



DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



Issue 38

July 2021

5th Lockdown Edition

Accounts and reminiscences

from our members and

coverage of our zoom

demonstrations and socials

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and also our facebook account
and on instagram at

<https://www.instagram.com/thedcp>

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Cover picture: Raku pot by Jane Annois



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Editorial July 2021



Ros Mcguirk

We started this edition with two reviews and little else. Then, thanks to you, our good contributors, it just grew. Especial thanks go to Tim Thornton of the Southern Ceramics Group for writing two pieces that will help improve our health and safety in the workshop. They are excellent and he has promised more.

Please keep sending in your items, and help keep us all updated on this summer's events, especially if you are taking part in open studios, visiting or showing at a fair, or treating yourself to a special workshop or course.

Having spent this afternoon at Childwickbury Art Fair I can say that it is just wonderful to meet up with other makers and old friends. For most of us this was the first show in 18 months and much appreciated.



Our Guild is at a moment of change. With much achieved since March 2020 we can look ahead with more confidence in the light of our recent experiences. We have pioneered new ways of connecting and the way forward is a little clearer regarding our activities and meetings. In addition three key committee members feel ready to set off in new directions, or to simply have the time to make pots. We owe them, and Mary Anne in particular, a huge thank you for all the extra work put in to keep the show on the road.

This is a good time for welcoming new talent into the organisation. Newcomers are needed both on committee and behind the scenes. Your Guild needs you. Get in touch with Mary Anne if you can find a little time to help.



Notes from the Chair



Mary Anne Bonney



As I write, we are waiting for an update on the easing of lockdown restrictions planned for 19th July.

Summer (so called) has already brought some new freedoms: the Guild has held garden socials, studios have been opened, art weeks are happening, there are ceramic shows to look forward to, not least the DCPG exhibition in September and a number of members have ventured out with their work on a stall at St Albans market. Alongside cautious optimism, there is also a realisation that we will not be going back to where we left off in March 2020. Lifestyles have changed, priorities have shifted, horizons have been broadened (thanks to Zoom) and narrowed at the same time. Many of us have been amazed at what we have discovered on our doorsteps and the riches of our communities as we followed the injunction to "stay home". My life has changed as well, with the addition of a baby granddaughter to the family, and I would like to make time to spend with her (and more time for pottery so that I am ready to introduce her to clay when she is ready) so I plan to step down as Chair of the Guild at the AGM.

The Guild too is on the verge of new beginnings - the wood firing group is working on the possibility of a new kiln and we have established a partnership with Open Door in Berkhamstead to support their work with members of the community who would not otherwise have the opportunity to work with clay. We have an exciting season of Zoom demonstrations lined up but are mindful that many members are yearning to meet and watch demonstrations in person and we are working towards starting these up again safely, as well as making the library accessible.

All these activities need volunteers, which is why, as well as a new Chair, we are looking to recruit additional trustees, and a new Secretary. Angela will be relinquishing the role that she has filled so expertly, at the AGM in October. If you would like to be part of the group taking the DCPG into its new normal, have enthusiasm, skills and a few spare hours to devote to broadening, deepening and spreading the understanding and appreciation of ceramics to the converted and to the not yet converted, please email me, chair@dcp.org.uk or anyone on the committee so that we can arrange a chat.

If you are one of the members who has not been in touch in the last 18 months or so, please do let me know what we might do to entice you to be more active, or if you are biding your time and happy to keep connected via the newsletter. Our members are key to all our activities, which brings me neatly to the matter of subscriptions. We waived the membership charge for 2020-21 because we recognised that the pandemic could affect your ability to participate and the Guild's ability to deliver services. In the event, we discovered a world of online demonstrations, socials and even workshops that have crossed borders and allowed us to entice to the Guild potters who would not have been able to travel to Kings Langley, even in 'normal' times. Whatever 2021-22 brings, we are confident that we will have plenty to offer members and will therefore ask you to renew your membership, from 1st September. Charges stay the same as for 2018-19:

Full membership includes a printed newsletter through the post:

Single £30

Family (all at same address) £42



Green membership is for those who continue with the emailed version - £25 single and £37 family.

Subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st October each year and are valid for 12 months. However, new memberships

purchased after Easter will be valid until 30th September the following year.

Details of how to renew will be sent in good time. Remember, that you cannot enter the Fitzwilliam competition unless you are a paid up member.

Happy potting and sculpting,

Mary Anne



Fitzwilliam Prize 2021



Time

Time is the topic for this year's competition. There are three monetary prizes to be won, generously donated by Sylvia Fitzwilliam in memory of her husband Mervyn who chaired the Guild with apparently inexhaustible energy and good humour for 15 years and edited the newsletter for 21. In addition, the winner of the first prize gains custody for a year of the Stan Romer bison trophy, created for the very first Guild competition.

