



Issue 40

January 2022

Guild News and Reviews

Pie Bolton

Malcolm Macdonald

Leach Workshop

www.dcpvg.org.uk

DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



POTTERY CRAFTS LIMITED

"Touching earth through the hands of a potter"

Roderveld wheels, equipment & POTTERY CRAFTS kilns are built by our dedicated team to an exceptionally high standard at our warehouse in Stoke-on-Trent, England.



"Our UK manufactured Wheels & Kilns"



"For the beginner and expert in ceramics & pottery"

- Kilns
- Wheels
- Glazes & Stains
- Raw Materials
- Bisque & Moulds
- Extensive Range of Clays
- Helpful & Friendly Advice



PotteryCrafts Ltd
Campbell Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 4ET



Tel: 01782 745000 www.pottery crafts.co.uk
Fax: 01782 746000 sales@pottery crafts.co.uk

Walter Brayford's

Acme Batt Co.

Specialist in manufacture and supply of kiln furniture to studio potters, hobby potters, colleges and schools.

- No minimum order
- Fast, friendly and efficient service
- Large stock of best quality refractories
- Immediate collection
- Overnight delivery if required
- Batts cut to any size, shape and thickness, perforated or plain
- Kiln shelves, props, tile cranks, stilts, pins, cements, batt washes etc

Contact Walter Brayford

Tel: 01782 505 405

Mobile: 07817 040971

email: walter@claylake.com



DCPG Social Media



For updates and current events always look out for your emails, or the website at **www.dcp.org.uk** and also our facebook account and on instagram at **https://www.instagram.com/thedcp**

DCPG would like to thank our advertisers for their continued support.

If you would like to advertise in our publication, enquire on advertising rates or other information, please contact David Evans at evansdjal@aol.com.

Cover picture: Pot by Sandy Lockwood - see POD update Page 17

M & K SPARROW

Kiln Services

Kilns Supplied
Installed • Repaired
Serviced • Safety Checked

Elements and Controls

Commercial & Domestic
Schools • Colleges
Universities • Hospitals

M & K SPARROW

6 Frankland Road
Croxley Green
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire, WD3 3AU
Tel/Fax: 01923 775059
Mob: 07836 361868

mksparrow@talktalk.net



In this issue



- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>3 Editorial</p> <p>4 Chair's Report</p> <p>5 AGM report</p> <p>6 Pie Bolton review</p> <p>10 In Pursuit of Beauty review</p> <p>14 Potters Pilgrimage</p> <p>17 Pod update</p> <p>18 Sustainable Ceramics</p> <p>19 Eco-conscious Ceramics</p> | <p>9 Fitzwilliam Competition</p> <p>20 Members news</p> <p>21 Socials - Coffee time</p> <p>Upcoming Demos / Zooms</p> <p>Other events</p> <p>22 Report from the Brick Team</p> <p>23 Guild Wheels</p> <p>24 Silicone Moulds</p> <p>26 What's Smoking?</p> |
|---|---|



Editorial Winter 2021



Ros McGuirk

The cold wintry weather is with us, Christmas is over and the fourth round of Throwdown has begun! I hope you managed to achieve your plans for the festive season and have survived unscathed.

As I write this the cat sits at the end of my table looking out at the grey scene, watching a chill wind whip through the bare trees. In Derbyshire it is snowing, I am assured by member Richard Pearson who lives there.

While we are hunkered down there is time to rest, also to look ahead and plan our next projects, and, in my case, to put the newsletter together. Thanks to all who contributed, whether you were cajoled or came forth with ideas and copy. Please consider contributing especially if you have not done so before.

Reading the diary entries you will find there are many ceramic shows in the pipeline. Not all the information is out yet, there will be more to come. There will also be Guild activities to fill in the gaps in your summer, so keep some free! Meanwhile we



will continue to use zoom a good deal but keep an eye on your emails for updates and opportunities to meet up face to face. Our Instagram and Facebook pages are also useful, and our website is a good source of information.

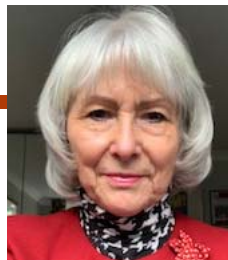
Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have ideas to help us keep going. We are always open to new ideas and offers of help. The cat has decided it is time to close or she will walk over the keyboard and wipe the slate clean. Happy New Year and Keep on Potting!



Notes from the Chair



Jackie Harrup



I hope you had a good festive season and are all in good health.

When I first drafted this note it was in November, soon after the AGM, and I had no intention of my first communication through the newsletter to be wishing you all a Happy New Year! Here 's hoping 2022 is a much better year for everyone!

It still feels slightly surreal to be acting as chair, but the last few years have moved us all into unknown territory. Little did I realise the consequences when I agreed to share the 5 am shift on a soda firing near Tring with Ros. As she showed me some tai chi moves to get ourselves warmed up she casually asked if I would consider being vice chair. I was still half asleep, so agreed. I had not been a member of the guild for long so did not really take this seriously until it was announced at the next AGM. A few years and a pandemic later, I find myself writing the notes from the chair - how did that happen? I thought I was good at horizon scanning, but I didn't see that one coming! So here I am, taking over from chairs with much more experience of the guild than I have, but I promise you I will do my best to support the guild in moving forward after a period of dramatic changes for all of us.

We are now in a relatively strong position with our use of the internet as circumstances continue to prevent us from being able to meet together face to face, to engage in workshops, firings, to physically meet with demonstrators and to socialise as we did before. We are hoping to redress this imbalance and our plans for a hybrid POD in March will enable those who feel comfortable to meet with the demonstrators in a large airy space in the University of Hertfordshire. A programme of demonstration meetings has also been scheduled using zoom and we will experiment with hybrid meetings where Covid restrictions allow.

We are moving ahead with plans for kiln building and firing projects at the Chiltern Open Air Museum.

Thanks to a hardworking team led by David Evans, we have now transferred the kiln bricks from Boxmoor and are poised to begin again at COAM.

Kingsbury Barn has welcomed us back and after another successful exhibition in September, we are exploring the potential for using their barns and facilities more frequently including for workshops and other hands on events. Someone with experience in planning, or drawing up legal agreements or insurance would be a huge asset to help with this and any future projects. Please get in touch if you can help with this.

The Hamada/Leach centenary celebration is still planned, when travel restrictions from Japan permit.

