



**DACORUM AND
CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD**



www.dcpng.org.uk

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Issue 32 January 2020 £2



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DCPG Social Media



For updates and current events always look out for your emails, the website at **www.dcp.org.uk**, and also our facebook account and on instagram at **https://www.instagram.com/thedcp**

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If you would like to advertise in our publication, enquire on advertising rates and other information, please contact David Evans at evansdjal@aol.com.

Cover picture: John Higgins from our October evening.



DCPG Programme



Friday meetings 8pm – 10pm at Kings Langley Methodist Church, WD4 8BR.
Refreshments from 7.30pm. Bring your own mugs to save using throwaway cups.
Free to members, £5 to visitors.

Feb 7th. DCPG member **Elaine Wells** will talk about her work, how she came to participate on 'Throw Down' and what happened thereafter. Elaine makes beautiful thrown tableware decorated by slip trailing and glossy glazes, and fired to stoneware. See www.elainewellspotter.co.uk

Sat March 7th. Potters' Open Day featuring **Prof Stephen Dixon, Wendy Lawrence and Brendan Hesmonhalgh.**
Sandpit Theatre, Sandringham School, St Albans, AL4 9NX

April 17. **Denis di Luca** is inspired by the many qualities that can be produced by raku firings. He also fires some of his pots in saggars to produce smoke effects and makes functional stoneware pots. Trained in Italy he uses a wide variety of techniques in his work. See www.dilucaceramics.com

Sunday 19 April. Special event marking the centenary of the **Leach/Hamada collaboration** and the founding of the studio pottery movement, featuring Philip Leach and Tomoo Hamada. The venue is the University of Hertfordshire. See item inside back cover for further information.

May 15. **Midori Takaki** makes quirky figurative pieces using hand building methods. See www.midoritakaki.co.uk



Diary Dates



27 Feb – 1 March 'Collect 2020'
International Art Fair featuring over 400 artists returns to Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2R 1LA.
www.craftscouncil.org.uk

19 – 20 March 'Restating Clay Conference'
York Art Gallery, Exhibition Square, York, YO1 7EW.

20 – 22 March 'Ceramic Art London'
The CPA's main annual show at Central St Martins, Granary Building, 1 Granary Square, Kings Cross, London N1C 4AA

26 – 28 June 'Earth and Fire'
International Ceramic Fair, long popular with wood firers.
The Harley Gallery, Welbeck, Worksop, Notts, S80 3LW

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

21 – 23 Aug 'Art in Clay'
The largest international ceramics fair in this country.
Hatfield House, Hatfield, AL9 5NQ

Watch our Facebook and Instagram pages for other events, including DCPG events which may take place before the publication of our next newsletter.

www.dcp.org.uk, and also our facebook account and on instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/thedcp>



Editorial



Ros McGuirk



DCPG Coffee Morning Socials



Judi Tribe

As your new editor may I say thank you to all who have gone before and especially to Judi my immediate predecessor who has left me plenty of lists and good advice, but also to Vicky our new proof reader and David our designer and production manager.

In the beginning the newsletter was just one piece of paper with information about forthcoming events, that was typed out and copied on a duplicator.

Then there was the A4 printed version produced by Mervyn and Sylvia that ran for many years, on glossy paper in black and white, the contents expanded to include reviews of demonstrations, tips, and adverts, and illustrated with photos.

In 2011 Bipin did a major revamp and it became a compact A5, beautifully designed and presented in colour. To this we recently added the 'green' version which is read online, thus saving trees, postage and transport.

We aim to maintain both formats for now as the paper version is so much appreciated by members, friends and supporters.

Please keep engaged with the newsletter, your contributions are always welcome. All things ceramic will be considered, from reviews, tips, opinions and travel, to exhibitions and recipes. For all these you cannot beat the thoughtful and considered writings of your pottery pals.

Look closely and you will find contributions from the newly formed 'green team' of Sandy, Mandy, Andrew and me. We would love to hear from you about greening up, so do send in your own tips and ideas for improving sustainability in the studio and at meetings.



Here are the dates and venues for the Guild's coffee social mornings. Do come and join us, where you can meet and chat to other members about pots and lots more. Reminders will be sent by email each month.

Please contact Judi Tribe to confirm that you will be coming along.

juditribe0@gmail.com (0 is a zero)

2020

January - Friday 24th 11.00am - 1.00pm

Waterstones St Albans Cafe, 8 St Peters Street, St Albans, AL1 3LF

<https://www.waterstones.com/bookshops/st-albans>

February - Monday 17th 11.00am - 1.00pm

Frogmore Paper Mill Cafe, Fourdrinier Way, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9RY
<https://www.thepapertrail.org.uk>

March - Tuesday 17th 11.00am - 1.00pm

Hemel Food Garden Sunnyside Rural Trust, Central Nursery, Two Waters Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9BY

<http://www.sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk/hemel-food-garden>

April - Thursday 2nd 11.00am - 1.00pm

The Cafe in the Park, The Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Rickmansworth, WD3 1NB
<https://www.thecafeinthepark.com>



Notes from the Chair



Mary Anne Bonney.

