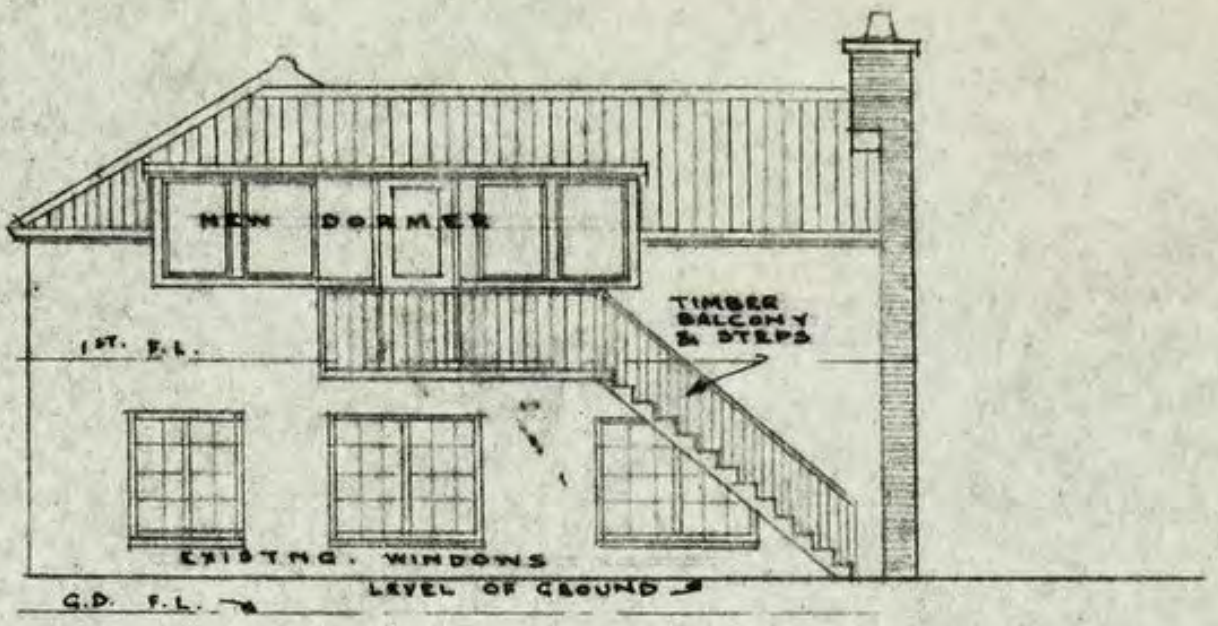
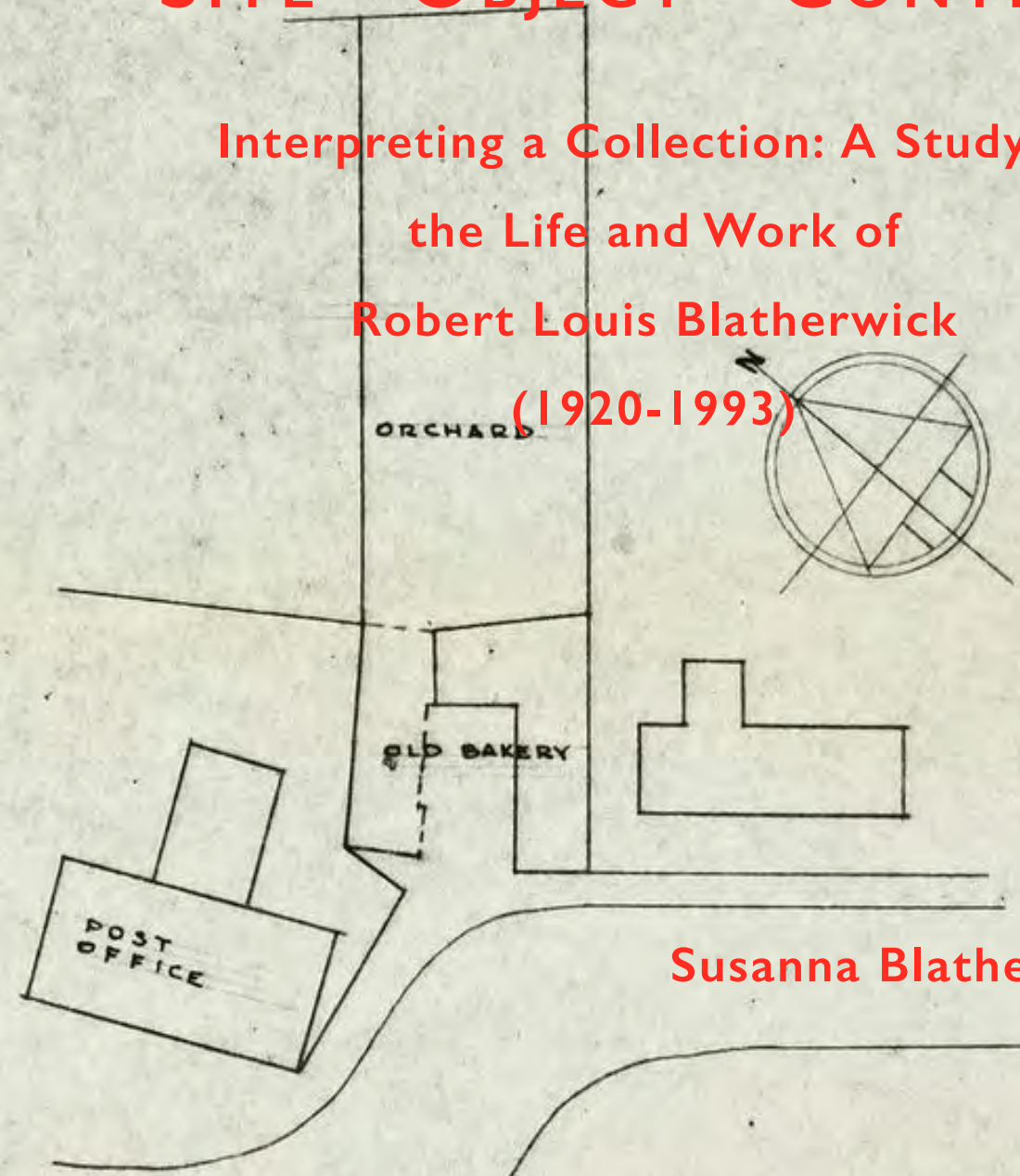


NORTH EAST ELEVATION

Archaeology of the House

Site • Object • Context

Interpreting a Collection: A Study of the Life and Work of Robert Louis Blatherwick (1920-1993)



Susanna Blatherwick

Archaeology of the House
Site · Object · Context

Interpreting a Collection: A Study of the Life and Work of Robert Louis Blatherwick (1920-1993)

Susanna Blatherwick

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the
Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

Manchester Institute for Research in Art and Design (MIRIAD)
Manchester Metropolitan University, February 2015

Director of Studies: Professor Steve Dixon
Supervisors: Dr. Jane Webb, Alex McErlain, Professor Jim Aulich

Abstract

This thesis began as a response to a question raised by an eminent craft historian relating to the ceramic work of my late father Robert Louis Blatherwick, to find out why his work was unknown when he had worked for the most influential British studio potters of the twentieth century. It responds to this history.

I set out to make a record by taking photographs of pots preserved within the family home by my mother, after her death. The house that my parents had designed and converted when they both worked at Lincoln School of Art had become an archive of contextual reference material relating to my father's work. In searching through the items within the house I discovered that objects of material culture contained essential narratives, which provided links to his work and background. I wrote descriptive and reflective passages about the house that I grew up in, responding to items discovered, and incorporating reflective memory and personal thoughts. Research involved retracing his life, making enquiries to places where he studied or worked, visiting an archival collection of letters, and interviewing former colleagues and students. By weaving findings from within the house together with existing historical texts I made discoveries relating to the existing histories of 20th-century studio pottery

I discovered that the family archive provides a rich resource which is structured according to a different discourse than that presumed important by archivists and historians, and that record keeping in institutions and archives perpetuates knowledge of those already known. I discovered that RLB succeeded in areas that more well known studio potters had abandoned, and that subconscious discriminatory practice within the studio pottery world has favoured stoneware over earthenware, contributing to a hegemonic dominance. This raises questions about the recording of history and exhibition policies.

For Madelaine, Ben, Louis, and Nye
so that they know

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Acknowledgements

For me personally, this has been a major project and I have so many people to thank for their involvement. I have been extremely lucky to have had four excellent supervisors at Manchester Metropolitan University MIRIAD (Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design). First of all I am thankful that I was accepted onto the programme. Without the structure and regular tutorial support, this project would not have even got off the ground. It would certainly not have been so extensive. I would like to thank all of my supervisors (I began with five) for their diverse input, superb knowledge and specialism in their respective fields.

I have had two Directors of Study: Dr. Jane Webb for the first part until she went on maternity leave, and Professor Steve Dixon from then on. I wish to thank Jane for her thoroughness in reading and responding to my material and for her extensive knowledge of twentieth century design history, as well as her ability to grasp what I was trying to express, when I haven't always realised this myself. I also wish to thank her for he encouragement and enthusiasm, particularly when my thesis began to take shape. I wish to thank Steve Dixon for his precision in questioning and for his gentle manner and kind way of providing criticism and observation.

I wish to thank Alex McErlain for his enthusiasm and interest in my subject, for providing a wonderful consultation service about any question relating to ceramics, and for his superb and extensive knowledge of the British studio pottery movement. He has always responded to material promptly, has challenged any controversial statement that I may have made, and has stayed with this project, even though he has officially retired.

I wish to thank Jim Aulich for encouraging me look at the broader perspective and beyond my known comfort zone, and for trying to make me think and write like a historian. This was not easy with such a personal subject. In my defence I argue that I am an artist who writes, a multifarious lateral-thinking product of the environment from which I have evolved.

At times this multi-disciplinary input has been too much, but my work has benefited from the cross-section of diverse opinions, approaches and ideas I have received. One of the strange paradoxes has been that while trying to narrow this subject down it has constantly been widened.

I am indebted to the (anti-)thesis MIRIAD writing group. Through this I gained the support of Tilo Reifenstein, who I engaged as my proof-reader. I had not installed an 'electronic referencing system', and my footnotes were like the ‘fluff on the stairs’, the things you notice but don't look at in too much detail (as you will never make it to the place where you are heading). His knowledge of referencing, organisation of the Bibliography, and understanding of grammatical structure has helped me to transform this document.

I am indebted to everyone in the peer led (anti-)thesis writing group for their commitment to our weekly meetings which have been met with bravery, generosity and integrity. This has been evident in the sharing and exposing of ideas and thoughts, in the enthusiasm, energy, love of material culture and

academic brilliance that this has provided. There are times when this group was my only positive support, and without it I would have given up. Their appreciation and response to my writing and ideas has been unbelievable. I wish to thank Sarbjt Kaur for her warmth, friendship, openness and energetic approach to life, which she has shared with all of us. I wish to thank Liz Mitchell for her insights, love of material culture, expressive energy, brilliant writing and suggestions of materials to read as we both share an interest in objects and collections. I wish to thank Sarah Davies for her beautiful writing about memories of Sweden, Lokesh Ghai for his energy and ideas, and his love of crafts and hand-work, I wish to thank Ralph Mills for his passion about objects and collections, and Tilo Reifenstein for his appreciation of this missing history, and his love of things tactile. I also wish to thank Myna Tustram for sharing and listening in the early days of the group, and Amanda Ravetz for establishing the writing group in the first place, and for hearing my voice. I wish to thank MMU for 'The Writer as Designer / Designer as Writer' residential week for researchers, which was part of the 'designing our futures' programme. This was at the ARVON Foundation near Hebden Bridge, and I view it as my turning point. Our supervisors there were Jen Hadfield, William Shaw and Inua Ellams, all of whom provided encouraging feedback.

While at MMU I have been part of a creative collaboration with a shared a common interest in objects. I wish to thank Jan Fyfe for her tremendous work on the 'Lost and Found' publication, those already mentioned from the (anti-)thesis group, and Derek Trillo and Roa Assass. We look forward to the launch of 'Lost and Found International'.

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I wish to thank David Lothian for his beautiful photographs of the house. I wish to thank Iain Hutton-Jamieson for his friendship and enthusiasm about the project, for his appreciation of the lifestyle and craftsmanship, and Caroline Arber for her beautiful photographs of the house we have not yet used. I wish to thank Bernard Walker for the black and white photographs taken in the 1970s, which have provided an invaluable record of the work and the workshop at that time. I wish to thank John Davis at MMU for converting a set of slides to digital images, and for photographing two sets of architects drawings.

I wish to thank Kay Meddings, whom I have never met, for responding to the initial *Ceramic Review* article about RLB and for providing me with another account which included her memories of my father, which were beautiful and amazing after all these years, and from which I have quoted. And I wish to thank everyone who has sent me statements or pieces of information.

I would like to thank all the people I have interviewed to get another perspective on my father. I wish to thank Gordon and Nancy Baldwin for welcoming me into their house, for their memories, for producing a lovely lunch, and for their enthusiasm about the photographs of RLB's work I showed them. I wish thank Gordon for remembering RLB and including him as a figure of inspiration in the 'Excitations' exhibition at York Art Gallery in 2012. I wish to thank Ron Harrison for his reflections on the time at Lincoln School of Art, for mowing the lawn at Reepham for seven years, and for some interesting conversations about life and art. I wish to thank David Paton for arranging the first small retrospective display of RLB's work in the Usher Gallery in 1998, as part of the Lincolnshire Artists' Society annual exhibition, which began a process of collecting reflective material from my mother. And for and his generosity in his enthusiasm about my father's work and sadness about the way things went. I wish to thank Ray Finch for trying to remember things from 'a very long time ago'. This was possibly his last interview. I am sorry I was not able to interview him a few years earlier, and wish I had turned my tape-recorder off, as I am sure he was holding something back.

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I would like to thank Beth Zonderman (married to a Blatherwick) for her graphic skills and for the transatlantic production of the brochure which supported the Showcase exhibition at the Usher Gallery in 2012, a copy of which is in the Appendix. The time difference created more difficulty than either of us expected, but it was great to have Beth's help and involvement. I would like to thank Robert Blatherwick - Beth's husband, my cousin's son - for appreciating my mother's help, and for forwarding the initial investigative email from Tanya Harrod.

And I wish to thank Tanya Harrod for sending that investigative email. It is indicative of the thoroughness of her research which led her to tracing down of my father's namesake. In response to that email I telephoned her and it was the authoritative tone in which she questioned why RLB was not known which prompted me to act. I also have to thank Tanya for informing me that my father was mentioned in Michael Cardew's letters in the V&A archives, and suggesting that I would find them interesting. Without this lead I would not have known that they contained appropriate relevant material. They have provided the best primary source material that was not in the house.

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Lastly, in the spirit of Mike Casson, I hope I have not missed anyone out. If I have I apologise profusely.

Image Credits

Front and back image: original architects plans by Jack Bates. Also **Fig.1.2.**

John Davis for photographing plans, front and rear cover and **Fig.1.2.**

Angela and David Adams: **Fig. 7.34.**

Paul Bates: **Figs. 8.8; 8.9; 8.10; 10.9; 11.24.**

David Blatherwick: **Fig. 5.13.**

Edward Blatherwick: **Figs. 2.7; 5.5; 13.5**. (likely photographer)

Sue Blatherwick: Figs. 1.1; 2.1; 2.2; 2.6; 2.8; 3.2; 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; 4.3a; 4.7; 4.9; 5.2; 5.7; 6.2; 6.4; 6.5; 7.1; 7.2; 7.3; 7.4; 7.7; 7.15; 7.16; 7.19; 7.21; 7.23; 7.25; 7.26; 7.27; 7.28; 7.29; 7.30; 7.31; 7.35; 7.39; 8.1; 8.5; 8.15; 8.19; 9.2; 10.1; 10.6; 11.4; 11.5; 11.7; 11.9; 11.10; 11.11; 11.12; 11.13; 11.14; 11.15; 11.16; 11.17; 11.19; 11.20; 11.21; 11.22; 12.1; 12.2.; 12.3.; 12.4.; 12.5.; 12.6.; 12.8.; 13.1.; 13.2.; 13.4.

John Davis for digitised slide conversion: **Figs. 7.10; 7.11; 7.12; 8.11; 8.18**.

Iain Hutton-Jamieson & Caroline Arber: **Fig. 3.1**.

David Lothian: **Figs.1.3; 5.1; 5.3; 5.4; 5.6; 7.4; 8.2; 9.1; 10.3; 11.2.**

Ken Sloane: **Fig. 11.25.**

Sarah Sundquist: **Fig. 11.23.**

VADS: visual art and design research archive: **Figs. 2.3; 2.4**.

Bernard Walker: **Figs. 10.2; 10.4; 11.1; 13.3.**

John Wheeldon (the potter) **Fig.11.8.**

Scanned images from Family archive: Figs. 1.4; 1.5; 2.12; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5; 3.6; 3.7; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10; 3.11; 3.14; 3.15; 3.16; 3.17; 3.18; 4.4; 4.5; 4.10; 4.11; 4.12; 5.8; 5.9; 5.10; 5.11; 5.12; 6.1; 6.2; 6.6; 6.7; 6.8; 7.0; 7.3; 7.5; 7.6; 7.8; 7.9; 7.13; 7.14; 7.17; 7.32 (original artwork Susanne Dyhre-Poulsen); 7. 33; 7.36; 7.37; 7.38; 7.39; 7.40; 8.6; 8.7; 8.12; 8.13; 8.16; 8.17; 9.3; 10.5; 10.7; 11.3; 11.6; 11.18; 11.28; 11.29; 11.30; 12.7.

Scanned or Downloaded Images:

Cardew, M. (1942) Diary. National Art Library, London. **Fig. 2.11.**

Clark, G. (ed.), (1978) Ceramic Art: Comment and Review Fig. **2.12**

Conran, T. (1994) The Essential House Book. **Fig. 2.9.**

Durobrivian pot: **Fig. 8.4.** Website currently unavailable.

Harrod, T. (1999) The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century. **Figs: 2.5; 2.10.**

Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.),The Potter's Challenge. **Figs. 7.24; 11.26; 11.27**.

Leighton, C.: http://www.warwickleadlay.com/prints/modern/clare-leighton **Fig. 3.13**

Millet (1976) *Jean François-Millet* London: Hayward Gallery exhibition catalogue p.77 **Fig. 3.12**.

Podmore & Sons Ltd./Potterycraft Catalogue, January 1983. **Fig. 10.5.**

Salto, A. (1935) *Tyrk, Faar, Klare, Ojne, Glasindet.* Copenhagen. **Figs: 7.36; 7.37**

http://www.stjohnthebaptistparishchurch.org.uk/feature_html.php. **Fig. 8.14.**

The Wedgwood Museum / designers.webarchive. **Fig. 4.8.**

Wedgwood Jasper Ware plate. Image from http://www.stan.tillotson.com/Jasper.htm). **Fig. 4.6.**

Wentworth Thompson, D. '*On Growth and Form*'. Front cover. **Fig. 8.7**

Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape. **Figs: 7.18; 7.20; 7.22**

Mary Wondrausch on Slipware. p40. **Fig. 8.3; 10.8**.

Beth Zonderman and Sue Blatherwick. Production of leaflet for Usher Gallery showcase.

Introduction

The work of the late Robert Louis Blatherwick[1] occupies an empty space. It represents a gap in the recording of ceramic and art history. This previously unrecorded body of work deserves collation.

His work received regular acclaim during his lifetime, both in a local context and abroad, yet there is a lack of recording or documentation, as well as an absence of scholarly investigation of the complex mechanics involved in the production of his work. The route he traversed swam with and against the fashionable tide, not fitting with expected definitions. It involved exploration into an unfashionable genre of ceramics, high-fired earthenware, which disconnected him at the time from the dominant domain of stoneware. That he lived and brought up a family on income derived solely from his work in ceramics, is in itself a remarkable achievement, and represents a very important element of ceramics history that focuses only on a relatively small section of the studio pottery movement.

This thesis uses a diverse approach to writing. It creates a chronology of the work of RLB, within the context of the comprehensive archive of his work, collected in the family home. In using the structure of the house as a mnemosyne, site, objects and context are recorded, incorporating memory and descriptive writing in order to survey and analyse.

This discourse weaves together the debates relating to studio pottery, the changing attitudes to ceramics as an art form during the second part of the twentieth century, and challenges the domination of the stoneware canon within a more intimate story. It considers the intersections between RLB and better-known studio potters, with whom he worked as a young person; the impact of the Coldstream Report on art schools and education; changes in definitions and understanding of art and craft; and the influence of the key figures who promoted stoneware. Looking at the high-fired earthenware produced by RLB during the years of self-employment in the second part of the twentieth century highlights a restricted vision applied in the recording of British twentieth-century studio ceramics, and questions whether this constitutes a cultural hegemony.

When RLB died he had not been part of mainstream pottery for some time. His death had no national coverage, although he was heralded, acknowledged, and revered by some of those he

[1] Hereafter referred to as RLB in 'Context' chapters, also referred to as Bob or Robert in quotes, and father or dad in 'Site' and 'Object' chapters, the more colloquial instances of personal/narrative/intimate/familial parts of the thesis.

had worked with and those who had known and supported him in general. There were no obituaries. He was a master potter, regarded with equal or higher importance than the best in the country by his wife Marjorie,[2] and left behind him a body of work almost completely unexplored until now.

As his eldest daughter, whose career in art education heightened the awareness of the gap in coverage, the responsibility to do something about the work in respect of the art, as well as respect for the life grew. This came with a realisation that few were aware of the chronology of development or the uniqueness of the working processes he had used. The family home reflected a life, a lifestyle and a life's work.

To accommodate the complexity of the narrative each chapter is divided into three and utilises different writing styles, with the Site and Object sections being descriptive and reflective, and the Context section being historical and contextual. Differentiation is highlighted by use of two different fonts, and the format used for the display of the images.

0.1. JOHN SHAW. Headstone craftsman, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire.
Slate from RLB's former wedging bench.
SUE BLATHERWICK design and layout.

[2] In the more colloquial instances of personal narrative within the thesis Marjorie may be referred to as mother or mum.

Section A:

The Formative Years 1920-1943

Section A introduces the house and discusses the Methodology utilised in this project and the Literature Review. It covers the early period of the life of RLB following him through his years as a student at Lincoln School of Art before he moved into employment at Wedgwood in Stoke-on-Trent, Winchcombe Pottery and the Leach Pottery in St Ives. These formative years provide an insight into the foundations for his later life. He returned to Lincoln School of Art to teach and this period is covered in Section B.

Chapter 1

Site: The House

Architectural space is different from the void of the philosophers. It is palpable stuff that can be chopped into neat and finite pieces ... Rooms set up our expectations and are the cells that store our memories.

— Donlyn Lyndon and Charles W. Moore
Chambers for a Memory Palace

1.1. The House

I absolutely love this place and just really enjoy being here. I look in the house and worry about how we are going to break it up. To me it is a sanctuary and a haven. My own personal museum, archive, source of information and family history. The ironic thing is that the beautiful things are what make this place and if you remove them it loses its magic and its meaning. This is my archive.

The house was created by Marjorie Wilson (1926-2007) and RLB (1920-1993). Both were creative people, born in the same city, who met while working at Lincoln School of Art. They purchased Sharp's Bakery, which had ceased trading in the early 1950s, in the village of Reepham, and converted it into a home, with living space upstairs and space for a workshop and gallery downstairs. Neither of them was from a wealthy background, but they developed the house using their earnings, doing a lot of work on the conversion themselves. This included removing the stables and the old bread ovens, and installing floors and windows. Marjorie spent weeks scraping the ceiling of what became the downstairs showroom. They worked together on the bakery, with many friends at the time, and their parents, helping them to dismantle the outbuildings. After their days' work at the Art School, they travelled by bus, to work on converting the building. They married upon completing the conversion, before moving in. Architect friend Jack Bates, who also taught at the Art School,[1] drew up plans for the building conversion and oversaw the works.

Scandinavian modernist design and the desire to have a pottery workshop on the premises were fundamental factors in their choice of the type of property to purchase.[2] These influenced the decisions to make the first floor the living quarters and to leave the ground floor for workshop and showroom space, essentially turning the building into an apartment above a pottery. This style was contemporary and ahead of its time in Lincoln, and represents a shift to a more continental model of accommodation with workspace. The living room had a low ceiling and large window towards the front, giving a view of the High Street. The brickwork was painted white and the floors were thin-panelled iroko and sapele, treated with a semi-matt Bourne-Seal, at a time before stripped floors were fashionable. They secured the purchase of a patch of adjoining land that had been an apple orchard to make a garden.

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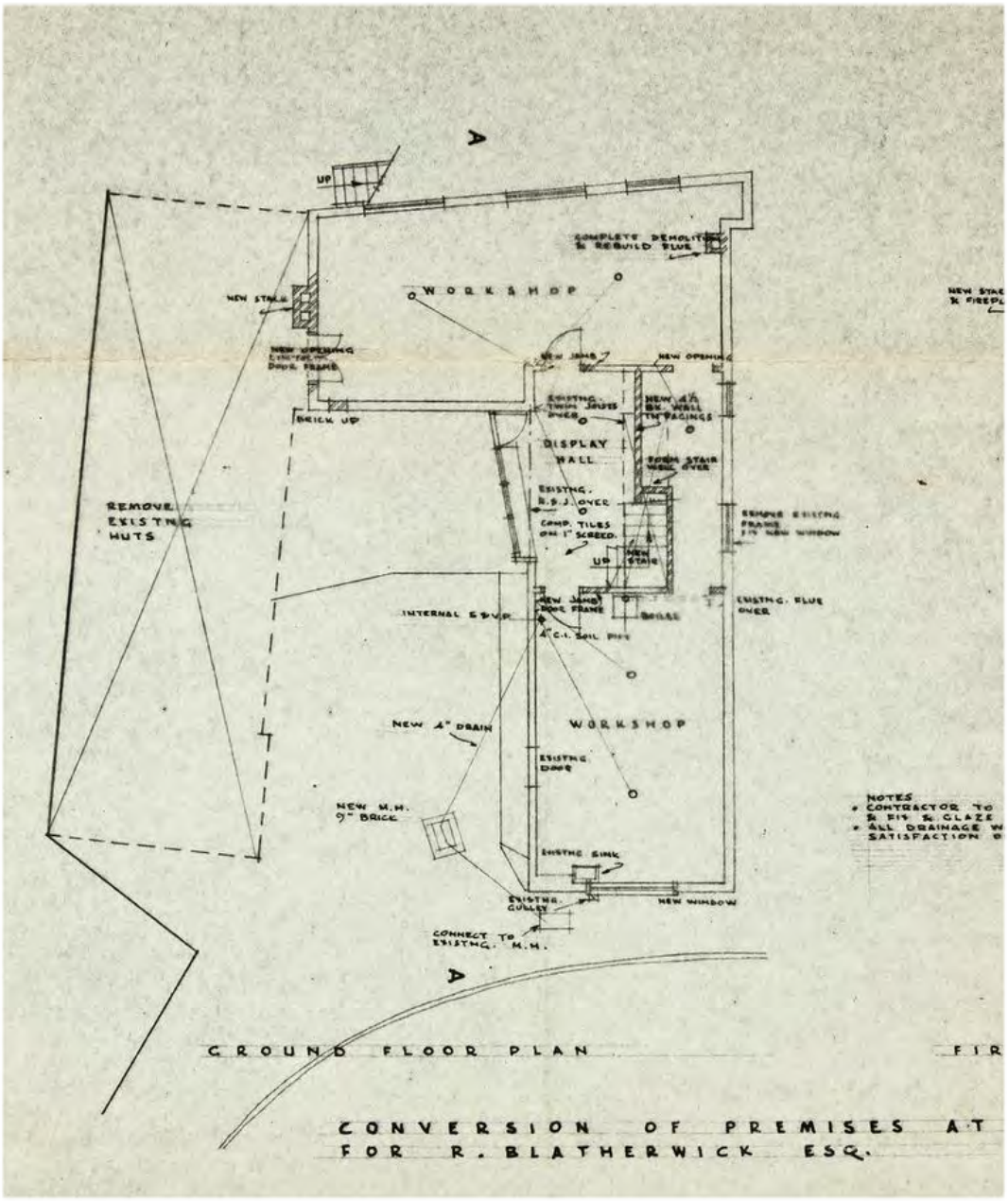
[1] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus* 1955-56 (1955) Lincoln: n/a.

[2] RLB and Marjorie purchased the bakery in 1953 and applied for planning permission to convert.



1.2. JACK BATES. August 1954. Plans for conversion of premises at Reepham for R.L. Blatherwick Esquire.

The building was in the centre of the village, which was four miles from the city of Lincoln, and had a train station with transport to the west, and Market Rasen and Cleethorpes on the east coast. There was a regular bus service, which Marjorie and Bob used until the 1960s when they purchased a car.

Marjorie was a skilled artist herself and had enormous strength of vision and sense of design. Without Marjorie, Bob would not have been able to achieve what he did. She was a skilled dressmaker with a First Class City and Guilds Certificate in Dressmaking[3] and had attended a number of classes at the Art School in jewellery making, enamelling, leatherwork, bookmaking, dressmaking, and many other things. She made wedding dresses for several of her friends.

During the second world war she had worked in the War Office and had trained as a secretary; she had wanted to go to art school but her father made her study office skills.[4] She was good at these, but was more creative than this. In 1948 she became Secretary to the Principal at Lincoln School of Art, where she met people who became lifelong friends.

Marjorie and Bob believed in Rudolph Steiner's anthroposophy-based principles[5] and wanted to create the ideal work and home space that Bernard Leach had written about in *A Potter's Book* and talked about in St Ives.[6]

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[3] She took this in 1949 having undertaken a course at Lincoln School of Art, where she was also employed.

[4] She was awarded the Certificate in Typewriting by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufactures and Commerce, London in 1944.

[5] Walter, J. (2006) 'An Independent Spirit'. ***Ceramic Review***. No. 221, p48.

[6] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

Object: The Ark(hive)

1.3. Wooden ark, with animals and the family of Noah inside. This was a childhood toy that belonged to RLB.

The illustrated wooden ark was a toy that had belonged to RLB. It is a German toy from the Erzgebirge region, made in about 1850. Nothing is known about how it came to be in RLB's possession, it may have passed down from an earlier generation.[7] It acts as a metaphor for the archive.

In *Archive Fever* French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) explores the etymology of the word 'archive'; a shelter, the meaning deriving from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address. It is at the home that official documents are filed, and Derrida writes that 'it is ... in this *domiciliation* ... that archives take place'.[8] The ark is the place where everything is gathered. The house is the archive.

The word 'archive' refers to a collection (of historical records), as well as the place in which they are located. Usually these records have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation on the grounds of their enduring cultural, historical, or evidential value. Archives contain primary source documents that have accumulated over the course of an individual's or organisation's lifetime. In the case of artists and collectors, this is complex; artists leave a lot behind; their homes are full of items made or created. With unknown artists this work is frequently of insignificant value. To many it is accumulated stuff. But its content may be of benefit or interest to others.

> An archive is a collection of items that have been almost subconsciously kept by the people involved; it is a social construction of items gathered together to form a collection of interest.[9]

Such personal collections are not made for historical purposes, but represent the interests and hobbies of the inhabitants. The family home therefore becomes a living archive, being full of items that are meaningful to the people who lived there.

Derrida writes about the house being the archive, the place where documents relating to the family exist, are collected and collated. This house was an archive: the centre of all the material relating to my family, the works, the possessions, the correspondence, the photographs. My mother was the

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[7] A similar ark exists in the Mary Greg Collection in Manchester Art Gallery, the collection currently being researched by curator and art historian Liz Mitchell.

[8] Derrida, J. (1995) *Archive Fever*. Translated 1996: Prenowitz, E. 1998 ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p.2.

[9] Parrett, J. (2011) *Notes from Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Special Collections Archivist. Manchester Metropolitan University: Family archive.

archetypal archivist, she kept almost everything. One frequently wondered why some of the things were kept. Sometimes she was too busy to sort, so she collated and filed in a semi-random way.

> The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name *arkhē*. But it also shelters itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it.[10]

In this Derrida is saying that archives are paradoxical places where articles are stored and protected, and by being so, they become wrapped and buried in their own safe place, so that it is easy to forget what it is that was preserved in the first place. There were many items in this house that had been sheltered, stored, and forgotten, and could easily have become lost and disposed of.

Death creates an interesting change of use, as it transforms a house from being a home to being an archive. At that point it is usual to break up the contents and divide them amongst the family. In the case I am recording, the home had already become a time-warp and capsule of a lifestyle that no longer existed, as Marjorie had remarried and lived in her second husband's house. The family home became an uninhabited historical archive. It existed like this for a number of years. She did not want to let it go.

The archivist in this house kept many boxes of letters and cards. Six weeks before submission, late one evening I looked through a box of these cards: Christmas, birthday, post-cards, jumbled in time of origination. Amongst them I found photographs of RLB's early work, including one which had the date: 1935 written on its reverse in his young spidery hand. A photograph of four pots, earthenware by the look of them, plus another. This is the earliest photograph of any of his work to date. These would have been in the skip if I had not purchased this house.

This, and the collated material, emphasises the importance of the family as archivists. In my search for records, little has been found in public archives. Frequently where anything has been found, it was either unknown, unidentified, or considered insignificant as the subject is not on the records. This family home was a huge ark. It housed the papers, the letters, the pots, the photographs. Perhaps they are only meaningful to me. I think not. This thesis goes on to demonstrate why.

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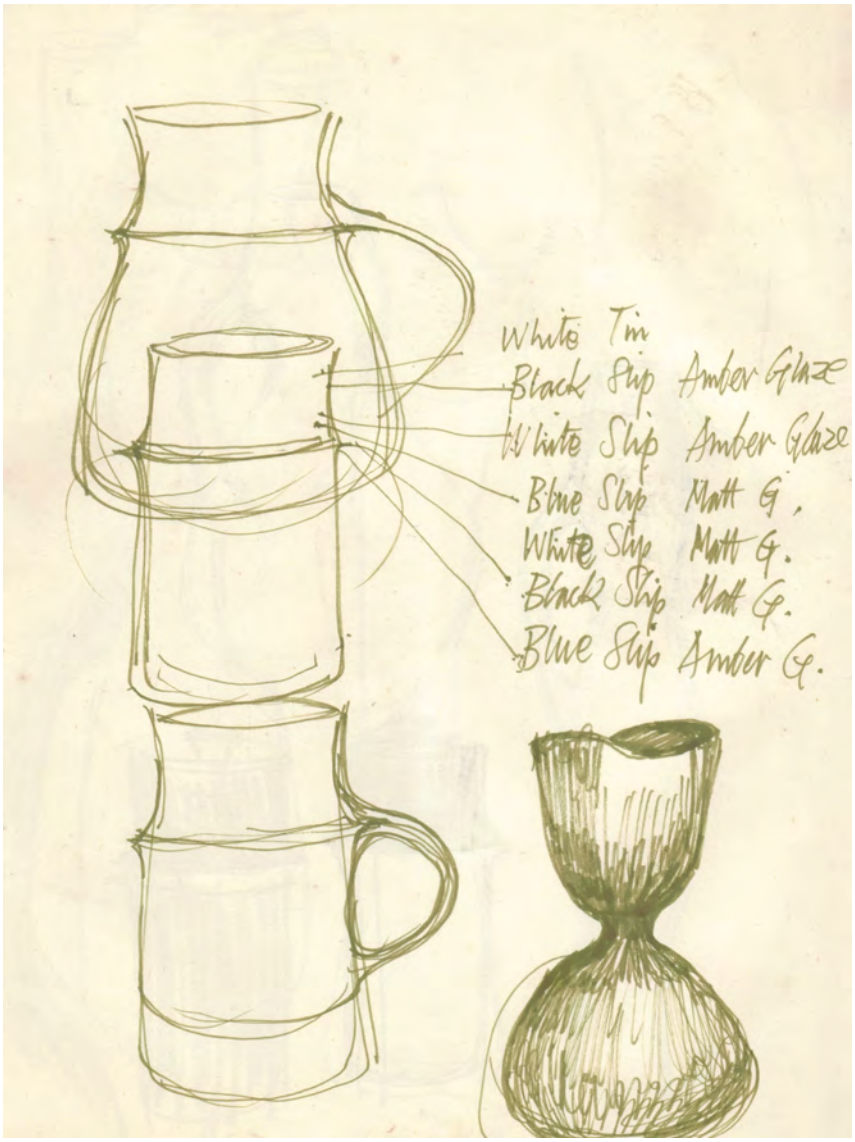
[10] Derrida, J. (1995) *Archive Fever*. Translated Prenowitz E. 1996; 1998 ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Context: Methodology

It is liberating for the creative imagination that there is no such thing as a correct historical method.

— Keith Jenkins
Refiguring History? New Thoughts on an Old Discipline



1.4. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1970. Page from a sketchbook.

		0	**Site** /Room Visual/ descriptive (i)	**Object** / pot / furniture Qualities of specific pieces, evocation (ii)	**Context /** issue Academic /historic. Art & Industry, education, canon (iii)	Story, what happened narrative	Chronology
A	FORMATIVE YEARS	1	Village	**Gravestone** **The House**	Obituaries, Intro, Aim, house, home, Archive Methodology, mnemosyne		
		2	The Entrance Hall and stairs	L**arge stoneware pot/bowl**Architecture Collection of pieces across genres	Literature Review, canons History of building, architect conversion, Scandinavian design,	Family background, Denmark, use of entrance hall	1920-1940
		3	The Kitchen Cupboard	**The Black Vase** **The Wedgwood plates**	**Lincoln School of Art** /Student Industrial Experience at Burslem School of Art & **Wedgwood Pottery**	Student work Training	1932-40 1940-1941
		4	The Landing	**The Bread crock** Bookshelves	**Winchcombe Pottery,** ideology, Early ew, war, lecture on Industry	Lecture -LSArt, Africa	1941-42
		5	Kitchen Cupboard?	**St Ives Standard Ware Plate 1943**	**St Ives.** Leach letters, Japanese influence, brushwork	thrower, time at St Ives	1942-43
B	TEACHING ART SCHOOL	6	The Annex	**The White Sculptural Figure** Xmas cards Photographs	Education, teaching, student exhibitions, national developments, Sculpture and sculptural pots- Denmark and house design(Adam & Eve, Henry Moore. White plaster, lead), decoration, Rie.	Hugh Robinson account	1944-67
		7	The Living Room	**The Tile fireplace**	**Tile Commissions & Post War Developments,** optimism, Modernism Japanese prints (Holton, Church, youth club, wash basin, Sandesbury, Halpern & Partners)	Collaboration, exhibitions Broadbent, Blatherwick,	1950s
		8	Annex again	**Sculptural pots - carved top** Bureau, letters Wallpaper bookshelves	Trouble in art schools, CPA, Resignation Growth in studio pottery movement, Pottery Quarterly, George Todd, Africa, Holton, folk art Exhibitions/ publications at time/ reviews	Swimming against the tide	1964-67
C	SELF EMPLOYMENT	9	Showroom	**Jewellery /domestic pots/big slip dish**	Design Centre, Earthenware / domestic items, range of work, selling, exhibiting, slip ware, glazes, Tin Glaze	Electricity strikes, family,	1967-1993
		10	Workshop	**Tin Glaze vase**	Sketchbooks / notebooks, glaze buckets Method or working alone Glazing. Mixes, practical making issues		
		11	Garden	**Landscape pot / drawings**	Lifestyle, anthroposophy, self sufficiency	work / life balance, oasis	
		12	Village	**Sculpted hands / Chess board metaphor**	Conclusion, Interviews, Usher Gallery, exhibitions, follow on, house		

Memory

In using the house for writing about the work of RLB, the rooms create a structure. This reflects the process I have been going through in discovering material and provides a metaphorical path for the journey. To manage this it was necessary to create a matrix in order to map the context in relation to the chronology, against the pots and the rooms of the house. This is included on the previous page, and was the structural plan I followed in writing. As the house is the place where this material has resided, to use the location of the material acts as a mnemonic device for the future, when it is no longer as it was.

The use of architecture as a mnemonic device is not new. Tony Judt recently used his memory of a house he had known as a child as a visual device to trigger the remembrance of events.[11] But it goes back further than this. 'Mnemosyne, said the Greeks, is the mother of the Muses'[12] and the 'Art of Memory'[13] was a mnemonic technique designed by Simonedes in ancient Greece, to strengthen the ability to memorise. Memory was enormously important.

Writing about the family home is also not new: Virginia Woolf memorised the house in which she had grown up and wrote '*Between the Acts*' when in a period of transition, moving home during the war, writing surrounded by boxes.[14] This author has been writing surrounded by boxes. While the subject of memory is not the focus of my writing, recording is, and the process of recording forms an essential aspect in the creation of memory. The house, my family, the ceramics and other artworks are the central elements. This study is concerned with the ceramics of RLB, and uses the context of the items in the house to shed light on their meaning. Simonedes believed in:

> the superiority of the sense of sight over the other senses. The theory of the equation of poetry and painting rests on the supremacy of the visual sense; the poet and painter both think in visual images which the one expresses in poetry the other in pictures.[15]

RLB saw poetry, painting, and memories in terms of visualisation. This is part of the reason that RLB did not write and publish articles about his work; his field was the visual world, not the written word.

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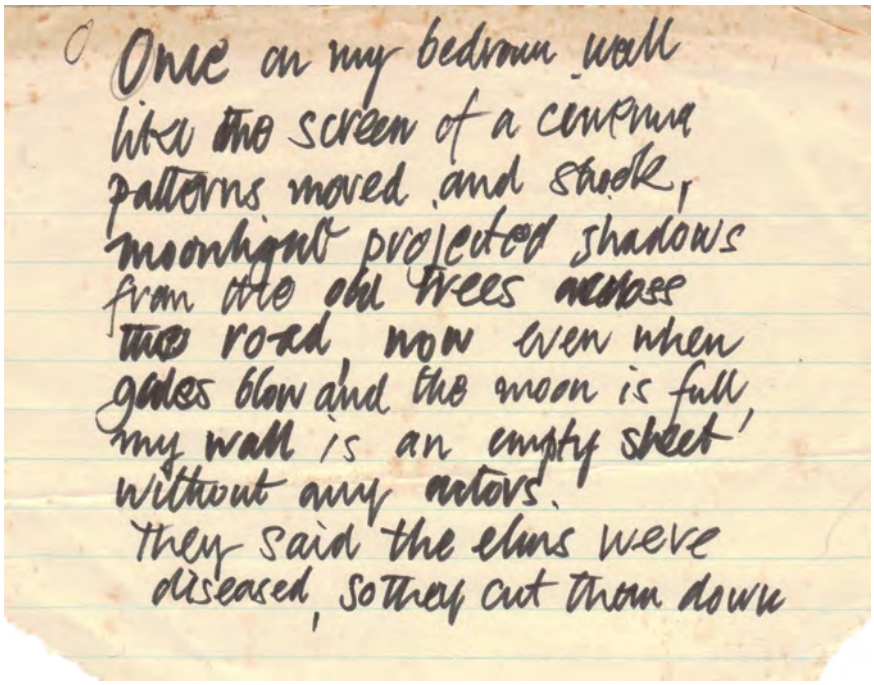
[11] Judt, T. (2010) *The Memory Chalet.* 2011 ed. London: Vintage Books.

[12] Yates, F. (1966) *The Art of Memory.* 1984 ed. London: Ark Paperbacks.pxi. Mnemosyne was the ancient Greek goddess of memory, daughter of Uranus and Gaea and mother by Zeus of the Muses.

[13] Ibid.p.4.

[14] Harris, A. (2010) *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper.* London: Thames and Hudson. This was published after her death as '*Sketch of the Past*'. p.261.

[15] Yates, F. (1966) *The Art of Memory.* 1984 ed. London: Ark Paperbacks. p.28.



1.5. This is a rare piece of reflective writing by RLB, which gives an insight into his visualisation.

The words above were written by RLB when a row of trees opposite the house were felled, in response to the fear of the spread of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s. I have included this as an example of RLB's visual perception, and way he looked at the world in terms of visual images. The elm tree also has a symbolic connection with memories of the the English landscape, and the skills of the craftsmen of the early part of the twentieth century, which were described and recorded by writers such as Hennell[16] and Massingham,[17] who are mentioned later in this thesis.

[16] Hennell, T. (1947) *The Countryman at Work*. London: The Architectural Press.

[17] Massingham, H.J. (1942) *The English Countryman: A Study of the English Tradition*. London: Batsford.

Site, Object, Context

The idea of using Site, Object, Context as the structure occurred to me after attendance at a *Ceramics in the Expanded Field Symposium* in January 2013 at the Freud Museum in London. The programme title for this was 'Interpreting Collections, Idea, Object, Site'. I already had 'Interpreting a Collection' as part of my title and there were overlaps with the subjects of ceramics, the content of houses, and museums as houses. I had read *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard[18] in which the significance of objects had a parallel with the domestic collections of Lucian Freud, Walter Benjamin and Kurt Schwitters in Esther Leslie's paper entitled 'Houses of the Future Perfect'.[19] Site, object, context therefore seemed appropriate terminology which paired with my research.

The recorded history of twentieth-century ceramics raises many questions. The collection of pots (objects) in the family home (site) were about to be dispersed after the death of the second parent (my mother). Pots, home, recollections, memory. These pots, made by my father represent a body of unrecorded work, with little information relating to them in the public domain, although there are many pots in the hands of collectors and users. Having studied and evaluated the work, it is my contention that they have a contribution to make to the understanding of twentieth-century studio ceramics. Their contribution lies in their intrinsic qualities as works of art, in the methods applied in making them, and in the life experiences of their maker and his connections and actions with other artists and developments. This potter has been given a brief mention in a few publications,[20] omitted from and misrepresented in many records,[21] and excluded from major studies of British studio pottery[22] with no scholarly

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[18] Bachelard, G. (1958) *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 ed., Boston: Beacon Press.

[19] Leslie, E. (2013) 'Houses of the Future Perfect: Freud, Benjamin and Schwitters' Domestic Collections'. *Interpreting Collections: Idea, Object, Site. Ceramics in the Expanded Field Symposium*. University of Westminster. Freud Museum, London. 26th January.

[20] Two years ago, when I began this research there were three references to RLB as a studio potter in published texts; there are, I believe, now five. They are: Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Whiting, D. (ed.) (2012) *Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape*. York: York Museums Trust; Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years 1906-2006'*. Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society; Wheeler, R. (1998) *Winchcombe Pottery The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford. White Cocklade Publishing; Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall. Beach Books.

[21] The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on Trent displayed an RLB pot in the Thomas Pincham Collection in 2000, incorrectly labelled; York Museum and Art Gallery knew the W.A. Ismay collection contained an RLB pot, but it needed identification, 2011; RLB details were not included in first publication of *British Studio Potters Marks*, pub. 1999; Usher Gallery Lincoln had an RLB pot on display incorrectly labelled as earthenware, which was stoneware; Winchcombe Pottery had incorrect first name next to Blatherwick and the year 1942, on my visit in 2011.

[22] See Literature Review, Chapter 2.

study of his work, despite numerous publications on twentieth-century studio pottery. After lobbying,[23] a four page article was published in *Ceramic Review* in 2006.[24]

This work has slipped off the radar, either due to being unknown to the writers and critics, or by being considered insignificant or irrelevant. How significance is defined is part of my underlying quest, and whether the work (or life) of this artist is considered significant or not by the wider cohort of ceramics academics is partially immaterial. It is not the reason for my research. The work of RLB needed recording, and I wanted to make a record. The deadline created by the end of its personal collector's life (my mother), presented itself. The beginning of this research ties in with the end of an era and the end of the family home.

An initial point of focus for my research was that the late earthenware work of RLB, produced in the latter thirty years of his life, may be unique in the type of glazes used and how they are applied. Are his earthenware glazes, or the way in which they are applied, breaking new ground? This was my mother's perception, and it is my belief that there is knowledge which was, and may still be, new knowledge in these glazes and their methods of application. However, until records are made, questions arise about whether my point is valid or whether my recognition is misconceived. With the work not recorded, there is no possibility of analysis; without publication there is no access for others to the pots, their images, or the knowledge contained within them. It has therefore been necessary to retrace the journey made by the maker, in order to identify what was known when, and where it came from. My research has become a study of a life in order to contextualise the work and make relevant information available.

My thesis therefore deliberately does not have a question. Every question I considered skewed the direction of my study into a direction I did not want it to go. Jacques Derrida asks:

> Couldn't there be, **before** the question, a more ancient, profound and radical movement that is not questioning, but is rather an affirmation? That's the first question on the question.[25]

So this study is an affirmation. I considered questions such as what does this work contribute to an understanding of twentieth-century studio pottery? Are RLB's glazes unique? What is unique about them? Has earthenware pottery been marginalised? Does a ceramics hegemony

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[23] Blatherwick, S.L. (2005) 'Letter to Emmanuel Cooper', *Ceramic Review*. October 21st. Author's archive.

[24] Walter, J. (2006) 'An Independent Spirit'. *Ceramic Review*. No. 221, pp. 48-51. Letter from Sue Blatherwick to Emmanuel Cooper (2005) suggesting an interview with Marjorie before she died. Family archive.

[25] Derrida, J. (2007) 'What comes before the Question?' www.youtube.com/. [Accessed: October 14th, 2011].

exist? Why is this work not amongst that of his former colleagues in the text books? What is the broader contextual environment that he was part of? What am I investigating, trying to find out? What is different about this work? What was he trying to do? Is the work only significant if it connects with a state institution? Why do I want to record it? What does it mean to me? Is this important? And why? I may be able to find the answers to the questions above through the process of recording RLB's work. All of these questions form a part of my research, but my overriding objective has not been to answer any one of those particular questions. It has been for an openness which considers the work and the context in which it was made; to 'unearth' the knowledge about the life that made the work; to reveal what the work was and how it came about, to make the journey that created the work, in order to create an understanding of what it was about and why, to tell the story of how it happened, to give it a meaning within a context, and to reveal the integrity with which I believe it was made. The main body of this thesis is the 'affirmation' of the work being investigated, before the question. This is required in order to determine how or why there is no knowledge of his work in the domain of twentieth century studio ceramics.

In working out methodology, I have passed through 'the moment of undecidability through which one must pass when making a 'real' decision',[26] what Derrida calls the '*aporia*',[27] and given my thesis the title 'Interpreting a Collection. A Study of the Life and Work of ...' This title allows the openness I require. It is in the pursuit of 'openness' (a term also used by Jenkins in *Refiguring History)* that this study represents a type of re-examination of history. 'This logical openness is crucial for Derrida'[28] who questions what is recorded as history. 'Scholarly reading tends to close down'[29] our understanding of history. Jenkins says 'to make sense of it – you have *to rewrite it* for yourself, *figur*e it out for yourself'.[30] So this is what I am attempting to do. The politics of 'historical' reading require spaces opened up. The space I have to open up is the knowledge contained within the work (the pots). They need to be accessed.

> We can never know the exact status (truth) … for we do not know the whole, the totality of history … the sifting out of that which is historically significant depends on us, … what we want our inheritance/history 'to be' is always waiting to be 'read' … the past as history lies before us.[31]

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[26] Jenkins, K. (2003) *Refiguring History? New thoughts on an old discipline.* London and New York: Routledge. p23

[27] Ibid.p.23

[28] Ibid. p.29

[29] Ibid. p.27

[30] Ibid. p.26

[31] Ibid.p.30

Jenkins discusses the very nature of the writing of history, and following on from Carr's *What is History?*[32] states that 'it is now impossible to ever say what history really is'.[33] He argues that 'all histories are fictive',[34] and 'we cannot escape the inevitability of our own subjectivity'.[35] This therefore opens the possibility of auto-ethnography, for a study to partially recount one's own life, that includes a personal perception of events from within the family of the studio potter, as well as looking at a broader contextual framework of studio pottery history. From its subjective objectivity, researching within an academic institution (a university) it represents a an(other) voice, a reading of 'the past', perceived 'from *outside* the gate-keepered craft-practices of the professional historian'.[36] Although undertaking this research within an institution, I have paid my own fees and therefore am not indebted to anybody to represent any opinion other than my own; I can therefore find my own voice.

Made by my artist father, the pots were collected, preserved, and managed by my dressmaker/ artist/business woman mother. Even before the beginning, this becomes a gendered and political discourse, as 'I' am the eldest daughter, undertaking this project, with a sense of responsibility after the death of my mother, redefining a connection with developments in the world of ceramics, which her deceased husband was both present in and absent from. Death creates a new sense of connection with objects and the past, which Susan Stewart describes as a 'transcendence which links objects to the world of the dead'.[37] Suddenly things are finite, they can be made no more, and the items become signs representing the person and the past. The person is in the item: the pot is the man; the patchwork cushion is the woman. The family home, gallery and workshop, planned, designed, styled, and created by them, that they lived in all their married life, suddenly becomes not a living place but an archive of created pots, sculptures, drawings, paintings, papers, letters, artefacts, plus collected folk-art and other treasures. It also contained the financial records (invoices and accounts) of their business and teamwork. It becomes a valuable primary source for a story untold, another history, an alternative version.

With this unrecorded body of work my primary objective was to make a record before dissemination of the collection, and the inevitable loss of context, meaning, and volume. The

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[32] Carr, E.H. (1990) *What is History?* 2nd ed., London: Penguin.

[33] Ibid.p.16

[34] Ibid. p.6

[35] Ibid.p.12

[36] Ibid. p.10

[37] Stewart, S. (1993) *On Longing, Narratives in the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir the Collection.* 2007 ed. Durham: Duke University Press p.57

collection represented a lifetime's work. Some of the best from different eras were picked and saved from sale by my mother. There is a chronology to the work, a path of change and development, which is unknown to others, of which there is no record, which swims against the tide of the main studio pottery movement, and which represents an(other) in the development of studio pottery and earthenware glazes. Because there is no record of this work, in order to trace the development of style and design, and in order to give integrity to the remarks or observations I make, to avoid being accused of overstatement and grandiose inflation of ideas, it is necessary to go back into the past and expose the experiences and influences that played their part, in the development of knowledge and ideas transmitted through the pots, and to assess how they fit within the wider framework of political/artistic activity at the time.

My method of recording and preservation was to create a photographic archive of my mother's personal collection of her husband's pots. These were not easily accessible, being distributed upstairs and downstairs, in, on top of, and at the bottom of cupboards; some were wrapped and needed cleaning and dusting. I purchased a digital Leica D-Lux 2 camera, took photographs of the work myself, and have collected images and continue to collect images from people with his pots in their collection. This required many journeys to the house from my current residence, which is a two-hour drive. Sometimes the natural light, my preferred method of recording, was poor. The cloth on which I photographed the pots was a pale George Todd hand-printed fabric, embedding the connecting friendship/craftsperson ideology (see Chapter 9). This needed ironing and arranging each time. By photographing the pots individually as studio pots, and in the context of their existence within the domestic environment of the house, a record and a digital archive have been created. Some of these photographs will be included in the body of this thesis. I commissioned a professional photographer David Lothian to record the house. It has also been photographed by Caroline Arber with art direction by Iain Hutton-Jamieson, these photographs are intended for a future publication.

This process is about saving before losing, keeping together before being broken, recording what was, for the future. It deals with the complexity of trying to keep things together at the same time as they are being pulled apart. The physical reality of it involves dealing with the house and its contents, 'the stuff', of which I am preserving boxes of collected archive material, some of which is referred to as family archive in the text. Through this journey I investigated many written histories of twentieth-century studio pottery: my process involved the mapping of these pots in their broader history, as well as what they and their context mean to me. This is a personal acknowledgement of place and the significance of home, as the site and location of the making and the collection.

By applying an archaeological approach to writing about the house,[38] the pots were examined in the context and environment in which they were created, displayed, and used. Through the ceramics and art contained within, a way of explaining begins, referring to objects in the archive and the broader historical perspective. The house creates a structure, the objects and pots within the house become both sign and signifier, which 'unearth' a narrative, an untold history, which is both private and public, personal and political, challenging the wider existing cultural and historical context. Part of the research was to analyse the intersections of major developments with this case study. This includes the impact of the Second World War, changing attitudes towards industry and ceramics, the effect of the Coldstream Report on art schools and the teaching of ceramics. It includes how the domination of stoneware within the developments of postmodernism may have contributed to a canon of ideology which excluded the struggles of the individual in the British Studio pottery movement. Theoretical constructs intersect to provide an '*other*' perspective on the construction of twentieth-century studio ceramics history. Analysis of material culture uses memory and reflection, and my knowledge from a practitioner's perspective and personal experience of living this lifestyle as a studio potter's daughter adds further information. This forms the major academic historical element of my thesis.

By writing about my father's work rather than my mother's, I run the risk of perpetuating a patriarchal domination with a story that privileges the role of the supposed bread-winner at the expense of side-lining my mother's role in our family and the business. Her role was fundamental to this venture.

To write this contextual historical study with a personally informed narrative each chapter is structured in three parts. Site and Object are intertwined with Context and two styles of writing are used. Site and Object utilise visual and descriptive language, painting a picture of a place, a room, or an object, the rooms providing an environmental and cultural context. This writing is reflective and poetic, and considers perspectives and viewpoints, and uses imagination and memory in response to letters, old photographs, interviews, or pots, and includes aspects of the self. Context provides a more academic, factual perspective which relates to and involves examining the historical events that impinged on the life and work of RLB and other informing factors. It is intended that 'entrancing stories in the archives are quite distinct from the historical arguments in which they will be deployed'[39] by the use of this structure.

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[38] Bachelard G. (1958) *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 ed., Boston: Beacon Press. Bachelard investigates the house and the consciousness of objects and furniture within. He determines that the house has unity and complexity, containing memory and experiences, with drawers of cabinets containing secrets, for example.

[39] Jordanova, L. (2000) *History in Practice*. London: Oxford University Press. p.187

The vernacular of the Site and Object sections is reflected by the use of 'American Typewriter' font, suggestive of the *Olivetti* Typewriter used by my mother, and evocative of the more personal reflective content. Images in theses sections are framed with a white border creating a scrapbook, diary type of appearance. The Context section contains the academic rigour and research, and the font used reflects connections with the history of crafts: Gill Sans was designed by the sculptor and artist Eric Gill, a craftsperson who advocated 'the value of creativity and the making of beautiful utilitarian things'.[40]

I considered using Times New Roman for the Context sections as it is frequently used for formal or official documents and could therefore be considered suitable for academic content. Times New Roman was based on Johnstone's lettering which RLB frequently used, but its association with officialdom today implies a conservatism which I deemed inappropriate.

