



**DACORUM AND  
CHILTERN  
POTTERS GUILD**



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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

Single £28, Family (one address) £37, Student (full time) £20. Newsletter only: £10 per annum.

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## Notes from the Chair **Ros McGuirk**



By the time you read this, the summer season will be well under way. The sun may be shining, the not-to-be-missed last Art in Action at Waterperry in full swing and the result of the EU referendum will be digested and off the front pages at last. Meanwhile I slave away over a hot keyboard to keep warm and look forward to a glazing session in a draughty shed swept by near arctic winds. What has happened to 'flaming June'? It seems to have emigrated!

A recent message from another potters' group enquiring about charitable status has again brought into focus the changes that are underway in the world of ceramics. The shifts of industrial output from Stoke to the Far East and the consequent closure of courses at all levels in the education sector are generally seen as negative factors. Yet skills do remain at Stoke, which is still seen as a centre for design, and some producers are flourishing there. Is anyone in the Guild up for organising a potters' trip to find out more?

The closure of education facilities is more worrying in some ways. Where are the future studio potters to come from? Are we a dying breed? Can we reverse the trend? Will there be a market for such special work when simulated hand-made pottery is being mass produced?

The efforts of those who teach privately and those who run outreach projects in schools on a professional basis are to be lauded. The

Adopt a Potter charity is quietly helping, though it seems too small to have much impact. Will the proposed school of ceramics in Stoke change the course of history should it come to pass?

What is fascinating about our time is the effect of mass media on the mood and desires of people. The internet is certainly a powerful tool for education, as well as mass marketing and manipulation. Yet I believe that a genuine interest in studio ceramics has been identified and encouraged by the TV 'throwdown' series: most of our members who teach, whether in the private or public sector, confirm this. Should we as a group respond further to such opportunity at this crucial time? As volunteers our time is limited and there are only so many projects we can undertake in a year.

Perhaps getting involved at Kimpton, Childwickbury, Sandringham and Boxmoor will give more potters the confidence to step out on their own, like Beccy Boxer and Fiona Booy are doing, as Kirsteen Holuj, Mark Compton and Ruby Sharpe have done in the past, to name but a few.

I certainly hope that the debate continues. The future is ours: grab it while we can.

Meanwhile I look forward to the autumn with our next season of meetings (tba) and the next series of the Great Pottery Throwdown.

September, there is a lot of organising to be done! We also hope to fit in a raku and possibly a soda firing – watch your emails. The Committee was treated to a preview of Jitka Palmer's fabulous POD bowl, which you will all have a chance to admire at the exhibition in September.

**Mary Anne Bonney**



## Get to know DCPG Potters: **Ros McGuirk**



### **Where do you do your potting?**

*Garden studio*

### **Have you had any formal training?**

### **Where and when? Teachers?**

*City and Guilds 1&2 and Professional Development (BTech) with David Pitcher.*

### **What is your favourite clay? Why?**

*Porcelain. Feels so soft and silky when throwing*

### **How do you construct your pots?**

*Throwing and altering. Slabbing.*

### **What are your inspirations?**

*A mish mash of everything from geology and landscape, plants and wildlife, Matisse, life drawing, history and literature, pots from China, Korea, Japan and old English slipware.*

### **How do you decorate your pots?**

### **What tools do you use?**

*Earthenware is slipped, scuffed, and trailed. Stoneware is treated in a variety of ways such as stamped, or simply glazed. Soda fired work is decorated with salt/soda slips and which is then altered by the flames.*

### **What glazes do you like?**

*Celadon and other reduction glazes, and honey glaze*

### **How are your pots fired?**

*Using my old electric kiln for biscuit and earthenware and, as fixing my gas kiln is still 'work in progress', other people's kilns for stoneware, eg the Boxmoor and soda kilns.*

### **How have your pots developed over time?**

*Gradually becoming better defined and feeling lighter and more voluminous.*

### **Who are your favourite potters and why?**

*Richard Batterham – they are quiet, well designed and just perfect. Loads of others.*

### **Do you have any favourite pots?**

*Richard Batterham teapot with chipped spout and a replacement lid, which does not quite match because I made it at college years ago.*

### **Of your own?**

*A few, eg a teapot with a strong reference to a certain time traveller's adversary and a set of lidded cooking pots that came out of the soda kiln a few years ago after a particularly good firing.*

### **Another potter?**

*Most of my mug collection is the clue here!*





## Firing the Oxford Anagama Kiln January 2016



It's freezing cold, I'm fully dressed, including a pair of overalls, lying in my car in my sleeping bag. It's 8 am on Sunday 24th January and I have just woken up after getting into the car at 5am and having 3 hours sleep. I am at Wytham Woods, just outside Oxford, taking part as a volunteer to fire Oxford University's new anagama kiln. Following Kazuya Ishida's demonstration at the Guild in December, and him talking about how he was advising on the build and firing, I logged onto their website and booked in as a volunteer for several shifts. You could volunteer for any number of 6 hour shifts every day between 14th and 23rd January.

