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NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2008

£1.50

ABOUT THE GUILD & THE NEWSLETTER  
www.thedcpg.org.uk

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

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Send your cheque, made payable to D.C.P.G., to Digby Stott, "Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts., HP3 0DJ tel: 01442 404122. (If joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate).

The Dacorum & Chiltern Potters Guild Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November, being distributed free to all members of the Guild, other craft groups & organisations. Contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome (s.a.e. please with any items to be returned). Opinions expressed in items published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or Guild members as a whole; nor is the Guild responsible for the content of individual advertisements printed in the Newsletter.

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## FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Ceramic Sculpture by Ashraf Hanna, The winning piece in "Best of the Best" at Art – in - Action 2008 (see P 5)

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## Editorial

Most of you will be familiar with **Art-in-Action** at **Waterperry**, which is held during July each year. The Exhibitors & demonstrators cover many fields, ie painting, needlework, woodwork, blacksmithing, jewellery, sculpture, glass, etc. - the list is long.

At the start of this 4 day event, each demonstrator is asked to select a piece of their own work for display in an exhibition entitled "the best of the best". All exhibitors then vote on which three items should be regarded as the best of the best.

This year the winning piece was a hand built sculptural vessel by Ashraf Hanna, with a bowl by Tony Laverick being in joint third place with another exhibit. I regard this as an outstanding result for ceramics in general, and Ashraf in particular. When I spoke with him he said that he was really delighted to have won.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

## Future Guild Events

Sept 14 Pitstone – the last raku firing this season.

Oct 3 AGM and 'Out of Africa' – the Stan Romer competition, with Gareth Mason. This meeting starts at 7.30pm. Please bring competition items at 7pm Gareth makes unusually large pots from porcelain, fired with celadon and copper glazes. Although based on classic forms, they are not quite what you would expect.

Oct 4/5 Soda firing at Northfield Studio Open to all Members. Bring your pots at 10am to decorate with our soda slips and glazes. All work for firing must be delivered by noon. There will be a charge to cover costs. Contact Ros for more info.

## POTTERS OPEN DAY 2008 – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> Nov. at Longdean School.

Joe Finch is a very well known and distinguished potter, & he will be with us for the whole day, demonstrating his throwing and decorating skills making his exciting practical functional pots which are much appreciated. In addition he will be talking to us about kiln building, & answering questions on this subject, on which he is a leading practitioner. We hope he will have copies of his book on kiln building available.

Joe's wife Trudy may not now be joining us on the day, but it will certainly be a memorable one, with Joe sharing his vast knowledge and experiences of ceramics both in this country and through his travels abroad. For information on Joe's work go to his website [joe.finch@virgin.net](mailto:joe.finch@virgin.net)

We will have a large selection of Joe's pots for sale, & we hope to have a raffle as usual, plus a few bargain items for you to browse through & purchase.

We will look forward to seeing you on the day. Please refer to the application form for ticket prices and catering arrangements.

**Joy Wills**

Sat Nov 22 Members annual exhibition private view and 'Meet the Makers' event

Dec 5 Tina Vlassopoulos on her iconic, sculptural vessels, hand built and burnished.

## Other Events

Till 22 Sept The Art of Drinking Drinking vessels at the V&A. Tel 0207 942 2000

9 Sept–2 Oct 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary exhibition at Galerie Besson

19-21 Sept Ceramics in the City Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Rd, London E2 8EA 0207 739 98937

7-12 Oct Origins Somerset House, Strand, WC2R 1LA. 0207 845 4600

20-25 Oct Joanna Bird Pottery at Browse & Derby, 19 Cork St, W15 3LP. 0207 734 7984  
See [www.joannabirdpottery.com](http://www.joannabirdpottery.com)

22 Oct International Contemporary Ceramics. Bonhams, 101 New Bond St, W15 1SR 0207 468 8328

25-26 Oct Oxford Studio Ceramics CPA Autumn Fair. St. Edwards School, Woodstock Rd, Oxford. 0207 437 6781

7-9 Nov Windsor Contemporary Art Fair at Windsor racecourse, SL1 5JJ. 01753 542869 Fri 10-6pm, Sat + Sun 10-5pm

22-24 Nov Art in Clay at Farnham Maltings. 0-6pm. 01159 873966

Bonhams will be auctioning part of Robert Fournier's collection of ceramics, on **20<sup>th</sup> September, at Bath**, with the more valuable works being auctioned in London in October.

