the State, including two from Port Hedland, three from Albany, two from Bunbury and one from Cuballing. In June, English potter Peter Lane, distinguished author of *Studio Ceramics* and *Contemporary Porcelain*, who had been visiting Perth, generously agreed to give the club a slide lecture on his last night before leaving for home: "A Personal Approach to Design in Ceramics". Porcelain artist Angela Mellor, who had studied with him in England, came and introduced him to members. He showed how he developed designs from photographs



of vegetation and landscape, both in Australia and England, and incised them through a sprayed glaze surface, subsequently over-spraying with a different but compatible glaze. Club members also held in-house workshops for each other: for instance, in August, a hands-on workshop on a variety of handles, cane, extruded and pulled, was presented by Caroline McCrudden, Dianne Sigel and Janet Kovesi Watt.

The highlight of the year's workshop programme was the visit at the end of September by Sandy Lockwood from New South Wales, with her wonderfully fluid and spontaneous style of throwing. The clay seemed to dance under her hands. The many inspiring pots she made were biscuit-fired and have joined the distinguished teaching collection on the workroom shelves. She also brought over a small exhibition, from which the club purchased the teapot illustrated below.



*Above: small teapot by Sandy Lockwood, wood-fired and salt-glazed*

*Left: Sandy Lockwood demonstrating*

## **The Perth National Ceramics Conference**

In May 1998, the Ceramic Arts Association of Western Australia (CAAWA, formerly the Clay and Glass Association of Western Australia), organised a remarkable event at Houghton's vineyard in the Swan Valley. This was a kind of dress rehearsal for a "Clay Olympics" which was planned as light entertainment for the National Ceramics Conference due to be held in Perth the following year. The newsletter editor commanded: "Be there. We need a team and blatantly partisan supporters" to compete in such events as the longest handle, two people throwing a pot with one hand each, and suchlike equivalents of sack races or egg-and-spoon. The Perth Studio Potters team brought home four medals:

Dan Hodgkin and Frank Parrotte made an undefeatable partnership in the 'three-legged plus wet pot race'; Dan and Jo Jones drew gold whilst 'throwing a wobbly', and our spectacular composite teapot was rated bronze by

Mike Kusnik. A special mention must go to Jo for her quick thinking at the finish of the 'throwing with body parts other than the hands' event, when she quickly retrieved our pot which had been sheared off by Frank's big toe.

The Clay Olympics was understandably a great hit at the Conference the following year.

At the annual general meeting this year, Tony Ridout joined the committee as treasurer, and over the years was to be a considerable asset to the club, by exercising his professional skills as an electrician when needed.



*Christmas meeting at the club during the late 1990s: Gina Kitchen, Tony Ridout, Lyn Salfinger, Gos Rosenbrock, Anne Airey (president), Marjorie McKercher, Caroline McCrudden, Setsuko Hayashi.*

For Perth Studio Potters, the year 1999 started with an entertaining workshop from Andrew Cope, an inventive young potter from Victoria. His Noah's Ark teapot won all hearts with its elephant trunk spout, tortoise knob on the lid and hole in the handle for the giraffe's head to poke through. The main focus this year, however, was the 9<sup>th</sup> National Ceramics Conference, entitled "Edge: Identity and Change". Club members Anne Airey, Marion Page, Cher Shackleton, Dianne Sigel and Janet Kovesi Watt were much occupied with arrangements for the Conference, which dominated the first half of the year. The club was well represented in the survey exhibition: "Everyday Changes", which was held at the Laurence Wilson Art Gallery at the University of Western Australia, and included work by Jean Ewers, Judy Halliday, Janis Heston, Teddy Letham, Michiko Love, Helen Manson, Maria Phillips, Jo Reid, Dianne Sigel and Janet Kovesi Watt. Dianne Sigel chose the work for the club's own selective exhibition, which was held at the same time as the Conference, and which was opened by Greg Crowe, the





*Detail of dish by  
Dianne Sigel, with  
crystalline glaze.  
(Reproduced courtesy  
Pottery in Australia.)*

president of the Ceramic Arts Association. It proved to be an overwhelming, indeed staggering, success, with cars parked for several blocks along the railway reserve. Never before had the club been so crammed with visitors. A record number of forty-two members took part. A further small display was mounted at the Karrinyup shopping centre at the same time, which gave valuable publicity to the club, and a grant from Craft West financed a brochure about the club for inclusion in the Conference delegates' kit. This had been designed by Sue Warrington and Gina Kitchen, with photographic assistance from Leanna Taylor.

After the Conference, Dianne Sigel held a solo exhibition at the Fremantle Arts Centre, presenting a striking group of pots which showed off her turquoise and emerald green crystalline glazes.

Normal club life resumed after the Conference, balancing participation in community, social and ceramic activities. Members set up a stall at the Cottesloe "Sea Dragon" festival under the pines overlooking the beach, took part in the Probus Sale for Cancer Support in the South Perth Civic Centre and enjoyed a noodle night in the club courtyard organised by Sow Fong Khoo and Carly Chow. Later they watched in amusement and delight as Robyn Lees gave a demonstration workshop in which she constructed her wittily seductive lady teapots.



*Teapot by Robyn Lees, made at the club.  
(Donated by the artist to the club collection.)*

## **The Millennium and a Possible Move**

A possible major change for the club had been foreshadowed at an extraordinary general meeting held at the end of 1997. A subcommittee, consisting of Tony Ridout, Jenny Ripley, Jane Stewart and Caroline McCrudden, had been formed to consider the feasibility of a move to new premises, if a place could be found which offered more space and scope for the club's activities, was conveniently accessible to members, and which the club could afford. The fact that the club was in a residential area, rapidly becoming a highly sought-after residential area, did give rise to a certain uneasiness among members, particularly after the club's difficulty in gaining permission to erect the shed. Since then, sporadic efforts had been made to look for new premises which might give the club room to expand, and a majority of members had voted in favour of this investigation.

In the year 2000, a recently vacated bank building in a small shopping centre in Doubleview was presented as a serious contender for consideration as a new headquarters for the club. A sub-committee was formed to assess the relative values, advantages and disadvantages of the Doubleview and Cottesloe properties, and the financial feasibility of a move. The proposal aroused strong feelings both for and against. Members considered it with anxious care, and sent in submissions and arguments to be considered and collated by the committee. Finally, at an extraordinary general meeting on 19 October, a vote was taken, and it was clearly decided, by 42 votes to 9, with one abstention, not to initiate the move. Furthermore, there had been a general change of attitude since the end of 1997, and in response to the question whether to continue actively searching for new premises the vote was now 33 to 19 against. Members gratefully acknowledged the dedicated and persistent efforts that Anne Airey and the subcommittee had put into the search, and thanked them for all their work. The general feeling among members now was that the club should stay with the Burt Street property, and make maximum constructive use of the space. They were encouraged by the fact that the Council had installed a blue street sign pointing to "Perth Studio Potters" at the corner of Burt Street. It was a relief to have arrived at a decision and to have ended the uncertainty about the club's future, but there were members who were undeniably and understandably disappointed, especially some of those living in the northern suburbs.

