

David Ballantyne, who died ten years ago, is remembered by his students as a master potter and an inspiring teacher.

Yet this description does less than justice to a remarkable man whose many talents and interests led his friend Sir George Trevelyan to describe him as a "true renaissance man".

He originally studied painting at Liverpool, but he might well have become a professional pianist – at one time he seriously contemplated a career in music. His first contact with clay was with Dora Billington at the Central School, during his ATD course at London University.

He began his working life as a grammar school teacher at West Ham and Bridgnorth before taking over pottery and fabric printing at Bournemouth in 1950. Pottery was then being taught by part-timers in a poorly equipped corner of the sculpture studio. From this unpromising start David created a highly regarded course which attracted students from all over the country. His aim was to combine practical training of potters with a broad liberal education. He had little time for "art pottery" with no practical purpose. At Bournemouth he built most of

his own equipment. But he had been designing wheels and kilns since the Bridgnorth days, and had set up the SAVIAC* workshops to produce them. Peter Stoodley joined him in this enterprise. Their most successful product was the geared SK110, described as the Rolls Royce of kick wheels.

During the traumatic changes in art education in the 60s it was decreed that pottery should merge with interior design to become the new Department of Environmental Design. Peter Stoodley says that David entered this field unhappily "but prepared to support it with all his experience and knowledge... the paradox is that out of the changed emphasis he saw new origins for the direction of his personal work."

This broadening of his field of study, though born of necessity, led on to commissions in diverse fields – architectural sculpture, murals and street furniture, lettering and the restoration of historic buildings. On occasions he collaborated with the architect/designer Theo Crosby and with the poet Ian Hamilton Finlay.

David was involved in many external activities, such as the Thomas Hardy exhibition at Kingston Mauward in 1968. With the 'cellist Maurice Hardy (no relation) he organised two Festivals of Chamber Music and the Arts at the Red House Museum. He became Honorary Secretary of the Society of Designer Craftsmen and persuaded them to create a Licentiatehip for craftspeople. This was particularly useful in colleges like Bournemouth which did not offer DipAD.

He kept an active workshop at

"His openness to new ideas, the absence of any precious attitudes towards craft or art, and his willingness to share his knowledge and enthusiasm are rare and valued gifts in our materialistic age."
Emmanuel Cooper

* Acronym for 'Striving After Values In an Age of Crisis'



home. He was one of the very first post-war craftsman potters to use saltglaze, and he built his own drip feed oil kiln to fire it, using waste oil from local garages (this was long before recycling was fashionable). The porcellaneous clay body was decorated by impressing and engraving through painted slips.

Pat Laurenson remembers seeing the amazing retrospective exhibition at Walkford Mill in 1988. David's very varied work from different periods included figurative pieces and wonderful commemorative plates using ground laying enamels and decorative calligraphy.

In retirement he returned to painting but continued to make pots (he sometimes called himself "the village potter") and to accept other

1. Thrown and carved stoneware bowl, 1976.

2. David at work.

3 Detail of mural at Barbers Wharf, Poole, 1990

Photographs reproduced by kind permission of the Ceramic Review (whose joint editor, Emmanuel Cooper, was a student of David's at Bournemouth).

The original SK110 kick wheels were all slightly different, as David was continually improving the design. Pat has the final one at her Ship House Pottery.

Much of the material in the above article was supplied by **PETER STOODLEY**, who worked with David Ballantyne at Bournemouth from 1951 to 1978 and was closely involved in the SAVIAC workshops' wheel and kiln development in the 1960s. He continues to make pots in his studio near Lymington.

THE BALLANTYNE COLLECTION was started in 1971 by David's brother Rollo Ballantyne and his wife Marion. It contains work by practically every major 20th century studio potter, including Michael Cardew, Bernard and David Leach, Alan Caiger-Smith, Mary and Bob Rogers, Geoffrey Swindell, Siddig 'el Nigoumi, Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie and of course David himself. It also includes pieces by Lucie Rie and Marie Rich, which were commissioned by the Ballantynes. In 1980 an important collection was acquired from the Derbyshire Schools Loan Service, bringing the total to 368 pieces. The collection is now permanently housed at the Castle Museum, Nottingham, which also runs a series of related talks and events. It is of course only possible to display part of the collection at any one time, but pieces not on display can be seen by appointment. For details please call **Pamela Wood, Keeper of Decorative Art, Castle Museum** on 0115 915 3700.



(Continued overleaf)

REUNION 2000

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The Cottonwood Hotel
Grove Road
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Tel 01202 553183
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BOOK NOW!

Cottonwood Hotel

David Ballantyne: (continued from page 3)

commissions. He died suddenly ten
years ago at the height of his creative
powers.