The line that I have traversed in writing is a mapping, a putting together of pieces like a patchwork quilt. Separately the pieces are just pieces, but together they make a whole. Tim Ingold discusses mapping and observes that 'we are all surveyors in our everyday lives',[41] we use our bodies and minds as the surveyor uses his instruments, to obtain data from multiple points. He explains 'knowledge is integrated not by going *along* but by building *up*, by fitting fragments into structures of progressively greater inclusiveness'.[42] That is what I hope to achieve with the content partially reflected by the structure. In producing this material I take Jenkins's aim in *Refiguring History* as mine:

> the main aim of this text is to work the discourse of history in the direction of that kind of radical, open-ended democracy that grasps the impossibility of enacting a total historical/historicising closure of the past whilst recognising that its refigured way of figuring things out 'will never have been good enough'.[43]

Participation in the MIRIAD *(anti-)thesis* peer-led writing group has assisted me as a practitioner to 'present [a] text written in a purposefully polemical tone'.[44] This writing does not intend to provide the answers; it will leave more questions. It presents material which throws a different light on that which is already written. It may contribute to a shift in understanding of twentieth-century studio pottery. I recognise that there are many other perspectives and points of view that could have been included.

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[40] Wheeler, R.(1998) *Winchcombe Pottery, The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford: White Cocklade.p.37.

[41] Ingold, T. (2007) *Lines: A Brief History.* London and New York: Routledge. p.88

[42] Ibid. p.88

[43] Jenkins, K. (2003) *Refiguring History? New Thoughts on an Old Discipline.* London and New York: Routledge. p.5

[44] Jenkins, K. (2003) *Refiguring History? New Thoughts on an Old Discipline.* London & New York: Routledge. p.7

Chapter 2

Site: The Entrance Hall

> The front door can be a place of gracious convergence between public and private lives ... When you enter a house through the front door, you discover its interiors in a logical progression, passing from public to private realms ... The front door is the first step on this journey of progressive congeniality.
>
> — A. Busch
> *Geography of Home: Writings on Where we Live.*

2.1. The Entrance Hall

Open the front door into the entrance hall and you discover a strangely trapezium shaped room with a glass door and three matching full-length windows, the long window side not parallel to the opposite side, but one is hardly aware of its deliberate irregularity. Immediately the rooms appearance is unusual, with its slatted wooden ceiling, and walls covered with woven seagrass or painted white brick, and Staffordshire Blue tiled floor, revealing something about the roots of its design. The entry to the house is also its exit.

Diagonally opposite the door is a dark wooden staircase, at the bottom of which stands a tall female figure. She had existed as a chunky block of pine that lay on the workshop floor for forty years. In RLB' s final weeks, she was taking shape and coming to life. The woman in wood was being chipped away, symbolic of the process of retraction. She became more Giacometti-like as each day passed, and like the life of her carver, became thinner and thinner.

The entrance hall had been designed as a gallery when the house was converted from a bakery. Shelves on the walls displayed work for sale.

A large stoneware container with a lid, adorned with black and white clay sprigs, sits on the floor. It was designed to contain a paraffin heater in the late 1940s; the oval shape at the front corresponded with the silica window of the heater. Later a small tubular electric heater was placed inside it, which barely emitted any heat. To the right of this room was my parents' bedroom, which doubled up as the main showroom.

The wooden staircase links the work area with the living area, which holds the treasures that connect the family with its past and stories of other lives. The Entrance Hall is the first step into the privacy of this house, which leads you into this writing.

Object: The Bookshelves

But there were all their father's books – they never read them,
but they were their father's, and must be kept.

— Edward Morgan Forster
Howards End
.

2.2.Detail of the bookshelves

The house was full of books. It was as if every book that had ever been given as a present at any time during their lives was on the shelves. The inscriptions reveal the love with which they were given and with which they have been cherished. Books from childhood,[1] Christmas presents,[2] beautifully hand-drawn ex libris labels,[3] inscriptions, names of ownership, presents to each other, the change in relationship, (a book to 'Mr Blatherwick' before 'To Bob'), beekeeping books that belonged to my grandfather and poetry and political cartoons with my unknown grandmother's name inside.[4] And a book 'from Cleo and Helge, October 1952',[5] from Boston, Massachusetts, where the latter died eight months later. My father who complained of stuff had more stuff than anyone.

This collection holds many layers of narrative. You can trace the relationships, chronologies, events, styles, and fashions of different times. These objects, which have meaning and hold memory, contain more than the material printed inside. Many have the *Lincoln School of Art* stamp inside, and were thrown out of there as part of a rethink, when jewellery making and button collections were no longer valued art school subjects, reflecting a restructuring of values. Stored here on these shelves; material valued in this household. Through the books, I have come to know the unknown, not only in terms of knowledge contained within, but in terms of who owned and read what. Books I saw as a child, I have revisited with the knowledge of what else was going on. A few gaps filled.

As well as books, there are folders of cuttings, articles from magazines and newspapers, and scrap-books. Materials for inspiration, collected and collated. Folders of mum's hand-cut clothes patterns, workbooks, notebooks, hand-bound and leather-covered ledgers. And copies of *The Connoisseur* and *Burlington Magazine* from before my parents were born.

And slotted amongst these are old photographs, folders full of cards, and a small brown leather suitcase full of letters from the first world war: correspondence to

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[1] *My Picture Book of Animals*, (n.d.) by Harry Golding, inscribed with RLB's full name and 'from his Dad and Mother. 1923. Aged 3 years'; *My Picture Book of Railways (no author, no date, published by Ward, Lock & Co.)* the following year, with his name and 'Xmas 1924' and in pencil 'from his mother', and *Railway Wonders 1928* by Cecil J. Allen, 'With Love from Mother Xmas 1931'.

[2] Read C.H. (1921) *Charles Hercules Read: - A Tribute and a Record*'. Inscribed 'Robert Louis Blatherwick Christmas 1941'

[3] Pope A.U. (1930) '*An Introduction to Persian Art*'. London: Peter Davies., cloth-covered copy.

[4] *Europe Since Versailles* by David Low, 1940 with 'Florence B' written inside.

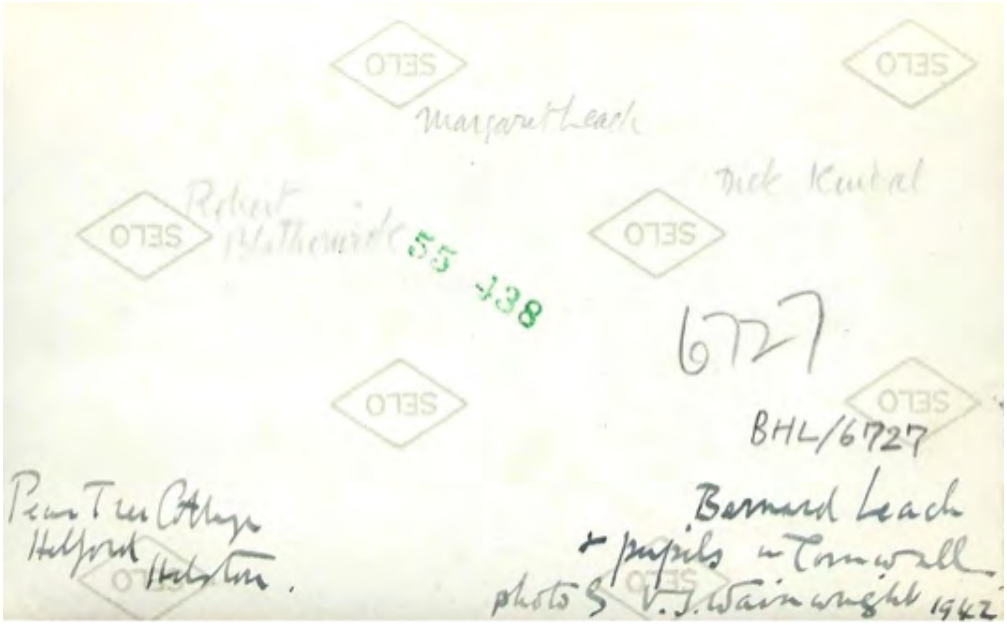
[5] *The Charles B. Hoyt Collection* (of ceramics), 1952, from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

my unknown grandmother Florence from Robert Handley, her brother, who was killed in 1915. Her fourth child was given his name.

Context: Literature Review

Deconstruction and Questioning of the Canon

> The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.
>
> - Italo Calvino
> *Invisible Cities*



2.3.,2.4.,Bernard Leach, Robert Blatherwick, Margaret Leach and Dick Kendal, outside Pear Tree Cottage, Helston, Cornwall. 1942.

The prompt for undertaking this research came from a question asked in 2008 by eminent craft historian Tanya Harrod when she was researching her recent publication *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*.[6] She had discovered that RLB had worked at Winchcombe Pottery for Michael Cardew (1901-1983) just before Cardew's departure for Africa in 1942, and in a phone call responding to her enquiry, she asked me, in an almost accusatory tone: 'Why don't we know about him?'[7] The simple answer to that question is: 'because nobody has written about him'; the more complex question is: 'how can this be?'

These two questions are particularly puzzling when many other studio potters working in the Leach/Cardew genre are included in one or more of the comprehensive texts on the history of twentieth-century British studio pottery. RLB spent his life making pots, working in a professional capacity, initially in teaching, followed by thirty years as a full-time potter. A symposium entitled 'Bernard Leach and his Contemporaries'[8] was attended by Marjorie and myself in 2003, and the interest in Leach related potters which excluded RLB was observed in the remaining years of her life with a bemused interest.

Writing a literature review about literature that does not exist, when the only material in the public domain has come from one source,[9] is not an easy task. Vast numbers of publications cover areas close to my subject, but all skim past. He is just not there. Marginalised, like the black British artists of the 1990s, it is down to me to write *The Other Story*.[10] Where does one begin and how wide does one go?

This Literature Review looks at the material RLB was included in, followed by texts on studio pottery that skim past RLB, and some studio pottery makers manuals. I will then examine the canon of studio pottery to see what is included in order to make further observations of definitions and developments.

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[6] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

[7] Phone call to Tanya Harrod from Sue Blatherwick, (2008) following email enquiry from Harrod to first cousin once removed, Robert Blatherwick in California, who forwarded her enquiry about RLB to the author.

[8] Symposium: 'Bernard Leach and his Contemporaries', Chesterfield Library, 8th November 2003. This was attended by the author, her mother Marjorie Wheeldon and her husband John Wheeldon.

[9] The source was Marjorie Wheeldon (previously Blatherwick), assisted by her daughter, the author.

[10] Araeen, R. (1989) *The Other Story - Afro-Asian artists in Post-war Britain*, pub Hayward Gallery, London.

An exhibition review of RLB's work was published in *Ceramic Review* in 1971 and he was favourably mentioned in a group review the following year.[11] It was 1998 before RLB was mentioned again in any publication connected with British studio pottery. This was when Ron Wheeler published *Winchcombe Pottery: The Cardew-Finch Tradition*.[12] It was followed in 2006 by Marion Whybrow's *Leach Pottery at St Ives: The Legacy of Bernard Leach*.[13] In between these studies of the two most significant figures and places of studio pottery development in twentieth-century Britain, Edward Mayor published *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years 1906-2006,*[14] documenting artistic developments that had taken place in that county.

Wheeler and Whybrow both give factual and biographical information, but neither publication contains any discussion or comment relating to the work of RLB. Mayor includes references and comments relating to exhibitions and local reviews, which give some insight into considered opinion of RLB's work. Walter provides a detailed report on RLB and his wife's life and work together, following the interview with Marjorie for the article published in *Ceramic Review* in 2006, which has already been mentioned.[15] The British ceramics world in the 1960s and 1970s was rapidly changing, characterised by a shift in practice and split in discourse. It was expanding with emphasis on different approaches to work in clay, new understandings and interpretations of definitions. I have chosen to analyse the literature relating to this era first, as it is during this time that RLB was branching out, working both against the dominant tide of studio pottery development and alongside it in a different stream. This was a completely different field from the more 'avant-garde' postmodern developments in ceramics led by Alison Britton and the 'Gang of Four' at the Royal College of Art (RCA). It was at a time when RLB was connected with London, the Craftsmen Potters Association (CPA), Primavera, and the Design Centre, with big commissions on the horizon from America and Japan, but it is also a period in which he appears to have lost this connection with the dominant studio pottery world.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, a ceramics publication boom began, in what had previously been a rather impoverished area; the many publications available today (on making techniques, on

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[11] Ismay, W.A. (1971) 'Exhibition Reviews, Robert Blatherwick, Earthenware. Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Lincs, June 1971'. *Ceramic Review,* No.11, p14.; Ismay, W.A. (1972) 'Exhibition Reviews, Ten Lincolnshire Potters. Usher Gallery, Lincoln. March-April 1972'. *Ceramic Review,* No.14, p19.

[12] Wheeler, R.(1998) *Winchcombe Pottery: The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford: White Cocklade Publishing. p46, p153

[13] Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives: The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall. Beach Books.pp110-111

[14] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years 1906-2006.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society. p42, p48, p51, p63, p68, p80, p84, p88. p96, p104, p123.

[15] Walter J. (2006) 'An Independent Spirit'. *Ceramic Review*. No. 221, pp. 48-51. This was following a letter written by the author suggesting and interview with Marjorie while she was still alive, she was unwell at the time.

individual potters and specific aspects of ceramics) were not available thirty-five years ago. The focus and the cultural climate have changed. When I began teaching ceramics in 1979, many of the few publications were by American authors, for example Daniel Rhodes' *Clay and Glazes for the Potter.*[16] The school library subscribed to *Ceramic Review* and *Crafts* magazine, providing contemporary reference material, and through these publications I first became aware of a vacuum in coverage relating to earthenware studio pottery.[17]

Clay and Glazes for the Potter was a technical handbook and provided 'an indispensable reference and text for potters and pottery students',[18] with up-to-date developments in materials and their uses, illustrations of ceramics from past and present, and in-depth information about materials relating to glazes and effects. This highly technical book contains more information than needed for a school teacher on glaze calculation, blending, testing, applying, and firing, but with very few texts available, it provided a reference book. It contained over thirty glaze recipes, but none for firing to earthenware temperatures between 1060˚ and 1160˚centigrade (technically earthenware ends at 1190˚).[19] Rhodes includes information on how to mix clay bodies for firing to earthenware temperatures, and on high-firing slip glazes 'only possible in the stoneware range of firing'.[20] The glazes given missed out the whole earthenware range which RLB used, and the temperature range I required.

Rhodes makes a revealing statement when he notes that 'in the period since this book first appeared, studio potters have been concentrating on stoneware'.[21] His coverage of the subject privileges stoneware and this maps out the arena at the time. He acknowledged that the 'pre-eminence of stoneware as the preferred medium of the studio potter'[22] was being challenged, but added that:

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[16] Rhodes, D. (1973) *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. 1979 revised edition. London: Pitman House.

[17] Clay-work: sculpture and/or pottery, were compulsory curriculum components in secondary schools. In the more progressive education authorities, including Inner London where I taught, it was highly regarded and considered an essential and integral learning activity by the Art and Design Education Inspectorate. (These included Norman Binch, Chief Inspector for Art and Design Education, who wrote many books on art and design education; Frederick Palmer, author of *Art and Design in Context* (1990); and Charles Salter who was pottery advisory teacher). As a teacher of clay-work, the problematic issue of glazes presented itself, with large groups of inner city children with short attention spans, and no technical support. My classroom had an electric kiln, and it seemed natural to fire to earthenware; I had been taught ceramics by my father, and consulted him regarding issues and technical problems.

[18] Rhodes, D. (1973) *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. 1979 revised edition. London: Pitman House. Dust cover front flap.

[19] Ibid. p47

[20] Ibid. p288

[21] Ibid. pxv

[22] Ibid. pxvi

> many potters are finding that making earthenware may involve more complex procedures than stoneware ... [and that] exacting control of formulation and firing is necessary and unless slips, glazes and over-glaze colours are skilfully applied the results can be disastrous. The use of low fire bodies and glazes may call for more, not less, technical knowledge and craftsmanship.[23]

This statement is of particular interest to me now, as it is the specific area RLB was working in at this time.[24] Rhodes informs us that 'the vast majority of the world's pottery has been earthenware'.[25] He even informs us that with earthenware fired to between 1125° and 1180°centigrade

> some of the virtues of stoneware can be achieved [while maintaining] the possibility of the brilliant and varied colour which is typical of lower firing.[26]

Rhodes does not include any images of twentieth century earthenware studio pottery and includes only a minimal amount of related information. The majority of the earthenware images are historic glazed examples, or slip decorated indigenous American examples, which are frequently considered to be in the folk-art genre. This creates a perception of earthenware as simple, primitive or not contemporary.

At the same time I purchased *The Ceramic Review Book of Glaze Recipes*[27] and discovered ten pages of earthenware glazes compared with forty pages of stoneware glazes; over 75% of the glazes in this book were stoneware.[28] Earthenware potters had a limited range available to them both in the commercial market and in the home production recipe market.

I became aware in 1979 that texts relating to the making of contemporary earthenware pottery were virtually non-existent. Little was known about earthenware glazes and even less written about them. On asking my family, I was informed that RLB tested and created his own glazes, and such glazes were not available on the market, therefore could not be purchased for use in my classroom. This highlighted the gap I am now investigating. Its significance has only

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[23] Ibid. pxvi

[24] The technical terms used will be examined in Chapter 10.

[25] Ibid. p47

[26] Ibid. p51

[27] Cooper E, Lewenstein E. (1978) *The Revised and Enlarged Ceramic Review Book of Glaze Recipes*. The Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain.

[28] The glazes in the earthenware section of '*The Ceramic Review Book of Glaze Recipes*' were headed by a recipe from Gordon Baldwin, who had been a pupil of RLB, and Paul Baron, who later gave up on earthenware.

become apparent to me through time. It is an unacknowledged gap and it is my intention to make others aware of this undocumented area of ceramic history.

The dominance of stoneware in British studio pottery has been enhanced by Bernard Leach (1887-1979), who wrote *A Potter's Book* in 1940.[29] He was a great orator and communicator, and had an Arts Council retrospective exhibition in 1961[30] and other publications in the 1970s[31] towards the end of his life. In 1975, Mick Casson (1925-2003) presented a BBC TV series, which documented *The Craft of the Potter.* Casson had turned from earthenware to stoneware after re-reading *A Potter's Book* in 1959. He is quoted in Harrod as being 'genuinely egalitarian, classless' a potter who believed that 'no one must be missed out!'[32] These comments, made in 1989, suggest an awareness of omissions and hierarchy. In 1978 Garth Clark published *Ceramic Art: Comment and Review 1882-1977,*[33] and in the same year *Michael Cardew: a Portrait.*[34] These represent a growing public interest in studio pottery and in the potters RLB had worked with as a young man. Later came publications on slipware and earthenware: in 1986 *Mary Wondrausch on Slipware;*[35] in 1993 David Barker's *Slipware;*[36] in 1999 Victoria and Mike Eden's *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches,*[37] and in 2000 *Andrew* McGarva's *Country Pottery: The Traditional Earthenware of Britain.*[38] Most twentieth century earthenware pottery is slipware, this being 'slip-decorated lead-glazed earthenware',[39] usually with a transparent, clear or honey coloured glossy glaze. All of these publications went close to discussing the type of work produced by RLB, but none of the above wrote about earthenware studio pottery that was not slipware. This is a fine line that I am drawing here, and I will return to it.

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[29] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth Impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber.

[30] Hodin, J.P. (1961) *Bernard Leach: Fifty Years a Potter*. London: Arts Council.

[31] Leach, B. (1976*) Bernard Leach: The Potter's Challenge*. In Outerbridge, D. ed. London: Souvenir Press.

[32] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p262 Harrod is referring to a conversation with Mike Casson which is partially quoted in Tanya Harrod 'Michael Casson Sources of Inspiration', Crafts 99, July/August 99, p43.

[33] Clark, G. Ed. (1978) *Ceramic Art: Comment and Review 1882-1977: An Anthology of Writings on Modern Ceramic Art.* New York: E.P. Dutton.

[34] Clark, G. (1978), *Michael Cardew: a Portrait. An intimate Account of a Potter Who Has Captured the Spirit of Country Craft.* London & Boston: Faber & Faber.

[35] Wondrausch, M. (1986) *Mary Wondrausch on Slipware.* London: A&C Black.

[36] Barker, D. (1993) *Slipware*.Princes Risborough: Shire Publications.

[37] Eden, M. and Eden V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches*. London: A&C Black.

[38] McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery: The Traditional Earthenware of Britain*. London: A&C Black.

[39] Eden, M. and Eden, V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches.* London: A&C Black. p8

As the twentieth century reached its close, several comprehensive tomes reflected on the work of the potters of the last hundred years. In 1995 Garth Clark published *The Potter's Art: A Complete History of Pottery in Britain;*[40] in 1999 Tanya Harrod published *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century;*[41] followed in 2002 by Paul Rice's *British Studio Ceramics;*[42] and in 2007 Jeffrey Jones published *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005.*[43] Each of these offers a different perspective and interpretation of the events of what came to be known as 'the studio pottery movement.' Paul Rice wrote a chapter on 'The Earthenware Years'.[44] This covered potters from the late 1940s, and he remarks on a 'prejudice in the 1960s and 1970s against low fired ceramics'.[45] He observed that earthenware became very unfashionable and 'almost disappeared from serious studio ceramics for many years',[46] and that some of the earthenware pots 'are amongst the most underrated of the century'.[47] All of these potters worked in earthenware for a very short period, with the exception perhaps, of Brigitta Appleby, who ran Briglin Pottery, but the work she produced and the way she worked was very different to RLB's. Jeffrey Jones visits the stoneware/earthenware debate several times and wrote that Cardew's irrevocable switch from earthenware to stoneware left earthenware 'high and dry as a respectable medium for the British studio potter for many decades to come'.[48]

These publications, full of images of beautiful pots and interiors that relate to the chosen lifestyle of artists and potters, echo the scene in the 1970s at the pottery in Reepham, where RLB lived. Harrod's extensive and comprehensive *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*[49] epitomises the lifestyle and type of work produced there; the similarity with my home, the work we lived with, ate with, and saw every day amongst our family, friends and customers, is striking. From ceramics to silversmithing, calligraphy to textiles, enamelling to bookbinding,

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[40] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art: a Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon.

[41] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

[42] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics.* Marlborough: The Crowood Press

[43] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005.* London: A&C Black

[44] Rice, P. (2002) British Studio Ceramics. Marlborough: The Crowood Press. pp74-82

[45] Ibid. p74

[46] Ibid. p82

[47] Ibid. p82

[48] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005.* London: A&C Black. p116

[49] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

dressmaking to weaving, crafts have played a rich and complex role in the social, cultural, and artistic history of twentieth-century Britain, and in the life of my extended family. We could be in this book. A picture from our house interior would not go amiss: the gallery/showroom; the hand-printed wallpaper by textile artist George Todd (1922-1972) in the annex; the unique chairs, designed by RLB and made by Roy Broadbent (1915-1972);[50] a Danish leather butterfly chair and a Hans Wegner (1914-2007) rocking chair; the calligraphic texts from Alan Quincey,[51] mother's patchwork cushions and weavings, which she sold in The Regional Craft Centre in Lincoln,[52] would not look out of place. This book surveys the full range of individual craft disciplines and key practitioners from the Arts and Crafts Movement to the years before the first world war to the 1990s. It is as though this book is about our life and yet it is not. There is no reference to any craft developments by artists from Lincolnshire; it represents a parallel existence.

2.5. Left: Henry Rothschild's first exhibition,'Baskets for Town and Country', held at the Tea Centre, Regent Street, 1953.
2.6. Right: The Showroom at The Old Bakery, circa 1970.

[50] Furniture maker / sculptor from Holton-cum-Beckering, Lincolnshire.

[51] Colleague and friend from Lincoln School of Art; Honoured Fellow of the Calligraphy and Lettering Arts Society.

[52] Records of sales. Family Archive.

2.7. Top: The Living Room. 1957, showing day-bed, tiled fireplace, kelim rug, patchwork cushion and Kai Bojeson monkey on wall.
2.8. Left: The Living Room, Reepham, c.1973.
2.9. Right: Terence Conran interior, c.1995

The cultural and political climate of the 1970s and 1980s is detailed in *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, as well as the creation, impact, and changing nature and names of well-intended, government-funded bodies for the arts. Harrod describes the complexity of the power structures which are connected with the funding bodies; different ideologies, quangos and genres which meander through the control of individuals in charge of regional and national organisations. These are difficult to comprehend when observed from the receiving end of the individual craftsman/artist who is not involved in the think-tanks. How is an artist/craftsperson meant to know these ideologies? Harrod highlights unclear objectives, confusion, and lack of clarity or consensus about the definition of 'craft' that permeated this period. She gives a detailed account of the chaotic organisation of an exhibition entitled *The Craftsman's Art;*[53] it was designed to find 'the little man who hides his genius in a faraway village'.[54] This sounds like the ideal opportunity for RLB's work to be included, he had displayed jewellery in The Design Centre in Regent Street in 1967, and his pots were for sale in The Craftsmen Potters' Shop.[55] The resulting exhibition in 1972/3, did not achieve its aim: 'no unknown geniuses had emerged and many leading craftsmen and women had not sent their work in'.[56] Initial objectives had become diluted on their way to the Regional Arts Bodies, as in a game of Chinese Whispers. This example illustrates a huge problem: much of what is recorded is the result of an exhibition, what is exhibited is determined by the selection of work according to criteria, which are frequently inconsistently applied; the criteria are at times too specific; how works fit criteria is open to interpretation; and words can obscure/muddle/exclude the obvious, or the intention of work produced. Leading British art collector Charles Saatchi observed another problem and wrote a 'scathing portrait of the art world.' He refers to 'oligarchs; and art dealers with masturbatory levels of self-regard.' Critics mainly see the shows they are assigned to cover: 'I don't actually believe many people in the art world have much feeling for art and cannot tell a good artist from a weak one**, until the artist has enjoyed the validation of others'.**[57] He is talking about a different time and place, but nevertheless this statement contains an overt underlying poignance, further indicating the mechanism of the critic and the historian.

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[53] This was an exhibition of new work by British craftsmen, organised by the National Crafts Advisory Committee and took place in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1973.

[54] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p381

[55] *The Lincolnshire Echo*, (September 11, 1967) 'Ceramics Artist Gets Export Order'. Newspaper cutting in family archive.

[56] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p382

[57] Satchi, C. (3rd December 2011) 'Vulgar, Eurotrashy, Masturbatory': Saatchi's Scathing Portrait of the Art World. *The Guardian.* p3. my emphasis.

Clark confesses that writing about the period from the 1970s to the 1990s involved a 'difficult task of taking a generation of diverse artists whose main thrust has been to ignore rules, categories and stylistic dictates'.[58] In order to write about it, 'a small group of artists has been selected from the hundreds of professional ceramicists working in Britain', and he selected 'the most influential figures who are instrumental in defining this new ceramic age'.[59] This assertion, however, ignores how Clark has contributed to the creation of a ceramics canon (see reference to 'Industry and the Studio Potter' at the end of this chapter). It would be true to say that RLB ignored the rules and categories, and that he has not been an 'influential' public figure; but his work does define a radically different, unique, and sustained approach to earthenware ceramics.

Harrod describes the craft renaissance of the 1970s as a 'hybrid'.[60] One arena was dominated by the consumerist worlds of rock music and fashion, which snapped up certain ceramics as a rebellious rejection of 'good design', and is classed by cultural theorists as 'postmodernism'. This is itself an elusive term, difficult to define and pin down in its eclectic variant and disparate forms. Harrod describes it as a period of ideas, where conceptual and minimal art were emphasised, ceramics were dominated by stoneware, there was an 'anti-Leach'[61] spirit in which kitsch ceramics and ceramic jokes were shown, and it was the emergence of feminism in ceramics. Alongside this there was disillusionment with technological progress which led to the valuing of hand-made goods and a craft renaissance.

In discussing the 'buoyant craft economy' of the 1970s Harrod informs us that 'the bread and butter of the mainstream shops and galleries consisted in selling work by makers who had come to the fore in the 1960s – well-made **stoneware** by Richard Batterham, Michael Casson, David Leach, Lucie Rie and Robin Welch'.[62] The 1970s had seen many new outlets for crafts, including the 'older establishments like Henry Rothschild's Primavera … 1969, in Cambridge',[63]

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[58] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art A Complete History of Pottery in Britain*. London: Phaidon. p195

[59] Ibid.

[60] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p378

[61] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p376

[62] Ibid. p376, my emphasis.

[63] Ibid. p375

where RLB had displayed his work.[64] The records from these early years are scant, both in the family and CPA archives. Harrod mentions the move of the Craftsmen Potters Shop to 'handsome new premises in Marshall Street'[65] in London. This was in 1967.[66] I distinctly remember delivering pots to the new Marshall Street premises, and to the earlier, smaller premises round the corner in Lowndes Court, right next to the epicentre of the swinging sixties, London's famous and colourful Carnaby Street.

What is astonishing is that neither the CPA archive nor the Craft Study Centre[67] had any record of RLB having any connection with the Craftsmen Potters Association. Amelia Lawrence from the CPA searched for record of his membership and had

> gone through the minutes and have covered up to 1975. I am afraid that there is no mention of Robert Blatherwick in these documents.[68]

And Jean Vacher, Curator and Collections Manager of the Crafts Study Centre, Farnham, University for the Creative Arts, had 'undertaken a search on our electronic archive database and sadly nothing has come up under 'Robert', 'Bob' or 'Blatherwick'.[69] Archive Assistant Louise Chennell from Aberystwyth University wrote:

> The CPA had a tiered membership system with elected fellows and those with full membership who appear in their member directories from 1972 onwards. I have checked these and … your father is not listed.[70]

But five months later she found that 'there is a record of your father being a member in 1973, he is not mentioned before that'.[71] It was over a period of several years that we delivered pots to the CPA; we were there in January 1966 (it was my sister's 4th birthday) with George Todd, and before that time. I recognised the route through London, passing the small gallery on Finchley Road painted bright pink which sold *Gallery Five* designed stickers, which I was treated

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[64] RLB's work was also sold in *Joshua Taylor* in Cambridge. Sale of his work in Cambridge is mentioned in the *The Lincolnshire Echo*, (September 11, 1967) 'Ceramics Artist Gets Export Order '. Newspaper cutting in family archive. I believe he did show his work in Primavera, but have no record of this.

[65] Harrod, T. (1999) The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p375

[66] Cooper, E. and Lewenstein, E. (ed) (1976); *Potters Third Edition. An Illustrated Directory of the Work of the Full Members of the Craftsmen Potters Association: a Guide to Pottery Training in Britain* . London: Craftsmen Potters Association, p2

[67] The Craft Study Centre is located at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, Surrey.

[68] Lawrence, A. (2012) Personal email to author . She had been through the minutes of the CPA archives from the early 1960's to 1975. Author's archive.

[69] Vacher, J. (2011) Personal email to author. Author's archive.

[70] Chennell, L. (2011) Personal email to author. 14th March. Author's archive.

[71] Ibid. (2011) 1st August. Author's archive.

to a sheet of before mother and I hit the A1 for the long return drive home; RLB didn't drive. And I enjoyed finding the shelf in the CPA showroom which his pots were on.[72]

Archives are not infallible, they are organised according to what is considered relevant by the archivist. The question of where to look for the researcher recurs: 'I am afraid if you investigated the archives yourself you may not come up with any more information'.[73] This presents the difficulty experienced and provides evidence of the importance of memory and family in forming alternative records. Finding evidence for unknown people is extremely difficult. Without a useful lead the researcher can waste a lot of their own and other people's time:

> I think Louise Chennell has already been in touch with you. We have looked in the documents relating to the CPA and there is not very much from that period. We have minutes of the early years up to about 1963 but after that there are only a few lists. I doubt very much if you would find anything however there is always a chance that you might find something useful when you look for yourself of course. The basic catalogue of the documents that are on deposit in the National Library are on the website.
> http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com/craft-potters-association-archive.php
> I presume you have already looked through that but you will see there is very little from that period. But looking through that catalogue carefully you might be able to decide wh[e]ther it is worth coming here. There may be things that are relevant to your research more generally.[74]

Emmanuel Cooper was contacted while he was writing the Rie biography with an enquiry about the possibility of any letters from RLB in the archive, but 'alas, very few of Lucie's letters have survived'.[75] In 2010 Jean Vacher, Collections Manager at the Crafts Study Centre[76] was contacted regarding information relating to RLB in the Rie archive,[77] and again in 2011, but nothing was found; in 2013 she was contacted again, and this time in relation to RLB working with Leach. She 'did a search on our Bernard Leach archive and came up with a photograph'.[78] (Fig. 2.4, and the reverse side Fig. 2.3).

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[72] What is interesting about this lack of record and trace, is that literature and material already in the archives are considered more accurate than my memory and version of events.

[73] Chennell, L. (2011) Personal email to author. 14th March. Author's archive.

[74] Vincentelli, M. (2012). 'RE: archives at Aberyswyth'. Personal email to author. 7th November. Author's archive

[75] Cooper, E. (2011) 'Re: Lucie Rie'. email to Sue Blatherwick. 18th March.

[76] Crafts Study Centre is part of the University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, Surrey.

[77] RLB had stayed at Lucie Rie's flat in Kensington Mews, London, with Leach. When teaching and making ceramics in London in early 1980, RLB told me of a potter he knew who lived in Kensington who he thought I would like, and who may be able to help me. I did not follow this up. It was only later after visiting the 1982 Crafts Council Rie exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, that I discovered it had been Lucie Rie that he was suggesting I meet.

[78] Vacher, J. (2013) Personal email to author. 'Photo'. 11th September 2013. Author's archive. A fee of £15.00 was charged for its retrieval from the archive.

The two dominant strands of the 'hybrid' studio pottery movement of the 1970s were the emergence of postmodernism, with its kitsch, anti-form, feminist, conceptually based work, which was anti-Leachian in ideology and approach. Alongside this were the predominantly male stoneware potters producing 'sturdy functional stoneware'.[79] Many of these had been students at Harrow School of Art, and were products of a vocational course set up by Victor Margrie in 1963. This course was a product of changing attitudes towards ceramics in art schools, a result of *The Coldstream Report,* which I discuss later. These were 'studio potters', who were more interested in traditional form, and high-fired stoneware. RLB was interested in form and studio pottery, but not stoneware; he was influenced by Leach but not working in the same field.

An image of the interior of the Prescote Gallery, circa1978 (Fig. 2.10) highlights the complexity of the changing approach to ceramics. Traditional forms are represented by the turned wooden bowls of Jim Partridge. The seagrass matting, the hand-woven rug, the use of natural materials,

2.10. The Prescote Gallery, circa 1978.

all of which we had at The Old Bakery, fitted in with the ecological ideology of the home producers and self-sufficient potters. But the earthenware ceramic jug on the right by Alison Briton, is postmodern, as is the shaped wooden table;[80] these were not concerned with form and function. The messages were mixed, it was a heterogeneous arena: ceramics had moved into a new arena.

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[79] Harrod, T. (1999) The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p380

[80] Made by Ashely Cartwright.

The postmodern potters from the Royal College of Art began working in earthenware in the late1970s. They made very different pots to those which RLB was producing. Clark informs us that 'many rejected the austere colours of stoneware and embraced earthenware (particularly whiteware) and the bright, brash, polychromatic palette that this low-fired ware offered'.[81] Most of the studio potters that RLB had worked and trained with had given up earthenware and moved to stoneware. A few potters had begun to work in earthenware/slipware in the 1960s and 1970s. These included Clive Bowen who 'developed the English slipware tradition in the spirit of Michael Cardew's inter-war work',[82] producing raw-glazed, wood-fired slipware; and Mary Wondrausch who began making slipware based on the English tradition in 1979. RLB's work was earthenware and used slip, but it did not have the appearance of traditional slipware. What I am pointing out here is that all of these types of work are different to the work RLB was producing, there are some points of connection but these categories omit his work.

The Canon

Another list of potters recently appeared on the internet called 'The Leach Potters Family Tree', giving names of many potters connected with the Leach Pottery, but excluding RLB.[83] The significance of the canon of recorded history cannot be ignored; it is 'an authoritative body of writings or art works that are deemed of special value and worthy of academic study'.[84] What constitutes work worthy of being in the canon was formally outlined by Clive Bell in a publication called *Art* in 1914,[85] and the term is frequently used in texts which examine canons, which contribute to the creation of, or add to existing canons.

Jordanova notes that in history 'we do not really have canons, partly because creative individuals are not at the core of the subject'.[86] But in ceramic history individuals play a key role, even though it is their work and not the person that the canon is recording. Leach

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[81] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. a Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. p193

[82] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p266

[83] Leach Potters Family Tree. Ceramike website. http://www.ceramike.com/LeachTree.asp

[84] Jordanova, L. (2000) *History in Practice.* London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press. p212

[85] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts by Yale University Press, p338. The canon was outlined by Clive Bell in a publication called *Art.*

[86] Jordanova, L. (2000) *History in Practice.* London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press. p88

asserted that 'the pot is the man',[87] that identity is revealed by the work. Every person producing work in a different way or with a unique variation is identified by their work. But voices speak more loudly than pots. Studio pottery from 1920-1950 was dominated by 'three extraordinary men, Bernard Howell Leach …, Michael Cardew …, and William Staite Murray (1881-1962)',[88] and they have without doubt shaped the recording of the twentieth-century ceramics canon. It is the way history is recorded that has created the canon.

Several books have contributed to its creation and our understanding of the canon, but Jones informs us that 'the first of two books to have a major impact in establishing the studio pottery canon'[89] was *The Work of the Modern Potter in England*, published in 1952 by George Wingfield Digby.[90] In his research, Wingfield Digby was influenced by the collection of Milner-White in York, visiting it three times.[91] Milner-White collected only stoneware and held an extreme opinion of these two forms of pottery, considering stoneware to be 'the aristocrat of ceramics', and identified earthenware in the same explanation as 'soft pottery'.[92] William Bowyer Honey, the Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum also published a book in 1952, with a chapter headed 'Slipware and Other Peasant Pottery'.[93] This title reveals the opinion of knowledgeable historians. Jones informs us that the second book to have a major impact in establishing the studio pottery canon was Muriel Rose's *Artist Potters in England*, published in 1955.[94] Jones comments that this publication 'is as significant for what it excludes as for what it includes'.[95] He considers Rose's book as a

> crucial moment of closure [for the studio pottery movement as it] **defined studio pottery as a certain kind of practice, with the wheel-thrown stoneware pot as the central object of concern.**[96]

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[87] Leach, B. (1976*) Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. ed. Outerbridge D., London: Souvenir Press. p48

[88] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London*:* Phaidon. p136

[89] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black Ltd. p133

[90] George Wingfield Digby was Keeper of the Department of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

[91] Riddick, S. (1990) *Pioneer Studio Pottery The Milner-White Collection*. London: Lund Humphries in association with York City Art Gallery. p15

[92] Ibid. p130

[93] Honey, W.B. (1952) *English Pottery and Porcelain.* London: A&C Black.

[94] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black.

[95] Ibid. p135

[96] Ibid. p136, my emphasis.

Wingfield Digby and Rose were

> close associates of Bernard Leach … together these three made up three quarters of the selection committee of the 1952 Dartington Exhibition, which was as important an event in the establishment of the studio pottery canon as the publication of Rose and Wingfield Digby's books.[97]

This illustrates the exclusive connections which empowered this dominant approach. It illustrates how the mechanism of the canon evolves; it suggests a hegemonic and introspective approach.

In my research, I have discovered a major error in the recording of information which further illustrates how the canon is created, and how history is shaped. This is regarding an event organised by RLB, which took place in Lincoln. On 5th March 1942, Michael Cardew delivered a lecture entitled 'Industry and the Studio Potter' to students at Lincoln School of Art. He had written it the week before, specifically for the event.[98] RLB had arranged this lecture whilst working for Cardew as he had maintained his connections with his former place of study. To deliver the lecture and visit the sites of the city, Cardew stayed at the home of RLB.[99] This is recorded in letters in the V&A archives, and can be seen in Cardew's diary (Fig. 2.11). Cardew sent the lecture to Miss Pilkington[100] and it was published in *Crafts, The Quarterly of the Red Rose Guild*[101] later in the same year.

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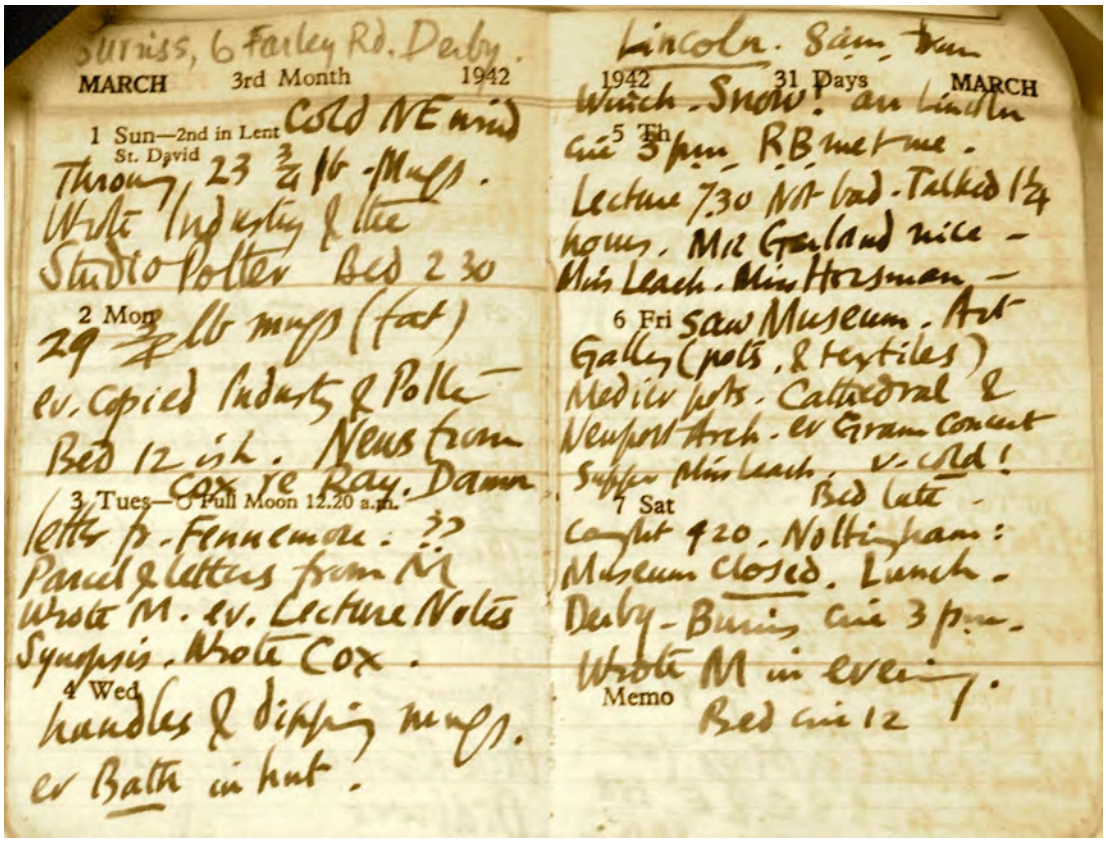
[97] Ibid. p133

[98] Cardew, M. (1942) Diary entry 1st March, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, AAD/2006/2/1/1. Four of the twelve pages of notes for the Lincoln lecture are in Box 2006/2/2/23. Also Cardew, M. (1942) Letter to Mariel, dated 'Tues am' - 'I've written 12 pages about 'Should Studio Potters Design for Mass Production' for Lincoln'. Box 2/1/9. Accessed by visit 24th, 25th January 2013

[99] Cardew, M. (1942) Letter to Mariel, dated March 7th, Sat. Victoria and Albert Museum archives, Box 2/1/9. Accessed by visit 24th / 25th January 2013.

[100] Ibid. Letter to Mariel, dated Tues am, 1942.

[101] Cardew, M.(1942) 'Industry and the Studio Potter'. *Crafts, The Quarterly of the Red Rose Guild*, Volume Two, Number One, 1942.



2.11. Michael Cardew's appointment diary showing that he wrote 'Industry and the Studio Potter' on 1st March 1942, and that he went to Lincoln on 5th March and was met by RLB. Cardew delivered his lecture later that evening. Miss Leach was present on 5th and 6th. It has not been determined whether she is the same Miss Leach that was at St Ives pottery later that year.

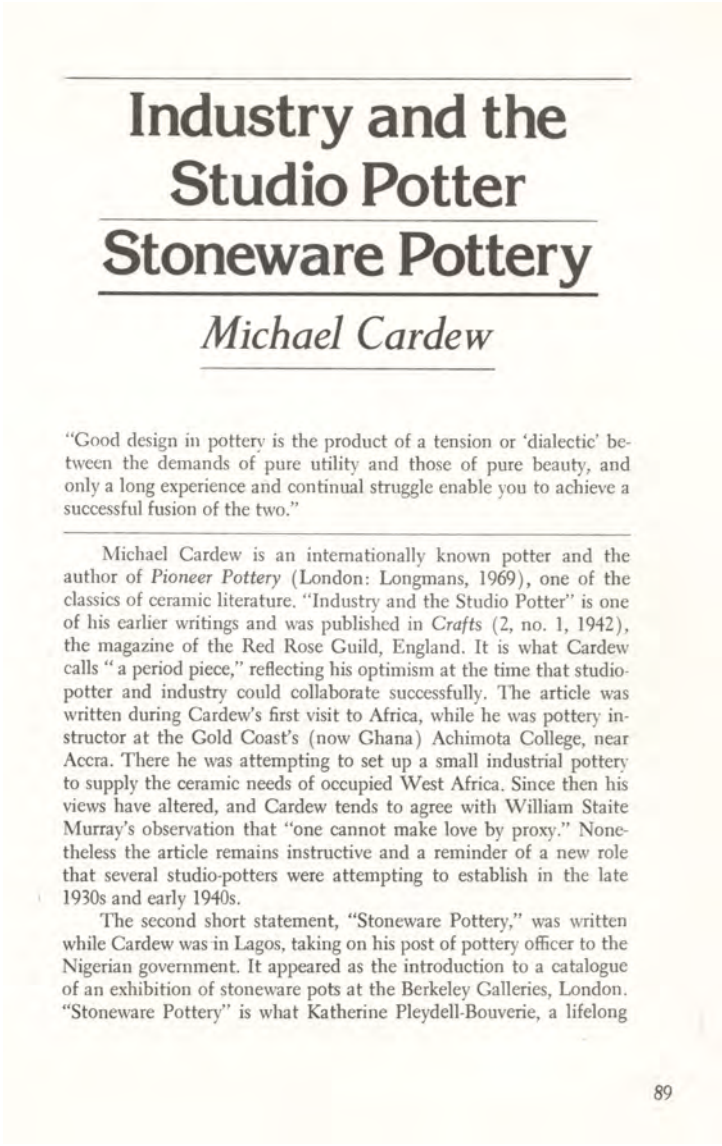
The lecture was published again in 1978 in Garth Clark's *Anthology of Writings on Modern Ceramic Art.*[102] In the preface to the piece, Clark states that it was written during Cardew's first visit to Africa, 'while he was pottery instructor at the Gold Coasts Achimota College, near Accra',[103] which was when Cardew was working in stoneware. My research, in the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum, discovered it was written while Cardew was still working at Winchcombe Pottery, and in earthenware.

Clark's publication of 'Industry and the Studio Potter' in 1978 places it together with an article entitled 'Stoneware Pottery' (Fig. 2.12). The positioning of the two titles gives a semiotic

[102] Clark, G. (ed.), (1978) *Ceramic Art: Comment and Review 1882-1977: An Anthology of Writings on Modern Ceramic Art.* New York: E.P. Dutton. pp89-99.

[103] Ibid. p89

implication that the two pieces are connected, placing a different emphasis on the original article. It is difficult to assess whether it would have made any difference if the lecture had been published with an article on 'Earthenware Pottery' and the correct source been stated. At the time due to the domination of stoneware, such a concept was probably inconceivable. But it illustrates the significance of the canon in the mis-recording of history and how connections create impressions.



Industry and the Studio Potter

Stoneware Pottery

Michael Cardew

"Good design in pottery is the product of a tension or 'dialectic' between the demands of pure utility and those of pure beauty, and only a long experience and continual struggle enable you to achieve a successful fusion of the two."

Michael Cardew is an internationally known potter and the author of *Pioneer Pottery* (London: Longmans, 1969), one of the classics of ceramic literature. "Industry and the Studio Potter" is one of his earlier writings and was published in *Crafts* (2, no. 1, 1942), the magazine of the Red Rose Guild, England. It is what Cardew calls " a period piece," reflecting his optimism at the time that studio-potter and industry could collaborate successfully. The article was written during Cardew's first visit to Africa, while he was pottery instructor at the Gold Coast's (now Ghana) Achimota College, near Accra. There he was attempting to set up a small industrial pottery to supply the ceramic needs of occupied West Africa. Since then his views have altered, and Cardew tends to agree with William Staite Murray's observation that "one cannot make love by proxy." Nonetheless the article remains instructive and a reminder of a new role that several studio-potters were attempting to establish in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The second short statement, "Stoneware Pottery," was written while Cardew was in Lagos, taking on his post of pottery officer to the Nigerian government. It appeared as the introduction to a catalogue of an exhibition of stoneware pots at the Berkeley Galleries, London. "Stoneware Pottery" is what Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, a lifelong

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2.12. Copy of the page in *Ceramic Art: Comment and Review 1882-1977: An Anthology of Writings on Modern Ceramic Art*, edited by Garth Clark which places 'Industry and the Studio Potter' next to 'Stoneware Pottery'.

This find makes a significant contribution and difference to understanding the importance of the lecture, and the position of RLB in relation to his knowledge and involvement in the debates in the early days of the studio pottery movement. Jeffrey Jones acknowledges that 'key individuals … went unacknowledged'[104] and there are some whose 'contribution was almost forgotten'.[105] Many potters followed in the Leach model, and those who 'were highly visible … took on the role of leadership in the field.'[106] Only those with the highest profile make it into the canon through exhibitions, writing, and lectures. It provides further evidence of the dominance of stoneware ideology, which has contributed to the creation of the canon, exacerbated by a narrow hegemonic perception. It consolidates my arguments and throws a new light on the existing canon of ceramic history. This thesis therefore explores other aspects of the discourse around stoneware and earthenware in order to locate RLB and others who may also have been omitted.

[104] Jones J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. Dust cover front flap.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

Chapter 3

Site: The Kitchen

I have many occasions to call at the residencies of well-known art collectors, but I find too often that the articles of everyday use in their homes are far from being artistic, to say the least. They often leave me with a sad suspicion as to how much these collectors really appreciate beauty.

— Sōetsu Yanagi,

A Potter's Book.

3.1. The Kitchen.

Turn left at the top of the stairs and you will find yourself in the kitchen. Immediately facing you are two floor-to-ceiling wooden doors, plain, matt, golden wood, each with a porcelain knob in the centre opening edge, a matching pair, like buttons, making a statement of intent and purpose. These are doors to the cupboard. Look left to see into the kitchen.

It is a small open-plan space, suitable for only one person to work in. The floor is the same golden brown extending to the landing past the top of the stairs. The cupboards and drawers were made by my grandfather, Frank Wilson (1898-1959),[1] out of dark wood, and their colour contrasts with the floor and the pine work surface. To the right a window looks out over the front yard, over the post office yard and garden, onto the mature trees in the old graveyard, with red-tiled rooftops and the church spire.

A number of wooden shelves line the walls, with neatly displayed domestic items required for everyday use: coffee makers, weighing scales, teapots, and more. A wooden beam crosses the centre of the ceiling and has a narrow shelf attached, on which the saucepans are kept up high, and from it hang stainless steel items: a sieve, a jug, and more. To the left, slightly left of the cooker, is a large high internal window onto the landing. Along the bottom of this and a third of the way up are two rows of matching jars with glass-stoppered lids in which a variety of dried pulses and herbs are kept.

Many utensils hang from under the shelves: fish-shaped pan stands, Danish coloured enamel dishes, patterned wooden bread pats from Poland, and an assortment of stainless steel utensils, all within easy reach of the cooker. Every space is filled in this busy, functional place of work.

As a family we ate breakfast in here. On school days, three children would sit around the sides of a small wooden table, which mum set the night before, ready for a moody scramble out of our beds in the morning. Each place had a round wooden board, made by grandfather Wilson, flanked with a spoon and a knife, with cereals placed in the centre. Mum had us seated to eat and would herself sit on a stool on the other side, by the sink and the drainer, passing us slices of toast and dealing with whatever issues arose. Dad stayed out of the way until we had

[1] My mother's father, who was an engineers pattern maker for Robey's Engineering in Lincoln.

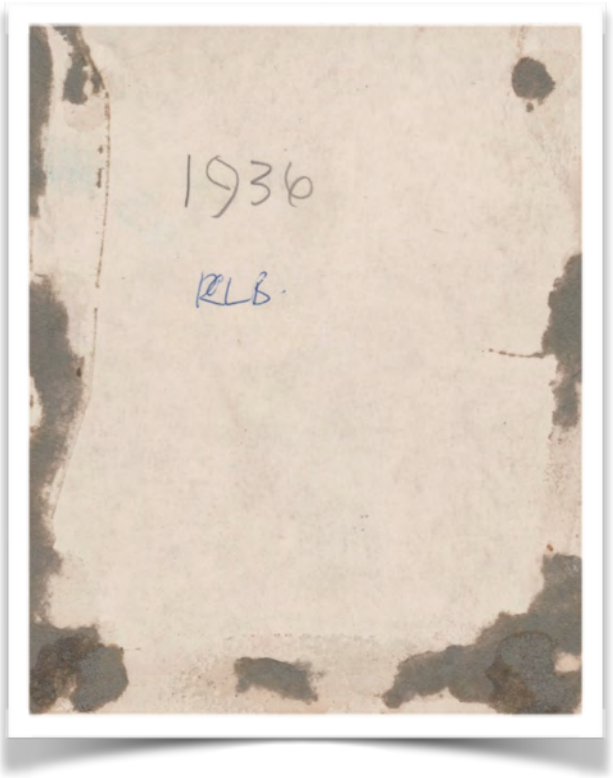
left the house and caught the school bus at ten past eight, appearing when the morning mayhem was over. There was no room for a fifth person in the kitchen. Other meals were eaten around the big table in the annex.

The kitchen was mum's domain and she kept it organised. The table had two drawers with her sewing equipment, boxes of cottons neatly laid out in rows, small wooden cigar boxes containing elastic and zips, tins with hooks-and-eyes, a metal pin-tin with a snap-open lid with a colourful felted thimble holder/needle case inside, and two pairs of magnificent sewing scissors and pinking shears. These had her maiden name, Marjorie Wilson, engraved along the outer edge of the blades. These scissors were strictly for fabric only.

On the days when we drove to London to deliver pots to the Craftsmen Potters Association, the kitchen looked different on our return. You could tell dad had been cooking, as the compost bucket would be in the middle of the floor, rather than tucked out of sight behind a small curtain under the drainer.

3.2. Robert Blatherwick. Jugs and coffee pots on a kitchen shelf.

Object: The Black Vase



3.3, 3.4. The reverse of photograph of RLB's black vase with date written on, and photograph of the vase.

I'm watching mum remove the tins from the bottom of the cupboard, and place them on the floor. The old scratched one with a red-handled lid with 'Biscuits' painted on its white side gives a soft hollow aluminium clunk as you place it on top of another. You kneel and scramble in the dark at the back to find the correct vase, the one you want to put the wild flowers in that I have just picked. Pots are stored here, hidden and out of the way, under the cold slate shelf, most of them are too big or the wrong shape; but you find the one that is just right, which holds the flowers well, upright so they fan out and don't flop. They brighten up the room and bring colours from the garden into the house.

A musty scent wafts through the air from this dark place at the back, a fusty, woody smell, connected with cobwebs and silverfish and wood-pigs who live in undisturbed places, like an old library. You remove the dust from the objects, with a laugh and a shrug, mocking surprise and wonder that there should be so much of it.

I have been trying to match the old photographs I have found in drawers with pots that still exist, some are in the house and some have appeared from other places. With the magnifying glass I search for clues, asking if this can be the same piece. Sometimes a photograph appears of a pot or a person that I recognise. Each of these is a discovery, new and exciting, like doing a jigsaw, fitting the pieces into the spaces. It is strange how people and pots have become merged. The discovery of the existence of a pot is as exciting as the identification of my grandmother, who I never knew. But I recognise the slide in her hair which matches the one in the painting, which Dad told me was her. Pots and people are as exciting as each other. The two have become merged.

I take out a small black pot. It is the one that I found a photograph of in a brown envelope, in a drawer in the bureau. I recognise its classic vase shape and the black semi-shiny glaze. The photograph has '1936' written on its back, the date the vase was made. Dad would have been sixteen. Like a game of snap, the connection traces a personal and meaningful history. The pot is the same one that is in the photograph.

I can see him standing in the annex, bending over, hesitating while remembering, before writing the date; the six-sided yellow pencil sharpened by a knife, with a chiselled angular edge up to and including the lead, giving that definite line with a thick and thin edge.

Context:

Lincoln School of Art as a Student 1932-1940

RLB was a student at Lincoln School of Art from the age of fourteen, having attended evening classes from the age of twelve, leaving school and attending full-time from 1934. Looking at his early work in the context of Lincoln School of Art gives us a broader framework and insight into contemporaneous initiatives and political developments. It provides information on the changing roles of artists and studio potters, which informed RLB's approaches to teaching ceramics and the production of his own work. He returned to develop his teaching career in this art school.

Art and design education is the oldest form of publicly funded education in the United Kingdom; it began in 1837 with art schools emerging to meet the needs of industry following the Industrial Revolution. It was hoped that Schools of Design would encourage Applied Arts and Design, and improve the aesthetic quality of poorly designed British products, which 'lack[ed] … originality'[2] and were inferior to their European counterparts. Continental Europeans were perceived to have had good design education with 'well-organised systems of vocational education'[3] leading to better manufacturing; British trade was suffering and education in design was needed.

The Parliamentary Select Committee of 1835/36 recommended 'a Government School of Design in London'[4] (this was Somerset House, which became the Central School of Design in 1852) 'with further annual funding to establish a network of provincial Schools in the major industrial centres of the country'.[5] By 1850 twenty art schools had been established to 'promulgate a government-sponsored notion of 'taste'.'[6]

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[2] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. p88

[3] Dent, H.C. (1946) *British Education*; 1965 ed., London: Longmans, Green and Co., for The British Council. p12

[4] Bird, E. (2000) Research in Art and Design: the first decade. Working Papers in Art and Design 1, University of Wolverhampton. [Online] [Accessed 10th September 2012] http://www.herts.ac.uk/

[5] Ibid. A Parliamentary Select Committee enquired 'into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts and of the principles of Design among the people, especially the manufacturing population of the country', concluding that the success of the continental countries was due to their funding of design education for the manufacturing industries.

