



Issue 39

October 2021

DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



In this issue
Jane Sawyer
Pittard family
Meg Patey
Kingsbury Barn
exhibition

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*Cover picture pot by Jane Sawyer
see page 6*



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Editorial Autumn 2021



Ros McGuirk

Working on the newsletter is like waiting for a bus. Nothing happens for ages and then they all come along at once. With most of our face to face activities happening around and just after the copy date, this issue is being put together under the heading 'It's never too late'...

We are also aware that a good number of you are receiving your first printed copy in 18 months and have decided to continue sending out email copies to all, for now, to make sure you all get one.

Many thanks to all who contributed. Once again more copy arrived than I had anticipated and it has been a joy reading all the items. There should have been more, but I so enjoyed myself at Waterperry with 'Celebrating Ceramics' that I forgot to take any photos and can only say that it was brilliant! The potters there reported well of the various Potfests in Scotland, Penrith and Warwickshire, which is hardly a surprise after the restrictions we have been under.

The new season comes with significant

changes on committee and there is now an urgent need for more help. Committee are currently looking for a secretary. Meanwhile, many thanks to Angela, who is retiring after doing a sterling job.

There has already been a job split when the treasurer's post was divided between John Alderman, who has joined the committee, and Ian Jones who keeps the accounts. This is likely to happen again so please step up if you can help in any way.

Of all the changes, we shall miss the chair, Mary Anne, as she leaves the post. She certainly had no idea what was in store when she became chair, but she tackled the extra work caused by the pandemic with cheerful determination. A very big thank you to her for holding together the group under such difficult circumstances and another to Jackie, former vice chair, for agreeing to take over the role, and to Fiona Booy for returning to committee as vice chair.

Good luck with the potting, everyone.



Notes from the Chair



Mary Anne Bonney



The meeting in October 2019 when I became chair of the Guild feels a long way off. How unsuspecting I was of the upheavals ahead as I sailed through the first five months in the role: tentative steps towards building a new wood fired kiln, plans for the Hamada Leach celebration, committee meetings, some great Fridays at Kings Langley. I even got to feel confident introducing the speakers and was honoured to host the lovely Ruthanne Tudball and her husband for the night after her demonstration. She soon sussed me out for the hobby potter that I am: 'I would have the pottery here' she said as we walked through the utility room on the way back from viewing the corner of the garage that is my pottery. I was not quick enough to point out to her that having the workspace apart from the house has distinct advantages: I love my commute down the garden path and the distance I can put between myself, the wif, and domestic chores on the all too rare occasions I get stuck in to the clay and glazes. Also, having a tiny pottery means I have to keep it tidy!

Stephen Dixon's appearance via Zoom at the Potters Open Day was a minor hiccup in the predictable course of Guild affairs, happily overcome thanks to his enterprise and the technical expertise of Johnny at the Sandpit Theatre. But the news from Italy and the absence of some of our more vulnerable members gave a hint that change was to come. The shock of lockdown, the enormous relief when my son who was working on Broadway decided to come home rather than ride things out in the States and caught one of the last planes out of New York, took my mind right off pots and the Guild for a while, as I reassessed my priorities - top was keeping myself safe and well so that I did not add to

the stress for the rest of the family and the world at large.

However, the Guild had plans for events to finesse (or so we naively thought at the time) and decisions to be made and so, by April, we had embraced Zoom for committee meetings and, soon after, for social meetings too. Judi's suggested topics and Nicole's challenges helped dispel the initial awkwardness, conversing through the screen got easier and easier, and it was a joy to see familiar and new faces and indulge in some wide-ranging potters' chats. From there, thanks to masses of persistence and persuasion on Gay's part, we moved on to the first Zoom demonstration. I don't think anyone who watched Denis di Luca firing well into the night on his Italian hillside will easily forget the experience! Thanks to imaginative teamwork, and encouragement from members, the Guild was back in the business of providing education and enjoyment to members - a good part of its mission. It was important to me that organising our activities, limited as they were, should not demand more of committee members than they felt comfortable with as they juggled commitments to family, friends and selves, so we waived the membership fees for existing members for the year to the end of this September. I knew that members' lives and livelihoods too were affected in different ways by Covid and its consequences. I have been one of the lucky ones, remaining well and solvent, as have my loved ones, though there has been anxiety along the way. Being part of the Guild has been important to me during this time: bringing contact with like-minded people, encouraging me to keep up with the wider ceramic world.

I know that I am not the only one to have enjoyed the company, ceramic top tips, encouragement, distraction and information provided by recent Guild activities, but I do wonder and worry about those we have not heard from. It was good, therefore, to receive a message of farewell from Sue Lines who, after many years of membership and active involvement with Guild activities - most recently as she preceded Gay as librarian and for a long time, with her partner Peter, presided over the urn at meetings, now has other priorities and demands on her time. Jane Kilvington who preceded me as Secretary and is famous as creator of the original bison of which the Stan Romer trophy is a scaled down version has also written to end her membership - and mentions happy memories of her involvement with the Guild. Her note prompted me to look back over the newsletter archive and in 1998, Jane was described as "the rock on which the rest of the crew depended" at the Guild's stand at Art in Clay - those were the days!

The digital newsletter archive is not complete, but if you are interested in seeing what we have, let me know: many of the articles are very entertaining, lots include quantities of technical detail and they demonstrate the Guild's continuing commitment to providing a forum for potters of all kinds and levels of skill to come together, share knowledge and experience, facilities and ideas, have fun and, as Ros and David will recognise, cajole and sometimes even bully

members into writing up and illustrating their ceramic adventures.