A reminder of the rules:

1. The item must be made after the theme is announced - this was on 4th June this year.
2. It should be made by one person only and that person must be a paid up Guild member.
3. It should be mostly or entirely ceramic. In view of the difficulty many members have had in getting work fired this year, unfired entries will be allowed,

The deadline for completion of entries is Sunday 5th September so that pieces can be displayed at the Kingsbury Barn Exhibition

before members vote online on the shortlist, in the week after the exhibition closes. The final vote for the three winning pieces will be held after the formal business of the AGM on 15th October, 8 pm on Zoom. Send a photo of your entry to Nicole at nlceramics1@gmail.com by 5th Sept.

Photos should be -

1. be clear and in focus
2. contain a 50 pence piece or £1 coin standing on its edge on the right of the piece - for scale
3. include one close up of the surface so we can see any glaze/ texture/ detail
4. show as little as possible in the way of props and background, and nothing that is recognisably yours: the star of the photo has to be the ceramics

If you have any queries, please contact Nicole. More information about bringing entries to Kingsbury Barn will follow nearer the time.

Find your inspiration and get making!



Le Tour de France aux Poteries and working back home.

 A live talk from Australia by Jane Annois Ros Mcguirk



there are many different takes on the old styles of the lovely lead glazed terracotta slipware called “terre vernissee”. This is Jane’s passion and there was no shortage of gorgeous pots in her collection of photos. We saw plenty of other types of pots, too, thanks largely to a sound ceramics education system based on college training followed by apprenticeships.

I followed the tour using the recorded version that was put out for our members to catch up. I have to say it took me hours as I used google and google maps as I went along to track down as many places and potters as I could find. Now I have the basis of a wonderful tour around some of Jane’s most favourite potters and places.

If you want the list it includes several picturesque pottery villages. Look for Valensole in northern Provence, St Quentin-la-Poterie just west of the Rhone from Avignon in the

Jane lives and works in Warrandyte just 30 miles from Melbourne. She runs exchanges with and cultural tours to France, teaches pottery, runs a major annual show at home and somehow finds the time to make beautiful, colourful raku and terracotta slipware.

Being by nature a pioneer, she kindly agreed to be our first guest potter in our Australian series, and, having been introduced by Gay, she set off straight away by taking us on a trip to our closest European neighbour. Speaking from the darkness of an Australian winter’s night to us in the gloom of a damp British summer, she cheerily took us off to Provence, a land blessed by sunshine, lavender, wine and honey. We were introduced to many of the most iconic potters, to pottery villages, galleries and markets. France has a great tradition of local rural potteries and



Gard region and Moustiers with its famous Chapelle Notre Dame de Beauvoir. Jane also took us to La Borne, that mecca for potters and for wood firing in particular, just NE of Borges in central France. (Once upon a very long time ago the Guild took a trip there...)

Jane has taken part in many French potters' markets over the years and thereby got to know a lot of potters around that country. She guided us around the one at Lyon. It is a big, two day event held in one of the main squares. From taking part in these, Jane has learned that high end markets work well when they are free, in an open space, in a beautiful setting and show selected makers. Using these principles she established a successful show herself, back home, the Pottery Expo.

See: <https://vimeo.com/521741122> for a short video of this.



The time sped by listening and learning lots about the pots, potters, galleries and markets, and even the excavations of a Roman pottery and then we continued with Jane's own collection back home, this time a mix of French and Australian pots.

After an hour and a half of feasting on other potters' work, we were turned round to view Jane's place and learn something of her life and work at Warrandyte. Her pottery has a view over the treetops to distant mountains in the west, and she had some smashing shots of the sunset. She has set up her studio with that view from her wheel! Her Pottery Expo of Feb 2021 looked wonderful with all the stalls set up beside the river and in the dappled shade of accacia trees. She used video for this and unfortunately we lost some of the sound, but no matter, it looked so inviting.



When it came to her demo Jane used several short videos taken on her phone. They worked very well and must have made it a lot easier for her to manage. She showed the making of a wide slab dish made in a shallow mould. A narrow slab of 156 cms length was joined on for a wall, it was textured and deformed a little, and when leather hard it was inverted for the thrown foot ring. Slips were added later, then a bisque firing before glazing and firing at 1085C. Jane spoke about her glazes and how she is allowed to use lead bisilicate and lead sesquilate one of which is the main glaze constituent in all her glazes.

Although it has been a long process catching up, I have thoroughly enjoyed the

process and am ready to plan a trip around the potteries of Provence. Meanwhile I can dream of going to the next Pottery Expo in Warrandyte. Look out Jane!

For more about Jane see

www.janeannois.com

For information about her tours see

www.zestefrenchtours.com

PS Many thanks to all who made this possible: to John Higgins for taking his pots all the way to Warrandyte thereby initiating a new Anglo-Australian network, to all those who helped Gay and Mary Anne set up and run the zoom meeting and the trial run beforehand, and to Jane Annois herself who had to manage everything at her end. She is a tour de force!