### Thursday 14th, 12pm to 6pm

Kiln is still being packed by Jim Keeling and members of the Whichford Pottery team along with the Japanese potters Kazuya Ishida, Taku Takiyama and Mari Suzuki. Completed by 6pm ready for bricking up the door. Spent the day chopping wood into usable sizes, mainly using the 5 ton hydraulic splitter. There are photos of this, taken by Aya Watanabe, on the Oxford Anagama Kiln Facebook page [www.facebook.com/OxfordAnagama](http://www.facebook.com/OxfordAnagama)

### Friday 15th, 12pm to 6pm

Firing started 8am with a small fire in front and at the base of the kiln door. Aiming for a temperature rise of 3 to 4 degrees per hour between 80 and 100 degrees to allow kiln and pots to dry without damage. Aiming for 130 degrees by midnight. Spent most of day chopping wood, though I did also rewire the pyrometers with longer cables, so they could be seen from the front of the kiln.

### Monday 18th, 12pm to 6pm

Kiln still being fired using the small extended firebox at front of kiln. Temperature on front pyrometer about 500deg at 6pm. Almost time to open stoke hole in door to feed wood straight into kiln. Spent the day chopping wood, moving wood so that the smaller pieces ready at front of kiln and helping stoke, still with a very slow increase in temperature.

### Friday 22nd, 12pm to 6pm

Now stoking through the main door stoke hole. Also firing through the bottom stoke hole with smaller timber pieces. The upper stoke hole taking quite large logs. Temperature now about 1130 deg. Chopping wood and helping stoke through the main stoke hole, wood stockpile depleting rapidly. It was clear that they were struggling to get the temperature rise and were behind schedule. Now caught up in the whole process, I offered to come in on the Saturday night (they had been due to finish by Saturday) and it was looking as if it would run-over with no more volunteers scheduled to come in.

### Fri 22nd 8pm to Sun 23rd 12.30pm.

Got a call to do a late shift starting at 8pm Saturday 23rd. Blocked up front door stoke holes and started firing first two side fire boxes about 11pm, temperature at front about 1150 deg. Continued to side stoke moving to

## Jerry Seaborn

the rear stoke holes, but no further increase in temperature. Side stoking continued overnight by the Japanese potters and team from Whichford Pottery, with assistance from Lisa Hammond and her apprentice Florian Gadsby. We all chopped wood with increasing desperation throughout the night.

With the temperature stuck at the rear end of the kiln, it was realised that the chimney was not pulling strongly enough for the size of kiln. An improvised extension utilizing old roof sheets increased the chimney height sufficiently to allow the same temperature to be stabilized along the length of the kiln. All the fire boxes were stopped up just before midday except the two end ones. We left Kaz and Tak to complete the firing which they did sometime in the afternoon.

The kiln was opened the following weekend after a week of cooling. I was really pleased I took part and am currently making items hopefully to be included in the next firing in May. You can see the original posts I made on Instagram at [grangrad71](https://www.instagram.com/grangrad71) and also

#thedcpg. More information on the Oxford University website [oxfordanagama.org](http://oxfordanagama.org) and on the Facebook page.



## New Guild Members

A very warm welcome to those who have recently joined the Guild:

**Avril James Iver** *I have attended evening pottery class for the past 9 years and love all things ceramic. I am potty about pottery!*

**Esther Green Hitchin** *I am a collector of studio pottery, particularly 1960s/70s such as Abdo Nagi.*

**Linda Hails Barnet** *I attend a class with Sandra Barnet on Wednesdays. My main experience is hand-building but I would love to try throwing and learn a lot more about glazes.*

**Audrey Hammett**



## Pots at Kingsbury Barn

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## Kevin Millward Glaze Workshop

By Pauline Josephs and Ros McGuirk



West Herts College Ceramic Department was the venue for Kevin's talk and demonstration about making and applying glazes. Firstly he ran through a brief history of glaze technology.