The exhibition at Kingsbury Barn on the weekend of 10 -12 September which I hope many of you managed to visit, summed up the breadth of the Guild's activities and the diversity of members' work. With the live relay of Meg Patey's demonstration on the Saturday, it even included a sample of the Guild's online offer! The variety of members' work was complemented by the display which Nicole put together about materials and methods, demonstrating the Guild's commitment to ceramic education at a time when it has been difficult for us to offer the community activities which draw in newcomers to the world of clay. As I write, these are just beginning to creep back onto our calendar, though volunteers to help are still thin on the ground - people still have catching up to do with family and friends and many, I know, are hesitant to mingle in crowds. Being at the Barn, able to see and touch work and talk to makers reinforced, for me the value of live events, and reminded me just how generous potters are with their time and knowledge, but I think we still need to respect people's caution around being out and about, and provide a mix of in person and online options. I look forward to working with whoever steps into the Chair and all the talented and generous people in the Guild, while having a bit more time and space in my life to spend at the wheel and wrestling with glaze recipes, firing schedules etc.

Membership News

Welcome to new members Roz Eijgenhuijsen, Kristin Stolpe, Edwina Wilks and Dorianne Carmel.

We look forward to meeting you soon, whether online or for real!



A brief history of 'Lockdown' and in between!!



Vivienne Rodwell-Davies

There was never time to get bored as my time was constantly occupied with potting, sketching, gardening, walking, cycling and of course the mandatory clearing out! When the Merchant Taylor school lakes were opened, swimming was allowed at a distance. With the choice of up to a 1km loop it was never that busy!

I had a commission from 'Julian the Rug man' who has a beautiful carpet shop in St. Albans. I had to make six very similar, very large, glazed flower pots in red E/W to house his beautiful Aeonium plants. 30cm high 22cm wide (they did vary a little but not by much) My kiln was very busy during this time as I could only get two in at a time for Bisque, until they shrank a little for the Glost firing.

This proved to be quite a challenge for my arthritic hands, back and neck! I had several visits to the Physio after but it was worth it. All six pots were gratefully received by Julian and his wife and look beautiful with the plants in them.

Two on-line exhibitions with Anglian Potters and one with London Potters over the Christmas period and after proved to be a great success. Boxing up and posting was a little more of a challenge to the making as the local post Office in Barnet was closed due to Covid. I tried My Hermes and that worked out well and eventually mastered the art of wrapping and double boxing.

Walking and sketching during Lockdown (and normal times) was also a pleasant diversion and I discovered many more walks. The Shire Golf club opened up the whole golf course to 'responsible' walkers. Hundreds of acres and dozens of lakes of undulating and varied planting with coppices were accessible.

The lakes were full of water fowl and I

charted the progress of a pair of swans from egg hatching and incubation through to hatching - 6 cygnets. All this took 48 days. I would sit and sketch every day and filled two sketch books! Sadly all cygnets did not survive as there are so many natural predators.

My allotment was another life saver as two of my three children have adjacent plots. We were able to meet and even have picnics across the fences! I also have a large garden so there was never any time to get bored and vegetables and fruit were always available. I document all of my sowings, progress and harvesting and have A4 folders with water colour sketches throughout the seasons. One day I would like to publish these but need the help of a computer wizard! - Any suggestions?

Cycling with my daughter also occupied several hours, sometimes getting lost and having to push our bikes through streams and fields! We discovered so many new tracks and covered miles and areas that I didn't know existed. We did gain many bruises, scrapes and one puncture each, but all very much worth the time, fresh air and valuable exercise! (more sketching en route too).

Hedges Farm was a definite life-saver, with a walk through the fields from the allotment, past all his livestock grazing peacefully in the fields. We would stand outside his farm shop at a suitable distance wearing masks and one of the butchers would come out and take the order. This was a regular weekly occurrence for me and many locals. If you have never tried the produce from the farm I strongly recommend it (unless you are a vegetarian in which case you need to visit me at my allotment for surplus produce!).

I think keeping my body and mind active is a must for me for as long as I can!!

Happy potting.



Membership Renewals

 Audrey Hammett

I hope you have been managing to take advantage of some of the excellent online activities which Committee have organised for us all. As you know we waived our membership fees last September because our face to face events were not possible. With live events now creeping back into our programme and the on-going Zoom activities, we do now need to renew memberships to raise funds for our Guild. Renewals were due by 31 September so this is a reminder to those who have yet to pay.

You can either print and mail your completed form back to me with a cheque (mailing address is on the form) or scan the completed form back to dcpghmembership@gmail.com



A view from Milton Keynes

 by Chris Hartley-Wiley

The pandemic, pottery, and me.

As news flashed of distant parts of the world, Covid cases from people who had visited the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan rose, the Diamond Princess cruise ship had a major outbreak on board and many, many more fell ill, how little I realised how much life would change.

Suddenly, some of the first people who had travelled abroad and returned to the UK were brought to the quarantine hotels, images of people wearing Hazmat suits were seen. Preparations were made for the nearby ice rink to be a temporary mortuary. Ross Kemp and a tiny ITV crew made a documentary at the Milton Keynes University Hospital highlighting what one of the ICU consultants said was like a war zone. The same was seen across most of the hospitals in the UK.

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Many thanks and I hope you decide to renew your membership.

Lockdown followed and then of course there was the isolation.

Pottery and potters to me in lockdown have been a caring community. The virtual coffee meetings welcomed all those who would usually attend as well as those who could not. They were a wonderful insight into people's worlds and importantly their journeys that we might not ordinarily see.

Exploring studios around the world from the comfort of my dining room has been incredible. Private guided tours around their studios while also seeing how they make their wonderful work is incredible.

It has been lovely to meet face to face again and explore the Natural History Museum, but a blended approach and continuing virtual overseas trips to potters would be wonderful. Happy potting



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Angela Bowen

Having hand built for more than 40 years I am still unclear about my relationship with what I create.

There are prevailing questions.

At what point in its making is a pot deemed right or wrong?

How can a pot be retrieved, is it worth it and how does saving it affect how I feel about it?

Is a favourite pot a reminder of success or does it evoke a more artistic evaluation?

Why do I love my imperfect pots more than the pristine? Do my pots have a personality and what does it say about mine?