[6] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. p87. For further discussions of popular notions of taste see: Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber. p9

Location of the National Schools of Design was determined by the position of the major industries, and the Potteries School of Design in Stoke-on-Trent opened in 1847,[7] followed shortly afterwards by two small design schools in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Burslem.[8] Both of these art schools performed an important design role for the Wedgwood and other ceramics factories. (RLB attended Burslem School of Art and worked at Wedgwood in 1940). For most of the nineteenth century education was largely the privilege of the sons of the rich,[9] this being long before the introduction of education for all. Art schools catered for pupils over fourteen years of age,[10] although the school-leaving age was not raised from ten to fourteen until 1893.

This background information is relevant contextual material as both of RLB's parents were keen supporters of educational development and were active members of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The early pioneers of the WEA recognised that a vital part of any struggle to improve the educational chances of the working people was to campaign for better state education for the young.

3.5. Detail of Fig. 3.6, showing year 1913 chalked on the wall.

[7] Clark, G. (1995), *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain*. London: Phaidon.

[8] Cooper, B.(2010) Stoke-on-Trent's first art schools. The Phoenix Trust [Accessed September 10th 2013] http://www.northstaffordshire.co.uk/?p=857

[9] Dent, H.C. (1946) *British Education*; 1965 ed., London: Longmans, Green & Co., for The British Council. In 1833 the Government granted the sum of £20,000 'in aid of private subscriptions for the erection of school houses for the education of the poorer classes in Great Britain'. p11

[10] Ibid. In 1870 the first Education Act for England and Wales was passed which laid the foundation of a national system of public education. This was the Elementary Education Act, which created the concept of compulsory education for children under thirteen, although it was not compulsory and only provided education of children up to 10 years of age. The Elementary Education Act of 1880 insisted on compulsory attendance from 5–12 years, but fees were charged.

3.6. This photograph is of a WEA Summer Conference at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1913. The year is chalked onto the left wall behind the participants. RLB's father, Luther Blatherwick, is standing in the back row on the right, wearing a dark suit and bow tie. RLB's mother, Florence, is in front of him seated with arms folded and wearing a dark cravat.

The 'Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations' which took place in Crystal Palace in 1851, had further exposed the problem of poor design. Britain had excelled in engineering and construction (as evidenced by the Crystal Palace building itself) and become a leader in the industry, but the design of anything which required aesthetic judgement: ceramics, furniture, fabrics, and glass, was problematic. The domination of the machine in industry had destroyed the design quality and intrinsic beauty of hand-made and crafted products. Art schools were opened, museums were founded, and exhibitions organised in response to this.[11]

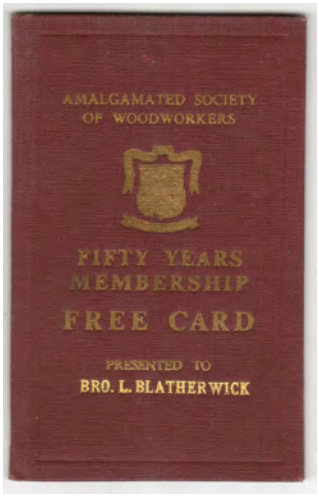
RLB's parents were keen supporters of such developments. His father, Luther, was a skilled craftsman who was born in Newark in 1885. He was apprenticed to a joinery firm at the age of sixteen, and spent his life working in grand houses building 'Oak flights in Brackenhurst Hall

[11] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber & Faber. A Museum of Ornamental Art was founded in 1852 which later moved into the Victoria and Albert Museum. The National Gallery in London was established in 1832 and for the first time art 'was admitted into an official discussion of economic affairs.'

and Stragglethorpe Hall amongst countless other [places]'.[12] He was foreman of the Stair Shop of Newsums, a joinery firm in Lincoln. In November 1958 he was presented with the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Fifty Years of Membership which entitled him to 'Benefits in accordance with the General Rules of the Society for the remainder of his life without payment of Contributions'.[13] He was clearly very proud of this and kept it in his wallet, along with his Lincoln City Football Club Season ticket. He

> had a well-merited reputation for his pungent, pithy criticism of slip-shod work, and many apprentices who have trained under him must be of the opinion that it was he who invented Basic English![14]

3.7. Postcard from family archive, believed to be the staircase at Stragglethorpe Hall, built by Luther Blatherwick.



3.8. Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Fifty Years of Membership presented to 'Bro.L. Blatherwick' on 22nd November 1958.

[12] Unknown author (1952) 'Spotlight on Luther Edward Spiby Blatherwick', *The Log, Newsums,* October, p2. Family archive. Oak flights were wooden staircases.

[13] As stated on Luther Blatherwick's membership card, Family archive.

[14] Unknown author (1952) 'Spotlight on Luther Edward Spiby Blatherwick', *The Log, Newsums,* October,p2 Family archive.

Lincoln School of Art was one of the first art schools that originated from developments following the Great Exhibition. It ranked high among the art schools in the UK for much of the nineteenth century and was part of the South Kensington System and The National Art Training System with schools spread out over Great Britain and Ireland, administered by the Department of Science and Art in London.[15] It was opened in 1863 as a private venture by John Somerville Gibney (d.1875) who was a Canon of Lincoln Cathedral.

Lincoln had an immediate industrial and commercial need for draughtsmen with its expanding engineering industry. It had two large firms manufacturing diesel and steam engines: Ruston's opened in 1840, and Robey's opened in 1854. They needed draughtsmen to produce accurate drawings of machine and engineering parts, and to illustrate catalogues. Courses on draughtsmanship at Lincoln School of Art provided an immediate utilitarian link with these industrial requirements. Access to information for the individual and industry was increased by publications. The first technical ceramics handbook in English was 'A Treatise on Ceramic Industries' published in 1901. It was 'intended for practical men rather than for the scientist' and covered

> the manipulation of every class of ceramic ware from the common brick to the finest porcelain, and thus enables the reader to compare the effect of the general principles governing the manufacture of the most diverse products.[16]

A copy of this was in RLB's book collection, inscribed with his name and 'Lincoln 1942'. This provides evidence of the issues he was interested in at that time.

Art, Craft and Design Education

Art schools were established to support industrial needs, but they were developing artists and designers who were increasingly interested in getting back to basics and in touch with raw materials, digging and 'mixing clay bodies, boiling up leaves, twigs and urine, attacking stone directly'.[17] This presents dilemmas and divided objectives. Is the purpose of fine art, design, and craft education the needs of industry? Or is it for the needs of the individual? The desire for

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[15] (Usher Gallery, Lincoln (2013) 'Past and Present: A Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Lincoln School of Art and Design'. June. Wall text.

[16] Bourry, E. (1901) *A Treatise of Ceramic Industries*. 1926 Fourth Revised English ed., London: Scott, Greenwood & Son. Introduction by Alfred B. Searle, pv. Family archive.

[17] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p29

independent thought and autonomy is frequently not conducive to supporting industry, and presents a split in interest and direction. There is a constantly shifting emphasis on these subjects and teaching approaches. The meaning and purpose of art, the definitions and status of arts and crafts, and the development of the individual compared with the needs of industry are frequently recurring polemical dilemmas. The place of art, craft, industry and the curriculum has been subject to many changes in approach and attitude, and it continues today. The role of design and industry/business is an important thread which runs through art, craft, and design education initiatives. It was an issue which was discussed as long ago as 1916. In a special edition of *The Studio* magazine, which was in the family archive, a review asked: 'What are the art schools of Great Britain and Ireland doing to foster the close union of the Arts and Crafts?'[18]

Art school education had a strong arts and crafts emphasis, but up to the introduction of the Intermediate Certificate in Arts and Crafts in 1946, a 'substantial amount of the craft work which was carried out in art schools…was not built into the national examination system'[19] and excluded practical craft work. The significance of this cannot be ignored and it is as important today as it was then: the need for greater accountability and the way it is measured in terms of performance put the emphasis on examinations, which are taken as the main index of success. 'In practice, those activities which are not examinable suffer in terms of space, staffing, time facilities – and status'.[20] The Board of Education's exam, introduced in 1913,

> remained substantially intact until 1946 … The majority of candidates were fulltime students of schools of art who had continued their secondary education up to the age of sixteen.[21]

RLB followed a broad range of courses:

> The Drawing Examination, which was usually taken at the end of the second year of full time study, consisted of tests in six subjects.[22]

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[18] Unknown author, (1916) 'What are the Art Schools of Great Britain and Ireland doing to foster the close union of the Arts and Crafts?' *The Studio.* Sept LXViii. No 282, Family archive.

[19] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p231. From 1935 the Board of Education had required candidates to send specimens of actual objects, if they had submitted craftwork design in a drawn form..

[20] Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1982) *The Arts in Schools. Principles, Practice and Provision*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. p8. The Gulbenkian Foundation was stabilised after in the late 1970s amid concerns about the poor lack of arts provision in the curriculum, which seemed to exclude not only the arts but some of the principles upon which the idea of education had developed since the Education Act of 1944 pp1-17.

[21] Read, H. (1934) 'Departmental Committee on Art Examinations Report 1948'. *Art and Industry.* Faber and Faber. p194

[22] Ibid.

These were namely Drawing from Life, Drawing from the Antique, Drawing and Painting from Memory and Knowledge, Architecture, Anatomy, and Perspective. This was followed by a further two years in Painting, Pictorial Design, and Modelling. The focus of assessable knowledge was on a comprehensive range of two-dimensional drawing, and evidence of technique and skill produced in a visual format. It made no provision for crafts; being skilled at pottery for example did not merit a qualification. The only evidence of any formal qualification uncovered to date states that RLB gained the 'Board of Education Drawing Examination … in 1939' and had 'taken a short course' in Pottery and Modelling 'while at the School'.[23] However the visual evidence and the fact that he taught and was strongly commended for teaching a broad range of subjects later at the art school, including 'Modelling, General Knowledge, Lettering, Plant Drawing and General Pictorial work'[24] confirm that he had this knowledge.

The photograph on the following page shows RLB playing table tennis. This was apparently common recreation in art schools, before the introduction of computers. The environment shows a classical sculpture and the teaching of lettering formation on the blackboard. Students learnt by studying examples of classical forms and ideals, and the philosophical principles of proportion, balance and aesthetics.

> Drawing from the Cast meant that large plaster casts of Greek and Roman sculptures … were a feature of art schools in those days.[25]

[23] Marchbanck Salmon, J. (1953) 'Letter in support of application for post of Lecturer in Pottery at Loughborough College of Art'. (MS). Family archive.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* unpublished (MS), Family archive. p3

3.9. Photograph of RLB playing table-tennis in the art school c.1950, showing plaster cast sculptures and teaching of lettering forms on the blackboard.

These principals were derived from the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato, who discovered that proportions and shapes were a constant in nature and that the whole universe is based on number with every relationship expressed in numerical proportion and balance, creating the Golden Section. This played an enormous part in the history of science and informed almost all art from painting to architecture until the beginning of postmodernism.[26] These were frequently referred to by RLB; they had been a part of his formative education.[27]

The drawings in RLB's sketchbooks from this period reveal a detailed study of the history of pottery as well as hand-painted studies of pots from around the world from different periods and genres. He worked from museum exhibits and historical sources, with decoration and form providing knowledge and inspiration. Learning through looking, by drawing from direct observation is one of the important purposes of drawing, it is an aspect of the hand-eye-brain coordination in learning. He made studies of ceramics and had written an essay in which he compared Chinese (Sung and Ming) and Persian Wares.[28]

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[26] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber. p35 This is discussed further and referred to as Humanistic art.

[27] It was RLB who taught me about the proportions of the Golden Section in composition and classical architecture when I was studying for GCE Art examinations, these concepts were not taught as part of my school art education.

[28] Blatherwick, R.L. (c.1939) 'A Comparison of Chinese (Sung and Ming) and Persian Wares', unpublished (MS). Family archive.

3.10, 3.11. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Pages of student research book relating to the history and chronology of pottery. Undated, but pre 1940.

Examples of his student work: paintings, drawings, design, and sculpture – in marble, wood, clay, and plaster, as well as modelling, ceramic forms and pottery, were evident in the family home, and provide evidence of the breadth and depth of RLB's experience in a broad range of media.

He frequently referenced historical art in his work, extending beyond the boundaries of ceramics. The imagery in the RLB plate (below right) suggests Jean Francois Millet's (1814-1875) *The Sower;* the same image reference is also used in a 1933 wood engraving by

3.12. JEAN FRANÇOIS-MILLET (1850) *The Sower*, oil on canvas. A similar composition and image is used in:
3.13. CLARE LEIGHTON (1933) *April, Sowing,* wood engraving, and:
3.14. ROBERT BLATHERWICK (C.1939) *Plate Design,* student work.

Clare Leighton (1898-1989).[29] This also reveals a connection with the land, with the labouring man. Many other references can be identified when looking through books and periodicals in his collection.

Ceramics and Lincoln School of Art

Ceramics had played a significant role in the early period of Lincoln School of Art with senior staff being pottery tutors. The first headmaster of Lincoln School of Art was Edward R. Taylor (1838-1913),[30] who went on to found Ruskin Pottery (in 1898), which was notable for innovative glazes used on brightly coloured pots.[31] Taylor was a follower of the influential thinker John Ruskin (1819-1900), who believed that art and design had a social purpose. Ruskin was concerned about the dignity of labour and an honesty in the use of materials, believing it was the absence of human labour which made industrially manufactured items worthless and poor in quality.

In RLB's time as a student Austin Garland (1887-1966) was Head of the School (1920-1947) The senior assistant teacher Charles Hayes (dates unknown) taught pottery.[32] He left in 1937 or 1938, and his place was taken by another potter Arthur Broadbent (dates unknown), who left before the war.[33] Broadbent was succeeded by William Corrie.[34] Hayes, Broadbent, and Corrie were all Royal College of Art graduates. The status of these senior staff who were pottery teachers gives a further indication of the importance of ceramics at Lincoln School of Art, and will have had an impact on the status of ceramics when RLB was a student. Modelling and carving were taught by the sculptor Arthur Willetts,[35] and

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[29] Leighton, C. (1933) *The Farmer's Year: A Calendar of English Husbandry*. London: Collins

[30] Usher Gallery, Lincoln (2013) 'Past and Present: A Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Lincoln School of Art and Design'. June. Wall text.

[31] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. Ruskin Pottery was named after Ruskin, the artist, writer, and socialist whose beliefs Taylor empathised with. Taylor went on to become the first Principle of Birmingham School of Art (1877-1903)

[32] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* unpublished (MS), Family archive. p2 Charles Hayes later became Principal of Medway College of Art.

[33] Ibid. Arthur Broadbent took a post at Shrewsbury School (the public school,not the School of Art).

[34] Ibid. William Corrie was senior assistant teacher until 1948, when he became Principal of Great Yarmouth College of Art.

[35] Ibid. Arthur Willetts, who was art master of the City School in Lincoln, and taught evening classes at Lincoln School of Art. Willets was replaced by Hugh Robinson (dates unknown) as the City School art master, before he joined the staff at the school of art.

> downstairs in part of the City School workshop block … was a pottery … a printing workshop was … next to the pottery … and metalwork and silversmithing classes were held in the City School craft workshop.[36]

It was in these footsteps that he followed when he returned to teach here in 1944.

Ceramics Specialisation

The following studio photographs of RLB's work, with the dates written on their reverse side, are the type of professional photographs taken at an end-of-year exhibition.

3.15. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1940. Coffee set with four cups and saucers, a milk jug, and sugar bowl.

The coffee pot in the photograph above is modernist in design style, with its pronounced long spout, and the brush mark decoration has a Japanese quality. The glossiness of the glaze suggests these may be earthenware, but making a judgement on photographic evidence, one cannot be definite. This work is typical of the studio pottery movement of the time.

[36] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* Unpublished (MS), Family archive. p2.

The first period of modern British studio pottery lasted from 1920 to the mid-1950s and was dominated by Bernard Leach (1887-1979), Michael Cardew (1901-1983), and William Staite Murray (1881-1962). It had its roots in the "pure' traditions of Chinese Sung pottery and the slipwares of the English peasant potter'.[37] The items in the photograph above were domestic items designed for everyday use and represent desirable objects for people who were interested in style and design and wanted to follow William Morris's ideal of owning hand-crafted objects.

3.16. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1940. Student work.

In this photograph of his work as a student, three of the pieces appear to be earthenware, the jar on the right appears to have a Tenmoku stoneware glaze. The woman on the vase in the centre at the back of the photograph is a reference from *The Birth of Venus*, a painting of the goddess emerging from the sea by Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510). The piece in the centre-front is in the form of a Chinese ginger jar, with seahorses. Chinese mythology believed that the seahorse was a type of sea dragon. It is said to represent strength and power and to be a symbol of good luck. Seahorses also appear in Greek and Roman mythology and are

[37] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. p136

associated with the sea gods.[38] The seahorse forms part of the alphabet of RLB, as it recurs in his tile designs, as does the eagle on the vase on the left, which also appears later. Traditional ginger jars of the Sung Dynasty (960-1269) were made of porcelain. The making and designing of these pieces reflects the value and respect applied to broad cultural references.

3.17, 3.18. ROBERT BLATHERWICK student work. The photograph on the left is dated 1940, the one on the right is dated 1939-42.

These pots are painted with slips and oxides, showing painted and scraffito designs, and reveal attention to decoration and design of individual pieces (the two small pieces appear to be stoneware).

William Staite Murray was Head of Ceramics at the Royal College of Art from 1926-1940. RLB and his tutors who had been educated there would have been aware of developments that were taking place, both at the RCA and in exhibitions nationally. A review from 1928 in *Apollo: A Journal of the Arts* stated that Staite Murray saw himself as an artist, rather than an artisan:

> Mr Murray … wishes his pots to be regarded as works of art, as equivalents of paintings: hence such titles as 'Girlhood', 'Nocturne in Black and Bronze', 'The Sea through Trees'; hence also the prices - twenty, thirty, forty and fifty guineas - he is asking for some of them.[39]

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[38] Chastain, B, (2012) What role does the seahorse play in mythology? [Accessed 2012, September 10th]. http://www.webanswers.com/social-sciences/mythology/what-role-does-the-seahorse-play-in-mythology-ba0af1 'Seahorses have appeared in myths and legends for at least two thousand years. The sea god in both Greek and Roman mythology always appears with the seahorse or hippocampus. Poseidon (the Greek god of the sea) is depicted riding on the back of a seahorse. Neptune (the Roman god of the sea) uses seahorses to draw his chariot. The Romans, in particular, have left many pictorial representations of Neptune with seahorses which have survived to this day. The best known … are the mosaic pictures of Neptune at the Roman baths in the city of Bath, UK. You can also see Neptune with seahorses on the Trevi Fountain, Rome in Italy'.

[39] Author unknown. *Apollo: A Journal of the Arts*, (1928), Vol. VIII, No 44, August. p110. Family archive.

His approach to ceramics was the production of unique one-off pots as pieces. He marked them with extremely high prices, rejecting any need for functionality or affordability, and by giving his work titles made them take on personal statements. He showed his work in respected fine art galleries, exhibiting with painters and sculptors.[40] This demonstrates the ambiguous status of pottery and its position as an item of art or craft. Murray was described as a very influential potter and teacher. He had an

> odd reputation of teaching by silence – you know he would walk into the studio and look at them and then say nothing so that the students had to think, 'God, What? What? What? What?'[41]

He was a Buddhist and very interested in pots from the East and oriental ideas. He was also regarded as an 'aesthetic genius' and Pleydell-Bouverie said 'there was a real splendour about his pots'.[42] Staite Murray's philosophical approach to ceramics was radically different from that of William Morris or Bernard Leach. His approach was considered elitist and at odds with the more functional pots of Leach, whose attitude to function and affordability appeared to be more socially responsible. RLB made one-off pieces and showed his work with painters and sculptors (in the Lincolnshire Artists Society for example). Some say his prices were high, but they were not in the Staite Murray league of prices.[43] RLB also made functional and affordable pots. Garth Clark describes the Staite Murray versus Leach divide as exemplifying the

> schizophrenic polarities of the modern potter, torn between the practical artisanal world of craft on the one hand and the subjectivity of the fine arts on the other.[44]

This polarity between fine art and craft continued to present questions and dilemmas throughout the twentieth century, both in art education and in the recording of ceramics. The work RLB produced at Lincoln falls into both camps, with some decorative and expressive individual pieces and some very functional sets of domestic pots, and this points to the way he was to work in the future.

The art school education and experience of this period created studio potters with a sense of diversity and independence similar to that of the painter or sculptor; they were knowledgeable

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[40] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. In 1932 Staite-Murray priced one of his pots at 160 guineas.

[41] Cooper, E. (2002) Emmanuel Cooper on William Staite Murray, Video. Victoria and Albert Museum [Accessed 14th September 2013]. http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/videos/e/video-emmanuel-cooper-on-william-staite-murray/ .

[42] Pleydell-Bouverie, quoted in Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. p141

[43] Moss, P. (2012) commented that RLB's prices were high. Blatherwick, S.L. (2012) *'Robert Blatherwick'* Usher Gallery Lincoln. 8th September. Showcase display and slide presentation.

[44] Clark, G. (1995), *The Potter's Art A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon.p136

artists who made pots as one strand of their creative practice. This is important to establish as the training for a potter became narrower and more functional as the subject became marginalised in the curriculum later. This broad-based approach was to become evident in publications of the time: *The Burlington Magazine* presented itself as synthesising opposing traditions – 'historicist versus aestheticism and academic versus commercial'.[45] It was evident in Europe too. Magazines such as *Kunsthaandværk,* produced in Denmark, cover a broad range of arts and crafts. These were sent to RLB from Copenhagen, revealing the influence of Scandinavian modernism, an interest in simplified furniture, a move away from the dark oak of the nineteenth century. Hand-block-printed textiles, kelim rugs, weaving, calligraphy, letter-cutting, simplicity, bare walls, folk art, *objets trouvés,* characterised a new aesthetic.

On his graduation in 1940 RLB was awarded The Gibney Art Scholarship of £25.00 per annum. This was

> awarded [bi-annually] on the result of the examination of works submitted to the Board of Education by the respective candidates and the recommendation of the Board thereon.[46]

This was an extremely significant award, and acknowledgement of the quality of his work. The most well-known of other receivers of the award was William Logsdail (1859-1944), a painter of English and Venetian landscapes, who exhibited at the Royal Academy. Many of his works now hang in the Usher Gallery in Lincoln.[47]

The terms of the Scholarship state that it was 'to be held for two years at the School of Art, and the holder must not hold any other appointment'.[48] This scholarship enabled him to develop his experience with more specialist study at Burslem School of Art with industrial experience at Wedgwood Pottery in Stoke-on-Trent, and maintain his connection with Lincoln School of Art.

The Second World War had begun.

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[45] Among the family archive are copies of the *Burlington Magazine* and *The Connoisseur.* Some of these are marked with Lincoln School of Art Library stamp.

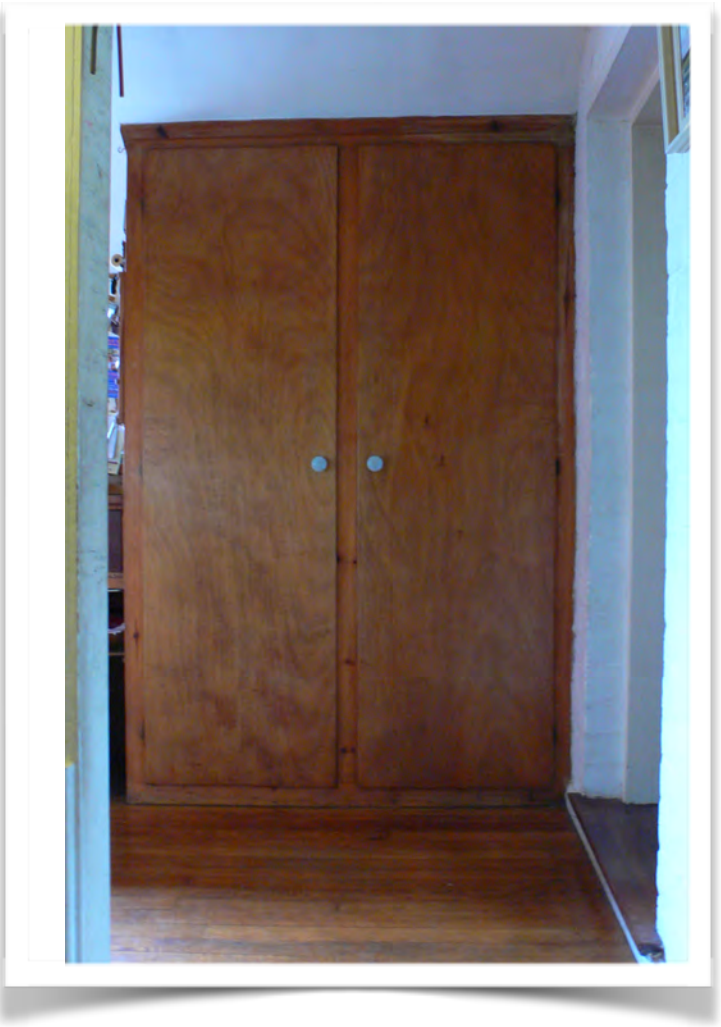
[46] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years 1906-2006.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society. pv. The Gibney Scholarship was named after Canon John Somerville Gibney, who opened Lincoln School of Art and Design in 1863.

[47] Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1946-47 (1946), Lincoln: n/a. Author's collection. The prospectus lists other receivers of the Gibney Art Scholarship.

[48] Ibid.

Chapter 4

Site: The Kitchen Cupboard



4.1. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1950. Porcelain door knobs

Open the big doors to the cupboard and inside you will find three large cool grey slate shelves which cross the width of the cupboard, a wooden shelf towards the top and two shallow ones in-between. These shelves and the cupboard were installed when the building was converted into a house in 1955, before fridges were in common use, when slate was used to retain coolness. Each area was designated for specific items, the food shelves on the left for tins and cans, bottles and cereal packets; the crockery shelves on the right for everyday plates, mugs, cereal bowls, wine goblets, and items too small for display.

At the bottom of the cupboard were two stacks of biscuit tins and a Tupperware tub. Behind these, in the darkness at the rear, was a collection of pots, jugs, jars, bottles, flower vases and items that were useful for display but not in regular use.

Some of these were very familiar: a cracked Wedgwood teapot with a purple decoration in which ribbons were kept, a reminder of a morning ritual when mum plaited my hair. It used to be on the shelf along the landing, but there were also some pots I had rarely seen before. These provide links to the past and some of them connect with the photographs I have discovered. They reveal another life history, squirrelled away, stored and preserved.

It is my belief that most of the studio pots at the back of this cupboard were made by Dad, this being the reason they were kept here, in a secure and safe place. Some were from his time as a student, at Wedgwood and at St Ives, some from later. Mum had gathered this collection, I had videoed her talking about them, but there were some which threw up questions. He did not always mark his pots with his stamp or initials. For some potters it is a routine, but there were times when the moment of inscribing or placing a stamp on the base just passed by: pressure of time, visitor at the door, coffee break, stamp not to hand. Or maybe the moment for the best time to stamp was missed, when the clay is not soft and not hard, before it becomes leather-hard. Or he may just have been thinking they did not need to be marked. People were always telling him that he should stamp his pots, yet throughout his career he was inconsistent with this; he would do it for a while and then lapse again.

A few pots in this cupboard did not look quite like the type of pot dad made. A large vase has the look of a Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie: it has the appearance of her glaze and is the sort of shape she made. She was at Winchcombe at the same time he was, so it could be hers; perhaps they swapped, or it could be one of his. Pots were rarely purchased; why buy them when you can make them yourself? And there were always more essential items to spend money on. Hanging on a hook was a Michael Cardew mug.

4.2. Probably by ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1945-1955 in the style of Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie

Object: The Wedgwood Plates

4.3. Robert Blatherwick. 1940/41. Decorated Wedgwood blanks, earthenware with on-glaze and lustre decoration.

We grew up in an environment of studio pottery; this was very different from the industrial ceramics produced at Wedgwood. I have tried to recollect why I had a negative and poorly-formed bias against the concept of Wedgwood Pottery; and I am not sure how that has come about. I concluded that in our home Wedgwood Pottery was respected, but not revered. It was the sort of pottery that other people had in their houses but not the sort that we had. When I came to research, I discovered that I was wrong, and we had a number of Wedgwood pieces, that we had eaten off Ravilious *Garden* and *Persephone* dinner plates for years, and that the plates kept for best were grey *Napoleon Ivy Leaf* design, that had been made in Etruria in 1940.[1] Some of these were seconds, and we used to enjoy finding the place where the transfer had not met up accurately. The work produced at Wedgwood was more connected with the art schools and political, industrial, and creative initiatives than I had previously been aware of.

These plates in Fig.4.3 were decorated by RLB when he had completed his studies at Lincoln School of Art. He went to Wedgwood Pottery in Stoke-on-Trent for industrial production experience. These plates are factory produced earthenware blanks, with a warm grey glaze in the centre and a hand-painted purple band, with a Scraffito V through the purple, and a lustre brushstroke design painted on the edges. The design is simple and effective. It demonstrates control of colour, tone, and brush, as well as a penchant for decoration. This set, of six small side-plates and one large plate, was kept for best, coming out of the cupboard only for Christmas or Boxing Day tea.

Wedgwood was known for white earthenware though produced many other types of pottery. For studio potters it symbolised the industrial processes they were rejecting. Earthenware, as a type of pottery has had trouble in shaking off this perception, along with the association of red terracotta clay being connected with country pottery and plant pots.

[1] Wedgwood Napoleon Ivy pottery was advertised in *The Pottery Gazette* (Feb - Dec 1941), Vol. 66. The advertisement stated it was' selected for use of the ex-Emperor during his exile on St Helena from 1815 till his death in 1821. Recent revival of regency motif — one of WW's most historically interesting patterns'. Unknown author (1963) *The Pottery Gazette.* Proprietors: Scott Greenwood and Son Ltd, London. Accessed Hanley City Central Library Archives, Stoke-on-Trent. 2012

Context: Wedgwood Pottery 1940–1941

> Wedgwood produced a large range of wares with printed, slip-trailed decoration, inspired by Japanese designs, Middle Eastern and early civilisations such as pre-Columbian and ancient Egyptian styles which had been blended with classical traditions associated with the factory.
>
> — Maureen Batkin
> *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959: A New Appraisal*

'In the summer of 1940 [RLB] spent four months at Burslem School of Art followed by a six-month student placement at the Wedgwood Factory'.[2] He went 'for a short period to Messrs. Wedgwood's'[3] from January to July 1941. This was an important training ground in industrial ceramic production methods and experience. RLB was at Wedgwood again for a short time in 1963.[4] The Wedgwood archivists have been unable to find any record of RLB's time at the factory. The mark on the rear of the plates RLB decorated (Fig. 4.3a) was also one with which Wedgwood archivists were unfamiliar:

> the backstamp which appears on the 'blanks' which your father decorated around 1940-41 – it is not a backstamp I can readily recognise – but I will try to track it down. I will ask … if there are any records which may help ... It may take a while …[5]

4.3a. Backstamp on RLB Wedgwood decorated plates

[2] Walter, J. (2006) 'An Independent Spirit'. *Ceramic Review*. No. 221, p.48.

[3] Marchbanck Salmon, J. (1953) 'Letter in support of application for post of Lecturer in Pottery at Loughborough College of Art'. 30th April. (MS). Family archive. (This reference was written for a post applied for at Loughborough College of Art. A letter from Loughborough College of Art, dated 22nd June 1953, informed RLB that circumstances had arisen which resulted in the post being offered to David Leach for a short period, and they would retain his application for when the post became vacant again. Family archive).

[4] Blatherwick, R.L. (1963) Letter-card to Marjorie, from Wedgwood Memorial College, Barlaston, (n.d.) franked 1963. Family archive.

[5] Miller, L. (2012) private emails to author, from Wedgwood Museum, 17th July. Author's archive.

As no specific details of work or training undertaken exist and records cannot be found, investigations involve looking at photographs, sketchbooks and pots in the family collection from that period, and connect with what was happening at the time.[6] An investigation into the artists and designers at Wedgwood during this period helps to establish the impact and influence of time and place, which link with RLB's ceramic and design ideas.

It was war time and conditions in the factory were grim. Stoke-on-Trent had been bombed a number of times, factories and retail shops were damaged.[7] The working conditions were poor by today's standards and the war made them worse. 'Broken glass, reduction in natural light, and damage falling from roof' were all noted as problems. Blackouts, bombing, transport and long hours were causing more accidents to happen and poor lighting.[8]

Coordination between the art schools and the manufacturing industry was part of a government experiment, aimed at strengthening links between art and industry. Eric Gill had written 'Art and Industrialism' and addressed the Design and Industries Association in 1933.[9] Coordination continued for many years, with varying degrees of commitment. A review of an exhibition by students at the Royal College of Art twenty years later, in 1963 – 'The Shape of Things to Come' – stated that it was 'part of the college's aim … to foster a closer liaison between studio pottery and industrial design'.[10]

Industry and the art schools aimed to tackle the problem of poor British design and design awareness. This was not a new problem. As noted in the previous chapter, the museums in South Kensington and Trafalgar Square had been established for this purpose – they were not just places full of glorious artefacts. Their purpose was to educate the consumer on 'correct taste'[11] and instil a sense of design in manufacturing. The development of the crafts and studio pottery movement is a direct consequence of the close connection of education and industry, an economic necessity.

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[6] Dated photographs from the family archive provide indications about the production dates of some items.

[7] Unknown author (1940) 'A Pottery is Bombed', *The Pottery Gazette*. Volume. 66. London: Scott Greenwood and Son. Feb-Dec. Accessed: City Central Library Archives, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. 2011

[8] Ibid. p245.

[9] Gill, E, (1933) 'Art and Industrialism'. Address to the Design and Industries Association. *Design for Today*. May. p33. Family archive

[10] Unknown author (1941) *The Pottery Gazette*. Volume. 66. London: Scott Greenwood and Son. Feb-Dec. Accessed: City Central Library Archives, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. 2011

[11] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber. p43

Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) had 'the wit to discover that "art pays",'[12] by connecting art and craft with industry. He has been described as a marketing genius and is consequently one of the key characters responsible for revitalising British ceramics.[13] He was an innovative social reformer and designer. The Wedgwood factory was founded in 1759 as a manufacturer of high-quality pottery, which developed as a result of the seventeenth-century British obsession with drinking tea. Herbert Read describes Wedgwood as converting 'peasant craft into an industrial manufacture'.[14] Their products were sophisticated and refined, especially when compared with the English country slipware of the 1800s.

Wedgwood's view was very different to William Morris's (1834-1896). Morris was a socialist and idealist, and argued that the machines of the Industrial Revolution had alienated people. He believed that industry was inconsistent with art, and that all machines should be abolished. Wedgwood saw art as something he could import and use. The factory was a family-run business which used mass-production methods for making prestigious domestic and decorative products. Wedgwood's history is a rags-to-riches-to-rags epic, built in a city of clay, it was at the heart of Britain's ceramics empire.

Wedgwood produced a huge range of designs. Some of these are displayed in the Wedgwood Museum, which has been under threat of closure. It has a very interesting collection of pattern books with designs and ornaments beautifully drawn by different artists.[15] These are a visual delight and source of inspiration, the quality of which is sometimes lost when transferred to the final ceramic article. RLB was interested in decorative design, as was evidenced in his work and book collection.

Many of Wedgwood's ranges had been discontinued after the Wall Street crash of 1929 and in rebuilding the company utilised designers. The connection with the art schools was important. The 'Design and Industries Association' was formed in 1915, followed by 'The Council of Industrial Art and Design' in 1934[16] and 'The Council for Industrial Design' in 1944. These were government bodies created to oversee problems and establish new attitudes to design

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[12] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber. p43

[13] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959: A New Appraisal.* London: Richard Dennis. He invented the pyrometer for measuring kiln temperatures, for which he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1783. He was also interested in efficient factory organisation, and improving the transportation of raw materials and finished wares via the canals in Britain.

[14] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber. p41

[15] The Wedgwood Museum, is located in Wedgwood Drive, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent ST12 9ER. Visited 2012.

[16] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

and industry. The Royal College of Art became an independent foundation to extend the principles of design, providing advanced teaching and research in Fine Arts and Design. With industry focused on capitalism and consumerism and art school education focused on the pursuit of aesthetic ideals, there were obvious tensions. Wedgwood had a history of developing links between industry and artists, and was keen to develop a relationship with the crafts and design skills developed in the art schools.

Wedgwood created a kind of white earthenware which was durable, with which they produced a range of simple and regular white wares. These concepts of simple and white have become associated with an understanding of industrial earthenware. Slipwares were introduced after 1936 and remained in production until the 1950s, with 'new shapes, thrown on the wheel, dipped in different coloured slips, dried and slip cut away to reveal the lighter body'.[17]

Wedgwood produced a huge range and by the mid-1930s needed to modernise and move the production of earthenware to new works.[18] The first section of the factory was completed in April 1940, but the Second World War halted progress, so the move was not completed till the late 1940s. A set of 'Napoleon Ivy Leaf' plates which were produced in Etruria were in the family household. It is possible that RLB had spent some time working in Etruria.

4.4. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1941. Casseroles, soup bowls, plates and jug. The date of this photograph gives an indication of the type of work he was making at this time.

[17] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:A New Appraisal*. London: Richard Dennis. p205

[18] This culminated in the decision to leave Etruria and move production to a modern purpose-built factory in a rural setting at Barlaston Hall estate, near Trentham, south of The Potteries.

The photograph Fig.4.4 has the date '1941' written on the reverse. It shows a set of thrown domestic items: matching casseroles with lids, soup bowls, side plates, gravy jug, and a dinner plate. The definition in the throwing lines and lack of decoration indicate that the pieces are biscuit-fired pieces. The emphasis is on production throwing of repeated shapes of identical size. These are one of the types of work made at Wedgwood Pottery, intended for the domestic environment as part of a dinner service. This is a studio photograph, so why they are unglazed is unclear. In the casseroles we see a type of handle which was frequently used on RLB's dishes, but the bowls curving inwards towards the top are not typical of his shapes. Much of Wedgwood production was slip-cast, but some sets would be hand-thrown, and this would be the type of work a production thrower would do day in, day out.

Early Wedgwood designs were influenced by the ancient cultures rediscovered when Britain was expanding its empire. Motifs from ancient Roman, Greek and Egyptian mythologies were applied as decorative design to Jasperware, Basaltware, Queensware and Caneware. Some of this classical imagery is evident in RLB's sketchbook, and he used some of these techniques in pieces he made. The plant pots below left are a series of stoneware plant pots with attached clay sprigs, imprinted with a decorative stamp motif. The technique is similar to that illustrated in the Wedgwood Jasperware piece, below right. These stoneware plant pots (Fig. 4.5) were made at a later time in the 1950s, using the techniques acquired from this period at Wedgwood.

4.5. Left: ROBERT BLATHERWICK stoneware plant pots, with attached sprigs of clay.
4.6. Right: Wedgwood Jasperware vase, with design attached by sprigs of clay.

Slip decoration and scraffito techniques for mass production had been developed at the factory, and chemists conducted experiments to improve and develop bodies and glazes.[19] This knowledge relating to mixing clay bodies was carried with RLB into other work, the tiles for the Holton-cum-Beckering doorway for example, which is discussed in Chapter 8.

Some Wedgwood work was exhibited at 'Arts and Crafts' exhibitions.[20] There was widespread enthusiasm for design and decoration based on William Morris's craft principles. Liberty's and Heals actively supported arts and craft designers, and new organisations such as The Art Workers Guild created public appreciation of new ideas. Industry utilised these ideals to reach a wider audience, adapting styles and principles to suit industrial production demands.

Hand-painting of ceramics had been revived in the early twentieth century by Alfred (1865-1960) and Louise (1882-1956) Powell and a hand-craft department was established at Wedgwood. They introduced an arts and crafts philosophy which affected many areas of production and attitudes towards decoration. The Powells had a studio in London, taught china painting at Central School of Art, and encouraged artists and designers to decorate pottery. They took earthenware blanks, such as the ones used by RLB in Fig. 4.3. to London and returned them decorated to Wedgwood for glazing and firing. Some of the artists they worked with used these blanks and included their work in exhibitions organised by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. The painter Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942) decorated for Wedgwood. Kenneth Clark commissioned a dinner service from Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant in1932, which they painted on Wedgwood blanks. These artists saw the possibility of using the plate as a canvas. The Powells undertook commissions by owners of country houses in the 1940s and 1950s. Throwing and hand-painting became important and this influenced the design and decoration of table wares during the 1920s and 30s.[21] The hand-painted craft element was important.

While RLB was at Wedgwood he attended the Burslem School of Art for tuition,[22] and this was where Millicent Taplin (1902-1980) taught majolica painting on ceramics. She had been trained

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[19] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:A New Appraisal.* London: Richard Dennis. Thomas Allen in the 1880s had introduced processes associated with painted carved or modelled slips, and had taken slip trailing to new heights of excellence with freely drawn foliate and floral forms. These techniques were applied to a wide range of wares including bone china, stoneware, and tiles. Slip decoration techniques had been developed at Etruria.

[20] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:A New Appraisal.* London: Richard Dennis. In 1936 an exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, London, had a display of new developments, named 'factory designers', displaying the link with designers and the industry.

[21] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:A New Appraisa*l. London: Richard Dennis.

[22] Marchbanck Salmon, J. (1953) 'Letter in support of application for post of Lecturer in Pottery at Loughborough College of Art'. 30th April. (MS). Family archive.

by the Powells and she ran the department of hand-painting on table and ornamental wares designed for quantity production at Etruria. During the late 1930s she was one of Wedgwood's most prolific designers who created printed and painted patterns for china. She became associated with the success of freehand painting. In 1940 she taught full-time and remained a design consultant for Wedgwood. An obituary for her was among the books in the family collection, cut out from a newspaper. It is probable that she taught RLB; the designs on the plates in Fig.4.3 were hand painted. What is interesting is that the use of decoration was banned on British ware during the war, but allowed to continue on exports.[23]

Victor Skellern (1909-1966) was Art Director when RLB was at Wedgwood, appointed in 1935 to improve the poor financial position of the 1930s. He was their first permanent fully-trained professional designer. Skellern had studied at the Royal College of Art and believed that decoration and modern design had a role to play. He engaged freelance artists and designers to forge closer links between art and industry.[24] This provided artists with industrial experience and commercial methods of production, and regenerated Wedgwood's image. Many makers, including Leach, Cardew, and contemporary curator Garth Clark, believed that industrial ceramics should be designed by men and women with direct experience as potters.[25]

The artists and designers at Wedgwood during the 1940s represent a particular type of Englishness. Their designs are bold and many are connected by an interest in natural forms, landscape, wildlife, gardening activities, frequently expressed in the style of wood-block design. There is a celebration of what is known and familiar. The need for this is heightened when that which is known comes under threat, and the country was at war. (There is a similarity between this author and the family home: what is known and has always been there is under threat of disappearance). Alexandra Harris discusses this in *Romantic Moderns,*[26] and the subjects elaborated therein were close to RLB's heart. He shared interests with the Romantic Moderns and some of their works or information relating to them was in the RLB household. These include Edward Bawden, who was an illustrator, book-, poster-, textile- and wallpaper

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[23] Batkin, M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:, A New Appraisa*l. London: Richard Dennis.

[24] Batkin M. (1982) *Wedgwood Ceramics, 1846-1959:A New Appraisa*l. Richard Dennis, London. The RCA had become an independent foundation to provide advanced teaching and conduct research in Fine Arts and the principles of design. Skellern was taught by Edward Bawden (1903-1989).

[25] Cardew, M. (1942) 'Industry and the Studio Potter', In Clark, G. (ed.) (1978) *Ceramic Art: Comment and Review 1882-1977: An Anthology of Writings on Modern Ceramic Art.* New York: E.P. Dutton. pp89-99; Leach, B. (1940) 'Towards a Standard'. *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber.p21; Clark, G. (2003) 'The future of functional pottery. Part one: an argument for free design'. *Shards, Garth Clark on Ceramic Art. In:* Pagliaro, J. (ed.). The University of Michigan: Distributed Art Publications. pp375-387

[26] Harris, A. (2010) *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper.* London: Thames & Hudson.



4.7, 4.9. Left and right images: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1950. Handmade terracotta tiles, with attached clay motifs. 9 inches square.
4.8. Central image: ERIC RAVILIOUS 1930/40. *Garden* plate design, Wedgwood.

designer throughout the1930s, and was the Official War Artist. Bawden visited Etruria and worked for Wedgwood in 1946. Richard Gerald Talbot Guyatt (1914-2007) designed for Wedgwood. He was a graphic designer who created stylised images of landscapes, producing iconic posters for *Shell* and *British Petroleum.* Clare Leighton (1898-1989) is known for her woodcuts depicting scenes from rural life, designed for Wedgwood in the 1950s, one of her books was in the family household.[27] Sculptor John Skeaping (1901-1980), the husband of Barbara Hepworth worked at Wedgwood and was also in St Ives two years later, at the same time as RLB; and designer Susie Cooper (1902-1995) was at Wedgwood from August 1941.[28]

Eric William Ravilious (1903-1942) was perhaps the most prolific and interesting of freelance designers who produced many designs for Wedgwood between 1936 and 1940.[29] He designed the commemorative mug for the Coronation of Edward VIII in 1936, which was adapted for the Coronation of George VI in 1937 after Edward abdicated, and the same design, with minor alterations, was used for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. He designed an *Alphabet* nursery mug in 1937, one of which was in the RLB household. Ravilious and Bawden had been students together, they were both taught by the painter Paul Nash (1989-1946), and both produced illustrations for the Curwen Press, who specialise in publications with hand-printed imagery. Ravilious has become popular for the designs of garden and horticultural implements he made in 1938, and RLB used a similar subjects in his tile designs. Ravilious's observational drawings and designs were stylised and decorative. He was an Official War Artist but was killed in 1942.

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[27] Leighton C. (1935) *Four Hedges, A Gardener's Chronicle.* London: Victor Gollancz. was in family archive. A newspaper obituary for Clare Leighton had been cut out and inserted among the pages of this book.

[28] Michael Cardew had also been in Stoke-on-Trent in 1938, familiarising himself with industrial processes at Copeland Pottery.

[29] Ravilious worked on murals at Morley College with Edward Bawden in 1928. He was introduced to industrial design in 1933 when twenty-seven young artists were invited to design for tableware; the results were exhibited in Harrods in 1934. Because of restrictions imposed by the war many of his designs were not produced in quantity until the 1950s.

While in Stoke-on-Trent RLB visited the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery which contains one of the world's best collections of traditional English pottery and Staffordshire ceramics, particularly the work of Thomas Toft (d. 1698) and many other excellent examples of seventeenth-century slipware. RLB's sketchbooks of the time contain these observational watercolour studies of Thomas Toft plates that are in the museum.[30]

4.10. ROBERT BLATHERWICK c.1940. Studies of Thomas Toft slip decorated plates. Watercolour.

[30] Blatherwick, R.L. (c. 1940-41) RLB Sketchbook, Staffordshire slipware plates. Family archive.

Both the photographs in Fig. 4.11 and Fig. 4.12 are dated 1941. They show ceramic work by RLB reflecting two different genres.

4.11. ROBERT BLATHERWICK 1941. Display of work. with *Nocturne* dish.

The photograph above (Fig. 4.11) contains two thrown vases reflecting classical form. The *Nocturne* dish on the right is a response to Debussy's *Nocturne* (1899) with stars, sudden flashes of lightning, and dancing rhythms of the atmosphere. The decoration bears a resemblance to the style of Ravilious.

4.12. ROBERT BLATHERWICK 1941. *The Fall of Man*. Cider flagon with cider mugs.

The photograph Fig. 4.12. is of a cider flagon with matching mugs. It is possible it was made after he left Wedgwood. It is included here to highlight the different styles and genres of work produced in this calendar year, 1941. The *Fall of Man* is slip trailed on the vertical surface of each mug, and the decoration of the flagon contains a decorative winged phoenix. According to biblical myths, the phoenix was the only bird that refused to eat the fruit offered by Eve and was given the gift of eternal life and allowed to remain in paradise after the fall of man.[31] This cider flagon and beakers represent a witty metaphorical message relating to the intended alcoholic contents. Brewing jars were a form of domestic country pottery, but the decoration and form of this one is sophisticated and refined, reflecting a hybrid.

These examples illustrate the breadth of RLB's experience at this particular period in time: repeat production throwing, studio art pottery, and work with connections to the English slipware tradition, with a difference. Hebert Read observed a dualism in English pottery which had never existed before, between the 'fine' and the 'utilitarian' arts. But there was more than one dualism. There was studio pottery and factory-produced; mass-produced fine-art pottery and individually produced fine-art pottery; production throwing and 'one-off' throwing; a difference between art and function, between the needs of the designer/maker and the needs of industry.[32]

This time at Wedgwood provided useful training and broadening of experience. But working in a factory as part of a production team was not the life RLB aspired to. Conditions in the factory were poor, and the British Ceramic Society had identified the need for improvement in pottery working conditions.[33] On a visit to these workshops in 1980, they still emitted a Dickensian appearance, with people sitting in rows in dimly lit warehouses, painstakingly laying stencils or hand-painting detailed decorative designs.[34]

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[31] Van den Broek, R. (1972) *The Myth of the Phoenix: According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*. The Abode. p326. [Accessed 1st August 2014].

[32] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber and Faber.

[33] Unknown author (1941) *The Pottery Gazette*. Volume. 66. London: Scott Greenwood and Son. Feb-Dec. Accessed: City Central Library Archives, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. 2011There were many injuries in the factories of Stoke-on-Trent: in 1939 a total of 193,475 accidents were reported to the Chief Inspector of Factories which included 1104 fatalities. 17,000 women injured, including 11 fatalities. 34,000 young persons were injured with 55 fatalities. '[A]ll these accidents involving enormous wastage of productive capacity – all these figures related to more than 3 days of disablement – hundreds of thousand more minor injuries'.

[34] The author visited these workshops with Goldsmith's College, London, where 'In-Service Training' in ceramic sculpture had taken place, followed by attendance at evening workshops to develop own work while teaching ceramics in a Hammersmith school.

RLB was interested in acquiring some experience in a small pottery, where he had more control and autonomy over the whole process of designing and making individual pieces. He returned to Lincoln before moving to his next place of employment at Winchcombe Pottery in Gloucestershire, working for Michael Cardew.

Chapter 5

Site: The Landing

5.1. The wall at the top of the stairs. From left to right:
John Danby Wheeldon, *Seascape with Castle*, c. 2000, oil on board;
Top centre: Sue Blatherwick, 2004, *Moorland Hills*, conté on paper;
Bottom centre: George Todd, c.1970, *Holton-cum-Beckering,* silk screen print;
Right: John Danby Wheeldon, c.2004, *Goltho Church*, charcoal.

The dark sapele wood of the stairs changes colour to a lighter golden brown, bringing a warm atmosphere to the landing. The dark wooden handrail and uprights create windows to the entrance hall showroom below. Long and narrow, the landing extends along the south side of the red brick wall of Sharp's old bakery with no windows, creating a corridor, the bathroom and bunk-room off to the right, the bedroom at the end. The wedding-present staircase made by my grandfather, Luther Blatherwick.

At the top of the stairs a white painted brick wall faces you: a T-junction, the wall covered with drawings and prints; a large framed black and white conté landscape drawing of mine, and a silkscreen print by the charismatic textile artist and friend of the family, George Todd of Holton-cum-Beckering.[1] Turn left at the top of the stairs into the kitchen, and up a small step into the living room and the annex; turn right and sit on the tall-backed English wooden chair to look along the landing.

A set of long, low, golden, wooden shelves with dark uprights line the white brick wall, fitting the space like a glove. Similar shelving was designed by cabinet maker and design theorist Norman Potter from Corsham in Wiltshire in the 1950s, in which he attempted to 'honour the purest principles of the Modern Movement ... using wooden rods and integral joints'.[2] These shelves were made by my father; the only other place I have seen this design is in RLB's brother's house two miles away; he made them as a wedding present for Edward.

The landing is a mini museum, a homage to RLB's work and to other artists. The walls are hung with paintings and drawings, and the shelves hold a variety of pots and sculptures. On the lower shelves are utilitarian items and pots for daily use, such as casseroles, salad bowls, dinner plates, serving dishes, place mats, cookery books and other books and magazines; items collected, used, and stored over the years.

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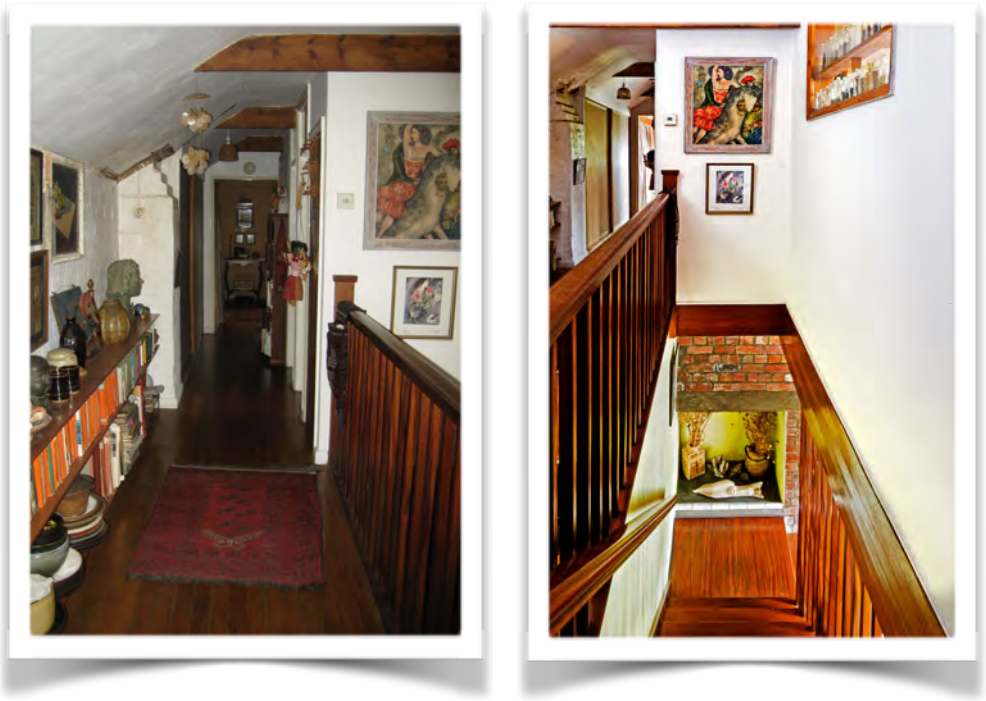
[1] Holton-cum-Beckering is a small village in Lincolnshire where conscientious objectors were sent during the Second World War. Billy Bragg made a documentary programme for BBC Radio 4 called 'Conchies of Holton-cum-Beckering' broadcast in May 2007., 27th May. http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/programmes/genres/factual/history. Currently unavailable.[Accessed 27th May 2009]

[2]Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p.228. More on Potter's design theories can be found in: Potter, N. (1969) *What is a Designer: Things, Places, Messages*. 1980 revised ed. Reading: Hyphen Press.

Sitting on the tall-backed chair and looking along the landing, light from a window above the stairs and into the kitchen aids visibility. The top shelf on the left holds the displayed items, a plaster model of a baby's head cast from a clay model;[3] a sculptural head of a former student;[4] a standing abstracted nude mounted on a wooden plinth, modelled and cast from lead which was left over from the bakery conversion.[5]



5.2,5.3. Looking along the landing, and down the stairs.

The wall above the shelving is covered with paintings by RLB and other Lincolnshire Artists.[6] *Interior with Flowers* by Peter Brannan (1926-1994),[7] purchased by mum after visiting him in his lovely home full of collected items. Further along is a drawing by his father Edward Brannan[8] (1886-1957): a beautiful large pen and ink drawing of two grand trees, heavy with leaves with

[3] This sculpture was of my head, which my mother told me was measured with callipers when I was a few months old.

[4] I believe I have identified the woman in the photographs in the bureau, she may have been Pauline Selway.

[5] The figure was my mother, Marjorie.

[6] Members of the Lincolnshire Artists' Society and colleagues from Lincoln School of Art.

[7] Peter Brannan was president of Lincolnshire and South Humberside Arts, and an elected member of The Royal Society of British Artists.

[8] Edward Brannan studied at the Lincoln School of Art and was a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy. His work is in the Usher Gallery in Lincoln and many private collections

long grasses beneath; his use of line has an expressive, fluid quality. On the back is written: 'by Edward Eaton Brannan (Ted)', and an envelope is attached, containing a photograph of another drawing by Ted and a newspaper clip about Peter. This was one of mum's finds in a junk shop.

A drawing by RLB of *Sid* our cat, sleeping in comfortable bliss. He was found in a sack above the tide-line in Northumbria, his coat so matted with knots that it was a year before we discovered he was the long-haired variety; he came to live in this house, a child substitute after the children had left home. It is a beautiful and simple drawing in sienna conté pencil, and captures Sid's appearance. He was an extremely sociable cat who followed mum on her visits around the village.

A charcoal drawing of *Goltho Church*[9] is by John Danby Wheeldon (1914-2008), so is an oil pastel drawing of the same place, the colours in this being warmer than in some of his other work. Like RLB, he had been a holder of the Gibney Scholarship for students of the Lincoln School of Art in 1933;[10] and he became mum's husband after RLB died.

There are a few works by RLB: two pen and ink drawings with watercolour, one of which is of the *River Witham*[11] and dated 'July 1942', just after he was back from Winchcombe Pottery in Gloucestershire. The other is similar in style and colour and possibly painted about the same time. Two more watercolours show a semi-abstract study of *Brayford Pool*[12] with the Cathedral on the hill, painted with warm reds, and below this hangs a pen and ink drawing of *Reepham High Street*, the daily view seen from the living room window. *The Chequers* pub-sign and the striped canvas canopy of the post office date this piece; it was drawn before the housing estate was built on the beautiful large garden opposite which had a grass tennis court, but otherwise the High Street has not changed very much.

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[9] Goltho Church is in Lincolnshire.

[10] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1946-47.* (1946), Lincoln: n/a.

[11] The River Witham runs through the centre of Lincoln.

[12] Brayford Pool is in the centre of Lincoln.

There is an oil on board study of fruit, figs and cloth on a table; it is abstracted and simplified, — post-cubist in style — with black lines painted around the edges which flatten the depth, like a Lichtenstein or Calder painting. The soft, cold colours, purple and green, are even in tone, and balanced by the addition of a small warm lemon. If I had not found sketchbook evidence of this I would not have known this was RLB's as it is not his usual style.

5.4. The Landing, with bookshelves, pots and sculpture mainly made by RLB.

And below the pictures are the utilitarian shelves laden with items, each having a narrative of a life and time that has passed, a meaning, a semiotic ethnology, connected to people and histories, with stories hidden within, some of which may never be heard.

