



Issue 41

May 2022

DACORUM AND CHILTERN POTTERS GUILD



In this issue:

Potters Open Day

Zoom Demo reviews

Kiln Calibration

DCPG Programme and Socials

COAM and Open Door

www.dcp.org.uk

Text



POTTERY CRAFTS

"Touching earth through the hands of a potter" LIMITED

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: Ben Brierly pot.
See page 12. Ben at POD.

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



- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 Editorial | 18 Big Build in Berkhamsted |
| 4 Chair's Report | 19 Kingsbury Barn 2022 |
| 5 Paul Wearing | 19 Green Men Masks at COAM |
| 7 Ben Fosker | 20 COAM help needed |
| 10 Australians at POD | 20 Fitzwillian competition |
| 12 Ben Brierly at POD | 21 Collaboration with Open Door |
| 14 DCPG Summer programme | 22 DCPG Socials |
| 15 Kiln Calibration | 23 Members and the DCPG team |



Editorial Spring/Summer 2022

 Ros McGuirk

The return of spring is always welcome, never more so than this year. A bright sunny day in February took me to stunning Somerset House to see Collect, the busy gallery show for artistry in glass, textiles, wood, jewellery and ceramics. Having subscribed to the Craft magazine I got a good deal on the entrance, which made it more attractive. It was my first trip to a London gallery in a long while, which made it even better.

The Guild's first meeting in two years was our Open Day. It was such a joy to attend, along with at least 45 others plus more on Zoom. As I write Ceramic Art London is on and is fully booked for most of its time.

All this shows that we have a real need to gather together, share our interests and enjoy the fellowship of other clay addicts. We tend to be fairly isolated as makers, and so meeting up is always something to look forward to. In this edition of the newsletter you will find plenty of events planned for this summer and well into autumn, and there will be more to

look out for, especially our own community events.

Look out for Judi's socials, the "big builds", and the making days at COAM. In addition there will soon be news from the kiln site.

The last meeting this season will be really special. It is going to be a workshop with Richard and Carol back in the hall at Kings Langley.

All these are great opportunities to focus on working with others.

Please also think of your committee as they do need more help to keep going. If you are the sociable sort you would just love to take over the membership role....

Time to role up your sleeves!

With thanks to all who contributed to this issue and apologies to Sabine Nemet whose review is being held back for the next issue.





Notes from the Chair



Jackie Harrup



January and February and March are usually a time to hunker down, stay warm and wait for brighter warmer days, but not for DCPG. This period saw tremendous activity for the guild with at least 4 major events and major projects moving from ideas to reality.

At the time of writing my first draft report, planning for our Potters' Open Day in March had moved towards its final stages with visits to UH as well as technical rehearsals, equipment gathering and checks, and the run through with the speakers. This takes considerable time and energy for the enthusiastic and diligent POD planning team. Those who attended the event were delighted to be able to catch up with friends and browse the goodies on offer from the demonstrators and Blue Matchbox. It was a joy to see the foyer buzzing with people catching up with friends they had probably not seen for 2 years. Thanks to the POD team led by John Higgins, supported by Mandy, Gay, Judi and Fiona, the event signalled the start of an exciting programme for the coming year.

In the meantime the kiln firing group led by Sandie have moved things forward enormously and we are poised to embark on an exciting phase of developing the kiln site for raku, kiln building and wood firing opportunities. David Evans and the brick team did a terrific job of moving the old kiln bricks from the Boxmoor Trust to the Chiltern Open Air museum where the site has been cleared ready to establish a base for a wood store and a base for our kiln building projects. COAM have been incredibly helpful and are well placed to initiate work with DCPG members to raku firings during the summer months. More volunteers will be needed to help and get involved with these exciting developments. Contact Sandie if you are interested in joining this group email one-earth@ntlworld.com

We have also been approached to repeat our BIG BUILD events this summer. An exciting proposal came from Berkhamsted

Arts society, a collaboration with Open Door who are planning a similar project to the cathedral build we did a few years ago. We have supported Open door to establish a ceramics centre with wheels, kiln and facilities for making, and are keen to start engaging with the public. If you want to join in the fun planned for the weekend of July 2nd/3rd contact Ian Jones at (hungrymexican@hotmail.com)

St Albans Cathedral are also keen to work with us on a BIG Build with a Tudor theme for the Alban Festival. The preparation will start on 5th May at 10.30 with a guided tour of St Albans and the public will join us in the cathedral grounds on 25th June. Contact me or Judi if you would like to be part of either of these teams.

The committee have also been working on an exciting offer from the owners of Kingsbury Barn, our venue for the annual exhibition, who are willing to let us use spaces in another barn on their site. This is an outstanding opportunity to establish a hub from which we can manage our activities. Any member who can give legal, property or practical advice would be welcome to join the group looking into this.

I am sure you will want to join me in thanking Audrey Hammet who is stepping down from her role as membership secretary. For years, she has been the warm welcoming face at our live events and Friday demos, always cheerful and helpful, ensuring new members and guests are introduced to our guild, and conscientious in keeping membership records and data secure. If you

are interested in helping us fill this vacancy, (PLEASE!) Audrey has kindly offered to help hand over the reigns to her successor. We are also delighted that Sandie Taylor joined the committee as minutes secretary supporting Mary Anne with our many administrative and communication tasks and maintaining the Guild calendar, as well as co-ordinating the COAM projects and handling safe guarding issues.

Nicole has been busy setting up the Fitzwilliam competition. Members voted that this year's topic will be "Natural forms".

As last year, entries will be on view at the Kingsbury exhibition on Sept 9-11th, so not only members but also the public can have an opinion on the winning piece.

Judi has been busy organising an excellent programme of visits and social events. Check the website for details. Gay has been busy arranging our next hands-on demo with Richard Ballantyne and Carol Read who will guide us making a bird. This will be held back in the old meeting place, the Methodist Church hall in Kings Langley.

