



DACORUM AND CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD

Issue 54 Summer 2025
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In this issue:

POD 2025 with
Mella Shaw, Wayne Clark
and Rich Miller

Demos by
Jaroslav Hrustalenko and
and Byrony Applegate



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Cover picture: **Rich Miller** .
See page 14 fro his presentation at
POD in March 2025

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Notes from the Chair

Jackie Harrop



So much has happened already this year, a whirlwind of events and activities which have provided terrific opportunities for members to experience pottery in a variety of forms.

The first of our two POD events was a terrific success in March with the extreme contrast of Rich Miller's meticulous attention to detail and culturally loaded constructions contrasting with Wayne Clark's intuitive and liberal textural extravaganza pots and platters. Mella Shaw's lecture was intensely moving and thought provoking and the Sounding Lines installation left a lasting impression.

The organisation for POD 2 is well under way and tickets will shortly be available through Eventbrite. Watch out for notification and don't miss the chance to be part of this unique event combining pottery making and poetry in an experimental venture at Trestle theatre in St Albans.

The fanfare of events so far included handling ancient pots at the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, mudlarking for Tudor, Roman and medieval fragments

on the shore of the Thames, experimenting with kiln building, soda firing and raku at COAM, mug making and glazing, and we are only half way through the year.

Kingsbury Barn is fully booked for the annual exhibition with the Fitzwilliam competition, and members are busy making for these as well as the regular firings at COAM and for the summer party mug extravaganza on 21st June.

Aberystwyth was a great success and the canal cruise from Kings Cross is still to come, along with studio visits to Guild members' gardens for coffee mornings.

The Alban Festival clock tower big build, also on 21st June, and regular market stall events have kept members fully occupied and the level of motivation continues at a pace.

Thanks to everyone who has orchestrated these events and given generously of their time and effort to ensure members experience a really memorable anniversary year.

Best wishes Jackie



Editorial Summer 2025

Ros McGuirk



Honestly I can barely keep up with the Guild these days. There is so much going on this year that dates are flying through the ether like dandelion seeds in the wind. Looking back through the archive, which you will find on our website, it truly reflects the huge energy and enthusiasm of the very first year, 1975. There were so many ideas for meetings, demonstrations, kiln buildings, firings, museum visits, social gatherings and outreach events. It is astonishing that all this is still happening in these very different times.

A founding member has recently got in touch to say how pleased and amazed he was to find we still exist and are thriving! He sends his best wishes to all. This is entirely due to the happy confluence of the commitment and creativity of countless members over the years

together with the luck of finding accommodating hosts for our activities.

Once those come together we can flourish to the benefit of the communities in which we operate.

We were founded with a strong ethos of sharing and learning. Our meetings are open to all. Our activities are volunteer led and are open to all members. Even if you are not in the firing groups you are welcome to go along and maybe join in when the kilns are being fired – providing you get in touch with Laura or Lyndsey to check if it is ok. (We are guests there and numbers have to be managed as the site is small.)

As always I must thank the many contributors to the newsletter for taking the time to share.



Members News

Laura Gibbs took part in 'Handmade in Oxford', an arts and crafts show at Waterperry, on 12 - 14th June. It is a well attended show in beautiful grounds in which she had plenty of interest and sales were best on Saturday.





Lyndsey Miles took part in Free Range at 15 Hanbury St, E1 6QR on 11 - 13th July from 11.00 - 18.00. She was in the Legacy exhibition on the 2nd floor. This is a show for artists living outside London. See <http://www.free-range.org.uk/>

Considered dead to the earthly world, an anchorite would take part in a solemn ceremony before entering a period of

solitude, prayer and contemplation inside an anchorhold.

Offering counsel through exterior windows, they were not completely isolated from society.

Interested in how anchorites served as spiritual advisors to their communities, Miles undertook a period of physical confinement in a cell built from locally foraged clay.



New Members

Annie Kilby

from St Neots, Cambridgeshire :

"I am only 3 years into my pottery journey and am inspired by the infinite possibilities clay offers, I am starting to explore putting my emotions and life experiences into making some one off projects. Very inspired by attending two POD days, profound and thought provoking days, where I have been made to feel very welcome."