Many early glazes were applied to a wet pot as a dust of ash, lead or some other caustic material. Later, the raw materials were added to water, but the ingredients used as fluxes (required to promote liquefaction of the glaze) were toxic and caused poisoning, even by placing hands in the glaze. European glazes were made up of silica, lead and clay and the lead was in a raw state suspended in water. Other fluxes in use were borax and sodium carbonate, more commonly known as soda ash. The latter was caustic, causing skin problems.

In the early twentieth century fritting was introduced. Lead, the toxic element and silica, the glass-forming element, were fused together in the frit kiln, until the lead and silica came together to form a eutectic

(a compound which melts at a single temperature lower than the individual constituents). The silica is a very high-firing refractory material and the lead a very soft low-melting material. Putting the two together brought down the melting point dramatically. Instead of melting at 1500°C the melting point was reduced to 1000°C. The lead content in a glaze was subsequently reduced to make it less toxic, and then frits were used to make them even safer.

### Setting up a Glaze

Every glaze should be set up to a specific pint weight and this also applies to decorating slip. A pint weight is a measurement of the dry materials suspended in a given amount of water.

A milk bottle was used to demonstrate a pint weight, but any pint vessel with a narrow top would be suitable. Use the same vessel each time to ensure accuracy and consistency. Good scales are required: digital kitchen scales will be fine but always use the same scales each time.

1. Place your empty pint bottle on the scales and set the weight to 0.
2. Mix your glaze and fill the bottle to the very top.
3. 30-32 ozs is the average weight of a glaze, but you will probably wish to check, so...
4. Start at 34 oz/pt. Glaze pot and mark 34oz on base
5. Add water to the glaze bucket and refill the milk bottle till the pint weight is 32 oz/pt. Glaze and mark the pot accordingly
6. Repeat for 30 oz/pt
7. Fire your test pots to decide which glaze is best for you.
8. Keep a note of the pint weight for those particular wares.



## Boxmoor Wood Firing

Emily Good



This is the only way to learn what a properly glazed pot looks like and is highly recommended!

### Glaze consistency

Very experienced potters can put their hand in glaze and know just by looking at the glaze whether or not the glaze consistency is correct. 'Single cream' or 'double cream' do not mean anything. One person's glaze will feel very different to another person's glaze.

The heavier elements of glazes sink to the bottom of the bucket and it is necessary to stir them constantly to keep the glaze suspended. To overcome this, most studio potters add bentonite to the recipe (up to 2% normally). However, this is a clay and the recipe may need to be adjusted to incorporate it properly into the dry materials. It is best to add the water slowly to ensure it disperses and you do not get lumps.

Alternatively, flocculants such as Magnesium Sulphate (Epsom Salts) can be used, sprinkled straight into the glaze. This does not affect the glaze formulation or the pint weight. Apparently, up to 3% plaster of Paris can be used in the same kind of way!

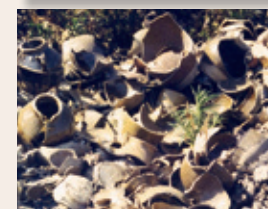
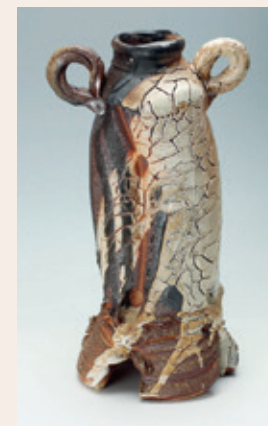
When preparing a glaze, never put water into the dry material, always add the dry material to the water. If concerned about inhaling the dry material, once you have carefully added it to the water, place a wet towel over the top of the bucket while the materials slake in to the water.

Part 2 of this article will follow in the next Newsletter and will cover 'How to glaze' and the implications on firing temperatures.

At the time of writing, it is two weeks before the wood firing at Boxmoor with Ben Brierley and by the time you read this, the results will be known! To date, members have been busy glazing their pots using a number of wood ash glazes, celadons, shino and tenmoku. We are hoping for a variety of greens and browns but it is anyone's guess as to how they will turn out!

