



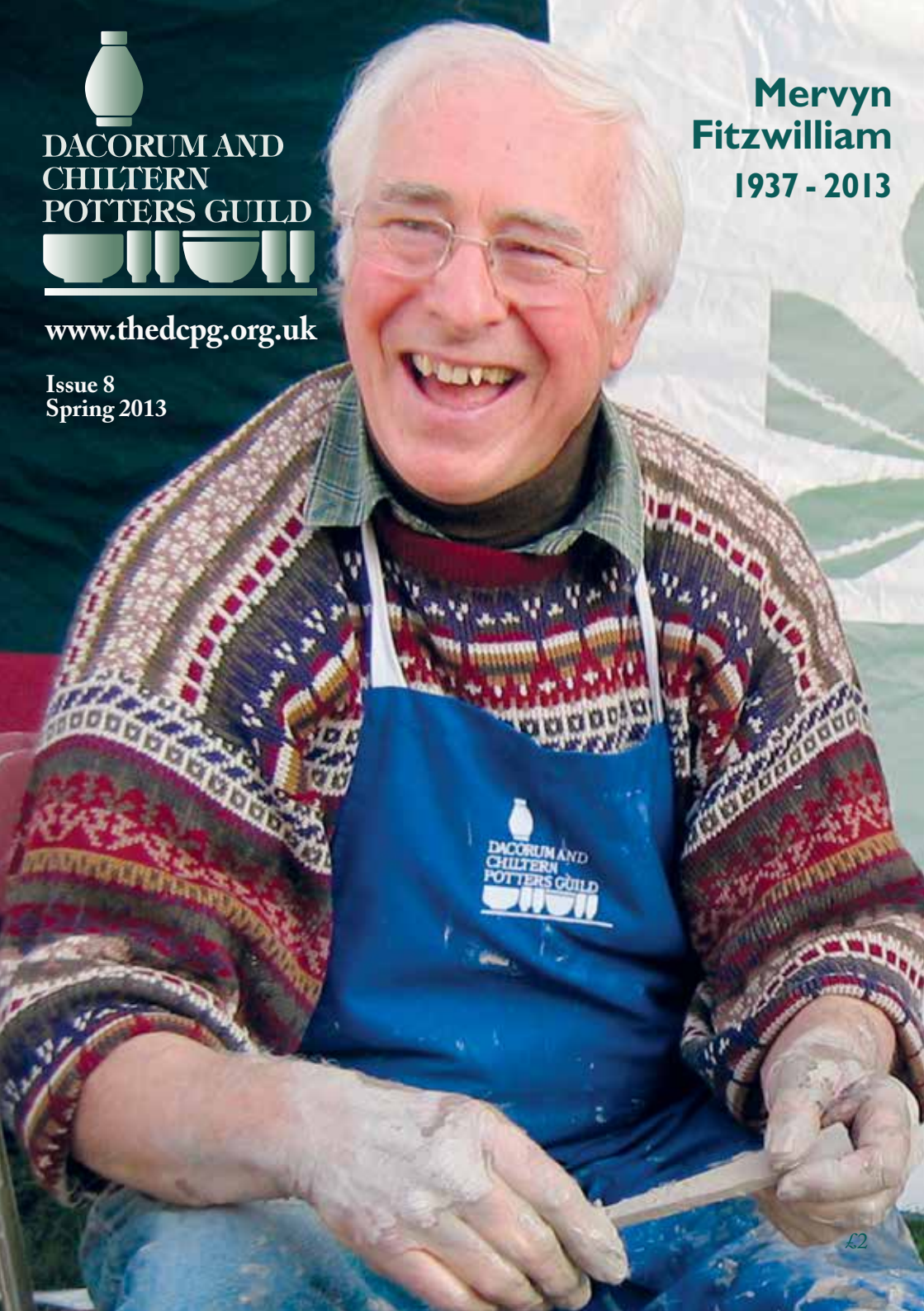
**DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD**



www.thedcpg.org.uk

Issue 8
Spring 2013

**Mervyn
Fitzwilliam**
1937 - 2013



HARROW OPEN STUDIOS 2013

Artists from Harrow Borough
open their doors to the public

8-10th June 2013

15 - 16th June 2013

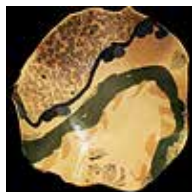
Open from: 11am to 6pm

Join us for our sixth annual event,
where 33 artists open their studios
over two weekends in June

- Work on display: ceramics, jewellery, paintings, prints and textile arts
- Meet the artists
- Buy or commission art work
- Enter our children's competition
- Entry is free and some artists include demonstrations and refreshments

See our website for more information,
or to download our brochure.

www.harrowopenstudios.com



Walter Brayford's Acme Batt Co.

Specialist in manufacture and supply of
kiln furniture to studio potters, hobby
potters, colleges and schools.

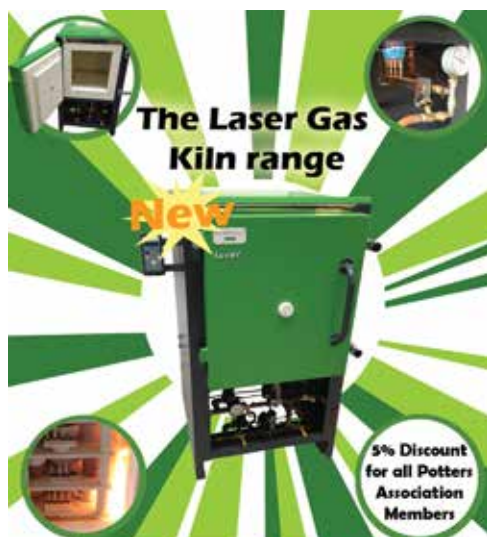
- No minimum order
- Fast, friendly and efficient service
- Large stock of best quality refractories
 - Immediate collection
 - Overnight delivery if required
- Batts cut to any size, shape and thickness, perforated or plain
- Kiln shelves, props, tile cranks, stilts, pins, cements, batt washes etc

Contact Walter Brayford

Tel: 01782 505 405

Mobile: 07817 040971

email: walter@claylake.com



www.pottery crafts.co.uk/laser Manufactured in the UK
There are three new kilns in the Pottery crafts Laser Gas kiln range, each available in both propane and natural gas
POTTERY CRAFTS LIMITED
01782 745000
Pottery crafts Ltd, Campbell Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 4ET.