Never a dull moment!



Paul Wearing on Zoom

Friday 11th Feb 2022



Ros McGuirk

Paul is a well-known ceramic artist who exhibits internationally, is a selected member of the CPA and enjoys demonstrating. He belongs to a collective of 18 designer makers at the Fireworks Clay Studios in Cardiff. His work is mostly based on the vessel, a form which he has pared down and abstracted to deceptively 'simple' forms. Partly enclosed cylinders are a current focus. Other vessels are asymmetric and are often presented as mirrored pairs. These simple forms are the canvas on which he develops matt, rough surfaces reminiscent of weathering and erosion.

Paul spoke to us from his studio, starting with a quick overview of his work including a 3-minute time lapse video of the making of a "tilt elipse".

See <https://paulwearingceramics.com/tilt-ellipses/> for images of these.

Paul works precisely, using press-moulding and coiling to make his vessels. One had to concentrate quite hard to take it all in as 3 ½

hours had been condensed into the 3 minutes, but as his main interest is what happens later, with the way he uses slips and glazes to produce his surfaces, this was understandable.

Thereafter he guided us through his decorative process whereby he layers up a variety of slips and glazes, often using a dry brush and soft minimalist strokes.

Frequently the layers were partly rubbed off before more were added. He works carefully, in a relaxed way, yet always aware of how he holds the brush, the kind of stroke used, and the amount of slip or glaze used. There is a deal of knowledge at work here, and also intuition and spontaneity. The effect at the end of this phase was of a multi-layered surface with pieces peeling off and layers partly seen.



The end result, out of the kiln, could never be fully anticipated. Some pieces go back into the kiln and are re-fired until he is satisfied with the result.

A pot worked on for a long time can be hard to judge. One gallery took what he felt were a pair of failed pots and put them in the centre of their exhibition.

Paul makes all his own slips and glazes, making sure there are a good number of reactive materials in the mix. Volcanic effects are desirable, with blistering, cratering and crawling. He buys in a grey stain from Bath Potters (B128) and makes everything else. Useful glaze materials include dolomite (magnesium carbonate), copper, cobalt, vanadium pentoxide (yellow), manganese, iron spangles, barium and silicon carbide grit (60). With materials like these his brushes are generally inexpensive, including hake and oval mops. The work is fired to 1220C in oxidation. The colours he is aiming for are geological, often soft and subtle. The surfaces are always matt and frequently so rough that he wire brushes all his pots to remove the sharp edges. Often he includes cotton gloves in his packaging, with a warning note to galleries.



Top Tips from Paul:

1. Use ceramic fibre sheet, cut into mats and placed under each pot. (A desirable precaution to prevent glazes running and cementing pots to the kiln shelves).
2. Scarva Earthstone ES20 is a versatile clay for a multitude of purposes. Its advantage to Paul is that it has a low shrinkage rate, tends to hold its shape well and fires off-white.
3. His basic stoneware slip recipe is ball clay 50 + china clay 50.
4. To avoid contaminating your brushes, label them with indelible ink.

NB Paul's slips and glazes contain a good deal of toxic materials and must be used with protection. A dust mask and latex gloves are essential equipment at various stages.

The two hours sped by and I must say a big Thank You to Paul for a well organised, enjoyable and enlightening evening.





Mr Crow - Making People Happy, a reflection of my childhood.



Demonstration by Ben Fosker

Nicole Lyster

On 14th January, on a rather dark and dismal evening, after a year or two of pandemic and idiotic government behaviour, I spent the evening with a smile on my face and even a few laugh out loud moments. It was a tonic to be in the presence of Ben Fosker – even through the screen of a zoom demonstration.

Ben grew up in the Essex village of Rowhedge, on the banks of the river Colne. His was an idyllic childhood, full of magic, and it is that feeling he is trying to recapture in his illustrated ceramics.

Mr Crow was a tall skinny grocer, with an enormous heavy bike, seen riding around the village and considered by Ben to look ridiculous. But he had his uses for he was the source of free bottles of Corona. Young Ben and his friend would sneak into his back yard to pilfer the empty bottles and then run round to the front of the shop to ‘return their empties’ in exchange for a free bottle of pop.

At 16 Ben left school and decided he wanted to go to Art College, but his mother had other ideas, and he was told quite clearly “College, no. You need to get a job”. So it was off to sea to sail the Atlantic for many years, until he married and became an antique dealer.

That didn’t work out too well, so Ben delved into the life of a Buddhist Monk for four years, until he started a new life as a builder.



At 42 he finally got to college, studying embroidery, textiles and ceramics, but there was not enough time in the day to fit in building houses and a degree, so he had to concentrate on building and making a living. A short time trying to do a master’s degree at the Cardiff University told Ben that the constrictions of a ‘formal’ educa-

tion were not for him and he left. By then he

was hooked on the natural flow and process of wood firing – to such an extent that the rapture of the flames, coupled with a bottle of whiskey, resulted in a 4-hour-extension in the reduction phase of the firing and a kiln full of melted pottery (with a few surviving gems).

Needless to say he did not imbibe whiskey whilst firing his kiln from then on.

After this serendipitous journey, Ben found his ‘happy place’ with pottery and can now consider it his full time occupa-

pation and living.

“Clay is such an expressive material, and you can do whatever you like with it”, he said, and then proceeded to show us just what this means. “Everything I make is a

self-portrait, a little bit of me. I just want my work to make people happy.” And it does.

The Making of Mr Crow:

Roll a slab of clay (Ben uses Commercial Clay Ltd for his clay, their fine grogged white sculpture clay for preference) around a rolling pin. Ben uses a cement based board from a DIY store (e.g. Hardy Backer board from B & Q) to wedge his clay, as it removes moisture quickly and he likes to work with firm clay when making Mr Crow.