Like other potters I keep a range of pots that I will never part with; They move about around 'the hearth' where they contribute to daily family life. These good pots have fellows, many of which have been moved on elsewhere because friends and family wanted them or they were short term experiments that challenged my parameters or were not really loved. Why, I am not sure.

Bad pots with chips, ghastly glaze effects, misused slips, oxides or wax now perform menial storage tasks in the garage or elsewhere and are held in some respect because they represent steep learning curves, many



of which were useful for moving on.

However the effort of saving a bad pot is often wasted as it's like trying to paddle upstream knowing the link between mind and hand no longer has force.

Yet sometimes an imperfect pot can be pleasing and inspiring. Kintsugi-like, it's possible to regard imperfection having value although in my case it is form repair, rather than crack repair in gold, that can lead to a pot being cherished. These are my ugly

asymmetrical pots which in fact reach very good in my hierarchy. Every pot is unique but somehow these ugly pots are more than unique.



So it's this freedom of being able to adjust, not correct, and not expect perfection which is so rewarding. I have gained most enjoyment from asymmetry and nudged imperfections in African themed pots, Japanese enjimonos, fish bowls, planters and stands many of which still 'speak'.

It's obvious there are no standardised or clear answers to these questions/subjectivity rules, and I would like to know what others think.

Thanks for reading, Angela.





Jane Sawyer demonstration



Andre Hess (See front cover picture).

There seemed almost no better way to spend a Saturday morning than this: Jane Sawyer, master of slipware, talking to us live from her studio in Melbourne, showing us how she does her work, taking us around her studio, back through her past, and right up to the moment. Thank you to members of the committee who set up what felt like a special handful of hours.

An interesting, possibly foremost, feature of Jane Sawyer's work is the role of Japan and her time there as an apprentice, but in a way that clearly separates her work from the genre of pottery referred to as Anglo-Japanese.

One of her opening statements - a kind of manifesto - was to say that 'the touch of the clay is more important than anything else'. She started the morning (it was evening there) demonstrating spiral wedging and explaining in detail what happens when a small volume of clay as part of the larger mound is wedged at one time until the entire volume is wedged.

Next, she demonstrated throwing 'off the hump', 'which everybody in Japan does'. Interesting was her measuring apparatus with which she measured the depth and diameter of the containers as they emerged from the hump (it was important especially for large restaurant orders, she said).

She talked about Japan like it was on her doorstep, which psycho-geographically, it of course is. And this is interesting. For us, here in the UK, Japan is distant and exotic. To Australians, less so. Together with this there was her early training with Andrew Halford, where she worked as an apprentice from 1982-1985. It was he who encouraged her to go to Japan: 'if only you could go to Japan you will have your eyes opened'. She went to

Shussagama in Shimane where she found her metier, contemporary slipware. Jane reminded us that her influences are more Asian than English, apart from using terracotta as her throwing body.

She also travelled to Okinawa in southern Japan where she saw Chinese-influenced colourful ware made of dark clay, slip, and over-glaze colour. Then came Marge Hall, Winton Pottery, Pencaitland, East Lothian where she discovered a wonderful warm community of potters making English slipware (dairy ware), and the opportunity to make her own work.

Jane thought it useful to consider what the 'key' to her work was, and produced a concise list (doing this is a useful exercise):

- ◆ Dark clay
- ◆ Slip (she uses white commercial slip which she adjusts)
- ◆ Throwing off centre, and expressive ways of deforming the soft pot on the wheel.
- ◆ Glaze with a high clay content so that it fuses with and resembles the slip
- ◆ The clay and glaze fitting well (so that it does not look like it has landed on the pot as an afterthought)
- ◆ Finding shapes that are appropriate to use, and to the hand and the body (she experiments with this)
- ◆ She fires to her top temperature, reduces that temperature 'a little', then soaks for an hour or so.
- ◆ Social engagement and activism are very important aspects to her life and work.
- ◆ Always keeping in mind that an exhibition is an installation, itself an act of making.

It was noticeable in her discussion that Jane uses a very limited number of ingredients

and colours, and that her creativity is located elsewhere and not dependent on adding 'more' all the time.

Jane is clearly a very busy woman, who else runs a successful commercial pottery, makes exhibition work, and heads up a clay cooperative and school? At this point Jane asked us what we would like to see more of, and the attendees chose her Slowclay.com presentation. What we saw was a warehouse kind of building with a shop front, on a busy street, and pictures of the crowd, and it was a crowd, including cool young people. There were rows of wheels and many kilns. She trusted her teacher training and what she had learnt as a pottery apprentice, and wanted to teach a course that had technical and intellectual rigour and a distinct development pathway. It was, and is, successful, and coincided with the rise and collapse of the 'Maker Movement' in Australia (a shallow

craft-focussed endeavour based in fashion) and government funding cuts to the arts as part of its cuts to the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (!) sector. The centre has teaching staff and its courses are fully booked. It raises funds for destitute potters and applies those funds directly to where the need is, eg in Nepal, after the earthquake. Slowclay.com exists and thrives as an act of protest.

What emerged strongly from the morning was, for Jane, the nearness of Japan and the Far East in context of British pottery traditions, the impact of her apprenticeships in Japan, the epiphany of slip on dark clay, the expressive deformation of soft clay while on the wheel, the insistence on the part of the maker as to how her/his work is shown, and social engagement. Jane Sawyer's moment in the DCPG Australia Season will be remembered for a long time.



The Pittards - A family of artists

 Review by Marialba Vitro Hogg

The second event in our Australian season was a family affair. The amazingly talented Pittards joined us from the Melbourne area of Australia and began their polished and professional presentation with a tour of their extensive property. They are fortunate in having space for a ceramic studio, a "clean" workshop for printmaking and drawing, and their own gallery. It is a true family business. Chris, Mary-Lou and their daughter Jessie each have their own space within these studios and are able to work separately but can also collaborate. The influences on each



other's work are apparent in the beautiful pieces they produce. In addition to selling in the gallery they supply regular customers and take one-off commissions, producing such items as wedding tableware, regular commercial lines of mugs and more quirky piece such as Chris's "dog-in-boats" series.

