



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



www.dcpvg.org.uk

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Leach Pottery in St Ives

POD Stephen Dixon

POD Wendy Lawrence

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Let the sunshine in

Press moulding

Once-firing

Issue 33

April 2020



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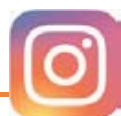
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Cover picture: Elaine Wells
Our February demonstrator



Editorial



Ros McGuirk

Welcome to our first entirely online newsletter! Due to events beyond our control, we cannot print and post out issue 33 of your newsletter in the usual way so we are making good use of electronic media. Only three of our members are offline and they will each receive a paper copy.

To those who prefer reading from paper, I suggest you download the newsletter and read it at your leisure. Thanks to our wonderful contributors who have done a sterling job, you will find plenty to enjoy and some you may wish to refer back to. There are reviews of our meetings, a great workshop on throwing in St Ives, instructions on mould making, raw firing, tips and ideas, and a unique piece of research into the solar energy input of an electric kiln firing. I hope you enjoy dipping into it and are sufficiently inspired to come up with more contributions for the next issue.

Without your help it is likely to be rather small! Putting this together has been a strange experience. As the copy date approached the world began to change, events such as Ceramic Art London were being cancelled at the last minute and we began to re-write our listings. Two weeks later we realised that we would be re-writing up to the last minute. All events are on hold, being postponed or cancelled and we have no idea of the time scales involved. We can only hope they will happen eventually.

We will carry on planning our next season's programme while hoping it will not be delayed. Our reviewers of POD made gallant efforts to get their scripts ready in time but two were unlucky with ill health. Andre had a nasty bout of shingles, so many thanks to him for battling on with his review. Charlotte Anstey had weeks cut out coping with covid 19

and was unable to write up Wendy's demonstration. We sympathise and wish her and the family a good recovery. Many thanks go to Nicole for filling the gap with gusto, and to Mandy for her help over the technical details.

Right now, like you, probably, I am adjusting to living in the slow lane. Once I have cleared out the office, got the vegetables sown and the garden planted up I will be on my way to turning my home into a working retreat where, hopefully, I will enjoy making at leisure. I hope you find peace in making, too.



Kingsbury Barn Exhibition



Jackie Harrop.

The guild's annual exhibition has been held at Kingsbury Barn in recent years during St Albans' Heritage weekend. This combines the opportunity for the Barn to be viewed by the public and for our members to have use of this magnificent space. The event has been very successful with over 30 exhibitors displaying and selling their work. We hold a private view and members' social evening which generates good sales. We also run hands on activities for the public and for the pupils of nearby St Michael's schools.

This year the heritage weekend is likely to be deferred until social distancing measures to counteract the spread of Covid -19 can be relaxed. This could be in the autumn or even next year. As our exhibition is tied into Heritage week we will have to wait, too. I can assure you we will do our best to make sure this is as early as restrictions allow.



Notes from the Chair



Mary Anne Bonney.

How very fortunate we were to squeeze in our Potters Open Day before social distancing, though some of you, I know, felt it prudent to stay at home. If you were not able to make it, and have not yet caught up with the Instagram posts that Nicole and others have put up, I would urge you to have a look at <https://www.instagram.com/thedcpg/>.

Thank you POD team, organisers and helpers, for a truly inspiring day – and thank you to the technical wizards at the Sandpit Theatre for helping set up the video link that allowed Stephen Dixon, larger than life, to present his powerful talk, to the caterers whose delicious cakes and lunches sustained us, to Blue Matchbox for meeting our needs as far as potting materials and tools are concerned, to those who so generously donated prizes and bought tickets for the raffle, to Wendy Lawrence for showing how she puts her whole body into constructing and carving her pieces and to Brendan Hesmondhalgh for sharing his unique way of drawing with clay.

In the last Newsletter, I mentioned that the woodfirers' group are researching sites for a new wood kiln – we have entered a promising dialogue with the Chiltern Open Air Museum whose mission to educate and involve fits neatly with the Guild's, and been talking to the Paper Trail in Apsley, whose involvement with community arts projects aligns closely with the DCPG's aims. We hope to pick up the discussions as soon as circumstances permit.

The flurry of cancellations of our Friday talks and coffee mornings for the time being continued today with the news that the Cathedral in St Albans are postponing the Summer Festival until next year. Detailed planning for Art in Clay in August and the

Kingsbury Barn exhibition in September is all on hold until we see how the situation develops. Tomoo Hamada and Philp Leach have both indicated that they are eager to reschedule the Centenary Celebration day, possibly in the autumn. You can be sure that we will be in touch as soon as we have confirmation and need volunteers!

In the meantime, I hope that you stay well and that pottery in one form or another can help keep your spirits up – whether it is enjoying a cup of tea from your favourite mug, tackling one of Nicole's Instagram challenges, carrying out the experiments that you've never had time for, bingeing on online demonstrations and exhibitions, or sharing your ceramic achievements (or disasters), tips and discoveries with fellow members – via Instagram (tag#thedcpg), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/dacorumandchilternpottersguild/>) or an email to me that I will pass on. We may not be able to meet in person for a while, but we can keep in touch and I am very grateful to Nicole, Amanda and Emily for keeping the DCPG operating on Instagram, Facebook and the website and to Ros and David for putting together the newsletter.



New members



Audrey Hammett

A warm welcome to our new members, we look forward to meeting you once the current restrictions are lifted :

Camilla Bignall; Hemel Hempstead
Maureen & Katrina Shearlaw; Aston Clinton
Graham Jackman; Hanworth
Claire Friend; Amersham



New Facebook page for members only



We now have a private page on Facebook where we can message together out of the public eye. This is a great way of keeping in touch in a more personal way while we are unable to get out and about and meet up.

To join up use this link www.facebook.com/pg/dacorumandchilternpottersguild/groups then look for the DCPG members group and request to join.

Once you have been verified as a DCPG member you will be added in.



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Other Events



Due to the coronavirus covid-19 these may be subject to change

12 -14 June 'Potfest Scotland' Postponed.

26 – 28 June 'Earth and Fire' Cancelled

3 – 5 July 'Ceramica 2020'

The biennial bash run by South Wales Potters. This year with Niek Hoogland and Christy Keeny.

At Cardiff Metropolitan University, C23 6XD. See www.southwalespotters.org.uk

17 – 19 July 'Celebrating Ceramics'

The new version of Art in Action for potters, still with a strong emphasis on demonstrating and workshops.

Waterperry Gardens, Near Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1LA

24 – 26 July 'Potfest in the Park'

The selected show at Hutton-in-the-Forest, Penrith, CA11 9TH. Open 10am – 5pm.

31 July – 2 Aug. 'Potfest in the Pens'

Skirsgill Auction Mart, Penrith, CA11 0DN

21 – 23 Aug 'Art in Clay'

The largest international ceramics fair in this country.

Hatfield House, Hatfield, AL9 5NQ.

Open 10am – 5.30pm Fri/Sat, and 10am – 5pm Sun

17 - 20 september 'Handmade Oxford'

The international Contemporary Arts Festival at Waterperry Gardens, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LA.

Modelled on Art in Action. Ceramics, glass, wood and jewellery.

10am – 6pm Thurs – Saturday, till 5pm

Sunday. See www.waterperrygardens.co.uk

(See also the ceramics festival held in July)

20 – 22 Sept 'Ceramics in the City'

The Geoffrye Museum, 136 Kingsland Rd, London E2 8EA

50 of the best makers in the Museum of the Home. Open 10am – 5pm. With a preview event on Thurs 19th Sept 6 – 8.30pm

8 - 11 October 'Living Crafts'

The long established and largest show in the SE, held at Hatfield House.

10am – 5.30pm. Tickets up to £3 cheaper online at

<https://livingcrafts.ticketsrv.co.uk/tickets>

Daily tickets – adult £9, senior £8, child £5. Under 5's free.



Social events



Our coffee mornings are on hold like all other events. This was our last at The Paper Mill in Apsley.

We will start again when circumstances allow, In the meantime, stay safe and well.





Margaret Gardiner – Vapour Glazed Ceramics



Experiments in Creation and little Possibilities.

Nicole Lyster

Margaret Gardiner started her ceramics career in the 70's at Harrow where she learnt by building her own Kiln and being allowed to experiment. She moved on to Dartington Pottery Training Workshop as the 'second thrower' with Peter Starkey and worked from 8 am until 8pm on commissioned work fitting in her own creations in her own time.

After developing her knowledge of salt firing and sharing a kiln with Joanna Still in Wiltshire, Margaret felt the need to have her own space and develop her own unique approach to salt firing. In the 80's she moved with a group of Artists to a large house, with grounds just under Stanstead flight path (hence the affordability) where she built her own Salt Kiln.

Being unable to draw Margaret took time before she was able to call herself an artist, but she has a keen eye for pattern and creates beautiful pieces of art using paper resist, applique and texture on the clay canvases she throws. She then raises these up further by the application of soda slips and the iridescent chemistry created by Stannous Chloride.

Margaret had a hiatus in her pottery career, caring for her two children and her elderly parents, but came back to it in force in 2002. She took on apprentices for 12 months of training, up until very recently, creating work with them to supply 20 shows a year and many galleries.

She is now contemplating a slower creative pace, that has less impact on the environment (and her body).

Margaret demonstrated how she throws her porcelain miniatures off the hump. She explained that a hip injury made her change her throwing habits, and for a time she made



a lot of work using plaster moulds.

She prefers to use 'Royale' Porcelain for her miniatures, and 'Audrey Blackman' for her larger work, as she finds its thixotropic properties better suited to the 'more difficult' pieces.

Margaret particularly enjoys throwing miniature because each one is "an experiment in creation, a little possibility". The small size and the method of throwing off the hump allows for a quick flow of production, but affords the luxury of creating a different shape each time. Whilst she threw, Margaret imparted little gems of knowledge to help with successful creations.



1. Before centring a large lump of clay on a batt make sure the plug holes are filled in to avoid any tiny air pockets on the bottom of the hump, as that makes centring it more difficult.

2. Throwing porcelain off the hump often results in S-cracks, because it is impossible to compress the bottom sufficiently. Making sure the pot is as dry as possible inside with the use of a children's sponge brush, and turning the leather hard miniatures to compress the bottom will help with this.

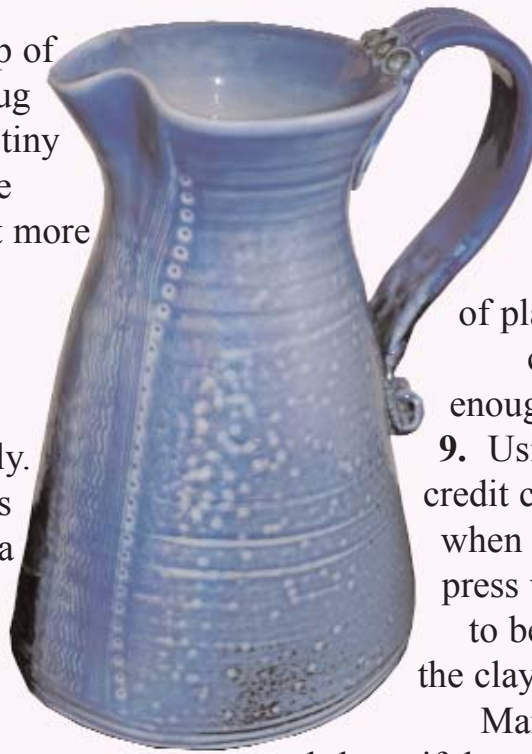
3. Using mattress protectors, rather than towels, to keep porcelain moist will reduce the amount of mould and fibres that attach to the clay.

4. Using her thumb nail to mark the bottom of the pot on the outside first, reduces the chance of making the bottom too thin from the inside.

5. Using a broad knife to cut the pots off, makes transporting them to a batt easier, and ensuring the clay is wet enough that it slips through the hand reduces the chance of warping the shape as the pot is cut off.

6. Using newspaper strips on a wet chuck stops the pots from sticking to it when you are turning them.

7. Wetting fabric, such as lace and netting, when making marks in



pottery will ensure the marks made are clear and do not drag up the clay.

