



**DACORUM AND  
CHILTERN  
POTTERS GUILD**



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Boxmoor Kiln  
Harry Karnac  
Herts & Cambs Open Studios  
Kathleen Standen  
Lynne McGechie at Barnfield  
Natalie Tobert in Belgium  
Book Review

Issue 13 Summer 2014

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Deanne Seaman



Foundation Degree in Craft Design, Barnfield College

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**Harry Karnac Obituary**  
by Sylvia Fitzwilliam

Some members of the Guild may remember the name of Ruth Karnac & her husband Harry. Ruth was the Chair of the guild for many years and Harry was an interested and very helpful aid to both Ruth & Mervyn who followed as chairman after Ruth. Mervyn, being editor of the Newsletter, was glad to have Harry as co-editor. Harry having taught himself to use the computer did a lot of the donkey work of typing up the articles often correcting spelling and grammar.



Harry was a stalwart man with strong opinions on many subjects. He took a great interest in, and indeed wrote quite a number of books about Psychoanalysis, as well as running a shop dedicated to the subject in Finchley Road (around the corner from the Freud Museum).

In his early years he was a socialist and in 1936 was involved in the Cable Street demonstrations against the Mosley Blackshirt Fascists. As he mellowed slightly in later years he was a supporter of the Ruislip Labour Party. He loved a discussion on semantics, politics, etc usually winning the arguments. I remember him with affection and am very glad to have known him and I know Mervyn had great respect for him. He added another dimension to our lives.

His funeral on April 14th was attended by a considerable congregation and was conducted by a member of the Humanist Society which Harry supported. Naomi, Harry's daughter, her husband, as well as two or three friends and relations paid tribute to Harry.

I hope these few words do Harry justice.

**Notes from the Chair Ros McGuirk**

As I write we are well into the season of shows. Many of our members are taking part in events and we wish them well. Some are prepared to travel afar. Nigel Carrick has gone off to Potfest in Scotland and Natalie Tobert is taking her sculptures to a ceramic show in Belgium.

Some have already been successful. Diana Tonnison took her 3D fish pictures to Chelsea last week and took an order from Liberty's. That is wonderful news.

Several members will be at Art in Clay while others will be at Childwickbury. Both are on July 4-6 and not only are they both excellent, but they are barely five miles apart. If you have not yet found Childwickbury it is a little gem of a show, modelled on Art in Action, but in miniature and thus cheaper, much closer to hand for most of us and much easier to get round.

If you are taking part in a show and have room for some guild flyers, do get in touch soon so we can get something to you. We ought to advertise the Guild more widely.

Last week I attended a talk on art held at the prestigious Art Workers Guild in Bloomsbury. Ceramic artist and teacher

Gareth Mason, whom many of you will remember throwing a bowl from an entire bag of porcelain at one of our meetings, took on an American professor of philosophy in an animated performance that produced torrents of words of Shakespearean proportions in a ding dong discussion that ranged from the nature of beauty, the expression of sexuality in art, the role of imagination and above all the relationships that form between the artist, the artefact and the viewer or collector. It was brilliant, passionate, thought provoking and great fun.

It is amazing where you can get to in the wonderful world of ceramics.

Enjoy your journey.



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**The Boxmoor Kiln**



As most of you know the Boxmoor kiln is a wood burning kiln project that we began three years ago. We built the kiln, fired it to earthenware temperatures and partly rebuilt it, and then, when we were ready to fire to stoneware, the site was closed while a big building project was carried out by the owners, the Boxmoor Trust. What was a working headquarters became a visitors' centre with facilities suitable for events such as conferences and weddings. The area around was cleared and our kiln site was suddenly revealed, and it was not very pretty. So today (1 June) we ran around and tidied, sorted, moved piles of wood (which uncovered a fox's larder of fresh rabbits) and re-covered the kiln. The site is now nearly ready for our own building project to provide a new roof and wood store. Look out in your email and also on the website for news of work parties and, eventually, firings.