Despite the fact that committee members naturally move on and our capacity is temporarily depleted, the remaining committee members, trustees and many willing volunteers have, so far, taken on the additional tasks and responsibilities with enthusiasm and energy. However we cannot continue to do so indefinitely and we need more help. We have still have no secretary and are in need of people with **admin skills** who could share responsibilities for taking minutes, communicating with members and helping us with **social media** contacts. We need people with an interest in **wood firing, raku and kiln building** to lead or join a team working on developments with COAM. We would benefit from a **vice chair**, or someone with better **IT skills** than I have to help when I can't be available. We also need helpers to support **on line demos** and to help with other **social or hands on events**. Could you help with any of these or do you have other skills you could offer? If so please contact me at: chair@dcpg.org.uk or jackieharrup1@gmail.com



AGM 2021.

Mary Anne Bonney

The highlight of the meeting for me, as outgoing chair, was the surprise appearance in my study of Fiona Booy bearing a gorgeous thank you bouquet, fizz and cards from the committee. Thank you all.

The 17 members present on Zoom recorded gratitude to the potters (and their families and friends) who bravely branched out onto Zoom for demonstrations, to all the committee members and volunteers who made activities happen and to all the members who took part, opened gardens, wrote for the newsletter, made donations and much more besides.

Especial thanks went to those leaving the committee: Angela Bowen whose combination of efficiency and charm as secretary brightened Zoom committee meetings and Amanda Toms who, having joined as facebook guru – extending the Guild's reach and channels of communication – also established and nurtured the connection with the Chiltern Open Air Museum (COAM) which has brought exciting possibilities for firings. Since the AGM, Gay Crommelin has handed over the position of safeguarding lead to Sandie Taylor. During the year we lost Ian Jones as treasurer but John Alderman, who we welcomed to succeed him, lost no time in signing him up as bookkeeper. We were delighted to recruit Fiona Booy back to the committee as Vice-Chair and equally devastated when she realised her time was not as elastic as she had hoped and relinquished the role.

Among other highlights of a busy year are the partnership with Open Door in Berkhamsted, the Kingsbury exhibition, have-a-go sessions at COAM and Boxmoor and a ground breaking Potters Open Day.

We are fortunate that reserve funds have kept the Guild financially buoyant and we remain in a strong position for the year ahead.

After the formal meeting, members explored, and the committee agreed to pursue, options for running hybrid in person and Zoom demonstrations, and the possibility of creating local members' groups.

The Guild officers are:

John Alderman – Treasurer

Tony Baxter – Property

Mary Anne Bonney – Trustee

Gay Crommelin – Programme organiser
and Librarian

Mandy English – Website

David Evans – Trustee and
Newsletter Production

Audrey Hammett – Membership

Jackie Harrop – Trustee, Chair and Events

Colin Hazelwood – Trustee

John Higgins – President, Trustee
and POD organiser.

Nicole Lyster – Instagram

Ros McGuirk – Trustee and Editor

Judi Tribe – Visits and social events

Sandie Taylor is safeguarding lead.

We have vacancies for a Vice-Chair, Secretary, facebook lead and wood firing co-ordinator. All these roles could be broken down or shared.





A Piece of Pie A Zoom meeting with Pie Bolton from Melbourne



Australia by Ros McGuirk

I take my hat off to Pie Bolton, though she kept hers on throughout her presentation!

For her it was 5 am the following day in Melbourne, dark and chilly, and she had gone without a good night's sleep. As she guided us through her studio and stories from her life we saw the pre dawn light grow and heard the dawn chorus of trucks as they were prepared for the early morning shift. Pie does not do anything by halves, it seems, and she has a fascinating history.

Raised in the outback, in the Victorian desert, she was always a free spirit and grew up with a deep appreciation of the land and nature. She loved art and was good at science which she followed at university. When she discovered geology she knew that was for her, and after graduating she began her working life in the corporate world as a



taught her much about the land, their traditional ways of life, their remote sacred sites and beliefs. Eventually the disconnects between the two cultures made it impossible for her to continue working for big business.

By serendipity she eventually found her

way into ceramics, it became an outlet for her passion for all things geological.

First, however, she set up a business consultancy in market research working mostly from home.



geologist for a mining consortium. This entailed six months' fieldwork out in the Northern Territories collecting seismic data and travelling about by helicopter, followed by six months making presentations to corporate customers.

These long periods based in the outback strengthened her connections to the land and nature. She learned much from the indigenous peoples with whom she worked, and they, drawing on 40,000 years' of history,

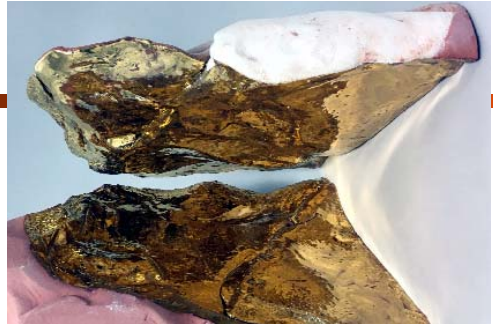


Although her hours were hugely variable, this fitted in pretty well with raising a young family. Then, one day, she opened a newspaper and saw an ad that caught her eye. Despite having no experience other than management,

she landed a job as a ceramic technician. (Hats off again!) She soon found the connections between geochemistry, clay and glazes, so it was not so difficult after all. With naive optimism and a deal of good luck, she got away with it and stayed at it for over a decade. What a wonderful way to start a career in ceramics!

Eventually she decided to set up on her own. With ceramics education in decline she could see the need for more training and support to maintain the knowledge and skills. In 2019 she founded The Kiln Room, a large and fully equipped studio to serve the ceramic community in Melbourne and build connections between artists. Here Pie offers a specialist firing service, technical expertise, mentorship, artist studios, an international residency programme, workshops and courses. Activities were on hold until Nov 5th, due to a hard lockdown, so she has time to experiment and develop her own work.

Pie showed us photos of her experiments including pebbles that had melted around white cups from Ikea. She may have spent years collecting geological samples, but Pie is a pragmatist and had bought her pebbles in Bunnings! They had



been covered in black wax and on melting this off she discovered she had an interesting collection of rock types. The ones that worked best for her were from the Mansfield silt beds - a fine grained mudstone containing iron, manganese and magnesium.

When heated they expanded like bread buns, then cracked, and at 1300C melted and flowed like lava. What could be more exciting than recreating the effects of volcanic activity?

Devonian granite when place in a bisque firing to 1000C becomes aerated, like soft brown pumice and is easily crumbled by placing it in a pillowcase and bashing it with a hammer. Add water to it and it makes a glossy soft brown glaze. (NB we are talking Australian rocks from that era, not the red sandstones that are familiar to us.)