A wooden hat-maker's stand belonged to Nellie Wilson (1898-1980), my mother's mother, a hat-maker and seamstress.[13] When I stayed at her house as a child my mum's childhood bedroom, the room I slept in, had a tailor's/dressmaker's dummy and the carpet was thick with sewing pins. And there is more: a wooden-

[13] Nellie Wilson worked as a hat maker for Mawer and Collingham's in Lincoln., dates unknown. The company's trade included wholesale and retail drapers, silk mercers, haberdashers, milliners, dressmakers, tailors, hatters, furriers, lacemen, clothiers, hosiers, glovers and general outfitters, carpet warehousemen, upholsterers and house furnishers and decorators. Mawer and Collingham Ltd. [Accessed 11th July 2014]

lidded box for recipe cards made by Frank Harold Wilson (1898-1959), my mother's father;[14] a wooden butter-pat from Poland; a candle stick with a Hand of Fatima candle, a sawdust fired coil pot I made in 1980; an RLB plate with bird and sun design; another ceramic candle stick. On the shelves below were place-mats, plates, bowls, dishes, and casseroles in daily use. Although it had the visual appearance of a gallery, it was a place for domestic storage.

And on the top shelf, in a position of prime access and visibility, just two steps away from the open plan kitchen, sat the large and beautiful bread crock that RLB had made at Winchcombe.

5.5 The Landing, before the bookshelves were installed. 1957.

[14] Frank Wilson, an engineer's pattern maker for Robey and Co. Ltd, makers of steam engines in Lincoln. Patterns were made in wood.

Object: The Bread Crock

5.6. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. May 1942. Earthenware bread crock produced at Winchcombe Pottery.

This bread crock stands on the top shelf of the landing. It has resided there for fifty-eight of the seventy-one years since it was made. A functional item, it has been used daily for keeping bread in, two steps away from the kitchen. It gave a familiar ring and clunk as the lid was lifted and replaced.

The bread crock's roots are in the past. It is 'a continuation of a production established in the Middle Ages'.[15] The simple shape of everyday pots where 'nothing superfluous exists'[16] represents a tradition of functionalism; pots designed to serve a purpose: form meeting function in a pragmatic way. The bread crock, made by country potters, represents the lifestyle of the traditional craftsperson, which has diminished and almost disappeared.[17]

In its appearance this bread crock shares some characteristics with traditional country pottery, and yet attention to detail and its decoration inform us otherwise. In *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain,* Andrew McGarva discusses the traditional characteristics, which will be compared and contrasted with this bread crock. Country pots were 'made of whatever material was locally available', which was often made coarse by the addition of sand. Pancheons[18] were made 'deliberately thick and sturdy to withstand the knocks and wear of the farmhouse kitchen'.[19] This RLB bread crock is a country pot in this sense: it is made of red clay which was local, and is grogged with sand and ground biscuit ware.[20] It was made at Winchcombe Pottery. Many country pots used a lead glaze, and a lead raw glaze was used at Winchcombe at this time.[21]

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[15] McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain*. London: A&C Black. p9

[16] Ibid. p12

[17] For an interesting account of a country craftsman's life as it was, see Massingham, H.J. (1942) *The English Countryman: A Study of the English Tradition.* London: Batsford. The way of life of the traditional country potter is recorded in Hennell, T. (1947) *The Countryman at Work.* London: The Architectural Press. A chapter, entitled 'The Potter', is written about Winchcombe Pottery, which Hennell visited while RLB was working there. Michael Cardew's letters provide information of Hennell's visit.

[18] The term 'pancheon' appears to be disappearing from use and is not in all dictionaries. It is a term applied to large thick-rimmed country bowls made for washing or making bread, and they are made from a coarse earthenware clay. It has another spelling: 'panshions'. Andrew McGarva makes several references to pancheons in McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain*. London: A&C Black.

[19] McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain.* London: A&C Black. p14

[20] Wheeler, R. (1998) *Winchcombe Pottery. The Cardew-Finch Tradition.* Oxford: White Cocklade. Digging for clay is recorded on p51.

[21] Cardew M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee.

But from this point we notice differences. Many country pots use a glaze only on the interior, with lids glazed on the exterior and not on the interior.[22] This crock, along with others made by Michael Cardew at the same time and place, is glazed on the inside and most of the outside.[23]

The country pot was 'seldom marked with the maker's name'.[24] Scratched into the base of this bread crock, in large letters, is 'RLB MAY 42'. It also carries the stamp of Winchcombe Pottery.

5.7. Base of RLB bread crock showing his initials and the date May 1942, plus the Winchcombe Pottery stamp.

[22] McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain.* London: A&C Black. p21

[23] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Entry records the making and glazing of bread pots ready for firing in June 1942. In a letter to Mariel, (June 1942) Cardew wrote 'I am making bread pots for the hovel. Order for one, so got to make enough for a circle of them i.e. 8 or 9'. AAD/2006/2/1/9. The hovel is the upper chamber of the bottle kiln.

[24] McGarva, A. (2000) *Country Pottery The Traditional Earthenware of Britain*. London: A&C Black. p14

Most bread crocks have 'two small coil-like handles';[25] this one does not have any. On country pots 'decoration was kept to the minimum, a band or two of a contrasting slip';[26] the decoration on this bread crock, a scraffito design drawn through a white slip, revealing the red body, could not be described as the minimum. It is elaborate and executed with careful control. The design of the fish is influenced by a Chinese Tz'u-chou pot, an illustration of which appears in *Ceramic Art of China and other Countries of the Far East*.[27] As this book was not published until two years after this particular bread crock was made, RLB must have discovered this design when undertaking his studies as a student.

Chinese ceramics of the Ming and Sung Dynasties (960-1644) had developed a sophisticated level of using slip glazes or engobes, and excelled in the scraffito technique, with some beautiful examples from Tz'u-chou. Slips were employed in Persian and *Gabri* wares and they produced sturdy and utilitarian pots for everyday use.[28] Europeans had a lot to learn from their advanced decoration and glazing techniques. Developing studio potters in England looked to the Chinese for knowledge and inspiration, as well as to the potters of Japan and Korea, who applied brushed slip with an expressive quality using beautiful brush marks.

The two horizontal scraffito lines, placed above and below the waist of this bread crock, stem from this influence and are also seen in the work of Leach and Cardew. It was not only the beauty of the pots, but the idealism behind the making which appealed to them. Bernard Leach, who had taught Cardew, was 'constantly setting the aesthetics of the Far East against the materialism and superficiality of the West'.[29]

RLB was at Winchcombe for a year during 1941-42, giving assistance to Michael Cardew during a difficult period at the pottery in the Second World War. This bread crock is a slip-decorated earthenware item and is typical of the type of

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[25] Ibid. p21

[26] Ibid. p9

[27] Honey, W.B. (1944) *Ceramic Art of China and Other Countries of the Far East.* London: Faber and Faber and The Hyperion Press. p87.

[28] Ibid. Gabri ware is an eleventh century Islamic red bodied earthenware covered with white slip.

[29] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p38

work which was being made at Winchcombe at that time.[30] This type of production came to a sudden end in 1942 when Cardew left for Africa, and the pottery did not reopen until 1946, after the war, when it was run by Ray Finch. Finch carried on in Cardew's tradition until 1950, when he moved to stoneware, with earthenware finally phased out in 1964.[31]

The making of this bread crock highlights a little window of time when Michael Cardew returned to Winchcombe Pottery, 'from Autumn 1941 to June 1942',[32] (Cardew did not actually return until the end of November 1941).[33] This window of time has been overlooked in the writing of ceramic history. It was when Finch 'ran into trouble'[34] and needed help.

The attention to the aesthetics and decoration creates a link with a broader cultural context and references. The small changes in detail from the traditional country pot alter the status of this bread crock from its traditional nature into a pot that is not just a simple country pot.

Although created as an everyday object for ordinary people, this bread crock has taken on a broader significance than the one that was intended when it was made. The passage of time, the date stamp on its base, and the location of its making change that; it now holds a meaning and importance well beyond its creator's intention. This raises questions: should this bread crock be in everyday use? As an artist and maker, I cannot ignore the aesthetic and historic qualities of this object, or its significance. A similar piece by Michael Cardew, most probably made at the same time and even in the same firing,[35] is in the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery.[36] This bread crock is unique, it has a story to tell, it

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[30] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Cardew's diaries record making these pots.

[31] Wheeler, R.(1998) *Winchcombe Pottery The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford: White Cocklade.

[32] Clark, G. (1978) *Michael Cardew: a Portrait. An Intimate Account of a Potter Who Has Captured the Spirit of Country Craft.* London and Boston: Faber and Faber. p40

[33] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence, 1933-1942'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. [Accessed: by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[34] Clark, G. (1978) *Michael Cardew: A Portrait. An Intimate Account of a Potter Who Has Captured the Spirit of Country Craft.* London and Boston: Faber and Faber. p40

[35] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. In May 1942 Cardew wrote he was waiting for bread pots to dry before firing.

[36] The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery is located in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

represents that very special time in 1942 and the archived letters and diaries which relate to its making testify to this pot's particularity. As well as being a beautiful object, it has also become a very significant item.

I have a different opinion from my family about this issue. They believe it was made as a domestic item. They love RLB's pottery too, and use it every day. They miss my point. Trying to preserve this bread crock because of its provenance goes against the ethos of its making. But the context of the present day has to be considered. There is not another RLB bread crock in existence. Now is the time to reconsider the context in which it was made, to look at the social order, to understand its place. This piece marks that time more than anything else. By looking at the context of the making of this particular bread crock, we should reassess the role it plays in our understanding of the whole of the recorded history of twentieth-century British studio pottery.

Context: Winchcombe Pottery 1941 – 1942

There's a youth called Robert Blatherwick, exempt from Army, wants to come for 1 or 2 years to Winchcombe to pot, in exchange for board and lodging. He's had a few years Art School potting and wants some more real experience. Relevant letter enclosed. Quite a God send really.

— Michael Cardew
Letter to Mariel. 28th June 1941.

5.8. RLB in the doorway of the hut in which he lived for a year at Winchcombe Pottery.

After his time at Wedgwood, RLB's interest lay in the direction of studio pottery, which allowed him to follow a more creative and practical approach to making slipware in a rural environment. His experiences at Wedgwood and Burslem School of Art provided him with solid technical knowledge and creative ideas which could be usefully employed. Michael Cardew had revived the redundant country pottery at Winchcombe Pottery thirteen years previously,[37] and had re-established the making of slipware. Cardew took RLB on as an employed assistant.[38]

Cardew's domestic arrangements with his wife and children were complex. He had purchased another pottery at Wenford Bridge in Cornwall and employed Finch to run Winchcombe. Finch had married a year earlier in July 1940, had become a father in June 1941, and his wife was in Nottingham with his new-born son. He was expecting to be 'called up'[39] for non-combatant war duties and so he 'spent as much time as he could visiting them'.[40] Two of the main labourers from the pottery - Sidney and Charles Tustin, were in the army. With both Cardew and Finch absent from Winchcombe, the pottery was very run down. 'It was becoming extremely difficult to keep a small pottery going at all'.[41]

It was wartime and a time of uncertainty. Cardew needed someone responsible to be in charge. RLB had written and asked if there was any possibility of working at the pottery. RLB was twenty years old when he took charge of the pottery at Winchcombe in July 1941.[42] Cardew was relieved to receive his assistance; they desperately needed help.[43] Cardew

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[37] Cardew, M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee.

[38] Marchbank Salmon, J. (1953) 'Letter in support of application for post of Lecturer in Pottery at Loughborough College of Art'. 30th April. (MS). Family archive.

[39] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; , 28th June. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. The issue of when Finch or Cardew would be called up is mentioned in letters from Michael to Mariel.

[40] Finch, R. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Winchcombe Pottery, Gloucestershire: 10th October. Digital recording in family archive.

[41] Cardew M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p60

[42] Finch, R. (1943) *Reference letter for Robert Blatherwick*. July 28th. (MS) Family archive.

[43] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; 28th June. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

provided board and lodging and paid RLB thirty shillings (£1.50) a week.[44] RLB was confident about looking after the pottery:

> I will do my best to keep things going until you arrive … There are no difficulties I can think of, I will write for your advice when they do turn up.[45]

He was to make sure the pottery ran smoothly and to buy any materials that were needed. This involved instructing the elderly, experienced thrower, Elijah Comfort, who had been chief thrower at the pottery in its previous existence.[46] Cardew sent RLB lists of things that needed making, and RLB was to oversee the running of operations and communicate with Cardew, for example: 'Mr Comfort would like to know if he is to make any oval baking dishes. He says it is not on his list, as usual'.[47] This was a responsible position, particularly for a twenty year old. In an interview, not long before he died, Finch said:

> Sid, who was about my age, had been called up, and Elijah Comfort was about eighty then, and he was all that was left behind, so it was Bob, and that was about all. Bob had to look after what was left.[48]

Finch explained:

> […] my wife was away in Nottinghamshire with some friends … and I wanted to go and see her … and I tended to leave him in charge … I spent more time away than I should have done … I tended to spend more time there than I really intended to.[49]

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[44] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Robert Blatherwick to Mr. Cardew.* 'Winchcombe Pottery 1926-1939'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/2/7. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. There was a message to RLB from Cardew on the reverse of the letter from RLB in which he asked if he was to receive a wage. This was not a high wage. In comparison Cardew had been paid £5.00 a week with accommodation, as a pottery instructor in Glasgow in Jan 1941, and Cardew was paid £3.3.0 [£3.15] for the lecture at Lincoln School of Art, plus travelling expenses. Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p148. When Cardew went to Nigeria in July 1942 he had an annual salary of £600.00 per annum (Ibid p157).

[45] Blatherwick, R.L.(1941) 'Letter from Robert Blatherwick to Mr. Cardew'. 'Winchcombe Pottery 1926-1939'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/2/7. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[46] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Winchcombe had previously been Greet Pottery, which had closed in 1914.

[47] Blatherwick, R.L.(1941) 'Letter from Robert Blatherwick to Mr. Cardew'. 'Winchcombe Pottery 1926-1939'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/2/7. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[48] Finch, R. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Winchcombe Pottery, Gloucestershire. 10th October: Digital recording in family archive.

[49] Ibid.

Bob was 'not very keen on living alone',[50] but did so, and he kept the pottery functioning until Finch and Cardew returned in late November or early December1941.[51] From then until July 1942 the three of them lived at the pottery. RLB lived in the hut that Cardew had lived in when he first married Mariel Russell a few years earlier. The photograph Fig. 5.9 shows RLB standing in its doorway, holding a jug he had made.

5.9. RLB standing outside the hut at Winchcombe Pottery, which he lived in for about a year.

Details of day-to-day events are recorded in Cardew's diaries and letters to his wife. These are in the Victoria and Albert Museum archives, and make interesting reading. Cardew wrote to his wife almost daily during this period, sometimes twice a day. The nature of his correspondence is conversational, like a contemporary telephone conversation; it is the type of letter not written any more, having been replaced by SMS texts and Facebook. Cardew and Mariel had started their family at Winchcombe, but lived apart for most of their lives, for a variety of

[50]Blatherwick, R.L. (1941) *Letter from Robert Blatherwick to Mr. Cardew.* 'Winchcombe Pottery 1926-1939'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/2/7. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[51] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; December. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

complex reasons.[52] Cardew returned to Winchcombe to help run the pottery[53] and stayed there until mid-June 1942, leaving for Nigeria a month later.[54]

This window of time is frequently overlooked when Winchcombe is written about, many articles and publications write off the war years, skipping over the time when RLB was at the pottery, with details being generalised. This is how it is recorded: Finch 'worked for Michael Cardew from 1936-1939 and took over the pottery after the war';[55] and 'in 1939 [Cardew] left Winchcombe in the hands of Ray Finch';[56] and 'after the war, which virtually shut down operations at Winchcombe';[57] and 'in 1939 Ray Finch was left to manage operations at Winchcombe, and after purchasing the pottery in 1946, was to professionalise and streamline operations';[58] and 'in 1939 he left Winchcombe Pottery in the capable hands of Ray Finch …';[59] and 'Cardew … set up Wenford Bridge leaving Finch to run Winchcombe Pottery and then there was the war';[60] and 'by 1939 Finch had progressed sufficiently for Winchcombe to be left in his hands'.[61] All seven of these publications concentrate on Finch's role. There has not been a single mention in any text relating to the history of Winchcombe, of the person who kept the pottery running when no one else with the skills or experience required was available.

This was a time of war, when change could occur at any moment. Cardew's letters reflect this. It was a time of transition and irregularity, a period of fervent activity, of discussing ideals in the face of uncertainty, of making decisions and plans for the future, when political issues and those close to the heart were discussed. It was also a time of hardship – Cardew frequently wrote

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[52] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. See pp144-157 for further details about Cardew's living arrangements.

[53] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; December. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[54] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p157

[55] Finch, R. (1970) 'Winchcombe Pottery'. *Ceramic Review.* No.3. p4.

[56] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press. p37

[57] Kern, N. (1975) 'Winchcombe Pottery', *Ceramics Monthly*, California. April. Volume 23. No.4. p25

[58] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe: Cotswold Living. p119

[59] Unknown author, (n.d.) 'Michael Cardew' Pottery Studio, http://www.studiopottery.com/cgi-bin/mp.cgi?item=137[Online. Accessed 10th November 2013].

[60] Unknown author, (n.d.) 'History', *Winchcombe Pottery,* www.winchcombepottery.co.uk/ [Online. Accessed 10th November 2013].

[61] Clark G. (1978) *Michael Cardew: A Portrait. An Intimate Account of a Potter who has Captured the Spirit of Country Craft.* London and Boston: Faber and Faber. p39

to Mariel about the 'unspeakable'[62] cold and Pleydell Bouverie wrote that they 'lived in fantastic discomfort'.[63] There was an urgency, driven by Cardew, to get the pottery going. Living conditions were simple and primitive, and they lived and worked together on the site:

> R. Blatherwick sleeps in the hut, Ray in the back room of the flat, and I in the front room! We eat in the hut, v. warm and cosy.[64]

Working as a team, RLB, Cardew and Finch organised the pottery which had become neglected. 'There is no blackout in the attic at all yet, and none in the main part of the pottery',[65] and they worked hard to maintain production, making pots, gathering faggots. Cardew refers to Finch and RLB as 'his two mates',[66] and they did many things other than work together, including going to 'the Pictures',[67] eating,[68] and 'getting drunk on cider'.[69] They often ate communally, sitting on the floor and using chopsticks. As the place where the three of them worked and lived, it formed their world, it was a way of life. They worked as a team, with Cardew as the leader:

> I'm trying to get some enthusiasm into RF and RB in the cause of clearing and tidying up. We want Sidney! He was very conscious of the general mess.[70]

On one occasion Cardew went to decorate his jugs and there was

> no white slip — all wanted sieving … it's a scandal … I must give Ray a lecture about how the pottery is a great deal too lackadaisical these days. Everything is in a muddle like a bloody Art school.[71]

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[62] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; February 17th. December. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[63] Pleydell-Bouverie, K. (1976) 'A Personal Account' In *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p35

[64] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[65] Ibid. (1941) December.. Underlined emphasis in MS.

[66] Ibid. (1942).

[67] Ibid. March

[68] Ibid. n.d.

[69] Ibid. 28th June.

[70] Ibid. (1941).7th December.

[71] Ibid. (1942) emphasis in MS.

Sidney Tustin and Elijah Comfort referred to Cardew as 'the gaffer'.[72] Towards the end of Cardew's time, larger teams appeared, helping and preparing for the last firing:

> What a crowd here now. Ray and his friend Donald Potter – (E. Gill[s] pupil teaching sculp & pot at a boys' school at Blandford – nice.) Ursula [Trevelyan], Robert B.; Dicon [Nance] (glazing & works engineer so far) and Col. Roger Barmoy…[73]

There were other helpers: 'Robert has got two more of his Lincoln friends (2 boys 17 & 18, quite keen on pottery)',[74] preparing and firing the kiln, potters who visited during this period included Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie (1895-1985) and Dick Kendall (n.d.). Other visitors were Herbert Vladimir Meyerowitz (1900-1945),[75] the man behind the ceramic enterprise in Achimota, Nigeria, which Cardew was preparing for, intending to combine African art with industry. Thomas Hennell's (1903-1945) visit is recorded in Cardew's letters.[76] Hennell wrote *The Countryman at Work* and the chapter 'The Potter' is based on drawings and observations recorded at this time. The discussions about Africa, pottery, art, industry, firing, and glazing, as well as about food, growing vegetables, music and lifestyle, all contributed to RLB's experience, informing his later decisions.

Beliefs and Ideals

Cardew and RLB shared many interests and possessed similar cultural tastes. Aesthetically, both liked minimal decoration and had a love of warm colours,[77] which led them to search for those qualities in their ceramics; they liked classical music: Cardew played the recorder,[78] RLB the violin; they both liked the same serifed Edward Johnston lettering that was developed by his

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[72] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.p76

[73] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; May. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. (emphasis in MS)

[74] Ibid. It is likely that the two helpers would have been Steve Wallhead (1925-2003) and Pat McCloskey. (similar age, n.d.). They were both friends and students at Lincoln School of Art, Steve Wallhead became a pottery teacher; Pat McCloskey became an artist, he lived with the Blatherwick family in Maple Street after McCloskey's mother died and he became an orphan. They were both lifelong friends.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Hennell, T. (1947) *The Countryman at Work*. London: The Architectural Press.

[77] Cardew, M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p55

[78] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Diary entry 15th Feb: 'tea and recorder music at Griffiths'. AAD/2006/2/1/1

pupil Eric Gill, which they used on their pots.[79] They paid attention to the food they ate, and the planting and growing of vegetables. They were practical and pragmatic, and shared many socialist ideals. They met in this arena of shared idealism, and yet their roots were very different. Cardew was from an upper-middle-class background, with domestic help in the form of a nanny and several staff in the home;[80] RLB came from a small, terraced, rented property.[81]

As discussed in the previous chapter, RLB's family believed in education as the way to eradicate the poverty of the working class. Cardew felt extremely strongly about a more egalitarian approach.[82] He read socialist texts, thought of ways of improving society, and discussed his ideas with the people he worked with.[83] He recognised and reviled his private education 'with doubts about the value of his own privileged classical education'[84] wanting his own children to go to the local school, and argued with Mariel about this.[85] He lived his life humbly, ostensibly rejecting this privileged upbringing,[86] though the links and connections of privilege remain. Harrod describes Cardew's attitudes to privilege and class as 'contradictory ... he could be quite snobbish'.[87] That he discussed his ideas and shared his thoughts with Finch and RLB is evident.

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[79] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe: Cotswold Living. Edward Johnston was a close friend and correspondent of Leach. p61.

[80] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p18

[81] L. Blatherwick's last wishes were written on a small piece of card, kept in his Amalgamated Society of Woodworker's Membership Card. It said: 'Give Steve Moon the big hut. What's left share up four of you.' Family archive.

[82] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.p144

[83] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Diary entry: Feb 21st: He read *The Coming Struggle for Power* by John Strachey.

[84] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.p144

[85] Ibid. p144

[86]. Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Harrod informs us that he felt his place at Oxford was the result of nepotism, but that this may have been unfounded belief. p35

[87] Ibid. p146

5.10. Robert Blatherwick outside his home in Lincoln, c.1933.

RLB thought Lincoln School of Art would be interested in Cardew's ideas on 'Potters in Industry'[88] and contacted the Principal to arrange a lecture for him.[89] Cardew delivered this on March 5th, 1942.[90] That he liked RLB is evident. He wrote to Mariel:

> R. Blatherwick is a charming (double underlined) person - Small, & v. young. looking (abt. 19?!) — very beautiful longish face, v. g. nose & mouth & eyes,— and a v. big

[88] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; Saturday 7th March. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[89] Ibid. January or February.

[90] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013, and letters in AAD/2006/2/1/9.

> sticking-out head behind — but not big anywhere — all quite small and neat but not tight at all.[91]

He mentioned that 'R. Blatherwick is very nice' again in 1942.[92] The difference in their upbringing is highlighted by his response to RLB's family home on the outskirts of Lincoln, which Cardew stayed at when he went to deliver the lecture at Lincoln School of Art:

> The Blatherwick household awfully nice and very homely but a very narrow poky bleak little house (wh. they've lived in since 1912 when it was built — & reared 4 children: Robert being the youngest.)[93]

Cardew stayed two nights with RLB who took him to the Usher Gallery, the City and County Museum with its mediaeval collection of pots, and the Roman Newport Arch. They had supper with Miss Leach and had been to a 'Gram Concert' in the evening;[94] Cardew liked the Cathedral, and the Adam and Eve figures with serpents on the doors of the west front, and made a sketch of them for Mariel: 'Quite small carving — wonderful pot design!'[95] This was a motif he had used in ceramics, one of the few pieces he ever produced with figures, circa 1936-38.[96] Cardew also admired RLB's drawings, and wrote to Mariel:

> I am sending you some little drawings by Robert Blatherwick, of the Hut, and some of his pot ideas, – I quite like some of the latter, and I do like the hut drawing. I wonder if you will. I think, keep and send back the larger drawing sometime, as he might want some of the pot designs, though he swears he doesn't want them back![97]

This is typical of RLB's attitude: he was happy to share his ideas, and not precious about owning them. Like everyone, he appreciated his ideas being approved of.

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[91] Cardew, M. (1941) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence',1933-1942'; , Nov/Dec.Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9.Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London.Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. Harrod,T. (2008) *Re: Robert Blatherwick.* 21st November. Email to author from Harrod raised my awareness of the archive material relating to RLB that was accessible.

[92] Cardew, M. (1942).Ibid.

[93] Ibid. Sat 7th March.

[94] Cardew, M. (1942) *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. 6th March. Reference:AAD/2006/2/1/1.Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London.Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Miss Leach was unrelated to Bernard Leach.There was a Margaret Leach at St Ives in 1942. It has not been determined whether this is the same person, but is likely to have been. RLB had a book of glaze recipes in his collection with 'M.G. Leach' written inside; the book was: Searle,A.B. (1935) *The Glazers Book - The Practical Application of Recipes and Processes to Glazes for Bricks and Tiles.* London:The Technical Press.

[95] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence',1933-1942'; March. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9.Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London.Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[96] Harrod,T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London:Yale University Press. plate23, p129

[97] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence',1933-1942'; June. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9.Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London.Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

The attitude of Cardew and RLB towards their wives is interesting: both Mariel and Marjorie fed and looked after these men, Mariel sent food packages, they both packaged their husband's pots, arranged for them to be delivered, dealt with forms and finance, and the business side of matters, leaving these artists to pursue their practice. This hierarchy of gender and labour was accepted and taken as given at the time; but that is another discourse.

RLB's health is mentioned a few times in Cardew's letters. When RLB 'had a nasty cold' Cardew 'kept him in bed Friday and part of Sunday gave him aspirins and a h-w-bottle. He is not strong at all'.[98] Cardew was concerned that RLB's health 'is rather a liability'[99] when RLB applied to work at St Ives, and a letter from Finch to Cardew dated January 2nd, 1942, informs Cardew that RLB was 'not back yet' as he 'had to be X-rayed'.[100] However, Cardew in his letters to Mariel frequently complained about feeling unwell, having lumbago, having to lie down, 'having a horrible cold',[101] having toothache and 'feel[ing] an absolute death's-head and misery'.[102]

RLB was young in a team of older people. Several of the players, Pleydell-Bouverie for instance, were from extremely wealthy and aristocratic backgrounds.[103] Jeffrey Jones observed that Cardew's

> dream of becoming an independent potter … could only have been pursued by someone with the utter assurance bestowed by an upper middle class upbringing.[104]

There is more than an element of truth in this; the network of wealthy connections that existed with such a background helped Cardew with his success. Whether it was financial assistance received, or the security of knowing that support is available should it be required, is beyond the remit of this enquiry. However RLB pursued the same dream, following an ideal, and succeeded in many ways in which Cardew did not. They both believed in their art, and they both loved earthenware. RLB was a family man, managing to live and work and care for his family from his home, which was something Cardew struggled with, never living with his family

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[98] Cardew, M. (1941) Ibid. December

[99] Ibid. Feb 17th 1942

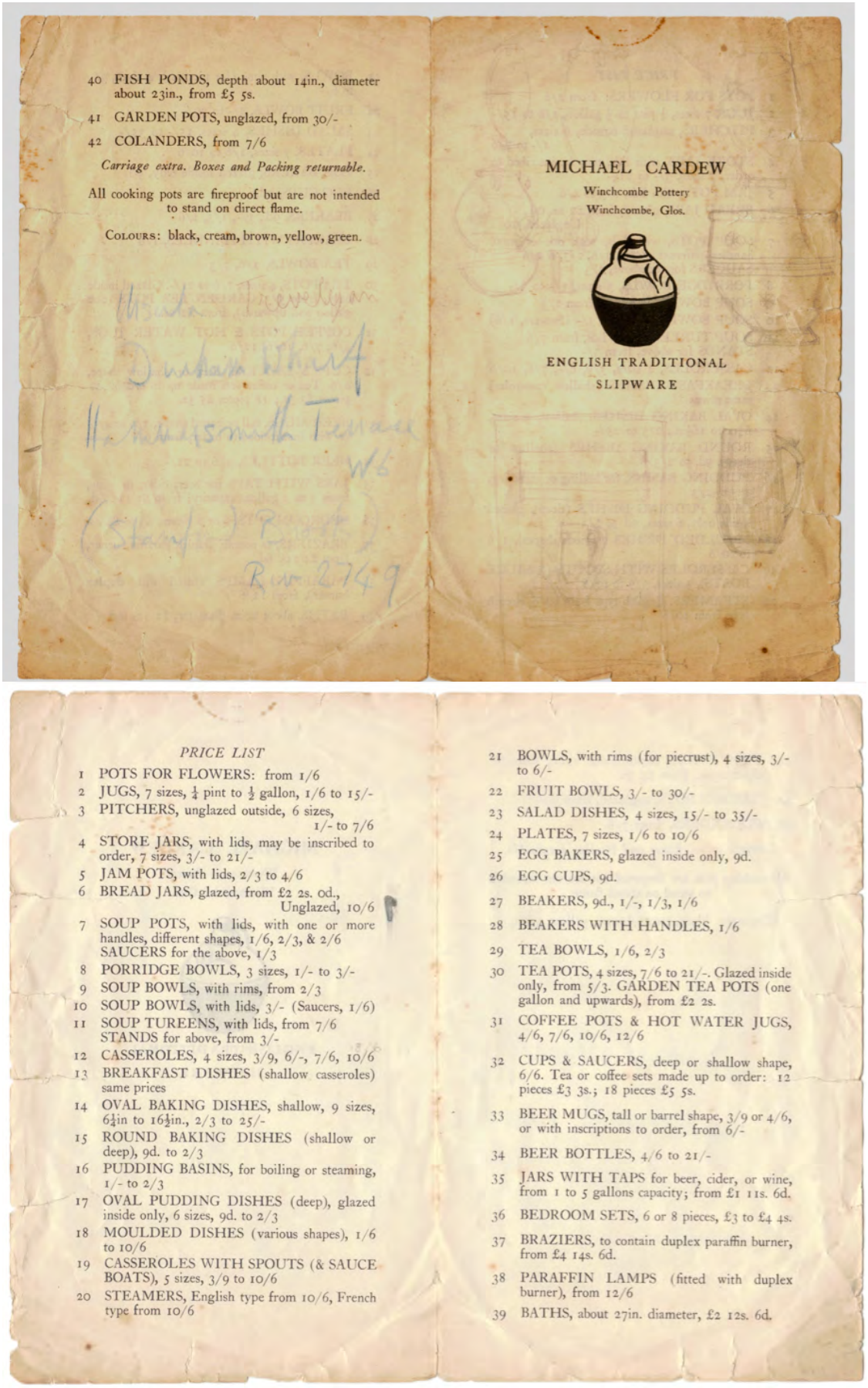
[100] Finch, R. (1942) *Letter from Finch to Cardew.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence',1933-1942';, Jan 2nd. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[101] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence, 1933-1942';March. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[102] Ibid. April 1942.

[103] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain.* London: Phaidon. Pleydell-Bouverie's family estate was Coleshill, 'one of England's finest seventeenth-century mansion houses'. p160.

[104] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p24



40 FISH PONDS, depth about 14in., diameter about 23in., from £5 5s.

41 GARDEN POTS, unglazed, from 30/-

42 COLANDERS, from 7/6

Carriage extra. Boxes and Packing returnable.

All cooking pots are fireproof but are not intended to stand on direct flame.

COLOURS: black, cream, brown, yellow, green.

MICHAEL CARDEW

Winchcombe Pottery
Winchcombe, Glos.

ENGLISH TRADITIONAL
SLIPWARE

PRICE LIST

1 POTS FOR FLOWERS: from 1/6
2 JUGS, 7 sizes, ¼ pint to ½ gallon, 1/6 to 15/-
3 PITCHERS, unglazed outside, 6 sizes, 1/- to 7/6
4 STORE JARS, with lids, may be inscribed to order, 7 sizes, 3/- to 21/-
5 JAM POTS, with lids, 2/3 to 4/6
6 BREAD JARS, glazed, from £2 2s. 0d., Unglazed, 10/6
7 SOUP POTS, with lids, with one or more handles, different shapes, 1/6, 2/3, & 2/6 SAUCERS for the above, 1/3
8 PORRIDGE BOWLS, 3 sizes, 1/- to 3/-
9 SOUP BOWLS, with rims, from 2/3
10 SOUP BOWLS, with lids, 3/- (Saucers, 1/6)
11 SOUP TUREENS, with lids, from 7/6 STANDS for above, from 3/-
12 CASSEROLES, 4 sizes, 3/9, 6/-, 7/6, 10/6
13 BREAKFAST DISHES (shallow casseroles) same prices
14 OVAL BAKING DISHES, shallow, 9 sizes, 6¼in to 16½in., 2/3 to 25/-
15 ROUND BAKING DISHES (shallow or deep), 9d. to 2/3
16 PUDDING BASINS, for boiling or steaming, 1/- to 2/3
17 OVAL PUDDING DISHES (deep), glazed inside only, 6 sizes, 9d. to 2/3
18 MOULDED DISHES (various shapes), 1/6 to 10/6
19 CASSEROLES WITH SPOUTS (& SAUCE BOATS), 5 sizes, 3/9 to 10/6
20 STEAMERS, English type from 10/6, French type from 10/6
21 BOWLS, with rims (for piecrust), 4 sizes, 3/- to 6/-
22 FRUIT BOWLS, 3/- to 30/-
23 SALAD DISHES, 4 sizes, 15/- to 35/-
24 PLATES, 7 sizes, 1/6 to 10/6
25 EGG BAKERS, glazed inside only, 9d.
26 EGG CUPS, 9d.
27 BEAKERS, 9d., 1/-, 1/3, 1/6
28 BEAKERS WITH HANDLES, 1/6
29 TEA BOWLS, 1/6, 2/3
30 TEA POTS, 4 sizes, 7/6 to 21/-. Glazed inside only, from 5/3. GARDEN TEA POTS (one gallon and upwards), from £2 2s.
31 COFFEE POTS & HOT WATER JUGS, 4/6, 7/6, 10/6, 12/6
32 CUPS & SAUCERS, deep or shallow shape, 6/6. Tea or coffee sets made up to order: 12 pieces £3 3s.; 18 pieces £5 5s.
33 BEER MUGS, tall or barrel shape, 3/9 or 4/6, or with inscriptions to order, from 6/-
34 BEER BOTTLES, 4/6 to 21/-
35 JARS WITH TAPS for beer, cider, or wine, from 1 to 5 gallons capacity; from £1 11s. 6d.
36 BEDROOM SETS, 6 or 8 pieces, £3 to £4 4s.
37 BRAZIERS, to contain duplex paraffin burner, from £4 14s. 6d.
38 PARAFFIN LAMPS (fitted with duplex burner), from 12/6
39 BATHS, about 27in. diameter, £2 12s. 6d.

5.11, 5.12. MICHAEL CARDEW (1942) *English Traditional Slipware* sales sheet from Winchcombe Pottery.

for very long. For both of them, their decision to follow the life of a rurally based potter was extremely unconventional.

Pleydell-Bouverie described Cardew as a romantic, having 'the creative temperament of a seventeenth[-]century intellectual, part savage and part mystic'.[105] Cardew was eccentric and extrovert; he was a leader and thinker who was happy to delegate tasks, he depended on the work of others: assistants, throwers, and the women at Winchcombe who looked after him.[106] Cardew tried to be egalitarian. RLB had a different, calmer temperament, RLB 'was inventive and he was creative, but in a very quiet way'.[107] He could be described as a romantic pragmatist who pursued similar socialist ideals, applied differently in the way he lived his life.

Making English Slipware

Winchcombe Pottery is significant for what it was, as well as what it has come to represent. It holds an extremely important place in the history of twentieth-century studio ceramics, but also in the development of RLB's work, particularly the direction he took when he became self-employed. Cardew is one of the major figures credited for playing 'an important part in the revival of the English slipware tradition',[108] but it was Leach who had revived the tradition initially in St Ives, while Cardew picked up the baton from him.[109] Working in earthenware was something both of these potters dropped in favour of stoneware.

This particular period, when Cardew returned to Winchcombe before leaving for Africa, was the final period of his work in earthenware. It was during this time that Cardew was formulating his ideas about where his work went next. He returned to earthenware for six months between 1948-49, when he worked at Kingwood Pottery in Surrey,[110] but when he left for Africa he worked in stoneware. RLB was learning about the potentials offered and the problems presented by the material. Amongst RLB's papers is a price list of 'English Traditional Slipware'. This itemises the vast range of domestic products available to purchase from Winchcombe Pottery, made by Cardew and others.

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[105] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe: Cotswold Living. p68

[106] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. Mrs Butler took him breakfast in bed when he was feeling unwell.

[107] Harrison, R. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 10th February. Reepham: Digital recording in Family archive.

[108] Cardew, M. (1976) In *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. Front flyer.

[109] Ibid. p56

[110] Rice P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics.* Marlborough: The Crowood Press.

The philosophy of Winchcombe was based on using good-quality raw materials. They 'were making slipware on the scale of a real country pottery, in a kiln of traditional size and design'.[111] Cardew wanted to

> make pots which could be used for all the ordinary purposes of daily living, and to be able to sell them at prices which would allow people to use them in their kitchens and not mind too much when they got broken.[112]

To achieve this they had to be made in large quantities and fired in a big kiln, 'a one-man, studio style operation would not be suitable.' They made a

> soft-fired galena-glazed earthenware … to give a nice yellowish glaze, which is a warm chestnut brown over the natural red clay, yellow when applied over a white slip or a sort of black if used over a black slip.[113]

Their black slip was red clay with added oxides of iron and manganese. They only used 'three glazes, [which] had essentially the same composition'.[114] Cardew's letters inform us that they also mixed a Tin Glaze,[115] which is a glaze RLB explored towards the end of his career.

Cardew found that slipware was not the 'simple kind of pottery' that he had originally thought.[116] The galena glaze presented problems with unacceptable rough or bare patches; if the conditions were not right the glaze left an unpleasant yellowish colour; and it was difficult to avoid porosity and create a glaze that didn't craze:[117]

> … our glazes were always crazed. The approved way to cure crazing is to give the pots a hard bisque fire before the glaze is applied, but this way out of the difficulty was not acceptable because I realised that it would spoil the beauty of the ware, the colours and the quality … which depend on using a 'raw' … glaze. The operation of maturating the body and glaze needed to take place at the same time, not separately.[118]

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[111] Cardew, M. (1976) In *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p56

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid. p55

[114] Ibid.

[115] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence',1933-1942'; , 25th February. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[116] Cardew, M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p56

[117] Crazing is a common glaze flaw, it is the development of a fine network of cracks that appear in a finished glaze. It is usually caused by the mismatching in shrinkage of the clay and the glaze.

[118] Cardew, M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach*. London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p59

These were key factors that RLB took into consideration when he undertook extensive testing, as recorded in his glaze record books of the 1960s.

Cardew had tried to eliminate porosity by firing at a higher temperature so as to make the clay body impermeable, 'but I found that a limit is soon reached to what can be done in this direction. Earthenware clays … will not vitrify properly'.[119] So Cardew gave up on earthenware. 'After many years of searching', he returned to ideas 'conceived in the 1930s' relating to 'the warmth of slipware colours', but translated them into the 'dimension of stoneware'.[120] Cardew revealed that:

> By temperament, I am still an earthenware man. I miss the crispness of that body and those strong, clear, bright colours. My only dissatisfaction with earthenware and the reason for my move was on technical grounds. When I discovered that my belief that one could make earthenware better by firing it higher was incorrect, I turned to stoneware.[121]

5.13. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1942. Christening present made for his nephew, while at Winchcombe,

[119] Ibid., p59

[120] Ibid.p72

[121] Cardew in Clark, G. (1978) *Michael Cardew: A Portrait. An intimate Account of a Potter who has Captured the Spirit of Country Craft.* London and Boston: Faber and Faber. p 81. Also Cardew in Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition.* Winchcombe: Cotswold Living Publications. p116

Chapter 6

Site: A Drawer in the Bureau

Unlike any other visual image, a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of its subject, but actually a trace of it.

— John Berger
About Looking

6.1. Florence Handley, c.1900;
6.2 Hand printed fabric;
6.3. George Todd, Robert Blatherwick, Pauline Selway, Marjorie Wilson. c.1950;

I am sifting through a drawer of the bureau that contains photographs. They are fascinating to browse; a luxury of time to sift and peruse. They are full of the people of my childhood and past. Familiar faces, some of them are of me as a young girl. And there are other faces I do not recognise. I stare at them. Is this the woman in the painting? Is she my grandmother when she was younger? I look for clues, in the shape of the face, the eyes, the haircut, the locket around her neck, the buttons on her blouse; but this one I cannot be sure. I will need to look again and compare. There are photographs of happy times. A day trip to Skegness, four of them, carrying items: a bowl with a cloth over the top, food inside, a paper bag twisted at its corners, a towel rolled up under an arm. They seem to be having fun. And mother wearing those red sandals that I found in the cupboard, from almost seventy years ago. How can I throw them away when she kept them for so long? But I digress, and I need to keep to the task in hand. There are art school Christmas parties, my parents looking young, and in this one I know the fabric that the skirt is made of – it is still around, somewhere.

I find another envelope, brown and crinkled at the edges, '**PRINTED MATTER**' and '**DO NOT BEND**' on the address label, franked with a 2½ penny pink stamp, 'March 71' visible in the centre of the black ring. In it are large black and white studio photographs of pots, 8½ x 6 inches. Professionally taken, displays of work. They have dates written on the back, in pencil: '1940' and '1941'. These are pieces of work I have never seen before, and I need to investigate: student work - 1940 - beginning of the war - slubbed linen and coarse hessian backcloths - decorative pots. A photograph of a woman on a bench, have I seen her elsewhere? Did I meet her as a child? Perhaps not. Botticelli's Venus rising from the waves, seahorses, imagery I have known: this snail, fish, and rabbit are like old friends.

And here are some more. Pots, people, and places. I look with the magnifying glass, searching, for what? For more details, information, clues to the past, pieces that help to paint a picture and piece the jigsaw together.

Object: St Ives Standard Ware Plate

Two worlds:
The artists and the fishermen,
The land and the sea,
The kitchen and the workshop,
The craftsman and the artist.
Calm and devastation.
A crossing of cultures and continents:
Japan and England.
The meeting of East and West;
A knowing of both hemispheres from within.

Sue Blatherwick
— Reflections on St Ives

6.4. Robert Blatherwick. 1943. *St.Ives Standard Ware Plate*

Blue on white. Horizontal lines. The sea and the sky. The meeting of the two merge in the distance, unclear, at a point beyond, hazy where the two meet, at the horizon.

Imagine a calm day. The water ripples. A gentle breeze causes it to shimmer under the sun, mottling in light and shade. Beneath are the deeps and the shallows, masked by the glittering surface; depth and the world beyond are hidden from view.

The occasional wave rolls inwards, with a final thundering crash onto the shore.

Lonely fishermen in tiny boats haul their nets out afar, and those moored by the shore bob gently. Alfred Wallis had been one of them, before 1943, out in all weathers. Living simply, a pauper, painting scenes of his life on cardboard boxes. He had found his own way with expression and colour, in the lonely hours after his wife had died.

The air would be loud with the cries of gulls swirling and swooping in the vast expanse of a summer sky. The colours blue. St Ives, sand, sea, and safety, at the end of the land, away from the terror of bombing in the cities.

A sense of space. The long beach and vast ocean, to the places beyond. Two worlds. Sense and beauty, simplicity and form. Soyestsu Yanagi also talks about two worlds in the Introduction to *A Potter's Book.*

The Japanese brush dipped in cobalt oxide and painted over a white tin glaze, ingredients from the mines of Cornwall, not far away. Calmness evoked. The parallel blue lines vary in thickness, touching and lifting, the colour deeper where the hand has hesitated; accidental variation – a feature in Japan. The deep blue rippling wave gives life and contrasts with the stillness of the horizontal. The glaze poured in and swirled out, wiped from its thicker rim by thumb,[1] leaving a toasted clay edge, to contrast. A peaceful plate on which to place a piece of cake.

[1] A finger wipe around an edge was a technique used in the glazing of country pots and pancheons.

In *The Leach Pottery Catalogue* of 1952 its duplicate is item number 33, described as a 'Small decorated cake dish', approximate diameter 6.5 x 1.25 inches, selling for seven shillings and sixpence. *Leach Pottery Standard Ware.*

This particular small plate is showing its age, its glaze crackled and crazed from wear and use. It has sat amongst others on the shelf in the kitchen cupboard, quietly existing and barely noticed.

Context: St Ives 1942-1943

To make a thing oneself is the nearest way to understanding.

— Bernard Leach
A Potter's Book

6.5. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. *The Mermaid of Zennor.* Mid 1980s. Tin glaze tile decoration.

The few potteries which were functioning during the war provided solid ground for the post-war development of studio pottery. Paul Rice observed that

> an important factor in the success of the Leach Pottery [was that it] somehow managed to keep in production throughout the war.[2]

This is something RLB contributed to as he worked at the pottery in St Ives in 1942. It is therefore necessary to assess this extremely important time and its impact on the subsequent work of RLB, as well as our understanding of how the studio pottery movement has evolved. As Rice said: 'very few pots at all were made during the war years'.[3]

The Environment

The pottery at Higher Stennack in St Ives, now known as the Leach Pottery, is considered by many to represent the beginnings of the studio pottery movement in England. It was a small venture outside of the town; its significance has magnified as the status and impact of the work and teachings of Bernard Leach have grown. The recently restored Leach Pottery is considered 'among the most respected and influential studio potteries in the world'[4] with its museum, exhibition programme and resident studio potters. It is one of the most significant places showing works of art from the early twentieth century, and sits with the Tate St Ives and the Barbara Hepworth Studio in importance and location.

It was a very different place in 1942. St Ives, a small Cornish fishing port, had developed as an artists' colony in the late nineteenth century, with a thriving and lively artistic community who were 'putting down roots either alone or in groups … like a hidden water source'.[5] Many artists moved to St Ives from London for relative safety during the war. Art theorist Adrian Stokes (1902-1972) and his wife, the painter Margaret Mellis (1914-2009) had bought a house in Carbis Bay (a wealthy area, in which Leach also had a house). The sculptor Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) and her second husband, the painter Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) went to stay with them. Hepworth was drawing and making plaster sculptures at night; Ben Nicholson was painting abstracted landscapes, often through a window with a still life in the

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[2] Rice P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press p103

[3] Ibid. p74

[4] The Leach Pottery, St Ives, 'Studio and Museum', The Leach Pottery: http://www.leachpottery.com/; managed by the Bernard Leach (St Ives) Trust Ltd, a registered charity, founded 2005[Accessed: 12th July 2014]

[5] Shioda, J. (1989) 'Postwar painting in St Ives', Translated by Anderson, S. In: Shioda, J.; Shimizu, M.; Endo, N.; Nakajima, T.; Hirai, S.; Sakai, T.; Mizusawa, T. (eds.) *St Ives*. Japan: The Japan Association of Art Museums; The Yomiuri Shimbun. p43

foreground. The constructivist artist Naum Gabo (1890-1977) was there, he carved pebbles picked up on the beach,[6] and also his wife Miriam, a painter. Abstract colourist Victor Pasmore (1908-1998) was there, as were the painters Patrick Heron (1920-1999) and Sven Berlin (1911-1999) who were pacifists and conscientious objectors, plus many more leading artists and abstract painters. Ben Nicholson had visited St Ives in 1928 with Christopher Wood (1921-1930) and encountered the painter Alfred Wallis (1855-1942);[7] Nicholson gave drawing lessons to the local artist Peter Lanyon (1918-1964). This combination of innovative artists and inspiring landscapes led to the development of a particularly British abstraction and use of colour, with St Ives becoming an internationally significant centre for the development of post-war contemporary art. It was a haven of creative activity. These artists were frequently referred to in conversation and books in the RLB household, or newspaper clippings were cut out and kept in a file, and have formed part of the referential context. RLB was at St Ives when Alfred Wallis died, and recounted the ensuing frenzied interest in his paintings.

Twenty years earlier in 1920, Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada (1894-1978), a young potter from Japan, had been invited to St Ives with a generous bursary from the St Ives Handicraft Guild,[8] and chose this location to set up a pottery. They built the first Japanese, wood fired, three chambered climbing kiln in Britain. The pottery provided a meeting of the ideals of the East and the West, with a focus on a balanced integration of form, aesthetics, and function. RLB came to work here after leaving Winchcombe Pottery, when Cardew had left for Nigeria. It was a time of ideas, when beliefs and ideals were discussed, of hope and aspiration, amongst the fear, uncertainty and gloom of war.

Leach was already well known for his exhibitions of studio pottery in London galleries, public talks, and writing about ceramics. He had published *A Potter's Book* in 1940. This was a practical manifesto for running a pottery which expounded his passionate beliefs and explained his philosophical approach to the making of all forms of pottery. It is often referred to as the potter's bible, was unique and hardly anything of its kind had previously been written. He had been funded to write the book by the Elmhursts of Dartington Hall. The success of this book was huge and much greater than Leach had expected, and it has been reprinted many times. As Harrod said, it was more than a textbook: 'it offered the promise of a spiritually fulfilling way of

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[6] Brown, D. (1989) 'St Ives: Development as an Artist Colony 1877-1964', ; Shimizu, M.; Endo, N.; Nakajima, T.; Hirai, S.; Sakai, T.; Mizusawa, T. (eds.) *St Ives*. Japan: The Japan Association of Art Museums; The Yomiuri Shimbun. p35

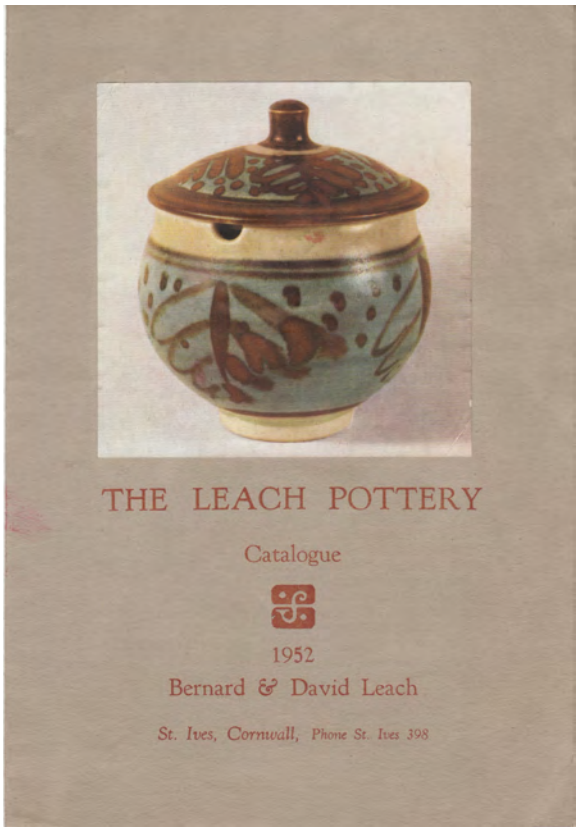
[7] Shioda, J. (1989) 'Postwar painting in St Ives', Translated by Anderson, S. In: Shioda, J.; Shimizu, M.; Endo, N.; Nakajima, T.; Hirai, S.; Sakai, T.; Mizusawa, T. (eds.) *St Ives*. Japan: The Japan Association of Art Museums; The Yomiuri Shimbun. p43

[8] Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall: Beach Books,

life'.[9] It was only after the war, when Leach was almost sixty, that he finally received popular acclaim. This has been partly attributed 'to the fact that he was able to continue work through the war'.[10]

> Many small potteries had not survived the war; and the mere fact that the Leach Pottery had done so meant that it was in a strong position to supply the big London department stores, which were clamouring for products to fill their shelves.[11]

The stockpile of pots that were made by RLB and his colleagues at this time were ready to fill the shelves of Liberty's, Heal's, John Lewis, and Peter Jones.[12]



6.6, 6.7. The Leach Pottery Catalogue, 1952, with one of the pages of Standard Ware showing plate identical to Fig. 6.4 made by RLB.

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[9] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.p38.

[10] Watson, O. (1989) 'St.Ives, Ceramics and Bernard Leach'. Shimizu, M.; Endo, N.; Nakajima, T.; Hirai, S.; Sakai, T.; Mizusawa, T. (eds.) *St Ives*. Japan: The Japan Association of Art Museums; The Yomiuri Shimbun.p.107

[11] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p88

[12] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press. p103

At the Pottery

As with Winchcombe Pottery, the Leach Pottery provides another example of a gap in recording, with RLB absent from most publications relating to St Ives.[13] It was a time of complexity and change at the pottery and RLB was there for several months. Harry Davis had been in charge but left in1937 to set up a pottery in Achimota, Nigeria. (This was the pottery that Cardew went to after leaving Winchcombe in July 1942). David Leach (1911-2005), Leach's son, had worked at the St Ives pottery since 1930, and William (Bill) Marshall (1923-2007) since 1938. They had both been called up to undertake war duties. Marshall was conscripted into the army in 1942 until 1947,[14] David Leach was in the army and away from the pottery from 1941-1945. Leach had lost his main throwers and 'the pottery did little more than tick over'.[15]

A land mine had destroyed part of the cottage at the pottery and damaged the kiln-shed a year earlier, and Leach had to return from Dartington where he was working. He was married to Muriel (the mother of David) who lived in Carbis Bay, near St Ives, but Leach was living in a wooden house (called 'The Cabin') with Laurie Cookes at Dartington.[16] All normal routine was disrupted. With his two main throwers called up, Leach needed someone for the day-to-day running of the pottery; he needed a thrower, and a first-hand assistant, someone to manage the pottery and fire the kilns. While Cardew was busy making plans for his escape from Winchcombe to Africa, RLB took the initiative and had unbeknownst to Cardew written to Leach, as evidenced by a letter from Cardew to Mariel:

> No! I didn't know anything abt. Robert B. wanting to go to St.Ives — first I've heard of it! But if there is decent living accomm. for him there, it might be quite alright.[17]

So it came to be that 'on Mr. Cardew's strong recommendation, Bernard Leach invited Mr. Blatherwick to join him in his Pottery at St Ives'.[18] From July 1942, RLB joined a very small

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[13] RLB is mentioned in Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives, The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall: Beach Books. pp110-111. He is not mentioned in Cooper, E. (2003) *Bernard Leach: Life and Work*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Margaret Leach and Dick Kendall, who were the other two present at the time, are mentioned, RLB is not. p219.

[14] Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives, The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall: Beach Books.

[15] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p87.

[16] Cooper, E. (2003) *Bernard Leach: Life and Work*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Margaret Leach and Dick Kendall are mentioned.

[17] Cardew, M. (1942,) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence', 1933-1942'; Feb 17th. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013.

[18] Marchbank Salmon, J. (1953). 'Letter in support of application for post of Lecturer in Pottery at Loughborough College of Art'. 30th April. (MS). Family archive.

team and was employed by Leach as 'a thrower and general assistant'.[19] Leach 'was without anybody, and for a while Bob was the only potter who was throwing and working with [him]'.[20] The other people working at the pottery were Margaret Leach (1918-2003) no relation to Bernard Leach, and Dick Kendall.[21] Not many potteries were functioning to full capacity,[22] and this link with his experience at Winchcombe presented a unique opportunity for employment and further development as well as solving a problem for Leach, when very few skilled throwers were available. Although RLB was young, Leach considered him to have 'a considerable all-round knowledge and skill in pottery',[23] and he accompanied Leach on trips to Dartington and London, where they stayed with Lucie Rie in her small Mews flat in Kensington.[24] RLB met many of the (now well-known) visitors to the pottery. RLB was making Leach Pottery standard ware, decorating, glazing, and firing pots.

At the time RLB was at St Ives Leach was married to Muriel, but was living with Laurie Cookes (whom he married in 1944, after divorcing Muriel). This created an atmosphere of tension and unease in the pottery, and it was clearly a difficult time for all persons concerned; the workers were party to a situation which they could not avoid and put them in a compromising position. Jeffrey Jones informs us that:

> In a series of letters from 1939 the various members of the family reveal the personal strains they were under; and this correspondence also shows the authority which Bernard wielded … these were difficult times … loyalties were obviously split.[25]

Although RLB found Leach 'charming and wonderful to work with ... he wasn't an easy man [and was] difficult at times'.[26] This made him feel uncomfortable. 'Things weren't happy at the

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[19] Leach, B. (1943) *Reference for Robert Blatherwick.* 22nd July. (Letter MS) Family archive.

[20] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[21] It is not clear whether Margaret Leach was the same Miss Leach that Cardew met on his visit to Lincoln. See Figure 2.11 showing Cardew diary entry in Chapter 2.

[22] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black.

[23] Leach, B. (1943, 22nd July) *Reference for Robert Blatherwick.* (Letter MS) Family archive.

[24] Evidential records of this have not been found. However this is based on recollections of information given to the author by RLB, who suggested she visit Rie when she was teaching in Hammersmith.

[25] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p86

[26] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording. Family archive.

pottery and Bob decided he couldn't work there',[27] and he 'left on account of ill health'.[28] It was far from the ideal mood for the creation of beauty, the calm harmonious working environment that Leach had written about in *A Potter's Book*[29] for a spiritually fulfilling way of life. Dicon Nance, who had helped at Winchcombe and worked at the pottery in St Ives between the wars as a general maintenance man, reported

> from a technical point of view the pottery was badly run. Leach's pots were often ruined, for instance, because in his eagerness he would open the kiln too soon.[30]

This disorganisation would have troubled RLB and is confirmed by Leach's letter to him in 1948 when he wrote that the pottery was 'all ship-shape [and] they were very much more in a swing of a routine than when you were here'.[31]

The Philosophy of Studio Pottery

> In Japan, beauty has always been related to humility, and the best potters are some of the most humble who do not need to display themselves by a shelf of pots.
>
> — Bernard Leach.
> *The Potter's Challenge*

Leach introduced RLB to the Japanese philosophy and ideals. He had worked with Japanese potters and had learnt the art of making using traditional methods. The Japanese respect for Leach's commitment to pottery was demonstrated by them passing on to him the highly prestigious traditional title of Kenzan heritage.[32] This had only ever been bestowed on five Japanese potters before, never a European. Leach 'got nearer to the heart of modern Japan than the ordinary Japanese did',[33] applying the philosophies of Buddhism and Zen, and bringing

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[27] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording. Family archive.

