



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



Issue 36

January 2021

3rd Lockdown Edition

Accounts and reminiscences
from our members and
coverage of our zoom
demonstrations.

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Front cover pot by Sasha Wardell. p25



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Editorial January 2021



Ros McGuirk

The last three months have seen many changes and we have all had to adapt accordingly. The Guild's market stall was on, then off, then on again. It thrived on early Christmas shopping with seven sessions before the November lockdown and three afterwards, in December. Each time the gazebo and tables were collected from my garage, and then, as though by the tide, they were returned.

By the time Christmas came everything seemed so gloomy I simply wanted to hibernate for a couple of months. With very little in the way of newsletter copy coming in, I felt close to it. Now that the light is returning and we can see the first snowdrops and even daffodils, we are discussing potting sheds and workshops. With the roll out of vaccines and the promise of warmer weather we

anticipate a degree of liberation from covid restrictions. Glastonbury may be postponed, and so is Earth and Fire, till next year, but there are going to be some outdoor events to look forward to. All three Potfests and also Art in Clay are in the pipeline and there will be others, closer to home.

Thanks to all the contributors who have woken me up with items for the newsletter. I look forward to a glorious year of pottery activities and being inundated with articles from you.





Chair's report



Mary Anne Bonney



As I write in mid-January the DCPG's activities continue almost exclusively online and, as you will read, Gay and the POD team have taken full advantage of the ability that gives us to draw from around the world: An Australian season of demonstrations and a Potters Open Day which, as well as a conversation exploring the confluence of psycho-analysis and dance with clay, and mould making with Sasha Wardell, includes a virtual visit to Thomas Bohle's studio in Austria.

Regular Zoom socials allow members from all over the Guild's patch to meet and chat at a few clicks and I can envisage continuing with some gatherings 'in the ether' alongside activities in the real world once these become possible again, but I do not think it is over-optimistic to hope that 2021 will see a return to some, if not yet all, of our 'in person' activities. In preparation, socially distanced committee members have tidied up the brick store at Box Moor and installed new shelving in the garage which holds our outdoor event equipment. We are also developing safety procedures to which we will add measures to minimise the risk of contagion - if you have expertise or experience that could help us with

this, please do let me know. We are doing all we can to be ready for when restrictions are lifted

and it is good to know that some of the Ceramic Shows are being planned and that The new series of the Great Pottery Throw Down is inspiring newcomers to pottery as well as challenging the more experienced to get started on new projects.

I hope you will keep in touch and give some of the Guild's newer ventures a try: we had a lively turnout for the evening Zoom social at which conversation ranged from world events to studio heating devices and I am looking forward to insights into members' studio practice at the open workshop next week. The DCPG exists to support you in your ceramic endeavours and to encourage creativity with clay. Whether you contribute by turning up at a Zoom event, writing for or responding to the newsletter, sharing your creations, inspiration or dilemmas on the members' Facebook page, tagging the DCPG when you post on Instagram or chatting by email or phone with a fellow member or potential member, your input to our community is much appreciated.



Fiona Zooms for Members' Social

When Fiona Booy joined the Guild about 6 years ago it was apparent that we had a super charged potter in the making. Yesterday, 25th November, at one of our regular 'coffee socials' on Zoom, Fiona told us the story of her journey towards becoming a potter. Her account involved loads of excellent illustrations, including shots from her Instagram accounts. It was breathtaking. There is no doubt that her journey has only just begun and there are many more chapters to follow.

Fiona hails from South Africa, near Durban. In the mid-1980's she met David Walters and was so impressed with his life as a working studio potter that she determined to follow his example and set about getting her own equipment together at home. Life intervened and for the next 30 years or so, she pursued other goals, including working in Hong Kong, The Netherlands and latterly London, implementing IT and finance systems. As time progressed, career and family life competed fiercely for attention and changes had to be made. She had no problems deciding her next path in life and turned to clay. It was far more than therapy; it was her found vocation.

Her first exhibition was with the Guild in the old courtroom in St Albans town hall just before the whole place was closed for refurbishing. Her use of a vibrant blue glaze often slashed with a bright red created a stunning display. How times have changed. A three year diploma course at City Lit was fitted in around looking after a young family.



Fiona admits it was a "sea change". She learned an enormous amount and was able to identify her strengths. Now, inspired by her love of mountains and erosion, especially those of South Africa, of natural textures, glaze experiments and throwing, she is powering on with work that is clearly her own.

About a year ago Fiona became a fellow at Digswell Arts Trust, sharing a studio with



another potter. She had planned that 2020 was to mark the beginning of her career



around the big international exhibitions and fairs. This part of her career path is obviously on hold. Instead, the unusual circumstances of the pandemic offered the chance to set up as an online teacher, not something she had intended to do. It began with her pupils at the school pottery club and like Topsy it grew.



It is now a vibrant community project. She drops off clay to around 200 students of all ages, takes away some for firing (the rest use air drying clay) and offers making projects as lessons via YouTube. She has tapped into a real desire in the community to get creative.

Those attending had lots of questions for Fiona afterwards and we learned more about her glaze experiments, firings, clay bodies and the organic additions that came from the kitchen cupboards.

There was also an interesting discussion on the use of social media which Fiona is still exploring. She uses several Instagram accounts as well as Facebook and her own website.



Zoom Demo with Katherine Kingdon of Fatbellypots Mandy English.

Friday 11th December 2020



Our last Zoom demonstration of 2020 was a great fun session with Katherine Kingdon of Fatbellypots. Thanks to Gay Crommelin's initiative to invite her from an Instagram post, we were treated to an insight of Katherine's fabulous work. To start the evening, we were lined up, like her robin Christmas decorations, ready to watch her apply the detail to create these caricatures.

Katherine explained essentially these are made from the basis of a pinch pot, which are hollowed out using a dowel. She then presses out from the inside to make a protruding stomach for the little bird. She angles the top back slightly for the head then uses a knife to mark the belly and wings. Katherine is creative in her use of tools, finding an old pen top to mark the eyes and a cut up piece of plastic to make cuts. She explained a folded-out paper clip is also great for sculpting as it doesn't leave burrs.