A busy programme of workshops had continued as usual while these deliberations were going on. The first for the millennium year was given by Jane Lidbetter, who had just given a course at the Albany Summer School, on her speciality of bead-making and assembly. In May, Garry Zeck gave a workshop on "Accessing New Form and Looking at Design", and later in the year invited members to visit his studio in West Swan. In June, Stewart Scambler conducted an immaculately organised (and virtually smokeless) raku firing for members at his Palmyra studio: thick layers of wet newspaper kept the smoke under control when the red-hot pots were smothered in leaves or sawdust. In October, Cher Shackleton and Marion Page donated their time, and conducted workshops in mosaics and tie-dyeing which were enjoyable fund-raisers for the club.

In November, the students of Pauline Burnet and Caroline McCrudden mounted shows of their work in the club gallery, and these and the Christmas sale were a success, but overall gallery sales had been disappointing during the year, barely covering the cost of even quite modest publicity, and certainly not justifying the many hours put in by members on gallery duty. After discussion at the December quarterly meeting, members voted to cease opening routinely during weekends, at least for the time being, but to concentrate on a limited number of special exhibitions during the year, with a few pots regularly displayed for sale in the hallway.

The first of these theme shows, in March 2001, was entitled "By the Sea", and a group of the students even painted the front of the house in turquoise and blue to match the theme. Sales amounted to just over \$730, more than the takings for the previous four months combined, but still in poignant contrast to the buoyant sales of earlier years.

In May, American potter Ginny Conrow, who had visited Perth during the Conference, gave the club a workshop on the making of table fountains. A useful tip which she passed



on was to throw wide bowls or platters on a dampened circle of canvas attached to a bat with a good smear of slurry, and to cut off with a wire passed *between canvas and bat*. When the bowl is firm enough to be turned upside down the canvas can simply be peeled off. In August, Graham Hay gave a workshop on the uses and possibilities of paperclay, a material on which he is an acknowledged authority, and which is being used by a number of potters, including Robyn Lees, for her “lady” teapots and other sculptural pieces. Also in August, Linda Ruby conducted a course on the making of ceramic masks. In September, Christiane de Mesa, assisted by a Japanese friend, invited fellow-members to a Japanese tea ceremony, at which the participants were greatly impressed by the beauty of the utensils and surroundings, and the atmosphere of serenity and calm. In late November and early December, Heide Mead conducted enjoyable workshops on the dyeing of silk scarves.

The club held a selective exhibition in October 2001, which was planned to coincide with the exhibition of functional pottery held by the Ceramic Arts Association at their “Is the Dinner Party Dead?” event. (Club members Marion Page, Cher Shackleton, Dianne Sigel and Leanna Taylor were among the hard-working organisers of this.) Janis Heston again agreed to choose the work, and the club was privileged to have the exhibition opened by Suzy Atkins, one of the distinguished visiting potters who had made sure that the dinner party was certainly not dead. She was particularly pleased to be approached, as she is always happy to promote community groups such as the club. She herself had trained in England at the prestigious Harrow School of Art, and was now living in France. She works in salt glaze and embellishes her pots with gold lustre in a second low-temperature firing, creating an effect of great richness.

In August 2002, a second theme exhibition, “Shades of Aussie”, was held in the gallery, and members were invited to consider again whether this system of having occasional theme shows was preferable to the former practice of regular Saturday openings. They made various suggestions, with the aim of achieving better exposure and bringing in the public, and finally decided to recruit a dedicated sub-group of members who

would be responsible among themselves for opening the gallery on Saturdays. Roster duty would no longer be required from the general membership, and the members of the smaller group would easily be able to get in touch with each other to arrange dates and times and substitutions where necessary. The gallery reopened with this system in place in May the following year, and it has worked well.



Work by Suzy Atkins, shown at the club exhibition  
“Pots of Inspiration” in 2007

## A New Look for the Club House



*Above: dish by Melva Preston*

*Left: Jane Hall in her studio*

At the March quarterly meeting in 2003, Jane Hall was awarded life membership, joining Melva Preston, who had been made a life member in December the previous year.

At this meeting, considerable discussion was devoted to giving the club building an attractive new look and carrying out essential maintenance. An engineer who had been consulted, strongly advised moving the kilns outside the building. Despite the capacious stainless steel canopy and the extractor fan in the kiln room, ventilation in the building as a whole was inadequate to cope with the heat and fumes from frequent firings, which made the atmosphere both unpleasant and unhealthy.

The other major project discussed was the replacement of the asbestos roof, and members resolved to apply for a grant to help with the cost of this. They put together a wish-list, which included the replacement of the corridor ceiling as well, the plastering of the brick walls of the gallery and, when the club could afford it, improved lighting, and enlarged windows in the gallery. All these projects were completed by 2007, as was the removal of the carpet tiles laid in 1986, which had been judged to be a health hazard, as harbouring clay dust. This turned out to be a horrible job, which was carried out by a grimly resolute group of students, co-ordinated by Kim Maple and Caroline Morrison. What made it so unpleasant was not just the hacking and scraping up of the actual tiles, but the removal of the glue, which involved the use of kerosene as a solvent.

The annual general meeting of 2003 was noteworthy for the presentation given by former member Maureen Spencer, now living in the north of the State, where she is known affectionately by local people as “Mud Munga”. She described her work with indigenous artist and former stockman Philip Green, and how, as community artists, they have organised story-telling tile installations for groups of local people.

In September this year, the ever-inventive porcelain artist Fleur Schell was invited to choose work for the selective exhibition, and then to open it. She observed how hard it was as a judge to “walk the fine line between encouraging and discouraging the makers, who in many cases require a great deal of courage to publicly display their work”. She ended her speech by commenting: “The works on show tonight embody technical difficulty,





*Teapot by Fleur Schell.  
(From the club collection.)*

frivolity, serenity, and a wonderful rapport between the hands of the maker and those of Mother Nature. All of the pieces ask us to stop, to slow down and to care. In doing so each object has much to teach us". She followed this up with a workshop to a packed audience, demonstrating her meticulous (but often surprising) texturing techniques using cuttlebones, plastic bubble-wrap and home-made plasticine incorporating castor oil.

