

"TUBE LINED" INSET BLUE PLAQUES FOR ENGLISH HERITAGE

CREATION PROCESS

The plaques are created from a white stoneware body which contains a high proportion of coarse molochite and is highly resistant to warping and cracking. This makes it ideal for plaques and ceramic murals. The plaques are fired to 1280°C making it extremely hard, totally nonporous and frost proof. (The higher the temperature to which the clay is fired the harder and more durable is the finished product) The glaze is fired on at this temperature, the glaze will, of course, never ever fade or change colour.

Once the layout of the lettering has been agreed a highly accurate handmade template is produced. Using a hand driven slab roller the plaque is pressed from plastic clay. The template is then used to transfer the lettering onto the surface of the slab. An extruded, precisely measured strip is then attached to the back of the plaque to form the depth. Accurately shaped struts are inserted in the back to form the dome.

The plaque at this stage is made oversize it is transferred to the potter's wheel and trimmed by hand to create the circle and edge detail. Any imperfections in the surface of the plaque or lettering are corrected at this stage in the soft clay.

The plaque is dried slowly using weights to keep it from warping or attempting to flatten out the dome.

It is then biscuit fired to 1000°C.

The lettering is then coated with a resist and the whole plaque sprayed with blue glaze. This is a stoneware glaze made to our own recipe which, if the ingredient minerals are accurately weighed, will produce consistent results. The resist is removed from the lettering, which is left "clean" with no blue glaze on it, the plaque is then re-fired to 760°C to sinter blue glaze in position.

The lettering is now flooded with a white glaze using a handheld slip trailer. The plaque edge is also glazed white by pouring the glaze on from a jug.

The whole plaque is then fired in an electric kiln to 1280°C on specially made silicon carbide kiln shelves that do not warp.

Any minor imperfections in the glaze can be corrected by dressing with a micro diamond grinder and spots of on-glaze enamel fired on at 800°C, which will give tiny cosmetic repairs, which are as permanent as the rest of the plaque.