

Crafty deed done

By Monique Ebrington

THREE Upper Yarra craftsmen are forging a bond with villagers in the remote region of South West Bay in Vanuatu.

Potter Alistair Whyte, blacksmith Andy Jagger and woodworker Don Willis have combined their talents to handcraft a pottery wheel for the overseas communities.

The wheel was dismantled and loaded onto a Medical Sailing Ministries ship in early April, along with a collection of pottery books.

Mr Whyte said he would meet the ship when it reached the region in July, and that the pottery wheel would be kept at the high school in the district.

Mr Whyte's connection with the remote region comes from his parents who were missionaries on the island in the 1950s.

He said that part of his childhood was spent growing up in South West Bay and the pottery created by locals could be sold as trade or used by the villagers.

"My mother was a nurse and my father was responsible for establishing 17 villages along the coast," Mr Whyte said. "My brother went back last year and mentioned I was a potter. The villagers seemed interested in improving their own pottery techniques and it all went on from there.

"I haven't been there for more than 50 years, and I'm sure it has changed a lot since then."

Mr Whyte said the trio had researched the region's existing pottery facilities and techniques.



Upper Yarra blacksmith Andy Jagger, potter Alistair Whyte and woodworker Don Willis have handcrafted a potter's kick wheel for a remote community in Vanuatu.

"The pottery wheel we built is a kick wheel design," he said. "They have very little in the way of electricity out there. The worst thing we could have done was to create something that relied on power. I'll be going there, later this year, to teach the

villagers how to use the pottery wheel and some simple techniques that are familiar to their culture."

Mr Whyte said the pottery wheel would be kept at the high school because it was used by five villages. "The wheel will be

in a central location at the high school, and will be able to be accessed by whoever has the need for it," he said.

Anyone with pottery books to donate or interested in more information, can email Alistair on ajwhyte@iprimus.com.au