Other Events for your Diary



Check before you go.

- July 16 – 18** **Celebrating Ceramics.** The new version of Art in Action with demonstrations etc in the beautiful grounds at Waterperry. See www.celebratingceramics.co.uk
- 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. See www.potfest.co.uk
- 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. See www.potfest.co.uk
- July 31- 15 Aug** **Southern Ceramics Exhibition** at the Bishops Kitchen, Chichester Cathedral PO19 1PX daily 10 till 5.
- Aug 20 – 22** **Art in Clay.** Windsor Race Course. The biggest international ceramic show in the UK has moved from Hatfield House. See <https://www.artinclay.co.uk/>
Check out the website for their new online show.
- Sept 1 -30th** **Open Studio in Herts.** See <https://www.hvaf.org.uk/>



Something in the Air

 By Tim Thornton tim@tim-thornton.com

We all hear about the perils of dust, and in particular of silica dust, in the studio. But how much dust is safe? And how much is in your studio? And is it the wrong type of dust?

Your body is quite good at protecting your lungs from dust. Your nasal hairs filter out the biggest particles, and then as the air goes down your windpipe into the bronchii any dust that hits the sides is pushed back up into your mouth by cilia (or hairs), where you generally swallow it. This dust doesn't harm the lungs, and is cleared out between coming in from your studio in the evening, and going out in the morning, all nice and clean and ready to be recontaminated. These large particles are called inhalable dust by the medics, or PM10 by the environmental monitors (for our purposes we can ignore a slight difference in definitions). The 10 refers to the particle size - 10 microns.

The smaller particles, respirable dust or PM2.5, gets into the alveoli or air sacs in the lungs, and can take many months to be

cleared, if at all, so the concentration builds up with time, and this is what causes a lot of the damage. Your lungs become clogged up, and a few substances like crystalline silica have sharp edges that also cut away at the lungs. So you get scarring, your lungs lose elasticity, breathing gets harder, and some cause lung cancer. These are long term effects though, slowly building up over the years with low to moderate levels of exposure.

So how much dust is going to cause you harm? Scientists study these things and set safe levels, which are then set into law or regulated, but often politicians and industry water down the levels in the interests of profit. So the numbers here are taken from a number of sources, erring on the side of caution by taking the lowest levels. Levels are measured in mg/m³ and averaged out over an 8 hour day, 5 day week, so if you just do pottery one day a week your dust levels can safely be 5 times higher.

| Substance | Inhalable dust, mg/m ³ TWA | Respirable dust, mg/m ³ TWA |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| General dust | 10 | 1.3 |
| Aluminium oxide, talc | | 1 |
| Silica, amorphous | 6 | |
| Zinc, zirconium | 5 | |
| Tin | 2 | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Bone ash, copper | 1 | |
| Antimony, barium, chromium | 0.5 | |
| Manganese | 0.1 | 0.02 |
| Vanadium | 0.05 | |
| Silica, crystalline | | 0.025 |
| Cobalt | 0.02 | |
| Nickel | 0.015 | |

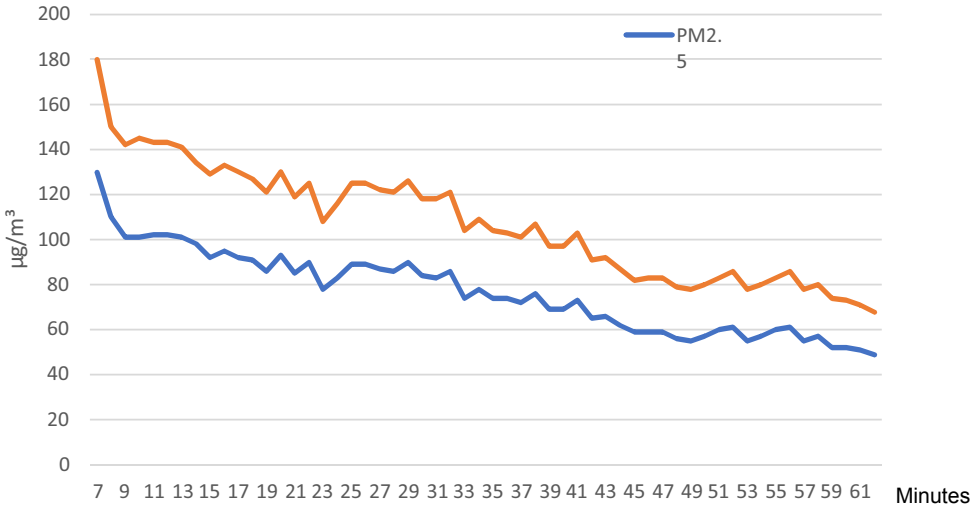
Looking at this, the general dust level for inhalable dust is higher than you would want to work in, and the levels for other substances are quite low considering the quantities we use, except possibly if you use black clay with a lot of manganese in. The real challenge is the amount of respirable crystalline silica, particularly when you remember that ball clay, for example, can be up to 50% crystalline silica. Again, manganese can be a concern if you use a lot of high manganese clay. But, for most people, if you crack the silica problem, everything else falls into place.