Ben fires his work in an Anagama kiln for three to five days, reaching as high as cone 14 in the hottest parts of the kiln. He uses the pyroplasticity, fly ash and flame flashing of the firing to highlight the softness and movement within his forms. He has developed several stoneware clays and porcelains which respond directly to the atmospheres generated within the kiln from protracted wood firings. The Boxmoor kiln will not be fired for nearly as long or to as high a temperature, but it will be taken up to cone 10/11 and will be fired over the whole weekend, with plenty of reduction taking place.

*Fingers crossed our work will come out looking like this...*



*and not like this!*



## A tale of a Brick and a Hornbeam Colin Hazelwood



I didn't cut down the 40 foot Hornbeam especially to make an ash glaze, it had simply become overbearing and needed felling. I did, however, have every intention of using it to make a new batch of glaze.

I burnt the logs in an enclosure of loose laid bricks. It was surprising how little ash is produced from such a big tree, but then it is only the inorganic residue that remains.

The first glaze I made (unwashed ash as I see no point in washing out valuable fluxes) used Steve Parry's basic formula 888888. It produced a good gloss at 1280°C but the colour was very bland. I remember thinking that the best looking pots which Steve brought to his demo appeared to be enhanced by an inhomogeneous body beneath. I looked again at my brick enclosure. Those bricks were very dark and rich: that's why I selected them to build enclosures in the garden. That was the sort of body I needed. Could I reproduce it? Probably not. Could I perhaps get hold of some of the clay? The frog of the brick had the initials FBW imprinted on it. Google soon identified the manufacturer:

the Freshfield brick company, now part of a big conglomerate located in Sussex.

I visited their works and asked to buy some clay. I half expected the brush off, but to my surprise a few minutes wait produced the reply "£34 per cubic meter, where is your trailer? Follow the fork-lift truck driver!!" Fortunately I had brought a number of old clay bags and, with help of their most co-operative staff, left with my estate car weighed down with half a cubic metre. I could hardly have bought less.

Those of you who visited Marshalls brick works a few years ago will remember that the current process for firing bricks doesn't involve kilns as we know them. The clay is loaded with anthracite so that when stacked by the thousand in essentially an open air clamp much of the heat is generated internally. I soon discovered that the clay I had bought was loaded, not only with anthracite, but also with large fragments of crushed wasters, so that it was impossible to throw. Slabbing, however, was no problem and I fished out the templates of slab pots I produced years ago and got to work.

Two problems arose. First, when biscuit fired to 1000°C the body had begun to fuse so that it was not very absorbent and receptive to glaze and artificial drying was necessary, with the attendant risk of the glaze spalling off even before the glaze firing. Second, the clay slumped a little at 1280°C. Some of the impurities which give it the richness melted at a lower temperature. I should have checked: I could have prevented the loss of a kiln shelf! I now know to set the pot on wads to prevent fusion to the kiln shelf. I shall refine my technique.

If anyone else wants to try to produce gnarly pots, let me know. Half a cubic meter of clay goes a long way!



## Get to know DCPG Potters: Colin Hazelwood



### Where do you do your potting?

*In my integral garage*

### Have you had any formal training?

#### Where and when? Teachers?

*Evening classes at Oxford School of Art in 1956(!). A Mrs Grimshaw taught me to throw. Then evening classes at St Albans Art School where Hugh Spendlove, a calligrapher at heart, did not teach me to throw!*

### What is your favourite clay?

#### Why?

*I mainly use a 50:50 mixture of grogged crank and high firing terracotta. I have always liked the contrast between glazed and unglazed, and where the rough body breaks through the glaze when fluted – my favourite mode of decorating.*

### How do you construct your pots?

*Throwing*

### What are your inspirations?

*Probably the pots of my favourite potters.*

### How do you decorate your pots?

#### What tools do you use?

*Fluting raw pots with a paperclip to show through the subsequent white glaze. Wax resist when using tenmoku.*

### What glazes do you like?

*A matt white glaze plus Tenmoku, tenmoku oil spot and a speckled orange /yellow which breaks black where it pools*

### How are your pots fired?

*To 1280°C in a top loading electric kiln*

### How have your pots developed over time?

*When I first found stoneware, it was big pots with wax resist and tenmoku and little else. Now I seem to have to make bigger pots in two pieces and I have developed new glazes and different sorts of surface decoration*

### Who are your favourite potters & why?

*Micki Schloessing and Lisa Hammond for the simplicity of their forms and the richness of their glazes*

### Do you have a favourite pot of your own?...

*Yes a small discus-shaped pot with decoration and unglazed incisions using a pastry cutter.*

#### ...other potters?

*Tea bowls by Micki and Lisa, a lidded caddy by Ruthanne Tudball and, contradicting the foregoing, pride of place goes to a bowl by Duncan Ross!*







but with an Islamic architectural influence.