Pinch one end of the tube to a dome. “My work is a poetic illustration of an animal, rather than a literal representation. When I first made Mr Crow I was reminded of ‘proper potters’ pulling handles. They start off looking like large phalluses, but with a beak and some wings stuck on suddenly they are a crow.”

Make a cuboid plinth with slabs of clay, score and slip edges to ensure a good fix together. Decorate with splashes of copper oxide, in water. There is no specific mix “Like salt and pepper, a little bit of this and a little bit of that.” For this Mr Crow, Ben might add some splashes of red “So he looks like he’s killed something.” Ben signs his sculptures on the plinth, “for the added effort, you get a full signature”.

Cut triangles out of the tube end for the tail. “The best bit of doing a crow is the tail”. Save the cut out pieces for the wings. Make two solid cuboids for the feet and slip and score them to the top of the plinth. Ben has never had problems with these solid aspects. He leaves his work to dry for a week or two (depending on the weather) and then puts them in his kiln at 82C an hour drying cycle for four hours, before bisque firing them to 1000C.



Use a coil of clay, twisted to make a long beak – score in the mouth with a wooden tool and slip and score it to the ‘head’ of Mr Crow.

Add two small balls into the eye hollows, with slip and poke in the pupils with a wooden tool.

Use the triangles from the tail, for the wings, making bold scoring marks to represent feathers. Add a couple of clay disks with score marks to these, making sure everything is slip and scored for a firm fix.

Add coiled ‘dagger’ shapes to the legs, to make claws. Ben used to do Mr Crow with a yellow beak and feet, but now he prefers the black stain effect.

When Mr Crow has firmed up, paint his wings and feet with black powder stain mixed with water straight onto the clay. Sometimes Ben adds a little clay body to the stains, but it isn’t necessary. The rest of the bird is painted with cobalt oxide and water, as deep as he can so the blue is almost black. After Mr Crow has been bisque fired, he is covered in a transparent glaze and fired to earthenware cone 03 (1086C). Ben adds a little terracotta clay to this glaze to give it a slight tint. This results in a slightly off white finish over white slip.

When Ben is making, he is ‘just concentrating on sticking the bits together’, but this is

because he has envisaged his creation through a process of percolating many small ideas collected from different experiences, until an idea gets stuck in his mind and then he makes them”.

The Sgraffitoing of plates:

Ben uses a very tight pallet, of primary colours and a few oxides (cobalt, copper and manganese). Since starting to use black clay for his plates he has increased the colour intensity. He uses either an earthenware clay from PotteryCrafts mixed with a bit of terracotta to stop it slumping, or Scarva's Smooth Black. For our demonstration he used raw terracotta plates. Each plate is slab rolled and moulded, using slump moulds. They are not perfectly round by design as Ben prefers

to leave the edges as they are rolled, rather than cutting them. Each plate is painted with white slip (60% ball clay, 40% china clay). Ben makes a hundred of these 'plate canvasses' so he can then do what he enjoys the most "It makes me chuckle, I adore drawing onto clay – the making bit is boring, but the drawing is great".



When Ben was in college his art teacher called his technique 'truly primitive' and he still doesn't know if

she was being nice or nasty. But after "dreaming that William Blake poured ink" into his head, he believed in his drawings and "let go of my inhibitions" and "now I just do it and don't worry about it".

Drawing is done with a metal tool to scrape the surface of the plate through the slip, leaving dark terracotta lines.

Ben draws tigers chasing butterflies; dray horses with plaited manes and red shoes that he remembers from his childhood; stories of Nipper, his famous Jack Russell dog, yapping at the neighbours;

and hares running through flowers. Each stroke of the sgraffito tool is bold and flowing, every application of colour is thought about and balanced.

Occasionally he will add stripes using a slip trailer and clouds using a fan brush that splits the

coloured wash into wavy lines. His tools are simple, his approach is considered and the outcome is an uninhibited celebration of memory, feelings and magic – which it has taken him a lifetime to rediscover.





Potters' Open Day 2022

Seminar from Australia Beverly Benson and Ros McGuirk

Two years ago, in early March 2020, our annual POD turned out to be our last normal meeting. There was one exception. Our guest for the opening seminar was Professor Stephen Dixon who spoke to us via a video link from his home near Manchester. He was in quarantine having returned from Italy. Little did we realise then what was to happen next, but with normal life on pause we soon found other ways of being and doing, and Zoom appeared...and we carried on as best we could.

So there we were, on Saturday March 26th 2022, in a lecture theatre at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield, celebrating being together again. As the Guild wants to focus on wood firings and kiln buildings this year, our topic for the day was decided some time ago.

To carry out this plan our adept POD team had set up the most technically ambitious event ever. We were to start with a seminar on zoom shown on the big screen in the lecture theatre with three potters scattered across Australia, and would go on to spend the rest of the day with Ben Brierley and Sabine Nemet, the two demonstrators who were actually with us. The whole event was broadcast live on Zoom so all members and guests could join in wherever they were.

Helped by the expertise of Nick the university technician, four computers and Jackie, Gay controlled the main output and handled both the chatroom and the questions from the hall with admirable calm and cheeriness.

The seminar was introduced by Pie Bolton, one of our guest potters on zoom last year. For a full description of her work, see the review in Newsletter no. 40, Jan 2022.

Pie started with a statement of reconciliation to the tribal peoples of Australia, naming those tribes whose lands were being used by today's guests. As a former geologist working



Pie Bolton Sandy Lockwood Jack Latti

out in the outback, this is an issue that is fundamental to her beliefs and her ceramics. She explained her work briefly and acknowledged that she uses other potters' wood kilns as well as her own gas and electric ones. (Her large workshop is a community ceramic hub where others can come to learn and work.) Her own practice is mostly about geological processes and landforms. She likes melting rocks.