Jacquie Follett

After hobbying in silversmithing/ jewellery for many years I discovered the joys of clay, and enjoyed ten years of evening classes before embarking on a BA in Ceramics at the University of Herts.

My six years of part-time study will end this summer, so hopefully I will now have time to join in with Guild events. My final project uses the burnout technique to fire flaky fragile white porcelain forms, exploring themes of human fragility and resilience. I also volunteer with a mental health pottery group, teaching wheel throwing to beginners.

Elizabeth Murton

from St Albans is an artist who has been developing her interest in bringing ceramics and textiles together



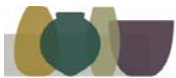
since Arts Council funding in 2022. She is excited to learn more from members and the events programme.

See www.elizabethmurton.co.uk

Hannah Williams

is from High Wycombe and has joined the kiln group:

"I have always loved handmade, functional ceramics and had some lessons a year or so ago. I now occasionally throw wonky pots for friends and family in a greenhouse in the back garden. I'm looking forward to joining DCPG to pick up tips for my own work, but also to meet other potters!"



Welcome back to **Steve Fitzwilliam**, now living in Hackney, who writes "Having helped make pottery wheels when I was younger, I'm now trying my hand at throwing on them." (A case of the wheel coming full circle? - Ed)



One Creative Ape, otherwise known as **Paul Owens**, from St Albans, has been hand building and throwing in stoneware for 4 years and enjoys pushing the boundaries between form and function, aesthetics and technicalities. His pieces are carefully designed to catch the eye and one's curiosity.

Follow his progress on instagram, #onecreativeape, and at www.onecreativeape.com



Guild meetings in Kings Langley

Unless otherwise stated, all Guild meetings are held on a Friday evening starting with refreshments at 7pm followed by a presentation from our guest potter at 7.30 – 9.30pm.

The venue is the Methodist Church hall, Hempstead Rd, Kings Langley WD4 8BR. There is parking on site and at the premises next door.

During the meeting members will have access to our excellent library and may borrow for a small fee. Bring your own mug for tea or coffee. Guests are welcome for £5.

Sat 11th Oct : AGM with guest **Roger Cockram**. AGM at 9.30am and then a welcome back for an old friend of the Guild. Marine biologist turned potter, Roger lives in Devon and is very well known for his beautiful pots part sculpted with fish. Even his domestic ware brings a taste of the sea. This will be a fascinating morning of making and decorating.

Sun 19th Oct : **POD 2** – an anniversary special at Trestle.

14th Nov: Fri meeting with **Jeremy Nichols**. Jeremy makes high fired saltware inspired by precision engineering and architecture. The freedom of the glaze effects, mostly in blue and white, is a foil to the carefully constructed pots.

He is an experienced maker and demonstrator and a former chair of the London Potters.

12th Dec : **Phil Jolley** uses slabs of layered clay with added surface decoration to make work that is both colourful and quirky. He is a great recycler of ideas and materials and a fund of knowledge of clays, glazes and decorative techniques.

This will especially appeal to those with an appreciation of all things historical and offbeat. (Mudlarking included!)



Firing Dates at COAM

At the time of going to press the dates are provisional. Please check with the relevant whatsapp group.

For more information and to join in please email : laura_gibbs@yahoo.co.uk or lyndseymiles@gmail.com. All members are welcome and will be supported.

July : 19/20 : Wood firing over the weekend. Raku on Sunday

Aug : 16/17 : Firings tba

Sept : 27/28 : Introductory wood firing for newcomers (earthenware). Bring your work bisque fired. Glazes provided.

Nov : 8/9 : tba and **Dec : 13/14** : tba



Terrific Tuesdays - Clay Workshops at COAM in 2025

29th July : Victorians : tea cups, crowns, Haddenham House (at museum)

5th Aug : Stone Age : huts, shields, pots,

12th Aug : Fun of the Fair : fairground rides and merry-go-rounds

19th Aug : VJ Day : Japanese pots and pagodas

26th Aug : Bushcraft : leaf imprints and tree of life

28th Oct : Terrible Tuesday : Halloween theme

For an absorbing day out in a beautiful setting, it is hard to beat the clay workshops we run in the old Northolt Barn. Well worth a visit if you have not been before and your help will be much appreciated.

Please contact Judi at

juditribe0@gmail.com

for more info and to join in.

Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newland Park Dr, Gorelands Ln, Chalfont St Peter, Chalfont Saint Giles HP8 4AB

<https://www.coam.org.uk>



Kingsbury Barn annual members exhibition and Fitzwilliam competition

Kingsbury barn is now fully booked with exhibitors for the annual members exhibition from 12th to 14th September.

We'll be setting up on Weds 10th Sept and receiving exhibitors with their work on Thursday 11th along with entries for the Fitzwilliam competition. The theme is Natural World and entries must be ceramic, made by the exhibitor this year.

Friday 12th will be the first day when you can buy work and we will have the private view for family and friends on Friday 12th from 7-9.00 pm. Get these

dates in your diary now, so you don't miss a chance to get the best of the best!

The "hands on" with St Michael's school pupils will be on the afternoon of Friday 12th and volunteer helpers welcome. Just let me or Jill Baxter know please.

Don't miss the opportunity to see the exciting range of work which your fellow members will have on display and for sale. It's a beautiful setting and a really good chance to meet with other members, swap pottery stories and to check out some spectacular exhibits .



Other Events

6th Sept - 19th Oct British Ceramics Biennial 2025

A great festival with exhibitions, screenings, talks and events focussed on the ceramics skills and industry of Stoke.

www.britishceramicsbiennial.com

12th - 14th Sept Ceramics in the City.

Museum of the Home, 136 Kingsland Road, London E2 8EA

15 /16th Nov Art in Clay Farnham.

In its 28th year, this show has grown into a major event with around 90 potters exhibiting. The Maltings, Bridge Square, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7QR

Sat 10am – 5pm, Sun 10am – 4.50pm. Adults £5, concs £4.50 under 15's free.

Cash and card accepted on the day.

See www.artinclayfarnham.co.uk

For even more ceramic events see <https://www.thisthingwithceramics.co.uk>



Notices

Pitstone Green Museum

Based on an old farm at the foot of the Chilterns and run by volunteers it has an eclectic mix of old machines, local history and traditional crafts including demonstrations and have a go activities.

Well worth a visit.

Address : Vicarage Rd, Pitstone, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 9EY

See www.pitstonemuseum.co.uk

Wheel hire

There are now three wheels out on hire. They will be back in October for maintenance and then available for hire for 6 months at £10/month. They are for members only and there are conditions attached. Bookings will open in mid-Sept.

Discounts for Members

Potclays -

10% against all goods with exception of some machinery and equipment which would be 5%. Only available when phoning sales team.

Not available online

Scarva - 10% discount on all materials, not incl machinery & equipment. Online orders ONLY. Quote DCPG24

CTM Supplies

- 5% discount if for own use - though not for pallets of clay sent directly from the slip house (250kg+), or kilns and wheels as these are already discounted down.

Potterycrafts

tbc - keep an eye on the DCPG members' Facebook page for updates

Ceramtech – 5% - email before visiting.

Clayman

– 5% All members will be offered 5% if phoning and they mention they are members of Dacorom and Chiltern Potters Guild, and will automatically receive 5% if ordering online on our web shop.

NB It seems best to phone your supplier, tell them you are a DCPG member and request a discount. The exception being Scarva who use a code.)

Nicole is on hand to confirm you are indeed a member. That will be by email, so let Nicole have their address.

Thanks to Fiona Booy for researching all this.



Boxmoor Fair 2025 by Ros McGuirk

We will have a stand at Boxmoor Fair on Sunday 21st Sept. This is a small country fair run by the Boxmoor Trust over that weekend. It is held on the water meadows beside St John's Church, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1NP. Just around the corner was the old hall where the DCPG began in 1975. We have at least 2 members who were there and remember it well!

The Guild have long been an integral part of this popular show, offering a clay workshop in exchange for a free selling space. This year circus is the theme and there will be suitable entertainment.

Setting-up on the Sunday is 9.30am. The fair starts at 11am and ends by 4pm. It is a short day but a busy one with lots of locals strolling over to see the entertainers, food, great coffee and craft stalls. Here you will meet parents bringing their own children to enjoy something that they remember so well from their own childhood – the have-a-go clay workshop!

Boxmoor are good hosts and will have our gazebos ready.

Setting up will involve arranging the



tables, the handbuilding workshop (similar to our crafting sessions at COAM) and, on a separate table, a selling exhibition.