Is it really only two months since the AGM? In that time we have had two fabulous demonstrations - David Wright and Ruthanne Tudball, both engaging speakers and demonstrators who were generous with their knowledge and expertise - three coffee mornings, a committee awayday and open meeting, a newsletter and many conversations about future plans.

I was delighted to see committee members joined by a good number of keen would-be woodfirers at our awayday discussion about the future of the wood kiln. A small team is investigating potential sites - for the kiln, for raku firings and for some much needed storage space for the Guild. Angela Bowen, our new and very welcome Guild secretary, is co-ordinating visits.

Looking ahead, our request for a space to build Hatfield House at Art in Clay is being considered - and preparations for both POD and the Hamada Leach day of talks and Demonstrations are well advanced. Ros and team are considering sustainable potting and the Guild has been approached by the

Cathedral in St Albans about a successor to the big build there in June.

Behind the scenes, we have been busy with the many tasks that go into ensuring smooth functioning of the organization.

All this is possible because we have a dedicated committee and a number of equally enthusiastic members who volunteer their time, skills, knowledge and, occasionally, musclepower. If there is something you would like the Guild to become involved with, please do let us know and, if you can, offer to help make it happen. A big thank you to the committee and to all members who have got stuck in to help.

We are sad to record the death, on 1st December, of former secretary, John Beckley who will be remembered by longer-standing members as a keen participant, along with his wife Pierrette, in many Guild activities.

I am writing this in the run up to Christmas, by the time you read it, I trust that you will have had a peaceful break and are looking forward to a new year of involvement with clay.



Kimpton Art Fair



Ros McGuirk

Kimpton holds its annual art fair over the May Day bank holiday weekend. Over the years it has expanded from a church fund raising event to a whole village celebration including fun runs, barbeque, picnics on the green, jazz band, and this year a dog show. We have become an integral part of the craft day, taking up a large part of the school hall with two wheels and a table of pots to sell.

This year we had a strong team of members

and set up a hand building table in addition to the wheels. Sadly the dog competition beat us in the popularity stakes and we were short of customers until the last half an hour.

Nevertheless it was an enjoyable day with time for everyone to walk around the village hunting for tea and home made cakes, to see the artwork and to socialise. Many thanks to Amanda, Colin, Emily, Ian, Jackie, Katharine and Nicole who all came to help on May 5th.



Potters Open Day 7th March 2020



Prices: DCPG members £20 Non-members £30

Tickets: www.sandpittheatre.co.uk Tel: 01727 799565

Or in person 11:30- 15:30

Our very special day will be held on Saturday 7th March at the Sandpit Theatre in Sandringham School in St Albans, starting at 9.30am. Doors will open at 8.45 am. Allow extra time for parking as spaces at the school are limited and access is reduced by other activities at the school.

Note that it will save time to purchase your tickets in advance. See flyer for details.

Once inside you will be able to view the work of our guests and purchase supplies from Bluematchbox (advance orders can be made by emailing Grant at: shop@bluematchbox.co.uk).

British ceramic artist **Stephen Dixon** combines political and social commentary with his highly decorated vessels and plates. He explores his topics through the use of metaphor, drawing on classical and mythological as well as pop culture figures and images. His slab-built forms incorporate a variety of techniques, including sprigging, silk-screening, modelling, and coloured slips applied in multiple layers. As a Research

Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, he has developed innovative printing processes for ceramic work, and has shared his skills and beliefs through a series of residencies with both art and political organizations. His work is to be found in museums and private collections internationally.

Wendy Lawrence's work tends towards the large scale and is made for both outdoors and within. She is inspired by natural forms and textures, also architecture and antiquity. She enjoys carving into the clay body, decorates with volcanic glazes and fires the work to stoneware temperatures.

See <http://www.wlawrenceceramics.com>

Brendan Hesmondhalgh is a British contemporary figurative sculptor, best known for his unique handmade ceramic and bronze sculptures of animals. Using slabs of clay or sculptural wax, Hesmondhalgh wraps, layers, tears, textures and draws on the material to create one-off pieces full of character and movement.