[28] Leach, B. (1943) 'Reference for Robert Blatherwick'. 22nd July. (Letter MS) Family archive.

[29] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber.

[30] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p167.

[31] Leach, B. (1948) *Letter to Robert.* , 27th February. (Letter MS) Family archive.

[32] Leach, B. (1966) *Kenzan and His Tradition*. London: Faber and Faber. For more information on Kenzan.

[33] Yanagi, S. (1940) *In:* Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. page xiv. Leach had been instructed by the sixth Kenzan, who died without an heir, and Leach and Tomimoto received the title of the seventh Kenzan as they were the only pupils who 'legally mastered the art of Raku ware.'

this Eastern quality back to England. Applied to ways of working this involved a truth to materials, and appreciation of 'simplicity ... a quality that harmonises well with beauty'.[34]

The Japanese refer to *shibui* as the ideal beauty, and the 'whole nation…share[s] a standard word for aesthetic appraisal',[35] believing that 'Beauty and Humility border upon each other'.[36] Applied to ceramics this allowed the serendipity of 'accidentals', and discoveries, an Oriental 'unconcern with natural flaws and irregularities'[37] which was 'dependent on the spirit in which the work is done'.[38] It required an approach to decorating in which the body and mind focused in a type of calmness, with emphasis placed on the quality of the mark and the beauty of the brush stroke. Beauty existed in simple marks, combing through slip, an understanding of aesthetics. This created a tension between what Jones calls the 'exotic Eastern and the indigenous English',[39] with opportunities for a playful crossover of styles, techniques, and sensibilities.

When analysing the approach and ideology of Leach one becomes aware of many contradictions in his philosophical teaching and his own actions. A 'studio-potter' or 'potter-artist' was how Leach described the potter 'who performs all or nearly all the processes of production with his own hands',[40] taking control of the whole process from the design and making of the pot from beginning to end. In contradiction with this Leach did 'not make his own tiles, he only decorate[d] them',[41] frequently decorating the work others had made for him; in later post-war years Bill Marshall made many of Leach's pots. Like Morris before him, Leach believed that the individuality and uniqueness of the handmade item was lost in industry, that the machine had taken over and devalued the work of the country potter. He observed that

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[34] Ibid. pp 7-8

[35] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. p8

[36] Ibid.

[37] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach: The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press. p22.

[38] Ibid. p23

[39] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A & C Black. p81

[40] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber.p1

[41] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*. Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p124.

> about nine tenths of the industrial pottery produced in England … is hopelessly bad in both form and decoration [comprising of] dead shapes, dead clay, dead … printing, dead patterns.[42]

Leach was concerned with making 'good' pots[43] the quality of which was captured in Korean pottery of the Yi dynasty and Chinese Sung;[44] such a pot 'was born [not made] it has warmth [and] there is no ego'.[45]

Leach was critical of the western ego and need for individualism, informing us that the Japanese way is a 'challenge to our over-accentuated individualism' and 'loss of 'communal element'.[46] But Leach, the man, was not lacking in ego, he became the essence of the individual artist/ potter himself. His fame has grown out of the very loss of the communal element which he strived for. He ran a modern co-operative workshop, but with unco-operative processes. The pottery at St Ives was communal in production, but not in the way it was marketed and promoted. Leach justified putting his own name and the place of making on the pot 'in order to distinguish between the work done by me, my sons, and my grandsons'.[47] This may not have been his only reason. Paradoxically Leach spoke of the humility of Hamada:

> When Hamada left the pottery in England in 1923 he left behind his pottery seal and thereafter neither sealed nor signed any of the pots he made.[48]

He did this because he

> did not want to put an accent on his own personality, [he] did not want people to buy the pot merely because of his name.[49]

However Hamada's approach too has its contradictions, as he had individual boxes made for each pot and signed the lids, enhancing the individuality of the single pot even more than the potter's stamp, as the box becomes an item which singles out the pot, giving the work the emphasis and status of a plinth.

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[42] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber.p3

[43]Leach, B. (1976*)* In*:* Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press. p16

[44] Ibid. p17

[45] Ibid. p21

[46] Leach B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Faber and Faber (1976 edition) p9

[47] Leach, B. (1976*)* In*:* Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press.p20

[48] Ibid. p20.

[49] Ibid. p20

Leach held an ethical opposition to what he called fine art pots, which promoted aesthetic concerns rather than function, and was critical of Staite-Murray for this. However, he produced pots which he considered exhibition quality pieces, which were shown as works of art, lacking the humility he himself had praised. He went on to say that

> no matter what one writes about the complex relationships of shape, pattern and color-texture, ultimately it is the manner in which such abstract ideas are applied which will determine the vitality of the work, for the pot is indeed the projection of the man who makes it and of the culture, or cultures, upon which he draws.[50]

Leach was a skilled orator and communicator, holding court to the local people of St Ives, as well as to those from further afield. He held critical sessions in the evenings at St Ives, after a day's work, discussing the qualities of the work produced. He searched for the ideal and would analyse the components of form, structure, body, and composition, as a music critic analyses a symphony. He believed every pot should be the expression of the maker.

The Impact of St Ives

In a reference for RLB Leach wrote: 'the particular qualification he possesses is practical as distinct from book knowledge'.[51] This reads in an ambiguous way and appears to undermine practical knowledge. Part of my intention in this thesis is to expose that RLB had both types of knowledge. When one reads *A Potter's Book* Leach discusses the importance of first-hand experience and the quality of craftsmanship, and bemoans reading as not providing real experience.[52] Leach wrote: 'potting is one of the few activities ... in which a person can use his natural faculties of head, heart, and hand in balance'.[53] Was his reference statement intended to be positive, or is it evidence of Leach's complexity? Marjorie said: 'I think relationships were difficult with Bernard, he wasn't an easy man'.[54] Leach also wrote:

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[50] Ibid. p39.

[51] Leach, B. (1943) *Reference for Robert Blatherwick.* , 22nd July. (Letter MS) Family archive.

[52] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. pp1-27. p21 contains a long footnote about the importance of first hand experience for designers in industry.

[53] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press.p17.

[54] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

> Only with the enthusiasm engendered by … personal experience is there any likelihood of a generation growing up capable of appreciating and demanding beauty in our domestic pottery.[55]

The impact of Leach's teaching, his eccentricity and passion for Japanese art and culture (they sat on the floor and ate with chopsticks), and the time at St Ives, as well as at Winchcombe Pottery, had a profound effect on the work produced by RLB. He too was extremely passionate about Japanese art, as reflected in the prints and pots collected in the family house. Both Leach's approach and the Japanese tradition have influenced RLB's pottery and aesthetics. However, these are only two of several strands in RLB's work, and Leach's teaching was not followed dogmatically but applied in new and different contexts.

There is only one pot among the Blatherwick family collection that bears the Leach pottery stamp, and it is small and could almost pass unnoticed. There are a few other pots that were made at St Ives, but the implication is that most pots made by RLB were sold. It is likely that if any still exist they will have been attributed to others, as RLB's presence at St Ives lacks evidence in the archives. However, there are numerous stoneware pots that RLB made after this time which have the Leach appearance, which show the influence of time at St Ives in terms of mark, style, decoration, and product type.

And there are many aspects of lifestyle and ideas of harmony which Leach wrote about in *A Potter's Book*, which were searched for and found by RLB. Leach's difficulties with relationships in his personal life meant that he struggled to achieve that harmony and calm, which was not present in his workshop when RLB was at St Ives.

RLB applied Leach's philosophy to the making of pots and, particularly after his resignation from Lincoln School of Art, to his way of living. RLB believed that a good pot did not need words for description or analysis, but stood nobly above the mediocre, making its presence felt, that it spoke for itself. This was a Leach doctrine: 'The pot is the man: his virtues and vices are shown therein - and no disguise is possible'.[56] However this probably reflects an expectation of knowledge and discernment from the viewer. RLB was frequently jolted out of what Leach refers to as 'the malady of self-consciousness'[57] by others (particularly his wife and sister-in-

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[55] Ibid. p27

[56] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press.p48.

[57] Ibid.p45.

law),[58] who were concerned for his and his family's welfare, and frequently urged greater self promotion and publicity.

Leach's ideas contributed to RLB's aim for perfection, his 'unerring sense of form',[59] his love of the Japanese aesthetic, constant criticism of his own work, and his ability to communicate some of the above to those he taught. A good pot was thrown with love and conviction, and its personality showed in the form.

The Work Produced

A promotional booklet for the Leach pottery c.1925 stated:

> The chief endeavour of the St.Ives Pottery is to produce with home material a hand-made high temperature stoneware of personal design resembling in craft the Chinese early [sic] and Korean work of the Sung and Korai periods.[60]

Leach predominantly made stoneware and porcelain at St Ives with a relatively small amount of slipware, and raku firings for the tourists at weekends, although some slip-decorated ware was made for the Japanese market who considered it superior. At St Ives they had a round up-draft kiln for biscuit, raku, and slipware, fuelled by wood and drip fed by paraffin. There was also a three-chamber Japanese climbing up-draft kiln, designed by T. Matsubayashi, stoked by wood, and then oil. Leach's own firing experience was 'limited mainly to wood and oil'.[61] He had no time for electric kilns:

> there is no flame; nothing seems to happen...With an electric kiln half your palette is eliminated, and as most of the pleasing glazes usually come from a mixture of the two types of atmosphere [reduction and oxidisation], it is very hard to make a completely satisfactory product or to retain direct contact with nature.[62]

Leach was an advocate of simple, domestic, and utilitarian forms, and created a catalogue of handmade 'Standard Ware' pottery for the general public to purchase. A chapter in *A Potter's Book* is entitled 'Towards a Standard'. In this he explores the philosophy and history behind the making of pottery, the qualities to be appreciated in good pots and the need for a standard to

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[58] Dorothy Blatherwick

[59] Paton, D. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Tealby, Lincolnshire: , 17th February. Digital recording in family archive.

[60] Leach, B. *Beyond East and West*, quoted in Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p82

[61] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. p205

[62] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach: The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press. p35.

be applied to ware in everyday use in order to educate the public on these issues.[63] When Leach set up the pottery in 1920, his original idea had been to revive 'the English tradition'[64] of slipware country pottery. But

> after the fever of technical research abated, we saw that there were definite limitations to the use of slipware in present day life. [The] relative roughness of the ware relegates it for the most part to the kitchen and the cottage [and] few people want red and brown or black or heavy cream coloured ware for table use in modern cities.[65]

The wares from the Leach Pottery 'provided a real feeling of warmth, humanity and reassuring traditional values',[66] which was part of a post-war need for homely domestic items. Leach dropped the production of slipware altogether in the mid-thirties (although he produced over one hundred pieces in 1953, when asked to send some to Japan).[67] He believed stoneware to be a superior material to earthenware, and this attitude dominated the studio pottery movement for almost half a century. When RLB left Lincoln Art school in 1967 he made earthenware in an electric kiln. This was a form of pottery that Leach had no time for, regarding electric kilns as lifeless.[68] Leach also spoke publicly against the art schools,[69] even though someone from the pottery taught in Penzance Art School 'three evenings a week'.[70] RLB and Leach were travelling in opposite directions.

In later life, RLB returned to some of the designs and ideas he had explored while at St Ives, revisiting narrative and imagery such as *The Mermaid of Zennor* and other Leach-influenced designs. RLB produced large earthenware dishes and chargers that had the quality and appearance of stoneware. They were an absorption of the teachings of Leach and Cardew, a hybrid of the two, a unique mix of Japanese marks combined with the decoration techniques of traditional English slipware. He produced earthenware pots which contained the qualities of oriental stoneware, with qualities drawn from each, but applied in a different context. Only the

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[63] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. pp1-26. He also writes about 'the four principal' types of pottery: Raku, English Slipware, Stoneware, Porcelain.

[64] Ibid. p33

[65] Ibid.p.34

[66] Ibid. p107

[67] Hodin, J.P. (1961) 'Introduction'. *Bernard Leach. Fifty Years a Potter*. London: Arts Council.

[68] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach: The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press. p35.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Leach, B. (1948) *Letter to Robert.* (Letter MS) 27th February. Family archive.

unpicking of RLB's life and experience in this research can expose and explain the evolution and development of these strands. In the ensuing chapters the influence of the philosophy and experience of the time at St Ives and Winchcombe will become more apparent.

RLB left St Ives and returned to Lincoln. He considered reversing this move and wrote to Leach in 1948 asking to be taken on again, but Leach had a new team of potters. Since the war Leach had received 'a continual series of applications [and] must have turned away 125'. The pottery had been 'enlarged by two good rooms', more equipment, with his 'own studio above'.[71] Leach put his success in popularity down to potters reading his book. People returning from the war did not want to work in factories; they were interested in a more fulfilling way of life. RLB kept in touch with Leach for many years, visiting 'the first post-war exhibition of individual pots [which was] held at the Berkeley Gallery in London in 1946'.[72] Photograph Fig 6.8 was probably taken on this occasion. He later met Leach and Hamada with Marjorie in 1952.[73] RLB remained aware of developments and was in contact with some of the potters he had met during this period, including Lucie Rie, who he liked and felt an affinity with, admiring the aesthetic qualities of the earthenware work she was making at this time.

6.8. RLB with his mother Florence, and Lucie Rie, 1946.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Whybrow, M. (2006) *Leach Pottery at St Ives, The Legacy of Bernard Leach*. Cornwall: Beach Books. p42.

[73] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive. Marjorie had met Hamada with Leach and RLB. Records of this have not been found. Hamada visited England in 1952.

Section B

The Art School Years 1944-1967

Section B covers the teaching career of RLB. During this period there were many changes in art and design education, and this section looks at the teaching of art, as well as the developments in his own work and the directions it took. During this period he worked in earthenware and stoneware.

7.0. ROBERT BLATHERWICK

Chapter 7

Site: The Balcony

One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet which belongs to us, and to which we belong.

— Charles Moore
Foreward: *In Praise of Shadows*

7.1. The view from the balcony.

Open the back door onto the balcony. Hook it open against the wall and take the step out from the living room onto the wooden slats. The doorstep provides a perfect seat on which to sit and eat breakfast on a summer's day, listening to the blackbirds' song. Still in touch with the inside world but feeling outside, a transitionary space from which to look down the garden and its organised beauty. The view broken by the vertical white lines of the metal railings.

Look below through the black-slatted, creosoted parallel bars, to a sea of green, an ocean of ferns, grasses, petals, and fallen blossom. Black and white vertical lines, like Japanese writing, like the prints in the room.

Object: The White Sculptural Figure

Tall and white you stand. Beautiful and upright, slender and elegant, with a quiet poise of confidence and assuredness. You watched us grow up and change and develop, came to know the visitors to the house, enjoyed the happiness and felt the moods, listened to the music and observed. Absorbing, knowing, watching, without intruding.

Way back when I was young and you first came to the house I called you Gordon. There was another one too, I called Mainsie. Why you were Gordon when you were clearly female I do not know. Did Gordon bring you to the house? A distant memory pictures the excitement of the moment of your arrival.

You have always been a presence in the room. Both with and without power. An emblem, a symbol, a reminder, a signifier. And now I wonder: how were you made? Were you modelled in clay and cast in plaster? The surface has the tactile quality of pressed clay. What sort of mould were you from?

A wooden box mirroring your shape was in the shed. Hand painted in neat red gouache were the words:

SCULPTURE WITH CARE

I brought the box in and rescued it when the roof began to leak. When the contents of the house were divided and I got you, I opened the long box. Its lid had been screwed down for over fifty years. Inside were supports for your inner pole, a few crusty dead wood-pigs, a cobwebby, blue rag which had been used as packing, and crumpled newspaper. Uncreasing the newspaper, there was reference to your maker. Nothing special, just a mention of him as a teacher.[1]

We slid you into the box, like a stretcher into the air ambulance, and transported you to your new home, my home. It will take me a while to find the right space where you will be undisturbed. Our rooms are smaller and more packed — you need a clear space in which to reside. You have been in the box for two months now and I need to get you out. Your presence is required in our company.

[1] Staffman, (1966) 'Pottery on Show'. City and County. *The Lincolnshire Echo.* April 22nd, Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

7.2; 7.3; 7.4. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1948. The box, the newspaper cutting found inside, and the white sculptural figure.

Context:

Teaching at Lincoln School of Art 1944-1967

7.5. Noel Brannan watching RLB remove a bowl from a throwing demonstration, c.1949. In this image a Thomas Toft design is evident, and the hand printed textiles are of the type produced at Lincoln School of Art.

RLB returned from St Ives and began teaching part-time at Lincoln School of Art in 1943, and was appointed full-time in September 1945.[2] This was the place where he had studied, and where he taught until 1967, a period of twenty-four years. During this time he met Marjorie, purchased the old bakery in Reepham (which is the location of the 'Site' sections of this thesis), married, and started a family.

This section looks at changing attitudes which had a direct impact on the experience of many artists, crafts people and teachers of the subjects, including RLB. The beginning of this period was a particularly active time for the crafts, but this was to change in the 1960s when educational focus shifted from Applied Art and Crafts to Fine Art. With the development of modernism came a changing attitude towards crafts, with definitions becoming paradoxically more specialised and boundaries less clear. This created problems for crafts with divisions, particularly in the studio pottery movement. As a teacher in an art school, RLB applied a broad approach which reflected his training and experience. Pottery was a specialism, as were other craft forms. RLB was a teacher of pottery but also an artist. The changing approaches to teaching in art schools occurred nationally, resulting in disaffection and student unrest, with 'sit-in' protests at Hornsey College of Art in 1968.

Between 1913 and 1946 substantial amounts of craftwork had been carried out in art schools, but as these were considered 'vocational' subjects they had been largely ignored by national examinations.[3] The definition of 'craft' and the nature of 'vocational' subjects continue to be a political football today.[4] Soon after RLB began teaching, in 1946 a national scheme of assessment was introduced. This was a post-war Keynesian policy, which recognised the crafts as artistic.[5] The Ministry of Education introduced the Intermediate Examination in Arts and Crafts (IEAC) which took place after two years of study, followed by a further two years specialisation for the National Diploma in Design (NDD). The IEAC covered eight areas of knowledge: Drawing from Life, Drawing and Painting from Memory and Knowledge, Anatomy, Architecture, Drawing the Figure in Costume, Creative Design for Craft, Modelling, and General Knowledge, with one craft being examined.[6]

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[2] City of Lincoln Education Committee Form of Agreement of Service with Members of the Teaching Staff in the School of Art. Family archive.

[3] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.p243.

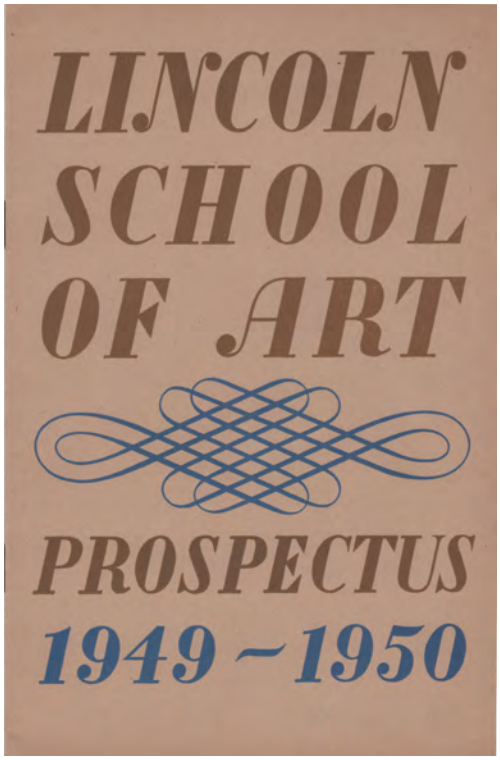
[4] Yeomans, D. (n.d.) 'Constructing Vocational Education: from TVEI to GNVQ'. Post 14 Research Group. School of Education, University of Leeds http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002214.htm [Accessed 12th January 2014].
The General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) was designed to assess vocational art, craft, and design, an attempt by the Labour Government in the 1990s to align education with the needs of industry, but this qualification has been scrapped by the current government.

[5] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

[6] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.p232.

The NDD provided for a range of crafts and vocational subjects including dress design and making, craft preparation, illustration, pottery, typography, bookcrafts, weaving, embroidery and millinery, modelmaking, metalwork and silversmithing, leatherwork, textile design, lettering, costume life, commercial art, architecture, painting and decorating.[7]

The *Prospectus* reflects a broad definition of the teaching of 'art' with craft skills strongly emphasised along with the more traditional fine art subjects of anatomy, painting and sculpture, object drawing, memory drawing, and general knowledge. Use of imagination is reflected in the subjects of memory and etching, and composition.[8]



7.6. Prospectus, demonstrating a craft-based aesthetic

[7] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1949-50* (1949), Lincoln: n/a

[8] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1946-47* (1946), Lincoln: n/a. The full list of subjects in 1946-47 Prospectus were: anatomy, architectural drawing, book-binding, decorative design, drawing (preliminary); drawing (advanced), drawing from life; dress design; dress making; embroidery; engraving; etching; fabric printing; geometrical drawing; house painting and decorating; history of architecture; illustration; leatherwork; lettering; mural decoration; illuminating; metal-work; modelling; painting still Life; perspective; plasterers' work; portraiture; poster design; pottery; silversmithing; stone carving; typography; weaving; woodcarving; window display.

Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1949-50 (1949), Lincoln: n/a. Prospectus course names had changed to: sculpture and modelling, lithography, general knowledge, courses for teachers, illustration, design and commercial design, anatomy, painting, drawing, composition, memory and etching, pottery, wood carving, general drawing, model making, modelling, dress design; embroidery, history of costume, millinery, architecture, architectural design, architectural calculations and construction, City and Guilds final certificate, woodwork and metalwork, silversmithing and metalwork, design and illustration, weaving, painting and decorating, trade classes, leatherwork, sign-writing, typography-press and machines, typography-compositors' work, commercial design, bookbinding and silk-screen process.

Also offered at Lincoln were linoleum block cutting, fabric printing, interior decoration, rug weaving, terracotta work, and wallpaper design.[9] Generous provision for the crafts was not offered by many colleges,[10] but the coverage in Lincoln was quite extensive. RLB taught pottery, wood carving, general drawing, model making, and modelling.[11]

The design of the cover of Lincoln School of Art prospectus (Fig. 7.6.) reflects the aesthetic of the time, with hand-printed flourished lettering printed on a natural brown soft paper. The work produced in the art schools during this period demonstrates the explosion of new ideas and close connection and interaction between the different media. Art schools were lively

7.7. Hand-printed cards and invitations from members of Lincoln School of Art in the 1950s.

training grounds for makers and designers throughout the 1950s,[12] and this is evident in the hand-printed Christmas cards, thank-you cards, and invitations, from the RLB archive. This photograph shows designs by staff and students at Lincoln School of Art, further revealing the aesthetic of this period, with hand-crafted lettering and printing. Harrod informs us that innovative crafts flourished in art schools with inspired instructors, and several of Lincoln's tutors were 'holding their own among the largest exhibitions in London'.[13] *One Hundred Years of*

[9] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1949-50* (1949), Lincoln: n/a

[10] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

[11] The *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1948-1949*

[12] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p232. Comment relating to the Central School of Arts and Crafts.

[13] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years 1906-2006'.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society p46

Lincolnshire Artists records a county that 'has a school of artists worthy to rank alongside those more famous schools of Norwich and St Ives'.[14]

Exhibitions such as *Typographic Art in the USA* held in the School of Art brought an international connection to Lincoln. This is further evidenced by the diverse backgrounds of the staff, some of whom had escaped the Nazi invasion of Europe during the Second World War. Antonin Bartl (1912-1998) had been taught by the expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka; a Czechoslovakian Communist, Bartl had escaped the labour camps and reached England in 1947. He arrived with unrecognised qualifications and unable to speak English.[15]

Another instructor with an unusual provenance was Edward Albarn (n.d.- 2002), lecturer in architecture, who had lived in a closed community near Wragby during the Second World War, and was ostracised for being a conscientious objector. This post-war period at Lincoln was full of energy and dynamism and has been described as 'heady times'.[16] In her later years, Marjorie frequently recollected these times with her then new husband, who had been part of the same scene.

The photographs below show a 1950 student and staff exhibition at the Usher Gallery in Lincoln. The pot on the top left of Fig. 7.9. was made by Gordon Baldwin (b.1932) and was part of his Intermediate Examination at Lincoln School of Art. A large photograph of this very pot was displayed in the 'Excitations' exhibition at York Museum in 2012, supporting 'Objects for a Landscape', a major touring retrospective of Baldwin's work.

7.8, 7.9. Lincoln School of Art exhibitions showing student and staff work. Usher Gallery, 1950. Family archive.

[14] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists One Hundred Years: 1906-2006*. Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society. Back cover

[15] Ibid.

[16] Eisner, C. (2011, June). *Antonin Bartl: One Colourful Life; In Conversation with Sheila Bartl.* 'Antonin Bartl:100 years Retrospective' exhibition 2012, Sam Scorer Gallery, Lincoln. [Accessed 10th September 2013].

In the early 1960s, as post modernism evolved, a move away from the traditional crafts towards a new approach to thinking and teaching in the art schools was introduced. This approach was based on the principles of the Weimar Bauhaus, the German school of art famous for its combined approach to crafts, fine art, and design.[17] Experimental ways of constructive thinking about the principles of space, material, and form were being introduced. Joseph Albers (1888-1976) had written:

> to experiment is at first more valuable than to produce; free play … develops courage … we do not begin with a theoretical introduction, we start directly with the material.[18]

These ideas were detailed in 'A Visual Grammar of Form (2) in Three Dimensions'[19] published in *Motif 9* in 1962, this publication being on RLB's bookshelves. The cover design and endpapers of *Motif 9* were created by Edward Bawden and are designs pasted up from lino-cuts, with a strong hand-crafted appearance. The combination of craft-skill-based illustrations and conceptual articles in this publication illustrate the crossover that was taking place between the crafts and new thinking about experimentation. The publication of *Basic Design* was an extension of this article. It became an art school handbook which aimed to clarify 'certain fundamental areas of enquiry and [act as] a spur to … constant inquisitiveness'.[20]

The fact that clarification was needed illustrates the confusion that existed. This *Basic Design* approach to teaching was the 'antithesis of the Leachean workshop approach; it set out to educate, but not to train',[21] and created problems for crafts people in the art schools. Furthermore, *The White Paper* of May 1966[22] announced plans for mergers and amalgamations of art colleges into polytechnics which 'most leading artists and educationalists were against',[23] and which led to sit-ins at Hornsey School of Art. These were radical protests against the restructuring that was taking place. Throughout the twentieth century, a considerable amount of confusion has existed about the proper role of the craftsperson, how they should be defined, what they could or could not be expected to undertake.

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[17] The Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius and had many radical thinkers including Johannes Itten, theorist, colourist and writer of *Design and Form.*

[18] Albers, J. (1928). quoted in De Sausmarez, M., Martin, K., Richmond, O., and Broodbank D. (1962) 'A Visual Grammar of Form (2) in Three Dimensions'. *Motif 9*. London: The Shenval Press. p47

[19] De Sausmarez, M., Martin, K., Richmond, O., and Broodbank, D. (1962) 'A Visual Grammar of Form (2) in Three Dimensions'. *Motif 9*. London: The Shenval Press. pp47-65

[20] De Sausmarez, M. (1964) *Basic Design: The Dynamics of Visual Form*. London: The Herbert Press, p11

[21] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p232

[22] *The White Paper* of May 1966 included a plan for polytechnics and other colleges: higher education in the further education system.

[23] Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution.* 2008 London: Frances Lincoln. p21

As noted previously, Bernard Leach was a passionate exponent of the workshop ethic and its accompanying set of 'standards'.[24] Both Leach and Cardew had spoken out against art schools, Leach saying that 'art schools were places where crafts such as ours cannot be learned'.[25] In Leach's view, 'art school tutors lacked basic pottery skills in preparing clay bodies, repetition throwing, kiln building and glaze technology'.[26]

RLB had one foot in the studio pottery and another in the experimental art camp, having been art school educated as well as studio pottery trained. The Prospectus of 1955-56 lists him as teaching just 'Pottery' (and not the other subjects from previous years). By 1961-62 a new principal was in position,[27] and the Intermediate Diploma in Art and Design (DipAd) Course was on offer; by 1962-63 staff were organised into Departments, RLB being in Fine Art.[28] The examples below, made as teaching aids, are from a box of slides discovered in his desk at home,[29] which also contained photographs of his sculptural pots from the 1960s. These paper-constructed shapes, which I remember seeing as a child and hearing him talk about, are taken directly from the teachings in *Basic Design.* The illustrations on the following two pages (Figs. 7.10, 7.11, 7.12, 7.15 and 7.16) show RLB's exploration of geometrical forms, using paper and cocktail sticks to explore volume and surface.

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[24] Leach, B. (1940) 'Towards a Standard'. *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber. pp1-27.

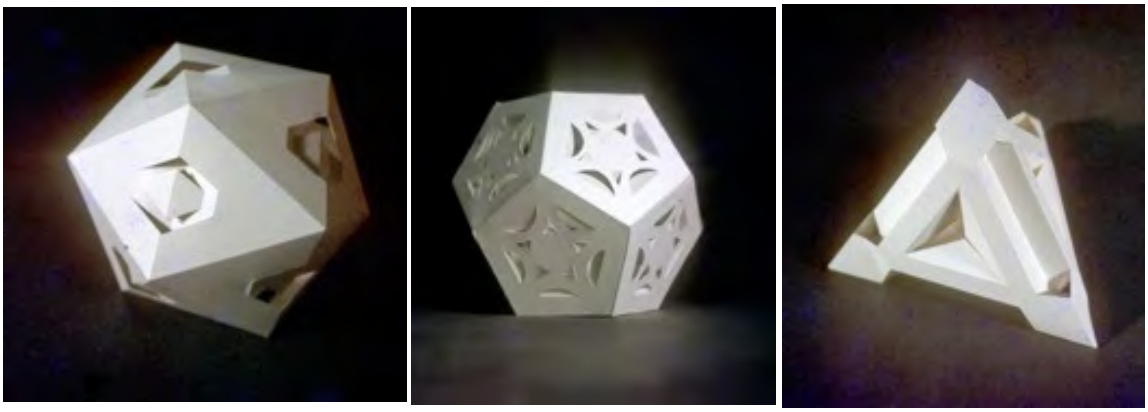
[25] Leach, B. (1948) *The Contemporary Studio Potter*, Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 21st May, p366. quoted in Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p221. Referenced from p366

[26] Ibid.

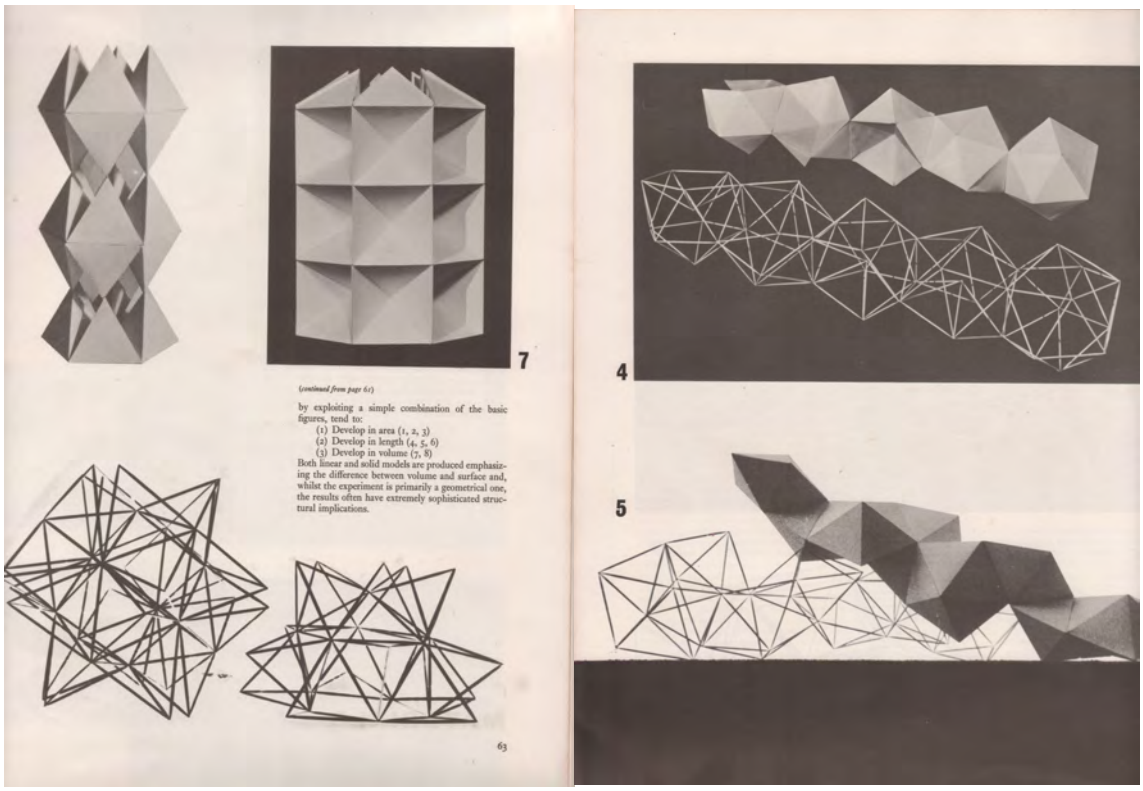
[27] The new Principal was Mr. Kenneth Gribble.

[28] *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1962-63* (1962), Lincoln: n/a. The Board of Academic Studies included Mr. H. Robinson and Mr. R. Harrison from Graphic Design, Mr. A.K. Bartl and Mr. R.L. Blatherwick from Fine Art, Mr. T.P. Wild from Fashion and Hairdressing.

[29] These were digitised by John Davis of Manchester Metropolitan University.



7.10, 7.11, 7.12. Paper sculptural forms made by RLB, c.1960.



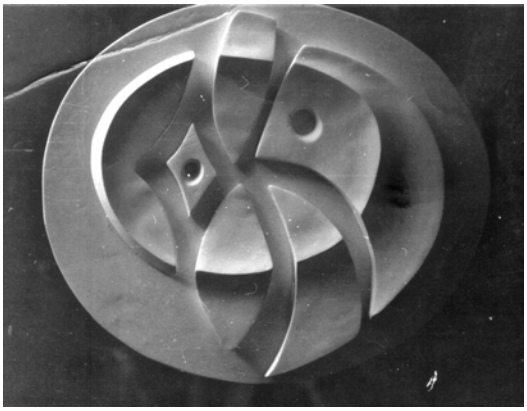
7.13, 7.14. Pages from 'A Visual Grammar of Form (2) in Three Dimensions' published in *Motif 9*, showing geometrical structures similar to those made by RLB.

These illustrate an approach to structural sculptural design which was then transferred to clay. This is represented by the geometric form below (Fig.7.16). These remnants of cocktail stick structures, below left, made during 1960s, were photographed recently in RLB's workshop.

7.15. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Geometric structure made from cocktail sticks.
7.16. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Geometric form made from clay.

These examples illustrate extremes of concepts, a breadth of experience in applying a constructive experimental approach to the teaching of art, in a broad sense, as well as teaching the studio pottery workshop approach. His teaching and his experience bridged the gap between art school inventiveness and workshop production skills. He believed it was possible to educate a studio potter, to teach an enquiring and experimental approach, which involved workshop training but was more than just functional production, and to transfer the conceptual skills into a broader context. The following section explores how he applied this approach to sculpture and the development of sculptural pots.

Sculpture



7.17. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1945-55.
Sculptural exploration of abstracted shapes.

The last decade has seen ceramic practice expand in directions undreamed of half a century ago with new forms of extended experimental practice.[30] Before the 1950s, ceramics and sculpture were quite separate fields, but some ceramics moved closer to the domain of sculptural forms, and by the end of the 1960s 'ceramic sculpture' was being shown as a special category by the Craftsmen Potters Association.[31] However, a huge conceptual distinction in the thinking approach existed between ceramic sculpture and studio pottery. Sculpture and ceramics were very different disciplines, products of the historical route from which they had developed. As noted above, the multi-disciplinary approach introduced in the 1960s in art schools contributed to the breakdown of barriers and invited transference of ideas. Some of the sculptor potters such as Hans Coper (1920-1981) pushed the 'outward limits' of pottery, and yet never lost sight of the true nature of it.

There are connections between the art of the sculptor and the art of the potter: the modeller for bronze casting initially builds with clay to create the form from which to cast. As well as changes in the approach to ceramics, the nature of sculpture was changing. The *First International Open-Air Exhibition of Sculpture* took place in Battersea Park in London in 1948, and continued triennially five more times.[32] RLB visited these enormously significant exhibitions,

[30] See for examples the diversity of approaches on the *Ceramics in the Expanded Field* website: http://ceramics-in-the-expanded-field.com/

[31] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black.

[32] The catalogues of the 1951, 1957, 1960 Battersea Park exhibitions were in RLB's collection of books.

which brought non-figurative work into the public domain. In discussing the work Pevsner reminds us that

> [a]ll sculpture has been representational before our century, even if as violently distorted as that of totem-poles or twelfth-century statuary.[33]

Exhibiting sculpture made during the first half of the twentieth century, these exhibitions were a display of the very essence of modernism and abstraction, with sculptors 'striving … to get down to the basis of form in its elemental simplicity'.[34] This phase in sculpture, which evolved from Picasso's cubism and the abstraction of Hans Arp (1886-1966), focused on pure form. 'Volume and outline speak as audibly as the inner spaces'.[35] It was the beginning of the deconstruction of figurative representation. Sculptural practice took place in Lincoln School of Art, with some modelling and abstract shapes, similar to those explored by Ben Nicholson when he was at St Ives (Fig. 7.17). Along with the exploration of abstract form through clay, this development took pottery beyond the functional. This was happening in other European countries at a different pace, following other paths of evolution, and will be examined in the next section on Danish Design.

A key figure in the development of hand-built sculptural ceramic form in Britain was Gordon Baldwin. He was taught pottery at Lincoln School of Art by RLB from 1949-51 on the Intermediate NDD[36] before going on to the Central School of Art. Baldwin's family lived in the next street to RLB and their gardens backed onto each other. Baldwin remembered:

> Well they were over there, we lived in Elder Street, the gardens abutted each other, but I can sort of vaguely picture his mother but his father I can't picture, then suddenly word went round in shock whisper that she had been killed, on her bike, run over, suddenly.[37]

Baldwin remembers seeing very little of RLB's work produced at the time, recalling him as a teacher of pots which were 'Leachian in style',[38] but he knew the house at Reepham and

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[33] Pevsner, N. (1951) 'The Sculptor's Problems'; *Sculpture in Battersea Park May to September 1951'*, London: Lund Humphries. p2 (pages not numbered). Family archive.

[34] Wheeler, C. (1957). *Sculpture 1850 and 1950*. London County Council Exhibition at Holland Park, London, May to September 1957.p2. (pages not numbered). Family archive.

[35] Pevsner, N. (1951) 'The Sculptor's Problems'; *Sculpture in Battersea Park May to September 1951'*, p3 (unnumbered), London: Lund Humphries. p3. (pages not numbered). Family archive.

[36] Jones, J. (2012) 'Gordon Baldwin in Context'. *Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape*. York: York Museums Trust.p55.

[37] Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

[38] Whiting, D. (ed.) (2012) *Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape*. York: York Museums Trust. p17

remembered the Tiled Fireplace.[39] There are similarities in surface and form between Baldwin's and RLB's work of the early 1950s, and RLB must have had an influence on Baldwin of which he was unaware. RLB had his first solo exhibition in the Usher Art Gallery in July 1949 with 'his models being staged in the lower hall of the Usher Art Gallery'.[40] This was when Baldwin was RLB's student. Many of RLB's large sculptural pieces were plaster casts from figures modelled in clay. They were concerned with the simplification of form. Abstract shape is evident in other RLB ceramic works, such as the chess set figures, and 'totemic' forms. That RLB designed his work is evident from the drawings in his sketchbooks; he produced sculptural tiles, and sculptural ceramic vessels, connected to the form of the pot. In RLB's figures the influence of early Cycladian form and the sculpture of Henry Moore is evident in the abstraction and simplification, with a similar influence seen in the work of Baldwin.[41] At the Central School of Art Baldwin moved from ceramics towards sculpture, and developed a postmodern style.[42] Along with others, Baldwin took ceramic form beyond the functional into abstract sculpture.

To make a living as a sculptor or a potter (without financial support) is and was extremely difficult.[43] Sculptural items are not useful, they do not have a domestic market. The possibilities for making sculpture reduced for RLB when he became self-employed as he needed to focus on items that would sell. He sculpted again towards the end of his life, carving a figure from a large piece of pine he had saved. Sorting through papers in the family home, the following statement was discovered: 'I sometimes think he was more of a sculptor than a potter'.[44] It was written by someone who knew him well, his wife Marjorie.

The images on the following page show a similarity in both the forms and surface textures in the work of RLB and Baldwin. There is an undeniable overlap and influence in the colours used and the 'heads' of the figures. Both artists were interested in similar Modernist issues. This brief analysis of RLB's sculptural pieces adds a dimension and understanding to his ways of seeing, which differentiates his work and identity from that of being solely a studio potter and maker of domestic ware.

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[39] The Tiled Fireplace is discussed in Chapter 8, the tiles were made in 1951. Gordon and Nancy Baldwin visited the house at Reepham during the mid to late 1950s, helping with jobs on the conversion of the bakery. As a young child, this author gave the fictitious names of *Gordon* and *Mainsie* to RLB's sculptural figures.

[40] Unknown author (1949) 'City and County'. The Lincolnshire Echo. July 30th. Family archive, newspaper cutting.

[41] Whiting, D. (ed.) (2012) *Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape*. York: York Museums Trust.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Clark quoted in Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black.

[44] Family archive, written c.2004. Marjorie was expressing her thoughts in preparing a statement for Wheeler, R. (1998) *Winchcombe Pottery The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford: White Cocklade Publishing.

7.18. Left: GORDON BALDWIN. 1961. Standing Form. Earthenware.
7.19. Right: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1950s. Bowl. Stoneware.

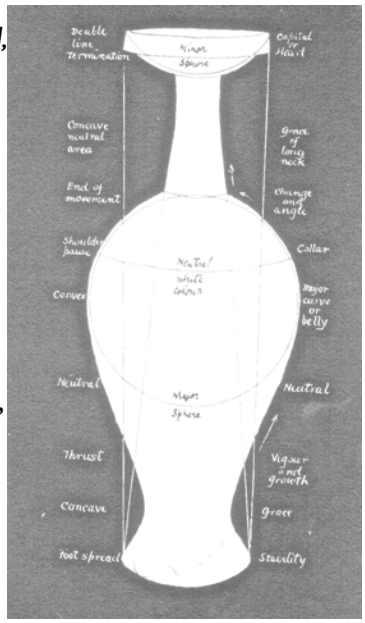
7.20. Left: GORDON BALDWIN, 1959. The Watcher. Earthenware.
7.21. Right: ROBERT BLATHERWICK, c.1948. Detail of Reclining Figure (Mainsie). Cast plaster.

7.22. Left: GORDON BALDWIN, 1961. Untitled, 1961. Earthenware.
7.23. Right: ROBERT BLATHERWICK, c.1948. Standing Figure. Cast plaster.

Sculptural Pots

Pots and sculpture have existed in distinct camps. Many potters explored sculptural form, going beyond the laws of proportion and composition for making good pots that Leach had written about. He included 'signposts to intuition' regarding the principles of composition for potters,[45] as illustrated in Fig. 7.24 on the right. But the potter sculptors of the 1960s were not a homogenous group.[46]

As recently as 1994, in the exhibition T*he Raw and the Cooked, New Work in Clay in Britain,* Alison Britton wrote that 'the ingredients of this meal are unusual in that the pots and sculpture are not segregated'.[47]



7.24. BERNARD LEACH. The Principles of Composition in Pottery.

Picasso was among the first artists in the West to explore ceramics as an art form, using the plate as a canvas, and decorating forms, which had frequently been made by others, in a painterly way. In this he was traversing the boundary between ceramics and painting. An important exhibition of Picasso's ceramics had been held at the Musee d'Antibes in the early 1960s, and the Blatherwick collection included a number of postcards from that exhibition.[48] William Staite Murray considered his pottery an art form and gave his work titles and high prices. Three potters who were nicknamed 'the Picassoettes' — a derisive name given to them by Leach who regarded their playfulness as superficial — explored decorative art and sculptural forms.[49]

Many of the Leach school's explorations looked to the past to the unusual characteristics of Korean pots such as 'lobed or pleated' feet with carved inserts. Porcelain from Korea or the Chinese Sung Dynasty of the tenth and eleventh centuries had exaggerated forms and

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[45] Leach, B. (1976*)* In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach: The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press. p36

[46] Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black.

[47] Britton, A. (1993) *The Raw and the Cooked. New Work in Clay in Britain. Oxford: The Museum of Modern Art.* p10.

[48] There are four postcards in the family archive, a collection of painted plates, one post-marked 1964, sent from Sheila, Tony and Caroline Bartl, three others from family members to RLB and Marjorie.

[49] These were William Newland, Margaret Hine, Nicholas Vergette,

7.25. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. mid 1950s stoneware pot with fluted sides, pronounced foot and Tenmoku glaze.

extended necks.[50] Leach reintroduced faceting and the carving or fluting of the sides of bowls.[51] But twentieth-century studio potters searching for new ways took these forms further.

Lucie Rie and Hans Coper explored the possibilities of what a pot could do, while remaining within the domain of the pot. Coper explored pots with foot extensions, even appearing to turn them upside down;[52] his pots are structural and minimally decorated with a concern for surface. Rie widened the flange and the lip. She said that Coper 'never sculpt[s], he makes pots';[53] although she felt that with his pots he made art; she said about herself that she 'just make[s] pots'.[54] Colin Pearson (1923-2007) added wings to his forms. Dan Arbeid (1928-2010) and Ian Auld (1926-200) manipulated and re-presented the shape of the pot. Slab pots followed the shapes of Japanese bottles, with proportions altered, giving a partly industrial appearance. An interconnection between potters and artists meant that shapes and form

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[50] Honey, W.B. (1947) *Corean Pottery*. London: Faber & Faber. Glasgow: Glasgow University Press. p6

[51] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber.

[52] A Korean pot from the Koryu period resembles shapes made by Coper with extended neck rather than extended foot.

[53] Lucie Rie quoted in Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p165

[54] Clark G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain*. London: Phaidon. p173

evolved. The distinction between functional pot, art objects, and sculptural items became blurred.

Some of RLB's pots of the late 1940s to 1950s were Leach in style with fluting and use of Tenmoku glaze. But his sculptural pots followed an evolution which included fluted and faceted forms, the addition of the extended Coper style foot (Fig. 7.25), the transfer of one thrown form onto another to create a square pot with a flared lipped top (Fig.10.4), gentle flattening to reshape a bowl. Later, shapes began to be carved into the tops of pots, looking to nature and rock formations, and changing the very nature of the vessel, exploring the boundary between pot and sculptural form (see overleaf Figs.7.27, 7.31) Methods of making evolved by the use of partly thrown and part slab forms, such as slab pots with thrown necks, or added thrown feet. During the electricity strikes of the 1970s RLB could not use his wheel, so he focussed on slab built forms. Some of these had carved and modelled tops. Many of these forms show a strong sculptural quality in their carving and their structural shape.

In the late 1970s potters Alison Britton and Jacqueline Poncelet, from the Royal College of Art, took the idea of the pot beyond its existence as a vessel and away from concerns with form. The contemporary clay work in T*he Raw and the Cooked, New Work in Clay in Britain* is more sculpture than pot, but as stated in the earlier quote, the two are shown together and not segregated.






From left to right: 7.26, 7.27, 7.28, 7.29, 7.30, 7.31: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1960-80. Sculpturally formed earthenware pots

Danish Design

More than anywhere else in the world, designers in Scandinavia have instigated and nurtured a democratic approach to design that seeks a social ideal and the enhancement of the quality of life through appropriate and affordable products and technology.

— Charlotte and Peter Fiell
Scandinavian Design

7.32. SUSANNE DYHRE-POULSEN. 1955. *To Bob*. Johann Sebastian Bach record cover with drawings given on her visit to England.

The development of ceramics in Denmark followed a different route to that in Britain. Denmark had a strong industrial design history and many artists worked across boundaries, producing works in a range of media. The pots of Thorvald Bindesbøll (1846-1948) and Axel Salto, (1889-1961) for instance, contained expressive surface decoration. Having visited Denmark, RLB was very familiar with their work. He did not look to the potters of Denmark but to the designers, and Danish style had a large impact on the house and living arrangements. This will be discussed in relation to the decisions made by RLB regarding lifestyle, and the house being a work of craftsmanship, as well as a holistic way of life.

At times the family felt culturally more Danish than British, the home had many Danish items and the Christmas tree always had Danish flags and decorations. The Danes' egalitarian understanding of arts and crafts and enhancement of the quality of life through good design was an aspired to social ideal. This essentialist approach of simple design, truth to materials, form and function, reveals a respect for the craftsperson, and the living environment of the user. These socially conscious, humanistic goals existed in Denmark, and in pockets of Britain, and reflected RLB's approach and understanding of the arts.

Scandinavian design represented these ideals, and interest in their representation in interiors grew in Britain during the late 1940s and 1950s. Photographic articles appeared in life-style magazines such as *House and Gardens,* and cutouts were kept in a file in the RLB household. The Industrial Revolution had bypassed Denmark, whose economy was based on crafts and agriculture. After the Second World War, when the Danes modernised their industry, they maintained high-quality, skilled craftsmanship, transferring these skills to the design and manufacture of industrial products.[55] Individual craft designers created furniture and interior items, designed with a sleek and practical minimalism. These reflected a passion for organic forms and the 'functional and aesthetic essence of objects',[56] which looked to the simplicity of

7.33. *Illums Bolighus Center of Modern Design Mail-Order Catalogue.* 1959, showing the arrangement of furniture, textiles, and art.

[55] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen.

[56] Ibid p20

American Shaker furniture and the Japanese aesthetic. This was different to anything produced in Britain.

RLB had been to Copenhagen many times in the 1950s.[57] The cultural connection with Denmark was strong: RLB's sister, Mabel (1910-1984) known as Cleo, had married Helge Hertz (1914-1953), the son of an eminent Danish art historian Peter Julius Hertz (1874-1939), who was Curator of *Statens Museum for Kunst*[58] and lived in Copenhagen. They were interested in Danish art of a different, more expressive nature, particularly the earthenware ceramics of Thorvald Bindesbøll which were influenced by Japanese art and the floral arts and crafts forms of William Morris: bold and art nouveau in style. Like many Danish artists, Bindesbøll worked across several disciplines.[59] RLB, however, was interested in contemporary Danish design.

Copenhagen had two large and very significant exhibition centres for interior design, which had been established early in the twentieth century. The first of these was founded in 1925 and called *BO*. It changed its name to *Illums Bolighus, Center of Modern Design,* and was a store which declared that it displayed 'a concept that had never been seen before': furnished interiors, where textiles and furniture interacted with art.[60] Even the Mail-order publication was unusual, the 1959 version with a Teak wooden front and back cover, redolent of the furniture illustrated within.[61] This was kept on the family bookshelves, an emblem of the design being implemented in the home, a symbol of a lifestyle.[62]

The second modern interior design centre was *Den Permanente,* the 'permanent exhibition' store of *The Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design.*[63] It was founded six years after *BO* in 1931 by Kaj Bojesen,[64] as a democratic co-operative association engaged in the production of items of applied art, with the object of selling 'the finest achievements of members'.[65] It became an extremely important showcase of contemporary modernist design,

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[57] Family Archive, RLB passport 1950-55, with Danish stamp each year.

[58] Hertz, S. (2104) Personal email to the author. 9th April. The equivalent of our National Gallery, verified by Susanne and Johan Hertz, email dated 9th April 2014.

[59] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen. Bindesbøll worked in number of diverse disciplines including metalwork, leather work, jewellery, furniture design, textiles, graphics, lighting, and stained glass.

[60] Illums Bolighus, 'Our History'. http://www.illumsbolighus.com/about_illums_bolighus/our_history.aspx [Accessed March 2014]. Illums Bolighus was founded by Danish entrepreneur Kaj Dessau and consultant Brita Drewsen. It was renamed *Illums Bolighus* in 1941, during German occupation.

[61] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen. Teak from the Philippines had been extensively logged during Second World War as a result of military road clearing.

[62] *Illums Bolighus Center of Modern Design* (1959). Mail-order Catalogue and Price-List. Copenhagen: E.H. Petersen. Family archive.

[63] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen. full name: *The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts*.

[64] Ibid. p26

[65] *Den Permanente*, (c.1960) promotional leaflet. Family archive.

displaying high quality machine-aided craftsmanship. Danish modernism exemplified good design, and this was admired by RLB. Both exhibition centres had organised marketing strategies aimed at selling for export, *Den Permanente* being in the 'vicinity of the Central Station and the SAS Terminal'.[66] An article from the *New York Herald Tribune* – appealing to the American buyer – was placed on the first page of the *Illums Bolighus* catalogue. The equivalent display and sales point of modern furniture and interiors in London was *Heal's* on Tottenham Court Road.

The desire for well-designed, functional objects that were simple and stylish, affordable and practical, and for everyday use, became an important hallmark of Danish design, applied to everything relating to interior design and architecture.[67] However, they were expensive and not as 'affordable' as the mass-produced Swedish-designed IKEA furniture of today. This ideology of craftsmanship particularly appealed to RLB and influenced the design of the home and ceramic items he made, which included tiles, lamp-bases, lampshades, doorknobs and a washbasin made for a commission (Fig. 7.34). Many Danish items were in daily use in the family home, including furniture, domestic artefacts, and Kaj Bojesen wooden toys (see monkey hanging on wall in Fig. 2.7).[68]

7.34. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1980, earthenware washbasin, made for a commission.

[66] *Ibid,*

[67] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen.

[68] Kaj Bojeson wooden toys belonged to the author as a child: monkey, zebra, and rabbit.

A striking difference between the development of design in Denmark and Britain existed in the working conditions and respect for craft workers. Danish crafts had not been marginalised by industrialisation and they had a strong body of talented and skilled workers. This respect is reflected in the following *Den Permanente* statement:

> The individual artist working alone in his workshop or studio has the same power and rights at general meetings of the society as the largest industrial concern.[69]

This status of the individual craftsman was something RLB strongly believed and hoped for in Britain. Over twenty years later egalitarian aims were established by *The Craftsmen Potters Association,*[70] of which RLB was a member of when it first formed. However, he became disconnected from the groups he was part of - these were the Lincoln School of Art and the Craftsmen Potters Association, and a further connection disappeared with the death of a craftsman friend George Todd.

7.35. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1957. Ceramic lamp base, with copper tubing.

RLB had spent a short time working at the *Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Factory* in 1949 or 1950,[71] where the working conditions were very different from those in English factories. The Danes were justly proud of this: 'In England [the word factory] represents the Frankenstein who has slain many cottage industries'.[72] Here RLB became aware of Axel Salto, one of the most important Danish ceramic designers of the time, who worked at the factory as an artist/

[69] *Den Permanente*, (c.1960) promotional leaflet. Family archive.

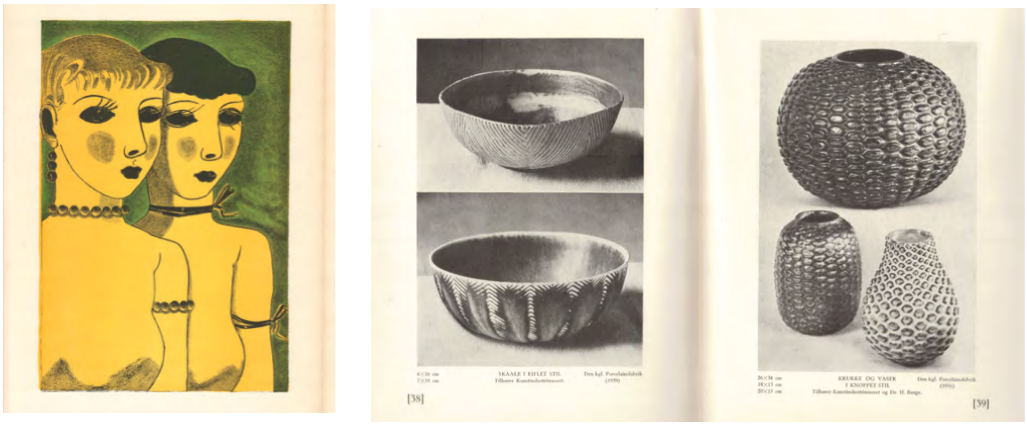
[70] Cooper, E. and Lewenstein, E. (1975) *Potters: An Illustrated Directory of the Work of Full Members of the Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain. A Guide to Pottery Training in Britain.* 3rd ed. London: The Craftsmen Potters Association.

[71] Records relating to this experience have not been found, but explain the porcelain items in the family home which were not the type of item made at Wedgwood. However, David Blatherwick remembers visiting the Copenhagen Porcelain Factory with his father, in the late 1940s or early 1950, and saw RLB at work there.

[72] Hayden, A. (1911) *Royal Copenhagen Porcelain*. London: Adelphi. T. Fisher Unwin.

designer, and whose expressive surface designs were produced by the *Royal Porcelain Factory.*[73] His ceramics were not all of the 'sleek and minimal' Danish design, some (Fig.7.37) being in shape more like the post-modern British ceramics or the contemporary sculptural shapes of Peter Randall-Page.[74] They were of interest due to their stylised design and decoration, frequently based on natural forms and because Salto, like many Danes, worked across disciplines. He was particularly admired by RLB for his graphic designs and his energetic drawings, and RLB had several books with beautiful endpapers and illustrations by Salto. The lithographic illustration of the two girls, shown below (Fig. 7.36) is just one example of Salto's broad range of graphic styles. This has been included because of the similarity with some RLB dish designs (see Figs 7.39 and 7.40).

The broad-based approach applied to the arts of Denmark was evidenced in *Dansk*



7.36. Left: AXEL SALTO, 1935. Illustration from *Tyrk, Faar, Klare, Ojne, Glasindet*. Lithograph.
7.37. Right: AXEL SALTO, 1939, 1931. Fluted and relief decoration on vases made for the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Manufactory.

Kunsthaandværk, a monthly magazine subscribed to by RLB from 1948-1968.[75] It did not reflect the hierarchies relating to crafts and art, which were evident in Britain, and which were returning in the art school curriculum.[76] *Dansk Kunsthaandværk* featured articles on such seemingly unconnected fields as embroidery and architecture. The anti-capitalist expressive

[73] Unknown author (n.d.) Creative archive catalogues, Bernard Leach Archive, Archives, Crafts Study Centre, University of the Creative arts. http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/learndex.php [Online. Accessed: 15th August 2012]. Bernard Leach and his new wife Janet, visited Copenhagen in March/April 1949, and were on the guest list for lunch, given by Christian Christenson, at the Royal Porcelain Factory.

