

# *Paint and pots*

*There is a technology of ceramics and an art to it. Dave White visited Trevor Nicklin's pottery studio on the moors above Chesterfield to learn a little bit about both.*

**T**he oldest pieces of simple, unglazed pottery — found in what is now known as Japan — are some 16,000-years-old.

European ceramic technology goes back at least 6500 years.

For over 1000 years, in all parts of the world, potters have been doing complex work with a variety of clay types, using a variety of kiln designs and applying various glazes.

And ever since the industrial revolution, science has helped to explain more and more precisely, what is going on during this apparently primitive combination of earth and fire.

The practical benefits of the industrialisation of ceramics are repeatability and cheapness. The disadvantage is the forestalling of creativity, which comes through discovery by accident or by risk-taking.

This principle does not only apply to technicalities such as levels of vitrification, degrees of fusion and resultant glaze colour and texture. It can also apply to subtle variations in the relative dimensions of a pot, the relationships of spout to body or handle to spout.

In industrialised ceramics these proportions are standardised...in studio ceramics the potter is invited, by the working method itself, to experiment with an almost infinite variation even within the basic outline or silhouette of each piece.

Bernard Leach, who set up the St Ives Pottery in Cornwall in 1920 after studying



● *Hands on: Trevor creates a pot on the wheel*

pottery in Japan, rejuvenated interest in such matters. His influence was to re-emphasise creativity and inspirational potting within the European tradition.

Trevor Nicklin studied at Wolverhampton College of Art, as he says, "...some time ago." As a student, he was torn between painting and pottery. Never one to be bull-dozed by authority he says it "was the attitude of the painting hierarchy, their preference for dull, grey, academic work and their discouragement

of experimentation that helped me to make my mind up."

He later taught at Chesterfield College, at a time when the ceramics department was well known for the quality of its work. "I had always intended to be a potter who did some teaching, rather than the other way around," he muses. "But we enjoyed the work so much in those days we often lost track of the amount of time we spent there. We would think nothing of staying late into the evening to load the