In March 2004, Caroline McCrudden hosted a notable event at her Gidgegannup property at which Steve Mills, from Bath Potters' Supplies in England, demonstrated the construction of an ingeniously simple wood-fired kiln for salt glaze. He had been engaged to build and fire a kiln of this sort

the following year at the International Potters' Festival in Aberystwyth, in Wales. The unusual thing about this kiln was the height of the firebox/ash-pit, which was designed so that the lengths of wood when thrown in would rest at an angle, one end on the floor and the other on a firebar, thus exposing the maximum area of fuel to incoming air. The floor of the ash-pit was formed of raised perforated bricks to act as a secondary grate for the falling embers. He valiantly worked in full sun and punishing heat, shaming the locals who took refuge in the shade.

In May, Robyn Lees revisited the club and demonstrated her teapot ladies and larger sculptural forms. These were assembled in great part from thrown components, even down to the high-heeled shoes. In June, Linda Ruby continued the sculptural theme, and gave members a hands-on workshop on the modelling of a head. Linda is a painter, potter and puppet maker, and this proved to be a rewarding course with interestingly varied results from similar starting points. Two years later, members interested in ceramic sculpture were further inspired by Myra Staffa when she opened

the programme for 2006. She gave a thought-provoking demonstration showing how she developed ideas for her sculptural pieces, laying great stress on the value of keeping a visual diary. She spread out a number of miscellaneous odds and ends on the table, and showed how she used them as a jumping-off point for her own work. Finally, she constructed a charming assemblage of a mermaid swimming over a coral reef among the waves, and gave practical hints on the structure and balance of such a piece.



*Pot with iron brushwork by Lorna Oxley*

The October newsletter in 2004 carried the welcome announcement that Lotterywest had approved a grant of \$10,000 towards the replacement of the asbestos roof. Kim Maple, Gerry Jones and Caroline Morrison had worked hard to achieve this. The grant was supplemented by the impressive amount of over \$3,000 from previous club fund-raising activities, all highly enjoyable as well as financially successful. Lorna Oxley and Jill Wood had arranged a series of theme dinners, the last of which had the intriguing title: "What Ails Thee?" Members discovered that they were required to come in fancy dress representing some dire disease. This inspired some entertaining punning costumes and made a welcome contribution to the roof fund.

Other dinners, with Greek and Italian themes, were held at the club and at Kathy Evans's home, and Judith Paisley, the club's resourceful publicity officer, later hosted a lavish Italian dinner at which members wore Venetian Carnival masks. This gained over \$1,000 for club funds.

The roof replacement was completed by the end of April 2005, and the corridor ceiling was not only replaced, but fitted with a welcome skylight. The workroom was equipped with a large double sink, donated by Yuri Niida, and capacious shelving, donated and installed by John and Judith Paisley. It will now be far more comfortable for members and students throughout the year, since the installation of reverse-cycle air-conditioning. The building itself was repainted a quiet green.

At the end of 2004, members enjoyed another raku workshop given by Stewart Scambler, a lustre workshop with Fran Haines, and a non-pottery workshop with Val Hornibrook (Cher Shackleton's sister) on the making of luxurious "nuno" scarves from silk and wool, in a Japanese felting technique. By popular request, she returned the following year to show how to make other items by the same method.

Cher Shackleton, who had recently held a solo exhibition of her wood-fired work at Gallows Gallery in Mosman Park, held a distinguished exhibition at the club, of pots from four local wood-fired kilns, including two anagamas. An impressively large crowd of guests filled the gallery for the opening by Stewart Scambler.

In 2006, Cher exhibited three of her wood-fired pots in Melbourne, in a major exhibition featuring the work



*Wood-fired bottle  
by Cher Shackleton,  
banksia ash glaze*



*Soda-glazed wood-fired pots by Cher Shackleton,  
shown at the CAAWA exhibition*



of Australia's most respected wood-firers. Then in early 2007, she took part, by invitation, in the first national exhibition of soda-fired work, held as part of "Clay Edge" at Gulgong, New South Wales, under the artistic direction of Janet Mansfield. Later in the year, she won the judge's choice award at the CAAWA exhibition at Gallows Gallery.

Other club members have also exhibited their work in galleries around Perth, throughout Western Australia and interstate, and some have been able to make a serious career in ceramics, often combining making and selling with teaching.

At the beginning of 2005, the kilns were moved out of the main building and into the back shed, newly wired with heavy-duty cable. Unfortunately the gas kiln, which had been purchased after such prolonged deliberations twenty years before, needed expensive modification in order to comply with current safety regulations. Accordingly, the club has acquired a new gas kiln, at the time of writing awaiting installation. Though electric kilns are convenient and reliable, the club has been anxious to offer members the possibility of reduction firing, for which a flame kiln is essential. The original small kiln shed, now rusty, was also replaced, thanks to the efforts of Jurg and Ursula Kieliger.

This year, 25 members entered work for the selective exhibition. Stewart Scambler chose the work and spoke at the opening, reminding members that an exhibition is not primarily about sales, but about reputation. Joan Campbell had made the same point in December 1966, when the club first planned to hold selective exhibitions, encouraging members to regard "the artistic rather than the mercenary as the goal". Stewart also made considered and helpful comments to individual members on the night, explaining the reasons for his choices.

Not long after the club exhibition, Janet Kovesi Watt exhibited work from her wood-fired kiln, built partly, by permission, with some unwanted second-hand Clackline firebricks which had been donated to the club. She also showed work by some of the early club members, as a tribute both to them and to the club itself, of which she had been a member for 40 years. Trisha Kotai Ewers, daughter of Jean Ewers, who opened the exhibition, read part of the charming and amusing speech which her mother had given when the club house was opened in 1964. This event was the forerunner of the "Celebrating Our Past" exhibition held in the club's 50th anniversary year.



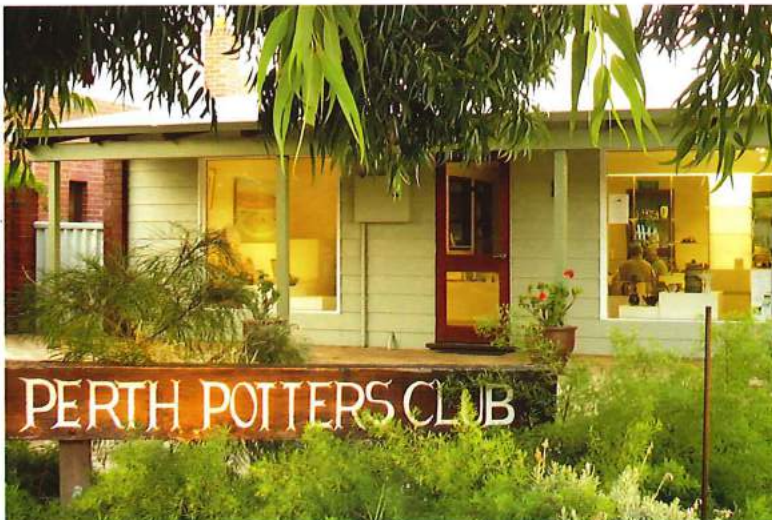
*"Family" by Jean Ewers.  
(Collection of the artist's daughter.)*