But how much dust might there be floating round your studio? Using a dust meter, in my studio I had a background reading of up to 0.04 mg/m³ PM10, 0.03 mg/m³ PM2.5. This

could double or triple if just doing general things. Activities that pushed the dust meter over its maximum reading of 1 were things like mixing large quantities of glaze, sanding or grinding fired work, or cleaning with a broom or a non-HEPA vacuum cleaner (a HEPA one didn't affect dust levels) - and these readings came down after a few minutes as the particles dispersed round the studio.

However once the dust had dispersed, it still takes a long time to settle - especially the most harmful small particles that can stay in the air for many hours. The first graph shows this, with it taking about 45 minutes for the dust levels to halve. So don't take your respirator off as soon as you've finished that dusty job!

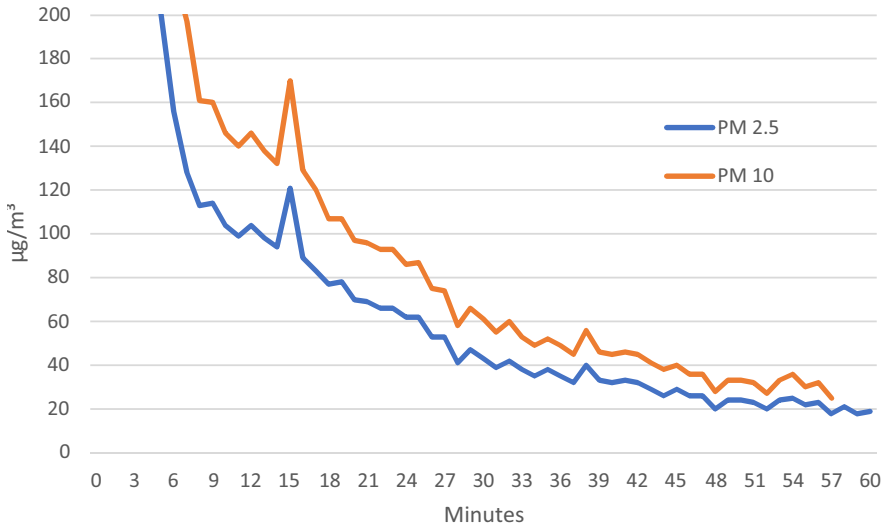
NO VENTILATION



What can we do about this? Ventilating the room makes a big difference, either by having a couple of windows open, so air can flow through your studio, or by having a fan push air through a suitable filter to trap the dust

particles. Ideally we want 5 or 6 air changes per hour. The graph below shows this, using a fan with a dust extracting filter attached, and you can see how much more quickly the dust level comes down in the room.

With air filter



So by having some ventilation in your studio, you help keep the general dust level low, and when you do something that creates a lot of dust it brings the dust level down much more quickly, so you don't have to

wear your respirator for as long a time.

If you want to learn more about how to run your studio safely, go to www.tim-thornton.com and look at the online course I give on it.



Friday 15th October 2021

8 pm on Zoom

The business meeting will be followed by the judging of the Fitzwilliam Competition, by you, the DCPG members

For more information on how to submit your entry, see Page 5.

At the AGM we will be confirming the appointment of Ian Jones' successor as Treasurer, who we hope to appoint at the next committee meeting on 20th July - we

will keep you informed. The posts of Chair and Secretary will fall vacant at the AGM and we are looking to expand the number of Trustees on the Committee. If you are interested in playing a more active role in the Guild, support the aim of deepening and widening the understanding of ceramics and have time, skills and enthusiasm to bring to this very worthwhile organisation, please email chair@dcp.org.uk so that we can arrange a chat about the various vacancies.



DCPG Programme of Online Demonstrations

From UK and Australia

Saturday 14th Aug 7 – 9 pm.

Jane Sawyer

www.janesawyer.com.au

Jane's pots reflect her love of the tactile qualities of clay and slip. Softly distorted rims and fluid use of slips make for pots you just want to pick up.

Jane trained in Australia, Japan and Edinburgh and now lives in Melbourne. She lectures widely and founded Slow Clay where she teaches Japanese techniques. She has exhibited in Denmark, Japan, UK and Australia.

Friday 8th October 7 - 9 pm. tbc

Pie Bolton

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 7 pm.

The Oriental Collection at Durham

www.dur.ac.uk/orientalmuseum

A talk on the wonderful collection of ceramics and other artefacts bequeathed by Malcolm Macdonald, politician and diplomat and son of Ramsey Macdonald, PM.