About the Guild & the Newsletter

Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery and sculpture and offers members many opportunities each year to see top potters and sculptors demonstrating their skills. In addition, an annual Open Day is held with demonstrations. Exhibitions, visits and workshops are also organised at various times.

Membership Rates for 2013

Single £27, Family (one address) £35, Student (full time) £19. Newsletter only: £10 per annum.

Make your cheque payable to DCPG, and please send to Ingrid Thorstad, 3 Church Lane, Chearsley, Bucks HP18 0DH. Tel: 01844 208 702.

If joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate.

The Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published quarterly and distributed free to all members of the Guild, other craft groups and organisations. Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome (s.a.e. please with any items to be returned).

Opinions expressed in items published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or Guild members as a whole; nor is the Guild responsible for the content of individual advertisements printed in the Newsletter.

Reproduction of Newsletter Articles

Articles in the newsletter are the copyright of the Guild or the Author unless otherwise attributed and may not be reproduced, copied or used in any way without the permission of the Guild or the Author.

Advertising Rates

Quarter page £18, half page £25, whole page £50
Small ads: 25p per word (20 words free to members). Semi display £7 from your artwork or £10 for typesetting (maximum 50 words)
Covers: Back +20%, Inside +15%
Distribution of leaflets £35 for A5

For all advertising enquiries please contact:
Karen George Advertising Manager
karen@funkyzebra.org.uk

Editorial

Since our last newsletter we've had the sad news that our Chairman, Mervyn Fitzwilliam has died. He was the source of much energy and direction for the guild and will be sadly missed. This edition is devoted to his memory and we have included pieces about his life and his contribution to the art and craft of ceramics.

Thanks to Ros for stepping up to the plate and taking on the role of chairman in these difficult circumstances. We all need to support her.

There are various vacancies on the committee and we need volunteers to take on important roles within the guild.

In particular we need a Potters Open Day (POD) Organiser and Publicity Officer. If you are at all interested please look at the details in the vacancy section of this issue and contact Ros for more information.

Looking forward we have coming up our annual exhibition at Chenies Gallery, which will run from Wednesday 31 July until Thursday 29 August. This is an opportunity for members to exhibit their work and I would encourage you to put your work forward. You can find more information about it in this newsletter.

And of course we have our regular monthly programme of events.

Hope to see you there.

Lynne McGeachie



Notes from the Chair



Ros McGuirk



Mervyn Fitzwilliam and Ros McGuirk at POD 2011

Mervyn chaired the Guild for 15 years and over a period of 21 years he edited and produced 87 editions of the newsletter. He was deeply concerned at the loss of ceramic education and never missed an opportunity to introduce people to the joy of clay.

Despite his increasing frailty in recent months, he kept his promise to organise our part in the local Conker Festival which involved him hauling three wheels onto the site, plus lots of other kit. We had to lure him off the wheel that day with hot coffee to make him take a break from teaching kids to throw.

That was followed by our Open Day, an event at which he was always there to support the organiser and shift a great deal of equipment. The list goes on.

However, there was more to Mervyn than all that, for Sylvia was always there too. Teaching hand building at shows, selling pots, helping set up, helping clean up. The entire Fitzwilliam family have been known to help. Indeed, the Conker Festival and Music on the Moor would not have happened without them.

January has been a cruel month. We are still adjusting to the loss of our most long serving and active member ever.

Mervyn Fitzwilliam was a man who believed in active service and who always gave his best. He helped many people in all sorts of ways. He loved fixing things, from pottery wheels to the church hall clock. He even organised his next door neighbour's funeral, and he nurtured fragile talent, bringing in new members and keeping an eye on those he thought needed help.

So a big 'Thank You' to Sylvia and all the Fitzwilliam family for all they have done over the years. Please keep in touch; you are always welcome to join in.

Winter is the time when, being too cold for the potting shed, one turns to sorting out other stuff, planning the year ahead, applying for shows, courses, organising events, holidays, and planning new work. As a group of over one hundred members, we are remarkably prolific.

Vivienne Rodwell-Davies has been busy making stuff for the British Museum shop for the current show on Ice Age Art.

Marshall Coleman took part in the recent Designer Crafts show at the Mall Gallery.

Diana Tonnison continues to supply several galleries with her ceramic pictures and Les Parrott is running a ceramic exhibition in Maidenhead, as well as selling at the Duckpond Market in Ruislip.

Ruby Sharpe is selling at Art in Clay and two Potfests, Nigel Carrick is at Potfest in Perth and Penrith, and I am making pots for my local farmers market.



Memories of Mervyn



That, I suspect, is just the tip of the iceberg. Let us know what you are up to!

Look out for information about the Guild exhibition at Chenies – and take the opportunity to show off your work. You learn a lot doing this, and it's great way to start selling.

I was at the Boxmoor kiln recently to help replace the protective tarpaulin. It was bitterly cold and snowing and the site looked a mess as it has been used as a dump during the building operations there.

However, one was aware that in a few weeks' time the whole place will be transformed. The visitors centre will be finished, the trees will be in leaf and the kiln site will be in a green oasis.

And best of all, we will be able to fire the kiln. There is so much to look forward to.

If wood firing does not appeal, why not put aside a few biscuit fired pots for the raku firings at Pitstone? The timetable for the Pitstone openings is on the website.

Also look out for soda firings at Northfields. There should be two or three this year and the dates will be circulated by email.

Your committee met recently. There were lots of issues to discuss, of course, and there was a strong sense of going forward. We are also looking to you for more help to keep things on track.

Thus I have a little list which, by the time you read this, you may have a copy of in your inbox. Please do not be backward in coming forward. We are what we do, and we will do it all the better with more help.

The committee are a really committed and enthusiastic team – why not come and join in the fun?

As you probably know, Mervyn had been a long-time member of the DCPG, we knew each other well. I had the great pleasure of sharing many events with him – he was always a hands-on man and full of enthusiasm.

There were Open Days, workshops, exhibitions, outdoor events using Fitzwilliam wheels and which involved members of the public of all ages and abilities; Lark in the Park (remember that?), special firings, group weekends away to see well-known potters in their native habitats!

In addition there were the regular Friday evening demonstrations and the Newsletter to oversee and distribute. One way or another he had a hand in most of those things.