[74] Randall-Page, P. (1996) *In Mind of Botany*. London. Contemporary Art Society. This contemporary British sculptor's organic shapes are based on natural forms and bear a visual resemblance to the ceramic forms of Salto.

[75] These copies were in the family home.

[76] *Dansk Kunsthaandværk* featured articles on fine art, design, dress-making, embroidery, furniture design, ethnographic sculpture, textile design, architectural design, interior design, porcelain, ceramics, bookbinding, silver cutlery, silver-ware, glass-ware, lampshade design, embroidery, jewellery, book illustration.

7.38. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1950. Designs for pots.

painter Asger Jorn (1914-1973) published an article entitled 'What is Ornament?'[77] Like pattern and decoration, ornament is 'applied art' and holds a different place in the hierarchy of British art to that held by expressive painting. This philosophically egalitarian approach to the arts and crafts appealed to RLB, and was evidenced by the books in his collection, many of which carried the Lincoln School of Art stamp. These had had been thrown out when new curriculum changes came into place, when they moved away from teaching crafts. These include books on better handwriting, jewellery, button collections, British furniture, pottery, glass, and a book full of decorative designs called *Decorative Patterns of the Ancient World*.[78]

Danish design developed its own distinctive form of modernism; it was almost untouched by the developments of the Bauhaus, which were regarded as of 'little relevance to ordinary people's lives'.[79] Furniture design reflected a change in lifestyle, an interest in the allocation of dining space in modern homes for working people, and a move away from the formalities of the

[77] Jorn, A. (1948) 'Hvad er et Ornament?' (What is an Ornament?) *Dansk Kunsthaandværk*, Volume 21, Issue No. 8, p121-129. August. Family archive.

[78] Petrie, F. (1930), *Decorative Patterns of the Ancient World*. London: University College.

[79] Fiell, C. and Fiell, P. (2002) *Scandinavian Design*. 2005 ed., Cologne: Taschen. p27

past, with living and eating reflecting a new informality. Danish design 'projected a homely ... and reassuring domesticity',[80] and it was this that influenced the design of the conversion of an old bakery to a house, with its open-plan living room, hardwood floors and white-painted walls, which many people considered were ahead of their time. RLB's knowledge of Danish design was enriched by his connection with Denmark, which Marjorie had also visited and admired in 1948, before they met.[81] The influence of Danish design is evident in the design of the home, and was transferred to RLB's ceramic practice. He drew and designed the ceramics he made.

The connection with family in Denmark was important, and letters were exchanged regularly. In 1955 a fifteen-year-old graphics student from Copenhagen[82] visited the newly converted home as part of an informal cultural exchange (her parents were friends of RLB's sister). She attended Lincoln School of Art with RLB and Marjorie where they were both employed, and met their peers. In a recent conversation, she recalled the energetic designs of George Todd's fabrics – it was before his time in Nigeria – his unusual open-toed sandals, the peculiarities of England as seen from a Danish perspective, with its cold meats in jelly, dark houses, and formalities of the past and austerity still evident in many British homes.[83]

The democratic approach to Danish design and crafts in Denmark influenced the domestic interior of the RLB house, and the philosophically broad approach to art and life, was reflected in the ensuing lifestyle of the family and the design of RLB's ceramics.

7.39, 7.40. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. late 1950s. Dishes with decorative designs, reflecting influence of Dyhre-Poulsen and Salto (Figs 7.32, 7.36).

[80] Ibid, p28

[81] Family Archive: Passport of Miss M.I. Wilson 1948-1958. She had been on a cycling holiday in the country.

[82] Susanne Dyhre-Poulsen (b.1940), who became Godmother to the author.

[83] Dyhre-Poulsen, S. (2102) Remembered conversation with Sue Blatherwick, Oakenclough, Longnor. May. Authors archive.

Chapter 8

Site: The Living Room

In the realm of absolute imagination, we remain young late in life.

— Gaston Bachelard
The Poetics of Space

8.1. The Living Room window

A large open-plan space with good natural light, Scandinavian and modernist in style and appearance with two matching oak English Windsor chairs. The size of the room gives the impression of a large house, which is misleading as all the other rooms are small. This was the room we lived, ate, played, and read in; varying the combinations of use at different times. For homework I had a small desk against the wall, and at one time we had the dining table in here. There was always a problem of where to sit as there were only two comfortable chairs. These were made by Roy Broadbent but drawings discovered suggest they were designed by RLB.[1] The day-bed, made by him, was never very comfortable as the cushion was too thin, and between the cushion and its solid base, wild flowers – which had been collected on holidays – were placed on sheets of newspaper, to be pressed every time anyone sat on the day-bed. Bernard Walker wrote:

> As fellow botanists enquiring where the Lakeland specimens were to be seen. We were told to lift the cushions we were sitting on. The newspaper press was a part of the function of visitors to tea.[2]

Hand-made patchwork and log cabin cushions lined the day-bed's back, their colours coordinated in tonal harmony, these were adjusted for comfort, and plumped up each night before going to bed, to make the room look inviting and tidy when visited anew the following morning. A long, low coffee table made by RLB from left-over pieces of narrow board, the same reddish-brown sapele as the floor, stood parallel to the day-bed. Coffee would be served on this table, in an RLB coffee pot with small straight-sided mugs, brought in from the kitchen on a tray, with a plate of flapjack when we had visitors. There were always visitors.

This room was our haven and view, our inner and outer world, with a large and private garden at the back and the life of the street and the village passing by at the front. A large, low window looked onto the yard and the Post Office next door, and dad would peer out to see who was arriving or leaving, or he would kneel on the floor in front of the fire reading the newspaper; mum would be in the kitchen preparing food, or in the annex, or downstairs serving customers.

I remember seeing from this low window my little brother come home from hospital brought by my grandparents who had a car before we did. This window

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[1] Roy Broadbent lived at Holton-cum-Beckering, Lincolnshire.

[2] Walker, B. and Walker, C. (2013) *How I met Bob and Marjorie Blatherwick.* (MS). Family archive.

was the perfect height for a young child; all houses should have a low window for children to see through!

In the evenings music was played on the very special hi-fi which RLB had built a speaker and cabinet for, or we would listen to the Radio, always BBC Radio Three or Radio Four. When I brought home my first single, *My Sweet Lord* by George Harrison, it was a revolution, as 'pop music' sounds had not emerged from that speaker before.

The room has a bright and light appearance with clean, white-painted brick and a low ceiling. Framed Japanese prints hung on the walls, fading now, but they were a set of six delicately executed images of a chaffinch, a cockerel, a fish, a diving duck, flowers, and a sunset over a landscape. Prints which were rescued from a bin at Lincoln School of Art where my parents had worked; and another print, regularly discussed because of its similarity to an image used by Toulouse Lautrec; and a print taken from a herring dipped in ink by RLB, very much in the Japanese style. The Japanese ethos in a Scandinavian room.

The door from this room opens onto the balcony. A wonderful piece of architectural design that runs along the rear edge of the house with steps down into the garden, this being the equivalent of two more rooms, a painting to look at, the garden a playground and a producer of fruits and vegetables. The balcony was a transitional space, one could be outside without needing shoes or getting wet feet.

On a spring morning the balcony door would be opened and hooked back to the wall, the sunlight pouring in, and I would sit on the step and look through the vertical metal bars of the balcony rail onto the pink apple blossom and the garden beyond; or down through the creosoted panels onto the ground underneath, while the pigeons cooed in a peaceful steady rhythm. Dad had built an extension to the balcony and I lay on a thin mattress in the sun reading *Macbeth*, getting tanned and revising, two activities at the same time.

The living room was where we entertained, where people sat and chatted and laughed and listened to music. Kathleen Ferrier singing *Blow the Wind Southerly*, the volume really loud, with aunt and uncle listening, enthusing about the clarity of her contralto voice, and her being a discovery, and a Lancashire lass.

The music was often so loud that when we were young and in bed we frequently had to ask our parents to turn it down as we couldn't sleep.

Blaydon Races was played a lot when I was younger, sung by Owen Brannigan, a baritone, male voice with an upbeat rhythm.[3] Other music my parents loved were Tchaikovsky and Mozart, and Dylan Thomas reciting *Under Milk Wood*, and later mum dared to play second-hand (inferior quality) L.P.'s on dad's system, which she purchased from church bric-a-brac sales; these were the jazzy sounds that she liked of Josh White, Duke Ellington, and Eartha Kit.

We had a large black-and-white Friesian cow skin rug on the floor, which always caused great discussion amongst my friends, a real cow, purchased from a trip to Heal's in London. And a Danish leather sling-back chair,[4] which we lovingly saddle-soaped once in a blue moon. The smell of the saddle soap was nourishing and evocative and almost tasty.

The day-bed was great for forty winks. In the sixth form I would come home from school and lay on it hearing the sounds of the house going on around me, which was comforting and meant it was possible to rest. Towards the end, when dad was ill he would lie on this, face down, pretending not to be ill at all but just resting, with us and not with us, as he was with the world in the latter part of his life.

And mum would always be in and out, working in the kitchen, whistling to a Mozart concerto, walking through to the balcony to hang some scraps in a feeder for the birds from the apple tree, or to call someone in from the garden for meal times.

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[3] It is also the song of Newcastle United Football Club.

[4] The Danish leather sling-back chair was designed by Knoll Hardoy.

Object: The Tile Fireplace

In the contemplation of Nature we are perpetually renewed, our sense of mystery and our imagination is kept alive, and rightly understood, it gives us the power to project into a plastic medium some universal or abstract vision of beauty.

— Barbara Hepworth
'Unit One' in IMAGE

8.2. ROBERT BLATHERWICK (1951) Hand-made slip and glaze decorated tiles.

The tiled fireplace is located in the centre of the end wall in the living room. It is the first thing you see when you walk into the room, a central focus in the design of the room. Before the days when chairs turned toward the television they turned towards the fireplace, and this is true of my childhood, as we did not have a television until after I had left home. As the stove was the only form of heating upstairs, many hours were spent sitting or kneeling very close to it, and looking at the tiles' imagery. These were handmade earthenware tiles, four inches square, made using a range of techniques, displaying a variety of images. These can be classified as wildlife (bird, animal, fish), plant-derived design, molecular, plus a few other decorative designs. No two tiles are exactly the same although there is some repetition in the use of motif, a Noah's ark approach (two snails, two rabbits, two owls, two wrens), and almost like a game of 'Pairs' we looked for the matching tile. In the bottom right-hand corner a slip-painted tile has 'Anno Domini 1951' as its design, indicating the date of creation. This was the year of the Festival of Britain.

In 1929 Bernard Leach had created a panel of 25 small tiles for a fireplace summer screen. They were the same size, 4 inches square, and included a number of animals: a snail, a rabbit, a leaping dog, a fish and a pot. The subject is similar, but the designs are quite different. Leach's are blue and brown painted glaze on a cream ground, and are stoneware. These tiles have the subtle and warm colours of earthenware. Leach's fireplace is described as combining 'old Delft mediaeval heraldic ornament and Chinese invention into a product so peculiarly his own that it resembles nothing that has been done before'.[5] The Leach Pottery produced a *Catalogue of Tiles, Fireplaces, Pottery* in 1930, from which tile designs could be ordered.[6]

RLB had an alphabet of images which he used and reused, and some of these designs appeared in an earlier tabletop piece produced for a commission, and some appear again in later work.[7] There are references to imagery from other places – a similar owl appears on a Staffordshire slipware plate (Fig.8.3),[8] the running deer is like the running dog on a Castor or Durobrivian ware pot (Fig.

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[5] Riddick, S. (1990) *Pioneer Studio Pottery. The Milner-White Collection*. London: Lund Humphries, London in association with York City Art Gallery. p63.

[6] Ibid. This included a loose sheet illustrating a 'Sample Set of Decorated Tiles'.

[7] For example in hand-made Christmas cards in the Family archive, and the tiles in the kitchen in Bartle Garth in Reepham.

[8] The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent. 18th century. Visited by author 2012.

8.4) studied and drawn by RLB in a student sketch book,[9] with its head looking back, but stylised in a different manner; the dog is reversed in another tile (Fig 8.5). The eagle symbol is from a Hispano Moresque bowl, painted in green lustre, a study of which was made while RLB was a student,[10] and some of the plant type forms appear to have evolved from a Hispano Moresque Drug Jar,[11] drawn on the same page of his study book.[12]

8.3. Left: Staffordshire slipware owl, City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent;
8.4. Centre: Durobrivian ware pot
8.5. Right: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Running dog tile, Bartle Garth, Reepham.

Some of the images bear a resemblance to the diagrams produced by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, who adopted a mathematical approach to morphology, the relationship of living forms to their structures, and published *On Growth and Form* in 1917. He was interested in the Fibonacci formula and structures in plants and natural forms and this area of maths and art was of interest to academics at the time. Amongst RLB's collection of papers is the magazine *IMAGE: A Quarterly of the Visual Arts*.[13] This contained an article which referred to Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thomson in a discussion of science and art, and visual

[9] Blatherwick, R.L. (c.1940) Sketchbook, containing 'Chronology of Pottery' and Staffordshire slipware plate study. Family archive.

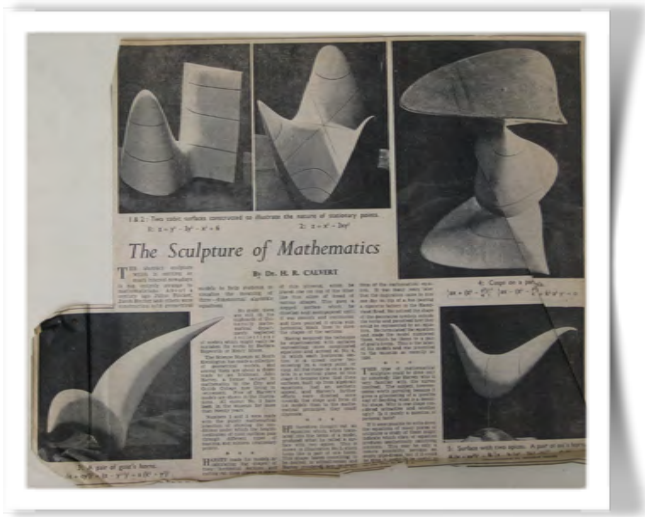
[10] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber. The same Hispano-Moresque bowl can be seen in Illustration 63, with supporting comment 'Hamada spoke of this brushwork as the best in Europe.'

[11] Hispano Moresque tin-glazes earthenware blue and copper lustre drug jar. (Circa 1435). Valencian region. Christies. Sale 2486. Lot. 300. (http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot/an-hispano-moresque-tin-glazed-earthenware-blue-and-copper-lustre-5507777-details.aspx) [Online. Accessed: 10th April 2012]

[12] RLB study book, brown cover, containing 'Chronology of Pottery'. Family archive.

[13] *IMAGE: A Quarterly of the Visual Arts* 1949, No.2.

phenomena informed by laws of order, growth, rhythm and harmony.[14] RLB explored this in a more visual and experimental way with students with three-dimensional shapes being constructed from cut and folded paper (see Chapter 6). There was also an article on 'The Sculpture of Mathematics'.[15] It is likely that such imagery and ideology informed these decorative tile designs and other work.



8.6. Newspaper article: 'The Sculpture of Mathematics' in Family archive
8.7. Right: Cover of 'On Growth and Form' by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson

Some of the designs in the tile fireplace are drawn by slip trailing in brown, elaborated with white slip-jewelled decoration on top,[16] in the style of seventeenth-century North Staffordshire slipware. There are sgraffito design images of at least three pot forms, and these designs also appear in Christmas cards,[17] and later in the work of RLB on pots, and in the work of Lucie Rie from this time onwards. Some of the tiles are decorated with a stamp impressed in the red clay, and others appear to be glaze- and oxide-painted. Baldwin said: 'looking

[14] Goffin, P. (1949) 'Images of Movement'. *IMAGE: A Quarterly of the Visual Arts,* No.2. p56.

[15] Calvert, H.R. (n.d.) 'The Sculpture of Mathematics', newspaper article, Family archive.

[16] Barker, D. (1993) *Slipware*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications. Slip-jewelling is 'a technique which was particularly common during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is found on many of the most elaborately decorated wares.. [It] involves embellishing the outline of a trailed slip design with tiny dots in a contrasting colour to give additional detail'.p5

[17] See for example the 1954 Christmas cards from the family archive.

at those tiles you can see his past, you can see Winchcombe, and you can see Leach'.[18]

The slate for the fireplace hearth came from a cottage that had been demolished in the village, for which my parents paid £5.00. Three pieces were purchased; two were used as fireplace hearths, and the third became a wedging bench in his workshop.[19] This later became my father's tombstone (Fig. 0.1).

Tile products and tile commissions were a regular strand in the work produced by RLB, some of which will be discussed in the following Context.

8.8.-8.10. ROBERT BLATHERWICK (1961) Three of eighty tiles produced for JACK BATES, the architect of the house conversion. (These have been taken with the Bates family each time they have moved house).

[18] Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

[19] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

Context:

Tile Commissions and Post-War Developments 1950-1960s.

8.11. ROBERT BLATHERWICK (c. 1964) Tiles designed and glaze decorated for Youth Centre coffee bar in St Giles, Lincoln.

Tile commissions for domestic use were a regular form of commission from private individuals and provided income for RLB. Tiles were required for kitchen surfaces, kitchen splash-back areas, fireplace surrounds, floors, table tops, and trays. There were also a number of public commissions.

The post-war period saw a new audience for the crafts, with a blossoming of new practitioners, new kinds of patronage, and a shift from private to public art. This was exemplified by the role that craft played in the Festival of Britain of 1951.[20] For a short time in the 1960s, architecture offered new possibilities for ceramicists. Both Hans Coper and RLB undertook major ceramic architectural projects. The post war period saw the setting up of the Crafts Centre of Great Britain, a retail outlet in the centre of London. This was an amalgamation of societies which had been established to define interest groups and act as guardians of standards. The Council of Industrial Design (CoID) had been formed in 1944,[21] and was later funded by the post-war Labour government and the Arts Council of Great Britain, which was set up in 1946.

Cities

Damaged sites and cities needed reconstructing after the war, and public money was going into the commissioning of artists and public art work. This was in order to rebuild, but also part of the spirit of optimism and a positive attitude towards the role of art, working alongside designers and architects in the development of new public places. This post-war building boom created opportunities for artists. Sir Hugh Casson had given a talk to the Lincolnshire Artists' Society on 'Architecture and the Decorative Arts' in November 1952.[22] Many new buildings of that period offered large open walls which were ideal for murals. The post-war years were a time of tremendous experimentation and exuberance for public art, as well as architecture. Artists were brought into contact with industry, town planners, and architects, some of whom built up relationships with individual artists, and many murals were commissioned. During the Festival of Britain the South Bank included over 100 murals, although most of these were painted.[23]

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[20] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years: 1906-2006.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society. RLB work was on show in the 1951 'Exhibition of Painting and Drawings' at Foyle's Art Gallery, Charing Cross Road, London. Invited members of the Lincolnshire Artists' Society participated. Mayor reports it was visited by members of the Arts Council and 'favourably reviewed' in the *Art News Review*. Reference not in text.

[21] Read, H. (1934) *Art and Industry: The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber & Faber. p206.

[22] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years: 1906-2006.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society. p49

[23] Pearson, L. (n.d.) *'A Period of Extraordinary Fecundity: A Survey of Post-War Murals'*. [Online. Accessed May, 2013] www.lynnpearson.co.uk/pearson-studyday.pdf There are about 45 post-war murals at listed locations in England, many of these being churches and schools. Some are mentioned and some ignored. There are only five listed ceramic murals in England.

The Ermine estate in Lincoln was a post-war city development which began in 1946, creating local authority social housing. Like many other new towns (Letchworth, Welwyn Garden City), it was a large uniform townscape, mostly modernist in style and influence, with little or no decorative detail. Like other such developments, it had large grass areas including 'village greens'. Churches and schools were investing in culture, with craft playing a significant role in post-war ecclesial architecture. The Local Education Authorities (LEA) embarked on an ambitious school building project in the late 1940s and 1950s, and were among the most important patrons of the crafts.[24] The post-war atmosphere of egalitarianism and looking for a better future inspired these developments. Major reforms had taken place in the Education Act of 1944, known as the 'Butler Act', with the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, and free secondary education for all pupils. This required a major investment in development and provision, with money being put into improving learning environments and commissions available for interior design and tile work. Artists worked with architects, and art was brought to people and into everyday life. Schools were an important source of post-war commissioning.

One such commission enabled RLB to produce work for the Ermine Infant School in Lincoln, circa 1955.[25] The designs he produced were based on images from children's tales: a musician playing the fiddle, a jester with a pointed hat and shoes, and a knight in armour on horseback. They are colourful, lively designs, decorated by the painting and trailing of coloured slips on hand-made earthenware tiles, nine inches square, set in the wall in a communal area (Fig. 8.12). Art was being brought into schools all over the country with the *Pictures for Schools* scheme, which provided 'exhibitions of contemporary art for sale to education authorities under the aegis of the Society for Education through Art'.[26] Schools were able to use these as primary educational resources; new colleges and buildings were keen to extend the exposure of pupils to art, and schools purchased art. The new schools were

> models of spatial clarity, full of light, surrounded by green playing fields, [and] every school has some sculpture and starts off its life as owner of some original painting and ceramics.[27]

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[24] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p244

[25] City of Lincoln Council. (2008). 'Lincoln Townscape Assessment'. [Accessed online May 2013]. The Ermine Infant School opened around 1956.

[26] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p244

[27] Ibid. p245, Stewart Mason Director of Education, Leicester, 1947-1971, and former Inspector of Schools (HMI) in Cambridgeshire. The Director of Education in Leicester purchased craftwork.

8.12. ROBERT BLATHERWICK (c. 1964). Sheet from portfolio showing painted gouache tile designs and photographs of the finished tiles.

These permanent collections were supplemented by circulating collections of art, design, and craft. Remnants of these collections (good quality, framed prints for example) were still evident in schools in inner London, and even in the late 1990s in Staffordshire.[28]

The development of creativity within the child was deemed to be paramount, and the following statement made in 1948 reveals a shocking attitude prior to this time:

> It was Marion Richardson alone who recognised that this power of imaginative expression could be developed in almost every child as part of his education.[29]

RLB empathised with this belief and had some of Richardson's texts on handwriting in his book collection.[30] He had met Thomas Hennell while he was at Winchcombe, the man Richardson refused to marry.[31] Art was selected which spoke to children, and the crafts, particularly

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[28] These were evident in schools in which the author taught.

[29] Clark, K. (1948) 'Introduction'.In: Richardson M. (1948) A*rt and the Child. London:* University of London Press. p7

[30] Richardson, M. (1966) *Writing and Writing Patterns Book III*'. London: University of London Press.

[31] Massingham, H.J. (1942) *The English Countryman:A Study of the English Tradition*. London: Batsford. Thomas Hennell was in love with Marion Richardson, and he proposed to her but she responded 'What, marry you? I would be confined to living in a hedge'.

8.13 ROBERT BLATHERWICK (c.1964) One of the Decorative Tiles for Ermine Junior School under serving hatch in entrance hall

ceramics and textiles, were able to fulfil this role. The Lincoln Ermine School tiles were designed in this context. It was a time of changing attitudes to children, and towards the working classes and the potential of the individual, with more emphasis being placed on the development of creativity and imagination. Both Herbert Read and Marion Richardson emphasised the role of creative activity in a holistic approach to extending the mind, and believed that education through activity (making and doing) leads on to a greater enquiry and inquisitiveness. The introduction of crafts in the schools revealed a changing attitude towards children's potential and creativity. Read had written *Education through Art* in 1943 (this was on RLB's bookshelf). Art and craft were developmental teaching tools and were incorporated into the learning environment.

Another set of decorative individual tiles (Fig. 8.13) was made by RLB at the same time, to be installed under the serving hatch in the entrance hall at the Ermine Junior School. The set of four designs, also nine inches square, were decorative images of a fish, an owl, a running rabbit,

and a snail. This is an example of RLB using his alphabet of imagery with the subject being similar to the tiles in the living room fireplace, these images being larger are more detailed. These were decorated with rubbed iron and cobalt oxides, painted with blue, black and green glazes onto unglazed fireclay tiles, and set in wood panelling with a wooden frame, forming framed ceramic images set in a wall. Along with schools the idea of youth clubs as places for young people to meet and socialise was being developed, and money was being invested in these.

Teenage delinquency had led the government to look into a national response to address the needs of young people. In 1960, the government published the *Albemarle Report*, which outlined the need for local government agencies to take responsibility for providing extracurricular activities for young people. Out of this the Youth Service was born, and for the first time in Britain, youth centres with full-time paid youth workers made an appearance across the country. One of these youth clubs was created in the St. Giles area of Lincoln, circa 1964. RLB undertook a commission to design and create a large tiled mural, to cover the wall in a seated communal area (Fig. 8.11). The design produced was abstract, geometric shapes, based on triangles and semi-circles, using negative and positive shapes. Design sheets for this project exist,[32] and a box of recently digitised slides includes an image of the final mural in the youth club.[33] The tiles used were commercially produced heavy terracotta tiles, with the design carefully mapped out and painted in glossy black glaze.[34] This was a large commission of over three hundred tiles and took several firings to complete. The mural no longer exists as the youth club was burnt down, a sad example, perhaps, that the provision of a youth club for teenage delinquency was not sufficient to solve the problems on this urban housing estate. A few of the left over tiles from this project are installed in the house at Reepham.

Sadly, the schools with these tiles were closed in 2008 and demolished in 2013.[35] This is a poor indication of our nations attitude towards artists and public works of art.

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[32] Family archive

[33] Digitised by John Davis, Manchester Metropolitan University.

[34] Some of the tiles left over from this commission were used in the Old Bakery in the showroom.

[35] Unknown author (2012) 'Former school building demolished as land goes on sale'. *The Lincolnshire Echo.* 19th April, [Accessed on line May 2013]. The Ermine Infant and the Ermine Junior School closed in 2008 and were due to be demolished following the opening of the new Ermine Primary Academy in 2008.

Churches

Churches were also spending money on public art, bringing art works into the lives of their congregation and the general public. St John the Baptist Parish Church, on the Ermine Estate in Lincoln, was designed by RIBA architect Sam Scorer (1923-2003). He was another creative Lincolnshire person who was well known locally though less so nationally.[36] The church, which was to serve the newly constructed housing estate, was opened in 1963, a year after the new Coventry Cathedral. This church was modernist and radical:

> Scorer designed ... buildings, that have since been recognised as of national importance and of special interest: the Markham Moor petrol station … [on the A1], the garage and car showroom on the Brayford Pool ... and the St. John the Baptist church on the Ermine Estate in Lincoln. All the buildings have hyperbolic paraboloid roofs ...[37]

These slope and meet the ground. His building for the Lincolnshire Motor Company (1959) boasted the largest hyperbolic paraboloid roof in the UK, until the Commonwealth Institute was built in Kensington in 1962. A design for Coventry Cathedral with such a roof had been submitted for a competition in 1951.[38] These were exciting times for creative projects. St John the Baptist Church was

> the first church in Lincolnshire to break the tradition of the Gothic revival. It is a major contribution to church architecture of the second half of the 20th century. Its importance lies in combining innovative minimalist architectural thinking with advanced liturgical planning; flexible uninterrupted *functional* open plan. The parish had 'precious little money but plenty of determination.[39]

Sam Scorer also designed the font, the pulpit, and the altar in St John the Baptist Parish Church.[40] For its interior a collaborative commission for metal candle holders and a cross were required. The small coloured ceramic pieces adhered to the cross were made by RLB, and the supporting drawings suggest that he may have designed it too. The modernist metalwork was created by Charles Sansbury (1916-1989) a colleague and friend of RLB who

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[36] Szynalska, K. (2010) *Sam Scorer, A Lesser Known Architect of the Twentieth Century.* [Accessed online 10th March 2012] http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/6004/1/sam_scorer_karolina_szynalska.pdf

[37] Ibid. p22

[38] Ibid. p23

[39] Ibid.

[40] The Sam Scorer Gallery in Lincoln was founded in 2000; Scorer borrowed a selection of paintings from the Tate Gallery for his first exhibition, 'The Tate Unseen'. The Gallery is available for hire and the author exhibited there with colleagues from a ceramics group in 2011.

taught at the Bishop Grosseteste College in Lincoln. The church has a large and beautiful stained glass window designed by Keith New (1926-2012) who was a lecturer at the RCA,[41] with the glass being cut and assembled in a large studio loaned by the RCA.[42] New had designed three windows for the nave of the new Coventry Cathedral,[43] which had been completed in May 1962.[44] There are interesting interconnections with Coventry Cathedral, as Hans Coper had made and designed monumental ceramic candlesticks in 1962, a year earlier. It is likely that Scorer knew of Coper as they had both worked in Scunthorpe, north Lincolnshire at about the same time: Coper had designed a mural for the interior of Scunthorpe Public Library,[45] and Scorer had designed a building in 1958.[46]

Following this, RLB acquired a commission for the design of a large *Crown of Thorns* sculpture for a new Lady Chapel being built for the parish church of Reepham, the village in which he lived. This was in memory of Kathleen Margaret Webb, the wife of the vicar who had died in 1962.[47] For this RLB collaborated again with Sansbury who made the metalwork. RLB designed the piece and made the small colourful ceramic shapes which were attached to the sculpture. The design for this was no doubt informed by the *Crown of Thorns* in Coventry Cathedral, a large metal sculptural screen at the entrance to the Chapel of Gethsemane, which was designed by Sir Basil Spence (1907-1976).

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[41] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. Keith New, Peter Collingwood and Hans Coper had studios provided by the Digswell Arts Trust. This was formed by Henry Morris, Chief Education Officer for Cambridge who was involved in the *Pictures for Schools* Scheme.

[42] Hoy, S. About the Church: 'The Window'. St. John the Baptist Parish Church, Ermine, Lincoln. [Accessed 10th May 2013] http://www.stjohnthebaptistparishchurch.org.uk/feature_html.php

[43] Eavis, A. ed.(2012). 'Keith New (1926-2012)' *Vidimus* News Page. Issue No 59. April. [Accessed 10th May 2013] http://vidimus.org/blogs/news/keith-new-1926-2012/

[44] This was opened by a concert performance by classical British twentieth-century musician, Benjamin Britten.

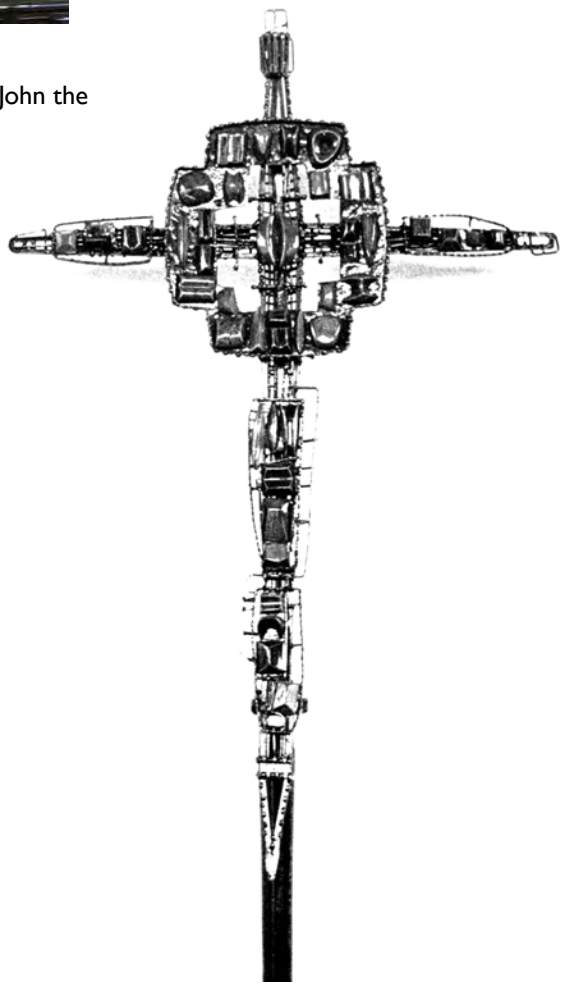
[45] Graves, A. (2012) *'Hans Coper Sculpture in Architecture'*. Symposium at Cardiff.

[46] Szynalska, K. (2010) *Sam Scorer, A Lesser Known Architect of the Twentieth Century.* p11. [Accessed online 10th March 2012] http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/6004/1/sam_scorer_karolina_szynalska.pdf.

[47] Kathleen Margaret Webb (1915-1962). Her gravestone is in Reepham churchyard. Reverend Harvey Webb was the vicar.

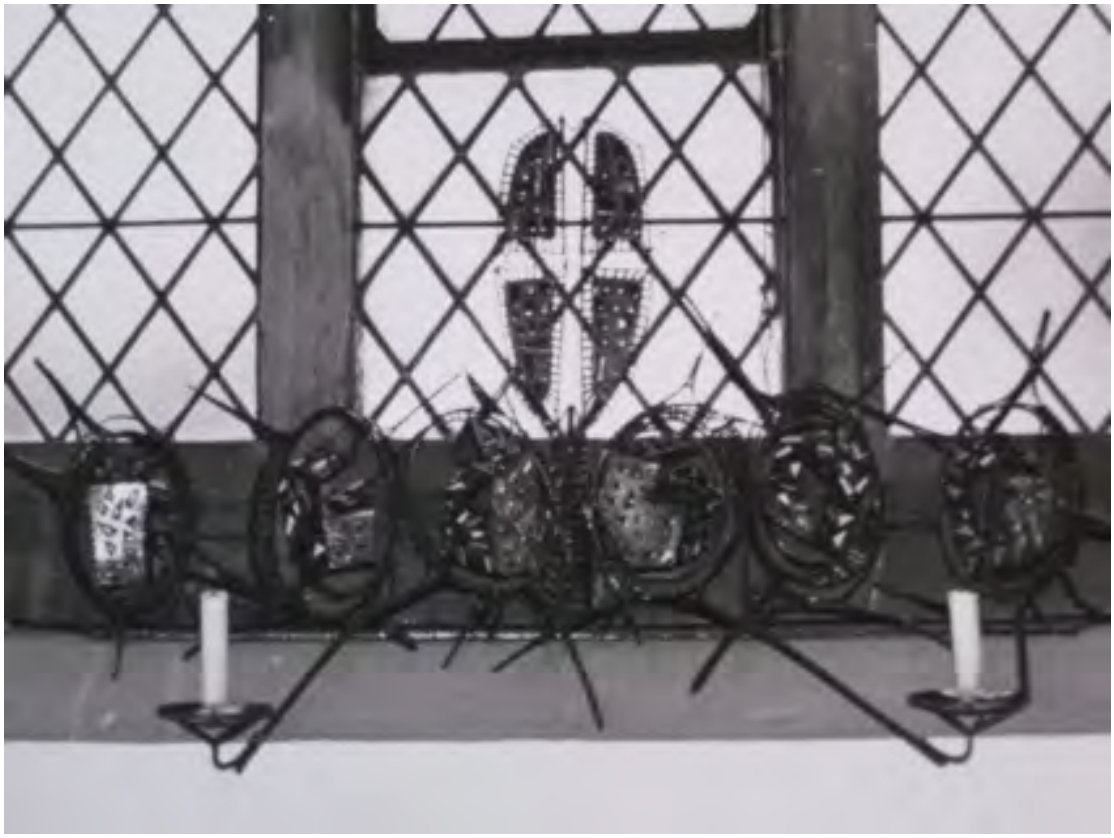
8.14. KEITH NEW (1961- 62). Window design in St John the Baptist Parish Church, Lincoln.

8.15 Detail of cross showing ceramic pieces by ROBERT BLATHERWICK (1961- 62).



8.16. Right: ROBERT BLATHERWICK (1961- 62). Cross design with ceramic pieces, metalwork by Charles Sansbury. St John the Baptist Parish Church, Lincoln.

Private Commissions



8.17. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. C. 1963. 'Crown of Thorns' with small, coloured ceramic pieces, Church of St Peter and St Paul, Reepham, Lincolnshire.

RLB received a large private commission from Holton-cum-Beckering in 1967, for a tile design for an external sculptural doorway. This was for new office headquarters, a modernist style pre-fabricated building situated on a remote and disused aerodrome in Lincolnshire, an out-of-the-way and extremely unusual place to have such a grand and monumental doorway. It was the headquarters of Holton Power Farmers, a limited company, who had also invested in other works of art for their office.

There were at least three detailed variations of design for this doorway, each quite significantly different, but only one doorway was ever constructed. This piece is made of twenty-four very large individual tiles, approximately twelve inches by sixteen inches by five inches deep. The design is sculptural and uses three-dimensional concave and convex shapes that appear to hover over the base tile. Their design is suggestive of an Aztec temple doorway, both in pattern structure and in its monumentality. To make the earthenware clay strong enough for this unusual external use, and to make the clay durable enough to hold the sculptural shapes, a

special clay was mixed by RLB. This involved the addition of coarse grog and sand. The shapes, some of which were suspended from the tile surface, were rolled and curved, and held in place until they had hardened. Shrinkage of the clay had to be calculated in order to make them fit the space around the doorway. Manganese oxide was painted onto the surface giving a matt black textured appearance. This was similar in textural quality and monumentality to the candlesticks made by Hans Coper for Coventry Cathedral, which were also made of large black manganese shapes. Coper composed these of low, broad, disc forms individually thrown, painted in black manganese. The creation of RLB's tiles was a large and extremely ambitious project, particularly for one person to produce. At this time RLB was working from his home workshop, he never employed any assistants. The piece was in place until December 2012, when it was dismantled.[48] There has been no documentation or review of this incredible work of art.

8.18. Holton Power Farmers Building, c.1967, showing RLB ceramic tile door surround.

[48] Makin, P. (2012) Personal email to author. This informed the author that the building had been dismantled. P. Makin was in Holton-Beckering at the time: December 12th. A year earlier an email received gave a different message: Nutting, J. (2011) Personal email to the author reported that after her enquiry to the owners of the building as to the future well being of the tiles: 'they have no intention of demolishing the building and are very well aware of the "historical significance of the tiles" (owners words) … the tiles are safe and the building is going to be used again in the future.' 14th October.

The piece bears a strong visual similarity with Hans Coper's ceramic installation wall pieces. Coper had three site-specific commissions, which included two mural schemes in 1961. One of these was to supply and fit interlocking ceramic discs, and a mural in Barclay Street, London, in which eighteen discs depicting rhythm and movement were set in concrete. Coper's mural is described by Alun Graves as 'the most advanced ceramic mural of the generation'.[49] However, the design of RLB's mural is equally, if not more complex. One of RLB's design drawings for the customer contains his description of the piece:

> Relief built up from parts of cylinders and cylinders which would project over the edges of tiles and link together. It looks heavy on this drawing but it could work out satisfactorily.[50]

The price he was charging is written on the design: £175.00. Coper's work was the result of funding he had received as a design consultant to study architecture in the field of ceramics.[51] Both Coper's mural and RLB's doorway rely on complex spatial relationships, and the role of light plays its part in the complexity of their shapes. They both use abstract design. In the past more traditional figurative sculptures had been used in relationship to architecture. RLB's doorway epitomises the relationship between sculpture, architecture, and ceramics which Coper was studying. There is also a similarity with some of RLB and Coper's pots, they both painted their pots and tiles with black manganese oxide. Coper made only black pots from the beginning of the 1960s, and this surface treatment represents another connection between these two sculptural ceramicists.

In 1970 RLB submitted a proposal for a very large commission to Halpern & Partners, London.[52] This was for a tile mural (fifty-four by eight feet, over 1500 tiles) to be situated on the ground floor external wall of Bateman's supermarket, a newly-designed and constructed modernist six-storey building, in Ebbw Vale, South Wales. Archival material found in the home shows his submission included three drawings of different designs, using further complex ceramic sculptural arrangements, of glazed and textured manganese shapes. These were never realised. He was unsuccessful in his bid for this commission, and the drawings and designs were returned a year later.[53] It would have been a significant and enormous landmark, a huge

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[49] Graves, A. (2012) 'Hans Coper: Sculpture in Architecture'. Symposium at Cardiff, 5th July. Also in ***Interpreting Ceramics***, Issue 14.

[50] Blatherwick. R.L. (c.1967) Supporting comments on design for doorway. Family archive.

[51] Coper was funded by the The Digswell Arts Trust.

[52] Halpern and Partners established in 1952 trade today, under a different name.

[53] Halpern and Partners. (1971) Letter thanking RLB for designs and suggestions. July 22nd. Family archive,

project on a major new construction, and being in a public place in a town centre may have raised his public profile more than work situated on a disused airfield in rural Lincolnshire.

These mural projects are examples of artists working with architects and industry. When the Crafts Centre of Great Britain was formed its aim was to support 'fine craftsmanship ... as embodied by the work of the Designer Craftsman in the Fine Arts'.[54] These words sound clear, these examples of tile design in public places are examples of well designed fine craftsmanship. They fit the definition of the type of craft they would support. But definitions of 'craft' have presented many groups and committees with problems, and continue to do so, with inconsistent interpretations and understandings of terms. There were problems with the connections between craft and industry; the crafts were required to have a role in improving industrial design. Some regarded this requirement as a disabling limitation: 'staff of the Central School of Arts and Crafts could prostitute their talents for industry'.[55] This was 'just at the moment when an increasing number of men and women were turning to crafts'.[56] Many, including Rie and Coper, avoided the Crafts Centre for this reason, although they were persuaded to exhibit there after 1961. Japanese potter Shoji Hamada (1894-1978) who helped Bernard Leach set up St Ives, showed his work in the Crafts Centre in 1963. It is not known whether RLB showed his work at the Crafts Centre. However, in 1967 he did show his work at the Design Centre, which evolved out of this organisation.[57]

Tile commissions continued to be a major source of work, and there are many displays and arrangements in private and public collections. These include the kitchen tiles at Bartle Garth in Reepham, and one of his later commissions for a 1930s style dado rail in *The Jolly Brewer* public house in Lincoln. Some of these have been photographed and the images are amongst the author's personal collection. However there are many more RLB tile commissions in existence in houses, waiting to be photographed before they too are demolished. These are being collected and collated by the author for use in a future publication. She recently received photographs of eighty individually decorated tiles that had been created by RLB in 1961. Each

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[54]Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p.211. Quoting Craft Centre of Great Britain *Rules 1948,* Bircham 1948. p.3.

[55] Fieldhouse, M. (c.1960, n.d.) *Crafts Review 4.* 'The Artist Relates', at The Tea Centre, November. The magazine was amongst RLB's books (*Crafts Review 4*, also has a review by Murray Fieldhouse of a Ministry of Education Art Examination Exhibition, of art school work, which has some complimentary comments about the pottery).

[56] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

[57] *The Lincolnshire Echo*, (1967) 'Ceramics Artist Gets Export Order'. September 11th. Newspaper cutting in Family archive. Family archive.

commission and tile was uniquely designed, with its own quality, style, design, and type of motif, imagery, or decoration. They deserve to be recognised and recorded.

8.19. ROBERT BLATHERWICK standing outside the relief ceramic tile doorway made c.1967 for Holton Power Farmers. Photograph taken mid-1980.

Chapter 9

Site: The Annex

9.1.The Annex

The annex is a small, intimate space next to the living room, without a door, part of a semi-open-plan design. In the past this has been a cosy snug, but mostly it has served as a dining room, which doubled up as a study, sewing and activity room, so long as the table was cleared ready for meal times.

On entering the annex you are faced with a wall of books on fitted shelves. To the left is a window and the wall adjacent to the window is covered with beige hessian fabric which covers insulation board. It gives the room a warm feeling, which emanates an earthy organic quality. The floor is dark wooden sapele.

Most of the space is taken up by a large oak dining table, around which are a selection of wooden chairs, all with woven sea-grass cord seats, acquired at different times. Those at either end of the table are Carver chairs that came from grandfather Blatherwick's house, with curved backs and wooden arms, though the colour of the wood is different. These chairs had a cushion made by Marjorie from George Todd's African style printed fabric: one blue and the other brown.

Each family member had their own seat, no doubt to allocate places and prevent arguments. One got to know one's own seat and anyone else's was uncomfortable: mine was light sea-grass, my sister's was the darker seat. My brother's chair had an appliqué cushion with a stylised cockerel and a flower on its reverse. This was made on mum's deluxe Italian Necchi sewing machine. Everything else for the house and family was made on this machine: clothes, coats, curtains, cushion covers, etc. She was versatile and could rapidly transform an appearance, creating stylish results, which were not always welcome when we were teenagers.

Another chair has a patchwork cushion made from triangular pieces of velvet, with birds-foot stitching between each small piece, creating a colourful mosaic.

The window has cotton lace curtains which are now usually closed. They would never have been drawn when we lived here as we liked the light and the view. Now they are because the house is sometimes empty. When the sun shines they cast a shadow on the wallpaper, and the interaction of the two designs is interesting.

A lot of carved African figures live in this house. On the varnished windowsill they stand tall and thin, men with djembes between their legs, hands positioned as if playing, women carrying water pots or gourds on their heads. A sitting figure has real hair coming out of the top of his head and there are five smaller

figures. A bust of a woman with a long face, carved braided hair, and very pointed breasts, and smaller heads, one with a tall hairpiece, like Marge from *The Simpsons.*

These reflect an interest in African sculpture and culture, a connection with the continent through its objects, each with its unique and individual characteristic expressed by its maker. They reflect a respect for the skill involved in the craftsmanship, the observation and attention to detail. They were links with places visited by people they knew, and were a way of travelling with the mind, and contemplating.

Two African burnished terracotta pots sit on the windowsill. One has black geometric shapes, similar to those in some RLB tiles, and Mexican or Navaho Indian designs. Another is beautifully formed with a sgraffito pattern in black oxide around its neck, like a necklace. This was purchased from a Nigerian potter in London, Tony Agogo,[1] has the letters 'hc' and the number '16' on its base.

At the end of the windowsill is a piece of stained glass set in lead, made by mother's grandfather.[2] It is one of four pieces she gave to us, passing on information about her family. There is a candleholder, brass candle snuffers, a soapstone bird, and smooth round pebbles gathered from the beach, displayed in a spiral that is reminiscent of those in Kettle's Yard.[3]

The hessian wall is covered with ethnic artefacts, folk art, pinned with sewing pins: wooden spoons from Africa with scorched decoration, spoons from Polynesia, more carved wooden figures, woven patterned mats, a grass fly whisk, wooden castanets, a cardboard heart, and a set of elegant Scandinavian salad servers. There is also a colourful, delicious-looking apple from the garden, which I painted on canvas in 1978.

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[1] During a multicultural week, when teaching in Hammersmith, Tony Agogo dressed the students in Nigerian fabric, danced around the art room, and talked about which 'tribe' they belonged to, before making clay masks. Marjorie purchased this pot when visiting the author.

[2] My Great Grandfather Brown.

[3] Kettle's Yard is an art gallery and house in Cambridge, England.

On the floor is a viola which dad played occasionally, sometimes at Christmas around the tree, when it was lit by Danish candles.

On the red-brick chimney stack between the book shelves is a painting of Edward, my father's brother, sitting on a Parker-Knowle chair (the same chair features in the painting of his mother). It must have been painted between 1935 and 1943, as Edward is wearing shorts and looks young, although he was ten years older than RLB.[4] The colours are warm ochres and greys, and the brush strokes look quite loose; it is representational and oil on board.

The other wall of the room has bare, old, red bricks with a smooth veneer. These reveal an earlier doorway from the bakery which has been bricked in with more modern bricks. This archway is barely noticeable as it is hidden by paintings. In the centre is a seascape painting by my sister.

To the right is a small oil painting of mine, painted au plein air while sitting in a field, having cycled towards Barlings. It is oil on board and the wet board was strapped to the rear of my bike to bring home. I remember Edward being at the house when I returned, and laughing. Mum framed it and hung it here.

Below is an oil painting of dad's, with loose almost impressionistic marks. It is a lane with a red brick wall and two small figures chatting at its end, and is possibly one of the stone villages to the south of Lincoln.[5]

Against the wall is a mahogany bureau with beautiful shell marquetry on its pull-down desktop. This also came from my grandparents' house in Maple Street. On top is a ceramic carafe with the words *Eviva Taverna* impressed in a seal. This was a commission made to order which was then not purchased; consequently we had these carafes and mugs in our homes.

Next to this is a ceramic sculpture I made while a student in Cambridge. It is glazed clay spikes leaning in different directions, sitting on a plaster plinth. This is one of several pieces I made on this theme, another is in the entrance hall. Some were kept for display at my college, I never returned to collect them.

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[4] From the quality of the painting it is unlikely to have been painted by someone younger than fifteen years of age, and Edward was married in 1943 and therefore unlikely to have had time to be sitting for a painting. The wearing of shorts would have been more commonplace by young men at this time and reflects a change in attitudes to clothing.

[5] It is possible that this painting is of one of the villages of Washingborough or Heighington,

Object: George Todd Wallpaper

He was a really fit, fit guy.

— David Paton (about George Todd)
Interview with Sue Blatherwick

9.2. George Todd (c.1970) *Bracken.* Hand-printed wallpaper on the annex wall.

There is only one wall in the house with wallpaper. It is hand-printed on brown paper by fabric designer George Todd (1922-1972). He was a pacifist and lived in Hall Lodge at Holton-cum-Beckering.[6] His house smelt of sea-grass and was beautiful. He used bamboo poles for curtain rods, had coconut matting, and a Nigerian goat-hair rug, which had been woven in strips, over his day-bed; and he made the tastiest milkshakes with a soda fountain. His workshop was annexed to his house and contained a very long table for silk-screen printing, with a lamp hanging above it.

George's[7] drawings and designs were exceptionally beautiful and two of his pieces of textile design are in the Victoria and Albert Museum archives.[8] He had been to Sheffield College of Art from 1936-40 but his application to the Royal College of Art was lost during the Second World War,[9] so he laboured among a community of conscientious objectors in Lincolnshire. George taught part-time at Lincoln School of Art and later at Grimsby, where his brother was Head of the Art School. George went to teach at Zaria College of Art in Nigeria in 1955,[10] returning to England in 1959 after contracting bilharzia.

Some of George's fabrics were heavily stylised designs developed from leaves and plant forms, and others were strongly influenced by the patterns and designs of Nigeria. He loved the duality of the visually simple yet complex designs of the *Adire* cloth from the Yoruba region of Nigeria: flowing lines, interconnecting shapes, and patterns. His plant designs reflect a modernised interpretation of the arts and crafts designs of William Morris, but are bolder and stronger, much less fussy. George knew about RLB's work for Cardew, and knew Cardew's work in Abuja, as Zaria and the pottery in Abuja were part of an educational development programme initiated by the British Government.[11] Cardew 'paid regular visits' to the College in Zaria' and knew 'most of the staff in the art

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[6] Holton-cum-Beckering is near Wragby, in Lincolnshire.

[7] As this is the informal section of writing it is deemed appropriate to refer to Todd by his first name.

[8] Todd, G. (1952) 'Counterchange'. Furnishing fabric. Textiles: Interior. Museum number:CIRC.273-1953; 'Cuckoo Pint' 1952. Museum number:CIRC.274-1953. Textiles. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O266204/counterchange-furnishing-fabric-todd-george/ [Accessed: 2011 and 3rd August 2014].

[9] Unknown author (1972) 'Lincs art teacher dies'. The Lincolnshire Echo. March, Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

[10] This was a newly formed College of Arts Science and Technology, with external examiners from University of London[Accessed June 2014] http://www.abu.edu.ng

[11] Ibid.

department'.[12] George had some of Cardew's and Ladi Kwali's pots in his home in Holton.

The Norsk Kunstnerleksikon (The Norwegian Artist Encyclopedia) mentions George under the listing of textile artist Liv Hassell (1917-1989). She had five annual scholarships to work in his workshop between 1955 and 1962.[13] Her work has a similarity with some of his work, hers portraying mostly representational subjects including Norwegian fishermen and rural life. She left a book in England: *Gammel Trondersk Pottemakerkunst*,[14] with her ex libris inside, which is now in my possession. It has colourful plates of mid-nineteenth-century slip-decorated pots from the Trondersk region of Norway. The book is protected with a thick brown paper cover, on the inside of which is printed 'Nydalens Compagnie. Oslo'. It is the textile company she designed for. These connections represent important elements of the interweaving of the cultural influences of art, craft, and design.

George was a craftsman who worked with his hands and his heart. His desensitised legs meant he could stand in a stream for hours and not feel the cold. He made a dam to the waterfall pool at a cottage in Cumbria[15] which withstood the torrents of forty winters; and he rigged up shower structures under the waterfall, freezing but refreshingly cleansing. He was part of our family.[16] He would pick RLB up in his Volkswagen Beetle to go to the theatre and they talked about art, politics, ban-the-bomb, and trouble in art schools.[17] He was a kindred spirit, a similar soul, and was fun to be with. He had a tidy red beard, laughed jovially, and looked very dapper in his suit and tie.

> He was an exceptionally lovely man, everybody liked him ... he had the kind of charisma that attracts.[18]

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[12] Harrod, T. (2012) *The Last Sane Man: Michael Cardew, Modern Pots, Colonialism and Counterculture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. pp284-286

[13] Thue, R.S.(2014) Norsk kunstnerlexicon. Liv Hassel. Nasjonal Museet. [Accessed June 3rd 2014] nkl.snl.no/Liv_Hassel

[14] Dedekam, H. (1926) *Gammel Trondersk Pottemakerkunst,* Trondheim: Nordenfjedske Kunstindustrimuseum.

[15] The cottage was rented by George and other friends as a simple holiday cottage, without electricity, and was purchased after his death by Vicky and Noel Makin, and is still in their family, run along the same lines. The author visits it annually.

[16] He had been Marjorie's friend, before he became RLB's best friend, and was my brother's godfather.

[17] These are subjects I recall hearing.

[18] Wellington-Garret, L. (2011) personal email to Sue Blatherwick.

Like Cardew, George caught bilharzia by swimming in infected water. Unlike Cardew, he was not cured and it killed him, paralysing the nerves in his legs until it reached his kidneys.

I photographed and collated images of his textiles and drawings from the collection in the house and those of other friends, and produced a small book in 2011 so that his work would not be forgotten.[19]

[19]Blatherwick, S. (2011) *George Todd Fabric Designer 1922-1972*. Self published: Made on a Mac. This small publication of his textiles and drawings is to date the only documentation or collated recording of his work.

Context: Trouble in Art Schools 1964-1967

All I know is that when he was there I had the best and most appropriate teaching I received in any art college.

— Kay Meddings
Former LSA student

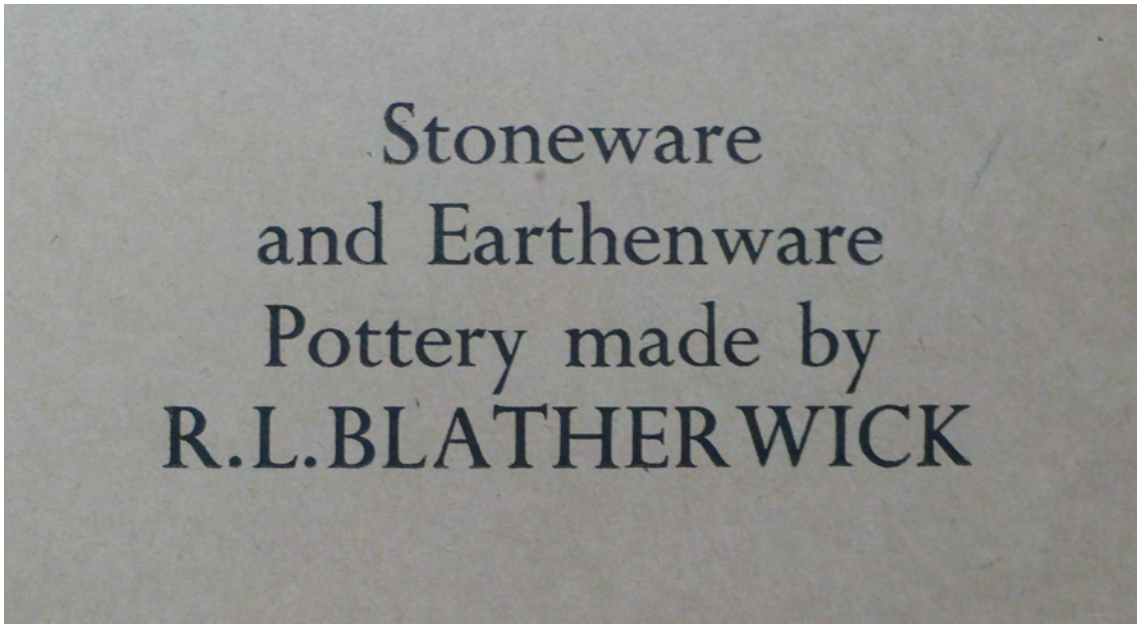

Fig. 9.3. During this period at Lincoln School of Art RLB made and taught both earthenware and stoneware.

The 'sweeping changes in national art education' which took place in the 1960s disrupted the status quo, causing distress to many people working in art schools.[20] Political intervention imposed new directives, altering the composition of departments. This reflected a change in attitude towards the crafts, many of which were removed from the curriculum structure, with many existing beliefs and structures abandoned. Lincoln School of Art was not alone in experiencing difficulties: the most well known disruption being the 'sit-ins' and protests by students at Hornsey College of Art.[21] These political changes caused huge ructions in the studio pottery movement, also affecting local arts organisations including the Lincolnshire Artists' Society. They had a massive impact on RLB, ending his career as a teacher and irreversibly changing the direction of his life and focus of his ceramic work. Harrod describes this period as 'a chaotic and painful time for art colleges'.[22] This section examines some of the problems of teaching pottery both locally and nationally.

In 1955 the Royal College of Art looked at the needs of manufacturing with the aim of creating good designers rather than expert craftsmen.[23] Britain needed to improve trade products, modernise production and increase exports. This was one aspect of a broader strategy to modernise higher education in the context of the Cold War.[24] The National Advisory Committee on Art Examination (1957) had suggested greater autonomy for art schools in planning courses and examining students, and the following year the National Advisory Council on Art Education (NACAE) was established, chaired by the figurative painter Sir William Coldstream.[25] The resulting suggestions, which came to be known as the Coldstream Report, proposed advanced courses of study for a limited number of colleges. It advocated 'courses conceived as a liberal education in art',[26] and established four areas of specialisation called chief studies, namely: Fine Art, Graphic Design, Three-Dimensional Design, and Fashion and Textiles. This was the Diploma in Art and Design (DipAD); a degree level qualification. The report stated that experimentation in different media and materials was to be encouraged during the

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[20] Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968 The Art School Revolution.* 2008 ed. London: Frances Lincoln. p14

[21] Ibid.