We are now into our summer break with the pleasures of Rufford, Art in Clay, Art in Action and the many local Open Studio events held at this time of the year to enjoy.

Ros has come up trumps again with an excellent programme for the forthcoming year which includes Russell Collins, Hiro Takahashi, Matthew Blakeley, Patia Davies, Peter Hayes, Diana Tonnison and Richard Pearson.

We kick off with our first meeting and AGM on Oct 10th. The Stan Romer competition this year is on the theme of 'Contrasts' and we have the redoubtable Russell Collins as our guest. To quote Ros: *'Russell is one of the best production potters.'*

### **Herts Open Studios 6-8 September 2014** by **Linda Warminger**

If you are on the hunt for three dimensional objects or gifts then visit **Ruta Bartkeviciute's** studio. She creates superbly finished one-off handmade ceramics. These precious and decorative pieces include vibrant and fun decorative tableware and would make ideal gifts for all ages.

At **Artscape Arts** you can find fine and precious Raku porcelain by **Pauline Ashley**, some with gold leaf inlays. Pauline also has a background in restoration, professionally restoring ceramics, glass, resin and alabaster.

If you are looking for carefully crafted figurative drawing, sculpture and painting then visit **Paul Diggins'** studio to see his inspirational works. **Jonathan Higgins** sculpts beautifully proportioned figures inspired by everyday situations, fashion

*He set up and ran Hook Norton Pottery for many years supplying the catering trade. He has recently moved on and now works as a studio potter making individual pieces and trying to resist the lure of the bulk order.*

*He last came to the Guild for an open day about 15 years ago and gave an electric performance - I had never seen anything like it."*

There's still time for you to enter the competition, so why not use the summer months to get making. The meeting rooms will be open before 7pm to enable the competitors to deliver their work before 7.30pm when the judging begins.

The AGM will run from 7.30-8pm. The meeting will close at 10.30pm.

and photography. His materials are marble resin and acrylic, used to create wonderful contemporary pieces.

For nature-lovers enjoy **Jane Sleator's** perfect ceramic pieces which are thrown on the wheel and then decorated with wood bark designs that resonate and work well for modern and traditional interiors.

Our brochures will be in circulation from 1 July. A pdf brochure can be downloaded from our website at [www.hvaf.org.uk/Open-Studios/Open-Studios-2014/Brochure](http://www.hvaf.org.uk/Open-Studios/Open-Studios-2014/Brochure).

For more information contact **Linda Warminger: [www.hvaf.org.uk](http://www.hvaf.org.uk)**

### **Cambridge Open Studios**

5-27 July 2014. For more information see [www.camopenstudios.co.uk](http://www.camopenstudios.co.uk)



by **Natalie Tobert**

I had never travelled abroad before with my ceramics. This was a new experience. I had been invited to an international ceramics fair in Haacht, Belgium in June, together with over 70 Potters from across Europe.

I only had a small car, but I packed it tightly with boxes of pottery, carefully putting helmets on the curious looped tops of my sculptures, then swathing them in bubble wrap. I wouldn't forgive myself if my work broke on the journey.

The fair was held in a community centre, and around a lake in the small Flemish town of Haacht. Inside were two exhibition halls, and outside were rows of shaded stalls on the banks of the lake, extending along its pathways. Each stall had a four metre table to display ware: other potters showed a mixture of functional glazed ware and sculptural figurative work, with some abstract designs.

Regular streams of people came all day: some found my work so weird, so unsettling, that they passed quickly by the stall, whereas others were curious as to why and how I made the sculptures. I explained I had travelled a lot in Africa, and wanted to make sculptures that seemed as if they had originated in the Sahara Desert, created by the effects of wind, water, and heat.