Pumice, formed from volcanic ash, forms a shiny grey glaze. Sometimes Pie sprinkles powdered pumice on edges.





Pie then gave us a guided tour of her immaculate and enormous studio. With plants, a library area, kitchen table and chairs, working benches, materials meticulously stored and labelled, storage and kiln trolleys, map drawers for storing art paper, and many kilns, it seemed she had set up an entire art college.

Pie Tips

1. Make your own extractor system based on an upturned plant pot attached to a vacuum

cleaner with a hepa filter - a flexible and effective system for removing dust.

2. How to resuscitate bags of dry clay – by adding a cup or two of water to the bag and immersing in a large bucket of water.
3. Wash items first washed in a bucket and then in a sink with a clay trap.
4. Grind up rocks with a cobble crusher attachment to your angle grinder.
5. A metal grid set up on a wall makes a great place to hang tools, sponges etc.
6. Test and observe. Keep all records tidy.



Pie showed us pieces of her work en route, including her ‘mountains’. These are little more than hand sized and made of a few simple layers of alternating clays that have been gently deformed into shape. They are cut to expose the strata and sometimes these exposures are painted in gold lustre. Is this to show how precious the earth is?

Another interesting experiment was a kind of porcelain conglomerate rock she made from a heap of porcelain pebbles packed in with other clay around. When fired in one piece and then cut in half with a concrete cutter, the section showed flow lines and crystals, giving an insight into geological processes.

Pie’s demonstration was how to make and then use her large mountain bisque moulds.

These are essentially simple large humps up to half a metre high. She starts with a paper pattern, cuts out two from clay slabs, joins them by scoring with a pin, brushing in a little water and joining them on the flat. When firm enough they are stood up and paddled to firm up the seams and fill out the volume. The form is smoothed with a kidney and the base is trimmed. After firing they can be used in a number of ways to form slab pots small or large. Subsequent mountains are made the same way, but supported on a mould while they dry.

Pie presented her life and work to us with care and enthusiasm. Her work reflects a love for the land and its history as seen in rocks and natural processes. With an enquiring and open mind she follows processes and



loves to experiment with her materials.

What can be more fascinating than exploring ceramic processes to learn something of how the earth moves, how rocks flow, how volcanoes explode? Geology is the most its exciting of the earth sciences and ceramics is almost its alter ego, its reflection. These are Pie’s passions. Like lava, Pie flows on from one experiment to another, and back again, guided by her dreaming, always coming back to earth, rocks, and process. We are, as she pointed out, part of this, and one of those layers of rock will be ours.





In Pursuit of Beauty

 Review by Marialba Hog

Dr Craig Barclay is the Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibition, as well as lecturer, at Durham University, and on Friday 12 November he gave an exhaustive and insightful Zoom talk on Malcolm Macdonald. This was a departure from the sort of presentation we generally have. The focus this time was on *collecting* rather than *making* ceramics.

Given the wealth of very detailed information Craig bestowed on us, the best that can be achieved in this review is to give a summary of the salient elements.

Malcolm Macdonald was born in 1901, the son of the renowned Labour politician and first socialist PM, Ramsey Macdonald, and was himself a politician, a diplomat and, perhaps foremost, a collector whose legacy remains today and will continue in the future.

His interest in collecting started when he was at Oxford, but the pivotal moment, Craig told us, was in Paris, where Macdonald 'fell in love with a woman'. This woman happened to be a Dresden figurine of a shepherdess at the Musée Cluny. He just knew he had to acquire a similar figurine - regardless of the price.

Malcolm's love of collecting continued when he became a politician. During a visit to East Asia in 1929 as part of a delegation, he came in close contact with Chinese ceramics, and of course he had to buy some. He bought five items, including a couple of Ming Dynasty incense burners in the shape of dragons, for which he paid the equivalent of £5.



He continued his political career, which included a stint as Minister for Health under Winston Churchill (1940-41), and as High Commissioner in Canada (1941)

In time he realized that his interest lay in diplomacy, and he had a distinguished diplomatic career: in 1946 he became Governor General of Malaya, then was Commissioner General for South East Asia (1948). He went on to be High Commissioner in India ('55-'60), followed by Kenya ('63-'64)



He was never a run-of-the-mill diplomat, and was often criticized for not behaving as one, but he was as interested in relationships as in diplomacy. He became a friend to leading figures in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. Through all this, of course, he never neglected his collecting.

He focused for a time on the Chinese domestic market, until his friend S.Q. Wong, a businessman and fellow collector, directed his attention to the finer objects.



The pictures which accompanied Craig's talk helped us visualize the collecting journey which Malcolm continued all his life. A particularly beautiful example is a porcelain wine cup, so fine that one can see against the light the delicately embossed figure of a dragon. This was produced for the Imperial Court, and the stem had the specific function of allowing a rider to drink while in the saddle.

A favourite of Malcolm's (and Craig's too!) is a Dingware bowl, (1100-1200) with a delicately incised pattern of two mandarin ducks, representing fidelity in marriage. This object was factory produced, therefore part of a mass production system, long before the Industrial Revolution happened in Britain. Craig was at pains to emphasize the process, from the extraction of clay to the firing in kilns, where the bowls were placed upside down, leaving an imperfect rim. They were then taken to a metal workshop, where a copper ring was placed along the perimeter of the rim, ensuring its perfection. As the kilns were coal fired, there must have been mines nearby. So the entire process was in effect an industrial one. Malcolm paid £750 for this object - by far the largest amount he paid for an item!

Craig told us how collecting went hand in hand with relationships for Macdonald, though he had a number of other cultural interests, like ballet, music, photography, and birds, a subject on which he wrote a number of books. He also worked to support local crafts and cultural assets, and to educate others by donating his collections to museums.

Macdonald became involved with a museum in Durham. It was opened in 1960 as the Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archeology, with the intention of supporting



the teaching of oriental studies at Durham University. The central belief was that a strong cultural background was essential to the learning of languages, an aim which chimed perfectly with Macdonald. He continued to collect with the intention of creating a comprehensive collection for teaching purposes, but also to increase public awareness of Chinese art and culture. With this in mind he looked to earlier times with the acquisition of Chinese prehistoric wares, from the 2nd and 3rd century c.e.



Among the pictures Craig showed us, there was a particularly interesting one of a female polo player. As well as being a very dynamic representation and a fine object, it is a clear indication that women of the imperial court during the Tang dynasty were active participants in the social life around them.

Despite Malcolm's extensive knowledge and experience of the market, he occasionally made wrong choices, perhaps when his enthusiasm got the better of him. Craig gave us the example of a vase that Macdonald thought was a Song dynasty piece, but was in fact a copy made in Japan between 1900 and 1950.