Emily's pots are often thrown and then altered when leather hard. She showed us her large, wide bottomed bottles with very narrow necks. When leather hard she cuts off the base and squashes the bottle to give a narrow profile, then adds a base to create a rocking bottle.

Emily takes a long time and a lot of care over her work, creating different styles of faceted pots. We sat enthralled, watching as she used a cheese cutter to remove swathes of the surface to produce beautifully curved facets following the shape of the bottle. She'd obviously done this many times before and is a perfectionist!

Her preferred clays are Audrey Blackmoor porcelain and Valentines Earthenware smooth terracotta, to produce elegant pots both decorative and useful.

Emily gave us some fascinating demonstrations, many and varied. Difficult to describe, but I'll do my best...

### Horizontal ribs

Emily demonstrated how she creates horizontal ribs in a larger, tall form. The pot itself was made in two parts and joined, then turned at leather hard stage. To create the horizontal ribs, Emily used a penny, pushing against the outside at regular intervals and then burnished the surfaces. When fired, she uses her latest grey glaze (from Linda Bloomfield's book) and wipes this off the raised surfaces, creating not just a textured effect but also non-glazed ribs interspersed with glazed valleys.

### Water etching

One of the most fascinating techniques that Emily demonstrated was Sasha Wardell's water etching technique.



On a tall porcelain, bone dry form, she draws stripes in wax resist. To ensure the wax resist goes on from top to bottom, she dips the brush firstly into hot water before applying each stripe. All the stripes are drawn by eye, steadying

her hand by resting her little finger on the pot and drawing the lines away from her on a horizontal pot. Apparently it doesn't work on grogged clay - it has to be smooth. After drawing wax resist lines all the way around the form she takes a not-too-wet sponge and rubs over the surface from top to bottom. The water washes away the clay between the wax resist stripes, leaving raised areas. Care is needed to avoid washing away too much of the dry clay and creating weak spots or holes. When fired and glazed the surface is textured or ribbed.

Ros provided the hint that dipping the brush into washing up liquid before using wax prevents the brush from clogging up. Or you can mix the wax with a little washing up liquid to give a slightly broken line, for a different effect and texture.

### Throwing a tall porcelain form

Whilst demonstrating throwing (and whilst we all held our breath), Emily explained how important it is to wedge clay sufficiently. She tends to wedge at least 100 times in order to expel as much air as possible, but still occasionally finds an air bubble in the clay. She explained she has had problems occasionally with 'S' cracks on the base of

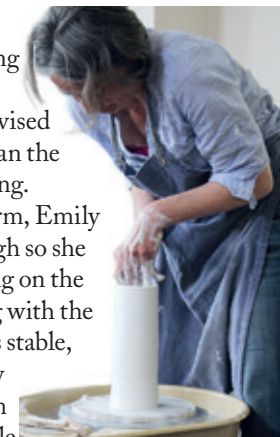
pots and has found that compressing the base using her thumb several times works well. Colin also advised drying the base earlier than the walls to help avoid cracking.

As she throws a tall form, Emily stands up part way through so she can pull up better, pushing on the outside hand and guiding with the inner one. To ensure she's stable, she braces her right elbow against her leg. At the rim she dwells for a short while as she wants the rim to be strong, but nice and thin. She always throws on a bat, but doesn't wire off before removing the bat from the wheel, preferring to leave it until the next day to ensure the shape is retained.

### Lidded pot - thrown all in one

In porcelain, Emily threw a small pot, opening out, compressing the base and pulling up. She changes direction to bring the top in towards the centre. There needs to be enough clay at the top to bring the top together to close it off. Emily reminds us that before closing the top, you must remove all water from inside. Once closed, the air is trapped providing a fairly firm shape to work with. The top needs to be shaped into a low dome and refined to make a pleasing shape.

As this is a lidded pot, it needs to have a channel cut into it, but not cut all the way through at this stage. Emily uses a small tool to press a channel into the side wall. This will create the section of the lid that sits inside the base to hold the lid in place. The channel is cut through to separate top from bottom at leather hard stage, when placed back on the wheel. The lip needs to be either turned or



What a treat to have a DCPG meeting on a Saturday morning rather than a Friday evening. It meant I was happily able to stay alert, thoroughly enjoying the whole meeting!