See www.hesmondhalghsculpture.co.uk



David Wright Demo 8th November 2019



Mary Anne Bonney

David Wright discovered clay almost by accident: after art school, he found himself working as a graphic designer for a prestigious Mayfair advertising agency and not enjoying it, so he looked around for something that he could do for himself and hit upon evening classes in black-

smithing and jewellery. When he came to sign up and found the class he wanted was full, he decided to give beginners' pottery a go instead. And how lucky for us that he did! One of clay's great charms for him was that, if you made something you did not like, you could squash it up and start again. The classes, though, were focussed on throwing which did not interest him and it was not long before he invested in a banding wheel, some bats, and guide sticks, commandeered his mother's rolling pin and spent his bonus on an electric toploader kiln.

This basic kit has been supplemented by silicone kidneys, a double ended plasterer's leaf tool, children's painting brushes for applying slip and "the persuader" - of which more later. The electric kiln gave rather bland results, which is how he came to join the Wood Firing Society and now uses a downdraught wood fired kiln, derived from the Phoenix kiln developed in the US, whose capacity is 1m³. His wife Laura, designer and maker of the split-front potters apron, samples of which she had brought for sale, is the kiln lighter. They burn pallet wood and a stoneware glaze firing typically takes 12 to



13 hours of solid hard work, intense concentration, and non-stop watching and listening. It takes around 35 pallets per firing.

Coiling is David's speciality and is the technique that he uses even for creating the rectangular boxes and bottles that are among his

signature designs.

For the Guild, he chose to demonstrate making a spiral, faceted vessel. Starting with a small rolled disc for the base, which he firmly attached to a bat whose circumference was marked into sixths, he rolled a coil and patted it gently with the four fingers held straight together - a more even tool than any other part of the hand. Flattened coils sit evenly on one another, reducing the risk of trapping air between them. David always scores and slips the base to ensure a firm seal. His art school training means he thinks through and plans what he is going to make, but the coiling technique allows the piece to develop as it grows.

David worked the coils carefully together with his fingers. At the end of a layer, he made a taper into which he dovetailed the beginning of the next coil. As the vessel grew outward, he smoothed first on the inside, and from the point where the sides began to slope inwards, he shaped from the outside, smoothing the walls with the silicone kidney. Once he had a shallow bowl shape, he tapped the pot gently with the "persuader", a flat wooden slat, into a hexagon



shape, using the marks on the bat as his guides. As the pot grew a little taller, he began to angle the persuader and turn the wheel regularly as he patted, and the facets began to spiral. This technique means that the spirals form inside and out and the pot is very much lighter and its walls more even than could be achieved by faceting and twisting a thrown pot.

Evenness is a big plus when it comes to the firing - David fires to 1300°C and pots must be able to withstand the stresses as the temperature in the kiln peaks and drops. As he worked, David described the clays he uses: either David Wright handbuilding body which he developed with Potclays (and which is available from them), a relatively fine textured and plastic grogged clay which holds water when fired to stoneware, or a grogged pink which is identical in texture but gives a more interesting colour.

When the facets began to deform as he built up the coils, David reshaped them from the inside with a finger, smoothing the flat surfaces with the kidney on the outside.

To monitor the developing shape, David moved around the table, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling. He finished off the pot by patting and manipulating the clay inwards to create a convex rim, which sloped gently down from the fluted shoulder.

David describes his preferred glazes as European Asian fusion. Many of them use wood ash, which he washes before incorporating it. He draws for recipes on Bernard Leach's



The Potters Handbook, which has been his guide throughout his career. He has experimented with once firing but applying glaze to a raw pot caused distortion and it was difficult to achieve the slow temperature increase necessary at the start when firing with wood.

As he worked, keeping up an illuminating and entertaining commentary on what he was doing, David also offered insights into the other shapes he makes, the subtle twist that coiling a straight sided vessel gives, the colours he achieves, the way he selects wood for lids, how a little gold leaf can 'lift' an ordinary pot (as long as you do not let it blow away), the transformative magic of resin kintsugi and lots more besides. To illustrate some of his points, Laura handed round examples of his work.

David was generous and knowledgeable in answering questions from the audience too. Iron, he thinks may be the secret to getting an orange flush in your Shino, and, if you have to fire in a communal kiln, be sure that all participants are agreed on their aims and how they plan to get there!

To conclude, he offered a cautionary joke: a parachutist jumped, his chute failed to open, and so did the backup. As he plunged to earth he met someone shooting up towards him. 'Do you know anything about jammed ripcords?' he asked, desperately. 'No replied the other, do you know anything about gas kilns?'

Thank you David and Laura for a great evening.





John Higgins



Jackie Harrop.

In these turbulent and troubled times, John Higgins is the only president I have any intention of paying attention to.

His presentation on his recent 5 week multinational residential visit to Lintao, a centre for Majiayao, Neolithic ceramics 3,100-2700 BC in China was a rare opportunity to gain a perspective on how highly respected he is not only in Britain but globally and to watch him at work.