He will be greatly missed as I am sure we will all feel. Sylvia has supported him all the way and he added greatly to the enjoyment of all our lives who knew him.

Harry (who worked on the Newsletter) and I both regret his passing and send our sympathy to Sylvia for the future.

Ruth and Harry Karnac
(ex-members)





Memories of my Father

Words spoken by Steven Fitzwilliam
at Mervyn's Funeral

I am Steven Fitzwilliam, Mervyn and Sylvia's Son. Being brought up by mum and dad has been a great journey, filled with love, fun, a few sharp words and many inventions.

These elements of Family, Fun and Invention have always seemed of great importance. They are evident in everything mum & dad have achieved and are still part of.

I would like to tell you about 3 things which were very dear to Mervyn.

The Barn

The Barn is the building at the bottom of the Mum and dad's garden. It was bought from the local farmer to be used as a workshop, and a space for inventions.

Mum has never understood why it couldn't be kept tidy.

When I was about 5, I remember Mum, Dad, Carol and I spent a whole weekend laying the concrete floor of the barn together.

Here we mixed, poured and laid the foundations for our family and a small business you may know as Rayefco Ltd.

'The Barn' was where it all happened

A place for fireworks and birthday parties, apple bobbing with friends and neighbours, a place where logs were burnt for warmth. Dad would disappear to the barn, to build wiring looms and the plywood shells of pottery wheels often with our help.

Here, he and I made bird tables and boxes to sell to raise money for my first computer.

Since then the barn has helped grow the pottery wheel business, played host to more grown up parties and recently housed pottery lessons for the grandchildren.



Sylvia and Steven Fitzwilliam
at a recent Guild event

'The Barn'. Photographed early morning recently by Steven Fitzwilliam



Summer Fetes

Mum and Dad have always supported many different committees and groups.

They were particularly involved in our school PTAs.

For these Mum and Dad would rope in various committee members to help make all kinds of inventive Money Raisers.

They started modestly with:

White elephant stall and whack a rat.

There was the almost famous crockery smash, eventually closed down for health and safety reasons (for Dad fun always had an element of danger).

I remember a Kinnock v Thatcher Welly Wanging Stand with the Abletts, the aim was to hit a party leader with a size 10 welly.

Then there was Mervyn's masterpiece, 9 hole Crazy Golf Course. It was well received and reappeared on many occasions since.

Mum and Dad's endeavours raised good money for these schools and were always masses of fun.

Pottery Wheels

As you know Mervyn designed his own

Pottery Wheel and created a company with Sylvia.

The first wheel was made for the eminent Mick Casson and tested in the classrooms of Harrow Art School in the 60s.

The wheel was inspired by two of Dad's biggest heroes – Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the Spitfire.

Steve Harrison, an excellent potter and Merv's good friend, recounted that for Dad, *"Great engineering should always include part of a Spitfire in it. And his wheels did."*

For many potter's Mervyn's design of wheel is so reliable and quiet, it almost disappears at the hand of the potter.

I also spoke with Chris Brewschawn, of Art in Action. Mervyn often supplied wheels to his summer Arts event in Oxford. Chris recounted the mutiny of over 20 potters when it was suggested that Dad's wheels might not be used for the event. Chris talked of his affection for Mervyn, who he described as having a profound decency and integrity. Mervyn believed in "doing what you enjoy and doing it well".

Memories of my Father Continued

Dad's wheels have been a formative part of our family life and have introduced us to many of you lovely people. Mervyn was a proud chairman of the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild and influenced Studio Pottery over the last 50 years.

In phone calls and conversations with you all recently, tributes to Mervyn have poured in. Our Family have felt strengthened by your kind words.

Mervyn, if you can hear us now, know that we love and respected you. We are very proud of all you achieved and we cherish all that you gave to us.

We will miss you.

Pots Mervyn made in Mick Casson's class at Harrow, mid 1960's. 35-38cms.



Ben Casson picking up wheel no. 1 (the white one) for Wobage Farm in the early 1980's



'The runaway train came down the track and she BLEW!' With the children at Wobage Farm: Sylwia, Andy McInnes and Mervyn. Image courtesy of Andy McInnes.



Mervyn at a typical DCPG event

Mervyn with life-size model of Isambard Kingdom Brunel

Memories of Mervyn

by Roger Cockram



I first met Mervyn in 1971. I hardly knew how to centre a lump of clay at that time, but I was keen to learn and to have a wheel, and being a scientist at that time it seems now that the engineer in Mervyn appealed to me greatly. He would talk, as it were, "in straight lines".

So I wanted a wheel - and bold as well as foolish I charged in and said that I needed the wheel to be flat across the top - not stepped up like the one he was showing me - so that 'one day I want to throw wide dishes'. "That's funny" Mervyn said "someone else asked me for that last week."

That 'someone' turned out to be none other than Mick Casson (my eventual friend and teacher).

So I learnt of, and attended, the Studio Pottery course at Harrow which Mick was running and which frankly changed my life - and Mervyn designed the second flat-top

type of wheel which he sold for the rest of his time.

Perhaps 20 years later Mervyn rang me here in Devon and said that because he and Sylvia were holidaying in Cornwall - could he call in on the way and check the wheel over - because "there must be something that needs doing to it after all this time."

Of course it was good to see them but even though nothing had gone wrong at all - he took the motor away and replaced the brushes - or somesuch - then sent it back. Such was the man...

One other brief tale - I've also been lucky enough to be invited to come and do a demo or 3 with DCPG - starting in 1986.

As you may know I like to finish up with a song on my guitar or banjo. Well on one visit Mervyn asked if he could carry my instruments onto the stage on his own - "so that they'll think I'm going to play. It'll give them a bit of a shock." He had a great wit...

If we're lucky - we can usually count a few people in our lives whom we feel we 'get on' with - but I can honestly say that Mervyn Fitzwilliam was one of a special breed.

Maya Angelou said once "It's not what we say or even do that people remember - what they remember is how we made them feel." Well that says it for me.

Mervyn was just a 'lovely man' - and that's how I shall always remember him.

By the way - the wheel's still going fine.

Memories of Mervyn

by Doug Jones



thought that it would bring the masses to Milton Keynes and other such god forsaken places. He did get a few folk to join the DCPG though.