## Renovation of the gallery

When the front of the clubhouse was rebuilt in 1978, the large all-purpose front room was used mainly for meetings and social functions, and only occasionally for exhibitions and sales. In 1984, members decided to change the focus of the club's activities, and designate it as a permanent gallery, relegating meetings to the workroom. In 2005, the club moved to convert it into a more elegant gallery space: the brick walls were smoothly plastered, and the front wall was transformed by the installation of large display windows, replacing



*Overall view of the gallery interior, 2005*



*Exterior view of the clubhouse, after the installation of the large windows*



the original small ones with their dated vertical blinds. The possibility of carrying out this desirable improvement had been discussed two years earlier, but with other projects demanding attention, members had felt unable at the time to incur the expense of such a major alteration. Now, however, Kim Maple, the club president, revived her proposal, putting the case for making this substantial investment in the appearance of the building, and the committee voted to go ahead. The new windows have not only made the interior of the gallery invitingly visible to passers-by looking in, but have naturally brought more light and a view of the outside in for those looking out. Even those who had been concerned about the cost of the project were converted by this. The gallery was then repainted in off-white, and members were delighted with the final result. At a time when hand-potters have to devise new ways of promoting their work, an attractive gallery to display it in is an obvious asset.

## Education in Ceramics in Perth

The gallery represents only part of the activities of the club. Teaching is a vital part of promoting the practice and appreciation of ceramics in the community, and the classes which were started in 1978 have been a continuing feature of club life. As background to the current situation at the club, it is worth making a brief survey of some of the opportunities for education in ceramics in Perth over those years.

In the 1970s and 1980s, when the craft movement flourished Australia-wide, numbers of pottery classes at all levels, including degree and diploma courses, were offered in Perth and beyond, but many of these have now been discontinued. The decline in opportunities for formal education in ceramics began in the early 1990s, with the closure of the course at Fremantle Technical College, to be followed during the decade by ceramics courses at many other TAFE colleges. The ceramics classes at the Claremont School of Art, where foundation member Jane Vandon taught for many years, and where many club members had studied, have also been discontinued.

With the reduction in TAFE courses in the outer suburban areas, there has been a move to centralise the teaching of pottery, and Perth Central College of TAFE, built and lavishly equipped as recently as 1999, offers some units of ceramics as part (but only part) of a Diploma in Art and Contemporary Craft. Students can elect to specialise further in ceramics units as the course proceeds. In earlier years, however, a demanding diploma course specifically dedicated to ceramics was offered by Perth Tech. in the less luxurious surroundings of the disused convent of St Brigid's. This covered



*"The Old Dutch Cheese Shop" by Jane Vandon. (Collection of Mrs Julie Bethell.)*

technology and practical making skills, ceramics chemistry, ceramics history and kiln and glaze technology, and a number of club members acquired this qualification. Club member Helen Manson taught there. Helen Mee and Anne Airey both published articles in *Pottery in Australia* based on research projects undertaken as part of their diploma studies: Helen Mee wrote on copper red glazes at low temperatures (August 1986), and Anne Airey explored the use of the lithium mineral spodumene in flame-resistant clay bodies (Summer 1992).

During the 1980s and 1990s, several club members attended Greg Crowe's courses at Carine College of TAFE, and gained valuable experience in the building and firing of different kilns. Dianne Sigel taught there, and built an oil-fired salt kiln, and Caroline McCrudden (who also taught there) collaborated with Vicki Malone, Kathy Evans and Helen Jenke to design, build and fire a wood-fired cross-draught kiln, which was in constant use by fellow-students. This was possible in the open spaces of an outer suburb, but is impractical in the city. The course at Carine was axed at the end of 2002, and the kilns have been demolished.



*Vicki Malone, Caroline McCrudden and Helen Jenke in front of the Carine cross-draught kiln*

Caroline McCrudden is able to compensate to some extent for the loss of the firing opportunities at Carine, by the wood firings which she holds at her Gidgegannup property. These are attended not only by club members and her students, but by their families and friends, who enjoy the experience enormously. Melva Preston, when aged over 90, was one of those who took part, bringing home-made biscuits with her to sustain her fellow-stokers, and some embroidery to occupy herself when not on firing duty.

Many Western Australian professional potters, including Greg Crowe, Bela Kotai, Sandra Black and Alison Brown, were trained at WAIT, now Curtin University, where a general Bachelor of Arts degree is offered, with painting and sculpture studied alongside ceramics units. Students who wish to specialise can do so at postgraduate level, and





*Urns by Greg Crowe, late 1970s, shown at the club exhibition "Celebrating Our Past" in 2007.*

at Curtin it is now possible to work towards a diploma or masters degree in ceramics.

Well-attended classes which do not, however, lead to a formal qualification, have been held since the early 1970s at the Fremantle Arts Centre. In the 1950s, the building, then semi-derelict, was the Finnerty Street Annexe of the Fremantle Technical College, in which Francis Kotai taught and inspired the foundation members of the Potters' Club. After its restoration, club members Janet Kovesi, Vera Palfreyman and Michiko Love taught there, and it was there that Garry Zeck, originally a painter, was introduced to ceramics. Internationally known as well as local potters have given classes and workshops at the Arts Centre, including Ivan Englund, Sandra Black, Robyn Lees, Joel Smoker and David Woodland, who have also given workshops and demonstrations at the

club. Stewart Scambler has taught there for over 20 years.

A number of adult education and evening classes are still available in and around Perth, some of which are taught by club members Dianne Sigel, Jeanne Powell and Jill Archibald, but ominously, for the first time ever, no pottery classes were planned for the 2008 Albany Summer School, in its 48<sup>th</sup> year.

Prospective secondary school art teachers spend a semester studying ceramics during their course at Edith Cowan University, and some Perth schools offer courses in pottery. Dianne Sigel teaches in the Gifted and Talented Visual Art Programme at Applecross Senior High School. The club has friendly relations with the teacher at nearby Presbyterian Ladies' College, who once led her students in procession towards the club, bringing their clay models for firing, by special arrangement, in the club kiln.

Members of pottery groups around Perth and the rest of the State, help and encourage each other much as Perth Potters did in the 1950s and 1960s, when they consulted each other about their potting problems, consoled each other for their failures and shared their successes. There is now, however, a much larger pool of knowledge to draw from, handed on over many years from local and visiting potters, and to be found in the huge variety of books and magazines now available. Despite the closure of so many classes, and the loss of many opportunities to gain formal qualifications, potters in Western Australia can and do still learn.