Peter Stoodley wrote an excellent
biography which was published in
edited form in *Ceramic Review* in
1991. There is a lot of other material
which is of great interest. We are currently
investigating the idea of publication
in some form. If you have any
reminiscences of David, photos, or
actual pieces that might be included
in such a project, please let us know.

EXHIBITIONS

PAINTINGS BY

Michael Sheldon
at the Ivory Room, Norwich
June 12-17

POTTERY BY

Delan Cookson
at the New Ashgate Gallery,
Farnham, Surrey
May/June
Exact dates to be confirmed – see website

BOTANICAL PAINTINGS

Chris Stephenson
has five paintings in the Society
of Botanical Artists Exhibition
Central Hall, Westminster
May 5th-13th

Brian Bishop
is currently in a group show
at Bell Fine Art
Parchment Street, Winchester

RETROSPECTIVE
PAINTINGS & CERAMICS

**Peter 'Henry'
Simpson**
at Derby University in October
Exact dates to be confirmed – see website

*If you are showing your work please let us
know the details as soon as possible so
that we can publish them here and on the
website. Free to BMCA-FSA members.*

INFO WANTED

Delan Cookson would like to contact
Michael Orchard who studied painting
and/or pottery in the late 50s

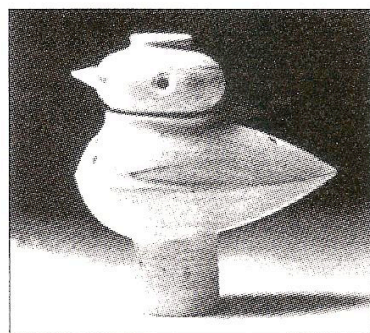
Pat Laurensen would like to contact
D'Almaine Boord (intermediate and
painting 51-55) who married Captain Green,
also **John Adams** (intermediate 51-55, then
went to the Royal College of Art)

The first Pine City Stomper

Does anyone have any reminiscences of the
late Ron Weldon, who left BMCA for the
Royal College in about 1951 and who led the
original Pine City Stompers? I joined the band
after he had left, but I never met him nor heard
him play (tape recorders were in their infancy)
and this is something I greatly regret. I have
been in touch with Ron's second wife, Fay
Weldon, the novelist, but she knows very little
about his Bournemouth days, except that his
first wife Barbara was also a student.

P T

*If you can help with any of the above, please contact Peter
Taylor, 14 Copperas Hill, Penrycae, Wrexham LL14 2SA.
Tel: 01978 845912. E-mail: peter@taylorgraphics.co.uk*



David Ballantyne: Potpourri jar and lid, saltglazed
stoneware, 1962. (V&A Collection)

INES TO J

(a former College girlfriend)

Do you recall that evening concert
Hearing lush Tchaikovsky tunes?
How at Hengistbury Head we loved
On sunlit afternoons?
I still have that little sketch I did
Of you among the dunes . . .
From that fresh and loving starting
To the pain of that last parting
Was a matter of a year
Well, more or less;
Bournemouth Central was the station
Of that last sad separation,
Not the ideal place to share our last caress.
The carriage doors were closing,
So indifferent to my losing
One to me who was so infinitely dear;
But a uniformed official
Who was brandishing a whistle
Glared at us and made his meaning very clear!
One despairing last embrace
As I kissed your anxious face
And we tried to fight away each coming tear;
As my train clanked round the bend
I felt my world come to an end
As I watched your waving figure disappear

That was four decades ago
But unhappily, I know
That this journey is still taking me from you;
I know where this train is going –
Though I'd rather not be knowing –
To the terminus we must all travel to.
When I arrive I hope you'll meet me,
Throw your arms out wide to greet me,
As forty years ago you used to do

Michael Sheldon

bottom corridor

Our alma mater has undergone yet
another metamorphosis, now going
under the name The Art Institute at
Bournemouth. How pompous can you
get? Bring back the BMCA, say I.

Apologies to Brian Bishop, who was
reported in an earlier newsletter as
having died, due possibly to confusion

with the late Graham Bishop.
Anyway, we are pleased to say that
Brian is alive and well and teaching at
the aforementioned Art Institute at
Bournemouth. Perhaps he can be
persuaded to join us this year

We once again suggest a working
visit to Poole Printmakers. John

Liddell invites us to use the equip-
ment there for a very reasonable
charge as long as not too many come
at once. Call to book a space on
01202 393776 or 01202 748455.

Colin Morris's magnum opus on the
Royal Blue coach company should
now be available. I'm sure he'll be

delighted to sell you a copy at the
reunion.

Any mistakes or omissions are all
my fault. Please accept the usual
apologies in advance. PT.

I know who "J" is but I'm not telling.