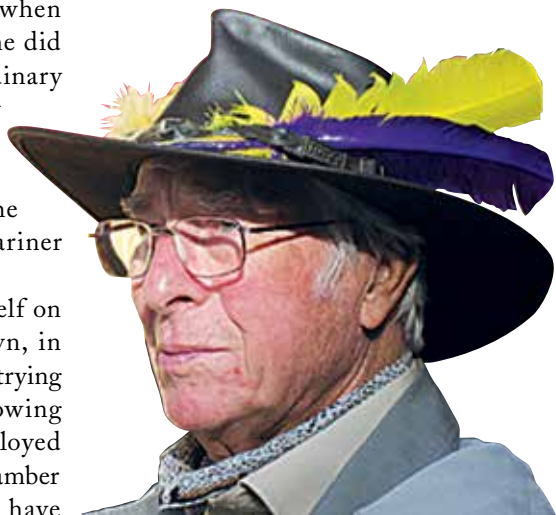
Mervyn and Sylvia liked parties and would throw them for birthdays, anniversaries, the Guild or because the sun was due to show its face on a day allocated.

Always supportive with a good business mind Mervyn suggested that, as people liked our garden, I should have some open days. He was now my unofficial unpaid business manager.

He and Sylvia also became some of my best customers/patrons. They alone could probably account for me recouping several years of renting and eventually buying the aforementioned wheel.

Not the best business man in the world then but the best friend any one could wish for.

He is unashamedly missed.



Like so many people, I first met Mervyn Fitzwilliam because I was in need of a potter's wheel. Not any old wheel but one that I could rent as I had just finished building a studio on dry land after many years afloat and was short of ready money.

I think I saw the ad' in Ceramic Review and the phone number suggested that the supplier was almost local. It was when the wheel was used for the first time did I realize that this indeed was no ordinary wheel and the supplier was no ordinary business man.

Like the ancient mariner one did not pass by without first joining the DCP Guild. Unlike the ancient mariner I soon became a friend.

In a very short time I found myself on several occasions, alongside Mervyn, in rather cold windswept shopping malls trying to encourage passers-by to try throwing a pot. I still have no idea who employed Mervyn to do this, maybe the local chamber of commerce, but somebody might have

Mervyn by Steve Harrison

There is a connection between the Fitzwilliam wheel; the Rolls Royce and the Spitfire. It is true that Mervyn's wheels were coined the 'Rolls Royce' of wheels.

It is known that the Rolls Royce engine was used in the Spitfire and I also remember that Mervyn said to me, "*Great engineering should always include part of a Spitfire in it.*" And his wheels did.

However, his greatest achievement was to create something that was so well designed that for more than 50 years it has remained unchanged, allowing generations of potters to freely connect with the clay in a way which made the wheel invisible.

Perhaps it is this invisible force that is only recognised when it is gone.



Pauline Ashley, Mervyn Fitzwilliam, Steve Harrison and Vivienne Rodwell-Davies outside 'The Barn' during Steve's Fast Firing 'Rocket' Salt Kiln-building and Firing Workshop for the DCPG. Photograph by Bipin

This obituary for Mervyn appeared on the Ceramic Review and Contemporary Ceramics Facebook pages. Thanks to both organisations and to Steven Fitzwilliam for their kind permission to reproduce it here.

We are sad to announce that Mervyn Fitzwilliam, founder of Rayefco Ltd. and once chair, editor and committee member for the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild, sadly passed away on 9 Jan 2013, aged 75.

A good friend of Mick Casson, who he met at Harrow Art School in the early 60s, Mervyn was encouraged by Mick to use his mechanical engineering skills and technical background to design "a better wheel". A few months later Mick sat on Mervyn's prototype wheel excitedly and gave it a try. His immediate and typically exuberant response was something along the lines of; "Merv, this is terrific! Can I have this one?"

Over the years, he and his wife Sylvia, with the help of friends and family, built nearing a 1000 wheels from their Hertfordshire "barn". They often personally delivered wheels all over the country. For those who came to pick up their new acquisition, there was always a warm welcome, a technical demonstration, a brief tour, and of course plenty of cups of tea or coffee.

Mervyn and Sylvia would often travel the UK either delivering wheels, or making repairs and would carry additional spares, 'just in case'. They'd always receive an equally warm welcome in return, chat for a time and purchase a pot from the artist they'd visited, if they could.

On occasion, Mervyn would take a call from a potter he might just about remember from the distant past, with a question on the lines of...

"Hello Mervyn, I've had one of your wheel for, oh about 25 years, I use it every day and it's working just fine, but I wondered if you thought it might need a once over, just to be sure?"

Mervyn's helpful energy and enthusiasm will be greatly missed by friends, family and of course the pottery community. His memory will always remain dear in our hearts.

Steven Fitzwilliam



After Ros' very warming "hot toddy", we settled down to Toff Milway's wonderful talk and demonstration of his salt-glazed tableware at the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild Open Day. Toff began with saying that it felt like it was a "Harrow Boys Day" as Roger Cockram (the other guest potter) and Mervyn Fitzwilliam (DCPG late chairperson) had all been at the Studio Pottery course at Harrow run by Mick Casson and Vic Margrie; Toff started his studies there in 1970. He set up his pottery at Conderton, a Cotswold village at the foot of Bredon Hill in 1985, having spent a number of years working at different potteries including Winchcombe Pottery with Ray Finch as well as working in Africa, France and the U.S.A.

Toff described his enthusiasm and enjoyment of food and because of this great passion, he has been throwing functional tableware pots for 45 years, using slips and salt-glaze firing to achieve the beautiful decorative effects on his pots. Toff describes himself as someone who makes pottery which is *"relatively simple but I do it really well"* and he makes a whole range of stunning food containers. One of his top tips is that if you get the size of a dish wrong nobody will buy it but get the size right then all is good...

"The old brown pot provides an excellent platform for displaying food - potatoes look very good in these kinds of dishes" and therefore this is still his main body of work.

However Toff is now beginning to find that he has *"had enough of round pots"* and he has developed new and exciting forms and decoration applications. His fish pots, which

he has developed over recent years, have led him to *"up his game"* and he loves the challenge of producing these. After throwing a circular dish, Toff makes a hollow rim enabling the form to be pulled and modelled into a fish which looks as if it is directly swimming out of the dish.