Sandy Lockwood lives out in the bush in a house that she built herself. Her studio is built using entirely recycled materials and she fires with eucalyptus wood and sometimes pine.

Sandy uses a number of methods in relation to the surfaces of her work. She uses a range of slips and glazes as well as ash and salt from the firing.

She is interested in introducing other materials to the clay that she prepares herself and is excited by the effect that firing has on the bits of rocks that she includes in the clay body. When her work comes into contact with the embers it has flame flares that leave a colour flash across the piece. As part of her PhD research, Sandy has explored forms related to British Neolithic artefacts such as axes, adzes and querns in her sculptural work. Her aesthetic is derived from material instability and she celebrates the visual complexity produced by wood firing as being similar to that caused by years of weathering.

The fierce fires that raged across Australia in recent years have devastated the woodland on and around Sandy's block. As well



as using plantation grown wood, Sandy is also making use of wood from trees destroyed by the fires.

It takes her around two days to fire the kiln. She preheats with gas and then continues with wood. When she introduces salt into the kiln, she throws it on to bark in the fire box and as it evaporates it flows with the flame through the kiln onto the work. She also makes 'burritos' of newspaper and salt which she introduces into the side stoke port. She fires the kiln up to cone 11 to 12. She prefers to fire with at least one other person because it is physically tiring. Sandy has found that there is a lot of interest in wood firing and she has run several successful workshops to introduce people to the craft. She believes that it takes nine or ten firings to discover the true potential of a new wood kiln.

Jack Latti lives outside Melbourne with his studio spreading out into his 5 acre garden. He has filled the garden with many of the succulents that surrounded him during his childhood in South Africa and they continue to inspire his making.

Jack was raised on the family farm and studied architecture for three years before changing to ceramics. He called his first kiln project the 'Klei huis'. It was built of clay bricks and other local materials. The design was based partly on Iranian mud houses and was influenced by the architecture of Nader Khalili. It had three rooms, or chambers, each with a large domed roof. When the building was finished he fired it to 1000C. It took three burners and 5,000litres of kerosene over two days. After he left a family moved in and have stayed there ever since. Nowadays he is mostly interested in what happens in the firebox of his kiln. The kiln he is currently building is again of bricks,

caged in metal. He passed on a number of useful tips such as to complete the interior before the roof is built so you are not left inside crawling around in a dusty atmosphere. The brick roof is supported with steel and sleeved with lighter weight insulating bricks. There are 'mouse holes' under the floor to allow the heat to travel right across the kiln. He emphasised that the size of the kiln has to be dictated by the size of the available kiln shelves.

He expects that it will take three days to fire and has set up a number of probes in different parts of the kiln to measure temperatures. These are linked to a device at the back of the kiln which will record the firing. He hopes this will happen soon and has given himself three weeks to make the work to fill it. We are hoping he will share the results!

At the end of the seminar there was time for a few questions and they were about freedom to fire and sustainability. Jack said that he is concerned to reduce his firing time to conserve the fuel. He is also to introduce fans to help improve the quality of the exhaust fumes. That appealed to Guild member Jerry who wood fires in Ruislip and admitted to being worried whether Environmental Health or the Fire Brigade would be the first to close him down. Sandy, on the other hand is able to reduce her firing time and fuel by bisque firing entirely on solar power. This is more efficient than once-firing which she used to do. She has 26 solar panels on her roof. That is Australia for you!

Our plans to build at COAM have been at the back of our minds for a while, and happily, during this seminar we felt reassured that size does not matter. Small is beautiful and should work, too.

After that time ran out, so we said our thanks for a fascinating hour, and 'good night'.



Ben Brierly at POD

Andre Hess

Introduction

The afternoon slot at POD 2022 was assigned to Ben Brierley as part of the day of woodfired pots and potters. He is an established wood-firer whose work does not fit into the generally understood picture of what a woodfirer does and produces. I will show this below.

Discussion

Woodfired pottery is a type of ceramics defined mainly by the way it is fired, and by features that make the work recognisable as woodfired. These distinguishing features include natural ash deposits which partly or wholly glazes the piece, 'flash' marks caused by the flames, wadding marks made by materials that prevent pieces from sticking to the kiln shelves and to each other, and a particular set of colours. Sometimes salt and soda firings are done with wood, with enhanced effects. The surface effects are influenced by the shape and where the piece sat in the kiln in relation to the flames, the ports where eg salt/soda were added, and to the other pieces nearby.

The firing technique is often associated with pottery of a homely size (a concept disrupted by 'New Expressionist' potters like Peter Voulkos, Torbjorn Kvasbo, and a succession of people who passed through Gulgong and the organising mind of Janet Mansfield, including Ryoji Koie, the kind of pottery much complained about by Peter Dormer in his book 'The New Ceramics: Trends and Traditions').

Some see 'authenticity' in ceramics as associated with wood, open flames, the effort involved, and its characterisation as 'ancient', usually 'ancient Japanese'. This 'effort' involves building monster kilns, sourcing and preparing the wood, labour-



intensive firing, and significant slices of time, often days (and days waiting for the kiln to cool down). It is usually collaborative and social, and often requires a network of 'kiln doctors' advising and helping each other. Every new wood kiln starts off with 'having potential' which can only be realised by experience and closely observing and recording the firing and the results. Chance and risk are inseparable from this method, and potters making and firing this way are sometimes deemed to be working on the 'frontline.' Many eschew electric firing and biscuiting the ware, and are faithful to a type of pottery.

What distinguishes Ben Brierley's work from that of others.

