



DACORUM AND CHILTERN  
**POTTERS GUILD**

Issue 55 Autumn 2025  
[www.dcp.org.uk](http://www.dcp.org.uk)

*In this issue:*  
Our 50th Anniversary party  
The Annual Exhibition  
ICF Aberystwyth  
St Albans Big Build  
Book review





## DCPG Wheel hire

We still have one of our wheels available for any paid up member who can transport, care for it, and is happy to bring it over to any of our events where they are needed.

The period of hire is 6 months and the cost £10/month.

The contact is [ros.mcguirk@gmail.com](mailto:ros.mcguirk@gmail.com)



For updates and current events always



look out for your emails,  
or the website at  
[www.dcp.org.uk](http://www.dcp.org.uk)



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and on instagram at

<https://www.instagram.com/thedcpg>

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Cover picture:

Top 2 pictures from our Kingsbury  
Barn Annual Exhibition.

Bottom picture, Doug Fitch at ICF  
Aberystwyth

## Special workshops focusing on personalised house signs

Come and explore on how you can  
create your house sign that's both  
individual and creative.



1st November 2025 10am till 4pm

Costs including basic range of materials and  
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For bookings and availability email: [tony@tonymoodyart.com](mailto:tony@tonymoodyart.com)

[www.tonymoodyart.com](http://www.tonymoodyart.com)





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## Notes from the Chair Sept 2025

Jackie Harrop



Despite the awful weather Kingsbury was a tremendous success. For the first time we had an outside broadcast from Mix FM and lots of new exhibitors with an amazing range of work. We also initiated a series of President's choice awards which were presented at the private view, and of course there was cake! The final Fitzwilliam competition attracted some incredible pieces and the public were keen voters. An excitable group of year 2 pupils completed their minibeast and leaves models on the Friday afternoon thanks to the team of helpers led by Judi. Thanks to help from Jill Baxter and Tim Mitchell and Nicole Lyster, this was another successful event to add to our action packed 50th anniversary celebrations.

John is putting the finishing touches to POD2 at Trestle theatre, which is moving forward with lots of surprises planned for those curious to see how poetry, pottery and sculpture interact in unexpected ways.

The kiln group continue to build, fire and glaze, building on each other's knowledge and experience how each of the kilns behaves, in both predictable and unpredictable ways. Increased understanding of how the kilns are functioning means people can place their pieces more accurately to achieve the more consistent results with some beautiful pots emerging as a result.

The summer events programme was very well subscribed with successful visits to the canal, coffee mornings and studio visits and of course the excitement of the international festival in Aberystwyth which brought appreciative responses.

The clock tower build was a resounding success with a hilarious finale when we discovered the dimensions of the tower and the dimensions of the door lacked the synergy which we had anticipated!

With the help of some members of the public, and a bit of sideways



manoeuvring, we finally managed to get it through the door, much to the amusement of passers-by. St Albans BID were delighted and have asked us back!

The autumn programme of demos at Kings Langley is due to start and with

lots of new members joining we have the opportunity to engage with and hopefully encourage some of our newbies to join in lots of our other activities.

Best wishes Jackie



## Editorial Autumn 2025

Ros McGuirk

'After an exceptionally busy summer of Guild activities we are now back together again at Kings Langley and have already had our AGM with Roger Cockram.

As I write this we are on the cusp of POD2, and I am looking forward to gathering more material for the next issue!

Meanwhile this edition of the newsletter records at least some of our summer activities, with many thanks to all the organisers and

participants, and especially to those who have reviewed them for us to read.

Please keep up the good work of sharing your ceramic experiences in your newsletter, whether an account of a particular show, a course you have enjoyed, a book review or some new technique you are developing.

All items are welcome.

Ros



## Guild Socials

### November - Wednesday 12th -

10.30am - 12.30pm

Ayletts Nurseries,  
North Obitial Road,  
St Albans AL2 1DH  
[www.aylett nurseries.co.uk](http://www.aylett nurseries.co.uk)

### January - Monday 19th

10.30am - 12.30pm

Waterstones St Albans Cafe,  
8 St Peters Street, St Albans, AL1 3LF  
<https://www.waterstones.com/bookshops/st-albans>

### December - Monday 15th

10.30am - 12.30pm

Hemel Food Garden Sunnyside Rural Trust, Central Nursery,  
Two Waters Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9BY

### February - Friday 13th 10.30am - 12.30pm

Chenies Garden Centre, Chenies, WD3 6EN  
[www.bluediamond.gg](http://www.bluediamond.gg)

Please contact Judi for more information and so she can book enough tables for our DCPG meet up and pottery chats



## New Members

Welcome to **Rod Sandy** from Watford: "I live in Oxhey Village where I have a small studio in my garden. I have been making pots for about 30 years. I mainly throw functional items in stoneware, and sometimes hand build in terracotta. In recent years have started mixing my own glazes. I look forward to meeting fellow potters and sharing ideas."