John was invited to join a prestigious group of 12 ceramicists from Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, The Netherlands, Argentina, France, Japan and Korea as part of a cultural event in the city of Lintao Gansu Province, an area of central China steeped in ceramic history alongside the Yellow River.

Throughout the visit, they were treated regally, with entertainment by opera singers and Tibetan drummers interspersing visits which took them along sections of the silk road, and into the Gobi desert, visiting the spectacular ruins of the Quin dynasty including the great wall, Buddhist statues and enormous kilns built into the hillside.

Vast quantities of archaeological shards from these historical sites, many of which were from 3000BC and over 5000years old were stored awaiting reconstruction, and many of the designs, incorporating cross hatching and casually hand painted linear



swirls of black and red on burnished and raw terracotta, continue to be used by local potter dynasties whose current pots bore a striking similarity to those ancient relics.

The inspiration for these designs was thought to originate from the cosmos and reveal an incredible awareness of the universe and cosmic landscapes.

As part of the cultural celebration and using the Majiayao ceramics as inspiration, each of the artists produced a body of work inspired by their observations and celebrating their own style. The group worked in a recently built workshop and residential facility whose gardens had been planted,



and accommodation opened in their honour. Throughout the visit, John was impressed by the sense of sharing and a collective culture. The Lintao mayor hosted many of their sumptuous banquets and soirees with lavish generosity and extensive publicity including large banners on street hoardings, buses and bus-stops featuring the artists' work.

Producing the work for the exhibition was not without challenges, when firings in the gas trolley kiln and the electric were too rapid or over fired, and pieces broke, or when glazes were unavailable and arrived too late for deadline. The magnificent tea set, comprising a platter, jug and three tea bowls and a wok symbolising its essential role in the many shared meals, was constructed from John's uniquely stretched slabs, textured, altered and thrown on a wheel. These pieces are now on display in Jingdezhen having moved from Lintao, and the many posters, buses and bus stops in Lintao.

The flight back produced an entertaining if not scary encounter with Chinese bureaucracy which almost resulted in John's incarceration, when close scrutiny of his passport revealed that his visa had expired. Quick thinking and a display of the poster and the mayoral award from Lintao impressed them with his credentials and avoided us having to make regular visits to a Chinese prison or to practice flies in cakes cookery.



The Fitzwilliam Competition October 2019



The theme for our annual members competition was "Birds and Bird baths". Like all the best challenges, it was a broad



John then showed us how he made the installation pieces, using a 50:50 mix of crank and Scarva hand building clay, first using the Korean method of creating slabs by hand, wedged and stretched in different directions to achieve rectangular shapes ready to roll onto canvas covered cylinders. He used Indian fabric printing block and an evil looking nail embellished wooden paddle.

theme offering many possibilities. Did the bird have to come with a bath? How many birds can one get in a bath? And so on.



A dozen interpretations were on view in the exhibition varying from garden sized to table top, slab built, coiled, thrown, coloured, glazed or not, and some were made of combined materials. The thought of where to begin judging such a remarkable collection was bewildering, but John Higgins set about his task with alacrity. During the adjudication, held after the AGM, John gave us all his observations on each piece, admiring the successes and giving guidance where due.

The first prize went to Andrew Gardner for his exquisite Parrot in the bath tub, a witty piece that contained a tiny battery operated pump so that water flowed out of the (gold) tap! The second prize was awarded to Wendy Peters for her bird bath with playful crows and Richard Ballantyre gained third prize with a raku toucan perched on an old lacquer work box.

They were really original pieces, well designed and beautifully made. It must have

been a close call, for that could have been said about all the exhibits. Well done everybody!



The Box Moor Festival



David Evans.

The Box Moor Festival (formally The Conker Festival) has long since been an annual event on the DCPG calendar.

To say this year's was a wet one would be a gross understatement. On arrival, we found the car park largely under water and we were advised not to take our vehicles on to the field.

The Box Moor Trust had provided us with two square tents butted together. However, where the two met the rain came in, hence the most repeated expression of the day was 'mind the gap.' Our hosts had kindly supplied us with both hot and cold water and our own generator to power the two Shimpos.

We put up our tables, installed the wheels and set about preparing clay for the expected 'have a go' throwers. We prepared thirty odd balls of clay in two buckets and waited for our enthusiastic would be potters to surge upon us.

Alas, it wasn't happening. Our invitation to passers by to come and have a go were greeted by polite smiles, a shake of the head and "maybe later." Mary Anne made the executive decision to make it a FREE EVENT. Little changed and Gill and Tony Baxter, who were manning the sales table of pots in another tent were equally underwhelmed.

Come nearly two o'clock and we had the odd customer, then a small trickle. For the last hour and a half we had queues of would be throwers standing out in the rain.