In the 1960s Malcolm Macdonald wanted to retire. The problem was that he'd spent practically all his money on collecting and hadn't really made provisions for his retirement. However, he did need somewhere to live, and in the end he found a suitable place in Sevenoaks. All he needed was the funds to buy it.

Happily he came to an arrangement with Durham University whereby he would give the university his collection and in return it would buy the house for him. The arrangement suited both sides, but especially the University, as the collection was worth far more than the house and, in any case, the Arts Fund later helped the University recoup the money spent on it.

The relationship with the University continued. In 1971 he was invited to become Chancellor, a



post he held until 1980, a year before his death in 1981, at the age of 79. In 1972 the University published book on Macdonald's collection, with a preface by him.

He maintained his links with the University of Malaya, to which he donated a significant amount of export ware. He also instituted an Art Museum there and became Chancellor. His collection is now split between Durham, Malaya and Singapore.

In 2017 there was a major exhibition on his collecting and diplomacy. The latest exhibition opened in February 2019, with the title *The Pursuit of Beauty*.

No title could be more appropriate to describe the life-long commitment to the collection of beautiful objects by this extraordinary personality. Craig informed us that interest in Malcolm Macdonald is growing, and we can absolutely see why. He was a fascinating individual who has left an amazing legacy. He deserves to be widely known and acclaimed.

We can only thank Craig Barclay for having provided us with a window into the world of an inspiring, engaging and broad-ranging personality.



From when I first started my journey into the ceramics world, it was always my ambition to spend time at the Leach Pottery in St Ives to experience traditional methods of production pottery. In October 2021 I finally attended their intensive five-day throwing course which had been rescheduled from January due to Covid-19.

As with any skill it can take years to hone the practice and Kat Wheeler, our tutor had done just that. Graduating from her degree in Tennessee, she moved to the UK and spent 10 years in the production team at the Leach. She became Deputy Manager until moving on to continue with her own ceramics and teaching business in St Ives a few years ago. The four of us on the course were continually in awe of her technique and the way she explained her processes made them easy to grasp. She explained the 'why' in her methods which meant we had a greater depth of understanding.

If you're thinking of doing either the three or five-day intensive course, they start at 10am and finish at 4pm each day. You're on the wheel for most of the time, except for up



to an hour for lunch and any quick demos from your tutor. This is what makes it worthwhile as you have the chance to go over in as much detail as you want for any areas of your skill you wish to improve. I had a mental block on pulling up and positioning of my hands, which I've now hopefully got sorted with enough muscle memory to replicate in my own studio.

Our workshop was held in the Clore Learning Space (below) - a building opened on the site in 2013 - and we had adequate space for social distancing. We ate outside on the picnic benches twice and upstairs in the tiny kitchen when it was raining. Kat got us going at 10am on the dot and mid-morning coffee/tea was optional - we were usually too engrossed to stop!



The pugged clay is soft and easy to work with and little water is required. Kat told us as you get older, people tend to gravitate to softer clay as it's easier for the hands and less trouble for any arthritic problems. The Leach uses clay from St Agnes, (about half an hour's drive north of St Ives), as they have done since the 1920's, and the junior production team members get most involved in the reclaim system. All work is twice fired - bisque to 950 degrees C and glaze firing to 1280 degrees C - this produces the hardest and most durable stoneware.

They focus on 3 types of glaze for their standard ware production pieces - dolomite (white), celadon (dark green) and tenmoku (dark red/brown). Each glaze brings out the flecks of iron in the clay. You can have one piece fired in a choice of one of these glazes at the end of the course (as long as it's maximum 20x20x20cm in size) and they send it on after the course. I chose a simple bowl which now contains my apples! What was useful was a list of 'core' functional tableware sizes and the corresponding weights of clay they start with to produce their standard-ware. I learnt how to throw to exact sizes using a clever measuring tool (and how tricky it can be) - Kat made it look so easy!

Their production pottery discipline is to throw work on marine-ply batts which are secured to the wheel using a clay batt. This is thrown much like a plate using a 1kg ball of clay. The clay batt is used and reused and covered up at the end of the day with a black bin liner. Kat told us she keeps hers in use like this for months. All throwing tools were provided for the course - you just had to take your own apron and a small towel for handwashing. We had two buckets, one of

which was filled for hand washing during the day and the other was for reclaim.

We learnt basic throwing techniques (broken down into stages) and threw cylinders before moving onto bowls and then making mugs and pulling handles. With a desire to throw different sized pieces from two of us, Kat demonstrated how to make a larger moon jar as well as an egg cup and lidded jars by throwing off the hump. Due to the small numbers of attendees, Kat was able to give us 1-1 tuition whenever we got stuck.



Included on the course is an interesting hour's tour of the original part of the Leach Pottery with the famous three chamber climbing kiln. When Bernard Leach died in 1979, his wife, Janet, continued making her own work there, until she died in 1997. After a couple of private ownerships, it was acquired by Penwith District Council as part of the Leach Restoration Project. On completion the Leach Pottery was handed over to the Bernard Leach (St Ives) Trust Ltd., a registered charity set up to

manage the Leach Pottery.

It reopened in 2008 as a production pottery once again and employs apprentices as well as experienced potters. There's also a small gallery space, museum, teaching studios and of course, the shop, which students get 10% discount in throughout the week.

Although you can't visit the production area, you can peep in through the window and outside easily see the two large gas kilns. They are having discussions on how to move to more environmentally sustainable firing methods and Kat is already considering changing her gas kiln to electric next year. She knows she'll have to test how her glazes work in a new kiln and feels it's the way to go.

On the last day, Kat touched on decorating techniques using white slip - we could add broad brushes of slip to our finished pieces, which would show through the celadon glaze when fired.

The logistics of getting to St Ives for me had an extra challenge as I took our electric car, so the journey was longer than would otherwise have been to stop and re-charge the battery! You'll need to book accommodation well in advance - mine was booked 9 months ahead as soon as I knew I had to reschedule. I had a tiny cottage about 10 minutes walks north of the pottery (called Sanctuary Cottage in Heleveston). Bear in mind if you stay in St Ives itself, the Leach is about a 20 minute walk uphill from the centre. The benefit of my cottage over hotel accommodation was the option to cook in when all the restaurants were fully booked! There's a Co-op just down the road from the Pottery and Tesco delivers.