And also to **Jane Wigley** from Mentmore near Leighton Buzzard, who writes: "I'm in my happy place in the studio and like to see where the clay takes me. I hand build and usually make animals in some shape or form."

**Alison Goodall** from Hemel Hempstead has just joined. She has been

potting for the last 4/5 years and now throws some but mainly hand builds.

A belated welcome to **Claire Bevacqua** from Palmers Green who joined us earlier this year, and delighted to welcome **Charlotte Bruton** from St Albans, **Debora Catherall** from Harrow and **Clare Dewhirst** from Kings Langley, **Eleri Evans** from Radlett, **Ellen Pearce-Davies** from Stoke Newington who is intrigued by natural clays and Japanese style wood firings, **Edith Garraway** from Aylesbury who likes making garden sculptures and gargoyles, and **Puri Lopez-Carballo** from Berkhamsted.

We look forward to meeting you all soon.



## Guild Meetings at 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.

**14th Nov** : Fri meeting with **Jeremy Nichols**. Jeremy makes high fired salt-ware 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!)

**9th Jan 2026** : **Katherine Kingdon**. A prize winning ceramic artist who makes colourful and offbeat table ware and decorates her pots with quirky characters. [www.fatbellypots.art](http://www.fatbellypots.art)





### Public Liability Insurance for artists and crafters

Public Liability Insurance for artists and crafters. Public liability insurance is not generally a legal requirement in the UK, but you may be required to have it when taking part in certain craft shows or open studios. It protects your business from claims for injury to the public or

damage to their property and, being relatively inexpensive for a small maker, is well worth having anyway. Look out for PLI for artists and crafters or simply get CPA associate membership.

NB when selling at a Guild event you are covered by the Guild's insurance.

See note below.

### The Guild's PLI

Public liability insurance is an important part of the Guild's insurance policy. It protects the Guild and members engaged in Guild activities against claims from the public for injuries or damage to property sustained as a result of the Guild's or a member's action.

The Guild needs public liability cover for events like the exhibition at Kingsbury Barn, the firings at the Chiltern Open Air Museum, our stalls at the Box Moor Trust Autumn Festival and at St Albans market. It is a requirement on all occasions where Guild activities bring us into contact with members of the public or property which does not belong to the Guild.

We naturally do our very best to avoid any harm to the public or to property by minimising risk, keeping our equipment in good order and ensuring all members

participating in activities are aware of and adhere to the DCPG Health and Safety Policy and are given guidance on safe working procedures.

Members should note that the Guild's public liability cover only applies to you when participating in official Guild activities. If you take your work to the public – at markets and fairs or bring members of the public to you for lessons or workshops, you will need your own cover. Associate membership of the Craft Potters Association is well worth investigating: it brings many benefits, including the option to purchase public and product liability insurance through them.

(<https://www.craftpotters.com/craftp0t5/uploads/2021/03/2019-Craft-Potters-Association-Associate-Membership-1.pdf>)

### St Albans Market stall

Potters will be at the market on Dec 6th but there are plenty of other dates available including some special Christmas markets.

Anyone wishing to sell at the market please contact our market organiser: for further details:

[beverly.benson2@gmail.com](mailto:beverly.benson2@gmail.com)



## Trustees

As a small independent charitable organisation (ICO), we report annually to the Charity Commission and follow their guidelines, including trustees. We have six trustees and within the next few months they will reach an average age of 80 years. Although we are mostly hale and hearty, even we can see that this is not sustainable, and the Guild needs both more, and younger trustees. Two have just recently stepped up. Would you like to join them?

What is the role of our trustees? Well, they are part of the committee and help run the Guild. We are too small for an independent 'upper house' and we are invisible in the scheme of things. We are simply a necessity for maintaining our charitable status.

With the aid of our treasurer (currently the role is divided between Fran and

Laura) all income and expenditure is discussed at committee and we follow due care with regular reports and an annual examination of the accounts.

Over the years we have carefully nurtured our assets and aim to cover costs with our events. Overall the Guild's balance is healthy. We are always well covered by insurance.

There is little risk to being a trustee and we welcome any further questions you may have.

Further notes taken from AI:

An independent charitable organization is a non-profit entity that is not controlled by a government or corporation and is governed solely by its trustees to fulfil its charitable purposes for public benefit. Most are smaller, grassroots organisations that rely on local support.