Mums, dads and kids of all ages. Two wheels going fast and furiously and it was all hands to the clay to produce enough balls for our throwers.



By closing time we were turning them away. With the exception of the hot tea and coffee vendors, we probably had the best attended stand in the field.



For the Green Corner Innovation Update



Mandy English.

Climate change is encouraging new innovations from designers to help protect our planet. Designers are encouraged to use the principles of the circular economy, where products remain in a closed loop lifecycle to

reduce carbon emissions, including using waste as raw materials. This sustainable design concept has been applied by Granby Workshop; a group of artisan potters based in Liverpool. Investing in innovative



research, they have produced tableware made from 100% recycled ceramic waste. The industrial and post-consumer clay waste they used would otherwise have been sent to landfill and their source was local ceramic industries in Stoke on Trent.

The group had to add an ongoing additional step in the production process to test waste products received to assess the safety and quality of the new raw materials. Both the clay body and glaze material they developed were promoted as part of London Design Week last September and support their ambition for more sustainable products.

It was exciting to read Granby exceeded their Kickstarter campaign target of £50k for full production in October and are aiming to have their new range available to investors by April. We hope to report on an update later in the year.

You can read more about Granby's innovation as reported on Dezeen's website (the global architecture and design magazine) at:

<https://www.dezeen.com/2019/09/22/granby-workshop-recycled-clay-tableware/> (see photo from their website below) and the circular economy on the Ellen McArthur Foundation website at:

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>.



Ruthanne Tudball - Inspired by Nature – “Why I make what I make”



Nicole Lyster.

Ruthanne first came to pottery when she saw a potter making bowls in Wales. Her first thoughts were not ‘I want to own one of those’, but ‘I want to make one of those’. This led her to teach herself throwing, using the facilities on offer at a local pottery and many, many books with illustrations (there was no YouTube back then). She advanced to throwing on her own wheel, rented from Mervyn Fitzwilliam (of DCPG fame), in the coal cellar. Having no kiln she developed a care-free attitude to her work and for two years it was in a constant circle of ‘throw, reclaim and throw again’. Eventually this was

not enough and Ruthanne embarked on a ceramics course at Goldsmiths college.

There she developed a way of making complete forms whilst they were still wet, including her own way to make holes in teapots after the spout was added. The removal of the need to trim or add handles and spouts when work was leather hard allowed her to develop her flowing designs and dry them fully in a week so that she could fire in the university kiln as part of her experiments into glazing. After two years of investigating alternatives to salt glazing (which is illegal in urban locations due to



clean air regulations), Ruthanne developed a comprehensive knowledge of ‘soda’ firing and wrote the definitive book on the subject in 1995. This gave her the opportunity to travel the world demonstrating and teaching this new knowledge wherever it was asked.

Ruthanne began her demonstration with a presentation that beautifully demonstrated the link between the natural world that surrounds her and her ceramic pieces. Each piece is influenced by something specific that she has seen and drawn “I draw for me, to make me look at things”: bark peeling and a tree, the juxtaposition of sand and beach rocks, salt rings deposited on the clay in the Black Sea, museum pieces from ancient history, dancing figurines.

Ruthanne had to learn to throw for the second time in reverse, due to a damaged ligament in one hand, and this enabled her to develop a real ‘feel’ for the clay as she couldn’t use muscle memory and sight to help her with this new direction of throwing.

Her work is fired in her own specially designed kiln in Norfolk, up to 1300 C (and sometimes beyond) using wood and gas. The soda is sprayed directly into the hot kiln just as the silica in the clay is melting so that the soda and silica bond into a glaze. She also uses ash glazes made up from the ash trees on her land, and colours her work with slips of natural clay colours (apart from the black slip which is mixed with Iron, Cobalt and Manganese oxides).

After this presentation we were mesmerised by Ruthanne’s use of her specially formulated soft pink clay (mixed from powdered materials and with synthetic Red Iron Oxide added to give it its special colour) to make a series of alternative forms. Using very little water, because the clay is so soft, smooth



and yielding, and her “most important tools, my little fingers” she produced some wonderful free flowing bowls off the hump, a ‘not round’ plate from a square piece of clay, and a large teapot with a top handle beautifully pulled and stretched over the lid.

All pieces were formed and completed whilst wet and the edges of vessels are torn or manipulated with her little fingers (like the unfinished edges of petals). These raw edges are then softened by the reactive process of the silica and soda in the hot kiln to make beautifully natural and ‘grown’ forms that are calling out to be held and used.





New Members



Charlotte Anstey.

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to the Guild: -

Sonia Bhasin who learns at Oaklands.