He talked as he worked, throwing on the wheel and assembling, and what he talked about, and what he made, attested to a hybrid way of working. He biscuit fires almost all his work because of the need to transport them to various kilns; he does not add materials such as seashells for wadding; he insists that the technique of making and firing always be in service of the idea; he explores narrative and 'performance' in his work; he is interested

in the way we describe pots eg as having heads, necks, bellies, and feet, and deforming/moving these. Both his parents were in the theatre and the body in space is part of his visual vocabulary.

Ben spoke freely and quickly about his background, his formative times, and his epiphanies in clay. Names like Winchcombe, Mid Warwickshire College, Joe Tete (Ghanaian potter painter), Wolverhampton, Cardiff (where he did an MA), St Neots in Cornwall, the first anagama kiln he made with Paul McAlister, and Loughborough where he now works. He has also, very recently, taken on the role of Principal at the Clay College in Stoke-on-Trent.

He maintains that his work distinguishes itself by his focus on self-expression using firing techniques that include traditional woodfiring. His are not traditional pots, and he does not come from the Leachean peasant-pot tradition. His is a sensibility that speaks of an artistic self-consciousness.

He talked of his collaboration with Stephen Parry, another potter who works in a unique way with woodfiring, and Matthew Blakely, whose engagement with wood is only part of his vocabulary. He described his interest in American Abstract Expressionism, and recalls how he would drop thrown plates into formers on the floor, and how he 'clamped' large vessels after they came off the wheel.

What did Ben Brierley make?

For the demonstration he constructed one of his composite pieces made out of a roughly



and expressively fashioned base using his 'rough black' clay, atop which was a thrown 'body' (urn shaped) in terracotta, a small cylinder that slotted over the neck of that pot, on top of which was a small urn-shaped pot that was the 'head' of the piece. Once assembled, he added 'movement', that in the end endangered the piece and it collapsed.

Terracotta of course would not survive a woodfiring, so these are electrically fired. And, interestingly, he mentioned that he has built a small fast-firing wood kiln for biscuiting work, this concept alone is filled with tension.

Also interesting was his use of an earthenware glaze to 'glue' parts of his constructions together.

Conclusion

It is clear that Ben Brierley is not principally and emotionally bound to woodfiring. Woodfiring is not for him a vocation, but a means of expression, amongst others.





Guild Summer Programme

Sat 14th May. 11am – 1pm.

Richard Ballantyne and Carol Read.
'Chicken Making'. Bring a board, a knife,
brush and modelling tools. £3 for clay.
Methodist Church hall, Kings Langley,
WD4 8BR

**Tues 31st May and subsequent dates in
July, Aug and Oct.** COAM clay activities.
See separate item for details. (page 20)

There will be more to come, so watch your emails and also check
the website and our Facebook and Instagram pages.



Other Events

Sat 7th May. Open Day

at Whichford Pottery, Shipston-on-Stour,
Warks, CV36 5PG 10am – 4pm

Top end flower pots, free pottery exhibition and demos, also home baking, quality plants. 'Big and Bold' – an hour's master-class in throwing by Adam Keeling at 11.30 am and 2.30 pm. £35. Book your place. <https://www.whichfordpottery.com/>

3 - 5th June. 'Potfest in the Pens'.

Penrith. The first of two. (2nd in Oct. See below.) www.potfest.co.uk

10 - 12th June. 'Potfest Scotland'. Scone Palace. www.potfest.co.uk

1-3 July Childwickbury Arts Fair. 60+ arts and crafters selling and demos. Childwickbury, Harpenden Rd, St Albans, AL3 6JU

Adults £7, seniors £6, 15yrs £4,

Sat 25th June

Big Build in St Albans in Tudor times.
See Chair's report for details. (page 5)

Sat 2 – Sun 3 July

Clay Build in Berkhamsted.
St Peters and Open Door event.
See separate item for details. (page 18)

5yrs free. Fri half price.

Fri 10-5pm, Sat 10-6pm,
Sun 10-5pm. No online booking.

29 - 31st July. 'Potfest in the Park'.

Hutton-in-the-Forest, Penrith.
www.potfest.co.uk

19 -21st Aug. 'Art in Clay'.

Windsor Race Course. Tickets online or by card at the gate.
£11 adults, £10.50 seniors, under 15yrs free.
See www.artinclay.co.uk

10th Sept - 2nd Oct Herts Open Studios.
See www.hvaf.org.uk to register.

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

Penrith. www.potfest.co.uk

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



Kiln Calibration

 By Tim Thornton

Many potters just type in or select their desired firing schedule and press Start, thinking that's all that is required when operating a kiln. But there's a bit more to it than that if you want to have consistent, repeatable firings, all of which can be put under the umbrella of kiln calibration. Some are specific to the type of thermocouple you have, or how you use your controller, whereas others apply equally to all kilns. I'll deal with them here in the order that they should be applied - if one doesn't apply to you, then just skip to the next one. At the end you'll have a better understanding of your kiln's capabilities, and your pots will suffer less from the temperamental vagaries of the kiln gods!

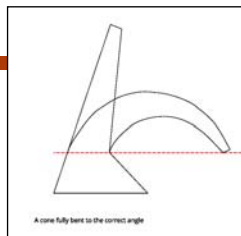
Thermocouple Calibration

Thermocouples used in kilns are one of three types: **K**, **R** or **S**. Type **K** are cheaper, but of much lower accuracy. Whereas **R** and **S** types are accurate to about $\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ throughout their life, **K** type may have errors of $\pm 10^{\circ}\text{C}$ when new, and as they age this may increase to 30°C or more. So, if your kiln has a **K** type thermocouple, you need to calibrate it when new and regularly thereafter. If you have an **R** or **S** type, skip to the next section. The thermocouple type should be given in your kiln specification and user manual, and often can be displayed in the controller.