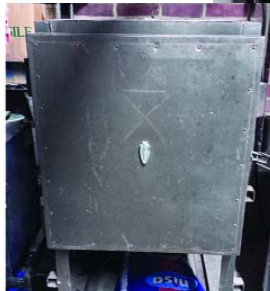
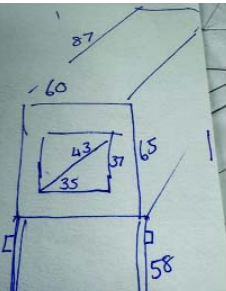
## Kiln looking for a new home

Unbranded 32 Amp kiln looking for a new home. Elements all intact.

Variations of up to 2 cones between shelves on glaze firings. Perfect for biscuit.

Fiona Wilcock

fionajwilcock@gmail.com.



I don't want money for it but you could contribute to one of the Gaza relief charities.

It is set up for for a Stafford style controller. Location is Chesham.

It will need 4 people to lift - it has pole bearing slots.



## Merry Monday

The last craft day of the year at COAM will be at half term but the day has had to be changed and will be on Monday

Oct 27th when we will be making gargoyles! Volunteers are needed. Contact juditribe0@gmail.com

## COAM Firings

The kiln site at COAM will be busy with firings on weekend of Nov 1-2 with a cone 10 wood firing for the 2 days and a raku on one tba.

Nov 7-8th there will be a soda firing. Contact Lyndsey at lyndseymiles@gmail.com or Laura at lauraj\_gibbs@yahoo.co.uk



## Other Events

**25/26th Oct**

### **Oxford Ceramics Fair.**

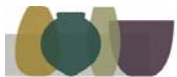
Run by the CPA and now 30 years old it is still one of the best. St Edward's school, Oxford, OX2 7NN.

Demonstrations on Sat by Geoffrey Swindell (minatures), Jack Durling (sculpture) and Judi McKenzie (nerikomi). On Sunday Jin Eui Kim, Russell Kingston (slipware and extruding) and Sue Mundy (from pinch to pot). [www.oxfordceramicsfair.com](http://www.oxfordceramicsfair.com)

**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 and under 15's free. Cash and card accepted on the day. See [www.artinclayfarnham.co](http://www.artinclayfarnham.co) For even more ceramic events, including umpteen christmas markets, see <http://www.thisthingwithceramics.co.uk/>



## The Anniversary Party

Laura Gibbs

Our party was scheduled for the summer solstice, June 21st and we could not have had a more perfect summer's evening. About 35-40 members plus guests turned up.

We enjoyed a picnic, cake and the mug swap and the musical entertainment provided by our then newest member John Knowles was perfect and he even got a few people up and dancing - thank you to Jill and Tony for suggesting we invite him to play. Martin from COAM was very helpful, both in the planning and on





the evening and was very pleased to receive a mug. A big thank you to everyone who helped with the setup and clearing away and to everyone who donated mugs.

I certainly had a great time and the feedback was very positive.



## A Jolly Good Show

The beautiful old barn at Kingsbury glowed warmly in the sunlight streaming through the doorway enhanced by swathes of lights hanging from the ancient beams. One step inside and a treasure trove of ceramic delights opened to view.

Either I am mellowing as I age, like a good cheese, or my spectacles are becoming rose tinted, but it seems that our show just gets better every year. The quality and breadth of work is fabulous. On display were so many ways of using the many different clays, decorative processes, the alchemy of colours and the magic of firings.

No two makers are alike. All displayed their own interests, obsessions, something of their character and even, on occasion, their innermost thoughts and fantasies.

To give an impression of the show, I





have given my own brief account of each exhibitor's display together with the commendations made by John Higgins for the President's choices.

Joijn's pots are positively gothic; dark and sometimes decorated with the likes of pterodactyls and crows. She fires some in an electric kiln, others in the wood kiln or raku. The differences are subtle but give added interest.

David designs his pots beautifully, employing different techniques including cutwork. His eye for detail and the use of colour are wonderfully displayed in his bird portraits. The platter decorated with a puffin was given a mention in the President's judgment.

Tim Mitchell is busy developing a range of reduction fired thrown stoneware. Already he is experimenting with shapes as well as glazes, so there was plenty of interest and surely there will be more to come.

Emma Przygrodska is inspired by Japanese ceramics. A thrower, she reduction fires and uses glazes and colours that remind her of Cornwall producing a rich palette of natural colours.

Jackie has a preference for light, bright colours, suitable for modern interiors. This year she displayed a good range of tableware and one of her figurative sculptures.

Maud is happily hand building in a black sculptural clay. Her organic forms are often finished with volcanic extrusions of white crystalline material.

Nicole brought a range of colourful goodies, from pottery to plant labels, all displaying her attention to fine detail.

Jill Gleeson is a prolific thrower who loves making in large batches. Her table and oven ware is well made, good looking and entirely functional. She now fires to 1220C and often over glazes to explore the colours produced.

