When I am sitting throwing at the wheel, looking out of the window to where the farmer is steadily ploughing furrows across the field opposite, I sometimes think that there is very little difference in our work.

This image of Andrew’s remained with me long after I had left the lanes of Norfolk and my visit to the Young’s workshop. It remained, not because of the romantic allusion to enduring country life, but because it expresses so much about the Young’s ideas and their work. The comparison was made seriously as they have a deep respect for skill and recognize the planning and accuracy required to plough a field properly. The choice of image was also apt, expressing for me their modest and unpretentious view of their work, the quiet thoroughness with which they apply themselves to achieve a rightness, a simple balance and beauty of form.

However, the comparison with ploughing also expresses a tension that they feel in their working lives. After twelve years developing and making their range of domestic pottery they remain completely committed to and bound up in the rhythmic process of production, striving for perfection and enjoying the growing rows of the different pots lining up on the workshop shelves. But at the same time they feel a frustration with the repetition and the long hours which they put in. As they sit at their wheels they are also daunted by the vision of the rows of pots stretching into the future, yet to be thrown.

The Youngs make a complete range of domestic pottery: bread crooks, baking dishes, colanders, through plates and mugs to butter dishes and lemon squeezers. The range has been designed and developed, and is now made, very equally between them. Andrew and Joanne both trained at West Surrey College of Art and Design (Farnham) and always wanted to make pots, to run their own pottery, a single minded and simple view of the world which they find amusing now. In each case their first interest had been in more sculptural work; Jo was attracted by the work of Hans Coper and Ruth Duckworth, and Andy was influenced by John Reeve whilst at Farnham. The seeds of interest in production and in functional ware were sown by their first year tutor, Gwyn Hanssen, and grew during a time spent working with her in France. The scale of production at French country potteries impressed them as did the careful work by Gwyn herself.

After Farnham and a year’s A.T.C. course at Goldsmith’s College, Jo and Andy had the opportunity to take over Peter Starkey’s pottery at Hunworth in Norfolk. At the same time they received a Crafts Council setting up grant giving them the chance to try their hand at making lots of the sort of quiet pots they admired. Their work was quickly spotted by David Cantor who ordered work for Craftwork, and gave them an exhibition. Other gallery and shop owners saw their work at the Craftsman Potters Shop. Their ambition to stock the David Melor shop took rather longer and a great deal of persistence to realise, but now their work is one of the best selling lines.

In 1981 the Youngs moved to Gresham where they have two large barn spaces for throwing, shaping and glazing the pots, storage and packing areas, the kiln, a small display area, and two wind surfers. They now have two assistants, Claire Robinson, a Farnham
graduate who throws, and Janet Annison who mixes glazes, pugs the clays and packs pots. Andy now throws the crocks, jugs, storage jars, mugs and teapots and Jo makes the casseroles, butter dishes, pie dishes, plates and lemon squeezer, a division of labour made purely for efficiency. They both use Leach kick wheels, apart from using an electric wheel to throw the large crocks.

Much of the work is shaped and adapted after it has left the wheel, when it is leather hard. For example the oval casseroles are thrown round and then a section is cut out of the base, the pot is drawn together and the base rejoined with a coil to achieve the oval. The lid has a strip removed from across the centre and is then rejoined. Handles have to be attached and the attractive name stamp imprinted.

The pots are then raw-glazed using two standard glazes, one for the exterior, one for the interior. The same glaze is used to achieve the warm soft brown as the dark glossy green, the glaze is just applied more thickly to get the green. The Youngs use an oil fired kiln, with a top temperature of 1280-1300°C reached in about 24 hours. Wood is added after the kiln reaches 1100°C to help reduction and warm the colours. Once the top temperature has been reached the kiln is cooled quickly for 1½ hours and then clamped up and left for two days to cool completely.