To do the calibration, you'll need a cone corresponding to the top temperature you glaze to - I'd suggest self-supporting cones as they are much easier to use and more consistent than the ones you need to make a support for, if a little pricier. You'll also need Orton's table of cones and equivalent temperatures, which you can download here:

<https://www.ortonceramic.com/pyrometric-cones-resources>.

Put a kiln shelf about 30mm below the thermocouple, and put the cone on the shelf about the same distance from the thermocouple and where it can be seen from a peep hole. Now program your kiln to fire at 60°C/hr to about 60°C above the cone temperature, e.g. for Cone 6 the temperature is 1222°C in Orton's tables, so you may want to set the program to 1240°C . As the thermocouple temperature approaches the cone temperature, check the state of the cone through the spy hole, and when fully down (*as shown in Fig. 1 above*) make a note of the thermocouple reading. The difference is the thermocouple error that you need to enter into your controller, e.g. if the thermocouple read 1231°C when the cone was down the error would be 9°C . Your thermocouple is now calibrated!



Unfortunately, the thermocouple will drift with time, so I would put a cone close to the thermocouple at least every few glaze firings to detect this, and let it tell you when you need to recalibrate. You probably don't do your glaze firings at 60°C/hr , so the cone may bend a bit more or a bit less, or you may need to go up or down a cone, but whenever the state of the cone after the firing differs significantly from previous firings on the same program, you should think about recalibrating.

Cone Firings

Quite a few controllers (particularly from the USA) come with pre-programmed "Cone firings", the idea being that you can just select, say, a fast Cone 6 firing, and the controller will do it all for you. Sounds great if you do all of your firings based on cones,

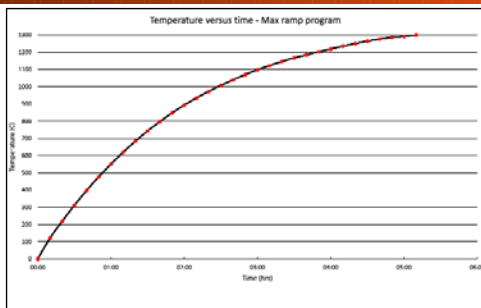
but there can be a fair bit of variation between actual cones and what the program does - partly because it depends on things like how you load your kiln and the state of your elements, and partly because the quality of the programs in the controllers can be quite variable. But most controllers with cone firings let you put in an offset value to correct for any errors. Skip on to the next section if your controller doesn't have cone firings, or if you don't use them.

Checking and adjusting the cone firings is typically a one-off task, unless you start making very different sized work or loading your kiln very differently. And, of course, you only need to do it for the programs that you actually use. Because results can be quite variable, I'd suggest putting 3 cones into the kiln: the target cone, one above and one below, as before placed close to the thermocouple. Load the kiln as you normally would for the glaze firing, with a kiln full of pots, and fire using the desired cone program. When you open the kiln, you will probably find that the kiln has fired a bit hotter or cooler than programmed, and you need to adjust the offset up or down for that cone firing. This needs a bit of trial and error, as the kiln won't have fired at one of the rates in Orton's tables, but after 2 or 3 firings you should have it close enough.

Ramp Rates

We happily enter a given ramp rate into our firing schedules, but do we know if the kiln can actually achieve that rate? Or does the program have the same wishful thinking as a child's birthday present wish list? And how fast does the kiln actually fire if we set the ramp to Max?

The actual maximum firing rate of your kiln



depends on the kiln design, the weight of pots and kiln furniture in the kiln, the state of your elements, and the kiln temperature. The more stuff in the kiln, the more tired your elements, and the higher the temperature, the slower the achievable ramp rate. And, by setting a ramp rate higher than is achievable, your firings will never be consistent and repeatable. So you need to do a test firing to see what is realistically achievable. The technique is to fill the kiln to the maximum that you normally would with pots, set the ramp rate to max, and fire to the top temperature of your kiln, recording the temperature every 10 or 15 minutes. As this is probably faster than you normally fire your kiln, I'd suggest filling it with seconds or other rejects.

Once you have logged the data, you can calculate the actual ramp rate at a given reading as follows: If the temperature is T_1 , and the previous temperature reading was T_2 , and the time between readings is t minutes, then the ramp is $(T_1 - T_2) \times 60 / t$ °/hr.

All these numbers can be plotted on graphs. (Fig. 2 above) plots temperature against time, and it can clearly be seen how the rate of temperature rise slows as the kiln gets hotter. More usefully, Fig. 3 (top of page XX) plots the calculated ramp rate against temperature. Here you can see that this kiln will happily fire at 200°C/hr to 1000°C, and 100°C/hr

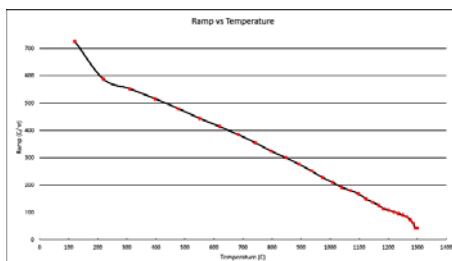
to 1200°C, but really struggles above 1250°C. To use this data, when programming your kiln look up the maximum ramp rate at the target temperature for each segment, and don't enter a ramp rate higher than this, as your kiln will not achieve it - I normally round it down a bit to allow for when the elements are getting tired. So, for example, if doing a Cone 6 firing to 1220°C, with this kiln the maximum ramp rate would be 95°C/hr. If you were to program in 200°C/hr, for example, then the kiln would not be able to follow this above 1000°C, and the longer firing time would effectively be adding a 20 minute soak to the firing as the controller waited for the kiln to reach the target temperature.

Of course, you do not need to fire at that slow rate throughout the firing - you could fire at 200°C/hr to 1000°C, and then 95°C/hr to 1220°C if you wanted to, reducing the overall firing time considerably.