Helpers are welcome to bring work to sell (more details later) and we will run a rota if required to share out the jobs.

You can come for as much time as you can manage, (though once arrived you will be loath to leave.) Extra help at setting up and taking down is always welcome.

Reply to me, ros.mcguirk@gmail.com if you are interested in joining in and I will email further details nearer the time.

Thank you

OBITUARY

Gordon Baldwin

Gordon Baldwin who has died aged 92 was a pioneer potter taking ceramics towards art, philosophy and abstraction. He was an inspiration in post war ceramics and influenced the course of teaching pottery everywhere. He explored the potential of the vessel producing exciting new forms and took up the idea of 'inscape' - the inner nature of an object. Landscapes were also

explored in this way.

He was influenced by ancient Egypt and Greece, Picasso and Henry Moore. He taught at Goldsmiths, Central School and Eton from the 1950's. In the '70's he developed his iconic winged bottle forms. He retired from teaching in mid-1990's and carried on producing work, towards the end of his life mostly drawings and collages.



Mella Shaw at POD 1 2025

In the Lecture slot at POD 1 2025 there was Mella Shaw, winner of the British Ceramics Biennial 2023, whose work brought to the fore oceanic sonar/sound pollution and its sometimes catastrophic effect on cetaceans, especially whales. She was introduced to the audience by Laura Gibbs.

This body of work is in obvious contrast to the conventional studio tableware - or figure-making pottery tradition and aligns itself with the wider more expansive uses of clay as medium. This, in ceramics, follows in the wake of the many latter movements in art: art as site of information; art making as journalism; art as site of discursiveness; art as activist in eg climate/gender/identity/outrage/etc; art that comes out of 'situation' or events or performance; and more recently art as experience. Who would forget artist Jeremy Deller's 'We're Here Because We're Here', and his hundreds of WW1 Soldiers (played by actors) standing, walking, sitting silently, all over the country? That poignancy? That feeling it gave us.

It is this expanded field of art and ceramics that Mella Shaw positions herself using, this time, large, beautiful modernist clay objects (capable of functioning independently) accompanied by text and, in the case of 'Sounding Line', red marine rope, sound and vibration, and an encouragement to touch.

She started off by telling the audience about the project, about where the idea came from, which was the 'ear-bone', the tympanic bulla of the whale, a 'Henry Moore type' shape, and how looking at this caused an explosion in



her mind and life and turned her into the self-declared activist artist she has become.

Key words when thinking about her own work she said were: balance, tipping points, thresholds, and edges. And the Portuguese word *saudade*, a word that is difficult to translate directly, but which encompasses feelings of melancholy, longing, desire, loss, gain. Another important consideration in her work is temporality, as in time. Hers is work that is the equivalent of feelings, work that evoke feelings, and work that imparts crucial information almost 'side-ways' rather than in pure documentary or journalism.





Technique is important, but not fetishised, as she learnt at the Royal College of Art, and that it is the idea that is most meaningful and important. Each of her projects is years in the making, which is why affordable studio space and funding are crucial to the work. Some of the discussion was around that. An incident that permanently shifted her sensibilities, and in a way her life, was the mass beaching of around 100 whales along the West Coast of Scotland and the Outer Hebrides, their disorientation and beaching resulting from the sound and sonar pollution in the sea caused by shipping and the military/navy.

She spoke for a while on the place of the whale in culture and in history. She also spoke of the otherness and wonder of the whale body marooned on land.

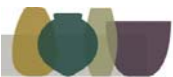
Her shapes are large formal abstractions from the shape of the actual ear-bone of the whale and in the clay she had incorporated the sintered bones of a specific Northern Bottlenose whale that died from the effect of sona. There is a story there of official consent and of difficulties.

During the making of this work, and while on the beaches of the Uist, she noticed the patterns produced by the sea as it withdrew from the shore. She referred to these as 'sand etchings'. It was this that inspired her to drag, with huge difficulty, one of her sculptures hitched with red rope. This line made by the sculpture being dragged in the sand became an idiom and major subtext in the work. This phase of the project was filmed by Rowan Aitchison, and shown at the end of her talk.

What about the future of the project? Mella is working on making a large, engineered cube-like lightweight metal frame in which the work can be hung, and which is 'portable'. It is her intention to tour the project.

