This year sees the twelfth anniversary of the establishment of Millfield Pottery at Everton on the Nottinghamshire Yorkshire border. Jane Hamlyn, salt-glaze potter, and her husband Ted Hamlyn, a painter, moved from London in 1975 with their family and Ted’s mother to set up and run a small country pottery.

Jane Hamlyn, in common with so many women of our time recognised her own need for a creative outlet. She is first and foremost a maker. From childhood she has always been intrigued with manufacture (in the strict sense of the word) – as a young adult she was able to augment her income by selling small quantities of her handmade tie and die scarves or crocheted rugs. But it was not until her early thirties that she was able to attend two years full-time training on the Harrow Studio Pottery Course under Mick Casson and Wally Keefer. And what a collection of students that two years produced. Amongst others – Peter Starkey, Jane herself, Micky Docherty, Sarah Walton and Suki Creas, many of whom, presumably influenced by Wally Keefer, have taken the salt-glaze path. But in Jane’s case it was not until after college during a period working with Peter Starkey in Norfolk that she realised the exciting potential of working with salt. She “fell in love” and has remained faithful ever since.

Salt glazing is at the heart of her ceramic life. Ideas abound and avenues open up but they are all by-ways to the main highroad.

The revelation that “salt was the medium for her” was the deciding factor that took the Hamlyn family out of London. Salt firing must be done in the wide open space of the countryside to allow the potentially hazardous effluent to escape from the kiln’s tall chimney. It is a process with a long history dating in Europe from around the early sixteenth century. Dutch and German salt-glazed beermugs, wine jars and bottles were perhaps the commonest examples then made. By the beginning of the seventeenth century salted ware was being manufactured in England but by the beginning of this century it had become relegated to use on heavy building items such as clay sewer pipes, chimney pots, ridge tiles, troughs and sinks. It is only in relatively recent times that studio potters have turned their attention to the enormous possibilities of the medium.

Salt glazing takes place entirely within the kiln. In other glaze firings an external application of glaze mixture must be made before setting the ware. For a salt-firing no glaze need be applied. During the firings salt is thrown into the kiln at the temperature at which it volatilises. The sodium vapour from the salt reacts with the silica in the clay and causes it to melt on the surface of the pots thus creating a glaze. Colours are achieved by the use of metal oxides in various slips and glazes.

This method of glazing produces its own very particular qualities of colour and surface. The most distinctive feature of salt-glaze is an orange-peel mottled surface. Because the glaze is derived from the pot itself every mark on the clay is revealed by the glaze, not disguised. Texture is taken up and enhanced. The colour response is alkaline and can produce some very vivid results. These are the qualities that the salt-glazer must explore and develop with her kiln which is her most essential and least changeable asset.

When the Hamlyns had settled into their new home the kiln was the first thing to be built. The potter has to live with her kiln and learn all its idiosyncrasies. She knows the spots within it which will have greater reduction or oxidation and where pots will get under or over-fired and still the results may be unpredictable, but for Jane this is one of the joys as well as the frustrations of the process.

The same kiln still serves Jane well thanks to regular attention from Ted who has done some splendid maintenance over the years. In fact he now coats the whole of the inside with a quartz wash which has helped to reduce the inevitable deterioration of the brickwork from the attack made by the salt at each firing.

Jane Hamlyn has a very practical approach to her working life. Not only does she support herself and her family from the income made by potting but she has managed to allow herself the self-indulgence (her words) of doing what she wants to do. At first the pots were mainly
simple country kitchen-ware, strong uncomplicated forms with straightforward decoration. Her pots have always been colourful and even in the early days she managed to achieve a wide range of colours using only about five slips and glazes. She quickly established good relations with her public selling most of her output to shops and galleries, retaining only seconds to sell from the small showroom attached to her workshop. She realised early on that she was not interested in producing rows of identical pots and that the firing itself was conducive to a more individualistic output. Her regular retailers soon learned to appreciate that she would always produce something a little different from the last time.

Thus it was that her increasing interest in form, decoration and colour coincided with the changing atmosphere in the market place. The kitchenware gave way to a more sophisticated range of porcelain tableware.

As a student myself I remember going to a lecture given by Jane Hamlyn and one of the abiding memories I have of that lecture was her attitude to problems — she regards them as steps along the way and the solving of them as the paths which leads to the next stage of one’s creative development. Talking with her the other day this was reinforced. She is intensely curious and explores every avenue that reveals itself until she feels she has reached its end. This seems to be what happened with her porcelainware. The porcelain itself required from the maker a decorative response which was being overwhelmed by the firing process — the fierceness and brutality of the flame and salt was not in sympathy with the clay and the decorative response it demanded. Besides which Jane finally decided that her work was becoming altogether too “charming”. This avenue had served its purpose and it was time for a complete re-evaluation. In order to bring about a change, almost to contrive a different direction, she decided to return to stoneware clay.

Meanwhile, on other fronts she has explored form, addition to form such as handles, surface textures and colour, all of which have added to her vocabulary as a salt-glazer. The characteristic folded-in rim of much of Jane’s work is the result of a conscious decision to enliven the form, and is a natural development from her early simple kitchenware. She has always kept her rims and edges soft and rounded which has given strength to the form and made raw-glazing easier. All her pots are raw-glazed and once-fired. This means that there is no break in the making process from throwing to finishing—hence, concentration on the finished article is unbroken by the time-lag that results from bisque firing. The pots are the more complete for that.