Allowing extra time to stay down there around the course would be ideal if you have

the time. I'd booked the weekends either side of the five day course to explore St Ives and surrounding area. The weather was kind and I managed two separate walks on the South West Coastal Path in both directions, towards Zenon (I got about 7 miles along) and towards Carbis Bay and Length when my husband joined me for the last weekend. As a Tate member, you get in free of charge to both Tate St Ives and the Barbara Hepworth museum, which are great to see. It's worth considering at least staying over on the Friday night at the end of the course so you don't have a long drive back at the end of the week and don't have to find somewhere to put your luggage if you have to check out on the Friday morning.



I feel I've ticked the bucket list for now on this trip and would highly recommend the pilgrimage for anyone wanting to experience top quality tuition in a truly historic setting.



POD update -



John Higgins

Dear DCPG Members

The plans for **POD 2022** are almost complete and it seemed a good idea to whet your appetite for this annual event which will be held at:

Hertfordshire University on Sat 26th March 2022.

This is a change of venue to comply with Covid precautions, providing us with more space in the auditorium for social distancing. There is a large free carpark. In the lecture theatre there are two very large screens for projecting images both via Zoom and the actual demonstrations in the lecture theatre. We will have the annual raffle, the trade stand, and the sale of work by the demonstrators.

The Theme chosen for the POD event, given the current enthusiasm for building a kiln is Wood Firing.

This will be a hybrid meeting at the University. It will consist of the lecture slot being zoomed from Australia and the demonstrations in the Lecture theatre by two of the UK's foremost wood firers.

The lecture by Zoom will involve 3 Australians, **Pie Bolton** a specialist in firing, based near Melbourne, **Jack Latti** who is currently building an Anagama kiln and documenting the process, also from near Melbourne, and **Sandy Lockwood** who is a renowned wood firer, with multiple kilns, based south of Sydney. They will engage in a conversation re wood firing as well as talking about their take on the process, colour and technique. The conversation will be led by Pie.

The two demonstrators who have agreed to attend in person are **Sabine Nemet** and



Ben Brierly.

Sabine is very much a functional and production potter and will be talking, showing, and making her work.

Ben (*above*) is now Principal at the Clay College as well as still teaching at Loughborough. He did fire the Box Moor Kiln successfully for us, and he will be showing images of his work, building his one off sculptural pieces, discussing firing and talking about the new experimental small kilns he and the students at the Clay College have been building and firing successfully. As well as a surprise known only to me.

In the event of Covid restrictions being further enforced Ben and Sabine have agreed to demonstrate via Zoom, and then we will have no need of the facilities at the University as was the case in 2021, which also proved to be very successful. But fingers crossed it will go ahead as planned. The POD team will keep you posted of up dates as they happen via emails.

Best wishes, John

PS If any of you would like to help on the day just let me know, otherwise I will come badgering you.

johnceramics@aol.com



Sustainable Ceramics by Robert Harrison

 Ruby Sharp

Sustainability is a subject close to my heart and this book offers lots of ideas for ceramic practice. It views sustainability from several angles ranging from an individual's responsibility, to reviewing commercial and social processes. It includes materials, accessibility and education.

Several working ceramicists are featured from around the world and there are also references to those from the past, Leach, Cardew, Casson and Margrie.

The potters here discuss how they have responsibly used and obtained their materials and fuel, built efficient kilns and work places, explored better methods of production and the use of waste materials. Examples include how to save on water for cleaning, building a kiln wall from old wine bottles, various ways to reduce your carbon footprint, and an analysis of salt and soda firings. There is a discussion on various fuels and kiln designs with the aim of reducing energy consumption and a section on using local materials for glazes, etc.

The message is explore, experiment, try, and most of all, think laterally and creatively in your practice. Do you need all that running water? Can we reuse the waste?

An occupational therapist discusses ergonomics and how to reduce discomfort and injury, with suggested exercises and changes to activities.

Part of the focus of the book is that materials may be site specific and unique, so use with respect and explore. Respect towards our environment and consideration of our practice makes sense in this day and age. I have only

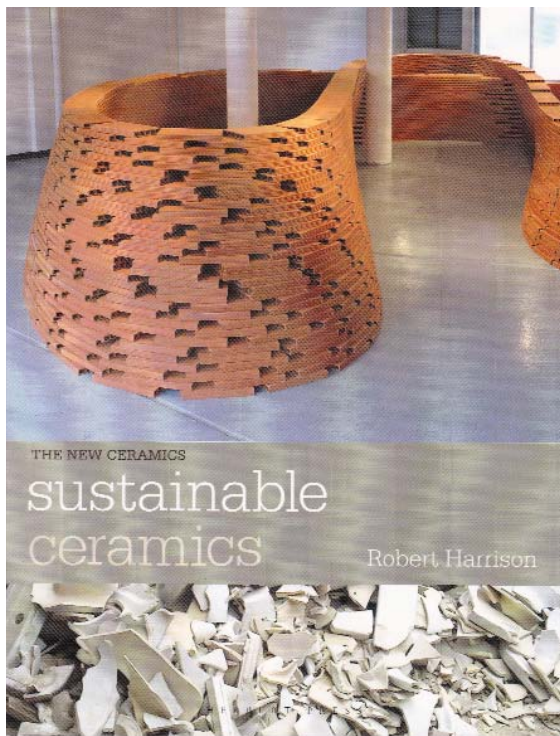
a few of the many areas covered. We can all use our creative thinking to make a difference.

Review by Ruby Sharp (2013).

Book published by Herbert Press in 2013 is still available and a copy is going into our library shortly.

Editor's note.

Ruby was delighted when I offered to put out her article again as it is relevant more than ever. Sadly however, Ruby, a Guild member who was active for years with many of our outreach events, regularly helped and exhibited at Art in Clay and ran the pottery activities at Pitstone Farm Museum, is now seriously unwell. We send her our sincere thanks and very best wishes.





Eco-conscious Ceramics



Ros McGuirk

What is the link between a Jurassic deposit stretching from Dorset to Yorkshire, and a group of environmentally concerned potters?

Answer : both are called Oxford Clay.

The potters, led by Katherine Tomlinson, have been researching clay and glaze materials and also examining ceramic practice, aiming to reduce their carbon footprint and decrease their impact on the environment both animate and inanimate. Their experiments are ongoing and they sell their work locally in two galleries in Oxford. See www.oxfordclay.co.uk

They began by forming an ethical framework for their studies and by defining 'eco-conscious 'ceramics.' Here their concern became to avoid those ceramic materials whose production involves exploitation of the labour force, forest clearance and environmental devastation with the release of toxins and its subsequent harms. Unfortunately this applies to some of our most favoured glaze minerals including cobalt, copper, tin and rutile.