Their main workspace is a well-equipped ceramic studio with 3 large kilns. They have recently acquired an electric kiln with a programmer so they no longer have to stay up to the early hours with hourly adjustments during firings. Chris began as a painter but now he hand builds ceramics. He uses a jigger and jolley to create the foundation for his individual pieces on to which he coils his unique organic pieces. He decorates them using techniques inspired by his love of watercolour painting.

QUIZ question:

What is the difference between a Jigger and a Jolley?

Answer:

A Jig has the profile of the shape on the arm which is brought down with a lever action into the outside shape. A jolley on the other hand, has a cup head, into which the lever presses.

This is normally done on the wheel and was developed to speed up production throwing. Chris usually works on 4 or 5 pieces at the same time, decorating at greenware stage using sgrafitto or piercing to complete the shapes. He uses underglaze pencils or creates his own underglaze crayons by mixing clay and stain fired to 600/700 which give a soft colour which he can smudge with water. He fires his work to stoneware cone 9 (about 1280C) which leaves a more robust finish than earthenware fired Majolica work which chips or crazes too easily. Some of the



surfaces he leaves unglazed but smooths to a polish using wet and dry sandpaper after firing. The designs on his pots are often inspired by sketches which he keeps in a simple visual diary.



Mary Lou's brightly coloured pieces are inspired by local flora. Most of her work is wheel thrown. She uses a mirror behind the wheel when turning to check the form and trims the edges with a scalpel. When decorating she starts by sketching the image with a soft pencil before adding colour with underglaze body stain or coloured slips.

Mary Lou's top tips:

*Use a clay body made up of a mix of half porcelain and half white stoneware clay to get a white finish which is a good base for her bright colours, without warping.

*To avoid warping on large plates, leave in the plaster mould and dry slowly, pressing periodically with a kidney to counteract the tendency for edges to curl.

*Cement sheets work better than wooden boards to draw out moisture.

*Mix coloured stain with water before adding to slip to control the intensity of colour and to help it bond. (1kilo slip to 1kilo dilute colour)
Test on newspaper - if you can see the print it is too thin.



*Brushes made of natural hairs hold more colour than synthetic ones.

Daughter Jessie studied print making and still works in a range of mediums. She makes her clay forms using the jig and jolley in a similar way to Chris and then decorates her ceramics with beautifully detailed illustrations which are often transferred from lino print or lithograph to a ceramic surface by printing directly onto wet clay. She uses paper porcelain rolled thin so she can manipulate the surface after printing.

She also uses latex resist, stencils and decals (printed transfers) made from her own designs. All are enhanced with the addition of colour, using a range of soft colours for more functional pieces and tableware.





Notes on Committee Away Day



Jackie Harrop

On 9th August the trustees and wider committee spent an afternoon at the Kings Langley hall on an “awayday”.

The first task was to review the guilds objectives, which we agreed were to promote an awareness of

working with clay, and to educate, both with our members and the general public. We reviewed the activities we have undertaken in the recent past and our ambitions for the future. We recognised that we had to adapt to the pandemic, and this has added to our repertoire with zoom demonstrations, coffee mornings and studio visits. We expanded our use of social media and also managed to sustain the newsletter on-line with only few printed copies. The overall effect of working online was to broaden our content and to extend our range globally. At the same time, we lost the capacity for face to face events, social engagement and the chance to work together on community builds, kiln firings and the regular monthly Friday demos. In order to move forward we needed to review our capacity to continue to deliver some of these activities and functions. We are a small number of trustees and committee members and need to strengthen our succession planning by encouraging more members to join the committee, the trustees and crucially to take on the key roles which ensure the



guild can survive.

We agreed to strengthen some of these activities by regrouping and sharing the workload to reduce the levels of stress on trustees and individual committee members who take charge and organise activities on behalf of the guild.

We only had 3 hours to work on this, but we made a start reviewing our forward planning, how we make decisions, prioritise and agree proposals. We agreed that we need to increase the involvement of the membership, to ensure we are meeting the needs and aspirations of members as well as fulfilling our obligations as a charity. We still have gaps but hopefully we will soon have a secretary to help the guild fulfil its objectives and meet your needs.

If you would like to help, or have experience which could help us to do this, please get in touch and give it a try. Come and join one of our committee meetings to see if you d like it. Talk to one of the committee or a trustee. None of us are experts, but we are all willing to help - come and join us.



Tracing Places workshop - The Potting Shed



Jackie Harrop

On 4th September I was lucky enough to be staying very near the Fulmer Sculpture Park, so took part in an experimental event which was a blend of hands on clay and sculpture exhibition.

Contemporary Sculpture, Fulmer is set in 13 acres of beautiful private gardens in the south Buckinghamshire village of Fulmer. The gardens were originally set out between 1890 and 1925 by Sir Harry Legge a personal aide to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. Several of the exotic sample trees were planted by Queen Victoria when she was still a princess, to mark her visits.

The sculpture exhibition runs until 24th October by appointment Thursday to Sunday www.contemporarysculpturefulmer.com and the potting shed is a facility within the grounds for people to engage and interact with clay.

The Potting Shed is run by a group of volunteers who initiate periodic community events for local and wider audiences. I had originally seen the email from the guild but was surprised to be greeted by Paul Rowbotham who is currently working with them and also to see that Les Parrott had also taken up the invitation. We were later joined by Judi Tribe and her husband John and also by Lindsay.

We began with a stroll through the beautiful gardens to find more than 30 intriguing sculptures tucked in the trees, on the lawns and around the ponds. At various points around the sculpture trail we were encouraged to experiment, using "telescopes" to focus the field of vision and reproduce either from verbal or visual prompts making marks to represent a simplified view. We were then offered clay to transfer the marks and textures to a small plaque of soft red clay.



Another experiment involved translating a wider view painting with slips and black ink on large canvasses fixed on the ground near the ponds, using sponges or charcoal an long twigs, or acorn husks, we worked individually and collaboratively to create large representations.