[22] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p239

[23] Ibid.

[24] Tickner L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968 The Art School Revolution.* 2008 ed. London: Frances Lincoln. The introduction of the DipAD should not be seen solely as a struggle against the straight jacket of the NDD system but should be understood as an 'epiphenomenon of [the] Cold War.'

[25] Sir William Coldstream was Professor of Fine Art at the Slade School of Art.

[26] National Advisory Council on Art Education (1961) 'The Coldstream Report'. Department of Education and Science quoted in Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p238

early stages of the new course, and introduced a new requirement that '15% of the total course should be devoted to the history of art and complementary studies', and that history of art should be examined.[27] This required a shift of focus in teaching towards a *Basic Design* approach, which has been discussed in Chapter 7. These main areas of study did not readily accommodate the crafts, with some specific areas of study that had been available in the earlier National Diploma in Design (NDD) vanishing from the curriculum altogether, creating a second-class level of vocational study.

The First Coldstream Report was published in 1960,[28] followed by the second report in 1962 which looked at studio pottery.[29] It argued that student numbers 'will never be numerous' and hoped that art schools could provide this training from local resources, 'perhaps with help from local craftsmen'.[30] This raises further questions about the nature and expectation of the term 'craftsmen', a term applied to qualified experts as well as unqualified people who work with their hands. Without any system of national certification provided for training in the crafts, it was clear that crafts were not regarded as an innovatory force. As in the situation before the 1945 reorganisation of art education, some of the crafts became marginalised. Cardew's 'Studio Potter and Industry' lecture, delivered at Lincoln School of Art in 1942, had not had any national or local impact on the studio potter's ability to contribute to industry. Problems in Lincoln arose in 1957 when the art school moved into a new building with

> little money ... allocated to adapting the building ... a large pottery kiln was piped into an old existing chimney flue [which led to] a serious fire which destroyed the west part of the building.[31]

Harrison reported that:

> a new gas kiln that Bob had brought for the department to improve the firing capacity, had been installed in an old chimney through which a wooden timber had been poking into or resting on the brick work. It was a big kiln. Of course he fired it over night, he set it up and put it on the night before ... the next day the fire brigade had to turn out as it had set fire to quite a bit of the building. [32]

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[27] Naylor, G. (n.d.) *Post-War Curriculum and Assessment: Coldstream, Summerson, Art History and Complementary Studies, University of Brighton.*

[28] Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution.* 2008 London: Frances Lincoln.

[29] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p.238.

[30] Second report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education: vocational courses in colleges and schools of art, HMSO 1962 quoted in Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p238

[31] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* unpublished (MS), Family archive.

[32] Harrison, R. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 10th February. Reepham: Digital recording in Family archive.

This exemplifies the expectations and responsibilities of the pottery teacher. Further problems arose in Lincoln in October 1964 when the changes were being implemented by the Summerson Council,[33] and carried on for over two and a half years.[34] Correspondence in the family archive suggests chaos, with discussions affecting the very nature of how ceramics were taught: should ceramics be in the Fine Art Department or the 3D Design Department? Was ceramics creative clay work or functional pottery? Was its purpose design for industry, the repeat production of domestic items, or the exploration of an expressive material? Where was its focus to be? Could it sit in more than one domain? The ensuing confusion regarding the identity of ceramics marginalised its status, with students in Lincoln spending 'more time specialising in their chosen subjects' and 'not going to pottery'.[35] Tickner confirms that in Hornsey emphasis was 'placed on advanced-level, full-time courses at the expense of lower-level, vocational or part-time'[36] work, which it appeared 'pottery' was conceived to be.

The role of the crafts in art schools became increasingly problematic with the shift towards the *Basic Design* approach to teaching and restructuring meant that teachers of painting or sculpture had 'little interest in skills'.[37] In Lincoln, staff were required to teach the unexpected: RLB was asked to teach silversmithing and metal-work; 'Bartl (the painter) is teaching three dimensional design of all things'.[38] Many highly skilled craftsmen appointed to art schools, were appointed as technicians only, and it was stated that 'training in craftsmanship would be secondary to training in design'.[39] At this time in Lincoln School of Art 'up to the end of the 1960s there was no or very little technical assistance'.[40] Former Senior Assistant to the School of Art, Hugh Robinson, wrote:

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[33] The First Report of the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design, known as the Summerson Report, was published in 1964. Schools and colleges had been invited to submit course proposals for DipAD recognition in July 1961. Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution.* 2008 ed. London: Frances Lincoln. p19.

[34] The *Lincoln School of Art Prospectus 1962-63* (1962), Lincoln: n/a This pamphlet reflects a restructuring of the school into departments or faculties.

[35] Blatherwick, R.L. (1964-1967) folder of letters. (MS) Family archive.

[36] Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution.* 2008 London: Frances Lincoln. p18

[37] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p236

[38] Blatherwick, R.L. (1964-1967) folder of letters. (MS) Family archive.

[39] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p237

[40] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* unpublished (MS), Family archive.

> staff were working about twenty-seven contact hours per week with no extra pay for any hours worked over the minimum. These hours still included up to four evening classes a week.[41]

Serious arguments erupted in the Lincolnshire Artists' Society (LAS) with resignations.[42] The LAS and the School of Art were inextricably linked, with several members of staff from the Art School involved in the running of the LAS, including the Principal and RLB. What happened in one place therefore affected relations and decisions in the other.

The changing status of ceramics in the art schools had an immediate impact on the studio pottery movement. In 1966, a 'stormy' meeting was held by the Craftsmen Potters Association (CPA) to discuss the appropriate training for a potter.[43] In the art schools repetitive and production throwing were not considered part of a liberal education, and both Cardew and Leach had been advocating workshop training as a more appropriate experience for potters.[44] The 1966 meeting at the CPA fell into two camps: those whose art schools had been granted DipAD status where ceramics could be used as an experimental medium, and those, like David Leach, who believed that Coldstream's 'liberal general training'[45] did not make a professional potter. Workshop-based studio potters saw the art schools as 'spawning a race of part-time makers who simply went back into the art schools to teach'.[46] Some college leaders had gained DipAD status for courses that were essentially artist-craft courses. At this CPA meeting were two potters from Harrow School of Art which had not been granted DipAD status. They were Victor Margrie and Michael Casson, and as a result they created the Diploma in Studio Pottery in 1963. Their Diploma was the antithesis of the DipAD and provided ceramics workshop training. These problems mirror the difficulties RLB was experiencing. Conceptually he was caught in the middle: he regarded a broad art school education (like the one he had received) far superior to a narrow studio pottery training; but he believed in the need for a focused ceramics course within a broader art and design environment. He considered it was possible to teach studio pottery and its philosophy as well as the concepts which lay behind *Basic*

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[41] Robinson, H. (n.d.) *A Personal Reminiscence.* unpublished (MS), Family archive.

[42] Mayor, E. (2006) *Lincolnshire Artists: One Hundred Years: 1906-2006.* Lincoln: Lincolnshire Artists' Society.

[43] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* The Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in The Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p240

[44] Leach spoke against art school training in a lecture at The Royal Society of Arts in 1948. Quoted in Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* The Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in The Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber.p21.

[45] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in The Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p240

[46] Ibid. p240

Design, yet considered it was also necessary to acquire appropriate skills and techniques. These ideals did not fit with either exclusive approach.

The third report of the NACAE in 1964 looked at post-diploma studies in Art and Design, and craftsmanship was mentioned only in terms of staff back-up for student designers, as 'adequate staff of technical assistants, including craftsmen'.[47] This confirmed the low esteem in which 'crafts' were held. The letters from RLB reveal that in Lincoln there was 'infighting amongst staff'[48] and they were all 'in a battle'.[49]

> The Principal and most of the staff were held to ridicule … your father was one of the people who were subtly portrayed as 'yesterday's men'.[50]

RLB observed that specialists were not teaching on appropriate courses, inappropriate assistants were being appointed, and decisions were made without consultation. RLB viewed these as a personal vendetta, undermining him and his teaching, and thought he was being personally victimised. His trade union was 'not aware of any developments of School policy that would reduce your present status and position',[51] seemingly oblivious to the major changes taking place in art schools throughout the country. Thus RLB was advised by the Chief Education Officer to go abroad for a month,[52] and he went to Copenhagen. Whilst there he received a letter from the Principal of LSA informing him of the developments that were taking place:

> I think we are working towards an attitude in Ceramics which encourages the student in a process of discovery, rather than a ready-made craft system. Students are responding to making their own problems and to solving them.[53]

This confirms the changes. The self-discovery, experimentation with glazes and materials, student 'drop-in' approach, represented the antithesis of the systems that RLB had in place for teaching and making ceramics. David Paton, a former friend and student, who ran the pottery during RLB's absence, said: 'Oh yes. He had his code, his set of rules, and if you didn't measure

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[47] Quoted in Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in The Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p238

[48] Blatherwick, R.L. (1964-1967) Folder of letters. (MS) Family archive.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Meddings, K. (2012) 'Robert Blatherwick'. 8th May. Former student of RLB. Personal email to author.

[51] (1964-1967) folder of letters. Feb 1965, letter from the NUT. (MS) Family archive.

[52] (1964-1967) folder of letters. 7th Sept. (MS) Family archive.

[53] Gribble, K. (1966). Folder of letters. October. (MS) Family archive. This letter was found in Paul Vangehede's flat in Copenhagen in 1992, by Sue and Marjorie Blatherwick.

up, you were out!'[54] Four years later Geoffrey Whiting left England and went to Lesotho to make pots. He wrote a letter in *Ceramic Review:*

> [I]t will be wonderful to get away from all the ghastly High Art thinking which bedevils pottery training in Art Colleges in this country, and the minds of those responsible for it.[55]

The effect of the application of the Coldstream Report and the Summerson review of courses which took place is described by Tickner as 'fast and draconian', and referred to as the 'Dr Beechings' of the art-school system. It was

> traumatic for the majority of colleges, left without nationally recognised courses in any area and obliged to diversify with part-time and lower-level vocational work. There were national protests …[56]

RLB had been granted leave without salary until the end of Spring Term of 1967. By March of that year the Principal had left, with the Vice Principal appointed as acting Principal. The chief education officer asked RLB for 'his full co-operation in the rather difficult term which lies ahead', but the damage caused by the restructuring had been done. On 4th April 1967 RLB wrote:

> [A]fter considering the conditions you stipulated last week … I think the hazards of working for oneself are preferable at the present time, and you may regard this as my resignation from the staff of the Lincoln School of Art.[57]

This was the beginning of a new era of self-employment and self-sufficient living. He had three children under the age of ten, and no income.

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[54] Paton, D. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Tealby, Lincolnshire. 17th February. Digital recording in Family archive.

[55] Whiting, G. (1971) 'News of Members'. *Ceramic Review*. March/April. No.8. p2.

[56] Tickner, L. (1968) *Hornsey 1968: The Art School Revolution.* 2008 ed. London: Frances Lincoln. p19. Beeching axed the national rail network in Britain by a third, in a report published in 1961.

[57] Blatherwick, R.L. (1967). Folder of letters. 4th April. (MS) Family archive.

Section C

Self-Employment 1967-1993

Section C is the third phase in the career and life of RLB; the period of self-employment. This began in 1967 and continued until his death in 1993. After resignation from Lincoln School of Art, RLB worked from his home, developing and working solely in a refined form of high-fired ceramic earthenware.

10.1. Robert Blatherwick. c.1980. *Washing Line and Wheel-barrow*. black and white conté on paper.

Chapter 10

Site: The Showroom

10.2. Sitting in the leather butterfly chair in the showroom, Reepham, 1971.

Everyone said he was mad, crazy, giving up a good job with a salary and a pension to work alone. No one could live by making and selling pots. He must have had a breakdown. How could that work? How would they be able to make a living and survive, to feed and clothe their children and to pay the bills?

A place was needed to display the work he produced. The entrance hall was not big enough. Next to it was a large room which could double up as the showroom; then the entire 'business': the workshop, the showroom, and the entrance hall were downstairs. Most of the living went on upstairs.

Coconut matting was fitted to cover the floor. It was the only room in the house with a carpet, and a scratchy one at that. It reflected their love of natural materials, the fabric of self-sufficient living in the 1960s. Its light tone complemented the dark, warm colours of the pots. This room had been part of the workshop and the bakery with its ovens before that. They had scraped the lime off the beams by hand, bit by bit. The rough concrete floor was transformed by the matting which was hard-wearing and durable enough to last for a long time. It is still there.

The showroom was for displaying work. This was the point of sale. It was open all hours, every day; people rang the doorbell and dropped in. Often at meal times. Sometimes they just wandered in or found their way upstairs.

Low cedar-wood shelves along the far wall were supported by stacks of bricks from the bread-ovens of the bakery. Large dishes, bowls, jugs and vases were displayed along the top shelf, with domestic pots such at lidded jars, jugs, bowls, and mugs along the lower shelves. Wine goblets sat on the windowsill above, a small hand-written sign saying **'OPEN'** being the only signal to the world that there was something within. In the centre of the room large dishes were displayed on a rug, each bearing a different design. In the front left corner of the photograph of RLB in the showroom (Fig.10.2) you can just see the display of jewellery: small slip-decorated jewels, which were made into rings, brooches, pendants, and cuff-links.

On the right side of the room were imported fair-trade items such as baskets, cane garden rakes, and rush doormats. These were unusual at the time, before they became widely available in the shops. Hanging from the ceiling were

Japanese paper fish kites. On a little table, not in the photograph, was wrapping paper, raffia, and an invoice book in which every sale was recorded.

There never was a sign outside. RLB did not advertise. People got to know by word of mouth. To make phone calls, mother went to the telephone box in the village. It was madness, it would never work.

10.3. Unfired sculpted letters, on a wooden bat, for the sign that was never completed for the pottery.

Object: Earthenware Pots

Robert Blatherwick works at Reepham, near Lincoln, and is now a full-time potter after teaching for many years. Makes domestic ware and ovenware pottery as well as individual and 'one-off' pots. Also uses ceramics for sculpture, tiles and tile murals.

— Artist's Statement
Catalogue of Exhibits, March 1971

10.4. Marjorie and RLB setting up an exhibition, 1971. Pricing pots and checking against the typed list.

Context: Earthenware

> Like the Red Queen, we had to run as fast as we could just to stay in one place. Since it was anyhow a pretty good place to be in, this was not exactly a disaster, but it meant we were so busy running that our voice was not heard and our immediate influence was less than, possibly, it deserved to be.
>
> — Michael Cardew
> *The Maker's Eye*.

In 1962, Kenneth Clark wrote an article entitled 'Potters Must Eat'. In this he acknowledged that

> very few potters in this country support themselves entirely by the products of their workshops, the most common form of subsidy being teaching.[1]

RLB had cashed in his pension, which, if managed with caution, would provide enough money to live on for a year. This was a big gamble. The challenge was to establish the business and survive for the first year, and hope that success would take care of the future.[2]

RLB resigned from teaching at Lincoln School of Art in 1967 and set out to use his knowledge and experience to break the mould and create something different. He was an artist potter; he needed to make a living and provide for his family, and the most appropriate way was to make domestic studio pots for everyday use. He did not want to do repeat production throwing. He had seen how workshops worked, had experienced the difficulties of team work in the art school, and now needed to work alone; he was a designer and maker interested in producing 'one-off' designed items or sets. He decided to do this in earthenware and to work without any assistance in his workshop.[3] This had the advantage of not having to develop standard production lines for assistants to manufacture.

The majority of studio potters were working in stoneware or porcelain, and those that were working in earthenware produced a traditional type of slipware. Many did not stay with earthenware for very long, moving on to stoneware when they felt they had reached its limits, unable to achieve the appearance they wanted. In writing about 'The Earthenware Years' (1940

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[1] Clark, K. (1962) 'Potters must eat', *Pottery Quarterly, Vol. 7 no 28*, in Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black Ltd. p142

[2] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[3] Students and potters wrote and offered their services as assistants or apprentices but he turned these down.

to 1970), Paul Rice observes that: 'earthenware, and especially tin-glaze, almost disappeared from serious studio ceramics for many years'.[4]

Some of the earthenware RLB produced was very unusual. Over a period of thirty years, which began while he was teaching at Lincoln School of Art, he developed many glazes and a range of complex application techniques (Figs.1.4;11.18) to create an appearance that was specific to his work. He explored and created earthenware glazes and decorative methods within the tradition of domestic studio pottery, venturing into sculptural pottery. This did not fit neatly into any of the studio pottery categories. Stoneware, porcelain, and raku; the postmodernist exploration of concepts; and the traditional domestic earthenware category of slipware were all different forms of pottery. The definitions and terminology applied to types of pottery, as discussed previously, were part of the problem. While the unusual quality of his work was noticed at the time,[5] it has not been considered as having any significant contribution to make to the grand narrative of British studio pottery, partially due to a dominant ideology which has favoured other types of studio pottery.

From 1967 onwards the family lived solely on the income from sales.[6] They had no private income, sponsorship, government grants, or income from elsewhere to assist, and adapted their lifestyle to become self-sufficient. Marjorie did consider teaching arts and crafts, which would have provided a regular income,[7] but she was needed to run the business from the gallery/showroom in the home and manage sales and orders while RLB created in the workshop;[8] the potter cannot get off the wheel with clay-covered hands while customers contemplate purchases. Furthermore, RLB did not drive and Marjorie was required to deliver pots to exhibitions and galleries.

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[4] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press. p82

[5] Ismay, W.A. (1971) 'Exhibition Reviews, Robert Blatherwick, Earthenware. Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Lincs, June 1971'. *Ceramic Review,* No.11, p.14.

[6] The family consisted of three children under the age of ten and two adults.

[7] Marjorie was offered a place at Bishop Grosseteste College in Lincoln to train as an arts and crafts teacher.

[8] She managed the customers, sales, and distribution, the accounts, the house, and the children.

Difficult New Colours

Manufacturers had developed new earthenware colours, and the range of stains and glazes available in the 1960s and 1970s had increased. These colours offered 'wider opportunities for decoration and colour than stoneware'.[9] Between August 1970 and February 1971 earthenware potter Kenneth Clark published three articles in *Ceramic Review.* He explained that earthenware

> is not any easy medium to come to grips with, but once its qualities are understood and respected, it offers great scope to the potter.[10]

A year later Daniel Rhodes wrote:

> many potters are finding that making earthenware may involve more complex procedures than stoneware … exacting control of formulation and firing is necessary and unless slips, glazes and over-glazes are skilfully applied the results can be disastrous. The use of low fire bodies and glazes may call for more, not less technical knowledge and craftsmanship.[11]

Kenneth Clark went on to say that

> with the wide range of rich coloured glazes and enamels now available, great restraint and sensitivity is needed in handling them in order to avoid the obvious pitfalls.[12]

Earthenware glazes were difficult to apply with a consistency and it was hard to avoid uneven patches, which made the glaze appear thin in parts. Frequently the body showed through and it was easy for earthenware to display a crudeness which stoneware managed to avoid by the fusion of the glaze with the body. Earthenware stains were cold and harsh. Applied under a clear glossy glaze the effect detracted from the form, creating shadows and shine, which made work appear 'cheap' and superficial. This was not the appearance that RLB was looking for. The page from Podmore's catalogue (Fig. 10.5) fifteen years later in 1983, shows 'Stoneware Effect Glazes' which the catalogue claims produces a 'simulated textured stoneware appearance' when fired. Fig.10.6 shows some of the new glazes and stains which RLB had tested on jewellery pieces circa 1965, but the colours were considered to be cold, and hard, and not used thereafter.

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[9] Clark, C. (1971) 'Earthenware, Part Two'. *Ceramic Review,* No.7. p.8.

[10] Clark, C. (1970) 'Earthenware, Part One'. *Ceramic Review,* No. 4. p5.

[11] Rhodes, D. (1973) *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. 1979 revised ed. Pitman House pxvi

[12] Clark, C. (1971) 'Earthenware, Part Two'. *Ceramic Review,* No.7. p.9.

10.5. *Podmore & Sons Ltd./Potterycraft Catalogue*, January 1983, showing the range of earthenware colours that were available twenty years later. The image shows 'Stoneware Effect Glazes' which the catalogue claims produces a 'simulated textured stoneware appearance' when fired.

10.6. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Jewellery pieces. c.1965. Glazes and stains were tested on jewellery pieces. These colours were considered too hard and not used thereafter.

Earthenware was unfashionable[13] and considered to have 'obvious limitations'.[14] The decision to work in earthenware was informed by RLB's personal experience of its possibilities while at his previous places of employment, all of which had produced earthenware: Wedgwood produced industrial earthenware; Cardew had worked exclusively in slip-decorated earthenware while RLB was at Winchcombe; Leach had produced some slip-decorated earthenware; and an extremely durable Faience earthenware was made at the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Factory, *The Faience Manufactory Aluminia*.[15] RLB was aware that many potters had abandoned earthenware and believed he saw a solution where they had not:

> Bob decided to work in earthenware because he felt it had never been used to its full advantage. There were so many possibilities, earthenware was accepted as just a glaze used on country pottery. He felt there was much more to it than simple country pottery, stoneware was the popular thing then, and most people were working in stoneware. And because he was working in earthenware he was exploring new grounds.[16]

Both Leach and Cardew had moved away from earthenware. Leach wrote: '[A]fter the fever of technical research had abated, we saw that there were definite limitations to the use of slipware in present-day life'.[17] Cardew also wrote:

> [F]aced with the limitations of this kind of ware, I began during the later nineteen-thirties to wish I had undertaken at the beginning to make stoneware rather than earthenware.[18]

When RLB became self-employed, he initially worked in traditional slipware. This was a strand that he utilised throughout his work, and he pushed this to new limits. But he also developed another type of earthenware. These points will be investigated in the following chapter. In September 1967 RLB explained to the local press:

> I am working with slipware, which is a traditional English technique, and **not many potters are doing it at the moment.** Most specialise in stoneware which is a higher temperature technique.[19]

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[13] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press.

[14] Ibid p86

[15] Rostock, X. (1939) *The Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Manufactory and the Faience Manufactory Alumina.* Copenhagen. Det Berlingske Bogtrykkeri.

[16] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[17] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber. p34.

[18] Cardew M. (1976) *Michael Cardew, A Collection of Essays with an Introduction by Bernard Leach.* London: Crafts Advisory Committee. p60.

[19] Blatherwick, R.L. in unknown author (1967)., 'Ceramics Artist Gets Export Order'. *The Lincolnshire Echo,* September 11, Newspaper cutting in Family archive. (my emphasis).

Many potters worked with earthenware for a short time, but their output was small.[20] This is the first area where RLB's work differs from others, he worked with earthenware exclusively and full-time, without touching stoneware or porcelain after leaving teaching at the Art School. His output and range were extensive. Marjorie explained that he was:

> making pots for twenty-five years, firing almost every weekend, one weekend biscuit, three weekends of glaze firings, so we turned over a tremendous amount of pots, not repetitive pots, mainly one off pots.[21]

10.7. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1967. Slip-decorated ceramic pieces, with honey glaze, attached to ring fittings.

[20] Leach moved to stoneware in 1935, after his son returned from training in Stoke-on-Trent; he felt he could get higher prices for stoneware, and that 'stronger wares were more suitable for our modern life'. Cardew ceased working in earthenware after leaving Winchcombe in 1942 (although Finch and Tustin produced large amounts of slipware until 1960). Many of his contemporary potters abandoned it: Margaret Leach, who had been at St Ives with RLB and produced slipware, gave up potting when she married in 1956; Sam Haile died; Marianne de Trey changed to stoneware after a fire in 1957; Lucie Rie adapted to stoneware in 1949 (not an easy task as she fired oxidised stoneware); Bernard Forester and Henry Hammond made slipware from 1946-51; both of them were teaching and made very few pots, Paul Barron gave it up in the 1950s. The Picassoettes (William Newland, Nicholas Vergette, Margaret Hine) had worked in earthenware: Margaret Hine made tin-glazed earthenware vessels, Newland taught and made virtually no work for twenty-five years, and changed to working in bronze in the late 1950s, James Tower made tin-glazed earthenware and taught, so his output was extremely small; Mick Casson gave it up in 1959, David Eeles in 1963, and there may be others.

[21] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

What Is Slipware? What Is Earthenware?

The way that slip is applied, how the glazes and oxides are applied, to what clay, and how they are fired, offers a huge range of variation and possibilities for personal interpretation. Slip can be painted, poured, dropped, and shaken. Marks can be made by use of trellis lines, wet or dry scraffito, or the application of dots over trailed lines (jewelling). Traditional techniques include marbling (or joggling), feathering, trailing, swirling, combing, and wax resist. Decoration can be elaborate or simple. RLB used the techniques and methods of traditional slipware, but applied these in new ways, creating a range of decoration and design which went beyond the boundaries of traditional country pottery.

In order to understand these innovations, it is important to be clear about the terminology. Slipware describes a specific type of pottery which is often referred to as 'slip-decorated lead-glazed earthenware',[22] slip being the liquid clay used to decorate the clay body, usually when it is leather-hard and before it is fired. Historically, lead glazes were used as they produced a richer/warmer colour. They were mainly glossy clear or honey-coloured. It is important to understand that not all earthenware is slipware. Furthermore, slip can be applied to stoneware, but is not referred to as slipware. Earthenware is usually, but not always, a red terracotta clay, which is fired to a lower temperature than stoneware,[23] and remains porous until covered with a glaze. The clay platelets which make up the body remain separate and do not vitrify, therefore allowing water to be absorbed around the platelets. It is for this very reason that unglazed earthenware has been used traditionally over the centuries for water jars — the absorption and evaporation keeps the water cool.[24]

Slip-decorated pots have been made for thousands of years and potters continue to look to examples from cultures whose techniques we are still discovering.[25] The use of slip-trailing and scraffito revived in Europe in the seventeenth-century and became a technique used in cooking and serving dishes, with elaborate slipware plates and simple domestic pots made in the

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[22] Eden, M. and Eden, V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches.* London: A&C Black. p8

[23] Wedgwood produced a white earthenware and white earthenware clay is available.

[24] Clark, C. (1970) 'Earthenware, Part One'. *Ceramic Review,* No. 4. Since earthenware pots were first made they have been a universal commodity for cooking and eating, for storage and transportation of solids and liquids.

[25] The tombs of the Chinese Han Dynasty (206BC - 220AD) contained a wealth of slip-decorated and glazed ceramics. The South American cultures of Moche, Nazca, and Chimu, (from 200BC - 900AD) produced sophisticated slip-decorated pots and figurines. Complex slip-decorated wares were produced in Iran, Afghanistan, Samarkand, and Nishapur; the Mesopotamian potters of the ninth century used a red body that was slipped with white, painted with copper, iron, or manganese, before glazing with a colourless or yellowish-transparent lead glaze. The Byzantine and Islamic world produced wares which featured scraffitoed slip under a lead or tin glaze, and the whole of the Mediterranean basin were influenced by this.

Mediterranean countries.[26] Many paintings show pots in use with slip in their markings (for example, Johannes Vermeer, 1632-1675, *The Kitchen Maid*). These examples from other cultures provide untapped sources of forgotten knowledge. RLB had studied some of these and believed it was important to follow a different route than that taken by his contemporaries.

Traditional Slipware in Britain

Lincoln, the Roman city of Lindum, had many examples of Roman and mediaeval pottery in the City and County Museum,[27] as the Romans had brought slip-decorated pots to England. Cardew mentions seeing these on his visit to Lincoln when RLB took him to the museum.[28] Frequent archaeological excavations in the city provided a source of information and contemplation for RLB. In the second century AD the Romans produced pots with a smooth black body decorated with white slip. Pottery dwindled when the Romans left in the fifth century, but revived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when large jugs and pitchers were made. British mediaeval pots were frequently patterned with slip-trailed lines and glazed with a yellow lead glaze,[29] and RLB's student sketchbooks contain studies of these.[30]

The seventeenth century was the heyday of a highly developed English slipware; Bernard Leach was of the opinion that the crusaders brought certain techniques back from Egypt.[31] Some of the work was crude but slip decoration gave the work a vitality, and the honey glaze gave a visual warmth. The Potteries developed in Staffordshire as the area provided clay, wood and coal for firing, lead ore for glazing, plus the River Trent for moving pots by boat. The River Witham flows through the centre of Lincoln and is connected to the River Trent by the Fossdyke, built by the Romans and considered the oldest canal in England.[32] Access by boat was an important factor in pottery's trading history and the river was used for trade when RLB was young, with boats selling items in the centre of the town. One of the best known makers of Staffordshire slipware in the 1600s was Thomas Toft who developed large, elaborately

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[26] Eden, M. and Eden, V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches.* London: A&C Black.

[27] The old City and County Museum was in Free School Lane, Lincoln, and had a large display of mediaeval and Roman pots.

[28] Cardew, M. (1942). *Diary 1942*. 'Diaries 1916-1949'. Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/1. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author. 24th/25th January 2013. Diary entry 6th March 1942: 'Saw museum. Art Gallery (pots and textiles) Mediev. pots.' This would be the old City and County Museum.

[29] Eden, M. and Eden, V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches.* London: A&C Black.

[30] In Tudor times lead glazing became established and undecorated pots were made by monks in monasteries throughout England and Wales, These pots had a red body and were glazed with a velvety dark brown or black and called 'Cistercian ware'.

[31] Hodin, J.P. (1961) *Bernard Leach, Fifty Years a Potter*. London: Arts Council.

[32] The Fossdyke was constructed in AD 120.

decorated dishes. We have already established in Chapter 4 that RLB visited the collection of slipware in the The Potteries Museum in Stoke-on-Trent, when he was at the Wedgwood Factory.

Slipware pots were made for the farmhouse and dairy in country potteries throughout Britain; it was Devonshire slipware that inspired Cardew to start making pottery. Country potteries declined when people turned to factory- and mass-produced wares. In recent years the number of studio potters producing slip-decorated earthenware has increased, with Clive Bowen producing wood-fired slipware from the 1960s, Mary Wondraush from the late 1970s, and many contemporary potters such as Hannah McAndrew and Doug Fitch producing a type of traditional slipware. It has, however, been regarded as the 'poor relation of ceramics'.[33]

Charger by Thomas Toft 'King Charles in the oak'. Dia. 50 cm (20 in.). Note the miniscule pearling on the outlines of the drawing, and remember this was done with a pouring vessel. Courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

10.8. THOMAS TOFT. Example of seventeenth-century traditional English slipware charger.

[33] Eden, M. and Eden, V. (1999) *Slipware, Contemporary Approaches.* London: A&C Black p8.

Attitudes to Earthenware

Ceramics had a hierarchy. Daniel Rhodes wrote in *Pottery Quarterly* that after the war the trend toward stoneware became a rush and 'soon all pottery exhibitions came to be dominated by stoneware'.[34]

The word 'earthenware' has traditionally been associated with unglazed items such as flowerpots and roof tiles, water jars or simple pots from third-world countries that had not developed glaze. Slipware was associated with simple, functional and cheap everyday kitchenware.

Earthenware was considered the medium for 'the hobbyist and the school',[35] and had lost favour with the seriously committed potter. This is reflected in many written texts which have promulgated style and dominated attitudes, and this has been commented on but not fully exposed as a problem in the recording and exhibiting of twentieth-century studio pottery. This hierarchy is epitomised in a pamphlet produced by Eric Milner-White, which accompanied a display of his collection of ceramics at York Art Gallery in 1952. In 'an explanation of the exhibits' he explains that he only purchased stoneware pots, as these are the 'aristocrat of ceramic wares – its highest art'. He described earthenware as 'soft pottery'.[36] This point of view was held by many others, particularly those in prestigious positions. W.B. Honey, the Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, wrote a chapter entitled 'Slipware and Other Peasant Pottery'[37] in 1952 (republished in 1962). The linking of the term slipware with 'peasant pottery' (a pejorative term which would not be acceptable today), further reinforces the lowly status of earthenware. They were not alone in holding this perception; Bernard Leach believed that 'stoneware, with its associations with China, was somehow more 'noble",[38] and that the London galleries were able to get a better price for stoneware.

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[34] Rhodes, D. (1961) 'Recent Trends in Pottery Style'. *Pottery Quarterly.* Vol. 7, No.25. p8

[35] Ibid.

[36] Riddick, S. (1990) *Pioneer Studio Pottery. The Milner-White Collection*. London: Lund Humphries in association with York City Art Gallery. p15

[37] Honey, W.B. (1952) *English Pottery and Porcelain.* London: A & C Black.

[38] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition.* Winchcombe: Cotswold Living Publications. p65

The opinion of those in positions of high status carried weight. Milner-White was the Dean of King's College, Cambridge, before becoming the Dean of York Minster,[39] and has been described as a passionate and discriminating collector of pottery with a clear aesthetic philosophy. With position and status comes access to finance, and this helps with publicity and promotion of exhibitions, further raising profile and status. Leach, for instance, was extremely good at accessing financial support from a network of wealthy and prestigious supporters.[40] This begins to represent a type of hegemonic 'closed shop'.

An assumption existed that most glazed earthenware was slipware and that this was cheap country pottery. (An exception to this was manufactured Wedgwood). This opinion has been held in some quarters for a long time. Kenneth Clark wrote with the aim of raising awareness of its possibilities, but the position he takes is defensive and reinforces the dominant negative attitude of the time. He writes that for some earthenware 'may suggest cheapness, poor quality and a lack of refinement'.[41]

In 1971 RLB exhibited fifty pots in an exhibition in Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire. This exhibition was reviewed in *Ceramic Review* by the influential collector 'observer and appreciator'[42] of studio pottery, Bill Ismay.[43] The opening statement of Ismay's review says that it 'was a distinctive exhibition of about 50 pots at this interesting folk-museum of Lincolnshire life'.[44]

This review will be revisited in the next chapter, but what is interesting to note is that this exhibition took place in a folk-museum. Was this the perception of the position of earthenware within the studio pottery movement? That it was a type of slipware and therefore considered as folk art and country pottery?

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[39] Riddick, S. (1990) *Pioneer Studio Pottery. The Milner-White Collection*. London: Lund Humphries in association with York City Art Gallery.

[40] Whiting, G. (1961) in the Introduction to Leach, B. (1961) *Bernard Leach Fifty Years a Potter*. London: The Arts Council. p3. Miss Muriel Rose, Mr George Wingfield Digby, the Victoria and Albert Museum and Mr & Mrs Elmhirst helped Leach set up exhibitions.

[41] Clark, C. (1970) 'Earthenware, Part One'. *Ceramic Review,* No.4. p4.

[42] Ismay, W.A. quoted in Walsh, H. (2012) 'Not the Possessor but the Possessed'. *The Decorative Arts Society Journal. 1850 to the Present.* Journal No.36. p14

[43] Ismay was a librarian and collector, and became an elected honorary lifetime full member of 'The Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain' in 1980, in recognition of his role as a supporter of studio potters. His collection of pots is currently being digitised in York Art Gallery by curator / PhD student, Helen Walsh,

[44] Ismay, W.A. (1971)'Exhibition Reviews, Robert Blatherwick, Earthenware. Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Lincs, June 1971'. *Ceramic Review,* No.11, p14. Ismay's collection of pots in York Art Gallery is currently being digitised by curator Helen Walsh. She is a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University.

RLB had been an early member of the Craftsmen Potters Association, displaying his work in their gallery/shop from when it opened in the 1960s. It was reportedly during the early 1970s that the CPA had written to RLB, saying that

> they didn't want [RLB's] pots anymore because they were earthenware and they had decided that stoneware were the pots they wanted.[45]

No record of this correspondence has been found, either in the family or the CPA archives to date. In undertaking investigative enquiries over the last few years, Amelia Lawrence from the CPA wrote:

> I can however say to you that at no point [did] the CPA discriminate against any type of studio pottery. Its aim has always being to promote the awareness of all studio pottery and indeed there were a number of earthenware members of the CPA throughout this period.[46]

However, in the Third Edition of *Potters (*produced in 1975) only six potters out of the one hundred and forty-seven listed were producing domestic-ware solely in earthenware.[47]

Slipware received another blow to its status in a scare relating to the use of lead in glazes, and its possible release in food. Following the lead scare, the CPA became aware of

> the possible danger to health of cadmium or lead released from glazed pottery into food … Because of this the CPA council now requires all members sending work to the shop to state whether lead or cadmium are used in their pottery or not. If these materials are present then potters must have their work tested regularly and produce certificates to show it conforms to the British Standard BS 4860.[48]

It is possible that the cost, time, delay in sending and receiving the results and the transportation involved in the testing regime was considered an impractical requirement. He was a potter working alone in his workshop. He used numerous glazes, with Lead Bisilicate as one of the ingredients (this is its safest form).[49] Rhodes specifies that '[l]ead glazes on ware intended for table use should be fired to at least cone 04 [1050°C] and preferably higher'.[50]

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[45] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[46] Lawrence, A. (2012, November) Personal email to Sue Blatherwick

[47] Cooper, E. and Lewenstein, E. (1975) *Potters: An Illustrated Directory of the Work of Full Members of the Craftsmen Potters Association of Great Britain. A Guide to Pottery Training in Britain.* 3rd ed. London: The Craftsmen Potters Association. These were Brigitta Appleby, Alan Caiger-Smith, Alan Frewin (self-taught), Geoffrey Maund and John Solly, Shelia Willison

[48] Ibid.

[49] Cooper, E. (1992) *The Potter's Book of Glazes Recipes*. London: B.T. Batsford. p26.

[50] Rhodes, D. (1973) *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. 1979 revised ed. London: Pitman House.p91.

RLB's work was high-fired earthenware, fired to above 1120°C. 'In the pottery industry the twin scourges of lead poisoning and silicosis have always hung over the heads of workers'.[51]

In searching through issues of *Ceramic Review* and the earlier publication *Pottery Quarterly,* the minimal amount of comment on earthenware-related issues is surprising. This narrowness in approach was questioned by Robert Fournier who asked: 'Where are the galleries willing to take any but the narrowest range of names from the ceramic establishment?'[52] Breaking away from the established norm would prove to be more of a challenge than expected. Ismay wrote and asked RLB about the limitations, whether there was any problem with the pots being earthenware. To this RLB replied:

> With reference to the earthenware stoneware question. I am an earthenware potter, I don't see any barrier within the scope of the materials I use.[53]

The barriers came from elsewhere.

10.9. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1963. Glazed earthenware tile.

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[51] Bowcock, A. (1971) 'Health Notes. Potters Rot'. *Ceramic Review.* No. 10. p9.

[52] Fournier, R. (1970) 'Work of art school students', *Ceramic Review* No. 5, p17. Robert Fournier wrote several distinguished reference books on ceramics. He worked in slipware until 1965, when he converted to stoneware. He was a founder of the CPA and his obituary in the Independent describes him as a 'rebel' and a 'lifelong pacifist and atheist'Cooper, E. (2008) Robert Fournier: Inventive ceramicist whose 'pebble pots were based on natural forms'. *The Independent.* 12th March. [Accessed April 12th 2014] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/robert-fournier-inventive-ceramist-whose-pebble-pots-were-based-on-natural-forms-794432.html

[53] Blatherwick, R.L. (1971) 'Letter to Mr. Ismay', June 15th, (MS). York Museum and Art Gallery archive. The year is not stated but it would have been the year of the exhibition. York Art Gallery archive.

Chapter 11

Site: The Workshop 1967-1993

The frog in the well does not know the great ocean, but he does know Heaven.

井の中の蛙大海を知らず

— Shoji Hamada

Zen saying/Japanese proverb

11.1. Robert Blatherwick packing the electric kiln at Reepham, 1971.

The space was organised according to systems of which we were unaware. There were large, damp slabs of clay, buckets and containers full of liquid slips. Pestles and mortars, bowls with soft brush mops in dark liquid, bamboo brushes with pointed tips and green Japanese characters on their handles, scattered around the surfaces. Remnants of the spirit of how it used to be.

Buckets of dried-up glaze sit beneath dust-laden lids; twenty years have passed since they were used. Dad's old workbenches and the cone driven wheel, with a seat attached like a tractor, still stand where they used to. When throwing pots one can look down the garden and see the view, contemplative and calming. Or it can shout at you to do something: plant me, dig me, mow me, harvest me. This is where he spent his days. It became overgrown with less light coming in after he died. A pear tree that was once in the centre of the lawn joined a bank of bushes at the side. It has not moved. As shrubs grow, the garden appears to shrink.

The kiln was dismantled, the metal shell of the electric one crumbled after years of service. It was time to build a new one, it would be oil-fired, outside the workshop in a shed in the garden. There were plans to extend.

Oxides in 1lb honey jars sit in a row on a shelf, with two large gardening scene tiles. A reproduction vase from Knossos, a gift from a holiday in Greece, holds a collection of pheasants' feathers collected on walks.

Behind the wheel sits a black, marble-topped bathroom cupboard, in which wheel bats and round boards are kept. Underneath a solid bench are bags of clay and a bin containing still-moist clay. In the corner are shelves with pieces of leather, picture frames, old school books of mine, and cardboard boxes with accounts and sales records from the years of self-employment.

Below are plastic milk crates on their sides holding bottles of homemade Pea and Apple Wine, with handwritten labels in Johnstone lettering. Wine made from whatever was surplus. We have occasionally opened a bottle when we have come to the house, some have gone sour, some need decanting and filtering, but many have been pleasant to drink and still have a kick after all this time.

A brick chimney stack leads from the workshop stove into the annex above. It has a stepped ledge on which were kept boxes of matches and cobweb-covered geometric structures made out of cocktail sticks.

The first stove in here was a big cast-iron pot-bellied device. It was replaced with a French oil stove, at the same time as one in the living room above. They gave easier heat than lighting fires but needed filling each day, and when the wind blew there was an oily smell in the air. Next to the stove stands a tall cracked cast-iron wood burner, which had been in the living room for many years. This was a magnificent item purchased on a trip to Wales, a contact from another potter. She visited frequently when she was starting her pottery in Alvingham, near Louth, arriving with questions about ceramics and problems she was experiencing. Pru Green worked in earthenware in a totally different manner and colour range employing throwers and decorators, and mass-producing designs and shapes. Her husband was the son of Sharp's bakery.

In the passage-way is another workbench and the sink. Here, on more shelves, are flint, plaster, red iron oxide, and other materials in large jars. There are DIY materials and hanging tools such as hammers, screwdrivers and pliers, each with a slot. In the workbench is a large drawer with my grandfather's tools, his name impressed on their handles – LUTHER BLATHERWICK. At the end is the washing machine where mum came to do the washing. Then there are more shelves holding fabric dyes and old kettles. Under the sink are plastic bowls and buckets, and further along a wooden sledge and a large aluminium honey extractor. Slotted amongst the beams below the first-floor roof space are old wooden skis and poles that belonged to George Todd, and there are canvas bivouac tents he had purchased from the Army and Navy stores and a wigwam George made for my brother's seventh birthday and erected on a hill by the stream in Cumbria as a surprise. The lining inside it is a hand-printed Todd textile.

Back in the main workshop is the Norwegian rug-loom which came from George's house. Mum restrung this loom and then used it to weave colourful rugs.

Further along this wall are shelves with adjustable wooden pegs which slot into holes. I have seen exactly the same system in the Leach Pottery in St Ives. These

shelves were used to hold pots that were awaiting glazing or firing. Next to them are a series of lids from pots which have lost their bodies. There were unfired letters for the word **POTTERY** until recently, when I took them to my workshop and fired them. After all those years of self-employment he had finally made a sign. There are dishes with cracks or breaks waiting to be repaired with Araldite, they have been waiting for a very long time.There are cane handles for tea pots, corks for flagons, and sieves for glazes on the top shelf. Towards the door is a slate wedging bench, and a pug mill mum purchased for him on a trip to Stoke-on-Trent to buy clay; he had been wedging by hand and she thought it too exhausting.

Object: The Glaze Buckets

11.2. Glaze buckets in the workshop.

Inconspicuous buckets of slop, numbered and labelled. The key to the door, the answer to alchemy. How they worked and their magic known only to one. The books contain the recipes. The coded tests painted on the feet of small bowls, now gone to disparate places. These crusty looking dried-up slops beneath dust-laden lids may hold some secret gems. I have taken one to my workshop, soaked and de-solidified it, stirred it from its solid sleep, pushed it through meshes and sieves, and tested it on a series of beakers. Its grey colour is warm and inviting, soft and appealing. Which recipe it belonged to, I do not know. If I could find it I would make it again. The materials were good, the oxides keep their qualities. Other buckets await their soaking; like the Atacama desert, they may have another blossoming. But this is another project, what they will reveal is uncertain, how they correlate with the records unclear, and they may not be worth the trouble. It is probably another madness, like this one, the process slow and time consuming.

Context:

Extending the Traditional Method of Slipware

I don't think your father, for one minute, thought about his work as being important, because he wasn't that kind of person.

— Ron Harrison
former friend and LSA colleague
Conversation with Sue Blatherwick

11.3. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1970. Teapot designs.

This chapter looks at the working processes used by RLB in his years of self-employment, when he worked only in earthenware. He began using slipware in a traditional manner, which he then developed to apply the techniques in new ways. Some of these could be considered to be pushing earthenware and the use of slip to new extremes, and it is these processes which will be examined.

> I make functional things, things to use rather than decorative things. I am using a traditional technique, but I don't copy traditional ideas.[1]

One type of work produced by RLB used the traditional slipware methods and techniques. This is white slip on a terracotta body and the application of a clear, honey-coloured glaze over the top. He used this combination of materials for a period of time, but wanted to move away from the appearance of traditional country pots. Both of the examples below use the traditional red clay body, the dish on the left follows a Leach/Cardew convention in domestic pottery. This type of oval pudding dish is listed as number seventeen on the 'English Traditional

11.4. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1968. Early slipware with glossy glaze, showing connection with traditional methods.
11.5. In these mugs c.1968 the beginning of change is evident in the painting of the body in black.

Slipware' list of pots made while RLB was at Winchcombe Pottery in 1942 (Fig 5.12), and continues the tradition of domestic pottery previously made at Fremington.[2] Similar pie dishes were exported to Heals & Sons. Leach illustrates how to make such an oval shaped dish in *A Potters Book*.[3] The mugs in Fig. 11.5 illustrate breaking away from this convention, partially by

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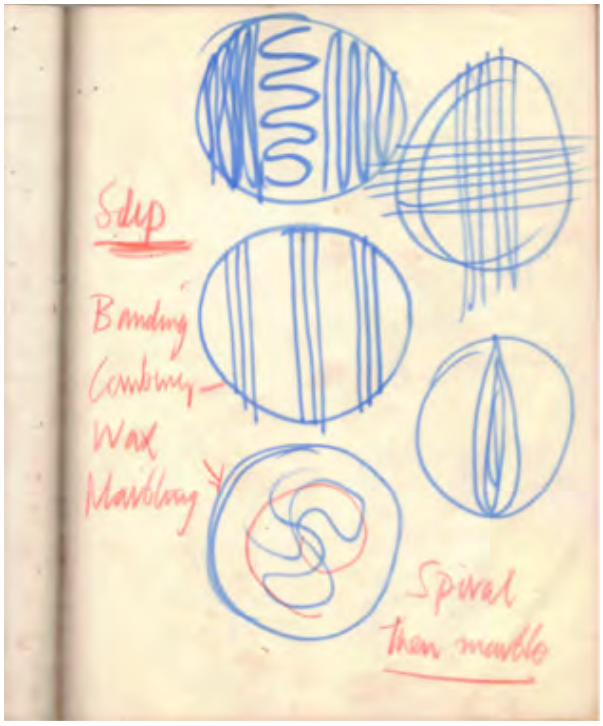
[1] Blatherwick, R.L. (1967) 'Ceramics artist gets export order'. *Lincolnshire Echo*. 11th September, Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

[2] A similar dish is illustrated in the 1936 publication of *20th Century Ceramics: an International Survey of the Best Work Produced by Modern Craftsmen, Artists and Manufacturers*. See p96 of Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe: Cotswold Living, where a similar dish is also illustrated.

[3] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression. 1977 ed. London: Faber and Faber. p81.

the change in design but primarily by the use of black manganese oxide painted over the red body, complementing the honey glaze and modernising the appearance. The black body was 'in vogue' and in line with current stoneware studio pottery, the work of Coper for example, and the aesthetic visual quality of the contrast of the black with the honey was an element that was utilised by RLB and taken further.

On some of RLB's early examples of slipware he experienced similar problems to those Cardew had noted at Winchcombe with earthenware glazes not adhering to the fired pot surface.[4] In traditional slipware, the decoration can look quite busy. A traditional slipware piece frequently uses more than one decorating technique in a piece (see example in previous chapter: Fig. 10.8). RLB took some of the techniques used in traditional slipware and isolated them. His experience of design and awareness of the process of abstraction becomes evident here. He took one element, which he expanded, exploded, simplified, or abstracted. The isolation of a single slip decorating process is illustrated in the sketchbook in which he draws designs and notes the process (Fig. 11.6). These simplified designs and techniques were applied on numerous large dishes, in different formations, as shown in the photographs of large dishes in Figs.11.7-11.12.



11.6. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. June 1970. Page from Glaze Record book of sketches showing ideas to be explored utilising slip techniques.

[4] Some examples of mugs with glaze peeling from the rim were in RLB's workshop, and used for storing paint brushes.

11.7 - 11.12. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Examples of slip-decorated dishes, with each dish showing a single technique, for example layered drops jogged and tilted, slip poured, slip dropped around the edge and then swirled, marbled, trailed in lines, and splashed.

Slip decoration is applied on large dishes. These are domestic products and this can obscure seeing the decoration in its own right. In the dishes in Figs. 11.7-11.12, the clay has been used as a canvas. Many more variations were made. Painting of the terracotta clay with black slip, as in these examples, further distances the work from traditional slipware.

The use of a traditional technique in a new context reveals the beginnings of a new type of slipware design emerging. This is a theme which continued in his work for many years. It is close to traditional slipware in its use of a glossy honey glaze, but it is applied on a body that has been painted black. Combined with the use of an isolated technique this becomes a not very traditional slipware. In later years he developed non-glossy glazes for slipware (Fig. 11.13).

11.13. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c. 1985. Large slip decorated bowl with matt glaze.

These techniques were utilised and incorporated into more non-traditional combinations as he developed new glazes, producing work that could no longer be categorised as 'traditional country pottery slipware'. These examples show how traditional slipware methods and techniques were used, but applied in a thoroughly untraditional way.

Untraditional Slipware – Exploring New Ground

> Bob's work was always superb, and there wasn't anybody doing high-fired earthenware at the time.
>
> — David Paton
> former friend and LSA colleague
> *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*

There was new ground to be explored. RLB had tested both earthenware and stoneware glazes extensively during the 1950s and 1960s, and continued testing earthenware glazes for the next thirty years as his notebooks show.[5] He created colours that were matt and could be layered to achieve varying effects. This range could be both subtle and strong and could produce unusual results, with the glazes appearing to vitrify the body with the glaze.

Critic and collector W.A. Ismay commented on the work being distinctive. In his review of RLB's exhibition in Scunthorpe in 1971, Ismay wrote about its unusual quality: 'many of the pots had the visual and tactile qualities of oxidised stoneware'.[6] Ismay, who knew Cardew and Leach and was a prolific collector of pots, was intrigued by how this had been achieved, and wrote to RLB enquiring.

RLB's hand-written reply appeared in the archives of York Museum with the response to Ismay's questions. It provided information relating to the clay body, methods of decoration, type of kiln used, glaze, firing temperature, plus the peculiar issue of him working in earthenware when it had been abandoned by the great masters of British studio pottery and was known to be so difficult.[7] Ismay commented that the work was

> agreeably semi-matt in a colour-range which included black and many browns to buff and yellowish, together with dark greens and a sparingly-used red in decoration.[8]

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[5] Several notebooks contain glaze tests and notes. Family archive.

[6] Ismay, W.A. (1971) 'Exhibition Reviews, Robert Blatherwick, Earthenware. Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Lincs, June 1971'. *Ceramic Review,* No.11, p.14.

[7] Blatherwick, R.L. (1971) 'Letter to Mr. Ismay', June 15th (MS). York Museum and Art Gallery archive. The year is not stated but it would have been the year of the exhibition, 1971. York Art Gallery archive.

[8] Ismay, W.A. (1971) 'Exhibition Reviews, Robert Blatherwick, Earthenware. Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Lincs, June 1971' *Ceramic Review,* No.11. p14.

11.14. Surface of RLB earthenware pot similar to the pots in the exhibition reviewed by Ismay in Scunthorpe in 1971, showing a semi-matt colour range.

This semi-matt surface and subtle colour range was unusual and makes the work of RLB different from traditional slipware. It was part of the aesthetic of the 1970s, the appeal of earthiness and natural materials, the wholesomeness that came with brown bread on wooden boards and pine kitchen tables. RLB was aware that he had developed a new form of earthenware, and as his supporting statement said: 'most of the pots are types of slipware which is not always traditional in appearance'.[9]

He had experimented and was working to create an individual identity. A local newspaper article reporting on his work had the headline 'Potter's aim is individuality'.[10] His exhibition lists itemise the making of 'one-off' individual pieces.

[9] Blatherwick, M.I. and Blatherwick, R.L.(1971). 'Catalogue of Exhibits'. *Spring Exhibition of Work by Local Artists and Craftsmen*, Lincoln Adult Education Centre. March. Family archive.

[10] Unknown author (1974) 'Potter's aim is individuality', *Lincolnshire Chronicle*. 9th August. Newspaper cutting in family archive.

With the work exhibited at Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery he had achieved what had been deemed impossible, an earthenware which looked like stoneware. He continued experimenting and exploring the possibilities with constantly changing glazes.

11.15. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1971. Earthenware pot similar to the pots in the Scunthorpe exhibition reviewed by Ismay, showing semi-matt colour range of browns, buff and yellow together with green and sparingly used red.

Creating Earthenware Glazes

RLB achieved these matt earthenware appearances through the use of slips and glazes. His record books contain many recipes and testing records, with occasional comment and date, and these provide an insight into his thought processes. In a statement for an exhibition (date unknown) he said: 'I aim to produce pottery that is functional with aesthetic appeal, using colours which are natural to clay, and which reflect nature'.[11] He often picked up stones when on holiday, and looked at their markings and colourings; the colour brighter when wet, but never overtly glossy.

While still teaching at Lincoln School of Art he worked in both stoneware and earthenware, and was testing and formulating his ideas about the way to work in the future. By February 1961 he noted a black earthenware that was 'a good glaze, not too glossy';[12] he also had a 'shiny but good black' tenmoku (stoneware) glaze. In Feb 1961 an ash glaze had been tested using ash from the apple trees in the garden at Reepham, which resulted in a 'very good' black and rust celadon,[13] which is a stoneware glaze. His comments remark on colour quality: 'interesting broken green' or 'very dark brown', or ingredients that could be changed: 'possibly wrong iron content', and reveal the aesthetic he was searching for. Dora Billington's (1890-1968) name is written next to a lime zinc matt earthenware glaze; Billington taught at the Royal College of Art and at the Central School of Art until 1955, when she ceased potting.[14] She had worked in earthenware and wrote that 'stoneware had gone stale and no one seemed able to do anything about it'.[15] In his testing of earthenware glazes RLB was searching for a matt glaze that adhered to the body and did not craze. Through experiments he built a sound base of recipes, which provided the foundation for all his work in subsequent years. After 1967 he worked only in earthenware.

For an earthenware glaze to be useful for food products it needs to have a glass-like non-absorbent layer over the clay body, and the commercial glazes available were glossy and the colours cold (see Fig. 10.5 Podmore/Potterycraft catalogue illustration). The appeal of stoneware to potters, artists, and the public during the 1970s and today is its matt quality and

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[11] Blatherwick, R.L. (n.d., possibly 1980) 'Robert Blatherwick - Potter' Family archive.

[12] Blatherwick, R.L. (n.d.) small folder with canvas cover. Family archive

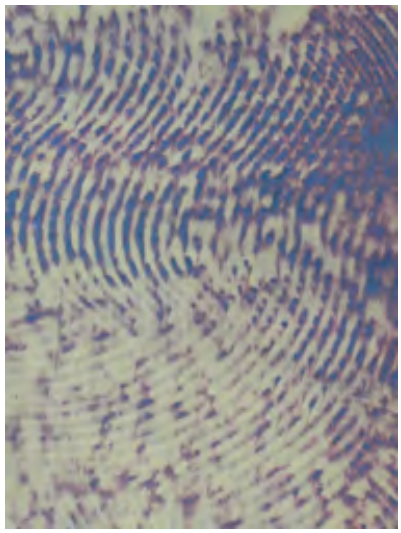
[13] Ibid.

[14] Rice, P. (2002) *British Studio Ceramics*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press,

[15] Billington,D. (1953) 'The young English potters', *The Studio*, vol.cxlv, no.720, March, p78 Quoted in Jones, J. (2007) *Studio Pottery in Britain 1900-2005*. London: A&C Black. p124.

its durability. This is achievable because clay platelets in the body fuse in firing and it becomes non-absorbent, therefore the glaze does not function as a protective layer. Glazes on stoneware and earthenware pots perform different functions due to the different absorbency of their clays. RLB's glaze record books show that he was testing to create a matt earthenware glaze. Comments include 'Shiny and hard at 1150°C. Not very successful'; 'Semi Matt, continue experiments'; and '(Shiny), Felspar to be increased'.[16] He experienced problems along the way: sometimes manufacturers changed the components or source of their raw ingredients (without informing their customers) and they react unexpectedly in a firing. When the change in regulations regarding the use of lead in glazes came into effect, solutions had to be found. Throughout the next thirty years there are many phases exploring different glazes and many combinations. Each colour change involved more than the change of an oxide, as the constituents of the oxides vary. He also needed glossy glazes for the interior of domestic products, and for visual contrast on the surface. In 1967 RLB told *The Chronicle* 'I am still in an experimental period; I am trying a number of things'.[17]

The use of several thin and thick glazes over slips allowed the clay body to show through, giving the (deceptive) mottled appearance of the body fusing with the glaze, in the manner of stoneware.

