



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD

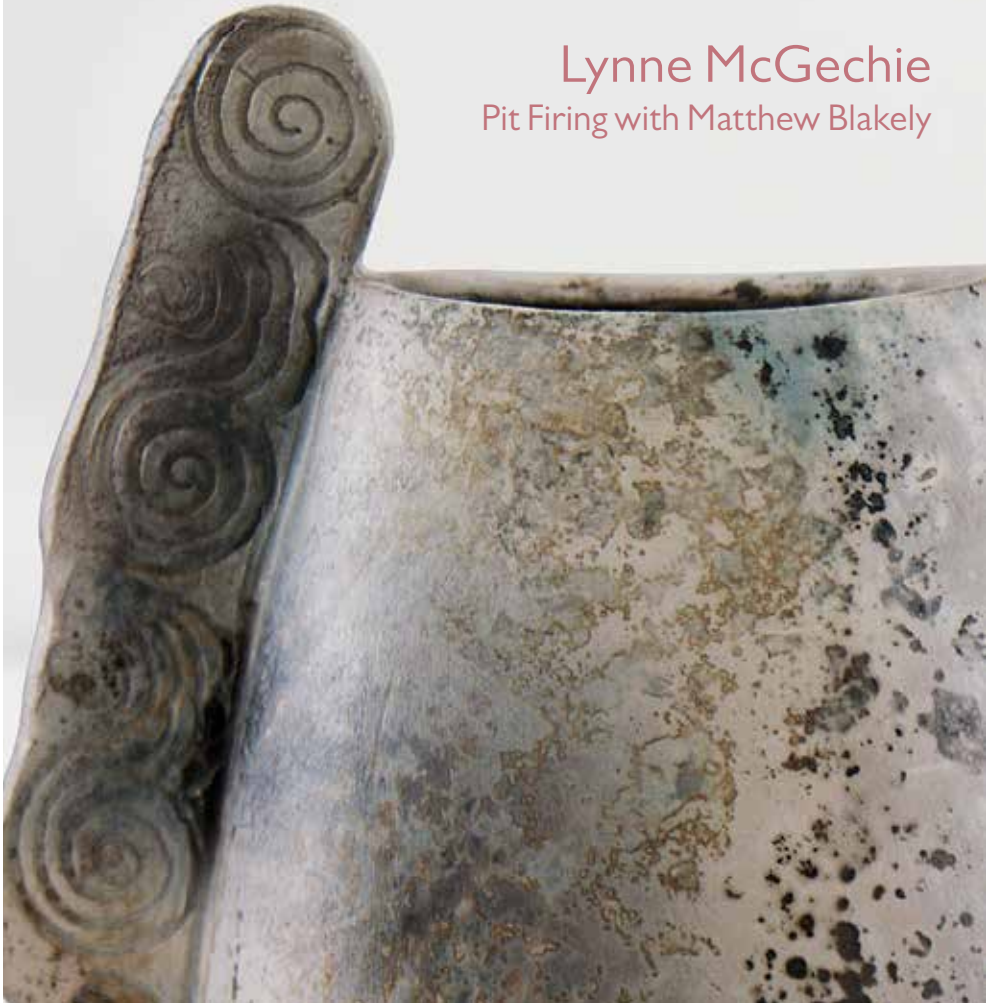


Aberystwyth 2013
Art in Clay Hatfield
Chenies Exhibition
Kigbeare Pottery
Primitive Clay
Soda Firing, Northfield Studio

www.thedcpg.org.uk Issue 10 Autumn 2013

Lynne McGeachie

Pit Firing with Matthew Blakely



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 2013/14

Single £28, Family (one address) £37, Student (full time) £20. 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).

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Editorial

Welcome back to our new season's exciting programme which features some nationally renowned potters - Stephen Parry; Steve Harrison; Kevin Millward; Chris Bramble; Kathleen Standen; Micki Schloessing along with two of our members, Marshall Colman and Les Parrott.