Catalogues & more information available from Patrick Toynbee of Bonhams. Phone 01225 788 981.

For even more events, see [www.studioceramics.co.uk](http://www.studioceramics.co.uk)

## **Soda Firings**

The soda kiln has been fired twice this year, and produced good results on both occasions. The April firing involved a group of six members, most of whom had been fired up by Peter Starkey's workshop last year and the subsequent firing when we had to find out how to do it ourselves. This June we invited all members to join us and the group expanded to include twelve people, including a couple of new members.

Last year we were on a steep learning curve, and had a number of problems to sort out. Using a flimsy pyrometer and cones that disappeared before breakfast, we had

difficulty judging the temperature rise and over fired the kiln. Now we are careful to dry the cone sitters thoroughly, and site them when they are properly aligned with the spy hole. We have purchased a much more substantial pyrometer, and Colin has drilled through a brick so that it sits snugly in the top of the door. This all works very well, and the pyro gives good readings that calibrate well with the cones, up to the 1200's. We also fire the kiln for a short while on the day we pack, to help dry out the newly decorated ware. The kiln also needs to dry, especially for the first firing of the year.

In April we tested the new pyro. On the day of the firing we had to contend with strong winds and squally showers. The firing seemed to go on for ever, but we got there in the end and finished before it got dark.

The weather was kinder in June, which was really lucky for us, given the Atlantic summer we are having this year. This time we used Bullers rings in addition to cones and the pyro. When the kiln was unpacked the rings were retrieved, measured and calibrated to check the temperatures achieved in different areas of the kiln. We discovered that the kiln had fired remarkably evenly – 1260 right across the back and 1280 at the front, with no differences from top to bottom. As we all use different clays it had been difficult to work out what was going on. Other factors affect the results, particularly the amount of soda used, and also the degree of reduction achieved. In June we used the usual amount of soda - 1.5 kg of sodium bicarbonate, and 200g of salt. However, this time there was a little borax in the bicarbonate solution, and that appeared to have enhanced the results. Next time we intend to use a little less of the soda and salt, but still include the borax because it also seems to bring down the temperature at which the soda glaze starts to form. Watch this space.....

We are planning to have another firing on October 4+5 which is just after the AGM. The arrangements will be the same as last time.

- Bring pots at 10am on Sat to decorate with
- soda slips and glazes.
- Be sure to deliver all work for firing by noon.
- Stay if you can to learn how to pack the kiln.
- Join us during the firing on Sunday and
- bring a picnic to share.
- Your pots must be biscuit fired and of
- stoneware clay.
- Bring warm clothes and waterproofs,
- food and a thermos.
- Be prepared to share the costs of the gas
- and materials.
- Let me know if you wish to join in.
- (01727 834326 or [ros.mcguirk@gmail.com](mailto:ros.mcguirk@gmail.com))

See you soon. Ros

## **The Annual Exhibition – Help!**

An encouraging number of images were sent when we were in the exploratory stages of organising this show, but there was no reaction to the appeal in the last Newsletter for exhibitors to come forth. Now I need names for real and I only have one! So please read on and discover what excitement there is to be had in Hitchin this autumn....

The exhibition is in a new place for us, and provides us with new opportunities. Hitchin is, of course an ancient and attractive market town. The exhibition is to be held at the 'Centre for the Arts', North Herts College, Cambridge Road, Hitchin, SG4 0JD, which is about a mile from the town centre.

The dates for the show have been refined. It will run from Tues 18 Nov to Fri 19 Dec.

On **Sat 22 Nov** we will have a private view party with a '**Meet the Makers**' event for the public. The times for this have yet to be finalised, but it probably would run from 10 – 3pm.

We will set up on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November. If you are unable to deliver your work, I will collect it at the AGM and on the Open Day.