If Toff wants to create ovals and squares, they are first thrown then cut and altered; apart for the large salmon plates, moulds are used instead. His wife has a theory that his *"pots get bigger and bigger as it approaches lunch or suppertime!"*

Toff still works on an Alsager wheel and has done so for 30 years. He makes and uses homemade tools to fit the purpose of the task, for example ordinary table knives which are cut and tapered and then used for scoring and cutting off pieces of clay which are always thrown on the wheel batts.

Toff uses one white stoneware clay body which he has made up to his specification, asking the commercial producers to change the body to accommodate for his salt-glaze firings. He orders five tons at a time, which usually lasts him four years. His accountant says that the cost of the clay is less than 5% of his total costs.

After coffee, Toff was ready to show us his skilful throwing and decorating techniques. With a boiler suit over his smart attire and bow tie, he settled down to demonstrate how he makes tableware dishes, including his famous fish dish. The idea for these was spawned when a zoologist asked if Toff could make a commemorative plate for his baby who was born under the Zodiac sign of Pisces. It took eighteen months to work up the design.

The secret of the dish is its hollow rim, which is achieved by attaching a large coil of paper clay onto a thrown dish, then after making a gap like a Victorian posy rim, the inner surfaces are joined together, and firmly wiggled to really seal the join.

Toff uses his fingers to tease and shape the fish, this can take hours to do but he loves creating the form, and he always has to carefully consider how the tail and fins fit in with the function of the dish. He has never really studied a real fish form, it is more *"a cartoon"* and so he feels that *"he blags his way through life!"*

The fins were then added with slurry; holes are made on each fish as part of the pattern to prevent any blows during the firing process. Toff will use a blow torch to enable him to continue to form the decoration of the dish or he will wrap it up if he needs to leave it.

Toff's Top Tips for Decoration

Sketching

Toff showed us how he decorated his tableware, firstly coating it with a background slip then the fish shape is sketched out by using a soft brush with Dylon diluted with water, this has the added bonus of completely firing away.

Rope Edging

Using a Screwfix pencil (or a twig) Toff pressed into the rim of a dish *"simple things but artful"*. With this rope edge round his pots, Toff feels that he is *"creating and using light to bring jazz to the pot"*.

Scratch Lines

If scratch lines are made into the slip, applied colours will not bleed into one another so this creates another decorative effect.

Vitreous Slips

Toff wants to show watery effects on his individual pieces and uses soft coloured vitreous slips (a mixture of slip and glaze) to achieve this; it is applied using a soft floppy brush with very little slip on the brush.

This is gradually built up on top of the scales of his fish decoration and thereby ending up with fat beads of glass which, after the firing, reflect the light and brings life to the scales of the fish.





Potters Open Day Toff Milway continued



Salt Glaze

The salt glaze firing helps to produce subtle blues and greens which are the essence of Toff's work. Salt glaze is an unusual ceramic process as the outside of a clay pot is melted into the glaze by salt at a very high temperature. This is achieved by throwing common salt (NaCl) on to the flames at top temperature (1320°C) causing it to vaporise and reactive Sodium (Na) is released to dissolve the highly siliceous (SiO₂) stoneware clay into a soda (glaze) on the pots. (Info taken from Toff's website)

Firing

Toff used to fire 15 times a year but now it is around 6 or 7 times. His kiln is 1 cubic metre and it takes approximately six weeks of making to fill the kiln. It takes four days to pack the salt kiln as it has to be packed correctly but as Toff says the rewards are worth it and he is prepared to put in the time and struggle. He once fires with propane gas which he finds is clean and efficient. The cost of firing is about £150.



Throwing Rectangular Dish

Toff centred the clay on the batt then threw the wall of the pie dish without a bottom. *"If you have a sloping wall, it will arch when knocking it into shape - this will then look interesting"*. Toff also likes to check that the outside is as well finished as he wants it to be before continuing with the next stage of making. If he wants to have a rectangular dish then he manipulates the sides into that shape, leaving this to dry until the afternoon or the next day. Toff slab rolled the base using hessian and sticks which he rolled out on flashboard or soffit board obtained from a builders' merchant. This helps to absorb the water evenly from the clay. The slab is then smoothed with slurry to make it wet and sticky before Toff placed the cut through rectangular sides onto it. Toff showed his *"wiggle technique"* to join firmly and securely the wall of the dish to the base.

Toff gave us an amazing master class demonstration with so many insights into his throwing techniques, fish dishes and his superb application of decoration. His gentle humour prevailed throughout, as well as sharing with us some of his very useful and practical tips. But I must say one of the most memorable moments of the whole day for me was when, at the end of the day, I came to help pack away Toff's tableware. His careful precision packing and labelling his work was a revelation; there was a special place for every pot and dish. This was so effective and time efficient and it has seriously made me consider that I need some serious re-organising of my own haphazard exhibition carrier boxes!

Thanks to Toff for such a wonderful demonstration.



Dora Billington



by Marshall Colman
Photograph: Copyright Central Saint Martin's School of Art



Guild member Marshall Colman is researching the life of Dora Billington with the intention of writing her biography and asks if anyone has any information about her or pieces of her pottery.

"Her importance as a pottery teacher is universally recognised," says Marshall. "Among the ceramists she taught at the Central School of Arts and Crafts were Gordon Baldwin, Alan Caiger-Smith, Ray Finch, Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, Nora Braden, Robert Fournier, Ursula

Mommens, David Queensberry, William Newland, Margaret Hine, Kenneth Clark and Ann Wynn Reeves."

He says that little has been written about her, there is no personal archive and that there are few of her pots in public collections. "With this lack of detail, anything anyone knows about her would be helpful: correspondence, portraits of her (at least two were painted, by Rex Whistler and Catherine Brock), pieces of her work in private collections, sketchbooks and reminiscences (even at second-hand). "Nothing is too small or insignificant."

"As Tanya Harrod has remarked, it is often the fate of unmarried craftswomen to have no-one to care for their legacy. At a time when Dora Billington is slipping from living memory, I hope to rescue her from obscurity, to write about her life, her pottery and her contribution to ceramic education."

If you can help, please contact Marshall at either marshall@marshallcolman.com, 29 Flint Way, St Albans AL3 6DU or phone 07900 281651.