But please, no more just setting the controller to Max!

Cold Spots

The last stage in this process is to see how even the temperature is in your kiln - the top and bottom tend to be cooler than the middle as there is the kiln floor and lid/ceiling to heat up, and fewer elements to do this. If you have a multi-segment kiln, with multiple thermocouples each controlling a bank of elements, like some from L&L, then this problem is largely eliminated as the top and bottom sets of elements will be fired harder than the middle ones. Also, Skutt try and compensate for this with more powerful elements top and bottom, and others put an element on the kiln floor, but generally this doesn't fully solve the problem.



Here you measure the heat going into different parts of the kiln by using cones - I'd suggest packs of 3 in various places throughout the kiln. Initially I'd put 2 sets on each shelf, one in the middle and one at the edge, to get a good feel for how the kiln behaves. You can then help even out the temperature by how you load the kiln. A good start is to increase kiln shelf spacing in cooler areas, so that an extra element is included, and decrease in hot areas, so there is one less element (but always have at least one element between each pair of shelves). You'll probably find you have a larger shelf spacing top and bottom, and smallest in the middle. You can also adjust the temperature by putting fewer pots onto the colder shelves, though this isn't my first choice as I get less in the kiln.

So now your kiln is all set up to give reliable, repeatable firings, and you are no longer susceptible to the vagaries of the "kiln gods".

Happy firing!

Tim Thornton runs courses on electric kilns and firing, product safety, and studio health and safety. The next iteration of online courses starts in mid-May.

www.tim-thornton.com



Another Ecclesiastical Clay Build (Berkhamsted Sat/Sun 2/3 July)



Ian Jones

The Church of St Peters in Berkhamsted is celebrating 800 years and Father Stuart the new Rector is keen that local organisations should come to together to celebrate this amazing anniversary.

Following on from the success of the Clay builds that the Guild has created over the last few years in St Albans, I thought it would be the ideal event for this celebration. The Guild will be collaborating with the Berkhamsted Art Society and the Open Door Charity to promote all three of the organisations and engage with the local community.

By the time of this event the Open Door Pottery Shed will be up and running. As of Wednesday 6th April the electrics are all functioning and the Kiln will be commissioned on 26th April. The Water/Sewage is still to be connected, but the necessary groundwork has been completed. The Kiln room has been built and a disabled toilet has been installed. The three pottery wheels will be delivered just after Easter and the pottery tools will be ordered using the generous grant from the Guild of £500.



David Evans from the Guild and David Satchell from the Art Society have already visited the church to take photos of the outside, some external detail from the windows etc and internal features. These will be used to prompt the general public to



model the detail of the Church .

As this the first time I have organised such an event the plan is for a model of about 6 feet long and 4 feet high. (the St Albans Cathedral build was 17 Feet long) The cardboard formers have been sourced from a local packaging company and will be built following guidance from members of the Pottery Guilds's team that are building the Tudor theme clay models in St Albans the previous weekend Judi Tribe and David Evans and Jackie Harrop.



The photographs will also be used as inspiration for pictures that the Berkhamsted Art Society will paint either during a series of Monday Summer Drawing Evenings in June based around St Peter's Church or at home for those unable to attend the drawing

evenings.

Should any members be interested in helping out with the Clay build in any way ie building, attending and inspiring the general public to take part please contact Ian Jones at the BerkhamstedArtSociety@gmail.com



Green Men Masks at COAM



Sandie Taylor

The children who visited COAM for the second "Terrific Tuesday" during the Bucks Easter holidays had great fun making clay faces covered in green foliage. They also had the opportunity to work collaboratively with our volunteers Deborah De Beer, Judi Tribe, Jackie Harrop and Sandie Taylor on a single large Green Man Mask which was pressed onto the old cherry tree by Northolt Barn. This collaborative art work will be fired and returned to COAM and hopefully hung by the new raku firing area to ward off evil spirits!



We need more volunteers to help with these events. The next is on Tuesday May 31st during half term. If anyone can spare the time even for a couple of hours in the morning please contact Sandie Taylor one-earth@ntlworld.com.



Kingsbury Barn Exhibition



Jackie Harrop

If you are interested in showing your work in this beautiful venue, or would like to know more, please email me as soon as possible. The exhibition is a highlight of the DCPG year and we will be asking for photographs of your recent pieces very soon, so that we can select some for the poster.

I look forward to hearing from you, Jackie (jackieharrop1@gmail.com)





Fitzwilliam Competition 2022



Nichole Lister

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

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 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.



Request for potters to help at COAM



Sandie Taylor

Every year COAM organise a number of event days for their visitors. During the holidays they run 'Terrific Tuesdays' for primary school children (5-11 years old) and their carers. There are a number of activities on offer and one of them this year will be working with clay.

If you would like to volunteer or help on one or more of the following dates or want to find out more about what is involved please contact Sandie Taylor by email at:

one-earth@ntlworld.com



Half Term: May 31st

Summer: July 26th,
August 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th

Half Term: Oct 25th

To find out more about COAM go to
<https://coam.org.uk/>



Collaboration with Open Door (Berkhamsted)

 Audrey Hammett

As reported in Issue 39, DCPG continues to collaborate with Open Door- an inspiring community arts charity in Berkhamsted.

The new ceramics studio is close to completion. It is hoped that with final electrical work and decoration, the space should be ready to host workshops from early April. The grant from DCPG will be used very soon to purchase tools and materials. The ceramics studio is a very exciting addition to making clay/ceramics accessible to the public in our area.

A few DCPG members helped to put together packs of air-dry clay, tools and instructions for a home-based clay activity "Lovely Mud" in November which was funded by National Lottery. 17 packs were delivered to participants via Hospice of St Francis, MIND and a local retirement complex.