Our guide to the collection will be Craig Barclay, Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions at Durham



Saturday 11th Dec 10 – 12 noon.

Imogen Noble

www.imogentaylor-noble.com

Hand built pots inspired by the Japanese aesthetic of minimal glazing and anagama firings.

Imogen moved to Devon last year where she is already organising covid secure classes in addition to developing her work. Up until the move she worked to recreate the subtle colourings of long wood firings using an electric kiln.





DCPG Officers for 2021.



The DCPG team

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New Members



A warm welcome to Ellen Tunstall (Bushey) who writes: "working in my garden studio, my work explores various methods of surface decoration. My main focus revolves around carved, thrown decorative forms that are inspired by nature."

We also welcome Sandra Damas from Redbourn. We hope you both enjoy your membership and look forward to meeting you soon.



Potters' Socials



Judi Tribe



At last members have been able to meet up together (socially distanced of course) in people's gardens. After months of enjoying seeing people on Coffee Zoom, in May Angela Bowen invited us round to her beautiful garden for a Potters' tea with Welsh cakes. It was a real joy to sit in the sunshine and chat again to everyone face to face. In June we all met round at my house, under our gazebo as the weather was not quite so promising but again it was great fun sharing chats and cake.

The Open Studio Zooms continue to be a great time to see what other members are working on as well as to seek advice or just to get some wonderful top tips. It really is like working alongside other potters, but in your own space at home and a perfect way to connect up with other members.

Here are the dates and times for next Potters' Socials and Open Studio Zooms

Monday 19th July - 11.00am - 1.00pm at Chiltern Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles, Gorelands Lane HP8 4AB
<https://www.coam.org.uk/>
There is an entrance fee - £8, Group fee -

£6 (10 or more)

This charity museum is a true delight with 37 rescued historical buildings set in the Chiltern. The Guild is beginning to form exciting collaborations with COAM and this will be a wonder-

ful opportunity to meet up with members and enjoy walking around the grounds of the museum, having refreshments at the cafe or bringing your own picnic.

Studio Zoom - Monday 26th July
10.00am - 1.00pm

Potters' Coffee / Lunch -
Tuesday 17th August 12.00 - 2.00pm at
The Three Horseshoes, Winkwell, Hemel Hempstead. HP1 2RZ
<https://www.the3horseshoeswinkwell.co.uk/>

Studio Zoom - Monday 23rd August
10.00 - 1.00pm

DCPG Kingsbury Barn Exhibition -
Friday 10th - Sunday 12th September

Potters' Coffee -
Friday 24th September 11.00 - 1.00pm at
Sunnyside Up - Hemel Food Garden Cafe,
Two Waters Road, Hemel Hempstead,
HP3 9BY
<https://www.sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk/our-sites/hemel-food-garden/>



Midori Takaki Zoom Demonstration 14 May 2021

 by Marialba Hogg

On Friday 14 May we were treated to a talk and demonstration by Midori Takaki, the talented Japanese artist, whose work is striking and awe-inspiring. Her pieces are full of meaning, and show painstaking attention to detail and the delicacy one often associates with Japanese art. It is exhibited in art galleries across the UK as well as internationally.

Her introduction gave us an insight into the cultural differences between Britain and Japan. She focused particularly on food customs. We were shown a series of different vessels: a little sake dish, beautifully decorated, a flower shaped dish and more. In Japan aesthetics and function are closely connected; each piece of crockery has to match both the food it holds and the person using it. The whole experience of eating is mindful and almost ceremonial.

One day she saw a notice for a ceramics evening class at the local college. Her husband Mike, who also likes Japanese food, encouraged her to enrol. The idea was to produce the tableware they liked and wanted. Despite her initial reluctance, in the end she relented, started the course and her life changed.

At first there was frustration at the slow progress, but eventually she got into her stride, thanks to her decision to make clay rabbits! By now the idea of producing pots had been discarded. She has an affinity to animals, especially rabbits and she considers herself a 'rabbit girl'. She ended up making one every day, 'for company', she admits. As a result of this decision she was finally able to sleep well, having had sleep problems since birth. Finding fulfilment in her creative activity resulted in untroubled sleep.



Later, Midori embarked on a two-year, part time MA course. Her talent soon attracted attention, and her work started to be appreciated and, crucially, bought. At this point she decided to quit the course and embark on a professional career as a ceramist and sculptor.

Midori's talk was punctuated by images of her work. Even the early pieces already show what is clearly a very striking and individual style. A bold imagination enables her to produce fantastical figures, sometimes animal, sometimes human, sometimes something in between.



Midori told us that in her early work there was edginess, even 'cold anger'. In time, as she continued on her professional path, those feelings softened. She is, however, always experimental and bold, she told us. For her, it's important to try things, to be brave. For example, she uses ink-jet printer technique to great effect in her sculptures.