The current range of pots dates from the move to Gresham. It took a while to develop a range which they felt happy with. Having known each other, and potted together, since college days, most design developments have been made mutually and naturally, sometimes even without discussion. They claim, with characteristic modesty, to have forgotten everything about glazes, clay bodies and firing that they do not use today. This seems doubtful but it is certainly true that they are far more concerned with the design of the product than with the way that it is made. They are both perfectionists and have refined each item over the years; the range is far simpler now, in shape and decoration. Although the pottery has its roots in French and English traditional country pottery and is sometimes described as country pottery, it is a misleading label. The range is now far more sophisticated than the word implies.

Although they have no ideological objection to other people making the work, and indeed like a degree of anonymity and mass-production in the pots, they have found it very hard to come to terms with it in practice. However good their assistants are they can see tiny differences even if no-one else can. One result is an even greater discipline in defining the pots and in teaching others. Andy, ironically, even has to stamp the name A J YOUNG on himself as he just does not feel it looks quite the same when anyone else does it.

On the face of it the Youngs seem contented and absorbed in their work – but they confess to worrying at an itch, an itch that has been with them now for about five years. This must mean that it started at the time that they felt that they were getting this range of pots right! Jo and Andy’s itch is about the validity of their pots and being a potter. They no longer discuss just the pots themselves but, twelve years on, discuss what sort of life the pots they made would produce – a sure sign of age! The itch is a troublesome desire for change, a need to experiment and make new things but without losing the satisfaction they enjoy in production and the scale of their business.

It is a real dilemma; on the one hand their expressed discomfort at pots picked out in spotlight on plinths, their pleasure in the masses of useful pots, piled up in use; on the other their need to explore new ideas, the need for more time in their lives and the knowledge that developing a new range would not satisfy them for long the second time round. The new ideas will not burst out quickly, they have invested in a small kiln for experiments, they will be carefully considered. The pots will be worth waiting for.
A & J YOUNG: CROCHENYDDION GWLEDIG

"Y Gwres Gerameg"

Yn fyfoda inni esiedd yn gwelio wrth y droi, ac yn edrych ar drwy'r ffinen ar flwmwr ym tori o'rysi y mae gyferbyn, fe fydd in meddwl wetiau nad oes fawr o waithaeth rhwng ei waith ef a'n gwaith ninnau.'

Arhosodd y defelwedd hon o ddido Andrew yn hir yn fy nghof ar ol i mi gefnu ar hwyd Norfolk a gadael gwelwch Andrew a Joanna Young. Fe arhosodd gyfra fla, nid obernwydd y cytrefiad rhamanus a byw ym mocsor o wy. Onn am ei fod yn mynegi cymaint am symiau a gwaith y ddau. Gwnaed y gymharieth yn gwbl ddirif gan fod gantrynt y parch mwyaf i fedranwyd a chon eud yddin y sylweddol fodd gelyn cynllunio a rhaid i ni defnyddio mae'n briodol. Roedd y defelwedd yn addas helaen am ei fod yn cyfleu eu forod ddiddali a ddylanhoar ystynyn eu gwaith, y trywerydd tawel sy'w nodweddu eu hymrodadi i greu perfformio, cydwyneodd symiau a phhyffderthwch ffurf.

Fodd bynnag, mae'r gymharau ag adelig helaen y mae'n cyfleu'r tawel sydd yn hyblyg ym eu gwaith. Ar ol deuddeg milfennad yr daithbytu ac yn cynhyrchu eu cyfres o crochenwaith domestig maent yn dal ym gwbl ymrodledd ac yn gaeth i broses rythmyg y cynhyrchu. Yn ymdeureu am berfthethrydd ac yn cael boddiad yna y rheoedd cynyddol o lestri gwaith o'r symi ond wythnosau. Yn oedd yr un pryd teimlant'r rhoddidiaeth eu obrywydd o'ir aladrodd cysw cyrau a o'ir ond mithion o waith, Tra'n esiedd wrth y droi maent helaen yna cefi eu dilligynnwr wrth ragweld y rheoedd o lestri sydd eto heb eu llenio ym ystynyn i'r dyfodiad.