Linda Cavill is well known for her finely made architectural vessels. They make a great show with colourful and painterly effects. She was commended for her hill top village and overall for the best sculptural work.





Sarah Evans Tottenhoe is unafraid to express her feelings through her work. Her craggy figures make a strong impact. They also show how the act of making can recalibrate the maker.

Isabel Colomar's pots show just how much she enjoys the process of making and how one project moves on to another. She began potting and exhibiting in Majorca.

Fenella makes sculptural work for outdoors and more decorative work for indoors, including the use of glazes and oxides. Her Lucy Rie inspired pots are lovely and her globular form with surface additions was recommended by the President.

Finn has produced a fine range of dishes in white clay with green coloured leaf impressions. They are hand built, loosely formed and very eye catching.

Julie Leaming makes vessels that are abstract in form, displaying cut and tuck features and are often round bottomed sitting at an angle. Fired but unglazed, they are finished off with stains and paint, to great effect. Her convoluted form received a commendation from the President.

Joy Trpkovic brought a selection of her delightful porcelain dishes and marine installations. The details and soft colours of those miniature stingrays and squids are breathtaking. She uses Parian porcelain which is very short and tricky to handle. It was developed by Mintons around 1845 to imitate white marble. Joy is a marvel.

Tony and Jill's table full of cheerful and colourful animal characters is always a delight and surely reflects the nature of the makers.

Tony Bowler's work is thoughtful and carefully designed. His elegant slab vases seem to sway together like grass in the wind and his rhino sculpture is magnificent.





Jenny Jones is another prolific maker of useful pots such as mugs and jugs, often of a humorous nature. Her salt pigs were commended by the President.

Emily Good showed her colourful pots and delightful dishes with bird portraits. Her gingerbread men look the real thing, but will last longer!

Amanda Toms has roots on the Isle of Wight, and this is perhaps the inspiration for her series of exquisite boats for which she is well known.

Bev Benson is obviously a story teller and there is far too much to read into her bewitching dragons, Green Men and assorted characters for me to do justice. Her delightful couple on a park bench was commended by the President.

John Alderman is her other half and makes strong pots, usefully large mugs and splendid platters. His 16" dish received a President's commendation.

Jerry Seaborn has become our wood firing consultant at the kiln site.

Inspired by the Hamada/Leach tradition of stoneware pottery he throws on a kick wheel, uses local found clay, ash glazes and fires in oxidation as well as in the wood kiln that he built at home.

Pots from the wide variety of firings at COAM were also on display. There were too many for me to name.

With many thanks to all the makers and organisers of this joyful exhibition.  
Ros McGuirk





## The Fitzwilliam Competition

Almost a year ago we chose the theme of 'The Natural World' for our annual competition which was certainly a winner in itself for the way imaginations were sparked and the wonderful variety of pieces produced by our competitors.

The winners were chosen by an online vote by our members and the outcome was that first prize went to Fenella Mowbray for her extraordinary piece of art that looked something like a sponge or coral, or was it a piece of volcanic pumice?

Second prize went to Tony Bowler for his vertebral sculpture, a piece of abstract perfection.

Julie Leaming won third prize for her striking bird sculpture. A new trophy was awarded to Fenella, as well as vouchers for Blue Matchbox ceramic supplies to all three prize winners.



Well done to all who took part, the standard was so high. And very many thanks to Nicole who has organised this event for several years and will be handing over the role to someone else.





## International Ceramic Festival at Aberystwyth

Judi Tribe

Sustainability was the overarching theme of the International Ceramic Festival 2025 held in Aberystwyth this year. A group of 16 Guild members travelled to Wales to enjoy this full on and very special four day event.

There were demonstrations, lectures, discussions, films, a sound-scape gallery exhibition and of course dramatic kiln firings throughout the whole festival. We had the amazing opportunity to watch and learn from potters from around the world who shared their passion and commitment to their own practices with clay. The emphasis also was how these potters could try to reduce harmful emissions and waste which is having devastating effects on the earth's environment.



The ICF has a very full schedule and every one goes off in all different directions to see the potters and events that they are interested in. However our DCPG group members did manage to meet up during the day and evening to chat about who we had seen, what we had learnt and share our own thoughts about how sustainability could be achieved in our own making.

The ICF website has all the information about the festival potters and links to YouTube videos of some of the demonstrations. It's definitely worth taking look.

[www.internationalceramicsfestival.org](http://www.internationalceramicsfestival.org)



Thanks to David, Mary Anne and Judi several of us managed to share lifts to Aberystwyth and others went by train. Those of us who travelled by car took the opportunity to stop off at Whichford Pottery for a workshop tour and lunch. Here we were treated to watching skilled throwing and decorating of their stunning large garden pots and an elephant seat, as well as being shown how they used their huge plaster press moulds. Lunch in their cafe was homemade and delicious.