## Classes at the Club

This briefly indicates the general background against which the teaching programme at Perth Studio Potters still flourishes. The club continues to meet the demand for regular classes, as well as fulfilling its early role of providing a space where new potters can develop their skills. Pottery equipment is now efficient and commercially available, as it was not in the early 1960s, but it is now so highly priced that it is out of reach for many potters. There is still, therefore, a great need for a place such as the club, with its comprehensive facilities, large library and attractive gallery for the display and sale of work. In 1978, when the teaching programme started, the classes were taught by Joel Smoker, Phillip Douglas, Claire Cameron, Lil Caesar and Michiko Love. Other teachers over the years have been David Woodland, Penny Lindeman, Jo Jones and her daughter Paula Garn-Jones (now Trevor), Setsuko Hayashi, Jeanne Herring, Janet Kovesi Watt, Margaret Lane, Kathy Evans, Kath Michel, Maureen Spencer, Pauline Burnet (who has also conducted workshops in slumped glass), Stewart Scambler, Sarah Keirle and Caroline McCrudden.

Since the mid-1990s, Caroline McCrudden has facilitated the teaching programme at the club. She holds a teaching qualification from Bedford College of Physical Education, part of the Cambridge Institute of Education, and an advanced diploma in studio ceramics from Carine College. At the time of writing she takes three weekly classes, and a great many present members have joined the club as a result of attending these. As with Francis Kotai's original classes, students keep on coming back for more. The aim is to teach solid studio practice in a supportive and enjoyable environment, and to encourage experimentation with different techniques. As well as taking part in the raku firings mentioned earlier, and building and firing their own small kilns, students receive a rounded education in ceramics by visiting galleries, private collections and studios of established artists. By contributing to the Subiaco Rotary Fair, they have also learned about the effective presentation and marketing of their work.

Sarah Keirle (formerly Breen) has taught both adults and children (including two of Francis Kotai's great-grand-children) at the club. She holds an honours degree in Ceramic Design from the University of Staffordshire, and a graduate diploma in secondary education from Edith Cowan University. Holiday workshops for teenagers and children have been held by Rosemary D'Lima, Marie McSweeney and Julia Noakes.

Kathy Evans has for some years conducted classes at the club for profoundly disabled adults from the Nulsen Haven home. In 2000, these were supported by grants from the Multicultural Foundation and the Community Arts Network, and fountains made by her students won first



*Wood-fired pot by Kathy Evans*



prize in the sculpture section at an ACROD exhibition. From 2001 to 2005, she received grants from the Australia Council and from Lotterywest for a series of mark-making workshops. The pieces which her students textured with fingers, leaves, gumnuts and shells, have been assembled into murals and water features, and mounted on the walls of Nulsen Haven and some of the individual homes. They are much admired by visitors, and are a source of justified pride to their makers. One of her disabled students, Stephen Delower, has made work good enough to qualify him for club membership. Club secretary Beverley McMahon has also taught disabled students at Southcare, in Manning.



*Detail of fish mural at Nulsen Haven*

## **The Club Celebrates Fifty Years**

The club's 50th anniversary year started with an exhibition entitled "Pots of Inspiration", which featured a distinguished selection of studio pottery from overseas and interstate, collected over a period of more than 30 years, drawn from the club's own collection and from those of some of its members. This was followed by a major display of work lent by many of the foundation and very early members of the club, as well as current members: "Celebrating Our Past". There was a grand reunion of potters past and present



*Part of the "Celebrating Our Past" exhibition, with work by Anne Airey, Ann Storey, Leanna Taylor, Yolanda Pullman, Elaine Bradley and Anne Ryan.*

at the opening, and it was fitting that four generations of the Kotai family were able to attend: Francis Kotai's widow Julia was there, together with her daughter and son-in-law, grandson and two of her great-grandchildren. She had also been present at the gathering which had been held over 40 years before to celebrate the opening of the club cottage in 1964. The families of other early members were also present: Judy Halliday's daughter, Esmé Macaulay's son and daughter, Dolores Gable's husband and daughter, and Lil Caesar's husband and son. Trisha Kotai Ewers spoke movingly at the exhibition opening, quoting from "Centring in Pottery, Poetry and the Person" by the American potter-poet Mary Caroline Richards:

Centring: that act which precedes all others on the potter's wheel. The bringing of the clay into a spinning, unwobbly pivot, which will then be free to take innumerable shapes as potter and clay press against each other, the firm, sensitive pressure which yields as much as it asserts. It is like a handclasp between two living hands, receiving the greeting at the very moment that they give it.



*Above: tall wood-fired pot by  
Diane McCusker  
Top right: salt-glazed bowl by  
Dianne Sigel  
Right: crackle-glaze teapots by  
Leanna Taylor*

As well as these exhibitions, two outstanding workshops were held later in 2007, the first conducted by German-born potter Britta Stolle Jacob: "Raku at its Finest". Britta had recently been the subject of an article in *The Journal of Australian Ceramics*, (Vol. 45, no. 3, 2006) with examples of her meticulous hand-built work featured on the cover. Participants were amused to see that she shaped the thin clay slabs for her "kimono" pots by draping them over a horizontally-supported shovel handle, until they stiffened to a workable firmness. In stimulating contrast was the workshop given by Thai-born potter Vipoo Srivilasa, a hand-builder and decorator of witty and wildly inventive pieces, who encouraged students to give their imagination free rein. They ended up making





*Fantasy teapot by Vipoo Srivilasa.  
(Donated by the artist to the club collection.)*



*View into the gallery*

"It's a Scream". Further afield, some members entered work for the York Art and Craft Award, at which Chris Airey and Janet Kovesi Watt gained awards, for glass and ceramics respectively. The year ended with a triumphant Christmas sale at which over \$4,000 worth of work was sold.

Club members would like here to express their gratitude to the many distinguished local, interstate and international potters who have been so generous with their time and expertise, in giving workshops and demonstrations at the club, and to those who have undertaken the demanding task of choosing the work for selective exhibitions, and in many cases performing the opening ceremony.

an amazing variety of extraordinary little monsters, which clustered engagingly on the shelf. Pairs of joined pinch-pots formed the bodies of these, which were then given appropriate limbs, and embellished with scales, horns, fangs and claws, as fancy dictated.