She likes using porcelain slip, which has a matt finish. She uses it before bisque firing, but sometimes after. Also, she doesn't mind



cracks, in fact she positively relishes that particular look in her finished objects.



She told us she bisque fires at 950°/975°, and her glaze firing temperature is up to 1240°.

Towards the end of the evening, we were treated to a virtual tour of her studio, which is an extension to the house. It was fascinating to see how immaculate it is! Apparently she was told by an interviewer that he would have been happy to have surgery in it!

She has three separate working surfaces for different phases of her work, with shelves and drawers for implements. A place for everything, and everything in its place. One of the desks has adjustable heights, which helps with her back problems.

We could only gaze in wonder at this level of organization!

She also has two kilns. The drying room is separated from the studio by a very efficient fire door, ensuring it's cold enough for a gradual drying process.

Midori also has a packing room which is just as neat and carefully set up as the other rooms. Being able to peep into Midori's working spaces was truly amazing.

Finally, we had a brief demonstration of how Midori constructs her sculptures. She uses the pinch pot technique, and then, very carefully and painstakingly, goes on to add features: the nose is pushed out from the back, ears are added - she tells us that they don't need to be realistic to be recognized as

ears - eyes and so on. It would have been so interesting to have had more time for this.



However, the evening was very instructive and enjoyable, giving us a fascinating insight into Japanese culture, which I for one don't know nearly enough about, as well as allowing us to see the world and the work of a very talented and inspirational artist.



Potters Return to St Albans Market

Ros McGuirk

We returned for one Saturday in May and another in June, according to interest from members.

As always there are sales, lots of interest from the public and the good company of fellow makers. In addition there are plenty of tempting ways of spending your earnings, including some excellent food and drink outlets.

I expect that there will be keen interest in selling after the summer, so look out for



emails about the market stall and plan your making accordingly. If you have already decided that you want to go on the market get in touch with Jackie at:

jackieharrop1@gmail.com

St Albans was granted a Royal Charter by Edward VI in 1553 which specified Wednesdays and Saturdays as the trading days. This has continued up to the present. It included livestock up till about 1972.

The Guild, which formed in 1975, is a relative newcomer! Jackie jumped at the chance of having a go when it became apparent that our show at Kingsbury was not going to happen and so we joined last September. Pleased at the results and the chance to meet up with others after a long period of lockdown, we kept up a weekly stall right through to Christmas, apart from November when only food was allowed on the market.





How to make and use Gas Fired Kilns by Chris Barnes



Ros McGuirk

Chris Barnes is an experienced potter and teacher who began his career studying sculpture at St Martins. He progressed to making pots at the Chocolate Factory and is now potting in Cumbria. His main output is reduction fired tableware typically decorated in his trademark multi-coloured stripes.

He has written this book for all students everywhere who are keen to get on and learn how to build and fire their first gas kiln, or, in my case, to learn how to make good a second hand one that is in need of improving.

At first sight this is the most attractive and accessible book on kiln building I have seen. With 138 pages and in paperback it is a handy size and is brightly coloured and plentifully illustrated with photos, cartoons, graphs and diagrams. The layout is straightforward and the explanations clear and concise. It would be the top contender for 'ladybird book of gas kilns', the adult version.

It begins with a good argument for firing by gas rather than electricity. Learning to use gas gives one another level of knowledge and skill and is much more rewarding than firing in an electric kiln.

It goes on to give an overview of kiln design and then describes how to build a raku kiln, how to convert an electric kiln to

gas and instructions to build a down draught kiln.

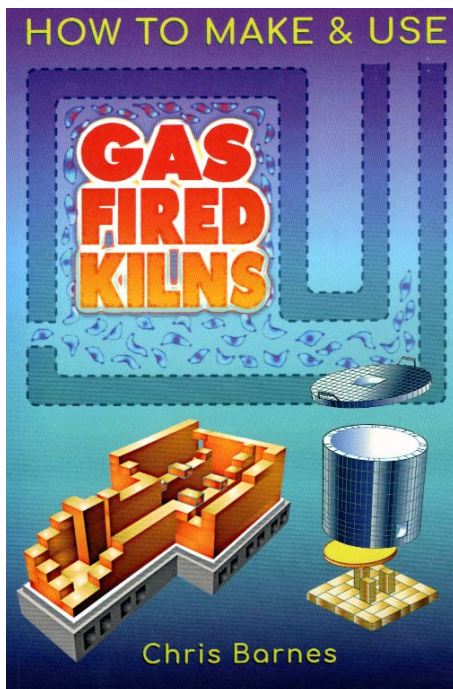
The next section is on firing and how to record firings. Lastly there are glaze recipes with a chapter entirely on copper reds.