8. Using 'builders plastic' to keep pots from drying out reduces the possibility

of plastic leaving marks on wet clay, as it is soft but strong enough not to tear and let in air.

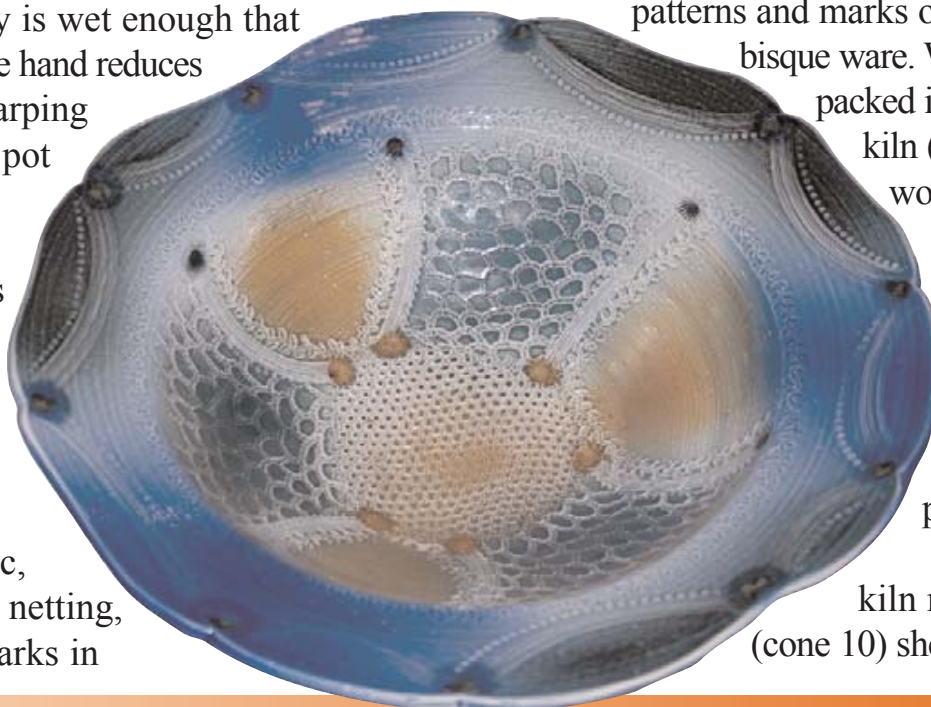
9. Using circles cut from plastic credit cards on the bottom of pots when turning them, as a place to press with a finger (which needs to be dry) without dragging on the clay or leaving an indentation.

Margaret's iridescent, delicate and beautiful pottery belies the amazing amount of hard work, dangerous chemicals and sleep deprivation that goes into their creation. They are made with a unique application of salt and soda mix and Stannous Chloride. Each piece is bisque fired in an electric kiln and then decorated with special soda slips. Margaret found that spraying the slip gave a better effect than dipping and pouring. She then slip trails patterns and marks onto the sprayed

bisque ware. Wares are tightly packed into her gas fired kiln (about 3 months work in one firing)

to create a protective atmosphere around as many of the pieces as was possible.

When the kiln reaches 1300°C (cone 10) she sprays a 50/50





saturated solution of hot salt and soda mix into the kiln for 20 seconds at 1 minute intervals for three hours using a powered spray gun. It is important to keep the kiln protected from cold drafts as the ports are opened, because this can cause cracks in her pots and kiln shelves (and at £50+ per Silicon Carbide kilns shelf, with a three month wait for a new one to be specially made to size, it is not cost effective to be careless). The kiln is then crash cooled to 1000°C in reduction.

After a 9 hour firing when the kiln has cooled from 'red' to 'black' hot – about 600°C – 700°C Margaret introduces about 10grams of crystallised Stannous Chloride, which vapourises and creates an iridescent lustre on the pots as it is pulled through the hot kiln. The way the pots protect each other by their tight formation means that the vapour can settle and fix to the pots more successfully.

Margaret learnt her techniques for firing through years of experimentation. Her unique mix of salt and soda came about because although she didn't like the often dry look of soda glaze she really liked the orange colour it can give in a gas kiln.



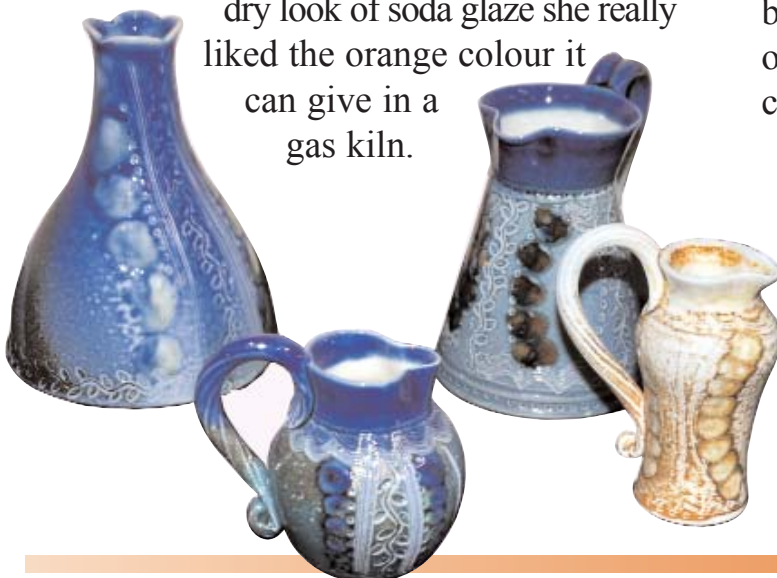
The addition of salt, which is more reactive than soda alone, gives more glaze and colour reactions. The balance between the two fluxes, plus the late stage vapourisation, is what gives the unique and lustrous effects she is looking for.

The design of her kiln had to match her requirements. She found that having both ports at the front seemed to hold the vapours within the kiln after the introduction of her salt and soda mix and the later stannous chloride. The salt enabled the glazing

vapour to move more evenly through the kiln, and for a good covering of glaze to form on the pots. Similarly the chloride vapour settled well, rather than it being blown through the kiln by a traditional line-up of front and back ports.

The use of two thermocouples to help with reading exact temperature measurements helps to ensure the correct timing of application. It is essential to maintain temperature during this process.

In addition, an ethos of prolonged hard work, with quick reflexes (to avoid the blow back of noxious fumes that occur when opening a port in a hot kiln) is essential to create her pieces.





Elaine Wells



Marialba Hogg and Sandie Taylor

What a treat it was to have Elaine Wells for the evening on Friday 7 February!

More than a demonstration, it was a full evening's entertainment. Of course, Elaine is famous now for having been on The Great Pottery Throw Down and it's easy to see why she was good enough to take part.

She spent some time explaining the process of selection for the show. Initially she did not confess to anyone, not even her husband, that she had applied. She wanted to enter the competition for herself.

Chatting away all the time, she seemed totally at ease at the wheel, making everything look so effortless and even centering with one hand. She showed us how she made her oval pots and upside-down plates.

To make an oval pot she first threw a bottomless ring of clay on the wheel. Leaving the ring to dry a little on the wheel head Elaine then rolled out a slab. She removed the ring and carefully holding inside the ring at opposite ends, laid the now oval ring onto the slab. She drew around the oval shape and this formed her dish. Very simple and very clever. She suggested if you don't want finger marks on your oval ring you could use two cylinders to lift the ring, one at each end, toilet roll inner would do.



The upside-down plates were also very interesting. These plates are completely flat so ideal for serving cakes, cheese or pizza.

First, she threw a flat disc approximately 200mm (8") in diameter on to a wooden bat, more complicated than it appears.



She then brought up the sides. She explained that she would normally leave it on the bat for 12-24 hours before taking it off. This, turned upside down, forms a beautifully flat plate. She brought a 500mm plate she had thrown – apparently the biggest her kiln could fire. This plate had an inner ring and an outer ring to help support the weight. It was glazed in her 'toilet white' but she had simply brushed wood ash across the surface which gave a greenish swirl.



In 1991, while bringing up her children and working full time as an HR manager, she somehow managed to throw pots and attend night classes. She was the only one who wanted to throw so bought the book associated with the BBC programme 'The Craft of the Potter' by Nick Casson. This programme first inspired her to take up pottery. Using this she learnt to throw and continued to make pots in her spare time.

Following her entry into 'The Great Pottery Throw Down' she enrolled to do a two-year Diploma at The Clay College in Stoke where she is now a Trustee. The Clay College diploma changed her way of thinking about her pottery. Her tutors did not hold back from criticizing her work. She said this helped her focus on the details that turn a good piece of pottery into a great piece of pottery. Throwing the same piece over and over again and subtly changing the shape or angle of the handle or spout can make such a difference.



This diploma is the only practical potters' course in the country which gives the students the skills to not only set up in business on their own but also to be able to work in the pottery manufacturing industry. It teaches them how to be methodical and scientific

about the pottery process. For example, Elaine had numerous samples of glazes with varying amounts of ash all written in ratios on the back. 'Record everything' she suggested. A white board and marker or a simple notebook for scribbling down notes while you're working was another good suggestion.

We got a whirlwind tour behind the scenes of The Great Pottery Throw Down, how the contestants she met there are now firm friends, and how she was asked by Kate Malone to go and work with her. What an accolade! A great opportunity to add to her considerable store of pottery know-how.

Apparently, Kate is a stickler for being prepared and ensures all her workforce follow her discipline. This means thinking about what you need for any specific job and making sure you have

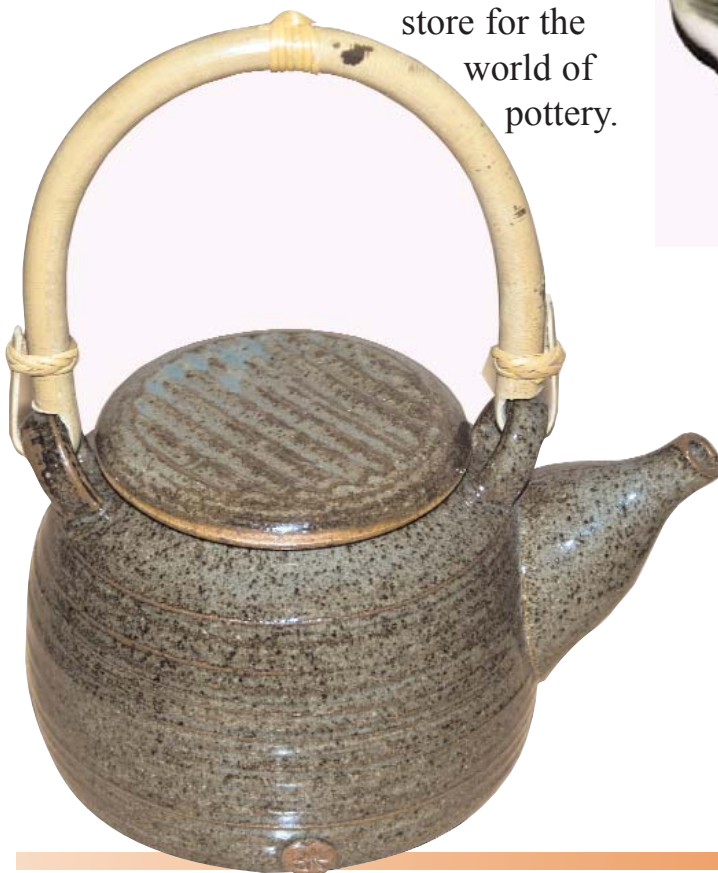
all the tools you need to hand. Working from left to right and timing everything to ensure the clay is at the correct stage for the process is all very good advice, especially if you need to utilize your time effectively.



An extra bonus for her during this period was meeting a variety of celebrities, including Zandra Rhodes with her amazing house, and many others. She remains, however, down-to-earth, warm and approachable. It was fascinating to hear how she doesn't turn her pieces because she says she is 'lazy'. In my opinion she throws so well there is no need to turn the bottom of her pots. Elaine lets the pot dry a little then wires it off with a crinkly wire. The result is amazing, clean, neat and aesthetically pleasing. She had several samples of her pieces showing this technique.