In this anniversary year, an energetic group of members repainted the workroom and corridor, and gave the gallery a facelift with new track lighting. Members decided that it would in future be known as the "Burt Street Gallery". The club was looking its best for Vipoo's workshop and for the selective exhibition, for which Vipoo chose the work, in collaboration with Fleur Schell. It was an active time for the club, as Beverley McMahon had organised displays and demonstrations to take place at the Cottesloe Central shopping centre, at the same time as the exhibition, and a number of members took part in this. There had also just been a light-hearted exhibition at the club with the provocative title



*"Diving Diva" by Wendy Lilje from  
the exhibition "It's a Scream"*



*General view of part of the selective exhibition, 2007, with work by Beverley McMahon, Judith Paisley, Cher Shackleton, Louise Jankowski, Amanda Harris and Yolanda Pullman.*



*Tall vase by Caroline McCrudden*



*Hand-built covered bottle by Kelly Andrews*



The club should here gratefully acknowledge the valuable contribution to the club's activities made by Jackson's Ceramic Crafts and The Potter's Market, who offer members a discount on purchases, and who have made generous donations of clay and other materials for workshops. In the year 2000, both offered prizes for the most promising students in the "New Generations" show.

The last words of this history should be those of Teddy Letham. In the final essay for the booklet celebrating the club's first 40 years, she wrote:

Historically the creation of ceramics owes much to utilitarian need, but beyond that the desire "to make" has produced over the centuries articles of brilliant concept and enduring beauty overriding periods of fashion and gimmickry. It gives impetus to that continuing need of the human spirit to muck about and dirty its hands. May it survive to inspire members of Perth Studio Potters Inc. to satisfy this innate need into the second millennium and beyond.



*Perth Studio Potters clubhouse in 2009*

## Appendix 1

### Officers of Perth Potters' Club/Perth Studio Potters

*1957*

**Acting President:** Merle Tuohy  
**Joint Secretaries:** Pam Martin  
 Shirley Moir

*1957 11 July*

**President:** Merle Tuohy  
**Secretaries:** Miriam Williams  
 Shirley Moir  
**Treasurer:** Mr Barton

*1958 17 April*

**President:** Judy Halliday  
**Secretary:** Miriam Williams  
**Treasurer:** Lyn Bannister

*1958 2 October*

**President:** Judy Halliday  
**Vice-President:** Miriam Williams  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Treasurer:** Lyn Bannister

*1959*

**President:** Betty Kent  
**Vice-President:** Mrs Atkins  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Treasurer:** Lyn Bannister

*1960*

**President:** Doris Harms  
**Vice-President:** Phyllis Caudle  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse

*1961*

**President:** Doris Harms  
**Vice-President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Assistant Secretary:** Peta May  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse

*1962*

**President:** Doris Harms  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse

*1963*

**President:** Jean Ewers  
**Vice President:** Judy Halliday  
**Secretary:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse  
**Editor:** Hilary Medlow

*1964*

**President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Jean Spry  
**Assistant Secretary:** Myra Turner  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse  
**Editor:** Myf Young

*1965*

**President:** Myra Turner  
**Vice-President:** Doris Harms  
**Secretary:** Jean Spry  
**Treasurer:** May Piesse  
**Editor:** Thelma Gare



*1966*

**President:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Vice-President:** Doris Harms  
**Secretary:** Lil Caesar  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Thelma Gare

*1967*

**President:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Vice-Presidents:** Doris Harms  
 Teddy Letham  
**Secretary:** Lil Caesar  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor & Publicity:** Ruth Harms

*1968*

**President:** May Metropolis  
**Vice-Presidents:** Doris Harms  
 Esmé Macaulay  
**Secretary:** Judith Bottomley  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Ruth Harms  
 Esmé Macaulay

*1969*

**President:** May Metropolis  
**Vice-Presidents:** Doris Harms  
 Esmé Macaulay  
**Secretary:** Judith Bottomley  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Esmé Macaulay

*1970*

**President:** Janet Kovesi  
**Vice-Presidents:** May Metropolis  
 Esmé Macaulay  
**Minutes Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Executive Secretary:** Judy Halliday  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Esmé Macaulay

*1971*

**President:** Janet Kovesi  
**Vice-President:** Esmé Macaulay  
**Secretary (Acting):** Gos Rosenbrock  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Esmé Macaulay

*1972*

**President:** Janet Kovesi  
**Vice-President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Esmé Macaulay

*1973*

**President:** Maria Phillips  
**Vice-President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel

*1974*

**President:** Judy Halliday  
**Vice-President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Treasurer:** Audrey Foyel  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1975*

**President:** Judy Halliday  
**Vice-President:** Jean Ewers  
**Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Treasurer:** Nan Ford  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1976*

**President:** Lil Caesar  
**Vice-President:** Gos Rosenbrock  
**Secretary:** Georgie Davy  
**Treasurer:** Nan Ford  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1977*

**President:** Lil Caesar  
**Vice-President:** Gos Rosenbrock  
**Secretary:** Pat Coxon  
**Treasurer:** Nan Ford  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1978*

**President:** Nan Ford  
**Vice-President:** Lil Caesar  
**Secretary:** Rosemary Whittaker  
**Treasurer:** Pat Griffiths  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1979*

**President:** Nan Ford  
**Vice-President:** Lil Caesar  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Ewers  
**Treasurer:** Liz Owens  
**Editor:** Gos Rosenbrock

*1980*

**President:** Nan Ford  
**Vice-Presidents:** Rosemary Whittaker  
 Pat Stuckey  
**Secretary:** Wendy Buffham  
**Treasurer:** Liz Owens  
**Editor:** Julie Wheeler

*1981*

**President:** Rosemary Whittaker  
**Vice-Presidents:** Pat Stuckey  
 Liz Owens  
**Secretary:** Wendy Buffham  
**Treasurer:** Liz Owens  
**Editor:** Lil Caesar

*1982*

**President:** Rosemary Whittaker  
**Vice-President:** Pat Stuckey  
**Secretary:** Wendy Buffham  
**Treasurer:** Liz Owens  
**Editor:** Lil Caesar

*1983*

**President:** Liz Owens  
**Vice-President:** Pat Stuckey  
**Secretary:** Wendy Buffham  
**Treasurer:** Judith Wookey  
**Editor:** Lil Caesar.

*1984*

**President:** Jo Jones  
**Vice-Presidents:** Liz Owens  
 Lil Caesar  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Derek Large  
**Editor:** Lil Caesar

*1985*

**President:** Jo Jones  
**Vice-Presidents:** Dorothy Ewers  
 Judith Wookey  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Derek Large  
**Editor:** Lil Caesar  
 Judith Wookey

*1986*

**President:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Vice-Presidents:** Margaret Lane  
 Jo Jones  
**Secretary:** Claire Cameron  
**Treasurer:** Jo Jones  
**Editor:** Judith Wookey

*1987*

**President:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Vice-President:** Dianne Sigel  
**Secretary:** Fran Martin  
**Treasurer:** Cherie Carlo  
**Editor:** Judith Wookey  
 Roberta Stearne



*1988*

**President:** Janet Kovesi  
**Vice-President:** Jeanne Herring  
**Secretary:** Fran Martin  
 Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Cherie Carlo  
**Editor:** Roberta Stearne

*1989*

**President:** Janet Kovesi  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Roberta Stearne  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Helen Mee  
**Editor:** Roberta Stearne.