Not forgetting one of the highlights of our year the Potters Open Day (POD) on Saturday 9 November. For this POD we have two excellent demonstrators; Richard Wilson who uses coloured slips to create abstract patterns on his thrown and hand built work and Geoffrey Swindell who makes small intense porcelain forms.

If you've not already booked and you want to come along contact our membership secretary Ingrid Thorstad at ithorstad@btinternet.com for a booking form.

We also have the Boxmoor Conker Festival coming up on 20 October. This is a fun day when guild members run a 'have-a-go' event. More volunteers are needed so if you'd like to take part and help teach throwing (the main aptitude for this is being happy to work with children together with only a modicum of skill on the wheel) and hand building please contact Ros McGuirk: rosmcguirk@gmail.com.

You also get to sell your own pots!

Chenies Annual Exhibition 2013

Ros McGuirk

Thirteen members entered work and we filled the little gallery at Chenies without using the cellar. Helen provided her colourful paintings for the walls and they really enhanced the whole room and complimented the ceramics.

Generally the weather was fine so we had good foot fall, with most visitors to the gardens choosing the route that takes them through the gallery. They even came on damp days, unperturbed by the showers. Sales were steady, but seemed less than last time (we were there two years ago).

That indeed was the case, but the final total of £838 was not far behind, and was a good deal more than I expected.

Well done and thanks to all who helped put it together.





Pit Firing with Matthew Blakely by Lynne McGechie



We then built a wall around the kiln shelves with used kiln bricks from an old salt kiln Matthew had recently dismantled. The final result was a fairly sturdy structure; a kiln shelf lined pit with a brick wall above ground level.

The second step was to pack the pit. We took our bisque fired pieces and placed them in the pit on top of a layer of sawdust. Further sawdust, wood shavings and straw was packed around these pots, and then more pots and straw added until the pit was full. Some pots were wrapped tightly in seaweed, raffia, straw or aluminium foil before they were added to the pit; others were sprinkled with copper carbonate or bicarbonate of soda.

Then came the exciting part; lighting the fire! We made a small bonfire of paper and sticks on top of the pit. Once the fire had got a hold we built it up using larger pieces of wood until it was burning well and extended evenly across the whole of the pit.

We continued to feed this fire and let it burn for 10 or 15 minutes until it was quite extensive. Matthew then covered the fire with corrugated iron. This created quite a billow of smoke, but it soon died down. The fire was then left to smoulder away, which would take a day or so.

The first step was to prepare the pit. We started by digging a hole in the ground approx. L90cm x W60cm x D45cm. This was then lined with old kiln shelves, which being several centimetres higher than the depth of the pit, stood up a little above it.



We returned a week later to unpack the pit and see the effects of the fire. As is often the way with this type of firing the results were varied, but I was pleased with my pieces.

As I understand it the tighter the pieces are packed, the hotter the temperatures achieved and the more colour effects we are likely



Soda Firing August 2013



At the beginning of August this year I experienced my first ever soda firing. The Guild has a soda kiln housed in the grounds of Murray and Dorley Fieldhouse's home near Tring. Nestled in the Chilterns it is a delightful place and blessed with (mostly) sunny weather we were in an ideal setting for an open air firing

Day One

Being a complete novice I had a lot to learn. The first steps are to prepare the kiln and the work for the firing. This meant opening it up, keeping an accurate record of where the bricks came from in order to

to see. With a lower the temperature more blackening occurs. The colouring on my pieces is subtle, but pleasing. I particularly like the effects of the seaweed, which I would definitely use again.

I like pit firing because of its low tech nature. With a big enough garden and being careful not to be a nuisance to neighbours it is something we can all tackle.

It's fun to do and the effects can be dramatic or subtle, but always interesting.



by Lynne McGechie

ease the process of closing up the kiln once packed; removing debris from the kiln; cleaning the kiln shelves and supports; applying batt wash; and preparing wadding to use when packing the kiln.