[www.whichfordpottery.com](http://www.whichfordpottery.com)

On the way home we visited John and Penny West's wonderful pottery near Stroud. We were warmly welcomed with cool homemade elderflower juice and a personal tour of their workshops and kilns. Their functional pottery is beautifully made with glorious glazes.

[www.lansdownpottery.co.uk](http://www.lansdownpottery.co.uk)



The ICF weekend was very inspirational and it was brilliant to go with our Guild group. Can't wait for 2027.



## ICF Aberystwyth

by Fiona Cristol

A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!  
We were treated to a demonstration by Gareth Nash who sculptured exquisite horses in half an hour. He captured, in clay, the essence of the horse which he finished by applying slip which brought the horse to life.

His background: he grew up on a farm in Wales where he had an affinity for horses finding solace in their gentle nature. He is a graduate of The Royal College of Art. He completed a residency in Fuping, China to further his research into clay horses studying the Wei and Tang dynasties. Through his work he explores the sensitive issues of gender and sexuality.



I found Gareth, his horses and his quiet self-effacing nature inspirational.

The ICF was action packed from demonstrations to kiln building with emphasis on sustainability. Thank you DCPG and Judi for facilitating our attendance.



## Boxmoor Fair 2025

by Ros McGuirk



Many thanks to the 10 members who turned out to run our handbuilding workshop at the fair. It made for light work and enabled all to enjoy the whole event. The fair continues to grow year by year and we remain a valued part of it.

This time we followed the suggested theme of 'circus' and set up the workshop to make clowns. A few jolly hats

and even a stab at clown costume among our crew added to the festive atmosphere, though we were disappointed to find no other circus entertainers this year.

Five of us sold pots and made a few quid each. The Boxmoor Trust have thanked us and we are already invited back for 2026.



## Looking for a spiritual home?

Beverly Benson

Sifnos is the Greek Island famous for pottery and food: I mean, rude not to go, right?

Sifnos is in the Cyclades. The islands are volcanic and on Sifnos this has meant large iron deposits in the soil. In ancient times, the people also mined gold and silver, which, together with its excellent position for sea trade, brought the island wealth and prominence. It also brought the pottery industry.

For many years potters worked all along the coast, producing their own clay in brutal conditions and shipping their pots straight off the island in small boats. The Sifnos potters designed a curved based cooking pot, 'tsikali', which spread the heat from a fire, preventing cracking. The red bodied, iron bearing ware has been found all over the world. Like all things, the industry began to decline, but the confiscation of iron cookware during WW2 caused a resurgence: people once again needed clay cooking pots. In an island kitchen, you had a different pot for each staple dish: the 'mastelo' -



an unfired bowl which absorbed the fat from lamb as it was slow cooked, (these had to be replaced after a couple of months, because they could not absorb any more



fat and were put out as plant pots); the kouroupou, and the skepastaria, which cooked the island signature chick pea soup.

They also made 'flaros' - a closed in clay chimney which allowed smoke to escape



from the sides, without sides, without letting anything fall down the chimney into the cooking pot.

We spent the day with Giannis Apostolidis, whose father and grandfather had potted on the island. He now works with Dinos, who fortunately has excellent English and is knowledgeable and passionate about the pottery heritage. They showed us the red hill behind the pottery where the iron bearing clay is sourced.



It is then crushed - no longer by hammer and slave labour, fortunately, added to water gathered from the hills, (tap water has chlorine in it, we were told: it contaminates the purity of the piece). The slurry is sieved several times and left to dry in vast tanks. They make the clay over winter, when it is cool enough for manual labour. The clay is cut into blocks and stored under wet blankets, to keep it pliable for the potters.

They throw sitting beside the wheel - they say that it supported the potter's backs in the days when they were throwing for ten hours a day. They brace on their left foot and move a heavy wheel with the right. These days the wheels are electric, but still quite Heath Robinson. We did have a go and it was not easy - plus they were appalled by how much precious water we were slopping about!



The site is littered with old machinery which told a tale of how hard the potter's life must have been. Dinos told us that his family had been farmers. They did not visit the coast, which was dominated by the harsh pottery industry. His father first went in the sea on his 60th birthday.



These days Giannis mostly supplies hotels both here, on the other Greek islands and in Athens. They are very proud of their history and many of the local tavernas still prepare their food in the traditional way.

Of course, once people no longer cooked on fires, there was no longer a call for the tsikalis, but its flat bottomed successor is still very popular all over the world.