Elaine would love to wood fire or gas fire her wares but this isn't practical at home, so she uses glazes and ash to give her work an interesting twist.

There was so much more she gave her audience during the evening, but suffice to say that her energy, drive and enthusiasm will surely take her to greater and greater things. I suspect she has a lot more in store for the world of pottery.





The Professor Stephen Dixon Lecture at POD 2020



Andre Hess.

All art, all objects, have their particular and undeniable location in time and space. And so, too, events, as we saw with Professor Stephen Dixon's presentation for the Dacorum and Chiltern Potters Guild 'Potters Open Day 2020'. The lecture consisted of a video link of a PowerPoint presentation projected onto the big screen, with Professor Dixon speaking live from his home, and in close-up.

It was the justified anxiety around the Coronavirus/Covid19 pandemic that necessitated this unique organisation of the day, and it must be recorded as such in the history of the Guild. Stephen Dixon was 13 days into 2 weeks of self-isolation following a visit to Italy.

With Coronavirus/Covid19 an international social event, the pandemic, impacted on the day. It is uncanny, therefore, that Professor Stephen Dixon's work locates itself, emphatically, in the world of socio-politics – as opposed to the independent, self-referential, or decorative ceramic object. Here is how he is introduced on Wikipedia:

'Stephen Dixon is a British ceramic artist and professor at the Manchester Metropolitan University. He is also a satirist, writer, lecturer and curator. He is known mainly for his use of dark narrative and for using "illustrated ceramics pots as an unlikely platform for social commentary and political discontent.'

Dixon graduated from the Manchester School of Art, and then the Royal College of Art in 1986, at a time when studio ceramics was characterised by abstraction and modernism, exemplified by the work of Alison Britton, Jacque Poncelet, Glenys Barton, Elisabeth Fritch, Ewan Henderson, Nicholas Homoky, soon to be followed by

Martin Smith, Ken Eastman, and so on. It was the age of the aloof and rarefied vessel, and the reduced and lonely figure. The plinth was the ground zero. And into this world stepped Stephen Dixon with his buzzing and busy narrative figurative ceramics that positioned itself squarely within socio-politics. He was keen on storytelling and ceramics, and it was the story of his time that he was keen to take on in clay. It was not mere depiction, however, but participation and engagement in the events of the day.

The basis of his practice is located in his interest in the political cartoon and satire, and narrative. His exemplars, his models of artistic endeavour, were William Hogarth (1697 – 1764) and James Gillray (1756 – 1815) to Steve Bell today. The sheer artistic beauty, sophistication, and skill of their work are for a separate discussion. Recalling Hogarth and Gillray, a Stephen Dixon work like 'Living in the Past', satirises the then King Charles and his mistresses and our current Prince Charles and Camilla.

Dixon found that the Staffordshire Flatback was ripe for what he wanted to do ten years later while 'studio ceramics' gathered around the ideas of minimalism and non-figuration. With Obadiah Sharrat in the front of his mind, and Hogarth by his right side ('The Roast Beef of Old England'), he made his 'Mad Cow Disease' piece, which could be seen as one of his many images in his presentation.

From around 1995 he started to produce work that involved printing processes, with Robert Rauschenberg (1925 – 2008) his great hero. His was, however, not only an investigation of the ceramic printing processes for decorative reasons, but an increased opportunity for political critique,



satire, and interrogation of received canon of history, as became clear in the images. Water-based screen-printing on clay was a very useful discovery and resulted in a large amount of work. An example is an installation work consisting of 21 plates entitled '21 Countries'. In the piece he used a page from the 'New International Magazine' as one of the image reproduced on these plates. The work went on display in the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, and was later bought by the American Craft Museum, now renamed The Museum of Modern Art and Design' for their new building in New York.

In 2009 he became involved with the British Ceramics Biennial at the Spode factory in Stoke on Trent. A fortuitous find was a quantity of 50 000 handmade ceramic flowers. This initiated a body of work that attested - if any proof was needed at that point in his career - to a ceramic mind that was not bound to pot-making and recipes, but to the wider world of ideas. It included cladding an existing column in the Spode factory with these delicate white flowers, creating a tension between the visual and the heavy work of the actual underlying concrete column. He also covered a large plywood-clad model of the ubiquitous Monopoly Battleship token with clay and flowers, resulting in that same visual tension and sparking of thought and questioning in the ready viewer.



Dixon then went on to use these flowers in a project called 'The Pol Project', in Dal Ni Pol, a poor area in Ahmedabad in India. In this project he clad everyday and overlooked objects, eg. the bicycle, with these white ceramic flowers - making them objects of sustained attention - and photographed them in various chosen locations.



The selection of sites, the selection of objects, the bringing of factory made flowers from Stoke on Trent to Hyderabad, the photograph, the photograph transmitted, and the afterlife of the piece (in the hands of the citizens of Ahmedabad), and so on, are all part of 'The Pol Project'. This kind of work invite(s)(d) complex analyses around authorship, colonialism, modes of existence of the work, purity, transcultural/translocation of decorative ceramic items, shifting and disparate subjectivities, and so on and so on. It is an example of a ceramicist's practice that encompasses originality, complexity, complexity of technique, as well as simplicity.

A Victoria and Albert Museum residency of 6 months allowed Dixon to make large earthenware heads consisting of fragments of different heads and faces from several different people, including Chinese leaders, other historically significant figures.



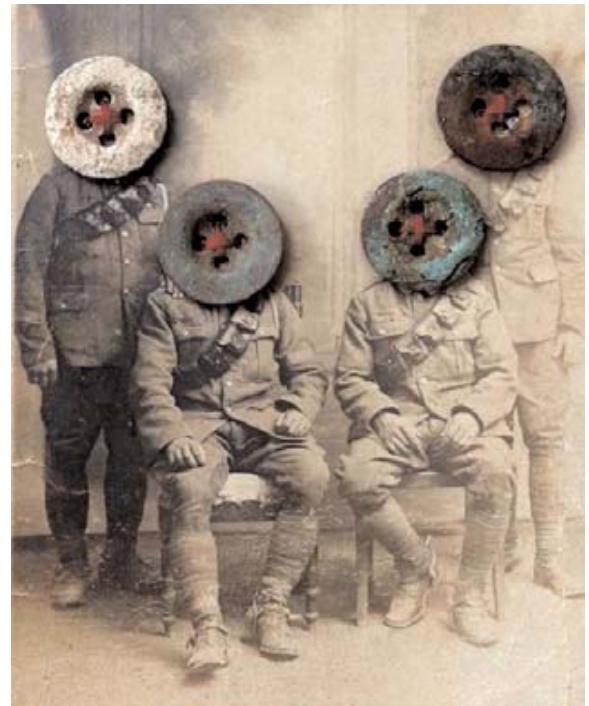
At this point he noted that sometimes work like this can become a hostage to fortune, as in his Aung San Suu Kyi piece. This work, a ‘reconstituted’ head made up of the features of several leaders, was researched at the Nobel Institute in Norway and acquired by the Crafts Council. Another work made at the time focussed on three Nobel laureates who could not take up their prizes, among them Carl von Ossietzky, who received the first Nobel Peace Prize for his work on human rights, and after whom the Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg, is named.

Dixon talked also about his body of work he describes as ‘Factional Narrative’. In the Spode example he set up a fictional archaeological dig at the bottom of a lift shaft in the factory. In it the public were invited to watch the dig during which the fragments of a ceramic violin, called the ‘Josiah Spode Violin’, is discovered and reconstructed (which is intentionally untrue and existentially ludicrous)



His next body of work involved ceramics and commemoration, and focussed on the first World War, as in ‘Resonance’ of 2015 and ‘The Lost Boys’ of 2016. In these works, which consists of ceramics objects/plates on which imagery has been printed, found objects, text, film, etc., the humanity behind the numbers is sought, the melancholy is

brought to light, and the iniquities interrogated.



At this point in Stephen Dixon’s talk it became abundantly clear that his is a serious and complex endeavour in which clay, or even technique, is not the subject but part of the multiple means to create something bigger than decoration, utility, or even aesthetic display.

It is worthwhile concentrating now on a single work, entitled ‘Mud and Memory’, as exemplary of Dixon’s current work. It centred on the Battle of Passchendaele. ‘Mud and Memory’ consisted of a solo exhibition at The National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas in Staffordshire, and ran from the 8th July to 19th November in 2017. Commemoration and the First World War, and revealing its hidden, wilfully and otherwise, aspects became very important to Dixon, and so with commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele.

Found objects and the memories they can, and do, and might, generate were the means that Dixon chose to make the work. He chose the undeniable power of battlefield



objects and materials to evoke a resonance that was sad and humane, and filled the viewer with feelings of pathos and questioning.

The Battle of Passchendaele was the most cruel and futile of battles, even by the standards of World War 1. An estimated

150,000 soldiers from both sides died terrible deaths in the mud and rain of Passchendaele.

The centrepiece of the installation is a large portrait sculpture, made of terracotta clay from the Wienerberger quarry and

Reconstituted

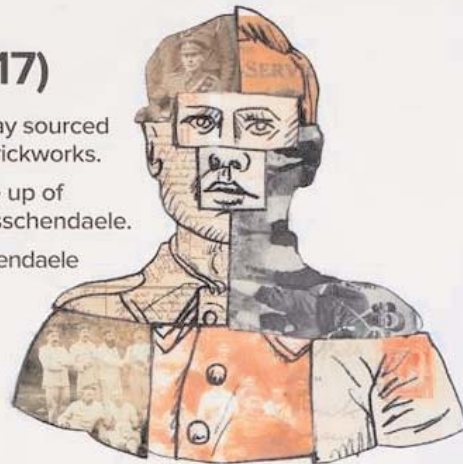
By Stephen Dixon (2016-2017)

This large portrait sculpture is made using terracotta clay sourced from Passchendaele at the Wienerberger quarry and brickworks.

The sculpture is a portrait of the 'everyman'. It is made up of different facial features from soldiers who fought at Passchendaele.

Archive photographs from the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917, Lancashire Infantry Museum and from members of the public have been used to create this portrait.

The chosen soldiers came from different nations, representing the many countries involved in the Battle: Great Britain, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and New Zealand.



Nose and mouth: Lieutenant Colonel Harry Moorhouse, 4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Eyes, left chest and right forehead: Bernard Johann te Loken, 7th Reserve Infantry Regiment, Germany.

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Left forehead: Driver Percy Pidd, Royal Field Artillery.

Image: on loan from Howard Pidd



Right ear: Captain Ronald Moorhouse, 4th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. (Son of Major Harry Moorhouse, above.)

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Left ear: Second Lieutenant William Keith Seabrook, 2nd Division Australian Army.

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Left chin and collar: Captain Georges Guynemer, Combat Group No. 12, French Air Force.

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Right chin and collar: An unknown French officer.

Image: from a postcard, artist's collection.



Right chest: George Ross Seabrook, Private in the Australian Imperial Force, 17 Battalion. (Brother of William Keith Seabrook, below, left.)

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917



Centre chest: Captain Neville Swift, East Lancashire Regiment.

Image: on loan from Lancashire Infantry Museum



Right cheek: Lance Corporal Samuel Frickleton, 3rd Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade.

Image: on loan from Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917





brickworks, which is located on the actual battlefield site at Zonnebeke. The large head-study is an ‘everyman’, Dixon described it as, made up of features from men of the many nations who died at Passchendaele, and is based on photographs of individual soldiers owned by the Passchendaele Memorial Museum itself.

Three display cases/vitrines contain material that from a curatorial point of view each represents one of the main combatant nations: the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, and contains found/excavated battlefield artefacts and items of popular culture of the time (from the collection of the Passchendaele Memorial Museum and from Dixon’s own collection). These include objects which carry poignant and personal associations: a pair of glasses, a penknife, a harmonica, a cigarette lighter, a wristwatch, a pocket shrine, and so on.

The formal resemblance of the objects in these vitrines demonstrate, in a heart breaking way, the common human experience shared by soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

The installation also included objects in the showcases and a display of 108 Navy and Army Canteen Board plates, printed with drawings from the excavated artefacts, and made by museum visitors and volunteers during the exhibition.