Back at the Potting Shed, we were encouraged to create textured pieces to add to a collective sculpture. Throughout the experience I was aware of the wider potential for the guild to engage with the Potting Shed, and also that members would enjoy the sculpture park itself as well as the opportunity to "play" as we did in the past with the cathedral build, the Roman clay event and the building of French Row in the town hall. I hope we will seek out more opportunities to benefit from being able to work together, in an outdoor space, and recover from the limitations of confinement.

The organisers are hoping to organise firings in the future, and would be happy to work with us in some of these ventures.



From Maiolica to Reduced Lustre with Meg Patey

 Vicky Goutis

On Saturday 11 September, the fourth potter in our Australian season of Zoom demonstrations was Meg Patey working from her studio in the Southern highlands of New South Wales.

Meg started as a potter 40 years ago after completing an art course at tertiary college followed by apprenticeships to learn more about throwing, glazing and firing etc.

Having spent two and a half years in a large pottery in Canberra, making about 15 teapots and 100 mugs per day, she then worked in two potteries in France and after spending a short time with Jane Henman in South Yorkshire, she returned to Australia and set up a studio in her garden.

Meg taught part-time for several years and was Director at the Sturt Craft Centre in Mittagong from 1998-2009, initiating several exhibitions. She has exhibited many times across Australia as well as in Korea, Indonesia and this year in the Plate Show IV in the Schaller Gallery in Michigan.

In 2015, Meg took a break to work at the Sturt Craft Centre when John Higgins was resident.

For the first twenty five years her work was in majolica, tin glazed earthenware, using red clay with white glaze and decorated with brushwork. Later on in her talk, we saw a majolica plate showing rhythmic brushwork and the use of negative and positive space in her designs.



Having attended a glazing course in Sydney learning about lustre, she began to investigate reduced lustre and started making it at home, using red clay, white slip and clear glaze.

The slip is to a standard recipe, firing to about 1100 degrees:

70% clay, 20% flux + 10% silica.

Meg uses 2 glazes which have some lead bisilicate frit, one with more lead than the other.

The lustre pigments are applied to the ware after this glaze firing. The lustre firing is generally the third and lowest firing and is done in reduction usually using gas or wood. We were shown around her large, well-organized studio (shared with her artist husband) which houses the electric kiln she fires overnight and is used for both bisque and glaze firings.

In the garden is her gas kiln for reduced lustre firings which stands on bricks for ease of use. She explained that at the moment of reduction, as cone 019 starts to bend, (around 650 C), she pulls out two or three plugs and sticks in slivers of wood which produces a longer flame (pinewood produces extra smoke).

MAKING

Meg enjoys slabwork because of the freedom to experiment with different shapes, always making her own moulds and usually using a riser tool to lay the clay over. Her feet are 'lugs' added with just water and compressed quite flat.

First we watched her throwing a square pot on the wheel using a 500g ball of clay. Meg uses spiral wedging and brings up the clay with a sponge, centring at the same time. Following the method Christopher Weaver, a New Zealand potter uses to make square pots,



Meg has two flat pieces of wood, angled not square, to shape and then sharpen the corners, using a slab as a lid. When leather hard, she uses a cheese cutter on the edges to get her preferred angles.

DECORATING

We then saw how she uses brushwork for decoration. Using a pigment of cobalt oxide, copper, a little water and frit, she first loosens her arm and body by using different brushes to make strokes on butcher's paper (newsprint paper to us in England), always standing to decorate. She then carries on the movement quickly drawing, on her plate with her whole arm moving to get energy from her body.

The process of lustre reveals her brushstroke lines around the edge of the plate and the halo around the edge is the lustre moving, reducing the copper to create lustre. The grey edges on the shapes is carbon entrap-



REDUCED LUSTRE FIRING (3rd firing)

Using lustre pigment painted on top of the glaze, then fired to about 650 degrees, the molecules of the glazes start to melt a little, getting agitated, and because the pigment on the pot has silver or copper in it, at that temperature they start changing and looking for other molecules. If there is enough reduction at the same time, the compounds of silver and copper are converted to the pure metal. So three things are important; the temperature of the kiln, the temperature of the silver or copper (to start them moving) and enough reduction. These lustres are volatile in the kiln and consistency is difficult to achieve.

We were shown a plate revealing tiny combinations of silver metal and copper metal forming the colour pattern and design. Meg then gave us a demonstration on applying brushwork to a shiny surface.

She always wears gloves because lustre pigments as well as using silver chloride and silver sulphate, also contain silver nitrate which stains. All Meg's pigments look the same so are clearly labelled.

The pigment must be thick enough to stick but not too thick or the lustre doesn't work. As before, Meg's first brushstrokes are on paper or on an old pot, usually starting on the back. It can be washed off with water, even the next day.

After firing, haloing will fill spaces, but not always and because results are so unpredictable, Meg seems happy to be able to produce maybe six items a year that completely satisfy her expectations, in spite of working regularly 8am-5pm in her studio.

COLOUR

It is important to know her colours before

putting them on as she mixes her own, so she might buy a turquoise stain and add a bit of copper or cobalt, using them rather like water colours. She showed us examples of pots on which she had used red clay, white slip, cobalt and oxide and produced a 'soapy' finish by soaking* for at least an hour.

We also saw a majolica plate which she had decorated using a turquoise stain mixed with oxide and prit, plus a tiny bit of medium and water.



Carbon intrusion may cause small black dots around the edge of the pigment. She showed us a box with slight crazing, produced by wiping the pot and allowing a little lustre to go into the crazing.

CLEANING

Finally, we were shown a pot after firing which she cleaned with a sponge and water, though a dry sponge will work. The effect

after cleaning was really magical with copper clearly producing pink haloing. Each piece is unique.

THE HISTORY OF LUSTRE.

This lustre is different to that bought in shops. Reduced pigment lustre was developed in the 9th and 10th centuries in Iraq, Iran and Egypt and was popular up till the 16th and early 17th centuries when other technologies took over. Some is still made in Italy and Spain.