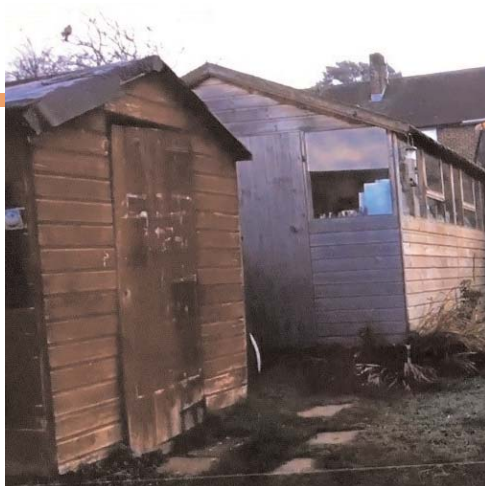


Her bisque-fired robins are painted using a tenmoku brush on glaze, red underglaze and with a tiny amount of spectrum yellow for the eyes, nose and feet. She applies a clear glaze on top and fires to stoneware at 1250 degrees for the second firing. Last year she made robins with feet 'hanging' off the base which sold very well on her Etsy site, so this year she is continuing her robin theme.

Based in Berkshire, Katherine explained her main work, making 'figurative sculptures and illustrated vessels' is sold at three different galleries: Bell Art in Winchester, New Brewery Arts in Cirencester and the New Ashgate Gallery in Farnham. In addition to Etsy, she also sells via the website Love From The Artist and her work's available on Arlington Arts.

Sadly, most of her exhibition work this year 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19 which has meant more of her work is sold online. This has affected her designs, moving to ceramics which are more easily sent through the post, meaning smaller, more robust pieces with additions, 'tucked in'. She has developed her packaging to include double boxing and lots of bubble wrap, as work is often sent to America for orders through her online platforms. Also, as an experienced teacher, during the recent lockdown she was asked, by The Corn Exchange in Newbury to do a contactless creativity workshop. This was so people could be creative at home, using Daz air-dry clay (from The Works - £4 per 1 kg bag).

As well as watching her work and asking questions, our Zoom



session included an excellent video Katherine had made of her garden workshop - a large, insulated space packed with shelves of her figures and vessels, clay equipment and her kiln. She has a 'French' drain outside which is a small dug out pit filled with broken bricks and rubble, then gravel on top. This is to pour away any used water - she sieves off clay sediments first. Although she doesn't have a sink, she uses a water butt and stores water in old milk bottles. She uses her window blinds as a backdrop for photography.



She showed some of her work in progress (which she covers with pots, as above, rather than cling film or plastic to dry out) and some of her completed vessels.

We saw partly created figures and Katherine explained they're made starting with the legs first, then building on top when they've dried slightly to support the additional weight of the bodies. Her experience of life drawing helps to create the right proportions in the figures.

Katherine likes a narrative in the characters, and makes them up as she goes along, with faces which are, 'caught in the moment'. She likes to leave a 'stillness' or ambiguous whimsical look in her pieces and thinks if they're overtly humorous it's too much. She welcomes commissions, like this one below of a grandmother and granddaughter.



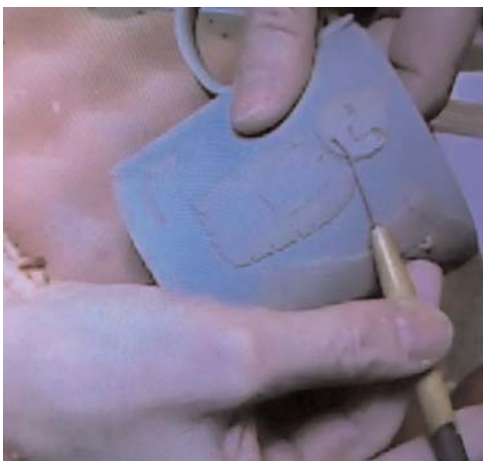


People sometimes send photos or suggest what they might like so she can create bespoke figures and groups. They might include poems or some writing for her to incorporate and she might write chosen words into the clay, like a stream of consciousness. She enjoys the insight into other peoples lives and loves getting the delighted responses to her work.

Katherine leafed through some of her sketchbooks for us to see, which was difficult to get the detail on Zoom but we managed to get the gist. She draws a lot to give her inspiration and to see how she thinks something should look. She explained that although her drawing is quite 'sketchy', her mugs have to be quite neat as they're more functional, with a 'pretence' of a lack of uniformity. Her bigger mugs are a standard 8/9 floz size and she makes sure the additions of clay figures around the mug don't interfere with how it feels when you

drink out of it. She also makes smaller, 3floz expresso style mugs.

We were then given a lovely demonstration of how Katherine creates 2D figures on her mugs. When the base mug is made, she uses an acrylic stamp for her mark before adding the people. Starting by rolling very thin pieces of clay, which is torn into a body shape, she usually applies 2 people to the front of her mugs and one at the back, using slip to attach. The mug is rested on a sponge during this process for support. Small modelling tools are used for sculpting the expressions and fine details.





Katherine focuses on figures and isn't tempted to design animals. She enjoys turning 'blobs' into people by sculpting, such as making a shoulder in line with a leg, adding nuances to the directions her characters are looking, takes care to line ears up with eyes and even mould slip as it dries for the finer details. Her figures suggest a story behind them. She's sold about 40-50 of her mugs so far and although new to Etsy this year, it's been a success so far. After bisque-firing, she uses



a selection of brush-on glazes sometimes using powdered underglaze and glue to rub into her lines.



The name Fatbellypots, she explained, was created as she considers herself to have a fat belly and wanted a name which illustrated how you should embrace who you are and as a woman that should be celebrated! It also reflects the subtle humour in her work and thinks it's the best feeling when she sees other people smile in response to her work.

A final tip from Katherine was a suggestion of how to overcome a creative block. When teaching GCSE students, she'd get them to take photos of their work or make sketches of it, then cut them up and make something else from it. It encourages you to look at things with a new perspective. When asked where the direction of her work was next headed, she said she didn't know. She's developed a good way of making and didn't see herself deviating from it, apart from in the Spring, when she might have a look at birds, after her brush with robins!

The end of the evening came too soon. It was a huge privilege to hear and see Katherine discuss her work - we'd had a great mix of demonstrations, questions and a video to stimulate and inspire us. Thanks so much once again to Katherine for taking the time to talk to us and, as a past member of the DCPG, we wish her much success in the future.



Jerry's search for the Orange Shino



Jerry Seaborn

In the last firing of the Boxmoor Kiln on 28 April 2018, a number of glazes were used all as set out on the DCPG Website.