This last example demonstrates the hybrid, social, political, and collaborative nature of Stephen Dixon’s work. But the work is never loud and hammed-up. It comes at us low and quietly, and is beautiful. It invokes in us feelings of melancholy and sometimes anger at the powers that be.

It is a tribute to the organisers of the DCPG Potters Open Day that they themselves are contributing to the expanding field that is clay today.

Dr Andre Hess is a Fellow of the Craft Potters Association and writes for the Ceramic Review and other journals including the Neue Keramik.





Wendy Lawrence POD 2020 "Carving and carving and carving, until you think it is finished..."



Nicole Lyster. Sketches by Vivienne Rodwell-Davies



Wendy Lawrence has been producing her organic, naturalistic forms for over 20 years. A member of the CPA, she has been exhibiting her work at venues ranging from Hampton Court to Art in Clay at Hatfield House. She works to various scales and for both interior spaces and outdoors. Inspired by geological weathering, archaeology and architecture, she works freely, using texture and subtle glazing to achieve her results.

In addition to her own work, Wendy teaches and also works with other types of makers on collaborative projects.

Wendy's demonstration was a glimpse into her daily love affair with clay and the constant dance she does with her pieces. She works on a formidable scale creating monolithic, architectural structures that capture the form and texture of volcanic rock

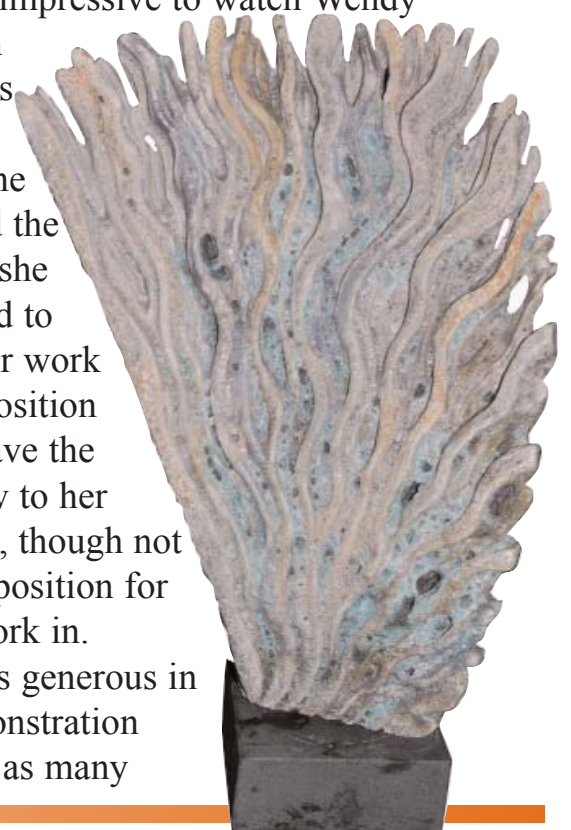
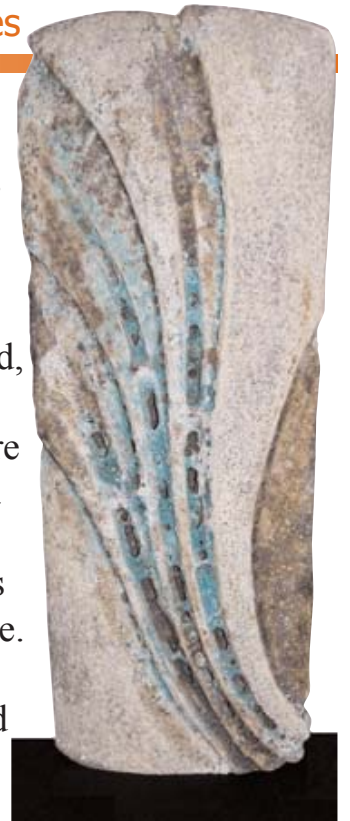
and natural stone.

Pieces are either solid, or thick slab-built blocks of heavily grogged clay. Her work is carved, gouged, with a myriad of different tools, lines are drawn freehand with a sharp knife creating waves and undulations that play on the surface. Their journey is then carved out, around and through the pieces in a constant dance between the body of the clay and the many layers of volcanic glaze and oxides that she applies to the surface.

As Wendy explained it, "carving and carving and carving until you think it's finished, I suppose". The final creations have both movement and a timeless stability.

It was impressive to watch Wendy heft such enormous forms around the table and the floor, as she attempted to create her work from a position which gave the best view to her audience, though not the best position for her to work in.

She was generous in her demonstration bringing as many





different forms and styles of work as she could fit on the table, and working on each piece to show how they begin as a solid, or slab built form.

The slabs were made from Valentine's Ashraf Hanna clay, a heavily grogged body. They had been prepared in advance and left to firm up, some over a cardboard tube to give a gentle curve to the form. Joins are made by roughing up the edges with a fork and applying water with a paintbrush.

Her forms are carved freely, and in the demonstration, vigorously, with various tools (never her fingers, as the clay has a very rough texture). Wendy demonstrated how she rocks the tall pieces back and forward to slightly round the base, so that they aren't flat as she likes to be able to lift them up from the plinth and it gives the piece 'more lift and bounce'. Her method for securing pieces onto a granite plinth or into the ground was ingeniously simple, a bespoke rod that slid into a hole made in the base and then passes through a granite block, so that the rod could be pushed into the ground if it was for the garden, or just rested on the surface if it was for a tabletop or shelf.

Wendy takes care to dry her work exceedingly slowly, a process that takes weeks. Pieces are bisque fired slowly, 20°C and hour up to 600°C then 200°C and hour up to 1000 degrees.

Glazing is not Wendy's favourite part of the process "I make no bones about it, I'm not a glaze expert",

hole to take a steel rod. to go into a granite block. to hold up the sculpture.



Below. Supporting the piece with a rod plinth.



it's the carving into clay that she loves. But, this belies the fact that glazing is carefully done with 10 to 15 different glazes (no slips), including a thick white glaze that can be applied in different thicknesses, and layers of oxides, particularly copper to give that teal colour she admires so much, and that fits with her pieces so well. She uses silica carbide to create the rough bubbly texture in the glaze that is reminiscent of volcanic activity, and pays attention to wiping away areas and building up other sections to ensure there is pooling of glaze in some areas and a thinner layer that allows the naked clay to be revealed to



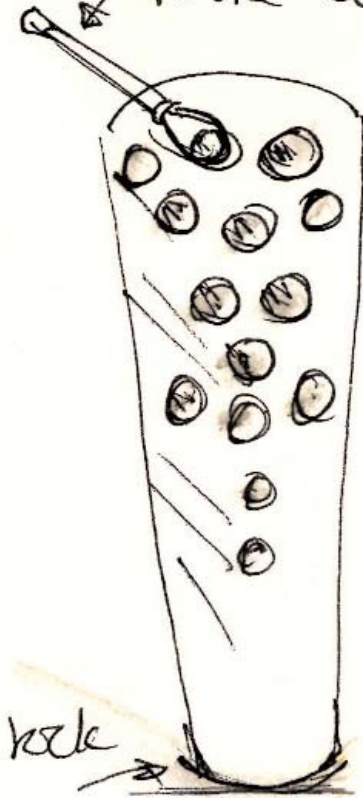
enhance contrast.

The depth of glaze application matches the smooth and rough surface of her pieces, so that the glaze reacts to enhance the final shape and flow. Smooth areas of the body react with the glaze to create smaller bubbles, rough heavily carved areas react to create larger bubbles. Final firing is to a high stoneware temperature making her pieces suitable for outside display. (Tall upstanding forms are set up with heavy kiln bricks to prevent them falling over). The result is a complex organic glaze effect that enhances the carvings and increases the flow of the piece.

Finally, Wendy moved on to show us a large circular piece which she had already worked on, some two feet in diameter. Again the clay had been allowed to dry very slowly to a state whereby it could be handled with some gusto.

She showed us the first side where she had created a radiating, rippling effect akin to

Make depressions
using a
rounded
Peep tool.



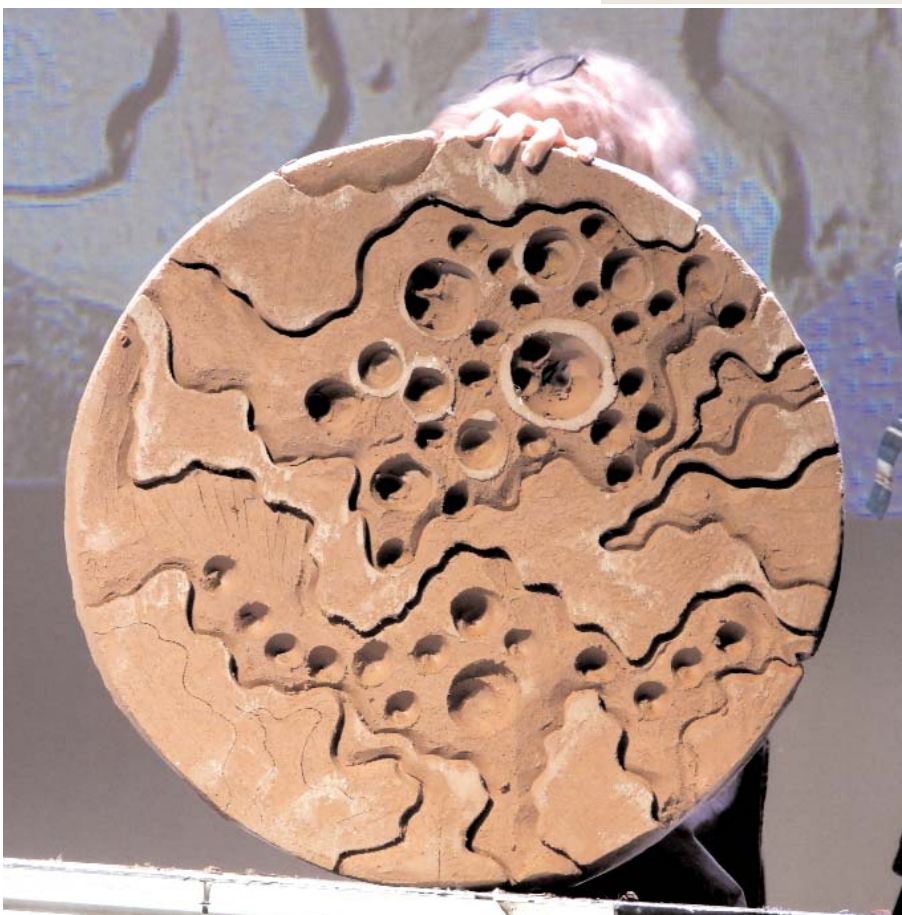
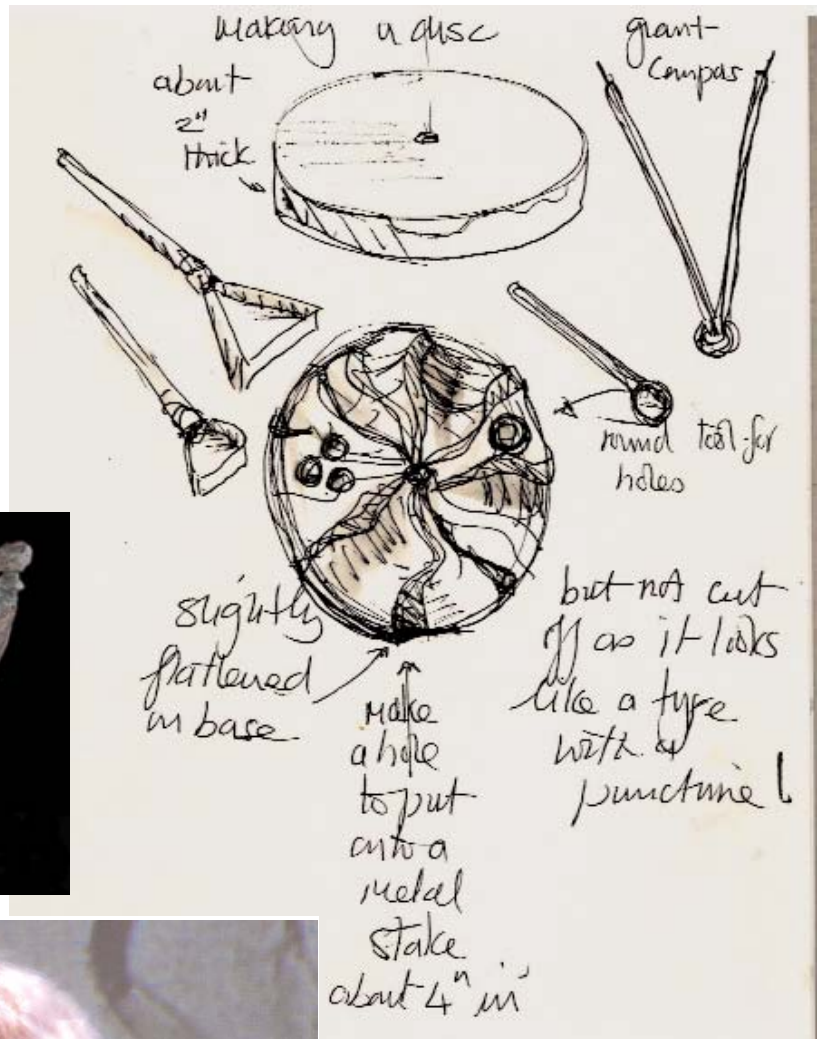
rock formations.