In the UK it was revived by Alan Caiger-Smith, co-founder of the Aldermaston Pottery in the 1950s who produced the book 'Lustre Pottery'. Sutton Taylor, still living and working in Cornwall, has been exhibiting his lusterware since 1976 and Jonathan Chiswell-Jones, working in E. Sussex, is probably better known to Guild members as he has demonstrated for us and is still a regular exhibitor at Art in Clay. Greg Daly, an Australian potter, wrote the book *Lustre*, which is in our library.

The whole presentation was really fascinating and greatly appreciated.

** Soaking = firing the kiln to the top temperature and staying at that temperature for a given time to allow the glaze to settle, rather than firing to required temperature and turning off.*



Richard Batterham 1936-2021



Ros McGuirk

Richard Batterham, the "potters' potter", died on 16th Sept aged 86. A quiet and self-effacing man, he dedicated his life to making pots from local clay, decorating them

with quiet textures, facets, and grooves that caught the glaze and accentuated the form of the piece. He fired with gas and wood to create reduced stoneware with only a few

glazes – mainly ash and tenmoku – but to wonderful and subtle effects.

There was no one quite like Richard. He learnt to pot at Bryanston school with Don Potter and trained at St Ives where he met Dinah whom he married, and also Atsuya Hamada, third son of Shoji Hamada. The three were close friends. (Atsuya was an uncle to Tomoo Hamada, whom we hope to meet before long!) Richard and Dinah bought a pottery in Durweston, virtually at the back gate of his old school, where Richard worked on his own from 1959 till his death last month. He hated the thought of crowds of visitors and so turned down an invitation to meet the DCPG on one of our long-ago potcrawls.

He did not sign his work and did not worry what others thought, whether it was one of his iconic large bottles or a small piece of tableware. He made what he made and it reflected the integrity of its maker.

I found his place when staying with my kids at Bryanston on a summer music course. Every cottage in the village had a beautiful

pot or two in the window. Eventually I found his house and Dinah pointed me across the road to his large workshop. He kindly showed me round and noting my slightly glazed expression offered to show me his seconds. They were kept separately in an old shed, an Aladdin's cave of yummy pots. They were mostly overfired with richly toasted clay, glaze runs, glorious colours and chisel marks where they had been hacked off the shelf. I eventually tore myself away clutching as many pots as I could hold, all wrapped in old newspaper.

I returned at the end of August for a few more years and a few more pots until the children grew up. Now, when the late summer turns warm and dewy, I think back to that time and wish I could have gone back for more.

There will be a retrospective of his work at the V&A from 24th Nov 2021 till Sept 2022. You can also find a video on Youtube made by Joanna Bird in 2017 where you learn more about a life well lived.



Kingsbury Barn exhibition

Jackie Harrop

In May 2020 we looked at potential options to resume the Kingsbury exhibition, but circumstances conspired against us and it was only early in 2021 we felt we could try to reinstate some physical activity after a long enforced pause. The Heritage weekend offered an opportunity to return to Kingsbury Barn in a modified format with no hands on activities and for a smaller

number of exhibitors. We pondered the risks and wondered whether the coincidence of Pub in the Park would be a benefit in terms of footfall, or a hindrance in terms of parking access. In the end footfall won, so David took on the task of creating a poster, flyers and helping to publicise the event. Last minute poster distribution was aided by a volunteer from the barn riding a recumbent



bike around the town handing out flyers to visitors to the park. We also publicised through social media and Radio Verulam who very kindly re-ran two recordings of the interview before the opening. This brought in more visitors.

We decided to limit the number of exhibitors to ensure we could keep everyone safe, and thankfully 22 members had an appetite to get out to show and sell their work. Despite the lack of a social evening, members were able to chat and catch up in person, relishing the ambience and enjoying each other's company, expertise and friendship. Whilst Friday was slightly quieter, there was a steady flow of visitors, which meant the barn was not overcrowded and we were able to maintain safe distance. We were blessed with good weather which enabled us to open the large doors for good ventilation. Pub in the park doubled our footfall on Saturday and Sunday with more than 470 visitors over the 3 days, from the



time we decided a count might be interesting. An analysis showed that visitors started as soon as we opened, and peaked around midday with a consistent level right up to closing at 5.00. We even had people coming out of the park at 7.00pm asking if we were still open and again on Monday as we were packing up, so the publicity, signage and

marketing clearly worked. Encouraging too, to see that the age profile included lots of younger visitors, and families. Although we had to take extra measures to safeguard exhibitors, stewards and the public from Covid 19, everyone responded positively and cooperated willingly. Nicole's technical expertise meant we had a QR code as well as signing in options and this was accepted as the norm.



There was an excellent range of work, with varied styles and media, from porcelain to heavily grogged black clay, with different glaze finishes, functional, decorative, sculptural, tiles and even some jewellery. Visitors commented positively on the setting, the atmosphere and were delighted with the work and the chance to engage and chat with the potters about their work.

Sales were amazing, the best ever, beyond expectations with some exhibitors selling rapidly and extensively. here were moments when we thought we would run out of receipt books or bubble wrap, but the cavalry in the form

of John Higgins, Ros, Nicole and John Alderman came to our rescue with timely replacements

The Fitzwilliam entries were few in number, but intrigued members and public alike. This holds potential for future years, enabling members to fully appreciate the pieces prior to the voting later on at the AGM, maybe even involving the public in having a separate vote to compare the potters and public view.

The pandemic has obliged us to innovate and seek alternatives to past practice. We have become more familiar with meeting on-line and using social media to promote our activities. Thanks to Ian and Nicole, we were not only able to encourage exhibitors to share images of their work in advance, but we were able to use these images and the artist statements to populate a link to the website, and to promote work through instagram and facebook. Thanks to the generosity of the barn owners we were also able to use wifi to connect on Saturday to the Australian season zoom talk and demo with Meg Patey which engaged our visitors as much as our stewards. Some visitors missed the hands on experience, but we set up an education table showing the range of activities undertaken by the guild and the possibilities offered by engaging in ceramics. Many visitors found this fascinating and attracted a lot of interest. Again, this is an innovation worth repeating.