Fran and Tony Bowler are clay enthusiasts who have recently moved from Bedford to St Albans. They are looking forward to meeting like minded folk and becoming more creative.

Shaija Sharma from Stanmore who has been working with clay for the last 6 years. She loves throwing on the wheel and works with both stoneware and porcelain clays. She achieved her B Tech last year.

Sue Williams from Stanmore.

Vijay Thind from Cranford who specialises in hand built ceramic sculptures illustrating love of the challenges, joys and disappointments posed by ceramics. He uses metal oxide stains to preserve the details and showcase the clay.

Stephen Coade from St Albans, who has finally taken the plunge into clay at Oaklands, having been an admirer and collector of pots for many years.

You have joined a diverse group of over 130 potters, between them covering many different aspects of ceramics. Please feel free to introduce yourselves to others.



DCPG Summer Party - 11th August 2019



Judi Tribe



The weather started overcast in the morning but by the time the Summer Picnic Party was all set up and Guild members and their families arrived laden with delicious quiches, salads and puddings to share, the sun broke free and everyone enjoyed the beautiful sunny afternoon chatting about pots, glazing,

holiday trips and much more. It was great fun to host this in our garden and I hope that this will now become an annual event again.





John Richard Beckley MA ACIS 13th Feb 1929 to 1st Dec 2019



Claire Stephens



National Service with two years of military service in North Africa as a Captain in the Royal Army Educational Corps of the British Army.

After the Army, he went on to study English and Psychology at Pembroke College, Cambridge University. Later, while working, he gained his Company Secretary qualification.

In 1948 he started dating Pierrette Ripley, marrying her in 1954. John and Pierrette celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary on 26th June 2019.

On leaving University, with his father's advice, he went into sales of accounting machines and mainframe computers with NCR where his career lasted to his retirement age.

On retiring, he was able to pursue his hobbies of ceramics, sculpting, gardening and cooking.

John sadly passed away peacefully on Sunday 1st December. John was born on 13th February 1929 to Winifred and Frederick Beckley at Queen Charlottes Hospital, Hammersmith, London. His primary education was in Neasden and then in Watford at Watford Grammar School for Boys.

He was an avid boy scout in the 45th Watford Central Grammar School Scout Troop, throughout his time at school, where he made many of his lifelong friends. His interest in scouting continued in later life, on the parents' committee of the 6th Northwood Scout Group.

Following his schooling he carried out

He was a keen member of the Guild for many years and served on the committee as secretary for over 10 of the, retiring in 2009,

He was a loving and devoted family man and had three children; Claire, Jonathan and Simeon. He was grandfather to Natalie, Annette, Elizabeth, George and Edward and this year he became a great grandfather to Luca. He will be sorely missed by all family members and his close friends.

His funeral was held on Monday 23rd December in North Watford Cemetery.

Donations in memory of John can be made to the Alzheimer's Society, if desired.



In Praise of Buckets

 Ros McGuirk

I doubt whether you have ever thought much about how you use water in the workshop, nor questioned how much you use and if you can reduce it. On an industrial scale that would make sense, but in your own little studio? Really?

When setting up a workshop you have to consider your water supply and what to do with the waste. When my husband helped build my shed and dug a trench for the water, electricity and gas supplies, I assumed I would have a plentiful supply of running water for making glazes, slaking dry clay and keeping the place clean. The electricity and gas were connected, but somehow the water supply did not happen. I made do with buckets and was happy.

Every day in the pottery starts with taking half a bucket of fresh water down the garden. Yesterday's slops will be settled enough to pour the clear water off the top and onto the shrubs. The clay left behind is then poured onto a plaster or wooden batt to dry off. It is so easy that when someone said how concerned they were to reduce their use of water in the studio, I really did not understand the question. "Well", I said, without further thought, "use a bucket".

Buckets have a multitude of uses in the workshop. With lids they make great containers for glaze materials or to keep your clay fresh once it is out of the bag. (Old potters might have laid a piece of wet sacking on the top to make extra sure the clay stayed moist. Plastic sheeting is more likely now, but there are issues with the clay dust they release when moved about.)

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or disposal.

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Most importantly of all, I always have at least one bucket for washing and another for a clean water supply. I also keep a galvanised fire bucket to hand when firing the gas kiln.

Andrew has a more sophisticated system for separating clay from the slops, as you can see from the photographs, using three inset flower pots. The slops are poured into the inner pot where the clay settles onto the base. Water overflows into the outer pots through holes drilled below the rim, as shown and can be removed. When the inner pot is full of clay it is lifted out and the clay dried on an absorbent surface. Brilliant!

In SE England our summers are becoming seriously dry and most of us have a metered supply, so it makes sense to recycle where we can. I can reuse some of the clear water at the top of my settling buckets, but I would not advise using that when mixing slips and glazes in case of impurities.