The result was a very geological feel which as she turned it around, the light caught the rippley, undercut edges to





create contrast and shadows which gave the impression of a wild and rugged landscape. The second side was carved and pitted, a bit like looking into a volcanic pit or the surface of some distant planet. Or was it a microscopic image of something cellular? Her work certainly fires the imagination and we can only imagine what the finished, fired and glazed article will look like.





Brendan Hesmondhalgh



Jackie Harrop. Sketches by Vivienne Rodwell-Davies.

Brendan's monumental animal sculptures, some as large as 7ft, have received international recognition in galleries and public spaces throughout Britain and beyond. Success at art fairs and first day sellouts at events such as the Chelsea Flower show have assured him of recognition in the world of ceramics and his work is highly valued. This poses challenges in deciding whether or not to accept lucrative commissions which require him to reproduce successful work, thereby reducing the time needed to follow his own creative impulses. His successes have now placed him in a strong position to refuse commissions for what he calls "pet portraits" and to make more of what he wants.



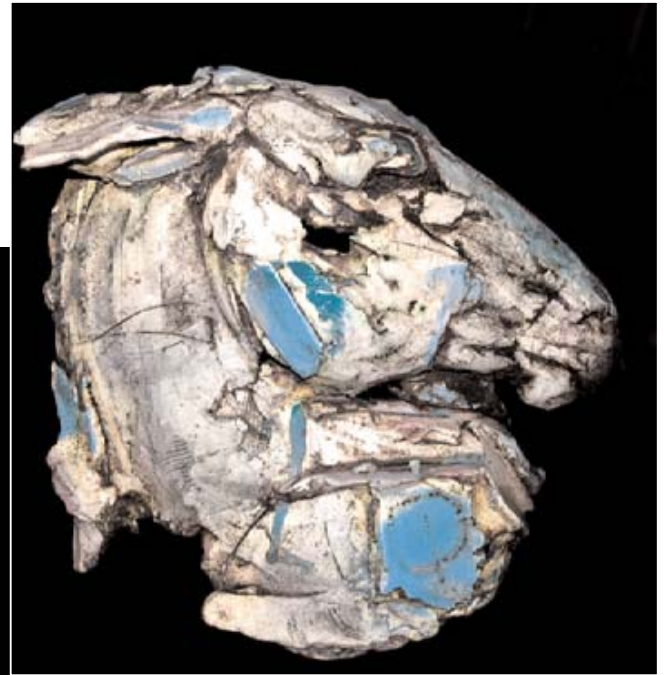
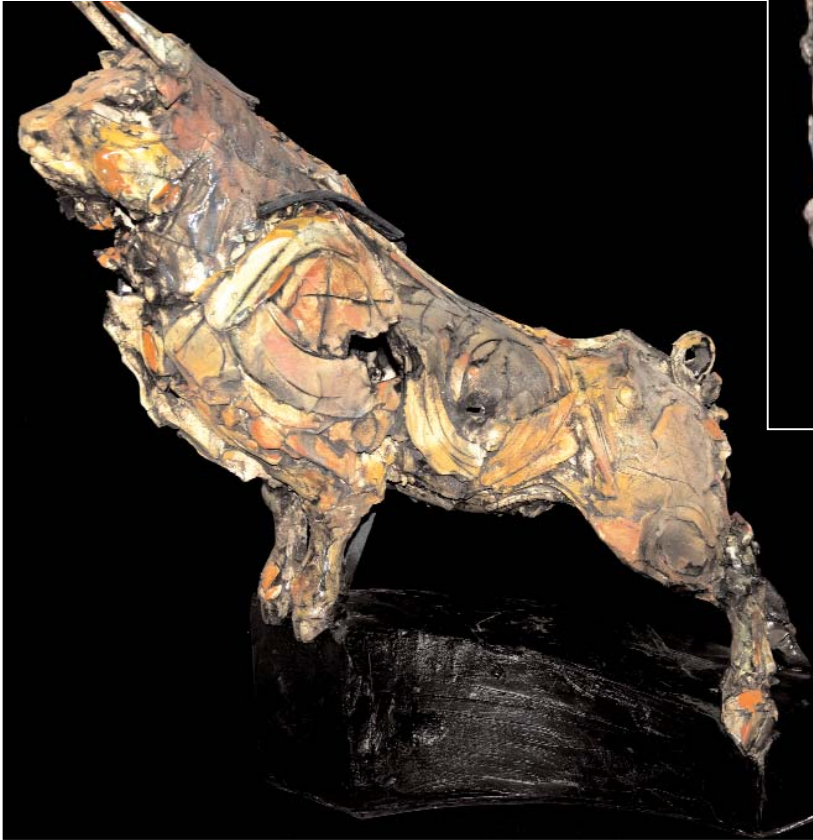
Brendan sometimes works in wax and bronze, which satisfies some galleries' appetite for multiple sculptures and is much easier to ship, but his first love is clay.

He began his demonstration, as many do,





by sharing his favourite tools. Some are made of boxwood or metal and others are plasterers' or builders' tools. He emphasised his preference for minimal interference with the clay, for not overworking it.



The head emerged from a flattened and folded triangle of clay and a suggestion of eyes was pressed from the inside so as to open a deftly sketched mark.

He used Ashraf Hanna stoneware straight from the bag, stretching and pushing it into a thick slab which he then rolled, twisted and compressed. Then, curving and stretching from the inside, he began to form the body of a bull. Muscular definition was added using tools and the side of his hand in quick flicks, smoothing and scribing the torso.





His work is placed on dried sand in the kiln to provide support and prevent any shifting. It is fired to 1210 C with a clear glaze over to finish.

I was thrilled to win the raffle prize of a 3 day sculpture workshop in his converted mill which houses 17 artists and an education space, and will happily share this adventure in a future newsletter.





Let the sunshine in . Pot free?



Andrew P. Gardner

No, not a reference to the iconic musical Hair but rather a few thoughts on reducing not only the environmental impact but also the cost of running a small-scale studio.

Have you ever wondered about the carbon footprint of an electric kiln? Published data is not readily available, probably because of the individual nature of each potter's practice. Kiln specifications, age of the elements, firing schedules and how the kiln is stacked are among the factors that can significantly affect efficiency.

My 40 litre L&L Fuego kiln operates from a normal domestic 13amp, 3kW, supply to reach temperatures up to 1290°C. I am also fortunate to have a house with photovoltaic solar panels on its roof. The system can generate a peak of 3.65kW in perfect conditions. more than enough, in theory, to power the kiln. At this peak, the kiln is using no Grid electricity so has zero carbon footprint and is costing nothing at all to run. But does this work in practice?

What follows is data I have collected from recent firings using a simple plug-through wattmeter. The results have allowed me to minimise the cost of each firing and reduce the carbon footprint of my pottery.

During firing, the elements are switched on and off by the controller to maintain the programmed rate of temperature change. In the initial stages, the elements are switching on and off quite frequently – sometimes very briefly – while, at higher temperatures, they can be on nearly all the time.

As an example, figure 1 shows power used, at low and high temperatures, during a “fast”

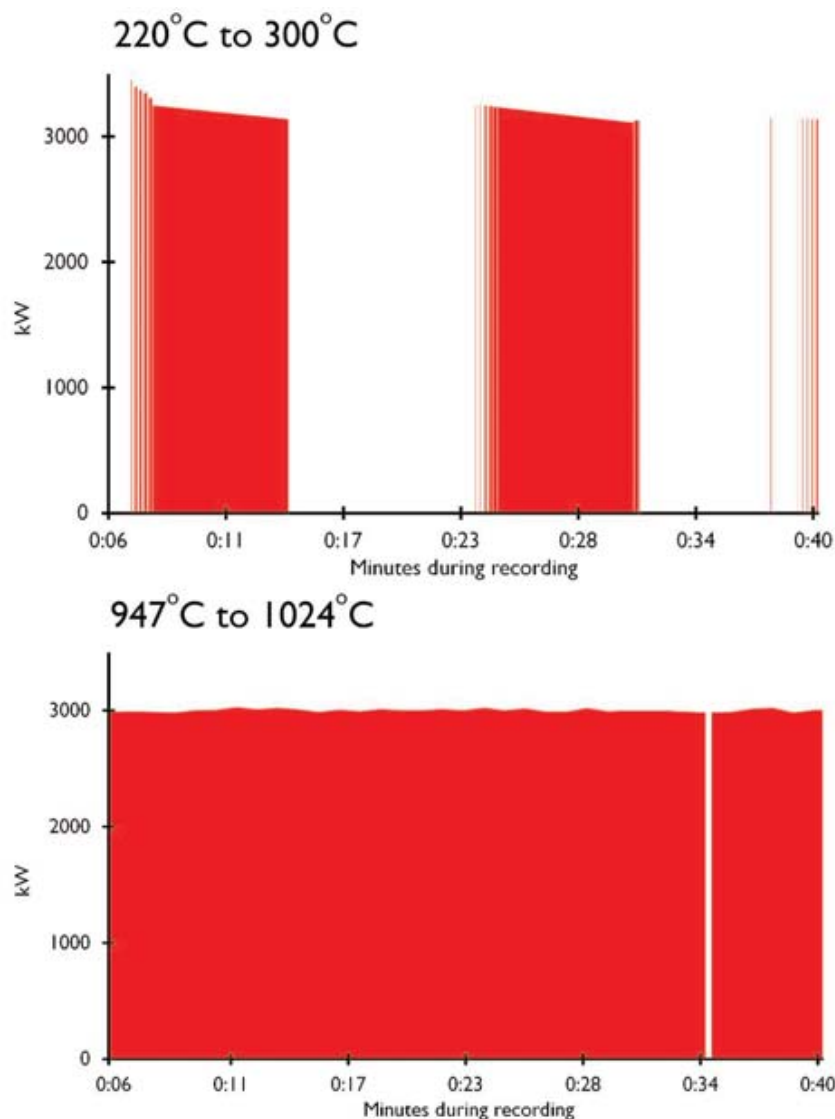


Figure 1

earthenware firing. Note that, while “on”, the kiln is drawing at least the full 3kW. In the “off” state total power needed to power the controller is less than 3W.

Figure 2 shows the power used (red line) and the kiln temperature (blue line) for three quite different firing schedules. Above each graph, the pattern of power used throughout the firing is shown in bar form. The carbon footprint of each schedule was derived from official DEFRA conversion values using a calculator provided by the National Energy Foundation¹.