As for the pots, these needed to be decorated. Following the advice of my more experienced colleagues I decorated the outer surfaces with slips. These react with the soda in the kiln to create the burnt oranges and browns, mottled blues and occasional lustres that we associate with soda firing. I glazed the inner surfaces as these are less likely to be touched by the soda vapour.



Lastly we packed the kiln. The pieces on the outer edges of the shelves are likely to have greater contact with the vaporised soda and the work is packed with this in mind.

Once packed the kiln is closed up, using mortar to fill in any gaps in the kiln wall. The gas bottles were tested and the kiln lit for a short burst to help dry off any remaining moisture. We then left the site for the night.

Day Two

Jan and Dorley rose early to light the kiln at 5.00 am. The rest of the team arrived throughout the morning. The temperature in the kiln rose gradually and after a 'bring and share' picnic lunch, the kiln was ready, having reached approx. 1220°C, for the introduction of the soda (see technical notes for the details).

Once all the soda had been introduced the firing continued with a soak until cone 9 was down and cone 10 was bending over. It was then crash cooled before being sealed and left to cool naturally.

Opening the Kiln

We returned a week later to open the kiln and see the results of our efforts. The entrance to the kiln was carefully dismantled and the pieces from the kiln removed and placed on the ground so that they roughly mirrored their relative positions in the kiln enabling us to register the effect of the soda on pots in different parts of the kiln.

Unfortunately on this occasion we had a bit of a disaster. One of the pots had exploded and fragments became glazed on to other pieces (grrrrh!). The soda had worked well on some pieces, but others were hardly affected at all leaving a dull, dry surface. So all in all for me the results were disappointing. That said, it is an interesting process and there is a lot to learn, so more experience is required....



This was my eighth trip to ICF, the international ceramics festival at Aberystwyth, and I still enjoy it very much. It has been going on a lot longer than that, though, just ask guild member Jola Spytowska who remembers the first one.

It always makes a huge impression on first timers, who often struggle to get around the site to see everything. I had to fit my first

trip into one day, and then hurry back to my brother's fortieth birthday party, with my brain exploding.

Phil Rogers was the festival director then and all the demonstrations were top class, often amazing. The kiln firings have developed into performance art since then, but the standard of demonstrations is more variable.

This year I was delighted to see at least six former demonstrators of ours, including Jitka Palmer and Doug Fitch who gave excellent accounts of themselves and their work. I met Jitka shortly after she had been on stage and she graciously thanked us for having her all those years ago. "It was like a master class in presentation without which I would not have had the confidence to do this today." She paints people and their stories on pots and has recently started making portrait heads, developing an interesting way with armatures and finishing off.

The star of the show was undoubtedly one Beth Stichter from the US, who wowed us all with her large ceramic animal sculptures. They are slightly abstracted, elongated, beautifully aligned and imbued with human emotions. They are akin to the medieval beasts and to heraldry. And they are huge. She gave a talk on the making of one piece which comprised a pair of embracing goats at least ten feet high. It was a massive undertaking, and she cut no corners in the making nor the telling.

There were four soda kilns on site, two burning wood and two gas, so I was in seventh heaven. Joe Finch ran three, and provided an almost constant stream of hot pots as the kilns were emptied at different



times. Check out the ICF website for a plan for one of these small, affordable kilns, see internationalceramicsfestival.org.uk

It is two whole years to the next festival and I am looking forward to it already. If you are still wondering why, then Jean's glowing smile as she hugged her beautiful raffle prize just about explains it all.

Others' comments on the weekend:

"My first visit, I'll come again." **Janet.**

"Great experience wonderful"

"Very interesting first visit. Beth Stichter will stay in my mind forever!"

"Also my first visit. Rafael Perez was the highlight for me with his expanding black clay. Beth was the star of the show with her personality and the size of her pieces." **Nigel Lambert.**



Aberystwyth 2013 *continued*



by Ros McGuirk

"My first visit was as good as it was cracked up to be. Highlight was Beth and Doug Fitch who got less nervous and more exuberant by the end - good progression."