For further research go to Pubchem at www.pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov. This is a department of the US National Institutes of Health where you will find a chemical data base including toxicity.

The second aspect of OC's research was to develop good glazes using more locally resourced and environmentally friendly

materials. Spoiler alert – this often means waste wood ash.

Thirdly the group looked into more sustainable production methods. Here the main concerns are the use of electricity and water. This resulted in paying for renewable electricity and investing in the most efficient kiln they could find, a Rhode Ecotop (available from various UK pottery suppliers). They use rainwater for washing and recycle their waste clay.

Being as ethical as they can be they have omitted animal products from the workshop, so effectively run a vegan operation.

For further information they have produced two ebooks, at £20 each, 'Eco-Friendly Pottery: 30 simple ways to make your pottery practice more ethical and sustainable' and 'Eco-conscious Pottery Glazing'.

It is interesting that this group have taken apart and examined ceramic practice down to some very fine details and have still arrived at obvious conclusions. Yet we should thank them for doing so. They have raised important issues and shown how the least of decisions by many of us can have devastating consequences for others, far away. I will henceforth treasure those old bags of wood ash, gifted by kind friends, and make the most of them.



Fitzwilliam Competition 2022



Here is a reminder of the competition details:

The rules:

1. The item must be made after the theme is announced.
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.

This Years Theme is:

NATURAL FORMS.

Chosen by members in an online poll.

Fully completed submissions should be brought to the DCPG Kingsbury Barn exhibition in September 2022 (dates TBC) to be exhibited to the public. This year we will hold a public's choice vote during the exhibition, with a special prize to the selected piece.

Formal Judging will take place through an online members vote using photo images taken at the Kingsbury Barn Exhibition. The winners will be announced at our AGM in



2021 Fitzwilliam Winner



First prize and the bison went Beverly Benson (see photo) for her great character, 'Father Time'.

Second prize went to Fiona Cristol for her 'Time for Teapot'. A great concept.

Third prize to Jerry Seaborn for his latest ceramic invention, the 'Lifetime Postbox Topper'.



Members news



Hearty congratulations to John Higgins, our President and POD coordinator, for being elected to the International Academy of Ceramics in Geneva.

This organisation is committed to achieving large scale projects that promote ceramics, to cultivate and debate, exchange, reflect and share knowledge. It claims to be the only

October.

There are three monetary prizes to be won, generously donated by Sylvia Fitzwilliam in memory of her husband Mervyn; who chaired the Guild with 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.



Runner-up was Margaret Tatton-Brown for her magnificent 'Summertime Platter'. Congratulations to all!

international association devoted to clay and includes potters, artists, designers, gallerists, conservators, restorers, curators and now John!



New Member - We would like to warmly welcome Catherine Haynes of Cheshunt and Jon Pain from Buckingham to the Guild and hope to meet them soon.



Socials - Coffee time & Demos / Zooms / Other events



Judi Tribe

During the late Autumn we were enjoying meeting up and going for walks in St Albans Verulamium park, along the Grand Union

canal and afterwards chatting together over hot drinks while sitting outside in cafes and pubs.

2022 Socials

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

Tuesday 15th February Evening Zoom - 7.30 - 9.00pm

What exhibitions will you be participating in and how do you prepare for them ?

Monday 28th February Studio Zoom - 10.00 - 12.30 New techniques.

Friday 11th March Social -11.00 - 1.00pm - details TBA

Monday 28th March - Studio Zoom - 10.00 - 12.30 Top pottery tips

Keep up to date by checking on our website: www.dcp.org.uk

Meetings / Zoom

Fri 11th February 7 – 9pm on Zoom. Paul Wearing.

Vessels made by press moulding and coiling, textured with layers of slips and glazes to produce surfaces resonating with both geology and architecture.

See www.paulwearingceramics.com

This may be run as a 'hybrid' meeting, with members attending the demo. Details and venue tba.

Sat 26th March. Potters' Open Day.

Our unmissable annual event will be held at UH in Hatfield. A real face to face meeting with Zoom for those who are unable to attend. 'Wood firing' is the theme. Speakers are all from Australia, courtesy of zoom: Pie Bolton, Jack Latti and Sandy Jackson. Face to face demonstrators will be Ben Brierly and Sabine Nemett. *See item for further details. Page 17.*

Fri 8th or Sat 9th April. Tba

Sat 14th May 10 am – 1 pm. Richard Ballantyne and Carol Read.

The well known duo R & B Ceramics and makers of raku animal sculptures. Come, stretch your imagination and enjoy! In person at venue tba. See www.carolceramics.com

Other Events Check before you go for updates and ticket arrangements.

25 – 27th Feb. 'Collect' has returned to Somerset House. Previews on 23 + 24th. Run by the Crafts Council and showcasing gallery collections. Ceramics, glass, wood, fabrics, jewellery and precious metals, etc. Events also shown on Artsy.net.

22 - 24th April. 'Potfest SE'. New venue at Glynde Place, Glynde, Lewes, BN8 6SX.

See www.potfest.co.uk

3 - 5th June. 'Potfest in the Pens'. Penrith. The first of two. (2nd in Oct. See below.)

10 - 12th June. 'Potfest Scotland'. Scone Palace.

? June. 'Earth and Fire' at Wolseley Bridge, Stafford, ST17 0XN. ·

29 - 31st July. 'Potfest in the Park'. Hutton-in-the-Forest, Penrith.

19 -21st Aug. 'Art in Clay'. Windsor Race Course. See www.artinclay.co.uk

28 - 30th Oct. 'Potfest in the Pens'. Penrith.

4 - 6th Nov. 'Potfest in the Pens'. New show at Melton Mowbray, Leics.



Report from the Brick Team

 by the Editor

What does the newsletter team to do in between issues? Well, we shift bricks!

Thanks to Amanda, Edwina, Elaine, Patrick, Judi and Nicole who joined in on a very damp blustery day in November, we moved all the bricks from Boxmoor to the Chiltern Open Air Museum (COAM) in one day.

David hired a large white van, Patrick brought his smaller one and the rest put our car boots to use. We made three trips in total which is more than we had thought possible in one day.

The bricks are now sorted and stacked on 9 pallets near the old cart shed, about 100 mts



from the kiln site.

We have told the COAM trustees that we will focus on small temporary kiln builds and raku firings at first. The plan for a larger wood burning kiln is on hold until we have had some experience of easier shorter firings. We also intend to run workshops and have-a-go events there on occasions.