*1990*

**President:** Dianne Sigel  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Anne Airey  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Helen Mee  
**Editor:** Roberta Stearne

*1991*

**President:** Dianne Sigel  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Anne Airey  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Helen Mee  
**Editor:** Roberta Stearne  
 Jeanne Herring

*1992*

**President:** Dianne Sigel  
**Vice-Presidents:** Janet Kovesi  
 Anne Airey  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Frank Parrotte  
**Editor:** Jeanne Herring

*1993*

**President:** Dianne Sigel  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Vicki Malone  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
**Treasurer:** Frank Parrotte  
**Editor:** Kathy Evans

*1994*

**President:** Jeanne Herring  
**Vice-Presidents:** Anne Airey  
 Dianne Sigel  
**Secretary:** Dorothy Atkinson  
 Valma Rhodes  
**Treasurer:** Frank Parrotte  
**Assistant Treasurer:** Janet Kovesi Watt  
**Editor:** Kathy Evans

*1995*

**President:** Jeanne Herring  
**Vice-Presidents:** Anne Airey  
 Dianne Sigel  
**Secretary:** Valma Rhodes  
**Treasurer:** Frank Parrotte  
**Assistant Treasurer:** Janet Kovesi Watt  
**Editor:** Kathy Evans

*1996*

**President:** Anne Airey  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Ann Storey  
**Secretary:** Lyn Salfinger  
**Treasurer:** Frank Parrotte  
**Editor:** Jeanne Powell

*1997*

**President:** Anne Airey  
**Vice-Presidents:** Jeanne Herring  
 Ann Storey  
**Secretary Minutes:** Jeanne Herring  
**Correspondence:** Anne Airey  
**Treasurer:** Sue Warrington  
**Editor:** Jeanne Powell

*1998*

**President:** Anne Airey  
**Vice-Presidents:** Marjorie McKercher,  
 Jo Jones  
**Secretary Minutes:** Jeanne Herring  
**Correspondence:** Anne Airey  
**Treasurer:** Tony Ridout  
**Editor:** Jeanne Powell

*1999*

**President:** Marjorie McKercher  
**Vice-Presidents:** Leanna Taylor  
 Anne Airey  
**Secretary:** Kathy Evans  
**Treasurer:** Tony Ridout  
**Editor:** Jeanne Powell

*2000*

**President:** Marjorie McKercher  
**Vice-Presidents:** Caroline McCrudden  
 Leanna Taylor  
**Secretary:** Kathy Evans  
**Treasurers:** Cher Shackleton  
 Leanna Taylor  
**Editor:** Jeanne Powell

*2001*

**President:** Marjorie McKercher  
**Vice-President:** Leanna Taylor  
**Secretary:** Kathy Evans  
**Treasurers:** Cher Shackleton  
 Leanna Taylor  
**Editor:** Peter Marchesani

*2002*

**President:** Jill Wood  
**Vice-President:** Cher Shackleton  
**Secretary:** Kathy Evans  
**Treasurers:** Cher Shackleton  
 Leanna Taylor  
**Editors:** Peter Marchesani  
 Caroline McCrudden

*2003*

**President:** Cher Shackleton  
**Vice-President:** Kim Maple  
**Secretary:** Jill Wood  
**Treasurer:** Susanne Postler  
**Gallery Treasurer:** Leanna Taylor  
**Editor:** Kathy Evans

*2004*

**President:** Cher Shackleton  
**Vice-President:** Janet Kovesi Watt  
**Secretary:** Jill Wood  
**Treasurer:** Kim Maple  
**Gallery Treasurer:** Leanna Taylor  
**Editor:** Kathy Evans

*2005*

**President:** Kim Maple  
**Vice-President:** Janet Kovesi Watt  
**Secretary:** Beverley McMahon  
**Treasurer:** Marilyn Rattigan  
 Kim Maple  
 Dianne Sigel  
**Editor:** Shuna Akerman

*2006*

**President:** Kim Maple  
**Vice-President:** Janet Kovesi Watt  
**Secretary:** Beverley McMahon  
**Treasurer:** Dianne Sigel  
**Editor:** Kim Maple

*2007*

**President:** Kim Maple  
**Vice-President:** Judith Paisley  
**Secretary:** Beverley McMahon  
**Treasurer:** Dianne Sigel  
**Editor:** Kim Maple



## Appendix 2

### Life Members of Perth Potters' Club/Perth Studio Potters

1963	F Kotai	1979	M Piesse
1963	O Garde	1979	G Davy
1963	V Garde	1979	A Foyel
1965	A Lutz	1984	L Caesar
1967	P Wallace	1986	G Rosenbrock
1967	H Wallace	1988	J Spry
1969	A Croll	1991	T Letham
1972	M Williams	1995	D Atkinson
1976	A Sawkins	1997	J Kovesi Watt
1977	D Harms	2000	J Jones
1977	N Rubie	2002	M Preston
1978	M Young	2003	J Hall
1979	J Ewers	2004	A Airey
1979	J Halliday	2005	D Sigel
1979	E Macaulay		

## **Appendix 3**

### **In Memoriam**

In the course of fifty years, the club has farewelled many valued members, and it is fitting to commemorate them here.

#### **Gertrude Serventy**

In 1977, the newsletter announced: "We have lost Gertrude Serventy and we are the poorer. New members may not remember her, but she was one of the original members when potting was done in a boathouse by the river. She was a loyal member of the club, and a jolly person whom members who knew her well over the years will always remember with affection and a smile". In 1989, the club was delighted and touched to receive a legacy of \$300 from her husband, Dr Serventy.

#### **John K Ewers**

In 1978, the March newsletter announced the death of Keith Ewers. He was the husband of Jean Ewers, "one of our most cherished members", and was always supportive of the club, and his wife's role in it.

#### **Jane Vandon**

In 1982, the club lost one of its most gifted members, at the early age of 59. She lived her last years to the full, travelling extensively in Africa, India and Europe. The club cherishes in its collection a beautifully modelled head of a young African woman, which is a valued memento of her talents.

#### **Lil Caesar**

In 1985, the death of long-standing member Lil Caesar was announced. She had joined the club in 1961, and had been elected a life member at the recent annual general meeting. She was editor of the newsletter, and had held every office on the committee except treasurer. She was president at the time when the front of the house was rebuilt.