I am also lucky to have a water butt that collects the water off my shed, so in theory as a potter I can be self sufficient in water, given enough rainfall. In practice, though, I am a bit squeamish about the organic nature of it, and most goes on the vegetable patch!





A tip I picked up from an old DCPG newsletter was to use one bucket of water to restore a variety of dried clays by simply placing each type of clay in its own plastic bag and punching holes in the side. Leave all the bags in one bucket till the clays are ready to use, then wedge and knead.

I have heard of potters cutting away the side of a large plastic bucket to make a small dry spray booth. For health and safety considerations I am not recommending this, but it might work with one of those tiny sprayers that you blow down.



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The potters at Boxmoor used buckets of concrete when making the footings of the wood store. David found them and dug them up when we cleared the site.

Back in the pottery I have a traditional cotton mop for washing the floor, with a bucket, of course.

I remember at school we put a waste paper basket on top of the classroom door just before our RE lesson. It worked perfectly on the unsuspecting vicar. The next best thing to a bucket head! What else can you do with a bucket? Do let us know.

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How to fill your Uni summer hols (studying BA (Hons) Design Crafts (Ceramics and Glassware).

After my fabulous throwing course with Sylph Baier near Bergerac last summer, I decided for my second year Uni hols this summer to sign up for Alison Sandeman's residential glaze course week at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation in West Sussex. Having visited previously for other courses, I knew I'd be in for a treat as the college is set in beautiful grounds and has excellent facilities. I looked forward to the course with great anticipation and it certainly exceeded my expectations.

If you consider attending though, be prepared for an intensive week. Daytime and evening teaching sessions meant we benefited from a huge amount of quality tuition and although we had a fun social time too, the bar didn't get used much! The pre-course 'to do' list was a bit daunting as, ideally, you needed to take with you about 20 bisque fired pots and test tiles to practice on. However, it was more challenging to source 20 jam jars with lids to mix the glaze powders. One tip from me if you go - make sure your test tiles fit into the jam jars, otherwise you end up, like me, having to pour your glazes into another vessel to dip your tiles.

Alison and our small group of six bonded quickly over mealtimes as we all enjoyed sharing our knowledge, tips and stories and were keen to indulge our clay obsessions.

There was ample studio space, supported by a technician and an adjacent room with extractors

for mixing glazes.

Alison is a long-standing tutor at West Dean and has amazing attention to detail. She taught us very practical glazing techniques which ranged from refreshing your basic knowledge to more scientific depth and was good humoured when bombarded with students' questions. Active participation in a couple of voluntary short independent research projects was encouraged in any spare time we had, to share with the group on the last day (I chose raw glazing) and we collected loads of notes to take home.

The end of the week finished jubilantly with four kiln openings (three electric and one gas) and we felt like kids at Christmas; the excitement was overwhelming! Some surprising results emerged, including an unexpected crystalline finish but the most successful were where we had combined different glazes in layers.

The week certainly boosted my glaze confidence and I was privileged to meet a lovely group of people, some of whom I've remained in contact with since - highly recommended for a thoroughly enjoyable learning experience.





Trip to Mashiko

 Jackie Harrop 2019

I had the most amazing birthday treat last month when my husband plotted with John Higgins and Mori Yamauchi to organise a surprise visit to Mashiko for a 3 day pottery course at the Tougei pottery club. Ever since our son stopped living in Japan we have both missed our regular trips to Honshu, Hokkaido and Okinawa. I had frequently commented on a wish to return and a regret at having only spent a fleeting visit to Mashiko. This was a treat we were both going to enjoy! In the past our son, who is fluent in spoken and written Japanese, had always been there to interpret or translate for us, but we were able to navigate and negotiate our way around without too much trouble. We flew from Heathrow to Haneda, staying overnight in Tokyo and renewing our love of shopping and eating in Japan, before getting the Shinkansen (the bullet train) to Utsonomiya then the local bus to Mashiko. The bus stops outside the Shoji Hamada's house and it was only a short direct walk for us to get to the Tougei club where we stayed for 3 nights.

Shinkansen trains are frequent, and we

were able to change tickets for earlier trains without any problem.

We stayed in the Tougei club which is just 10 minutes walk from the centre of Mashiko, the Museum of Ceramic Art and the Memorial Shoji Hamada Sankokan Museum.



Tougei means ceramics, and the studio was in what had once been a magnificent farmhouse and associated outbuildings. The wood store and kilns had a look of our Boxmoor site and although things looked chaotic, the systems they had in place worked remarkably well. Residents were accommodated in simple rooms with a tatami mat and rolled futon. Toilets were shared but thankfully were western style, not the Japanese ones with music and wash and blow dry facilities as we had come to expect! It was important to remember that every room had its own footwear restrictions.