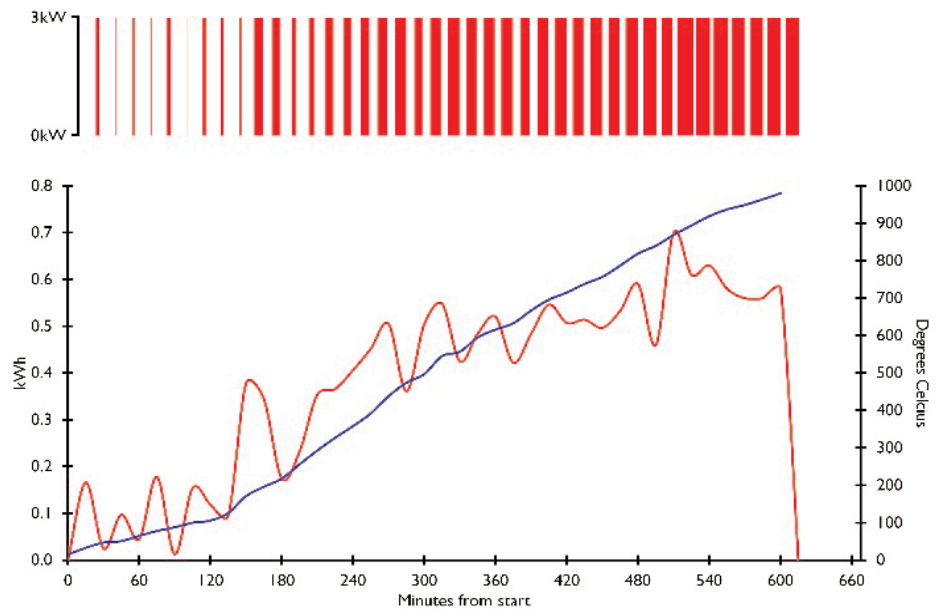
Bisc

to 980°C

Firing time - 9 hrs 58 mins

Total power - 15.72 kWh

Carbon footprint :
5.527 kg CO₂ emitted
= 1.509 kg Carbon
= 17.62 miles (petrol car)



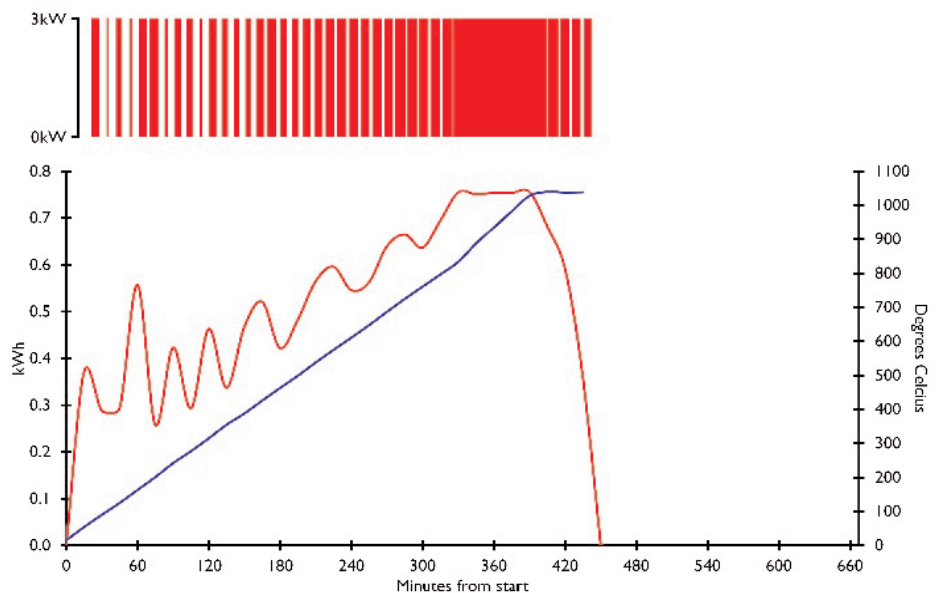
Earthenware

to 1040°C, hold for 30 mins

Firing time - 7 hrs 19 mins

Total power - 15.48 kWh

Carbon footprint :
5.442 kg CO₂ emitted
= 1.486 kg Carbon
= 17.35 miles (petrol car)



Stoneware

to 1240°C, hold for 30 mins

Firing time - 10 hrs 56 mins

Total power - 26.06 kWh

Carbon footprint :
9.162 kg CO₂ emitted
= 2.501 kg Carbon
= 29.17 miles (petrol car)

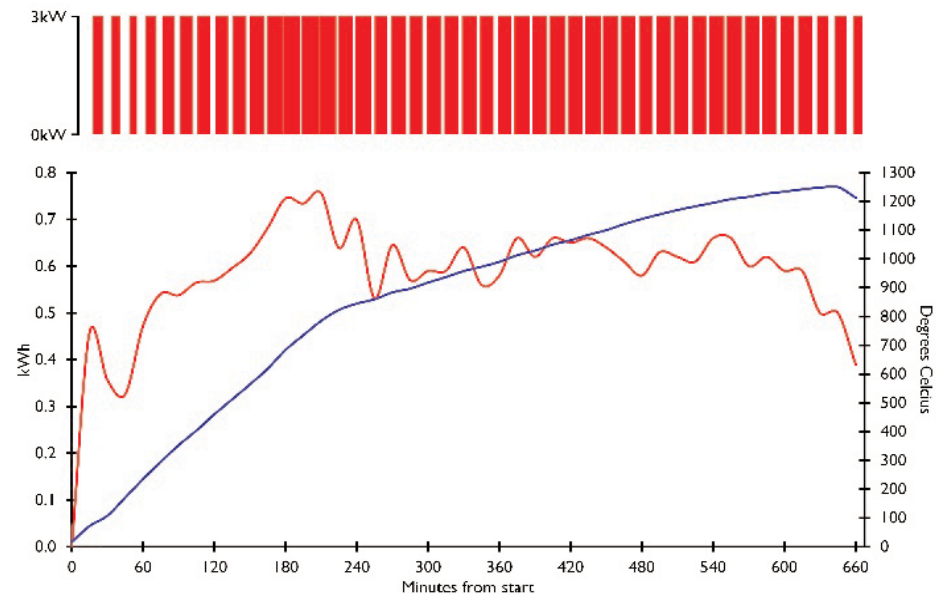


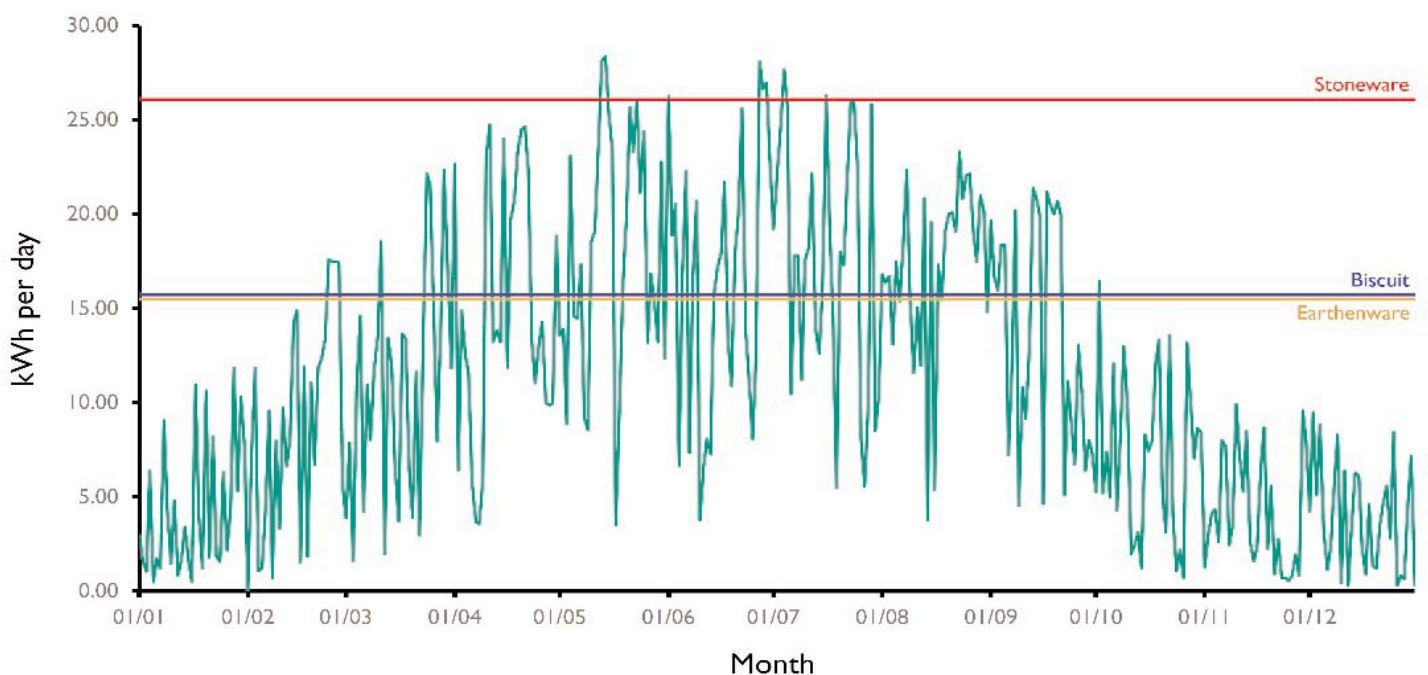
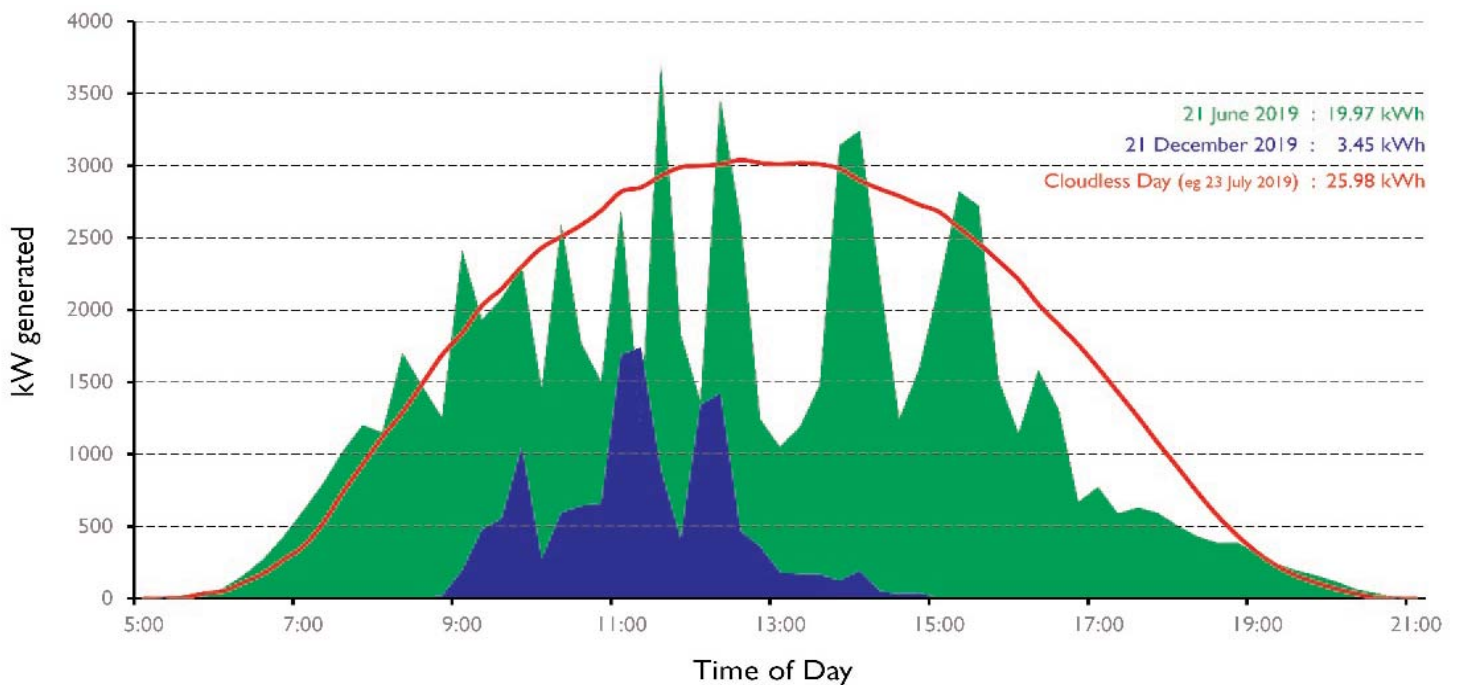
Figure 2



Normal UK weather conditions, and the power consumption pattern of the kiln, however, means the ideal “no-cost” situation is seldom achievable in practice and, in any case, only around the middle of the day.