It is now up to the whole membership to consider these exciting opportunities and step up. We need a leader and assistant to take over the kiln project to take it any further. Please do not waste all that effort – there at least 1700 bricks waiting for you!



Jane Sawyer – amendment to issue 39 article

After her travels to Japan she spent two years living in Scotland where she had the opportunity to make her own work for the first time in Marg Hall's welcoming

studio at Winton Pottery, East Lothian (1987-89). It proved an ideal time to research old English slipware.



Guild Wheel for loan



I still have the small folding Wenger in my garage. It really needs a better home and to be kept in use to ensure it stays in good working order.

As you know, there are conditions attached so that the Guild may use it for any outreach work where it is required. However, due to covid we have avoided throwing events in the last two years and we do not know yet when we can reintroduce this very popular activity. This may mean another free year of wheel loan.



Please get in touch with me at ros.mcguirk@gmail.com for further information or if you are interested.
Ros

ADVERTISEMENT

Fitzwilliam wheel and electric top loader kiln for sale

Fitzwilliam wheel in good working order for £1800. Check the prices on ebay and see what a bargain this is.



Potclays kiln type S26 + controller for £800.

Volts – 230, phase 1 + N, Max temp 1300C. Requires new elements (cost approx £200 – contact Duncan Bull).

In both cases buyer collects.

Contact Alison and George Bateson on 01442 851209 (Aldbury, near Tring)



Silicone Moulds

 by Graham Hough (NPA)

For many years I have used traditional plaster moulds for my work.

However, looking at alternative methods and avoiding the use of heavy plaster, I looked at silicone moulds, used widely with resin and plastic clays.

I watched a number of videos demonstrating how to make silicone moulds and consulted a forum or two. At first sight they seemed unsuitable for clay due to its brittle nature when dry. Obviously large enclosed slip moulds were impractical because the slip would never dry, or would it?

I bought a ready-made silicone mould from a specialist website and filled it with porcelain paper clay. This mould has a small undercut potentially trapping the clay. After leaving it to air dry for 24 hours I tentatively removed the piece by folding back the flexible mould to release the undercut area, and it worked!

The next stage was to make my own moulds.

All the advice I read and watched described the use of rigid, elaborate mould holders, releasing agents and detailed mix recipes.

However, I made a hole in the ready made silicone mould and stuffed a piece of clay into it and let it dry. The dry clay popped out easily, so no need for releasing agents.

So my method is to make a scrap cardboard box just big enough to contain the piece you want to cast and bind it with tape. Put a small plug of clay into the base of the box to hold your master. Pour in the mixed silicone and let it set.

The suitability of silicone becomes clear because you can now slice the mould into as many sections as you need to ensure the new piece can be removed.

I used Polycraft GP3481-F General Purpose RTV Condensation Cure mould making silicone rubber.

For the items shown in the photo I used most of a 1.1kg kit with Red fast setting



hardener, ratio 1 to 10. As you can see, I used a doll's hands and feet as the masters and sliced the mould into 4 sections so that I could release the dried clay without snapping off the toes.

I used soft ES600 Porcelain Paper Clay carefully pressed into all the little pockets of the separate sections of the mould, and then reassembled them with rubber bands. The silicone sections semi-adhere to each other which is useful.

Allow to semi-dry over 48 hours and then fold back the flexible mould to release your piece. Trim off the excess clay.

These are early days with my silicone experiments but it seems to have many uses and I would encourage you to try using it and let us know what methods you have developed using silicone rubber moulds.

With thanks to Graham and Chris Barnes, editor of Northern Potters Association, for permission to reproduce this article.





Repair cracks with sodium silicate

 by Vijay Thind

How to Use:

You can use sodium silicate direct on damp clay, however, my experience for high success, mix clay and sodium silicate into thin paste, then applied between cracks and smooth out any excess. Same applies to broken dry clay by first rehydrating the area then apply mixture, squeeze the two pieces together followed by removing any excess with damp sponge and scraping the surface.

You have option to make your own or probably easy to buy readymade which is also used for repairing, making texture on thrown pots (like tree bark texture - see you tube videos), making certain slips from clay, however, if you need a challenge and you got the ingredients then see these two methods:

Method 1

Ingredients:

20ml of water,

8g of Sodium Hydroxide (NaOH)

Crushed Silica Gel - finer the better

Suitable container which could be heated to high temperature (close to boiling point) and help silica gel to dissolve in NaOH- stainless steel or Pyrex beaker.

*******Warning: wear google and protect yourself from splashes*******

Crush silica gel in heat proof container add water. Add small quantity of NaOH slowly, heat and continuously stir to dissolve. Keep adding small quantities and

each time keep stirring and heat to boiling point to help dissolve. Once the silica gel is dissolved with just trace of silica left behind undissolved, stop adding more NaOH. Decant and ready to use.

Method 2

Ingredients:

55g silica gel Crushed - finer the better

37g of sodium hydroxide (NaOH)

80ml of water

Suitable container which could be heated to high temperature (close to boiling point) and help silica gel to dissolve in NaOH - stainless steel or Pyrex beaker.

*******Warning: wear google and protect yourself from splashes*******

It is reverse method of above but requires exact quantities.

Add NaOH to water. While adding NaOH to water, it produces lots of heat. Be careful!!.

Then slowly add small quantity at a time of silica gel and keep stirring. Heating solution (near boiling point) helps silica gel to dissolve. Initially you may find silica gel forming a clump but heat and constant stirring keeps it from forming a lump. Keep continuously stirring and heating till the solution is clear. Add more till you find traces of undissolved silica gel no more dissolving assures NaOH is exhausted. Decant and ready to use.



What's Smoking?



Tim Thornton

Kiln fumes are a topic that divides many potters - some are highly concerned, whereas others are oblivious to them. So I thought I'd dig down into what happens when firing an electric kiln, and how harmful any fumes may be. Space prohibits dealing with all the other ways of firing in this article, though they're covered in my studio health and safety course.

So, first of all, what fumes may be given off? To answer that, we need to look at the composition of what we put into the kiln - clays and glazes (note that I'm ignoring water, as it is not harmful to health).

Clay bodies generally have impurities in them - ball and earthenware clays are notably impure, as they pick up all sorts of stuff travelling from where they were first created, to where they were dug out of the ground. But there is quite a lot of variation in what different clays will give off, so not all of this need apply to you.