Boxmoor Glaze Recipes 28 April 2018 Firing.pdf (dcp.org.uk)

The Shino glaze we used was developed from glaze tests that I carried out in my very simple garden BOGI kiln, and were variations on the Sven Bayer Shino glaze used in earlier Boxmoor firings.

AT Ball Clay 20%
Potassium Feldspar 47%
Nepheline Syenite 33%

This did not mature due to the Boxmoor kiln not getting to temperature, but I re-fired it later in my wood kiln. In my notes at the time I note *"Not happy with results to date, not maturing"*. I did try massaging the quantities to add more Nepheline Syenite, but no better result.

About this time I was asking some of our demonstrators how they were getting the orange flashing on their shino pots. David Wright thought that it needed more iron in the body to get the orange colour. Elaine Wells gets the orange colour and she is using Valentines V9A high iron content clay, and firing in a gas kiln. She very kindly gave me one of her pots as a sample, and also gave me her glaze recipe (this does not add up to 100%, there may be a transcription error somewhere). This was one she got when she was at Clay College, and is known as the Malcolm Davis Carbon Trap Glaze.

Hyplas Ball Clay(low iron)	15%	15.8%	My mix to give 100%
Soda Feldspar	11%	11.7%	Nepheline Syenite 43% 45%
China Clay	10%	10.8%	Soda Ash 18% 16.6% Washing Soda

Now there is a lot of information out there about this glaze, and the mechanism that causes the soda ash, which dissolves in water, to transfer to the glaze surface and cause carbon trapping. Here is just one comment *"About the only thing that shino recipes have in common is their higher than normal clay content and presence of soda ash. They have a uniquely large amount of clay, which interacts to varying degrees with iron depending on the iron in the glaze or clay body, and almost all will trap carbon to some degree or another. - the author Ryan Copping is currently Chemistry Faculty at the University of Richmond Virginia."* I'm not sure I completely agree with him, 25% doesn't seem like a lot of clay in the glaze, compared to some slip glaze recipes. I would rather have said this was a high Feldspathic glaze, with both the Soda Feldspar and the Nepheline Syenite in the mix. It's interesting to compare the Boxmoor Glaze analysis with this one, and I append this analysis at the end. In use, the soda ash goes into solution, and you have to be careful not to remove the water from the glaze, or dilute it; in a similar way to how you would treat Ash glazes.

There is not so much out there about how the orange colour forms, but it is clear that it is caused by the soda. Think of the old sodium street lights that glowed orange. But, what is clear is that this is a modern recipe and not some old Japanese one, like celadon or tenmoku. Bernard Leach, in *"A Potters Book"*, refers to both shino and oribe as "glaze styles".

Wikipedia sets this out clearly in this link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shino_ware. Summarising, there were shino glazes made in Japan, and in fact, they were the first white stoneware glazes made there in the 16th century... *“In 1974, Virginia Wirt, a student of Warren MacKenzie at the University of Minnesota, developed a glaze.... which added soda ash and spodumene to the base of feldspar and clays, (and) was the first American Shino”*. It should be pointed out that Spodumene is Lithium Feldspar, and this rather reinforces my views above, that this should be seen as a high Feldspathic glaze.

I'm not really interested in the carbon trapping, but it would seem I need sodium in the mix to get the soda reaction with the iron in the body. Also it seems it needs to be reduced. I talked to Lisa Hammond at CAL as she produces some beautiful orange

glazed ware which she calls shino, but she salt glazes them, further proof that soda is needed for the orange colour. So I set out a range of glaze tests, adding soda ash in the form of washing soda, to this mix, my white glaze and the old Boxmoor glaze as well. These tests were carried out on three types of clay to see if the clay body iron content, really affected the result. All these tests were fired to cone 10, and reduced for one hour at cone 06. The glaze was applied in two thickness's as well, to see if I could get the old style shino melting snow effect. It was clear from the results that adding soda to the potassium feldspar Boxmoor glaze was unsuccessful, and also to the white glaze. The Malcolm Davis mix above gave me the best result. It seems that you need some iron in the glaze or in the clay body, to give the orange sodium colour. Here are two pots from my last firing.



These two were glazed at the same time with the Malcolm Davis glaze, fired together in the same kiln to just over cone 10, but they are different clays. The jug is a 50/50 mix of Valentines Birch and HT clays. The mug is Potterycraft P1401. The mug is almost the old “melting snow” style, but what caused the difference, the clay? The walls of the jug are much thicker than the mug, and maybe more of the soda crystals from the washing soda, migrated to the surface of the mug as the glaze dried. They were on different shelves, and obviously with a wood kiln, there is natural variation due to the flame path through the ware. The jug is pretty much what I am looking for, and I am happy that I now seem to have the principles for the shino I was looking for. Lots of scope for further experiments though.

From the analysis sheet the formula for both glazes is as follows

Boxmoor

K₂O 0.60] Al₂O₃ 1.54 [SiO₂ 5.66

Na₂O 0.40] Fe₂O₃ 0.05 [TiO₂ 0.03

Malcolm Davis

K₂O 0.25] Al₂O₃ 1.27 [SiO₂ 5.24

Na₂O 0.75] Fe₂O₃ 0.01 [TiO₂ 0.03

It's clear that the Boxmoor Glaze has proportionately less flux than the MD Shino and this flux is more potassium than sodium. This explains a lot as to why the Boxmoor glaze did not mature. The quantity of non fluxes seems quite high in both glazes, and could be a reason for the high clay comment made earlier. Also there is more iron oxide in the Boxmoor glaze, but that should have helped to create the orange colour.



Perhaps if we made a straight change of the soda feldspar for the potassium feldspar we would get a better result in the Boxmoor glaze, but I think now we would go for the MD mix as much more likely to work, allowing for all the other things that affect the result, as listed above. Notice I left the soda ash out of the analysis, because frankly, I don't know how it actually affects the glaze.

It affects the surface by crystallising on it, and helping the carbon trapping and colour response, but does it do more than that, does it actually help flux the glaze, more research needed! The unity formula analysis is only a guide, so I now need to do an empirical test, comparing a mix with soda ash, and one without. See next firing.