Thanks to Ian and John Alderman we had a redesigned catalogue format which means

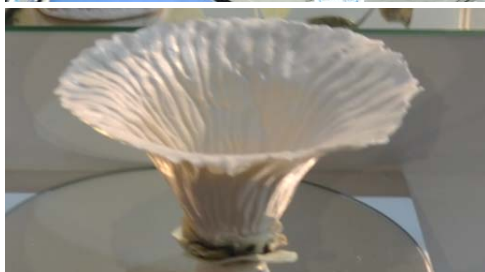


sales can be recorded and reconciled more easily (fingers crossed) and a redesigned receipt book helps avoid ambiguity when taking card or cash payments.

The whole team of helpers, gathering equipment, setting up, stewarding and clearing up were outstanding. Everyone was so helpful, good humoured, supportive and encouraging. Thank you to everyone for an amazing contribution.

This exhibition at Kingsbury gave us a chance to feel our way forward, embracing innovation whilst fulfilling our charitable objectives and regenerating interest. It felt exciting, exhilarating and very enjoyable both for our members and the public.

They are already asking when will we be back!





The Wood Firing Kiln Project

 Amanda Toms

After the Guild was asked to remove the wood firing kiln from its position at Box Moor, many trips to the site ensued ending with a grand tidying up of the site. There were many items to move as extra bricks, kiln shelves and wood populated the site. This was accomplished by teams of volunteers over several weekends. The kiln itself was also dismantled layer by layer. Trailer loads of bricks were loaded and transported to a new resting place on Box Moor land. They were stacked and stored ready and waiting for rebuilding. After careful consideration it was decided by the committee that we needed to look for a new site beyond those that were offered by the Box Moor Trust.

A group of interested DCPG members got together to investigate alternative possibilities. They visited various sites and eventually decided to go to the Chiltern Open Air Museum. It is in a rural setting with lots of space and shelter. This organisation is a registered charity with an educational bias, already hosting activities such as a working forge, charcoal-making and craft workshops. It is situated in the Dacorum and Chiltern area, easily accessed from the M25 and it seems a good fit for the DCPG. See <https://www.coam.org.uk/>

The response from the COAM was encouraging. Tim Thornton also joined us when we met the museum director to assess the safety and positioning of the potential sites. (Tim has been running online workshops in safety aspects of potting and also sending articles to the newsletter. He has worked with the Oxford anagama project so has a keen interest in wood firing.)

This whole process has rather been interrupted and slowed down by the Covid-19 pandemic but we are now at the point where we have permission to build a kiln on this site. The next steps are finalising the details of a formal agreement, getting an enthusiastic group of DCPG members together to carry the project through, deciding on the best kiln design, getting the plans passed by the COAM trust, securing funding and finding a sustainable wood supply.

The first job, however, is a big one - to move the bricks stored at Box Moor to the COAM site. Then, as an interim project, we will start by building a small Raku kiln. If you are interested in getting involved and helping with this project, please do get in touch, more volunteers are very welcome. amandart4@gmail.com





Socials - Coffee time



Judi Tribe

We have had wonderful meet ups during the summer and thanks to Mary Anne and Fiona for organising these too. We are now heading into late Autumn and I have chosen all the venues to have outdoor spaces and hopefully we will try and sit outside as much as possible, so please bring lots of layers! We will venture inside if it is too cold and wet. For my own piece of mind and consideration for other members, I will be taking a lateral flow test in the morning before we all meet up.

Below are the dates, times and venues for the next few months and heading into 2022. It would be great to go to some new venues next year, therefore so if you have a favourite cafe we could all meet up in, please let me know. (juditribe0@gmail.com 0 is a zero)

Open Studio Zoom sessions 10.00 - 12.30 (*please note the earlier ending time*) Studio Zoom is continuing throughout this Autumn and below are the next set of dates and times. It's wonderful and still very inspiring to see people working in their studio / home spaces and chatting about pots, techniques and top tips. Please come along and join other members while they are throwing on the wheel, glazing, handbuilding and decorating.

Another idea I have been thinking about for Spring time is to have a chance to organise

actual visits to members' work spaces. Please let me know if you are happy for a few members to come along to see where and what you do in your own clay space. I can start off with my work shed, it will make me clear it out ! TBA.

Look forward to see you soon, either at the Coffee times or Open Studio Zooms.

DCPG Social and Studio Zoom 2021 / 22 October 2021

Studio Zoom - Monday 25th Oct -
10.00 - 12.30 (*note earlier ending time*)

November 2021

Social - Thursday 18th Nov - 12.00 - 14.00
- The Six Bells, St Michael's Street,
St Albans AL3 4SH

Studio Zoom - Monday 29th Nov -
10.00 - 12.30 (*note earlier ending time*)

December 2021

Social - Friday 10th Dec - 12.00 - 14.00 -
The Three Horseshoes, Winkwell, Hemel
Hempstead HP1 2RZ

January 2022

Social - Monday 10th Jan - 11.00 - 13.00 -
Van Hague Chenies Garden Centre,
Chenies, Chorleywood WD3 6 EN

Studio Zoom - Monday 24th Jan -
10.00 - 12.30 (*note earlier ending time*)

John Leach 1939 – 2021

Sadly the well known potter John Leach died on Aug 29th. He ran his family pottery in Muchelney in Somerset for 50 years, making wood fired stoneware pottery. He came from an illustrious family of potters. His grandfather was Bernard, his father David, and his uncle was Michael Leach. His cousin Simon lives and works in the US and his brother Philip in Devon. It is Philip we are hoping to see at the Leach/Hamada event.

He served as an apprentice with his father, then Ray Finch and then his grandfather.

John took great satisfaction from his work, believing that a well made and appreciated pot is a small work of art and a social good. He grew trees to help reduce his carbon footprint and most of his wood came from sustainable forestry in Wales via the offcuts of a local fencing company.