'Sounding Lines', she states unambiguously and repeatedly, has made her an activist artist. To this end she is working towards staging 'Sounding Line' at the MacManus Museum in Dundee that will coincide with a conference drawing attention to the ongoing global issue of whale numbers. Hers is more than mere inflating of the work with text.

Andre Hess



Wayne Clark by Amanda Toms

Welsh potter Wayne Clark also teaches, exhibits and is an organiser of Ceramic Wales.

He took us through his journey into the world of pottery, starting with a two year National Diploma in Wrexham and ending up at Harrow College where he





developed his rugged sculptural handling of clay coupled with making traditional functional ware. "It's about how you handle a material, how you pick things up and how they feel". It is about distorting, stretching and ripping up the clay to create interesting and textured marks.

His time at Harrow was mostly spent on the kiln site where students got to design, build and fire their kilns. This practical and down to earth approach to learning suited Wayne and he immersed himself in wood firing. Big influences were Patrick Sargent, Takeshi Yasuda, Robert Turner and the likes of Charles Bound. His final year degree show was at Whitely's in London where his impressive display led to representation by the Paul Rice Gallery. Initially they asked for six pieces, giving frank advice on pricing for the professional art market. It was a sellout, one piece going to New York.

Wayne returned to his old college in Wrexham as a demonstrator rather than a lecturer.

This was by choice as he is very 'hands on'. He is still there now working closely with Wendy Lawrence running a BA course while also developing his own work. He has also gained a master's degree in which he delved deep into the sculptural and functional possibilities of concrete, still with thrown clay in the mould making process. This has led him to designing very large pieces of





furniture which he has exhibited at Sir Harold Gardens in Romsey. There are however many practicalities and difficulties in the logistics of working with this very heavy material which limit its use.

Wayne wowed us with five different wood kilns that he has built over the years, all from the same bricks. He has really enjoyed experimenting with firing everything and anything. His kiln designs have gradually become shorter and taller. They can now be fired just by him and his wife Jo in 21 – 24 hours, as opposed to needing a crew for several days. He tends to buy in logs a ton at a time and burns them without even splitting them.

For his demonstration Wayne showed us how he constructs a functioning stool. His preferred clay is a very coarse pizza clay body which he mixes with the smoother ES50 in varying amounts. His throwing technique for centering large quantities of clay is to hit it into shape on the wheel while avoiding contact with the abrasive clay as much as possible. A patchwork of thrown and cut pieces showed his exciting and intuitive way of working with large pieces of clay. He cut slabs with a giant handmade tool, adapted from a bow saw, rather than use a wire. Extruded tubes support the seat and form the legs. Wayne said he likes the clay best in its wet state and prefers making a piece in one go. The textures produced in this free way of working are enhanced by the effects of wood firing. He uses simple shino glazes or vitreous slips and the reduction brings out warm toasty colours due to iron in the clay.



He added that it takes time to get to know a kiln and now he has fewer failures and can use cooler parts of the kiln for different glazes.

The demo ended in spectacular fashion with three enormous thrown platters placed on the floor sandwiched between very large bats. Members of the audience were then guided by Wayne to jump or rock on each piece in turn to get the desired rim. The audience were buzzing with declarations of how inspiring it was to be encouraged to take risks with clay.



Crown Maker - Rich Miller Jackie Harrop

It wasn't the first time that Richard has been to talk to us, but the first time we have been able to watch him assemble one of his beautiful crowns and to hear what lies behind the colonial messaging. He began with a lovely account of his grandfather's move from Guyana to the UK, his father's career as a military bandsman and his mother's upbringing in rural Wales. It is easy to understand why the early childhood experience as the only mixed-race boy in his Welsh village and the lived experience of slights and injuries of intended and unintended racism were clear in the early visual symbols which emerged through his work with clay.

His formal training at Farnham under the tutelage of Magdalena Odundo, Claire Twomey, and Gareth Mason, nurtured the talent which was apparent from an early age when he discovered how to create shapes in sugar craft alongside his mother.