The explanations include a glossary and useful tables and graphs. There is everything for the novice as well as the intermediate learner. Every part of a kiln is described and explained from the damper to types of burner. There is an especially useful section on building materials and types of bricks, and also a section on designing with lego. For those who are already working with gas there is a useful revision of safety procedures. For those

who have never fired this way before, the illustrations of the different types of flames is unique and fundamental.

There are also some memorable quotes: from Steve Mills "building a good kiln is not rocket science, but something anyone can do" and, my favourite, "The larger the chamber is, the more fuel efficient it is when fired. This is similar to the evolutionary principle that leads to very large dinosaurs." (!)

The book is published by Mud House and is available online from various websites for prices, excluding postage, up to £17.99, and from <https://www.chrisbarnespottery.com/> for £9.99.





Strong and Stable



By Tim Thornton tim@tim-thornton.com

No, she's not back! But having a strong and stable glaze is important for many types of ceramics, not just tableware. What if your customer puts your vase through the dishwasher, or positions your sculpture outside, exposed to the elements? And, of course, it is often key to a piece being "food safe". Here we will look at how glazes may be attacked by chemicals, from the dishwasher to Coca Cola.

We need to understand that there are three external factors that result in a glaze being attacked: time, temperature, and the environment. The longer the time a glaze is in contact with something that can attack it, the more it will be damaged. And the higher the temperature, the faster it will be attacked - as a rule of thumb, every increase of 10°C doubles the rate of corrosion. But what do we mean by the environment? This is simply the substance in contact with the glaze that is trying to attack it.

In normal use, we are looking at attack by water-based chemicals, and the key consideration here is how acid or alkaline they are. This is given by the pH - 7 is neutral, pure water; lower numbers are acidic; and higher numbers are alkaline. The most significant alkaline environment is when washing up the dishes - hand washing has a pH of 7 to 9 at a maximum temperature of around 45°C. Dishwashers are more aggressive, though, with a pH of 10 to 12 or more, and a temperature of 55-85°C. This is aggressive enough to slowly dissolve the glaze, the silica and aluminium in the glaze dissolving into the water, along with all of the other glaze components. This attack continues at a constant rate and is proportional to the pH and the temperature.

For acids, the main perpetrators are food

and drink - most foods are only mildly acidic, but things like fizzy drinks, lemon juice and pickles can have a pH of 3 or less. Here, at temperatures up to about 50°C, the mechanism is different: the fluxes and colourants in the glaze are not bonded in as strongly as the core matrix of silica, aluminium and oxygen, and they dissolve out into the water, being replaced by hydrogen ions (electrically charged atoms and molecules) from the water, leaving a weakened glaze full of voids where the larger atoms have been replaced by hydrogen. The corrosion rate starts climbing steeply at a pH of 4 or below. This starts at the surface of the glaze and descends ever deeper, but the rate of leaching slows down as the ions have to travel ever further to get in and out of the glaze. Until you heat it up above about 50°C, or wash it up, when the top layer of the glaze is removed, exposing fresh glaze to be attacked by the food!

So how to decide what makes a glaze stable? First, glossy glazes tend to be more stable - matt glazes can be stable too, so long as this is through the growth of stable micro-crystals on cooling. If the crystals are not chemically stable, or if it is just matt because it hasn't been fired to a high enough temperature, then it won't be stable. You can often test if it is the right firing temperature by firing a test tile at the top temperature of your kiln and seeing if there is a difference - if it comes out glossier, it was under fired at the lower temperature. If developing a glaze from scratch, a good source of guidance for glaze composition is to look up the limit formulae for your firing temperature - ones for high fired stoneware are in the table. Another guide is the Stull chart, a plot of SiO₂ against Al₂O₃, which shows the regions of gloss

and matt glazes (and also crazing), though you need to remember that Stull only created this for one glaze at one firing temperature and didn't intend it to be generalised to all glazes as some people do. The shape of the regions on the graph will be similar for most glazes, but their size and positioning on the graph will vary.

A key point to understand is that the more the glaze heads towards just aluminium and silica, with fewer fluxes and colourants, the more stable it will be. And, from this, the higher the firing temperature, the more durable you can make the glaze (though you can also make a non-durable glaze at any firing temperature!). Looking at the fluxes, the alkali metals (sodium, potassium and lithium) help melting at a lower temperature than the alkali earths (calcium, magnesium, strontium and barium), but also make the glazes less stable in acids, so a ratio of about 0.3 alkali to 0.7 alkali earth is best for high fired stoneware or porcelain, dropping to 0.5:0.5 for earthenware (unless Boron is added - see below). The best alkali to use in terms of glaze toughness is lithium, but it is expensive, and may affect the fit of your glazes. And the benefits of lots of alkali earths are reduced in a caustic dishwasher environment, so you don't want too much of them. But one easy tweak to do is to add 1-2% of Zircon, which toughens the glaze up significantly against both acids and alkalis but isn't a high enough quantity for it to start acting as an opacifier.