Unity Formula Analysis

		Proportions	Molecular Weight	Molecular Ratio		Alumina Al ₂ O ₃	Silica SiO ₂	Potassium Oxide K ₂ O	Sodium Oxide Na ₂ O	Calcium Oxide CaO	Magnesium Oxide MgO	Titanium Oxide TiO ₂	Iron Oxide Fe ₂ O ₃
1.0	<u>Boxmoor Shino</u>												
	AT Ball Clay	30.00	309.77	0.0968	Mineral ratio	1.0000	1.8621	0.1069				0.0414	0.0793
					Oxide ratio	0.0968	0.1803	0.0104				0.0040	0.0077
	Potassium Feldspar	35.00	556.70	0.0629	Mineral ratio	1.0000	6.0000	1.0000					
					Oxide ratio	0.0629	0.3772	0.0629					
	Nepheline Syenite	35.00	404.30	0.0866	Mineral ratio	1.0000	4.0000	0.2500	0.7500				
					Oxide ratio	0.0866	0.3463	0.0216	0.0649				
		100.00	%										
					Total Oxide	0.2463	0.9038	0.0949	0.0649			0.0040	0.0077
					Total Flux			0.1598					
					Unity Ratio	1.5413	5.6563	0.5937	0.4063			0.0251	0.0481
					Flux Total			1.0000					
					Silica/Alumina ratio	3.6699							
2.0	<u>Malcolm Davis Shino</u>												
	Hypas Ball Clay	19.00	350.00	0.0543	Mineral ratio	1.0000	3.5000	0.1550				0.0800	0.0400
					Oxide ratio	0.0543	0.1900	0.0084				0.0043	0.0022
	Soda Feldspar	14.00	524.30	0.0267	Mineral ratio	1.0000	6.0000		1.0000				
					Oxide ratio	0.0267	0.1602		0.0267				
	Nepheline Syenite	54.00	404.30	0.1336	Mineral ratio	1.0000	4.0000	0.2500	0.7500				
					Oxide ratio	0.1336	0.5343	0.0334	0.1002				
	China Clay	13.00	275.60	0.0472	Mineral ratio	1.0000	2.2000						
					Oxide ratio	0.1336	0.2938						
		100.00	%										
	Ignoring Soda Ash												
					Total Oxide	0.2146	0.8845	0.0418	0.1269			0.0043	0.0022
					Total Flux			0.1687					
					Unity Ratio	1.2719	5.2435	0.2478	0.7522			0.0257	0.0129
					Flux Total			1.0000					
					Silica/Alumina ratio	4.1224							



More Notes on Shino Glaze.



Ros McGuirk

John Dawson, a London Potter, was the Guild's demonstrator at the Friday meeting on 19 March 1999. I bought a small jug from him that night. It is of porcelain with a lustrous, shiny glaze with varied flashing in pink/orange. On a whim I contacted John a few days ago to find out more about this shino glaze. He replied thus:

"As far as I can remember, I had just spent some time in the USA with Jeff Oestreich and one of the other guests was Malcolm Davis the absolute guru of trapped carbon Shinzo glazes. I was so taken with the quality and finish that I thought I would test the market here. I had never seen it here in the UK. I tried it at the CPA but it just didn't sell. Although it often doesn't trap the carbon, you get this beautiful lustrous surface. I only work with porcelain.

The recipe, I think, is:
Nepheline syenide 40. Spodumene 30. Ball clay (high in iron) 17. Soda Ash 8. China clay 5. Then add 2% bentonite (add this to the dry ingredients).

The firing process is in reduction and you start the reduction at about 900°C. It is the soda ash that rises to the surface which traps the carbon."

Many thanks to John for his recipe. I am sure he will be interested to know of any further progress on shinos! Also we wish him well as he recovers from Covid, hoping that he is able make his planned trip to New Zealand later in the year.



Spodumene

This glaze material is common to several shino recipes.

Its name comes from the Greek word 'spodumenos', meaning 'ash coloured'. It is a lithium aluminium silicate and is one of the main sources of lithium for industrial uses.

In a glaze it has interesting properties. The lithium content causes fluxing. It

reduces the melting point and viscosity of the mix and produces glazes with improved physical properties including a low coefficient of thermal expansion. This, in turn, means you have a good chance of a well fitting glaze which will not craze.

Gemstone varieties of spodumene have been found in the late 20th century. Some vary in colour from pale to golden yellow. This is caused by traces of iron. Pink to violet gems, coloured by traces of manganese, are traded under the name 'kunzite' and green spodumene, coloured by chromium, is called 'hiddenite'. These were first found in the USA. Photographs show brilliant faceted stones, but although they are relatively hard they are very difficult to cut as they shatter easily.

Spodumene is mined in the USA, Afganistan, Brazil, Madagascar, Pakistan and Myanmar.

It is available to the potter from Pottery crafts, among other suppliers.



Have you not had a pot come out of the kiln with unexpected additions from someone else's work? Or a mug that crazed as soon as liquid touched it? A glaze that went dull and tasted horrid after a few cycles of the dishwasher? A dish that cracked within the year? A plant pot that did not survive the first winter?

Ceramics is a very technical art form, guaranteed to challenge all of us from time to time. Yet it is taught mostly in art colleges where the emphasis is on creating and expressing ideas. The materials are provided, the firings are standardised, and much of the technical knowledge bypasses the students. Those who want to make good quality functional pots have to look elsewhere for information and many are motivated to set up their own workshop and learn by trial and error.

Tim Thornton is now a potter and came to ceramics after a varied career through engineering, science and product design. As a keen sailor and yacht designer he is acutely aware of environmental and other practicalities. He lives and pots in Hampshire, near Stockbridge, and has taken part in the Oxford anagama firings.

Tim's approach to ceramics is more science based than that of many potters and he is a keen experimenter and analyst. He is also keen to share his findings and explain his approach.

Currently he is developing his website,

www.tim-thornton.com

to be a resource for other studio potters to use. There is a section on health and safety and also a technical section aiming to help those wanting to improve the quality of their work. The latter is where you will find much of the information that was covered in the webinar.



I signed up for Tim's webinar because it intrigued me. What was I going to learn that you could not find in a good glaze book, or all those years of trial and error plus a City and Guilds certificate?

As I love the satisfaction of bringing my own pots to the table, it seemed that a good hard look at product safety could help me improve the quality of my pots.

Tim has an easy going style of speaking to camera while backing up with lots of graphs and diagrams. We were able to use the chat facility to ask him questions and make comments which he managed to read and answer as he went along. He covered the ground thoroughly and extensively, beyond that which would normally be required. I was glad of my knowledge of geology and school chemistry, got a bit fuzzy over the physics of stresses and enjoyed the bit about ice wedges in the tundra. We covered a lot of ground! There were eight weekly sessions and each overran their hour's slot. What follows is my own overview of the topic.