I told visitors I had also worked in archaeology, and the markings on my sculpture were reminiscent of stratified excavations. Some forms had anthropomorphic humanlike features, which transmuted into bird skulls or skeletal bones. Some seemed to metamorphose into curious animal-like creatures.

My sculptures were fired to stoneware, and I used an ilmenite glaze that fired matt.



It was the colour of the ochre desert sand where it was thick, and looked like a rocky stone surface where thin. I wanted sculptures to look as if they had been made of stone or sand.

I explained to visitors that I didn't pre-draw any forms: the design was reached by intuition and practice alone. My only prerequisite was that the sculptures rested on a flat base and could stand stable upright.

I enjoyed my first trip abroad with the ceramics, and stayed in a little hotel at the edge of a forest, with pine trees shimmering in the sunlight, and swaying ruthlessly during the thunder. This journey had been marked by extremes of weather: soaring heat in 30° sunshine, followed by continuous thunder, lightning, and torrential rain.

I came back to UK on Tuesday night, unpacked my ceramic sculptures on Wednesday, and set them up at home just in time for Harrow Open Studios, a few days later.

Now I have been invited to show in Italy, but I am not yet sure how my ceramics and I will reach there...

Copy deadline for the autumn edition of the newsletter is Friday 5 September. Please send to [lynne.mcgechie@btinternet.com](mailto:lynne.mcgechie@btinternet.com) and to [bipin@thedcpg.org.uk](mailto:bipin@thedcpg.org.uk)



Having undertaken several pottery courses in colleges in and around London (West Herts, Harrow Weald, Camberwell, Chelsea) all of which have much to commend them, I have just completed a Foundation Degree in craft design at Barnfield College, Luton in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire.

## Why a Foundation Degree at Barnfield College?

I first came across Barnfield at Art in Clay through two of its ex-students, Barry Stedman whose work you may know from Art in Clay, Ceramic Art London, Rufford etc. ([barrystedman.co.uk](http://barrystedman.co.uk)) and Miche Follano ([michiefollano.com](http://michiefollano.com)) a recent graduate of Central St Martin's whose work can also be seen at Art in Clay and other major exhibitions.

At that time Barry was working at the college as a part time teacher and technician and the first course I undertook there was a year course led by Barry and Ruth Parsfield on surface design. We covered techniques using slips, mono printing, screen printing, and making and using decals. Encouraged by this experience and wanting to develop my own creative 'voice' I moved on to the Foundation Degree course.

## What did the course cover?

As a craft design course it covered work in glass and jewellery as well as ceramic. Over the three years of the part time course I made ceramic work inspired by and then displayed in the gardens at Luton Hoo; a glass piece with a design developed from ideas about the seasons; a silver ring on the theme of personal narrative; a ceramic drinking vessel (in my case thrown stoneware mugs); and a piece that arose from my work based learning (I was very lucky to get a placement with Matthew Blakely).

The course culminated in a final major project, for me a collection of ceramic pieces on the theme of entropy, age and decay, which was displayed at the degree show in that Hat Factory, Luton.

In addition, to the 3D work we had to keep sketchbooks and learning and research journals which in the final year morphed into a blog. Over the course we had to write two essays looking at the context of our work within contemporary art. This was rather irksome for me as a mature student, but in retrospect the research that I undertook was an enriching process.

A valuable aspect of the course was seeing the work of other students and sharing feedback and critical comment. The course group consisted of full and part-time students at various stages in their two and three year courses, many of whom went on to complete an honours degree at various universities, including Central St Martin's. Sadly in the final year there were just two of us specialising in ceramics, Deanne Seaman and me, but the supportive environment continued and I think we were both pleased with our final work for the degree show.

## What have I learnt from the course?

I think the main things I have taken away from the course are how to develop an idea and critically evaluate my work. I don't find creativity easy, but have learnt the value of tenacity, keeping on, even when things have gone wrong, and building on the bits, however small, that do work - it's a continual process, which eventually can reap rewards.