His personal work reflects a deep-rooted response to the colonialism which enabled him to create narratives that echo the story of his family heritage. The Jolly Man banks of the nineteenth century and the crown revered by his military parents, symbolise the extremes of racist privilege emerging in his early work. The sugar cones inspired by mudlarking in London, not only pick up elements of slavery and sugar plantations reflect strong visual images from his Guyanan ancestry. His artwork is a metaphor which enables emotions to be communicated and some of his more recent work invokes the many racial injustices which he and his family and many men who look like him have been obliged to endure.





Current work features a hero of his younger self, Hondo MacLean (a Welsh musician), standing as a press moulded icon on a brick base. He demonstrated his use of moulds to create his fleur de lys sprigs and spherical forms and showed us the precisely measured 3D printed profiles used to create the extruded arms which feature in his beautiful crowns. As he was demonstrating it became clear that meticulous attention to detail and mathematical precision were strong features of his work ethic.

His passion for clay led to him taking on and developing a highly successful tile producing company. The beautifully embossed Froyle tiles were commissioned by companies as varied as Nandos, Marks and Spencer, Tate St Ives, Fired Earth, and Saville Row. They are produced by a tight team of dedicated employees including his mother as bookkeeper. He and his wife are the driving force behind Art in Clay at Farnham which enables him to enjoy the work of other potters, an enduring passion which is clear for all to see in his enjoyment as co-host of the Pottery Throwdown. Of course, there were lots of questions about the programme and his role in its success as an entertaining production bringing awareness of ceramics to a much wider audience.

Unsurprisingly his mugs, crowns and Hondo bricks were a sell-out, and it was a delight to listen to his stories and to watch him work.





Jaroslav Hrustalenko

Ros McGuirk

Jaroslav came to the April meeting as our guest demonstrator. He is known for his elegant, sculptural tableware in strong colours – red, green, blue, yellow. Some of the shapes he makes seem to dance and others to float. As you will see from the photos, most are thrown and then altered. Some of the mugs are paired off in tango style. Bowls are often wide-based and rise from narrower, flared footings.

Jaro grew up in Soviet Ukraine, developing a strong desire to work in the arts from an early age. However, from his grandfather, he well knew how little freedom of expression there was for fine artists so he turned to ceramics. After school and college he worked in various ceramic factories both as a thrower and later in design, decorating, and glaze making. He went to factories in Ukraine, Hungary, Slovenia (10 years), a residency in Kenya, and finally to the UK in 2007 where he had a residency in Farnham and studied for an MA in ceramics.



By this time he had become an artisan potter exhibiting in galleries and at shows, and with work in various international collections.

For us Jaro made one of his asymmetric vases which are entirely functional despite their looks. The first part is a thrown cone (with no base) which is then closed up to form an old bee-hive shape. The second part is the top of the vase, made as a spout by throwing a narrow tall cylinder (again no base) and pulling it up and in until he closed it up with a knob shape at the top.

The third part is a slightly curved disc he made in his hands by slapping it into shape.

To assemble he used a heat gun on the first part, the inverted bowl, to hurry along the demo. Then with scoring and a little water he joined the bowl and the disc. They were set up on their side and the neck was joined on at the top.



This was a fascinating demonstration by a potter at the top of his game. A true artist, he had to travel a long way to find a place that could be home.

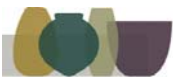


Bryony Applegate by Georgina Johnson

Bryony is a Hertfordshire based potter with a studio in Much Hadham. She specializes in high end tableware, working closely with chefs to design ceramics to compliment the food being produced for new menus. One such customer is the Michelin starred restaurant the Olive Tree, in Bath.

Bryony works through experimentation with different materials and techniques including mould making. For the demonstration she made one of her open unglazed pieces that was definitely not intended for food use but makes attractive candle holders and when on a bigger scale, lamp shades. She used a cylindrical mould the size of a wide





bracelet and an icing bag with a nozzle full of her special slip. Working quickly she piped the slip in small overlapping loops inside the mould. This produces an open weave, or lacy, effect. To achieve the required height more cylinders are made so that each segment will slightly overlap and thus the finished piece will hold. All the piping has to be done in one go as it dries quickly.

Bryony's slip is based on Valantine's porcelain casting slip to which she adds, by eye, some toilet paper and molochite. The first strengthens the raw clay and the molochite helps strengthen the piece for the firing. The slip contains a chemical (a deflocculant) so it keeps gloopy like liquid chocolate until it dries. For colour she uses her own pigments and stains. She fires to 1200C and all the paper content burns off.