The gallery is eight square meters, well lit by a floor to ceiling window and many lights. There are glass shelves and plinths, and lots of hanging space for pictures etc.

The college catering department runs an excellent restaurant which serves Christmas lunches and dinners, and the hairdressers work from 9-2pm. on Saturdays

The college has already sent out its brochure of events, with us included. We will organise further local publicity nearer the time. All we need now is your support, so please put the dates in your diary, sort out your pots, and join in.

Contact me asap by post, phone or email. I need your name and contact details and then I will send you an application form. Closing date for applications is Fri Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, which is also the AGM. Ros – 01727 834326, or [ros.mcguirk@gmail.com](mailto:ros.mcguirk@gmail.com)



### Plans for two future exhibitions

-Next year we are to join the Queens Park Centre in Aylesbury for their ceramics festival. We have been invited to run 'have a go' on May 17<sup>th</sup>, which will be part of the main event. We have also been offered some space in the main exhibition.

Look out for more news on this in following newsletters

-We are also intending that our annual exhibition in 2009 should be part of the Herts Open Studio event in September. Suggestions for a suitable venue are required, and, in next Newsletter, there will be an appeal for exhibitors to commit, as we have to apply in February.

### Pot Crawl Oct 11th/12th

The outline for the two days confirmed to date are :

**Saturday** - Morning visit to Stephen Parry (wood ash glazes on stoneware and porcelain, wood fired kiln) near Fakenham, lunchtime in Burnham Market with the Grapevine gallery.

Afternoon a visit to potters co-operative 'Made in Cley' (functional ware / individual pieces) in Cley next to Sea, tea in Holt with Bircham and Appleyard galleries ending up in Cromer for overnight stay.

**Sunday** - Morning visit to Antje Ernestus (celadon and copper red glazes on porcelain) at Wood Dalling, lunch at a local pub and then travelling on to Ruthanne Tudball at Wellbourne Common.

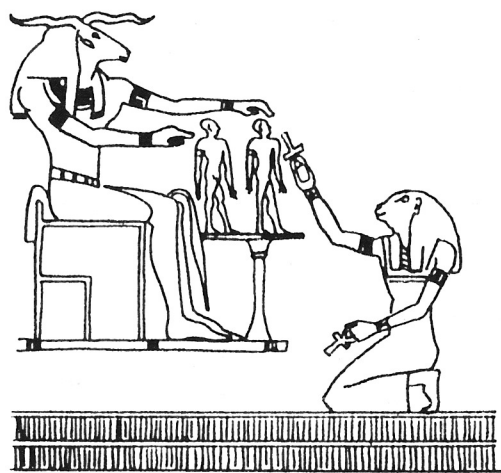
This may vary a little with a possible addition on Sunday

Based on the interest shown to date it is going to be far more economic to go by shared cars. I will produce a full itinerary, times etc and co-ordinate cars. Cost of accommodation for night will be in range £32 to £40. Share petrol costs and meals at own choice.

If interested and you have not done so please complete a form. Numbers limited as studios are limited in size.

**Nigel Carrick 01462 672428 or EMAIL to sarahnigel\_carrick@hotmail.com**

### Khnum (the Potter's God) and Jane Kilvington



*Part of a limestone relief from the Dynasty XVIII Mortuary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, Thebes. The ram-headed god, Khnum, is shown fashioning Hatshepsut and her ka upon his potter's turn-table, with the frog-headed goddess, Heket, in attendance.*

Khnum is the name the ancient Egyptians gave to their ram-headed potter's god. I sometimes invoke him, occasionally swear at him, but mostly I am just overwhelmingly grateful to him for the opportunities he bestows.

Life is full of surprises. When I retired from one profession, I was leapfrogged into a second. How could I know there was this power at work which had decided that I could enjoy life all over again at a potter's wheel? I have loved every minute in my workshop, it was the best gift Khnum could have prepared for me.

For 17 years I have been busy. Interestingly, even these have thrown up changes. It is the last change that I want to talk about.

It was quite by chance I saw a request for someone to teach potting to a group of cancer sufferers. Never in my life having taught anybody anything, I stuck my neck out and volunteered. And now for several months, under Khnum's direction, shared some of the excitement I have always found in making things.

