



"MY HANDS IN THE CLAY"

Len Rees

In the early 1950's - by chance, I became interested in pottery. I wanted to do drawing and painting at an evening class, but it was full. They offered me a pottery class instead. I didn't know they did that in such a place. However I soon became interested in the clay and have never lost interest since. You might say I got hooked on clay. Though the skills of painting and drawing would have been very useful to a budding potter.

On returning to Pembrokeshire to work as a surveyor in the Highways Dept. I carried on trying to make pots, initially at the Fishguard

Comprehensive School, where they had wheels and kilns. I then went on to construct a wheel and kiln for myself, which then enabled me to become a "Sunday Potter". *There is no stopping this man!*

Later I went to the Art College at Aberystwyth, where regular courses on pottery/ceramics were offered. The Festival of Ceramics was held there every other year and potters/ceramicists of world renown, from China, Japan, America, and of course Europe came to lecture and demonstrate. It was all very inspirational. Visiting the British Museum, the V&A and a host of other galleries, was a source of great enthusiasm and inspiration. It was then possible to 'do' London in a day by leaving Fishguard Harbour on the 6 am train and be back in Fishguard before midnight, having spent about 5 hours in the V&A. Of course, I didn't see anything much of London. I was younger and fitter in those days. Reading on the train was also an opportunity to catch up.

When not doing all this travelling, I was putting my hands in the clay. I also did some teaching at evening classes for a short time at the F.E. Centre in



Fishguard. I was also working with school children, who were also keen to get their hands into clay. Some of the schools were very keen on having ceramic panels as a permanent fixture inside or outside the school premises. One such school was featured in the programme Country File.

I was involved in creating the original mural at the Gwaun Valley School many years ago. The children were helped to create it by myself, Denis Short and Jean Pugh. The staff at the school led by Irfor James were very keen to make it a success. Often the parents had to suffer the inconvenience of having to wait for the children to complete the interesting piece of ceramic they were working on at the time!

The Market Hall Fishguard panel ceramic mural, involved all the schools. I was the firing all the tiles in my kiln at my workshop in Dinas. Other artists and teachers from the local schools were also kept busy for sometime that year. The main team of ceramic artists for the project came down from Cardiff Art College.



A few years after the completion of the work, it was decided to renovate the Market Hall but in order to accomplish this the Ceramic Mural had to be removed and re-set. This involved a huge project and during the operation a number of tiles became broken and missing. Finally, Denis Short and I came to the rescue, stepped in and the mural was again completed.

There has to be a happy ending to all stories.

FOOTNOTES

Len bought a half acre field in Dinas, a rough plot, designed his house, and had it built then moved there in the sixties.

He created a most beautiful and special garden, now in maturity and displaying his marvellous colourful ceramics.

The gallery was first built as a sun room, or garden/party room with views over the garden. It is now a brilliant space for showing arts and crafts, including his own work.



Cerameg Len Rees Galeri Gweithdy Parc-Y-Gilwen Dinas