For more information go to <https://bryonyapplegate.co.uk/>



Fitzwilliam Museum trip

The visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge was greatly enjoyed by all who went, as these photos show. Participants were able to handle pots from all ages and to connect with the hands who made them often so very long ago.





What larks in the Thames mud

Despite a rather pessimistic weather forecast, a group of 22 members assembled at the Millennium bridge for a briefing from Chris, our guide from the Thames Explorer Trust. She gave us a fascinating indication of the sort of pieces we might find, sharing examples of Roman, Medieval, Tudor and Stuart as well as Georgian and Victorian finds. She explained the current protocol which allows no finds to be removed, or any disturbance of the surface through digging or disturbance, warning us also of the risks from pollution and the need to sanitise thoroughly after the visit. In previous years before Covid made this such a popular Thames-front activity, pieces were vetted by a member of the London museum who had authorised less "precious pieces to be removed. Regulations now govern this more tightly so our finds were photographed then returned to their watery home. Equipped with rubber gloves, and plastic bags for our "finds, we stepped gingerly down the steep stairs onto the foreshore. With only two hours before the tide came back in, we all worked quickly to find hoards of shards from all of the periods when the Thames acted not only as a gigantic sewer, and rubbish dump, but also a centre for nefarious activities on the south side including slaughter houses, brothels and entertainment as well as the hub of sugar refiners, leather and ceramic manufacture.

There was no shortage of clay pipe fragments, oyster shells, animal bones and some finely decorated porcelain and china pieces. A curious phenomenon was the high incidence of oyster shells with circular holes, which may have been used as tokens for travel. (the original Oyster cards?)



The tide left areas with varying density of deposit, from light shingle to heavier pebbles and larger pieces. It was fascinating too to see the metal debris, but no one was lucky enough to find coins, or any of the silver pins swept away in corset making. Towards the end of the session we were encouraged to lay our finds on the sandbank and check against the helpful illustrated guide sheets. And Chris helped us to verify our treasures. There's something really satisfying in discovering something of such historic connection, to pick up piece of pottery and wonder how it got there, what secrets it could tell, who threw it, or lost it, in the Thames, who made it, where did it come from. Everyone was really buzzing and the majority of the group decided the pub was the best way to round off the visit. The rain held off and everyone agreed Judi had triumphed again with another excellent well organised visit. What larks indeed!

Recommended - 'The Secrets of the Thames' is a new exhibition of items found through mudlarking on the Thames foreshore at London Museum Docklands, (handy for both the Jubilee and Elizabeth lines.)

See <https://www.londonmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/secrets-thames>



Caroline Bird,
Poet

English poet and playwright Caroline Bird grew up in Leeds, the daughter of noted theater director and producer Jude Kelly. Bird's first collection of poems, *Looking Through Letterboxes* (2002), was published when she was just 15. Her other collections of poetry include *Trouble Came to the Turnip* (2006); *Watering Can* (2009); *The Hat-Stand Union* (2013); *In These Days of Prohibition* (2017), which was shortlisted for both the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Ted Hughes Award; and *The Air Year* (2020). Bird's work has been commended for her dexterous use of image, pun, and voice; poet Simon Armitage described Bird's poetry as "spring-loaded, funny, sad and deadly." Her poems have been widely anthologized, and in 2012, she was an official poet at the London Olympics. Her poem "The Fun Palace" is on permanent display at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Bird is also a successful playwright. She was the youngest ever member of the Royal Court Young Writers Programme, working under the guidance of Simon Stephens. Her plays include the musical *The Trial of Dennis the Menace*, which debuted in 2012 in the Purcell Room at the Southbank Centre. She is at work on the book and lyrics for the musical for the Old Vic. Bird's other plays include a new version



of *The Trojan Women* for the Gate Theatre (2012), *Chamber Piece* for the Lyric Theater Hammersmith's Secret Theatre season (2013), and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* for Northern Stage (2015). In 2013, Bird was shortlisted for Most Promising New Playwright at the Off-West-End Awards

Bird's honors and awards include an Eric Gregory Award, and she has twice won the Foyle Young Poet of the Year award. She won third prize in the Poetry London Competition in 2007 and the Peterloo Poetry Competition in 2004, 2003, and 2002. She has been shortlisted twice for the Dylan Thomas Prize, was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and was on the shortlist for the Shell Woman of the Future Awards. Bird teaches at the Arvon Foundation and is a writer-in-residence for First Story. She lives in London.