We started off with the boring but necessary stuff of laws, regulations and standards, then went on to the customer's usage and how you can guide this to a limited extent with advice on stamped symbols or decals.

Product safety involves common sense and good design (strength, smooth surface, defect free, no sharp edges, good design and balance, cool handles, non toxic glazes.) If you can show the customer all these things are considered in your work, that raises your game and reputation.

We looked at contact foodstuffs and how they might interact with glazes, possibly leaching out materials. To test for leaching from lead and cadmium soak your pot in vinegar or lemon juice for 24 hours. Or, even better, find a lab in Stoke where certified tests are carried out.

There are a multitude of glaze materials to consider and I found out that even good old tenmoku glazes can leach out iron, although in most circumstances the amounts are negligible.

We looked at testing the durability of oven to tableware and also for the microwave. Broadly speaking you heat up the vessel in a hot oven or microwave and then plunge it into cold water. (This requires a gung-ho spirit and a lot of spare pots!)

For dishwasher resistance, leave the pot in a solution of soda ash for 16 hours at 75C. Soda ash is sodium carbonate and can be bought as washing soda, a common cleaning agent. In solution it is highly caustic with a pH of 11 and should not be allowed to touch the skin. Incidentally it can be used in soda firings instead of sodium bicarbonate.

If you are drawn to making and selling table lamps take care to read all the regulations on electrical products which you must follow. It is not for the faint hearted.

The section on glaze stability and leaching was very useful. Why were we taught so little of this in college?

Leaching is caused by various chemical reactions and may do more than contaminate food and drink. It will also slowly corrode the pot. The rate at which these changes occur depends partly on the temperature of the environment. Some reactions do not occur until a specific temperature is reached. We considered acids and alkalis and compared pH values of dishwasher detergent (high at 10 – 12 and therefore highly caustic and likely to damage glazes) with water (neutral at 7) human skin (5) and gastric juices (2-3). NB soap at around pH 9 is not particularly good for the skin!

It got interesting in relation to fluxes, which groups of elements they come from, how they work in the glaze melt and at what temperatures. (This you will find in any good glaze book.)

We looked at how glazes are corroded by exposure to acids, alkalis and damp, and how to make glazes stable and durable.

We looked at 'food safety' in detail, considering usage, tolerances and standards, and sources of toxins in food and food packaging. There are always several factors involved and often information is withheld for commercial reasons so this is a difficult area to research.

Leaching tests in the lab are not the same as



in the real world, but you will be happy to know that water does not cause leaching, whisky is comparable to a hot cup of tea (almost none) and cola at room temperature is 33 times more effective than any of them.

We looked at the effects of a range of potentially toxic elements found in the diet and glaze materials. The worst culprits are well known – cadmium, barium, arsenic, lead, copper when used with lead in earthenware, and also manganese above a certain level, and nickel.

It is also best to avoid boron as it makes glazes less durable.

The general conclusion on glaze chemistry is to test your glazes thoroughly and to keep the use of heavy metals to a minimum where there will be contact with food and drink.

Crazing in functional ware is generally considered unacceptable for health and safety reasons. It also reduces the strength of the pot. We looked at causes, including a mismatch between the thermal co-efficients of the glaze and the clay (they expand and

contract at different rates as temperatures change), moisture within non-vitrified ware causing it to expand, thermal stress and physical impact. We looked at the forces, stresses, strains involved and elasticity which would all have appealed to any engineers in the audience.

A consideration of tension and compression within a pot that can lead to crazing was followed by ways of adjusting the glaze recipe to reduce the problem.

This usually involves changing or adjusting the fluxes to ones with a lower thermal

co-efficient.

Sometimes simply applying the glaze more thinly works just as well, or a lower firing schedule with a longer soak.

Experimenting with different clay bodies can also help. Doing your own shrinkage tests on clay will help find a body that works.

To find out if your crazing is caused by the clay body taking up water after firing, take a test piece already finished and fired. Weigh it dry, steam it in a pressure cooker for 4 hours and cool it fast in cold water. Dry the surface and reweigh to see if the moisture content has changed. Check for crazing.

Other topics were cutlery marking, testing for oven use, and also for the microwave, freezer and dishwasher. The methods were to expose the pots to extremes of temperature and see how well they survive. Always the

answer includes having a smooth surface, a resilient clay body and a hard, durable glaze. Other aids are making even walled pots



which are also fairly thin.

The characteristics of the clay body is really important and there are pros and cons with different types. Studio potters generally aim for stoneware fired pots. Here, a well grogged clay may be stronger in the making and easier for flatware, but the extra pores and variable particle sizes make them more likely to fracture in use after firing. The strongest fired clays are those with fine grog and porcelain with the finest particles of all.

On the other hand cooking pots have for aeons been made of low fired clays which

are much less brittle than stoneware. A low fired groggy clay is much more resilient and elastic and allows for a degree of flexibility in the firing. However, low fired cookware may not be fully vitrified and hence easily damaged mechanically and may be slightly porous.

We considered how to design our ware for product safety, looking at types and position of handles and spouts, at lids, at balance and stability. We also considered the intended use of a pot and how that might influence the choice of glaze.

Our final webinar was on outdoor pots including freeze/thaw, acid rain, and moulds and fungi. Tim's description of the formation of an ice lens within a pot was fascinating and reminded me of facts imparted at the chalk face as a geography teacher a long time ago.

(Here I throw in a gardener's tip on raising up the planters that stay outside all year. Use those little rubber discs you can get on ebay – they are much easier to use than ceramic feet, and cost a few pence each.)

Overall I felt that it was well worth the small effort of sitting in front of the computer for an hour or so over eight weeks. By the end I felt significantly more confident about my problem solving abilities in the workshop and I will carry on experimenting till I get it right.

I hope that lockdown will give Tim the opportunity to write a book from all this material for I would definitely find a space for it alongside my glaze books! Meanwhile he is planning more courses to help studio potters like us, so I recommend keeping an eye on his website.

Late News:

Health and Safety course for Studio Potters

Tim Thornton will be giving an 8 week online course on Studio Health and Safety, beginning on 15th February.

It is based on weekly 1 hour sessions held live, so there can be questions and discussions. There is also a dedicated forum for discussions throughout the course, and exercises to help you assess your studio and practices.