The 'mastelo' - lamb or goat cooking pot - is particularly ubiquitous on the island. Giannis sells his pots with the recipe that should be cooked in them. He keeps the local clay for these pots, but it is very labour intensive to produce, so these days they have to import other clay from Italy for what he calls his 'tourist ware' - with a twinkle in his eye.



Tourists like their pots glazed. They have adopted the flaros chimneys, but cut in more decoration and transformed them into lanterns. These are also all over the islands, both as chimneys and lights.

The old wood fired kilns have been superseded by the massive electric one - still only firing to 1060°. The iron pyrites in the body makes it vulnerable to collapse if the temperature goes too high, which it occasionally did in the old kilns. (It also makes the sand and the sea sparkle...)



which it occasionally did in the old kilns. (It also makes the sand and the sea sparkle...)



This sculpture - a symbol of the island, shows the way that they controlled the rim of the pot between their fingers. They thought it was hilarious when I snatched up a wire to even the rim, (because I had done a poor job of centring, trying to throw sideways.)

In the evenings, after sampling the amazing island food, we wandered along to a cocktail bar on the beach. We got talking to the owner. "The Island is changing," he said. "There used to be hundreds of potters, and now there are only 12. People do not want to carry heavy pots home from their holidays. The potters are reduced to making trinkets. This used to be my grandfather's pottery. Here is where the wheels fitted into the walls." Then, with an ironic chuckle, "He was a potter. My father saved the building from collapse... and I have made it into a bar."

<https://www.apostolidis-ceramics.gr/en/>





## The Alban Festival Big Build

Jackie Harrop

When St Albans BID approached us to do a Big Build as part of the Alban Festival, My first response was, that we had too many commitments and couldn't do it as the date clashed with our plans for a summer party to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the guild. With a bit of a rethink and a compromise on the part of the BID, we agreed that this year we'd tackle a smaller challenge and make the clock tower and some market stalls instead.

With the help of a very small team of volunteers, the regular stalwarts David Evans, Lyndsey Stillwell and myself constructed the clock tower former with his usual attention to detail measuring out the height of the tower so we could fit it in through the clock tower door.

Lyndsey and I came up with a simple idea to create the basic market stall shapes. A quick trip up to the market enabled me to photograph a range of stalls and we opted for bread and pastries, fish, hats, toys, flowers and fruit and veg stalls.

Without the help of John Higgins who ordered the clay and helped to transport the clock tower we couldn't have done it. David fixed to a base board, and we arrived at 8.00 at the barn to load up the equipment and the former and clay in Johns van, we set ourselves up outside the clocktower at 8.30. We were expecting two gazebos to have been set up for us, but unfortunately, they didn't arrive til past 9 so there was a bit of an equipment shuffle before the public started to join in our build, helped by Tim Mitchell who made a great job of texturing and shaping the rather boring façade of the



tower.

It was an ideal pitch right outside the Boot pub, near to Simmons for coffee and cakes, with music and lots of public interest. The momentum built throughout the day and it was rather like a terrific Tuesday with families avidly creating items for the "market stalls" - including the inevitable dinosaur and some terrific imaginative items.



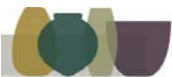
We had arranged with BID that we would pack up early in tie to get to the COAM summer party, and the clock tower volunteers were primed to take the tower, some water sprays and plastic covering from us at 3.30.

We had taken the precaution of setting the clock tower onto the trolley so we would be able to move it into the tower itself. A slight miscalculation meant the steps down to the tower doorway and the exact dimensions of the tower with its added clay, was going to be a streamlined fit though the door. Tilting was the only option, but with 8 or so 15 kg bags of clay on top of the weight of the former this was no mean feat.

John Tim and David attempted to remove the board, remove the trolley but it was when two gallant members of the public came to the rescue that the deed was done and the clock tower was IN the clock tower. Members of the public watching asked "Is this for Candid camera?"

Thanks to Ros for help with clearing up we managed to get clear of the site, unload the equipment to Kingsbury, shower, change and arrived in time to help set up the Summer party at COAM. Another brilliant event

The BID was delighted with the public response and have already booked us for next year!



## The Harray Potter and the Stone Age

Ros McGuirk

Close by the Loch of Harray on Mainland, Orkney, lies the Fursbeck Pottery. It was set up by Andrew Appleby in an old chicken house in 1975 and within a week the locals were talking about the Harray Potter and his great pots. Two years later he moved into the old school and there he has remained.

When three years old Andrew was taken to Peggy Foy's Pottery at West Wickham, Kent and instantly became a great fan of clay. He has always been a free spirit and seems to have flitted through school via the pottery department and little else, except for archaeology. Old pots spoke to him, especially the Greek and Roman ones, so it was hardly surprising that on a hitch hiking trip at the age of 15 he fell in love with Orkney. After art college he remained in Kent and even worked with Peggy for a while. (You will find examples of her colourful pots and figurines online.) Then he set off to follow his dream.