Mae Andrew a Joanna Young yn cynhyrchu ystod gyfyllawn o crochenwaith domestig: llestri bara, dysglau pobl, colanadog, amrywiaeth sy'n ystyst mn y biliwm i mygliau i ddysglau menyn a gwaedwydion llwm. Rhannwy y daug o gymhliw a daithbytu'r llestri yng ngystadleu'r cyfyllawn y bwyd ar gyfer lestri ystalmen. Yn dweud Andrew a Joanna Young yr hyn negoleg Celf a Cynllunio Gorllewin Surrey (Farnham) ac o'r cyfyllawn roeddyn ymddygiadau i ni llenio lestri ac i ni dydd eu chrochendy eu hunain, agweddu symiau ac unplyg o byd sy'n eu far o ddoniol erbyn heddiw. Yn achos y ddau ohonyn roedd eu dddordeb o'r wythnosau ym mwn gwaith mwy cerfuniol; cafodd Jo ei denu gan waith Hans Cooper a Ruth Duckworth, a dylanwadwyd ar Andy gan John Reeve tra oeddyn yn Farnham. Defrowyd eu dddordeb mewn cynhyrchu ac mewn crochenwaith defnyddiol gan Gwyn Hanssen, eu twt yr ystyd y flwyddyn gyntaf, a daithydd yr ymchwil ystod o'r celfnod a ddiwylwyd ym gwaith gyda hi ym Ffrainc. Gwnaed argraff arnynt gan raddfa cynhyrchu crochendai gwledig Ffrainc a chan waith trywyd Gwyn ei hunan.

Yn dilyn Farnham a blwyddyn ar gyfer A.T.C. yng Ngholeg Goldsmiths, cafodd Jo ac Andy gyfyllu i gymryd crochendy Peter Starkey yn Hunworth. Norfolk, drosodd. Ar yr un pryd cwassodd grant ymydw i ymgyntro a gynnar arnoedd a him ffwnhau iddi ym cyfle i roi eu llaw eu gwanneu llawer o ddiwyldiant o'r mae eu lestri dylanhoar a hynny ym mwn oeddyn yn cael eu heddwr hynny. Daeth eu gwaith ym flwyddyn i siwr John Davidson ac fe arheb o'i waith ar gyfer 'Craftwork' a threfnodd a'r symiau a'u gwaith. Gwelodd permgonion o'ir iddi a siopau eraill eu gwaith ym y 'Craftsman Potters Shop'. Cymeroedd eu chwelgeliais i gyfleo siopau David Melior cyn ddyyn i hwy a chryn fesur o ddylalbarhad i’w sylweddoli, ond
Ym 1981 symudodd Andrew a Joanna Young i Gresham ac yno mae ganddynt ddwy ysgubor helaeth ar gyfer gwaith ar y droel. Ffurio a gwydro'r llestri, storio a phacio, odyw a marw arian tra bychon a dDRAW hwyl. Erbyn hyn mae ganddynt ddau gynorthwyr, Claire Robinson a raddioodd yn Fannham ac sy'n gweitlio ar yr droel a Janel Annison sy'n cymysgu gwydred- dau, yn paratoi ei ac yn pacio llestri. Ar hyn o bryd Andy sy'n llunio'r llestri pridd, jy ga'i, llarau storio, mygiaw a thehobiti a Jo sy'n gwneud caseroiau, dysglu menyn, dysglu pastiau, pliau a gwasgydion larnw, dulf o ranu gwaith a fabwysiadwyd yn unig ar leis effeithlonwyr. Mae'i ddau'n defnyddio troeli droed Leach a din ond ar gyfer y llestri pridd mwyaf y defnyddiant droel drydan.