Sharon Griffin Ceramic Sculptor

Sharon gained a BA (Hons) 3D Design (Ceramics) in 1997 and an MA Ceramics in 2003 from the University of Wolverhampton. With over 15 years of teaching experience within further and higher education, Sharon has a solid background in fine art practice and a strong foundation as a figurative sculptor.

Sharon's sculptures aim to be expressive and emotive, and to capture the essence of humanity.

Clay is used as an artistic medium to be witness to the inner self and to explore wider human issues including psychology, connectivity, and healing. Her work is semi-autobiographical and she wishes it to act as a platform for discussion.

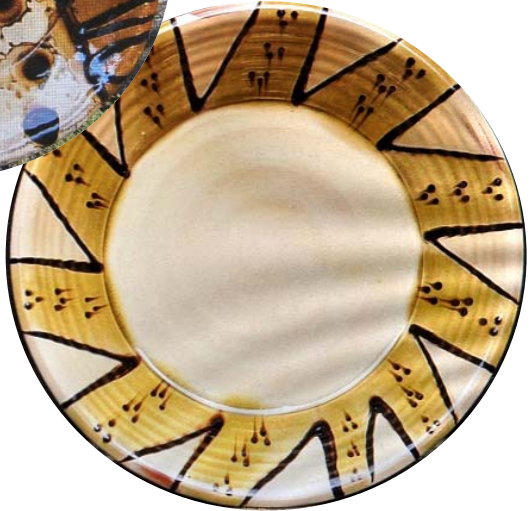




Russell Kingston Slipware Potter

I work in the Slipware tradition. Its roots in North Devon are what drew me to it. Its humble origins of the everyday medieval pot to its vibrant place in today's studio pottery are what kept me captivated. My pots are made for the kitchen, oven and table with function at their heart to enhance the everyday cooking and eating experience.

My work, while being deeply rooted in North Devon's heritage and country pottery traditions, has a contemporary freshness to it.



My pots are thrown, slabbed and extruded. I use very minimal tools or ribs, in order to preserve the human touch and champion the making processes. My work is made quickly with confidence, capturing the energy of the making. The same approach is taken with my use of Slip. This is all in keeping with the country pottery traditions. I do this with aesthetic in mind resulting in exciting pots full of life.

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Committee members

President & POD Organiser -

John Higgins -
johnceramics@aol.com

Chair and Kingsbury coordinator -

Jackie Harrop -
jackieharrop1@gmail.com

Secretary – Jolijn Bronneberg -

jolijnbronneberg@gmail.com

Member mailings & data controller -

Mary Anne Bonney -
mabonney@btinternet.com

Treasurer and firing co-ordinator –

Laura Gibbs - lauraj_gibbs@yahoo.co.uk

Finance officer - Fran Bowler -

bowlerclan@btopenworld.com

Deputy firing coordinator -

Lyndsey Miles -
lyndseymiles@googlemail.com

Membership Secretary -

Nicole Lyster -
membership@dcpg.org.uk

COAM crafting and socials -

Judi Tribe – juditribe0@gmail.com

Programme Organiser -

Jane Russell - russell_jane@sky.com

Library - Gay Crommelin -

library@dcpg.org.uk

Social Media Co-ordinator:

Emma Przygodzka
(emmaprz@iCloud.com), aided by
Nicole Lyster and Laura Gibbs with
help from non-committee
members Amanda Toms and Deirdre
McGuirk. NB use @the DCPG on your
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and COAM kiln site manager-
David Evans - evansdjal@aol.com

Editor, Boxmoor Fair and wheels -

Ros McGuirk - ros.mcguirk@gmail.com

Property -

Tony Baxter -
tonymbaxter@hotmail.com

Safe guarding –

Sandie Taylor -
one-earth@ntlworld.com

General Committee member –

Colin Hazelwood

Other Officers

Minutes Secretary - Jill Baxter

St Albans market co-ordinator –

Beverly Benson
(beverly.benson2@gmail.com)

Trustees

**Mary Anne, Colin, David, Jackie,
John, Ros.**