Diana Tonnison



Congratulations to Guild member Diana Tonnison who won the prize for the best hand built piece in the London Potters Exhibition at Morley Gallery, Westminster Bridge Road, last November for her piece *'Fish market box - Cornish Mackerel'*



Our December meeting has always had a special atmosphere; relaxed and jovial, fuelled by the scent of hot spices from the mulled wine and mince pies being prepared nearby. It is also becoming the slot for our own members to demonstrate their talents, talk about the exotic places they have worked in, and generally entertain us.

Certainly this year we had a most convivial time and were greatly impressed by the professionalism of both our member guests. There was a turnout of about 30 people, including a number of new members, which was great.



Annette Cole

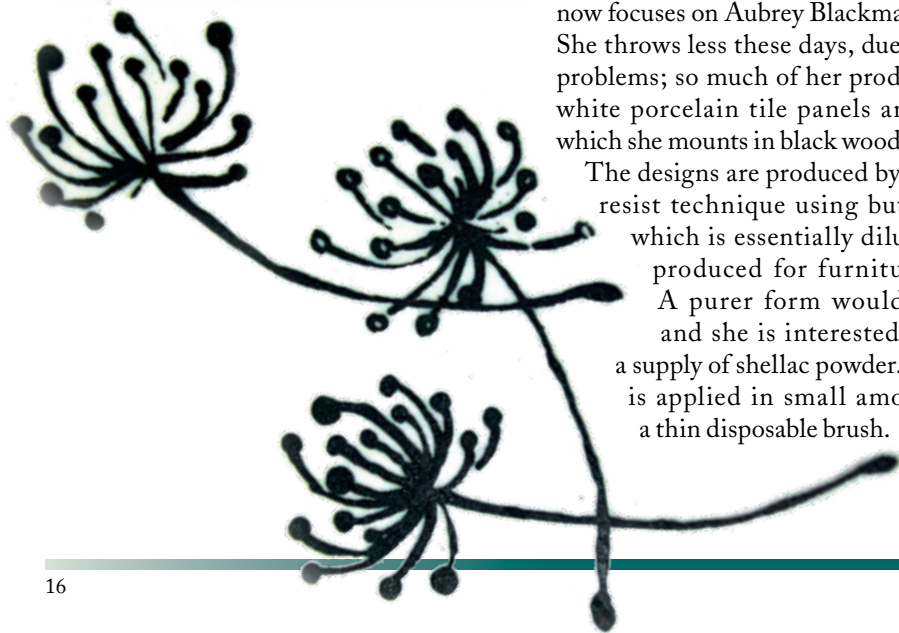
Annette came first with a short illustrated talk about the development of her work from creating textures in slip to her unique landscapes in crisp black and white designs.

The demonstration that followed proved her to be an excellent teacher, well prepared and able to engage with her audience. She had to work hard to fit it all into her allotted hour, as the notes that follow will show. I will make full use of her notes for this, for which I am very grateful.

Annette has used a lot of different clays while exploring and honing her skills and now focuses on Aubrey Blackman porcelain. She throws less these days, due to physical problems; so much of her production is of white porcelain tile panels and pictures which she mounts in black wooden frames.

The designs are produced by an unusual resist technique using button polish which is essentially diluted shellac produced for furniture makers.

A purer form would be better, and she is interested in finding a supply of shellac powder. The polish is applied in small amounts using a thin disposable brush.



by Ros McGuirk

Photography by Lutz Krainhöfner

Annette's notes on the making process and her slip and glaze recipes follow below:

Process

- ✿ Clay type - not groggy (do have example of grogged) then depends on glaze or not
- ✿ Clay thickness - too thin will warp and may crack when washing shellac
- ✿ Roll clay out and smooth surface using a rubber kidney to compact if a flat surface
- ✿ Flat work - stack on wooden batts to prevent from warping and dry slowly
- ✿ Allow to dry until soft leather hard if applying slip otherwise the shellacked slip will lift during biscuit firing.
- ✿ Apply slip with a soft brush as smooth as possible as ridges show when shellacked. If large areas are to be free of shellac/slip it is worth working out in advance in order to apply slip only where it is needed and avoid unnecessary work and staining of the clay.
- ✿ Allow to dry completely then apply shellac decoration. Some people apply shellac on leather hard ware, but I find that it washes away more easily
- ✿ Pencil design on gently if complex.
- ✿ Apply shellac (button polish) with a brush. I buy cheap brushes as they do not last long with the shellac. Brushes can be washed out with meths. If working in a hot environment the button polish thickens up and it is more difficult to get fine lines so do not work outside in the sun

- ✿ Allow shellac to dry. I usually leave it overnight to fully harden
- ✿ With a wet (not waterlogged) sponge wash off excess slip or clay from around the shellac. Remember to regularly rinse the sponge otherwise the shellac decoration can be worn away. I use a synthetic sponge as the closer texture produces a cleaner finish.
- ✿ Allow to dry fully before biscuit firing. I fire to 1030°C
- ✿ Rub over the surface with a soft, fine towel to remove any slip that might have lifted - better to know at this stage than after the glaze firing
- ✿ Glaze options - translucent, glaze that breaks that breaks on the ridges or very thin transparent glaze. Porcelain and white clays can be left unglazed depending on the end use.
- ✿ Fire porcelain to cone 9 - 1265°C



Annette Cole *Continued*

As you can see, this work is intensive and time consuming, so, for an antidote, Annette makes large garden pots from crank. We were shown a picture of a large shallow dish glazed in a gorgeous blue with a contrasting textured rim in brown and beige clay.

Annette also has a career as a pharmacist and has a young family, so our double thanks go out to her for finding the time and energy

to travel from North Yorkshire to our meeting! She was supported by her mum, Hazel, and it was especially good to have two old friends back with us.

In appreciation, Annette pointed out that as a group we are doing very well, compared to some others that she knows, to achieve so much on a shoe string.

So, well done everyone!

Pauline Ashley 7 December 2012

by Ros McGuirk



she restored. She used her potting skills to make clay formers to support the pieces she was working on, thus introducing a new technique to the glass restoration department. There were photos of the beauty and grandeur of the Dome of the Rock, the Wailing Wall and street scenes from Jerusalem. Pauline gave us a glimpse into life in Jerusalem, too, as she got to know the other volunteers and professionals working at the National Museum.

I have kept this account brief as I was enjoying her pictures too much to describe it all, but also because she has promised to edit her elegantly written script for later publication in the newsletter. I hope she finds the time to do this as it was wonderfully written, and I could not have done it justice.