So, what about Boron, the mainstay of many low and mid fired glazes? Well, that depends - its chemistry is much more complex than silica, and not fully understood by potters - a clue to its complexity lies in the "boron anomaly", where its thermal

expansion coefficient can swing from a high positive number to a high negative number, depending on the glaze chemistry. Basically, small to moderate amounts, up to about 12% in the UMF act in a similar way to aluminium, joining the homogenous glaze network. But higher amounts cause a phase separation, so you have a tough silica glass and a soft boron glaze intermixed like oil and water in mayonnaise, and in a corrosive environment the boron glaze is readily dissolved away. The threshold for this depends on the fluxes used, and the amount of aluminium in the glaze.

Unfortunately all these complexities mean that it is very hard to predict with a high degree of certainty whether a glaze will be stable or not, but there are 3 simple tests you can do in your studio: for acids, there's the lemon test and the vinegar test - they work slightly differently, so it's worth doing both. And for alkalis, put it in the dishwasher - or you can accelerate this by simmering the piece in a strongly caustic solution in a stainless steel pan for a few hours. In all cases, you're looking for a loss of gloss, streakiness developing, white patches, or a loss of colour. Have an untested piece with the same clay and glaze to compare before and after, and using a magnifying app on your phone (or even a magnifying glass) can make it easier to see things. Google will take you to descriptions of these tests, or I'll cover them in a later article. You can see the before and after results of subjecting an unstable glaze to these three tests, at different levels of magnification, in the illustration.

Tim Thornton runs courses on product safety and on studio health and safety. The next online courses are in September; in person course dates are dependent on the COVID status. See www.tim-thornton.com for more information.

| 1250-1325°C / $\Delta 10$ | Ron Roy (1250 – 1300°C / $\Delta 8 - 10$) | Green & Cooper (1250 – 1270°C / $\Delta 8$) | Green & Cooper (1260 – 1280°C / $\Delta 9$) | Green & Cooper $\Delta 10$ | DigitalFire UK (1250 – 1300°C / $\Delta 8 - 10$) | Rhodes (1250 – 1345°C / $\Delta 8-12$) |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|----------------------------|---|---|
| (K+Na)O ₂ | 0.2 – 0.45 | 0 – 0.35 | 0 – 0.325 | 0 – 0.3 | 0.1 – 0.5 | 0.2 – 0.4 |
| CaO | 0.35 – 0.7 | 0 – 0.6 | 0 – 0.65 | 0 – 0.7 | 0.35 – 0.8 | 0.4 – 0.7 |
| MgO | 0 – 0.35 | 0 – 0.33 | 0 – 0.335 | 0 – 0.34 | 0 – 0.4 | 0 – 0.35 |
| BaO | 0 – 0.3 | 0 – 0.425 | 0 – 0.45 | 0 – 0.475 | 0 – 0.3 | 0 – 0.30 |
| SrO | - | - | - | - | 0 – 0.7 | - |



Members websites

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

<https://www.amandatoms ceramics.com/>

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

<https://debbielawson.com/>

<https://deirdremcguirk.com/>

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

<http://elainewellspotter.co.uk/>

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

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

<https://www.helenhalliday.com/ceramics.html>

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

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

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

<http://katharinegillings.com/>

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

<http://www.lesparrott.me.uk/>

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

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

<https://www.margaret-tatton-brown.co.uk/>

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

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

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

www.ranjana.com

<http://carolceramics.com/>

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

www.dcp.org.uk

We are back at the barn! Our annual members' exhibition is to be held at Kingsbury Barn, Branch Road, St Albans, AL3 4SX, from Friday 10th September through to Sunday 12th, running from 10am till 4pm. Once again we will be part of the national Heritage celebrations.

This will be our first real world event in ages and a great opportunity to meet up and socialise with old friends and new, some of whom you may only have met on zoom, so put the dates in your diary!!

There are plenty of other things to do nearby including a visit to the Pub in the Park event at Verulamium.

The exhibition complies with regulations to safeguard exhibitors and the public. By following public health guidance we will not be holding the evening social or have a go events. This is, however, the beginning of a gradual resumption of our activities.

Twenty members will exhibiting in this beautiful and spacious 13th century barn. As always this is a self selecting show, but with fewer participants than before. Currently there is one space due to an exhibitor's change of plans, so move fast and contact Jackie (jackieharrop1@gmail.com) if you want to apply.

See you there!



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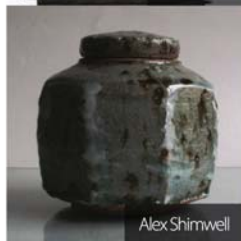
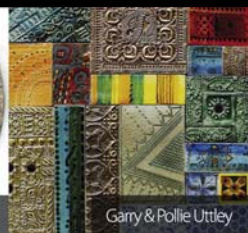
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