Orkney is a treasure trove for archaeologists and those Neolithic pots so inspired Andrew that he has made museum replicas and this has given him a unique view of those olden times. While producing finely thrown domestic ware in high fired earthenware clays from Stoke, in his largely solar powered kiln, his shapes and decorative flourishes all have Orkney references, Neolithic references. Look for the flaring bases and narrow foot rings, or the occasional drawn animals or runes. He has researched the making and use of the pottery that is found in Orkney soil and

has even used them to cook the appropriate food. A feast from the late Stone Age anyone?



Having entered the mindset of makers living more than 5,000 years ago, he appreciates just how well they used the materials and tools available and how innovative they were. Eventually these ideas became such a great story that he began writing it down. 'Skara' has run to four volumes.

Andrew is one of the most enthusiastic and energetic potters I have met. It was a joy to meet him and his young assistant Heather, and I recommend everyone take a trip to Orkney!

See [www.harraypotter.co.uk](http://www.harraypotter.co.uk) "a cruise-liner free zone"



## Still Pottering On.

By Rick Graves an old member returned.

I was a pottery teacher for thirty-four years and retired gratefully in 2005.

Inevitably the call of the clay reached out across the void and got me hooked again. This year. So I rejoined the NPA, obviously.

I have no studio of my own but I have just begun delivering taster sessions in clay for a forest school near me. (Wildwood Days at Brinscall, near Blackburn).

There's no kiln but we take our finished work, glazed while green, to the Making Rooms, a community initiative in Blackburn, who very kindly fire it for us to a safe, low earthenware.

The "studio" at Wildwood is a shed made out of recycled pallets on an earth floor. Electricity there is none, and water comes in through the door in plastic bottles. We work on tables which are sturdy enough, and I wedge clay on a 4" plaster block scrounged from a builder's yard in France.

I have no idea who's likely to come through that door until they arrive and then I have to think on my feet.

I'm thoroughly enjoying myself and it's this unpredictable range of situations and ages that makes the whole thing so fascinating, and so entertaining.

On one occasion I only realised about ten minutes in, that one of my pupils had half an arm missing. She found it advantageous to be able to smooth the inside of her pot without needing tools. At half time someone brings cake.

Lately I seem to have been obsessed with inventing tools, slicing up old saws and whittling stamps out of paintbrush handles.



And moulds. Lots of moulds. Two hours isn't long to start and finish a pot, so we take short-cuts wherever we can.

In fact, two-hour single sessions have been fun and challenging in equal measure but I want to offer a chance for something more extensive, so we're now planning four-week blocks, some introductory, some for further development. It would be nice to build a kiln, but that won't happen.

There will always be a limit to what can be achieved in our rudimentary circumstances, but that won't stop me pushing, so I'm looking forward, optimistically, to my next career in pottery.





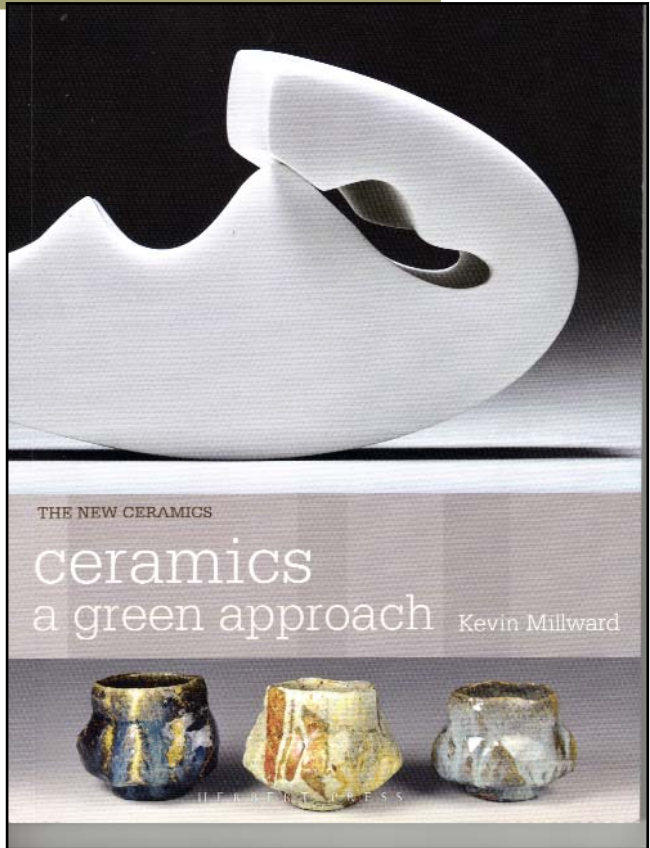
## Ceramics - A green approach by Kevin Millward Jackie Harrop

I have always found Kevin Millward to be an unpretentious and passionate advocate for ceramics.