The power output of the solar panels on a cloudless day is a bell-curve with the peak around midday. The red curve in figure 3 is from a clear summer day, compared with a more normal mid-summer day (green) and a

mid-winter day (blue). Below this, the daily total output is plotted for the whole of 2019, shown with lines indicating the total power demand for the three firing schedules. There were more than 110 days in the year when total daily output exceeded the power used for both these biscuit and earthenware firings but only on seven days was enough power generated to cover the stoneware firing schedule.





Careful analysis of the power used by the kiln through each firing and matching that to the predicted weather during the day allows me to minimise both the cost and the environmental impact of my pottery activities. Figure 4 demonstrates how, by overlaying the solar generation with the kiln power demand pattern, the optimum start time can be visualised. In these figures (the earthenware firing), red is the grid electricity used, yellow is the solar power used and green is the solar electricity available for other purposes.

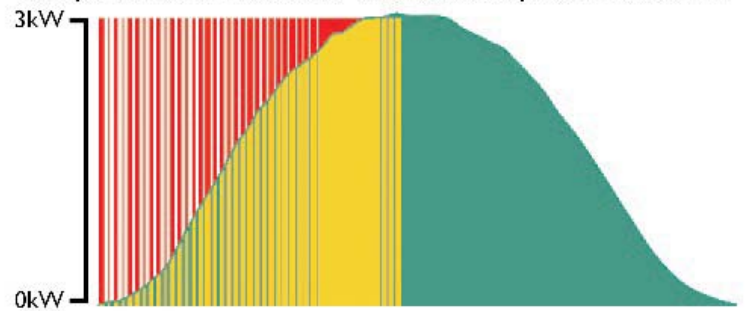
By choosing to begin the firing at a time that will position the peak demand at the time of peak generation, ensures that the highest possible amount of energy is supplied by the solar panels rather than drawn from the grid. I can also balance the kiln's use of power against the amount available to use in other ways or to sell to the grid.

Rules governing payments for uploaded units has changed over time and, from January 2020, they are not especially advantageous. However, the increasing viability of battery storage for unused solar power may make further very useful contributions. With care, a well-designed system could provide all the power required to fire a kiln on any schedule.

Most astrologers agree the Dawn has passed and we are now into the Age of Aquarius. I wish you all a mystic crystal revelation each time you open your kiln – and maybe solar panels could crown your seventh house partnership with the world we live in.

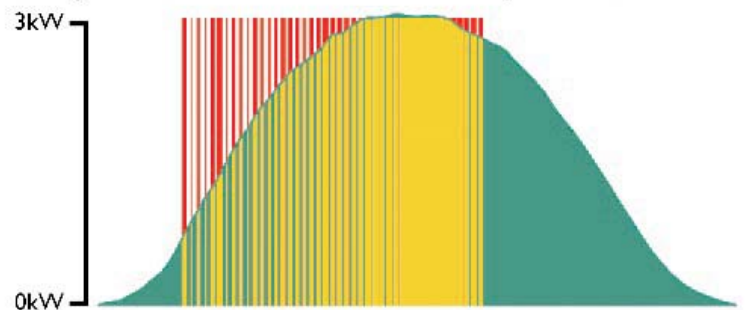
05:30 start

Grid power used : 4.13kWh Available to upload : 13.93kWh



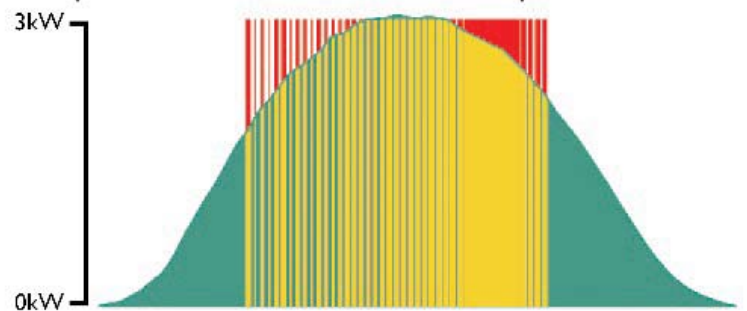
07:30 start

Grid power used : 0.5kWh Available to upload : 10.31kWh



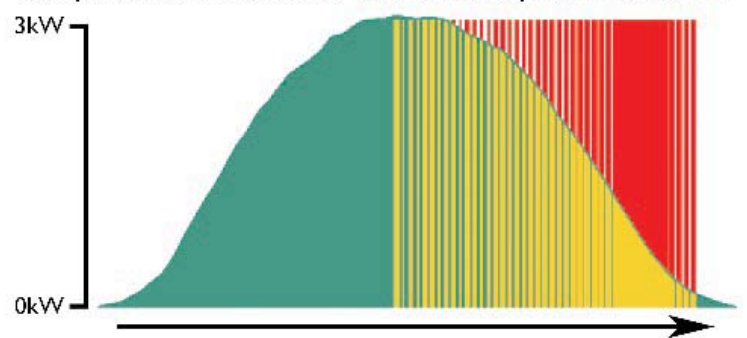
09:00 start

Grid power used : 0.44kWh Available to upload : 10.25kWh



12:00 start

Grid power used : 5.58kWh Available to upload : 15.39kWh



Time of Day

Total kiln power used : 15.48kWh

1. (<http://www.carbon-calculator.org.uk/>)



Throwing course at the Leach Pottery in St Ives.



Beverly Benson

Can you reliably throw a cylinder 24cms high? Yes, we thought we could, so we set off happily for the week-long 'Throwing' course at the Leach Pottery in St Ives.

The first surprise was that the course was being held in Bernard Leach's own studio. These days, the pottery is divided between a working area and a fascinating museum, showing the pottery as it would have been in Leach's time. During the day we heard the film soundtrack as it was triggered by passing tourists, who had come to find out about the 'father of English studio pottery'. There were six wheels (one each) and an endless supply of the 'toasty' stoneware clay that is supplied locally.

Our first shock was that we had to demonstrate our thrown cylinders. We were only allowed 1 kg of clay and three pulls – and all this with the tutor's nose just inches from our hands. Some of the participants had been a bit optimistic about their throwing skills, so a second tutor was brought in and we began our course.

Both John and I learned to throw at evening classes. When the fees for adult students became astronomical, we set up our studio at home and since that time have been pretty much self-taught. We have both retired in the last year and had more time for pottery – realising that we could probably do more than just whacking some clay on the wheel and seeing what came out.

The course at Leach is all about 'studio pottery' and it is serious. The tutors are all studio potters who work, or did their apprenticeship, at the Leach Pottery and are disciples of the clean, practical style. They have their own collections available in the shop. Three or four of them demonstrated for us over the week and, though their

techniques varied a little, the finished products were identical. Weighing out clay and reproducing pieces to exactly the same specification was new to us. They throw with the clay quite wet and don't 'mess around' with foot rings. In fact, the aim is to throw so accurately that each piece hardly needs to be turned at all. We were also amazed at how little clay they used and achieving the expected height with a controlled amount of clay meant that all the finished pieces are light.



Leach has a set number of designs and over the week we made our way through all of them, from nesting bowls to large jugs and lidded honey pots. Having analysed our techniques, the tutors gave us individual attention and shared their own tips and wrinkles. We cut many pieces in half and discovered where we had wasted clay or allowed the wheel to turn too fast. We were all amazed by how much our throwing improved with the repetition and the tutor's expectation of exact uniformity.



It was an honour to walk through the famous old pottery every day, marvelling at how little many of the tools that we use have changed since Leach's time. We had the opportunity to watch the studio potters creating the ware that is sold in the shop and to watch American potter Kat Wheeler unloading the massive kiln and setting up her one woman show for the coming weekend.

Unloading our own kiln when we got home, I was shocked at the weight and clumsiness of my pre-course work. It was an inspiring week and has made us much more disciplined and accurate potters.



The course tutors were Britta James, Kat Wheeler and Laura Crosland. They are all highly trained, Britt in Germany, Kat in America and Laura in the UK, and all work and/or teach at the Leach pottery.



See link to information about the courses and the tutors.

<https://www.leachpottery.com/courses-activities-shop>

<https://www.leachpottery.com/britta-james>

<https://www.throwncontemporary.co.uk/katwheeler>

<https://www.lauracroslandceramics.co>



Press Moulding



Sandie Taylor.

In pottery, press moulding refers to the process in which clay is forced into a mould in order to take on a certain shape. Once the mould is removed, the piece produced is a uniform copy of the inside of the mould. Press moulds are useful both for creating large numbers of identical objects or producing complex vessels that could not be produced easily by hand in any other way. Sprig moulds, which were used to such great effect by Josiah Wedgwood are an example of press moulding. It is also possible to purchase silicon moulds which can be used with clay.

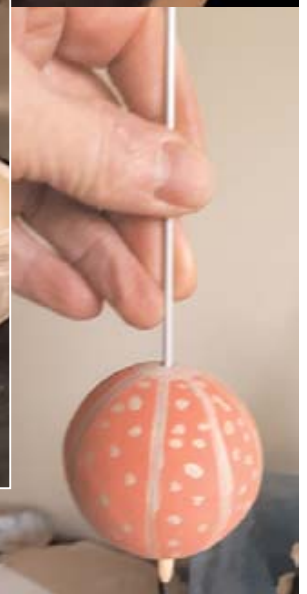
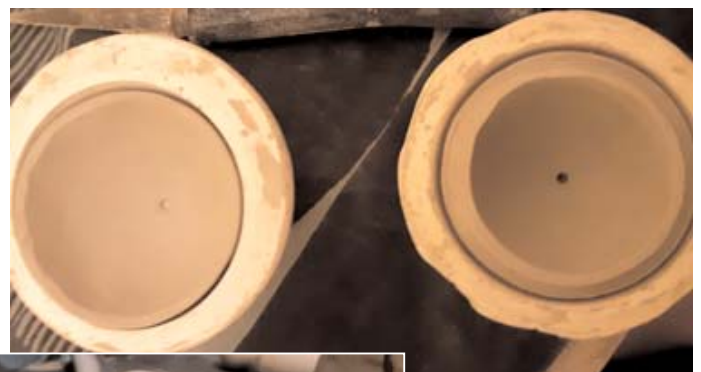
Most large moulds are made from potter's plaster which is a mixture of plaster and talcum powder (talc). Talc helps the plaster to prove more quickly and prevents cracking. Plaster is a powdered clay mineral made up of hydrated magnesium silicate. It usually comes in a bucket with a bag of plaster inside, so when opening and using it dry always wear a face mask. Once the dry powder is mixed with water then the mask can be removed.

To make christmas baubles I started with a ball and two old yoghurt pots. The potter's plaster I used gave the ratio of plaster to water as 1.6kg to 1 litre of water. Half a tennis ball was put into an empty yoghurt pot.

The yoghurt pot was then filled with water. The ball was pushed curved side down into the water until the meniscus was just at the edge of the ball. Some of the water spilled out. I then removed the ball and measured the volume

of water I needed to make the mould. Using the ratio, I calculated how much plaster I needed and mixed it up. Once it was ready, I poured the plaster into the yoghurt pot and pushed the ball into the plaster and held it down with masking tape. Then left it to set for about 20 minutes. The half ball was removed, and the plaster mould left to dry out completely.