A noticeable component of many clays is organic matter - this is the stuff that burns out of most grey clays, leaving the fired clay a whiter colour. We may also intentionally add organic matter to the clay or glaze, in materials such as CMC, Gum Arabic, glycerine, wax resist or paper clay. These mostly burn out between 200 and 600°C, though some substances like rice husk ash need higher temperatures. When it burns out it oxidises and breaks down in the heat of the kiln, but doesn't generally create flames, and most of the substances exit the kiln as fumes. At low temperatures they come off as VOCs, aldehydes and similar, which are irritating and in high enough concentrations are not good for you, but as the temperature rises they break down further into more benign chemicals.

With these materials burning out, oxygen in the kiln is used up. This will generate carbon dioxide and, unless there is enough fresh air coming into the kiln, it will generate carbon monoxide as the kiln environment temporarily heads towards reduction.

Some clays may also contain sulfur, chlorine and fluorine compounds, all given off at about 500°C, or 850°C if present as salts that need to decompose. Sulfur and chlorine both have unpleasant smells, as well as being harmful in high enough concentrations. Fluorine seems to occur mostly in porcelains. It is odourless, but again not healthy in high concentrations, and it will also etch glass over time if the kiln fumes pass over your windowpanes.

Turning now to glazes, the materials used are generally purer, so we can expect much less of the emissions associated with clay (apart from any organic matter that we have added). However some people do worry about metal fumes - especially as, if present, they are of nanoparticle size, and so very readily absorbed if inhaled. But tests I and others have conducted show that almost all the metals we use in glazes are not emitted as fumes to anywhere near toxic levels, except for lead, antimony and vanadium when fired to stoneware temperatures, and they are normally used in low temperature glazes. Lead doesn't start giving off fumes until somewhere between 1000 and 1100°C, and lead glazes can easily be formulated to mature below this point.

Finally, we also get nitrogen oxides being given off. These don't come from the materials fired, but from nitrogen in the air being



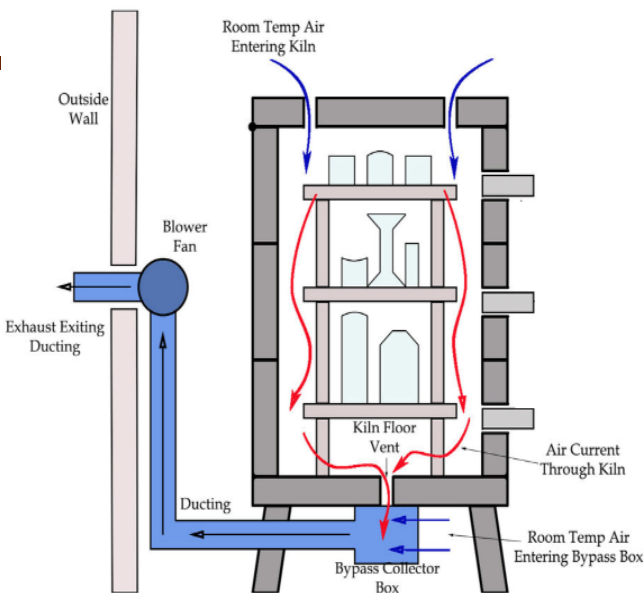
Kiln Vent Diagram

converted into oxides at the high temperatures found in the kiln. Again, as anyone living in just about any of our cities will know, this is not something that is good for your health in any quantity.

So we have a few things that may be harmful, but are the concentrations high enough to actually do us harm? And how does the concentration vary through the studio?

Concentrations of kiln fumes will be highest directly over the kiln, but then they will dissipate through the room. If the room is large (in relation to the size of the kiln), then the dissipated concentration will be lower than if you have a cupboard for your kiln. And having a fan to circulate the air will help dissipate the fumes from the kiln area (though be aware that it may also raise dust levels).

The good news is that a study of 50 studio potters, varying from hobby potters to studios in schools and colleges, showed that overall there is no significant health risk from kiln fumes. Although close to the kiln the levels can get to the safe limits, or even temporarily exceed them, few people will stay by the kiln throughout its firing, and the limits are averaged over a working day, not instantaneous levels. But, depending on the materials you use and your level of sensitivity, you may find the fumes irritating to breathe, or just an unpleasant smell, in which case you may want better ventilation. This should also be the case in a teaching environment, as you don't know how sensitive your pupils may be to the fumes.



The simplest solution is to have a couple of windows open, or a fan close to the kiln that expels air. Both of these will also help keep dust down. Or you can fit a kiln vent, which sucks fresh air into your kiln and then the fumes are ducted to the outside - there are some YouTube videos and web sites showing how to do this economically if you have basic DIY skills. The air flow created by the kiln vent may also reduce flashing, and help keep the kiln in oxidation when things are burning out, but it may extend your glaze firing times by as much as 30 minutes, increasing your electricity bill, and your anxiety time in waiting to see the results of your firing!

So, in summary, kiln fumes aren't going to kill you, but they may be an irritant. If so, some simple ventilation will solve the problem.

After a summer break, I am running my online classes from 21st September, and then again in January. As well as the existing ones on Product Safety and Studio Health and Safety, I have a new one on Electric Kilns and Firing. For more information, go to www.tim-thornton.com.

Valentine Clays holds
the key ingredient...



Valentine Clays Ltd

Manufactured in the Heart of the Potteries...

tel 01782 271200

Valentine Clays Limited. Valentine Way

Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2FJ

email: sales@valentineclays.co.uk

www.valentineclays.co.uk



visit our new online potters
shop at
www.claymansupplies.co.uk

Enter **dacorum10** at the checkout to get
10% off your complete order

Distributors for

Valentines Spencrofts Potclays
Pottery Craft St Gobain Formula Plasters
Chrysanthos Brush-on Glazes & Colours
Ferro Gladstone Shippo Northstar
Kilns & Furnaces Northern Kilns
Pyerotec Rohde

CLAYMAN

Morells Barn Park Lane Lower Bognor Road
Lagness, Chichester PO20 1LR

Phone: 01243 265845 info@claymansupplies.co.uk

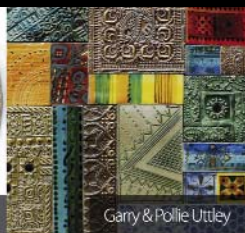
5% member discount

POTCLAYS LIMITED Since 1932

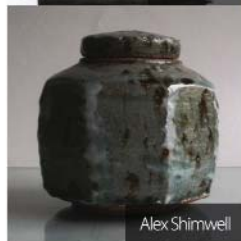
Committed to supporting
makers at every stage
of their ceramic practice



John Scott



Garry & Pollie Uttley



Alex Shimwell



Chiu-Wu



Clockwise: Geoffrey Swindell, Sue Pryke, Illyria Pottery

potclays.co.uk