Outdoor shoes were removed and replaced with studio shoes, indoor slippers, and toilet slippers, or socks on the tatami sleeping space floor. The studio area had a bare earth floor, but everything was provided, from studio crocs and aprons, and the artists working there from around the world, were all guided to improve from their own starting points and inclinations.

There were classes of Japanese students during the few days I was there, but residents came and went throughout the evening, working when their creative juices stirred them, as well as having morning and afternoon timed sessions with a guide, if desired. I was able to learn to throw off the hump, using finger widths to measure intended bowl size.

I was guided to try to make traditional bowl shapes, without being forced to adopt any particular restriction. I learned to wire off using a piece of string and the only tool I used was a strip of chamois for the bowl rim. The throwing demos were done in Japanese rotation but I was able to reverse the switch on my wheel to throw in my preferred orientation.



In the morning of day 1, I used Mashiko red clay and in the afternoon practiced with the gritty white. Day 2 started with a catastrophe when on lifting my board from the overhead rack in order to begin to trim, all my bowls slid off, smashing into someone else's softer work below. No problem! Wabi sabi! Baula from Patagonia re threw the damaged pots, exactly as the previous person had, complete with imperfections, undulations and no one was upset- except for my embarrassment and shame! For trimming I used just one trimming tool using the side to flatten and the angle to trim rather than the way I had previously used trimming tools. I was able to select the Mashiko glazes that will be used to finish my pots before shipping back to UK in a few months time. I cannot wait to see them!



There are two major ceramic festivals one in May during Golden week which was 5-10 May and the other around 3rd November where there are around 500 tents set up and direct sales mean some ceramics can be bought cheaper. We had just missed the Golden Week Festival but even without this market there are a huge number of studios, galleries and factories. You can smell and see wood firings going on with many anagama kilns still in use.



I was fortunate to be given a contact who owns the Kajiura pottery which makes press moulded table ware which he exports globally from Mashiko. We were able to visit and see how he and his family make a terrific range of work and to talk with him using his phone app voice translator. He still has a beautiful anagama kiln which he rarely gets time to fire, but his woodstore is impressive!

There are also temples and cultural sights in and around this small town, and rice fields and forests to explore, and the cherry blossom which tends to be out late April to early May. There are also antique markets with a wide range of curios and oddities and my favourite pottery supplies shop with a range of tools, glazes and oxides that you might not find in Potclays!

Many of the cafes are attached to potteries and are a combination of gallery and eating space, so you can admire the work as you eat, with beautiful teacups, bowls and plates everywhere. Workshops abound and the potters are generous in permitting observers, photos and admiring views.





Hamada-Leach Centenary celebration

Sunday April 19th 10am - 4.00pm

A talk and demonstrations by Philip Leach and Tomoo Hamada

Outlining the unique contribution of their families to studio pottery in St Ives and Mashiko

University of Hertfordshire,
School of Creative Arts,
College Lane Campus,
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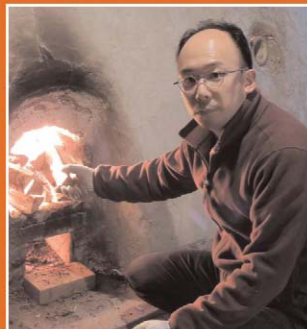
Tickets available at www.eventbrite.co.uk

Refreshments available at lunchtime

In May last year I was fortunate to have a surprise birthday trip to Japan for a short course of throwing in Mashiko. A chance encounter at with Minori Thorpe, a Japanese potter now living in America, and taking a pottery break at the same studio, led to the Guild being sponsored to host a centenary celebration of the relationship between the Leach and Hamada families. Minori's generosity has enabled us to organise an event at the University of Hertfordshire and to invite the grandsons of Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada to share with us some of the

historic professional relationship with their families and the development of their pottery studios in St Ives and Mashiko which started a 100 years ago. Tomoo Hamada and Philip Leach will present a day of demonstration and celebration at the University of Hertfordshire on 19th April 2020. (see poster above) This promises to be a one in a lifetime event and is a real scoop for us as a guild. Miss it at your peril. To avoid disappointment tickets available from the Eventbrite website and search Hamada/Leach

Jackie Harrop



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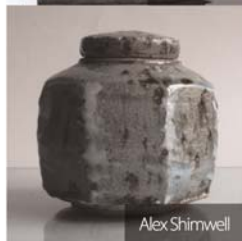
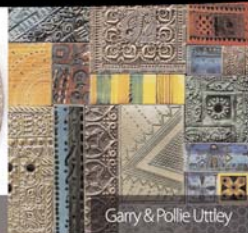
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