Wonderful moments there have been. For instance, when the very uncertain member who "isn't any good at artistic things" is shown the glazed and fired object she or he last saw as a rather unsightly concave lump of clay with dashes of slip splashed on its surface and is finally aware that **everyone** can create things. Or the person who, on the last day, shyly found me and pressed my hand in gratitude for the fun she'd had. Or the several people who say they will seek out pottery classes in the future.

What none of these men and women realise is that this operation is a two-way thing. They can't possibly know what it feels like to be me. To be able to give all that pleasure is a privilege indeed. I feel that I am repaying Khnum and he is blessing the work. This kind of group responds to "play-time". It is therapeutic, it helps them express themselves, it makes a number of people into an integrated whole.

What do we do? We have four sessions per course. The first produces mostly tiles and house-numbers and other flat shapes rolled and decorated with slips. I dry them (my plate-heater has been a god-send), fire them and glaze them so that at the second meeting each person is aware of the possibilities of fired clay. On the second session each of 15 members has a mould and there is a chance to make something useful with more ambitious decoration (scraffito, wax resist, sculptured surfaces). And I work jolly hard to get them all turned round. The third week they decorate some ready biscuited pots with engobes, using for inspiration a range of paintings torn out of magazines or old postcards. The last week I

take a whole lot of animal shapes which lie around my house and get them to make an animal or something of their own choice.

Obvious? Of course it's obvious. I don't need to tell members of the Guild what we all know: potting is a very fulfilling human activity. It's just that I want it put on record the rewarding time I've had.

**Jane Kilvington**

#### **Footnote**

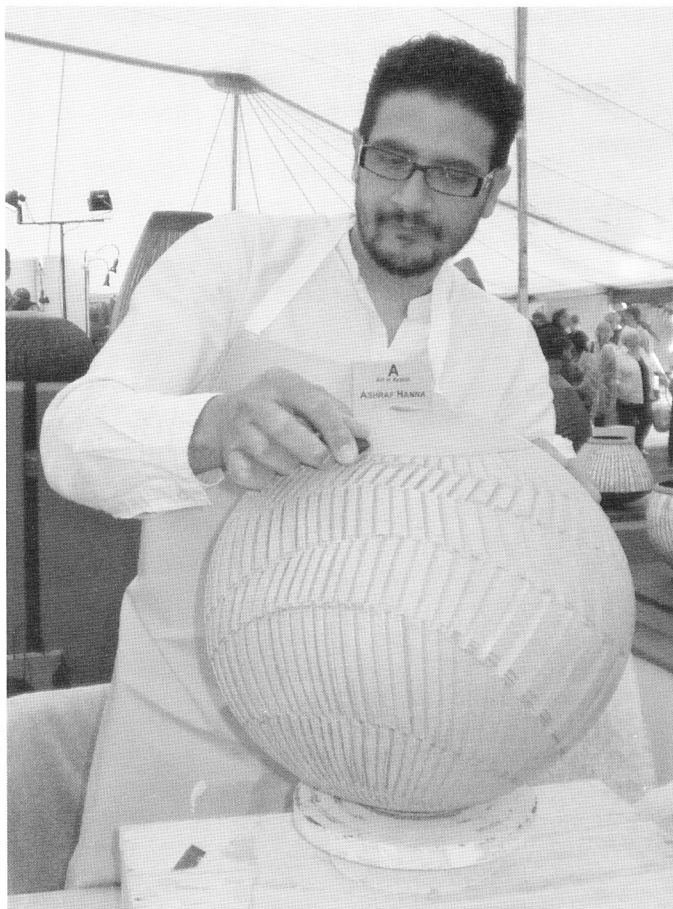
Now that Jane has retired from helping at **Grove House, in St. Albans**, we are hoping that another guild member, or members (preferably with access to a kiln) will be able to take up this very worthwhile activity.

The cancer patients you will be helping are aged 18 to 60 years. The pottery / clay activities you will be introducing for them, will be part of the group programme, called **Cancer the Next Step**, which gives people information & emotional support when having treatment aimed at a cure of their illness.