DCPG Programme Online

Demonstrations & Talks

Tuesday 19th Oct 7-8.30pm. Kate Malone talk 'Earth, Air, Fire, Water – Connecting Clay with the Elements'.

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

A joint event hosted by Berkhamsted Art Society. Talk at 7pm followed by Q & A at 8pm. Free to members. Non-members £6 + £0.84 booking fee from

www.eventbrite.co.uk

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.



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Further events are in the pipeline so look out for more on our website www.dcp.org.uk and in your inbox.



Other Events 2021



15th Oct - 11th Dec

'Collectors, Curators, Connoisseurs: 100 years of the Oriental Ceramic Society'.

A dazzling exhibition of over 100 rare works of art some dating back 3.000 years. Includes ceramics, bronzes, jades and sculptures, from both private and public collections.

Brunei Gallery, SOAS, Thornough St, Russell St, WC1H 0XG

Sat 30th Oct Oxford Ceramics Fair.

Back after a year's absence, the CPA autumn show. Always worth a visit. 10am – 5pm. St Edwards School, Woodstock Rd, OX2 7NN.

13 - 14th Nov Art in Clay Farnham.

Exhibitors, demonstrations, films and talks. Farnham Maltings, Bridge Square, Farnham, GU9 7QR

Midori review

Apologies to Midori for presenting her story inaccurately in the last edition. To encourage Mike to have a go at pottery, she enrolled in the classes first, not the other way around. Editor's note : A Zoom glitch!



Open Door Project

 by Ian Jones

The Open Door is a community arts charity based in a former shop in Berkhamstead High street. You may already have been there as they have been running exhibitions and art workshops for a number of years.

As part of the promotion of pottery coming to Open Door, Ian Jones attended a barbecue organised by the Berkhamsted chamber of commerce and demonstrated throwing pots for the attendees. See photo. The event raised £500 for Open Door.

The best news is that a Studio space just behind Open Door has become available and an exciting new project is now under way, the construction of a working pottery studio. It already has a shiny new kiln funded by a grant from the Dacorum Borough Council.

The kiln Room is being built with proper ventilation and a toilet is in the process of being constructed and plumbed in with running water connected. Soon the building materials will be cleared. If any members know of an organisation that needs drain pipes or soffits contact Open Door on 01442 768120.

There are two long tables from the building's previous life that will remain in use for the classes and workshops.



The DCPG Committee has awarded £500 to the Open Door towards the purchase of pottery tools.

Three of our members

Ian Jones, Amanda Toms and Audrey Hammett are providing advice and support as plans are drawn up for the use of the studio. They are also putting together the packs of clay, tools and instructions for a home based clay workshop on 11th November, 'Lovely mud'.

This workshop is mainly for people who are confined to home, including those who have been referred by their, GPs nurses or care professionals and social prescribers which includes Dementia sufferers. The aim is for the participants to experience a holistic approach to their health and well being.

This studio will provide a fantastic opportunity for DCPG members to hold classes and workshops with all the facilities you need for a working studio. It will also be used to run workshops for the socially disadvantaged.

Late News

Joan who leads the Open Door Charity was delighted recently to confirm that Open Door have received funding from The National Lottery, for this Project.

They also intend to make an archive film over the lifetime of the project, which will be an interesting and valuable record of the local community in these historic Covid times.





Boxmoor Autumn Fair

Ros McGuirk

It was so exciting to get back into the swing of things and it was a lovely warm late September day. We were back at Boxmoor Autumn Fair on Blackbird Moor, the water meadows that lie on the edge of Hemel Hempstead. A mere step away from the bustling town centre is this rural idyll and gateway to the rolling Chilterns.

For one weekend the meadows are transformed by a small local fair run by the Boxmoor Trust who work to maintain a mile and a half strip of land donated centuries ago to the people of Hemel. This land is a remnant of what once surrounded every settlement, the commons, land owned by no-one but kept for the use of all.

The fair was originally a Conker Festival and the Guild has been a part of it for a very long time. It was held in mid-October at a time to coincide with the conker drop from the many magnificent chestnut trees that line the valley, and the centre piece was the conker championship, which even potters have been known to win! To be sure of conkers the Trust would never release the date of the festival until late August. In the last few years this forecast became increasingly unreliable, so the name was changed and the date brought forward to September. With better weather it is much more attractive and is growing annually with more crafters and some great new food stalls.

The Boxmoor Trust generously supplied us with a double gazebo, all the tables and chairs we needed, a proper washbasin and hot and cold water. In the past we have always taken wheels and they have provided us with electricity via a generator parked nearby. We could not ask for better hosts!



You will see from the photos that so many people came and we were as busy as we could possibly be with keen youngsters engrossed in making. In no time at all multitudes of leaves, caterpillars, snails and hedgehogs appeared on and around David's trees. There was plenty of interest in the pots, too, with a total of £254 of sales. As always we were asked about pottery classes from adults who had loved playing with clay at school. It is sad that so many schools have lost their pottery studios and children have fewer opportunities to learn about clay. We made a mental note to update the old list of classes and Nicole is updating our Instagram to capture and share information.

It was a great day out for all of us and we left tired but in good spirits.

Many thanks to all who came to help – David for making the trees, Nicole for giving up all weekend to work at both Boxmoor and COAM, Mary Anne for literally jumping ship to join in the fun, to Sylvia for maintaining the Fitzwilliam connection, and to Mandy who saved the day by bringing a spare card reader (as my phone signal was too weak).

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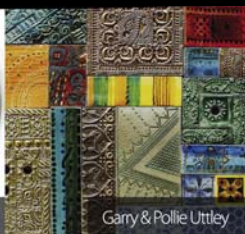
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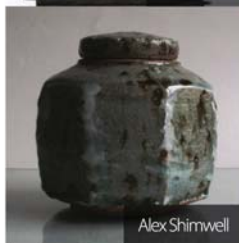
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