Also, although not a natural drawer, I have experienced the value of keeping a sketchbook to develop and even sometimes to discover ideas - it takes discipline, but maintaining a sketchbook is something I must continue to do into the future.



For more information about ceramic and applied arts courses at Barnfield College contact Ruth Parsfield at [ruth.parsfield@barnfield.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.parsfield@barnfield.ac.uk)





Glass, grog, shards, tacks, nuts, seeds, perlite, nails, paper, fibreglass are the main materials added to clay and Kathleen spent the first part of her presentation discussing the work of many ceramic artists who employ additions to their clay body. Kathleen categorises additions as hard materials, combustibles, impressions, imprints and dipping (as one), fibres, metals and colour.

So comprehensive was Kathleen's talk that I have had to limit myself in this piece to the work of one ceramic artist in each category, prior to discussing Kathleen Standen's own work.

Taking Fred Gatley as the ceramicist who employs hard additions in a big way, he makes his own low fired coloured porcelain grog and adds other grog made from pottery shards or crushed brick. He also uses crude flakes of rust and other additions of sand, gravel, silt, and organic material gathered on riverside walks, Fred Gatley's clay body

is bone china or Limoges porcelain. Fred has a variety of directions he may take his work and hence uses a variety of techniques; he may grind to reveal interesting textures, seam lines or cavities and may fire several times in different ways. He makes many of the tools he uses and often grinds pieces to a marble-like finish.

A favourite ceramicist of mine is Claudio Casanovas so I have an excuse to elaborate on his work, which Kathleen takes as an example of a ceramicist who uses combustibles in the work she includes in her book. Casanovas works alone, often needing to use industrial machinery on his larger work, never touching the clay, in spite of needing to introduce many combustibles; dog biscuits, bread dough, stramin board to name a few, while laminating together different clays, a process the Japanese call *neriage*. When the combustibles burn out, Casanovas may sand blast the work to exploit the different properties of the clay.

Mette Maya Gregersen is a Danish ceramicist much in the public eye with her wave work; shapes held under tension during formation whose energy is captured for ever. Using sections of bamboo window blinds, she cuts them up and ties them with thread and wire into the curved wave-like forms she is seeking. The form is hung from the ceiling ready for coating with soft stoneware paper clay, molochite paper pulp, acrylic fibres, bentonite and sand. This process is repeated slowly over time until the required thickness is reached. An outdoor low biscuit gas firing is needed to burn off the bamboo before a second biscuit firing in an electric kiln to 1140. Different stoneware glazes (to 1280) build a depth to the surface but also leave the impression of the fine bamboo sticks on the final pieces of work.

Kathleen talked about the strength that fibres acquire when re-shaped and moulded with the clay to become integrated and invisible in the finished building.

In a similar way, paper, flax or cotton linter (Kathleen's own preferred fibre) or even glass fibre may be mixed into clay to increase the strength of the ware, allowing wet to be added to wet, wet to dry and even wet to bisque. When finished the work is amazingly light, a great advantage for large pieces. I loved the image of a piece by Jenny Pope, a Scottish ceramicist who adds perlite, nichrome wire, plant materials to her mix of porcelain and paper pulp. Jenny's piece, photographed for Kathleen's book, looks like a piece of eroded landscape or even weathered bone.

Metals lose their strength at different temperatures and some ceramicists wilfully use mesh, wire, rods and nails to create interesting semi-melted features whereas nichrome wire or recycled kiln elements are used because of their strength at high temperatures. Lesley Rigby's work has been getting known in recent times; the curved forms of wire coated with slip assisted by finely chopped fabric with molochite 200 mesh to help reduce shrinkage and silicon carbide for texture producing a skeletal form into which she typically places a broken egg shell.