Tim, London Potters

"What a fabulous weekend! Crowned by winning first prize in the raffle! My first Aberystwyth - such amazing demos and my impression confirmed that potters are the friendliest and nicest people!!!"

Jean Langdon

"Had a fab time, very interesting talks & will bring back some valid information to try when I get home. I also won the Steve Dixon piece - very lucky in the raffle!"

Angela

"An amazing event again. So interesting to see international ceramicists coming together.

Dancing the night away on Saturday night... Great to meet and talk with the makers and see their enthusiasm showing in their pots. Loved the New Zealanders' potato kiln and their phone book kiln and also the big raku kiln. Anything goes." **Judi Tribe**



Yes, they did eat the potatoes afterwards.



Japanese Master Classes at Kigbeare *by Ros McGuirk*



The advertisement in Ceramic Review caught my eye. I knew that Kigbeare is in Devon, and that Lisa Hammond had spent a couple of years there perfecting her craggy, Shino pots, but that was all. Nevertheless, the idea of a week's holiday in Devon with three days potting thrown in was a most attractive proposition - even to Husband who does not pot.

And so it turned out. The holiday cottage we found on the edge of Oakhampton was hidden by trees and had ancient foundations, and we had the use of a hot tub out in the woods. Dartmoor was within walking distance and a long distance cycle track was just above us. The wonderful weather we had this summer meant that it was too hot for a hot tub but we enjoyed everything else that bit more!

Kigbeare Manor Farmhouse is not named on the OS map, nor on Google, so you need good map reading skills and directions to find your way. It is two miles off the road, tucked into a quiet valley. Access is by a single track lane that runs straight across the map but in reality is a typical Devon lane - deep and devious, with few passing places. There are no signs to the place, apart from a few saying mischievously

'you are nearly there', without saying where.

It is, however, well worth the journey, for you will find an old Devon farmhouse that has been lovingly restored by the current owners, Maddy and Phil. The surrounding barns and outhouses have been extended and provide the core around which has grown a community of artisan craftsmen, including several potters.

There are ten studios, three or four apartments, one of which is run as a holiday let, and a gallery. Two of the studios are currently available for short term lets and this is where the course was held.

The three day course was taught by three potters from Japan, Peter Seabridge, Reiko Nagata and Masahiro Kumagae. Their aim was to demonstrate their skills and help us make certain forms. Peter showed us his way of throwing pots with such prominent throwing rings that they start to spiral off centre. Reiko taught decorative brushwork and how to build up patterns on tiles and vases that were prepared especially for the course. Kuma taught us his unique ways of making and working with slabs.

He also showed us how he throws and how to improvise a chuck for turning bowls

using kiln props. We beavered away in between the demonstrations, trying out the new techniques and aiming to get a few pots in the wood firing the following weekend.

It was a gentle introduction to potting in Japan. Peter has lived there for about 18 years and now has a Japanese family, so he provided lots of anecdotes about life there and potting. We drank gallons of green tea, and at each lunch the excellent food always included a Japanese dish. The first one was DIY potter's sushi.

One afternoon Reiko and Kuma performed the tea ceremony using a tent as a makeshift tea house. Neither of them speaks English, but they gave us a great deal through their enthusiasm and generosity.

I thoroughly enjoyed the three days I spent at Kigbeare. It was a very well-run course with three excellent potters and supported by a fourth - Brian Dickinson - and I also met a group of new people who are all passionate about pots. Kigbeare is a hidden gem - do spread the word.

Look out for other courses at kigbeare.co.uk and if you are thinking of just dropping in, better to phone Maddy on 01837 53787 before you go.



Art in Clay 2013 Hatfield



by Ruby Sharp
Photography by Bipin



Ruby Sharp



Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

Art in clay for the exhibitors starts on the Thursday before, when setting up, with all of us having to make split second decisions about how and what to show. Thanks to Andy and Di McInnes' well organised preparation settling in is made relatively straight forward by hovering helpers, should anyone require some assistance.