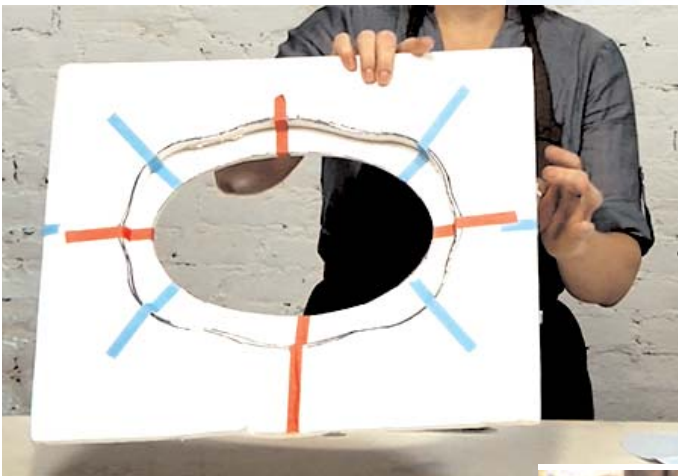
Soft pliable clay is pressed into or over the



surface of the mould and is a popular method of producing shallow dishes or simple forms. Moulds with a concave surface are called 'drop' or 'slump' moulds as the clay is pressed into them. When using two-piece moulds each piece is pressed separately. Having pressed clay into the two piece mould, the pieces being scored and slurry applied, they can be joined as above.



Plaster moulds are great but once they are cast, they can't be changed. You may need many different moulds, some of which can be quite large and heavy, and they have to be stored. The plaster tools need to be kept separated from your clay tools so as not to contaminate the



clay. All quite time consuming and being lazy I looked around for alternatives.

I read an article in a back copy of Ceramic Review (issue 199, Jan/Feb 2003) about Richard Godfrey and how he used cardboard to make slump moulds. He used this technique to produce his Bivalve teapot. I started experimenting with cardboard. I cut a shape out of paper and once happy with it transferred the shape on to the cardboard sheet and cut it out with a craft knife. It is quite flimsy and needs to be supported close to the edge of the cut hole. I found a sturdy cardboard box useful as a support. The cardboard can be reused if kept dry.

I have recently discovered a more durable replacement for cardboard called foam board and it is available from Hobbycraft. It is rigid and easy to shape using a craft knife.



Moulds with a convex surface are 'hump' or 'drape' moulds because the clay is literally draped over the top of them. These might be made from plaster, MDF or wood but many household vessels could be used. Old plastic



bowls, paper plates and my dog's water bowl to name but a few. If using non-porous vessels as slump moulds, then careful attention is required to remove the clay shape

before it is leather hard. Ensure the mould is covered with cloth or newspaper to facilitate removal of the clay. I find using an old pair of tights useful for giving a smooth surface. If left too long the clay will crack as the clay shrinks onto the mould.

Bisque moulds can be made using rolled slabs of clay. Cast your mould to form your vessel shape. Make sure to line your mould former with talcum powder, cornstarch, pantihose or cloth to ensure your clay doesn't stick. Let it dry to leather hard and bisque fire.



Once-firing from a student's perspective

 Mandy English.

Crazily, I made the decision last September to once-fire all my final year degree work to reduce my carbon footprint, without fully appreciating the challenges involved. Whilst not appropriate or suitable for everyone, I've since learned several practical tips which I can pass on here to those who might not have considered it before.

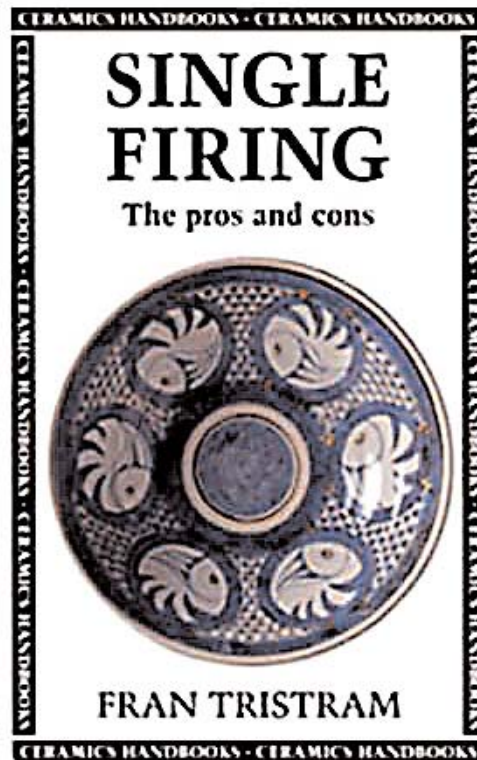
I've had a limited exposure to once-firing and I'm sure others will have additional suggestions, so if anyone would like to share their once-firing experiences in the next Newsletter, that would be great too! I've used Fran Tristram's Ceramic Handbook on Single Firing (first published in 1996) as a reference, as well as many online articles and been further inspired by Dame Lucie Rie (1902-1995), having read her biography 'Modernist Potter' by Emmanuel Cooper.

There are many terms associated with single or once-firing, so for the purposes of this newsletter, I'm using the term once-firing and my definition means firing glazed greenware to its finished state in one process. My current work (small-medium functional pieces) is raw glazed, misses out the bisque stage and is fired straight to stoneware in an electric kiln. The clay I use is the 'Really Good Stoneware' from Clayman Supplies. These are some of the things I've found:

Tip 1 – Drying process

I leave my work to dry out slowly and

naturally until it no longer feels cold and changes to a lighter grey colour. I've found it is best to apply glaze to the work in this state as opposed to when it's leatherhard. I then leave the glaze to dry for at least 24 hours before firing.



Tip 2 – Clay thickness

The thinner the clay, the harder it is to glaze as there is less clay to take up any moisture from the glaze, and the softer and more fragile it becomes to handle. Therefore, I've found slightly thicker walls give more security when glazing and transporting work around the studio.

Tip 3 – Types of glaze

I've experimented using both dipping and brush-on glazes. Dipping glaze contains a higher water content, so reintroduces more water to the dried

body, which can re-soften the clay, making it difficult to retain its shape. I've also found dipping glaze can flake off the clay body when dry and is therefore harder to handle the form into the kiln. Commercial brush-on glazes are designed to adhere to dried clay, and I predominantly use these. Interestingly, Lucie Rie's glaze notebooks (as reported in Ceramic Review by Emmanuel Cooper in 1994) contain instructions to make brush-on glaze stick by adding gum arabic to the recipe – the aim is to get the best glaze 'fit' to the clay. There are plenty of brush-on glaze recipes online, but I've not tried making any – yet!

I currently use PotteryCrafts Brush-on Stoneware range, specifically New Oatmeal



and Sea Green, and have found they don't 'move' in the kiln, so can be confident they won't damage the kiln shelves by running. They give a matt sheen surface, which I like – obviously it all depends on the finish and look you want to achieve. I haven't had any issues with bubbling or crawling with these two glazes mentioned, although I have tried a Duncan True Matt brush-on glaze which caused bubbling so it's just a case of trial and error. I haven't tried colouring my clay as a substitute for glazing, but this is obviously another way to go.

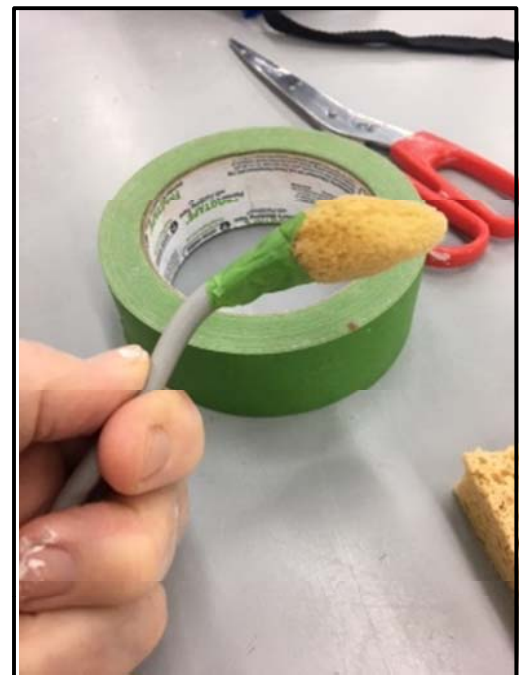
Tip 4 – Application of glaze

Wax any areas you don't want to glaze **FIRST!** When I've forgotten to do this and had to clean excess glaze off with a sponge, I've ended up wiping off the clay too and altering the form. I've found the more complicated the form, the harder it is to use either dipping or brush-on glazes. Dipping is difficult as you can't use tongs. If there isn't a big enough foot ring to hold onto while dipping, then I have also found finger-marks (which are then dabbed over) still show up after firing. This is probably due to grease on one's fingers and although I've tried finger nets, I've found these difficult to keep on! I've had several failures with dipping whole forms, only to have them break or collapse during dipping.

I've tested using a dipping glaze on the inside of a form only, by pouring it in using a jug. I first masked the outside rim with tape to prevent any drips when pouring back out again, to avoid having to wash the glaze off. I waited for the inside of the form to dry out before applying a brush-on glaze on the outside, which worked well. I've also left the inside of a form unglazed as firing to stoneware makes it non-porous, depending

on the clay that's used. [Editor's note – this is likely to work best with a smooth body].

I apply my brush-on glazes with a range of paintbrushes, depending on the size of the area to be covered.



However, I can't reach some areas inside my forms with a paintbrush, so have created my own flexible sponge brushes using natural sponges, wire cable and frog tape. I apply



two generous coats of glaze and plan which areas to glaze first and how to work my way around the form. This is because when applying two coats it becomes difficult to see which areas you've already glazed twice.

Tip 5 – Firing times

I've found general advice suggests slow ramping. My work using stoneware clay is successful in our University kiln, although the firing schedule for a stoneware firing in our electric kiln to 1250 degrees Celsius (deg) is quite quick, about 7.5 hours: 150 deg per hour to 600 deg, then 200 deg per hour to 1250 deg with no soak. I make sure everything is 100% dry before firing, however, if using clay with a high shrinkage rate, I understand this might cause cracking if ramped as quickly as this. Note! 'Digitalfire' suggests if raw glazing, work is best fired to stoneware as earthenware glazes can become a barrier too quickly for carbon and other gases to escape and breakages can occur.

Tip 6 – Control

If you have control over your own studio,

glazes and firings, you can hopefully avoid any accidents in moving work around the studio and loading and unloading kilns. There is a higher risk of damaging work as it remains in its raw state for longer before firing.

Summary comments!

The techniques of once firing have made me think more carefully about my designs and the way I practice, has made me take more time and care handling my work, but I've enjoyed the challenges of raw glazing.

I think there is definitely more chance of damaging work when raw glazing complicated pieces, but I'm getting more used to the technique so now avoiding some of the pitfalls.

I also like this technique as it means I use less energy and would love to know any tips anyone else has got to share as I am still very much a novice and continue to learn from each firing! If you want to check out my Instagram feed you can see some of my results (you don't need an account to view): <https://www.instagram.com/mandyenglishceramics/>.



Fitzwilliam Prize



We aim to start our new season of monthly meetings on Friday 9th October with our AGM and the Fitzwilliam Competition. This is the members' annual competition and is named after Mervyn who, in his time, was chairman, editor, president and Mr Fix-it, mostly all at the same time.

The rules of the competition.

1. The work must be made after our Potters' Open Day when the theme was announced.

2. It should be all or mostly of ceramic.
3. It should be the work of one person.
4. Entrants must be a paid up member.

The topic for this year's annual competition is '**Planter**'.

There will be a modest prize for the top three entries and the winner gets to keep the buffalo for a year.

Have fun!



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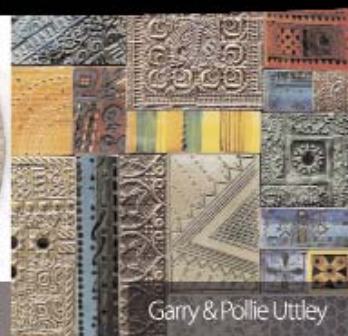
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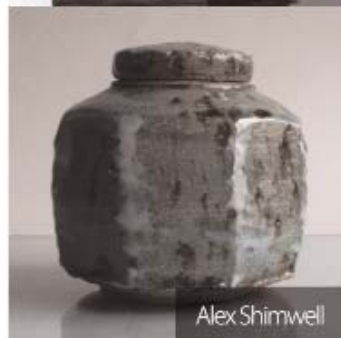
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Clockwise: Geoffrey Swindell, Sue Pryke, Illyria Pottery

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