Colour makes a frequent contribution to clay pieces; sometimes the clay's own natural colour being selected. For example, Fiona Byrne-Sutton travels from Glasgow to Clackmannanshire to get precisely the orange firing clay she prefers. Many artists combine the qualities and colour of the clay with the colours obtained from body stains and oxides. Some artists like Kathleen weigh out the ingredients and add them when dry, taking care not to inhale the dust.

She tests varying percentages first with great accuracy; care and precision being the characteristics of all her work processes.

In coming to Kathleen's work last, she uses all the techniques touched on in her talk. She is an avid researcher, drawing, photographing or utilising found objects along the Irish Coast where she lives.

She has an exceedingly experimental approach and is always open to possibilities of adding different materials to her work, by burning out and leaving pits and hollows, or by remaining in a changed form, marking the clay indelibly.

She often makes a maquette so as to explore the form she seeks and to experiment with the colours and glazes best suited to the piece. Her final piece is usually made using a press mould and while filling it, she adds the materials that best suit the piece.

Cutting, re-forming, cleaning, wet and dry sandpapering at different stages, glazing and post firing finishing are all required to obtain the final form. Kathleen's account of her own making confirms that she might very well use all the techniques she spoke to us about and written about in her book: *Additions to Clay Bodies*, Kathleen Standen, Bloomsbury ISBN 978-1-57498-333-3





## Book Review **The Handbook of Glaze Recipes** by Linda Bloomfield

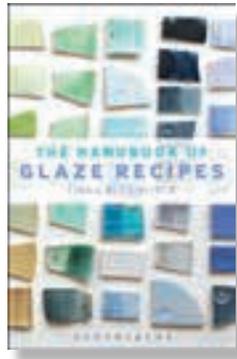


Image kindly supplied by Claire Weatherhead at Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Measuring approximately 10ins long by 6ins wide, in a hard plasticised cover and bound by wire so that it opens out flat, this new publication from Bloomsbury is perfectly designed for use in the workshop.

The book is bright, colourful and crisp. The contents are clearly defined. There is a short definition of 'glaze', brief introductions to glaze materials and the science of glazes (with attractive atomic diagrams) and the main colorants, before getting down to the nitty gritty of how to mix glazes, how to apply them (illustrated by couple of key photographs), health and safety, different approaches to testing, adjusting, firing, faults and their corrections. Each of these sections takes no more than two pages, a great boon to the novice and to those in a hurry.

Then there are the recipes, all either developed by Linda or by other potters. All are illustrated with luscious colour photographs of the tile tests which are placed right next to the relevant text. There are about 90 pages of recipes which must mean that there are around 300 glaze recipes in total;



divided into high firing stoneware/porcelain with a section on glazes and slips for soda firing, mid-temperature glazes, earthenware glazes and raku glazes. These are followed by clay body recipes.

The appendices include a glossary, a list of ceramic materials together with their chemical formulae, a conversion chart for coping with north American recipes using UK materials (so useful!) and current UK suppliers.

Everything in this book is clear, precise and practical – just like its author, scientist and potter Linda Bloomfield.

This easy to use book will appeal to those who are already dabbling in the subject especially if using an electric kiln and it will certainly encourage those who have yet to begin. Although there is less of interest for those firing with flame, there are some beautiful test tiles showing reduced copper glazes which have caught my eye.

Highly recommended for beginners, the book costs £27 from Bloomsbury. You may find it elsewhere at a less eye-watering price.

**Ros McGuirk**



## Exhibition **Phil Rogers**



by **Colin Hazlewood**

The Goldmark Gallery in Uppingham are currently staging a major exhibition of Phil Rogers latest work.

There are 360 "Cambro Oriental" (to quote the beautiful catalogue) pieces with an infinite variety of decorative treatments.

They occupy the whole of the first floor of the main gallery.

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# About the Guild & the Newsletter

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

## Membership Rates for 2013/14

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

Make your cheque payable to DCPG, and please send to Ingrid Thorstad, 5 Church Lane, Chearsley, Bucks HP18 0DH. Tel: 01844 208 702.

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

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

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