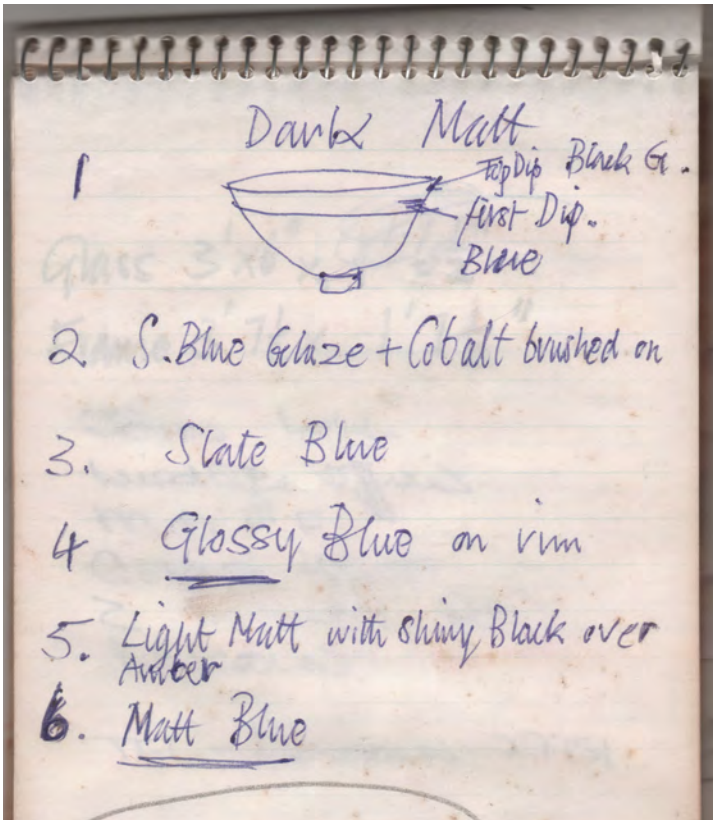


11.16, 11.17. Examples showing surface of the glazes.

[16] Blatherwick R.L. (n.d.) Glaze record book, 1969 entry. Family archive.

[17] Blatherwick, R.L (1967) 'Pottery teacher in business at home'. *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, April 28th. Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

Methods of Working



11.18. Page from a note pad showing RLB's glazing notes.

The methods RLB was applying to earthenware pots were the methods applied to stoneware. He was treating earthenware in a way which was not expected or thought possible. This section will highlight three ways of working which were not traditionally associated with earthenware or slipware.

The first is the combination of techniques, which involved a complex application of layers of slips, thin and thick glazes, and oxides, and these were endlessly variable. A close look at almost any of RLB's pots will often leave the observer wondering how he achieved such an effect or finish. What did he do and in which order were the techniques applied? There was no single formula and it is a continuously intriguing puzzle trying to determine the answer. The order of decorating and glazing arrangements was not usually written down. The form and the shape were designed; on some occasions this was the point that decoration was considered.[18] The

[18] See examples in glaze record books and sketchbooks, in family archive.

page from a notepad (Fig.11.18) found in RLB's workshop gives an example of one process involving several glazes used on a small bowl. It involves a first dip in blue, a top dip, a black, and a dark matt. The notepad gives an example of the number of glazes in use. It indicates six variations in the application techniques on a series of similar shaped bowls. These include 'glossy blue on rim' and 'light matt with shiny black over amber'. As well as the number of glazes in use he also uses a number of different blues: matt, light, slate and glossy, with cobalt oxide to be brushed on. He also used light amber and shiny black on this set of bowls.

Numerous examples show variation in slip decoration and glaze application. The incomplete teapot in Fig.11.19 shows a white slip painted over torn paper relief, onto part of a dark clay body, before biscuit-firing. Notes in RLB's glaze record book further indicate his attention to detail: '[i]nside of coffee pots, blue tin glaze with B1 over'. This is worth emphasising because of the use of more than one glaze, which is particularly unexpected on the inside of a pot, which is usually given little attention.

11.19. ROBERT BLATHERWICK late 1980s. Biscuit-fired teapot with slip applied over torn paper resist.

Brushwork


11.20, 11.21. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1980s. Examples of slip applied brushwork.

Brush marks are 'not associated traditionally with English slipware'.[19] They are a Chinese and Korean tradition, modified by the Japanese.[20] My research has found very little slipware that uses brushstrokes in this Japanese/oriental manner. In the teapot top left and the jug on the right, the brush marks are made with slip.

Brushwork is usually applied on top of a glaze with oxides suspended in water which are thinner and easier to brush than slip. Cardew experimented with oxides on earthenware and 'seems to have abandoned the brushed oxide technique at Winchcombe by c.1934',[21] revisiting the technique when working with stoneware.

The type of brush used is important. Chinese potters had the advantage of a calligraphic tradition using the brush in writing, which valued the 'austere vitality in the actual brush-strokes, which must be beautiful in themselves'.[22] The application calls for 'a sure touch in the irrevocable brush strokes'.[23] The examples in Figs.11.20 and 11.21 illustrate slip painted onto clay. Daniel Rhodes wrote:

> In slip painting, the quality of the brushstroke, its 'brushiness,' will be lost if it is gone over or touched up. It has to be put down boldly, once and for all, for better or for worse. For this reason, slip painting with the brush does not become

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[19] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe. Cotswold Living Publications. p92

[20] Leach, B. (1961) *Bernard Leach. Fifty Years a Potter*. London: The Arts Council.

[21] Edgeler, J. (2007) *Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition*. Winchcombe: Cotswold Living Publications. p94

[22] Honey, W.B. (1944) *Ceramic Art of China and other Countries of the Far East.* London: Faber & Faber and The Hyperion Press. p21

[23] Ibid.

> convincing until the painter has gained confidence, relaxation, and zest. Good results will not come from making just one or two examples. It is necessary to practice, to develop a method of approach, and to learn to let go. Among Westerners, the brush is not an everyday instrument of writing or drawing and to master it requires much practice.[24]

Japanese brushes are used to make such marks and Bernard Leach wrote that 'brushes deserve and repay respectful treatment'.[25] He also wrote that if 'nothing betrays a man more than his hand-writing, this is doubly true of brushwork'.[26] Shoji Hamada exemplified the Zen approach to using brushes, applying decoration with an inner calm and swift dexterity.

In the bowl, the cup and saucer, the bowl, and the tile below (Figs.11.22-11.24) the brush marks use a thin oxide over the glaze, in the tradition of stoneware, but on earthenware.

11.22.-11.24. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Examples of brushwork.
11.22 *Bowl*, c.1982; 11.23 *Cup and Saucer,* c.1976; 11.24 *Painted tile*,1960.

[24] Rhodes, D. (1976) *Pottery Form*, London: Pitman Publishing. p213

[25] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber. p121

[26] Ibid. p124

Designed Shapes

11.25. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Mid.1980s Slab pot with thrown top and base. Slip-decorated earthenware.

Earthenware was associated with country pottery, and considered not suitable for refined ware. 'Town life is refined, country life is simple and it is in country life that pottery is rooted'.[27] Bernard Leach had found that

> The softness and relative roughness of the [slip] ware relegates it … to the kitchen and the cottage in the shape of casseroles, bowls, egg-bakers, honey pots, oven dishes, jugs, pitchers, basins and so forth.[28]

The contrast between the expectations of earthenware and stoneware is illustrated on the page below which is from *Bernard Leach:The Potters Challenge*.[29] Both pots were made by Leach, the one on the left illustrating slip-decorated earthenware, the one on the right representing the more refined expectation of stoneware. RLB ignored these perceived limitations, and

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[27] Hodin, J.P. (1961) *Bernard Leach. Fifty Years a Potter*. London: Arts Council. p14

[28] Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*. Fifteenth impression 1977 ed. London: Faber & Faber. p34

[29] Leach, B. (1976) In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), *Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. London: Souvenir Press.

11.26. 11.27. Double page spread showing Bernard Leach concept of earthenware and stoneware pots. The one on the left is slip-decorated earthenware, the one on the right is stoneware.

applied his knowledge of design to his work. In 1965 before he resigned he was 'lecturer in pottery and three-dimensional design'.[30] He constantly drew, thinking about form, function and design, creating new forms, and producing a huge and varied range of shapes. This can be seen in the pages of his sketchbook, but he frequently drew shapes on whatever piece of paper was to hand, and Marjorie would find drawings on the corner of a newspaper that he was about to light the fire with. These drawings formed part of his thinking process. They represented the working out of shape and balance, presenting a new challenge in a way which was interesting

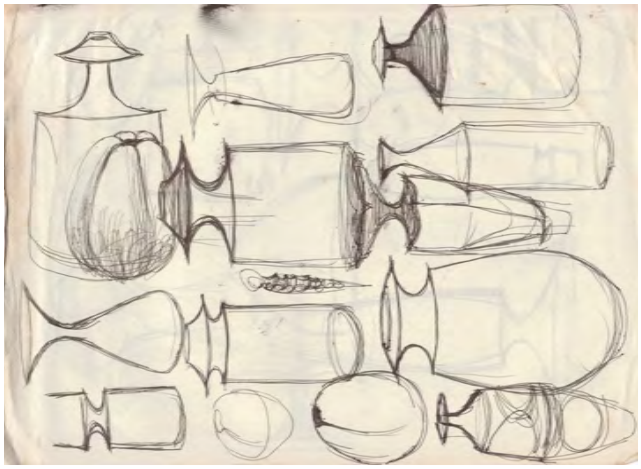
11.28. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1975. Design for olive oil storage jar and spoon, returned from customer identifying their preference.

[30] Unknown author (1965) 'Local artists'. *Lincolnshire Echo.* September 9th. Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

for himself. Customers frequently requested items of a specific size and purpose and drawing was a way of visualising the solution. The drawing for the storage jar in Fig.11.28, provides an example of this. It was a response to a request from customers in Surrey who wanted an olive oil jar to be capable of holding ten kilos of liquid. They also requested a soup tureen with a lid and ladle to match some bowls he had previously made, as well as a replacement lid for a teapot as their original one had broken. In the drawing RLB produced he suggested two designs for the olive oil jar, along with a drawing of the ladle with a wooden handle. There was no date on the letter, but it was during the 1970s or 80s. The soup tureen and ladle were £12.00 and the olive oil jar £24.00.

Paton said of him:

> He had an innate sense of form ... Bob was always available to listen and give advice which was unerring and generous ... He was a consummate craftsman and had an unerring sense of rightness which extended beyond the medium of clay.[31]



11.29. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Page from a sketchbook.

[31] Paton, D. (2012) *To Sue*. Handwritten MS. Family archive.

11.30. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1965-75. Page from a sketchbook.

Chapter 12

Site: The Garden

12.1.Robert Blatherwick. 1981. *The Vegetable Garden at Reepham*. Conté crayon.

I remember the crimson-pink blossom of the apple trees in May, bursting into bloom for mum's and grandma's birthdays, and the beauty of the petals as they fell on the lawn covering it like confetti from a wedding. With spring came the buzzing of the worker bees, their hives at the bottom of the garden, and the vegetable patch in neat rows. In summer there would be ripe peas, sweet and delicious, and the pink gooseberry bush with sharp thorns and little hairs on the fruits, behind the flower bed, and the big green ones which ripened to a soft squashy, juicy yellow, full of flavour. And I would go and eat them. I would walk behind the beehives and smell the air, when the plum tree had blossomed and look for things to eat. Sometimes on a summer's day the sky would fill with a busy hum and looking up you would see a large speckled cloud of bees gathering high up above and swaying like a flock of birds or seaweed dancing in the air. We would watch and hope they would settle and not fly off over the village which they sometimes did which meant a frantic chase to capture them. And the rusty tin chest in the shed would be opened and out came the white overalls with straw hat and gauze veil with a stale and sweet aroma of smoke and honey-comb, and the smoker would be stuffed with rolled corrugated card and when it was lit it had a special smell associated with summer. The bees would be puffed by the smouldering card gently into a straw skep which had been placed above them on a branch in the apple tree where they had landed, and they would creep slowly into it. When they were gathered around their queen in the skep, it could very carefully be removed from the tree and carried to the hive where it was placed under a special wooden box. This was the innards of a hive and the bees eased themselves into their new home. And the blackbirds would sing and the pigeons made a muted tenor sound like a soft bassoon as calm returned and everything was still again.

Object: The Beehives

12.2. *Beehives in the Garden*. Mid-1980s.

Context: Lifestyle and Self Sufficiency

> Marjorie was of course the driving force behind the whole industry of pot making and selling ... I remember [her] as a quiet, gentle, compassionate, understanding person who gave out a lot of warmth. She was Bob's right hand ... with a hidden strength ...
>
> — Cecilia and Bernard Walker,
> *How I met Bob and Marjorie Blatherwick*

The 1970s and '80s witnessed a 'remarkable craft revival'[1] with the aesthetics of hand-made goods valued again, and a growing number of potters and people working from home. Many of these, including RLB, were listed in the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas *CoSIRA Guide to Country Workshops in Britain.* The Crafts Advisory Committee launched *Crafts* magazine in 1973. New outlets for crafts promoted a lifestyle which was popularised by Terence Conran, who had opened the household retail store Habitat in 1964. Modern furnishings with hand-made items symbolised an alternative to the rat race.[2] Edward Lucie-Smith saw the modern maker as 'an ideal, even heroic figure, living out in practice the values which most people could only half-heartedly aspire towards'.[3] This was the sort of life RLB was living, the life Leach had written about in *A Potter's Book*.

Working from home required a new discipline and the family lived with work all the time. It seemed as though there were always visitors, but in reality, in terms of sales, there were probably not enough, and it must have been extremely hard to make a living from just selling. They ran a car, which was essential for transporting the pots, but there were insufficient funds for a telephone until sometime in the 1980s, and the telephone box in the village provided the means of making calls. Letters were written on the Olivetti typewriter, with carbon copies taken, as was the norm, with Marjorie drawing on her secretarial and accounting skills; frequently her Saturday nights were spent updating the books. They paid an accountant to finalise and check the accounts, and these are in the family archive.

Despite rejection from the main body representing studio potters, the Craftsmen Potters Association, RLB and Marjorie supplied galleries and craft shops throughout the country and

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[1] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p370

[2] Ibid.

[3] Lucie-Smith, E. (1976) 'Editorial'. *Crafts,* November. p7. Quoted in bid. p371.

the Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts Centre, and enough work was sold for the family to live on. Marjorie said about the CPA not requiring RLB's work:

> In a way it was quite a blow, but yet it was a lot of work getting the pots ready, going down to London. Taking them down there, and we weren't paid until they were sold.[4]

As observed by Harrod, 'the true entrepreneurs tended to operate on the margins of the craft world'.[5] Marjorie explained:

> people had started to come to the house for special things, and it meant that we were open every day of the week, we built up customers.[6]

People who knew about RLB pots came from all over the world. *The Lincolnshire Chronicle* reported that 'he has developed an increasing export market in Canada and the United States'.[7] They had a network of contacts and people who brought their friends to the showroom, and work was taken to galleries and retail outlets throughout the country. Marjorie said:

> pots went all over the world, a lot went to Canada, some went to Africa, people coming here and buying them and taking them back ... I think we were on a list of potters that was circulated in Australia and New Zealand, because we had quite a few young potters who were doing the round of established potters and craft potteries in this country ... they would come and talk. Denmark, Norway, France.[8]

Consumers of craft had a desire to see the object being made and RLB gave pottery demonstrations to interested groups such as the Women's Institute and other public organisations. Benches and seats were made available for people to sit and watch the craftsman throwing his pots in the workshop. Work was taken to some county shows.

RLB worked most days, but he also grew vegetables, which provided a break from the workshop environment and was part of the self-sufficient lifestyle. Vegetables were rarely purchased, they were grown. The family kept bees and in a good year there was surplus honey to sell, which supplemented their income. Apples from the huge old trees in the garden were

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[4] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[5] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press. p415.

[6] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

[7] Unknown author (1976) 'Potter keeps up baking tradition'. *The Lincolnshire Chronicle.* April 15th, Newspaper cutting in Family archive.

[8] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

sold, and used throughout the winter; when packed and stored carefully the supply would last until the following May. Fruit from the garden was bottled, beans were salted. To many people it seemed like a lot of work, but it was rewarding and they enjoyed the craft of it and rose to the challenge with a permanent wartime spirit. The Winter of Discontent in the 1970s with many power-cuts meant that RLB was unable to use the wheel, so he made a lot of slab pots. Marjorie undertook sewing projects and made colour-coordinated log-cabin cushions from velvet and corduroy, which she sold at the Craft Centre in Lincoln, along with RLB's pots. In 1978 'Edward Lucie-Smith very much admired the pots'.[9]

The 1980s saw a change in the studio pottery movement and a change in government. Harrod observed that craft businesses kept going because of artistic commitment rather than because of entrepreneurial risk-taking.[10] Rises in poll tax and business rates presented new challenges. The ceramics spirit was 'anti-Leach' but distanced from the modernism of the 1960s. Harrison observed that there was 'no surplus, ... no mental obesity, it [gave] you a leanness which is a survival technique ... there was a leanness about the whole of your family'[11] which created focus, in terms of design as well as in terms of living. In 1985 RLB received his state pension, and with the children having left home, was able to indulge in making bigger bowls and fewer day-to-day domestic pots.

Tin Glaze

In the 1980s RLB began using a tin glaze with slip decoration, applying his knowledge of glazes and their interaction with slips and clay body. A tin glaze had been used when he was at Winchcombe.[12] Again he tested glazes, this time for a good white that was warm and matt, with several pages of tests for whites with different amounts of tin oxide, testing with Podmores Borax Fritt and Wengers Borax Fritt; it was the same ingredient but gave different results due to different constituents. Comments in his glaze record book of July 1985 say: 'very cold white'. Tin glaze had been used extensively as a form of majolica decoration by Alan Caiger-Smith, well-known in the studio pottery movement for his decorative techniques, and who looked to the surface-painted designs of Morocco and the Islamic work. Caiger-Smith was one of a few earthenware potters to have articles about his work in *Ceramic Review,* having

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[9] Burgess, S. (1978) *Letter to Mr Blatherwick; Regional Fine Art Exhibition*. 23rd August, Family archive.

[10] Harrod, T. (1999) *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century.* Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts: Yale University Press.

[11] Harrison, R. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 10th February. Reepham: Digital recording in Family archive.

[12] Cardew, M. (1942) *Letter from Michael to Mariel.* 'Michael and Mariel Cardew Correspondence, 1933-1942'; 25th February, Reference: AAD/2006/2/1/9. Archive of Art and Design, National Art Library, London. Accessed by author: 24th/25th January 2013. 'Ray has mixed a new Tin glaze for Winchcombe'.

written and published books[13] on the subject. But even he was regarded as 'a loner flying in the face of fashion [whose] qualities have been overlooked', as

> earthenware decorated in the majolica tradition has been so unfashionable for so long in this country that many people fed on the far eastern tradition regard it as an inferior craft — it is not the true potter's job to be concerned with mere decoration they say.[14]

Caiger-Smith's work was very different in appearance to that produced by RLB. The tin glaze works by RLB represent an extension of his earlier matt slipware.

12.3; 12.4; 12.5; 12.6: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1987. *Bowls*. Tin glaze on black body over blue slip, 12 inch diameter.

These large tin-glazed bowls and plates (Figs.12.3-12.7) made in the last ten years of his life represent mature work, and the culmination of a lifetime's experience. They sit between the

[13] Cardew, M. (1974) 'Book Reviews: Tin Glaze Pottery in Europe and the Islamic World by Alan Caiger-Smith'. *Ceramic Review.* No 25, p20.

[14] Catleugh, J.D.H. (1973) 'Exhibition Reviews: Alan Caiger-Smith, Tin Glazed Earthenware. C.P.A.Shop. October 23rd - November 4th'. *Ceramic Review.* No. 25.

definitions of domestic pottery, craft, and art. They are decorative functional items and yet they are works of art. It is more likely that they would be displayed on a cabinet in a living room than kept in the kitchen cupboard, yet they are functional and designed for use. In them the form is utilised to explore design. The vessel becomes a three-dimensional canvas, complex because of the demands of its different parts in relation to its proportions, and because it has an inside and an outside, both of which have to be considered and work in relation to each other.

When potters and collectors look at pots, they frequently turn them upside down to see what the underneath is like, partly to see if the potter has left his/her mark, but also to see how the base has been formed, how the piece has been finished. A similar approach is undertaken with embroidery or dressmaking, looking at the seams on the reverse reveals a lot about the skills and techniques of the maker. The base of all RLB pots are turned, the final refining of the form, with a foot, an in-step. On large plates there were turned support rings. The base was always finished, considered in relation to the whole, and has the same level of definition as the main body. This was something Leach advocated.

Earthenware was re-emerging as a medium in the mid-1980s, used by postmodern ceramicists, in a way that explored the very essence of the material rather than form. Elspeth Owen for example, exposed the earthy qualities of the material, pushing it to its extremes in the creation of organic forms and surfaces. This was another approach and different to the working practices of RLB.

Through the mature bowls in Figs. 12.3-12.6 the past can be traced and the influences from the history of ceramics discovered. There is an attention to form, the individuality of each piece in shape and design, the way the design is applied and fits the form, and the subtle quality of the decoration and glaze. It is the combination of these factors in earthenware pots that contributes to their overall quality and uniqueness. Some of these mature pieces maintain a quiet presence, while others are bold and expressive. They refer to historical Korean and Japanese ceramics in their making and marking. They reflect a synthesis of influences, knowledge of the work of Hamada, Rie, as well as that of Leach and Cardew. This knowledge embedded within the work, is not immediately obvious and the untrained eye does not see what the making of these bowls contain, where these influences come from. This is what I have attempted to explain: where this knowledge came from and what these works therefore represent.

12.7. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. 1980s. *Slip-Combed Decorated Dishes*, with tin glaze.

12.8. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. Late 1980s. *Slip-Decorated Earthenware Dish*, with additional layer of on-glaze decoration.

The large dish in Fig.12.8 represents a new direction, with the use of on-glaze enamel over a combed slip design. Combing is another technique which Leach rediscovered, and is not widely used in slipware. Rhodes wrote: 'it always looks more or less alike no matter who does it'.[15] The RLB examples in Fig.12.7 and 12.8 are an exception to this. This also does not form part of the traditional slipware potter's formula.

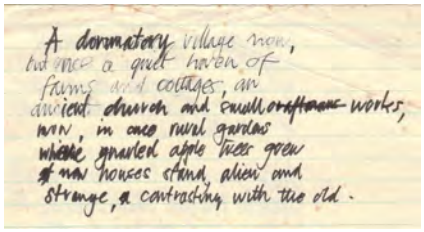
This chapter only partially covers the work from the 1970s to the 1990s; the wider critical framework and the discourse has not been fully recorded; it takes time for material to be available for research. It has addressed some of the main areas of the work of RLB.

[15] Rhodes, D. (1976) *Pottery Form*, London: Pitman Publishing. p216.

Chapter 13

Site: The Village

A dormitory village now,
but once a quiet haven of
farms and cottages, an
ancient church and small ~~craftsman's~~ works,
now, in once rural gardens
where gnarled apple trees grew
new houses stand, alien and
strange, contrasting with the old



— Robert Blatherwick

13.1. ROBERT BLATHERWICK. c.1969. *The Old Crew-yard in Reepham*. Pen, ink and wash

It is not the place that it once was. In reality, the magic it once held may have gone, along with the old crew-yard that was there, the huge garden opposite in which asparagus grew and which had a grass tennis court, lined with tall elm trees in which rooks nested; and the row of stone cottages next to the house, all buried under modern houses and bungalows, not even built of red brick, but yellow, liverish, lacking depth of body or colour. Now an annex to the city, busy with through-traffic, the old farmyards and the allotments, dug and nourished for centuries, built upon. Many of the old families have moved on, to Devon, Wisconsin, Japan, Australia, the far corners of the world.

In writing this, I hear my mother's voice. I have become my mother. It is as though I have undertaken some strange transition, like Flann O'Brien leaning against the wall, transmogrifying with his bicycle, to become part man, part bike;[1] I have absorbed my mother's thoughts and it is these I reiterate. The things she said to us over the years, that fell on deaf ears, we heard but did not hear, thinking she was too soft or dutiful.

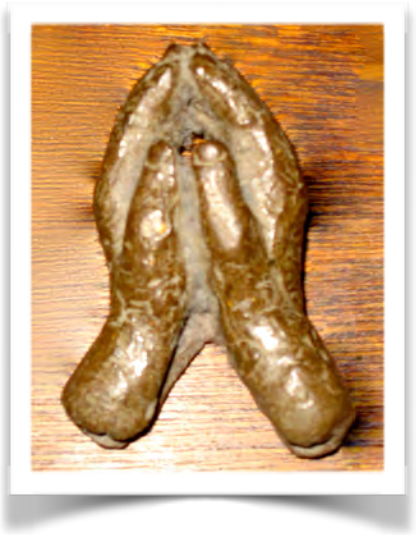
But she was right all along. I would question her, about why they didn't promote themselves more. 'We don't have the connections,' she would say, which I thought was a woolly response. I had believed in existentialism, that we were free and independent spirits who can make their own way, find their own groove. I believed that work spoke for itself, that quality was recognised in whatever form it took; and, in some ways it does though in others it doesn't. Like words falling on deaf ears, sights fall on blind eyes. Connections, I thought, were unnecessary. One didn't need to lean on connections, options were objective. I moved away from Lincoln to get away from connections, from being known as the artist's daughter. But I have come full circle, those connections are important. They are links with my past and my roots, they are what make me who I am. They are what make the great potters what they were and are. I understand what she meant now; without connection, one becomes stuck. Now I see what she meant.

[1] O'Brien, F. (1967) *The Third Policeman.* 1993 ed. Hammersmith: Flamingo.

Object: Sculptural Hands

... despite a significant degree of what would today be described as physical disability, he was a supremely able practitioner, and had the most beautiful hands that I can ever recall seeing.

— Kay Meddings
Former LSA student
re: Robert Blatherwick
Ceramic Review Letters



13.2. Left: ROBERT BLATHERWICK. *Hands*. c.1988.
13.3. Photograph showing his hands, which Kay Meddings remembered. c.1971.

'A man's work, like his life, is never completed'.[2]

When my father died, mum and I were at his bedside, and my brother and sister were on their way. The hospital had called us; three cats crossed the road on our drive in. His mind was fine but his body was failing. His lips were moving, he was trying to speak. He was looking into my eyes, and trying to say something. I was listening, what was he trying to say? But the words did not come.

His eyes spoke.

[2] Beer, J. (1993) quoted in untitled front piece in Michaels, A. (1996) *Fugitive Pieces*. Canada: McLelland and Stewart. 1998 ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. Jakob Beer (1933-1993) was a poet and translator.

Context: Further Questions

> Is it a contradiction that, amidst an ant-heap mentality which modern mechanised society has fostered, the artist-potter can find only one way out: a hermit-like existence with obligations only to his inner creed and standard?
>
> — Josep Paul Hodin
> *Bernard Leach, Fifty Years a Potter.*[3]

This study demonstrates the variety of the work covered by RLB and the depth of his skills.He was an artist, a craftsman, and a designer. He had been art-school-educated and came from a crafts background. He was skilled and deep thinking. His work was unique, but so is the work of many others. He worked alone but he is not alone in doing so. The details of his life and work provide an insight into the twentieth-century studio ceramics movement in Britain, our attitudes and approaches to art and design education, and the world in which we live today. It raises many questions: about the way decisions and judgements are made; about power and influence, about attitudes towards class and crafts which remain dormant, subordinate, confused, and even unseen in the collective unconscious. This is what it has been important to explore. This work presents another line of history that is of equal value to that which is already recorded. It was important to me that the work should not be lost. Perhaps it has something to offer from which we can learn.

A telephone conversation I had with Tanya Harrod in 2008 prompted me and provided a reason and justification to undertake this research. The question she asked was: 'Why don't we know about him?' This was followed by a second question, in which she was searching for the answer: 'was he simple?' The inference of this was that RLB's work was unrecorded because he was a labourer, a jobbing potter and not a literate creative thinking intellectual. I thought, 'Oh no! If I just leave it and do nothing, the wrong portrait will be portrayed'.[4]

Harrod's question and the fact that she needed to ask it in order to understand why RLB was not known, raises issues relating to British society, class, education, the value of craft, and the recording of history. These have been raised, but still leave many questions. RLB was not a simple person, he was in fact extremely complex. I believe the issues I have discussed reflect

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[3] Hodin, J.P. (1961) *Bernard Leach, Fifty Years a Potter*. London: Arts Council. Introduction, p11. In this statement Hodin was referring to the French potter Auguste Delaherche (1857-1940) who after a time in Paris lived the life of a recluse at La Chapelle from 1894, firing his kiln only once a year.

[4] The author in Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

this. In examining them, they raise many other interconnected questions, contradictions and paradoxes.

The study of the house and the work relates to lifestyle choices, the way they were made, and the artefacts that had been preserved. The house reflects the work of people who worked hard, who work because they take pride in their skills, who love their work. RLB and Marjorie lived the life and achieved what his teachers and leaders failed to: a life of self-sufficiency that Leach wrote about in *A Potter's Book*. RLB made earthenware pots succeed in a way in which both Cardew and Leach had failed to do. Furthermore, he was fortunate to have a lifelong partner who worked with him and supported him in this venture.

As a craftsperson, RLB discovered and created, was pleased when things were noticed and – perhaps importantly – got on with his work. He had commissions and orders to fulfil, bills to pay. Baldwin said that 'he got on with the job, it must have been quite hard work making a living, and there's not much time, and Reepham is out on a limb …'[5] He would not have got up and shouted about his achievements.

This in itself raises issues discussed by Leach on the importance of humility in life. In his writing, Leach looks at pots for 'a man's own statement without his self-conscious, aggressive, leaping ambition',[6] the importance of the forgetfulness of the self; the expulsion of the 'I'. The search for beauty is the 'liberation of the free spirit of man in *work*'.[7] Leach lectured about this, but in his travels around the world giving talks, was he practising it? Leach wrote about the ideal way to live, but his own life was extremely troubled and fractious. Both Leach and Cardew had troubled family lives. But they were extremely successful in terms of status. They were good at self promotion, recognising their own unique achievements, and were able to tell others about them. They were good orators. RLB was not an orator, he was a craftsman. While they travelled the world on lecture tours, he was in his workshop making or in his garden growing vegetables. They were lecturing when RLB was making. The theory and practice divide. Leach said to know is to make, yet he was talking, and not practicing what he was preaching.

In answer to Harrod's question, perhaps after all he was simple, but his was a simplicity of refinement, of removing some of the complexities which blight life and prevent focus, which

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[5] Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

[6] Leach, B. (1976*) Bernard Leach:The Potter's Challenge*. In: Outerbridge, D. (ed.), London: Souvenir Press. p21

[7] Ibid.p23

make life difficult. The demands of a job which get in the way of creative skill. The answer to her initial question, why don't we know about him, is tied up with class and recognition, how the craftsperson is viewed by society, how their trade and wares are regarded. How much has it all to do with fashion and trend? If stoneware had not been the 'aristocrat' of ceramics, would Ismay's observations have been picked up? Why were, and still are, great potters, great craftspeople, great people, dismissed by a few cognoscenti?

Two of RLB's former colleagues informed me that he was a hard taskmaster, he had high standards and strict rules. Paton had written, and it was quoted in *Ceramic Review* that

> [a]s an artist and tutor, he was uncompromising, totally consistent in his judgement and much respected by his students (who had to tread warily on occasions – for he was not inclined to suffer fools gladly).[8]

This point was responded to by a former student Kay Meddings in the following publication of *Ceramic Review*, in which she wrote:

> The article said he did not always 'suffer fools gladly'; generally a euphemism for foul temper. Not in this case … he was always gentle and encouraging. I was inspired…[9]

When I interviewed Paton about RLB he said: 'Oh yes, he had his code, his set of rules, and if you didn't measure up, you were out'.[10] In a totally different interview a few days earlier Harrison had said: 'When Bob said you're out of it, that was it'.[11]

RLB's exclusion from the studio pottery world is partially due to the dominant hegemony of stoneware pottery. It is, however, also partly his own doing. Harrison said: 'One key thing with Bob was he never left the house on his own … I never saw him' [in the village].[12] The fact that no-one felt able to write an obituary, in the local press or elsewhere, that his death was not mentioned in *Ceramic Review* illustrates how isolated in his world he had become. The church at his funeral, however, was packed to standing. Yet, he had made himself untouchable.

By adhering to his beliefs and standards, he had disconnected himself. He did not have any contact with his former colleagues from Lincoln School of Art after he resigned in 1967,

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[8] Quoted in: Walter, J. (2006) 'An independent spirit'. *Ceramic Review*. No.221, p51.

[9] Meddings, K. (2006) 'Re: Robert Blatherwick'. *Ceramic Review*. No.222, p12.

[10] Paton, D. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Tealby, Lincolnshire. 17th February. Digital recording in Family archive.

[11] Harrison, R. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 10th February. Reepham: Digital recording in Family archive.

[12] Ibid.

despite one of them living two doors away. Paton said that he 'fell short of his high moral standards'[13] but did not explain in what way. Harrison wrote 'we have missed the contact with you all which we once had … I have never wished you any ill nor would I in the future'.[14] This makes RLB appear unforgiving and perhaps he was, about the circumstances which led to his resignation from the Art School, and perhaps he blamed his colleagues for not supporting him when he was clearly facing an immensely difficult time. The answers are not clear, they are conjecture. Perhaps he found people difficult, as Baldwin said: 'he was a shy man';[15] he was not however without humour: 'once you teased him out, and made him feel comfortable, he was quite a wire, and had a strong sense of humour, he was witty'.[16] But he was not in control of his destiny, the stoneware hegemony also made him an outcast. This was not deliberate; the main characters did not notice that he was still there. This is difficult to comprehend as Finch was a family man, and he and his wife sent Christmas cards to the family every year, and Finch continued to correspond with Marjorie after RLB's and his own wife's death. In one of these Finch makes a statement which reveals something of the puzzle:

> I know you must miss Bob. I was very fond of him, but looking back I think I was a v. selfish young man, arrogant even, and I fear I didn't treat him with much consideration.[17]

This is a surprising statement and raises questions as to what lay behind this admission. Finch was, like RLB, quiet by nature 'and not given to self-promotion'.[18] He had also been a conscientious objector, and therefore perhaps of a similar mindset. What does he mean by this then, and how and why did he not treat him with much consideration? Was it due to the type of work that RLB was doing, was it RLB's disability, was there competition between them in terms of skill, knowledge, and ability? Or was it a question of class? As Clark said:

> Studio pottery was … an intellectual invention and its pioneers were far from being 'humble' potters. Leach, Cardew, Staite-Murray, Pleydell-Bouverie, Braden and the other early figures were, by and large, a rather arrogant and opinionated lot. They were mostly from middle and upper-middle-class backgrounds, were well educated, and, to one degree or another, the product of privilege – as were their collectors.[19]

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[13] Paton, D. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. Tealby, Lincolnshire. 17th February. Digital recording in Family archive.

[14] Harrison, R. (n.d.. c. 1974) 'Letter to Bob, Marjorie and Family'. Family archive.

[15] Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

[16] Harrison, R. (n.d.. c. 1974) 'Letter to Bob, Marjorie and Family'. Family archive.

[17] Finch, R. (1997) 'Letter to Marjorie', 3rd March. Family archive.

[18] Wheeler, R. (1998) *Winchcombe Pottery. The Cardew-Finch Tradition*. Oxford: White Cocklade Publishing. p49.

[19] Clark, G. (1995) *The Potter's Art. A Complete History of Pottery in Britain*. London: Phaidon. p134

RLB found himself among the upper class and privileged elite, and he was younger than them. Was their attitude towards him, from a 'poky bleak little house', part of the problem? Were they essentially elitist and classist, either openly or not? Do Cardew's and Finch's statements reflect that? There was another issue which may have worked against RLB, which was a type of discrimination due to the curvature of his spine. Meddings wrote: 'I think it possible that what would be described today as his physical disability may have hindered his wider recognition'.[20] His health was certainly mentioned by Cardew and Leach in their correspondence. The curvature of his spine made him shorter than he should have been. Harrison again:

> Of course, your father's physicality made him more vulnerable, you can't deny this is an element. I know, I am not a very tall man, I know it makes a difference, the way people regard you. I know how your father must have been a hundred times more sensitive. It didn't bother me of course but I know he would feel this.[21]

Whether his posture and height affected a prejudicial approach is unclear. His curved spine was certainly noticeable. It was never discussed. Those were different times; attitudes were different. Perhaps he was considered as not strong, although he was. When Alex McErlain, my studio pottery supervisor,[22] visited the house at the beginning of this study, he commented on the size of the pots RLB threw. They were large pots.

The process of researching a member of one's own family is fraught with difficulty. It is difficult to analyse the work, difficult to disentangle the wood from the trees. I was drowning inside Derrida's ark(hive), there was a problem of 'too much stuff' collected over a lifetime. And there were other difficulties. In the midst of this research my siblings lost patience with the time it was taking, and a decision was required about the house and its contents, which had to be shared. And of course there are questions along the line of 'why bother?' Why not get on with life and live now? It is not just because he deserves a place in the canon. For me it is about justice, fairness, and equality.

In 2003, Clark wrote an essay called 'The Future of Functional Pottery', in which he discusses the role of the craftsman and designer, and asks: 'Why is craft less creative than design?'[23] He bemoans functional ceramics saying that many potters have become 'Leach's orphans, lost

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[20] Meddings, K. (2012) 'Robert Blatherwick'. 8th May Email to author.

[21] Harrison, R. (2012) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 10th February. Reepham: Digital recording in Family archive.

[22] Alex McErlain has retired from his post as lecturer in studio pottery at Manchester Metropolitan University, but has been an additional supervisor due to his particular specialism and knowledge, as well as his interest in this subject.

[23] Clark, G. (2003) 'The Future of Functional Pottery. Part One: An Argument for Free Design'. *Shards, Garth Clark on Ceramic Art*. In: Pagliaro, J. (ed.) The University of Michigan: Distributed Art Publications. p376

children … who still dominate the field'.[24] He says that 'accepting a change in designation to designer is the most important threshold to be crossed by the functional potter'.[25] He compares a traditional potter to a classical musician. Most musicians are not composers, they play existing scores, bringing subtle interpretations to existing compositions; the potter is similar: '[t]he classical potter's imagination is not about innovating form, it is about the quality of the making'.[26] He further elaborates:

> [F]unctional pottery … requires a paradigm shift, from a performance-based philosophy to one that is design-based [from within which a] true functionalist … is driven by the desire to make things people both need and use.[27]

He goes on to say that 'to be a successful designer, simultaneously reflecting and leading contemporary taste, [a potter] will have to approach the process with contemporary eyes …'[28] Garth Clark, you forgot to look in Lincoln, again.

In writing this thesis and collating the material I have shared the work and life of a forgotten craftsman, his wife, and his friend George Todd. There are, of course, many interesting people whose work disappears with the end of their life. There are perhaps too many to record. On a visit to a museum store-room recently I was overwhelmed by the amount of material in storage, struck by the accumulative hours that had been spent painting or making, and asked myself 'why spend these hours writing, reading, studying, researching?'[29] But these are the things that engage us and make life interesting. They are the activities that we find stimulating to read, and look at, and hopefully others will do so too. This thesis provides another perspective on twentieth century studio ceramics history, which I believe is of equal interest to the work produced by those who worked in the more 'aristocratic' material. An email I received recently said:

> Just re-reading the piece in CERAMIC REVIEW from 2006 in which Marjorie talks about Bob, herself and their life at Reepham. Made us get out our pots by Bob and [we] think they are better than those we have by Michael Cardew![30]

Ibid. p. 378

[25] Ibid. p.379

[26] Ibid. p377

[27] Ibid. p378

[28] Ibid. p379

[29] Peer led '*anti*-thesis' writing group visited the Yellow Room, Manchester Art Gallery, Queens Park on 18th June 2014.

[30] Makin, J. (2014) 'Bob'. Personal email to the author. 27th June.

As Baldwin said, when I showed him some of the photographs of RLB's work: 'I am beginning to realise in Reepham there was a major artist at work'.[31]

In this thesis I have tried to lay out some of the information about the life of RLB to explain what happened and why. When looking for the answer to the question asked by Harrod as to why RLB was not known, there are many contributing factors, all of which have played a small part. The reasons are complex and there is not single answer. It is this combination, when woven together, that has managed to omit him from the recorded histories. Ingold wrote:

> [the] 'taxonomy of lines is far from satisfactory. The world we inhabit is one of such profuse linearity that it is virtually impossible to accommodate it all within some neatly ordered system. Indeed it is the very nature of lines that they nearly always seem to wriggle free of any classification one might seem to impose on them, trailing loose ends in every direction. It is not hard to think of instances that do not fit … categories'.[32]

This is where RLB was, a thread which has slipped out of the intricate weave of the world of studio ceramics and wriggled free; a world which deals with the complexity of individuality. There are many factors which may have contributed, some of which could be described as exclusive, discriminatory, prejudicial. But I believe it is always necessary to look at a person's or people's intentions. I do not believe that any of the people RLB worked with and knew intended to leave him out or forget about him. Everybody was busy with their own work. But there are a number of factors which could be described as subliminal or subconscious discrimination. These could be applied in attitudes towards earthenware, towards crafts, towards his physicality, towards his separation from the institutional bodies, whether that be by choice or circumstance, and together that subliminal unconsciousness has woven a network which has left him out.

The particular physical problem RLB had was kyphosis. This is a curving of the spine causing a protrusion, visible as a hump on his back. Because the spine curves it reduces the height of the person, so instead of being 5' 7" he was 5' 3". The cause of kyphosis is unknown. He was not born with it, it occurred during his mid-teens. It was cited on his death certificate as the cause of death. Although it was never discussed within the family, people did notice it. And my father was aware of it, he had an uncanny way of walking out of a photograph that was about to be taken. High degrees of kyphosis can cause severe pain and discomfort, breathing and digestion difficulties, cardiovascular irregularities, neurological compromise and, in the more severe cases, significantly shortened life span. He lived until he was seventy-two. Marjorie told me that this

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[31] Baldwin, G. and Baldwin, N. (2011) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick*. 20th July. Market Drayton: Digital recording in Family archive.

[32] Ingold, T. (2007) *Lines: A Brief History.* London and New York: Routledge. p50.

was longer than his prognosis, although we had not been expecting his death it when it occurred.

I was never aware of a discriminatory attitude towards him, and I like to think I would have noticed if there was such. He was highly respected and revered, and he seemed to know people wherever he went. But it must have made life difficult for him.

The disconnection from the CPA was extremely unfortunate, and cut him adrift from the main body of studio potters with whom he had worked in the past. This history discourse is relatively recent. Until more records are found, we cannot know exactly what and why. There are more people I could have interviewed. But this was meant to be a part-time research degree which has turned into a full-time project. So the questions with which my thesis began remain open, as does the answer. But by collating the threads of his life into a narrative that connects with the work, I have made the information available.

The second part of my question was regarding his earthenware work, whether his glazes were contributing anything new to our understanding of ceramics. Until these are analysed and compared with other recipes, which look at effect and result, the complete answer cannot be known. I have made my position clear, but this needs further investigation and research.

By using the house as a structure I have tried to provide a personal context, to present RLB as the craftsman he was. His skills as an artist, craftsman and designer are undoubtable. His range of ceramic work, his ability to work in a wide range of different materials is quite phenomenal. He was constantly questioning, searching, designing, enquiring with his materials and ways of working. He had the skills of a craftsperson, the style of a designer, and the questioning of an artist. He was all of these.

Towards the end of his life he dismantled his electric kiln. It was worn out. He was going to build another kiln in the garden. Marjorie said: 'strangely enough he was going to go back to stoneware'.[33] It is my belief he was fed-up with being out on a limb.

[33] Wheeldon, M. (formerly Blatherwick) (2003) *Conversation with Sue Blatherwick.* October. Reepham: video recording in Family archive.

Epilogue

> Everything that has taken decades to come into this house, settling in drawers and chests and vitrines and trunks, wedding-presents and birthday presents and souvenirs, is now being carried out again. This is the strange undoing of a collection, of a house and of a family. It is the moment of fissure when grand things are taken and when family objects, known and handled and loved, become stuff.
>
> — Edmund De Waal
> *The Hare with Amber Eyes; A Hidden Inheritance*

13.4. MARJORIE BLATHERWICK. c.1995. *Weaving*. George Todd's Norwegian rug loom.

After RLB died Marjorie wrote: 'I hope to stay here in the house we made, and pass it on to our children'.[34] She remarried five years later, but kept the house. I have since purchased it from my brother and sister; it is a true craftsman's house with a beautiful garden. I hope to be able to use it for myself and for it to become a retreat for other craftspeople. It would make a good place for short-term writing residencies, for sensitive souls who would respect the ceramic tiles and the woodwork that RLB and Marjorie created and looked after.

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Information about terms used:

'Family archive' refers to material retrieved from the family home.

Blatherwick, M. (Marjorie) married Wheeldon, J. in 1996.

Harrison, R. was a former colleague of RLB from Lincoln School of Art.

Baldwin, G. was a former student of RLB from Lincoln School of Art.

Paton, D. was a former student and colleague 285of RLB from Lincoln School of Art.

Wheeldon, J. (the potter) is a different Wheeldon, J. to the one Marjorie married (they both have the same name).

Appendix

The following four pages show the brochure produced for the Showcase Display at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln in 2012. It was double sided A4, folded in the centre and printed on brown eco-paper to reflect the hand-crafted ideology connected with working with natural materials.

Robert Louis Blatherwick 1920-1993

Stoneware dish with painted and scraffito decoration through slip, circa 1950

Stoneware soup tureen, ladle, soup bowls and plates circa 1941

Collaged print, Christmas card design, 1954

Lincoln School Of Art, Student And Lecturer

Robert (Bob) Blatherwick was born in Lincoln and attended Lincoln School of Art from the age of 14, where he studied a broad range of subjects, took the Board of Education Drawing Examination, and was awarded The Gibney Art Scholarship. He went to the Wedgwood Pottery in Stoke on Trent, and then to Winchcombe Pottery in Gloucestershire. He was employed by Michael Cardew, making slip decorated earthenware, and was in charge for some time, but due to the war the pottery closed temporarily in 1942. Cardew recommended Bob to Bernard Leach, who invited him to join his pottery at St. Ives, where he worked for a year. On returning to Lincoln, he taught pottery and three dimensional design at Lincoln School of Art, full-time for twenty-two years, until his resignation in 1967.

Plaster cast figure, 1940/50

The entrance hall showroom at The Old Bakery, circa 1972

The Old Bakery, Reepham

From 1967-1990 Bob and his wife Marjorie ran a business from their home with a workshop and gallery showroom. He produced a wide range of one-off individually designed high-fired earthenware items, including jewellery, sculpture, sculptural and decorated tiles, and domestic items for everyday use. They sold work from their home showroom, and in galleries across the country, with some commissions from abroad. They ceased trading when Bob reached 70 years of age, but he continued to work, and was planning on building a new kiln. He was an early member of The Craftsmen Potters Association.

Glaze decorated tile, circa 1975

Marjorie and Bob displaying work for an exhibition, circa 1967

Thrown and slabbed vase with combed blue slip on black body, tin glaze, circa 1990

Additional Information

The Gibney Art Scholarship was named in honour of Rev. John Somerville Gibney, who founded Lincoln School of Art in 1863. There was a need for accurate drawings of machine and engineering parts due to the growth of the engineering industry in Lincoln, and so the School offered courses on draughtsmanship. In 1875 Rev. John Gibney was killed in a tragic accident in which he fell through a skylight while inspecting the roof of the School with a joiner.

The purpose of the Scholarship was to allow the successful student to devote their time totally to the study of art for two years. The Scholarship (£25.00 per annum in 1946) was an open competition for all students who had been in the School of Art for not less than 18 months, and who were between 17 and 22 years of age. It was awarded on the basis of the examination of works submitted to the Board of Education by the respective candidates.

The 1946-47 Lincoln School of Art Prospectus lists the previous holders of the Gibney Art Scholarship. Some of the more familiar names to those of us from Lincoln include: William Logsdail (1876), F. Hall (1878), F.W. Elwell (1886), Doris Ringham (1925), Joyce Barber (1927),
John Danby Wheeldon (1933), Joyce Griffiths (1936), Roy Barker (1938), Robert Blatherwick (1940), Joan Rawlinson (1941), Patrick McClosky (1943), and Raymond Russell (1945).

The Wedgwood Pottery, founded in 1759, is an industrial ceramics factory in Stoke on Trent which prides itself on 'the highest standards of design, craftsmanship, quality and innovation.' It uses a variety of production methods for the making of high quality domestic and decorative pottery products. It has a history of links with artists and sculptors who have been employed as designers and modellers. Bob went there as an apprentice for six months during 1941, and attended Burslem School of Art for additional tuition.

Michael Cardew (1901-1983) is widely credited with having revived the slipware tradition in England. He is described as a romantic, having 'the creative temperament of a seventeenth century intellectual, part savage and part mystic' by Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie[1], and hailed as 'the guardian of the English slipware tradition and as a Gauguin manqué living in poverty[2]' by Tanya Harrod. He had studied Classics at Oxford, but spent his life producing practical pottery for everyday use. He bought Winchcombe Pottery before moving to work in Africa, where he spent much of his life working with the locals and making pots.

Bernard Howell Leach (1887-1979) is probably the most well known studio potter in Britain, and is credited with reviving studio pottery in Britain. He brought many Eastern influences to British pottery, having lived in Japan. He established the Leach Pottery in St Ives, wrote 'A Potter's Book' in 1940, followed by many other influential texts, and spent his life making pots, travelling and lecturing about his love of pottery and the qualities of Oriental design.

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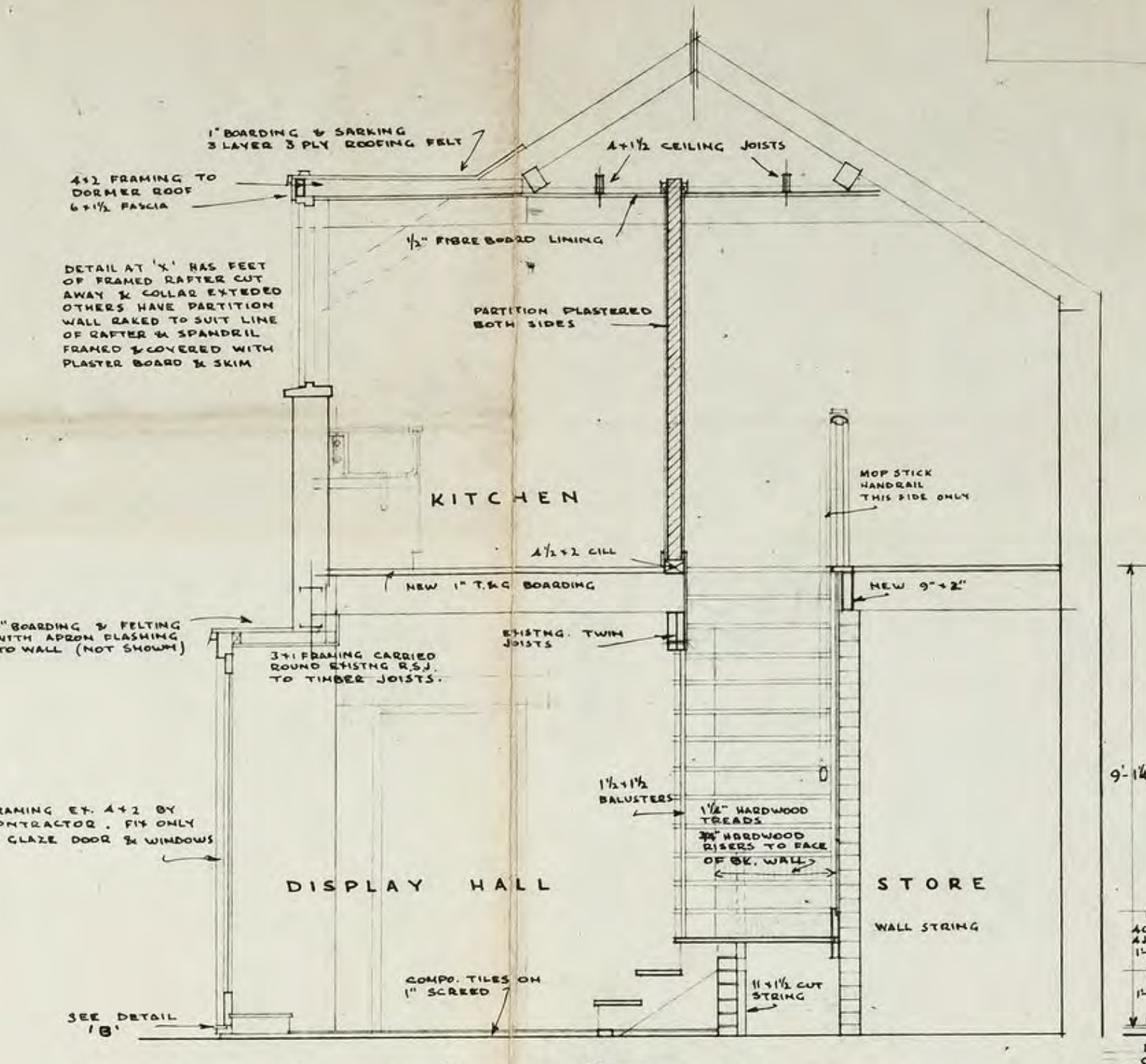
[1] Edgeler J. (2007) - Michael Cardew and the West Country Slipware Tradition. Cotswold Living Publications p. 68.

[2] Harrod T. (1999) The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century. Yale University Press p. 38.

Timeline

Youngest child of Luther Edward Spiby Blatherwick (of Newark) and Florence Rebecca Handley (Claypole, Newark). One brother and two sisters.

1920	Born 18th December, lived at 8 Maple Street, Lincoln. Bracebridge Junior, Sincil Bank Boys School.
1930	19th Lincoln Scouts Troop.
1934	Junior student at Lincoln School of Art. Kyphosis, curvature of the spine.
1939	Board of Education Drawing Examination
1940	Awarded the Gibney Art Scholarship, Lincoln School of Art.
1940-1	Apprenticeship at Wedgwood, Stoke on Trent, tuition at Burslem School of Art.
1941-2	Employed by Michael Cardew, at Winchcombe Pottery, Gloucestershire.
1942-3	Employed as thrower general assistant to Bernard Leach at St Ives, Cornwall.
1944	Part-time teaching, Lincoln School of Art.
1945	Full-time teaching, Lincoln School of Art.
1948	Marjorie Irene Wilson appointed as Secretary to the Principal, Lincoln School of Art.
1949	Death of his mother. First solo exhibition, The Usher Gallery, Lincoln.
1954	Purchased Old Bakery. Began conversion to showroom, workshop, flat upstairs
1955	Completed conversion. Married Marjorie Irene Wilson.
1957	Birth of first child, Susanna Louise.
1958	Luther Blatherwick - 50 years membership of Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers.
1959	Birth of second child, Robert Simon.
1962	Birth of third child, Catherine Mary.
1963	Wedgwood Memorial College for brief time. Death of his father.
1965	Exhibition in Adult Education Centre, Lincoln.
1966	Exhibition of paintings, sculpture and pottery, Thorpe Hall, Louth.
1967	Resigned from Lincoln School of Art. Self-employment. Export order to America; Exhibition Scunthorpe Borough Museum; Work on sale at the Craftsmen Potters Shop, London; Cambridge; Jewellery in The Design Centre, London. Ceramic relief doorway commission, Holton Power Farmers.
1968	Solo exhibition of domestic slipware and ceramic jewellery, Scunthorpe Museum.
1969	Exhibition of ceramic jewellery and earthenware, The Usher Gallery.
1970	‘Two Lincolnshire Potters Exhibition’ Grantham & District Arts Association. Group ceramics exhibition, The Gallery, York. Mural commission, Halpern and Partners Architects, London.
1971	Exhibition of work by local artists and craftsmen, Adult Education Centre, Lincoln. Solo exhibitions Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Normanby Hall.
1972	‘Ten Lincolnshire Potters’ exhibition, The Lincolnshire Association. Solo exhibition at Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery. Death of textile artist friend George Todd. End of membership of The Craftsmen Potters Association.
1973	‘Handmade’ exhibition of Lincolnshire crafts, The Usher Gallery. Exhibition of arts and crafts at The Cardinal’s Hat, Lincoln.
1977	Exhibition of Lincolnshire and South Humberside Artists,The Usher Gallery.
1979	Exhibition at The Regional Crafts Centre, Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts.
1981	Solo exhibition at The Willoughby Memorial Trust Art Gallery, Corby Glen. Exhibition at The Usher Gallery.
1982	Dado rail tiles commission, The Jolly Brewer, Lincoln.
1897	‘The Scattered Kiln’ exhibition of regional ceramics, The Usher Gallery.
1990	New business rates and cessation of business, retires; 70th birthday.
1993	Died 28th January.



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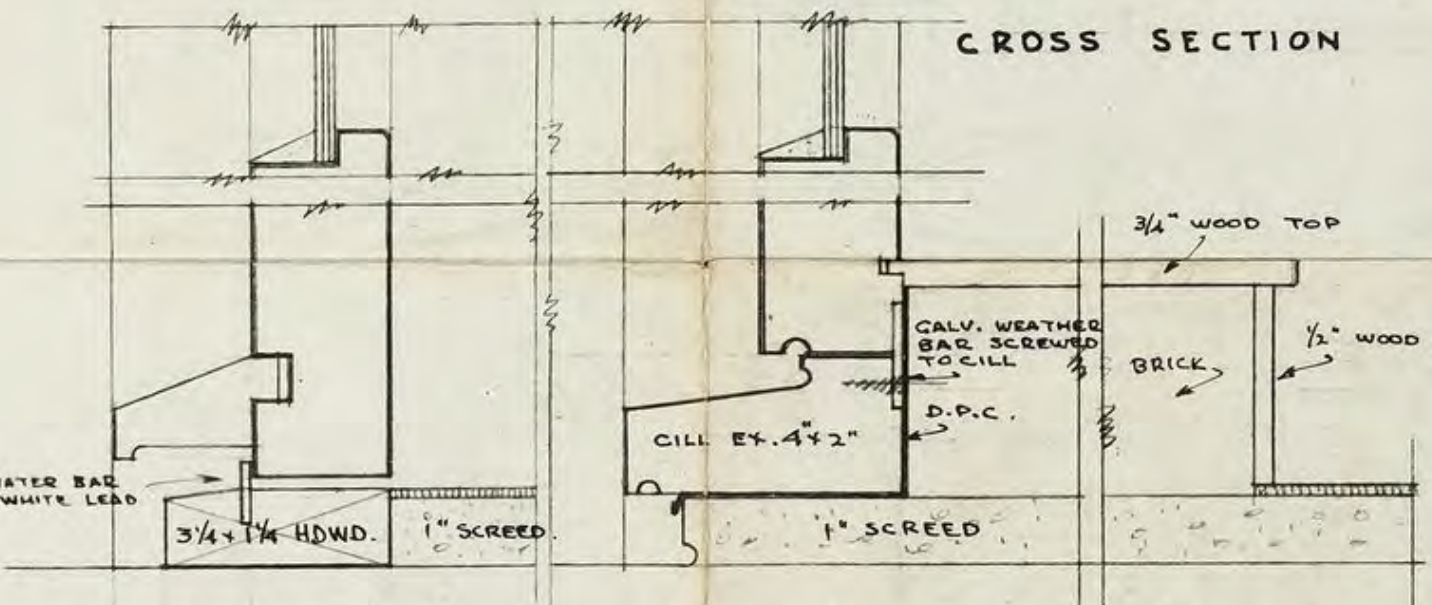

DETAIL AT 'A' DETAIL AT 'B'

HALF FULL SIZE DETAILS