Having attended one of his glaze workshops, and listened to him at various fairs and seen him quietly orchestrating the technical successes behind the Pottery Throwdown, there is no doubt in my mind he is an expert!

His inspiration comes from experience with industrial manufacturing processes, and with the studio elite, which has given him a wealth of technical skill, knowledge and understanding of ceramic processes, and is a huge asset to his students.

His calls for greater awareness of the processes rather than the end product of ceramic art is especially laudable in the current climate, and his plea for artists to be aware of the consequences of the waste and by products of production joins the voices of others campaigning for greater sustainability within the artistic communities. This book is an attempt to stimulate conversation and promote the steps which will mediate the detrimental impact of ceramics on the environment. Kevin documents the historic development of the materials, technical expertise and developments which many modern potters take for granted (and sometimes misuse, to their cost)



The book explains in clear and direct terms many of the sources of technical confusion and ignorance which causes modern studio potters so much angst in reworking solutions which have been known to industry for centuries. The divisions between industrial expertise and studio artists means that much of this knowledge is hidden or overlooked in a search for quick and easy solutions which actually stifle rather than encourage creativity and innovation and create massive waste.

The book contains a wealth of information and useful tips, facts and formulae



and interesting data on sources of glaze and oxide materials and their global market share and a reminder of the finite nature of some of these sources. A section on glazing techniques covers making and applying, using a safe spray booth, pouring and dipping, with clear advice for novices and experts.

He poses questions on the impact of various processes on the environment, energy use and water, fuel and transportation costs, managing scrap, source of raw materials as well as discussion of toxicity, and impact on health and moral choice in relation to glaze and clay body ingredients. There is a section analysing the relative merits and climate costs of different fuels and firing methods.

The fuels and firings section include tips on kiln furniture, even how to make your own, advice on packing a kiln for greater energy efficiency, as well as soda and salt firing. Kiln builders will love the detailed accounts of experimental firings to minimise the amount of fuel and time taken to reach optimum temperatures, choice of burners and he includes comparisons of commercial kilns for those who are not kiln builders. Recycling, repurposing and re-using materials is a constant thread throughout the book, as is health and safety in handling and disposing of toxic materials, throughout all the processes. There is



even a section on packing and dispatching finished items.

His final section on potters and their work, their working methods and firing processes including Roger Cockram who only once fires, Karen Atherley who uses solar panels to fire her electric kiln, Phoebe Cummings who doesn't fire her work, David Binns whose work is based on recycled aggregates and many others whose work will inspire a rethink on working with clay in more sustainable ways.

This is an excellent and comprehensive book – a great handbook of tips and advice.



## Valentine Clays' **LoStone** Has the Future of the Earth at Its Heart

Potters are breaking fresh ground with LoStone, the UK's first low-fire stoneware clay – a breakthrough from Valentine Clays that combines creativity with sustainability.

Based in Stoke-on-Trent, Valentine Clays has invested decades of research

and development to create this pioneering stoneware, which fires at substantially lower temperatures while maintaining the strength, stability, and surface that makers love.

Representing a major milestone in the company's 46-year history, LoStone allows potters to fire up their imagination without powering up their kilns.

Hannah Ault, CEO of Valentine Clays, said:

"LoStone redefines what's possible. It offers all the dynamic qualities of traditional stoneware, but with a significant reduction in energy costs and kiln maintenance, putting stoneware within reach of many more creatives."

Testing by Valentine Clays' technical team has shown consistent energy savings of around 16% when firing at



1160°C instead of 1260°C, without compromising on quality or performance. This 100-degree reduction not only benefits the environment and the potter's pocket but also reduces kiln wear, particularly on elements, which can last up to three times longer as a result.

LoStone is available in six natural colourways inspired by the elements - Frost, Dune, Shale, Sea-Mist, Drift, and Ember.

Valentine Clays continues to lead the way in sustainable clay production from its purpose-built Stoke-on-Trent facility, supported by a seamless new online retail service at

[www.valentineclays.co.uk](http://www.valentineclays.co.uk).

"The launch of LoStone reflects our mission to champion sustainability, creativity, and community among potters," adds Hannah. "It's an exciting new chapter for the craft."

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At Valentine Clays we believe innovation in clay can shape more than pots, *it can shape a better future.*

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\*The colours shown are a digital print representation and may not exactly match the actual product colours due to variations in printing processes.



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Clockwise: Geoffrey Swindell, Sue Pryke, Illyria Pottery

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