For many of those involved this will be their first contact with making pots or shapes in clay. Jane found this was time very well spent, with rewarding results. Could you continue this good work for us? Please contact **Ros Thomas** for more information, on 01727 731 026

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

#### **The "Best of the Best"**



**Ashraf Hanna working on one of his Sculptural pieces at Art – in – Action 2008.**



**The bowl by Tony Laverick which was in joint 3<sup>rd</sup> place with a piece of textile work at Art – in – Action 2008.**

#### **Workshops**

We usually have an advertisement inside the back cover, for Pottery Courses at Brunel University, but no longer.

The reason is that Saturdays at Brunel are now virtually fully booked, mainly by people local to Brunel, working on Pottery. This means that there is no longer an opportunity for weekend Pottery courses at the University.

However, there is a possibility for Brunel to run Sunday Workshops, but this depends entirely upon whether or not there is sufficient interest. Since we have been very unsuccessful at finding a workshop Organiser within our Guild, I would ask you all to consider the possibility of attending Workshops at Brunel. To start the ball rolling you just need to talk to Jay Wilkinson at the University Art Department. Jay can be contacted on 01895 266 074 or EMAIL [artscentre@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:artscentre@brunel.ac.uk)

Obviously it would be a good idea to talk to other Guild Members about the possibilities first, to get an idea of who you would like to teach the group & what level of interest exists. Jay told me that if it appeared viable she would be glad to organize accordingly.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

#### **Pitstone**

The Pitstone meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> August was well attended by the public. Guild members John & Veronica Powell came to help, John with the firing & Veronica with the decoration, clay work & Throwing. Ruby was mainly firing, & I helped with the Throwing and sales, with Veronica also chipping in on the sales as well.

We did well, there were lots of happy faces, & we raised over £80, so we could make a good contribution to the Museum, & Ruby has enough to purchase one or two of the items we need for the Raku work.

**Mervyn Fitzwilliam**

### The Soda Firing Team

During June this year quite a lot of people either visited Northfield Studio to see what was going on, or more actively participated in the Soda firing there. There were twelve people in the core group, and Ros McGuirk has sent in this picture of nine of that group.

From the left, they are;

**Jon Raine**

**Mark Compton**

**Paul Rowbottom** – long term supporter

**David Wright**

**Richard Pearson** – who makes the trip from Derbyshire to attend these soda firings, being a very keen member of the Guild

**Dorley Fieldhouse** – Dorley can always be relied upon to be up early to light the kiln, is always ready to help, but amazingly finds time to prepare all sorts of cooked delicacies, and turns up at one's elbow, with mugs of tea, at the drop of a hat.

**Ros McGuirk** - Organiser

**Richard Bicknell**

**Colin Hazelwood**



### COMMITTEE LIST

Murray Fieldhouse (President) 01442-851 229

Northfields Studio, Tring, Herts. HP23 5QW

Mervyn Fitzwilliam (Chairman & Newsletter)

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01442-242332

Jan Kent (Treasurer) 01908-674 051

48 Coleshill Place, Bradwell Common, Milton Keynes, Bucks. MK13 8DP

John Beckley (Secretary) 01923-822 659

44 Wolsey Road, Northwood, Mdx. HA6 2EN

Digby Stott (Membership) 01442-404 122

"Broomfield", 36 Box Lane, Boxmoor, Herts, HP3 0DJ

Joy Wills (Open Day Organiser) 01296-481 015

21 Tindal Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 1HT

Ros McGuirk (Programme Organiser & Vice-Chairman)

13 The Park, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 4RU 01727-834 326

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### COMMITTEE HELPERS

We are very grateful to any members who help with guild activities, and especially to our members who help us on a regular basis. Other members sometimes need to contact these helpers, so phone numbers are given below;

Tina Hall (Pitstone & Catering) 01442 826 223

John Powell (Website) 01494 774 398

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A large top loading electric kiln. Please phone 020 7419 7260 with details.

#### Wanted

An inexpensive pottery Wheel of any type suitable for a beginner. Phone Helen Witter 01582 861 780.

#### Wanted

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