The raffle was drawn at the end of the meeting. It raised over £70, thanks to Ronnie. The only mystery remains is who took home the mince pies?

Jill was looking forward to her winnings...

Pauline then took over and held us spell bound with her account of how she came to work in Israel for three months. We learned a lot about another time consuming process – that of glass restoration.

We marvelled at how anyone could spend days playing with dull bits of broken glass without apparently making any progress (how many broken items do we put into the recycling bin?) And then we gasped at the beauty of the exquisite glass bottle tops that

Committee Notes

by Ros McGuirk

The committee met on Monday 18 Feb at Longfields. Present were Sylvia Fitzwilliam, Ros McGuirk, Colin Hazelwood, Ronnie and John Powell, Ingrid Thorstad and Sue Lines. Sue kindly agreed to take the minutes in the absence of Mary Anne.

The agenda covered practically all aspects of the guild and its activities. It was mostly a case of assessing the current situation and preparing for future actions.

The committee spent some time discussing what posts it feels need filling and the job descriptions, particularly with respect to our flagship event, the Open Day. Look out for the list of vacancies elsewhere in the newsletter and on the website.

We discussed becoming a charitable trust, which has been an item on our agenda for the last year. It looks as though the scheme we wish to join is now set up, so we hope to be submitting an application before long.

Membership numbers and the state of our bank balance are always under the spotlight at this time of year. Fortunately both are looking healthy right now. We have over one hundred members, and continue to grow. The price of subscriptions will be reviewed at the next meeting.

We discussed the future of running workshops, should we have an officer to organise them, and where they might be held? We also noted that we benefit on the occasions that our own members run workshops and offer us places.

The Conker Festival was an important item on the agenda. It was felt that we should do our best to continue to take part in this event as it helped maintain our profile as local potters, brought in new members and above

all gave us a valuable opportunity to have a go at teaching our skills to others. In addition it is both fun and profitable. However this was very much one of Mervyn's projects and he relied a lot on his own family to help run it, in addition to the guild. To continue to run it in the same format as before we will also need to purchase a couple more wheels.

Attention was given to the wood firing kiln at Boxmoor. Currently it is under wraps for the winter and awaiting a proper roof. The wood pile also requires a roof.

A recent photo showed how the building work at the site has adversely affected our kiln area and that the kiln needs a new tarpaulin. Action was taken the following weekend and the kiln now has a new plastic cover.

What sort of roof would be suitable at this site was left for Sylvia to discuss with the Boxmoor Trust as she has generously offered to fund it. Despite the difficulties of access while the builders are on site, the kiln has been renovated and it is ready to fire to stoneware.

Our presence at Boxmoor is regulated by a licence which is up for renewal. The terms and conditions were examined and discussed by the committee, with the aim of giving the site manager our views.

I trust that these notes give you a view of how we are aiming to continue the good work of the guild, very much as Mervyn did when he was at the helm. They are not a complete record and are less brief than intended.

Please note that the date of the next Potters Open Day is already arranged for Saturday 8th November.

The next committee meeting will be on Monday 13 May.



The Guild Needs You!

Potters Open Day Co-ordinator

This is possibly the most exciting job on the committee and would look good on any CV. It gives you the opportunity to get out and meet professional potters in your search for two good demonstrators. You also liaise with the venue Longdean School, as well as with the guest potters.

Working with you will be the committee, in particular the publicity officer, and Ingrid who will handle the ticket sales.

It is a team effort, so there is plenty of help at hand. Ronnie, who is retiring from the post, had it well organised, and she has plenty of material to pass on to the next POD co-ordinator.

This is a key post in the guild. For further information contact Ronnie at ronnie.powell@btinternet.com

Publicity

Involves contacting other groups by email or post about the three main events in our calendar: the start of our new season of meetings by sending the programme; the Open Day; and the annual exhibition by distributing flyers and invitations.

In addition you will publicise other occasional events. The previous officer, Kirsteen, also designed and printed the flyers/invitations and posters. This part of the job could be split if necessary.

Exhibitions

Involves dealing with the venue, the members and visitors. In recent years we have held our annual exhibition in Letchworth one year followed by Chenies the next. It seems to work well. Sue Lines and her team in Letchworth are happy to

Guild Members Vacancies

carry on, but Ros would like to hand over running the show at Chenies. Last time she had an excellent team and it was a most enjoyable event to organise.

Conker Festival Coordinator

Mervyn used to organise our part in the Conker Festival at Boxmoor and we are very keen to continue. This involves getting the equipment on to the site and arranging a team of potters to teach and sell pots.

It is held on a Sunday in mid-October, from 11am-3pm. Occasionally we are asked to do other shows, which you may also be asked to organise.

Workshops

We used to have one or two workshops a year, but this has declined in recent years as there has been no one prepared to organise them. It is great when people ask one of the demonstrators to give a workshop.

The role involves working with the venue, the master potter and the guild, with help from the publicity officer.

Miscellaneous

Mervyn used to test the electrical equipment, cables and sockets, and could certify them as safe. We need someone to take this over. Are any of our members suitably qualified?

Advertising Officer

Our current officer Karen George would be happy to hand over the job, but as we are short of help in other areas, she has kindly agreed to continue for now. She organises the ads in the newsletter - an important source of revenue, and also deals with the sponsors for the website.



Guild News, Events & Programme 2013

Save the date!

POD 2013 will take place at Longdean School, Hemel Hempstead, HP5 8JB. Set up: Friday 8 Nov from 5.00 pm.

Demonstration: Sat 9 Nov 9 am - 5pm.

Chenies Manor

Our annual exhibition will be at Chenies Gallery and will run from Wed 31 July until Thur 29 August. We will set up on Tues 30 July and hold the private view that evening.

Beautiful garden and house, open Weds and Thurs 2-5pm, so stewarding is not arduous. If working there, and for the private view, which is outside the opening hours, access is free.

Stan Romer Competition

The Stan Romer Competition will be held at the next AGM in October. The theme is 'Ceramics with Mixed Media'. The piece must be entirely the work of one current member (no collaborations allowed), made predominantly of ceramic specifically for the competition, ie within the current calendar year.

Fri 10 May: Sun Kim

Exploring form & volume across three continents. A Korean potter raised in Brazil who has her own unique style.

Fri 10 Sep: Stephen Parry

A 'September Special' on large pots with a master potter.