Before Emily began her talk, she set out her pots for us to look at. Many of her pots sold before she started - we were like a flock of starlings!

Emily showed us a photo of her studio in the countryside near Andover, at the end of her garden - so not far to walk to work and in such a wonderful setting.

She took us through her early years: from 1983 to 1987 she studied at Bristol with the great Wally Keeler, who very definitely had an influence on her early work. This took the form of extruded shapes looking like scrap metal, exhaust pipes, creating formed and then altered shapes. From Bristol she went on to Camberwell to study. During this time she re-assessed her work and moved from Wally Keeler-style sculptural forms to creating pots which were more commercial, still extruded,



thrown to ensure it sits inside the base closely. It's a fiddly process but Emily advises us to fettle away, taking off bit by bit for that close fit.

### Spiral faceting a tall terracotta form

By eye, Emily makes marks around the top to create 4 or 6 facets and again around the base. As every pot is different she doesn't have a template so needs to make a judgement about how it will look once faceted.

Placing the pot on the side of the banding wheel, she uses a cheese cutter to remove sections of clay between the marks, cutting from top to bottom, spiralling around the form. We were gratified to hear that sometimes she does cut through – even the experts get it wrong occasionally!

When glazing she wipes so that glaze is left just in the valley sections: she burnishes the raised surfaces.

### Carving sections out of a form

Having marked out the pot to identify areas to remove, Emily uses a bent wire tool and laboriously removes clay. She enjoys the calmness of the process, spending time gradually creating the effect she wants.

Emily's techniques were deceptively simple – a mark of true expertise! The morning provided a fascinating series of demos and hints and tips and we left enriched and happier for the experience.

Many thanks Emily for your welcome return visit to the Guild!

*Rocking Pot.  
Throw an open-  
bottom pot,  
squeeze sides  
and attach  
to clay  
slab base*



At our April meeting we were introduced to the magical world of a ceramic artist, sculptor and story teller. It is a world of fantasy and myth, pantomime and caricature. There are heroes and villains, humour and love. There are story lines from the ancient Greeks, from the brothers Grimm and even a hint of 'Wind in the Willows'. This is the world of Andrew Hull, whose fertile imagination has populated his studio with griffins, centaurs, dragons and a host of comedy characters in fish, animal and amphibian forms.

From time to time these fabulous little creatures escape out into the world to find other homes. Florida is a prime destination.

Andrew has always loved drawing, especially birds and animals. From an early age he took his art work seriously and, despite the discouragement of his teachers who saw little evidence of his abilities, he eventually found his way on to a foundation course in art and design at his local college in Cambridge.

He went on to the BA course at Loughborough in 3D design with ceramics as a speciality. It took him over a year to find what he was looking for and he was on the verge of giving up, when help arrived. It appeared in the unlikely guise of a large ceramic owl in the Fitzwilliam Museum: then everything clicked into place.

This wonderful owl was the largest figure ever produced by the Martin Brothers. They ran a pottery in the late nineteenth century, making a wide range of work from tableware to the finely designed, grotesque figures that resonated so well with Andrew.



The brothers were very much part of the art and craft movement. Wallace Martin was the sculptor and his most popular character was a strange bird with oversized feet and a huge hooked bill. Taking its name from the maker, it became known as the Wally bird.

From that eureka moment, Andrew set off to interpret his fine animal drawings as clay sculptures. He began with an owl and then went on to make many other birds, in Wally bird style. At his degree show all but one of his figures sold out, an amazing success! From then on it has been a long and rocky road to get to where he is now, with his own pottery business, a technical partner and a reputation as a fine artist, illustrator and maker of fine ceramic characters.

Copy deadline for the Autumn edition of the newsletter is Sunday 11 September. Please send articles accompanied by high resolution images to **Helen Whitbread** at [dcpgnewsletter2@gmail.com](mailto:dcpgnewsletter2@gmail.com) and to **Bipin** at [bipin@thedcpg.org.uk](mailto:bipin@thedcpg.org.uk)



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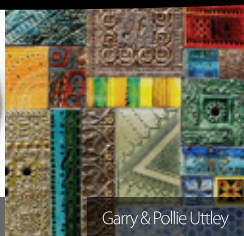
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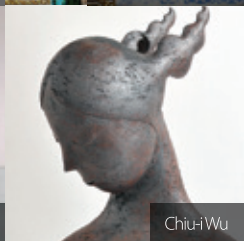
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