Feedback from participants was very positive showing the value in clay to provide "escapism between treatments" and other well-being benefits.

When the studio is open and the kiln commissioned, it is hoped that future community activities will benefit from working with clay that can be decorated and fired for an even more engaging experience. Anyone with an interest in running or attending workshops or being involved with community projects at Open Door, please contact Joan on -

joan.fisher@opendoorberkhamsted.co.uk





Socials - Coffee time and other events



Judi Tribe

DCPG Socials for May - July 2022

May 5th 10.30am - 1.00pm

A walk around St Albans led by Guild members Andrew Gardner & Sandie Taylor.

Please meet promptly at 10.30am at the St Albans Cathedral Welcome Centre & Shop AL1 1BY

Refreshments afterwards at the Cathedral Cafe at 12.00 noon. stalbanscathedral.org

On this slow morning walk around St Albans we will be looking at the 'Tudor' buildings around the town. This will help give us an idea of the building details for the preparation work for the next Guild's Big Clay Build for the St Albans Festival on Saturday 25th June.

Could you please let Judi Tribe juditribe0@gmail.com know by Wednesday May 4th if you are coming as we don't want to leave you behind once we have set off !

Monday 23rd May

Studio Visit at Judi Tribe in Little Chalfont. 10.30am - 1.00pm

Have a look around my work place as well as teas & coffees in my garden.

Could you please contact Judi for address and directions. juditribe0@gmail.com

Friday 10th June, 10.30am - 12.30pm

Coffee Social at Little Heath Cafe, Potten End HP4 2RY

A hidden gem serving delicious food with-in charming indoor or outdoor seating areas. littleheathearoom.co.uk

Could you please let Judi know as soon as possible and definitely by Wednesday 1st June as tables need to be booked. juditribe0@gmail.com

Saturday 18th June, 2.00pm - 5.00pm

Afternoon Teas with a Bring & Buy Sale at Janice & Mel Esterman garden in Elstree

This social get together is also a wonderful opportunity to bring along all your pottery equipment and tools - large or small, books and magazines etc. as well as a great opportunity to find some useful bits and pieces to buy. Extra specially handmade pottery gadgets will be on sale too.

Donations welcome, these will go to the Guild's community events at The Chiltern Open Air Museum. Cash only and please could people bringing, take away their bits and pieces when they leave.

Could you please contact Janice for more details and address:

janesterman@gmail.com

Tuesday 12th July, 10.30am - 1.00pm

Walk at Heartwood Forest and Coffee Social at The Potting Shed

Please meet promptly at 10.30am in the car park at Heartwood Forest, Sandridge, St Albans AL4 9DQ for a gentle walk through this very special woodland area. heartwood.woodkandtrust.org.uk

After our Heartwood Forest walk, we will go for refreshments at The Potting Shed Cafe, Sandridge, St Albans AL4 9LJ

The cafe is only 2 minutes drive from Heartwood Forest.

pottingshedcafe.com

Could you please contact Judi to confirm you are joining the walk by Monday 11th July as we don't want to leave you behind once we have set off !

juditribe0@gmail.com



DCPG Needs a New Membership Sec: It could be You!



Audrey Hammett

After 8 years as Membership Sec, I need to hand the role over to an enthusiastic volunteer. Please think about whether you could take this on. Without members DCPG can't survive.

Especially in "normal times" when we meet face to face it is a good role for getting to know other people in DCPG and can be a fairly light role in Committee.

Most of the role is administrative and can be done at home in your own time - collecting membership subscriptions and maintaining the membership list, for example. It is also good to be available to meet

people as they arrive at DCPG meetings (remember those?) and ensure a warm welcome.

Some familiarity with Excel Spreadsheets would be an advantage or at least being willing to learn, similarly an awareness and sensitivity to Data Protection requirements will be needed.

I will be on hand to answer questions to begin with so the handover can be smooth as burnished clay.

If you are interested please let Jackie know or if you want to ask questions feel free to email or call me.



New Members and the DCPG Team



Welcome to new members:

Sam & Jacob Verdier - Harpenden

Jennie Kirk - Northwood

Jon Pain - Buckingham

DCPG Committee and contacts

Trustees

John Higgins	President and POD	johnceramics@aol.com
Jackie Harrop	Chair and Kingsbury	jackieharrop1@gmail.com
Ros McGuirk	Editor	ros.mcguirk@gmail.com
David Evans	Newsletter & advertising	evansdjal@aol.com
Mary Anne Bonney	DCPG email	mabonney@btinternet.com
Colin Hazelwood		

Non-Trustees

Gay Crommelin	Demonstrations and Librarian	library@dcpg.org.uk
John Alderman	Treasurer	treasurer@dcpg.org.uk
Judi Tribe	Social events and visits	
Tony Baxter	Property manager	tonybaxter@hotmail.com
Nicole Lyster	Instagram	nlceramics1@gmail.com
Sandie Taylor	COAM events and Safe Guarding	one-earth@ntlworld.com
Mandy English	Website	

Valentine Clays holds the key ingredient...



Emma Rodgers

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

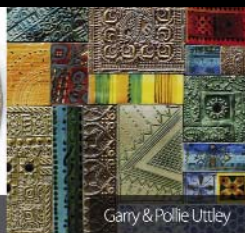
5%
member discount

POTCLAYS
LIMITED Since 1932
f t i n

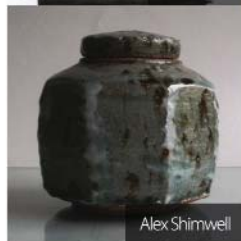
Committed to supporting
makers at every stage
of their ceramic practice



John Scott



Garry & Pollie Uttley



Alex Shimwell



Chiu-Wu



Clockwise: Geoffrey Swindell, Sue Pryke, Illyria Pottery

potclays.co.uk