Roy Lichtenstein

Tate Modern

21 Feb 2013 - 27 May 2013.

Jonathan Kenworthy:

Six Decades of Sculpture

Pangolin Gallery 20 Mar - 20 April
Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG

David Bowie is

V&A

23 March - 11 August.

Retrospective of the career of David Bowie

Moore Rodin

Henry Moore and Auguste Rodin

29 March - 27 October
The Henry Moore Foundation,
Perry Green, Herts, SG10 6EE

Classic & Contemporary

Erskine, Hall & Coe Ltd

(Formerly Gallerie Besson)

4 - 25 April
Mon - Sat 10am-6pm
15 Royal Arcade, 28 Old Bond Street,
London W1S 4SP

Objectify - Ceramic Art

Contemporary Ceramics Centre

25 April - 18 May
63 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury,
WC1B 3BF. Four makers - Ashley Howard,
Andre Hess, Susan Disley & Jane Perryman

Pitstone Farm Museum Raku Firings with Ruby Sharp

Guild members can bring pots to fire using the glazes available or their own, we also give the public the opportunity to throw pots on the wheel and hand build. We would love members of the guild to come and participate on an occasional or regular basis. Contact Ruby Sharp for further information.

Dates for 2013:

May Day Bank Holiday 6th May
Bank Holiday Mon 27th May, Sun 9th June,
Sun 14th July, Sun 11th August,
Summer Bank Holiday 26th August,
Sun 8th September, Sun 13th October

**Acting Chairman and
Programme Secretary**

Ros McGuirk

13 The Park, St. Albans, Herts AL1 4RU
01727 834 326

ros.mcguirk@gmail.com

Secretary Mary Anne Bonney

56 Clarence Road, St. Albans,
Herts AL1 4NG. 01727 860 787
mabonney@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary Ingrid Thorstad

5 Church Lane, Chearsley,
Bucks HP18 0DH. 01844 208 702
ithorstad@btinternet.com

Treasurer Colin Hazelwood

14 Butterfield Road, Wheathampstead,
Herts, AL4 8PU. 01582 833146
woodhazel@waitrose.com

Open Day Organiser Vacant

Webmaster and technical adviser

John Powell 2 Abbots Place, Chesham,
Bucks HP5 3HL. 01494 774 398
john@thedcpg.org.uk

Pitstone Raku Organiser

Ruby Sharp 01494 728 364
ruby@rubysharp pottery.co.uk

Publicity Secretary Vacant

Library and Exhibitions Sue Lines

78 Bedford Road, Letchworth,
Herts SG6 4DU
sue.lines@ntlworld.com

Workshop Organiser Vacant

Newsletter Editor Lynne McGeachie

lynne.mcgeachie@btopenworld.com

**Newsletter Design, Production and
co Editor Bipin**

bipin@thedcpg.org.uk

Production Assistant and Illustrator

Vivienne Rodwell-Davies
viviennerodwell@msn.com

Advertising Manager Karen George

karen@funkyzebra.org.uk

Newsletter Distributor Judi Tribe

judi.tribe@btinternet.com

Copy date for the next newsletter is
Friday 31 May. Please send to
lynne.mcgeachie@btopenworld.com
and to bipin@thedcpg.org.uk

50% DISCOUNT
to all members of
Pacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild

Many Unique Products...
Australian 'Walker's Ceramics' days inc.
PBIO3

Chrysanthos Colours & Brush-on Glazes

For helpful and friendly advice please contact us:
01243 265 845 • www.claymansupplies.co.uk

... where quality comes as standard

CLAYMAN

NORTHERN KILNS

				
GAS - Rakuno	GAS-Raku Flatpac	GAS-Rocket fibre	GAS-Rocket brick	GAS-Rakoomy
				
GAS - Meteor	GAS-Easy fire fibre	GAS-Easy fire brick	GAS-Burner tech	Bespoke kilns
				
NKSTL Studio	NKCTL Chieftain	NKOTL Chieftain	NKSQTL Champion	Kit kilns
				
NKFL Studio	NKFL Champion	NKFL Champion truck	Choice of Wheels	SlabRollers & PugMills
				
made by us	Control to any kiln	We listen & teach	Hobby & Plug in	Reconditioned
				
Built with pride	Nationwide	Service to any kiln	Weekly service runs	help on YouTube... pillingpottery northernkilns like us and share

www.northernkilns.com 01253 790307
info@northernkilns.com



WEST DEAN
COLLEGE





Short courses - Spring 2013

Gravity-defying coil pots and vitreous slips
Carolyn Genders • April 28 – May 2

Tall pots with surface textures
Gordon Cooke • May 27 – 31

Smoke and fire – Raku making and firing techniques
Alison Sandeman • June 16 – 21

Parts and pieces—throwing sculptural forms on the wheel
Virginia Scotchie • July 1 – 5

www.westdean.org.uk/college
bookingsoffice@westdean.org.uk. 0844 4994408



Best quality pottery materials and equipment supplies, with an excellent service at incredibly low prices.

With a huge range you need deal only with us for all your craft, hobby and education pottery needs, saving you on extra charges!


- Kilns • Wheels • Clays • Tools
- Glazes • Colours • Kiln Furniture

Buy online at
www.pottersconnection.co.uk

The Potters Connection
PO Box 3079 (Warehouse)
Stoke-on-Trent ST4 9FW
Tel: 01782 598 729 Fax: 01782 765 833
email: sales@pottersconnection.co.uk

FULL-TIME STUDY

WEST DEAN
COLLEGE



CONSERVATION CERAMICS

AND RELATED MATERIALS

DIPLOMAS & MAs


Very low student to staff ratio

High level of personal tuition

Practical hands-on bench skills

Bursaries available

Graduates now employed in leading heritage institutions or running their own businesses



FOR INFORMATION

+44 (0)1243 811 301

diplomas@westdean.org.uk

www.westdean.org.uk/college

POTCLAYS LIMITED



...with you all the way.


best selection of raw materials


best quality premium clay bodies


pottery wheels


pottery tools


electric & gas kilns


pottery machines


best quality glazes


pottery supplies


pottery supplies




Keep an eye on our facebook and twitter pages and join our mailing list to be one of the first to hear of our 2013 events!

Potclays Ltd, Brickkiln Lane, Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7BP
T: 01782 219810 F: 01782 286506 E: sales@potclays.co.uk
www.potclays.co.uk