The course is ideal for you if you have ever been concerned about the best way of doing things in the studio (whether yours or shared), or are setting up your own studio, or have been alarmed by some of the health and safety comments people make on Facebook. The cost of the course is £80.

For more information, and to sign up, go to:

<https://tim-thornton.com/health-and-safety-for-potters/>





DCPG stall on St Albans market - 12 Sept till 19 December

 Ros, Mandy and Jackie

Jackie, our intrepid exhibition organiser, was so disappointed by having to forego our September exhibition in the wonderful old Kingsbury Barn that she jumped at the opportunity to take on a market stall, in our name, and thereby set us up as market traders. Over the three months up to Christmas 19 members joined in this new venture and turned a disappointment into a success story. I am happy to report that many of the group came from outside the district, and all seemed to enjoy their stint. As always in selling, success was not guaranteed, but most reported making sales and several did very well indeed.

There were sales from the start and also considerable interest in our literature about the guild, about finding classes and especially about Fiona Booy's local pottery club with her online making projects and her clay deliveries.

I joined in for a couple of Saturdays in October with pots that I had been storing for several years. To my surprise and delight I sold about half my stock and one client came to my house a few weeks later for more.



Christmas shopping was happening from the start and it got better in December following the November lockdown when the market was reduced to food stalls only.

I dropped by most Saturdays to see how things were going and found a remarkable resilience among the potters. Come rain or shine they were a cheerful bunch. Fortunately they did not have to deal with snow which pleased me greatly. I was looking after the heavy old gazebo in my garage and had to drag it out to dry only once, so I was much relieved.



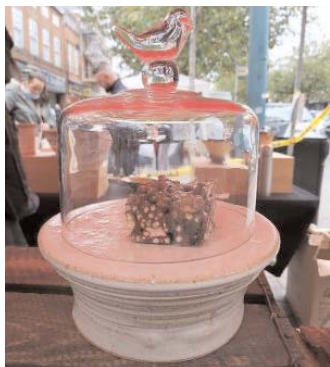
To keep ourselves safe we followed the 'covid code' of face masks and hand sanitisers

and tied safety tape around the legs of the gazebo at waist height to remind the public not to get too close to the sellers. They could still reach the pots, but it made up for our tables being less than 2 metres wide.

We were also at the top end of the market near the bus stops, where there is more space. I would have felt less comfortable working at the other end with narrow lanes and less chance of keeping a 2 metre distance.

Well done to Jackie for the constant support, especially on all those early Saturday mornings. Taking part was a truly liberating experience for me at a time when life seems so limited and all horizons diminished. It has given me the motivation needed to clear and restore my workshop and replace my stock!

Ros





It was a fabulous experience, Jackie, and one that would never have happened if it hadn't been for you, so a huge thanks from me too!

I was excited to take part and all the effort was totally worth it. Just to be part of a lovely group of like-minded people to share sunshine and showers and at times, many laughs – I learnt so much.

The funniest moment was this weekend, with Jane and the two Fionas. Rain had filled up the gazebo quickly and we had to push it up to get rid of the pooled water. As Fiona W had popped to get a coffee and the problem was over her stall, I had to really concentrate to lean over and give the gazebo roof a push with our stick. I was terrified I'd knock over Fiona's wonderful work! Just as I gave it my all and the water cascaded down onto the pavement, a speedy runner, whom I'd not seen, dashed past the corner and got completely and utterly drenched.



Well, we were initially speechless but not the runner, as he was caught off guard and furiously shouted ‘f***ing idiot’, then disappeared up the High Street.

We literally collapsed with laughter and I nearly wet myself in hysterics.

We kept giggling to ourselves over the next hour, saying the incident had made

our morning after a wet set up and damp start.

To our massive surprise we were taken aback a little later, when a well-dressed man appeared at the stall with 2 boxes of chocolates saying he wanted to apologise for his profanity earlier on as he revealed himself to be said runner. All faith in human nature was restored. It was Christmas after all – we had the best funniest moment and yummy treats to munch on for the rest of the day!

Having taken £130 on the stall for Ripple Africa, my total fundraising selling my Christmas decorations is now £460 – a nice present to send off! My highest single purchase was made by a lady from Communities 1st whom I’d only just met on Zoom last week at a Festive Zoom for volunteers and came to visit the stall specially – it’s all about relationships...

Mandy



A huge thank you to everyone who worked so hard to raise the profile of the DCPG through the St Albans Market stall and despite wind, rain, cold and Covid, kept and raised the name of DCPG in the minds of people locally.

Thanks to those who stored and lifted equipment, spouses who helped to erect and dismantle, and to everyone who went to so much trouble to keep our name alive and visible, through social media posts and publicising through personal networks, and to those who encouraged us by coming to visit, support and keep our morale high.

As an idea, a venture, tentative initially, I believe it worked. People who traded enjoyed the experience, even when sales were scant. Potters were able to talk pottery, swap ideas, and share information and enjoyed the camaraderie of the events. People who visited the stall were interested, curious and supportive.

Jackie



Our Potting Shed

 Jill Baxter.

It was great to talk to people at our virtual meeting on Friday 15th January and to exchange our experiences and ideas. It felt as though there is still a world outside our individual cocoons, which I find really important. One of the subjects which came up was that of our studios and the problems members were having getting them warm enough to use in winter. Generally we don't have that problem, so we thought members might like to know how we've achieved it.

We bought our shed about six years ago. With limited space available, our maximum size was about 2.4 x 3 metres (8 x 10ft), which can be pretty small for two of us to work in. We have shelving, two work benches and a small kiln and wheel, as well as storing all our clay and materials, so it's very snug!

We chose a shed design with maximum natural light, so as well as the front-facing windows there is another to one side - all very good at letting the cold in! When we took delivery of the shed it was single-skinned with a 'heavy duty' floor, which meant an unfinished surface. We added a layer of 9mm plywood to the floor to give a finished surface and enough strength to support the kiln and wheel, and to take the weight of our clay.

We used polystyrene sheeting from Wickes around the walls and inside the roof, secured in between the uprights, and because we had some left over at the end we put a second layer inside the roof. We then created an interior surface by covering it all with 3mm plywood. The windows were all single-glazed, so we've added a layer of Perspex - it

doesn't work like proper double-glazed units, but it does prevent some heat loss.