Cai lafwr o gwaith ei ffurio a' r addasu ar ôl iddo ddod oddi ar yr droel tra mae'n talu heb lawnf galedu. Enghraifft, caiff y caseroiau hirgrwn eu llunio'n greu ar y droel ac yna tormor ran anall o'r gwaedol, tynnurî llestai ar ei gyllid a chwbhai'r gwaedol gyda thoroch o glai er mwyn cael ac y flur hirgrwn. Tynnir strided i fwydd o gangly'r caead ac o yna gwagusr o caead at ei gyllid. Yna dodor doleni ar y llestri ac ar argraffu'r stamp enw atyniadl amo.

Y cym nefais yw dod gwyrddod crani ar y llestri gan ddefnyddio dau wyddred, y naill ar gyfer y tu allan a'r llaith ar gyfer y tu ffein. Yn yr wyddred a ddefnyddir i gynorthwyr'n brown meiddai cynnes a'i gwydro tyfyll disgair, ond bod y trais ddefnyddio nhag o drwch o'i defnyddio i ghyho- chwrll u llwyd gywyrr. Defnyddir oddy sy'n cael ei thanio gan olew, ac sy'n cysylltu uchafbynnu tymheredd i 1280-1300°C mewn tua 29 awr. Ychwanegai oedd ar ôl i tymheredd golgi i 1100°C i gynorthwyo'r rhyddfryd ac i greu llisiwn crynesach. Unwaith yna'i tymheredd wedi cyraedd ei uchafbynnu caiff yr oddy oen'n gyfylla am awr a hamor ac yna ei chau i lawr a'i gadael am ddau dwlwm o'i chau i llwyd.

Mae'r gyfrés o llestri a gynhyrchir ar hyn o bryd yno ddiwyd o amser y symudwyd i Gresham. Cerdded beth amser i ddadlygu gyfrés y tuwmion ym fonlon amryw. Gan eu bod wedi addasu ei gyllid ac wedi olygu hirgrwn er dyddiadog caleg, dyw'dubwyd y ran hwnwy o'i cynlluniau ym naturiol ac yr cyd heb unrhyw drafodaeth hyd yna oed mewn rhai achosion. Gyda' u gyfylledd a'i boblwyddad haent eu bod wedi ceisio poeni am y gwyddred a'r mathau o gli a dulliau o daniol nad ydym ystyra'r gwneud defnydd obonynt bellach. Mae'n anodd credu hynny, ond mae'n sicr o fod yn wir fod ganddynt lawer mwy o ddilorau yng nghylchwr yr hyn y gynhyrchir nag yng nall o'i gynhyrchu. Mae’n naill ar y llawer o berfftyddo ac mae'n wedi perffoftio pob elfen dros y blynyddoedd – mae’r gyfrés yno llawer symiaith erbyn hyn o ran flur a’r addasu. Er mai yng nghrochenwaith gwledig ddoddiadodd Prydain a'r Iraith yno gwaedol y crochenwaith ac y caiff ei ddefnyddio weithiau fel crochenwaith gwledig, mae’r enw hwnnw ym un canarmwarneini. Mae’r gyfrés yna gyfylla amawr i lawer mwy sofistigedd nag mae’n enw ei awgrwyria.

Er nad oes ganddynt unrhyw wrthwynebriad iddiogel o bofrin eraill wnedd y gwaith, a’t bod yno wrin y crosonaw eifen a’r anghys y ac a fas- gynhyrchu ynb y llestri, nid ar chwarae bach y maent wedi byddo i ddygyfyll âurf fel cefelyfiai llestro ac wrth hyfforddi eraill y wnedw y gwaith. Yn eironig ddigon, mae Andy hyd yno oedd y mynny mae’n symudw a’r ‘A & J YOUNG’ ar bob eitem ar’i law ei hun, gan nad yno’n teimlo’n gwaf haapus ei fod yn edrych ym uned o ran yfanydd o gwaith hwnnw gan rywun arall.

Ar yr wyneb mae Andrew a Joanna Young ymymdangos fel pe baent yno fonlon yn eu gwaith ac wedi llwyrr ymgyrlo yndo – ond maent ym.