Even though in some ways we are competing with each other for sales, we all feel happy to give and take advice and help, and work together looking forward to the unknown - the visiting public.

I tend to think that the DCPG are very lucky to have a large exclusive and dynamic ceramic show right on our door step. Having been a participant at Art in Clay for many years it has become a comfortable place where I have made many good friends, learning and teaching along the way.

At Hatfield's 19th Art in Clay this year the 'Throw a Pot' marquee team consisted of guild members Vivienne Rodwell-Davies, Lutz Krainhöfner, and me. Alongside us were Steve Booton - whom I know through Northern Potters and who has a passion for all things Japanese including ceramics - and Steve Ellis.

The weather was excellent, the public enthusiastic - even if sometimes the adults were too shy to try their hand at throwing, instead always pushing their children to have a go. Some came back several times for more, trying each one of our teaching styles because we all approach throwing techniques in different ways and between us have a wide variety of methods we can use to solve problems and help the learner.

Our stands were well displayed and professional as you would expect, but unfortunately sometimes some people seem to forget that we are displaying and selling our work as well as giving the uninitiated a throwing session. We hope the experience of having a go will help them understand



Lutz Krainhöfner



Steve Ellis



Lutz Krainhöfner



Ruby Sharp



Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

the intricacies of the wheel and clay and maybe give them a taste for more.

It fascinates me how many people may miss some of the great work in the small tents in the middle field away from the continuous flow of the larger marquees around the perimeter, as each year I have been asked by someone where was I in the show?

This year Art in Clay had many new exhibitors whom I have not met before, but as usual the atmosphere and camaraderie was great. We all felt included as part of a great community and tradition.

I hope you all got something from your visit if you went, and if not are tempted to come along next year. See you there.

Also at Hatfield Guild President John Higgins and member Danielle Bunker



John Higgins



Danielle Bunker



Book Review **Additions to Clay Bodies** by Kathleen Standen



Image kindly supplied by Claire Weatherhead at Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

It is quite fascinating to see what can be achieved by adding things to clay. As one who makes mostly functional ware I concentrate on form, functionality and surface decoration using slips and glazes. Once the clay body is chosen it is given little consideration. This book turns that all around and takes a long look at the basic material, clay, and how it can be changed by making additions. The author has used her own ceramic practice as a basis for the book and has travelled widely, mostly in the UK and the US, to research other makers. She is a generous guide providing many tips and ideas. The photographs are a delight and there are excellent sequential sets of them illustrating techniques used by different ceramic artists.

The book begins by looking at those who dig their own raw clay and those who mix it themselves, before going on to describe the myriad different things that can be added to create interesting effects; straw, cotton wool, fibres, ground rocks, rust, grain, germinating seeds, fibre glass and colorants. The list is almost infinite. Paper clay is well covered and Egyptian paste gets a mention. Some additions



did surprise me, though. Andy Glass has added fuse wire to large coiled pots and then runs a current through them... and Jonathan Roberts uses cement!

The book covers a wide range makers using a variety of effects and styles within the field of abstract sculptural ceramics. In addition there is some figurative work from Emma Rogers, Susan O'Byrne and Penny Green, and a beautiful pot by Nic Collins. Occasionally I wanted more information, such as the scale of some of the pieces. This question is particularly relevant to those like Claudi Casanovas whose work has enormous presence and who was represented by a very small photograph. I also wondered why there was no recipe for Egyptian paste.

To summarise, I found the book a good read with more than enough information to start experimenting, which really is the whole point of it. It also provides an excellent overview of the state of ceramic art in the twenty first century.

'Additions to Clay Bodies' is published by Bloomsbury and retails at £13.50 which I think is a bargain for a book of this quality.

Ros McGuirk



Using primitive clay **any experience out there?**



by Sue Lines

I bought some primitive clay having been excited at the demonstration and opportunity to make something at the Biennial at Aberystwyth in 2011. I have found it a beast to work with. Very difficult to model and that in spite of the different added ingredients it is still very dense and slow to dry. At Aberystwyth we

made small objects and they were dried with the heat of the kiln and then immediately fired. I haven't found any information on line about using primitive clay so I have assumed that with larger pieces it should be allowed to dry out thoroughly which it does but takes ages to do. Any experience?