#### **Doris Harms**

In 1988, the club lost its much-loved former president, who first served on the committee in 1958. She alerted members to the forthcoming sale of 1 Burt Street, and the club owes her an enormous debt. She donated the club scrapbook, in which she wrote, touchingly: "May this book record the story of the happy hours we have spent together, and the good we have done to ourselves and others". It preserves and documents a great deal of the club's early history. Towards the end of her life, she donated her books and equipment to the club. As the newsletter commented: "A sweet little lady, sadly missed".



### **Jo Stewart   Georgie Davy   May Piesse**

1990 was a year of farewells: to Jo Stewart, who lost a long battle to cancer, then to Georgie Davy, a life member who served many years on the committee, and was secretary from 1970 to 1976. May Piesse was a foundation member, and was awarded life membership in 1979. As club treasurer from 1960 to 1965, together with Esmé Macaulay, she had dealt with all the legal and practical matters connected with the purchase of 1 Burt Street.

### **Muriel Young**

In 1998 Muriel Young died. She was a foundation member of the club, and for many years held the "house" portfolio on the committee, ensuring the smooth running of the domestic side of club life.

### **Jane Stewart   Alex Croll   Jean Ewers**

In 1999 the club lost more valued members: Jane Stewart, who died at the early age of 55, and Alex Croll, the much-admired, partly disabled war veteran potter, who was honoured in a feature obituary in *The Sunday Times*. Greatly loved foundation member Jean Ewers also died in 1999. Her funeral was memorable for the tributes spoken by her family and friends, including one on behalf of Perth Potters, for the beautiful coffin painted in blues and greens with formalised garden designs by her grand-daughter Haede Kotai, and for the symbolic release of a white dove at the end.

### **Jean Spry**

In 2000, Jean Spry died, peacefully in her sleep. She was a foundation and life member not only of Perth Potters, but of the South of the River Potters, and was club secretary from 1964 to 1965. She was also an accomplished silversmith, and regularly donated pieces of her jewellery to be raffled in aid of club funds.

### **Judy Halliday**

2001 marked the death of foundation member Judy Halliday. As vice-president, she had chaired the extraordinary meeting at which the decision was made to purchase 1 Burt Street in 1963, and over the years, together with Jean Ewers, had helped countless members with advice on all aspects of pottery. For many years, she undertook the major task of compiling the catalogues for club sales and exhibitions. She also traditionally acted as returning officer for annual elections, and was a presence of great authority and elegance.

### **Esmé Macaulay   Dolores Gable**

In 2002, the club lost two more foundation members: Esmé Macaulay, who was a tireless worker for the club in a variety of roles, president, secretary and editor, and the gracious hostess for many years of Melbourne Cup parties; and Dolores Gable, who was a versatile painter, mosaic artist and potter, with a notable talent for modelling, a favourite subject being a mother and child.

### **Audrey Foyel**

In 2004, Audrey Foyel, a serene and gentle person, died on 14 October at the age of 96. She had joined the club in early 1965, and served as club treasurer for a record term of nine years, from 1966 to 1975. She oversaw the finalisation of the purchase of the cottage, and

then the financing of the workroom extension, which has been such an invaluable asset to the club.

### **Julia Kotai Murray Brown Teddy (Edith) Letham**

The year 2007, besides being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club, brought to a close the long life of Julia Kotai, who was plainly very frail when she graced with her presence the exhibition "Celebrating our Past", and who died a few weeks later, on 29 May, at the age of 96. One of her early memories as a child was of having been lifted up by her father to see the newly crowned last King of Hungary and Emperor of Austria, as his procession left the Coronation Church in Budapest. Murray Brown also died a few months after the anniversary exhibitions, for which he had generously lent valuable antique pots from his collection, and pots of his own, with his spectacular celadon and copper-red glazes. At the very end of the year, on 29 December, Teddy Letham died after a short illness, at the age of 93. She had joined the club in 1965, and was made a life member in 1991. To the end of her life she retained a keen interest in club affairs, and was regarded with much esteem and affection.

### **Myf (Myfanwy) Young**

On 4 February 2008, the club lost another of its very early members. Myf and her husband Rowan were early pioneers of do-it-yourself kiln building, and the use of solid fuel for firing, and she was the club's second newsletter editor in 1964.

### **Melva Preston**

The club's oldest and greatly loved member died on 1 September, 2008, at the age of 96. Her lifelong interest in pottery, and her infectious enthusiasm, were an inspiration to all her fellow-members.

Perth Studio Potters honour the memory of these and many other early members, to whom they owe so much.



*Left: hand-built jug by Lil Caesar  
Center: bowl by Murray Brown  
Right: 'Milly Molly Mandy'  
by Dolores Gable*





## Appendix 4

### List of Potters With Work in the Collection of Perth Studio Potters

#### *Potters Working in the United Kingdom*

Aldermaston Pottery	David Eeles	Mary Rich
Ian Auld	David Leach	Sidney Tustin
Richard Batterham	John Leach	Alan Wallwork Pottery
Svend Bayer	Michael Leach	Geoffrey Whiting
Seth Cardew	David Lloyd Jones	Winchcombe Pottery
Michael Casson	Toff Milway	Philip Wood
Joanna Constantinidis	Bryan Newman	Peter Wright
Tony Davies	Margaret O'Rorke	Takeshi Yasuda
Sally Dawson	Katharine Pleydell Bouverie	

#### *Potters Working in Australia*

Sandra Black	Victor Greenaway	Maria Phillips
Jenny Black	Judy Halliday	Jean Robins
Estelle Boak	Janis Heston	Stewart Scambler
Andrew Cope	Eileen Keys	Fleur Schell
Greg Crowe	Janet Kovesi Watt	Joel Smoker
Greg Daly	Robyn Lees	Maureen Spencer
Phillip Douglas	Sandy Lockwood	Vipoo Srivilasa
Pippin Drysdale	Michiko Love	Hiroe Swen
Jean Ewers	Ian Macrae	Jane Vandon
Dolores Gable	Fran Martin	Garry Zeck

The Perth Potters' Club, later re-named Perth Studio Potters, was founded in 1957 by a group of students who had attended the classes given by Francis Kotai at the Fremantle Technical College. For the first seven years of the club's existence, they met and worked together in a borrowed boatshed on the Swan River foreshore. In 1963, after vigorous fund-raising, they were able to buy a run-down weatherboard cottage in Cottesloe, which they renovated, extended, and finally rebuilt. Today the clubhouse has a well-equipped workroom, kilns, a large library and attractive gallery for the display of members' work. Regular classes are held, besides special demonstrations and workshops given by distinguished local potters and visitors from interstate and overseas. Fifty years on, the club still flourishes, and has enthusiastic members of whom the founders would be proud.