We heat our shed with a single small electric oil-filled radiator. In cold weather we leave it permanently on the lowest setting to prevent the clay from freezing. When we want to work in there we turn the heating up to 3-4 on the dial (which goes from 1 - 7) and it easily gets warmer than some parts of our house. When the kiln is running the temperature gets up to over 40°C and the door has to be slightly open at any time of year. A couple of winters ago we fired the kiln when there were several centimetres of snow on the ground, and the snow on the roof didn't melt during the firing.

This may not be one of the most fascinating aspects of potting but I hope it will give members some ideas for warming up their studios and enable them to keep potting all the year round.



Dacorum &
Chiltern
Potters Guild



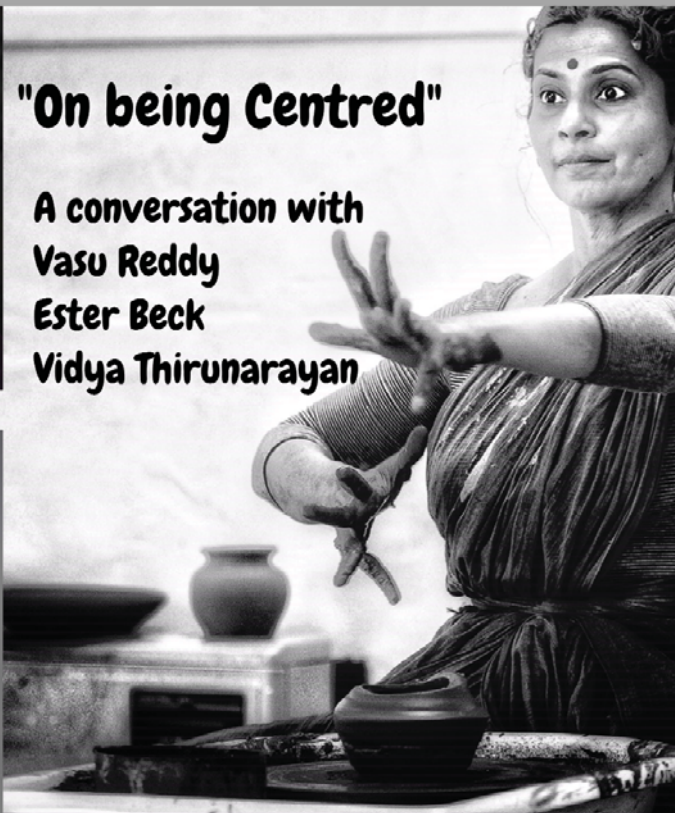
Potters Open Day

Saturday 13 March 2021
09:45– 16:00 GMT



"On being Centred"

A conversation with
Vasu Reddy
Ester Beck
Vidya Thirunarayan



Demonstrations

Sasha Wardell – Working with Moulds
Thomas Bohle – Double walled Throwing

Reserve your ticket from: [Eventbrite.co.uk / events](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/events)
£ 12

www.dcpag.org.uk Registered charity no 1161265

Eventbrite



Ester Beck

After a short career as clinical psychologist and years of independent studies of pottery at different venues in Israel and abroad, Ester has her own studio since 1987, participated in many ceramic exhibitions and held solo shows, and is an active member of the Israel Ceramics Association.



Her concern is with making her ceramic pieces dynamic, imparting motion into the clay, exploring the limits of the material and



injecting it with emotion. But at the same time her aim is to capture a moment in the life of the object when it transitions from one state to another, thereby arousing in the viewer a Zen-like experience of both transience and calm.

Vidya Thirunarayan

Vidya trained as a performer in the Indian Classical Dance style, Bharatanatyam. Over the last 25 years, as a dance artist she has been privileged to work within the various facets of the performing arts.

She is in her element when making something, whether it is a dance movement or a clay pot. It is the process rather than the end product

that continues to fascinate me.



Professor Vasu Reddy

For twenty years now as a Psychologist Vasu has been exploring the role of emotional engagement in social understanding, focusing on the everyday, ordinary engagements (such as teasing and joking and showing-off or feeling shy) which often tend to get

ignored in mainstream theories.

Her wheel thrown pots explore textures - both in the glazes and in the forms - and seem to be striving for the raw, unpolished expressiveness of emotions.

Thomas Bohle

Thomas has been working with clay for over thirty years.

The haptic crafting, the shaping of the vessels with his hands, fascinates him as much as the change that takes place during the firing process.



He moulds his works as double-walled vessels from a single piece of clay. This calls for a special power of imagination because he throw his works upside down. With double-walled vessels the drying phase and firing process are very critical, because the outer and inner walls dry differently.

Sasha Wardell

Sasha Wardell is known for her pioneering approach in moving forward the traditional process of bone china production. She is recognised internationally for her work, and her innovative approach, a focus based on taking an age-old craft to a higher level. Her carefully produced distinctive work embraces and reflects contemporary taste and lifestyle.

Each piece is individually made using bespoke advanced industrial processes that Sasha has personally developed.



- 9:45 - 10:00 Opening and introduction. John and Mary Anne
John, welcome and introduction. Mary Anne as Chair.
- 10:00 - 11:15 The conversation: "To Be Centered"
Vasu Reddy, Ester Beck, Vidya Thirunarayan
- 11:15 - 11:30 Break
- 11:30 - 13:30 Sasha Wardell - mould making
- 13:30 - 14:00 Break
- 14:00 - 16:00 Thomas Bohle - Throwing double walled pots



Phil Rogers 1951 - 2020



Obituary.

Phil was one of the great potters of the Anglo-Oriental tradition. Born in Newport he attended the local art college and Swansea College. Here he switched from painting to ceramics and was soon inspired by Korean pots and the work of more contemporary potters including Bernard Leach, Richard Batterham and Wally Keeler.

He stayed on at college, teaching until 1997 when he moved to Rayader in Powys to set up his own pottery and concentrate on his own work.

His energy and drive for perfection took his work quickly towards the collectors and his pots are now to be found in museums and galleries throughout the world. He carried on teaching and ran workshops and seminars internationally, also fitting in organising various ceramic inspired projects including being chairman of the CPA and director of the International Ceramics Festival.

in Aberystwyth for several years. He worked with the Fitzwilliam, the V&A, the National Museum of Wales and museums in Mashiko and Boston

He came to demonstrate to the Guild at POD in 1995 and a good few years later hosted a group of us as we travelled to Aberystwyth for the festival. After a guided tour of the pottery and gallery we were treated to tea and home baking at his generous kitchen table. I am not sure how he found the time but it made our trip all the more memorable.