Events and Guild Programme 2013/14

Ros McGuirk



Box Moor Conker Festival

Sunday 20 Oct 2013. 12 noon - 3 pm

Conkers will soon be ripe and ready for their annual bashing. What better place to test your skill than at the Box Moor Conker Festival? Several of our members have, over the years, shown great skill with their chosen conker, some have even won prizes!

Join members of the Fitzwilliam family and the Guild who are already committed to running our big 'Have-a-go' event. We need potters to help teach hand building and throwing, and to sell pots. We also need help setting up and taking down.

Bring your own pinny and towel and some basic tools, including a wire.

Money we raise will make a useful contribution to Guild funds as well as a donation to charity. What you make through pottery sales, you get to keep.

Please RSVP to me, Ros McGuirk at 13 The Park, St Albans, AL1 4RU.

Christmas Open Studios

Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

Frethun Cottage, 20 Grimsdyke Crescent, Barnet EN5 4AG.

Sat 30 Nov, Sun 1 Dec & Sat 7, Sun 8 Dec
1.00pm-5.30pm

Zalina Dewan: Art & Craft Christmas Sale

The Stables, 31 West Drive, Off Lakeland Close, Harrow Weald HA3 6TX

Sat 23 Nov & Sun 24 Nov 2013. 11am - 5pm

Copy date for Winter newsletter is 31 November. Please send with good quality high resolution images to lynne.mcgechie@btopenworld and to bipin@thedcpg.org.uk

Fri 11 Oct: AGM, Stan Romer Competition and Steve Harrison

Steve is renowned for his exquisite salt glazed pots and high quality craftsmanship. He is delighted to be judging a competition on 'Ceramics With Mixed Media'

Fri 8 Nov: Potters Open Day

Volunteers needed for setting up from 5pm

Sat 9 Nov: Potters Open Day

Geoffrey Swindell and Richard Wilson

Special Kevin Millward Weekend

Fri 6 Dec: Talk & Demo

One of the best throwers in the business makes a welcome return

Sat 7 Dec: Throwing workshop

W Herts College, Watford. £35 per session

Session 1: 9.30am-12.30pm

Session 2: 1.30-4.30pm

7 students in each session, all will be expected to clean up afterwards.

Send cheque made out to DCPG to 13 The Park, St Albans, AL1 4RU. Please state if you have a preference for am or pm.

Fri 10 Jan Members' meeting:

Marshall Colman on maijolica

Les Parrott on high fired stoneware

Fri 14 Feb: Chris Bramble

Thrown and sculptural work with African roots. Chris is devoting this year to a new body of work entitled 'Hidden symbols'

Fri 14 Mar: TBA

Fri 11 April: Kathleen Standen

Ceramic artist, beachcomber and author of 'Additions to Clay Bodies'

Sat 10 May: Micki Schloessing

A pioneer of salt-glazing and wood firing



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9 Oct - 01 Nov. 15 Royal Arcade,
28 Old Bond Street, London W1S 4SP

London Potters Annual Exhibition

Morley Gallery 05 - 20 Nov.

61 Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1 7HT

Frank Auerbach Ordovas

04 Oct - 01 Dec

25 Savile Row, London W1S 2ER

Emilio Greco Estorick Collection of

Modern Italian Art 25 Sept - 22 Dec

39a Canonbury Square, London N1 2AN

Shunga: sex and pleasure in

Japanese art British Museum

3 Oct 2013 - 5 Jan 2014

Francis Bacon/Henry Moore

Ashmolean Museum

12 Sep 2013 - 19 Jan 2014

Beaumont St, Oxford OX1 2PH

The Male Nude Eighteenth-century

Drawings from the Paris Academy

Wallace Collection 24 Oct 2013 - 19 Jan 2014

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