For Jane the whole question of form is paramount. Form has to fulfill an aesthetic requirement over and above utility. She has striven to achieve strength in this area in a very positive way. Until recently most of her designing has been done on the wheel and her fascination with changing the thrown form and the extruded additions that can be made to the central body of the pot to complement and complete it are now leading her into new areas of exploration. The John Ruskin Award, which she recently received, has enabled her to take time out to extend her work on extrusions and the building of slab pots, which may require her to design on paper. Whole new avenues are opening up.

If, as Mick Casson has said, pots reflect the makers’ personality then we must add the dimension of time and look at the pots in this exhibition as a statement of Jane Hamlyn, the person, at this point in her career. They seem to me to represent a fine balance between the strong and confident and the delicate and intuitive aspects in her work. Jane herself would be the first to say that not all has been resolved but the pots seen here are as mature and resolved as any she has so far produced. They represent the best of her wheel-designed work and the beginning of the new phase that her ever-critical and enquiring mind is even now developing.
JANE HAMLYN
by Sally Shrimpton

Ond yn achos Jane dim ond ar ôl gadael coleg, ac yn ystod cyfnod o weithio gyda Peter Starkey yn Norfolk, y daeth hi'n ymwybodol o bontesial cyfrfous gweithio gyda halen. "Strythio mewn cariad" a bu'n flydiddwr i'r cariad hwnnw o hynny allan. Gwydredd halen yw canolbwynt ei bywyd ceramig. Mae ganrûd dilgonedd o syniadau ac mae i'w bywbrau newydd yn ymigor iddi ond mae'i gymryd yn anwain tu'r un brifordd.

Sylweddoli mai "halen oedd y cyfwng iddi hi" oedd y factor a arwienio y tu eu Halywn i'r penderfyniad i ddiwod eu cefnau ar Llundain. Rhaid tani â halen mewn man agored yng nghofwedd er mwyn galluogi'r eiffiant a allu fod yn beryglus, odlau'r do wythnos ychwil yr oedy. Mae hi'n broses ag iddi hanes hari, yn ddydio y Ewrop o tua dechrau'r unfed ganrif ar bymtheg. Ymhleth yr enghreifiau mwyaf cyflymddyr o'r gwaith o waed bryd hynny mae'r llestri cymw, jariau gwnin a phoblail gwyddred halen o'r Almaen ar y llawer. Erbyn dechrau'r ail ganrif ar bymtheg roedd gweithiau gwyddred halen yn cael eu gynghoroch yr Lloegr, ond erbyn dechrau'r ganrif hon roedd yr grefi wedi ei darostwng i'r defnyddio'n unig ar gyfer defnyddiau adeiladu trymin megis pibellu carthaeoaeth, sinneuau, têl orb, cefnau a siclau o glai. Dim ond yn gyfmarol dod wedi'r dechrau'r dechrau'r ddwy o brosesau gwyddred halen.

Mae gwydredd halen yng Ngwydredd Cymru yng Nghefndiroedd y Delyth i'r unig a'r gweddillion cyfunol yr ymarferol sy'n cael ei ddod ar y byd wedi'i defnyddio ar y byd wedi'i defnyddio ar y byd.

Mae'r dull yma o wydro yn gynghoroch ei ansawdd gwybwl arbenig ei hun o'i llw ac arwynebedd. nodwedd hwyaf nodol gwyddred halen yr y'm wylwyd wedi'i defnyddio'n bres i'r unig a'r gweddillion cyfunol yr ymarferol sy'n cael ei ddod ar y byd wedi'i defnyddio ar y byd. Menywod wythnos i'r unig a'r gweddillion cyfunol yr ymarferol sy'n cael ei ddod ar y byd wedi'i defnyddio ar y byd.
defnyddio gywredd ydalen eu harchwilio a’u datblygu wrth drin ei odyn sef ei gyfhyng mwyaf hanfodol a rhoddodd ei newid. Ar ol i’r teulu Hamlyn setio i lawr yn eu cartref newydd yr odyn oedd y peth cyntaf a gafodd ei adeiladu. Rhaid i’r crochennog fyw gyda ei odyn a ddod yn gyfrynnod â i hol holl hwedidion. Daw i’w wybod am y mannau o’i mewn lle eisir y rhyhdwytho neu’r osciaid mwyaf a lle y bydd y taniol all i’r oesmod neu’n rhy chydig, ac er hydyn gall y canlynliadau ddiol i fod yn anniwglywi, ond i Jane dyma un o bleserau yn ogystal â rhwystrdigidiaeth y broses. Mae’r un odyn yn dal i wneud ei gwisg yn ardderchog i Jane, diolch i’r sywch rheoliaid a gallgan Ted sydd wedi gnewud gwaith cymal a chwadr ardderchog drywydd y blwynyddoedd. Erbyn hyn mae’n rhoi goruchudd o ollchwarz ar yr tu mewn i gyd, ac mae’r driniaeth wedi lliwddo i leihau’r dirywio anorfud yr bryniaid o ganlyniad i effaith yr halen yn ystod pob taniu.

Mae Jane Hamlyn yn wynebu ei gwaith mewn flordi gwybwl ym mhentref. Ni oherwydd ei hun o gymhych, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ei hun o adnabyddiad yno, ac ni oherwydd ei hun o adnabyddiad yno. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg. Mae’n siapio iddi ei hun i dderbyn eu hun, ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg, ac ei hun o’i wneud ei gwisg.

Sally Shrimpton

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