He also wrote books: the excellent work 'Ash Glazes' is still available on Amazon, 'Throwing Pots' (Ebay) and the latest book is 'Salt Glazing' (Bloomsbury, 2020). His last exhibition was online at the Goldmark Gallery in May 2020.

He died of a terminal illness in December and will be much missed throughout the ceramics community, family and friends.



Good News - There will be Ceramic Shows in 2021 !



Feb 24 – Mar 2 Collect. International Art Fair for Contemporary Craft and Design will go ahead online.
Over 30 galleries exhibiting top names and a programme of virtual events
See www.craftscouncil.org.uk

June 11 – 13th Potfest Scotland. The only big ceramic fair north of the border and well worth the journey for its eclectic mix. At Scone Palace, Perth, PH2 6BD
Adults £7 and accompanied under 16s are free.
10am – 5 pm.

July 23 - 25th Potfest in the Park. Selected show of about 80 potters in splendid grounds at Hutton in the Forest, Cumbria, CA11 9TH.
Adults £8 (this includes access to the gardens), accompanied under 16s are free.
10am – 5 pm.

July 30 - 1 Aug Potfest in the Pens. One of the longest running shows organised by potters for pottery lovers. Held in Skirsgill Auction Mart, Penrith.

Aug 20 – 22 Art in Clay. Windsor Race Course.
The biggest international ceramic show in the UK has moved from Hatfield House.

**Postponed
till 2022** Earth and Fire

Other Events

There are many possibilities in the pipeline awaiting the end of lockdown, so best to keep an eye on the listings. Meanwhile here are the dates of a big exhibition:

**27 March –
22 Aug** David Hockney : ‘The Arrival of Spring in Normandy 2020’
116 new and optimistic works of the natural world.
At the Royal Academy, Picadilly.



DCPG Programme of Demonstrations from Near and Far.



Saturday, 13 February 2021 10 to 12am
Christine Pike,

<http://www.christinepike.com>

Christine is a member of Anglian Potters who makes wildlife and figurative work inspired by folklore.



Magda by Christine Pike

Friday, 09 April 2021 Imogen Noble.
Date to be confirmed.

Imogen loves the simple unglazed ware from the kilns of Bizen and Shigaraki, in Japan. She writes,

“As an urban potter without access to an Anagama kiln or local mineral rich local clays, I set about finding an alternative that would give me the results I desired. Clays of natural colours which record their time in the kiln with flashes of colour and changes to their texture.”

<http://imogentaylor-noble.com>

Imogen moved to Devon last year and is busy setting up her new workshop.

Friday, 14 May 2021 Midori Takeki

<http://www.midoritakaki.co.uk>

Midori makes figurative sculptures which express the dream world of her imagination.



The Australian Programme
Courtesy of John Higgins

Saturday 12th June 2021 10-12am

Jane Annois

<http://www.janeannois.com>

Jane lives and works in Warrandyte, 30Kms from Melbourne. She teaches, runs regular ceramic tours to France and produces beautiful raku and terracotta slipware.



Friday 9th July 2021 Mary-Lou Pittard

<https://www.pittards.com.au>

The Pittards live in Melbourne. Mary-Lou is well known for her brightly coloured stoneware. Chris trained in fine art and now produces landscape paintings and pots that are decorated with painterly images from nature and landscape. He also teaches art and ceramics.

Friday 8th October 2021 7-9pm our time.

Pie Bolton <https://www.piebolton.com>

Pie Bolton is a contemporary ceramic installation artist working on Bunurong country in Melbourne. Geology and

geological forces are the focus of her work. In 2019 she founded The Kiln Room, a unique ceramic resource for other potters to learn and share studio space and equipment.

Friday 12th Nov at 7pm.

A talk on the collection at the Oriental Museum in Durham University. This is a wonderful collection of ceramics and other artifacts made by Malcolm Macdonald, politician and diplomat and son of Ramsey Macdonald, PM. Our guest speaker will be **Craig Barclay**, the Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions at Durham.

See <https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum>

**Members websites**

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<https://www.amandatonsceramics.com/>

<http://www.debbiebent.com/>

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<https://patrickjoyce.co.uk/>

<https://www.pratimakramer.co.uk/>

www.ranjena.com

<http://carolceramics.com/>

<http://www.viviennerodwell-davies.co.uk/>

www.dcp.org.uk

On Monday 25th January and thanks to Janice Esterman's suggestion, we had our first Guild Studio Zoom. 20 members joined in during the four hours of this virtual studio time from their own studios, tables in dining rooms and study rooms as well as outside places including gardens and snow covered fields! There were so many activities happening throughout this session from sketchbook drawing, throwing, turning bottoms of pots, hand-building, glazing and assembling a clay extruder to sharing techniques and top tips as well as seeking advice about making matt glazes and firing glass onto biscuit ware. The great thing about being part of this Zoom studio time was the fact that you really felt that you were working alongside others and even at times

there was that working silence as everyone was so engrossed in what they were doing, such magical moments. A few people however just joined with a cup of coffee to chat and to see what was going on.

As this was such a successful and enjoyable Studio Zoom, another session has been planned for Monday 22nd February, 10.00 - 13.00. So please 'save this date' and come and join in for as long or short a time that suits you. The Zoom link will be sent to you nearer the time by Mary Anne through Mailchimp or by email. Look forward to seeing you then.





DCPG Officers for 2021.



The DCPG team

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01442 876034 - treasurer@dcpg.org.uk

Website Co-ordinator - Mandy English -
dcpggallery@gmail.com

Editor - Ros McGuirk -
Ros.mcguirk@gmail.com

Newsletter Design - Production and
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evansdjal@aol.com

Colin Hazelwood



New Member



A warm welcome to Adam Hoyle from
Princes Risborough whom we hope to meet
soon via zoom.

Members are reminded that existing
membership subscriptions will last until 30
September 2021 by which time we hope to
be getting back towards a 'new normal'.

Meanwhile if you wish to make a donation
to the Guild, please visit the Membership

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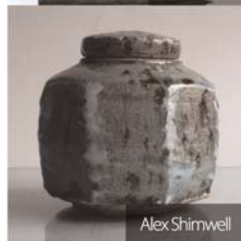
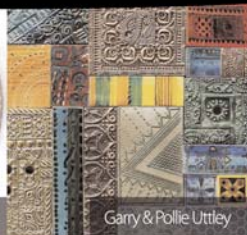
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